

Wrocławski
PRZEGLĄD
Teologiczny

Wrocław
Theological
REVIEW

Papieski Wydział Teologiczny we Wrocławiu

Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław



Niniejsza publikacja została dofinansowana ze środków Ministerstwa Edukacji i Nauki przyznanych w ramach umowy nr RCN/SN/0060/2021/11 o realizację projektu badawczego, który uzyskał finansowanie w ramach konkursu „Rozwój czasopism naukowych” ogłoszonego rozporządzeniem Ministra Edukacji i Nauki z dnia 3 sierpnia 2021 r.

This publication has been co-financed by the Ministry of Education and Science under contract no. RCN/SN/0060/2021/11 for the implementation of a research project within the programme “Development of scientific journals” announced by the Regulation of the Minister of Education and Science of 3 August 2021.

Wrocławski

PRZEGLĄD

Teologiczny

ISSN 1231-1731

Rok XXXI 2023 Nr 2

e-ISSN 2544-6460

Year XXXI 2023 No. 2

Wrocław

Theological

REVIEW

WROCLAWSKI PRZEGLĄD TEOLOGICZNY
WROCLAW THEOLOGICAL REVIEW
ISSN 1231-1731
e-ISSN 2544-6460

RADA NAUKOWA / EDITORIAL BOARD

- Bp Prof. Dr Hab. Andrzej Siemieniewski – przewodniczący / chairman (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland)
Prof. Yaacov Deutsch (David Yellin College of Education, Jerusalem, Israel)
Rev. Prof. Dr Hab. Bogdan Ferdek (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland)
Rev. Dr Hab. Józef Grzywaczewski, Associate Professor (Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland)
Rev. Prof. Dr Hab. Zbigniew Kubacki (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Warsaw, Collegium Bobolanum, Poland)
Rev. Prof. Dr Hab. Krzysztof Pawlina (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Warsaw, Collegium Joanneum, Poland)
Dr Adrian Podaru, Associate Professor (Universitatea Babeş-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca, Romania)
Prof. Franz Posset (independent scholar, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, USA)
Rev. Prof. Dr Hab. Mariusz Rosik (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland)
Rev. Prof. René Roux (Theological Faculty Lugano, Lugano, Switzerland)
Rev. Prof. Stefano Tarocchi (Theological Faculty of Central Italy, Florence, Italy)
Rev. Prof. Dr Hab. Włodzimierz Wołyniec (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland)

REDAKCJA / EDITORIAL TEAM

- Dr Hab. Sławomir Zatwardnicki – redaktor naczelny / editor-in-chief
Dr Agnieszka Łoza – sekretarz redakcji / secretary
50-328 Wrocław, ul. Katedralna 9
tel. +48 767 244 165

e-mail: przeglad@pwt.wroc.pl / wpt@ojs.academicon.pl

REDAKTORZY DZIAŁÓW / SECTION EDITORS

- Rev. Prof. Mariusz Rosik (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland) – biblistyka / Biblical Studies
Rev. Dr Hab. Waldemar Linke, Associate Professor (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland) –
biblistyka / Biblical Studies
Rev. Prof. Włodzimierz Wołyniec (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland) –
teologia systematyczna / Systematic Theology
Rev. Dr Hab. Robert Woźniak, Associate Professor (Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland) –
teologia systematyczna / Systematic Theology
Bp Prof. Andrzej Siemieniewski (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland) –
teologia duchowości / Theology of Spirituality
Rev. Dr Hab. Bogdan Giemza, Associate Professor (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland) –
teologia pastoralna / Pastoral Theology
Rev. Prof. Mieczysław Kogut (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland) –
historia Kościoła / History of the Church
Prof. Dr Hab. Jacek Wojtyśiak (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland) – filozofia / Philosophy
Fr. Dr Hab. Kazimierz Papciak, Associate Professor (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland) –
katolicka nauka społeczna / Catholic Social Sciences
Rev. Dr Andrzej Tomko, Associate Professor (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland) –
nauki pomocniczne teologii / Auxiliary Theological Sciences

REDAKTORZY JĘZYKOWI / LANGUAGE EDITING

- Monika Szela-Badzińska – język angielski / English
Piotr Zgondek – język niemiecki / German

KOREKTA / COPY EDITOR

Piotr Królikowski

TŁUMACZENIE TEKSTÓW / TEXT TRANSLATION

Monika Szela-Badzińska Tłumaczenia specjalistyczne

SKŁAD I ŁAMANIE / LAYOUT EDITOR

Studio DTP Academicon | Patrycja Waleszczak
dtp@academicon.pl | dtp.academicon.pl

Wersją pierwotną czasopisma Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny jest wersja elektroniczna.
The electronic version of Wrocław Theological Review journal is its original version.

Adres strony internetowej czasopisma / Website address of the journal:

www.ojs.academicon.pl/wpt

DRUK / PRINT

Elpil, Artyleryjska 11, 08-110 Siedlce

Giulio Maspero

Pontifical University of the Holy Cross, Rome, Italy
maspero@pusc.it
ORCID: 0000-0001-6827-4436

Ratzinger's Trinitarian Ontology and Its Patristic Roots: The Breakthrough of *Introduction to Christianity*

Trynitarna ontologia Ratzingera i jej patrystyczne korzenie:
nowatorskie ujęcie we *Wprowadzeniu w chrześcijaństwo*

ABSTRACT: The article shows the existence in Joseph Ratzinger's thought of a true Trinitarian ontology, which is a relational ontology, particularly with regard to the Trinitarian part of *Introduction to Christianity*, which originates with the patristic inspiration, in particular that of Augustine, but also of the Greek Fathers, in other words: of such an ontology of the Trinity, which can be understood both as an objective genitive, i.e. as a re-understanding of God's being in the light of Christian revelation, and as a subjective genitive, i.e. as a re-reading of the world and history in the light that comes precisely from the re-understanding of being in a Trinitarian key. The proof of the thesis is developed in three steps, starting with a rereading of negative theology, proposed by Ratzinger, as a cipher of Trinitarian doctrine, in the line of Trinitarian epistemology, insofar as it is relational. From here, it goes on to Ratzinger's view of the person as the epiphanic locus of Trinitarian ontology, and concludes through his Christology that the transition to a Trinitarian re-comprehension of creation is inescapable.

KEY WORDS: Joseph Ratzinger, Trinity, Trinitarian ontology, Trinitarian epistemology, relational ontology, relation, *Introduction to Christianity*, patristic roots of Trinitology, negative theology

ABSTRAKT: Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie relacyjnej ontologii trynitarniej w nowatorskim ujęciu Josepha Ratzingera, zaproponowanej przede wszystkim w trynitarniej części *Wprowadzenia w chrześcijaństwo*. Relacyjna ontologia trynitarna, zainspirowana pismami św. Augustyna, ale także innych ojców greckich, może być pojmowana jako próba ponownego zrozumienia istoty Boga w świetle Objawienia chrześcijańskiego (gdą dopełniacz w wyrażeniu „ontologia Trójcy Świętej” jest interpretowany jako *genetivus obiectivus*) lub jako ponowne odczytanie świata i historii w kluczu trynitarnym (gdą

dopełniacz jest interpretowany jako *genetivus subiectivus*). Badanie propozycji Ratzingera przebiega w trzech etapach. Autor zaczyna od ponownego odczytania teologii negatywnej jako swoistego kodu doktryny trynitarnej, zgodnie z relacyjną epistemologią trynitarzną, następnie analizuje pogląd Ratzingera na osobę jako epifaniczny *locus* trynitarnej ontologii, a kończy uzasadnieniem na podstawie Ratzingerowskiej chrystologii, że przejście do nowej trynitarnej koncepcji stworzenia jest nieuniknione.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Joseph Ratzinger, Trójca Święta, ontologia trynitarzna, epistemologia trynitarzna, ontologia relacyjna, relacja, *Wprowadzenie do chrześcijaństwa*, patrystyczne korzenie trynitologii, teologia negatywna

Introduction

The thesis of this contribution is that Joseph Ratzinger's *Introduction to Christianity*¹ presents a true Trinitarian ontology whose inspiration is patristic, relating to both Augustine and the Greek Fathers, especially Gregory of Nyssa.² By Trinitarian ontology is to be understood as a rethinking of metaphysical thought stemming from the light emanating from Trinitarian revelation. Even before Klaus Hemmerle made this expression famous in his book *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie*,³ written in the form of a theological letter to Hans Urs von Balthasar, Jean Daniélou⁴ had written the following words just in 1968, the very year of the publication of Ratzinger's work in which the great German theologian collected the lectures given in Tübingen the previous year:

We thus touch upon the depths of Christian Trinitarian ontology. One of the ways that the Trinitarian mystery better illuminates the human situation [is that] it indicates to us that the very depth of existence, the basis of reality, the form of everything in that it is the origin of all things, is love – that is, it is love in the sense of interpersonal community. The foundation of being is the community of persons. Those who say that the basis of being is material, those who say it

¹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, transl. J.R. Foster, San Francisco, CA 2004.

² For an introduction to Ratzinger's thought useful for the reading here proposed, see P. Blanco, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: Nuclear Ideas*, "Theology Today" 68 (2011), pp. 153–173; E. de Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift*, New York 2010; A. Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI. An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, London–New York 2007; T. Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford 2008.

³ Cf. K. Hemmerle, *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie*, Einsiedeln 1976.

⁴ On the relationships between Ratzinger's and Daniélou's theologies, see G. Maspero, J. Lynch (eds.), *Storia e Mistero. Una chiave di accesso alla teologia di Joseph Ratzinger e Jean Daniélou*, Series: ROR Studies Series 2, Roma 2016.

is the spirit, those who say it is the One: they are all wrong. The basis of being is communion.⁵

As can be seen, ontology referred to above is not used in the Heideggerian sense. Concurrently, it is not possible to call it only Christian metaphysics because the ultimate principle sought here is not merely the first cause that lies beyond (*meta*) cosmic realities (*ta physika*), since the incarnate Word has revealed that the deepest dimension of created being is the personal one. Ontology is, therefore, understood here in the etymological sense as discourse (*logos*) on being (*to on*). In turn, the specification “of the Trinity” juxtaposed with the noun “ontology” can be understood as either an objective genitive or a subjective genitive: in the first case, the thought on being has the triune God as its object, while in the second case, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the subjects of the thought on being itself. In other words, the genitive in the objective sense refers to the work done by Christian thinkers to change metaphysics and think the being of God according to revelation.⁶ In the case of the subjective genitive, on the other hand, one re-reads the world in the light that the Trinity itself radiates upon it. In a nutshell, one re-reads creation, starting from the revelation of the Creator's Trinitarian immanence. It will be shown that Joseph Ratzinger's thought, precisely because of its patristic inspiration, contains both a Trinitarian ontology in the sense of the objective genitive and in the sense of the subjective one.

The demonstration of the thesis will take place in three steps, following the path traced by Ratzinger himself in the Trinitarian part of *Introduction to Christianity* and in a certain sense in his whole intellectual discourse. For this, we will start from an aspect of great significance for fundamental theology, which is the proper epistemology of a form of thought that moves from Christian Revelation with respect to philosophy, in particular considering this form as negative theology. Then we will move on to the Trinitarian-ontological sphere proper by exploring how the theological work on the concept of “person,” required by the very exegesis of the scriptural texts, led to the discovery of a new dimension of Being which is the relational one. Finally, everything will be re-read from the dogmatic perspective in terms of Christology and relational identity, in a certain sense summarizing the first two passages. In each

⁵ J. Daniélou, *La Trinité et le mystère de l'existence*, Paris 1968, p. 52.

⁶ On this point, see G. Maspero, *Patristic Trinitarian Ontology*, [in:] *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology. Disputed Questions and Contemporary Issues in Trinitarian Theology*, eds. R.J. Woźniak, G. Maspero, London–New York 2012, pp. 211–229.

part we will try to highlight the patristic contribution, also referring to other works by Ratzinger. From this path, the presence of a Trinitarian ontology in both an objective and subjective sense should appear clear, together with its patristic inspiration.

Apophatism according to Ratzinger

The starting point of the proposed reading of the Trinitarian doctrine in *Introduction to Christianity* is very concrete and, in fact, already relational. Both Jean Daniélou and Joseph Ratzinger believe that the essential point that indicates the direction of Trinitarian ontology is the ontological depth of love, which is in itself a mystery not because of the insufficiency of the knowing subject, but because of the inexhaustibility of the known object. This is why, paradoxically, the limits that reason discovers in addressing the question of God reveal the proximity to the truth of the search itself:

On the other hand, we cannot overlook the fact that we are now touching a realm in which Christian theology must be more aware of its limits than it has often been in the past; a realm in which any false forthrightness in the attempt to gain too precise a knowledge is bound to end in disastrous foolishness; a realm in which only the humble admission of ignorance can be true knowledge and only wondering attendance before the incomprehensible mystery can be the right profession of faith in God. Love is always *mysterium*—more than one can reckon or grasp by subsequent reckoning. Love itself—the uncreated, eternal God—must therefore be in the highest degree a mystery—“the” *mysterium* itself.⁷

Such an approach allows Ratzinger to base his proposal on the tension present in Scripture between the personal distinction revealed by the fact that Jesus calls the Father “thou” and the affirmation of substantial identity with Him. This tension is read as a “curious paradox.”⁸ But what is crucial to recognise for the proposed reading here is the question of truth that underlies the approach described here: as the Fathers taught, if the dialogue between the Father and the Son were merely a theatrical fiction, then Christian salvation would not be real and the triune God could be reduced to a projection of human psyche, according to the position of the modern philosophers like Ludwig Feuerbach.

⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 162.

⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 163.

Theologically, the question is about mediation and this leads directly back to the confrontation with metaphysics because if Jesus were not just one thing with the Father, He would be no more than an intermediate ontological degree, like Platonic eros or one of the Aristotelian motors. Indeed, without substantial identity, Jesus' mediation would separate instead of uniting. This question arises again for the Holy Spirit, in whom mediation is given as God's presence in the human being who at the same time does not cease to be God's total and absolute excess and transcendence with respect to His creature.

The shift to the ontological question is, therefore, dictated by the need to show in personal faith the foundation of prayer and worship, that is, of the truth of the relationship between God and the human being. The history of dogma, with the contrasts and difficulties that characterised it, is thus removed from an intellectual and merely theoretical context in order to show its practical and fundamental significance. It is not about abstract questions but about the very truth of the relationship with God: "God *is* as he *shows* himself."⁹ Being and appearing cannot contradict each other if God is the truth. The point introduced in Ratzinger's Trinitarian epistemology is that God's truth is relational because God himself is relational as will be seen in the next section.

This is intrinsically connected to Christology because this relationality is founded on the fact that Jesus is perfect God and perfect man. Such a perspective allows us to grasp the seriousness of the history of the relationship between the Trinity and mankind, which cannot be reduced to a simple "masked ball."¹⁰ The monarchist and modalistic crisis is read from this perspective as one of the fundamental shortcuts that human reason can take to dodge the (epistemological) paradox and, hence, the (ontological) mystery. The fact that the term "person" originally had the meaning of a theatrical role made this false solution attractive. The other main possibility of reducing the mystery was subordinationism which read the Son as a substance different from God even though close to Him, undermining the truth of both Christian salvation and the personal relationship with the Father, through the Son in the Holy Spirit. On this front, Ratzinger highlights the political fallout, showing how these shortcuts pave the way to the manipulation of the Christian thought by civil power.

The Trinitarian ontological direction is also demonstrated by the connection stressed by our author between Monarchianism and the idealist metaphysics of Friedrich W.J. Schelling and Georg W.F. Hegel, with their historicization

⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 165.

¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 166.

and secularisation of the Trinitarian mystery itself, due to the identification between the revelatory process and the very being of God. Ratzinger highlights the political dimension of these theologies, pointing also to the Marxist proposal, in which meaning is not presupposed, but is to be produced in the future. This, in fact, is the crux of the matter: “Thus the ‘historicization’ of the doctrine of the Trinity, as contained in Monarchianism, now becomes the ‘historicization’ of God. This again signifies that meaning is no longer simply the creator of history; instead, history becomes the creator of meaning, and the latter becomes its creation.”¹¹

This proves that these shortcuts are only logical in appearance, but in reality they lose the (relational) truth that characterises the Christian Mystery. The result, paradoxically, is to bring Christianity back to a mythological dimension:

But something else, too, comes to light here: the radical attempt to fathom the doctrine of the Trinity, the thoroughly logical approach that ends in the “historicization” of the *logos* itself and, with the comprehension of God, also wants to abolish mystery and comprehend the history of God, to construct it itself according to its own logic—this grandiose attempt to lay hands on the logic of the *logos* itself leads us back to a mythology of history, to the myth of a God who brings himself to birth historically. The attempt at total logic ends in illogicality, in the self-dissolution of logic into myth.¹²

The political abuse of Christian revelation would be precisely an expression of such a mythological reduction of the mystery of the God of Jesus Christ. This is why it is essential to conceive of Trinitarian theology as negative theology, according to an epistemology that cannot be reduced to that of Aristotle.

From the point of view of the history of metaphysics, Ratzinger’s choice is extremely interesting because it courageously addresses an *aporia* that has been present since its origin, which historical development had exacerbated, particularly in the Christian era.

Metaphysics, in fact, arose as a response to the pre-Socratic tension between the reduction of being to the One, in Parmenides, and the reduction of being to pure multiplicity, in Heraclitus. A diametrically opposed conception of the *logos* depended on these two options, even temporally contemporaneous (5th century BC). In the first case, in fact, all that is multiple was identified with non-being because only Being is in such a way that every possibility of

¹¹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 169.

¹² J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 170.

reasoning necessarily had to prove aporetic. The paradoxes of the Eleatic school, such as that of Achilles and the tortoise in Zeno¹³ or the paradox of the liar,¹⁴ had the function of demonstrating the contradictory nature of the *logos*, since all reasoning is movement, i.e. it implies a passage through the manifold. For Heraclitus, however, everything *was* movement and the *logos* was precisely the law of such mutation.¹⁵ The philosopher's aim was precisely to recognise such harmony in multiplicity and dynamics. For Parmenides everything was one and not multiple, for Heraclitus everything was multiple and not one.

The connection of these understandings of unity and multiplicity with the *logos* is fundamental to the birth of metaphysics. In fact, the operation of Socrates-Plato that resematised the myths of the Greek religious tradition, bringing out the elements of immutable truth beneath the narrative covering, consisted in the search for the first principle or ultimate cause beyond (*meta*) the cosmic elements (*ta physika*) realised precisely through the *logos* in order to counter the relativism of the sophists who had radically separated being and thought. The answer of the physical philosophers was not sufficient, as they had mistaken second causes for first causes.

This is why Plato, in his *Sophist*, speaks of his symbolic parricide of Parmenides,¹⁶ giving a step that is as fundamental as it is irreversible in the history of thought. Indeed, the assertion that non-being somehow (*kata ti*) is, and that being somehow is not, calls into question precisely the relationship between the one and the many. This refers to participation on the ontological side and dialectics on the epistemological one. At the root of this metaphysical structure, Plato finds the pair One and Dyad, from which the multiplicity of ideas descends.¹⁷ Thus we have the affirmation of a twofold original principle, the foundation of the rationality of all things, in such a way as to bar the way for the very operation of the sophists who reduced the *logos* to mere words

¹³ Aristotle, *Physics*, vol. 2: *Books 5–8*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 255, transl. P.H. Wicksteed, F.M. Cornford, Cambridge, MA 1934, 239b.14–20.

¹⁴ Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations*, [in:] Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations. On Coming-to-be and Passing Away. On the Cosmos*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 400, transl. E.S. Forster, D.J. Furley, Cambridge, MA 1955, 180a32–180b7.

¹⁵ Heraclitus, *Fragments*, ed., transl. T.M. Robinson, Toronto 1987, fragm. 1 and 31, pp. 10–11, 26–27.

¹⁶ Plato, *Sophist*, [in:] Plato, *Theaetetus. Sophist*. Series: Loeb Classical Library 123, transl. H.N. Fowler, Cambridge, MA 1921, 241d.

¹⁷ Aristotle speaks of this in relation to Plato's Pythagoreanism: Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, vol. 1: *Books 1–9*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 271, transl. H. Tredennick, Cambridge, MA 1933, 987b.18–988a.1.

that could be used to achieve their own partisan ends, without reference to a founding unity.

Aristotle's reworking maintained this metaphysical structure based on the dual principle, despite the overcoming of the eidetic dimension through the introduction of form. In fact, the One and the Dyad are replaced by the act and the purely potential matter as co-principles. To see this proximity it is sufficient to compare the construction of the chain of motors¹⁸ with that introduced by Plato to prove that God is the "First Friend"¹⁹ or to prove the existence of the world soul.²⁰

Such brief historical remarks²¹ are given here only to highlight how the metaphysical question has extremely practical consequences when read from the point of view of its relationship to the *logos*, i.e. to thought and reason. The relationship with truth is at the heart of Ratzinger's research, which is why he was progressively drawn in his intellectual parabola towards Trinitarian ontology. He rethought thought starting from faith in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, inseparably from the value this faith assumes with respect to knowledge of the real. The comparison is no longer here with the sophists, but with post-modernity that the German theologian prophetically saw in advance.

This is why it may be extremely interesting to read his proposal of negative theology in *Introduction to Christianity* against the backdrop of the criticism that the sceptical school addressed to the Platonic Aristotelian and Stoic traditions.

Indeed, in the 2nd century A.D., Sextus Empiricus took up the Pyrrhonian legacy to radically criticise what the sceptics called the "dogmatists," i.e. the metaphysicians of both Platonic, Peripatetic and Stoic imprint. His argument aimed at the heart of the tension between Parmenides and Heraclitus, revealing the aporetic insufficiency of the Platonic-Aristotelian dualist solution. In fact, the assertion that everything is relative is not proposed in the wake of the sophists, but from the ontological irreconcilability of the One and the many. Sceptics claimed, therefore, that if it is not true that everything is relative, then there must be realities that differ on the basis of a substantial, not merely accidental identity, for if there were no such realities, everything would be relative. But if

¹⁸ Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, vol. 2: *Books 10–14*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 287, transl. H. Tredennick, G.C. Armstrong, Cambridge, MA 1933, 1072.a.21–b.30.

¹⁹ Plato, *Lysis*, [in:] Plato, *Lysis. Symposium. Phaedrus*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 166, eds., transl. C. Emlyn-Jones, W. Preddy, Cambridge, MA 2022, 219.d.

²⁰ Plato, *The Laws*, vol. 2: *Books 7–12*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 192, transl. R.G. Bury, Cambridge, MA 1926, 895.c.

²¹ More on this in G. Maspero, *The Trinity*, [in:] *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Philosophy*, ed. M. Edwards, London–New York 2021, pp. 125–138.

they do exist, they will be distinct in relation to something else, i.e. they will be distinct insofar as they are relative to something else, and thus they, too, will be relative.²² Diogenes Laertius translated this approach into epistemological terms, applying the same principle to the sign,²³ in such a way as to challenge the possibility of expressing the true, to which the metaphysical tradition appealed.

The relevance of such thought in post-modernity is apparent. Yet, it is essential not to fall into anachronism by projecting our contemporary questions (and wounds) onto the past. What the sceptical critique points out is that the tension between the one and the many remains aporetic unless a leap is made to abandon the identification between being and the intelligible, which would have led the Neo-Platonists, after the shift to an authentic monism with neo-Pythagoreans, to dialectically oppose the material world and the One, proposing not a salvation *of* the world, as Christianity does, but a salvation *from* the world. The negative theology of the Fathers was grafted onto this very point, responding to the challenge that the sceptical critique brought out as an *aporia* of Greek metaphysics. This did not mean theological denial of the convertibility of the *ens* with the *verum*. Rather, the serious sceptical contribution leads one to recognise the excess of the real over the human possibility of expressing it conceptually.

In a sense, Platonic-Aristotelian dualism had to introduce a pair of first principles (One-Dyad, Act-matter) to preserve the possibility of relationship with the world, while the subsequent history of metaphysics had sought to preserve the uniqueness of the principle, but at the price of losing the relationship between it and the material world.

Herein lies the very strength of Ratzinger's thought, which presents the negative dimension of theology precisely from the point of view of the mystery's excess over human expressive capacity. Without resorting to abstract terms, he moves almost phenomenologically²⁴ from historical observation, highlighting how not only the history of metaphysics, but also history of theology intertwined with and inseparable from it leads to an aporetic outcome, if one does not accept the excess of the real with respect to its formulation in conceptual terms:

²² Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 273, transl. R.G. Bury, Cambridge, MA 1933, I, 137.3–138.1.

²³ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 2: *Books 6–10*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 185, transl. R.D. Hicks, Cambridge, MA 1925, IX, 96.

²⁴ On this point, see R.J. Woźniak, *Phenomenological Fragments of Trinitarian Discourse: Being, Having, Relating*, "Religions" 14/7 (2023), article no. 929.

If the painful history of the human and Christian striving for God proves anything, it surely proves this: that any attempt to reduce God to the scope of our own comprehension leads to the absurd. We can only speak rightly about him if we renounce the attempt to comprehend and let him be the uncomprehended. Any doctrine of the Trinity, therefore, cannot aim at being a perfect comprehension of God. It is a frontier notice, a discouraging gesture pointing over to uncharitable territory. It is not a definition that confines a thing to the pigeonholes of human knowledge, nor is it a concept that would put the thing within the grasp of the human mind.²⁵

From such a perspective, Trinitarian theology is not presented as a synthesis that replaces the metaphysical enterprise. Exactly the opposite, the thought that allows itself to be illuminated by the revelation of the triune God shares the path of those who have attempted to think about Being, according to a relational approach that does not epistemologically oppose theology or philosophy, in fidelity to the epistemology of the Fathers. In fact, the concepts introduced by them in an attempt to express the mystery in order to proclaim it without violating its inexhaustible depth are not the “right answers,” nor the result of a Hegelian-type *Aufhebung*; rather, they are mere indications which relationally point towards that one inexhaustible Source that can explain the thirst for the infinite that dwells in the heart of every human being: “Every one of the main basic concepts in the doctrine of the Trinity was condemned at one time or another; they were all adopted only after the frustration of a condemnation; they are accepted only inasmuch as they are at the same time branded as unusable and admitted simply as poor stammering utterances—and no more.”²⁶

The remark refers to the terms *prosopon*, *homoousios* and *procession*, which were used by the modalists, monarchians and gnostics.²⁷ In Ratzinger’s reading, it is not a matter of right or wrong words, but of the relationships between terms. The dogma itself would have a structure of communion as each of its elements was condemned by itself while it is in their symphonic relationship that the Trinitarian categories are able to effectively refer to the Mystery. We could think of the formula *one substance and three hypostases*, where the two

²⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 171.

²⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 172.

²⁷ This recalls the condemnation in 269 at the Synod of Antioch of the term *homoousios*, used by Paul of Samosata in the context of dynamic monarchianism to describe the Logos as a simple force emanating from the sole essence of the Father; cf. Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Councils*, [in:] *Hilary of Poitiers, John of Damascus*, transl. E.W. Watson et al., Peabody, MA 1994, 81, p. 26.

terms were synonymous until the mid-4th century: it was only thanks to the Cappadocian interpretative work that the double reference of hypostases to the substantial and personal dimensions was resolved. The formula opposes substance and hypostasis by distinguishing them with the predication of one and three. Thus, those who interpreted the expression *three hypostases* as Arian, meaning three substances, were reassured by the presence of the one substance, which implied the personal interpretation of hypostasis in the formula itself. Similarly, it was the case for those who regarded the expression *three hypostases* as Sabellian. In this way, the two terms constitute a real and effective formulation of the dogma not in themselves, but in their mutual relationship.²⁸

Real Trinitarian epistemology is in action here, i.e. it translates into the convergence of knowledge and relationship in an authentically theological approach. From this perspective, heresies cannot be read merely as errors of human thought or language, but have a value linked to the role of history and the common structure of human thought and heart. Joseph Ratzinger resorts to bold imagery, comparing the textbook reconstruction of the history of Trinitarian doctrine to a graveyard of heresies, full of tombstones that would be nothing more than reminders of a failure of human thought and a dialectical moment resolved in favour of the Church. On the contrary, the framework so proposed is not dialectical, but relational: "One must say, I think, that these condemnations of the later formulas of faith form an intimate part of them: it is only through the negation, and the infinite indirectness implicit in it, that they are usable. The doctrine of the Trinity is only possible as a piece of baffled theology, so to speak."²⁹

Trinitarian doctrine is presented as a cathedral whose stones are just stones which in their mutual leaning on each other form that marvellous edifice that gives glory to God, helping souls to rise up to Him. Trinitarian dogma cannot be conceived, therefore, only as the right answer to the errors of the heretics, but presents itself as a place of praise, as a space where the human being can meet God to worship Him. In the perspective of relationship, apophaticism from negation becomes affirmation: "In other words, all these statements are not so much gravestones as the bricks of a cathedral, which are, of course, only useful when they do not remain alone but are inserted into something bigger, just as even the positively accepted formulas are valid only if they are at the same time aware of their own inadequacy."³⁰

²⁸ Cf. G. Maspero, *The Mystery of Communion. Encountering the Trinity*, South Bend, IN 2021, pp. 43-44.

²⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 172.

³⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 173.

The point of arrival of this first fundamental epistemological step taken by Joseph Ratzinger leads to rereading dogma in a relational sense in the light of the negative dimension of theology that biblical revelation indicates as a necessary path to interface with God's excess and transcendence. This undermines all dialectical and ideological approaches because one can no longer affirm that a certain position is true *a priori* against another, reducing truth to the conceptual dimension; rather, truth is given here as relation. In fact, the magisterium of the first seven ecumenical councils cannot be considered in an absolute way, regardless of the Fathers who were protagonists in them and their interlocutors, however heretical. Truth emerges from dialogue. And this happens because the Christian God is in Himself Dialogue, as we will see. The gnoseological relationship thus appears as a reflection of the ontological relation. This is why it is necessary to take a second step in the analysis proposed here, entering properly into the Trinitarian ontology presented in *Introduction to Christianity*.

Relational (Trinitarian) ontology

Etienne Gilson said: "it is because of their physics that metaphysics grow old."³¹ This profound expression may illuminate the theological value of Ratzinger's choice to use images taken from contemporary physics to express the Trinitarian-ontological novelty that we seek to highlight here. One might think that the use of such images was merely a pedagogical and didactic expedient, given that the audience present at the Tübingen lectures came from various faculties, not only those of theology and philosophy. The thesis advanced here is that, instead, the choice of resorting to elements taken from quantum mechanics accurately reflects the perspective of a Trinitarian ontology, which seeks to reread creation, and thus also the necessary laws of the material world, in the light of Trinitarian revelation, thus starting from the freedom and reciprocity of the gift as the meaning of all that is.

Etienne Gilson's sentence effectively highlights the inseparability of physics and metaphysics, contradicting what could be considered a dogma of modernity, as the separation of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* in Descartes shows. Aristotelian metaphysics was, in fact, based on a physics that, from today's perspective, is profoundly limited. For the Greek man, this was not a problem because for him being was perfectly identifiable with the intelligible, since the infinite ontological hiatus between God and the world did not exist. For Plato and

³¹ Quoted in G. Lafont, *Peut-on connaître Dieu en Jésus-Christ?*, Paris 1969, p. 10.

Aristotle, the first principle and the cosmos are both eternal and finite, whereas in a theological perspective that assumes the revelation of God as creator, God's transcendence; eternity and infinite being radically distinguish Him from the finitude and temporality of the world. This infinite ontological hiatus, emphasised by the Fathers of the Church, particularly from the 4th century onwards, seems on the surface to distance the first principle from mankind, but in reality brings Him closer to them because it implies that the relationship that God has freely established with us is a personal gift and not the result of a graduated metaphysical scale, as in the case of the Aristotelian motors.

This conception based on the infinite ontological gap between God and the world implies the impossibility of perfectly translating truths about God into conceptual terms. In fact, whereas for Plato the ground of being had to be sought in the eidetic structure, as in Aristotle in the intelligible form, with biblical revelation it is discovered that every term preached by the human being about God originated in the created world, hence in the finite and temporal sphere. In this way, the efficacy of signifiers will be based entirely on their relationship to signifieds.

This is analogous to what happens precisely in quantum mechanics. Ratzinger mentions the inseparability between the observer and the measurement process, which in the smallest dimensions, where quantum effects are fundamental, disrupts and modifies the measured phenomenon, collapsing the claim to objectivity.³² One could say that Ratzinger is leaning on a relational analogy because he knows perfectly well that God is absolutely distant with respect to the physical phenomenon, but at the same time he highlights the relational trace that, without the risk of confusion of planes, allows one to rediscover the value of theological statements from both physics and metaphysics:³³

We know today that in a physical experiment the observer himself enters into the experiment and only by doing so can arrive at a physical experience. This means that there is no such thing as pure objectivity even in physics, that even here the result of the experiment, nature's answer, depends on the question put to it. In the answer there is always a bit of the question and a bit of the questioner himself; it reflects not only nature in itself, in its pure objectivity, but

³² Cf. G. Maspero, *La fisica contemporanea e la teologia trinitaria possono avere qualcosa in comune? Un suggerimento dall'ontologia relazionale*, "Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica" 108/2 (2016), pp. 321–333.

³³ In this, the German theologian is in perfect harmony with the Cappadocians, who mainly resorted to Trinitarian metaphors of a material kind, in order to avoid any possible misunderstanding in the Neo-Platonic line.

also gives back something of man, of what is characteristically ours, a bit of the human subject. This too, *mutatis mutandis*, is true of the question of God. There is no such thing as a mere observer. There is no such thing as pure objectivity. One can even say that the higher an object stands in human terms, the more it penetrates the center of individuality; and the more it engages the beholder's individuality, then the smaller the possibility of the mere distancing involved in pure objectivity. Thus, wherever an answer is presented as unemotionally objective, as a statement that finally goes beyond the prejudices of the pious and provides purely factual, scientific information, then it has to be said that the speaker has here fallen victim to self-deception. This kind of objectivity is quite simply denied to man. He cannot ask and exist as a mere observer. He who tries to be a mere observer experiences nothing. Even the reality "God" can only impinge on the vision of him who enters into the experiment with God—the experiment that we call faith. Only by entering does one experience; only by cooperating in the experiment does one ask at all; and only he who asks receives an answer.³⁴

The inseparability of question and answer is therefore not perceived as an effect of limitation, but on the contrary it expresses the ontological depth reflected in the physical phenomena. One can read Ratzinger's reference to quantum mechanics only in an apologetic sense, as if to say that the accusation of a lack of objectivity levelled at those who pursue knowledge through faith is falsified by physical research itself. But there is more here, as shown by what he writes below:

Certainly it is true here, even more than it is in physics, that anyone who enters into the experiment of belief receives an answer that reflects not only God but also his own questioning and that, through the refraction of his own personality, lets us know something about God. Even dogmatic formulas such as "one being in three Persons" include this refraction of the human element; they reflect in this case the man of late antiquity, whose questions and experiments are governed by the categories of late antique philosophy, which provide him with his observation post. Indeed, we must go a step farther: that we put any questions or make any experiments at all is due to the fact that God for his part has agreed to the experiment, has entered into it himself as man. Through the human refraction of this one man we can thus come to know more than the mere man; in him who is both man and God, God has demonstrated his humanity and in the man has let himself be experienced.³⁵

³⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 175–176.

³⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 177.

It is evident that Ratzinger's theological perspective is the relational one because it is not limited to the apologetic or theological-fundamental dimension, but reinterprets everything starting from the personal relationship of God with the human being, opening up the properly Trinitarian-ontological question of the correspondence or not of the gift with the being of God. What was said in the brief outline of the history of metaphysics proposed in the previous section immediately shows that for Aristotle or Plato's heirs such a relational perspective would be contradictory to the very being of God. Quite different is the theological perspective.

The statement that in every answer there is always a shred of the question refers precisely to Ratzinger's assertion of the need to study the Church Fathers in order to approach Scripture, since only those who testify to the answer (*Antwort*) can lead us to an understanding of the Word (*Wort*), since this was addressed to someone.³⁶ Hence also the need not to separate the Old and New Testaments and not to oppose Greek thought and Christian revelation. Developing Joseph Ratzinger's play on words, it can be added that this connection between the Word and the answer, which in the German language are referred to in the terms *Wort* and *Antwort*, must constitute for us a responsibility, which in German is expressed by the word *Verantwortung*, which is linked to the same root.

Underlying this vision, one can trace a profound affirmation of the relational dimension of Being itself, which has been called Trinitarian ontology inasmuch as it is only thanks to the Revelation of the triune God that mankind has recognised relation, and therefore the Person as eternal and constitutive elements, together with the essence of the Being of God.

Joseph Ratzinger perfectly highlights the revolutionary scope of the Trinitarian doctrine from a metaphysical point of view, in particular because of the new ontological status it gave to relation. In fact, speaking of the Father as relation and the Son as relation and therefore of their being one God in correlation, he wrote:

In this idea of relatedness in word and love, independent of the concept of substance and not to be classified among the "accidents", Christian thought discovered the kernel of the concept of person, which describes something

³⁶ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, transl. M.F. McCarthy, San Francisco, CA 1987, p. 147. See on this M. Arostegi Esnaola, *I Padri come risposta (Antwort) alla Parola (Wort)*, [in:] *Storia e Mistero. Una chiave di accesso alla teologia di Joseph Ratzinger e Jean Daniélou*, eds. G. Maspero, J. Lynch, Roma 2016, pp. 41–68.

other and infinitely more than the mere idea of the “individual”. Let us listen once again to St. Augustine: “In God there are no accidents, only substance and relation.” (Augustine, *On the Trinity*, 5, 5,6). Therein lies concealed a revolution in man’s view of the world: the sole dominion of thinking in terms of substance is ended; relation is discovered as an equally valid primordial mode of reality. It becomes possible to surmount what we call today “objectifying thought”; a new plane of being comes into view. It is probably true to say that the task imposed on philosophy as a result of these facts is far from being completed—so much does modern thought depend on the possibilities thus disclosed, without which it would be inconceivable.³⁷

Therefore, in Ratzinger one can recognise an authentic Trinitarian ontology that is a relational ontology because, referring back to Augustine’s thought, it recognises a new ontological value to relation, compared to the accidental conception that characterised it in Greek metaphysics. In *Introduction to Christianity*, this point of arrival of the theoretical path is gained through three theses that constitute other fundamental steps in the construction of the new ontological architecture proper to Ratzinger’s thought. The sequence can be sketched as: (i) the question of *the one and the many*; (ii) the link this has with the ontological novelty of the *person* according to Christian revelation; (iii) the new ontological conception of *relation* as the foundation of this. Here are the theses in sequence:

(i) The paradox “*una essentia tres personae*”—one Being in three Persons—is associated with the question of the original meaning of unity and plurality.³⁸

(ii) The paradox “*una essentia tres personae*” is a function of the concept of person and is to be understood as an intrinsic implication of the concept of person.³⁹

(iii) The paradox “*una essentia tres personae*” is connected with the problem of absolute and relative and emphasizes the absoluteness of the relative, of that which is in relation.⁴⁰

The Trinitarian ontological intention is evident, as shown by the first thesis, which places the Trinitarian dogma in the background of the development of metaphysics, with the tension that we have tried to highlight: for the Greeks either the one was divine or the manifold, while Christian revelation implies

³⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 184.

³⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 178.

³⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 179.

⁴⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 180.

that both the one and the manifold are so, overcoming the ancient *aut-aut*. Equally evident is that the core of Ratzinger's ontological Trinitarian conception is the person.⁴¹ This acts as a bridge between the ancient world and the contemporary one, avoiding the risk of dialectical opposition between the metaphysical substantiality that characterised the former and the sensitivity to existence developed by the latter. Thus the awareness of being in front of a greater unity than the one identified by Aristotle is apparent:

To him who believes in God as triune, the highest unity is not the unity of inflexible monotony. The model of unity or oneness toward which one should strive is consequently not the indivisibility of the atom, the smallest unity, which cannot be divided up any further; the authentic acme of unity is the unity created by love. The multi-unity that grows in love is a more radical, truer unity than the unity of the "atom".⁴²

It is as if Christian revelation made possible access to a deeper dimension of unity, a dimension, indeed, characterised by personal plurality. Through Christian revelation it is possible to discover the relational immanence of ontological unity. It is precisely this new dimension that makes it possible to read the goodness of plurality also in the world as an expression of intratrinitarian relationality, shifting from a Trinitarian ontology in the sense of the objective genitive to the one in the sense of the subjective genitive.

Such a gain required a long terminological journey, a veritable re-sematisation of the terms substance, hypostasis and person, which ran parallel in East and West, with a more visual form in the former, and a more verbal one in the latter, in correspondence with the etymology of *pros-opon* (related to looking towards) and *per-sona* (i.e. resonating through).

Hence, negative theology is not, according to Ratzinger, a mere *pars destruens*, but already carries within itself a *pars construens*, which has made possible the elaboration of concepts and categories that although not in themselves capable of capturing the Mystery, are apt to refer back to it, fully accomplishing their function in the Trinitarian and relational epistemology outlined by the German theologian.

On the ontological front, his position is sharp. The fundamental principle of his Trinitarian ontology is "the overstepping of the singular is implicit in

⁴¹ On the structural role of this element see A. Proniewski, *Joseph Ratzinger's Philosophical Theology of the Person*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 17/3 (2018), pp. 219–236.

⁴² J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 179.

the concept of person.”⁴³ Affirmation and negation here are given together precisely because the relation says being and non-being at the same time. Not an absolute non-being, as Parmenides thought, nor a merely participatory non-being, as the Platonic correction required, but a non-being that refers back to another, thus remaining in the bosom of Being. This is an absolute novelty brought by Christianity into history (and which without Christianity proves impossible to preserve⁴⁴):

In the struggle over the language of the profession of faith, the struggle over the thing itself was settled, so that in this language, inadequate as it may be, contact with the reality does take place. We can say from the history of ideas that it was here that the reality “person” was first fully sighted; the only way that the concept and idea of “person” dawned on the human mind was in the struggle over the Christian image of God and the interpretation of the figure of Jesus of Nazareth.⁴⁵

These statements reveal clearly the theological legacy of the Cappadocians, who in their confrontation with the heirs of Eunomius had to break the necessary correspondence between entity, concept and word, which (neo-)Platonically led Eunomius to deny that the Son was God, since as such He was begotten and was therefore characterised by a term apparently incompatible with the Father’s being ingenerate. Only a relational reading could resolve the issue without denying divine oneness, as shown by the Cappadocians,⁴⁶ especially Gregory of Nyssa in the East, and Augustine in the West:

First, it was clear that, seen absolutely, God is only One, that there is not a plurality of divine principles. Once this has been established, it is also clear that the oneness lies on the plane of substance; consequently the three-ness that must also be mentioned is not to be sought here. It must therefore exist on a different level, on that of relation, of the “relative”.⁴⁷

⁴³ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 180.

⁴⁴ Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde (*Religion, Law, and Democracy: Selected Writings*, eds. M. Künkler, T. Stein, Oxford 2021) showed the crisis of the liberal state that, without the Christian background, is not able any more to protect the freedom it should based on.

⁴⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 181–182.

⁴⁶ For a detailed study of the Cappadocian approach, see G. Maspero, *The Cappadocian Reshaping of Metaphysics: Relational Being*, Cambridge 2024, pp. 135–161.

⁴⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 182.

From this perspective, it can be shown that it is precisely relational Trinitarian ontology that allows Ratzinger not to contrast the God of philosophers and the God of theologians, since the new ontology that Christian revelation has made possible does not contradict metaphysics but complements it. Parmenides and Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle were not wrong. Rather, they were faced with the paradox of the one and the many without that relationship with the triune God who alone can unveil His immanence, where the personal dimension recapitulates unity and multiplicity. The clarity of Ratzinger's thought is extreme here:

With the insight that, seen as substance, God is One but that there exists in him the phenomenon of dialogue, of differentiation, and of relationship through speech, the category of *relatio* gained a completely new significance for Christian thought. To Aristotle, it was among the "accidents", the chance circumstances of being, which are separate from substance, the sole sustaining form of the real. The experience of the God who conducts a dialogue, of the God who is not only logos but also *dia-logos*, not only idea and meaning but speech and word in the reciprocal exchanges of partners in conversation—this experience exploded the ancient division of reality into substance, the real thing, and accidents, the merely circumstantial. It now became clear that the dialogue, the *relatio*, stands beside the substance as an equally primordial form of being.⁴⁸

As this text shows, relation and substance are not opposed, but rather are recognised as co-principles of being. This makes it possible to avoid the risk of projecting anthropology onto the divine immanence, depowering the path and opening it to relativistic outcomes, as a certain type of personalism of the previous century has done against its own intentions. History and being do not oppose each other in Ratzinger's ontological thought,⁴⁹ who here presents a synthesis of his entire intellectual journey, juxtaposing the conception of the relationship in Augustine with the pure Bonaventurian *actualitas*⁵⁰ to (boldly)

⁴⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 182–183.

⁴⁹ See on this point I.C. Troconis Iribarren, *Dimensión histórica y dimensión ontológica del cumplimiento del hombre. La salvación cristiana según Joseph Ratzinger*, Roma 2019.

⁵⁰ *Actualitas* is a fundamental concept that Ratzinger takes from Bonaventure, to distinguish the realities for which *esse* and *factum esse* and *feri* are distinct, such as substance and accidents, from those in which *esse* and *feri* coincide, as in changes of state, from, finally, the category of realities for which *esse*, *feri* and *factum* coincide, such as grace and, in a certain sense, the person and God himself, which is supreme *Actualitas*. See on this J. Ratzinger, *Offenbarungsverständnis und Geschichtstheologie Bonaventuras. Habilitationsschrift und*

include the quantum principle of complementarity in a Trinitarian ontological perspective. In doing so, the German theologian also poses a challenge to contemporary philosophy, with which he has always sought both intellectually and personally to be in relation: “It is probably true to say that the task imposed on philosophy as a result of these facts is far from being completed—so much does modern thought depend on the possibilities thus disclosed, without which it would be inconceivable.”⁵¹

There is here an opening of perspective to post-modernism, today almost paralysed when faced with the crossroads between challenging some of the principles of modernity, which have led to outcomes contrary to those expected, or pushing towards a further radicalisation of these principles. Ratzinger, on the strength of the response offered by Trinitarian ontology to the cry that rises in the face of the tension between the One and the many in the history of metaphysics, prophetically indicates a way out of this paralysis in relational identity, a philosophical expression, as well as a theological one, that he derives from Christology and the theology of divine filiation, but which also opens up perspectives for those who do not believe.

The ontology of filiation

The proposed path thus makes it possible to grasp the strength of the conclusion towards which the Trinitarian part of *Introduction to Christianity* tends. Specifically, after presenting Trinitarian doctrine as negative theology, through the proposal of an epistemological approach that is authentically theological, i.e. Trinitarian, and after having stressed that the foundation of such an approach is the ontology of the Trinity in which the relation is a co-principle together with (and not against) the substance, Ratzinger proves that the passage from Trinitarian ontology in the sense of the objective genitive to Trinitarian ontology in the sense of the subjective genitive cannot be avoided. And this is precisely due to Christology.⁵²

Bonaventuras-Studien, Series: Gesammelte Schriften 2, ed. G.L. Müller, Freiburg 2009, p. 337.

On the non dialectical relationship of Ratzinger with Aquinas, see J.I. Belleza, *Joseph Ratzinger, Student of Thomas*, “Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology” 5/1 (2019), pp. 94–120.

⁵¹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 184.

⁵² The following text is also crucial for this passage J. Ratzinger, *Die Legitimität des christologischen Dogmas*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth, Beiträge zur Christologie*, vol. 2, Series: Gesammelte Schriften 6/2, ed. G.L. Müller, Freiburg 2013, pp. 832–849.

The German theologian, in fact, after highlighting on a theoretical level the relation as a constitutive element of the new ontological vision that emerges when one takes seriously Trinitarian dogma with its development for the understanding of the world, returns to Scripture, as a sort of litmus test, to show how what is affirmed gives reason to the very setting of the fourth gospel.

The starting point is the Johannine statement that “The Son can do nothing of himself” (John 5:19 and 30):

This seems to rob the Son of all power; he has nothing of his own; precisely because he is the Son he can only operate by virtue of him to whom he owes his whole existence. What first becomes evident here is that the concept “Son” is a concept of relation. By calling the Lord “Son”, John gives him a name that always points away from him and beyond him; he thus employs a term that denotes essentially a relatedness. He thereby puts his whole Christology into the context of the idea of relation.⁵³

In Christ, the ontology of the Trinity in an objective sense spills over into creation because the Filiation of the Word who became flesh is the eternal Relation with the Father. The life of Jesus of Nazareth is thus read as a translation into human terms; hence, as a personal, historical and narrative existence, of that pure being in relation to the first divine Person of the Son.

Essential to Ratzinger's ontology of the Filiation is the comparison with the paradox presented by the juxtaposition of the quoted Johannine expressions with the statement in John 10:30 that the Father and the Son are one. The Trinitarian ontology presented in the previous sections makes it possible here to grasp that the two statements do not contradict each other, but are perfectly complementary. In fact, if the Son is pure Relation, He is not necessarily alone, but precisely because of this He will not be separated in anything from the Father, being one with Him. Essential in this passage is precisely the fact that substance and relation are not dialectically opposed in the relational ontology of the German theologian, but are two co-principles that refer to each other.

From here follows, again at the level of Johannine exegesis, the shift to Trinitarian ontology in the sense of the subjective genitive. In fact, if the identity of Christ is totally relational with respect to the Father, the identity of the Christian is also totally relational with respect to Christ, as indicated by the very name introduced at Antioch, when the first non-Jews began to be baptised (Acts 11:19–26).

⁵³ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 185.

Thus, John 5:19–30 translates into Christ's statement that Christians can do nothing without Him in John 15:5. So, precisely because Christology is radically under the sign of relation, so is being a Christian. Likewise, John 10:30 corresponds to the statements of the priestly prayer in John 17:11 and 22, when Jesus asks the Father to grant the disciples that same (relational) unity that characterises the Life of the divine Persons.

Ratzinger thus leads the reader to the nuclear junction of his relational Trinitarian ontology, a junction that shows the inevitability of the passage from the objective to the subjective genitive:

The logic is compelling: If there is nothing in which he is just he, no kind of fenced-off private ground, then he coincides with the Father, is "one" with him. It is precisely this totality of interplay that the word "Son" aims at expressing. To John, "Son" means being from another; thus, with this word he defines the being of this man as being from another and for others, as a being that is completely open on both sides, knows no reserved area of the mere "I". When it thus becomes clear that the being of Jesus as Christ is a completely open being, a being "from" and "toward", which nowhere clings to itself and nowhere stands on its own, then it is also clear at the same time that this being is pure relation (not substantiality) and, as pure relation, pure unity. This fundamental statement about Christ becomes, as we have seen, at the same time the explanation of Christian existence.⁵⁴

So also for the Christian, being totally *from* Christ and totally *for* the brethren does not constitute a loss, but on the contrary is the foundation of his own ontology. Herein lies the fundamental anthropological point that the consideration of substance and relation as co-principles induces. In fact, if relation were dialectically opposed to substance, as a certain theological tradition has claimed, the risk would be moralism because being *from* and being *for* would have no substantial content and would not represent a gain. Instead, being generated and giving oneself to one's brothers does not imply any loss because relations are in the substance, i.e. they are in being. This is why Ratzinger's Trinitarian ontology is also extremely valuable for our post-modern times. He proposes the example of ecumenism, for the context in which he lectured, but today his proposal can be grasped in a far greater horizon of unity because the

⁵⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 186–187.

one-sided emphasis on existence against essence or the dialectical opposition of the many to the one have produced a generalised loneliness.⁵⁵

In contrast, in the context of Joseph Ratzinger's Trinitarian ontology, unity is always relational, both at the level of God, and for humans, created in His image and likeness:

It is the nature of the trinitarian personality to be pure relation and so the most absolute unity. That there is no contradiction in this is probably now evident. And one can understand from now on more clearly than before that it is not the "atom", the indivisible smallest piece of matter, that possesses the highest unity; that, on the contrary, pure oneness can only occur in the spirit and embraces the relatedness of love. Thus in Christianity the profession of faith in the oneness of God is just as radical as in any other monotheistic religion; indeed, only in Christianity does it reach its full stature. But it is the nature of Christian existence to receive and to live life as relatedness and, thus, to enter into that unity which is the ground of all reality and sustains it. This will perhaps make it clear how the doctrine of the Trinity, when properly understood, can become the reference point of theology that anchors all other lines of Christian thought.⁵⁶

The Trinitarian doctrine is called upon to be the point of reference, almost the origin of the coordinate axes of theology, precisely because it constitutes the equivalent of metaphysics with respect to ethics or anthropology in philosophy. When revealed light is allowed to illuminate ontology, then new categories emerge, as the Church Fathers have shown, both in the East and the West, that do not dialectically supplant the old ones, but rather complement them. Thus, Trinitarian theology makes it possible to reread Being and Unity "from within," through the relational reconfiguration it makes possible. Likewise, from here derives a principle of individuation that is not merely substantial, for which being a given reality necessarily requires being separate from the others, but relational:

Let us round off the whole discussion with a passage from St Augustine which elucidates splendidly what we mean. It occurs in his commentary on St John and hinges on the sentence in the Gospel which runs, "*Mea doctrina non est mea*"

⁵⁵ For application to moral theology, see J. Ratzinger, *The Renewal of Moral Theology: Perspectives of the Vatican II and Veritatis Splendor*, [in:] *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio*, vol. 1: *The Unity of the Church*, Grand Rapids, MI 2010, pp. 183–194, sp. p. 192 for the relational foundation.

⁵⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 187–188.

– “My teaching is not my teaching, but that of the Father who sent me” (7,16). Augustine has used the paradox in this sentence to illuminate the paradoxical nature of the Christian image of God and of Christian existence. He asks himself first whether it is not a sheer contradiction, an offence against the elementary rules of logic, to say something like “Mine is not mine”. But, he goes on to say, digging deeper, what really is the teaching of Jesus which is simultaneously his and not his? Jesus is “word”, and thus it becomes clear that his teaching is he himself. If one reads the sentence again from this angle it then says: I am by no means just I; I am not mine at all; my I is that of another. With this we have moved on out of Christology and arrived at ourselves: “*Quid tam tuum quam tu, quid tam non tuum quam tu*” – “What is so much yours as yourself and what is so little yours as yourself?” (*In Iohan.* 29,3). The most individual element in us – the only thing that belongs to us in the last analysis – our own “I”, is at the same time the least individual element of all, for it is precisely our “I” that we have neither from ourselves nor for ourselves. The “I” is simultaneously what I have completely and what least of all belongs to me. Thus here again the concept of mere substance (=what stands in itself!) is shattered and it is made apparent how being that truly understands itself grasps at the same time that in it does not belong to itself; that it only comes to itself by moving away from itself and finding its way back as relatedness to its true primordial state.⁵⁷

The role of Augustine’s writings in inspiring Ratzinger’s Trinitarian ontology formulated in *Introduction to Christianity* is evident from the quotations from the commentary on the fourth gospel by the bishop of Hippo in the text just quoted, preceded by those from *On the Trinity* 5, 5,6 and *Exposition of Psalm 68*, 15.⁵⁸

The patristic inspiration of this point of arrival is particularly evident also in *The Unity of the Nations*, which in a sense recapitulates Ratzinger’s own intellectual and academic journey.⁵⁹ Here, commenting on Eph 2:14–15, he explains that for the Fathers, unity was not one theme among others, but the centre of all their teaching. Original sin is read as the source of division. But both Augustine⁶⁰

⁵⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 190.

⁵⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 183–184.

⁵⁹ See, for example, J. Ratzinger, *The Unity of the Nations. A Vision of the Church Fathers*, transl. B. Ramsey, Washington, DC 2015, pp. 23–32.

⁶⁰ For the Pneumatological dimension see J. Ratzinger, *The Holy Spirit as Communio: Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality in Augustine*, “*Communio*” 25 (1998), pp. 324–337.

and Gregory of Nyssa⁶¹ present the unity of men as a relational unity because their very identity is relational (see *On the Song of Songs* 2, quoted at p. 27).⁶² The former, in fact, in his commentary on the Psalms, interprets the name Adam as a reference to the four cardinal points because the original Adam embraces the whole earth and even when sin broke this unity, God gathered and reunited the pieces (*Exposition of Psalm 95*, 15). The Cappadocian even believes, as Ratzinger himself explains, that one cannot use the plural when speaking of three men, just as one cannot talk of three gods when speaking of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Here the German theologian draws on Henry de Lubac's *Catholicism*, as the note in the text shows. The same happens with a further pair of proposed images that illustrate a similar line of interpretation: that of the lost sheep referring to humanity in the exegesis of Gregory of Nyssa and that of the coin that bears the image of God and must be given back to God in the exegesis of Augustine.⁶³

At the root of this possibility of re-reading humanity in the light of the relational unity and relational identity of the triune God is precisely the gift of Christ:

Jesus' human will assimilates itself to the will of the Son. In doing this, he receives the Son's identity, i.e., the complete subordination of the I to the Thou, the self-giving and self-expropriation of the I to the Thou. This is the very essence of him who is pure relation and act. Wherever the I gives itself to the Thou, there is freedom because this involves the reception of the "form of God."⁶⁴

⁶¹ Gregory of Nyssa is particularly present in Joseph Ratzinger's thought, precisely because of his relational ontology and epistemology, the foundation of his negative theology. See, for example, the Christological interpretation of the fact that Moses only sees God from behind (see Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, Series: The Classics of Western Spirituality, ed. A.J. Malherbe, New York 1978, II, 251, somehow parallel to Augustine, *On the Trinity*, [in:] *The Works of Aurelius Augustine*, vol. 7, ed. M. Dods, transl. A.W. Haddan, Edinburgh 1873, 2, 17,28, pp. 70–72). Here too there is a parallelism with Augustine in Ratzinger's quotations. Cf. J. Ratzinger, "Wer mich gesehen hat, hat den Vater gesehen" (*Joh 14,9*). *Das Antlitz Christi in der Heiligen Schrift*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth. Beiträge zur Christologie*, vol. 2, Series: Gesammelte Schriften 6/2, ed. G.L. Müller, Freiburg 2013, p. 772.

⁶² An really interesting question would be if Ratzinger, who is clearly inspired by Augustine, is in reality closer to him or to Gregory of Nyssa, but this exceeds the scope of the present paper. For a comparison of Augustine's and Gregory's versions of Trinitarian ontology, see G. Maspero, *Rethinking the Filioque with the Greek Fathers*, Grand Rapids, MI 2023, pp. 242–265.

⁶³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *The Unity of the Nations...*, op. cit., pp. 23–32.

⁶⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, San Francisco, CA 1986, p. 41.

In the school of Maximus the Confessor, Joseph Ratzinger shows in the free giving of the human will of Christ to the divine will the point of passage through which the relationality of God gives itself to the relationality of mankind.

Conclusion

At the end of this path we have tried to show that the Trinitarian part of *Introduction to Christianity* contains a Trinitarian ontology that is a relational ontology, understood in both the objective and subjective genitive sense. Relation is, by Ratzinger, recognised as a co-principle of being that does not supplant substance, but opens it up. This founds Trinitarian epistemology, which is a negative theology because it is relational, and Trinitarian anthropology, in which the unity and identity of human beings is founded precisely on the ontological value of relationship.⁶⁵ The German theologian's approach makes it crystal clear that the shift to a Trinitarian ontology in the sense of the subjective genitive cannot be avoided if one takes Christology seriously. Thus, history and eternity, existence and essence, can be reconciled in the school of both Eastern and Western Fathers:

For Catholic theology, this is a fairly recent problem, even though the underlying matter, simply from the structure of the Christian, which appeared as the message of God's action in history, was always present in some form and, in the interrelation of οἰκονομία and θεολογία, of *dispositio* and *natura*, is even at the centre of the thinking of Christian reality in the Fathers of the Church.⁶⁶

Precisely the patristic articulation between *theologia* and *oikonomia* is the point of transition from a Trinitarian ontology in the sense of the objective genitive to the subjective genitive. This is why Ratzinger's patristic inspiration, beyond the study of quotations and references, is given at a structural level. And this makes it possible to present his theology as a powerful response to the cry that rises from the history of metaphysics in the face of the tension between the one and the many, an *aporia* whose topicality is evident in contemporary times.

⁶⁵ On Ratzinger's anthropology, see I. Troconis, *Joseph Ratzinger's Imago Dei Anthropology: The Reconciliation of Ontology and Salvation History*, [in:] *Between Being and Time. From Ontology to Eschatology*, eds. A. Kaethler, S. Mitralaxis, Lanham, MD 2019, pp. 189–203.

⁶⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Heilsgeschichte und Eschatologie. Zur Frage nach dem Ansatz des theologischen Denkens*, [in:] *Theologie im Wandel. Festschrift zum 150 jährigen Bestehen der kath. theologischen Fakultät an der Universität Tübingen, 1817–1967*, München 1967, p. 68.

Bibliography

- Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, vol. 1: *Books 1–9*, vol. 2: *Books 10–14*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 271, 287, transl. H. Tredennick, G.C. Armstrong, Cambridge, MA 1933.
- Aristotle, *On Sophistical Refutations. On Coming-to-be and Passing Away. On the Cosmos*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 400, transl. E.S. Forster, D.J. Furley, Cambridge, MA 1955, pp. 2–155.
- Aristotle, *Physics*, vol. 2: *Books 5–8*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 255, transl. P.H. Wicksteed, F.M. Cornford, Cambridge, MA 1934.
- Arostegi Esnaola M., *I Padri come risposta (Antwort) alla Parola (Wort)*, [in:] *Storia e Mistero. Una chiave di accesso alla teologia di Joseph Ratzinger e Jean Daniélou*, eds. G. Maspero, J. Lynch, Roma 2016, pp. 41–68.
- Augustine, *On the Trinity*, [in:] *The Works of Aurelius Augustine*, vol. 7, ed. M. Dods, transl. A.W. Haddan, Edinburgh 1873.
- Belleza J.I., *Joseph Ratzinger, Student of Thomas*, “Berkeley Journal of Religion and Theology” 5/1 (2019), pp. 94–120.
- Blanco P., *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: Nuclear Ideas*, “Theology Today” 68 (2011), pp. 153–173.
- Böckenförde E.-W., *Religion, Law, and Democracy: Selected Writings*, eds. M. Künkler, T. Stein, Oxford 2021.
- Daniélou J., *La Trinité et le mystère de l'existence*, Paris 1968.
- Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 2: *Books 6–10*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 185, transl. R.D. Hicks, Cambridge, MA 1925.
- Gaal E. de, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift*, New York 2010.
- Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, Series: The Classics of Western Spirituality, ed. A.J. Malherbe, New York 1978.
- Hammerle K., *Thesen zu einer trinitarischen Ontologie*, Einsiedeln 1976.
- Heraclitus, *Fragments*, ed., transl. T.M. Robinson, Toronto 1987.
- Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Councils*, [in:] *Hilary of Poitiers, John of Damascus*, transl. E.W. Watson et al., Peabody, MA 1994, pp. 4–29.
- Lafont G., *Peut-on connaître Dieu en Jésus-Christ?*, Paris 1969.
- Maspero G., *The Cappadocian Reshaping of Metaphysics: Relational Being*, Cambridge 2024.
- Maspero G., *La fisica contemporanea e la teologia trinitaria possono avere qualcosa in comune? Un suggerimento dall'ontologia relazionale*, “Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica” 108/2 (2016), pp. 321–333.
- Maspero G., *The Mystery of Communion. Encountering the Trinity*, South Bend, IN 2021.
- Maspero G., *Patristic Trinitarian Ontology*, [in:] *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology. Disputed Questions and Contemporary Issues in Trinitarian Theology*, eds. R.J. Woźniak, G. Maspero, London–New York 2012, pp. 211–229.
- Maspero G., *Rethinking the Filioque with the Greek Fathers*, Grand Rapids, MI 2023.
- Maspero G., *The Trinity*, [in:] *The Routledge Handbook of Early Christian Philosophy*, ed. M. Edwards, London–New York 2021, pp. 125–138.
- Maspero G., Lynch J. (eds.), *Storia e Mistero. Una chiave di accesso alla teologia di Joseph Ratzinger e Jean Daniélou*, Series: ROR Studies Series 2, Roma 2016.

- Nichols A., *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI. An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, London–New York 2007.
- Plato, *Laws*, vol. 2: *Books 7–12*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 192, transl. R.G. Bury, Cambridge, MA 1926.
- Plato, *Lysis*, [in:] Plato, *Lysis. Symposium. Phaedrus*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 166, eds., transl. C. Emlyn-Jones, W. Preddy, Cambridge, MA: 2022, pp. 3–105.
- Plato, *Sophist*, [in:] Plato, *Theaetetus. Sophist*. Series: Loeb Classical Library 123, transl. H.N. Fowler, Cambridge, MA 1921, pp. 259–461.
- Proniewski A., *Joseph Ratzinger's Philosophical Theology of the Person*, "Rocznik Teologii Katolickiej" 17/3 (2018), pp. 219–236.
- Ratzinger J., *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, San Francisco, CA 1986.
- Ratzinger J., *Heilsgeschichte und Eschatologie. Zur Frage nach dem Ansatz des theologischen Denkens*, [in:] *Theologie im Wandel. Festschrift zum 150 jährigen Bestehen der kath. theologischen Fakultät an der Universität Tübingen, 1817–1967*, München 1967, pp. 68–89.
- Ratzinger J., *The Holy Spirit as Communio: Concerning the Relationship of Pneumatology and Spirituality in Augustine*, "Communio" 25 (1998), pp. 324–337.
- Ratzinger J., *Introduction to Christianity*, transl. J.R. Foster, San Francisco, CA 2004.
- Ratzinger J., *Jesus von Nazareth. Beiträge zur Christologie*, vol. 2, Series: Gesammelte Schriften 6/2, ed. G.L. Müller, Freiburg 2013.
- Ratzinger J., *Die Legitimität des christologischen Dogmas*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth, Beiträge zur Christologie*, vol. 2, Series: Gesammelte Schriften 6/2, ed. G.L. Müller, Freiburg 2013, pp. 832–849.
- Ratzinger J., *Offenbarungsverständnis und Geschichtstheologie Bonaventuras. Habilitationsschrift und Bonaventuras-Studien*, Series: Gesammelte Schriften 2, ed. G.L. Müller, Freiburg 2009.
- Ratzinger J., *On the Understanding of "Person" in Theology*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, San Francisco, CA 2011, pp. 181–196.
- Ratzinger J., *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, transl. M.F. McCarthy, San Francisco, CA 1987.
- Ratzinger J., *The Renewal of Moral Theology: Perspectives of the Vatican II and Veritatis Splendor*, [in:] *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio*, vol. 1: *The Unity of the Church*, Grand Rapids, MI 2010, pp. 183–194.
- Ratzinger J., *The Unity of the Nations. A Vision of the Church Fathers*, transl. B. Ramsey, Washington, DC 2015.
- Ratzinger J., "Wer mich gesehen hat, hat den Vater gesehen" (Joh 14,9). *Das Antlitz Christi in der Heiligen Schrift*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth. Beiträge zur Christologie*, vol. 2, Series: Gesammelte Schriften 6/2, ed. G.L. Müller, Freiburg 2013, pp. 761–776.
- Rowland T., *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford 2008.
- Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Series: Loeb Classical Library 273, transl. R.G. Bury, Cambridge, MA 1933.
- Troconis Iribarren I.C., *Dimensión histórica y dimensión ontológica del cumplimiento del hombre. La salvación cristiana según Joseph Ratzinger*, Roma 2019.
- Troconis Iribarren I.C., *Joseph Ratzinger's Imago Dei Anthropology: The Reconciliation of Ontology and Salvation History*, [in:] *Between Being and Time. From Ontology to Eschatology*, eds. A. Kaethler, S. Mitralaxis, Lanham, MD 2019, pp. 189–203.

Woźniak R.J., *Phenomenological Fragments of Trinitarian Discourse: Being, Having, Relating, "Religions"* 14/7 (2023), article no. 929.

GIULIO MASPERO (REV. PROF.) – is full professor at the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (Rome). He is a full member of the Pontifical Academy of Theology (PATH). He has published mainly on Gregory of Nyssa, Trinitarian theology and the relationship between philosophy and theology. In particular, he has directed, together with L.F. Mateo-Seco, *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa* (Leuven 2009) and, together with R. Wozniak, *Rethinking Trinitarian Theology* (London 2012). His most recent monograph is *Rethinking the Filioque with the Greek Fathers* (Grand Rapids, MI 2023).

Dariusz Kowalczyk

Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Italia

kowalczyk@unigre.it

ORCID: 0000-0002-6469-2443

Il mistero della Trinità secondo Joseph Ratzinger/Benedetto XVI

The Mystery of the Trinity according to Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI

Tajemnica Trójcy według Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI

ABSTRACT: Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's reflection on the Holy Trinity does not contain any ideas or expressions that could possibly take on a theological "career," such as Karl Rahner's fundamental axiom. Nevertheless, Ratzinger's Trinitarian theology, with the points of reference he made and accents he suggested, forms an original synthesis. In the first section the author of this article accentuates that Ratzinger in his reflection on God often refers to the divine name revealed in the history of salvation. It is precisely the "name," a synonym of a personal relation, that distinguishes faith in God from a philosophy of God. Ultimately, God revealed His name in three names: He Who Is—Father, Son, and the Spirit. The second section explains that Ratzinger considers the formula "*una essentia tres personae*" a paradox that expresses the unity of the absolute and the relative, the unity and the diversity. Thus, the truth of the Trinity reveals God, but also the whole of creation, which is a unity in diversity. The Trinitarian heresies grew precisely from the desire to eliminate a paradox that seemed to be a contradiction. However, the paradox present in theology is also present in the sciences, which is further clarified in section three. By way of an example one may point out the wave-like and corpuscular structure of reality that physics examines. In the last section the author insists that the whole of revelation is summed up in the words: "God is love," which means that "God is not a solitude but a perfect community," a Trinitarian community. Ratzinger points out that the New Testament does not speak of God as God "in himself," but of God in a kenotic relation to someone: "God and Father of Jesus." Even the Holy Spirit, who does not show us his face but hides himself under images of a dove, fire, wind is always the Spirit of the Father and of the Son. Thus, God is eternally the Trinitarian "being-with" and "being-for," which is an invitation and a challenge for every Christian and for the Church.

KEYWORDS: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, trinitarian theology, Trinity, name of God, *una essentia tres personae*, trinitarian community, unity vs diversity, absoluteness vs relativity, trinitarian heresies

ABSTRAKT: Refleksja Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI nad tajemnicą Trójcy Świętej nie zawiera idei czy sformułowań, które zrobiłyby teologiczną „karierę”, jak np. aksjomat fundamentalny Karla Rahnera. Tym niemniej jego teologia trynitarna, zaproponowane punkty odniesienia i rozłożenie akcentów układają się w oryginalną syntezę. W pierwszym paragrafie zwrócono uwagę na to, że w rozważaniach o Bogu Ratzinger często się odwołuje do objawionego w historii zbawienia imienia Bożego. To właśnie „imię”, synonim osobowej relacji, odróżnia wiarę w Boga od filozofii Boga, której teolog konsekwentnie broni. Ostatecznie Bóg objawił swe imię w trzech imionach: Ten, Który Jest – Ojciec, Syn i Duch. W drugim paragrafie wykazano, że formułę „*una essentia tres personae*” Ratzinger nazywa paradoksem, który wyraża jedność tego, co absolutne, i tego, co relatywne, paradoksem jedności i różnorodności. W ten sposób prawda o Trójcy Świętej objawia Boga, ale także całą rzeczywistość stworzoną. Ostatecznie Trójcy Świętej nie da się sprowadzić do żadnej absolutnej monady, gdyż jest jednością w różnorodności. Herezje trynitarne wyrastały właśnie z chęci wyeliminowania paradoksu, który wydawał się sprzecznością. Tymczasem obecny w teologii paradoks nie jest obcy także naukom ścisłym, co stanowi treść paragrafu trzeciego. Przykładem może być falowa i jednocześnie korpuskularna struktura rzeczywistości badanej przez fizykę. W ostatnim paragrafie autor wychodzi od tego, że całe objawienie streszcza się w słowach: „Bóg jest miłością” (1 J 4,8.16), co oznacza, że „Bóg nie jest samotnością, ale doskonałą wspólnotą”, wspólnotą trynitarną. Ratzinger wskazuje, że w Nowym Testamencie nie mówi się o Bogu jako takim „w sobie samym”, ale o Bogu w kenotycznej relacji do kogoś: „Bóg i Ojciec Jezusa”. Również Duch Święty, który nie ukazuje nam swego oblicza i skrywa się pod obrazami, jak gołębicą, ogień, wiatr, jest zawsze Duchem Ojca i Syna. A zatem Bóg jest odwiecznie trynitarnym „byciem-z” i „byciem-dla”, co stanowi zaproszenie i wyzwanie dla każdego chrześcijanina i Kościoła.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedykt XVI, teologia trynitarna, Trójca Święta, imię Boże, *una essentia tres personae*, wspólnota trynitarna, jedność a różnorodność, absolutność a relatywność, herezje trynitarne

Joseph Ratzinger, nella sua vasta ricerca teologica, non ha mai cercato di adeguarsi alle mode del tempo proponendo argomenti all'insegna di un'originalità corrispondente alle aspettative del mondo, ma ha perseguito tenacemente la comprensione della verità rivelata, con un approfondimento ponderato e ordinato, ben radicato nella Bibbia, nella Tradizione e nel Magistero della Chiesa. Nel campo della trinitaria, non abbiamo, di Ratzinger, postulati o formulazioni di concezioni innovative, tali da poter proseguire e fare «carriera», con un impatto significativo nella disciplina in oggetto, come è successo, p.es., per il *Grundaxiom* di Karl Rahner. Vale, comunque, la pena rivedere e ripercorrere il suo insegnamento sul Dio uno e trino, il quale, come appena

ricordato, non ha brillato per novità, ma non è stato neanche una semplice ripetizione di verità venerate da secoli e a tutti già note. Ratzinger, quasi sempre, riesce ad attingere i suoi contenuti dal tesoro della dottrina cristiana e lo fa in maniera ispirante, con un proprio modo e intenzionalità, che possiamo definire «ratzingeriano», mai privo di tratti apologetici e pastorali. In particolare, è da apprezzare la chiarezza con la quale argomenta ed espone il suo pensiero, tratto, questo, quanto mai necessario, oggi, in un tempo caratterizzato, anche nel campo della teologia, da una certa confusione. Il pensiero trinitario del nostro autore è stato sempre coerente, forse senza notevoli svolte, ma segnato da una continuità e linearità delle impostazioni, che gli conferisce una sua profondità, detta in termini convincenti e attualissimi, con una estrema onestà, tutta sua. Secondo Ratzinger, infatti, la professione cristiana di fede nell'unico Dio può resistere, nel trascorrere del tempo, solo se l'affermazione dei cristiani «Io credo in Dio» costituisca sempre «un processo di separazione, di accoglimento, di purificazione e di trasformazione»¹. Il nostro approccio, perciò, sarà sincronico, non porrà delle distinzioni tra i diversi periodi della vita di Ratzinger. La domanda, alla quale vogliamo rispondere, è semplice: Come Joseph Ratzinger/Benedetto XVI si è confrontato con il mistero della Santissima Trinità?

La filosofia e il nome di Dio

Nei diversi scritti di Ratzinger sulla *quaestio* di Dio che si rivela nella storia biblica, egli evidenzia, in modo particolare, il fatto che Dio ha un nome. Il piccolo libro *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo. Meditazioni sul Dio uno e trino*, inizia proprio con un capitolo intitolato «Dio ha dei nomi». Troviamo lo stesso tema nella famosa *Introduzione al Cristianesimo* e nel testo *Il Dio della fede e il Dio dei filosofi*. In quest'ultima riflessione, il teologo paragona i due diversi approcci che, nella storia del pensiero, sono stati elaborati intorno al problema del rapporto tra filosofia e fede. Il primo è di Tommaso d'Aquino, che ha rilevato, in diversi modi, come il Dio dei filosofi e il Dio della fede coincidano armoniosamente, anche se restano distinti. Infatti, la conoscenza di Dio che ci è data con la rivelazione supera quella dei filosofi. L'armonia tra la fede e la teologia filosofica si basa sul fatto che «la fede presuppone la cognizione naturale, come la grazia presuppone la natura»², pertanto, seguendo san Tommaso, si potrebbe dire che «il Dio di

¹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, trad. G. Francesconi, Brescia 2005, p. 141.

² Tommaso d'Aquino, *Somma teologica* I, q. 2, a. 2, ad 1, <http://www.carimo.it/somma-teologica/somma.htm> [accesso: 26.06.2023].

Aristotele e il Dio di Gesù Cristo è unico e lo stesso; Aristotele ha riconosciuto il vero Dio che noi nella fede possiamo comprendere in modo più profondo»³.

Un'altra posizione è quella sostenuta dal teologo riformato Emil Brunner, che si fonda sul Dio della storia biblica che ha un nome. La riflessione filosofica preferisce utilizzare dei concetti universali e astratti, come, p.es., l'«Essere» o l'«Assoluto», ritenendo uno scandalo, l'atto del nominarsi divino. La fede, invece, si rapporta con un Dio che non teme di rivelare il suo nome particolare e unico. Secondo Brunner, i concetti filosofici che riguardano Dio, sono decisamente opposti al nome o ai nomi di Dio che abbiamo nella Bibbia, ma per rivelazione s'intende proprio la manifestazione del nome di Dio. Nel vangelo di Giovanni, Gesù, pregando, si rivolge al Padre e dice: «Ho fatto conoscere il tuo nome» (17,6), «Io ho fatto conoscere loro il tuo nome e lo farò conoscere» (17,26). Il nome – sottolinea Ratzinger – «non è parola che esprime conoscenza dell'essere, ma rende un essere "chiamabile"»⁴ e tale *chiamabilità* significa la possibilità di una relazione io-tu, che si determina tra Dio e l'uomo. In altre parole, Dio non soltanto chiama l'uomo per nome, ma gli rivela il suo nome, affinché l'uomo possa chiamarlo adeguatamente. Il Dio dei filosofi è un Assoluto cercato dall'uomo, invece il Dio della fede è Colui che è sempre il primo ad avere l'iniziativa e a creare un rapporto con l'uomo. Il Dio della Bibbia crea comunione, mentre l'Assoluto della filosofia rimane sempre un oggetto lontano, che vogliamo conoscere.

Ratzinger dedica diverse pagine alla rivelazione del nome di Dio, narrata nel libro di Esodo. Mosè, sperimentando la presenza di Dio nel roveto ardente, chiede: «Ecco io arrivo dagli Israeliti e dico loro: Il Dio dei vostri padri mi ha mandato a voi. Ma mi diranno: Come si chiama? E io che cosa risponderò a loro?» (3,13). In questo punto cruciale per Israele e il suo mediatore, Dio rivela il suo nome: «Io sono colui che sono (YHWH)» (3,14). Il nostro teologo afferma: «Tutta la storia di fede che seguirà, fino alla professione di fede in Dio da parte di Gesù [che è la professione trinitaria], è un'interpretazione continua e rinnovata di queste parole»⁵. Ratzinger ricorda il contesto storico particolare e le motivazioni che provocarono quest'auto-manifestazione divina veterotestamentaria, così come indicate da Dio stesso: «Ho osservato la miseria del mio popolo in Egitto [...]. Sono sceso per liberarlo dalla mano dell'Egitto» (3,7–8). Dio decide di farsi conoscere, di *scendere* per liberare l'uomo dalla schiavitù.

³ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio della fede e il Dio dei filosofi*, trad. E. Coccia, Venezia 2013, pp. 24–25.

⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio della fede...*, op. cit., p. 27.

⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo. Meditazioni sul Dio uno e trino*, trad. D. Pezzetta, Brescia 2005, p. 16.

Abbiamo lo stesso dinamismo divino nella rivelazione trinitaria che ci è stata data in Gesù di Nazareth. Cristo rivela il nome del Padre ed entrambi, insieme, ci mandano lo Spirito Santo, per liberarci dalla schiavitù del peccato e aprirci la vita eterna. Nel cristianesimo, però, una lunga tradizione patristico-scolastica ha voluto vedere nell'espressione «Sono colui che sono» la rivelazione dell'essenza metafisica di Dio, la quale s'identifica con l'esistere. Brunner, già menzionato, si oppone fortemente a tale posizione, che ritiene sia un capovolgimento della rivelazione biblica, poiché in essa «si trasforma il nome, l'indefinibile, in una definizione»⁶.

Ratzinger riconosce che la questione del nome di Dio nasconde un vero problema, perciò ritiene che la critica di Brunner debba essere presa sul serio. Nello stesso tempo, il teologo propone una soluzione per mantenere, da un lato, il legame tra ontologia ed esperienza biblica e, dall'altro, per sottolineare la specificità originale di Dio che rivela il suo nome. Nell'incontro armonioso tra il Dio dei filosofi e il Dio della fede non si tratta di cambiare il nome divino rivelato in un concetto astratto, ma di dimostrare e difendere il monoteismo. Ratzinger afferma che il legame stabilito dai Padri tra la filosofia e la fede «fu legittimo nella dimensione e nella misura in cui la fede biblica in Dio volle e dovette essere monoteismo»⁷. Il cristianesimo primitivo, continua l'autore, ha coraggiosamente compiuto una prima scelta di purificazione nel momento in cui ha optato *per* il Dio dei filosofi, *contro* gli dèi delle religioni: i cristiani scelsero per dire il loro Dio unicamente l'Essere stesso, posto dai filosofi come il fondamento di tutto l'essere. Quest'opzione, sicuramente determinante, richiese, in seguito, un'ulteriore purificazione che sottrasse il Dio dei filosofi dalla sfera puramente accademica, subendo una profonda trasformazione. Come vedremo più avanti, il modo in cui Ratzinger analizza il rapporto tra il Dio della fede e il Dio della filosofia, lo conduce a compiere un primo passaggio nel dire che il Dio inteso come puro essere o puro pensare, eternamente chiuso in se stesso, la cui assoluta eternità e immutabilità esclude ogni rapporto con ciò che è mutevole, è, a un certo punto, letto dalla fede come il Dio *agápē* degli uomini⁸. La fede, pertanto, ha vissuto consapevolmente un collegamento con il Dio dei filosofi, poi sfociato in un suo deciso superamento in nome del Dio di Gesù Cristo. Inoltre, l'elemento filosofico fu necessario non solo per discutere e dialogare, ma anche per evangelizzare il mondo pagano, per questo possiamo

⁶ E. Brunner, *Die christliche Lehre von Gott*, collana: Dogmatik 1, Zürich 1953, p. 125. Cit. da: J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio della fede...*, op. cit., p. 30.

⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio della fede...*, op. cit., p. 47.

⁸ Cfr. J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., pp. 128–129, 134.

parlare di un ruolo missionario della filosofia all'interno del messaggio biblico cristiano. Tutto ciò non implica che le osservazioni di Brunner siano da rigettare. La differenza fondamentale tra l'Assoluto della filosofia e il Dio della fede biblica non viene, appunto, eliminata. «La filosofia – dice Ratzinger – rimane piuttosto, in quanto tale, altra cosa, cosa specifica, con la quale la fede si mette in relazione per rivolgerle la parola come ad altra cosa, e per rendersi comprensibile ad essa»⁹. Anzi, la filosofia può e deve essere sottoposta, come detto, a una purificazione, dal punto di vista del Dio della fede che ci rivela il suo nome, cioè il suo volto personale, mostrandosi in relazione.

Ratzinger fa riferimento ad Agostino, Riccardo di San Vittore e ai salmi, sottolineando che l'incontro con la filosofia non indebolisce il compito della teologia di «cercare il volto del Signore» (cfr. Sal 27,8). Le vie rappresentate dal pensiero di Tommaso d'Aquino e di Emil Brunner non vanno, necessariamente, in direzioni opposte, anzi, si possono incontrare nel tentativo di cercare il nome e il volto di Dio. Gesù – come abbiamo menzionato – mentre ci rivela il nome di Dio, fa ancora di più:

lui stesso è il volto di Dio, è il nome di Dio, la possibilità di invocare Dio come un Tu, come persona, come cuore. Il nome proprio di Gesù svela il mistero del nome del rovelto ardente. Ora appare chiaro che Dio non aveva detto in modo definitivo il proprio nome e che il suo discorso era stato temporaneamente interrotto. Il Nome di Gesù, infatti, contiene la voce 'YHWH' nella sua forma ebraica e vi aggiunge dell'altro: "Dio salva". Io sono colui che sono, ora, a partire da Gesù, significa: Io sono colui che vi salva. Il suo essere è redenzione¹⁰.

Il Figlio incarnato, come «reale e vivo nome di Dio»¹¹, compie pienamente il senso del nome di Dio, rivelato nell'Antico Testamento, cioè quello di creare la relazione divino-umana. Infatti, in Gesù, vero Dio e vero uomo, Dio ci chiama e si rende nominabile. È proprio l'essere Gesù il volto e il nome di Dio a costituire il fondamento della dottrina trinitaria. «Chi ha visto me ha visto il Padre. Credetemi: io sono nel Padre e il Padre è in me» (Gv 14,9.11) – così dice Gesù, differenziandosi, in questa e in tante altre espressioni, dal Padre e, nello stesso tempo, identificandosi con Lui. Il Padre e il Figlio, poi, inviano il Terzo: «lo Spirito Santo che il Padre manderà nel mio nome, egli v'insegnerà ogni cosa e vi ricorderà tutto ciò che io vi ho detto» (Gv 14,26). L'intreccio dei

⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio della fede...*, op. cit., p. 54.

¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo...*, op. cit., p. 20.

¹¹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 125.

tre nomi divini, rivelati in Gesù Cristo, costituisce il nome del Dio trinitario, nel quale ogni cristiano è stato battezzato: «La chiesa rende l'uomo cristiano pronunciando il nome del Dio trinitario»¹².

Il nostro autore rileva che la dottrina trinitaria nel Nuovo Testamento non appare e non si sviluppa in modo teorico, ma nella forma dei fatti che riguardano la nostra salvezza¹³. Da un lato, resta la verità fondamentale che Dio è unico: «sappiamo che non esiste alcun idolo al mondo e che non c'è che un Dio solo» (1 Cor 8,4). Dall'altro, esiste il Figlio di Dio, Gesù Cristo, di cui si dice chiaramente: «non è altro nome dato agli uomini sotto il cielo nel quale è stabilito che possiamo essere salvati» (At 4,12). L'uomo, però, non ha accesso alla persona e all'opera di Cristo se non nello Spirito Santo. Gli apostoli, infatti, ebbero paura e non sapevano cosa fare, fino alla Pentecoste, quando la discesa dello Spirito li ha resi capaci di predicare il Vangelo, cioè la salvezza nel nome del Padre, del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo. Ecco, il mistero della Trinità si dischiude nell'operare di Dio nei nostri confronti, ma esso, come tale, non si oppone alla riflessione metafisica. Anzi, se abbiamo detto – seguendo Ratzinger – che la filosofia all'interno della teologia serve per dimostrare il monoteismo, tale compito si presenta particolarmente importante nel campo della fede nel Dio uno e trino. Sarebbe impossibile, infatti, respingere le accuse del triteismo senza una filosofia con dei concetti che vanno oltre il linguaggio biblico.

Nell'enciclica *Fides et ratio* di Giovanni Paolo II, pubblicata quando Joseph Ratzinger era il prefetto della Congregazione della Dottrina della Fede, leggiamo che senza il riferimento alla filosofia «non si potrebbero illustrare contenuti teologici quali, ad esempio, il linguaggio su Dio, *le relazioni personali all'interno della Trinità* [corsivo aggiunto], l'azione creatrice di Dio nel mondo, il rapporto tra Dio e l'uomo, l'identità di Cristo che è vero Dio e vero uomo»¹⁴. Facciamo notare che la stessa espressione giovannea «Dio è amore» (1 Gv 4,8.16) ha una portata filosofica poiché ci dice non solo che Dio ci ama e come tale ci svela il suo nome, ma anche che Dio, in se stesso, è amore da sempre e da sempre i Tre si chiamano per nome. «Se Dio non è in sé amore, non è nulla; – scrive Ratzinger – ma se in sé egli è amore, allora deve essere Io, Tu e poi deve essere una-cosa-sola: deve essere uno e trino»¹⁵. Per sviluppare questo tema, si richiede l'ausilio di una metafisica capace di parlare non soltanto dell'essere, ma anche

¹² J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo...*, op. cit., p. 22.

¹³ Cfr. J. Ratzinger, *Dogma e predicazione*, trad. G. Poletti, Brescia 2018, p. 42.

¹⁴ Giovanni Paolo II, Enciclica *Fides et ratio*, 1998, n. 66, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html [accesso: 26.06.2023].

¹⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo...*, op. cit., p. 36.

dell'amore, che sappia, anzi, mettere insieme l'idea del Sommo Essere con la rivelazione biblica del Sommo Amore. Infatti, «l'Essere che tutto sostiene e abbraccia è al contempo coscienza, libertà ed amore»¹⁶.

Assoluto e relativo – unità e molteplicità

La fede cristiana, da un lato, supera «lo stadio – come dice Ratzinger – del puro e semplice monoteismo»¹⁷ e, dall'altro, spinge la filosofia ad andare oltre il presupposto della perfetta unità come esclusione della molteplicità, che sarebbe secondaria di fronte all'uno e l'unico. Superare l'idea di un «semplice monoteismo» vuol dire non sottoporre la vita eterna di Dio al criterio del numero uno, cioè richiede di uscire dall'identificazione dell'unicità di Dio con un numero o una monade assoluta e indifferenziata. Il Dio di Gesù Cristo non è «eterna matematica dell'universo, ma *agápē*, potenza di amore creativo»¹⁸. La questione trinitaria, dunque, non si risolve come un indovinello matematico, in cui 1 è uguale a 3, ma richiede una dottrina che mostri e spieghi che Dio non è un Assoluto solitario ma amore, dove c'è unità e alterità, con tutta la grammatica dell'amore: io, tu, noi, lui, voi. Non solo l'unicità e l'unità perfetta sono divine e originarie, ma anche la molteplicità. Esse vanno insieme, anzi, si rendono possibili e si spiegano a vicenda. La dottrina trinitaria ci dice che

la suprema unità non ha la rigida immobilità del blocco unico. Il modello di unità a cui bisogna tendere, non è, quindi, l'indivisibilità dell'atomo, della più piccola particella non più scindibile; la suprema forma di unità è invece l'unità creata dall'amore. L'unità dei molti, che nasce dall'amore, è un'unità più radicale, più vera di quella dell'atomo¹⁹.

Ratzinger sottolinea che la formula trinitaria *una essentia tres personae* riguarda proprio «il problema del significato originario di unità e molteplicità»²⁰. È questa la prima delle tre tesi della dottrina trinitaria che il teologo propone nell'*Introduzione al Cristianesimo*.

Alcuni filosofi, cercando di analizzare, in profondità, la realtà, si sono espressi usando, soprattutto, la terza persona, al singolare: «A esiste», «A è». In questo

¹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 149.

¹⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 151.

¹⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 134.

¹⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 169.

²⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 138.

modo, sono giunti a concepire la sostanza primordiale ed eterna, dalla quale tutto si origina e ha il suo inizio. Altri, invece, hanno proposto di parlare in prima persona singolare, cioè si sono riferiti piuttosto all'io che pensa, conosce, vuole e agisce, arrivando a formulare l'idea dell'Io, del Soggetto assoluto, al quale sono sottoposte tutte le cose. A tale imperialismo dell'io, si sono opposte le filosofie che mettono in rilievo che non esiste un io senza un tu, l'«io sono» va insieme con il «tu sei» e l'identità dell'io non è concepibile senza l'alterità dell'altro²¹. Ratzinger, dinanzi a tali prospettive, non rifiuta le prime due, ma, nello stesso tempo, non accetta le visioni che negano la vera relazionalità all'interno della Trinità: «Il concetto di persona, a partire dalla sua origine, esprime l'idea del dialogo e di Dio quale essere dialogico. Esso pensa a Dio come l'essere, che [...] esiste come io e tu e noi nella Parola. [...] Persona in Dio è la pura relattività dell'essere-rivolti-l'uno-all'altro»²². Il nostro teologo ricorda che il dialogo intradivino è già, in qualche modo, suggerito nell'Antico Testamento, quando, p.es., leggiamo: «E Dio disse: “Facciamo l'uomo a nostra immagine, a nostra somiglianza”» (Gen 1,26), oppure: «Oracolo del Signore al mio Signore: “Siedi alla mia destra ...”» (Sal 110,1). Scorgiamo, qui, la presenza di un io, un tu e un noi, in Dio. Diversamente dall'esegesi rabbinica, che vede in queste immagini bibliche un dialogo di Dio con gli angeli, Ratzinger afferma: «Ecco, la scoperta del dialogo all'interno di Dio stesso condusse ad ammettere in Dio, l'esistenza di un “io” e di un “tu”, un elemento di relazione, di distinzione, un volgersi uno all'altro»²³. Tale relazionalità intradivina è rivelata esplicitamente nella persona e nelle parole di Gesù, che dialoga con il Padre e parla dello Spirito.

Il concetto di persona suppone le relazioni. Se il Dio assoluto e unico non avesse relazioni da sempre, non sarebbe Persona da sempre e, in tale mancanza di relazionalità – *personalità*, non potrebbe rivelarci il suo nome e invitarci alla comunione d'amore con se stesso. D'altro canto, se il Dio eterno diventasse Persona e cominciasse ad avere delle relazioni attraverso la creazione, non sarebbe immutabile, *ergo*, non sarebbe Dio. «Non esiste persona come entità singola a sé stante»²⁴ – sottolinea Ratzinger, che fa osservare come il concetto stesso di

²¹ Cfr. B. Baran, *Z historii «nowego myślenia»*, [in:] *Rozum i słowo. Eseje dialogiczne*, collana: *Teksty Filozoficzne*, edd. B. Baran et al., Kraków 1987, p. 3. Jürgen Moltmann, ispirandosi ai tre approcci «grammaticali», qui suggeriti (egli/quello, io, tu/noi), suggerisce tre risposte fondamentali alla domanda «Chi è Dio?»: Dio è la sostanza suprema, Dio è il soggetto assoluto, Dio è la comunità perfetta (cfr. J. Moltmann, *Trinità e Regno di Dio*, trad. D. Pezzetta, Brescia 1983, pp. 198ss.).

²² J. Ratzinger, *Dogma e Predicazione*, op. cit., pp. 178–179.

²³ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 171.

²⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 169.

«persona» presupponga le relazioni. La nozione greca *prósōpon* è composta dalla particella *prós* (presso, verso) e la parola «sguardo». A tal riguardo, ricordiamo che nel prologo del vangelo di Giovanni leggiamo: «Il Verbo era presso Dio» (*prós tòn theón*) (Gv 1,1). La preposizione *prós* esprime una vicinanza dinamica, che dice *tensione* e *orientamento*, perciò possiamo tradurre quello stare del Verbo certamente come «presso», ma anche come «verso». In altre parole, non si tratta semplicemente di un rapporto di vicinanza ma *prós* include idea di una relazione²⁵. Ugo Vanni afferma che secondo il Prologo di Giovanni «il Verbo è nel seno del Padre, ossia nel seno di Dio; è orientato verso il Padre, in questa tensione di amore nella quale va riconosciuto lo Spirito Santo»²⁶. Quindi, nella parola *prós* possiamo percepire non solo una semplice relazione, ma lo Spirito Santo. Il legame tra il Padre e il Figlio è formato non dalle cose apersonali, ma dalla terza Persona. In Dio, c'è «solo» Dio, allora qualsiasi *tra* due Persone divine è una terza Persona. Lo stesso termine latino *persona* nasconde in sé – dice Ratzinger – la relazionalità, poiché può essere decifrato come un «suonare attraverso», «suonare per mezzo». Alcuni pensatori – come, p.es., Albert Einstein – rigettano, invece, la possibilità di parlare di personalità e relazionalità di Dio, considerando tale tentativo un antropomorfismo. A partire dalla ragionevolezza dell'universo – afferma Einstein – «sono disposto a parlare della Ragione, ma non del Dio personale»²⁷. Il nostro teologo risponde alla critica, affermando che

confessare che Dio è persona nella modalità delle «tre persone» fa saltare un concetto ingenuo, antropomorfo, di persona. In tal modo cifrato si afferma che l'essere persona di Dio trascende infinitamente l'essere-persona dell'uomo,

²⁵ Cfr. V. Lossky, *Conoscere Dio*, trad., a cura di A.M. Quartiroli, Magnano 1996, p. 22; B. Reicke, *prós*, [in:] *Il Grande Lessico del Nuovo Testamento*, vol. 11, edd. G. Kittel, G. Friedrich, trad. a cura di F. Montagnini, G. Scarpat, O. Soffritti, Brescia 1977, pp. 277–292. Ugo Vanni scrive: «Quando si dice poi che il Verbo era “presso Dio”, non si parla semplicemente di un rapporto di vicinanza: in greco, *prós tòn theón* indica una tensione, quindi rappresenta un tentativo di parlare dell'infinito. In questo caso anche Giovanni, come del resto chiunque si cimentasse in un tale compito, si mostra esitante, pur se in maniera suggestiva. Così, afferma che il Verbo e il Padre stanno in un rapporto di reciprocità, uno di fronte all'altro, senza che tuttavia si verifichi tra loro una giustapposizione, bensì si attua una tensione in cui il Verbo è orientato verso Dio» (U. Vanni, *Il tesoro di Giovanni. Un percorso biblico-spirituale nel Quarto Vangelo*, Assisi 2010, p. 41).

²⁶ U. Vanni, *Il tesoro di Giovanni...*, op. cit., p. 41.

²⁷ Cfr. A. Einstein, *Come io vedo il mondo. La teoria della relatività*, trad. R. Valori, A. Pratelli, Roma 1988, pp. 22ss.

cosicché il concetto di persona, per quanto faccia luce, si rivela però a sua volta una semplice e inadeguatissima metafora²⁸.

Ratzinger esprime questo pensiero, sviluppando la sua II tesi della dottrina trinitaria, cioè che «il paradosso *una essentia tres personae* è in funzione del concetto di persona e va inteso come un'implicanza interna di tale concetto»²⁹. Dio, infatti, non può essere meno di persona, cioè privo di volontà e di intelligenza consapevole di se stessa, ma, nello stesso tempo, è infinitamente altro dalla persona umana. Essendo uno e unico, dev'essere una sostanza o un soggetto tri-ipostatico. L'essere persona implica non solo un io, ma anche un tu, un noi, ecc.

Vale la pena sottolineare l'espressione appena citata: «Dio è persona nella modalità delle "tre persone"». Tale affermazione è molto vicina a Sergej Bulgakov, che parla dell'«Io in tre Io, di una Persona in tre Persone»³⁰. Dio sarebbe, dunque, persona nella sua unicità e unità, e persone nella sua molteplicità. L'impostazione sembra contraddire la formula classica: *una essentia tres personae*. In verità, non c'è nessuna contraddizione, giacché in Dio tutto è personale. Non esiste una natura divina apersonale, cosale, fuori le persone, perciò quando ci rivolgiamo a Dio nella sua unità, cioè a tutta la Trinità, non ci stiamo riferendo a una natura apersonale e, nemmeno, diciamo «Voi», ma preghiamo «Tu, Dio», e questo «Tu» raccoglie tutti e Tre: il Padre, il Figlio e lo Spirito Santo. La formula *una essentia tres personae* è uno schema aperto e consente di parlare anche di una persona in tre persone. Ratzinger non sviluppa tale idea, ma nella sua terza tesi trinitaria – «il paradosso *una essentia tres personae* [...] evidenzia l'assolutezza del relazionale» – afferma:

la formula «una sola essenza – tre persone», una tale suddivisione dei concetti significa innanzitutto solo una «regolazione del linguaggio». [...] Di fronte a questo dato non bisogna spingersi troppo lontano, nel costruire, per esempio, queste parole come le uniche possibili, nel dedurre intellettualmente che si possa dire unicamente così e in nessun altro modo: così si finirebbe per disconoscere il carattere negativo del linguaggio della dottrina su Dio³¹.

Secondo quanto riportato nell'ultima frase, è chiaro che in tali affermazioni non abbiamo nessun relativismo, piuttosto si evince un rispetto del mistero di

²⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 170.

²⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 169.

³⁰ Cfr. D. Kowalczyk, *Una Persona in tre Persone. La teologia trinitaria in Sergej Bulgakov*, "Studia Bobolanum" 32/1 (2021), pp. 173–191.

³¹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., pp. 170–171.

Dio, nella consapevolezza che non può essere rinchiuso in qualche formula. Difatti, le formule che riguardano Dio sono vere, ci permettono di parlare di Dio senza commettere errori e a confessare, insieme, la fede stessa, ma esse hanno dei limiti, perciò bisogna considerare l'ipotesi di avere altre formule, basate su diverse visioni, che esprimono meglio gli aspetti molteplici del mistero trinitario.

Ratzinger, seguendo Agostino, sottolinea che ogni persona divina, considerata in se stessa, è semplicemente Dio, mentre, solo perché in relazione alle altre persone, è una specifica persona ovvero il Padre, il Figlio o lo Spirito Santo. L'unico Dio, l'unica sostanza, da sempre, non esiste se non nel dialogo reciproco, nelle relazioni, nell'amore dei Tre. Le persone divine non sono identificabili con tre sostanze personali, così inteso nel senso moderno, ma pura correlazione, perciò non sono tre Dei, ma un solo Dio. Il nostro autore, per giustificare tale mistero, riprende delle analogie dal mondo della fisica e parla del «pacchetto onde» e del «corpuscolo». In fisica, infatti, si definisce la duplice natura della realtà con il dualismo onda-corpuscolo. La realtà, sottoposta a esperimenti scientifici, si comporta, una volta in modo corpuscolare (materia), un'altra in modo ondulatorio (radiazione elettromagnetica). Analogicamente, le persone divine sarebbero le «onde», ma l'unica sostanza divina potrebbe essere paragonata al corpuscolo. Ratzinger scrive che, p.es., la persona del Padre non esiste prima di generare il Figlio, ma da sempre esiste come l'atto del generare, «l'atto di donazione; è 'onda', non 'corpuscolo'...»³². E aggiunge che si ha, qui, una rivoluzione dell'immagine del mondo: la supremazia della sostanza è sorpassata, «la relazione viene scoperta come modalità originaria e di pari dignità del reale»³³.

Con tutti questi ragionamenti, la dottrina trinitaria non risolve il mistero, ma – dice il nostro teologo – fa sì che possiamo capire in un modo nuovo la realtà, l'uomo e, persino, l'essere cristiani. È vero che l'unità del Dio uno e trino supera infinitamente qualsiasi altra unità, ma, nello stesso tempo, essa rimane un esempio leggibile e il modello delle comunità umane, che dovrebbero svilupparsi e crescere non verso la pseudo-realtà di una monade collettivista o totalitarista, ma verso un'unità nella diversità. In tale prospettiva, diventa chiaro – sottolinea Ratzinger – che «la dottrina trinitaria, retamente intesa, possa diventare punto di partenza per la teologia e il pensiero cristiano in genere, punto da cui si diramano tutte le altre linee»³⁴. È così. La questione principale della visione cristiana del mondo è quella dell'unità e della molteplicità, come realtà non in opposizione, ma in perfetta armonia. La questione trinitaria, già chiara nel

³² J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 173.

³³ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 174.

³⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 177.

Prologo di Giovanni, si traduce per l'esistenza cristiana come «interamente cammino e apertura», un provenire dall'Uno e un dirigersi verso l'Altro, in cui la prossimità è relazione orientata.

Le eresie trinitarie e le analogie con *science*

I paradossi della dottrina trinitaria, che riguardano gli ambiti dell'uno e del trino, l'unità, l'unicità e la molteplicità, hanno condotto i diversi pensatori a cedere alla tentazione di ridurre la realtà ad alcuni aspetti, rigettando gli altri. Le soluzioni proposte, però, sono solo apparenti, seppur, in un primo momento, possano sembrare alcune utili o in grado di offrire una visione di chiarezza per la nostra mente che ricerca e si interroga. In realtà, la teologia, come anche la vita, intesa in un senso generale, consiste nel vivere le tensioni, cioè nel mantenere insieme i diversi lati della realtà, anche se questo tentativo teologico ed esistenziale, il più delle volte, è un artificio scomodo. Le eresie sono, spesso, una fuga dalle tensioni, verso il raggiungimento di un falso ordine. Questo particolare *impasse* salta agli occhi, soprattutto, nel campo della fede trinitaria, ma non è soltanto la teologia che si ritrova a doversi confrontare con i paradossi. Infatti, le stesse scienze naturali, *science*, con i loro presunti metodi raffinati, si scontrano – come ci mostra Joseph Ratzinger – con la paradossalità della realtà. Tocchiamo il discorso, seguendo il nostro autore, rivedendo prima le eresie trinitarie, che rifiutano il paradosso e utilizzano, di conseguenza, delle scorciatoie e semplificazioni, per, poi, guardare i paradossi della fisica contemporanea, in modo da dimostrare come la conoscenza umana, in generale, ha a che fare con il paradosso.

Il nostro autore mostra, come primo dato, che le eresie trinitarie, nella loro originaria intenzionalità, non sono solo «monumenti sepolcrali di una vana ricerca umana, lapidi funerarie» del fallimento del pensiero umano, ma quali 'cifra' di una verità perenne vogliono rendere le verità trinitarie meno «scandalose» per la ragione umana³⁵. Il subordinazionismo cerca, p. es., di eliminare la tensione tra l'«uno» e il «trino», sostenendo che, se Dio è uno solo, allora Gesù Cristo non è Dio vero, così come lo è il Padre, ma è l'Ente più vicino a Dio. Ratzinger respinge il subordinazionismo richiamando l'argomento classico che sostiene: se Gesù non è vero Dio, allora l'uomo non ha una relazione vera con Dio, ma, eventualmente, solo con i suoi misteri. La separazione tra Dio

³⁵ Cfr. J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 162; C. Bertero, *Persona e comunione. La prospettiva di Joseph Ratzinger*, Città del Vaticano 2014, p. 133.

e l'uomo non è stata, quindi, superata e, di fatto, non siamo stati salvati. È per questo che il cristianesimo annuncia, sin dall'inizio, il paradosso dell'infinitamente grande che si è realmente unito con la piccolezza finita, cioè che Dio, in Gesù di Nazareth, è diventato uomo. Un'altra eresia trinitaria è rappresentata dal modalismo, secondo il quale Dio è una sola persona che si rivela all'uomo sotto tre figure (travestimenti): il Padre, poi il Figlio e, alla fine, lo Spirito. Ma se le cose stanno così, allora noi non conosciamo il vero Dio e l'uomo gira solo intorno a se stesso. Il monarchianismo modalista è stato ripreso dal pensiero moderno, p.es., da Georg W.F. Hegel e Friedrich W.J. Schelling, portato poi avanti, in maniera radicale, da Karl Marx. Dio diventa storicizzato e i processi storici diventano divinizzati. Il Senso non appare all'inizio della storia, ma sta nel futuro creato dall'uomo. In tale concezione – scrive Ratzinger – è eliminata «la struttura personalistica del Senso con la sua reciprocità di grande e piccolo [...]. Tutto questo – il personale, il dialogico, la libertà e l'amore – viene qui dissolto nella necessità del solo processo della ragione»³⁶. Il subordinazionismo e il modalismo offrono delle soluzioni apparentemente logiche e modeste, ma, in realtà, «le loro traditrici semplificazioni finiscono per distruggere il tutto»³⁷. Di fronte alle eresie, la formula «Dio è uno e trino» costituisce – sottolinea il nostro teologo – «la rinuncia a qualsiasi scappatoia e il fermo permanere nel mistero, che per l'uomo è insondabile»³⁸. Permanere nel mistero non coincide con il rifiuto di conoscere e lo stare in un «buco nero». Al contrario, si tratta di guardare la realtà in tutta la sua complessità, senza compiere, frettolosamente, delle «comode» riduzioni. La storia che riguarda il conoscere Dio e la sua opera non implica il dover eliminare o diminuire la realtà del mistero. Infatti, nel mondo, tra le persone, più conoscenza vuol dire più consapevolezza del mistero. Ogni persona umana, e infinitamente di più la persona di Dio, essendo conosciuta e amata, si presenta, sempre e sempre di più, come Mistero. Le diverse personalità non s'identificano con le cose, le quali, anche se molto complesse, possono essere studiate e conosciute fino all'ultimo elemento che le costituisce, così che si può arrivare a uno stadio in cui non c'è niente più da conoscere. Le scienze naturali non parlano di mistero in senso teologico, ma si confrontano con quei paradossi che svelano la struttura paradossale della realtà, che non permette di ridurre e semplificare.

Lech Wołowski, nel suo libro *Problematyka paradoksu* (La problematica del paradosso), afferma che «per Ratzinger, come per Lubac e Balthasar, il paradosso

³⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 159.

³⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 157.

³⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 157.

si trova nel cuore stesso del dogma»³⁹. Come esempio, riporta le sopracitate tre tesi trinitarie, che cominciano con: «il paradosso *una essentia tres personae* ...». Wołowski suggerisce, nello stesso tempo, l'intuizione di Ratzinger circa il compito attuale e urgente per la teologia di prendere in considerazione l'impatto fruttuoso che la problematica del paradosso ha sul campo delle scienze naturali. Il teologo polacco scrive:

La fisica odierna è piena dei paradossi. I fisici se ne vergognano? Assolutamente no! Ogni paradosso è una «vena d'oro» per la falsificazione delle teorie e convinzioni erranee e, nello stesso tempo, per le nuove scoperte [...]. I paradossi che continuamente trovano i fisici, hanno loro insegnato, che non ci si può mai accontentare di una sola teoria, né aggrapparsi a essa, non importa quanto bene gestisca la descrizione di una parte di realtà. Prima o poi, apparirà un paradosso – ad esempio, verrà scoperto un fenomeno o una legge finora sconosciuti che farà saltare/esplodere il quadro degli accordi esistenti. Ratzinger ha sottolineato che lo stesso vale per la ricerca teologica⁴⁰.

Ovviamente, Ratzinger non vuole suggerire, p.es., che un dogma di fede, prima o poi, potrebbe risultare falso e, di conseguenza, si dovrà formulare un altro dogma. Si tratta, piuttosto, di scoprire gli altri aspetti che hanno determinato la formulazione dei dogmi, presenti anch'essi quando furono codificati e annunciati. La conoscenza umana è sempre parziale, mentre osserviamo la realtà, da un lato, ci sfuggono tanti altri lati. Non siamo capaci di vedere, nello stesso tempo, la realtà da tutti i punti di vista possibili, perciò ogni formula trinitaria elaborata dalla Chiesa deve essere accolta con la consapevolezza di una sua limitatezza e insufficienza.

Il nostro teologo ricorda una massima del giansenista Saint-Cyran, secondo la quale «la fede si compone di una serie di affermazioni contrapposte, tenute assieme dalla grazia»⁴¹. Infatti, le tre principali verità del cristianesimo, che sono la Trinità, l'Incarnazione e la Grazia, si basano su delle affermazioni apparentemente contraddittorie: Dio uno e trino, Gesù Cristo vero Dio e vero uomo, la libertà dell'uomo e la grazia di Dio, senza la quale l'uomo non può far niente. Non abbiamo, però, qui, delle contraddizioni, ma ci imbattiamo con ciò che nel campo delle scienze naturali è conosciuto come il *principio di complementarità*.

³⁹ L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu w myśli Henriego de Lubaca i Hansa Urs von Balthasara*, Kraków 2023, p. 310 (trad. pr.).

⁴⁰ L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu...*, op. cit., pp. 310–311 (trad. pr.).

⁴¹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 163.

Tale concetto è stato introdotto da Niels Bohr. L'esempio classico è la citata doppia struttura *corpuscolare-ondulare* della realtà, secondo la quale possiamo percepire un solo aspetto dell'oggetto sottoposto a esperimenti, particelle oppure onde, una per volta. Non abbiamo, cioè, modo di vedere questi due aspetti nello stesso tempo e nella loro unità. Ratzinger afferma che «ciò che si verifica nel campo fisico, come conseguenza della limitatezza della nostre facoltà sensorie, si verifica anche in misura incomparabilmente maggiore di fronte alle realtà spirituali di Dio»⁴². Possiamo conoscere Dio parzialmente, un aspetto dopo l'altro. Diciamo, p.es., che Dio è giusto e misericordioso, ma con questo non intendiamo che la giustizia e la misericordia si limitano a vicenda. Anzi, Dio è al massimo giusto e al massimo misericordioso. Dobbiamo mantenere, però, queste due affermazioni in una tensione, poiché non abbiamo uno sguardo che possa abbracciare contemporaneamente la giustizia e la misericordia, nella loro divina unità. Tale situazione, nella teologia e nelle scienze naturali, non significa un caos. Anzi, attraverso i paradossi della nostra conoscenza, riusciamo a vedere un ordine dell'universo e delle verità divine, in una disposizione infinitamente complessa, ma, insieme, incredibilmente bella.

Il nostro autore si chiede se l'approccio alla paradossalità, mostrato dalla fisica odierna, non sia un modello migliore della filosofia aristotelica, che – secondo lui – pretende di trovare una sola nozione in grado di raccogliere e spiegare tutta la realtà. A tale interrogativo, risponde: «parlando di Dio, non possiamo cercare alla maniera aristotelica un concetto ultimo capace di abbracciare il tutto, ma dobbiamo occuparci di una pluralità di aspetti che dipendono dalla collocazione dell'osservatore»⁴³. Ratzinger, dunque, guardando alla fisica odierna, postula, a partire dalla dottrina trinitaria, la teologia oltre la logica aristotelica e pensa i misteri di Dio nella prospettiva della complementarità. La prima complementarità sarebbe quella tra l'uno e il trino.

L'Amore del Padre, del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo

La dottrina trinitaria non può essere considerato uno dei tanti trattati, da leggere accanto agli altri, ma abbraccia tutti i rami della teologia cristiana e, nello stesso tempo, scaturisce da essi. Secondo Ratzinger, tutta la rivelazione

⁴² J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 163.

⁴³ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 164.

si riassume nella frase: «Dio è amore» (1 Gv 4,8.16)⁴⁴. Questa affermazione indica che «Dio non è solitudine, ma perfetta comunione»⁴⁵, intendendo non una comunione astratta, senza nome. Anzi, Dio è la comunione di Dio Padre, del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo: un nome in tre nomi. Per questo, la teologia trinitaria è un intreccio di paterologia, cristologia e pneumatologia ben legata con l'ecclesiologia. In diversi testi del nostro autore, abbiamo studi che portano tre titoli ben evidenziati: Dio, Gesù Cristo e Spirito Santo nella prospettiva ecclesiale. Le riflessioni generali sul «trino e uno» si trovano sotto la titolatura «Dio», ma, va detto, che non manca la dimensione profondamente trinitaria nella parte cristologica e in quella pneumatologico-ecclesiologica.

Ratzinger fa notare che nel Nuovo Testamento non si parla di un Dio «da solo e in quanto tale», ma sempre Egli è il «Dio di qualcuno», è, cioè, «Dio e Padre di Gesù»⁴⁶. In altre parole, la rivelazione neotestamentaria ci mostra Dio sempre in relazione – a, Egli si pone concretamente in una relazione di paternità. Ovviamente, nei vangeli il primo rapporto che incontriamo è quello di Cristo verso il Padre. Gesù di Nazareth comprende la sua persona e la sua missione mentre coltiva il suo intimo rapporto con il Padre, ma, d'altro lato, Dio Padre non sarebbe pensabile senza il Figlio, Gesù Cristo. Dio esiste solo nella relazione Padre-Figlio, perciò è vera l'affermazione solenne che nessuno «conosce il Figlio se non il Padre, e nessuno conosce il Padre se non il Figlio e colui al quale il Figlio vorrà rivelarlo» (Mt 11,27). Da qui, si evince «l'assoluta importanza di Gesù, che esce in questo modo dai "padri" ed entra direttamente nel concetto di Dio, appartiene a Dio per essenza»⁴⁷. Il nome di Dio, il Padre, non esiste, se non in relazione con il Figlio e «al Figlio non si può dare altro nome che quello della sua incarnazione, Gesù Cristo»⁴⁸. È questo il nucleo della dottrina trinitaria che, poi, si sviluppa verso il Terzo, cioè si apre allo Spirito Santo. Ratzinger sottolinea, riflettendo sulla modalità di una possibile predicazione per l'oggi, che Dio si deve annunciare come Padre, Figlio e Spirito Santo, così come ci viene indicato dall'atto a fondamento dell'essere cristiani, cioè dal battesimo, celebrato nel nome del Padre, del Figlio e dello Spirito.

La comprensione della paternità di Dio, rivelata dal Figlio incarnato, è esposta al pericolo di naufragio dovuto alla crisi della paternità umana, che minaccia la

⁴⁴ Cfr. Benedetto XVI, *Angelus, Città del Vaticano 22.05.2005*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/angelus/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20050522_holy-trinity.html [accesso: 22.05.2023].

⁴⁵ Cfr. Benedetto XVI, *Angelus, Città del Vaticano 22.05.2005*, op. cit.

⁴⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Dogma e predicazione*, op. cit., p. 83.

⁴⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Dogma e predicazione*, op. cit., p. 83.

⁴⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Dogma e predicazione*, op. cit., p. 89.

struttura sociale delle diverse culture, ormai da anni. «Forse la vera e propria crisi della nostra immagine di Dio è – scrive il teologo – il fatto che da molto tempo non sussiste più qualcosa di analogico, che ci aiuti ad esprimerci nei suoi confronti»⁴⁹. Questo nodo teologico rende urgente e chiaro il compito che hanno i cristiani, di ricostruire la paternità autentica nelle relazioni sociali, a partire dalla figura di Dio Padre. Ratzinger fa notare, inoltre, che, nella Bibbia, il concetto di «padre» racchiude l'idea di «madre». In altre parole, la maternità è inserita nella paternità. Basta ricordare due brani del profeta Isaia: «Si dimentica forse una donna del suo bambino, così da non commuoversi per il figlio delle sue viscere? Anche se queste donne si dimenticassero, io invece non dimenticherò mai» (49,15); «Come una madre consola un figlio così io vi consolerò» (66,13). Il nostro teologo non intendeva coltivare di più la retorica «materna», così come, invece, fece Giovanni Paolo II, quando, durante l'Angelus del 10 settembre 1978, disse: «Noi siamo oggetti da parte di Dio di un amore intramontabile. Sappiamo: ha sempre gli occhi aperti su di noi, anche quando sembra ci sia notte. È papà; più ancora è madre»⁵⁰. Nel I volume del suo libro *Gesù di Nazareth*, nel capitolo sul «Padre nostro», Joseph Ratzinger pone direttamente la domanda: «Dio è anche madre?». Nel rispondere, il Papa fa notare come nella Bibbia l'amore materno, basato sulla corporeità umana, costituisce un'immagine di Dio, anche se mai Dio è chiamato, sia nell'Antico, sia nel Nuovo Testamento, «madre». «Madre è nella Bibbia un'immagine di Dio, non un suo titolo»⁵¹. Su questo tema, Ratzinger si è espresso, in maniera molto decisa, nel 1984, in un'intervista rilasciata a Vittorio Messori: «Il cristianesimo non è "nostro", è la Rivelazione di Dio, è un messaggio che ci è stato consegnato [...]. Dunque, non siamo autorizzati a trasformare il Padre nostro in una Madre nostra: il simbolismo usato da Gesù è irreversibile». Aggiungendo, subito

⁴⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Dogma e predicazione*, op. cit., p. 88. Nel famoso romanzo di W. Paul Young, *Il rifugio*, troviamo un brano molto interessante dal punto di vista della questione della paternità divina. Il protagonista del libro, Mack, parlando con Dio, chiede: «Ma allora, perché si mette tanta enfasi sul fatto che sei il Padre?». Dio risponde: «Ci sono molti motivi, e alcuni vanno molto in profondità. Per ora ti dico solo che sapevamo che dopo la Creazione le figure paterne sarebbero venute a mancare molto più di quelle materne. Non mi fraintendere, servono entrambe ..., ma è necessario dare così tanto valore alla paternità, a causa dell'enormità della sua assenza» (W.P. Young, *Il rifugio*, trad. M. Foschini, Milano 2010, pp. 124-125).

⁵⁰ Giovanni Paolo II, *Angelus, Città del Vaticano 10.09.1978*, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/angelus/documents/hf_jp-ii_ang_10091978.html [accesso: 22.05.2023].

⁵¹ Benedetto XVI, *Gesù di Nazareth*, vol. 1: *Dal battesimo alla trasfigurazione*, Milano 2007, p. 170.

dopo: «Sono infatti convinto che ciò cui porta il femminismo nella sua forma radicale non è più il cristianesimo che conosciamo, è una religione diversa»⁵².

Se non si può capire il Padre senza la relazione con il Figlio nello Spirito Santo, ancor meno si potrebbe capire il Figlio senza il Padre. Ratzinger afferma che «il Verbo, per essenza, deriva da qualcun altro ed è diretto ad un altro: il Verbo è un'esistenza che è solo via di apertura»⁵³. Per questo, Gesù dice: «La mia dottrina non è mia, ma di colui che mi ha mandato» (Gv 7,16). La frase sembra comporti una contraddizione. Il nostro autore, seguendo Agostino, spiega che la dottrina di Cristo non è solo un insieme di proposizioni su Dio e l'uomo, ma è Cristo in persona, infatti, «egli stesso non è sua proprietà, perché il suo io esiste completamente nel tu»⁵⁴. È l'intreccio dell'assoluto e del relativo in Dio, che ci permette di spiegare l'affermazione citata e le altre di Gesù, che danno adito a pensare che sia sminuita la divinità del Figlio di fronte al Padre e che possono sfociare in un subordinazionismo. Nel vangelo di Giovanni, leggiamo: «il Figlio da sé non può fare nulla se non ciò che vede fare dal Padre» (5,19); «Io non posso far nulla da me stesso [...], perché non cerco la mia volontà, ma la volontà di colui che mi ha mandato (5,30); «il Padre è più grande di me» (14,28). Come interpretare e comprendere tali affermazioni, volendo mantenere saldo il fatto che il Figlio è uguale (*homoousios*) al Padre? Ci si potrebbe riferire a una fenomenologia dell'amore, secondo la quale l'amore dice sempre che l'amato è più grande. Chi ama si abbassa nei confronti dell'amato. Il Figlio che ama il Padre, si abbassa. Ma questo non vuol dire che il Figlio non sia uguale al Padre. Si potrebbero, poi, spiegare questi testi indicando che il Figlio si è limitato kenoticamente nell'incarnazione.

Secondo il teologo polacco Jerzy Szymik⁵⁵, una delle più accurate risposte di Ratzinger alla domanda «Qual è Dio?», si riferisce a Guglielmo di Saint-Thierry che ci racconta una visione di Dio che volendo salvare l'uomo ribelle, disse: «Ahimè, unicamente la miseria non suscita invidia [...]. Così mi voglio dunque presentare agli uomini come uomo disprezzato e come l'ultimo di tutti»⁵⁶. Ecco, questo il paradosso del Dio trinitario. La suprema gloria si fa sperimentare attraverso l'estremo abbassamento del Figlio crocifisso. Ratzinger scrive: «La verità stessa, la verità reale, si è resa all'uomo tollerabile, anzi si è resa via, per il

⁵² J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *Rapporto sulla Fede. Vittorio Messori a colloquio con il cardinale Joseph Ratzinger*, Cinisello Balsamo 1985, p. 97.

⁵³ J. Ratzinger, *Dogma e predicazione*, op. cit., p. 181.

⁵⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Dogma e predicazione*, op. cit., p. 181.

⁵⁵ Cfr. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, vol. 1, Katowice 2021, pp. 190-191.

⁵⁶ Cit. da J. Ratzinger, *Cantate al Signore un canto nuovo*, trad. E. Babini, C. Fedeli, Milano 1996, p. 35.

fatto che essa è apparsa e appare nella povertà dell'impotente. [...] L'umiltà di Dio è la porta della verità nel mondo, non ne esiste un'altra»⁵⁷. Potremmo dire, dunque, che il Padre rivela se stesso nella miseria del Figlio incarnato, poiché solo questa modalità di rivelazione rende possibile la comprensione e accettazione della verità sul Dio uno e trino, da parte dell'uomo. Paradossalmente, Gesù rivela la sua uguaglianza con il Padre attraverso un'apparente disuguaglianza.

Nella Lettera ai Filippesi, leggiamo: «Cristo Gesù, il quale, pur essendo di natura divina, non considerò un tesoro geloso la sua uguaglianza con Dio; ma spogliò se stesso, assumendo la condizione di servo e divenendo simile agli uomini; apparso in forma umana, umiliò se stesso facendosi obbediente fino alla morte e alla morte di croce» (2,5-8). Gesù non è uguale al Padre, poiché, scendendo alla condizione umana, nella sua kenosi ha lasciato la gloria che gli apparteneva nelle mani del Padre. Di questa gloria parla Gesù stesso: «E ora, Padre, glorificami davanti a te, con quella gloria che avevo presso di te prima che il mondo fosse» (Gv 17,4). Ratzinger propone un'altra spiegazione. Ammette, innanzitutto, che le frasi sopraccitate risultano, apparentemente, in contraddizione con quanto sempre Cristo dice di se stesso: «Io e il Padre siamo una cosa sola» (Gv 10,30). Ma dopo una riflessione più approfondita, alla luce dell'intreccio tra assoluto e relativo, le affermazioni non solo non sono contraddittorie, ma si postulano e rafforzano a vicenda. Infatti, se il Figlio non ha niente che gli appartiene in modo esclusivo, che sia solo suo, tranne la relazione di figliolanza, e se tutto riceve dal Padre, allora può essere uguale al Padre. Se avesse una sostanza diversa, anche in una sola cosa, da quella del Padre, non sarebbe uguale a Lui. Nell'*Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, leggiamo:

Il Figlio in quanto tale non sussiste affatto isolatamente, per conto suo, ma è una cosa sola col Padre; poiché non è accanto, non rivendica nulla di proprio, non afferma di essere soltanto lui, non contrappone al Padre nulla di esclusivamente suo, non si riserva alcuno spazio unicamente suo, egli è perciò totalmente uguale al Padre. La logica è stringente: se nulla c'è per cui egli sia semplicemente lui, nessuna dimensione privata separata, allora egli coincide con Quello, forma con lui «una cosa sola»⁵⁸.

Ecco, il Padre è la fonte, il Figlio è pura accoglienza. Il Figlio riceve tutto dal Padre e, in questo senso, il Padre è più grande, ma se il Figlio riceve tutto dal Padre, questo vuol dire che Egli ha tutto ciò che il Padre ha, perciò è uguale al

⁵⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Cantate al Signore un canto nuovo*, op. cit., p. 35.

⁵⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., pp. 175-176.

Padre. Se il Figlio non ha qualcosa di privato e separato dal Padre, allora può essere uguale al Padre, cioè può essere l'unico Dio con il Padre. Se il Figlio avesse qualcosa soltanto suo, personale, non sarebbe uguale al Padre in tutto. Il Figlio, invece, riceve tutto dal Padre, non fa niente senza il Padre, pertanto è uguale al Padre. In tale prospettiva, il relativo non si oppone all'assoluto, anzi, esso costituisce la condizione *sine qua non* per essere una persona divina di fronte all'altra persona divina e, nello stesso tempo, l'unico Assoluto. La pura relazionalità costituisce l'unità assoluta. Il Padre e il Figlio, essendo diversi, non si superano reciprocamente, anche perché il loro essere «una cosa sola» indica che «il loro amore è fecondo e va oltre loro stessi. In questo contesto possiamo notare – insieme al nostro autore – che il Concilio di Nicea che decise di usare il concetto «*homouísios*» per esprimere l'unità divina, non pretendeva di fare la filosofia. Infatti, «nel senso in cui i Padri di Nicea lo intendevano, *homouísios* non è altro che la traduzione del termine-simbolo 'Figlio' in concetto»⁵⁹. Se l'uomo è creato a immagine di Dio, allora nella relazione tra il Padre e il Figlio incarnato possiamo ritrovare il modello dell'essere uomo e dell'essere cristiano. Alla luce della rivelazione, sappiamo che lo scopo definitivo della vita di ogni persona umana risiede nel diventare figlio/figlia di Dio. Siamo chiamati a essere figli adottivi di Dio, in Gesù Cristo, il Figlio unigenito del Padre. Egli, essendo perfettamente dall'altro e per-gli-altri, non riservando nessun spazio solo per sé, ci mostra la nostra vera natura e la nostra vocazione. Ratzinger, facendo riferimento agli scritti giovannei, afferma che «essere cristiani vuol dire essere come il Figlio, diventare figli, e quindi non vivere fondandosi su se stessi e chiusi in se stessi, ma [...] nell'«essere-da» e nell'«essere-per»»⁶⁰.

L'eterna relazione tra il Padre e il Figlio non avviene, se non nello Spirito Santo. Ratzinger scrive: «Nel Terzo, nel quale si donano, nel dono, essi sono insieme se stessi e una cosa sola»⁶¹. Potremmo dire che lo Spirito unisce il Primo e il Secondo e, insieme, testimonia che l'Uno è infinitamente diverso dall'Altro. Ma – osserva il nostro autore – «mentre sul Padre e sul Figlio possiamo dire relativamente molto, lo Spirito Santo è rimasto largamente il Dio sconosciuto»⁶². Infatti, basta ricordare che nel Simbolo niceno del 325 si dice solo: «Crediamo nello Spirito Santo»⁶³. La Chiesa è stata ben consapevole sin dall'inizio che senza la forza dello Spirito non può far niente. Gli apostoli sapevano cosa fare solo

⁵⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo...*, op. cit., p. 100.

⁶⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 176.

⁶¹ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo...*, op. cit., p. 33.

⁶² J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo...*, op. cit., p. 117.

⁶³ H. Denzinger, *Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen*, ed. P. Hünermann, Freiburg im Br. 2007, pp. 125–126.

dopo la Pentecoste, eppure, nonostante ciò, nei primi secoli la pneumatologia si è sviluppata poco, lasciando tutto lo spazio alla riflessione sulla relazione tra il Padre e il Figlio. Tale situazione in parte è dovuta al carattere personale dello Spirito, il quale non parla in prima persona singolare, non rivela se stesso, ma è sempre in funzione del Padre e del Figlio⁶⁴. Questo carattere paradossale del «non-io», è nel nome stesso dello Spirito. Ratzinger afferma:

il nome della terza Persona divina, diversamente rispetto a 'Padre' e 'Figlio', non esprime qualcosa di specifico, ma nomina semplicemente proprio ciò che è comune in Dio. Ma è proprio così che emerge anche ciò che è 'proprio' della terza Persona: lo Spirito è ciò che è comune, l'unità fra Padre e Figlio, l'unità in persona. Padre e Figlio sono una-cosa-sola uscendo da se stessi; nel Terzo, nella fecondità del donarsi, sono Uno⁶⁵.

Lo Spirito non ci mostra il suo volto. Possiamo conoscerlo solo attraverso gli effetti della sua presenza e del suo agire, perciò, nella Bibbia, lo Spirito Santo viene rappresentato con simboli a-personali: la colomba, il fuoco, il vento, la nube. Il nostro teologo rileva che lo Spirito non si offre a noi come un oggetto da conoscere. Egli «abita nella parola di Gesù, ma questa parola non la si ottiene solo parlandone, ma osservandola, vivendola»⁶⁶. Lo Spirito non parla da se stesso, ma a partire da Gesù Cristo, il quale, a sua volta, compie la volontà del Padre. Questo intreccio trinitario lo vediamo chiaramente nel vangelo di Giovanni: «lo Spirito di verità, egli vi guiderà alla verità tutta intera, perché non parlerà da sé, ma dirà tutto ciò che avrà udito [...]. Egli mi glorificherà, perché prenderà del mio e ve l'annunzierà. Tutto quello che il Padre possiede è mio» (Gv 16,13-15). Si evince che la teologia dello Spirito dev'essere strettamente legata alla cristologia, ma, d'altro lato, è da rigettare qualsiasi cristocentrismo che dimentica la terza Persona della Trinità. Potrebbe sembrarci ovvia tale affermazione, ma, va detto che è proprio questa la differenza tra il Cristo e l'Anticristo, tra lo Spirito Santo e lo spirito maligno: le Persone divine non agiscono mai «come un Io separato e separabile»⁶⁷. Il male, invece, ci suggerisce continuamente di dimenticare quello che è, di fatto, il fondamento della realtà e di cominciare a ricostruirla secondo l'attraente tentazione serpentina che sibila: «sarete come Dio» (cfr. Gen 3,5). Lo Spirito ci riporta all'originaria

⁶⁴ Cfr. D. Kowalczyk, *Lo Spirito Santo, presenza silenziosa nella Trinità e in noi*, [in:] *Silenzio, polifonia di Dio*, a cura di B. Aniello, D. Kowalczyk, Roma 2020, pp. 71-84.

⁶⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo...*, op. cit., p. 123.

⁶⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo...*, op. cit., p. 124.

⁶⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo...*, op. cit., p. 126.

relazione, ci ricorda l'opera del Padre e del Figlio. Ratzinger scrive: «L'essenza dello Spirito Santo, in quanto unità tra Padre e Figlio, sta appunto in questo altruismo del ricordare, che è il vero rinnovamento»⁶⁸. Tutto ciò è particolarmente importante, oggi, quando si parla di ricostruire la Chiesa sulla base del concetto di «sinodalità».

Il menzionato Jerzy Szymik, profondo conoscitore di Ratzinger, afferma che «per la trinitologia e la pneumatologia di Joseph Ratzinger/Benedetto XVI [...] il significato decisivo ha la relazione reciproca tra l'azione dello Spirito Santo e le opere di Gesù Cristo»⁶⁹. Vedere, però, chiaramente tale relazione non vuol dire – secondo Ratzinger – che dovremmo parlare della seconda e della terza Persona della Trinità, in qualche maniera, simmetriche. È vero che la pneumatologia è stata, a volte, trascurata, rispetto alla cristologia e il confronto è avvenuto con una cristologia unilaterale, ma il dover ritrovare il giusto equilibrio non significa ottenere un'uguaglianza numerica tra le sezioni cristologiche e quelle pneumatologiche. Diamo la parola allo stesso Ratzinger che scrive:

Capita spesso di sentir lamentare che nella Chiesa si parla troppo poco dello Spirito. Talvolta questa lamentela arriva sino all'idea che dovrebbe esistere una certa simmetria tra il discorso su Cristo e quello sullo Spirito Santo. Chi pretende questo, dimentica però che Cristo e lo Spirito sono parte del Dio Trinità. Dimentica che la Trinità non può essere pensata come una serie di presenza parallele e simmetriche. Se fosse così, allora noi crederemmo in tre divinità e con ciò sarebbe radicalmente misconosciuto quel che intende la confessione cristiana dell'unico Dio in tre persone⁷⁰.

Il carattere personale dello Spirito nella comunità trinitaria è tale, dunque, da non dover necessariamente collocarlo e vederlo accanto al Padre e al Figlio, ma, piuttosto, come agente *nascosto*, tutto in funzione degli altri due. La divinità piena della terza Persona non si esprime come un'uguaglianza «statica» dove osserviamo in fila i Tre con ruoli indifferenziati. Lo Spirito esercita pienamente la comune divinità in un modo tutto suo, irripetibile e misterioso, portando tutti e tutto all'unità in Dio.

⁶⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo...*, op. cit., p. 127.

⁶⁹ J. Szymik, *Na bliskość tchnienia. Kluczowe tezy pneumatologii Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI*, „Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne” 46/2 (2013), p. 339.

⁷⁰ J. Ratzinger/Benedetto XVI, *Immagini di speranza. Le feste cristiane in compagnia del Papa*, Cinisello Balsamo 2005, p. 91.

Conclusione – L'universo parla della Trinità

Joseph Ratzinger ha cercato di giustificare e mantenere la tensione che si crea tra la teologia che si riferisce alle filosofie e le scienze naturali, con una riflessione radicata, prima di tutto, nella storia biblica. Così, l'autore non si perde in speculazioni o riflessioni astratte sulla vita intratrinitaria e mai dubita della fruttuosità del circolo fede-ragione. In una delle meditazioni, Benedetto XVI fa notare: «La mente e il linguaggio umani sono inadeguati a spiegare la relazione esistente tra il Padre, il Figlio e lo Spirito Santo, e tuttavia i Padri della Chiesa hanno cercato di illustrare il mistero di Dio Uno e Trino vivendolo nella propria esistenza con profonda fede»⁷¹. Ecco, è questo il paradosso che costituisce il filo conduttore del pensiero trinitario di Ratzinger: la Trinità è trascendente, lontana, sempre infinitamente più grande di qualsiasi ragionamento umano, ma, d'altro lato, Dio è più vicino a noi di quanto lo siamo noi stessi. La Trinità ci circonda, inoltre, da lontano e nell'intimo dei nostri cuori, è presente sempre, è accanto a noi nelle diverse e molteplici vicissitudini della storia. Il teologo – seguendo il suo maestro sant'Agostino – cerca la Trinità nell'uomo, creato a immagine del Dio uno e trino, e non solo, infatti, la cerca e trova anche nell'intero universo, creato dall'amore e per l'amore:

Dio è tutto e solo amore, amore purissimo, infinito ed eterno. Non vive in una splendida solitudine, ma è piuttosto fonte inesauribile di vita che incessantemente si dona e si comunica. Lo possiamo in qualche misura intuire osservando sia il macro-universo: la nostra terra, i pianeti, le stelle, le galassie; sia il micro-universo: le cellule, gli atomi, le particelle elementari. In tutto ciò che esiste è in un certo senso impresso il «nome» della Santissima Trinità, perché tutto l'essere, fino alle ultime particelle, è essere in relazione, e così traspare il Dio-relazione, traspare ultimamente l'Amore creatore⁷².

La dottrina sulla Trinità non arriva a capire del tutto il mistero, ma ci offre una nuova comprensione della realtà e dell'universo, su chi sia l'uomo e chi sia Dio, mentre riconosce una tensione paradossale tra il piccolo e l'infinito e ammette che ciò che è più paradossale, è ciò che è più chiaro e a noi di aiuto, così come

⁷¹ Benedetto XVI, *Angelus, Città del Vaticano 30.05.2010*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/angelus/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20100530.html [accesso: 22.05.2023].

⁷² Benedetto XVI, *Angelus, Città del Vaticano 07.06.2009*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/angelus/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20090607.html [accesso: 22.05.2023].

conclude Ratzinger, «proprio quando sembra si navighi nel campo della più estrema teoria, affiora ciò che è più concreto»⁷³. In questa esigenza di chiarezza, rientra il nostro perenne desiderio di unità nella distinzione e di separazione netta dal male, per questo il Figlio di Dio, poiché non sta a sé, ma sta nel Padre, formando un'eterna unità, ci insegna la possibilità di sane relazioni e ci ricorda che ogni separazione, che mette nell'oblio l'essere anche una-cosa-sola, è mancanza e tradimento del vero spirito cristiano, è attaccamento a un'egoità chiusa in una vana gloria. La fede cristiana non è «una mistica dell'auto-identificazione dello spirito con Dio»⁷⁴, bensì riconoscimento del nome del Dio uno e trino e accoglienza della *loro* presenza, in sé e nella storia.

Riferimenti

- Baran B., *Z historii «nowego myślenia»*, [in:] *Rozum i słowo. Eseje dialogiczne*, collana: Teksty Filozoficzne, edd. B. Baran, T. Gadacz, J. Tischner, M. Czerski, Kraków 1987, pp. 3–31.
- Benedetto XVI, *Angelus, Città del Vaticano 22.05.2005*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/angelus/2005/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20050522_holy-trinity.html [accesso: 22.05.2023].
- Benedetto XVI, *Angelus, Città del Vaticano 7.06.2009*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/angelus/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20090607.html [accesso: 22.05.2023].
- Benedetto XVI, *Angelus, Città del Vaticano 30.05.2010*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/it/angelus/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20100530.html [accesso: 22.05.2023].
- Bertero C., *Persona e comunione. La prospettiva di Joseph Ratzinger*, Città del Vaticano 2014.
- Brunner E., *Die christliche Lehre von Gott*, collana: Dogmatik I, Zürich 1953.
- Denzinger H., *Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen*, ed. P. Hünermann, Freiburg im Br. 2007.
- Einstein A., *Come io vedo il mondo. La teoria della relatività*, trad. R. Valori, A. Pratelli, Roma 1988.
- Giovanni Paolo I, *Angelus, Città del Vaticano 10.09.1978*, https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-i/it/angelus/documents/hf_jp-i_ang_10091978.html [accesso: 22.05.2023].
- Giovanni Paolo II, Enciclica *Fides et ratio*, 1998 https://www.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/it/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html [accesso: 26.06.2023].
- Kowalczyk D., *Lo Spirito Santo, presenza silenziosa nella Trinità e in noi*, [in:] *Silenzio, polifonia di Dio*, a cura di B. Aniello, D. Kowalczyk, Roma 2020, pp. 71–84.
- Kowalczyk D., *Una Persona in tre Persone. La teologia trinitaria in Sergej Bulgakov*, “Studia Bobolanum” 32/1 (2021), pp. 173–191.
- Lossky V., *Conoscere Dio*, trad., a cura di A.M. Quartirolì, Magnano 1996.

⁷³ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 180.

⁷⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, op. cit., p. 92.

- Moltmann J., *Trinità e Regno di Dio*, trad. D. Pezzetta, Brescia 1983.
- Ratzinger J., *Cantate al Signore un canto nuovo*, trad. E. Babini, C. Fedeli, Milano 1996.
- Ratzinger J., *Il Dio della fede e il Dio dei filosofi*, trad. E. Coccia, Venezia 2013.
- Ratzinger J., *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo. Meditazioni sul Dio uno e trino*, trad. D. Pezzetta, Brescia 2005.
- Ratzinger J., *Dogma e predicazione*, trad. G. Poletti, Brescia 2018.
- Ratzinger J./Benedetto XVI, *Gesù di Nazareth*, vol. 1: *Dal battesimo alla trasfigurazione*, Milano 2007.
- Ratzinger J./Benedetto XVI, *Immagini di speranza. Le feste cristiane in compagnia del Papa*, trad. G. Reguzzoni, Cinisello Balsamo 2005.
- Ratzinger J., *Introduzione al Cristianesimo*, trad. G. Francesconi, Brescia 2005.
- Ratzinger J., Messori V., *Rapporto sulla Fede. Vittorio Messori a colloquio con il cardinale Joseph Ratzinger*, Cinisello Balsamo 1985.
- Reicke B., *prós*, [in:] *Il Grande Lessico del Nuovo Testamento*, vol. 11, edd. G. Kittel, G. Friedrich, trad. a cura di F. Montagnini, G. Scarpata, O. Soffritti, Brescia 1977, pp. 277–292.
- Szymik J., *Na bliskość tchnienia. Kluczowe tezy pneumatologii Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI*, „Śląskie Studia Historyczno-Teologiczne” 46/2 (2013), pp. 337–351.
- Szymik J., *Theologia benedicta*, vol. 1, Katowice 2021.
- Tommaso d'Aquino, *Somma teologica*, <http://www.carimo.it/somma-teologica/somma.htm> [accesso: 26.06.2023].
- Vanni U., *Il tesoro di Giovanni. Un percorso biblico-spirituale nel Quarto Vangelo*, Assisi 2010.
- Wołowski L., *Problematyka paradoksu w myśli Henriego de Lubaca i Hansa Ursa von Balthasara*, Kraków 2023.
- Young W.P., *Il rifugio*, trad. M. Foschini, Milano 2010.

DARIUSZ KOWALCZYK SJ (REV. PROF. DR) – Jesuit priest, in 2003–2009 Superior of the Warsaw Jesuit Province, Professor of dogmatic theology, since 2010 lecturer of theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, in 2013–2019 Dean of the Faculty of Theology at the same University. Permanent columnist of weekly magazine “Idziemy.” Recently he has published: *Czy Jezus mógł się przeziębnić? Rozmowy o człowieczeństwie Boga* [Could Jesus Catch a Cold? Conversations on the Humanity of God] (Kraków 2015), *Między herezją a dogmatem* [Between Heresy and Dogma] (Łódź 2015), *Kościół i fałszywi prorocy* [The Church and False Prophets] (Warszawa 2016) and together with B. Aniello *Un caso di icono(teo)logia: Rembrandt e l'abbraccio trinitario* [A Case of icono(teo)logy: Rembrandt and the Trinitarian Embrace] (Tavagnacco 2022).

Janusz Królikowski

Pontifical University of John Paul II in Cracow, Poland

janusz.krolikowski@upjp2.edu.pl

ORCID: 0000-0003-3929-6008

Theology of the Word of God in the Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* by Benedict XVI

Teologia słowa Bożego w adhortacji apostolskiej *Verbum Domini*
Benedykta XVI

ABSTRACT: The theology of the word of God is one of the leitmotifs of Joseph Ratzinger's entire theology, and in a way its culmination is the apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini*, which, although being the result of a collegial reflection on the word of God undertaken during the Synod of Bishops, also bears the unmistakable mark of Benedict XVI's personal theological search and conviction. In this article, the author highlights the most crucial aspects, mainly of a dogmatic nature, of this problem read in the light of the exhortation *Verbum Domini*. In its first part, he explains the essence and specificity of the fact that „God speaks to man.” Rooted in God's action on behalf of man, His word has a sacramental character. Complementing this sacramental dimension of God's word is its close relationship with the action of the Holy Spirit, which influences the word's transmission, writing and interpretation. In the next section of the article, the author discusses the transmission of the word of God. He also defines the action of the Holy Spirit in relation to the word of God. The third part of the paper deals with the response that might be given to God. The nature of the word of God demands, first of all, faith as a condition and way of understanding and living it both individually and communally. The analysis of individual points of the exhortation in relation to post-conciliar theology has made it possible to show the fundamental importance of the word of God in the life of every believer as well as the community of the Church.

KEYWORDS: Benedict XVI, *Verbum Domini*, Scripture, the word of God and the Holy Spirit, the word of God vs. the Church, faith and the word of God, spiritual understanding, post-conciliar theology, sacramentality of the word of God, communication of the word of God

ABSTRAKT: Teologia słowa Bożego stanowi jeden z wątków przewodnich całej teologii Josepha Ratzingera, a poniekąd jej zwieńczeniem jest adhortacja *Verbum*

Domini, która będąc wprawdzie rezultatem kolegialnej refleksji nad słowem Bożym podjętej przez Synod Biskupów, nosi także wyraźne rysy osobistych poszukiwań i teologicznych przekonań Benedykta XVI. W artykule autor zwraca uwagę na najbardziej kluczowe, głównie o charakterze dogmatycznym, aspekty tego zagadnienia odczytywane w świetle adhortacji *Verbum Domini*. W jego pierwszej części wyjaśnia istotę i specyfikę faktu, że „Bóg mówi do człowieka”. Zakorzeniając się w działaniu Boga na rzecz człowieka, słowo Boże ma charakter sakramentalny. Dopełnieniem tego wymiaru słowa Bożego jest jego ścisła więź z działaniem Ducha Świętego, który wpływa na jego przekazywanie, spisanie oraz interpretację. W kolejnej części artykułu autor omawia kwestię przekazywania słowa Bożego. Określa również działanie Ducha Świętego w relacji do słowa Bożego. Trzecia część opracowania zajmuje się zagadnieniem odpowiedzi udzielanej Bogu przez człowieka. Charakter słowa Bożego domaga się od niego przede wszystkim wiary jako warunku i sposobu jego rozumienia oraz jej przeżywania zarówno w wymiarze indywidualnym, jak i wspólnotowym. Analiza poszczególnych punktów adhortacji w odniesieniu do teologii posoborowej pozwoliła na ukazanie zasadniczego znaczenia słowa Bożego w życiu każdego wierzącego, jak i wspólnoty Kościoła.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Benedykt XVI, *Verbum Domini*, Pismo Święte, słowo Boże a Duch Święty, słowo Boże a Kościół, wiara a słowo Boże, duchowe rozumienie, teologia posoborowa, sakramentalność słowa Bożego, przekazywanie słowa Bożego

The theology of the Word of God (Scripture) is undoubtedly the leitmotif of Joseph Ratzinger's entire theology, and then its elaborated shape defines the character and structure of his theological statements on specific topics that he addressed in his ministry as a theologian and pastor.¹ This theology was mainly rooted in the research carried out during the preparation of his habilitation thesis on the theology of the history in St Bonaventure, and its somewhat verifying moment was his participation as an expert at the Second Vatican Council, especially in the context of the work on the dogmatic constitution on divine revelation *Dei Verbum*.² Numerous results of the research conducted by Ratzinger are available in the seventh volume of his collected writings,³ although various aspects and details of the issue can also be found in other volumes that address various topics. The apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini* appears to take place to be the culmination of these explorations and writings;

¹ Cf. S.W. Hahn, *Covenant and Communion: The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Grand Rapids, MI 2009.

² Cf. L. Boeve, "La vraie réception de Vatican II n'a pas encore commencé". *Joseph Ratzinger, Révélation et autorité de Vatican II*, "Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses" 85/4 (2009), pp. 305-339.

³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego. Formułowanie – przekaz – interpretacja* [On the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council. Formulation – Transmission – Interpretation], vol. 1-2; Series: Opera Omnia 7/1-2, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, E. Grzesiuk, Lublin 2016.

it represents a very important aspect of Benedict XVI's function as a universal teacher.⁴ Although it is to a large extent the fruit of the collegial work undertaken by the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops and the "proposals" formulated at that time, Benedict XVI's personal touch, based on his own research and theological experience, is doubtless present in the presentation, explanation and justification of the text. For this reason, it is worth looking in particular at the theology of the word of God, which, with clear reference to the many post-conciliar explorations in this area, has been synthesised in the exhortation *Verbum Domini*, in order to also contribute to its reception in the Church as it responds to current spiritual and pastoral needs. The theology of the word of God aims first of all to show the word's specificity as precisely the word of *God*, that is, having its source in the salvific action of God. This specificity first gives rise to a consideration of the sacramental dimension of the word of God, and then also determines the specificity of its transmission in the Church.

This article therefore draws attention to the guiding threads of the theology of the word of God, which at the same time call for greater consideration in the current search for a theology of the word of God. It should be noted, of course, that work on this issue has already been undertaken, but nevertheless the complexity of the issue makes it possible to continue reflecting on this seemingly complex issue.⁵

Here, therefore, in addressing the issue set out in the title, we will turn to the first part of Pope Benedict XVI's exhortation *Verbum Domini* on "The

⁴ Cf. R. Pindel, S. Jędrzejewski (eds.), *Hermeneutyka Pisma Świętego w Kościele. Wokół adhortacji Verbum Domini Benedykta XVI o Słowie Bożym w życiu i misji Kościoła* [Hermeneutics of Scripture in the Church. Around Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church], Series: Hermeneutica et Judaica 6, Kraków 2012; D. Ostrowski (ed.), *Słowo Boże w życiu i misji Kościoła. Wokół adhortacji apostolskiej Benedykta XVI "Verbum Domini"* [The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. Around Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation "Verbum Domini"], Świdnica 2012, pp. 45–60.

⁵ Cf. D. Brzeziński, *Sakramentalność słowa Bożego w świetle adhortacji apostolskiej Benedykta XVI Verbum Domini* [Sacramentality of the Word of God in the Light of Benedict XVI's Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*], "Liturgia Sacra" 17/1 (2011), pp. 15–23; Z. Chromy, *Teologia Słowa Bożego Benedykta XVI* [Theology of the Word of God by Benedict XVI], [in:] *Słowo Boże w życiu i misji Kościoła. Wokół adhortacji apostolskiej Benedykta XVI "Verbum Domini"* [The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. Around the Apostolic Exhortation of Benedict XVI "Verbum Domini"], ed. D. Ostrowski, Świdnica 2012, pp. 45–60; W. Linke, *Logos Wcielony i słowo przepowiadane. Teologia Słowa Bożego i praktyka przepowiadania Słowa Bożego w Verbum Domini, Lumen fidei i Evangelii gaudium* [Logos Incarnate and the Preached Word. Theology of the Word of God and the Practice of Preaching the Word of God in *Verbum Domini*, *Lumen fidei* and *Evangelii Gaudium*], "Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne" 28/1 (2015), pp. 104–123.

God Who Speaks” (nos. 6–21), and “Our Response To The God Who Speaks” (nos. 22–28). This is the essential, explicitly doctrinal part of the exhortation, which gives rise, in a way, to the practical applications that are proposed in the rest of the papal document, namely how to understand, interpret and apply the word of God in the life of the Church. The issue to which we turn our attention is closely linked to the contents of the first two chapters of the Second Vatican Council’s *Dei Verbum* constitution, and in fact constitutes a deeper interpretation of them in the light of post-conciliar reflection on the word of God in the teaching and life of the Church.

Word of God and revelation

The first chapter of the exhortation *Verbum Domini* bears a significant title, clearly rooted in the long Ecclesiastical Tradition: “The God who speaks.” This statement points to divine revelation as seen in the light of the *Dei Verbum* Constitution and seeks to synthesise its essence. It contains a certain advance on the doctrine of the First Vatican Council as formulated in the constitution *Dei Filius*.⁶ Catholic theology, following that Council, as well as liturgy and catechesis, essentially treated revelation as a reality of an intellectual nature, aiming to communicate to man a certain body of information-cum-truths concerning God and to designate a sure path leading to Him: *manifestatio veritatis occultae homini facta per Deum*.⁷ In this perspective, faith was mainly seen essentially as an intellectual acceptance of what is not seen (cf. Heb 11:1). The Second Vatican Council, while not questioning this aspect of divine revelation and faith understood in this way, nevertheless defines revelation in an extended way, taking into account also the aspect of God’s giving of himself to man in history, culminating in Jesus Christ, the mediator in the order of creation and salvation, while faith is the response to the gift of salvation, which consists in participating in the life of God.⁸ Revelation becomes explicitly oriented towards communication, participation and encounter, and thus has an

⁶ Cf. First Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Filius* on the Catholic Faith, <https://inters.org/Vatican-Council-I-Dei-Filius>; <https://www.vatican.va/content/pius-ix/it/documents/constitutio-dogmatica-dei-filius-24-aprilis-1870.html> [access: 10.11.2023].

⁷ Cf. e.g. C.J. Vidmar, *Compendium repetitorium theologiae dogmaticae tum generalis cum specialis*, New York 1925, p. 33.

⁸ Cf. J. Królikowski, *Światło Chrystusa i sakrament zbawienia. Studia eklezjologiczne* [The Light of Christ and the Sacrament of Salvation. Ecclesiological Studies], Series: Ministerium Expositionis 5, Krakow 2018, pp. 35–49.

eminently eventual and existential significance. Revelation no longer appears as some external act that miraculously makes contact between God and man possible, with both remaining infinitely distant from each other, but points to a historical and personal event of a communicative nature through which man is graciously enabled to participate in the mystery of God, in his truth and in his holiness, and is thus led to a personal and living inclusion in the communion of the Trinity. Therein lies the essential novelty of the theology of revelation proposed by the Second Vatican Council.⁹

It is important to note a certain change in terminology that occurs in the exhortation *Verbum Domini* as compared to the constitution *Dei Verbum*. The Council referred to both the concept of revelation and the concept of the word of God, with the Bible most readily defined as *locutio Dei*. Pope Benedict XVI places a privileged emphasis on the word of God, also in relation to Scripture.¹⁰ Perhaps this is due to the fact that the term “the word of God” is much more evocative than the word “revelation,” which has a somewhat technical meaning without a clear existential and personal reference. The reference to “the word of God” draws explicit attention to the nature of God’s giving of Himself *ad extra* and in the manner of His effect on man.

The God of Jesus Christ is a Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and as such He has gradually revealed Himself in the history of salvation. This perspective was present in the *Dei Verbum* constitution, beginning with No. 2, which states that “through Christ, the Word made flesh, man might in the Holy Spirit have access to the Father and come to share in the divine nature.” The Father takes the initiative, the Son reveals and actualises the becoming of sons, and the Holy Spirit makes it possible for the believer to receive the life of God in order to become a partaker of it. In No. 20 of the exhortation *Verbum Domini*, this key vision, rooted in the Bible, is taken up in a very explicit and concrete way: God the Father is the source and origin of revelation, the incarnate

⁹ As for *Dei Verbum* constitution cf. L. Alonso Schökel, A.M. Artola, *La palabra de Dios en la historia de los hombres. Comentario Temático a la Constitución “Dei Verbum” del Vaticano II sobre la Divina Revelación*, Bilbao 1991; R. Burigana, *La Bibbia nel Concilio. La redazione della costituzione “Dei verbum” del Vaticano II*, Bologna 1998; F. Testaferri, *La parola viva. Commento teologico alla Dei Verbum*, Assisi 2009.

¹⁰ A very important role in such a view of Scripture was presented above all by Hans Urs von Balthasar in his article *Die Schrift als Gottes Wort*, “Schweizer Rundschau” 49 (1949), pp. 428–442. Later, the article under the title *Wort, Schrift, Tradition* was reprinted in Balthasar’s anthology of texts: *Verbum caro*, Series: Skizzen zur Theologie 1, Einsiedeln 1960, pp. 11–27.

Son is its completion and fullness, and the Holy Spirit is the empowerment to receive it and the guide to a life based on it.

In No. 6 of the exhortation, Benedict XVI refers to God's love in order to make it, as it were, the architectural criterion of revelation: God-Love dynamically reveals Himself in the word of the Son and, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, incorporates man into the love existing between the three persons of the Trinity. This is not just an abstract theological question, but a decisive moment of the Christian life. Accepting the manifestation of Love, which is God Himself, means for the believer a new way of life: it is no longer living for oneself, but orienting one's life towards the salvation of all. It means at the same time the real possibility of reaching the Father through Jesus, the Word of God, and living in communion with the three persons of God, whose principle and animating power is the Holy Spirit – the Spirit of Love.

In the course of history, God has gradually revealed Himself, just as Jesus did, who was part of this pedagogy of God when, for example, He did not speak openly about the kingdom of God, but explained its mysteries to a narrow circle of His disciples. God spoke to his people gradually, according to their capacity to understand and receive, placing himself on the side of the people who still had to mature in order to understand what was being communicated to them, accompanying them and especially speaking their language, sensitively taking into account the times, the ways and the dynamics of their growth (VD 11–13; DV 3 and 6). This means that revelation is not to be understood as some unexpected and spectacular theophany of which God is the author, but is to be understood in such a way that the people who God uses are also an integral part of it. The anthropological dimension of revelation is therefore part of his nature. Benedict XVI, in No. 11 of the exhortation, quotes in full an extremely important text from the New Testament, namely Heb 1:1–2.¹¹ These verses strongly emphasise that God's revelation is a process: God spoke in ancient times through the prophets, and now this speaking is fulfilled in the sending of the Son, through whom and from whom all things came into being. History is, then, the “womb” of God's gracious revelation; it is open to Him in order to host Him. This is the sense in which the Christian faith understands things: not only is Jesus Christ the manifestation of the Word in history, but also the same Word of God revealed as the Absolute in earthly and human adventure.

To indicate the manner in which God revealed himself, Benedict XVI speaks classically of “condescension” (*synkatabasis*) of God in revelation and

¹¹ Cf. P. Grelot, *Une lecture de l'épître aux Hébreux*, Paris 2003, pp. 15–18; A. Vanhoye, *L'epistola agli Ebrei. “Un sacerdote diverso”*, Bologna 2010, pp. 39–46.

in the incarnation (VD 11), following in this the Dogmatic Constitution *Dei Verbum* (par. 14). Considering these “ways” of God’s action significantly helps us to understand why God acted in ways that are difficult to understand, which by the way the “dark passages” of the Bible also convey to us (par. 42).

God’s speaking in history has its peak, and reaches its fullness in the incarnation of the Son, the Word, “mediator and the fullness of all revelation” (DV 2 and 4).¹² If God has revealed himself in a decisive and fully definitive way in the person of Jesus, then in the Son he has said all that he intended to say to man (VD 36). Jesus Christ is the Revelator, that is, the living and personal Word of God. Thus Pope Benedict XVI emphasises in his exhortation *Verbum Domini*: “Jesus is revealed as *the word of the new and everlasting covenant*” (par. 12). He not only made a covenant with his people, but he himself was and is the covenant in his passion and his resurrection (par. 13).

The novelty of the Christian faith is therefore not about what Christ said or communicated to us, but about who He is: His person together with the gift of divine life of which He has made human beings partakers. Such a view situates itself at the antipodes of the currents of thought that would like to make Christianity into a kind of general humanistic idea or a mere form of life. The word on which faith is based is the historical person who has transcended the boundaries of time to become an event “for me,” “today,” through which the transformation of human beings takes place.

This account, which is historical, personal and sacramental in character, has broad references to human life. On its basis, one understands how the event of Jesus Christ, the Word of God, encompasses the whole human being within a relationship that can only be adequately expressed through the category of grace. It turns out that capturing the Word of God in an informational and intellectual perspective is far from sufficient. There is no difference between believing what Christ says and believing who He is: “I am the way and the truth and the life” (John 14:6).¹³ To listen to Christ, then, means to encounter him in the Church, which proclaims the word and administers the sacraments, to experience him, for he is the “proto-sacrament of encounter with the Father”: “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9); “whoever receives me receives the one who sent me” (Matt 10:40).¹⁴

¹² Cf. I. de la Potterie, *Studi di cristologia giovannea*, Genova 1992, pp. 316–331.

¹³ Cf. I. de la Potterie, *La vérité dans Saint Jean*, vol. 1: *Le Christ et la vérité, l’esprit et la vérité*, Rome 1977, pp. 241–278.

¹⁴ Cf. J. Królikowski, *Jezus Chrystus jako prasakrament Boga i zbawienia* [Jesus Christ as the Proto-sacrament of God and Salvation], “Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne” 26/2 (2007), pp. 3–18.

The cosmic and anthropological dimension

Benedict XVI's exhortation *Verbum Domini*, in close connection with the constitution *Dei Verbum* (par. 3), is situated in a very broad perspective. It mentions the cosmic and personal dimension of the Word of God, which exists before any human intervention and before the Bible was written down. Man could potentially know the Word even if he did not have the written word of the hagiographers at his disposal. This would not happen by virtue of a personal effort based on his natural abilities, but is possible primarily because God has established the Word as the foundation of the being of all things: "In Him were created all things" (Col 1:16).

The starting point for talking about revelation is therefore the Creation, as the biblical and patristic tradition, moreover, suggests. This concept, which is referred to in No. 8, is based on biblical and patristic statements. In his *Itinerarium mentis in Deum*, St Bonaventure, whom Benedict XVI cites, stresses that "every creature is a word of God, since it proclaims God" (VD 8). Formed in the school of this great scholastic, but also in the light of the Fathers of the Church, Benedict XVI was able to say: "nothing in creation is isolated and the world, next to Sacred Scripture, is a Bible of God."¹⁵

In discussing this issue, it is important to emphasise that neither the Council nor Benedict XVI refers to the concept of "revelation" to indicate the manifestation of God in creation. The Council, in *Dei Verbum*, speaks of "an enduring witness – *perenne testimonium*" (par. 3), while the exhortation *Verbum Domini* limits itself to stating that "Scripture tells us that everything that exists does not exist by chance but is willed by God and part of his plan, at whose center is the invitation to partake, in Christ, in the divine life." (par. 8). There is thus a closer connection between creation and salvation than the First and Second Vatican Councils indicate in their documents. The First Vatican Council took into account the possibility of natural revelation, i.e. it assumed that man would be able to know God based on his natural abilities, starting from created things.¹⁶ This perspective also influences the approach to created realities. They are a gift on the basis of which one can know the Creator. If they are used well, they do not have a negative meaning, as various forms of Manichaeism imply, but are

¹⁵ Benedict XVI, General Audience *St Ephrem* (28 November 2007), [in:] *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI*, vol. III, 2 (2007), Città del Vaticano 2008, p. 658; https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20071128.html [access: 10.11.2023].

¹⁶ First Vatican Council, *Dei Filius...*, op. cit., ch. 2.

an open way to reach God, whose power and truth is reflected in all things. They are His “voice,” as St Thomas Aquinas often referred to them.¹⁷

If God speaks through all that exists, he speaks to an even greater extent in the books of other religions, above all the monotheistic ones, as taught by St Justin Martyr (doctrine of *logoi spermatikoi*) and many other holy Fathers of the Church; other religions, too, have “elements of truth” that refer back to the eternal Word of God, which is present in Christian revelation. Pope Benedict XVI refers to this doctrine when he speaks of interreligious dialogue with the Jews (VD 40, 43). Through these “elements,” God can somehow make Himself known, in accordance with patristic teaching, which was also taken up by the Second Vatican Council in the Declaration *Nostra Aetate*, which states that the actions and lives, precepts and doctrines of other religions “nonetheless often reflect a ray of that Truth which enlightens all men” (par. 2). This statement is also referred to in the declaration *Dominus Iesus* of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (par. 2, 21)

If the Word of God is the cause of creation, and if God speaks in all that has to do with creation (DV 3; VD 8), then for an even more fundamental reason He speaks in man, who at the level of creation, also abstracting from the gift of faith, is in a constitutive relationship with the Word of God (GS 22). Man is included in the relationship created by the Word of God because it is dialogue-oriented and response-oriented. By accepting it, man not only opens himself to God, but fully responds to what he is in his natural and human structure (VD 9). Already in his very being he finds the grounds or conditions for arriving by faith at revelation in Jesus Christ. In this perspective, faith, far from being in conflict with reason, finds itself in harmony with it and oriented towards achieving full union with it for the good of man. Faith does not contradict reason, but strengthens and expands it, since it enables man to see better and more, as indicated in the encyclical *Fides et Ratio* by Saint John Paul II. In this way, the “horizons of rationality” are widened, made more rational in the perspective of faith, as Pope Benedict XVI has consistently emphasised in his teaching, especially addressed to the academic world.¹⁸ In this perspective, too, basing one’s life on the eternal Word, the Creator and “reason” of creation, is the most rational attitude possible.

¹⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, I d. 27, 2, 2 ad 3; Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, q. 4 a. 2.

¹⁸ Cf. L. Leuzzi, *Allargare gli orizzonti della razionalità. I discorsi per l’Università di Benedetto XVI*, Milano 2008.

Sacramentality of the Word of God

The concept of sacramentality can be understood in at least two ways. The first way connects with the dimension of the sign proper to God's communication, and this is the sense in which it is used by Benedict XVI in his exhortation *Verbum Domini*; the second way of understanding refers to the efficacy of the word which, as an inspired word, gives the believer the possibility of a direct encounter with God, analogous to the encounter that is realised through the sacraments.

In addressing the question of the sacramentality of the word, one must start from the fact that the use of the term "word" to indicate communication properly applies only to man. And if it does apply to man, then due account must be taken of the differences that occur. First of all, the speaking of God does not coincide with the speaking of man. For man, speaking is a physiological and psychological act, whereas in the case of God, it is only a way of signifying that He gives Himself and acts, enters into dialogue with man and leads him to an encounter with Himself. "The word of God" signifies the way in which God reveals Himself and at the same time points to the personal reality of His self-giving. With His "speaking," God creates, acts, renews, subjecting Himself to the laws of the human word and of history, which are the mediating means He uses to reach man, both in the past and today. Saint Thomas Aquinas states suggestively: *Dicere Dei est facere*.¹⁹

When God enters into history, then what he communicates always has a sacramental dimension (VD 50), that is, it expresses itself through a sign (word and event) which, for its part, demands an appropriate reading (DV 2). The event of the Exodus from Egypt would not have been "the word of God" celebrated in the history of Israel if it had not been interpreted and commented upon by God himself, who used Moses and the men of his generation.

There is no word in a pure and neutral state, but is given in the form of human, cultural and historical mediation; otherwise man would stand outside the possibility of communicating with God. There is always a sign, or mediation, which refers back to that which is signified and communicated. This character of the Word of God is above all inherent in the mystery of the Incarnation, Scripture and the Church. The eternal Word, in order to reveal himself, assumed humanity and, through it, became the mediator of grace, that is, he makes it possible for man to enter into the life of God. Only through the mediation of the flesh does the Son of God have the possibility of reaching out

¹⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *Super II Corinthios*, cap. 1 l. 2.

to man and drawing him to himself; at the same time, it is only because God willed to incarnate himself in this way that man can receive him and respond voluntarily to his offer.

The sacramental dimension is also inherent in Scripture, in which God speaks in human language and the word of God is expressed and concretised in human words,²⁰ which are accessible to man, despite the distance separating the sacred authors who wrote them down. Scripture has the same character as the word of God, expressing the divine through the medium of the human. Human words relate to the word of God just as the humanity of Jesus relates to the eternal Word-Son of God. If one accepts the Incarnation integrally and attributes to Jesus God all that pertains to Jesus, then this is also the way to treat the Bible, in which – through inspiration – the word of God is contained and expressed in human words. The divine character of the Bible does not prevent us from using methods related to the letter, or “body” of the word, in reading it. There is no contradiction between inspiration and a scientific approach to the Bible, that is, the various methods by which one attempts to read what the inspired author intended to signify in words, which is due to the simple fact that inspiration, too, is linked to the writing down of the text, that is, to a reality that presupposes a relationship to a specific time and human historical situation.

Finally, the Church, too, is a sacrament of encounter with Christ. By preaching the word and celebrating the sacraments, it communicates the word of God through signs, in human and tangible form.

In all these areas, faith consists in the ability to go beyond sensory manifestations in order to recognise and grasp the intrinsic reality that underlies it and that defines the “participation in the life of God,” on account of which the Word of God has been revealed and is communicated. In other words, faith is that capacity to grasp the relationship occurring between the sign and what it signifies, between what is human and common to all human beings and what is divine, which is hidden and inaccessible directly to man. It is therefore a question of bringing out the relationship between the Word and words. God speaking to man can only be understood through faith; without faith, the Bible is just a historical document like any other, in many ways a strange book, but there is no God in it. Without faith, the word of God remains mute, failing to reach the human heart.

²⁰ Cf. more extensively J. Corbon, *La Parole de Dieu. Approche catholique*, [in:] J. Corbon, M. Bouttier, G. Khodre, *La Parole de Dieu*, Paris 1966, pp. 17–59; A. Vanhoye, *La Parola di Dio nella vita della Chiesa: La recezione della Dei Verbum*, “Rivista del Clero Italiano” 81 (2000), pp. 244–265.

This last aspect brings us to the subject of the sacramentality of the word in a second sense, that is, in the sense of its efficacy. The word of God gives grace, it gives the possibility to encounter Christ, to receive his sanctifying action. It is the word that saves (1 Tim 3:16), because it does what it signifies. This is also done in the Bible, which, because of its nature as a written word, not only objectifies the word of God in human and concrete language, but makes itself available and becomes a personal event. This happens so that the reader can, as it were, “dwell” in the word and understand it through faith and grace. St John speaks of “remaining” in Jesus by virtue of reference to his word (cf. John 15:7).

In this respect, there is an analogy with the Eucharist (DV 21; VD 56). Already the constitution *Dei Verbum*, placing the Bible and the Body of Christ on the same level in terms of the reverence shown to them,²¹ gave grounds for discovering the sacramentality of the Bible: the word nourishes like the Eucharist, and the Eucharist enlightens and dispels darkness like the word. Properly speaking, then, there are not two tables: the Word and the Body of Christ (SC 48), but there is one: the Word gives life, as does the Eucharist, which does not, however, mean that one table and the other rank equally.

Communicating the Word of God

Tradition and Scripture

Benedict XVI, in his exhortation *Verbum Domini*, recalls the Council’s doctrine on the transmission of the Word of God (par. 17).²² Here, too, it is worth remembering the turnaround that took place at the Second Vatican Council during the intensive work on the *Dei Verbum* constitution. This was one of the most debated points in the drafting of this constitution, since many of the Fathers were associated with a widely held theology according to which revelation is attested by unwritten traditions and by Scripture, treated independently as two separate and autonomous “sources.”²³ In fact, however, this was not a doctrine of the Council of Trent, but of post-Tridentine theologians with a view to distinguishing themselves clearly from the principle of *sola Scriptura* recognised as

²¹ Cf. J. Królikowski, *Słowo Boże i Eucharystia w konstytucji Dei Verbum* [The Word of God and the Eucharist in the Constitution *Dei Verbum*], “Teologia w Polsce” 9/1 (2015), pp. 71–81.

²² Cf. U. Betti, *La rivelazione divina nella Chiesa*, Roma 1970.

²³ Cf. First Vatican Council, *Dei Filius...*, op. cit., ch. 2.

a Protestant principle.²⁴ In the midst of the heated polemic, it was then completely forgotten that the principle of *sola Scriptura* was embraced by St Thomas Aquinas, among others: *Sola Scriptura canonica est regula fidei*.²⁵ The issue certainly calls for attention and an in-depth study of it, for which there is not space here.

According to the *Dei Verbum* Constitution, Scripture and Tradition are neither two sources nor one source of revelation, since it is revelation that is the proper “source” of Scripture and Tradition (DV 7), from which both Scripture and Tradition derive, constituting two ways of transmitting revelation.²⁶ Moreover, it is necessary to speak of Tradition in the singular and to write it with a capital letter, emphasising its singularity, its vitality and the fact that it belongs to the new People of God as a whole.²⁷ The Teaching Authority of the Church is not the source of revelation, but it makes an authentic interpretation of Scripture and Tradition, that is, it guards the one deposit of the word of God contained in them.

For many centuries, revelation retained its oral transmission dimension, so that there was no need for a written text. God was also able to achieve his purpose in this way without giving man the Bible in his hands. Tradition takes precedence over the process of writing down the inspired books and indeed it was only at a later date that they were written down.

In order to better illustrate the relationship between Tradition and Scripture, it is necessary to consider that they are in correlation with each other in relation to the Word of God or the Gospel which Christ entrusted to the Apostles. The Bible is in relation to Tradition for the reason that before the sacred books were written down they were transmitted orally. It was only within Tradition that they were recognised as inspired and included in the canon, that is, in the complete and normative list of the books of the Bible. In the context of the Council debate, J. Ratzinger formulated this point very clearly: “Scripture” only in the faith of the Church becomes Scripture in general; in this sense the existence of Scripture as such is still conditioned by the existence of ecclesiastical Tradition.²⁸

²⁴ Cf. F. Buzzi, *Il Concilio di Trento e il dibattito sul “sola scriptura” protestante*, [in:] *La Bibbia nella storia dell’Europa*, eds. A. Autiero, M. Perroni, Bologna 2012, pp. 125–140.

²⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Johannis lectura* 21, 24; cf. F. Gaboriau, *L’Écriture seule?*, Paris 1997.

²⁶ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Jedno źródło objawienia* [One Source of Revelation], [in:] J. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego*, vol. 1, op. cit., pp. 211–214.

²⁷ Cf. G. Segalla, *Scrittura, Tradizione e tradizioni nel loro mutuo rapporto*, “Lateranum” 74/1 (2008), pp. 29–68.

²⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Dyskusje soborowe nad relacją między Pismem i Tradycją* [Council Discussions on the Relationship between Scripture and Tradition], [in:] J. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 417.

The Bible, moreover, becomes intelligible in the context of the process of transmission of revelation that is constantly taking place. At the same time, Tradition is subordinate to Scripture, since it is only in the light of Scripture that the contents of Tradition can be considered authentic, i.e. remaining in accordance with divine revelation. The understanding of Scripture grows on the strength of Tradition and the awareness of the permanent significance of the revealed data. We are dealing here with a hermeneutical circle: on the one hand, the material text of Scripture is the norm from which one cannot deviate – it is the normative Apostolic Tradition – but on the other hand, it is the Holy Spirit who plays an irreplaceable role in relation to Tradition, that is, making it “alive,” enabling its historical adaptation and necessary renewal, so that it does not turn into an “archaeological museum,” but remains faithful to revelation. He can only do this in the perspective of pneumatological dynamism.

Vatican II thus sees Tradition in close and intrinsic relationship with Scripture, and vice versa, holding, however, to the principle that Tradition must always be referred to Scripture, since from a formal point of view it alone is the *locutio Dei*, the one and authentic word of God. Tradition is not the word of God on the same level as Scripture. This statement was the point of departure of the Second Vatican Council in relation to the Council of Trent, and it also has an ecumenical bearing in relation to the Reformed communities, which only recognise Scripture as the word of God. Commenting on the statement of *Dei Verbum* on this subject (par. 9), J. Ratzinger wrote that only in the case of Scripture [in *Dei Verbum*] was the verb “is” used. It is thus stated that Scripture *is* the word of God, recorded by means of writing. Tradition, on the other hand, is described only functionally, according to its presuppositions – Tradition transmits the word of God, but it is *not* the word of God. While the dominance of Scripture is clearly emphasised, this is reiterated when describing in more detail the process of the functioning of Tradition, whose function is to preserve, explain and spread. It is not productive but conservative, subservient to an overarching purpose.²⁹

²⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Wprowadzenie i komentarz do Prooemium, do rozdziałów I, II i IV Konstytucji o Objawieniu Dei Verbum* [Introduction and Commentary on the Prooemium, on Chapters I, II and IV of the Constitution on Revelation *Dei Verbum*], [in:] J. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego*, vol. 2, op. cit., p. 683.

The Bible is the word of God

When we say that the Bible is the word of God, we mean to say that it is different from all other books, that it is not only religious and sacred, but that it is a book that has God as its Author, in the sense that God stands at its origin and He is its primary author. In the Old Testament, the Law is said to have been written with the finger of God (Deut 9:10). This is a metaphor that may seem overblown, but it served to express the belief that the Bible has a divine origin.

In the course of the history of the dogma of inspiration, there has been, mainly under the influence of personalist concepts, a shift from emphasising that human authors were passive instruments in the hand of God (*organon*), to a conception according to which they fulfil the role of true and proper authors, who wrote in a way that corresponded to their intelligence and according to their own character what it pleased God to convey in writing.³⁰ Within this development of the understanding of the writing of the Bible, however, the belief in the divine origin of Scripture, that is, the belief in God as its primary Author, remained unchanged. It must be said, however, that at the beginning of this development, if, on the one hand, the role attributed to human authors as simple instruments was at odds with the human and historical dimension of the Bible, on the other hand, this posed fewer problems in the field of interpretation than does now the acknowledgement of an active role in relation to God's primary action. The issue calls for special reflection, the focus of which was provided by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in a special document on the inspiration and truth of Scripture.³¹

Linked to the concept of inspiration is the question of the truth of the Bible (VD 19). It is well known that with the Renaissance era there was a diminished awareness that the Bible could be treated as a normative source for the human and historical sciences, as had previously been quite widely accepted. The constitution *Dei Verbum*, quoted by Pope Benedict XVI in *Verbum Domini*, changed the way this issue was approached. It no longer treats the Bible as a book that contains no errors (the inerrancy of Scripture), but sees it in the perspective of the transmission of truth relating primarily to man's salvation.³² This is by no

³⁰ Cf. G. O'Collins, *Ispirazione. Verso un'interpretazione cristiana dell'ispirazione biblica*, Brescia 2022, pp. 114–121.

³¹ Cf. Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture: The Word that Comes from God and Speaks of God for the Salvation of the World*, Collegeville, MI 2014.

³² Cf. F. Cocco, *La verità della Scrittura: dalla Providentissimus Deus alla Verbum Domini*, "Euntes Docete" 64/2 (2011), pp. 27–40.

means a new thing, for it was already well known to the Church Fathers, but it is seen in a new perspective.³³ Such an approach in no way diminishes the human dimension of the Bible, nor does it lead to a rejection of critical methods when it comes to understanding it. There is progress in the way truth is understood, just as there is progress with regard to revelation. What is needed for the sake of salvation is based on a text that can be interpreted in a pluralistic sense, and its understanding deepens with the passage of time and the development of theological reflection. The truth of the Bible is thus sufficient for man to know the paths leading him to salvation and indeed to attain it.

Word in the Spirit

Dogmatic theology emphasises that the Holy Spirit realises His mission *ad extra* in manifold ways, that is, in the economic context of divine revelation; this stance is particularly concerned with the sanctification of the believer, as the Father is credited with creation and the Son with redemption. Obviously, in each case the three persons of God are acting simultaneously, reflecting their intrinsic unity. The revelation has been fulfilled by the incarnate Son of God, but its reception in the heart of the believer is accomplished through the Holy Spirit, who has the task of making the word of God alive, personal and present, and the heart of man open and submissive, so that the word of God may be fruitfully received.

The exhortation *Verbum Domini* indicates the penetration of the Holy Spirit through the whole process of revelation, from the beginning of salvation history to its concretised fulfilment in the believer who accepts the word in faith (par. 15–16). The Spirit leads to the realisation of God's design in the history of salvation (revelation); the Spirit watches over the actions taken by hagiographers; the Spirit acts when the word of revelation is received (*fides ex auditu*) and when the written word is read or interpreted. He is the author of the unity of the various stages of revelation and the guarantor of interpretive continuity. This is indicated by the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, in which, with regard to the Holy Spirit, it is said that "he has spoken through the prophets."

The work of the Holy Spirit is closely linked to revelation and its understanding. Benedict XVI emphasised this very explicitly: "there can be no

³³ Cf. T. Stramare, *La S. Scrittura come scienza della salvezza*, "Miscellanea Lateranense" 40–41 (1974–1975), pp. 275–284.

authentic understanding of Christian revelation apart from the activity of the Paraclete” (par. 15). It should be noted here that revelation and inspiration are two different realities: inspiration is related to a text written by authors who have received the gift of God’s special assistance, whereby what they have written can be attributed to God at the same time; revelation, on the other hand, concerns the content that it has pleased God to impart, so that man is able to receive the gift of God’s life in Christ. Already because of its developmental nature, not everything that God has revealed is situated on the same level. In the Gospels, for example, there is a loftier revelation than that conveyed in Leviticus, but from the point of view of inspiration, all the pages of the Bible are on the same level. Revelation and inspiration are not corresponding concepts either in relation to their scope: the whole Bible is inspired, in all its parts, as the Council of Trent stressed, and consequently there are no parts of the Bible that are more than others the word of God. No book of the Bible contains the whole of revelation, and revelation itself, given its developmental nature, is nowhere given as a whole.

The fact that revelation is the work of the Holy Spirit can already be read in certain Old Testament texts taken from the prophetic books, in which the word “said” cannot be separated from the Holy Spirit. The Word acquires its proper vitality through His mediation. On the other hand, the bond between Word and Spirit is shown in the life of Jesus, the Word of the Father. Without the Spirit’s participation, there would have been no incarnation in the womb of the Virgin Mary, who conceived under the influence of His action – “through the working of the Holy Spirit.” As the Gospels make clear, Jesus always speaks, acts and carries out his messianic mission in the Spirit.

Turning to the second aspect, that is, the relationship between the Holy Spirit and Scripture, it is necessary to refer to an analogy. As the Word of God was made flesh “from Mary” by the Holy Spirit, so by the same Spirit the word of God in the Bible was written down, since He assisted the hagiographers in their work of writing: “The word of God is thus expressed in human words” (VD 15). He is the Cause of the unity of Scripture, as He is also in the work of revelation. He leads to unity the diversity that exists, He allows the Gospel to be a unity even though there are four Gospels written down, and that there is only one image of Christ even though there are different ways of representing Him.

Apart from working in the Bible, which is the written testimony of revelation, the Holy Spirit also works in Tradition. It should be remembered that the process of transmission was not initiated with Christ when he entrusted the apostles with the task of transmitting what they had learned while they were with him, but was already initiated in the Old Covenant with the prophets,

that is, when God decided to reveal himself, that is, beginning with Abraham.³⁴ This is pointed out in the constitution *Dei Verbum* (par. 7), to which Benedict XVI referred in the exhortation *Verbum Domini* (par. 17). It may be considered a paradox, but this process of transmission continues today. When we interpret Scripture today, we situate ourselves within the circle of this great Tradition and take up its interpretative line of divine revelation.

The action of the Holy Spirit in relation to the word of God did not end with the writing of the Bible, because the Holy Spirit, poured out by Jesus glorified after the Resurrection, sent down on the apostles in the Upper Room, continues his work in the Church constantly, as Jesus himself announced in his farewell speech from the Upper Room recorded by St John. He, always present when the word of God is heard, arouses and strengthens faith. The exhortation *Verbum Domini* cites testimonies taken from Irenaeus, John Chrysostom, Jerome, Gregory the Great, Richard of the Abbey of St Victor (par. 16). Therefore, the Bible, having a theological message, can only be interpreted through a spiritual understanding, which is reached by participating, that is, internally experiencing the reality and truth that are the object of knowledge.³⁵

The action of the Holy Spirit is also prolonged in the believer who reads or interprets Scripture while living in the Church. The exhortation *Verbum Domini* emphasises this in paragraph 16, also citing patristic testimonies. It is, moreover, required by the very nature of the Bible to be read in the same Spirit in which it was written, as emphasised by the constitution *Dei Verbum* (par. 12), to which post-conciliar teaching refers, although this principle is not easily applied today.³⁶

Response to God

The second chapter of Benedict XVI's exhortation *Verbum Domini* is entitled: "Our Response To The God Who Speaks." If revelation is God's self-giving to man, then there is no revelation without a human response, which is an integral part of the fact that God speaks. The believer is not only the addressee of the word of God and experiences it in himself, but he becomes the constitutive

³⁴ Cf. H. Holstein, *La Tradition dans l'Église*, Paris 1960, pp. 15–36.

³⁵ Cf. H. de Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, Series: Milestones in Catholic Theology, Freiburg 2001, pp. 21–22.

³⁶ Cf. I. de la Potterie, *L'interpretazione della Sacra Scrittura nello Spirito in cui è stata scritta (DV 12,3)*, [in:] *Vaticano II. Bilancio e prospettive. Venticinque anni dopo (1962–1987)*, vol. 1, ed. R. Latourelle, Assisi 1987, pp. 204–242.

moment of the event of revelation, for without him the revelation could never be known and would not be able to achieve the purpose assigned to it by God. Given the personal character of the word of God, the response to it must have an equally personal character, cannot be limited to the assent of his reason or his will alone, but is ultimately to embrace the whole man. Benedict XVI emphasises synthetically in *Verbum Domini*: “the proper human response to the God who speaks is faith” (par. 25). Only faith is able to embrace the whole man, who in it engages all his spiritual powers and directs through them his whole life towards God. In this sense, it is man’s adherence to God, encompassing both faith in Him and the trust shown in Him. The Holy Spirit also plays a key role in this process of faith: “in order to accept revelation, man must open his mind and heart to the working of the Holy Spirit who enables him to understand the word of God present in the sacred Scriptures” (VD 25).

A positive response to the word of God takes the form corresponding to the incarnation of the Word in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Whoever accepts the word of God, in accordance with the announcement of Jesus himself, becomes his mother and gives birth to him in the works he produces. St Bonaventure, for example, presented this spiritual event very clearly in his work *Bringing Forth Christ. Five Feasts of the Child Jesus*.³⁷ It can be found in many other authors, both classical and contemporary.

In his exhortation *Verbum Domini*, Pope Benedict XVI highlights the link between the word of God and holiness, seeing it as the best interpretation of the word. Only the one who lives the word of God can understand it; and the one who best understands it is the one who bears witness to it by his deeds. Of course, such an interpretation is never complete and definitive because God’s call exceeds the possibilities of a full response on the part of man, goes beyond the human horizon and is, as it were, constantly onward, but there is something fundamental in this too, namely the call to constantly transcend the interpretation given. There is therefore a close connection between the reception of the word of God and the work of conversion undertaken. Henri de Lubac described this relationship as follows: “The Word of God a living and effective word acquires true fulfilment and total significance only by the transformation which it effects in the one who receives it. This is why, the expression ‘passing on to spiritual understanding’ is equivalent to ‘turning to Christ’ – a conversion which can never be said to have been fully achieved.” Reciprocal causality also between such a conversion to Christ or “passing on

³⁷ Cf. Bonaventure, *Bringing Forth Christ. Five Feasts of the Child Jesus* by St. Bonaventure, transl. E. Doyle, Oxford 1984.

to Christ” and the understanding of Scripture. Through the soul that opens itself to the Gospel and clings to Christ, all Scripture is seen in a new light. All Scripture is transformed by Christ.³⁸

The Word of God reflects the face of the Word who became human words, the face of God who became human. Spiritual tradition constantly sees Christ as the mirror in which the believer should view himself as part of his spiritual journey. At the end of the second chapter of the exhortation *Verbum Domini*, Benedict XVI presents Mary as the model of the Christian who listens to the word of God. There is an intimate relationship between her and the word of God: she lived in the word – she dwelt in it. An eloquent statement by Pope Benedict XVI on this subject can be found in his word at the conclusion of the Vatican retreat in 2006. He said at the time:

What fascinated me is this: the Archangel Gabriel holds a scroll in his hand, which I believe is the symbol of Scripture, of the Word of God. And Mary is kneeling within the scroll; that is, she lives her whole life in the Word of God. It is as though she were steeped in the Word. Thus, all her thoughts, her will and her actions are imbued with and formed by the Word. Since she herself dwells in the Word, she can also become the new “Dwelling Place” of the Word in the world.³⁹

Conclusions

In the first two chapters of his exhortation *Verbum Domini*, Pope Benedict XVI made an inspiring reinterpretation of the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council concerning the word of God addressed to man, and the response of faith that God expects from man. Particularly noteworthy is Benedict XVI’s emphasis laid in the Word of God on the word’s origin precisely from God, from which its specificity then follows. The word of God is intrinsically linked to the descent of God to man, to the manifestation of his love to bring him to a share in salvation, it reaches its fulfilment in Jesus Christ. God’s speech to man, gaining culmination in the mystery of the incarnation of the eternal Word, leads man to the fullness of divine life. This is because, through its union with the whole of God’s action, His word acquires a sacramental character,

³⁸ H. de Lubac, *Scripture in the Tradition*, op. cit., pp. 21–22.

³⁹ Benedict XVI, *Address at the Close of the Papal Spiritual Exercises* (11 March 2006), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060311_spiritual-exercises.html [access: 10.11.2023].

that is, it is a sign of God's communication, but it also acquires, through its direct union with His action, a special salvific efficacy. Through the word of God, on the basis of it, and above all by receiving it in and through faith, man comes to share in the life of God. This sacramental dimension of the word of God, which has been extensively emphasised by contemporary theology, seems to be the most original and most clearly emphasised aspect of the theology of the word of God, as pointed out by Pope Benedict XVI. This aspect then largely conditions the way in which the word of God is incorporated into the various areas of the Church's life, which are the "places" for giving adequate responses to God.

Advocating the primacy of God's word in revelation, Benedict XVI drew attention to the nature of the Bible and, consequently, to its role in human life. The process of God's revelation in history appears as a sequence of successive stages: creation – revelation – Church – Scripture, in which different actors act with different goals. Although it is a long and complex process, God's revelation is a single reality because it takes place in one and the same eternal Word and is fulfilled in His incarnation. The Bible is not merely the completion of this process, but reflects the Word which is already inscribed in creation and which, in and through the Church, awaits to be received and experienced by every human being. The Bible, therefore, is not just a witness to God's action in the world and some kind of "addition" to church life, but its most intrinsic element. This becomes particularly clear when it is pointed out that the word of God is the word of salvation.

The close connection between the Bible and the word of God then has multiple references to the Christian life and to its interpretation. If, on the one hand, the word of God is not bound to the word of the hagiographers, since it is the person of the Son of God who resounds in the Bible and is encountered in it, then on the other hand, the eternal word of God speaks through human words. For this reason, Scripture remains the privileged place where this word is put at the disposal of man and continues to speak to him, bringing the mystery of God alive to him and enhancing its impact.

The fact remains, therefore, what St Jerome once aptly said, that "ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ." It is important, therefore, for the Christian to establish by faith and in faith a deepened and living relationship with the word of God made available in Scripture. The word of God requires to be treated as personal and up-to-date as possible because, although it is a word that grows out of the past, it is a word that lives today for the sake of every human being and it directs its message to him "today." However, one must not fall into subjectivism or individualism. In order to avoid it, it is necessary

to constantly bear in mind that the Word is intimately connected with the Church, its living Tradition and the interpretation it gives. The word of God, while always being an individual word, remains an ecclesial word, living in the Church and serving its spiritual edification.

Bibliography

- Alonso Schökel L., Artola A.M., *La palabra de Dios en la historia de los hombres. Comentario Temático a la Constitución "Dei Verbum" del Vaticano II sobre la Divina Revelación*, Bilbao 1991.
- Balthasar H.U. von, *Die Schrift als Gottes Wort*, "Schweizer Rundschau" 49 (1949), pp. 428–442.
- Balthasar H.U. von, *Verbum caro*, Series: Skizzen zur Theologie 1, Einsiedeln 1960.
- Benedetto XVI, *A conclusione degli esercizi spirituali dettati dal Cardinale Marco Cé, patriarca emerito di Venezia* (11 marzo 2006), [in:] *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI*, vol. II, 1 (2006), Città del Vaticano 2007, pp. 302–303.
- Benedict XVI, *Address at the Close of the Papal Spiritual Exercises* (11 March 2006), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060311_spiritual-exercises.html [access: 10.11.2023].
- Benedict XVI, General Audience *St Ephrem* (28 November 2007), [in:] *Insegnamenti di Benedetto XVI*, vol. III, 2 (2007), Città del Vaticano 2008, pp. 654–659; https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/audiences/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20071128.html.
- Betti U., *La rivelazione divina nella Chiesa*, Roma 1970.
- Boeve L., "La vraie réception de Vatican II n'a pas encore commencé". *Joseph Ratzinger, Révélation et autorité de Vatican II*, "Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses" 85/4 (2009), pp. 305–339.
- Bonaventure, *Bringing Forth Christ. Five Feasts of the Child Jesus by St. Bonaventure*, transl. E. Doyle, Oxford 1984 (Bonawentura, *Pięć świąt Dzieciątka Jezus*, [in:] Bonawentura, *Pisma ascetyczno-mistyczne*, Warszawa 1984, pp. 143–153).
- Brzeziński D., *Sakramentalność słowa Bożego w świetle adhortacji apostolskiej Benedykta XVI Verbum Domini*, "Liturgia Sacra" 17/1 (2011), pp. 15–23.
- Burigana R., *La Bibbia nel Concilio. La redazione della costituzione "Dei Verbum" del Vaticano II*, Bologna 1998.
- Buzzi F., *Il Concilio di Trento e il dibattito sul "sola scriptura" protestante*, [in:] *La Bibbia nella storia dell'Europa*, eds. A. Autiero, M. Perroni, Bologna 2012, pp. 125–140.
- Chromy Z., *Teologia Słowa Bożego Benedykta XVI*, [in:] *Słowo Boże w życiu i misji Kościoła. Wokół adhortacji apostolskiej Benedykta XVI "Verbum Domini"*, ed. D. Ostrowski, Świdnica 2012, pp. 45–60.
- Cocco F., *La verità della Scrittura: dalla Providentissimus Deus alla Verbum Domini*, "Euntes Docete" 64/2 (2011), pp. 27–40.
- Corbon J., *La Parole de Dieu. Approche catholique*, [in:] J. Corbon, M. Bouttier, G. Khodre, *La Parole de Dieu. Approche catholique, protestante, orthodoxe*, Paris 1966, s. 17–59.
- Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych. Tekst łaciński i polski*, vol. 4: *Lateran V, Trydent, Watykan I (1511–1870)*, Series: Źródła Myśli Teologicznej 33, eds. A. Baron, H. Pietras, Kraków 2007.
- Gaboriau F., *L'Écriture seule?*, Paris 1997.

- Grelot P., *Une lecture de l'épître aux Hébreux*, Paris 2003.
- Hahn S.W., *Covenant and Communion: The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Grand Rapids, MI 2009.
- Holstein H., *La Tradition dans l'Église*, Paris 1960.
- Królikowski J., *Jezus Chrystus jako prasakrament Boga i zbawienia*, "Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne" 26/2 (2007), pp. 3–18.
- Królikowski J., *Słowo Boże i Eucharystia w konstytucji Dei Verbum*, "Teologia w Polsce" 9/1 (2015), pp. 71–81.
- Królikowski J., *Światło Chrystusa i sakrament zbawienia. Studia eklezjologiczne*, Series: Ministerium Expositionis 5, Kraków 2018.
- Leuzzi L., *Allargare gli orizzonti della razionalità. I discorsi per l'Università di Benedetto XVI*, Milano 2008.
- Linke W., *Logos Wcielony i słowo przepowiadane. Teologia Słowa Bożego i praktyka przepowiadania Słowa Bożego w Verbum Domini, Lumen fidei i Evangelii gaudium*, "Warszawskie Studia Teologiczne" 28/1 (2015), pp. 104–123.
- Lubac H. de, *Scripture in the Tradition*, Series: Milestones in Catholic Theology, Freiburg 2001 (Polish translation: H. de Lubac, *Pismo Święte w Tradycji Kościoła*, transl. K. Łukowicz, Kraków 2008).
- O'Collins G., *Ispirazione. Verso un'interpretazione cristiana dell'ispirazione biblica*, Brescia 2022.
- Ostrowski D. (ed.), *Słowo Boże w życiu i misji Kościoła. Wokół adhortacji apostolskiej Benedykta XVI "Verbum Domini"*, Świdnica 2012, pp. 45–60.
- Pindel R., Jędrzejewski S. (eds.), *Hermeneutyka Pisma Świętego w Kościele. Wokół adhortacji Verbum Domini Benedykta XVI o Słowie Bożym w życiu i misji Kościoła*, Series: Hermeneutica et Judaica 6, Kraków 2012.
- Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Inspiration and Truth of Sacred Scripture: The Word that Comes from God and Speaks of God for the Salvation of the World*, Collegeville, MI 2014 (Polish translation: Papieska Komisja Biblijna, *Natchnienie i prawda Pisma Świętego. Słowo, które od Boga pochodzi i mówi o Bogu, aby zbawić świat*, transl. H. Witczyk, Kielce 2014).
- Potterrie I. de la, *L'interpretazione della Sacra Scrittura nello Spirito in cui è stata scritta (DV 12,3)*, [in:] *Vaticano II. Bilancio e prospettive. Venticinque anni dopo (1962–1987)*, vol. 1, ed. R. Latourelle, Assisi 1987, pp. 204–242.
- Potterrie I. de la, *Studi di cristologia giovannea*, Genova 1992.
- Potterrie I. de la, *La vérité dans Saint Jean*, vol. 1: *Le Christ et la vérité, l'esprit et la vérité*, Rome 1977.
- Ratzinger J., *Dyskusje soborowe nad relacją między Pismem i Tradycją*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego. Formułowanie – przekaz – interpretacja*, vol. 1; Series: Opera Omnia 7/1, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2016, pp. 413–418.
- Ratzinger J., *Jedno źródło objawienia*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego. Formułowanie – przekaz – interpretacja*, vol. 1; Series: Opera Omnia 7/1, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2016, pp. 211–214.
- Ratzinger J., *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego. Formułowanie – przekaz – interpretacja*, vol. 1–2; Series: Opera Omnia 7/1–2, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, E. Grzesiuk, Lublin 2016.

- Ratzinger J., *Wprowadzenie i komentarz do Prooemium, do rozdziałów I, II i IV Konstytucji o Objawieniu Dei Verbum*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego. Formułowanie – przekaz – interpretacja*, vol. 2, Series: Opera Omnia 7/2, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. E. Grzesiuk, Lublin 2016, pp. 633–702.
- Segalla G., *Scrittura, Tradizione e tradizioni nel loro mutuo rapporto*, “Lateranum” 74/1 (2008), pp. 29–68.
- Stramare T., *La S. Scrittura come scienza della salvezza*, “Miscellanea Lateranense” 40–41 (1974–1975), pp. 275–284.
- Testaferri F., *La parola viva. Commento teologico alla Dei Verbum*, Assisi 2009.
- Thomas Aquinas, *De veritate*, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~QDeVer>.
- Thomas Aquinas, *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum*, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Sent.I>.
- Thomas Aquinas, *Super II ad Corinthios*, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~2Cor>.
- Thomas Aquinas, *Super Evangelium S. Johannis lectura*, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~Ioan>.
- Vanhoye A., *L'epistola agli Ebrei. “Un sacerdote diverso”*, Bologna 2010.
- Vanhoye A., *La Parola di Dio nella vita della Chiesa: La recezione della Dei Verbum*, “Rivista del Clero Italiano” 81 (2000), pp. 244–265.
- Vidmar C.J., *Compendium repetitorium theologiae dogmaticae tum generalis cum specialis*, New York 1925.

JANUSZ KRÓLIKOWSKI (REV. PROF.) – presbyter of the Tarnów diocese; in 1996–2009 lecturer in Eastern Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross in Rome; since 1997 lecturer in Dogmatic Theology at the Faculty of Theology, Department in Tarnów, of the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow; since 2010 lecturer in Mariology at the Marian-Kolbian Institute “Kolbianum” in Niepokalanów (Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw). Member of the Polish Mariological Society (President since 2021), Society of Dogmatic Theologians, Polish Theological Society, Branch in Tarnów, ordinary member of the International Pontifical Marian Academy in Rome. Consultor of the Marian Commission of the Polish Episcopate.

Sławomir Zatwardnicki

Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland
zatwardnicki@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0001-7597-6604

Christological “Once for All” of the Revelation versus Marian Dogmas in Joseph Ratzinger’s Theology¹

Chrystologiczne „raz jeden” objawienia a dogmaty maryjne w teologii Josepha Ratzingera

ABSTRACT: The purpose of this article is to show Marian dogmas in their relationship to Scripture as a testimony of revelation and to Tradition. In the first part, the author clarifies Ratzinger’s account of the relationship between the uniqueness of revelation in Christ and its continuity, as well as the links between Scripture preserving the “once for all” of revelation with Tradition, in which revelation is always present. The second part addresses the question of the Church’s memory, in which the Holy Spirit, guiding to all truth, also revealed the Marian aspect of revelation. Furthermore, the dynamic concept of Tradition demanded by the promulgation of the Marian dogmas of 1854 and 1950 is presented. In the last and most important part of the article, the author extracted from the work of the Bavarian theologian those contents of Mariology which, originating from the seeds of the inspired texts, shed light on the “once” of revelation and its testimony in Scripture. The example of Marian dogmas serves the purpose of outlining the creative though strained relationship between the two poles of revelation: uniqueness and continuity.

KEYWORDS: Marian dogmas, Mariology, “once for all” of revelation, continuity of revelation, dynamic concept of Tradition, Scripture versus Tradition, revelation versus Scripture, Immaculate Conception, Assumption, Christology versus Mariology

ABSTRAKT: Celem artykułu jest ukazanie dogmatów maryjnych w ich związku z Pismem Świętym jako świadectwem Objawienia oraz z Tradycją. Najpierw przedstawiono

¹ The article is part of research carried out under grant 20/2022 for scholarly activity entitled “The Marks of the Church vis-à-vis the Marks of Scripture,” awarded by the Rector of the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław from the funds of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education for the maintenance and development of research potential.

Ratzingera ujęcie relacji między jednorazowością Objawienia w Chrystusie a jego ciągłością oraz więzi między Pismem chroniącym „raz jeden” Objawienia a Tradycją, w której Objawienie pozostaje zawsze terazniejsze. Następnie zaprezentowana została kwestia pamięci Kościoła, w której Duch Święty prowadzący do pełni prawdy odsłonił również maryjny wymiar Objawienia. Kolejno przedstawiono dynamiczną koncepcję Tradycji, jakiej domaga się ogłoszenie dogmatów maryjnych z 1854 i 1950 roku. W ostatniej i najważniejszej części artykułu wydobyto z twórczości bawarskiego teologa te treści mariologii, które wyrósłszy z ziarna tekstów natchnionych, rzucają światło na „raz jeden” Objawienia oraz jego świadectwo w Piśmie. Na przykładzie dogmatów maryjnych zarysowano twórczy i niewolny od napięć stosunek dwóch biegunów Objawienia, jednorazowości i ciągłości.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: dogmaty maryjne, mariologia, „raz jeden” Objawienia, ciągłość Objawienia, dynamiczna koncepcja Tradycji, Pismo Święte a Tradycja, Objawienie a Pismo Święte, Niepokalane Poczęcie, Wniebowzięcie, chrystologia a mariologia

Introduction

Joseph Ratzinger's work attracted a widespread interest, which resulted in numerous publications whose authors endeavoured to characterise the most salient features of his Mariology. By way of an example, the following authors undertook research that corresponds with the topic explored in this article.

Mary Frances McKenna focused on “the female line in the Bible,” an important theme in Ratzinger's Mariology. The female line runs parallel to the masculine line and is indispensable for the realisation of salvation history. The author found that Ratzinger's reflections expand the understanding of salvation history presented in *Dei Verbum*, and even develop the ecclesial Tradition. Biblical women were portrayed by the German theologian as representatives of Israel and the Church. McKenna emphasised that Ratzinger wished to point out the proper place of Mariology and Marian devotion in Catholic theology and faith. She also accentuated that due to the perspective adopted by Ratzinger other important theological issues concerning not only Mariology, but also Christology, anthropology, ecclesiology or the interpretation of Scripture can be addressed.²

Rainer Hangler extracted from Ratzinger's work the significance of locating the reflection on the Mother of the Lord within the whole of the Christian

² M.F. McKenna, *Innovation within Tradition: Joseph Ratzinger and Reading the Women of Scripture*, Minneapolis, MN 2015; cf. also M.F. McKenna, *The Female Line in the Bible: Ratzinger's Deepening of the Church's Understanding of Tradition and Mary*, “Religions” 11/6 (2020), article no. 310.

faith. He emphasised that the Bavarian theologian read the New Testament Marian texts against the background of the female protagonists of Old Testament salvation history. Mary becomes a personification for both the chosen people and the Church.³

Boris Vulić, analysing Ratzinger's heritage, drew attention to the relationship of Marian dogmas to Scripture, mainly to the Old Testament theology of woman and the People of God. Ratzinger's fundamental biblical and Marian thesis is the personal concretisation of Israel and the Ecclesia in Mary. In order to demonstrate the harmony of Marian dogmas with revelation, it is necessary to read Scripture in its unity and totality (canonical exegesis), taking into account the Christological centre, as well as interpret it in line with the Tradition of the Church and the analogy of faith and typology.⁴

Jerzy Szymik considers the most original feature of Ratzinger's Mariology to be the link between Marian devotion and cordiality. Marian Christocentric piety is a way of the heart, not of distanced rationalism. The rightful place restored to Mary in theology and spirituality makes it possible, at the same time, to restore the full truth about God, Christ, the Church (with its Marian and not only Petrine dimension) and man. Mariological content, Szymik claims, is organised by the Bavarian theologian around two pairs of concepts: grace-faith and Christology-ecclesiology. The Mary-Church relations (Ratzinger writes about the transitivity of the mystery of Mary and the Ecclesia) is a consequence of the Mary-Christ relation. Mary is the daughter of Zion, the fruit of the piety of the People of the Covenant.⁵

Adam Wojtczak highlighted the roots of Ratzinger's methodology in Scripture interpreted as a whole and in patristic thought, as well as the organic connection with the doctrine of the Second Vatican Council, especially its perspective on the history of salvation. Among the motifs typical of the Mariological reflection of Benedict XVI, he included the lineage of women in Scripture and the Church, which, starting from the women of Israel, finds fulfilment in Mary. Wojtczak finds inspiring the typological interpretation of Mary as the "Daughter of Zion," who is a model of fidelity to the word of God.⁶

³ R. Hangler, *Die Mariologie von Joseph Ratzinger/Papst Em. Benedikt XVI. Ein Überblick*, "Studia Nauk Teologicznych" 12 (2017), pp. 113–129.

⁴ B. Vulić, *Marija, Kristova majka, u svjetlu jedinstva i harmonije Svetoga pisma u misli J. Ratzinger / Benedikta XVI*, "Diacovensia" 27/3 (2019), pp. 453–474.

⁵ J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, vol. 3, Katowice 2015, pp. 221–242.

⁶ A. Wojtczak, *The Characteristic Aspects of Benedict XVI's Teachings on Mary*, "Gregorianum" 95/2 (2014), pp. 327–348.

This article is intended as part of the research on Ratzinger's understanding of Mariology and its place in the whole of theological reflection,⁷ though from a different perspective. The author aims to show Marian dogmas (or more broadly, Marian doctrine and cult) in their relationship to Scripture as a testimony of revelation and to Tradition. The Bavarian theologian emphasised the uniqueness of God's revelation in Christ ("yesterday" of revelation) and, at the same time, pointed to the persistence of revelation ("today" of revelation) in the entity that received revelation on its pilgrimage through history, namely the Church. This raises the question about the relation between Marian dogmas and the Christological dimension of revelation, and between these dogmas that could only appear in the Tradition of the Church and Scripture securing the "once for all" of revelation in Christ.

In the first section, I will present Ratzinger's concept of the relation between the uniqueness of revelation and its continuity, while in the second I will show his understanding of the bond between Scripture securing the uniqueness of revelation and Tradition ensuring its continuity. In the next section, I will address the important question of the Church's memory, in which the Marian dimension of revelation could be recognised. The promulgation of the last two Marian dogmas demands a dynamic approach to Tradition, which will become the content of the fourth section. In the final section, which seems the most important for the research topic, I will answer the question of how Marian doctrine protects the message of Scripture and at the same time reveals what could not be discovered on the basis of *sola Scriptura*. In this way, using the example of Marian dogmas, the creative though strained relationship between the two poles of revelation, the uniqueness and continuity, will be outlined, in which the structure of dynamically approached Tradition will be manifested.

The "once," or "once for all," of revelation in Christ

Ratzinger, having researched the documents of the Fathers of the Council of Trent and the Tridentinum,⁸ came to the conclusion that they retained the same direction that was previously typical of patristic and medieval theology; the latter the Bavarian theologian had learnt while studying St Bonaventure's

⁷ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine and Piety in Faith and Theology as a Whole*, "Communio" [English edition] 30/1 (2003), pp. 147–160.

⁸ Cf. H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum. Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lebrentscheidungen*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2009, nos. 1501–1505 [hereinafter cited as DH].

concept of revelation.⁹ According to this traditional vision (not without the significant influence of Ratzinger as a conciliar expert), rediscovered at the Second Vatican Council, revelation signifies the approach of God to man and is "greater than what was merely written down," also greater than the words of Scripture, while Scripture is the significant witness to revelation.¹⁰ This approach left room for the ongoing revelation of the Holy Spirit working in the Church over time.

Ratzinger noted that St Benedict's conviction that all monks should participate in the community, since the Lord can reveal even to the younger what is better, served in the Middle Ages not only to delimit the principle of *auctoritas*, but also expressed the belief in the actuality of revelation. The revelation has its *palai*, but it also has its "today" related with the activity of the Holy Spirit present in the Church "today." From the perspective of faith, the primeval event is obligatory and authoritative, but not because of historical antecedence, but because of the action of God manifested in it. This, in turn, also has its ongoing presence, which remains in a dynamic and constantly redefined relation with the primeval event.¹¹

⁹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *A Life*, vol. 1: *Youth in Nazi Germany to the Second Vatican Council 1927–1965*, transl. D. Livingstone, London 2020, pp. 336, 349 (Polish translation: J. Ratzinger, *Moje życie*, transl. W. Wiśniowski, Częstochowa 2005, pp. 80, 106).

¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *A Life...*, op. cit., pp. 349–351 (J. Ratzinger, *Moje życie*, op. cit., pp. 106–107); cf. J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, San Francisco, CA 2002, p. 153 (Polish translation: J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat. Wiara i życie w dzisiejszych czasach. Z kardynałem Josephem Ratzingerem Benedyktem XVI rozmawia Peter Seewald*, transl. G. Sowinski, Kraków 2001, pp. 139–140); J. Ratzinger, *Wiara w Piśmie i Tradycji. Teologiczna nauka o zasadach* [Faith in Scripture and Tradition. A Theological Teaching on the Principles], vol. 2, Series: Opera Omnia 9/2, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. J. Merecki, Lublin 2018, p. 718 [hereafter referred to as JRO 9/2]; T. Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith. The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford 2008, p. 50: "Moreover, Ratzinger underscored the principle that *actio* (action) is an antecedent to *verbum* (speech), reality to the tidings of it. For him it is important to understand that the level of reality of the Revelation event is deeper than that of the proclamation event, which seeks to interpret God's action in human language." The necessity of Tradition (and at the same time the objection to *sola Scriptura*) was derived by Ratzinger precisely from the fact of the non-identity of revelation and Scripture – cf. J. Ratzinger, *Wiara w Piśmie i Tradycji. Teologiczna nauka o zasadach*, vol. 1, Series: Opera Omnia 9/1, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. J. Merecki, Lublin 2018, pp. 356–357 [hereinafter cited as JRO 9/1].

¹¹ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 454; R. Popowski, *Palai*, [in:] R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu. Wydanie z pełną lokalizacją greckich haseł, kluczem polsko-greckim oraz indeksem form czasownikowych* [Great Greek-Polish Dictionary of the New Testament. Edition with Full Localization of Greek Entries, Polish-Greek Key and Index of Verb Forms], Warszawa 1995, pp. 456–457. An instruction from the Rule of St. Benedict

The static concept of revelation, according to which the revelation ended with the death of the last of the Apostles, had to be revised, taking into account precisely the pneumatic perspective and the historical dimension of Christianity, the young Ratzinger believed.¹² He criticised this static view precisely from the position of a historical Christian awareness that did not know it; he also accentuated its inconsistency with the message of the Bible, in which revelation is not a system of sentences, but an event of a new relationship between God and men. As such, it is both something accomplished and something happening; it is accomplished because of the fact that this relationship has been realised in Christ in the highest way, in turn it is present because this relationship is to be actualised again and again. Accepting the fact that revelation closed with the end of the apostolic era would have to lead to equating revelation with the sum of the teachings that God has given to mankind over a period of time, so that one could now only accept them by faith and draw conclusions from them.¹³

Ratzinger insisted that this view corresponds to a historical and intellectualist notion of revelation proper to modernity, which is completely erroneous. Revelation is not the sum of sentences, since the revelation is Jesus Christ himself.¹⁴ From this Christological and personalist view, it follows that one must take into account the two poles of revelation, which has its “yesterday” and its “today.” Since “God has given us his Son, himself, his whole Word,” so that he can offer nothing more, “in this sense revelation has ended”. In turn, because “the Word is God himself, and all words point to the Word,” the Word can never be just the past, yes it will be “the present and the future, and always anchor our lives in eternity and at the same time open to it”. For us Christians, “Christ is both

in the thought of St. Bonaventure becomes a dogmatic and historical axiom justifying the development of dogmas in the course of history. In his view of *revelatio*, Bonaventure also referred to St Augustine and to the New Testament letters, from which he took over, without dogmatic reflection, the charismatic concept of revelation (cf. 1 Cor 14:30 and Phil 3:15) – cf. J. Ratzinger, *Rozumienie objawienia i teologia historii według Bonawentury. Rozprawa habilitacyjna i studia nad Bonawenturą* [Understanding Revelation and the Theology of History According to Bonaventure. Habilitation Dissertation and Studies on Bonaventure], Series: Opera Omnia 2, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. J. Merecki, Lublin 2014, pp. 628–632 [hereinafter cited as JRO 2].

¹² Cf. JRO 9/1, pp. 381–382, 499. Cf. DH 3421: “*Revelatio, obiectum fidei catholicae constituens, non fuit cum Apostolis completa.*” *Dei Verbum* nowhere claims that revelation ends with the death of the last of the Apostles – cf. G. Daly, *Revelation in the Theology of the Roman Catholic Church*, [in:] *Divine Revelation*, ed. P. Avis, Eugene, OR 1997, p. 37.

¹³ Cf. JRO 9/1, pp. 502–503.

¹⁴ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia o chrystologii* [Jesus of Nazareth. Studies on Christology], vol. 2, Series: Opera Omnia 6/2, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2015, pp. 680–681 [hereafter referred to as JRO 6/2].

the One who has come and the One who is coming. Therefore, we believe in the Redeemer already present, and at the same time we await Him: Maranatha!"¹⁵

In Ratzinger's thought, there is a connection between the "today" of revelation and what happened "once for all" (*ephapax*),¹⁶ since the historical event happened by God's will "once for all" (cf. Heb 7:27; 9:12; 10:10). For the Christian faith, the "yesterday" associated with the historicity of the Incarnation is just as important as the "always" resulting from the one-off/unique event retaining its present.¹⁷ Christ cannot be divided into the earthly Jesus and the Lord of glory. The beginning established in Jesus of Nazareth continues throughout human history, and it is only in the progression of history that all the possibilities of this already established encounter between man and God can unfold.¹⁸

The Bavarian theologian transposes the approach to revelation as accepted at the Council of Trent into the categories of modern theology, using for this purpose the distinction between material and formal principle. As Aaron Pidel writes, the constancy and progression of revelation are related to the fact that "revelation is fixed in its 'material principle' (*das Materialprinzip*) by virtue of the closed biblical canon, yet open in its formal principle by virtue of the canon's progressively unfolding meaning [...]."¹⁹ These statements by a Jesuit require modification. It seems characteristic of Ratzinger's work that he constantly emphasised distinction between revelation and its testimony in the form of a written (Scripture) or oral (*regula fidei*) canon. He treats the explication of revelation as the moment of closure for this "once for all" stage, and in this way the canon functions as a permanent norm for the Church throughout her history. However, if we are not to reduce revelation to a set of theses, it must be assumed that this norm is the permanent reality of revelation secured by these theses,²⁰ and not the canon itself. Ratzinger claimed that:

¹⁵ JRO 6/2, pp. 681–682.

¹⁶ Cf. R. Popowski, *Ephapax*, [in:] R. Popowski, *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu...*, op. cit., pp. 247–248.

¹⁷ Cf. JRO 9/1, pp. 366, 381–382, 503; B. Ferdek, *Objawienie w doktrynie kard. Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI* [Revelation in the Doctrine of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI], "Studia Theologiae Fundamentalis" 1 (2010), pp. 174–175. Cf. H. Seweryniak, *Teologiczna droga Josepha Ratzingera – papieża i współczesnego ojca Kościoła* [The Theological Path of Joseph Ratzinger – Pope and Contemporary Father of the Church], [in:] *Niedźwiedź biskupa Korbiniana. W kręgu myśli teologicznej Benedykta XVI*, eds. H. Seweryniak, K. Sitkowska, P. Artemiuk, Płock 2011, p. 40.

¹⁸ JRO 9/1, p. 502.

¹⁹ A. Pidel, *Christi Opera Proficiunt: Ratzinger's Neo-Bonaventurian Model of Social Inspiration*, "Nova et Vetera" [English edition] 13/3 (2015), p. 703.

²⁰ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 503.

[...] Although Revelation is completed according to its material principle, it is and remains present according to its reality. In other words: we are dealing here with a view according to which, although Revelation has its ἐφάναξ, because it has been accomplished in historical facts, it also has its continuous “today”, because what has happened once remains in the faith of the Church still alive and effective, and the Christian faith never refers only to what is past, but at the same time to what is present and past.²¹

The biblical message about Jesus is not an archival confirmation of an event that could be encapsulated in that history, but is a witness to the Lord’s permanent presence in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 3:17). The Word develops in history and at the same time is protected from human speculation insofar as it is linked to a historical basis.²²

If Jesus’ preaching already constituted an interpretation of Scripture by virtue of his authority, all the more so must ecclesiastical preaching retain the character of interpretation. Tradition is therefore “bound” by the original event and its written testimony under inspiration. The Church, by virtue of the Lord’s spiritual authority, continues to interpret Scripture – not merely through exegesis, but in faith, worship and life. Ratzinger takes into account both the importance of the Church’s authoritative office, which draws its power from the presence of the Spirit and the “present” with Christ, and emphasises the right of the office of Scripture’s testimony drawing its solemnity from the “once for all” of salvation history.²³ The function of the “office” of Scripture in this double criteriology is worth emphasising here – Ratzinger points to the understandable *littera scripturae* as an important criterion in maintaining the balance between “yesterday” and “today.” While it is not absolute, it is a relatively independent criterion:

What can be unequivocally discerned scientifically or in a simple reading in the Scriptures functions as the real criterion to which the statements of the Teaching Office must also be subjected. What is at stake here, of course, is the fundamental component, knowledge, which is not the judge of faith, but which also exists in faith as a critical instance and, as such, has an essential task: to take care of the purity of the ἐφάναξ, of the testimony once given, to defend

²¹ JRO 9/1, p. 382.

²² Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 386.

²³ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 366. Cf. Y. Congar, *Tradycja i tradycje* [The Tradition and Traditions], vol. 2: *Esej teologiczny* [Theological Essay], transl. A. Ziernicki, Poznań–Warszawa 2022, p. 250.

the *sarx* of history against the arbitrariness of gnosis, which wants to become independent again and again.²⁴

In the Magisterium of the Church, one should not see a "second" authority existing "alongside" Scripture; indeed, this office belongs intrinsically to Scripture. According to Ratzinger, the *viva vox* of the Church, for which Scripture is the measure and boundary, safeguards Scripture from manipulation, protects its perspicuity (*perspicuitas*) and the authority of its reliable response to divine revelation.²⁵ Thus, *vis-à-vis* the Church and the word of God, there are two moments: (i) the Church is the place where the word of God mediated by the Church lives; (ii) the Church stands *vis-à-vis* the received word of God, which becomes the basis of its existence. It is both a word within and above the Church, and thus becomes the critical instance for a particular form of ecclesial existence. Therefore, as Ratzinger writes, the empirical form of the Church, its *hic et nunc*, must be assessed in the light of the universal Church (the Church of all times and places) and above all from the perspective of the exemplary expression of the Church's faith in Scripture. In order to place her "body" at the disposal of the word of God, the Church should submit herself to his judgement.²⁶

²⁴ JRO 9/1, p. 367. cf. N. Bossu, S. Advani, *Resolving the Dualism between Exegesis and Theology: Joseph Ratzinger and the Rediscovery of Tradition. A Case Study of the Purification of the Temple (Jn 2:13–25), "Alpha Omega" 23/1 (2020)*, pp. 76–77. Thus, Luther's desired independence of Scripture as an unambiguous criterion versus the Church in some sense exists, which should find its due place in Catholic theology – cf. JRO 9/1, p. 366. In this approach, of course, it is not a matter of literalness, which can even be a betrayal of fidelity to the text, as it can cause one to lose sight of the Bible as a whole – cf. J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, San Francisco, CA 1985, p. 118 (Polish translation: J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *Raport o stanie wiary. Z Ks. Kardynalem Josephem Ratzingerem rozmawia Vittorio Messori*, transl. Z. Oryszyn, J. Chrapek, Kraków–Warszawa 1986, p. 101).

²⁵ Cf. JRO 9/1, pp. 332–333. It is also worthwhile to refer to the joint study by Ratzinger and Rahner – cf. J. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego. Formułowanie – przekaz – interpretacja* [On the Teaching of the Second Vatican Council. Formulation – Transmission – Interpretation], vol. 1, Series: Opera Omnia 7/1, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2016, pp. 181–183 [hereinafter cited as JRO 7/1].

²⁶ Cf. JRO 9/2, p. 791. The International Theological Commission (*Select Themes of Ecclesiology on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Closing of the Second Vatican Council*, 3.1 and 8.1) noted the inseparability, but at the same time the need to distinguish between the Church-mystery and the Church-historical subject.

Scripture and Tradition and the bond of uniqueness and continuity of revelation

As the Bavarian theologian points out, the idea of an unwritten Apostolic Tradition appeared late in Catholic theology and is not constitutive of the concept of Tradition; it has also been challenged by historical research, including that on the history of the canon of Scripture, which is by no means derived from information obtained from the Apostles.²⁷ According to Ratzinger, Tradition is made up of a number of elements which must be seen together,²⁸ and which he presents in such a way as to dismiss the understanding of Tradition as an oral transmission of the truths of the faith, a transmission that was supposed to go back to the apostolic period:

(1) Scripture, which must not be contrasted with Tradition, for it is an element of Tradition, and Tradition transcends Scripture. The transcendence of the principle of Scripture is already determined by the very distinction between the Old and New Testaments, which are rather living words interpreting "Scripture" (i.e. the Old Testament), whereby the Old Testament books can only be "Scripture" in a Christological reinterpretation, the criterion of which is found in the New Testament writings. Interpreted christologically, the Old Testament constituted the Scripture of the early Church, in which the bond of Scripture with Tradition must be recognised.²⁹ It should be emphasised that, in the light of the event of Christ, the Old Testament was opened to a new interpretation in the spiritual reality of Christ, who came in the Holy Spirit and reveals what the disciples could not bear while he was in their midst (cf. John 16:12n).³⁰ The "surplus" of the reality of revelation as compared to Scripture is one of the sources of the reality of Tradition.³¹

(2) The Old Testament Scriptures as a tool of Tradition remained open to further ecclesiastical interpretation. This found expression in the Synoptics' account of Jesus, in the acceptance and development of Paul's formulas and in John's interpretation of the Event of Christ. The New Testament canon bears witness to the presence of the Lord in the power of the Spirit, hence His word can be understood as present and can still develop. On the other hand, it remains bound to a historical basis from which separation could result in the "gnosis" of human speculation. The New Testament canon remains inherently open

²⁷ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 388.

²⁸ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 385.

²⁹ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 385.

³⁰ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 359.

³¹ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 364.

and lives in each Christian present.³² Ecclesiastical preaching is an explication of revelation; it is an explanation of the Old Testament in relation to Christ, and of the events of Christ in the light of *Pneuma* and in the light of Christ's ongoing presence in the Church – His Body.³³

(3) The idea of apostolic succession, whose function is to safeguard the given word against the inclinations of arbitrary Gnosis. The bishop as witness protected against alleged unscriptural, secret apostolic traditions mentioned by the Gnostics. The point of *successio apostolica* is that the personal presence of the witness is the primordial form of the presence of the word, safeguarding the primordial word to which he had to remain faithful and which he was to proclaim and interpret. Ratzinger explained that "the Tradition is understood as a witness in which a single word is assimilated into each present and precisely in this way faithfully preserved," whereby "history shows ever more clearly the intrinsic (and indelible) tension between preservation and making present."³⁴

(4) The concept of *regula fidei* (and later, inaccurately synonymous with it, the *symbolum*) as the first "canon" of the Church. Until the Middle Ages, there was a conviction that Scripture should be interpreted according to the *fides* of the Church expressed in the verbal formula. It was not a question of the material completion of Scripture by the creed, but rather a hermeneutical issue: Scripture is to be interpreted in the light of and for the sake of the rule of faith. Although the content of the rule was taken from Scripture (which might at first suggest the principle of *scriptura sui ipsius interpres*), "the canon within the canon" was established by the authority of the Church as an expression of her faith explaining Scripture. The *κανὼν τῆς πίστεως* is something more than the sum of theses/assertions, proving that Scripture can only interact in the faith of the Church, especially since the rule of faith was related to the liturgical and sacramental life in which the Church put its faith into practice and experienced the salvific action of the Lord.³⁵ Ratzinger links this placing of ecclesial *fides* above *scriptura* to the impossibility of objectifying revelation, which in the New Testament is *Pneuma vis-à-vis grammata*.³⁶

³² Cf. JRO 9/1, pp. 385–386. The New Testament writings are "the interpretation of the 'Law, Prophets and Writings' [...] from the standpoint of the story of Jesus," while the Old Testament writings remained open and constituted for the disciples a testimony in favour of Jesus himself, as Holy Writings revealing his mystery" – J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *A Life...*, op. cit., pp. 262–263 (J. Ratzinger, *Moje życie*, op. cit., p. 62).

³³ Cf. JRO 9/1, pp. 361, 364.

³⁴ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 386.

³⁵ Cf. JRO 9/1, pp. 386–387.

³⁶ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 364.

(5) The presence of the Holy Spirit in the time of the Church. Awareness of the Spirit's activity developed from the promise of sending the Paraclete recorded in the fourth Gospel. This conviction was expressed in the idea of the inspiration of the ecumenical councils and – in medieval theology and the debates of the Council of Trent – in the understanding of *revelatio* as a factor in the development of dogmas.³⁷ Ratzinger insisted that the pointing to the presence of the Spirit in the Church can be considered as the lasting core of these claims. "As present at every moment, the Spirit takes care that the revelation once given is preserved, which sometimes – precisely in order to remain the same – must be uttered in a different way."³⁸

For our considerations, most significant is the fact that Scripture and Tradition are linked in terms of uniqueness and continuity. Scripture safeguards the "once for all" of the historic and salvific events and thus protects the faith from going astray, while Tradition, on the other hand, makes it possible for the faith to be realised and to develop "today." Giving the floor to Ratzinger:

Scripture provides the link to history, to the one-time event of Christ and to his message; it provides a wall of defence, protecting the faith from being diluted in the speculations of arbitrary thought. Tradition, on the other hand, embodies the living "today" of the faith, which must be realised, developed and preserved anew in every time; it preserves the Church from the mummification of what is past. Taken together in this way, Scripture and Tradition embody the interplay of uniqueness and continuity that is essential to the Christian faith.³⁹

The theme of the actuality of revelation resounded in Ratzinger's critique of the working schemata given to the Fathers of Vaticanum Secundum. The Council expert opposed the intellectualistic view of revelation in the drafts *Constitutio-num et Decretorum*, because "revelation is not a dead and fossilised *depositum*, known only from the outside to a greater or lesser extent," but it "lives in the Church and that the increasing knowledge of revelation is at the same time its inner development."⁴⁰ Also in his commentary on *De Fontibus Revelationis*, Ratzinger emphasised that revelation being more than its testimony in Scripture is something living which embraces Scripture and develops it.⁴¹

³⁷ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 388.

³⁸ JRO 9/1, pp. 388–389.

³⁹ JRO 7/1, p. 417.

⁴⁰ JRO 7/1, p. 132.

⁴¹ Cf. JRO 7/1, p. 142.

Obviously, the reception of revelation is not tantamount to the object of reception, but, as Ratzinger maintained, it is impossible to separate the process of understanding from that which is understood – hence the division into history as a past and the subsequent process of explanation should be considered oversimplified. In his commentary on *Dei Verbum*, Ratzinger wrote that Tradition develops (Latin: *proficit*) as the understanding or perception of the source reality increases (Latin: *crescit perceptio*). This is made possible by the support of the Holy Spirit who, by expanding and deepening the Church's memory, leads her to all truth (cf. John 16:13) enabling an increase in the understanding of the transmitted words and realities. The Council Fathers enumerated three factors of growth: the contemplation and meditation of the faithful (cf. Luke 2:19, 51), deep understanding as a result of spiritual experience, and official preaching stemming from the charism of truth.⁴²

Vatican II pointed to a triad of events involving oral proclamation (*praedicatio oralis*), examples (*exempla*) and organised action (*institutiones*) of the Apostles. It is not the teaching of Christ alone that constitutes the genesis of Tradition (as the Council of Trent asserted), but also the behaviour and deeds of the One with whom the Apostles lived generate tradition. The provenance of Tradition is Christological and pneumatological, since the Apostles learned or received all that they were then to transmit to succeeding generations, not only from the Lord, but also through the help of the Holy Spirit.⁴³ As Tracey Rowland notes, the language of gift and communication was used by the Apostles to preach – "Proclamation is presented as part of the giving activity of God."⁴⁴

⁴² Cf. J. Ratzinger, *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego. Formułowanie – przekaz – interpretacja*, vol. 2, Series: Opera Omnia 7/2, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. E. Grzesiuk, Lublin 2016, pp. 672, 674–675, 990–991 [hereafter referred to as JRO 7/2]; M. McCaughey, *Through the Lens of the Pure in Heart: Ratzinger's Theological Approach and the Interpretation of Revelation*, "Annales Theologici" 32/1 (2018), p. 127; T. Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith...*, op. cit., p. 65; Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, no. 8 [hereinafter referred to as DV]. Also, the importance of the Fathers of the Church is considered not from the perspective of the statically understood traitors of the apostolic messages, but from the point of view of the dynamically understood Tradition. The writings of the Fathers are the living present and manifestation of Tradition, the manifestation of the perpetuation of the mystery of Christ in ecclesial life, the expression of an actualising and assimilating understanding of what was handed down at the beginning – cf. JRO 7/2, pp. 676–677. The dynamic understanding of revelation in Catholic theology originates from the Tübingen school – cf. G. Daly, *Revelation in the Theology...*, op. cit., p. 28.

⁴³ Cf. JRO 7/2, pp. 666–667.

⁴⁴ T. Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith...*, op. cit., p. 51.

With regard to the influence of the Holy Spirit on the creation of Scripture, Ratzinger notes the significant change introduced by the fathers of Vaticanum Secundum with regard to the statements of Tridentinum. The Tridentine formulation *Spiritu Sancto dictante* was replaced by *Spiritu Sancto suggerente* (cf. John 14:26). The guidance of the Paraclete “is not a ‘dictation’ but a *suggestio*, a retrospective understanding of the unspeakable in what was once spoken, which goes to a depth of events that cannot be measured by the concepts of *praedicatio oralis* [...] and *dictare*.” In this way, the conciliar document departs from a doctrinal approach/account of revelation. Revelation concerns the whole man and, as such, encompasses both what was spoken and what the Apostles were able to express, as well as what remained unspoken and which gave character to the Christian existence created by them, which consequently also goes beyond verbal expressions and cannot be merely a process of transmitting words.⁴⁵ The same Holy Spirit acting in the Church era makes it possible to grasp the depth of what has happened:

The ineffable, the spiritual experience of the whole Church, her communion with the Lord and his Word in faith, prayer and love, contributes to the growth of the understanding of the historical beginning, as well as updating again and again in the contemporary faith the history of its source and expressing what the Word meant from the beginning and what was to be understood in changing times by the people living in them.⁴⁶

Ratzinger accentuates the Christological dimension of Tradition, which originates from the sending of the Son by the Father. This primordial *παράδοσις* is continued in the permanent presence of Christ in the Church. Therefore, the primary reality communicated in Tradition is the whole mystery of Christ, preceding all explications (including those inspired). The Tradition then exists as the indwelling of Christ by faith, and as such also precedes detailed explications.⁴⁷ We can therefore say that for Ratzinger Tradition means man’s bond with the unique history of Christ, confirmed in Scripture (as the instrument of Tradition), which is present in the Church through the Spirit, experienced in the Church in faith and prayer, and expounded in preaching.⁴⁸ For a revelation

⁴⁵ Cf. JRO 7/2, p. 667; DV 7; T. Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith...*, op. cit., p. 52; M. Wahlberg, *Revelation as Testimony: A Philosophical-Theological Study*, Grand Rapids, MI 2014, p. 14.

⁴⁶ JRO 7/2, pp. 672–673. Cf. A. Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI: An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, London 2007, p. 60.

⁴⁷ Cf. JRO 9/1, pp. 364–365.

⁴⁸ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 390.

once given to remain the same, it sometimes requires being provided in a new way, which, according to Ratzinger, is precisely the concern of the Paraclete.⁴⁹

In order to confirm that Ratzinger held these views throughout his life, it suffices to refer to the Exhortation on the word of God. The author of *Verbum Domini* appreciates the meaning and value of living Tradition and Scripture in the Church, the interpretation of which he derives from the profound bond between the Holy Spirit and the word of God. The word of God, spoken in time, gave itself and entrusted itself to the Church, so that salvation can reach people in every time and place. Referring to the Second Vatican Council, Benedict XVI writes that the Tradition initiated by the Apostles is a living and dynamic reality developing in the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Although its truth remains eternal and unchanging, the understanding of the matters and words handed down can grow. Therefore, a living Tradition is important for a deeper understanding of the truth revealed in Scripture.⁵⁰

Memory of Mary – *memoria Ecclesiae* – Mary in the memory of the Church

If revelation is conceived as an accumulation of supernatural information, faith is reduced to merely accepting what has already been received in the past. If, however, ultimately the revelation is believed to be Christ himself, the Logos, then a question opens up concerning the memory of the Church in which this all-embracing Word will be comprehended. The Logos will always remain greater than the words; the words will never exhaust Him. Words can only participate in the inexhaustibility of the Word and reveal Him to some extent to successive generations of believers. The outline of a theology of memory, according to Ratzinger, was first given in the Fourth Gospel, in which memory is shown to be much more than a mere computer-like storage for accumulated information.⁵¹

When that which is stored in it meets that which is new, then that which has passed away also receives light, and now that which could not be seen at all

⁴⁹ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 387. It is worth adding that theology, too, requires a constantly new assimilation, since the eternal, unchanging truth of God must be experienced and expressed again and again within each generation – cf. *ibid.* p. 227.

⁵⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI, Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, no. 17 [hereafter referred to as VD]. Cf. M. Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation: The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture*, Grand Rapids, MI 2014, pp. 198, 212.

⁵¹ Cf. JRO 6/2, pp. 680–681; JRO 9/1, pp. 359, 364.

before is revealed and made known in it. It remains the same, and yet it grows. In the words we discover the Word more and more, and in this way it is always the same revelation, but to each succeeding generation it is revealed and opened in its fullness, in its life, as new in each present.⁵²

For our considerations those statements by Ratzinger are of importance which point to the connection between John's "recollection" leading to a fuller discovery of Christ and Luke's account of the process of recollection taking place in the life of Christ's mother. In the episode of the Annunciation (Luke 1:26–38), the evangelist shows a confused Mary in a dialogue with the word, inwardly wrestling with it to pursue the meaning of Gabriel's greeting (verse 29). In the two pericopes of the next chapter, about the shepherds' prostration (Luke 2:8–20) and the finding of the "lost" twelve-year-old Jesus (Luke 2:41–52), Mary's memory is shown to be more than merely preserving recollections of things past. She explores the inner dimension of the events that are a "word" for her, and, perceiving them in connection with others, she assembles them as if one mosaic, so that the whole message becomes visible (cf. verse 19 and 51).⁵³

In his commentary on Mary's reaction to the words spoken by the Twelve found in the temple, Ratzinger drew attention to the element of darkness or even passion connected to the mystery of God, and to the need to mature to the words of Jesus kept in the heart and not yet comprehended at that stage:

Jesus' divine mission bursts through the boundaries of all human criteria and repeatedly becomes, in human terms, a dark mystery. Something of the sword of sorrow of which Simeon had spoken (cf. Lk 2:35) becomes palpable for Mary at this hour. The closer one comes to Jesus, the more one is drawn into the mystery of his Passion. [...] Jesus' saying is on too lofty a plane for this moment in time. Even Mary's faith is a "journeying" faith, a faith that is repeatedly shrouded in darkness and has to mature by persevering through the darkness. Mary

⁵² JRO 6/2, p. 681; cf. M. McCaughey, *Through the Lens of the Pure in Heart...*, op. cit., p. 130.

⁵³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia o chrystologii*, vol. 1, Series: Opera Omnia 6/1, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. M. Górecka, W. Szymona, Lublin 2015, p. 293 [hereafter referred to as JRO 6/1]; J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. The Infancy Narratives*, transl. P.J. Whitmore, New York 2012, Kindle Location 437–447 [hereafter referred to as JN]; VD 27, 87; Benedict XVI, Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 33; J. Ratzinger, *Wzniosła Córa Syjonu. Rozważania mariologiczne*, transl. J. Królikowski, Poznań 2002, pp. 68, 104–105, 128 [hereinafter referred to as WCS]; J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., pp. 230, 240; J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. Urs von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, transl. A. Walker, San Francisco, CA 2005, p. 115.

does not understand Jesus' saying, but she keeps it in her heart and allows it gradually to come to maturity there.⁵⁴

In this way, characteristic of the *Virgo audiens*, she learns to understand and perceive in God's plan the profound thought that connects seemingly unrelated matters. This would not be possible, Benedict XVI emphasised, without the silence that must accompany the reception of the Word of God and without the humility, patience and time that constitute the "soil" for the seed of the word.⁵⁵ "For every member of the faithful Mary is the model of docile acceptance of God's word" (VD 87), and Mary, "the one who hears and keeps the Word in exemplary fashion"⁵⁶ is also "the image of the Church in attentive hearing of the word of God" (VD 27),⁵⁷ keeping and passing it on,⁵⁸ without separating reason from heart⁵⁹, but applying the word to life.⁶⁰ In *Jesus of Nazareth*, Pope Emeritus added that Mary "holds her heart and mind in harmony and seeks to understand the context, the overall significance of God's message," and thus "becomes an image of the Church," which tries to understand the word of God "in its entirety and guards in her memory the things that have been given to her."⁶¹ This requires recognition that the words of Jesus transcend human measure, and correct exegesis must humbly acknowledge it.⁶²

Benedict XVI referred the importance of the Mother of the Word not only to personal devotion, but also to scientific theological reflection. "I would

⁵⁴ JN, Kindle Location 1421–1439; cf. WCS, pp. 68, 103, 105, 128, 132 and p. 67 (commentary on: John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater*, no. 14).

⁵⁵ Cf. JRO 6/1, p. 293; VD 66, 87; WCS, pp. 105, 133. In *Mater Verbi* Benedict XVI sees the synthesis of the stages practised in *lectio divina* – VD 87. *Mater laetitiae* also reflects the essential connection between the word of God and joy or happiness – VD 124. Cf. also: A. Riches, *Deconstructing the Linearity of Grace: The Risk and Reflexive Paradox of Mary's Immaculate Fiat*, "International Journal of Systematic Theology" 10/2 (2008), p. 193.

⁵⁶ J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., p. 306 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., p. 273).

⁵⁷ Cf. VD 88 (on the indissoluble bond between the Word of God and Mary).

⁵⁸ Cf. JN, Kindle Location 1444.

⁵⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI. Cappella Papale for the Opening of the 12th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls* (5.10.2008), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20081005_apertura-sinodo.html [access: 13.10.2023].

⁶⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address to the Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Biblical Commission* (23.04.2009), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090423_pcb.html [access: 13.10.2023].

⁶¹ JN, Kindle Location 447.

⁶² Cf. JN, Kindle Location 1439.

encourage scholars as well to study the relationship between *Mariology and the theology of the word*,” he wrote in *Verbum Domini*, because “[t]his could prove most beneficial both for the spiritual life and for theological and biblical studies,” since “what the understanding of the faith has enabled us to know about Mary stands at the heart of Christian truth” (VD 27).

According to Benedict XVI, the Fourth Gospel is based precisely on the kind of “recollecting” typical of the conduct of the Mother of the Lord herself. With the difference that the evangelist “deepens still further the notion of remembrance, as the remembrance of the ‘We’ of the disciples, that is, of the Church.” Such recollection “is not a purely psychological or intellectual process, but a pneumatic event,” not just something private, but because of the Church as the subject of this recollection, “it transcends the sphere of our own human understanding and human knowledge.” What takes place here is “the guidance of the Holy Spirit, who shows us the connection of Scripture, the connection of words with reality, and so leads us «into all truth».”⁶³ This is not an invention or transformation of history (that would be gnosis), but entering into a deeper dimension of events that does not distance us from reality, but allows us to see the truth hidden in the fact. Ultimately, it is about such an attestation of Christ that would lead the reader to the Person of the Lord who not only was (in the past) but also is (in the present), for He is the One who says of Himself “I am” (John 8:58).⁶⁴

For the Bavarian theologian, the most important aspect seems to be the intertwining of personal (cf. John 19:35) with communal (cf. 1 John 1:1–2a) recollection, “since the recollection, which is the basis of the Gospel, is purified and deepened by being incorporated into the memory of the Church, it transcends indeed a mere banal memory based on facts.”⁶⁵ In John’s Gospel there are pericopes explicitly indicating that it was only after the Resurrection and

⁶³ JRO 6/1, p. 293; cf. T. Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith...*, op. cit., p. 60.

⁶⁴ Cf. JRO 6/1, pp. 290, 292–294; N. Bossu, S. Advani, *Resolving the Dualism...*, op. cit., p. 61; M. Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation...*, op. cit., p. 236. Ratzinger draws on the work of Martin Hengel (*Die Johanneische Frage. Ein Lösungsversuch mit einem Beitrag zur Apokalypse von Jörg Frey*, Tübingen 1993, p. 322), except that he considers the five factors listed by him for the composition of the Gospel text in a different order, showing the relationship of history and the reminiscent “theologising” of what happened – cf. JRO 6/1, pp. 290–291. Cf. also: Cf. H. Witzcyk, *Natchnienie, prawda, zbawienie* [Inspiration, Truth, Salvation], Poznań 2020, p. 169.

⁶⁵ JRO 6/1, p. 291. Ratzinger adopted the concept of the bond between the individual “I” with the common “I” of the Church from Henri de Lubac. “I believe” makes it possible to transcend subjectivity and to enter, in the memory of the Church, into a knowledge that transcends time and boundaries – cf. JRO 9/2, p. 830.

the glorification of Christ, in the memory of the Church precisely, that the disciples became capable of grasping the depth of words and historical events and discovering God's intended meaning of Scripture (cf. John 2:17, 22; 12:16). The process that takes place in the *memoria Ecclesiae* is tantamount to entering into the inner aspect of events thanks to the connection of speech and activity of God; the unity of Logos and fact is exposed, the mystery of Jesus is revealed, in whose destiny the Scriptures are fulfilled.⁶⁶

In Ratzinger's conviction, it is in this understanding of the Church's recollection that the Lord's announcement from the Upper Room is realised: "But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth" (John 16:13a).⁶⁷ This process, however, does not end with the emergence of New Testament literature. A rereading of the gift of revelation will take place throughout ecclesial Tradition, as the Church is guided by the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit allows previously covered meanings to be unveiled.⁶⁸ If Tradition always presupposes a supra-individual entity that transmits Tradition, then in the case of *traditio Jesu* the *tradent* of the memory is the Church. Without it, it would only be possible to speak of the Tradition of Jesu as a commemoration rather than a reality that is both historical and history-making.⁶⁹

Ratzinger could probably approve the statement of Jean Guitton, a French philosopher, that "Mary, whose considerations developed over time, became the object of considerations developing over the centuries."⁷⁰ This process, which marked the New Testament texts, must apply even more extensively to the entire history of the Church.⁷¹ In an interview with Peter Seewald, Ratzinger admitted that in the Gospels Mary "is quite marginal," in Matthew she still "plays almost no part," but in John's Mariology "the role of the Mother has been more clearly worked out." It could be said, the interviewer argued, that

⁶⁶ Cf. JRO 6/1, pp. 291–292; S. Hahn, *Covenant and Communion: The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Grand Rapids, MI 2009, p. 80; N. Bossu, S. Advani, *Resolving the Dualism...*, op. cit., pp. 72–73, 76.

⁶⁷ JRO 6/1, p. 293.

⁶⁸ Cf. JRO 6/2, p. 681.

⁶⁹ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 440; M. McCaughey, *Through the Lens of the Pure in Heart...*, op. cit., p. 130; M. Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation...*, op. cit., p. 3.

⁷⁰ J. Guitton, *Maryja* [Mary], transl. T. Dmochowska, Warszawa 1956, p. 32.

⁷¹ There are, according to Ratzinger, not only Old Testament theology, New Testament Old Testament theology and New Testament New Testament theology, but also ecclesiastical New Testament theology (this means "more" dogmatics in relation to biblical theology is referred to as Tradition) – cf. JRO 9/1, pp. 362–363.

“people were discreet so long as she was alive. And obviously she herself was always discreet.”⁷²

It could be assumed, against a suspicious critical exegesis, that Luke turned his attention to Mary (who was one of his sources) and through her to the wider circle of Jesus’ natural relatives (“brothers of the Lord”), who first preserved, then passed on and interpreted theologically such a tradition.⁷³ For Ratzinger, it is noteworthy that the messages of the Nativity and Pascha are of different importance, and he points out that the former, initially private, was only incorporated into the official preaching of the Church at a certain stage in the development of the Creed in Christ. It was then, when a place had been prepared for them and when the time necessary for inspiring proper reverence had elapsed, that these traditions had to be integrated.⁷⁴

Ratzinger highlights the role of the Nativity narrative in the development of Christological reflection, as well as the mutual illumination of the “mystery of Mary” and the profession of faith in Christ:

It seems natural to me that it was only after Mary’s death could the mystery be made public and pass into the shared patrimony of early Christianity. At that point it could find its way into the evolving complex of Christological doctrine and be linked to the confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God [...]. The mystery of his origin illuminated what came later, and conversely the developed form of Christological faith helped to make sense of that origin. Thus did Christology develop.⁷⁵

In Ratzinger’s view, there is also another theological basis for the inclusion of the private tradition in the official tradition of the Church. The point is that the concept and birth of Christ constitute a new beginning in the history of salvation, for which the only cause is the creative word of God. As a result of God’s special intervention, a new creation appears, a new “Adam” coming from

⁷² J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., p. 296 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., pp. 272–273); cf. JN, Kindle Location 237; Benedict XVI, P. Seewald, *Light of the World. The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times. A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, transl. M.J. Miller, A.J. Walker, San Francisco, CA 2010, p. 168: “[Mary] figures in the Bible, in Luke and in John, relatively late, but with great radiance and clarity, and she has therefore always been a part of Christian life.”

⁷³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church’s Marian Belief*, San Francisco, CA 1983, p. 45 [hereinafter referred to as DZ] (Polish translation: WCS, pp. 32–33); [hereinafter referred to as WCS]; JN, Kindle Location 224–237, 657, 1001–1017.

⁷⁴ Cf. DZ, p. 45; WCS, p. 33.

⁷⁵ JN, Kindle Location 663–668.

God (cf. Luke 3:38). The powerless, rejected and barren Israel, which becomes a concrete reality in Mary, bears fruit in accordance with Isaiah's promise (cf. Isa 54:1), and Mary becomes a sign of openness to God's grace.⁷⁶

The last two dogmas and the dynamic nature of Tradition

As Ratzinger noted, in the period between the end of the Second World War and the Second Vatican Council, there were "two movements that had—albeit in very different ways—certain 'charismatic features'."⁷⁷ The first was the Marian movement and the second was a current arising from the liturgical, ecumenical and biblical movement.⁷⁸ The liturgical movement sought an objective religiosity, based on the sacraments and based on the Bible or the ancient Church, and was characterised by a theocentrically oriented Trinitarian prayer (through Christ to the Father). The Marian movement, on the other hand, emphasised rather the personal and the subjective aspect, favoured a different concept of meditation (through Mary to Jesus) and was influenced by Our Lady's apparitions.⁷⁹

The Council was entrusted with the task to elaborate the relations between these movements and to show the way to fruitful integration and development without losing their specific character.⁸⁰ The famous 1963 vote resulting in the inclusion of Mariology in the Constitution on the Church can be considered, in the opinion of a former conciliar expert, as an attempt to answer the question of the meaning and priority of the two currents,⁸¹ as well as the

⁷⁶ Cf. DZ, p. 48; WCS, p. 34; JN, Kindle Location 617–632.

⁷⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 147; WCS, p. 113.

⁷⁸ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 148; WCS, p. 113. Ratzinger himself admitted that he grew up in a Christocentric piety fed by the Bible and the Fathers of the Church. Marian piety and theological formation were not integrated together because Mariology still lacked inner strength – cf. Benedict XVI, P. Seewald, *Light of the World...*, op. cit., p. 168; Benedict XVI, P. Seewald, *Ostatnie rozmowy* [Last Conversations], transl. J. Jurczyński, Kraków 2016, p. 106.

⁷⁹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 148; WCS, p. 114; J. Frings, *Das Konzil und die moderne Gedankenwelt*, Köln 1962, pp. 31–37.

⁸⁰ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 149; WCS, pp. 114–115. Cardinal Joseph Frings was to be the one to issue the call to find a meeting point between the two movements – cf. WCS, p. 130; cf. also: P. Blanco, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: Nuclear Ideas*, "Theology Today" 68/2 (2011), p. 166.

⁸¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 150; WCS, p. 115.

proper place of the mystery of Mary and Marian dogmas.⁸² The conclusion to be drawn from this is that the living Tradition of the Church, in which the movements characterised above developed their wings, influenced the course and outcome of the Council debates. They took place in the perspective of the aforementioned bipolarity, which was reflected in the two currents described by Ratzinger, and which ultimately caused, especially under the influence of the Marian movement, the Council to develop a new account of Tradition.

The debates at the Council took a dramatic turn with the submission of the document speaking of Scripture and Tradition as sources of revelation. The historical-critical method undermined the notion of Tradition understood as an oral transmission, existing alongside Scripture, that can be dated back to apostolic times itself and able to constitute the second source of historical knowledge.⁸³ The first millennium knew nothing about the Immaculate Conception,⁸⁴ the doctrine of the *assumptio corporalis* of the Mother of God was not known before the fifth century, and the first news of the Assumption is not a written version of a tradition previously transmitted orally.⁸⁵ The discussion on the dogma of the bodily Assumption of Mary proved to be so very difficult because of the problem of modern biblical exegesis and the question of how history and spirit relate to each other in the structure of faith.⁸⁶ This dogma is

a new knowledge that only then emerges, and then the centuries-long struggle to understand it begins, until finally, in 1950, the Church declared that it was knowledge in the Holy Spirit, which must be counted among the essential contents of revelation. Tradition as its own material principle cannot be demonstrated on this very basis, but it shows itself again as a process of spiritual assimilation and unfolding of the mystery of Christ in the historical struggles of the Church.⁸⁷

The struggle for the final form of *Dei Verbum* was linked, among other things, to a new view of the phenomenon of Tradition; this new view was initiated by the 1854 and 1950 dogmas, which, in the absence of proof from Scripture,

⁸² Cf. JRO 7/1, pp. 299–300, 338.

⁸³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Moje życie*, op. cit., pp. 103–104.

⁸⁴ Cf. DZ, p. 62; WCS, p. 42.

⁸⁵ Cf. JRO 7/1, p. 145. Ratzinger referred to the research of the patrologist Berthold Altaner of Würzburg – cf. J. Ratzinger, *Milestones. Memoirs 1927–1977*, transl. E. Leiva-Merikakis, San Francisco, CA 1998, p. 58; J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *A Life...*, op. cit., p. 298 (J. Ratzinger, *Moje życie*, op. cit., pp. 67–68); WCS, p. 48.

⁸⁶ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Moje życie*, op. cit., p. 104.

⁸⁷ JRO 7/1, p. 145.

were deduced from the idea of growth, progress and the sense of faith. Consequently, the idea of material Tradition was abandoned in favour of the process of Tradition. At the same time, however, the question of the criteria for the profession of faith was raised and the criterion of *sola Scriptura* (research by Josef Rupert Geiselmann), positively understood, came to the fore: Scripture as the unequivocal and indisputable place of apostolic Tradition (i.e., Scripture interpreted according to the assumptions of the historical-critical method) now appeared to be the only counterweight to the Church's Teaching Office.⁸⁸

Of interest to us is the assessment Ratzinger expressed in connection with the appeal in the case of the last two dogmas to the infallibility in matters of faith of the Church, which as a whole cannot err in its faith. Thus, in his opinion:

The awareness of the faith of the people of God becomes the first criterion of Tradition. Irrespective of the importance of this criterion, there is a danger here that [...] what was to be the criterion of Tradition will perhaps disappear, [...] and that at the same time as this positivism of the consciousness of the whole Church there will be a positivism of the Teaching Office which, by virtue of the present of the Spirit, will cease to perceive the Christological ἐφάπαξ and thus distort the basic structure of Christian Tradition.⁸⁹

The two poles mentioned earlier, between which an imbalance could occur, are clearly juxtaposed here. The Christological "once for all" could be overshadowed, distorting the structure of the Tradition.

In his commentary on DV 10, the Bavarian theologian wrote that Scripture and Tradition are an asset entrusted to the Church – they constitute the deposit of the word of God, the preservation and realisation of which is a matter

⁸⁸ Cf. JRO 7/2, pp. 633–634; JRO 7/1, p. 619; J. Ratzinger, *Moje życie*, op. cit., pp. 104–105; S. Zatwardnicki, *One Source of Revelation and Two Currents of the Revelation Transmission and Cognition: The Apological Dimension of Joseph Ratzinger's Theology*, "Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny" 28/2 (2020), pp. 78–84. It is noteworthy that Ratzinger as a young theologian neither included Mary and Her bodily Assumption in the entries of the lexicons, nor did he mention Her in the later Eschatology; cf. E. de Gaal, "Exaltation in the Second Adam": *Heavenly Mindedness and the Young Joseph Ratzinger in His 1950s Contributions to the Lexikon Für Kirche und Theologie*, [in:] *Engaging Catholic Doctrine: Essays in Honor of Matthew Levering*, eds. R. Barron, S.W. Hahn, J.R.A. Merrick, Steubenville, OH 2023, p. 507.

⁸⁹ JRO 9/1, p. 389. Yves Congar, too, saw the danger of assuming the autonomous life of Tradition vis-à-vis the deposit established "once for all," especially the scriptural testimony – cf. Y. Congar, *Tradycja i tradycje...*, op. cit., pp. 251–252, 327.

for the whole people of God, not just the hierarchy.⁹⁰ The statement about the role of the Church's Teaching Office in authentic explanation of the word of God must be read in line with this background. Exegesis is not limited to the Teaching Office, but is a ministry encompassing the whole actualisation of the word and is a function of the whole Church, bishops and laity.⁹¹ Here, a critique of the sense of faith that is interesting for the subject of our research emerges:

In so doing, we should consider it a fortunate decision of the Council that, while emphasising the contribution of the "laity" to the efforts for the purity of the Word, it did not refer to the theory of the sense of faith, which, in connection with the 1854 and 1950 dogmas, helped to make clear the role of the universal Church in confessing the Word. For this theory has too many underdeterminations in it to be regarded as a non-dangerous expression of the issue we are discussing.⁹²

Ratzinger's conviction here is that the function of the Church should rather be to preserve, to be faithful to what has already been received. It is for this reason that DV 10 states that the holy People "holding fast" (Latin: *iugiter perseverat*) in the teaching of the Apostles and thus disavow novelties contrary to the faith. This servile character of the Church's Teaching Office in relation to the word of God is regarded by Ratzinger as a *relecture* by the Council of previous statements of the Magisterium.⁹³

Geiselman, on the other hand, seemed to Ratzinger to over-emphasise the pole of uniqueness, considering Tradition to be the living presence of Scripture, i.e. merely its translation into the present of the Church.⁹⁴ After the Council, there was a hackneyed popularisation⁹⁵ of Geiselman's theses and the sufficiency of Scripture "was interpreted in the direction of biblicism removing the patristic legacy into the background," and "biblicism transformed itself into historicism." In this way, the Church ceased to appear as a living organism and "lacked space for the dynamics of a developing faith."⁹⁶ Neither the older dogmas of Christianity *consensus quinquaesecularis* nor, still less, the Marian

⁹⁰ Cf. JRO 7/2, p. 685.

⁹¹ Cf. JRO 7/2, p. 686.

⁹² JRO 7/2, p. 686.

⁹³ JRO 7/2, p. 686 (quotation and paraphrase).

⁹⁴ JRO 9/1, p. 447.

⁹⁵ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Moje życie*, op. cit., p. 106; cf. J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 153; WCS, p. 116.

⁹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 153; WCS, pp. 116–117.

dogmas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could be derived from *sola Scriptura*. To say, on the one hand, that Scripture contains all revealed truth and, on the other hand, that the 1950 dogma is revealed truth would lead to such a flexible understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture that the concept would lose all meaning.⁹⁷

Ratzinger pointed to a dangerous moment in history that determined the emergence of the idea of Oral Tradition. Still medieval theologians distinguished Scripture as the material principle of revelation from the formal principle of revelation, and therefore "could accept the material *sola scriptura*, i.e. conceive of Scripture as the only material principle of faith, without the need for the dubious construction of the material Oral Tradition." The idea of *paradosis agrafos* must have arisen when revelation was "erroneously identified with its material principle," for it then became necessary "to accept the material fullness of revelation." The Bavarian theologian claimed that this "erroneous objectification of the concept of revelation is the basis of both the former Protestant biblicism and the post-Tridentine material interpretation of the concept of Tradition."⁹⁸ For even in the statements of the Tridentinum, the pre-Tridentine understanding of revelation was still making itself known,⁹⁹ according to which "Scripture is the material principle of revelation, which is not completely objectified in it" and therefore, "to be revelation it needs interpretation."¹⁰⁰

Another change in the structure of Tradition came with the de-historicization of Tradition and the recognition that revelation could include what the whole Church at a certain time began to recognise as revealed, disregarding the "once for all" of revelation. The gap in the historical justification of the 1854 and 1950 dogmas sought to be filled by dogmatic considerations, the result of which can be presented as follows:

In order to prove that a given claim belongs to Tradition, it is not necessary to have a longitudinal section going back to the beginning, but a transverse section through the consciousness of the Church at any moment of her history *is* sufficient, since whatever the whole Church has recognised as revealed *is* also revealed and belongs to authentic Tradition. This de-historicization of the concept of Tradition meant at the same time – although not openly expressed – a minimisation of the Fathers.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Cf. JRO 9/1, pp. 354–355.

⁹⁸ JRO 2, p. 635.

⁹⁹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Moje życie*, op. cit., pp. 106–107.

¹⁰⁰ JRO 2, pp. 634–635.

¹⁰¹ JRO 9/1, pp. 447–448.

Marian dogmas at the service of revelation attested in Scripture

Ratzinger saw the two poles of revelation in their mutual connection. It is the "once for all" of revelation that enables it to persist in Tradition, while through Tradition, in turn, what was already budding in Scripture as the testimony of revelation and original Tradition can unfold. Mariology, argued Ratzinger in *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, "comprises [...] the necessary integration between Scripture and Tradition." All "Marian dogmas have their clear foundation in sacred Scripture. But it is there like a seed that grows and bears fruit in the life of Tradition just as it finds expression in the liturgy, in the perception of the believing people and in the reflection of theology guided by the Magisterium."¹⁰⁷ Aaron Pidel adds that this development is only possible when it takes place in continuity with the original meaning, and the guarantor of this continuity is the People of God as the living subject of Scripture.¹⁰⁸ But what grows out of the seeds inherent in the Bible ultimately also serves the "office" of Scripture, and this way enables fuller access to revelation. Thus, Mariology secures the pole of uniqueness and shows its openness to future development: "the faith of the Church sees in

vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050916_40-dei-verbum.html [access: 17.10.2023].

¹⁰⁷ J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *The Ratzinger Report...*, op. cit., p. 107 (J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *Raport o stanie wiary...*, op. cit., pp. 90–91). Cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., p. 227. In a television interview, Benedict XVI stressed that over the centuries Christians had increasingly entrusted themselves to Mary and felt that she was their Mother. Even those who found it difficult to comprehend Jesus is the Son of God entrusted themselves to His Mother. In response to the charge: "But this doesn't have any Biblical foundation!" the Pope referred to St Gregory the Great: "In reading,' he says, 'grow the words of Scripture.' That is, they develop in lived reality. They grow and more and more in history this Word develops. We see how we can all be grateful because there is truly a Mother; we have all been given a Mother" – Benedict XVI, *Interview with His Holiness Benedict XVI on the TV Programme entitled "In His Image. Questions on Jesus" broadcast by Rai Uno* (22.04.2011, Good Friday), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110422_intervista.html [access: 17.10.2023] (Polish translation: Benedykt XVI, *Moc samej miłości. Wywiad z Benedyktem XVI, transmitowany przez pierwszy kanał telewizji RAI w programie Na Jego obraz. Pytania na temat Jezusa* [22 kwietnia 2011 r., Wielki Piątek], [in:] Benedict XVI, *Mystagogia Benedicti. Wprowadzenie w tajemnice roku liturgicznego. Wielki Tydzień* [Mystagogia Benedicti. An Introduction to the Mysteries of the Liturgical Year. Holy Week], ed. A. Demitrów, Biskupów 2021, p. 275).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. A. Pidel, *Christi Opera Proficiunt...*, op. cit., pp. 704–705.

these beginnings something living, that conforms to its own constitution only insofar as it develops.”¹⁰⁹

In the following section, those motifs of Marian dogma and Mariology will be extracted from Ratzinger’s work which, having grown out of the seeds of the inspired texts, shed light on the “once for all” of the revelation and its witness in Scripture.

The feminine principle in the structure of the biblical faith

As Cardinal and Archbishop of Munich and Freising, Ratzinger attempted to provide a perspective to expose what is permanent in the Marian devotion, and to show the place of Mariology in the overall pattern of Scripture and the faith of the Church.¹¹⁰ Ratzinger advocated a movement from the end to the beginning, from the Marian image in the New Testament to the Old Testament, certain motifs of which were applied to express the mystery of Mary. He justified such a *modus operandi* on the grounds that the Old Testament is contained in the New, and the New is based on the Old, of which it is an interpretation in the light of the event of Christ.¹¹¹

According to the theologian, “all consequent Marian piety and theology is fundamentally based upon the Old Testament’s deeply anchored theology of woman, a theology indispensable to its entire structure.”¹¹² It is expressed by the following images taken from the Old Testament:

(i) The figure of Eve. Mary’s supra-individual role as woman is portrayed in John’s Gospel. Jesus initiates in the hour of the Cross a new family with the prominent role of the new Eve in it. The figure of Eve is the necessary complement to Adam-man, who could not be good without her (cf. Gen 2:18). Although she gave the fruit of death, woman is the antithesis of death – as the bearer of the key of life, she is brought closer to the God-Life from whom all life comes. This relationship recurs, Ratzinger believes, in the dogma of the Assumption.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ DZ, p. 38; WCS, p. 29.

¹¹⁰ Cf. DZ, pp. 8, 11; WCS, pp. 5, 14.

¹¹¹ Cf. DZ, pp. 11, 32; WCS, pp. 14, 25.

¹¹² DZ, p. 13; WCS, p. 15; L. Bouyer, *Mystère et ministères de la femme*, Paris 1976.

¹¹³ Cf. DZ, pp. 13, 18; WCS, pp. 15, 17; J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., pp. 303–305 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., pp. 272–273).

(2) Great mothers (especially Sarah and Hannah, the mother of Samuel, but also Rachel) who played a role in the Old Testament. Their infertility turns out to be a blessing, they also point to the promise that brings life.¹¹⁴

(3) The Daughter of Zion – in this image the prophets expressed the mystery of election and covenant, and above all God's love for Israel. Israel was referred to as woman, virgin, beloved, bride (wife) and mother, and what the whole nation was turned out to be represented by the great women of Israel, mothers and saviours, whose fertile infertility expressed what creation is and what election is, and what Israel is as the People of God. God's marriage covenant with the people revealed that this relationship does not belong only to God, but also to Israel – a woman who is at the same time virgin and mother.¹¹⁵ This in turn means that

to God, the One, is joined, not a goddess, but, as in his historical revelation, the chosen creation, Israel, the Daughter of Zion, the woman [...]. Of course this line of development in the Old Testament remains just as incomplete and open as all the other lines of the Old Testament. It acquires its definitive meaning for the first time in the New Testament: in the woman who is herself described as the true holy remnant, as the authentic daughter Zion, and who is thereby the mother of the saviour, yes, the mother of God.¹¹⁶

In Ratzinger's conviction, in Luke's portrait of Mary presented in the scene of the angelic greeting, she appears as the true Zion, the true Israel and the People of God.¹¹⁷ Discussing the issue of *populus Dei*, Ratzinger pointed out the dangers of understanding and experiencing it in masculine and institutional terms only. The *Ecclesia* is feminine, and Mary opens up a dimension of the mystery of the Church which is more than a people, a structure and an activity, since in it the mystery of conjugal love lives with the motherhood resulting from this love. Thus, Mariology makes it possible to recover an essential element of the Church,

¹¹⁴ Cf. DZ, pp. 12, 19; WCS, pp. 14, 17–18.

¹¹⁵ Cf. DZ, pp. 12–13, 21; WCS, pp. 14–15, 19–20. Cf. Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 55; J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., p. 233; J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. Urs von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, op. cit., p. 14: "The mystery of Mary means precisely that God's Word did not remain alone; rather, it assimilated the other – the soil – into itself, became man in the 'soil' of his Mother, and then, fused with the soil of the whole humanity, returned to God in a new form." The motif of the soil also appears in: WCS, pp. 127–128, 143–144.

¹¹⁶ DZ, pp. 23–24; WCS, p. 20.

¹¹⁷ Cf. DZ, p. 43; WCS, pp. 31–32, 91, 99–100; P. Blanco, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger...*, op. cit., p. 166.

to which both the Bible and the Fathers of the Church draw attention. Besides, the Marian element attracts attention to the emotional sphere indispensable for the bond *ex toto corde* with God or Christ.¹¹⁸

The liturgy of the Church allows two more images to be added to those mentioned above, extending the Old Testament theology of the woman:

(4) the great deliverers (“woman-savior”) (Esther and Judith). As in the case of the great mothers, here too infertility and powerlessness prove to be the place where God reveals his power, and the woman still, despite her sins, appears to be the mother of life. Ratzinger also points out that in the Old Testament the woman is never a priestess but plays the role of prophetess and deliverer.¹¹⁹

(5) The figure of wisdom present in the later layer of Old Testament texts. Wisdom expresses both the pure prefiguration of God’s creative will and the pure response he sought. The New Testament does not allow a complete identification of Christology with the continuation of the wisdom motif, especially since *sophia* in Hebrew and Greek is of the feminine gender. The mysterious remnant indicates, Ratzinger maintains, that wisdom signifies the pure response flowing from God’s creation and election, in which God’s love finds a dwelling place.¹²⁰ In wisdom, the connection between Word and response can be grasped, and Mary appears as the epitome of the true Israel. In the light of the New Testament, wisdom draws attention

to the creature, to the true Israel, who is personified in the humble maid whose whole existence is marked by the attitude of *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*. *Sophia* refers to the *Logos*, the Word who establishes wisdom, and also to the womanly answer which receives wisdom and brings it to fruition. The eradication of the Marian interpretation of sophiology ultimately leaves out an entire dimension of the biblical and the Christian mystery.¹²¹

Ratzinger concludes his reflections so far by stating the indispensability of the biblical figure of woman in the structure of faith. In the Old Testament she expresses the reality of creation and the fruitfulness of God’s grace, yet with the fulfilment of the scriptures and the realisation of the hope of the

¹¹⁸ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 153; WCS, pp. 117–119, 129; J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *The Ratzinger Report...*, op. cit., pp. 106–107 (J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *Raport o stanie wiary...*, op. cit., p. 91); J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., pp. 233, 239.

¹¹⁹ Cf. DZ, pp. 20–21; WCS, pp. 18–19, 21.

¹²⁰ Cf. DZ, p. 26; WCS, pp. 21–22.

¹²¹ DZ, pp. 26–27; WCS, p. 22.

Old Testament in Christ, the figure of woman is also highlighted. Hitherto the woman was seen typologically in Israel and embodied temporarily in the heroines of Israel, in the New Testament she finds her fulfilment in the person of Mary.¹²² Therefore

To deny or reject the feminine aspect in belief, or, more concretely, the Marian aspect, leads finally to the negation of creation and the invalidation of grace. It leads to a picture of God's omnipotence that reduces the creature to a mere masquerade and that also completely fails to understand the God of the Bible, who is characterized as being the creator and the God of the covenant – the God for whom the beloved's punishment and rejection themselves become the passion of love, the cross. Not without reason did the Church Fathers interpret the passion and cross as marriage, as that suffering in which God takes upon himself the pain of the faithless wife in order to draw her to himself irrevocably in eternal love.¹²³

Mariology, therefore, defends the biblical image of God creating and then uniting himself in a spousal relationship with his people, who, as endowed with his grace, respond to God's love. Mariology also allows the principle of *solus Christus* to be dismissed by showing not Christ himself, but Christ being Head and Body. In this way, it makes it possible to see that the doctrine of grace does not invalidate creation by attributing sole efficacy to God, but is a definitive "yes" to the creation redeemed, called and endowed with relative autonomy.¹²⁴

¹²² Cf. DZ, pp. 27–28; WCS, p. 22; cf. also: WCS, p. 72; G. Mansini, *Ecclesiology*, Washington, DC 2021, p. 130: "Types not only indicate but prepare for the future. It is a mistake to see in Sarah and Rebecca and Rachel nothing but bare signs of a future church to which they contribute nothing. The history they enact, together with Hagar and Leah, Tamar and Ruth, establishes the pattern of revelation, and by their cooperation with God they contribute to its dynamism, a dynamism not perfected, of course, except in Christ. The point, however, is that they are not empty signs of what is to come, but contribute to its coming. They contribute to its coming, moreover, precisely as women. Their maternity is entirely essential to embedding the design of salvation in history. What is said of Mary must be said of all the great and valiant women of the Old Testament, because they find their perfection in her, and that is that the Lord is more dependent on woman than he is on man for the incarnation."

¹²³ DZ, pp. 28–29; WCS, pp. 22–23.

¹²⁴ Cf. DZ, p. 70; J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 155; WCS, pp. 62, 122.

Unity of Scripture and continuity of the People of God (canonical exegesis)

If the New Testament is an interpretation of the Old in the light of Jesus of Nazareth, whose word, life and Passover mark the difference between the two Testaments, Mary in turn is the centre of the union of the two Testaments. She embodies the continuity of the blessed poor of Israel and is even, as Ratzinger writes commenting on the scene of the Annunciation, “the people of God” bearing fruit through the gracious power of God bringing forth a new creation from the old.¹²⁵ So

In her very person [...] Mary binds together, in a living and indissoluble way, the old and the new People of God, Israel and Christianity, synagogue and church. She is, as it were, the connecting link without which the Faith (as is happening today) runs the risk of losing its balance by either forsaking the New Testament for the Old or dispensing with the Old. In her, instead, we can live the unity of sacred Scripture in its entirety.¹²⁶

In Ratzinger’s considerations, canonical exegesis, reading the Bible in its entirety and taking into account the typological interpretation, appears to be an important issue.¹²⁷ Only then can it be seen that along with the line going from Abraham, through the patriarchs up to the Servant of Yahweh, a line is also drawn from Eve, through the great figures of the Old Testament.¹²⁸ It is

a journey that cannot be minimised from a theological point of view, however unfinished and therefore open-ended it may be in its affirmations; however incomplete it may be, like the whole of the Old Testament, which continues in anticipation of the New and of its response. But as the Adamic line receives its meaning from Christ, so in the light of the figure of Mary and in the position held by the *Ecclesia*, the meaning of the feminine line in its inseparable union with the Christological mystery becomes clear.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Cf. DZ, pp. 32, 43; WCS, pp. 25, 32.

¹²⁶ Cf. J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *The Ratzinger Report...*, op. cit., p. 107 (J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *Raport o stanie wiary...*, op. cit., p. 91); cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., p. 227.

¹²⁷ Cf. DZ, pp. 32–33, 69; WCS, pp. 25–26, 60; VD 34, 38, 41. Ratzinger maintains that the principle of reading the Bible in its totality is linked to the principle of reading it as a present reality – cf. DZ, p. 69; WCS, p. 60.

¹²⁸ Cf. DZ, p. 70; WCS, p. 62.

¹²⁹ DZ, pp. 70–71; WCS, pp. 62–63.

The rejection of the feminine principle in its relationship and unity with Christology is a selection that rejects the totality that makes the truth about God and man unspeakable.¹³⁰ In the unity of the two Testaments, Ratzinger sees at the same time the condition of the inviolability of the doctrine of creation and of grace. Where there is a separation of the Old and New Testaments, there the doctrine of grace becomes isolated from the doctrine of creation.¹³¹ The inability to read Scripture in its totality (e.g. dividing the New Testament into supposedly more important layers of the more ancient – at the expense of St. Luke and St. John, the two New Testament Mariologists) makes Mariological reflection impossible. Then the accents in the totality of Christian reality cannot be properly distributed, and without Mariology the experiential place of unity also disappears, as the Church loses her personal concreteness.¹³²

Without Mariology, both the unity and the *differentia specifica* between the People of God of the Old and New Covenants cannot be properly understood. In the New Testament, believers become a people in the sacrament of the Eucharist when they form the Body of Christ. This Pauline expression must be understood in the context of the union of "one flesh," which presupposes the mystery of marital union (cf. Gen 2:24; 1 Cor 6:17). Therefore, the Eucharistic and Christological mystery of the Church expressed by the term "Body of Christ," which "remains within the proper measure only when it includes the mystery of Mary: The mystery of the listening handmaid who – liberated in grace – speaks her *Fiat* and, in so doing, becomes bride and thus body."¹³³

The unity of the two Testaments is also manifested in Marian cult and therefore also in the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The dogma finds its origin in the cult of Mary, the papal bull containing the dogma is a statement of a theological and not of a historical nature, and the dogmatization itself also may be an act of veneration.¹³⁴ The Evangelist Luke assumed

¹³⁰ Cf. DZ, p. 71; WCS, p. 63.

¹³¹ Cf. DZ, p. 33; WCS, p. 26.

¹³² Cf. DZ, pp. 33, 71; WCS, pp. 25–26, 63.

¹³³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 153; WCS, p. 118. Of course, Mary transcends this "Bridegroom–Bride" or "Head–Body" relationship on account of the fact that, vis-à-vis Christ, she is first and foremost Mother; thus Mariology goes beyond the framework of ecclesiology – cf. WCS, p. 120.

¹³⁴ DZ, pp. 74–75; Cf. WCS, pp. 48–49. This character distinguishes the last two dogmas from the earlier ones, although there was also a doxological feature in those, cf. WCS, p. 48. Congar explained that the sacred liturgy venerating the Mother of God gives a deeper understanding of Her and Her role, which cannot be reduced to the knowledge that is a result of theological and exegetical research and reasoning; cf. Y. Congar, *Tradycja i tradycje...*, op. cit., p. 305.

the veneration of Mary in the Church of his time and saw this veneration as pertaining to the Church of all times (cf. Luke 1:45, 48). In worshipping Mary, therefore, the Church is not inventing something new, but is doing what she was instructed to do, and *vice versa*: to be silent in this worship would be to move away from the biblical word and praise of God.¹³⁵ According to Ratzinger, Elisabeth's words are a prophetic foreshadowing that "Christians will also give praise to God by rejoicing over people in whom he has shown how great and how good he is."¹³⁶ The theologian emphasises that

The earliest form of Marian devotion once more reflects the unity of the Testaments which is characteristic of the whole Marian theme: The God of Israel is named by men to whom he has manifested his greatness and in whose lives he becomes visible and present. They are as it were his *name* in history, through them he himself possesses names, and through and in them he becomes more accessible.¹³⁷

The expectation to see God in pure form, above the human faces, would be a hubristic purism and attempt to invent God. Mary enters into the name of God in a special way, so that without her we do not adore God adequately.¹³⁸ The 1950 dogma is a canonization pointing to an eschatological perfection, and worship refers to her Person who lives in God. This veneration is therefore linked to the veneration of the fathers of faith, whom God Himself included in His name. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, according to the words of Jesus, is the God of the living and not of the dead, and the fact that the patriarchs belong to the name of God is proof of the resurrection (cf. Mark 12:26–27).¹³⁹ "The right to veneration includes the certitude of the conquest of death, the certitude of the resurrection."¹⁴⁰

Ratzinger addressed the question as to why Mary was to be taken to heaven not only with a soul but also with a body. He asserted that Mary represents the Church and her final salvation which is a reality and not merely a promise. Besides, "being the Mother of God" of the One who is Life (and "the death of death") "is really a "new birth" (*nova nativitas*): a new way of giving birth

¹³⁵ Cf. DZ, p. 75; WCS, pp. 49, 97–98, 132.

¹³⁶ Cf. J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., p. 295 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., p. 271).

¹³⁷ DZ, p. 75; WCS, p. 49.

¹³⁸ Cf. WCS, p. 98.

¹³⁹ Cf. DZ, pp. 75–76; WCS, pp. 49–50.

¹⁴⁰ DZ, p. 76; WCS, p. 50.

inserted into the old way." Mary's life is pure beginning, it was not conceived to die but to live, and it points to the Assumption.¹⁴¹

The biblical image of God and the mystery of the Incarnate Word

Ratzinger highlighted the problem that his contemporaries find it difficult to recognise the Virgin birth. The rejection of the possibility of such an action of God stems from an assumed Cartesianism that strips the body and birth of what is human and reduces it to merely biological, and from the acceptance of an *apriori* relationship between God and the world according to which God's activity in matter is not permissible and He cannot encounter earthly history because His influence is limited to the realm of the spirit.¹⁴² The dogma of the ever-Virgin Mary portrays God as reaching even into biological matters. By showing that God marks the whole human being, including physical, biological and material life, the error of Manichaeism is dismissed, Ratzinger explained to interviewer Seewald.¹⁴³

In the part of *Jesus of Nazareth* with infancy narratives, Ratzinger noted, following Karl Barth, that "there are two moments in the story of Jesus when God intervenes directly in the material world: the virgin birth and the resurrection from the tomb, in which Jesus did not remain, nor see corruption. These two moments are a scandal to the modern spirit." God does not work only in the spiritual domain, in ideas or thoughts, but also in the material, in which He can manifest His creative power. "In that sense, these two moments – the virgin birth and the real resurrection from the tomb – are the cornerstones of faith." God shows Himself to have power also over matter, "and through the conception and resurrection of Jesus Christ he has ushered in a new creation. So as the Creator he is also our Redeemer."¹⁴⁴

Belief in the birth *ex Maria virgine* is a theological statement, and the biblical witness to this event

¹⁴¹ Cf. DZ, pp. 76–78; WCS, pp. 36, 50–52. The connection with the Immaculate Conception can also be pointed out: "where the totality of grace is, there is the totality of salvation. Where grace no longer exists in the fractured state of *simul justus et peccator*, but in pure 'Yes', death, sin's jailer, has no place" – DZ, p. 77; WCS, p. 51.

¹⁴² Cf. DZ, pp. 59–60; WCS, pp. 39–41.

¹⁴³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., p. 303 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., p. 278).

¹⁴⁴ Cf. JN, Kindle Location 705.

is not an idyllic nook of devotion, a tiny, private chapel of the two evangelists, an optional extra. [...] The alternatives are simple: does God act or not? [...] The affirmation of Jesus' birth from the Virgin Mary intends to affirm these two truths: (1) God really acts—realiter, not just interpretative, and (2) the earth produces its fruit—precisely because he acts.¹⁴⁵

Mary is both Virgin and Mother, and this is, according to Ratzinger, the fundamental Marian dogma in which the two truths are united. She can be called the Mother of God because a purely human Christ, as Nestorius wanted, cannot be built on the bodily element of the Incarnate Word. The separation of God from birth and motherhood as a full embodiment would negate the reality of the Incarnation, whereas the Virgin birth is the necessary beginning for the One who, also as man, is the Son of the Father and thus gives lasting and universal meaning to the messianic hope. The event of “becoming of man” extends all the way to the flesh, or, from the other side, the flesh extends all the way to the centre of the Person of the Logos, so that the whole life of Jesus is incorporated into a filial exchange with the Father. Because of this unity, Mary is the real “Mother of God” (and not merely an instrument), and her motherhood is united to the mystery of the Incarnation and it enters into this mystery.¹⁴⁶

Thus the christological affirmation of God's Incarnation in Christ becomes necessarily a Marian affirmation, as *de factaffirmatione* it was from the beginning. Conversely: only when it touches Mary and becomes Mariology is Christology itself as radical as the faith of the Church requires. The appearance of a truly Marian awareness serves as the touchstone indicating whether or not the christological substance is fully present.¹⁴⁷

Without Mary, God's entry into history would not have achieved the purpose expressed in the Creed, which reveals God with us and for us.¹⁴⁸ If motherhood were merely a purely biological fact, then its theological significance would have

¹⁴⁵ DZ, p. 60; WCS, p. 41.

¹⁴⁶ Cf. DZ, pp. 34–35; WCS, pp. 26–27, 29, 35–36.

¹⁴⁷ DZ, p. 35; WCS, p. 27. It should be added to this, however, that although Marian dogmas grow out of Christology, they do not form Mariology, but are part of Christology. In Ratzinger's view, it was only ecclesiology, though also inseparable from Mariology in itself, that could determine Mariology – cf. J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., pp. 154–155; WCS, pp. 119–120. Cf. also: J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., p. 232.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. WCS, p. 87.

to be questioned (cf. Mark 3:33–35 and Luke 11:27–28). The hermeneutics of faith, however, makes it possible to see the theological reality of the correlation of Christ and his mother existing from the beginning. The history of salvation leads to the mystery of the spousal union between Creator and creature, and according to this, the relationship between Christ and the Church constitutes the hermeneutical centre of Scripture. In this perspective, Mary's motherhood receives theological significance; Mary pronounces her *fiat* as "Israel in person" and "the personal concretisation of the Church," and in this way realises "the deepest content of the covenant" of God with humanity.¹⁴⁹

We can therefore say that the affirmation of Mary's motherhood and the affirmation of her representation of the Church are related as *factum* and *mysterium facti*, as the fact and the sense that gives the fact its meaning. The two things are inseparable: The fact without its sense would be blind, the sense without the fact would be empty. Mariology cannot be developed from the naked fact, but only from the fact as it is understood in the hermeneutics of faith.¹⁵⁰

Mary is the personification of the Church and the anticipation of what the Church is, and the Church reveals Mary's theological significance and "universal dimension." Ratzinger writes of the "interchangeability" of Mary and the Church, their mutual transition into each other.¹⁵¹

As Mariology serves Christology, so too does Marian devotion serve the cult of Christ. Ratzinger addresses the accusation that excessive Marian devotion would be detrimental to Jesus by pointing out that in the missionary areas, especially in South America, it was Mary who found her way into people's hearts and opened up access to Christ, who only then became close to those people. Thanks to this, they were able to see the true God's face, which was later corrupted by the Spanish conquerors.¹⁵² With their radical understanding of the *solus Christus* principle, Protestants failed to see "that the face of Christ

¹⁴⁹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 155; WCS, pp. 108–109, 120–121, 129, 131; J. Ratzinger, *Znak Kany* [Sign of the Cana], transl. L. Balter, "Communio" [Polish edition] 27/1 (2007), pp. 6–7; P. Blanco, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger...*, op. cit., pp. 166–167.

¹⁵⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 156; cf. WCS, p. 121.

¹⁵¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., p. 353 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., pp. 326–327); cf. WCS, p. 100.

¹⁵² Cf. J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., pp. 300–301 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., pp. 275–276). Conversely, where Marian devotion is disappearing (e.g. in South America), the void is filled by political ideologies, which, according to Ratzinger, indicates that Marian devotion is "no mere piety" – J. Ratzinger, V. Messori,

himself appears in the face of his Mother, and its true message becomes clear in this way.”¹⁵³

Promise and fulfilment in salvation history (typological interpretation)

One of the objections to the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was that it would entail the denial of the universality of divine grace. Martin Luther in the sixteenth century and Karl Barth in the twentieth century took the position of radically opposing the Law and the Gospel, and viewed the relationship between God and man on a dialectical basis to defend pure grace and the sinner's unmerited justification.¹⁵⁴ Ratzinger, however, referred to the doctrine of correspondence “binding Old and New Testaments in an interior unity of promise and fulfillment. As a form of interpretation typology includes analogy, similarity in dissimilarity, unity in diversity.”¹⁵⁵

In the birth of Jesus fulfilling the promises of the Old Testament, the inner bond of expectation and accomplishment is revealed, and the action of God is shown.¹⁵⁶ Yes, there are elements of discontinuity between the Old and New Covenants manifest in the prophecies of judgment, but there is also the admonition of the Holy Remnant of Israel, which was to be saved and, according to the words of the Apostle Paul, did indeed survive (cf. Rom 11:5), indicating continuity. The Bavarian theologian sees this Holy Remnant in Mary, in whom the Old and New Testaments remain one.¹⁵⁷

The Ratzinger Report..., op. cit., p. 106 (cf. J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *Raport o stanie wiary...*, op. cit., pp. 89–90).

¹⁵³ J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., p. 302 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., p. 277). The healings and miracles that take place at Marian shrines are also an expression of the trust Mary enjoys, and the faithful “[t]hrough Mary they are able to look upon the face of Christ and of God, so that they are able to understand God.” Such facts prove that “the mystery of the Son and the mystery of God are made accessible to men in a special way through the Mother” as “Mary is the open door to God.” “Faith becomes such a living thing in this trust that it spills out into the physical, everyday realm and thereby permits the kind hand of God to become actually effective, through the power of the kindness of this Mother” – J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., pp. 306–307 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., pp. 282–283).

¹⁵⁴ Cf. DZ, p. 63; WCS, p. 42. K. Barth, *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, vol. 1/2: *Die Lehre Vom Wort Gottes. Prolegomena Zur Kirchlichen Dogmatik*, Zollikon–Zürich 1945, pp. 158–159.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. DZ, p. 63; WCS, pp. 42–43.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. DZ, p. 67; WCS, p. 89.

¹⁵⁷ Cf. DZ, p. 65; WCS, p. 43.

She is the New Covenant in the Old Covenant; she is the New Covenant as the Old Covenant, as Israel: thus no one can comprehend her mission or her person if the unity of the Old and New Testaments collapses. Because she is entirely response, correspondence [*Entsprechung*], she cannot be understood where grace seems to be opposition and response, the real response of the creature, appears to be a denial of grace [...].¹⁵⁸

Thus, not only in God's eternal intention, but also in history, continuity can be seen as the word of God finding a real response is at work. Ratzinger recognises that grace and the word without a real positive response would be an 'empty game' and a 'monologue of God'. What belongs to the nature of woman – being 'opposite' to the other from whom one comes – culminates in Mary; in her created being she becomes the answer.¹⁵⁹

The content of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is freedom from original sin, which can only be known theologically. Ratzinger proposes to refer to a typological interpretation of Scripture.¹⁶⁰ The Letter to the Ephesians includes a description of the new Israel, the Church, which Christ presents to Himself to be "in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish" (Eph 5:27). This scriptural image of the *Ecclesiae Immaculatae*, developed by the Fathers of the Church, comprises the teaching of the Immaculate Conception anticipated as ecclesiology. The image of the Church refers secondarily to Mary as the beginning and personal concreteness of the Ecclesia, and the dogma of the Immaculate Conception is an application to the Person of Mary of a statement originally referring to the antithesis of the old-new Israel.¹⁶¹

It entails the conviction that the rebirth of the old Israel into the new Israel, of which the Epistle to the Ephesians spoke, achieves in Mary its concrete accomplishment. It proclaims that this new Israel (which is simultaneously the true old Israel, the holy remnant preserved by the grace of God) is not only an idea, but

¹⁵⁸ DZ, p. 65; WCS, pp. 43–44.

¹⁵⁹ Cf. DZ, p. 67; WCS, pp. 43–44. Cf. WCS, p. 20: The Church "possesses a certain relative independence from Christ: the independence of the bride, who, although she has achieved in love a spiritual bond, nevertheless remains face to face with Christ."

¹⁶⁰ Cf. DZ, p. 68; WCS, pp. 44–45.

¹⁶¹ Cf. DZ, p. 68; J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 154; WCS, pp. 45, 118–119.

a person. God does not act with abstractions or concepts; the type, of which the ecclesiology of the New Testament and the Fathers speak, exists as a person.¹⁶²

The biblical basis for such a justification of personification can be found in St Luke's (and, though differently, St John's) typological identification of Mary with Israel. The Evangelist compares the believing and listening Virgin with the true Daughter of Zion. According to Ratzinger, "It is no less part of the framework of biblical theology than the systematic interpretation of the Adam-Christ type is part of the doctrine of original sin."¹⁶³

The dogma of the Immaculate Conception shows that in a background marked by sin, Mary is an exception, since in her there is a new beginning, made on the initiative of God, who "has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness" (cf. Luke 1:48). The words "full of grace" found in the angelic greeting, read in the light of her unique adherence to Christ (which is the content of the 1854 dogma) prove to be something that encompasses and defines the whole life of the Mother of the Lord, whose "Yes" is contained in the prior love of God. During a protracted debate within the Church, a conviction developed that Mary's relationship with Christ was stronger than her relationship with Adam, and that Christ's destiny was an essential distinctive trait of her life, in accordance with God's prior idea.¹⁶⁴

The preservation from original sin is not only about chronology (justification earlier than for other persons); the axiological sense must be emphasised above all, as Ratzinger repeated after Rahner. The dogma of 1854 is a statement pointing to the relationship between God and man. Where original sin appears as a contradiction between the will of God and the will of man, there is a pure "Yes" to God in Mary and a pure "Yes" of God to her. And it is precisely "[t]his correspondence of God's 'Yes' with Mary's being as 'Yes' [that] is the freedom from original sin."¹⁶⁵ At the same time, the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception

reflects ultimately faith's certitude that there really is a Holy Church – as a person and in a person. In this sense it expresses the Church's certitude of salvation. [...] The doctrine of the *Immaculata* testifies accordingly that God's grace was

¹⁶² DZ, p. 68; WCS, p. 45.

¹⁶³ DZ, p. 68; WCS, pp. 45–46, 101 (quoted from p. 46).

¹⁶⁴ Cf. J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., p. 304 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., pp. 279–280); J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 153; WCS, p. 92.

¹⁶⁵ DZ, p. 70; WCS, p. 46.

powerful enough to awaken a response, that grace and freedom, grace and being oneself, renunciation and fulfilment are only apparent contradictories; in reality one conditions the other and grants it its very existence.¹⁶⁶

Also the Assumption, understood in a typological perspective, means that the new Israel will no longer be rejected, for it has been brought to heaven.¹⁶⁷

Relatio bilateralis between Marian dogmas and Scripture

The above reflections can be summed up by Ratzinger's statement about the distinct structure of Marian dogmas, which "cannot be deduced from the individual texts of the New Testament; instead they express the broad perspective embracing the unity of both Testaments." In the opinion of the Bavarian theologian, "[t]hey can become visible only to a mode of perception that accepts this unity, i.e., within a perspective which comprehends and makes its own the 'typological' interpretation."¹⁶⁸ Similarly, Mariology should not be built on the basis of New Testament elements, but should be based on the three great Marian dogmas (in fact there are four, the first two being combined by Ratzinger into the dogma of the Virgin-Mother), whose spiritual content can then be explained on a biblical basis.¹⁶⁹ All the Marian dogmas help to maintain the balance and fullness of the Catholic faith, as Ratzinger explained to Vittorio Messori:

These dogmas protect the original faith in Christ as true God and true man: two natures in a single Person. They also secure the indispensable eschatological tension by pointing to Mary's Assumption as the immortal destiny that awaits us. And they also protect the faith – threatened today – in God the Creator, who (and this, among other things, is the meaning of the truth of the perpetual

¹⁶⁶ DZ, p. 70; WCS, p. 47.

¹⁶⁷ Cf. DZ, p. 81; WCS, p. 53.

¹⁶⁸ DZ, p. 32; WCS, pp. 25–26.

¹⁶⁹ DZ, p. 9; cf. WCS, p. 26. Mariology cannot be a "duplicate of Christology," and that which is specifically Marian is to be seen in relation to that which is Christological – together they are to form a whole – cf. DZ, p. 9; J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 152; cf. WCS, pp. 13, 125. Also when it comes to Marian devotion, Ratzinger emphasises that it cannot refer to or reduce to partial aspects of Christianity; it is to be a path to openness to the totality of the mystery – cf. J. Ratzinger, *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine...*, op. cit., p. 152; cf. WCS, p. 125.

virginity of Mary, more than ever not understood today) can freely intervene also in matter.¹⁷⁰

It is worth recalling in this context Ratzinger's statement on the relationship between Scripture and dogma. Dogma as an interpretation cannot override the meaning of Scripture, nor is it true that only the Church's interpretation should be clear and the object of interpretation itself unclear. It is not *relatio unilateralis*, but a two-way relationship must be assumed: Scripture to be interpreted according to dogma, and dogma to be interpreted according to Scripture. If Tradition is a form of making Scripture present, then dogma too, as an objectified Tradition (and in this sense something materially transcending Scripture) participates in this process, and therefore needs an interpretation made possible only by returning to the source.¹⁷¹

Here he [Ratzinger – SZ] hints that the distinct functions of Scripture (the interpreted) and dogma (the interpreter) correspond roughly to the twofold structure of Revelation, which is simultaneously "once only" and "forever." In other words, the material closure of the biblical canon finds its justification in the historical unrepeatability of the Incarnate Word, while the open-endedness of dogmatic interpretation corresponds to the limitless diffusion of His presence by the Spirit.¹⁷²

I will refer to the 1950 dogma as perhaps the most difficult case for demonstrating the mutual clarification of Scripture and a Marian dogma.¹⁷³ Benedict XVI claimed that the Assumption "is an ancient feast deeply rooted in Sacred Scripture: indeed, it presents the Virgin Mary closely united to her divine Son and ever supportive of him."¹⁷⁴ Ratzinger's understanding of the content of this dogma was helped by the theology of baptism developed in the Letter to the

¹⁷⁰ J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *The Ratzinger Report*, p. 107 (J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *Raport o stanie wiary...*, op. cit., p. 90); cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., p. 227.

¹⁷¹ Cf. JRO 9/1, p. 388; A. Pidel, *Christi Opera Proficiunt...*, op. cit., p. 707.

¹⁷² A. Pidel, *Christi Opera Proficiunt...*, op. cit., p. 707.

¹⁷³ Ratzinger "offers an explanation of the title of the Immaculate Conception and the dogma of the Assumption, taking as a starting point the liturgy, the biblical texts and related categories" – P. Blanco, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger...*, op. cit., p. 166.

¹⁷⁴ Benedict XVI, *Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Angelus* (15.08.2007), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20070815_assunzione.html [access: 5.10.2023] (Polish translation: Benedykt XVI, *Światło Maryi rzuca blask na dzieje całej ludzkości. Rozważanie przed modlitwą Anioł Pański* [15.08.2007], [in:] Benedykt XVI, *Mystagogia Benedicti...*, op. cit., p. 206).

Ephesians. Its author argued that God has also "has raised us up with Jesus, and in Christ Jesus he has enthroned us with him in the heavenly realm (Eph 2:6)." In this way, through the sacrament, the future of Christians was anticipated.¹⁷⁵

The dogma says, then, that in Mary's case what baptism ensures for us all, that is, dwelling "enthroned" with God "in heaven" (God is heaven!), has already been put into effect for Mary. Baptism (being united with Christ) has achieved its full effect. [...] [Mary] has entered into full community with Christ. And part of this community is another corporal identity, which we cannot imagine. In brief: the essential point of this dogma is that Mary is wholly with God, entirely with Christ, completely a "Christian."¹⁷⁶

Ratzinger recalled other words of the Apostle: "For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3:3). This assurance, the Bavarian theologian believed, points to the existence of a kind of "assumption" of the baptised as described in Eph 2:6, which implies that baptism makes it possible to participate not only in Christ's rising from the dead but also in his ascension into heaven.¹⁷⁷ If the baptised already live their hidden but real life in the glorified Lord,

[t]he formula of the "assumption" of Mary's body and soul loses every trace of all speculative arbitrariness in this perspective. The Assumption is actually only the highest form of canonisation. She gave birth to the Lord "with the heart before her body" (Augustine), and therefore faith, i.e., the interior substance of Baptism according to Luke 1:45, can be predicated of her without restriction, realizing in her the very quintessence of Baptism. Thus it is said that, in her, death was swallowed up by Christ's victory.¹⁷⁸

Thus, by the way, this veneration was biblically explained: "Precisely this devotional element, so to speak, was the driving force behind the formulation of this Dogma. The Dogma appears as an act of praise and exaltation of the Holy Virgin."¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ Cf. J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., p. 305 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., pp. 280–281); DZ, p. 80; WCS p. 52.

¹⁷⁶ J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., p. 305 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., p. 281); cf. WCS, p. 138.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. DZ, p. 80; WCS, p. 52.

¹⁷⁸ DZ, p. 80; WCS, p. 52.

¹⁷⁹ Benedict XVI, *Homily on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Parish Church of St. Thomas of Villanova*, Castel Gandolfo (15.08.2012), <https://www.>

Summary

1. Ratzinger emphasises that revelation is greater than the words of Scripture, this in turn being the testimony of revelation. Revelation has its “yesterday” and its “today,” and both poles are equally important for Christian faith. For faith, the source event remains authoritative because of the action of God manifested in it, which nevertheless has an ongoing presence and remains alive and effective in the faith of the Church. Revelation is accomplished insofar as it is realised in the Incarnate One, as an event of the relationship between God and man; revelation, in turn, is accomplished because this relationship is realised again and again, and it is only in history that all the possibilities of the already established encounter between human beings and God unfold. The revelation is Christ himself, and in this sense the revelation has ended, but because Christ is also the One who comes, the revelation continues. Because it took place in history, revelation has its ἐφάπαξ which, together with its biblical explication, functions as a permanent norm for the Church. Tradition is thus “bound” not by the canon itself, but rather by the enduring reality of foundational revelation and its inspired witness. The Bavarian theologian therefore emphasised both the importance of the office of the Church and the office of Scripture; the former derives its solemnity from the Lord’s permanent presence in the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor 3:17), the latter from the “once for all” of the salvation history. This means that, in striking a balance between the poles of “yesterday” and “today,” *littera scripturae* is an important criterion to which the statements of the Church’s Teaching Office must also be subjected.

2. The Lord is present in the Church in the power of his Spirit, as the New Testament canon testifies. Therefore, the word of the Lord can be understood as present and subject to development. On the other hand, the word is linked to the historical basis attested in Scripture. History shows an increasing tension between preserving the word and assimilating it in Tradition with actualising it in the present. Thanks to the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, once given and still the same revelation is manifest in a different way and thus preserved. Ratzinger shows the link between Scripture and Tradition in terms of the interplay of uniqueness and continuity. Scripture provides the link to the “once for all” of the historical event of Christ, while Tradition embodies the

vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20120815_assunzione.html [access: 5.10.2023] (Polish translation: Benedict XVI, *Kiedy otwieramy się na Boga, nasze życie staje się bogate i wielkie. Homilia w uroczystość Wniebowzięcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny w kościele parafialnym pw. św. Tomasza z Villanova, Castel Gandolfo* [15.08.2012], [in:] Benedykt XVI, *Mystagogia Benedicti...*, op. cit., p. 238).

living "today" of faith, still being realised and developed anew. Tradition can develop because the perception of the source reality and the understanding of the matters and words handed down grow with the aid of the Paraclete who guides to all truth (cf. John 16:13). The Spirit of Truth allows retrospective insight into the depths of what has already happened (the unspoken in the spoken). In the spiritual experience of the whole Church, the understanding of the historical beginning grows. In Ratzinger's view, Tradition is the bond between man and the unique history of Christ confirmed in Scripture and present through the Spirit in the Church. A living Tradition is important for a deeper understanding of the truth revealed in the inspired texts.

3. The all-embracing Logos, always greater than the biblical words involved in the inexhaustibility of that Word, will be comprehended in the memory of the Church. The *Memoria Ecclesiae* is unveiled in John's Gospel, and the process of "recollection" present therein, leading to a fuller discovery of Christ, can be contrasted, according to Ratzinger, with Luke's account of the process of recollection that characterises the Mother of Christ. Mary is a figure of the Church listening to the word of God and trying to understand the word in its entirety. In the Fourth Gospel, personal and communal recollection are combined, and this process allows us to enter the inner aspect of events by linking God's words and actions. The evangelist's aim is to bear witness to Christ in such a way that leads to the discovery in the present of Him who says of Himself "I am" (John 8:58). In the process of ecclesial recollection, which will then continue in the Tradition of the Church, the promise of guidance by the Paraclete towards all truth is fulfilled (cf. John 16:13). In this truth there is a place for the mystery of the Mother of Christ alongside the mystery of Christ. The texts of the New Testament already reflect the gradual discovery of Mary, about whom secrecy was kept during her lifetime. The accounts from family traditions, initially private, were eventually incorporated into the official preaching of the Church. In this way, the mystery of the beginning illuminated future events, and the faith developed in Christ made it possible to grasp the profound meaning of the beginning. Mary thus played a role in the development of Christology and is permanently associated with it.

4. One of the tasks of the Second Vatican Council was to work out the relations between the two spiritual currents, liturgical and Marian, that had emerged in the living Tradition of the Church. The debates of the Council were marked by the bipolarity expressed in these two currents; the Council fathers considered how history and spirit relate to each other in the structure of faith. Particularly under the influence of the Marian movement and the last two dogmas, which could not be justified historically, a new dynamic approach

to Tradition had to be developed. The young Ratzinger pointed out that in the promulgation of the 1854 and 1950 dogmas, the awareness of the faith of the People of God came to the fore. The danger which the conciliar expert perceived in connection with the affirmation of the sense of faith was that the pole of the “today” associated with the present action of the Spirit was overemphasised at the expense of the Christological “once for all.” The dehistoricization of Tradition associated with the recognition that revelation can include what the Church has at some point in history discovered as revealed could, in his view, lead to a distortion of the basic structure of Tradition. On the other hand, the Bavarian theologian, with reference to the reception of Geiselman’s research, pointed to the other extreme. This would be to emphasise the pole of uniqueness in such a way as to postulate the sufficiency of Scripture itself. The elder Ratzinger viewed the sense of faith more favourably, allowing that the faith shared by the whole people could guide the Church’s Teaching Office. He judged that the opposition to Marian dogmas stemmed from a historicism that viewed Tradition statically.

5. The indissoluble link between the Bible and Tradition is perpetuated in Mariology. Although Marian dogmas are rooted in the Bible, they are present there as seeds whose growth is only possible in Tradition. In turn, what grows out of the biblical seeds ultimately also serves revelation and its inspired witness. Marian doctrine thus, to a certain extent, safeguards the pole of the “once for all” and shows its openness to future development.

In his reflections on the mystery of Mary, Ratzinger moved from the New Testament to the Old. The main theme he emphasised was the theology of the woman, which he considered essential to the overall construction of biblical faith and theology. The figure of the woman points to the reality of creation and the fruitfulness of God’s grace resulting in a real response to God’s love and his word. Thus, Mariology opposes the self-effectiveness of God’s action and the principle of *solus Christus*, as it points to Christ as Head and Body. What was typologically presented in Israel in female protagonists, it found fulfilment in the New Covenant in the Person of Mary. Mariology, in Ratzinger’s view, reveals the mystery of conjugal love and motherhood present in the Church, and in this way makes it possible to recover the dimension of the Church in accordance with the Bible and the theology of the Church Fathers.

If the Event of Christ marks the difference between the Old and New Testaments, Mary in turn embodies the continuity between them. In her Person she unites the old and the new People of God, the synagogue and the Church. In this way, she averts the danger of rupturing the unity of Scripture (Ratzinger even writes that it is in Her where the synthesis of the Bible takes place) and the

bond between the doctrine of creation and grace. Through Mariology, both the unity of the People of God and the *differentia specifica* of the People of the New Covenant become clear. The New Testament "Body of Christ" is linked not only to the Eucharistic and Christological mystery, but also to the Marian mystery. The submissive Handmaid, by virtue of the divine grace given to her, says "Yes" and becomes the Spouse and the Body. Marian devotion, too, reflects the unity of the two Testaments, for in Mary, as in the heroes of faith of the Old Testament period, God reveals as "made present" in history in those who are, as it were, His name.

The dogma of perpetual virginity protects the image of the biblical God as marking the whole of human life, not only spiritual but also physical (against Manichaeism and Cartesianism). The belief in the birth *ex Maria virgine* is a theological statement attesting that God acts in a real way and that creation bears fruit as a result of this action. The incarnation means that the whole human life of Jesus is incorporated into the filial dialogue with the Father. From the unity of God and man in the Incarnate Word, it follows that the motherhood of the "Mother of God" is united to the mystery of the Incarnation. The Christological statement of the Incarnation of the Logos includes a Mariological dimension, and where Christology does not also become Mariology, Christological faith is not preserved. If the whole history of salvation leads to the spousal union of Christ and the Church, then in this perspective Mary appears in her motherhood as the Church personified. The Bavarian theologian also argued that Marian devotion makes it possible to see the real face of Christ in the face of the Mother.

Ratzinger pointed to the intrinsic unity of promise and fulfilment in Scripture. Due to the typological interpretation, it is possible to see the parallels between the two Testaments and to grasp the similarity in dissimilarity. The continuity between the Old and New Covenants can be seen in the Holy Remnant of Israel, personified in Mary. The Mother of God is the response of the creation to God's grace and the word of God, which refuses to be a monologue. Through the response identified as Mary, a continuity reflecting God's eternal design becomes perceptible in history. The Bavarian theologian emphasised that the teaching of the Immaculate Conception was anticipated as an ecclesiology and the dogma is the application to Mary of the antithesis of the old and new Israel. Mary turns out to be a type of Israel according to the New Testament (e.g. the evangelist Luke in his depiction of Mary as the Daughter of Zion) and the Fathers of the Church. Such an identification is, in Ratzinger's view, no less present in the Bible than the Adam-Christ typological interpretation. The 1854 dogma expresses the certainty of salvation of the Church, which exists as holy in Her.

Mariology should be developed on the basis of Marian dogmas explained on a biblical basis, not only on the basis of New Testament texts. Ratzinger wrote about the reciprocal relation between dogma and Scripture: inspired texts must be interpreted according to dogma, and dogmas must be interpreted by relating them to the inspired source. Dogmas must be incorporated into Tradition, which is understood as making present the revelation attested in Scripture. Explaining the 1950 dogma, Ratzinger referred to the baptismal theology present in the letters to the Ephesians and to the Colossians. In this perspective, the whole essence of baptism was realised in Mary and she had already entered into full communion, her body including, with Christ. The Bavarian theologian believed that, in the light of the New Testament texts, the dogma of the Assumption loses its speculativeness and arbitrariness, which, it is worth recalling, was protected against precisely by the office of Scripture.

* * *

Finally, it is worth adding that the perspective taken in the article on the relation between the two poles of revelation, from which the relation of Marian dogma with the Christological “once for all” of revelation is described, lends itself well to revealing Ratzinger’s understanding of the relation between private and public revelation, and also clarifies his opposition to the proclamation of the dogma of Mary “Co-redemptrix.”¹⁸⁰

Bibliography

- Barth K., *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik*, vol. 1/2: *Die Lehre Vom Wort Gottes. Prolegomena Zur Kirchlichen Dogmatik*, Zollikon–Zürich 1945.
- Benedict XVI, *Address to the Participants in the International Congress Organized to Commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Dei Verbum* (16.09.2005), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20050916_40-dei-verbum.html (Polish translation: Benedykt XVI, Do uczestników kongresu z okazji 40. Rocznicy ogłoszenia soborowej

¹⁸⁰ Ratzinger, as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, explained that this formula departs from the language of the Bible and the Fathers of the Church, with which continuity must be maintained, and gives rise to misunderstandings and, despite some legitimate intentions behind the prefix “co,” obscures Christ’s “first” – cf. J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *God and the World...*, op. cit., p. 306 (J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat...*, op. cit., pp. 281–282).

- Konstytucji "Dei verbum". *Słowo Boże źródłem odnowy Kościoła* [16.09.2005], "L'Osservatore Romano" [Polish edition] 26/11–12 [2005], pp. 24–25).
- Benedict XVI, *Address to the Participants in the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Biblical Commission* (23.04.2009), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2009/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090423_pcb.html (Polish translation: Benedict XVI, Przemówienie do uczestników zgromadzenia plenarnego Papieskiej Komisji Biblijnej *Tradycja i Pismo Święte przenikają się nawzajem* [23.04.2009], "L'Osservatore Romano" [Polish edition] 30/6 [2009], pp. 33–35).
- Benedict XVI, Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 2007.
- Benedict XVI, Exhortation *Verbum Domini*, 2010.
- Benedict XVI, *Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI. Cappella Papale for the Opening of the 12th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops. Basilica of St Paul Outside-the-Walls* (5.10.2008), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20081005_apertura-sinodo.html (Polish translation: Benedykt XVI, *Homilia Papieża podczas Mszy św. inaugurującej Synod Bez Boga człowiek jest samotny, a społeczeństwo zagubione* [5.10.2008], "L'Osservatore Romano" [Polish edition] 29/12 [2008], pp. 7–9).
- Benedict XVI, *Homily on the Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Parish Church of St. Thomas of Villanova, Castel Gandolfo* (15.08.2012), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20120815_assunzione.html [access: 5.10.2023] (Polish translation: Benedict XVI, *Kiedy otwieramy się na Boga, nasze życie staje się bogate i wielkie. Homilia w uroczystość Wniebowzięcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny w kościele parafialnym pw. św. Tomasza z Villanova, Castel Gandolfo* [15.08.2012], [in:] Benedykt XVI, *Mystagogia Benedicti. Wprowadzenie w tajemnice roku liturgicznego. Uroczystości, święta i wspomnienia Najświętszej Maryi Panny*, ed. A. Demitrów, Biskupów 2022, pp. 238–242).
- Benedict XVI, *Interview with His Holiness Benedict XVI on the TV Programme entitled "In His Image. Questions on Jesus" broadcast by Rai Uno* (22.04.2011, Good Friday), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/april/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110422_intervista.html (Polish translation: Benedykt XVI, *Moc samej miłości. Wywiad z Benedyktem XVI, transmitowany przez pierwszy kanał telewizji RAI w programie Na Jego obraz. Pytania na temat Jezusa* [22 kwietnia 2011 r., Wielki Piątek], [in:] Benedykt XVI, *Mystagogia Benedicti. Wprowadzenie w tajemnice roku liturgicznego. Wielki Tydzień*, ed. A. Demitrów, Biskupów 2021, pp. 266–276).
- Benedict XVI, *Solemnity of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Angelus* (15.08.2007), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2007/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20070815_assunzione.html [access: 5.10.2023] (Polish translation: Benedykt XVI, *Światło Maryi rzuca blask na dzieje całej ludzkości. Rozważanie przed modlitwą Anioł Pański* [15.08.2007], [in:] Benedykt XVI, *Mystagogia Benedicti. Wprowadzenie w tajemnice roku liturgicznego. Uroczystości, święta i wspomnienia Najświętszej Maryi Panny*, ed. A. Demitrów, Biskupów 2022, pp. 206–208).
- Benedict XVI, Seewald P., *Light of the World. The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times. A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, transl. M.J. Miller, A.J. Walker, San Francisco, CA 2010 (Polish translation: Benedykt XVI, P. Seewald, *Światłość świata. Papież, Kościół*

- i znaki czasu. Benedict XVI w rozmowie z Peterem Seewaldem*, transl. P. Napiwodzki, Kraków 2011).
- Benedict XVI, Seewald P., *Ostatnie rozmowy*, transl. J. Jurczyński, Kraków 2016.
- Blanco P., *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: Nuclear Ideas*, "Theology Today" 68/2 (2011), pp. 153–173.
- Bossu N., Advani S., *Resolving the Dualism between Exegesis and Theology: Joseph Ratzinger and the Rediscovery of Tradition. A Case Study of the Purification of the Temple (John 2:13–25)*, "Alpha Omega" 23/1 (2020), pp. 47–79.
- Bouyer L., *Mystère et ministères de la femme*, Paris 1976.
- Congar Y., *Tradycja i tradycje*, vol. 2: *Esej teologiczny*, transl. A. Ziernicki, Poznań–Warszawa 2022.
- Daly G., *Revelation in the Theology of the Roman Catholic Church*, [in:] *Divine Revelation*, ed. P. Avis, Eugene, OR 1997, pp. 23–44.
- Denzinger H., *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum. Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen*, Freiburg im Breisgau 2009.
- Ferdek B., *Objawienie w doktrynie kard. Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI*, "Studia Theologiae Fundamentalis" 1 (2010), pp. 169–181.
- Frings J., *Das Konzil und die moderne Gedankenwelt*, Köln 1962.
- Gaal E. de, "Exaltation in the Second Adam": *Heavenly Mindedness and the Young Joseph Ratzinger in His 1950s Contributions to the Lexikon Für Kirche und Theologie*, [in:] *Engaging Catholic Doctrine: Essays in Honor of Matthew Levering*, eds. R. Barron, S.W. Hahn, J.R.A. Merrick, Steubenville, OH 2023, pp. 489–508.
- Guitton J., *Maryja*, transl. T. Dmochowska, Warszawa 1956.
- Hahn S., *Covenant and Communion: The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Grand Rapids, MI 2009.
- Hangler R., *Die Mariologie von Joseph Ratzinger/Papst Em. Benedikt XVI. Ein Überblick*, "Studia Nauk Teologicznych" 12 (2017), pp. 113–129.
- Hengel M., *Die Johanneische Frage. Ein Lösungsversuch mit einem Beitrag zur Apokalypse von Jörg Frey*, Tübingen 1993.
- International Theological Commission, *Select Themes of Ecclesiology on the Occasion of the Twentieth Anniversary of the Closing of the Second Vatican Council*, 1984.
- John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Redemptoris Mater*, 1987.
- Levering M., *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation: The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture*, Grand Rapids, MI 2014.
- Mansini G., *Ecclesiology*, Washington, DC 2021.
- McCaughey M., *Through the Lens of the Pure in Heart: Ratzinger's Theological Approach and the Interpretation of Revelation*, "Annales Theologici" 32/1 (2018), pp. 113–140.
- McKenna M.F., *The Female Line in the Bible: Ratzinger's Deepening of the Church's Understanding of Tradition and Mary*, "Religions" 11/6 (2020), article no. 310.
- McKenna M.F., *Innovation within Tradition: Joseph Ratzinger and Reading the Women of Scripture*, Minneapolis, MN 2015.
- Nichols A., *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI: An Introduction to the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, London 2007.
- Pidel A., *Christi Opera Proficiunt: Ratzinger's Neo-Bonaventurian Model of Social Inspiration*, "Nova et Vetera" [English edition] 13/3 (2015), pp. 693–711.

- Popowski R., *Wielki słownik grecko-polski Nowego Testamentu. Wydanie z pełną lokalizacją greckich haseł, kluczem polsko-greckim oraz indeksem form czasownikowych*, Warszawa 1995.
- Ratzinger J., *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church's Marian Belief*, transl. J.M. McDermott, San Francisco 1983 (Polish translation: J. Ratzinger, *Wzniosła Córa Syjonu. Rozważania mariologiczne*, transl. J. Królikowski, Poznań 2002).
- Ratzinger J., *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia o chrystologii*, vol. 1, Series: Opera Omnia 6/1, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. M. Górecka, W. Szymona, Lublin 2015.
- Ratzinger J., *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia o chrystologii*, vol. 2, Series: Opera Omnia 6/2, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2015.
- Ratzinger J., *Milestones. Memoirs 1927–1977*, transl. E. Leiva-Merikakis, San Francisco, CA 1998.
- Ratzinger J., *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego. Formułowanie – przekaz – interpretacja*, vol. 1, Series: Opera Omnia 7/1, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2016.
- Ratzinger J., *O nauczaniu II Soboru Watykańskiego. Formułowanie – przekaz – interpretacja*, vol. 2, Series: Opera Omnia 7/2, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. E. Grzesiuk, Lublin 2016 (*Opera omnia* 7/2).
- Ratzinger J., *Rozumienie objawienia i teologia historii według Bonawentury. Rozprawa habilitacyjna i studia nad Bonawenturą*, Series: Opera Omnia 2, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. J. Merecki, Lublin 2014.
- Ratzinger J., *Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine and Piety in Faith and Theology as a Whole*, "Communio" [English edition] 30/1 (2003), pp. 147–160.
- Ratzinger J., *Wiara w Piśmie i Tradycji. Teologiczna nauka o zasadach*, vol. 1, Series: Opera Omnia 9/1, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. J. Merecki, Lublin 2018.
- Ratzinger J., *Wiara w Piśmie i Tradycji. Teologiczna nauka o zasadach*, vol. 2, Series: Opera Omnia 9/2, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. J. Merecki, Lublin 2018.
- Ratzinger J., *Znak Kany*, transl. L. Balter, "Communio" [Polish edition] 27/1 (2007), pp. 3–8.
- Ratzinger J./Benedict XVI, Balthasar H. Urs von, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, transl. A. Walker, San Francisco, CA 2005 (Polish translation: J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, H. Urs von Balthasar, *Maryja w tajemnicy Kościoła*, transl. W. Szymona, Kraków 2007).
- Ratzinger J., Messori V., *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, San Francisco, CA 1985 (Polish translation: J. Ratzinger, V. Messori, *Raport o stanie wiary. Z Ks. Kardynałem Josephem Ratzingerem rozmawia Vittorio Messori*, transl. Z. Oryszyn, J. Chrapek, Kraków–Warszawa 1986).
- Ratzinger J., Seewald P., *God and the World: A Conversation with Peter Seewald*, San Francisco, CA 2002 (Polish translation: J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Bóg i świat. Wiara i życie w dzisiejszych czasach. Z kardynałem Josephem Ratzingerem Benedyktem XVI rozmawia Peter Seewald*, transl. G. Sowinski, Kraków 2001).
- Ratzinger J., Seewald P., *A Life*, vol. 1: *Youth in Nazi Germany to the Second Vatican Council 1927–1965*, transl. D. Livingstone, London 2020 (Polish translation: J. Ratzinger, *Moje życie*, transl. W. Wiśniowski, Częstochowa 2005).
- Riches A., *Deconstructing the Linearity of Grace: The Risk and Reflexive Paradox of Mary's Immaculate Fiat*, "International Journal of Systematic Theology" 10/2 (2008), pp. 179–194.
- Rowland T., *Ratzinger's Faith. The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford 2008.
- Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1964.
- Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation *Dei Verbum*, 1965.

- Seweryniak H., *Teologiczna droga Josepha Ratzingera – papieża i współczesnego ojca Kościoła*, [in:] *Niedźwiedź biskupa Korbiniana. W kręgu myśli teologicznej Benedykta XVI*, eds. H. Seweryniak, K. Sitkowska, P. Artemiuk, Płock 2011, pp. 15–74.
- Szymik J., *Theologia benedicta*, vol. 3, Katowice 2015.
- Vulić B., *Marija, Kristova majka, u svjetlu jedinstva i harmonije Svetoga pisma u misli J. Ratzingera / Benedikta XVI*, “Diacovensia” 27/3 (2019), pp. 453–474.
- Wahlberg M., *Revelation as Testimony: A Philosophical-Theological Study*, Grand Rapids, MI 2014.
- Witczyk H., *Natchnienie, prawda, zbawienie*, Poznań 2020.
- Wojtczak A., *The Characteristic Aspects of Benedict XVI’s Teachings on Mary*, “Gregorianum” 95/2 (2014), pp. 327–348.
- Zatwardnicki S., *One Source of Revelation and Two Currents of the Revelation Transmission and Cognition: The Apological Dimension of Joseph Ratzinger’s Theology*, “Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny” 28/2 (2020), pp. 63–93.

SŁAWOMIR ZATWARDNICKI (DR HAB.) – assistant professor at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław. Secretary of the editorial board of “Wrocławski Przegląd Teologiczny [Wrocław Theological Review].” Lecturer, publicist, author of numerous articles and books; recently published: *Od teologii objawienia do teologii natchnienia. Studium inspirowane twórczością Geralda O’Collinsa i Josepha Ratzingera* [From the Theology of Revelation to the Theology of Inspiration. A Study Inspired by the Work of Gerald O’Collins and Joseph Ratzinger] (Lublin 2022). Member of the Society of Dogmatic Theologians in Poland and the Association of Fundamental Theologians in Poland. Involved in evangelization and formation activities.

Jacek Froniewski

Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland

abbajacek@o2.pl

ORCID: 0000-0003-0133-3125

Voice of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI in Defence of the Eucharist as a Propitiatory Sacrifice in the Context of the Catholic-Protestant Controversy

Głos Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI w obronie Eucharystii
jako ofiary przebłagalnej w kontekście kontrowersji
katolicko-protestanckiej

ABSTRACT: The article was inspired by the text *Significatio della Comunione* contained in Benedict XVI's posthumously published book *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale*, which caused a considerable stir in ecumenical circles and was usually interpreted as an expression of the senior pope's opinion about the impossibility of intercommunion with Protestants. The author tries to read the meaning of this text in a different way, considering it as Benedict XVI's last voice in the theological discourse, giving inspiration for further research. The article consists of two main parts. The first part presents the theological background of the issue of the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice in three dimensions relevant here: the biblical and theological basis, the essence of the Catholic-Protestant controversy in this regard, and the rapprochement on the path of contemporary ecumenical dialogue. The second section is a chronological overview of Ratzinger's theological contribution to the resolution of this controversy from the 1960s to the end of his pontificate. Here we see that this theologian's work is not only in the line of the theological avant-garde breaking the stereotypes of the thinking of the time of the Reformation split, but also has an original contribution to the search for a path toward Eucharistic communion. The peculiarity of Ratzinger's theology here is, above all, a unique theological innovation drawing from fidelity to Tradition – there is no search for irenic shortcuts towards unity, but rather a diligent search for truth in the sources of Revelation, as summarized in the text mentioned at the beginning, published after his death.

KEYWORDS: Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, Eucharistic theology, mass as sacrifice, ecumenism, Catholic-Protestant dialogue

ABSTRAKT: Artykuł został zainspirowany tekstem *Significatio della Comunione*, zamieszczonym w wydanej pośmiertnie książce Benedykta XVI *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale*, który wywołał spore poruszenie w kręgach ekumenicznych i zazwyczaj był interpretowany jako wyraz opinii papieża-seniora o niemożności interkomunii z protestantami. Autor próbuje inaczej odczytać przesłanie tego tekstu, uznając go za ostatni głos Benedykta XVI w dyskursie teologicznym, dający inspirację do dalszych poszukiwań. Artykuł składa się z dwóch zasadniczych części. Część pierwsza prezentuje teologiczne tło zagadnienia mszy jako ofiary przebłagalnej w trzech istotnych tutaj wymiarach: podstaw biblijno-teologicznych, istoty kontrowersji katolicko-protestanckiej w tym zakresie oraz zbliżenia na drodze współczesnego dialogu ekumenicznego. Druga część jest chronologicznym przeglądem teologicznego wkładu Ratzingera w rozwiązanie tej kontrowersji począwszy od 60. lat XX wieku po kres jego pontyfikatu. Teolog ten w swojej twórczości nie tylko wpisuje się w linię teologiczną awangardy przełamującej stereotypy myślenia z czasów reformacyjnego rozłamu, ale także ma oryginalny wkład w poszukiwania drogi ku eucharystycznej komunii. Specyfiką teologii Ratzingera jest przede wszystkim swoiste nowatorstwo teologiczne czerpiące z wierności Tradycji, które nie jest szukaniem irenicznych skrótów ku jedności, a raczej żmudnym odkrywaniem prawdy w źródłach Objawienia, co reasumuje wspomniany na początku tekst wydany już po jego śmierci.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, teologia Eucharystii, msza jako ofiara, ekumenizm, dialog katolicko-protestancki

Inspiration – last writings of Benedict XVI in theological discourse

On 12 January 2023, less than two weeks after the death of Pope Emeritus, his book *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale (What Is Christianity? The Last Writings)*¹ was published with texts written in the period after his abdication from the Holy See. Some of Benedict XVI's reflections had already been known before (above all the text on the priesthood *Il sacerdozio*

¹ The word “quasi” (“as if,” “seemingly”), which does not appear neither in the Polish nor English translations that were published respectively in April and August 2023, is important here for the interpretation of these texts. Some commentaries on this publication omit it and treat the thoughts written here as almost the last will of Benedict XVI. It is probably more appropriate to perceive these texts as the last word in the theological discourses in which the Pope had previously participated. His spiritual testament, dated 29 August 2006, was published on the day of Benedict XVI's death. There we find one significant sentence in relation to theology: “For 60 years now, I have accompanied the path of theology, especially biblical studies, and have seen seemingly unshakeable theses collapse with the changing generations, which turned out to be mere hypotheses” (Benedict XVI, *My Spiritual Testament*, <https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/elezione/documents/testamento-spirituale-bxvi.html> [access: 9.08.2023]).

*cattolico*²), but some are completely new texts and it is, above all, these texts that have aroused widespread interest. Among them there is the article on the possibility of Catholics celebrating the Eucharist together with Protestants *Significatio della Comunione*,³ which was immediately noticed in the ecumenical milieu.⁴ Numerous press reports and internet accounts read: Benedict XVI considers intercommunion impossible.⁵ This is a very superficial interpretation of the article. After all, in order to grasp the Eucharist in its fullness, all three aspects: Sacrifice, Presence and Communion must be taken together into consideration. Only then can one think of the communion of the altar. The reflections of Pope Emeritus are therefore in fact much more profound here; they reveal the source of the problem. The Pope is far from closing the issue; on the contrary, he entrusts the next generation of theologians with a task to approach the essence of the Catholic-Protestant controversy in a renewed way.⁶ This article, therefore, is to be a step in this direction. However, before addressing Benedict XVI's "last writings" that crown his theology, it is first necessary to show the historical and theological background of this complex problem, and above all to focus on the status of this issue in the entirety of Joseph Ratzinger/

² Benedetto XVI, *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale*, Milano 2023, pp. 96–122 (English edition: Benedict XVI, *The Catholic Priesthood*, [in:] Benedict XVI, *What Is Christianity? The Last Writings*, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2023, pp. 113–142; cf. Benedykt XVI, *Katolickie kapłaństwo*, transl. R. Skrzypczak, [in:] Benedykt XVI, *Co to jest chrześcijaństwo? Testament duchowy*, Kraków 2023, pp. 139–178). The author notes that the text published here is a new version of an article contained in: Benedict XVI, R. Sarah, *From the Depths of Our Hearts: Priesthood, Celibacy and the Crisis of the Catholic Church*, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2020, pp. 23–60 (Polish edition: R. Sarah, Benedykt XVI/J. Ratzinger, *Z głębi naszych serc*, transl. A. Kuryś, Warszawa 2020, pp. 21–57).

³ Benedetto XVI, *Che cos'è il cristianesimo...*, op. cit., pp. 123–139. Text dated 28 June 2018. We will refer here to the English edition: Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, [in:] Benedict XVI, *What Is Christianity? The Last Writings*, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2023, pp. 144–161; cf. Benedykt XVI, *O znaczeniu komunii*, transl. R. Skrzypczak, [in:] Benedykt XVI, *Co to jest chrześcijaństwo? Testament duchowy*, Kraków 2023, pp. 179–202.

⁴ See discussion in: *Benedikt XVI.: Mahlfeier mit Protestanten theologisch unmöglich*, "Ökumenische Information" 4 (2023), 24 Januar, p. 7.

⁵ E.g. see K. Bronk, *Benedykt XVI po raz ostatni o interkomunii w Niemczech* [Benedict XVI for the Last Time about the Intercommunion in Germany], <https://m.niedziela.pl/artykul/88250/Benedykt-XVI-po-raz-ostatni-o> [access: 3.02.2023].

⁶ Cf. Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 161: "If we consider these correlations, we can note with gratitude that in the past century a new and far-reaching point of departure has been given to us, from the ecumenical perspective, too, for a more in-depth theology of the Eucharist, which certainly still must be further contemplated, experienced, and suffered."

Benedict XVI's teaching, for only in this context can one properly interpret the essential thought of Pope Emeritus in this posthumous publication. As is the case with contributions, and as the title of this article indicates, the article only focuses on one fundamental issue, which is nevertheless the key axis of the Catholic-Protestant controversy in this area: the matter of understanding the Eucharist as a propitiatory sacrifice.

Status quaestionis – the mass as a propitiatory sacrifice in the context of the Catholic-Protestant controversy

The Eucharist as a memorial (*anamnēsis*) of Christ's sacrifice on the cross – biblical and patristic foundations and the evolution of Eucharistic theology in the West during the Middle Ages

From the very beginning, the Church has fostered a profound belief in the expiatory power of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, as evidenced by the New Testament texts placing this truth at the heart of the message of the Good News (see Rom 3:24–25a; 1 Cor 6:20; Gal 1:4; 3:13; Eph 1:7; 1 Pet 1:18–19; 1 John 1:7; 2:2; 4:10; Rev 5:9).⁷ The fundamental hermeneutical key to reading the Eucharist as a sacrifice is to understand Jesus' intention in the words "do this in memory of me" (*eis tēn emēn anamnēsin*)⁸ and above all to interpret the word "memory" (Gr. *anamnēsis*) used here in a biblical way.⁹ When Jesus at the Last Supper institutes the rite of the Eucharist, through His words He clearly linked the actions and gestures over the bread and wine to the sacrifice He Himself would make on the Cross.¹⁰ This is particularly emphasised by the

⁷ For more on the results of contemporary exegesis of the New Testament texts on the propitiatory (atoning) nature of Jesus' sacrifice, see J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia o chrystologii* [Jesus of Nazareth. Studies on Christology], vol. 1, Series: Opera Omnia 6/1, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. M. Górecka, W. Szymona, Lublin 2015, pp. 437–439, 462–482, 540–547; cf. A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution des geistigen Opfers. Blut – Sündenbock – Eucharistie*, Freiburg im Br. 2016, pp. 63–66; G.L. Müller, *Msza Święta. Źródło chrześcijańskiego życia* [Mass as a Source of Christian Life], transl. S. Śledziewski, Lublin 2007, pp. 106–109.

⁸ Biblical texts in the English translation, unless otherwise noted, are quoted after the USCCB translation: <https://bible.usccb.org/bible>.

⁹ Cf. L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia. Teologia i duchowość modlitwy eucharystycznej*, transl. L. Rutowska, Lublin 2015, pp. 99–100 (English edition: L. Bouyer, *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer*, Notre Dame, IN 2006); W. Beinert, U. Kühn, *Ökumenische Dogmatik*, Leipzig–Regensburg 2013, p. 672.

¹⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI, *The Catholic Priesthood*, op. cit., p. 123.

words spoken over the bread “This is my body, which will be given for you” and over the cup “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which will be shed for you” (Luke 22:19–20), to which Matthew added “which will be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28). The phrase “blood shed for you” clearly connotes the cultic deeply rooted in Old Testament sacrifices, where the motif of blood had a very elaborate symbolism indicating the reality of sacrifice, especially related to the establishment of the covenant (cf. Exod 24:8).¹¹ Thus, we see that the Last Supper was consciously experienced by Jesus as an anticipation of the salvific sacrifice of the Cross. But, even more significantly for us, Jesus, expressing His last will, commands His disciples to repeat this rite with the words: “do this in memory of me” (Luke 22:19), “do this in remembrance of me” (1 Cor 11:24). The fulfilment of this injunction, as the earliest New Testament accounts show, gives the Church gathered at the Eucharist the basis for believing that the Church participates in Christ’s sacrifice.

What is the principle and the basis of the faith of the early Church here? It is not inadvertently that Jesus used the word “memory/remembrance” when instituting the rite of His Passover at the Last Supper. This concept is deeply rooted in the biblical and especially Paschal tradition that forms the liturgical context of the Last Supper. The problem is that “memory/remembrance/memorial,” as well as their etymological cognates seem to connote only passive recollection of past events; they denote an act of our remembering and do not actually represent the meaning of the original New Testament use of the Greek word *anamnesis*.¹² Looking for Hebrew equivalents in the Old Testament for

¹¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Eucharystia. Bóg blisko nas* [The Eucharist. God Close to Us], transl. M. Rodkiewicz, Kraków 2005, pp. 33–41; J. Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, Göttingen 1967, pp. 213–214; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist. Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion*, Steubenville, OH 2018, pp. 111–117.

¹² D.E. Stern, *Remembering and Redemption*, [in:] *Rediscovering the Eucharist*, ed. R. Kereszty, New York–Mahwah, NJ 2003, p. 2: “This Greek word is practically untranslatable in English. ‘Memorial’, ‘commemoration’, ‘remembrance’ all suggest a recollection of the past, whereas *anamnesis* means making present an object or person from the past. Sometimes the term ‘reactualization’ has been used to indicate the force of *anamnesis*.” Similar opinion of M. Rosik, *Pierwszy List do Koryntian. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz* [First Epistle to the Corinthians. Introduction, Translation from the Original, Commentary], Series: Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament 7, Czestochowa 2009, p. 368: “The Greek *anamnesis*, rendering the Hebrew term *zikkaron*, should be translated as ‘making present’. For a ‘memorial’ refers to the past, whereas ‘making present’ makes past events present now, and this is precisely the meaning of Christ’s words.” Cf. A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 35–36; J.M. Czerski, *Liturgie Kościołów Wschodnich. Liturgia Kościoła bizantyjskiego, ormiańskiego i koptyjskiego* [Liturgies of the Eastern Churches. Liturgy of the Byzantine, Armenian and Coptic Churches], Series: Liturgia Musica Ars 1, Opole 2009, p. 93.

the Greek term *anamnesis*, one should point first of all to the Hebrew word *zikkaron*. We can find a proof in the Septuagint in which *zikkaron* is translated exactly as *anamnesis*.¹³

It is necessary to ponder briefly on the understanding of the concept of “memorial” (*zikkaron*) in relation to the Jewish Passover, since, as we have pointed out, it was in its context that Jesus instituted the Eucharist. Let us leave aside the unresolved dispute among biblical scholars as to whether the Last Supper was in a historical sense a Passover feast.¹⁴ From the New Testament accounts, one thing is certain: Jesus very deliberately chooses the Passover feast in order to incorporate the event of His death and resurrection into its liturgy and theology and thus establish His own feast, a new Passover.¹⁵ Thus, the Jewish Passover rite becomes the primary hermeneutical key for the Passover of Jesus.¹⁶

The fundamental text on the establishment and celebration of Passover by the Jews is the passage from Exodus (12:1–14),¹⁷ and in it the essential biblical testimony to Passover as a memorial is verse 14:

This day will be a day of remembrance (*le-zikkaron*)¹⁸ for you, which your future generations will celebrate with pilgrimage to the Lord; you will celebrate it as a statute forever. (USCCB)

¹³ Cf. W. Świerzawski, *Dynamiczna „Pamiętka” Pana. Eucharystyczna anamneza Misterium Paschalnego i jego egzystencjalna dynamika* [The Dynamic “Memorial” of the Lord. Eucharistic Anamnesis of the Paschal Mystery and Its Existential Dynamics], Kraków 1980, p. 23; D.E. Stern, *Remembering...*, op. cit., p. 2.

¹⁴ See A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii* [Theology of the Eucharist], transl. S. Szczyrbowski, Warszawa 1977, p. 32 (German edition: A. Gerken, *Theologie der Eucharistie*, München 1973): “[...] even assuming that the Last Supper was not a Paschal feast, a Paschal theology starting from the Passover as a historical and salvific background is rooted in the Last Supper, and even more so in the theology of the synoptics and John”; cf. L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 94–97; H. Hoping, *Mein Leib für euch gegeben. Geschichte und Theologie der Eucharistie*, Freiburg im Br. 2011, pp. 42–48.

¹⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 460–462; cf. J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 32–214; cf. J. Ratzinger, *Duch liturgii*, Series: Christianitas, transl. E. Pieciul, Poznań 2002, p. 89; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 89–90, 103–104.

¹⁶ Cf. J. Czerski, *Biblijny przekaz Ostatniej Wieczerzy* [Biblical Message of the Last Supper], [in:] *Misterium Eucharystii* [The Mystery of the Eucharist], ed. M. Worbs, Opole 2005, pp. 7–8.

¹⁷ Cf. the later account of Deut 16:1–8 and the less relevant accounts in Num 28:16–25 and Lev 23:5–8.

¹⁸ See A. Kuśmirek (ed.), *Hebrajsko-polski Stary Testament. Pięcioksiąg. Przekład interliniarny z kodami gramatycznymi, transliteracją oraz indeksem rdzeni* [Hebrew-Polish Old Testament. Pentateuch. Interlinear Translation with Grammatical Codes, Transliteration

This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast. (English Standard Version)

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever. (King James Version)

The Passover as a feast day is meant to be a memorial/remembrance (*zikkaron*) celebrated by all generations as a feast for Yahweh who liberated His people. We can see an important point in this statement – Passover as a feast, a liturgical celebration, is a memorial. The motif of sacrifice is also strongly inscribed in the Passover – this is particularly emphasised by another account of the feast from the Yahwist tradition (Exod 12:21–27): “It is the Passover sacrifice for the Lord” (v. 27). Thus, we can see that Passover as a memorial highlights two dimensions on the liturgical level: on the one hand, it is, through the rite of the Passover meal, an effective, real sign of the liberation accomplished by Yahweh (or, in other words, of salvation), and on the other hand, it is an offering made to God.¹⁹ The next chapter of Exodus (13:3–11) expands on the Jews’ understanding of the Passover; it refers to Unleavened Bread, which in time merged into a single festival with the Passover. Verse 8 remarkably emphasises the actualisation of the historical event: “This is because of what the Lord did for me [emphasise – JF] when I came out of Egypt.” These words, spoken by the father of the family at the Passover feast, were a confession of faith that what God had done at the time of the Exodus, He had also done for the speaker of these words and for the participants in the rite; moreover, they themselves are currently participants in the Exodus from Egypt.²⁰ Here an emphasis is placed on the almost sacramental realism of this rite, with the actualisation of the historical fact of liberation from Egyptian slavery. One can therefore conclude that Passover as a feast and as a rite, is precisely a memorial (*zikkaron*) in the

and Stem Index], Warszawa 2003, p. 252. The Jewish translation from Hebrew into Polish contains the word “pamiętka” (memorial); see *Pięcioksiąg Mojżesza. Druga Księga Mojżesza. Exodus, Tłumaczył i podług najlepszych źródeł objaśnił Dr. I. Cylkow* [The Pentateuch of Moses. The Second Book of Moses. Exodus, Translated and Explained According to the Best Sources by Dr. I. Cylkow], Kraków 1895, p. 51.

¹⁹ Cf. M. Thurian, *L’Eucharistie. Mémorial du Seigneur. Sacrifice d’action de grâce et d’intercession*, Neuchâtel 1963, pp. 37 and 43.

²⁰ See M. Rosik, *Eucharystia w tradycji biblijnej. Zapowiedzi – ustanowienie – ku teologii* [The Eucharist in Biblical Tradition. Prophecies – Establishment – Theology], Wrocław 2022, pp. 148–149.

sense that its essence is to make present anew the salvific event accomplished by God in the past. It is the word “memorial” (*zikkaron*) that added the deepest meaning to the Jewish Passover feast, for despite the one-off, unique historical nature of the Exodus event, it becomes an accessible present to those taking part in it, with which they identify.²¹

In such a context, we understand that Jesus, by instituting the rite of the new Passover in the Upper Room on the eve of His death and ordering it to be repeated in memory/remembrance/memorial of Himself to the disciples present there, who were Jews, was referring to their religious experience, and in particular to the celebration of the Passover, in which the category of “memorial-*zikkaron*”²² is central. However, the new rite then established by Jesus is not a simple continuation of the Jewish Passover, nor some modified form of its development. Jesus said His Haggadah, explaining His gestures over the bread and wine, not to repeat the old rite, but to make it an original, completely new one.²³ Just as for the Jews the Passover was not a mere verbal reminder of historical events, but a living actualisation of God’s salvific action during the night of the Exodus, so for Jesus’s disciples the Lord’s death became a cultic memorial. On the cross Jesus fulfilled John the Baptist’s prophecy of Himself “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29) and became – especially in the Gospel of John the Apostle – the perfect paschal lamb whose blood has a salvific and expiatory power.²⁴ This connection of the Eucharistic memorial (*anamnesis*) with the sacrifice of the Cross in the early Christian liturgy is attested to by St Paul in 1 Cor 11:23–27, about which he writes in verse 26: “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes.” This sentence is the logical conclusion of the final words of the consecration formula recorded by Paul, where the emphasis falls on the word “memorial-*anamnesis*.”

²¹ Cf. M. Thurian, *O Eucharystii i modlitwie* [On the Eucharist and Prayer], transl. M. Tarnowska, Krakow 1987, pp. 20 and 24.

²² See more extensively M. Rosik, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 21–29; A. Demitrów, *Ciągłość i nowość między żydowskim Seder a ostatnią wieczerzą Jezusa* [Continuity and Novelty between the Jewish Seder and the Last Supper of Jesus], [in:] *Wspólnota eucharystyczna* [The Eucharistic Community], ed. A.A. Napiórkowski, Kraków 2022, pp. 9–33; cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 108–110.

²³ See more in J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 478–482; B. Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, Grand Rapids, MI 2015, pp. 403–443.

²⁴ See S. Lyonnet, *Eucharistie et vie chrétienne. Quelques aspects bibliques du mystère eucharistique*, Paris 1993, pp. 49–51; cf. J. Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, transl. H. Taylor, San Francisco, CA 2005, p. 71 (Polish edition: J. Ratzinger, *Kościół. Pielgrzymująca wspólnota wiary*, transl. W. Szymona, Kraków 2005, pp. 89–90).

The expiatory nature of Christ's sacrifice is deepened from the theological perspective in the Letter to the Hebrews (7:1–10:18), whose author innovatively links the theme of the expiatory sacrifice of Christ's cross with the sacrifice for sins offered on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur).²⁵ The message of this fragment can be summarised in the following two conclusions: The Old Covenant did not have, through the offering of blood sacrifices, the real possibility of forgiveness of sins – it could only confess them, offering “remembrance” (*anamnesis* – Heb 10:3) before God, hence these actions and the sacrifices associated with them had to be constantly repeated because they were imperfect (Heb 10:4–11), and it was only the perfect sacrifice of Christ the high priest on the cross accomplished “once for all” (Heb 10:10, 12; cf. 7:27; 9:28) that took away all sins.²⁶

Another problem arises here – if the Eucharist is to be considered a true atoning sacrifice for sins, how should we interpret the absolute statement that Jesus offered the sacrifice “once for all”? The Greek word *ephapax* “once for all” occurs three times in the Letter to the Hebrews (7:27; 9:12; 10:10) and always expresses the unique and ultimate nature of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, but also the permanent sanctification of God's people through Christ's entry into the heavenly sanctuary (cf. 10:12–14), where He is constantly so that “he might now appear before God on our behalf” (9:24). Literally this “appear” is the equivalent to the Greek verb *emphanizo* meaning “to make visible” – the risen Christ stands before the Father on our behalf and makes His sacrifice constantly visible in the heavenly liturgy. It is worth noticing that in such a context the term “once for all” cannot be read statically in the sense of a relation to the past – in other words, it cannot be interpreted with an emphasis on “once.” If we accentuate the second part “for all/forever,” we discover that the uniqueness of Christ's sacrifice does not mean that it is merely some isolated fact of the past, but is first and foremost a historical fact whose effects last continuously through Christ's eternal priesthood in heaven. The formula “once for all” emphasises the absolute, complete and permanent nature of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, but it by no means imply that this unique event in history cannot be experienced and made present, for it also lasts “for all/forever.”²⁷ The sacrifice of Christ is

²⁵ See more in a very good synthesis of this topic in: Brother John, Taizé, *In Defense of Sacrifice*, Taizé 2022, pp. 27–39; cf. M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie...*, op. cit., p. 202; H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 72–75.

²⁶ Cf. L.T. Johnson, *Sacramentality and Sacraments in Hebrews*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 118–120.

²⁷ M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 149–150; the author here demonstrates the error of Protestants at the time of the Reformation, who read this “once and for all” purely

therefore a unique, exceptional and dynamic act, since it appears as the beginning and source of Redemption, which lasts forever. In this sense, we can say that Christ's unique sacrifice on the cross is at the same time an eternal sacrifice,²⁸ for "in the Risen and Exalted Christ his whole life is forever present [...], all that he said and suffered, up to his death on the cross" – "in the resurrection all earthly time is suspended" and history "becomes a concentrated present."²⁹

Thus, the Eucharist, as a biblically understood memorial (*zikkaron*), makes sacramentally present the one sacrifice for the remission of sins made by the Son on the Cross. Of course, the remission of sins is the fruit of this unique act of sacrifice on the Cross, but this sacrifice can be actualised because it is permanently present before the Father in heaven in the eternal liturgy of the Son-priest for eternity, who abides in a state of sacrifice³⁰. In the light of the Letter to the Hebrews, it is not possible, as we have already shown, to conceive of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and its associated remission of sins merely as an isolated act that took place in the past, but as a work of Christ that is continually ongoing and results in sanctification in all sacramental acts³¹ (Heb 9:14; 10:10, 14³²). In this perspective, we can call the Eucharist a true sacrifice – it is not an independent sacrifice with power or effect in itself, but derives its power from the one sacrifice of Christ, which it represents-presents-actualises in the liturgical celebration.³³

historically, without reference to Christ's eternal priesthood in heaven, and at the same time, innovatively as a Protestant theologian, he here paves the way for ecumenical rapprochement provided by this new reading of the formula.

²⁸ M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 144–146; cf. G.L. Müller, *Msza Święta...*, op. cit., p. 114.

²⁹ G. Lohfink, *Przeciw banalizacji Jezusa* [Against the Trivialisation of Jesus], transl. E. Pieciul-Karmińska, Poznań 2015, p. 268.

³⁰ H. Bourgeois, B. Sesboué, P. Tihon, *Znaki zbawienia. Sakramenty, Kościół, Najświętsza Panna Maryja* [Signs of Salvation. Sacraments, the Church, the Blessed Virgin Mary], Series: Historia Dogmatów 3, transl. P. Rak, Kraków 2001, p. 275; cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 367–368.

³¹ This idea is also confirmed in 1 John 2:1–2.

³² In particular, verse Heb 10:14 in the original speaks of those continually and perpetually sanctified (*dienekes*); see J.H. Thayer (transl., ed.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, New York 1886; R. Popowski, M. Wojciechowski (transl.), *Grecko-polski Nowy Testament* [Greek-Polish New Testament]. *Wydanie interlinearne z kluczem gramatycznym, z kodami Stronga i Popowskiego oraz pełną transliteracją greckiego tekstu*, Warszawa 2014, p. 1198.

³³ M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 148–150, 206–207; cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 232; P. Blanco Sarto, *Eucharystia* [Eucharist], Series: Bóg, Człowiek, Świat 5, transl. K. Chorzewska, Kielce 2022, p. 73.

Jesus' words establishing the Eucharist form the original core of the Christian liturgy, but its broader framework originally constituted elements of Jewish liturgy, which was the natural soil for the spiritual life of the early Christians.³⁴ Of particular importance here, as Louis Bouyer has shown, are the Jewish blessing prayers *berakot*, in which the Jewish idea of memorial (*zikkaron*) is firmly embedded. They were very likely the inspiration for the most archaic Eucharistic prayers, and in this way the biblically understood idea of remembrance/memorial (*anamnesis*) became the fundamental basis of Christian liturgy.³⁵

In the era of the Church Fathers, the understanding of memorial in relation to the Eucharist as a sacrifice taken over from Jewish tradition was very vivid.³⁶ The most frequently cited evidence of this is the descriptive testimony of St John Chrysostom, whose synthesis is contained in the sentence: "It is not another sacrifice, as the High Priest, but we offer always the same, or rather we perform a remembrance (*anamnesin*) of a Sacrifice."³⁷ This is a very valuable, classic text on this issue, which explains, through the category of memorial–*anamnesis*, the singularity and uniqueness (Gr. *ephapax*) of the sacrifice of the New Covenant and its relation to the Eucharistic liturgy, so strongly emphasised in the Letter to the Hebrews. The one sacrifice of Christ is the sacrifice offered in every Eucharistic celebration in remembrance of its institution by Jesus; thus the Eucharistic sacrifice is the actualisation/making present of the sacrifice of the Cross.³⁸ For the Greek Fathers, *anamnesis*, preserving the link with the biblical understanding of a memorial/remembrance became the central idea, the key to explaining the mystery of the Eucharist and especially its sacrificial

³⁴ See more extensively J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Święto wiary. O teologii mszy świętej* [The Feast of Faith. On the Theology of the Mass], transl. J. Merecki, Kraków 2006, pp. 38–45.

³⁵ See more extensively L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 23–34, 94–100; cf. J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 471–472, 480; J. Ratzinger, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 52–53; M. Thurian, *O Eucharystii...*, op. cit., pp. 26–27.

³⁶ See more extensively P. Blanco Sarto, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., pp. 76–81.

³⁷ Full text: John Chrysostom, *Hom. Heb. 17,3* (PG 63, 131); English text: Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and The Epistle of the Hebrews*, Series: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series 14, ed. P. Schaff, New York 1889, pp. 363–522, <https://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/VOL-14-Nicene-and-post-Nicene-fathers-of-the-Christian-church.pdf> [access: 30.10.2023]. For a similar text directly relating the Old Testament notion of a memorial in the Passover feast to the Eucharist, see John Chrysostom, *Hom. Matth. 82,1* (PG 58,739); English text: Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, Series: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series 14, ed. P. Schaff, New York 1888, pp. 491–497, <https://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/VOL-10-Nicene-and-post-Nicene-fathers-of-the-Christian-church.pdf> [access: 30.10.2023].

³⁸ Cf. H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 106–108; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 163–168.

nature. They refined this concept on the basis of Platonic philosophy and its presuppositions, concerning the real symbol.³⁹ In contrast, the Latin Fathers, starting with Cyprian of Carthage, had a tendency to treat the Eucharistic sacrifice more as a form of repeating the sacrifice of the Cross.⁴⁰ From the end of the sixth century, the Latin Church began to lose the ability to construe the memorial, based on the words of the institution of the Eucharist, in terms developed by the Eastern Fathers and tended to interpret the Eucharistic liturgy as a new sacrifice, not by virtue of *anamnesis*, but by the direct offering of the Eucharistic gifts. It is here that we can point to the origins of the later crisis in the West concerning the question of the identity of the sacrifice of the Cross and the Eucharistic sacrifice, already signalled in some ways by the Eucharistic disputes of the early Middle Ages in the ninth and eleventh centuries.⁴¹

The pinnacle of medieval theology of the Eucharist in the West is the doctrine of St Thomas Aquinas, which set the course of Catholic theology in this area for centuries to come, being a kind of synthesis of the legacy of the Fathers made with the conceptual apparatus of Aristotle's philosophy. For Aquinas, the Eucharist is a sacrifice in the first place because "the Eucharist is the perfect sacrament of our Lord's Passion, as containing Christ crucified."⁴² Let us note that there is a shift in emphasis here on the question of sacrifice: the patristic model emphasised *anamnesis*, i.e. the basis was the actualisation/making present of Christ's Passover from which His presence resulted; in the scholastic model, the basis is the actual presence from which indirectly the sacrifice results. On closer examination of *Summa Theologiae*, however, it seems that Thomas did not completely lose the patristic model explaining the Eucharistic sacrifice, which can be exemplified with the patristic opinion – inspired by Augustine's text – recorded in *Summa* in the Christological treatise on the question of Christ's priesthood: "The Sacrifice which is offered every day in the Church is not distinct from that which Christ Himself offered, but is a commemoration (*commemoratio*) thereof."⁴³ On the other hand, if we turn to the Latin original of the passage devoted to the question of the Eucharistic

³⁹ Cf. W. Świerzawski, *Dynamiczna „Pamiętka”...*, op. cit., p. 216.

⁴⁰ Cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 147–149.

⁴¹ See H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 115–117, 130–131, 185–187; cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., pp. 103–110, 145–146; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 173–174.

⁴² St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* [hereafter STh], III, q.73, a.5, ad 2; <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.III.Q73.A5> [access: 17.08.2023]. See also STh III, q.79, a.1: "per hoc sacramentum repraesentatur, quod est passio Christi" (<https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.III.Q79.A1.C.2> [access: 17.08.2023]). Cf. H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 223–224.

⁴³ STh III, q.22, a.3, ad 2, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.III.Q22.A3> [access: 17.08.2023].

sacrifice (STh III, q.83, a.1), we also find there the patristic term *imago repraesentativa*.⁴⁴ There are other statements which testify that Aquinas understood the Eucharist as a true sacrifice which makes present the one sacrifice of the Cross, wherever he uses the verb *repraesentare*.⁴⁵ We may insist on it, insofar as we understand *re-praesentare* in the original sense of the word as “to make present.” Ultimately, then, we can conclude that St Thomas, referring to the Church Fathers, preserved the essential intuition of the unity of the sacrifice of the Cross and the Eucharistic sacrifice through the concept of *repraesentatio* understood as making present.⁴⁶

In the late Middle Ages, with the change of philosophical paradigm and the dominance of nominalism, Aquinas’ model in the doctrine of the Eucharist was deconstructed. The theology of the late Middle Ages only pointed to the identity of the offered gift (*host*) in the sacrifice of the Cross and in the Eucharistic sacrifice, but not to the identity of the sacrifice (*sacrificium*). Thus, by separating the sacrament from the sacrifice, it lost the eventual (*anamnetic*) dimension of the Eucharist as a liturgical act,⁴⁷ which in practice resulted in an autonomous treatment of the Mass as a sacrifice against the one sacrifice of

⁴⁴ STh III, q.83, a.1, ad 2, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~STh.III.Q83.A1> [access: 17.08.2023]. See more extensively L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 343–348.

⁴⁵ STh III, q.73, a.4, ad 3, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~STh.III.Q73.A4> [access: 17.08.2023]. We refer here to the original text of *Summa* to avoid any imprecision as a result of the translation process.

⁴⁶ See more in J. Froniewski, *Eucharystia jako ofiara w nauczaniu św. Tomasza z Akwinu – próba poszukiwania adekwatnego klucza hermeneutycznego* [The Eucharist as a Sacrifice in the Teaching of St Thomas Aquinas – An Attempt to Search for an Adequate Hermeneutical Key], [in:] *Piękna dama Teologia. Księga Jubileuszowa dedykowana Księdzu Profesorowi Romanowi E. Rogowskiemu* [Theology – a Beautiful Lady. A Tribute to Prof. Roman E. Rogowski], eds. W. Wołyniec, J. Froniewski, Wrocław 2016, pp. 233–244.

⁴⁷ Cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 135; W. Świerzawski, *Dynamiczna „Pamiątka”...*, op. cit., pp. 240–241; J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, transl. M.F. McCarthy, San Francisco, CA 1987, p. 255; cf. J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Formalne zasady chrześcijaństwa. Szkice do teologii fundamentalnej*, transl. W. Szymona, Poznań 2009, p. 345. It should be remembered that St Thomas’s Eucharistic doctrine was only sanctioned as official Church teaching at the Council of Trent, and that other concepts had previously operated in parallel with it. E.g. one generation later, Duns Scotus produced a doctrinal synthesis independent of that of Aquinas, in which the Eucharist was no longer a representation of the one sacrifice of Christ, but above all the sacrifice of the Church, which in practice meant that each Mass was a separate sacrifice, a repetition of the sacrifice of the Cross. It is also worth noting that even Cardinal Cajetan (Tommaso de Vio, †1534), a prominent Dominican theologian and Thomist, whose teaching would strongly influence Tridentine doctrine and who, as the Pope’s legate, held a dispute with Luther in 1518, despite his best intentions, in his

Christ on the Cross – this dramatic rupture would become the flashpoint of the most profound Eucharistic controversy in the history of theology formulated by the fathers of the Protestant Reformation.⁴⁸

The Catholic-Protestant controversy over the Mass as sacrifice during the Reformation period

For the father of the Reformation, Martin Luther, the Mass as a sacrifice was the main rock of offence in Catholic teaching on the Eucharist.⁴⁹ His criticism of the sacrificial character of the Mass was principally based on the biblical argument from the text of the Letter to the Hebrews (10:1–18) about the sacrifice “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” Thus, the one sacrifice of Christ made on the cross is fully sufficient and requires no additions, and since one speaks of the sacrifice of the mass, one would be referring to some new sacrifice, or, as Luther claimed, a human deed that would have salvific power, which is contrary to the principle of *sola gratia* and thus unacceptable.⁵⁰ The atoning sacrifice is only one, and it was accomplished on the Cross. We can only consider the Mass as a sacrifice in the sense of thanksgiving for the

explication of the Eucharistic sacrifice may seem to suggest a repetition of the sacrifice of the Cross. Cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 351–353, 467, n. 43.

⁴⁸ See H. Hopping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 244–246; P. Blanco Sarto, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., pp. 84–85.

⁴⁹ See more extensively J. Froniewski, *Marcina Lutra nauka o ofierze eucharystycznej. Jej ocena w orzeczeniach Soboru Trydenckiego oraz możliwości reinterpretacji w świetle współczesnych dokumentów dialogu katolicko-luterańskiego* [Martin Luther’s Teaching on the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Its Evaluation in the Teaching of the Council of Trent and the Possibilities of Reinterpretation in the Light of Contemporary Documents of the Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue], “Perspectiva. Legnickie Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne” 15/2 (2016), pp. 14–34; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 375–393; cf. M.L. Mattox, *Sacraments in the Lutheran Reformation*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 276–281.

⁵⁰ See more details in: M. Luther, *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae. Von der babylonischen Gefangenschaft der Kirche. Lateinisch/Deutsch*, ed., transl. H.-H. Tiemann, Stuttgart 2016, pp. 62–117; cf. J. Jolkkonen, *Luther and the Eucharist. A Defender of the Real Presence*, [in:] *Vermitteltes Heil. Martin Luther und die Sakramente*, eds. F. Körner, W. Thönissen, Paderborn–Leipzig 2018, p. 111; G. Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*, Cambridge–New York 2008, pp. 100–105; H. Hopping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 246–250; W. Beinert, U. Kühn, *Ökumenische Dogmatik*, op. cit., pp. 664–665. See also J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, p. 290.

forgiveness of sins. This is because the precursors of Lutheranism made a very sharp distinction between *propitiatory sacrifice* (*sacrificium propitiatorium*) and the Eucharistic or thanksgiving sacrifice. The propitiatory (expiatory) sacrifice, as described in the Letter to the Hebrews, took place “once for all” and it is the death of Christ on the cross, which alone can atone for sins.⁵¹ In contrast, the eucharistic (thanksgiving) sacrifice does not merit the remission of sins, but is an expression of gratitude for this and other gifts of God and is therefore also called a sacrifice of praise.⁵² Luther categorically rejected the possibility of actively actualising Christ’s sacrifice, and in fact reduced the entire Lord’s Supper to the words of institution and distribution of the sacrament.⁵³ Also, in interpreting the words of institution “This do in memory/remembrance (Germ. *Gedächtnis* – ‘memorial’) of me,” he reduced the Church’s fulfilment of these words to the mere mention of Christ’s one sacrifice, that is, he completely separated the sacrifice from the memorial of the sacrifice. For him, the memorial was only the subjective recollection by faith of the benefits available through Christ’s sacrifice, i.e. the acceptance in faith of its effects, and not an objective event.⁵⁴ In Luther’s understanding, the Mass is not some form of making present (*anamnesis*) of Christ’s sacrifice, but a reenactment of the Last Supper as *testamentum* of Jesus.⁵⁵

Similarly, the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli by no means accepted the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist in any form; he insisted that Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was a single and concluding event and there was no need or possibility of repeating it. In his reformed liturgy, he abolished the Mass as idolatry and introduced a very simplified communion service. The Lord’s

⁵¹ See *Augsburg Confession* XXIV (*Księgi wyznaniowe Kościoła luterńskiego* [Lutheran Church Confession Books], Bielsko-Biała 1999, p. 152). Cf. W. Beinert, U. Kühn, *Ökumenische Dogmatik*, op. cit., p. 667; S. Klein, *Katolicy i luteranie razem przy stole Pańskim. Wspólnota eucharystyczna według dokumentów dialogu katolicko-luterńskiego* [Catholics and Lutherans together at the Lord’s Table. Eucharistic Communion According to the Documents of the Catholic-Lutheran Dialogue], Series: Jeden Pan, Jedna Wiara 22, Lublin 2015, p. 76.

⁵² This is explained in detail by Melancthon, *Defence of the Augsburg Confession*, <https://bookofconcord.org/defense/> [access: 17.08.2023]; cf. J. Sojka, *Widzialne Słowo. Sakramenty w luterńskiej „Księdze zgody”* [The Visible Word. Sacraments in the Lutheran “Book of Concord”], Warszawa 2016, pp. 257–259.

⁵³ Cf. J. Jolkkonen, *Luther and the Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 112–114; J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., p. 261, especially n. 33.

⁵⁴ See more extensively A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., pp. 143–150.

⁵⁵ Cf. S. Klein, *Katolicy i luteranie...*, op. cit., p. 52, where the author states that with Luther “the anamnesis received the character of a ‘repetition’ (*Widerholungsmandat*) of what took place at the Last Supper.”

Supper, in Zwingli's teaching, is a memorial that was instituted, but it only has a significance as a commemoration in the mind of the believers to awaken in them gratitude for the salvific death of Jesus. He even saw an analogy between the Jewish Passover and the Eucharist, but believed that in both cases it is exclusively spiritual remembrance and the realisation of God's salvific work. For Zwingli, sacrifice and memorial are mutually exclusive: a memorial cannot be a sacrifice – the Last Supper can only be remembered, but not celebrated.⁵⁶ John Calvin, too, understood the Lord's Supper as a reenactment of the Last Supper without any sacrificial dimension; it is merely a feast of thanksgiving and praise.⁵⁷ Interestingly, although he was familiar with the patristic texts that refer to the Eucharist as a sacrifice, he interpreted the explanations about the anamnesis of Christ's sacrifice as a mere recollection of a past event.⁵⁸

The whole Catholic-Protestant dispute boiled down, to say the least, to the question of whether the Mass is a sacrifice or a memorial, where the memorial was understood by Protestants only as an act of human remembering. It was no longer understood that the Eucharist was a sacrifice because it was a memorial, but in the biblical sense.⁵⁹ The problem for the Reformers was that their criticism was valid, but it was essentially about the picture of the theology of the Eucharist they met in their era. In terms of patristics, especially Greek patristics, this problem would not arise at all, however, in the early sixteenth century, neither the Reformers nor, in general, Catholic theologians, starting from the assumptions of late medieval theology, could formulate a fully satisfactory answer to the question of the identity of the Eucharistic sacrifice with the unique sacrifice of the Cross.⁶⁰ The Catholics essentially defended their position on the basis of fidelity to Tradition.

It was not until the Council of Trent that a comprehensive response to the Reformation accusations was formulated. This Council, faced with a schism in the Church, had to thoroughly systematise Catholic doctrine, which in many cases led to the formulation of new dogmatic definitions denouncing previous erroneous views. The Council's key formulation explaining the doctrine on the

⁵⁶ See G. Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*, op. cit., pp. 99–100; M.L. Mattox, *Sacraments...*, op. cit., pp. 277–278.

⁵⁷ Cf. M. Thurian, *O Eucharystii...*, op. cit., p. 29.

⁵⁸ See J. Calvin, *L'Institution Chrétienne. Livre quatrième*, Marne-la-Vallée–Aix-en-Provence 1995, IV,18,10, pp. 409–410, where he refers to the classical texts on anamnesis by Augustine and John Chrysostom.

⁵⁹ Cf. L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 254.

⁶⁰ Cf. G. Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*, op. cit., pp. 125–127; H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 274–278.

sacrifice of the Mass is found in a single, very elaborate, and extremely condensed sentence in the first chapter of the *Doctrine on the Sacrifice of the Mass* in the twenty-second session of the Council (1562).⁶¹ The conciliar document very accurately put the relationship between Christ's "once" (*semel*) sacrifice of the Cross and the Eucharistic sacrifice using the concepts of *repraesentatio*, *memoria* and *applicatio*. The Eucharist is the memorial (*memoria*) of Christ's Passover cultic event (the Paschal context is developed in the next sentence of this doctrine) that is made present (*repraesentare*) in the celebration of the liturgy of the Mass. The key term here, however, is not *memoria*, but the word *repraesentatio*—making present/actualisation taken from the teaching of Thomas Aquinas.⁶² The Council of Trent construes this word in such a sense that the Eucharistic liturgy represents the one sacrifice of the Cross without adding or renewing anything to it. On the other hand, the term "memorial" (*memoria*) is closely linked to the notion of making present—*repraesentatio*, and therefore very close to its biblical understanding.⁶³ However, the Council Fathers do not elaborate theologically on this concept, treating it with some reserve, perhaps in fear that the notion of "memorial" will be interpreted in the Protestant manner, merely as a purely psychological recollection/commemoration. Confirmation of this thesis seems to come from the wording of Canon 3 attached to the same doctrine, which condemns the view that: "missae sacrificium tantum esse [...] nudam commemorationem sacrificium in cruce peracti."⁶⁴

⁶¹ The Council of Trent, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent*, ed., transl. J. Waterworth, London 1848, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/trent.htm> [access: 17.08.2023] (Polish edition: The Council of Trent, *Doctrina et canones de sanctissimo missae sacrificio*, [in:] *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych. Tekst łaciński i polski* [Documents of the Universal Councils. Latin and Polish Text], vol. 4: *Lateran V, Trydent, Watykan I [1511–1870]*, eds. A. Baron, H. Pietras, Kraków 2007, pp. 636–639).

⁶² See H. Hoping, *Mein Leib...*, op. cit., pp. 282–283; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 353–354; B.D. Marshall, *What is the Eucharist? A Dogmatic Outline*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 513–514.

⁶³ H. Bourgeois, B. Sesboüé, P. Tihon, *Znaki zbawienia...*, op. cit., pp. 147–148; cf. P. Blanco Sarto, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., pp. 91–93.

⁶⁴ The Council of Trent, *Doctrina et canones...*, op. cit., p. 646; cf. H. Bourgeois, B. Sesboüé, P. Tihon, *Znaki zbawienia...*, op. cit., p. 148; A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., p. 154. For a more extensive discussion of this issue, see J. Froniewski, *Ewolucja rozumienia biblijnego pojęcia pamiątki w protestanckiej teologii Eucharystii* [Evolution of the Understanding of the Biblical Concept of Memorial in Protestant Theology of the Eucharist], "Świdnickie Studia Teologiczne" 13/2 (2016), pp. 45–62.

The subject of the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice is taken up directly in the second chapter of this conciliar doctrine and the aforementioned Canon 3 in which the Protestant teaching is condemned: “If any one saith, that the sacrifice of the mass is only a sacrifice of praise and of thanksgiving; or, that it is a bare commemoration of the sacrifice consummated on the cross, but not a propitiatory sacrifice; [...] let him be anathema.”⁶⁵ It should be noted here that the doctrine of this chapter by explicating the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice to some extent blurs the clear teaching of the first chapter based on the concept of *repraesentatio*. The doctrine no longer refers explicitly to making present of the sacrifice of the Cross, but with considerable frequency uses the words “sacrifice” (*oblatio*) and “to offer” (*immolere, offerere*), and not so much in relation to the one sacrifice of Christ, but more to the Mass itself. By introducing these somewhat problematic terms, the emphasis was placed on the visible sacrifice of the Eucharistic liturgy.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, post-Tridentine theology followed precisely this direction, teaching most often about a reiteration or repetition of the sacrifice of the Cross in the Mass, which was elaborated in detail over the next four centuries by various immolationist and oblationist theories.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ The Council of Trent, *Doctrina et canones...*, op. cit., p. 647.

⁶⁶ See The Council of Trent, *Doctrina et canones...*, op. cit., pp. 638–641; cf. H. Bourgeois, B. Sesboüé, P. Tihon, *Znaki zbawienia...*, op. cit., pp. 148–149; A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., pp. 152–156; A. Angenendt, *Die Revolution...*, op. cit., pp. 158–159.

⁶⁷ For an extensive discussion, see K. Journet, *Msza święta: obecność ofiary krzyżowej* [The Mass: the Presence of the Sacrifice of the Cross], transl. M. Stokowska, Poznań–Warszawa–Lublin 1959, pp. 301–309; T. Pomplun, *Post-Tridentine Sacramental Theology*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 350–358; L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 355–361; cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., pp. 159, 161; M. Thurian, *L'Eucharistie...*, op. cit., pp. 14–17; G.L. Müller, *Msza Święta...*, op. cit., p. 196; P. Blanco Sarto, *Eucharystia*, op. cit., p. 93. It is worth noting here in particular the influence of the prominent theologian of the period immediately following the Council of Trent, Cardinal Robert Bellarmine, SJ, who, through his monumental apologetic-dogmatic work *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei adversus hujus temporis haereticos* (Venetiis 1599, <https://sbc.org.pl/dlibra/publication/12512/edition/38408?language=pl> [access: 30.10.2023]), set the course for so-called polemical theology (*Kontroverstheologie*) in the 17th century. A whole extensive section in this work (vol. II, part 3, books V–VI) is devoted to the Mass as a sacrifice; see R. Bellarmine, *On the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, transl. R. Grant, Post Falls, ID 2020, passim, especially the passage on pp. 163–168 containing an apologia for the Mass as an expiatory sacrifice in the face of Protestant arguments.

Ecumenical achievements in the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue on the Eucharist

The lack of entirely satisfactory solutions on the nature of the Eucharistic sacrifice in numerous post-Tridentine theories⁶⁸ became, at the beginning of the twentieth century, the impetus that pushed the theology of the Eucharist into a new track of a radical turn towards biblical, patristic and liturgical sources.⁶⁹ It was not until then that new generations of theologians restored to the doctrine of the Eucharist the original – biblical and patristic – understanding of the memorial (*anamnesis*) and, significantly, they came from different denominations, which will also be of extraordinary importance for the reception of this concept at the level of ecumenical dialogue. We should mention the Benedictine monk Odo Casel,⁷⁰ who has the greatest merit in rediscovering for Western theology the role of *anamnesis* in the Eucharistic liturgy, followed by the Lutheran biblical scholar Joachim Jeremias,⁷¹ who showed in a pioneering way the importance of the Jewish understanding of memorial–*zikkaron*. This theme was further developed in the context of ecumenical research, by Brother Max Thurian of Taizé.⁷² On the other hand, in the current of liturgical research, three figures are important here: an Anglican, Benedictine Gregory Dix;⁷³ a Jesuit, Joseph A. Jungmann;⁷⁴ and a convert from Protestantism, an oratorian, Louis Bouyer.⁷⁵

The Catholic-Lutheran dialogue, initiated at the Church-wide level shortly after the Second Vatican Council, followed this direction, seeking to reinterpret the 16th-century Eucharistic doctrines. Its second document published in 1978 was a joint statement on the Eucharist entitled *Das Herrenmahl* (The Lord's

⁶⁸ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, transl. J.R. Foster, M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2004, pp. 250–252.

⁶⁹ Cf. A. Gerken, *Teologia Eucharystii*, op. cit., pp. 166–167.

⁷⁰ O. Casel, *Das Gedächtnis des Herrn in der altchristlichen Liturgie*, Freiburg 1918.

⁷¹ J. Jeremias, *Die Abendmahlsworte Jesu*, op. cit.

⁷² M. Thurian, *L'eucharistie. Mémorial du Seigneur. Sacrifice d'action de grâce et d'intercession*, Neuchâtel 1963; M. Thurian, *Une seule eucharistie*, Taizé 1973; M. Thurian, *Le mystère de l'eucharistie. Une approche oecuménique*, Paris 1981 (Polish edition: M. Thurian, *O Eucharystii i modlitwie*, transl. M. Tarnowska, Kraków 1987). It is noteworthy that Ratzinger calls this first fundamental book “comprehensively elaborated.” See J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 298.

⁷³ G. Dix, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London 1945.

⁷⁴ J.A. Jungmann, *Missarum Sollemnia*, vols. 2, Wien 1948.

⁷⁵ L. Bouyer, *Eucharistie. Théologie et spiritualité de la prière eucharistique*, Tournai 1966.

Supper).⁷⁶ The importance of this document is still considerable today,⁷⁷ not only because of the historical breakthrough on the most poignant point of the Catholic-Protestant controversy, but also because of the comprehensive treatment of the topic, the methodology of the work and the reception of previous arrangements from earlier ecumenical dialogues.⁷⁸

The concept of memorial–*anamnesis* appears here first in paragraph 17, where it is stated that Christ instituted the sacrament of the Eucharist as a memorial in the sense of *anamnesis*.⁷⁹ However, the most important statement, accepted by both sides, about the role of the biblical category of memorial in Eucharistic theology is found in point 36. It reads that the relationship between the sacrifice of Christ and the Eucharist can be properly grasped due to the concept of memorial or remembrance (*Gedächtnis, memorial, mémorial*) when understood in the sense of the Passover celebrated at the time of Christ, i.e. in the sense of effectively making present a past event.⁸⁰ The authors of the document go on to elaborate on how they understand this concept, which is of paramount importance because, as shown above, the writings of the Fathers of the Reformation understood the memorial only as a subjective act of remembrance (*nudam commemorationem*), which was condemned by the Council of Trent. This document makes it clear that it is not so much an act of human memory or imagination as a creative action of God who, for the assembly of God's people, actualises the salvific events of the past in a liturgical celebration.⁸¹

This brings us to the most difficult issue, that of understanding the Eucharistic sacrifice. The use of the category of “memorial” (*anamnesis*) made it possible to find that both the Lutherans and the Catholics share the opinion that Jesus Christ in the Lord's Supper is present as the crucified one who died

⁷⁶ *The Eucharist. Final Report of the Joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Commission*, 1978, [in:] *Growth in Agreement. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, eds. H. Meyer, L. Vischer, New York–Geneva 1984, pp. 190–214.

⁷⁷ Cf. S. Klein, *Katolicy i luteranie...*, op. cit., p. 105.

⁷⁸ See *The Eucharist. Final Report...*, op. cit., no. 3. These references mainly refer to the arrangements of the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue in the USA, the documents of the Dombes Group, the *Accra Documents* from the Meeting of the Faith and Order Commission, Faith and Order and the arrangements of the Catholic-Anglican dialogue on the Eucharist.

⁷⁹ *The Eucharist. Final Report...*, op. cit., no. 17.

⁸⁰ *The Eucharist. Final Report...*, op. cit., no. 36.

⁸¹ See more extensively S. Klein, *Katolicy i luteranie...*, op. cit., pp. 167–169; the author notes that the document in a sense balances between the traditional view of the Eucharistic sacrifice and contemporary theological currents, especially those represented by Evangelical circles, which prefer to understand this notion of commemoration as the actualisation of salvation rather than the actualisation of the saving sacrifice.

for our sins and was raised for our justification as the sacrifice that was offered once for all for the sins of the world, with the reservation that this sacrifice cannot be prolonged, nor renewed, nor completed, but it can and must be made effective again and again in the midst of the community.⁸² At this point in the document, the two parties present different interpretations of the manner in which the Eucharistic sacrifice thus understood is effective. In view of the Catholic teaching on the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice (*sacrificium propitiatorium, Sühnopfer*), the Lutheran side constantly expresses reserve with regard to the term “Mass sacrifice” and prefers its own understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice as a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. The Catholics accept this approach as offering the possibility of a common understanding of the Eucharist as a sacrifice of the Church, but nevertheless not fully capturing the essence of the Eucharistic sacrifice in the light of the teaching of the Council of Trent. On the other hand, however, Lutherans see here a growing convergence towards contemporary explicit Catholic teaching, which considers the sacrifice of the Mass as the making present of the one sacrifice of the Cross, where nothing is added to its redemptive value.⁸³

The document *The Eucharist (Das Herrenmahl)* was an important breakthrough in the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue on the Eucharist, since the consensus, which could not be reached for more than four centuries,⁸⁴ was eventually made possible by the reception of the biblical category of memorial (*anamnesis*). Consequently, both sides were able to agree on the claim that the Lord’s Supper is a sacrifice in the sense that it makes present, and not reiterates, the one perfect sacrifice of Christ on the cross, made once and for all. Although it is also necessary to point out that, in certain Evangelical circles, the reception of this document has sometimes been marked by a certain fear of a “re-Catholicisation” of the Lutheran Lord’s Supper, and even in the harsher form of criticism of the exposition in contemporary Catholic teaching of the sacrificial dimension of the Eucharist, which can be read as an impatient pressure to reduce this aspect on the Catholic side in the name of a falsely understood

⁸² Komisja Wspólna Rzymskokatolicka i Ewangelicko-luterańska, *Wieczera Pańska*, [in:] S.C. Napiórkowski, *Wszyscy pod jednym Chrystusem. Ogólnokościelny dialog katolicko-luterański*, Part 1: *Lata 1965–1981*, Lublin 1985, p. 56.

⁸³ Komisja Wspólna Rzymskokatolicka i Ewangelicko-luterańska, *Wieczera Pańska*, op. cit., pp. 57–61; cf. S. Klein, *Katolicy i luteranie...*, op. cit., pp. 170–174.

⁸⁴ Luther stated in *Smalcald Articles* (Part II, Article II, 10) that by the Catholic teaching on the Mass “we are for ever separated and enemies to one another” (*Księgi wyznaniowe...*, op. cit., p. 340; see <https://bookofconcord.org/smalcald-articles/> [access: 20.08.2023]).

ecumenism.⁸⁵ However, the most recent document of the Catholic-Lutheran dialogue to date, *From Conflict to Communion*, which is a summary of 50 years of the dialogue, when discussing the issue of understanding the Eucharistic sacrifice, concludes rather optimistically: “If the understanding of the Lord’s Supper as a real remembrance is consistently taken seriously, the differences in understanding the eucharistic sacrifice are tolerable for Catholics and Lutherans.”⁸⁶

The Mass as sacrifice in Ratzinger’s theology

Only after the above panoramic sketch presenting *status quaestionis* can we undertake the task of tracing Ratzinger’s theological views on the Mass as a propitiatory sacrifice. Without this introduction to this complex issue, it would be difficult to verify the position and contribution of the Bavarian theologian. The issue of the Eucharist occupies one of the central positions in Ratzinger’s theology – especially as bishop and pope,⁸⁷ hence it is necessarily impossible to refer to all his publications in one article, but we will indicate the most important aspects, stopping at three chronological stages of his theological activity.

Academic theologian

As a starting point for our research we will take a surprising thesis, which can be read in the extensive book *Dogmat i tiara* (Dogma and Tiara) (its message is suggested by the subtitle added on the cover, *Esej o upadku rzymskiego katolicyzmu* [Essay on the Decline of Roman Catholicism]) by the well-known Polish traditionalist columnist Paweł Lisicki, which is in fact – somewhat surprisingly for a representative of this milieu – a devastating criticism of Ratzinger both as a theologian and as a pope. Lisicki, who has more than once, in many of his books, courageously confronted the difficult themes of Christianity, states

⁸⁵ See O.H. Pesch, *Zrozumieć Lutera* [Understanding Luther], transl. A. Marniok, K. Kowalik, Poznań 2008, pp. 509–511; cf. A. Birmelé, *Théologie. Voix protestante*, [in:] *Eucharistia. Encyclopédie de l’Eucharistie*, ed. M. Brouard, Paris 2004, pp. 485–486. See also for a review of opinions against the exposition of the sacrificial dimension of the Mass in contemporary Catholic theology, L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 393–403.

⁸⁶ *From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017. Report of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity*, Leipzig 2013, nos. 157–159, pp. 59–60.

⁸⁷ J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, vol. 2, Katowice 2016, p. 250.

that, Ratzinger in his *Introduction to Christianity* – his flagship work from the 1960s, which introduced him into the pantheon of 20th century theology – essentially deconstructs the traditionally understood expiatory dimension of the sacrifice of Christ's cross, and thus the Christian cult.⁸⁸ The basis for such a stance in Lisicki's view is, to put it as briefly as possible, Ratzinger's negation of St Anselm of Canterbury's purely legal theory of the atonement⁸⁹, which had a great influence on medieval soteriology, and thus indirectly Ratzinger's questioning the Tridentine teaching of the Mass as an atoning sacrifice. Is this really what the passage in the *Introduction* devoted to the article of the *Creed* mentions: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried,"⁹⁰ to which Lisicki refers in his assessment?

Certainly, Ratzinger finds Anselm's system insufficient though coherent in terms of legal logic, but despite Lisicki's suggestions, not to adapt to a modern mentality that no longer recognises sin, guilt and the need for redemption. Ratzinger wishes to fully clarify the Biblical message about the meaning of the Incarnation and Redemption flowing from the love of God, for as we read in this passage: "In the Bible, the cross does not appear as part of a mechanism of injured right; on the contrary, in the Bible the Cross is quite the reverse: it is the expression of the radical nature of the love that gives itself completely."⁹¹ Christianity is revolutionary here compared to other religious concepts, because atonement is not the result of human efforts to outdo the deity, but justification is the initiative of God, it is grace, "for in Christ God has united the world to himself" (2 Cor 5:19). Thus, Ratzinger concludes, the optics of the understanding of sacrifice are radically changed – "Christian sacrifice does not consist in a giving of what God would not have without us but in our becoming totally receptive and letting ourselves be completely taken over by him."⁹² This thought of the German theologian is perhaps most aptly expressed in the language of the liturgy by the act of offering in the conclusion of the anamnesis of the ancient liturgy of St John Chrysostom: "To, co Twoje, z Twoich [darów], Tobie przynosimy ze wszystkim i za wszystko / Your own of Your own we offer to You, in all and for all."⁹³ Ratzinger's explication of the sacrifice of Christ's

⁸⁸ P. Lisicki, *Dogmat i tiara* [Dogma and Tiara], Warszawa 2020, pp. 337–343.

⁸⁹ See a summary of Anselm's teaching – J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., pp. 245–247.

⁹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 245.

⁹¹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 246.

⁹² J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 248.

⁹³ J.M. Czernski, *Liturgie Kościołów Wschodnich...*, op. cit., pp. 94, 251; *The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-divine-liturgy-of-saint-john-chrysostom> [access: 19.08.2023].

cross here is based entirely on the expiatory hermeneutic of the Letter to the Hebrews, inscribing Jesus' death on the cross into the theology of the Jewish atonement feast of Yom Kippur. In the light of this interpretation, the idea of substitution acquired a whole new meaning in Christ, and His death "was in reality the one and only liturgy of the world, a cosmic liturgy [...]. There is no other kind of worship and no other priest but he who accomplished it [reconciliation]: Jesus Christ."⁹⁴ It seems that it is above all on this point that Lisicki has diverged from the theological presuppositions of Ratzinger's reasoning, defending "need for redemption through him who alone loves sufficiently."⁹⁵ Here, however, one must first enter into his logic built on the New Testament understanding of sacrifice, where ultimately "the fundamental principle of the sacrifice is not destruction but love,"⁹⁶ for here "it is not pain as such that counts, but the breadth of the love."⁹⁷

Strictly in the context of the topic of our considerations, however, it is more important to note a lesser-known text published even a year before *The Introduction* in the journal "Concilium" (1967) entitled: *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*,⁹⁸ which theologically fully dispels the doubts sown by Lisicki regarding Ratzinger's understanding of the Eucharistic sacrifice at the time. The article, although written in a period of post-conciliar ecumenical far-reaching hopes,⁹⁹ sets the issue rationally in the context of the 16th-century Catholic-Protestant controversy over the Eucharist, and the author posits it as a proposal for "a point at separated Christians, too, could try to find and to understand one another."¹⁰⁰

Ratzinger begins his contribution with an insightful presentation of Luther's stance, placing his dispute over the Mass in the context of the problem of justification central to his Reformation theology. In this logic, consequently, man cannot earn salvation for himself through sacrifices, he can only receive grace, hence "Luther saw in the idea of the Sacrifice of the Mass a denial of grace."¹⁰¹ The Bavarian theologian emphasises "the serious theological impor-

⁹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 251; see more extensively J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., pp. 84–87; J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 270–270.

⁹⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 252.

⁹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 253.

⁹⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction...*, op. cit., p. 255; cf. J. Szymik, *Prawda i mądrość. Przewodnik po teologii Benedykta XVI* [Truth and Wisdom. A Guide to the Theology of Benedict XVI], Krakow 2019, pp. 136–137; J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, vol. 1, Katowice 2016, p. 257.

⁹⁸ Here we use the text contained in: J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 289–301.

⁹⁹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., p. 231.

¹⁰⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 301.

¹⁰¹ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 290; see more in L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., p. 377.

tance of these reflections,” especially since they are in line with the Letter to the Hebrews on the uniqueness of the priesthood and Sacrifice of Jesus Christ and “for this reason, a theology of the Sacrifice of the Mass should never bypass these questions carelessly.”¹⁰² Emphasising the positive elements in Luther’s argument, Ratzinger explicitly states that it “rule[s] out entirely the notion of the Mass as an independent, self-contained sacrifice” and, following the Reformer’s reasoning, he nevertheless asks: “whether the Mass, being the grant of the Christ-gift to his followers, must not also mean somehow the presence of this gift, the presence of Jesus Christ’s salvific deed”?¹⁰³ He recognises the aspect the Reformers failed to grasp, even though they perceived that “what once happened becomes present in the sacramental celebration with a view to me.”¹⁰⁴

The next stage of Ratzinger’s argument focuses on an in-depth analysis of the words of the institution of the Eucharist in the various New Testament accounts. The four accounts of the institution are commonly divided into two models: the first in Matthew and Mark, the second in Paul and Luke. The first one follows the Old Testament theology of sacrifice and therefore emphasises the “Blood of the Covenant,” the second the “New Covenant” in the blood of Christ. In the first model we can identify a wealth of references to the concept of covenant and sacrificial terminology inscribed in the Torah, which unambiguously links the event of the Last Supper to the Old Testament idea of cultic sacrifice. The second model refers to the prophecies of the new covenant by prophets who criticised the temple worship in favour of spiritual sacrifice – the gift of oneself to God. What unites the two accounts concerning the institution, seemingly opposite in their biblical connotations, is, as Ratzinger originally explains, the idea of substitution: of giving “for many,” “for you,” particularly present in Isaiah’s songs about the Servant of the Lord. Here lies the core of the New Testament understanding of sacrifice contained in the descriptions of the Last Supper, expressing the meaning of Jesus’ offering on the cross. As Ratzinger further notes, the full development of the theology of Jesus’ sacrifice is found in the Letter to the Hebrews, which, based on the idea of substitution, shows in Jesus’ death the real intention and completion of Old Testament worship. In this view, the Eucharist is a sacrifice because it makes present for us the one true sacrifice.¹⁰⁵ This making present is suggested by Jesus’ injunction “Do this in memory/remembrance of me.” Referring here to the fundamental works

¹⁰² J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 291.

¹⁰³ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 291.

¹⁰⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 292.

¹⁰⁵ See more extensively J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., p. 246.

of Jeremias and Thurian, Ratzinger points out that “memorial/remembrance” as a central category of Old Testament sacrificial practice is at the same time a “type of making-present.”¹⁰⁶ It is in its thought contexts that the event of the Last Supper finds its cultic explanation. He concludes his article by modestly stating that this sketch is not yet “an explicit dogmatic theory of the Eucharist as sacrifice,”¹⁰⁷ but we can see that, in the light of the achievements of exegesis at the time, he gives here a solidly biblically grounded lecture on the proper understanding of the sacrificial character of the Mass.

In the context of our topic, it is in turn important to note Ratzinger’s review of Wilhelm Averbeck’s book *Der Opfercharakter des Abendmahls in der neueren evangelischen Theologie*,¹⁰⁸ published in 1970. This short text testifies to the then would-be pope’s in-depth study of the complexity of the approach to the sacrificial character of the Eucharist on the Evangelical side, especially in 20th-century theology. As he assessed when discussing the evolution of this issue “[after setting out] energetically towards liturgical renewal [it] turns back to the Lutheran starting points and seems increasingly to relegate those who opt in favour of the sacrificial character to minor circles that are readily suspected of ‘Catholicizing’ the faith.”¹⁰⁹

In 1977, the journal “Communio” published another article by Ratzinger, relevant to our topic, *Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration*.¹¹⁰ Although it is essentially an analysis of the historical process of the formation of the liturgical figure of the Eucharist from the Last Supper to the post-apostolic Church, it particularly addresses the theme of the Eucharist as sacrifice in its conclusions and additions. The point of reference for this text is the heated discussion during the post-conciliar liturgical reform, which clearly overemphasised the feasting dimension over the sacrificial one in the Eucharist. At the beginning, Ratzinger notes the tension between the dogmatic dimension, i.e. the Tridentine dogma of the Mass as sacrifice, and the liturgical one, which points to the form of feasting inherent in the Last Supper. He also notices

¹⁰⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 299; cf. J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., pp. 98.

¹⁰⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, op. cit., p. 301.

¹⁰⁸ W. Averbeck, *Der Opfercharakter des Abendmahls in der neueren evangelischen Theologie* [The Sacrificial Character of the Supper in More Recent Evangelical Theology], Paderborn 1967.

¹⁰⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 338.

¹¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 399–420.

that attributing only the form of a feast to the Eucharist is dangerously close to Luther's views condemned by Trent. In his analysis Ratzinger attempts to show that there is in fact no contradiction between the dogmatic aspect emphasising the sacrificial character of the Mass and its liturgical form as a feast. Drawing on Jungmann's research, he points out that the original liturgical form, however, was *eucharistia* – a prayer in the form of thanksgiving – rather than a feast, and that the term “Supper” itself was not used at all from the time of the First Letter to the Corinthians until the Reformation. Thus, the dogmatic and liturgical aspects are not separate, but, although different, interrelated. The Christian Eucharist was not a repetition of the Last Supper, although it was immersed in its multifaceted context of Old Testament worship, especially the Paschal references. On the other hand, the testimony of St Paul from the Corinthian community already shows that there was very soon a separation between the Eucharist and the meal – the agape feast. In the post-apostolic Church the Eucharistic liturgy was no longer a meal in the literal sense, but only as a “sign”. This is confirmed, for example, by the fact that during the Eucharistic prayers its participants stand. The essence here is not the meal, but the prayer of thanksgiving: “[once] the concept of the ‘meal’ is seen to be historically a crass oversimplification, once the Lord's testament is correctly seen in terms of *eucharistia*, many of the current theories just fade away.”¹¹¹ Thus, the separation of the liturgical and dogmatic dimension disappears here, but the distinction between the two is not blurred, since the Eucharist signifies both communion – the food in which the Lord gives himself and the sacrifice of Christ.

Ratzinger creatively continues his reflections on this issue in two previously unpublished postscripts to this article from “Communio”. In the first, he refers to the research of Lothar Lies, who believes that the meaning of the Eucharist is expressed in the Old Testament Paschal *eulogia*. This model confirms Ratzinger's earlier reflections and makes it possible to embrace presence and remembrance together, thus making it impossible to call the Eucharist merely a meal, or even a sacrificial meal.¹¹² In the second, he draws more extensively on an article by the Evangelical theologian Hartmut Gese, who, starting from the Paschal roots of the Eucharist, relates it to the broader model of the Jewish sacred feast, which includes a feast offering (*zabab*). This type of sacrifice always begins with *berakah* – the blessing of the bread and wine, in which we recognise the idea of *zikkaron*–memorial. As Gese notes, in Judaism from the time of Jesus, among

¹¹¹ J. Ratzinger, *Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration*, op. cit., p. 412.

¹¹² Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration*, op. cit., p. 412.

the feast offerings, a special role was played by the *tōda*¹¹³ – a thank offering (this Hebrew term was translated into Greek as *eucharistia*). The essence of *tōda* is the celebration of deliverance from misfortune – the celebration of the experience of salvation. Therefore, Ratzinger believes that just as in the Jewish *tōda* the rescued man offered an animal for himself, so Jesus in His *tōda* offered himself, and the food here is sacramentally the body of His sacrifice. Ratzinger concludes that these reflections shed a new light on the question of sacrifice: “Surely there are new possibilities here for the ecumenical dialogue between Catholics and Protestants? For it gives us a genuinely New Testament concept of sacrifice that both preserves the complete Catholic inheritance (and imparts to it a new profundity) and, on the other hand, is receptive to Luther’s central intentions.”¹¹⁴

Bishop and Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith

In 1978, four Lenten sermons preached by Ratzinger at St Michael’s Church in Munich were published under the common title *Eucharistie – Mitte der Kirche* (The Eucharist: Heart of the Church).¹¹⁵ These were intended by the author to be a synthetic catechesis on the Eucharist and are inevitably often a reference to his earlier texts on this sacrament. Therefore, out of the abundance of concepts to be found here, we select and will focus mainly on new threads that broaden the existing picture of his teaching on the Eucharist as a sacrifice. In the second sermon, where the theme of sacrifice is taken up, he strongly emphasises the connection between the words spoken by Jesus at the Last Supper and the event of the Cross. Without these interpretive words, Jesus’ death would be incomprehensible. On the other hand, Ratzinger points out that, in the light of John’s account, Jesus dies at the exact hour when the lambs were slaughtered in the temple for the Passover feast – He is the actual Paschal Lamb. Here the words spoken at the Last Supper find their fulfilment in His death. This shows us that the Eucharist is much more than a meal – it is the

¹¹³ For more on the significance of this sacrifice in Judaism and its relationship to the Eucharist, see M. Rosik, *Eucharystia...*, op. cit., pp. 444–453; cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 54, 123.

¹¹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration*, op. cit., p. 420.

¹¹⁵ We refer here to the text in: J. Ratzinger, *The Eucharist: Heart of the Church*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 340–399.

Sacrifice making present the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But the initiative belongs to God – it is God who first bestows us in the Eucharist as the Roman Canon so aptly expresses it: *De tuis donis ac datis offerimus tibi*.¹¹⁶ Ratzinger, in order to clarify this, refers to the Paschal roots of the Eucharist and the concept of a memorial inscribed in the Jewish Paschal prayers.¹¹⁷ He further states plainly:

The Canon of the Roman Mass developed directly from these Jewish prayers of thanksgiving; it is the direct descendant and continuation of this prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper and is thereby the heart of the Eucharist. It is the genuine vehicle of the Sacrifice, since thereby Jesus Christ transformed his death into verbal form [...]. As a result, this death is able to be present for us.¹¹⁸

As a continuation of the Passover Haggadah, the Canon, as *eucharistia* (that is, the transformation of existence into thanksgiving), is the true heart of the Mass [...]. Thus the Canon, the “true sacrifice,” is the word of the Word; in it speaks the one who, as Word, is life. By putting these words into our mouths, letting us pronounce them with him, he permits us and enables us to make the offering with him: his words become our words, his worship our worship, his sacrifice our sacrifice.¹¹⁹

In the conclusion of this sermon, the then Archbishop of Munich also refers to the theme of intercommunion. He emphasises that the Eucharist can never be reduced to the role of a means or instrument that we are entitled to use, but that it is a sign of the unity that already exists, which is why all experiments instead of bringing unity closer are a falsification of the facts here. What is needed here is genuine humility and acceptance of what God wants to give us as His solution.¹²⁰

In this area of ecumenical discussions, it is also worth noting Ratzinger’s little-known speech at an international ecumenical conference at the International Bridgettine Centre of Farfa in March 1995: *Reception as the Result of Dialogue*¹²¹. In pointing out the most important results of the Catholic-Lutheran

¹¹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 358.

¹¹⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 358.

¹¹⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 359.

¹¹⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 360.

¹²⁰ See J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 308; cf. J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., pp. 242–243.

¹²¹ J. Ratzinger, *Reception as the Result of Dialogue*, [in:] *Catholic-Lutheran Relations Three Decades after Vatican II*, Series: Studia Oecumenica Farfensia, ed. P. Nørgaard-Højen, vol. 1, Città del Vaticano 1997, pp. 78–84.

dialogue, he places first, of the main themes, the convergence concerning the Eucharist. According to the prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the time, we are at a completely different point than in the 16th century, above all because of the new concept of sacramental actualisation, in which the sacrifice of Christ no longer belongs uniquely to the past, but in God transcends human time and in the sacrament it becomes present to us. In this respect, the question of the Eucharist in its sacrificial dimension is very close to the topic of justification¹²² and, although in its depths we have discovered a rapprochement by rereading the heritage of our traditions, not all differences have yet been resolved, although as regards the core of the problem, especially the sacramental life, progress is becoming increasingly evident.¹²³

Ratzinger's celebrated book *The Spirit of the Liturgy*¹²⁴ was published in 2000 and has stirred up much discussion. Although it essentially focuses on liturgical issues, it is inevitable that among a plethora of issues we also find several places relating directly to the theology of the Mass as sacrifice that we are discussing. Many of the themes previously reported above in Ratzinger's writings find their elaborate synthesis here – this is the case above all with the idea of the *logikē latreia* taken over from Paul (Rom 12:1), from which the author concludes that in Christian worship it is the word of prayer that is the sacrifice, but it reaches its fullness in *Logos incarnatus*, for when the Word has become flesh, the Eucharist is “the ever-open door of adoration and the true Sacrifice, the Sacrifice of the New Covenant” – the true *logikē latreia* – “divine worship in accordance with *logos*.”¹²⁵ The extended theme of the understanding of *ephapax* from the Letter to the Hebrews also recurs. Referring to the thought of Bernard of Clairvaux, Ratzinger states: “The *ephapax* (‘once for all’) is bound up with the *aionios* (‘everlasting’). ‘Today’ embraces the whole time of the Church.” In this way, “in the Eucharist we are caught up and made contemporary with the Paschal Mystery of Christ.”¹²⁶ And although Christ's sacrifice has long been accepted, it is not yet over when conceived as a substitution: “the true *semel* (‘once’) bears within itself the *semper* (‘always’)”¹²⁷. This theme returns again

¹²² Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 544.

¹²³ J. Ratzinger, *Reception as the Result of Dialogue*, op. cit., pp. 82–83. It should be remembered here that 5 years later the *Joint Declaration on Justification* (1999) was elaborated, which became a milestone of the Catholic-Protestant dialogue.

¹²⁴ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 32–214.

¹²⁵ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 68; see more in *ibid.*, p. 64; cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 54–64.

¹²⁶ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 73.

¹²⁷ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 72.

when discussing the significance of Pascha for understanding the role of time in Christian liturgy. As the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith wrote in summarising this passus: “The whole meaning of the Jewish Passover is made present in the Christian Easter. At the same time, it is not about remembering a past and unrepeatable event, but, as we have seen, ‘once for all’ here becomes ‘forever.’”¹²⁸

The theme of the Eucharistic sacrifice itself, on the other hand, was developed in detail by Ratzinger in an interesting conference on the background of the discussion of *The Spirit of the Liturgy* at the liturgical symposium at the Fontgombault monastery in July 2001.¹²⁹ Starting from the statement of the conciliar Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy: “For the liturgy, ‘through which the work of our redemption is accomplished,’ most of all in the divine sacrifice of the Eucharist,”¹³⁰ he undertakes here, referring to the reflections included in his book, a defence of the sacrifice of the Mass in the face of the widespread tendency in the post-conciliar era to marginalise the concept of sacrifice and even to adopt Luther’s views in some Catholic circles. The future Pope clearly rejects such views, claiming that the belief in the Eucharist formulated at the Council of Trent never lost its validity.¹³¹ He goes on to point out that Luther’s interpretative error consisted, in seed, in the principle that Scripture interprets itself and the rejection of Tradition,¹³² and that Scripture and Tradition cannot be separated: From the beginning, the Church understood the Eucharist as a sacrifice, as exemplified by the ancient testimony of *Didache*. Also, the concept of sacrifice itself must be construed in compliance with the hermeneutics of faith; Scripture must be read in its entirety and the texts of the institution of the Eucharist should only then be interpreted in such a way as we showed at the beginning of our article. Here the paschal key is particularly important for the hermeneutics of these accounts, as Ratzinger accentuates very strongly in various references.¹³³ The then Cardinal Prefect also describes other background elements of the problem of the contemporary denial of the category of sacrifice. The first is the deistic image of God,

¹²⁸ J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 112; more extensively from p. 108.

¹²⁹ J. Ratzinger, *The Theology of the Liturgy*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 674–692.

¹³⁰ Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1963, no. 2, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html [access: 20.08.2023].

¹³¹ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 677.

¹³² Cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 315.

¹³³ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 679–682.

which results in a misunderstanding of the need for expiation in the human-God relationship,¹³⁴ the second is the individualistic image of man, to whom the idea of substitution is incongruent.¹³⁵ All this is compounded by the contemporary trivialisation of the liturgy, which blurs its essential message. He goes on, building on Augustine's thought, to devote much space to showing the essential difference between the understanding of sacrifice in natural religiosity, or even Old Testament religiosity, and the New Testament understanding of sacrifice – the essence of sacrifice is not destruction, it is the surrender of some precious thing to God. The sacrifice is only the sign of what is to become internally in man: the surrender of oneself completely to God in an act of love. This is what Christ does entirely, and it is what God reveals to us in the Eucharist,¹³⁶ which “to use Augustine's expression – is the *sacramentum* of the true sacrificium.”¹³⁷ Ratzinger also once again develops Paul's idea of the *logikē latreia*. In the final conclusions, we find two exceptionally accurate reflections in the context of our theme:

This true sacrifice that turns us all into sacrifice, in other words, unites us with God and causes us to become godlike, is indeed fixed and founded on an historical event but does not lie behind us a thing of the past but, rather, becomes contemporary with and accessible to us in the community of the believing, praying Church, in its sacrament: this is what “sacrifice of the Mass” means. Luther's error lay, I am convinced, in a false concept of historicity, in a misunderstanding of what is unrepeatable. Christ's sacrifice is not behind us as a thing of the past. It touches all times and is present to us. Eucharist is not merely the distribution of something from the past but is, rather, the presence of Christ's Paschal Mystery, which transcends and unites all times. When the Roman Canon cites Abel, Abraham and Melchisedech and describes them as concelebrants of the Eucharist, it does so in the conviction that in them too, those great men offering sacrifice, Christ was passing through time, or perhaps, more precisely, that in their search, they were going forth to meet Christ.¹³⁸

Trent was not mistaken; it stood on the firm foundation of the Church's tradition. It remains a reliable standard. But we can and must understand it in a new,

¹³⁴ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 465, 542.

¹³⁵ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Zastępstwo* [Substitution], [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia o chrystologii* [Jesus of Nazareth. Studies in Christology], vol. 2, Series: Opera Omnia 6/2, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2015, pp. 833–844.

¹³⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 682–685.

¹³⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., p. 688.

¹³⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, op. cit., pp. 690–691; cf. L. Feingold, *The Eucharist...*, op. cit., pp. 368–369.

more profound way, drawing on the fullness of the biblical testimony and of the faith of the Church of all times. There are signs of hope that this renewed and deeper understanding of Trent can be made accessible to Protestant Christians through the mediation of the Eastern Churches as well.¹³⁹

Pope Benedict XVI

The *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy of the years 2007–2012 is a kind of summary of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's theology, where all the themes from his earlier publications intersect and are complemented. We have already referred more than once in the footnotes to this work, especially to chapter *The Last Supper*,¹⁴⁰ illustrating in the first part of this article the achievements of contemporary theology of the Eucharist. Special attention still needs to be paid in the section *Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection* to chapter 8, paragraph 3 entitled: *Jesus' Death as Reconciliation (Atonement) and Salvation*,¹⁴¹ where we have a synthesis of the doctrine of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice – all the threads of this theme from Ratzinger's earlier publications are gathered here. Christ, who announced that He had come “to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45) by his obedience “is the true worship, the true sacrifice.”¹⁴²

Ultimately, many elements of Ratzinger's theology of the Eucharist permeate the teaching of the Magisterium, especially when, as Pope in 2007, he writes the post-synodal exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*. First of all, he explicitly uses the biblical category of “memorial/remembrance” in many places here to explain the making present of the sacrifice of the Cross in the Eucharist: “The remembrance of his perfect gift consists not in the mere repetition of the Last Supper, but in the Eucharist itself, that is, in the radical newness of Christian worship.”¹⁴³ Among the many other threads signalled earlier, it is also worth

¹³⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy*, p. 691.

¹⁴⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, transl. P.J. Whitmore; San Francisco, CA 2011, pp. 103–144.

¹⁴¹ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth...*, op. cit., pp. 228–240.

¹⁴² J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth...*, op. cit., p. 238; cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 46–49.

¹⁴³ Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 2007, no. 11, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html [access: 20.08.2023]; see the wider context *ibid.* nos. 9–10, 14.

noting the interpretation of Paul's teaching, originally developed in Ratzinger's theology, about the *logikē latreia*.¹⁴⁴

Conclusion – the task Benedict XVI left us with regard to unity at the Eucharistic table

We return to our starting point – to Benedict XVI's last text published shortly after his death. In the introductory part of his article *Significatio della Comunione*, Pope Emeritus pointed to certain external factors increasing the pressure, particularly in Germany, to bring about intercommunion as soon as possible. These are, on the one hand, political pressures to make this sign of ecclesial unity contribute to the political unity of a religiously divided nation and, on the other, strong Protestantising tendencies in the German Catholic Church. However, in the body of the text, he focused on the theological aspects of the issue, outlining three fundamental areas which, in his view, continually divide Catholics and Protestants and thus require further reworking so that real progress towards a common Eucharist is possible, without looking for shortcuts.

He first shows the difference in the very understanding of the form of the Eucharistic liturgy between the Evangelical Lord's Supper and the Catholic Eucharist.¹⁴⁵ This part of the book reflects, in fact, a synthetic summary of Ratzinger's earlier theological reflections on the formation of the forms of the Eucharist based on Paul's conception of the *logikē latreia* and the sacrificial theology of the Letter to the Hebrews. The differences are summarised by our author in this way:

In the Reformers' interpretations, the Eucharist is solely a meal, in the radical sense whereby only the sacred offering is distributed and given to be eaten, while for the Catholic faith in the Eucharist, the entire process of Jesus' gift in his death and Resurrection is present, a process without which these offerings could not exist. Body and Blood are not things that can be distributed; rather, they are the person of Jesus Christ who offers himself.¹⁴⁶

At the centre of his consideration here, Ratzinger poses the question: "What, in reality, is the offering of the Supper or, respectively, of the celebration of the

¹⁴⁴ Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 70.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Benedict XVI, *The Catholic Priesthood*, op. cit., pp. 138–140.

¹⁴⁶ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 152.

Mass?”¹⁴⁷ This is the area to which he devotes most space here by focusing on the concept of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist in both confessions. He first notes that for Luther the question of belief in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist was so important that for it he was prepared to sacrifice unity with Zwingli, who rejected it (which occurred during the famous Marburg Colloquy in 1529),¹⁴⁸ and that now Lutherans, by signing the Concord of Leuenburg in 1973, have agreed to communion of the altar with the Reformed Churches, despite this important difference in belief, which marks a departure from the Lutheran tradition. This approach is transposed into dialogue with Catholics about the unity of the altar. Benedict XVI, however, sees the problem much deeper, namely in the very concept of Eucharistic transubstantiation. According to him, it is not possible to reconcile the Lutheran doctrine of consubstantiation with the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which captures in metaphysical terms the belief in the radical transformation of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of the Lord rooted in the oldest Tradition of the Church – “for the Lutheran tradition, the ‘Body of Christ’ is eaten along with the bread, while in the Catholic view, Christ is taken and received in His sacrificial gift, and thus we allow ourselves to be drawn into this very gift.”¹⁴⁹ However, the way may be opened here by a new approach to the concept of substance, in the context of the achievements of the natural sciences and modern philosophy, where “being is relation,”¹⁵⁰ and thus to establish anew what the transformation of substance means. Leaving aside acceptable terminological explanations, however, it is unequivocal for Pope Emeritus that: “in the Eucharist one does not receive a little of the Body and a little of the Blood of Jesus, but rather one enters into the dynamic of the love of Jesus Christ that takes concrete form in the Cross and the Resurrection and becomes really present.”¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 152.

¹⁴⁸ For more on Luther’s teaching on the Eucharistic presence, see J. Froniewski, *Obecność Chrystusa w Eucharystii pod postaciami chleba i wina. Krystalizacja doktryny katolickiej na Soborze Trydenckim wobec nauki Lutra* [The Presence of Christ in the Eucharist under the Forms of Bread and Wine. The Crystallisation of Catholic Doctrine at the Council of Trent versus Luther’s Teaching], [in:] *Pozamszalny kult Chrystusa w Eucharystii* [The Cult of Christ in the Eucharist outside the Mass], ed. S. Araszczuk, Wrocław 2017, pp. 13–23.

¹⁴⁹ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 154.

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 159.

¹⁵¹ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 157. Further in his conclusion Ratzinger writes: “Holy Mass makes present the sacrifice of the cross. Luther condemned this in the harshest way, on the basis of his rejection of the concept of sacrifice. And nevertheless, it is the sole reasonable interpretation of the Eucharist that was instituted on the evening before the Passion”; *ibid.*, p. 160.

Finally, the third important area in this issue is for Benedict XVI the question of the ministry, i.e. who is allowed to preside at the sacred liturgy. For him, the basis for this is the sacrament of priestly ordination¹⁵² (he develops this issue further in the text *The Catholic Priesthood* included in the same book¹⁵³) – to put it shortly, this is a split between a functional and a sacramental approach to the ecclesiastical ministry.¹⁵⁴

At the end of his article, Pope Emeritus affirms that his intention is not to conclude these difficult questions, but indicate new directions and perspectives: “To arrive in this field at an understanding that is in keeping with the Scriptures and to develop Eucharistic theology adequately is a fine challenge for the theology of tomorrow.”¹⁵⁵ “Authentic ecumenism can come about only by facing the major questions with which the Lord confronts us in his Paschal Mystery and by arduously and personally processing them.”¹⁵⁶

As Jerzy Szymik rightly stated that with such intelligence and courage, knowledge and position, Benedict XVI became today the main warrior in the battle for the truth of the Eucharist, for its proper understanding and practice.¹⁵⁷ For Ratzinger, it was always clear that the basis of ecumenical dialogue must be the truth that has its source in the Word of God¹⁵⁸ – as Szymik summarises his thought here that ecumenism in its essence cannot be a search for compromise between traditions, but a crucial question about the truth and a common pursuit for it.¹⁵⁹ The path Ratzinger/Benedict XVI indicates is a difficult one, but he is concerned with true *communio*, a unity without falsifying the difficulties or betraying the deposit of faith.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵² See Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 158.

¹⁵³ See Benedict XVI, *What Is Christianity?...*, op. cit., pp. 113–142.

¹⁵⁴ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 158: “The service of the man who presides, who at the canon recites the words of transformation, is bound up with the sacrament of priestly ordination.” Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., p. 263; J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 275–276.

¹⁵⁵ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 160; cf. Benedict XVI, *The Catholic Priesthood*, op. cit., p. 145.

¹⁵⁶ Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, op. cit., p. 161.

¹⁵⁷ J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 252.

¹⁵⁸ See more in J. Ratzinger, *Kościół...*, op. cit., pp. 235–237; cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 305.

¹⁵⁹ J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 309–310.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. J. Szymik, *Theologia benedicta*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 322–323.

Bibliography

- Angenendt A., *Die Revolution des geistigen Opfers. Blut – Sündenbock – Eucharistie*, Freiburg im Br. 2016.
- Averbeck W., *Der Opfercharakter des Abendmahls in der neueren evangelischen Theologie*, Paderborn 1967.
- Beinert W., Kühn U., *Ökumenische Dogmatik*, Leipzig–Regensburg 2013.
- Bellarmino R., *Disputationes de Controversiis Christianae Fidei adversus hujus temporis haereticos*, Venetiis 1599, <https://sbc.org.pl/dlibra/publication/12512/edition/38408?language=pl> [access: 30.10.2023].
- Bellarmino R., *On the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass*, transl. R. Grant, Post Falls, ID 2020.
- Benedetto XVI, *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale*, Milano 2023 (English edition: Benedict XVI, *What Is Christianity? The Last Writings*, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2023; Polish edition: Benedykt XVI, *Co to jest chrześcijaństwo? Testament duchowy*, Kraków 2023).
- Benedikt XVI.: *Mahlfeier mit Protestanten theologisch unmöglich*, "Ökumenische Information" 4 (2023), 24 Januar, p. 7.
- Benedict XVI, *The Catholic Priesthood*, [in:] Benedict XVI, *What Is Christianity? The Last Writings*, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2023, pp. 113–142.
- Benedict XVI, *The Meaning of Communion*, [in:] Benedict XVI, *What Is Christianity? The Last Writings*, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2023, pp. 144–161.
- Benedict XVI, Post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum Caritatis*, 2007, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20070222_sacramentum-caritatis.html [access: 20.08.2023].
- Benedykt XVI, *Katolickie kapłaństwo*, transl. R. Skrzypczak, [in:] Benedykt XVI, *Co to jest chrześcijaństwo? Testament duchowy*, Kraków 2023, pp. 139–178.
- Benedykt XVI, *Mój testament duchowy*, "L'Osservatore Romano" [Polish edition] 42/1 (2023), p. 8.
- Benedykt XVI, *O znaczeniu komunii*, transl. R. Skrzypczak, [in:] Benedykt XVI, *Co to jest chrześcijaństwo? Testament duchowy*, Kraków 2023, pp. 179–202.
- Benedict XVI, Sarah R., *From the Depths of Our Hearts: Priesthood, Celibacy and the Crisis of the Catholic Church*, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2020 (Polish edition: R. Sarah, Benedykt XVI/J. Ratzinger, *Z głębi naszych serc*, transl. A. Kuryś, Warszawa 2020).
- Birmelé A., *Théologie. Voix protestante*, [in:] *Eucharistia. Encyclopédie de l'Eucharistie*, ed. M. Brouard, Paris 2004, pp. 467–490.
- Blanco Sarto P., *Eucharystia*, Series: Bóg, Człowiek, Świat 5, transl. K. Chorzewska, Kielce 2022.
- Bourgeois H., Sesboüé B., Tihon P., *Znaki zbawienia. Sakramenty, Kościół, Najświętsza Panna Maryja*. Series: Historia Dogmatów 3, transl. P. Rak, Kraków 2001.
- Bouyer L., *Eucharist: Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer*, Notre Dame, IN 2006 (French edition: L. Bouyer, *Eucharistie. Théologie et spiritualité de la prière eucharistique*, Tournai 1966; Polish edition: L. Bouyer, *Eucharystia. Teologia i duchowość modlitwy eucharystycznej*, transl. L. Rutowska, Lublin 2015).
- Bronk K., *Benedykt XVI po raz ostatni o interkomunii w Niemczech*, <https://m.niedziela.pl/arttykul/88250/Benedykt-XVI-po-raz-ostatni-o> [access: 3.02.2023].
- Brother John, Taizé, *In Defense of Sacrifice*, Taizé 2022.
- Calvin J., *L'Institution chrétienne. Livre quatrième*, Marne-la-Vallée–Aix-en-Provence 1995.
- Casel O., *Das Gedächtnis des Herrn in der altchristlichen Liturgie*, Freiburg 1918.

- Council of Trent, *The Canons and Decrees of the Sacred and Ecumenical Council of Trent*, ed., transl. J. Waterworth, London 1848, <https://www.papalencyclicals.net/councils/trent.htm> [access: 17.08.2023] (Polish edition: Council of Trent, *Doctrina et canones de sanctissimo missae sacrificio*, [in:] *Dokumenty Soborów Powszechnych. Tekst łaciński i polski*, vol. 4: *Lateran V, Trydent, Watykan I (1511–1870)*, eds. A. Baron, H. Pietras, Kraków 2007, pp. 636–647).
- Czerski J., *Biblijny przekaz Ostatniej Wieczerzy*, [in:] *Misterium Eucharystii*, ed. M. Worbs, Opole 2005, pp. 7–12.
- Czerski J.M., *Liturgie Kościołów Wschodnich. Liturgia Kościoła bizantyjskiego, ormiańskiego i koptyjskiego*, Series: *Liturgia Musica Ars* 1, Opole 2009.
- Demitrów A., *Ciągłość i nowość między żydowskim Seder a ostatnią wieczerzą Jezusa*, [in:] *Wspólnota eucharystyczna*, ed. A.A. Napiórkowski, Kraków 2022, pp. 9–33.
- The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom*, <https://www.goarch.org/-/the-divine-liturgy-of-saint-john-chrysostom> [access: 19.08.2023].
- Dix G., *The Shape of the Liturgy*, London 1945.
- The Eucharist. Final Report of the Joint Roman Catholic-Lutheran Commission*, 1978, [in:] *Growth in Agreement. Reports and Agreed Statements of Ecumenical Conversations on a World Level*, eds. H. Meyer, L. Vischer, New York–Geneva 1984, pp. 190–214.
- Feingold L., *The Eucharist. Mystery of Presence, Sacrifice, and Communion*, Steubenville, OH 2018.
- From Conflict to Communion. Lutheran-Catholic Common Commemoration of the Reformation in 2017. Report of the Lutheran-Roman Catholic Commission on Unity*, Leipzig 2013 (Polish edition: *Od konfliktu do komunii. Luteransko-katolickie wspólne upamiętnienie Reformacji w 2017 roku. Raport Luteransko-Rzymskokatolickiej Komisji Dialogu ds. Jedności*, Dziegielów 2013).
- Froniewski J., *Eucharystia jako ofiara w nauczaniu św. Tomasza z Akwinu – próba poszukiwania adekwatnego klucza hermeneutycznego*, [in:] *Piękna dama Teologia. Księga Jubileuszowa dedykowana Księdzu Profesorowi Romanowi E. Rogowskiemu*, eds. W. Wołyniec, J. Froniewski, Wrocław 2016, pp. 233–244.
- Froniewski J., *Ewolucja rozumienia biblijnego pojęcia pamiętki w protestanckiej teologii Eucharystii*, “Świdnickie Studia Teologiczne” 13/2 (2016), pp. 45–62.
- Froniewski J., *Marcina Lutra nauka o ofierze eucharystycznej. Jej ocena w orzeczeniach Soboru Trydenckiego oraz możliwości reinterpretacji w świetle współczesnych dokumentów dialogu katolicko-luterńskiego*, “Perspectiva. Legnickie Studia Teologiczno-Historyczne” 15/2 (2016), pp. 14–34.
- Froniewski J., *Obecność Chrystusa w Eucharystii pod postaciami chleba i wina. Krystalizacja doktryny katolickiej na Soborze Trydenckim wobec nauki Lutra*, [in:] *Pozamszalny kult Chrystusa w Eucharystii*, ed. S. Araszczuk, Wrocław 2017, pp. 7–29.
- Gerken A., *Teologia Eucharystii*, transl. S. Szczyrbowski, Warszawa 1977 (German edition: A. Gerken, *Theologie der Eucharistie*, München 1973).
- Hoping H., *Mein Leib für euch gegeben. Geschichte und Theologie der Eucharistie*, Freiburg im Br. 2011.
- Hunsinger G., *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*, Cambridge–New York 2008.
- Jeremias J., *Die Abendmahls Worte Jesu*, Göttingen 1967.
- John Chrysostom, *Homilia in epistulam ad Hebraeos 17*, [in:] *Patrologia Graeca*, t. 63, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1862, k. 127–134 (English text: Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of St. John and The Epistle of the Hebrews*, Series: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers,

- First Series 14, ed. P. Schaff, New York 1889, pp. 363–522, <https://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/VOL-14-Nicene-and-post-Nicene-fathers-of-the-Christian-church.pdf> [access: 30.10.2023].
- John Chrysostom, *Homilia in Matthaeum* 82, [in:] *Patrologia Graeca*, t. 58, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1862, k. 737–756 (English text: Saint Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew*, Series: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series 14, ed. P. Schaff, New York 1888, pp. 491–497, <https://www.holybooks.com/wp-content/uploads/VOL-10-Nicene-and-post-Nicene-fathers-of-the-Christian-church.pdf> [access: 30.10.2023]; Polish text: Jan Chryzostom św., *Homilie na Ewangelię według św. Mateusza (część druga: homilie 41–90)*, transl. A. Baron, J. Krystyniacki, Kraków 2001).
- Johnson L.T., *Sacramentality and Sacraments in Hebrews*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 109–122.
- Jolkkonen J., *Luther and the Eucharist. A Defender of the Real Presence*, [in:] *Vermitteltes Heil. Martin Luther und die Sakramente*, eds. F. Körner, W. Thönissen, Paderborn–Leipzig 2018, pp. 96–118.
- Journet K., *Msza święta. Obecność ofiary krzyżowej*, transl. M. Stokowska, Poznań–Warszawa–Lublin 1959.
- Jungmann J.A., *Missarum Sollemnia*, vols. 2, Wien 1948.
- Klein S., *Katolicy i luteranie razem przy stole Pańskim. Wspólnota eucharystyczna według dokumentów dialogu katolicko-luterańskiego*, Series: Jeden Pan, Jedna Wiara 22, Lublin 2015.
- Komisja Wspólna Rzymskokatolicka i Ewangelicko-luterańska, *Wieczera Pańska*, [in:] S.C. Napiórkowski, *Wszyscy pod jednym Chrystusem. Ogólnokościelny dialog katolicko-luterański*. Part 1: *Lata 1965–1981*, Lublin 1985, pp. 141–167.
- Księgi Wyznaniowe Kościoła Luterańskiego*, Bielsko-Biała 1999.
- Kuśmirek A. (ed.), *Hebrajsko-polski Stary Testament. Pięcioksiąg. Przekład interlinearny z kodami gramatycznymi, transliteracją oraz indeksem rdzeni*, Warszawa 2003.
- Lisicki P., *Dogmat i tiara*, Warszawa 2020.
- Lohfink G., *Przeciw banalizacji Jezusa*, transl. E. Pieciul-Karimińska, Poznań 2015.
- Luther M., *De captivitate Babylonica ecclesiae. Von der babylonischen Gefangenschaft der Kirche*. *Lateinisch/Deutsch*, ed., transl. H.-H. Tiemann, Stuttgart 2016.
- Lyonnet S., *Eucharistie et vie chrétienne. Quelques aspects bibliques du mystère eucharistique*, Paris 1993.
- Marshall B.D., *What is the Eucharist? A Dogmatic Outline*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 500–516.
- Mattox M.L., *Sacraments in the Lutheran Reformation*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 269–282.
- Melanchthon, *Defence of the Augsburg Confession*, <https://bookofconcord.org/defense/> [access: 17.08.2023].
- Müller G.L., *Msza Święta. Źródło chrześcijańskiego życia*, transl. S. Śledziwski, Lublin 2007.
- Pesch O.H., *Zrozumieć Lutra*, transl. A. Marniok, K. Kowalik, Poznań 2008.
- Pięcioksiąg Mojżesza. Druga Księga Mojżesza. Exodus, Tłumaczył i podług najlepszych źródeł objaśnił Dr. I. Cylkow*, Kraków 1895.
- Pitre B., *Jesus and the Last Supper*, Grand Rapids, MI 2015.
- Pomplun T., *Post-Tridentine Sacramental Theology*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology*, eds. H. Boersma, M. Levering, Oxford–New York 2015, pp. 348–361.

- Popowski R., Wojciechowski M. (transl.), *Grecko-polski Nowy Testament. Wydanie interliniarne z kluczem gramatycznym, z kodami Stronga i Popowskiego oraz pełną transliteracją greckiego tekstu*, Warszawa 2014.
- Ratzinger J., *Duch liturgii*, Series: Christianitas, transl. E. Pieciul, Poznań 2002.
- Ratzinger J., *The Eucharist: Heart of the Church*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 340–399.
- Ratzinger J., *Eucharystia. Bóg blisko nas*, transl. M. Rodkiewicz, Kraków 2005.
- Ratzinger J., *Form and Content of the Eucharistic Celebration*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 399–420.
- Ratzinger J., *Introduction to Christianity*, transl. J.R. Foster, M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2004 (Polish edition: J. Ratzinger, *Wprowadzenie w chrześcijaństwo*, transl. Z. Włodkowa, Kraków 1994).
- Ratzinger J., *Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice?*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 289–300 (Polish edition: J. Ratzinger, *Czy Eucharystia jest Ofiarą?*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Teologia liturgii. Sakramentalne podstawy życia chrześcijańskiego*, Series: Opera Omnia 11, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2012, pp. 243–254).
- Ratzinger J., *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, transl. P.J. Whitmore; San Francisco, CA 2011.
- Ratzinger J., *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia o chrystologii*, Series: Opera Omnia 6/1, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. M. Górecka, W. Szymona, Lublin 2015.
- Ratzinger J., *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, transl. H. Taylor, San Francisco, CA 2005 (Polish edition: J. Ratzinger, *Kościół. Pielgrzymująca wspólnota wiary*, transl. W. Szymona, Kraków 2005).
- Ratzinger J., *Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, transl. M.F. McCarthy, San Francisco, CA 1987 (Polish edition: J. Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, *Formalne zasady chrześcijaństwa. Szkice do teologii fundamentalnej*, transl. W. Szymona, Poznań 2009).
- Ratzinger J., *Reception as the Result of Dialogue*, [in:] *Catholic – Lutheran Relations Three Decades after Vatican II*, Series: Studia Oecumenica Farfensia, ed. P. Nørgaard-Højen, Studia Oecumenica Farfensia, vol. 1, Città del Vaticano 1997, pp. 78–84.
- Ratzinger J., *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 32–214.
- Ratzinger J./Benedykt XVI, *Święto wiary. O teologii mszy świętej*, transl. J. Merecki, Kraków 2006.
- Ratzinger J., *Teologia liturgii. Sakramentalne podstawy życia chrześcijańskiego*, Series: Opera Omnia 11, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2012.
- Ratzinger J., *The Theology of the Liturgy*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Theology of the Liturgy. The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence*, Series: Collected Works 11, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2014, pp. 674–692 (Polish edition: J. Ratzinger, *Teologia liturgii*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Teologia liturgii. Sakramentalne podstawy życia chrześcijańskiego*, Series: Opera Omnia 11, eds. K. Góźdz, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2012, pp. 601–617).

- Ratzinger J., *Zastępstwo*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Jezus z Nazaretu. Studia o chrystologii*, Opera Omnia 6/2, eds. K. Gózdź, M. Górecka, transl. W. Szymona, Lublin 2015, pp. 833–844.
- Rosik M., *Eucharystia w tradycji biblijnej. Zapowiedzi – ustanowienie – ku teologii*, Wrocław 2022.
- Rosik M., *Pierwszy List do Koryntian. Wstęp, przekład z oryginału, komentarz*, Series: Nowy Komentarz Biblijny. Nowy Testament 7, Częstochowa 2009.
- Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 1963, https://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19631204_sacrosanctum-concilium_en.html [access: 20.08.2023].
- Sojka J., *Widzialne Słowo. Sakramenty w luterńskiej „Księdze zgody”*, Warszawa 2016.
- Starowieyski M., *Eucharystia pierwszych chrześcijan*, [in:] *Eucharystia pierwszych chrześcijan. Ojcowie Kościoła nauczają o Eucharystii*, ed. M. Starowieyski, Series: Ojcowie Żywi 7, Kraków 1987, pp. 9–30.
- Stern D.E., *Remembering and Redemption*, [in:] *Rediscovering the Eucharist*, ed. R. Kereszty, New York–Mahwah, NJ 2003, pp. 1–15.
- Szymik J., *Prawda i mądrość. Przewodnik po teologii Benedykta XVI*, Kraków 2019.
- Szymik J., *Theologia benedicta*, vol. 1, Katowice 2016.
- Szymik J., *Theologia benedicta*, vol. 2, Katowice 2016.
- Świerzawski W., *Dynamiczna „Pamiętka” Pana. Eucharystyczna anamneza Misterium Paschalnego i jego egzystencjalna dynamika*, Kraków 1980.
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* III, <https://aquinas.cc/la/en/~ST.III> [access: 30.10.2023] (Polish edition: Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, vol. 28: *Eucharystia*, transl. S. Piotrowicz, Londyn 1974).
- Thurian M., *L'Eucharistie. Mémorial du Seigneur. Sacrifice d'action de grâce et d'intercession*, Neuchâtel 1963.
- Thurian M., *Le mystère de l'eucharistie. Une approche oecuménique*, Paris 1981 (Polish edition: M. Thurian, *O Eucharystii i modlitwie*, transl. M. Tarnowska, Kraków 1987).
- Thurian M., *Une seule eucharistie*, Taizé 1973.

JACEK FRONIEWSKI (REV. DR HAB.) – presbyter of the Archdiocese of Wrocław; after his doctorate in dogmatics at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, he studied ecumenical theology at the Möhler-Institut für Ökumenik in Paderborn (Germany) from 2011–2014. Since 2014, he has been an assistant professor in the Department of Dogmatic Theology at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław. He has published the results of his research to date in nearly 30 scholarly articles mainly on sacramentology and ecumenism. He has also published two scholarly monographs: *Teologia anamnezy eucharystycznej jako pamiętki uobecniającej ofiarę Chrystusa i jej implikacje ekumeniczne* [Theology of the Eucharistic Anamnesis as a Memorial Making Present the Sacrifice of Christ and Its Ecumenical Implications] (Wrocław 2011) and *Teologia sakramentu namaszczenia chorych. Historia – systematyka – ekumenia* [Theology of the Anointing of the Sick. History – Systematics – Ecumenism] (Wrocław 2022).

Peter John McGregor

Catholic Institute of Sydney and the University of Notre Dame, Australia

PMcGregor@cis.catholic.edu.au

ORCID: 0000-0002-1811-0043

Placing Joseph Ratzinger within the “Synthetic” Tradition of the Theological Anthropology of the Heart

Nauczanie Josepha Ratzingera na tle „syntetycznej”
tradycji teologicznej antropologii serca

ABSTRACT: This article begins with a chronological outline of the two main “traditions” of understanding the heart: the “analytic” tradition which treats the heart as a particular faculty of the human person, and the “synthetic” tradition which treats it as in some way transcending a particular faculty. Then, it looks at the contemporary search for a theological anthropology of the heart. Following this, it examines Joseph Ratzinger’s theological anthropology of the heart. More specifically, it looks at this understanding as found in his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*, his assessment of the patristic understanding of the heart, and as revealed in his *Jesus of Nazareth* and *Mary: The Church at the Source*. Then, it investigates his symbolic theology of the Father’s heart, followed by how both the human heart and the Father’s heart are revealed in the heart of Jesus. It concludes with a few thoughts on how a synthetic theological anthropology of the heart might assist us in healing our contemporary anthropological disintegration.

KEYWORDS: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, theological anthropology, heart, symbolic theology, Origen, Augustine, Pascal, John Henry Newman, Romano Guardini

ABSTRAKT: Niniejszy artykuł rozpoczyna chronologiczne przedstawienie dwóch głównych tradycji rozumienia serca: tradycji analitycznej, która traktuje serce jako szczególną zdolność osoby ludzkiej, oraz tradycji syntetycznej, która uznaje, że serce tę szczególną zdolność przekracza. W kolejnych częściach artykułu autor dokonuje przeglądu współczesnych badań teologicznej antropologii serca oraz analizuje teologiczną antropologię serca Josepha Ratzingera, zaprezentowaną w jego komentarzu do *Gaudium et spes*, w jego ocenie patrystycznego rozumienia serca oraz w jego książkach *Jezus z Nazaretu* i *Matka Boga. Maryja w wierze Kościoła*. Następnie autor bada Ratzingerowską symboliczną teologię serca Boga Ojca oraz sposób, w jaki zarówno

ludzkie serce, jak i serce Ojca objawiają się w sercu Jezusa. Artykuł kończą refleksje na temat sposobu, w jaki syntetyczna teologiczna antropologia serca może pomóc w uzdrowieniu współczesnej antropologicznej dezintegracji.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedykt XVI, antropologia teologiczna, serce, teologia symboliczna, Orygenes, Augustyn, Pascal, John Henry Newman, Romano Guardini

In everyday speech people often use the term “heart.” It can be used to describe someone’s disposition — one can have a soft, hard, warm, or cold heart; to indicate affection — I love you with all my heart; to indicate courage — take heart; to describe a person’s character — he is a man after my own heart; to indicate knowledge — I knew in my heart; to indicate memory — I know it by heart. The term is also used frequently in Sacred Scripture. Therein it is used to indicate knowing, believing, willing, conscience, the passions, imagination, and memory. It is the place of relationships with other persons, the place which God searches and knows, the place of revelation and the refusal of revelation, and the place of God’s indwelling.

In examining this term, one should seek to answer two fundamental questions. First, can the term “heart” be used clearly in theological anthropology, or must it remain forever vague, ambiguous, and indeterminate? Second, can the term be used fruitfully in theological anthropology, can it be used in a way that helps us to understand the mystery of ourselves and the mystery of our relationship with God? To answer these questions, we will begin with a brief chronological outline of the two main “traditions” of understanding the heart. These are the “analytic” tradition which treats the heart as a particular faculty of the human person, and the “synthetic” tradition which treats it as in some way transcending a particular faculty. Then, we will look at the contemporary search for a theological anthropology of the heart. Following this, we will examine Joseph Ratzinger’s theological anthropology of the heart. More specifically, we will look at this understanding as found in his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*, in his assessment of the patristic understanding of the heart, and as revealed in his *Jesus of Nazareth* and *Mary: The Church at the Source*. Then, we will investigate his symbolic theology of the Father’s heart, followed by how both the human heart and the Father’s heart are revealed in the heart of Jesus. The article will conclude with a few thoughts on how a synthetic theological anthropology of the heart might assist us in healing our contemporary anthropological disintegration.

A theological anthropology of the heart

When it comes to how the term "heart" has been used theologically, one finds that there have been two main "traditions." These could be called the analytic and the synthetic traditions. The first is an analysis of the human faculties, one that needs to be synthesized. The second is a synthesis of the human heart, one that needs to be analyzed. The first is based more on how one thinks about being human while the second is based more on how one experiences being human.

The analytic tradition distinguishes between the individual faculties of the human person. Thus, in *The Republic* Plato divides the soul into three parts; the logical, symbolized by the head, the spirited, symbolized by the heart, and the appetitive, symbolized by the entrails. Here he likens the soul to the three orders of the city: the guardians, the auxiliaries, and the producers.¹ In *Timaeus* he divides the human person into the immortal rational soul, the body, and the two parts of the mortal soul. The immortal rational soul resides in the head, and the two parts of the mortal soul reside in the body, the spirited part in the chest and the appetitive part in the viscera.² These Platonic schemata provide the basis for this tradition. Yet, one finds that these schemata are adapted in various ways to account for the place of the heart. The first adaption is found amongst the Greek Fathers.

The heart lies at the center of Eastern Christian spirituality. As Tomáš Špidlík points out, the spiritual writers of the East "speak of custody of the heart, of attentiveness to the heart, of purity of the heart, of the thoughts, desires, and resolutions of the heart, of prayer of the heart, of the divine presence in the heart, and so on."³ Faced with the fact that, in Sacred Scripture, "the heart contains the fullness of the spiritual life, which involves the whole person, with all his faculties and all his activities," the Fathers were faced with the dilemma of how to express this in a way comprehensible to a Greek mind.⁴ Since the mind occupied pride of place for the Greeks, the patristic response was to identify the heart with the mind. As Špidlík continues: "Speculative by nature, the Greeks certainly did not by mere chance substitute *nous* (reason,

¹ Plato, *The Republic*, [in:] *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 4, eds. R.M. Hare, D.A. Russell, transl. B. Jowett, London 1970, nos. 435–442.

² Plato, *Timaeus*, [in:] *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 3, eds. R.M. Hare, D.A. Russell, transl. B. Jowett, London 1970, nos. 69b–72d.

³ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook*, transl. A.P. Gythiel, Kalamazoo, MI 1986, p. 103.

⁴ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 104.

mind) for the biblical *lev, levav* (heart). According to Gregory Nazianzus the ‘clean heart’ of Ps. 50:2 was the *dianoētikon* (mind).⁵

With Thomas Aquinas, one finds that his view of the heart seems to combine Platonic and Aristotelian understandings, depending upon the particular sense in which he is using the term. Thus, he sometimes uses it to mean the principle of animal life and movement (Aristotelian).⁶ He also, “thinks of the heart as the organ of the passions, in the sense that the motions and affections of the sensitive part of the soul are joined with a powerful motion (*commotio*) of the body, and in particular of the heart. In this way love produces a *dilatatio cordis* [an enlargement of the heart] [Platonic].”⁷

When speaking of the heart in its biblical sense, he equates *cor* with *spiritus*.⁸ Furthermore, when commenting on the use of the term in the evangelical counsel to love God with all one’s heart (cf. Luke 10:27) he says that it indicates an *actus voluntatis quae hic significatur per cor* (an act of the will, which is indicated here by heart).⁹ He never speaks of the heart as a source of cognition.¹⁰

In Dietrich von Hildebrand’s *The Sacred Heart*, one finds a third account which differs from those of both Plato and Aquinas. He holds that, for the most part, it is “characteristic of the heart in its true and most specific sense that it is chosen as representative of man’s inner life, and that the heart, rather than the intellect or will, is identified with the soul as such.”¹¹

⁵ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 104, referring to Gregory of Nazianzus, *Orationes* 40:39.

⁶ See L. Elders, *The Inner Life of Jesus in the Theology and Devotion of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, [in:] *Faith in Christ and the Worship of Christ: New Approaches to Devotion to Christ*, ed. L. Scheffczyk, San Francisco, CA 1986, p. 79, where he refers the reader to Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, 20, 1, ad 1; III, 90, 3, ad 3; and *In IV Sent.*, d. 14, q. 1, ad 2.

⁷ L. Elders, *The Inner Life of Jesus...*, op. cit., p. 79, referring the reader to Thomas Aquinas, *Q. d. de veritate*, 22, 2; and *Super Io evang.*, c. 13, lectio 4, N. 1796.

⁸ L. Elders, *The Inner Life of Jesus...*, op. cit., p. 79, referring the reader to Thomas Aquinas, *Super epist. I ad Thess.*, c. 5, lectio I, N. 120; and *Super Io evang.*, c. 14, lectio I, N. 1850: “*cor, id est spiritus.*”

⁹ Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, transl. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York 1948, II–II, 44, 5.

¹⁰ L. Elders, *The Inner Life of Jesus...*, op. cit., p. 79, referring the reader to the *Summa Theologica*, III, 90, 3, ad 3.

¹¹ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart: An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*, Baltimore, MD 1965, p. 47. Von Hildebrand sees the intellect, will, and heart as the three fundamental “capacities” of the human person. It is to the heart that the “affective sphere” belongs (*ibid.*, pp. 25–49).

He goes on to identify the "heart" as the center of human affectivity. Thus, "just as the intellect is the root of all acts of knowledge, the heart is the organ of all affectivity: all wishing, all desiring, all 'being *affected*'."¹²

Von Hildebrand gradually explains his definition of the heart. More precisely, the heart is the center of affectivity. It can be contrasted not just with the will and intellect, but with the less central strata of affectivity. These strata von Hildebrand characterizes as "non-spiritual," that is, the agreeable or disagreeable feelings which attend upon bodily pains and pleasures.¹³ Distinguishing between bodily and psychic feelings, he holds that not all psychic feelings can be classified as "spiritual." There are psychic states such as "jolliness" and depression, and what he calls spiritual affective responses such as joy, sorrow, love, or compassion. He distinguishes between them on the grounds that the psychic states are not "intentional," that is, they do not have "a meaningful conscious relation to an object."¹⁴

Von Hildebrand further refines his definition of the "heart" by distinguishing between what he calls "energized" and "tender" affectivity. The former is "temperamental," for example, the pleasure experienced in sports or in displaying one's talents.¹⁵ For him, the latter is the "affectivity" spoken of in the Song of Songs.¹⁶ If one truly has a "tender affectivity," the more one's experience of the object of this affectivity will be "awakened," and the more one's affectivity is awakened, the greater the joy that one will experience. Thus, "The more conscious a joy is, the more its object is seen and understood in its full meaning; the more awakened and outspoken the response, the more the joy is lived."¹⁷ In other words, the deeper one's joy in the beloved, the deeper one's knowledge of the beloved, and the deeper that knowledge, the deeper the joy. Love, joy, and knowledge mutually reinforce each other. Thus: "It belongs to the very nature of affective experiences that a deep joy or a deep love, though each possesses a theme of its own, is penetrated by the awareness that our joy or our love is objectively justified and objectively valid."¹⁸

To sum up the analytical tradition, for Greek Fathers like Gregory Nazianzen, heart equals mind. For Aquinas, heart equals either the principle of

¹² D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 48.

¹³ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., pp. 49–52.

¹⁴ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., pp. 54–55. He goes on to contrast this with the conviviality caused by drinking alcohol.

¹⁵ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 77.

¹⁶ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 79.

¹⁷ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 81.

¹⁸ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 83.

animal life and movement, or the organ of the passions, or the *spiritus*, or the will. For von Hildebrand, heart equals joyful, knowing, and loving affectivity.

While not insisting that one needs to choose definitively between these traditions, an attempt will be made to present a more balanced picture by giving a brief outline and analysis of the synthetic tradition, which is based more on how one experiences being human. It will be maintained that having this picture is valuable, since a theological anthropology of the heart is more in accord with our immediate experience of being and acting humanly, and it may be of some help in countering a contemporary anthropological dualism.

Romano Guardini is one who identifies this focus upon the heart, which he calls the noblest tradition of the Christian Occident, a *philosophia* and *theologia cordis*. According to him, the pedigree of this tradition begins with Plato, and runs through Paul, Ignatius of Antioch, Augustine, Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, Gertrude the Great, Elizabeth of Thuringia and Catherine of Siena. Its “system” is created by Bonaventure and its “poetry” by Dante. After a hiatus in the Renaissance, it continues through Teresa of Avila, Francis de Sales, Blaise Pascal, the Oratorians Charles de Condren, Pierre de Bérulle, and Alphonse Gratre, Antonio Rosmini, and culminates in John Henry Newman. In the East it has been cultivated by Vladimir Soloviev, Aleksey Khomyakov, and Pavel Florensky. Guardini also sees it, “in a strange Nordic modification” in Søren Kierkegaard, and in an anti-Christian manifestation in Friedrich Nietzsche.¹⁹ To this pedigree Beáta Tóth adds Paul Ricoeur and Karol Wojtyła,²⁰ while Ratzinger could add the Old and New Testaments, the Stoics, Origen, and Guardini himself.²¹ To all of these could be added the Syrian Martyrius Sadhona, the Russian Théophane the Recluse,²² as well as Karl Rahner, Tóth, and Ratzinger.²³ Beginning with Sacred Scripture an attempt will be made

¹⁹ R. Guardini, *Pascal for Our Time*, transl. B. Thompson, New York 1966, pp. 128–129. For Augustine and Pascal, see also J.R. Peters, *The Logic of the Heart: Augustine, Pascal, and the Rationality of Faith*, Grand Rapids, MI 2009. For Francis de Sales see W.M. Wright, *Heart Speaks to Heart: The Salesian Tradition*, Maryknoll, NY 2004.

²⁰ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons: Towards a Theological Anthropology of the Heart*, Eugene, OR 2015, pp. 21–26, 29–60, 93–100, 214–230.

²¹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, transl. G. Harrison, San Francisco, CA 1986, pp. 51–69.

²² For Martyrius Sadhona and Théophane the Recluse, see T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., pp. 105–107; and T. Špidlík, *Prayer: The Spirituality of the Christian East*, vol. 2, transl. A.P. Gythiel, Kalamazoo, MI 2005, pp. 251–258.

²³ See K. Rahner, *Some Theses on the Theology of the Devotion*, [in:] *Heart of the Saviour*, ed. J. Stierli, transl. P. Andrews, New York 1957, pp. 131–155.

to trace this tradition through some of the most significant of these people, namely, Augustine, Pascal, Newman, and Guardini.

While Scripture does, on occasion, distinguish between such faculties of the human person as "heart," "soul," and "mind" (cf. Matt 22:37), it generally uses the term "heart" across the whole spectrum of human faculties. It is the place of knowing, faith, willing, and conscience. It is drawn to what seems good and beautiful. It is the seat of the passions, imagination, and memory. It is the place of virtue and purity. It is the place of relationships with other persons. It is the place which God searches and knows, the place of revelation and the refusal of revelation, and the place of God's indwelling.²⁴

Summing up the biblical understanding of the heart, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says that:

[The] heart is the center of the inner life of man and the source or seat of all the forces and functions of the soul and spirit ... [In it] dwell feelings, desires and passions ... [It is] the seat of understanding, the source of thought and reflection ... the seat of the will, the source of resolves ... supremely the one

²⁴ For example, in the Septuagint, for *kardia* as the locus of knowing, see Isa 6:10; for willing, see 2 Sam 7:3; for conscience, see 2 Sam 24:10; as the seat of desire, see Job 31:9; as the seat of the passions, see Jer 4:19; as being broken, see Isa 61:1. In the New Testament, for *kardia* as the locus of the passions, see John 14:1; for thought, see Matt 9:4; for understanding, see Matt 13:15; for doubt and questioning, see Luke 24:38; for belief, see Luke 24:25; for deception, see Jas 1:26; for intention and decision, see Acts 5:3–4; for imagination, see Luke 1:51; for memory, see Luke 1:66; for virtue, see 2 Thess 3:5; for conscience, see 1 John 3:20; for purity of heart, see Matt 5:8; for relation with other human persons, see 2 Cor 6:11–13; as that which God searches and knows, see Rom 8:27; of revelation, see Eph 1:18; of the refusal of revelation, see Eph 4:18; of God's indwelling, in Christ, see Eph 3:17. For the biblical language of the heart, see J. Becker, *The Heart in the Language of the Bible*, [in:] *Faith in Christ and the Worship of Christ: New Approaches to Devotion to Christ*, ed. L. Scheffczyk, San Francisco, CA 1986, pp. 24–30. Concerning the heart as the place of pity and mercy, Joachim Becker points out that, "Biblical language prefers to assign to these feelings other terms, meaning approximately 'bowels'" (ibid., p. 30). Hugo Rahner regards this term *splanchna* as equivalent to "heart." See H. Rahner, *On the Biblical Basis of the Devotion*, [in:] *Heart of the Saviour*, ed. J. Stierli, transl. P. Andrews, New York 1957, pp. 17–26. He states that: "In the language of Revelation, the hallowed word 'heart' and its almost synonymous equivalents (Hebrew: *leb, lebab, beten, me(j)'im, kereb*; Greek: *kardia, koilia, splanchna*; Latin: *cor, venter, viscera*) have the same primal meaning as in all human language" (ibid., p. 17). See also J.G. Bovenmars, *A Biblical Spirituality of the Heart*, New York 1991; and T. Špidlík, *Prayer...*, op. cit., pp. 250–251.

center in man to which God turns, in which the religious life is rooted, which determines moral conduct.²⁵

We have already seen Špidlík point out how the Eastern Fathers tended to identify the heart with the mind. In the face of the difficulty of defining the heart, Špidlík proposes an insightful solution, one that turns the issue on its head.

The psychological method to which people generally resort in discussions on this topic will never be able to clarify the question. There have been attempts above all to place the heart into a schematic presentation of man's psychological structure, and only then to ask which function such a "heart" can have in the spiritual life. This procedure really needs to be reversed. The biblical concept of the heart poses religious questions. Once these have been more or less clarified, we can ask how they are reflected in man's psychological structure.²⁶

According to Špidlík, the Eastern understanding of the heart developed over time. Eventually there was a reaction to the emphasis on the mind in favor of the "feelings." The classic definition of prayer changed from "an ascent of the mind to God" to "an ascent of the mind and heart to God."²⁷ For the Greeks, but especially for the Russians, the heart came to be seen as the principle of human integration.²⁸ For the Russian Théophane the Recluse the heart is "the focus of all the human forces, those of the mind, of the soul, of the animal and corporeal forces."²⁹ As Špidlík explains, this principle has temporal significance.

The heart, the principle of unity within a person, also gives stability to the multiplicity of successive moments of life. We cannot perform one act which continues forever ... For the Eastern Christian, however, the ideal has always been "the state of prayer" ... an habitual disposition which somehow in itself deserves the name prayer, aside from the acts which it produces with greater

²⁵ F. Baumgärtel, J. Behm, *kardia*, [in:] *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3, ed. G. Kittel, transl. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, MI 1965, pp. 611–612. See also B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 11.

²⁶ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 104.

²⁷ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., pp. 104–105.

²⁸ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 105. See also M. Evdokimov, *To Open One's Heart: A Spiritual Path*, transl. A.P. Gythiel, New York 2015.

²⁹ Théophane the Recluse, *Načertanie christianskago nravoučenjia*, Moscow 1895, p. 306. Quoted in T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 105.

or lesser frequency. This state of prayer is at the same time the state of the entire spiritual life, a steadfast disposition of the heart.³⁰

Both von Hildebrand and Ratzinger point out that “heart” is a key term in Augustine’s *Confessions*.³¹ For Augustine, the love of the heart is deeper than language, and can convey that which words cannot.³² Indeed, he claims that we do not know our own hearts; they are an “abyss,” a “great deep.”³³ Augustine sometimes seems to speak of the heart as equivalent to the “self.” His famous “you have made *us* for yourself, and our *hearts* are restless until they rest in you” would seem to indicate as much.³⁴ At other times, he seems to equate the heart with the soul. For instance, in his account of the death of a friend, Augustine speaks of the heart as the place of the passions. It was black with grief. As he says: “I became a great enigma to myself and I was forever asking my soul why it was sad and why it disquieted me so sorely.”³⁵ He also sees the heart as the place of encounter with God: “Let us return to the heart, that we may find Him.”³⁶ Ratzinger maintains that Augustine,

is well aware that the organ by which God can be seen cannot be a non-historical “ratio naturalis” which just does not exist, but only the *ratio pura*, i.e. *purificata* [purified reason] or, as Augustine expresses it echoing the gospel, the *cor purum* (“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”). Augustine also knows that the necessary purification of sight takes place through faith (Acts

³⁰ T. Špidlík, *The Spirituality of the Christian East...*, op. cit., p. 105.

³¹ See D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., pp. 28–29: “It is true that there is one great tradition in the stream of Christian philosophy in which full justice is done in a concrete way to the affective sphere and to the heart. St. Augustine’s work from the *Confessions* onward is pervaded by deep and admirable insights concerning the heart and the affective attitudes of man.” Von Hildebrand goes so far as to wonder why, when Augustine speaks of the reflection of the Trinity in the human soul, he “fails to give to the affective sphere and to the heart a standing analogous to that granted to the reason and will” (ibid., p. 28). See also J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 65.

³² J.M. Rist, *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, Cambridge 1994, p. 33.

³³ J.M. Rist, *Augustine...*, op. cit., p. 37.

³⁴ Augustine, *Confessions, Books I–IV*, ed. G. Clark, Cambridge 1995, I. I. 1.

³⁵ Augustine, *Confessions...*, op. cit., 4. 4. 9. Tóth finds Paul Ricoeur’s understanding of the heart to be akin though not identical to Augustine’s “restless heart.” See B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., pp. 40–41, 44.

³⁶ Augustine, *Confessions...*, op. cit., 4. 12. 19. Quoted by J. Ratzinger in *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 68.

15:9) and through love, at all events not as a result of reflection alone and not at all by man's own power.³⁷

In other words, we do not think our way or work our way to salvation and deification. Beyond this, Augustine never precisely defines what he means by "heart." He simply describes it in action. For him, ultimately, it is an enigma.

After the Protestant Reformation, the rise of skepticism in religious matters led Pascal to pen his *Pensées*. There one finds the famous, frequently quoted, and frequently misunderstood statement: "The heart has its reasons of which the reason knows nothing," a statement that can be understood as a reply to Michel de Montaigne's skeptical question: "Que sais-je?" (What do I know?)³⁸ In his answer, Pascal is being neither sentimental nor irrational. By "reason" he means Cartesian "reasoning" by scientific analysis and calculation, what Aristotelian-Scholastic logic called the third act of the mind, the discursive reasoning by which one proves a truth, the conclusion, from premises.³⁹ Pascal says that the heart has its own reasons. These are first principles, self-evident truths. "Principles are felt, propositions proved, and both with certainty by different means."⁴⁰

For Pascal, the first act of the mind, understanding the meaning of an essence, is carried out by the "heart." Furthermore, for him it is the heart that "feels" God (*sent Dieu*). This is Pascal's definition of faith: "It is the heart which perceives God and not the reason. That is what faith is: God perceived by the heart, not by the reason."⁴¹ The heart "sees" God. It knows God. God gives faith to people by moving their hearts.⁴² It is also the heart which chooses, which wills,

³⁷ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling*, [in:] *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 5, ed. H. Vorgrimler, transl. J.W. O'Hara, London 1969, p. 155. For more on this, see J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg der religiösen Erkenntnis nach dem heiligen Augustinus*, [in:] *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, vol. 2, eds. P. Granfield, J.A. Jungmann, Münster 1970, pp. 553–564.

³⁸ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, transl. A.J. Krailsheimer, London 1966, p. 423 (277). There are two common ways of numbering Pascal's "thoughts." Here the Alban J. Krailsheimer number is given first, followed by the Léon Brunschvicg number in brackets.

³⁹ See R. Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking for Truth in the Sciences*, transl. S. Haldane, G.R.T. Ross, [in:] *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 28: *Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza*, eds. M.J. Adler et al., Chicago, IL 1990, pp. 265–272. For Pascal's understanding of "reason" and "heart," see P. Kreeft, *Christianity for Modern Pagans: Pascal's Pensées Outlined, Edited and Explained*, San Francisco, CA 1993, pp. 228–234.

⁴⁰ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, op. cit., p. 110 (282).

⁴¹ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, op. cit., p. 424 (278).

⁴² B. Pascal, *Pensées*, op. cit., p. 110 (282).

to love God or self. “I say that it is natural for the heart to love the universal being or itself, according to its allegiance, and it hardens itself against either as it chooses.”⁴³ Finally, for Pascal, the heart is “the unified center of inner life.”⁴⁴

Like Augustine, Newman frequently uses the term “heart” but does not give an explicit definition of what he means by it. One must infer the definition from the way he uses the term. For Newman, “reason,” in the sense of that faculty which is used in logic, mathematics, the scientific method and historical investigations, cannot establish faith in God. Even though Newman holds that conscience can establish the “reasonableness,” though not the rationality, of faith, it too is not capable of establishing faith.⁴⁵ Reacting against an eighteenth century reduction of faith to nothing more than an acceptance of evidence, Newman argues from what might be called “existential” evidence that: “The Word of Life is offered to a man; and, on its being offered, he has Faith in it ... Faith is the reasoning of a religious mind, or of what Scripture calls a right or renewed heart.”⁴⁶

In a sermon entitled *Love the Safeguard of Faith against Superstition*, Newman states: “Right faith is the faith of a right mind. Faith is an intellectual act; right faith is an intellectual act, done in a certain moral disposition. Faith is an act of Reason, viz. a reasoning upon presumptions; right Faith is a reasoning upon holy, devout, and enlightened presumptions.”⁴⁷

Again, in the same sermon, he says: “[This faith does not need] what is popularly called Reason for its protection,—I mean processes of investigation, discrimination, discussion, argument, and inference. It itself is an intellectual act, and takes its character from the moral state of the agent. It is perfected, not by intellectual cultivation, but by obedience.”⁴⁸

Like Pascal, Newman held that there were two modes of reasoning, logical reasoning and a “logic of the heart.” The latter is an insight or intuition.⁴⁹

⁴³ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, op. cit., p. 423 (277).

⁴⁴ B. Pascal, *Pensées*, op. cit., p. 110 (282). For more on Pascal’s understanding of the heart, see B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., pp. 5–12. Tóth finds the Ricoeurian heart to be akin though not identical to Pascal’s sensitive *coeur*. See *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴⁵ G.J. Shute, *Newman’s Logic of the Heart*, “Expository Times” 78 (May 1967), pp. 233–235.

⁴⁶ J.H. Newman, *Newman’s University Sermons: Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford 1826–43*, London 1970, pp. 202–203.

⁴⁷ J.H. Newman, *Newman’s University Sermons...*, op. cit., p. 239. See also P.F. Sands, *The Justification of Religious Faith in Soren Kierkegaard, John Henry Newman, and William James*, Piscatway, NJ 2004, p. 121.

⁴⁸ J.H. Newman, *Newman’s University Sermons...*, op. cit., pp. 249–250.

⁴⁹ B.W. Hughes, *Une Source Cachée: Blaise Pascal’s Influence upon John Henry Newman*, “Newman Studies Journal” 7/1 (2010), pp. 29–44.

Conversion comes, not by overcoming the reason, but by touching the heart.⁵⁰ Furthermore: "The heart is commonly reached, not through the reason, but through the imagination, by means of direct impressions, by the testimony of facts and events, by history, by description. Persons influence us, voices melt us, looks subdue us, deeds inflame us."⁵¹

Rather than "reasoning," Newman sees that:

The safeguard of Faith is a right state of heart. This it is that gives it birth; it also disciplines it. This is what protects it from bigotry, credulity, and fanaticism. It is holiness, or dutifulness, or the new creation, or the spiritual mind, however we word it, which is the quickening and illuminating principle of true faith, giving it eyes, hands, and feet. It is Love which forms it out of the rude chaos into an image of Christ.⁵²

Like Augustine and Pascal, Newman is convinced that it is only the "heart" which can "see" God. It is only love-purified reason that can perceive him. Thus, in a sermon entitled "Faith and Reason contrasted as Habits of Mind," he states:

For is not this the error, the common and fatal error, of the world, to think itself a judge of Religious Truth without preparation of heart? "I am the good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine." "He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice." "The pure in heart shall see God:" "to the meek mysteries are revealed;" "he that is spiritual judgeth all things." "The darkness comprehendeth it not." Gross eyes see not; heavy ears hear not. But in the schools of the world the ways towards Truth are considered high roads open to all men, however disposed, at all times. Truth is to be approached without homage.⁵³

Turning to Guardini, the two main sources for his anthropology of the heart are his book on Pascal and another on the conversion of Augustine, both published in 1935. The more thorough-going exposition of Guardini's understanding of

⁵⁰ J.H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, Westminster, MD 1973, p. 425.

⁵¹ J.H. Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, op. cit., p. 92. See also M.J. Ferreira, *The Grammar of the Heart: Newman on Faith and Imagination*, [in:] *Discourse and Context: An Interdisciplinary Study of John Henry Newman*, ed. G. Magill, Carbondale, IL 1993, p. 129.

⁵² J.H. Newman, *Newman's University Sermons...*, op. cit., p. 234. See also G.J. Shute, *Newman's Logic of the Heart*, op. cit., p. 235.

⁵³ J.H. Newman, *Newman's University Sermons...*, op. cit., p. 198.

the human heart is to be found in that on Augustine. Guardini seeks to give a basis for understanding the whole of Augustine’s development as described in *The Confessions*. As he puts it:

The long slow process of experience, of growth, unfolding, seizure and struggle, action and suffering by which the young man with his unfree sensuality on the one hand, his abstract, idealistic-aesthetic intellectuality on the other, pries open the realm of the heart; the manner in which that realm, strengthened, purified, and instructed, gains power and knowledge and certainty—all this forms the central skein of Augustine’s rich and complicated development.⁵⁴

In his reading of Pascal, Guardini identifies *le coeur* as the central reality of Pascal’s anthropology. He also identifies what his understanding is not. It is not the emotional in opposition to the logical, feeling to intellect, or “soul” to “mind.” Rather, “heart” *is* mind, that is to say, the heart is a manifestation of the mind. For Guardini’s Pascal, “The act of the heart is an act productive of knowledge. Certain objects only become given in the act of the heart. But they do not remain there in a-rational intuition, but are accessible to intellectual and rational penetration.”⁵⁵

Guardini’s books on Augustine and Pascal reveal that, for him, the heart is the place of reconciliation between the two halves of the human person, the sensual and the intellectual. It is the “heart” that makes us specifically human since angels have spiritual intellects and animals have embodied senses. The heart is the place where spiritual mind becomes human soul, and animal corporeity becomes human body. The heart is also the place of reconciliation of the moral and the spiritual. The heart is evaluating mind, mind as eros-bearer. It can grasp not just truth, but also the transcendentals of goodness and beauty. It is the place of union of knowing and loving. The heart is the whole person participating in knowing, and the whole person participating in loving. Only when we love can we truly know. This is purity of heart. The heart is this organ of love. This love is both passive and active. Not only is it drawn to the good, true, and beautiful, but it actively seeks them out. Love is freedom. It is only through participation in the life of God that heart truly becomes heart, truly integrated, truly human, truly knowing, truly loving, truly pure, and truly free.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ R. Guardini, *The Conversion of Augustine*, transl. E. Briefs, London 1960, p. 45.

⁵⁵ R. Guardini, *Pascal for Our Time*, op. cit., p. 129.

⁵⁶ For a more detailed exposition of Guardini’s understanding of the heart, see P.J. McGregor, *Heart to Heart: The Spiritual Christology of Joseph Ratzinger*, Eugene, OR 2016, pp. 289–303.

The contemporary search for a theological anthropology of the heart

As we shall see, since at least 1968 Ratzinger, too, has developed a theological anthropology of the heart. However, he has not been alone. As Tracey Rowland points out: “A theological anthropology which pays due regard to the intellectual and affective dimensions of human action is now in the course of development.”⁵⁷ She states that:

[T]he contemporary work of Robert Sokolowski has also drawn attention to this neglected element in presentations of the natural law. With reference to the notion of the law being written on the hearts of the gentiles, Sokolowski has argued that the word *kardia* in the passage from St. Paul’s *Letter to the Romans* does not connote the separation of heart and head that we take for granted in a world shaped by Descartes. He concurs with Robert Spaemann’s claim that in the New Testament the heart is taken to be a deeper recipient of truth than even the mind or intellect in Greek philosophy since it deals with the person’s willingness to accept the truth.⁵⁸

One can see that both Sokolowski and Spaemann ground their understanding of the heart in the New Testament. However, such work has been uncommon. As von Hildebrand points out in his *The Sacred Heart: An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*:

The affective sphere, and the heart as its center, have been more or less under a cloud throughout the entire course of the history of philosophy. It has had a role in poetry, in literature, in the private prayers of great souls, and above all in the Old Testament, in the Gospel, and in the Liturgy, but not the area of philosophy proper.⁵⁹

He goes on to claim that not only has the nature of the heart generally been ignored, but that when a question of its nature has arisen, that nature has been misunderstood. Moreover, he states that: “The affective sphere, and with it the

⁵⁷ T. Rowland, *The Role of Natural Law and Natural Right in the Search for a Universal Ethics*, [in:] *Searching for a Universal Ethic: Multidisciplinary, Ecumenical, and Interfaith Responses to the Catholic Natural Law Tradition*, eds. J. Berkman, W.C. Mattison III, Grand Rapids, MI 2014, pp. 164–165.

⁵⁸ T. Rowland, *The Role of Natural Law...*, op. cit., pp. 164–165.

⁵⁹ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 25.

heart, has been excluded from the spiritual realm” also.⁶⁰ According to von Hildebrand, for Plato, the affective sphere did not possess a rank comparable to that of the intellect.⁶¹ For Aristotle, this sphere is consigned to the irrational, animalistic part of the human being.⁶² This attitude has remained as, “a more or less noncontroversial part of our philosophical heritage. The entire affective sphere was for the most part subsumed under the heading of passions, and as long as one dealt with it expressly under this title, its irrational and nonspiritual character was emphasized.”⁶³

However, there is one contemporary theologian who has systematically engaged in the search for a theological anthropology of the heart, the Hungarian Beáta Tóth. It is to her work that we now turn.

Like von Hildebrand, Tóth addresses the philosophical neglect of the heart, but points out that this neglect is, even more so, theological in nature. Thus:

For too long, theology has abandoned the project of exploring the human heart and has left the problematic job of mapping the domain of human emotionality to secular philosophy. Even philosophy has been oblivious of the issue of the emotions for a long time and has only recently regained a lively interest in the subject.⁶⁴

Tóth recognizes the need for a contemporary theological anthropology of the heart. According to her,

the rich notion of the biblical heart—the unifying centre of human knowing and feeling—has gradually waned into the thin concept of the seat of mystical emotionality, pietist religious feeling, or unearthly biblical sentiment. It is as if the biblical heart, which originally comprised reason together with volition and sensibility, forming an indivisible unity, broke up and gave way to independent self-supporting modern reason and the juxtaposed modern and emancipated, purely emotional heart.⁶⁵

Tóth maintains that one of the consequences of the Enlightenment is that current theology, in its struggle to deal with the consequences of rationalism,

⁶⁰ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶¹ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 25.

⁶² D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., pp. 25–26.

⁶³ D. von Hildebrand, *The Sacred Heart...*, op. cit., p. 26.

⁶⁴ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 14.

⁶⁵ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 11.

is much more ignorant of its own tradition regarding human emotionality and is therefore practically unequipped against the dangers of irrational sentimentalism, on the one hand, and an emotionally deficient rationalism, on the other. Such neglect affects the entire shape of the Christian stance towards faith, revelation, and the theology of love.⁶⁶

According to Tóth, in the wake of “the regrettable disappearance of the theme of the biblical heart after the Enlightenment,” we are now in a situation where even theology based on the heart is “incapable of developing a ‘Christian logic of affectivity.’”⁶⁷ Tóth accepts the diagnosis:

That reason and sensibility suffer from an unwholesome disassociation in our world, hence intellect and affectivity are in disharmony. The head and the heart are set in opposition and one usually opts for one at the expense of the other; the two are hardly ever considered as a unified whole and the interaction between them is not conceptualized.⁶⁸

Tóth admits that there are currently “numerous attempts at the exploration of the passional character of reason or the rationality of emotion.”⁶⁹ However, she regards these as inadequate since,

these accounts are typically written from a philosophical perspective and so they do not reckon in a systematic manner with the particularities of the Christian theological tradition; and ... they mostly seek to overcome the dichotomy by leveling out differences between the two sides: either reason is integrated into a concept of emotion, or emotion is made an integral part of reason.⁷⁰

Tóth herself wishes to find “a median zone where affectivity and reason, love and logos coincide and, without losing their distinctive identities, interact in multiple mediations.”⁷¹ Furthermore, she holds that, despite the piecemeal way in which discourse on the emotions “has traditionally been scattered throughout various fields of moral and dogmatic theology,” the solution is not to be found in treating of the emotions in isolation, but by investigating them as an

⁶⁶ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. x.

⁶⁷ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. x.

⁶⁸ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. x.

⁶⁹ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. x.

⁷⁰ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., pp. x–xi.

⁷¹ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. xi.

aspect of theological anthropology, where they can be looked at in the context of “the human condition with reference to God and creation, and reflection on the human person viewed in his relation to God, the Creator.”⁷² Thus Tóth holds that: “[The] theological logic of affectivity coincides with a larger logic that views the human person as being created in the image of God, recreated through Christ’s redemption, and destined to eschatological beatitude in the eternal life of the Triune God.”⁷³

Following Paul Ricoeur, Tóth points out that, in *The Republic*, there is another understanding of the heart that differs from that normally associated with Plato. Thus:

Plato’s description of the soul is dominated by the idea of unstable movement and a system of tensions that culminate in the median power of the *thumos*, which is not so much a mean, but rather a mixture or ‘*melange*’ of reason and desire: it sides both with reason (in the form of indignation and endurance) and it also sides with desire (in the form of irritation and fury) ... What is missing from the static political symbol of the soul is the dynamism of the soul, that is, its unity in movement towards the Ideas and the Good. By contrast, in the dynamic *thumos*, Ricoeur welcomes a versatile force that occupies a middle position between sensible desire (*epithumia*) and reason’s specific desire (*erōs*) and, in this manner, forms a kind of ‘affective node,’ constituting the field of human feeling *par excellence*. Therefore, Ricoeur’s key contention is to transpose Plato’s intuition into the mode of philosophical reflection by working out a modern theory of feeling where *thumos* as the ‘heart’ assumes a pivotal role.⁷⁴

From this starting point, Tóth goes on to develop a theological anthropology of the heart in dialogue with the Ricoeur and Karol Wojtyła/John Paul II. In Ricoeur’s philosophical anthropology, she discerns an understanding of the heart as a “median zone,” a “dynamic site” where affectivity unites the sensible and spiritual polarities of the human person.⁷⁵ In John Paul II’s catechesis on conjugal love, she sees a break from “the intellectual versus body dichotomy [that] makes the biblically understood heart the centre of what is ‘spiritual’ in man, while, however, not setting the heart over against the body,

⁷² B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. xi.

⁷³ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. xii.

⁷⁴ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., pp. 44–45. See P. Ricoeur, *Fallible Man*, transl. C. Kelbley, Chicago, IL 1965, pp. 161–163.

⁷⁵ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 232.

but making it the body's spiritual dimension."⁷⁶ Tóth concludes that: "[W]hat is distinctively human is not so much the abstracted intellect [which we share with the angels] as the symbolic heart, the seat of complex mediation between rationality, emotionality, and will and the site of relationality with regard to fellow humans and God."⁷⁷

Ratzinger's contribution to a theological anthropology of the heart

In developing her theological anthropology of the heart, Tóth draws especially on the work of Ricoeur and Wojtyła. Turning to the work of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, we find that he draws on other sources. Indeed, if we bring the work of Tóth and Ratzinger together, we have a very extensive foundation for the further development of a theological anthropology of the heart. Like Sokolowski and Spaemann, Ratzinger grounds his understanding in the biblical presentation of the heart. However, he does not stop there. He goes on to draw on the understanding of the heart found in the Fathers, especially Origen and Augustine, as well as Pascal, Newman, and Guardini. However, since he wrote no systematic treatise on a theological anthropology of the heart, rather than try to work through these sources systematically, an attempt will be made to follow its development more from a chronological perspective.

To find the beginnings of Ratzinger's anthropology of the heart, one must turn to his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*. There he offers a critique of the document's understanding of the human person. In doing so, he introduces some thoughts on the nature of the human heart. These specifically address the relationship between the heart and "interiority," the human being's relationship to God, human embodiment, conscience, and reason. Ratzinger's initial reference to the human heart is in his commentary on article 14, within the context of overcoming a body-soul dualism through a concept of "*interioritas*."⁷⁸ This concept reminds Ratzinger of Teilhard de Chardin's *intériorité*, that is,

⁷⁶ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 234.

⁷⁷ B. Tóth, *The Heart Has Its Reasons...*, op. cit., p. 237.

⁷⁸ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., pp. 127–128. The relevant passage in *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 14 reads: "*Interioritate enim sua universitatem rerum excedit: ad haec profundam interioritatem redit, quando convertitur ad cor, ubi Deus eum expectat, qui corda scrutator* (For in his interiority he exceeds the whole universe of things: he returns to this deep interiority when he is turned within to the heart, where the God who probes the heart awaits him)."

the inner dimension of things which is a fundamental principle of all reality. Ratzinger thinks that the Pastoral Constitution partly draws upon this idea "in order to suggest a sort of intuitive representation of what 'interiority' in man, his mind and spirit, means and is."⁷⁹ Nevertheless, he thinks that Pascal's Fragment 793 is a stronger influence on the concept.⁸⁰ He refers the reader to where Pascal writes: "All bodies, the firmament, the stars, the earth and its kingdoms do not equal the least of spirits; for the latter know all things, whereas bodies know nothing." Finally, he sees Augustine's theology of the interior life behind the mention of *conversio ad cor*, and how God awaits the human being in the depths of his or her being. Here are echoes of Augustine's spiritual experience of God being closer to us than then we are to ourselves, "that man finds himself and God by accomplishing a pilgrimage to himself, into his own inner depths, away from self-estrangement among things."⁸¹ Thus Ratzinger sees this text,

[as being] influenced by two fundamental concepts of Augustinian thought, by which [he] aimed at a synthesis of biblical anthropology, more historical in tendency, with the metaphysical conception of antiquity. The first is the distinction between the "homo interior" and "exterior." As compared with the corpus-anima schema, this introduces a greater element of personal responsibility and decision regarding the direction of life. It therefore analyses man more on historical and dynamic than on metaphysical lines. The second is the concept of the "philosophia cordis," the biblical concept of the heart which for Augustine expresses the unity of the interior life and corporeality. This again becomes a key concept with Pascal and here enters the conciliar text, bringing with it by implication a good deal of what Karl Rahner and Gabriel Marcel have had to say on other grounds and from other angles.⁸²

Ratzinger regards these concepts of heart and interiority as "the real theology of the body presented by this section," in contrast to a theology of the body which consists "of a purely regional theology concerning the body in contradistinction to the soul."⁸³ Rather, a genuine theology of the body must regard it in its full humanity, as the corporeal embodiment of mind and spirit, the

⁷⁹ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 128.

⁸⁰ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 128. Ratzinger refers the reader to B. Pascal, *Pensées*, in the edition of Léon Brunschvicg, op. cit., p. 697.

⁸¹ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 128.

⁸² J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., pp. 128–129.

⁸³ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 129.

way in which the human spirit has concrete existence. He concludes: "It must therefore be a theology of the unity of man as spirit in body and body in spirit, so that a genuine theology of the body will be achieved in proportion as the 'cor' is spoken of as spirit 'to the extent that it has come close to the blood' and therefore no longer merely spirit but embodied and therefore human."⁸⁴

The interior quotation given by Ratzinger in this passage is taken from a book on Pascal by Romano Guardini, *Christliches Bewußtsein*. This has been translated into English as *Pascal for our Time*. Although this is the only quotation that Ratzinger, in his commentary, takes from Guardini, we shall see that there are many similarities between the two when it comes to the nature of the heart. This raises the question of how much of Ratzinger's understanding of the significance of the heart in the thought of Augustine and Pascal has come via his reading of Guardini. Regarding Augustine in particular, was Guardini or his own doctoral thesis on Augustine more significant?

Ratzinger's comments upon the relationship between the heart and conscience are brief. He sees the Constitution's teaching on the nature of human conscience in article 16 as taking "its place in a line of thought deriving from Newman" in that it avoids "any purely sociological or psychological interpretation of conscience," instead affirming "its transcendent character."⁸⁵ This character is described as a law written in the human heart by God. This makes the conscience a holy place, where one is alone with God and hears the voice of God. It is the innermost core of the human person.

Finally, Ratzinger looks at the relationship between human reason and the heart within the context of his comments on the attitude of the Church towards atheism in article 21. In discussing the difficulties presented by the article concerning its presentation of the roles of experience and reason in coming to a natural knowledge of God, Ratzinger points out that there were two requests to modify the text, one which wanted a reaffirmation of the definition of Vatican I regarding natural knowledge of God in order to emphasize the importance of reason over experience, and the other that, despite the revelation of Christ, God remains inaccessible, that in our present state people cannot intellectually see God in his essence.⁸⁶ In response to the second request, the commission responsible for adjudicating such requests gave the remarkable answer that the *theologia negativa* was a *disputata quaestio!*⁸⁷ Ratzinger remarks that in passing

⁸⁴ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 129. See R. Guardini, *Christliches Bewußtsein: Versuche über Pascal*, Leipzig 1935, p. 187.

⁸⁵ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 134.

⁸⁶ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 154.

⁸⁷ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 154.

over the essentials of the *theologia negativa*, the Council “took no account of Augustine’s epistemology, which is much deeper than that of Aquinas.”⁸⁸ He goes on to state that:

[Augustine] is well aware that the organ by which God can be seen cannot be a non-historical “*ratio naturalis*” [natural reason] which just does not exist, but only *ratio pura*, i.e. *purificata* [purified reason] or, as Augustine expresses it echoing the Gospel, the *cor purum* (“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God”). Augustine also knows that the necessary purification of sight takes place through faith (Acts 15:9) and through love, at all events not as a result of reflection alone and not at all by man’s own power.⁸⁹

It is important to note that Ratzinger does not question the existence of “natural reason,” but only that of “non-historical” natural reason. He wishes “to limit the neo-scholastic rationalism contained in the formula of 1870 [by placing] its over-static idea of ‘ratio naturalis’ in a more historical perspective.”⁹⁰ In this way, he seeks to balance the claims of both reason and experience.

When Ratzinger looks at the meaning of “heart” in the Fathers, he gives a different though not necessarily contradictory perspective to that of Špidlík. Ratzinger maintains that much patristic writing reveals a failure to synthesize fully this biblical image of the heart with the Platonic world of ideas. However, according to him, the Fathers were often aware of these two contradictory anthropologies, the Platonic anthropology having its center in the intellect, and the Christian in the heart.⁹¹ For example, according to Ratzinger, a reading of the *Confessions* reveals that “the stream of biblical theology and anthropology has entered into his [Augustine’s] thought and combined with an entirely different, Platonic conception of man, a conception unacquainted with the notion of ‘heart’.”⁹² Moreover, Ratzinger sees not just this opposition between Platonic and Christian views, but also an opposition between Platonic and Stoic

⁸⁸ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man’s Calling...*, op. cit., p. 155.

⁸⁹ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man’s Calling...*, op. cit., p. 155. See also T. Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford 2009, p. 4.

⁹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man’s Calling...*, op. cit., p. 153.

⁹¹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 65. Ratzinger refers the reader to A. Maxsein, *Philosophia cordis: Das Wesen der Personalität bei Augustinus*, Salzburg 1966, where Maxsein calls Augustine’s anthropology a *philosophia cordis*.

⁹² J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 65.

anthropologies, an opposition that actually presented the Fathers with “the opportunity of drawing on the Bible to create a new anthropological synthesis.”⁹³

Ratzinger maintains that this Patristic synthesis draws upon Stoic anthropology. For the Platonists, the intellect is the center of the human being. However, whilst Platonic anthropology distinguishes the individual potencies of the soul—intellect, will, and sensibility—and relates them in a hierarchical order,⁹⁴ Stoic thought is closer to the anthropology of the Bible, focusing, as it does, on the heart rather than the intellect. The Stoics conceived of the human person as a microcosm corresponding to the macrocosm. As this cosmos is fashioned by a formless primal fire which adopts the form of that which it creates, so the human body is fashioned and enlivened by this divine, primal fire, becoming hearing, sight, thought, and imagination. This primal fire in the cosmos is called “logos.” In us, it is called “the logos in us.” For the Stoics, as the sun is the “heart of the cosmos,” the human heart is the body’s sun, the seat of the logos in us.⁹⁵

For Ratzinger, this displays a profound philosophical intuition, which offered the Fathers the opportunity of reaching a new synthesis of Platonic thought and biblical faith. For him, it was Origen who made the most of this opportunity. It was he who took up this insight and gave it a Christian understanding. Basing his thinking on John 1:26: “Among you stands one whom you do not know,” Origen went on to assert that, unbeknownst to us, the Logos is at the center of all human beings, since the Logos is present in the center of every human being, the heart. As Ratzinger states:

It is the Logos which is at the center of us all—without our knowing—for the center of man is the heart, and in the heart this is ... the guiding energy of the whole, which is the Logos. It is [this] Logos which enables us to be logic-al, to correspond to the Logos; he is the image of God after which we were created. Here the word “heart” has expanded beyond reason and denotes “a deeper level of spiritual/intellectual existence, where direct contact takes place with the divine.” It is here, in the heart, that the birth of the divine Logos in man takes place, that man is united with the personal incarnate Word of God.⁹⁶

⁹³ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 66. Ratzinger refers the reader to E. von Ivánka, *Plato christianus*, Einsiedeln 1964, pp. 315–351.

⁹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 66.

⁹⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 66–67.

⁹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 67–68. Here Ratzinger cites E. von Ivánka, *Plato christianus*, op. cit., p. 326.

Although one may be tempted to call Ratzinger’s approach Augustinian or Origenian, it is in fact biblical. He works from the biblical symbol of the heart, a symbol which was adopted independently by the Stoics, and taken up by Origen, Augustine, Pascal, Newman, and Guardini.

In his analysis of the Beatitudes and the Lord’s Prayer in his *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism*, Ratzinger constantly speaks of the human heart. Indeed, it is a theme that permeates the first two volumes of *Jesus of Nazareth*. As he sees it, in the parable of the Prodigal Son, the conversion of the prodigal is a “change of heart.”⁹⁷ In telling the parable, Jesus seeks to woo the hearts of the murmuring Pharisees and scribes through the words of the father to his prodigal.⁹⁸ Jesus also wishes to speak to the hearts of the poor and downtrodden, like Lazarus (cf. Luke 16:19–31). Rather than leave them with embittered hearts (cf. Ps 73:13–22), he wishes them to behold the form of God (cf. Ps 77:14–15), that their hearts may be “sated by the encounter with infinite love.”⁹⁹ We are called to become like the “little ones” in the temple, who are able to praise Jesus with Hosannas because they see with pure and undivided hearts.¹⁰⁰ The alternative to faith in Jesus is a hardening of the heart. Whether it is in response to the parables, or to a miracle of Jesus (cf. John 11:45–53), putting God “to the test” leads to a “non-seeing” and “non-understanding,” a “hardening of heart.”¹⁰¹ We are all in a position of “not knowing” what we do (cf. Luke 23:34, Acts 3:14–17; and 1 Tim 1:13).¹⁰² It is the failure to recognize one’s ignorance that is fatal, because it blinds one to the need for repentance. It is a danger that especially threatens the learned.¹⁰³

In *Jesus of Nazareth* Ratzinger explains what he means by “heart.”

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’ (Mt 5:8). The organ for seeing God is the heart. The intellect alone is not enough. In order for man to become capable of perceiving God, the energies of his existence have to work in harmony. His will must be pure and so too must the underlying affective dimension of his soul, which gives intelligence and will their direction. Speaking

⁹⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, transl. A.J. Walker, New York 2007, p. 205.

⁹⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., p. 209.

⁹⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., p. 214.

¹⁰⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, transl. P.J. Whitmore, San Francisco, CA 2011, p. 23.

¹⁰¹ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., pp. 193, 216.

¹⁰² J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week...*, op. cit., pp. 206–208.

¹⁰³ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week...*, op. cit., p. 208.

of the *heart* in this way means precisely that man's perceptive powers play in concert, which also requires the proper interplay of body and soul, since this is essential for the totality of the creature we call 'man'. Man's fundamental affective disposition actually depends on just this unity of body and soul and on man's acceptance of being both body and spirit. This means he places the body under the discipline of the spirit, yet does not isolate intellect or will. Rather, he accepts himself as coming from God, and thereby also acknowledges and lives out the bodiliness of his existence as an enrichment for the spirit. The heart—the wholeness of man—must be pure, interiorly open and free, in order for man to be able to see God.¹⁰⁴

What this passage reveals is that, for Ratzinger, the heart is not to be identified simply with the intellect, or the will, or the passions, or the senses, or the body, or the soul. Nor is it to be identified with the *ego*. Rather, it is the *locus* of the integration of the intellect, will, passions, and senses, of the body and the soul. One could say that, for Ratzinger, the human heart *is* the personal integration, the integration by the person, of these aspects of their humanity.

Ratzinger says that the heart is “the wholeness of man.” In a sense, to call it the locus of anthropological integration is still inadequate. One is almost tempted to say that the human person is “all heart.” However, what this phrase “the wholeness of man” leads us to is that this side of the Beatific Vision none of us are fully human. Rather, we all have wounded hearts since none of us are fully whole. In this world, there have only been two who were and remained fully human, Jesus and Mary. In his *Mary: The Church at the Source*, Ratzinger goes so far as to make a comparison between the human heart and Trinitarian perichoresis. Commenting on Mary's pondering “all these things” in her heart (cf. Luke 2:51), he writes:

Mary sees the events as “words,” as happenings full of meaning because they come from God's meaning-creating will. She translates the events into words and penetrates them, bringing them into her “heart”—into that interior dimension of understanding where sense and spirit, reason and feeling, interior and exterior perception interpenetrate circumincessively.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., pp. 92–93.

¹⁰⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, transl. A.J. Walker, San Francisco, CA 2005, pp. 70–71.

By this reference to “pondering,” Ratzinger includes the memory as a faculty that must be integrated into the heart. The only human faculty that he does not mention in relation to the heart is imagination, although I think that the explicit inclusion of memory suggests the implicit inclusion of imagination.

In common with Augustine, Pascal, Newman and Guardini, Ratzinger thinks of the heart as the place that “knows.” Like Pascal and Guardini, he regards the heart as the center of one’s inner life. However, Ratzinger does not say anything about the heart knowing first principles. Unlike Pascal and Newman, he does not contrast the perception of the heart with Enlightenment reasoning. Not just “reasoning,” but all reason has its limits. The “comprehension” spoken of in Eph 3:14–19 is that of a lover.¹⁰⁶ Ratzinger’s understanding of the heart’s perceptive power is in its ability to know “the other.” By means of the heart God is perceived. The heart is “man’s inner eye.”¹⁰⁷ It is the heart that must inquire after God, must “seek his face.”¹⁰⁸ Following Guardini, Newman, Augustine, and ultimately the Beatitudes, it is the “pure of heart” who see God.

Guardini’s anthropology of the heart seems to be a major source for Ratzinger’s. As has been said, it may be that both Augustine’s and Pascal’s understanding of the heart have been mediated to Ratzinger through Guardini. One might even say that Ratzinger’s understanding is “condensed” Guardini, with the caveat that Ratzinger’s anthropology of the heart has a far greater biblical foundation than Guardini’s.

The symbolic theology of the Father’s heart

Although the Old Testament speaks of God having a heart far less frequently than it speaks of the human heart, such occurrences are spread throughout it. As applied to God, “heart” is used in the same senses as it is used of human beings. Thus, God is grieved to the heart (cf. Gen 6:6). He ponders in his heart (cf. Gen 8:21), and the thoughts of his heart stand for all generations

¹⁰⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 55. As Ratzinger says: “As long ago as the Fathers, in particular in the pseudo-Dionysian tradition, this passage had led theologians to stress that reason had its limits.” And: “For ‘you only see properly with your heart,’ as Saint-Exupéry’s Little Prince says. (And the Little Prince can be taken as a symbol for that childlikeness which we must regain if we are to find our way back out of the clever foolishness of the adult world and into man’s true nature, which is beyond mere reason)” (ibid., p. 55).

¹⁰⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁰⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., p. 94.

(cf. Ps 33:11). He accomplishes the intentions of his heart (cf. Jer 23:20; 30:24). He will give his people shepherds after his own heart (cf. Jer 3:15), and he does not afflict and grieve his people from his heart (cf. Lam 3:33). His eyes and his heart will be in the temple forever (cf. 1 Kgs 9:3; 2 Chr 7:16). His heart recoils against handing his people over to destruction (cf. Hos 11:8).

As a preeminent example of the biblical basis for understanding the “heart of God” Ratzinger proposes Hosea 11. After portraying the immense proportions of God’s love for Israel, his son, Hosea presents God’s lament for the lack of response from this son. After declaring that the result of this refusal to respond to God’s love will be banishment, enslavement, and destruction, there comes a complete change of key, a blatant contradiction: “How can I give you up, O Ephraim! How can I hand you over, O Israel! ... My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my fierce anger ... for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come to destroy (Hos 11:8–9).”¹⁰⁹

In Ratzinger’s view, this passage exemplifies the Old Testament’s teaching about the heart of God. It is the organ of his will and the measuring rod of human behavior. The Flood demonstrates that the pain in God’s heart at human sinfulness causes him to send destruction. But the insight into human weakness on the part of the same heart causes God to refrain from repeating that judgment. Hosea 11 takes these insights to a new level. According to Ratzinger, “God’s Heart turns around—here the Bible uses the same word as in the depiction of God’s judgment on the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (sic) (Gen 19:25); the word expresses a total collapse ... The same word is applied to the havoc wrought by love in God’s Heart in favor of his people.”¹¹⁰ Regarding this point, Ratzinger cites Heinrich Gross as follows: “The upheaval occasioned in God’s Heart by the divine love has the effect of quashing his judicial sentence against Israel; God’s merciful love conquers his untouchable righteousness (which, in spite of everything, remains untouchable).”¹¹¹

Is this and other occurrences to be dismissed simply as anthropomorphisms and no more? Does Ratzinger understand the term “heart,” as applied to God, in a merely metaphorical sense or as something more? When Hosea speaks prophetically of God’s heart recoiling within him, of his compassion growing

¹⁰⁹ Quoted by J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 63.

¹¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 63.

¹¹¹ H. Gross, *Das Hohelied der Liebe Gottes. Zur Theologie von Hosea 11*, [in:] *Mysterium der Gnade (Festschrift J. Auer)*, eds. H. Rossman, J. Ratzinger, Regensburg 1974, p. 89. Quoted in J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 63–64. See also Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 10, where Benedict quotes the same verses from Hosea.

warm and tender, is this to be placed in the same category as the Psalmist asking to be guarded as the apple of God's eye and hidden in the shadow of his wings (cf. Ps 17:8)? The answer lies in *Jesus of Nazareth* where, in the context of his discussion on maternal images of God in Sacred Scripture, Ratzinger states that, "The image language of the body furnishes us ... with a deeper understanding of God's disposition toward man than any conceptual language could."¹¹² At first glance he would seem to be saying that *images* enable us to understand God better than *concepts* do. If one thinks of understanding only in terms of the intellect, even the intellect informed through the senses, this seems to be nonsense. However, Ratzinger holds that it is the *heart* that *sees*. This means that knowing is not simply an intellectual activity, but an activity that involves the whole person. One knows God, not as an object of study, but in a personal encounter. The heart is the organ of seeing. One sees through loving. It is the lover who truly sees, who truly knows, the beloved. It is in yearning for God, loving God, enjoying God, that one knows God. Just as a woman's experience, with its sensation, emotion, and self-giving, of relating to the helpless child within her, is summed up by the word "womb," so our experience of knowing and loving God in our sensual, emotional, intellectual, volitional, imaginative, and mnemonic life is summed up by the word "heart."

This is the burden of Ratzinger's commentary on Eph 3:18–19: "[that you] may have power to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God." Thus, Ratzinger comments:

As long ago as the Fathers, in particular of the pseudo-Dionysian tradition, this passage had led theologians to stress that reason had its limits. This is the origin, in the latter tradition, of the *ignote cognoscere*, knowing in unknowing, which leads to the concept of *docta ignorantia*, thus the mysticism of darkness comes about where love alone is able to see. Many texts could be quoted here, for instance, Gregory the Great's "*Amor ipse notitia est*"; Hugh of St. Victor's "*Intrat dilectio et appropinquat, ubi scientia foris est*"; or Richard of St. Victor's beautiful formulation: "*Amor oculus est et amare videre est*" ("love is the eye, and to love is to see").¹¹³

¹¹² J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., p. 139.

¹¹³ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 55.

In his use of images such as heart with reference to God, Anthony C. Scigliano Jr. claims that Ratzinger is one with the *ressourcement* theologians of the twentieth century in their adoption of the symbolic theology of the Fathers. Scigliano introduces the *ressourcement* retrieval of this way of theologizing.¹¹⁴ He claims that theologians such as Henri de Lubac, Yves Congar, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Marie-Dominique Chenu did the following:

[They] systematically [elevate] symbol (*Vorstellung*) over concept (*Begriff*). This does not mean that they turn to an irrationalist form of theology, but rather that human reason needs to be regulated by the symbolic world of Scripture and Christian worship, within which a deeper reason is disclosed that can heal and perfect distorted or inadequate human reason. This divine reason, however, cannot be reduced to human propositions and univocal statements; rather, it presents itself in the paradoxical joinings of spirit and matter, meaning and expression that can disclose a reality that transcends human rationality, yet does not destroy it. Indeed, only insofar as these paradoxical forms guide reason, can reason itself find its true vocation. Put otherwise, symbolic paradox reveals divine mystery.¹¹⁵

Matthew Levering questions this position. In response to Scigliano he states that:

This insistence on the inadequacy of “human propositions and univocal statements” is, on the one hand, nothing new: not only the fathers but also Thomas Aquinas and indeed almost the whole Christian theological tradition would certainly agree. The question, on the other hand, is whether the appropriate response is to elevate “symbol (*Vorstellung*) over concept (*Begriff*).” The fathers’ intense conceptual work militates, in my view, against the favoring of “symbol.” The notion of “symbol” does not serve theology better than does the notion of conceptual judgements of truth, once one recognizes that the letter, too, allows for surplus of meaning.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ A.C. Scigliano Jr., *Pope Benedict XVI’s Jesus of Nazareth: Agape and Logos*, “Pro Ecclesia” 17 (2008), pp. 174–178. For another example of Ratzinger’s use of symbolic theology, see his account of Easter symbolism in J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 112–113.

¹¹⁵ A.C. Scigliano Jr., *Pope Benedict XVI’s Jesus of Nazareth...*, op. cit., p. 175.

¹¹⁶ M. Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation: The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture*, Grand Rapids, MI 2014, p. 207, n. 114.

This is a debate that requires further investigation. Germane to such a debate would be a comment by Yves Congar:

A symbol is the place where and the means by which we can apprehend realities which the concept fragments in its attempt to reproduce them exactly. It is also apt to indicate the transcendence of revealed spiritual realities. One may take a more rational expression as an adequate statement. Images do not allow such an illusion. Thomas Aquinas comes close to supposing that in this respect the coarsest are the most fitting. Perhaps I should say: the more material, but they can also be suggestive and beautiful.¹¹⁷

Here perhaps Gabriel Marcel can help us, when he says that a mystery is not to be confused with a problem.

A problem is something which I meet, which I find complete before me, but which I can therefore lay siege to and reduce. But a mystery is something in which I myself am involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as "a sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and its initial validity." A genuine problem is subject to an appropriate technique by the exercise of which it is defined; whereas a mystery by definition transcends every conceivable technique.¹¹⁸

One could add "and every conceivable thought." In the case of the mystery of God, one encounters this mystery in our personal relationship with him. One cannot know God as an object, only as a Thou in an I–Thou relationship.

¹¹⁷ Y. Congar, *The Word and the Spirit*, transl. D. Smith, London 1986, p. 4. Congar's reference to Aquinas can be found in the *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 1, a. 9, ad 3: "As Dionysius says (Coel. Hier. I), it is more fitting that divine truths should be expounded under the figure of less noble than of nobler bodies, and this for three reasons. First, because thereby men's minds are the better preserved from error. For then it is clear that these things are not literal descriptions of divine truths, which might have been open to doubt had they been expressed under the figure of nobler bodies, especially for those who could think of nothing nobler than bodies. Secondly, because this is more befitting the knowledge of God that we have in this life. For what He is not is clearer to us than what He is. Therefore similitudes drawn from things farthest away from God form within us a truer estimate that God is above whatsoever we may say or think of Him. Thirdly, because thereby divine truths are the better hidden from the unworthy."

¹¹⁸ G. Marcel, *The Mystery of Being: Reflection and Mystery*, transl. G.S. Fraser, South Bend, IN 2001, pp. 211–212.

So, what are these images of God's heart attempting to convey? Since God is spirit and not body, does one relegate the love of God to a level something *less* than human love, something anemic in comparison? As God is "God and not man" (Hos 11:9), is his love to be understood as *more than* or *less than* human? Is spirit something more ephemeral, less substantial, than matter? There is the danger of regarding God as a kind of super angel, bodiless and therefore passionless. It seems axiomatic that since God has no body, he can have no passions. Yet, Ratzinger, after affirming that "suffering presupposes the ability to suffer, it presupposes the faculty of the emotions," goes on to affirm that the Father suffers.¹¹⁹ He states that it was Origen "who grasped most profoundly the idea of the suffering God and made bold to say that it could not be restricted to the suffering humanity of Jesus but also affected the Christian picture of God."¹²⁰ According to Ratzinger, not only does the Father suffer in allowing the Son to suffer, but the Holy Spirit also shares in this suffering, groaning within us, as St. Paul says (cf. Rom 8:26).¹²¹ Furthermore, he sees Origen as giving the normative definition for interpreting the theme of the suffering God: "When you hear someone speak of God's passions, always apply what is said to love."¹²² He sees Origen's position being developed by St. Bernard's dictum: "*impassibilis est Deus, sed non incompassibilis* [God is passionless, but not uncompassionate]."¹²³ Yet, he thinks that St. Bernard's line of thought does not do full justice to the reality of God's suffering given in Scripture and tradition.¹²⁴ In spite of all this, Ratzinger thinks that this position does not lead to a new Patripassianism, such as that apparently proposed by Jürgen Moltmann.¹²⁵

Ratzinger concludes his comments on the God who is *impassibilis—sed non incompassibilis* by referring us to John Paul II's encyclical *Dives in Misericordia* which, according to Ratzinger, takes up this very point. In particular, he draws our attention to "its highly significant note 52."¹²⁶ Since John Paul II does not write with scholastic precision in his letter on the mercy of God, identifying his teaching on the question of a God who cannot suffer, but can be compassionate,

¹¹⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 57–58.

¹²⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 58.

¹²¹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 58.

¹²² J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 58.

¹²³ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 58, n. 10.

¹²⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 58–59, n. 11.

¹²⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 58–59, n. 11. Cf. J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, transl. R.A. Wilson, J. Bowden, London 1974, pp. 267–278. For more on this issue, especially the influence of von Balthasar and Jacques Maritain on Ratzinger's understanding of how God can suffer, see P.J. McGregor, *Heart to Heart...*, op. cit., pp. 314–321.

¹²⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 58–59, n. 11.

is no easy task. There seems to be a certain ambiguity on his part regarding the nature of mercy as a divine attribute and the human experience of that mercy. On the one hand, he outlines a particular relationship between love, justice, and mercy which defines mercy as the *revelation* of love which is greater than justice.¹²⁷ Believing in the love of the Father revealed in the Son means "*believing in mercy*. For mercy is an indispensable dimension of love; it is as it were love's second name."¹²⁸ Herein, John Paul II seems to be saying that one experiences God's love as mercy. Furthermore, he states that:

Some theologians affirm that mercy is the greatest of the attributes and perfections of God, and the Bible, Tradition and the whole faith life of the People of God provide particular proofs of this. It is not a question here of the perfection of the inscrutable essence of God in the mystery of divinity itself, but of the perfection and attribute whereby man, in the intimate truth of his existence, encounters the living God particularly closely and particularly often.¹²⁹

Thus far, for John Paul II, it seems that mercy is not a perfection of God in himself, but the way in which human persons experience that love in their fallen condition. However, when one looks closely at the note that Ratzinger particularly refers to, one seems to find a different perspective. Note 52 is a long analysis of the Old Testament terminology used to define the mercy of God. It especially analyzes the meaning of two terms, *hesed* and *rahamim*. The first of these "indicates a profound attitude of 'goodness.'" It "also means 'grace' or 'love,'" as well as fidelity. It is a "love that gives, love more powerful than betrayal, grace stronger than sin."¹³⁰ The second of these is derived from the root *rehem*, meaning "womb." Hence, it denotes the love of a mother. According to John Paul II: "[This love] is completely gratuitous, not merited, and ... in this aspect it constitutes an inner necessity: an exigency of the heart ... Against this psychological background, *rahamim* generates a whole range of feelings, including goodness and tenderness, patience and understanding, that is, readiness to forgive."¹³¹

¹²⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 4.

¹²⁸ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 7. All italics in this and subsequent quotations from this document are original.

¹²⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 13.

¹³⁰ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 4, n. 52.

¹³¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 4, n. 52.

One should immediately recognize the similarity of this understanding with Ratzinger's understanding of *rahamim* in his mediations on the Father's heart in *Jesus of Nazareth*.¹³²

John Paul II claims that both the terms *hesed* and *rahamim*, as well as some other lesser used terms, present an image of God's "anxious love, which in contact with evil, and in particular with the sin of the individual and of the people, is manifested as mercy."¹³³ He notes that these terms used to denote the mercy of God "clearly show their original anthropomorphic aspect ... [an] obviously anthropomorphic 'psychology' of God."¹³⁴ However, while John Paul II indicates to us that these terms cannot be used univocally of the Creator and creatures, it should be noted that *hesed* is a conceptual term and *rahamim* is derived from a material image. *Hesed* is analogical and *rahamim* is metaphorical. Ratzinger's preference for *rahamim* in describing the mercy of God brings us back to his conviction that "symbolic," "metaphorical" language, at least in some instances, can give us a deeper understanding than conceptual language of God's dispositions towards us.

The heart of Jesus: divine love in a human heart?

In an Australian hymn by James Phillip McAuley and Richard Connolly entitled *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*, the antiphon says: "Jesus, in your heart we find love of the Father and mankind; these two loves to us impart, divine love in a human heart."¹³⁵ The last phrase raises the question: What love *does* one find emanating from the heart of Jesus? If the heart is identical to the person, the ego, then it makes no sense to speak of Jesus as having a human heart, since he is a divine Person. Yet if, as Ratzinger holds, the heart is the place of integration of the intellect, will, passions, memory, imagination, and senses; of the body and the soul; the place of the personal integration of these elements of human nature, then one can speak of Jesus having a human heart. It will be the integrated humanity of a divine Person.

An attempt has been made to demonstrate that Ratzinger presents us with an anthropology of the human heart and a theology of the Father's heart. To what extent does he bring them together in a Christology of the heart of Jesus?

¹³² J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism...*, op. cit., pp. 139, 197, 207.

¹³³ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 4, n. 52.

¹³⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, no. 4, n. 52.

¹³⁵ J.P. McAuley, R. Connolly, *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*, [in:] *The Living Parish Hymn Book*, ed. A. Newman, Sydney 1965, no. 142.

Ratzinger does not directly address the question of the nature of this heart. Rather, he reveals his thoughts on its nature within the context of devotion to it. The first question one needs to answer is whether he intends his anthropology of the heart to be applied to the heart of Jesus, or only to the human hearts of those who are devoted to Jesus. For the human heart of Jesus is unique amongst hearts. No other human heart is that of a divine Person. The second question pertains to the relationship between the heart of the Father and the heart of Jesus.

In a paper on the substance and foundation of devotion to the Sacred Heart, Ratzinger states that he simply seeks to trace the answers of Pius XII's *Haurietis Aquas* to the questions which had been raised regarding the continuing value of the devotion in the wake of Vatican II. He claims that his reflections, in the light of subsequent theological work, seek to clarify and draw out the teaching of the encyclical.¹³⁶ Ratzinger sees in *Haurietis Aquas* an anthropology and theology of bodily existence. According to him, the body is the self-expression of the spirit, its image. It is the visible form of the person, and since the human person is the image of God, the body is the place where the divine becomes visible. This is why the Bible can present the mystery of God in terms of the metaphors of the body. This presentation is a preparation for the Incarnation. In the Incarnation of the Logos, wherein the Word makes the "flesh" its own, one finds the fulfillment of a process which has been taking place since creation: the drawing of all "flesh" to Spirit. For Ratzinger: "[The] Incarnation can only take place because the flesh has always been the Spirit's outward expression and hence a possible dwelling place for the Word; on the other hand it is only the Son's Incarnation that imparts to man and the visible world their ultimate and innermost meaning."¹³⁷

The Incarnation means that God transcends himself and enters the passion of the human being. This self-transcendence brings to light the inner transcendence of the whole of creation, with "body" being the self-transcending movement towards spirit, and through spirit, towards God. In the human passions of Jesus, "the anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament are radicalized and attain their ultimate depth of meaning."¹³⁸ In Jesus, and especially in his pierced heart, the invisible God becomes visible. Unbelieving Thomas, in touching the Lord, "recognizes what is beyond touch and yet actually does touch it; he beholds

¹³⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 51.

¹³⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 52. See also J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, ed. J.R. Foster, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2004, pp. 319–322.

¹³⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 57.

the invisible and yet actually sees it.”¹³⁹ Strikingly, Ratzinger quotes a passage from Bonaventure: “The wound of the body also reveals the spiritual wound ... Let us look through the visible wound to the invisible wound of love!”¹⁴⁰ For Ratzinger, the corporality of Jesus, especially his pierced heart, reveals the love of the Father for us, a love which is an “invisible wound.” This brings us back to the question of God’s impassibility. For Ratzinger: “The passion of Jesus is the drama of the divine Heart [as portrayed in Hosea 11] ... The pierced Heart of the crucified Son is the literal fulfillment of the prophecy of the Heart of God.”¹⁴¹

We have gone some way towards answering our question about the relationship between the heart of Jesus and the Father’s heart. But what of the humanity of the heart of Jesus? Ratzinger answers our question by citing *Haurietis Aquas* to the effect that the love to be found in the incarnate Word is not only a spiritual love like that which is given expression in the Old Testament, but that the love of the heart of Jesus is also a fully human love, since the Word did not assume an imaginary body.¹⁴² Indeed, the spirituality of the heart which we are invited to enter into is the spirituality of the place where “sense and spirit meet, interpenetrate and unite,” and corresponds “to the bodily nature of the divine-human love of Jesus Christ.”¹⁴³ The heart of Jesus must be a fully human heart, for this heart is not just an expression of the human passions, but also the “passion” of being human. The heart is the epitome of the passions, and without it there could have been no Passion on the part of the Son.

If the heart of Jesus is a truly human heart, wherein lies the difference between his heart and ours? Ratzinger puts it this way; the Stoics saw the heart as the guiding power of the human being, that which “held things together.” For Cicero and Seneca, the heart was that which held a being together. The task of this heart is self-preservation, holding together all that belongs to it. But the heart of Jesus has “overturned” this definition (cf. Hos 11:8). It engages in self-surrender rather than self-preservation. This heart saves by opening itself, by giving itself away. Rather than being only the place of integration, it allows itself to “collapse.”¹⁴⁴ For Ratzinger, the resolution of the riddle of the heart of

¹³⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 53. See also Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 17.

¹⁴⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 53. See also Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*, “Acta Apostolicae Sedis” 48 (1956), p. 241.

¹⁴¹ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 64.

¹⁴² J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., pp. 55–56. Citing Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*, op. cit., pp. 322–323.

¹⁴³ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 56.

¹⁴⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 69.

God which “collapses” is to be found in the New Testament in the Passion of Christ. In this Passion: “God himself, in the person of his Son, [suffers] Israel’s rejection.”¹⁴⁵ There, God takes the place of the sinner, and gives us sinners the place of the Son. The words of Hosea 11: “My heart recoils within me, my compassion grows warm and tender,” reveal the drama of God’s heart in the Passion of Jesus. For Ratzinger, “The pierced Heart of the crucified Son is the literal fulfillment of the prophecy of the Heart of God, which overthrows righteousness by mercy and by that very action remains righteous.”¹⁴⁶ One can encounter God “in Christ [who] has shown us his face and opened his heart [to us].”¹⁴⁷ It is in this heart that one encounters the heart of the Father. It is this heart which calls to one’s heart.

But what about our hearts? For Benedict XVI, the heart of every Christian must be transformed by Jesus’ gift of the Holy Spirit. This is to fulfil his promise that rivers of living water would flow out of the hearts of believers.¹⁴⁸ According to him, “The Spirit ... is that interior power which harmonizes their hearts with Christ’s heart and moves them to love their brethren as Christ loved them.”¹⁴⁹ This will enable Christians to fulfil the “program” of the Good Samaritan, which is the program of Jesus; “a heart which sees.”¹⁵⁰

Do we need a synthetic theological anthropology of the heart?

We are suffering from a new dualism, one which has been called a disassociation of head and heart. However, expressing the disassociation simply in these terms could be misleading. In fact, as Tóth has shown us, we are suffering from a disassociation of the intellectual faculty from the sensual-emotional-volitional faculties. One could also call this disassociation a *de-kardia-zation* of reason. Furthermore, in our current separation of head and heart, more and more people are opting for the heart over the head. Our current age has been variously labelled post-modern, post-Enlightenment, and post-Christian. To these could be added post-rational. After the death of God, we are experiencing the

¹⁴⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 64.

¹⁴⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 64.

¹⁴⁷ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi*, no. 4. See also Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 17.

¹⁴⁸ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 19.

¹⁴⁹ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 19.

¹⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 31.

death of human reason. We seem to be in the last stage of the disintegration of the human person. This fragmentation has been occurring for some time. We could trace it back to the sexual revolution's treatment of a woman's body as her enemy, such that many women think it necessary to engage in a kind of chemical warfare, the Pill, against their own fertility. Or we could go back further to the Enlightenment's loss of a sense of anthropological integrity, beginning with René Descartes' separation of the body and the soul, and witnessed to be Friedrich Schleiermacher's position that, "Understanding, will, and emotion are the three provinces of the human mind, and none can be transmuted into any other."¹⁵¹ However, now it would seem that experience's time has come. More and more, it appears that we are entering the Age of Emotion, or the Age of Affectivity, but this is an affectivity disassociated from rationality, an affectivity that dominates both the reason and the will. Whether it concerns "identity politics" and "cancel culture," including the increasingly vexed question of transgenderism, or any of the other great moral issues of our time, the prevailing attitude of many people is: "I am what I feel," "I am what I desire." Thus, if a man says that he feels that he is really a woman, he can treat his body as a mere appendage to his "real" self, which is his "affective" self.

Could developing a synthetic theological anthropology of the heart help us overcome this increasing anthropological disintegration? As someone who has recently begun to teach an introductory course to seminarians on spiritual theology, one text I have been using is Jordan Aumann's classic *Spiritual Theology*.¹⁵² Aumann approaches the subject from a Thomistic perspective. It is great in some ways. It gives the students a very clear idea of the various human faculties and how they are related to each other. Yet, I find also that something is lacking in it. On its own it can give the impression that the human person is like a finely crafted Swiss watch, and that to be holy means to have all the parts working smoothly together. It does not adequately convey the sense of the human person as an integrated whole, nor the "passionate" nature of being human, whereas Ratzinger takes an approach which does emphasize these things, and "analyses man more on historical and dynamic than on metaphysical lines."¹⁵³ I think that this is the sense that our anthropologically fragmented neighbors, and we ourselves, need so desperately to recover. We need to rediscover a true understanding of human affectivity and human wholeness. I think that a synthetic theological anthropology of the heart could have real therapeutic value and

¹⁵¹ J. Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, San Francisco, CA 2009, p. 63.

¹⁵² J. Aumann, *Spiritual Theology*, London 1980.

¹⁵³ J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., p. 128.

great evangelical potential for addressing our current anthropological malaise. This malaise focuses too exclusively on isolated human experience. What better medicine can be found than one which restores the harmony between this experience and all the other aspects of our humanity?

References

- Augustine, *Confessions. Books I–IV*, ed. G. Clark, Cambridge 1995.
- Aumann J., *Spiritual Theology*, London 1980.
- Baumgärtel F., Behm J., *kardia*, [in:] *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 3, ed. G. Kittel, transl. G.W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids, MI 1965, pp. 605–614.
- Becker J., *The Heart in the Language of the Bible*, [in:] *Faith in Christ and the Worship of Christ: New Approaches to Devotion to Christ*, ed. L. Scheffczyk, San Francisco, CA 1986, pp. 23–31.
- Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Deus Caritas Est*, 2006.
- Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Spe Salvi*, 2007.
- Bovenmars J.G., *A Biblical Spirituality of the Heart*, New York 1991.
- Congar Y., *The Word and the Spirit*, transl. D. Smith, London 1986.
- Descartes R., *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking for Truth in the Sciences*, transl. S. Haldane, G.R.T. Ross, [in:] *Great Books of the Western World*, vol. 28: *Bacon, Descartes, Spinoza*, eds. M.J. Adler et al., Chicago, IL 1990, pp. 265–291.
- Elders L., *The Inner Life of Jesus in the Theology and Devotion of Saint Thomas Aquinas*, [in:] *Faith in Christ and the Worship of Christ: New Approaches to Devotion to Christ*, ed. L. Scheffczyk, San Francisco, CA 1986, pp. 65–79.
- Evdokimov M., *To Open One's Heart: A Spiritual Path*, transl. A.P. Gythiel, New York 2015.
- Ferreira M.J., *The Grammar of the Heart: Newman on Faith and Imagination*, [in:] *Discourse and Context: An Interdisciplinary Study of John Henry Newman*, ed. G. Magill, Carbondale, IL 1993, pp. 129–143.
- Gross H., *Das Hohelied der Liebe Gottes. Zur Theologie von Hosea 11*, [in:] *Mysterium der Gnade (Festschrift J. Auer)*, eds. H. Rossmann, J. Ratzinger, Regensburg 1974, pp. 83–91.
- Guardini R., *Christliches Bewußtsein: Versuche über Pascal*, Leipzig 1935.
- Guardini R., *The Conversion of Augustine*, transl. E. Briefs, London 1960.
- Guardini R., *Pascal for Our Time*, transl. B. Thompson, New York 1966.
- Hildebrand D. von, *The Sacred Heart: An Analysis of Human and Divine Affectivity*, Baltimore, MD 1965.
- Hughes B.W., *Une Source Cachée: Blaise Pascal's Influence upon John Henry Newman*, "Newman Studies Journal" 7/1 (2010), pp. 29–44.
- Ivánka E. von, *Plato christianus*, Einsiedeln 1964.
- John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Dives in Misericordia*, 1980.
- Kreeft P., *Christianity for Modern Pagans: Pascal's Pensées Outlined, Edited and Explained*, San Francisco, CA 1993.
- Levering M., *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation: The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture*, Grand Rapids, MI 2014.

- Marcel G., *The Mystery of Being: Reflection and Mystery*, transl. G.S. Fraser, South Bend, IN 2001.
- Maxsein A., *Philosophia cordis. Das Wesen der Personalität bei Augustinus*, Salzburg 1966.
- McAuley J.P., Connolly R., *The Sacred Heart of Jesus*, [in:] *The Living Parish Hymn Book*, ed. A. Newman, Sydney 1965, no. 142.
- McGregor P.J., *Heart to Heart: The Spiritual Christology of Joseph Ratzinger*, Eugene, OR 2016.
- Moltmann J., *The Crucified God*, transl. R.A. Wilson, J. Bowden, London 1974.
- Newman J.H., *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, Westminster, MD 1973.
- Newman J.H., *Newman's University Sermons: Fifteen Sermons Preached before the University of Oxford 1826–43*, London 1970.
- Pascal B., *Pensées*, ed. L. Brunschvicg, Paris 1897.
- Pascal B., *Pensées*, transl. A.J. Krailsheimer, London 1966.
- Peters J.R., *The Logic of the Heart: Augustine, Pascal, and the Rationality of Faith*, Grand Rapids, MI 2009.
- Pius XII, *Haurietis Aquas*, "Acta Apostolicae Sedis" 48 (1956), pp. 309–353.
- Plato, *The Republic*, [in:] *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 4, eds. R.M. Hare, D.A. Russell, transl. B. Jowett, London 1970.
- Plato, *Timaeus*, [in:] *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 3, eds. R.M. Hare, D.A. Russell, transl. B. Jowett, London 1970, pp. 223–298.
- Rahner H., *On the Biblical Basis of the Devotion*, [in:] *Heart of the Saviour*, ed. J. Stierli, transl. P. Andrews, New York 1957, pp. 15–35.
- Rahner K., *Some Theses on the Theology of the Devotion*, [in:] *Heart of the Saviour*, ed. J. Stierli, transl. P. Andrews, New York 1957, pp. 131–155.
- Ratzinger J., *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, transl. G. Harrison, San Francisco, CA 1986.
- Ratzinger J., *The Church and Man's Calling*, [in:] *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 5, ed. H. Vorgrimler, transl. J.W. O'Hara, London 1969, pp. 115–163.
- Ratzinger J., *Faith and the Future*, San Francisco, CA 2009.
- Ratzinger J., *Introduction to Christianity*, ed. J.R. Foster, transl. M.J. Miller, San Francisco, CA 2004.
- Ratzinger J., *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, transl. A.J. Walker, New York 2007.
- Ratzinger J., *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, transl. P.J. Whitmore, San Francisco, CA 2011.
- Ratzinger J., *Mary: The Church at the Source*, transl. A.J. Walker, San Francisco, CA 2005.
- Ratzinger J., *Der Weg der religiösen Erkenntnis nach dem heiligen Augustinus*, [in:] *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, vol. 2., eds. P. Granfield, J.A. Jungmann, Münster 1970, pp. 553–564.
- Ricoeur P., *Fallible Man*, transl. C. Kelbley, Chicago, IL 1965.
- Rist J.M., *Augustine: Ancient Thought Baptized*, Cambridge 1994.
- Rowland T., *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford 2009.
- Rowland T., *The Role of Natural Law and Natural Right in the Search for a Universal Ethics*, [in:] *Searching for a Universal Ethic: Multidisciplinary, Ecumenical, and Interfaith Responses to the Catholic Natural Law Tradition*, eds. J. Berkman, W.C. Mattison III, Grand Rapids, MI 2014, pp. 156–166.

- Sands P.F., *The Justification of Religious Faith in Søren Kierkegaard, John Henry Newman, and William James*, Piscataway, NJ 2004.
- Scigliano Jr. A.C., *Pope Benedict XVI's Jesus of Nazareth: Agape and Logos*, “Pro Ecclesia” 17 (2008), pp. 159–185.
- Shute G.J., *Newman's Logic of the Heart*, “Expository Times” 78 (May 1967), pp. 232–235.
- Špidlík T., *Prayer: The Spirituality of the Christian East*, vol. 2, transl. A.P. Gythiel, Kalamazoo, MI 2005.
- Špidlík T., *The Spirituality of the Christian East: A Systematic Handbook*, transl. A.P. Gythiel, Kalamazoo, MI 1986.
- Théophane the Recluse, *Načertanie christianskago npravoučenjia* [A Reading of Christian Ethical Teaching], Moscow 1895.
- Thomas Aquinas, *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, transl. the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, New York 1948.
- Tóth B., *The Heart Has Its Reasons: Towards a Theological Anthropology of the Heart*, Eugene, OR 2015.
- Wright W.M., *Heart Speaks to Heart: The Salesian Tradition*, Maryknoll, NY 2004.

PETER JOHN MCGREGOR (PHD) – lecturer in dogmatic theology and spiritual theology at the Catholic Institute of Sydney and the University of Notre Dame Australia. He is the author of *Heart to Heart: The Spiritual Christology of Joseph Ratzinger* (Eugene, OR 2016), and a co-editor of *Healing Fractures in Contemporary Theology* (Eugene, OR 2021) and the *Theology at the Beginning of the Third Millennium* series.

William M. Wright IV

Duquesne University, USA
wrightw@duq.edu
ORCID: 0009-0007-4798-8334

Augustine and “the Pure in Heart” in Benedict XVI’s *Jesus of Nazareth*

Augustyn i „czystego serca” w trylogii
Jezus z Nazaretu Benedykta XVI

ABSTRACT: This essay examines Benedict XVI’s treatment in his *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy of the purification of the heart as leading to a manner of seeing and knowing of God, a treatment which follows an Augustinian interpretation of the beatitude: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matt 5:8). Benedict’s account is much indebted to Augustine’s theological epistemology, the main elements of which he outlines in his early writings. After setting forth the main elements of Ratzinger’s analysis of Augustine’s theological epistemology, the essay examines the three places in *Jesus of Nazareth* where Benedict discusses purification of the heart in Augustinian terms and in relation to Matt 5:8: his interpretations of the “pure in heart” beatitude, the Footwashing, and the Father-Son saying in Matt 11:25–27. With Augustine, Benedict speaks of the purification of the heart as God’s action which he works in people by the gifts of faith and love. Benedict emphasizes the place of the believers’ spiritual communion with Jesus in this graced process of purification.

KEYWORDS: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, Augustine, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Matt 5:8, communion, theological epistemology, purification, heart, the pure in heart, spiritual sight

ABSTRAKT: Niniejszy artykuł podejmuje temat oczyszczenia serca w trylogii *Jezus z Nazaretu* Benedykta XVI jako sposobu widzenia i poznawania Boga zgodnie z augu-
styńską interpretacją jednego z ośmiu błogosławieństw: „Błogosławieni czystego serca, albowiem oni Boga oglądać będą” (Mt 5,8). Objasnienia Benedykta XVI w znacznym stopniu oparte są na teologicznej epistemologii Augustyna, której główne elementy nakreślił w swoich wcześniejszych pismach. W artykule przedstawiono główne elementy analizy teologicznej epistemologii Augustyna dokonanej przez Ratzingera, a następnie omówiono trzy miejsca w trylogii *Jezus z Nazaretu*, w których Benedykt analizuje oczyszczenie serca w świetle nauczania św. Augustyna i w odniesieniu do

Mt 5,8: błogosławieństwo dla tych „czystego serca”, obmycie stóp oraz objawienie Ojca i Syna w Mt 11,25–27. Podobnie jak Augustyn, Benedykt mówi o oczyszczeniu serca jako o Bożym działaniu w ludziach poprzez dary wiary i miłości oraz podkreśla miejsce duchowej komunii wierzących z Jezusem w tym szczególnym procesie oczyszczenia.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedykt XVI, Augustyn, *Jezus z Nazaretu*, Mt 5,8, komunია, epistemologia teologiczna, oczyszczenie, serce, czystego serca, wzrok duchowy

Throughout the three volumes of *Jesus of Nazareth*, Benedict XVI often uses the language of purification.¹ He employs this language in different and often overlapping respects. In some cases, Benedict uses this language with respect to the rites and conditions of ritual purity (i.e. the religious state required for one to be near God’s presence) given in the Torah.² In other cases, Benedict identifies purification as an effect of Christ’s death, coordinated with atonement and liberation from the powers of evil.³ Benedict also refers to the correction or refining improvement of concepts as a kind of purifying⁴ as well as those experiences which serve people’s spiritual development.⁵ Related to these uses are Benedict’s words about the purification of persons which enables them to know God in some respect. It is the purification of persons which enables them to know God that is the focus of this essay.

Some of Benedict’s most substantive remarks about such purification occur in passages where he also appeals to the Matthean beatitude, “Blessed are the pure in

¹ Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI uses purification language throughout his other theological writings as well, but the focus for this essay is his *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy. English citations of these works will be taken from J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, transl. A.J. Walker, New York 2007; J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth Part Two: Holy Week—From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, transl. P.J. Whitmore, San Francisco, CA 2011; J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, transl. P.J. Whitmore, New York 2012. References to the German text will be taken from J. Ratzinger/Benedikt XVI, *Jesus von Nazareth*, vol. 1: *Von der Taufe im Jordan bis zur Verklärung*, Freiburg–Basel–Wien 2007; J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Jesus von Nazareth*, vol. 2: *Vom Einzug in Jerusalem bis zur Auferstehung*, Freiburg–Basel–Wien 2011; J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Jesus von Nazareth*, [vol. 3:] *Prolog: Die Kindheitsgeschichten*, Freiburg–Basel–Wien 2012.

² See Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 51, 253; vol. 2, pp. 39, 230, 235, 272; vol. 3, pp. 80–81.

³ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 16, 174, 276, 310; vol. 2, p. 231; vol. 3, p. 82.

⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 137, 144, 163, 178, 278; vol. 2, p. 120; vol. 3, pp. 23, 95.

⁵ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 159, 163, 179, 211, 260–262.

heart, for they will see God” (Matt 5:8).⁶ This is not surprising, given the strong influence exercised by St. Augustine on Benedict’s theological thinking.⁷ Purification of the soul has a central place in Augustine’s theological epistemology, and he often associates this purification with Matt 5:8.⁸ Ratzinger himself treats Augustine’s account of spiritual purification as it relates to theological epistemology in his dissertation, a pertinent section of which was subsequently published as an essay.⁹ Moreover, in his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*, Ratzinger laments the Council’s overlooking of Augustine’s theological epistemology, with its notion of the heart purified by faith, as a road not taken in its engagement with modern atheism.¹⁰

In this essay, I examine Benedict’s discussion in *Jesus of Nazareth* of the purification of persons (or the heart) as it relates to knowing God and in light of his debts to Augustine. I will first sketch Ratzinger’s analysis of purification in Augustine’s theological epistemology, given in his essay *Der Weg der religiösen Erkenntnis nach dem heiligen Augustinus*.¹¹ My concern here is

⁶ Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural citations are my own translation.

⁷ Cf. J. Lam Cong Quy, *Der Einfluss des Augustinus auf die Theologie des Papstes Benedikt XVI*, “Augustiniana” 56 (2006), pp. 411–432.

⁸ See M.R. Barnes, *The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine’s Trinitarian Theology of 400*, “Modern Theology” 19 (2003), pp. 329–355; V.J. Bourke, *Wisdom from St. Augustine*, Houston, TX 1984, pp. 63–77; R.E. Cushman, *Faith and Reason*, [in:] *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. R.W. Battenhouse, New York 1955, pp. 287–314; S. MacDonald, *Augustine*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, eds. W.J. Abraham, F.D. Aquino, Oxford 2017, pp. 354–368; D. Simmons, “We shall be life him, for we shall see him”: *Augustine’s De Trinitate and the Purification of the Mind*, “International Journal of Systematic Theology” 15 (2013), pp. 240–264; R.J. Teske, *Augustine of Hippo on Seeing with the Eyes of the Mind*, [in:] R.J. Teske, *Augustine of Hippo: Philosopher, Exegete, and Theologian: A Second Collection of Essays*, Milwaukee, WI 2009, pp. 77–95; R.J. Teske, *St. Augustine and the Vision of God*, [in:] *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, eds. F. Van Fleteren, J.C. Schnaubelt, J. Reino, New York 1994, pp. 287–308.

⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg der religiösen Erkenntnis nach dem heiligen Augustinus*, [in:] *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, vol. 2, eds. P. Granfield, J.A. Jungmann, Münster Westfalen 1970, pp. 553–564. When referencing texts written before his election to the papacy, I will refer to the author as Joseph Ratzinger, and when referencing texts written after his papal election, I will refer to him as Benedict XVI.

¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Part I: The Church and Man’s Calling: Introductory Article and Chapter 1: The Dignity of the Human Person*, [in:] *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 5: *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, transl. W.J. O’Hara, ed. H. Vorgrimler, New York 1969, p. 155; noted in T. Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford 2008, pp. 4, 175.

¹¹ English translations of this essay by Ratzinger are my own. I thank Bogdan Bucur for his assistance with matters of German translation. All inaccuracies and infelicities in translation remain my own.

to explicate Ratzinger's interpretation of Augustine—and not to evaluate his interpretation, provide my own reading of Augustine, or venture into debates over the complexities of Augustine's account. I will then examine the three passages in *Jesus of Nazareth* where Benedict associates spiritual purification with knowing God and in light of the “pure in heart” beatitude (Matt 5:8): Benedict's treatments of the “pure in heart” beatitude proper, the Footwashing, and the Father-Son saying in Matt 11:25–27.¹² I will argue that Benedict follows Augustine by identifying purification of the heart by faith and by love as a needed preliminary for knowing God, and he grounds this purification in believers' spiritual communion with Christ.

Ratzinger on Augustine and the purification of the heart

According to Ratzinger, a fundamental principle of Augustine's theological epistemology is that “knowledge of God always rests on *metanoia*, on a reversal of the naturally given direction of knowledge.”¹³ The human being, as a corporeal creature, is naturally inclined to perceive and know things through bodily senses. But since God is not a sensible or material thing, one does not perceive and know God through the bodily senses. Rather, to know God, the human being must turn away from the external realm of sense objects and turn towards the inner realm of spirit. Spatially conceived, this inward turn is simultaneously an upward turn to the realm of spirit above and beyond the corporeal. This inward turn also provides for a surer form of knowing because spiritual realities contain “lasting truth [*bleibende Wahrheit*]” unlike corporeal realities which are subject to change and corruption.¹⁴ The human being does not come to know spiritual realities with the eyes of the body but with the eyes of the mind—or, as Augustine otherwise puts it, the heart.¹⁵

Ratzinger calls attention to a passage in Augustine's *Tractates on the Gospel according to John* where Augustine considers why people can fail to perceive God, who is “a reality of the spirit, visible in itself (the essence of truth is,

¹² These appear respectively in Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 92, 343; vol. 2, pp. 58, 64.

¹³ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 554 (“Gotteserkenntnis beruht immer auf »[*metanoia*]«, auf einer Umkehrung der naturhaft vorgegebenen Erkenntnisrichtung”). I here summarize some of Ratzinger's points in *ibid.*, pp. 553–554.

¹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 554.

¹⁵ See F. Van Fleteren, *Acies mentis*, [in:] *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. A.D. Fitzgerald, Grand Rapids, MI 1999, pp. 5–6.

according to Augustine, precisely its visibility).”¹⁶ Augustine argues that the defect in such perception does not lie with God but in the weakness of human spiritual perception, i.e. the eyes of the heart. Augustine writes the following:

just as a blind person, placed in the sun, has the sun present to him, even though he is absent from it, in the same way every fool, every crook, every godless person is blind in heart. Wisdom is present, but while present to a blind person, his eyes are absent from it.¹⁷

While God is present to all creation, the human being may be unable to perceive him on account of what impedes the vision of the heart.

To perceive God, the eyes of the heart must be purified or cleansed of what clouds or obstructs their vision. Elsewhere, Augustine speaks of the human inclination to material things and the associated tendency to think of God as one would think of material things.¹⁸ But in *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 1.19, Augustine emphasizes that sin is what primarily clouds the vision of the heart and hinders it from seeing:

Suppose someone could not see because he had sore and dirty eyes, with dust or rheum or smoke getting in them; the doctor would say to him, “Purge your eye of whatever is hurting it, so as to be able to see the light of your eyes.” Dust, rheum, smoke, these are sins and wickedness; get rid of all of them, and you will see the wisdom that is present with you, because God is this very wisdom; and it has been said, *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.*¹⁹

According to Augustine, the way to see God is not just intellectual but also moral—it involves both intellectual and moral conversion. As Ratzinger writes, for Augustine, “The concept of *purgatio cordis* is also the central description for the path to the knowledge of God, which is a religious and not a metaphysical path.”²⁰

¹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 554 (“eine an sich ja sichtbare Wirklichkeit des Geistes [das Wesen der Wahrheit ist nach Augustinus gerade die Sichtbarkeit]”). Ratzinger here (ibid., pp. 554–555) cites Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 1.19.

¹⁷ Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 1.19 (Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John 1–40*, transl. E. Hill, ed. A.D. Fitzgerald, Hyde Park, NY 2009).

¹⁸ E.g. Augustine, *Trin.* 1.1.1–4; see Simmons, *Augustine’s De Trinitate*, pp. 243–246.

¹⁹ Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 1.19.

²⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 555 (“Der Begriff der *purgatio cordis* ist also die zentrale Beschreibung für den Weg der Gotteserkenntnis, der ein religiöser und nicht ein metaphysischer Weg ist”).

Ratzinger thus summarizes two foundational elements for Augustine's theological epistemology: first, "The 'organ' for the knowledge of God is the *cor* [i.e., the heart]"; second, "In order for the *cor* to be able to see God, it must become free from foreign bodies which impair its capability for vision, it must be 'cleansed'."²¹ Augustine sees both foundational principles in the beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matt 5:8).²²

So how then does Augustine think that the heart is purified so as to become able to see God? Ratzinger tracks development in Augustine's thought on this matter. A helpful place to begin is with the basic account in Neoplatonism of the soul's purification and ascent to the divine. Not only does Augustine reconfigure elements of this Neoplatonist schema into a Christian register over the course of his career, but in *Jesus of Nazareth*, Benedict also profiles his exposition of the purification of the heart against a Neoplatonist account of the purification of the soul.²³

A basic Neoplatonist account of the soul's purification integrates ontology, epistemology, and contemplative asceticism. As Ratzinger sketches its core elements, being for the Neoplatonist emanates forth from the One—the diffusive, divine source—and as things emanate away from the One, they tend towards and mix with non-being (e.g. multiplicity and matter).²⁴ This movement away from the One and into matter is a movement away from intelligibility: "since being is at the same time both being true and being knowable, the loss of the density of being means at the same time a loss of knowability and of one's ability to know even as far as the complete darkness of matter."²⁵ The soul seeks re-union with the One, and to achieve this re-union, the soul is "to follow the path of the emanations in reverse, i.e. to return anew in an ascending direction."²⁶ The soul's return to the divine, "consists in purification from the

²¹ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 555 ("Das »Organ« der Gotteserkenntnis ist das *cor* ... Damit das *cor* sehfähig wird für Gott, muß es frei werden von Fremdkörpern, die seine Sehkraft beeinträchtigen, es muß »gereinigt« werden").

²² J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 555.

²³ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., pp. 555–556; Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 340; vol. 2, pp. 55, 60. A fuller overview of Plotinus' system is given in A.H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge 1967, pp. 236–263.

²⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 555.

²⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 555 ("Da nun aber Sein zugleich Wahrsein und Erkennbarsein ist, bedeutet der Verlust an Seinsdichte gleichzeitig einen Verlust an Erkennbarkeit und an eigenem Erkennenkönnen bis hin zur völligen Finsternis der Materie").

²⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 556 ("seine Aufgabe ist vielmehr, den Weg der Emanationen im umgekehrter, d. h. in aufsteigender Richtung neu zurückzulegen").

material sphere, in a gradual ascent, and in purifications that strip away again what is base and ultimately lead back to the unity of the divine.”²⁷ On this account, the purification of the soul unto its union with the One is a process of “spiritualization [*Vergeistigung*]” or “dematerialization [*Entmaterialisierung*]” through philosophical contemplation and virtuous practice.²⁸

According to Ratzinger, early Augustine regards spiritual purification along these basic Neoplatonist and ascetic lines.²⁹ But Augustine’s thinking about spiritual purification changes in several respects after he commences his priestly (and later episcopal) ministry. In his more mature writings, Augustine not only gives a more developed account of what (and who) purifies the heart, but also that of which the heart needs to be purified.

Ratzinger observes that Augustine comes to discern much significance in Acts 15:9.³⁰ In this episode, Peter recounts to the Jerusalem Council what God has done through his ministry to bring Gentiles to faith in Jesus. Peter states, God “did not distinguish between us and them, having purified their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:9). For Augustine, this Scriptural text identifies God as the one who purifies the heart and specifies that he does so by faith. Thus, for Augustine “*Purgatio* no longer consists just in the pure return to spirit, but rather in the *humilitas fidei*, in the humility of the obedience of faith.”³¹

The identification of faith as that which purifies the heart entails other shifts. For one, there is a recalibration in what constitutes the human predicament.³² The human predicament is not that the human being, “standing on a lower level of emanation, is afflicted by matter” (as in Neoplatonism) but rather, “that the image of God in him is buried, buried directly by *superbia*.”³³ It is pride (*superbia*) and the illusion of human “self-sufficiency [*Selbstgenügsamkeit*]” which blind the eyes of the heart to God.³⁴ Accordingly, the cleansing remedy

²⁷ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...* op. cit., vol. 2, p. 55.

²⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 556; cf. A.H. Armstrong, *Cambridge History...*, op. cit., pp. 259–260.

²⁹ Among the works of Augustine that Ratzinger (*Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 556) adduces in this regard are *Ord.* 2.19.50; *Quant. an.* 33; 35.

³⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., pp. 557–558.

³¹ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 557 (“*Purgatio* besteht nun nicht mehr einfach in der reinen Rückkehr zum Geist, sondern in der *humilitas fidei*, in der Demutstat des Glaubensgehorsams”).

³² J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 557.

³³ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 557 (“daß er, auf einer niederen Emanationsstufe stehend, mit Materie behaftet ist, sondern daß das Ebenbild Gottes in ihm zugeschüttet ist, zugeschüttet gerade auch durch die *superbia*”).

³⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 557.

for such obscuring, sinful pride is the humility and obedience of faith by which one yields to Word of God, presented in the Church. Thus, Ratzinger writes, "In place of the ontological dualism of matter and spirit there is set the ethical-historical dualism of *superbia* and *humilitas*."³⁵

Moreover, Augustine emphasizes that the purification of the heart is fundamentally the work of God's grace and not the result of human philosophical and ascetical striving. Whereas in Neoplatonism, human beings attempt to ascend to the divine by their own de-materializing efforts, in Christianity, the divine descends, humbles himself by taking on the materiality of flesh in the Incarnation, and purifies the human being.³⁶ Christ the Word comes to indwell believers spiritually by faith and purifies their hearts. On this account, the inward turn is also a turn in faith to the indwelling Christ. Ratzinger thus cites Augustine's remarks in *Ep.* 147: "lift up the spirit of your mind, 'which is renewed unto knowledge, according to the image of him that created him' [Col 3:10], where Christ dwells in you by faith."³⁷

Along with faith, Augustine also identifies love, i.e. charity (*caritas*), as cleansing the heart. Ratzinger calls attention to the interpretive combination of John 14:9 and Eph. 3:18–19 in Augustine's *Ep.* 147:33. Here, Augustine continues his commentary on Ambrose's remarks about seeing God in his *Commentary on Luke* 1.24–27. Referencing Ambrose, Augustine writes the following:

'So long a time have I been with you and you have not known me?' [John 14:9] Then, explaining by what sort of men God is seen as He is in that contemplation, [Ambrose] says: 'He who knew "what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and the charity of Christ which surpasseth all knowledge," [Eph 3:18–19] saw both Christ and the Father'.³⁸

Augustine goes on to interpret Paul's reference in Eph 3:18–19 to the breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's love with various aspects of the salvation available in him: "by the 'breadth,' all the good works of charity; by the 'length,' perseverance to the end; by the 'height,' hope of heavenly rewards; by the 'depth,'

³⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 557 ("An die Stelle des ontologischen Dualismus von Materie und Geist ist damit der ethisch-geschichtliche Dualismus von *superbia* und *humilitas* gesetzt").

³⁶ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 558.

³⁷ Augustine, *Ep.* 147:2; cited from Saint Augustine, *Letters*, vol. 3: (131–164), transl. Sister W. Parsons, Series: Fathers of the Church 20, New York 1953; referenced in J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 558.

³⁸ Augustine, *Ep.* 147:33; referenced in J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., pp. 558–559.

the unsearchable judgments of God.”³⁹ Augustine then applies these four aspects to the four directional points of Jesus’ cross, seeing them all exemplified in it.

According to Ratzinger, this association between Christ’s love and seeing God points to the purifying action of Christian charity:

That purification, which makes man capable of seeing God and is thus an exercising in the knowledge of God, consists essentially in the realization of the *Caritas Christi*, in which man in a special way participates in the Spirit of God, who therefore enables him in a special way for the knowledge of God.⁴⁰

For Augustine, faith and love are deeply interconnected and work together. Ratzinger writes that for Augustine, “one does not come to this *caritas* until one has reached the dimension of the *homo interior* through the path of conversion, until one has gone through a certain dematerialization.”⁴¹ That is, one must first turn spiritually inward to Christ in the humble obedience of faith in order to turn outwards to others in the humility of loving practice. For Augustine, love involves the “turning to the world out of the power of inwardness.”⁴² Ratzinger thus characterizes the interplay of faith and love as a kind of “mysticism of service, which wants to find God not only in the purely inner ascent, but also always in loving descent, which knows itself precisely in the descent in following Christ and thus on the path to God.”⁴³

On a final note, Ratzinger discerns a relationship between seeing God and presence. In the previously quoted passage from *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 1.19, Augustine speaks of the fallen human being as blinded to God’s Wisdom (i.e. Christ) who is nevertheless present to the human being: “Wisdom is present, but while present to a blind person, his eyes are absent from it—not because wisdom is

³⁹ Augustine, *Ep.* 147.34.

⁴⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 559 (“Jene Reinigung, die den Menschen sehend macht für Gott und so Einübung in die Erkenntnis Gottes ist, besteht wesentlich auch in der Verwirklichung der *Caritas Christi*, in der der Mensch in besonderem Maße teilgewinnt am Geist Gottes, die ihn daher auch in besonderem Maß zur Erkenntnis Gottes befähigt”).

⁴¹ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 560 (“Zu dieser *Caritas* kommt man nicht, ehe man nicht die Dimension des *homo interior* durch den Weg der Umkehr gewonnen hat, ehe man nicht eine gewisse Entmaterialisierung durchschritten hat”).

⁴² J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 560 (“Weltzuwendung aus der Kraft der Innerlichkeit heraus”).

⁴³ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 560 (“Man könnte von einer Mystik des Dienstes sprechen, die Gott nicht bloß im rein inneren Aufstieg, sondern immer auch im liebenden Abstieg finden will, die sich gerade im Absteigen in Nachfolge Christi und damit auf dem Weg zu Gott weiß ...”).

absent from his eyes, but because they are absent from him.”⁴⁴ There is a relationship here between ‘seeing’ a reality and being present to it.⁴⁵ Ratzinger thus writes, “If one considers that to have presence is the same as to see, it is thus clear that the knowledge of God comes about by this means, that the relation of presence becomes two-sided, that the human being enters into the already given, spiritual presence of God.”⁴⁶ To see God, on this account, is to enter spiritually into the presence of God, who was already present to the human being. God so cleanses the eyes of the heart that the human being can, in some respect, see him and so to enter into his presence.

To summarize: Ratzinger accents several important features regarding purification in Augustine’s theological epistemology. Adapting features from Neoplatonism, Augustine holds that God, as a spiritual reality, is perceived with the spiritual eyes of the heart. Perception of God involves a turning away from the material and a turning inward and upward to the spiritual. The spiritual vision of the heart, however, has been obscured by human pride and sin. The purifying of the eyes of the heart comes about not by philosophical and ascetical effort but by the action of God’s grace in people. The Incarnation reveals the humility of God, who takes flesh and heals the prideful blindness of the heart.⁴⁷ God works to purify the eyes of the heart through the related gifts of faith and charity. The purification of the eyes of the heart also involves the believers’ entering into the presence of the omnipresent God. Augustine sees these dynamics scripturally articulated in the beatitude, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matt 5:8).

With this basic sketch in place, I now turn to the three passages in *Jesus of Nazareth* where Benedict, in an Augustinian manner, associates spiritual purification with perceiving God and does so in light of the “pure in heart” beatitude.

⁴⁴ Augustine, *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 1.19. One also thinks of Augustine’s famous words in *Conf.* 10.27.38 about his life pre-conversion: “You were with me, and I was not with you.” Cited from Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, transl. H. Chadwick, New York 1991.

⁴⁵ Ratzinger (*Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 555) writes, “The truth is present to the spirit, but the spirit [is not present] to the truth” (“Die Wahrheit ist dem Geist gegenwärtig, nicht aber der Geist der Wahrheit”).

⁴⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 555 (“Bedenkt man nun, daß Gegenwärtighaben und Sehen dasselbe ist, so dürfte klar sein, daß Gotteserkenntnis dadurch zustandekommt, daß die Gegenwärtigkeitsrelation doppelseitig wird, daß der Mensch in die vorgegebene geistige Gegenwärtigkeit Gottes eintritt”).

⁴⁷ See J.C. Cavadini, *Pride*, [in:] *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. A.D. Fitzgerald, Grand Rapids, MI 1999, pp. 682–683.

Purification of the heart in *Jesus of Nazareth*

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God”

Benedict treats the “pure in heart” beatitude in his chapter on the Sermon on the Mount in volume 1 of *Jesus of Nazareth*. He begins by stating, “The organ for seeing God is the heart.”⁴⁸ From the outset, Benedict introduces Augustinian themes into his interpretation. Ratzinger uses this same description of the heart as the “organ” with which one sees God in his discussions of Augustine’s epistemology: in the previously examined essay on knowledge of God in Augustine as well as in his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*.⁴⁹ Later in his discussion of the beatitude, Benedict again recalls Augustine by referring “inner eye” which needs to be “purified,” for it can suffer from a “cataract that blurs [the] vision or even blinds it altogether.”⁵⁰

Benedict, however, defines the heart as more than interior perception and intellection. Rather, the heart is “the wholeness of man [*die Ganzheit des Menschen*]” i.e. intellect, will, emotions, and body.⁵¹ “In order for man to become capable of perceiving God,” Benedict states, “the energies of his existence have to work in harmony.”⁵² That is, these elements of human existence need to be rightly and harmoniously ordered to each other. This harmonious ordering of the elements of existence requires that the human being recognize his or her own creatureliness. The human being “accepts himself as coming from God, and thereby also acknowledges and lives out the bodiliness of his existence as an enrichment for the spirit.”⁵³ The heart’s perception, therefore, involves an openness to the transcendent and the proper awareness of material, embodied life as deeply integrated with spiritual realities.

⁴⁸ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 92.

⁴⁹ See J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 555. In his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*, Ratzinger (*Human Person*, op. cit., p. 155) writes, “Augustine’s epistemology ... is well aware that the organ by which God can be seen cannot be a non-historical ‘ratio naturalis’ which just does not exist, but only the *ratio pura*, i.e. *purificata* or, as Augustine expresses it echoing the gospel, the *cor purum* (‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God’).”

⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 93.

⁵¹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 93. German text from *ibid.*, p. 124.

⁵² Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 92.

⁵³ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 93. Benedict’s words about the acceptance of one’s own creatureliness recall his analysis of Gen 3, wherein he identifies the refusal of their creatureliness (i.e. self-exalting, rebellious pride) as ingredient to the sin of Adam and Eve. See J. Ratzinger, “*In the Beginning...*”: *A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, transl. B. Ramsey, Grand Rapids, MI 1995 [1986], pp. 70–71.

To explore the ways by which the heart is cleansed so as to see God, Ratzinger appeals to two related Psalms. First, Ratzinger cites Ps 24, the biblical text which Jesus' beatitude most strongly echoes.⁵⁴ The most pertinent part of the Psalm reads, "Who may ascend the mountain of YHWH? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who is clean of hand and pure of heart, who does not lift up his spirit to what is vain and does not swear falsely" (Ps 24:3-4). Generically, Ps 24 is "an entrance liturgy," which spells out the requirements for those who would be granted access to the presence of YHWH, the victorious king.⁵⁵ Jacques Dupont observes that notion of seeing God, presupposed in the beatitude of Matt 5:8, similarly concerns admission to God's presence: "When one speaks of seeing God, it is not a question attending a spectacle, but of being admitted into the presence of God to serve him."⁵⁶

Benedict recognizes that Ps 24 speaks to the conditions for being granted access to God's presence (i.e. to enter the Jerusalem temple). There are two conditions which he highlights in this text. First, Benedict reads the Psalm as evidencing a person's search for God. The situation envisioned by the Psalm presupposes that people are in fact seeking God and desiring to be in his presence. Accordingly, Benedict writes, "Inquiring after God, seeking his face—that is the first and fundamental condition for the ascent that leads to the encounter with God."⁵⁷ Second, Benedict points to the moral requirements which Ps 24 spells out for those who would be admitted into God's presence. In particular, Benedict cites virtues which relate to community life: "honesty, truthfulness, and justice toward one's fellow men and toward the community—what we might call social ethics."⁵⁸

Benedict elaborates by turning to the related entrance rite in Ps 15. Here too, the Psalm opens with a question about those who would be in God's presence: "YHWH, who may reside in your tent? Who may dwell on your holy mountain?" (Ps 15:1). As in Ps 24, Ps 15 answers by identifying certain moral requirements: "The one who walks without fault and does what is right and speaks truth from his heart" (15:2). Benedict sees these and the other

⁵⁴ On the pure of heart beatitude in Matthew and its Scriptural associations, see W.D. Davies, D.C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, Series: International Critical Commentary, Edinburgh 1988, pp. 455-456; J. Dupont, *Les Béatitudes*, vol. 3, Paris 1973, pp. 558, 567-576.

⁵⁵ R.J. Clifford, *Psalms 1-72*, Series: Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries, Nashville, TN 2002, pp. 133-137; citation from p. 133.

⁵⁶ J. Dupont, *Béatitudes*, vol. 3, op. cit., p. 557 ("Quand on parle de voir Dieu, il ne s'agit pas d'assister à un spectacle, mais d'être admis en présence de Dieu pour le servir"); translation mine.

⁵⁷ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 94.

⁵⁸ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 94.

virtuous practices set forth in Ps 15 as summarizing the two tables of the Ten Commandments. In both texts, admission into God’s presence calls for certain moral dispositions and practices from the suppliant.

Consistent with his principle that later (and Christological) interpretations of Scripture develop something or actualize a potency in the text, Benedict argues that these teachings from the Psalms “acquire new depth” with Jesus.⁵⁹ Though he does not label it as such, Benedict begins by appealing to what is effectively Jesus’ enjoyment of the beatific vision during his earthly life. He writes, “For it belongs to [Jesus’] nature that he sees God, that he stands face-to-face with him, in permanent interior discourse—in a relation of Sonship.”⁶⁰ As the Son, Jesus is the one who perfectly and continually sees the Father. Connecting this observation to Phil 2 (another key Christological text for Augustine), Benedict then states the following: “We will see God when we enter into the ‘mind of Christ’ (Phil 2:5). Purification of heart occurs as a consequence of following Christ, of becoming one with him.”⁶¹ By entering into spiritual communion with Jesus, the Son who always sees the Father, believers come to see and know God in their own way.⁶²

This union with Christ also involves union with his kenotic self-emptying in loving service. For the Son’s kenotic descent in the Incarnation and unto the cross reveals God’s love. It is the love of God, revealed and at work in the Son’s descent, which purifies the heart and so enables the human being to ascend into God’s presence and come to see him. Benedict writes, “The ascent to God occurs precisely in the descent of humble service, in the descent of love, for love is God’s essence, and is thus the power that truly purifies man and enables him to perceive God and to see him.”⁶³

Benedict’s interpretation recalls his analysis of Augustine in several additional respects. With Augustine, Benedict speaks of the purifying power of love. Recall that on his reading of Augustine, loving practice, as it is “the

⁵⁹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 95; cf. *ibid.*, pp. xviii–xix.

⁶⁰ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 93. Earlier, Benedict cites Jesus’ continual face-to-face seeing of God as characteristic of his being the promised Prophet-like-Moses and (as we shall later discuss) the Son; see *ibid.*, pp. 6–8.

⁶¹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 93. Cf. Augustine, *Trin.* 1.3.14; M.R. Barnes, *Visible Christ...*, op. cit., pp. 333–336.

⁶² Cf. P.J. McGregor, *Heart to Heart: The Spiritual Christology of Joseph Ratzinger*, Eugene, OR 2016, ch. 5. Here, Peter J. McGregor connects Ratzinger/Benedict’s interpretation of the heart to his exposition in J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, transl. G. Harrison, San Francisco, CA 1986 [1984].

⁶³ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 95.

realization of *Caritas Christi*,” purifies the heart and enables it to see.⁶⁴ This is case in part because “*caritas* keeps the descent and humiliation of faith ever present, which it always requires anew.”⁶⁵ Loving action in humility flows from one’s interior, faith relationship with Christ. Similarly, in *Jesus of Nazareth*, Benedict points to union with Christ and imitation of his self-emptying love as that which purifies the heart: “The pure heart is the loving heart that enters into communion of service and obedience with Jesus Christ.”⁶⁶

Relatedly, Benedict’s emphasis on spiritual communion with Christ recalls Augustine’s association between seeing and presence as well as the import of the Psalms. As given in Ps 24, to see God is to be admitted into God’s presence. Similarly, as we have discussed, Augustine associates seeing with being present to that which is seen. Benedict integrates both elements into his exposition of the believer’s spiritual union with Christ. According to Benedict, people see God and so enter into God’s presence by entering into spiritual union with Jesus, who, as the Son, continually sees the Father. Following Augustine, Benedict teaches that love purifies the soul because love is ingredient to and flows from one’s inner union with Christ. As one enters into union with the reality of Jesus and his love becomes increasingly active in and through believer, the various aspects of one’s existence (intellect, will, emotions, body) move towards harmonization and the heart becomes clean.⁶⁷ “This,” Benedict concludes, “is how man enters God’s dwelling place and becomes able to see him ... [and so is] ‘blessed.’”⁶⁸

The Footwashing

The second passage in *Jesus of Nazareth* where Benedict speaks of the purification of the heart with reference to Matt 5:8 is the Footwashing in John 13.⁶⁹ Although the epistemological aspect of purification is not prominent here, there are three elements in Benedict’s interpretation that stand out for present purposes.

⁶⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 559 (“der Verwirklichung der Caritas Christi”).

⁶⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 560 (“die caritas den Abstieg und die Verdemütigung des Glaubens ständig gegenwärtig halt, sie fortwährend von neuem verlangt”).

⁶⁶ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 95.

⁶⁷ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 95–96.

⁶⁸ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 96.

⁶⁹ Benedict references Matt 5:8 on Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 58, 64.

First, there are Benedict’s remarks about Jesus’ return to the Father. In narratorial commentary which introduces the Footwashing, John states, Jesus “knew ... that he came from God and is returning to God” (John 13:3). Benedict contrasts Jesus’ coming from and returning to God the Father with the basic *exitus–reditus* scheme of Neoplatonism. Whereas in Neoplatonism, the *exitus* is a fall from the divine One into matter and the *reditus* is the soul’s reunion with the One through a process of dematerialization, Jesus’ coming forth and returning to the Father is markedly different on several fronts. For one, there is a different valuation of material creation. The Son’s going forth from the Father and becoming incarnate “presupposes that creation is not a fall, but a positive act of God’s will.”⁷⁰ The Incarnation (as a kind of descent) is not a fall but “a movement of love” which reveals God’s love.⁷¹ Moreover, Jesus’ return to the Father is not a sloughing off of his humanity. Rather, the Son takes on a human nature so as to gather all humanity into union with himself and return to the Father with them.

In John’s Gospel, the Footwashing is a prophetic gesture which primarily symbolizes Jesus’ death and his self-humbling kenosis in love.⁷² Benedict comments on the self-humbling love of Jesus, displayed in the Footwashing, by making two strongly Augustinian remarks. Benedict writes, “it is the servant-love of Jesus that draws us out of our pride.”⁷³ As we have seen, Augustine holds that sinful pride and all that it begets are the deep pathologies afflicting humanity and occluding the vision of the heart. Such pride involves, among other things, the exaltation of the self and effort “to reorder [the universe]” around oneself and according to one’s wishes.⁷⁴ Augustine teaches that Christ’s humility and love provide the remedy for sinful human pride, and Benedict speaks of Christ’s love “to the end” in a similar way (John 13:1). Benedict describes the state of fallen humanity as involving self-centered isolation, and he states that Jesus’ love enables “stepping outside the limits of one’s closed individuality” (i.e. Jesus’ love overcomes prideful egotism and self-isolation).⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 55.

⁷¹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 56.

⁷² See F. Martin, W.M. Wright IV, *The Gospel of John*, Series: Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, Grand Rapids, MI 2015, pp. 233–235. Benedict (*Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 62), referencing Rudolf Schnackenburg, likewise notes this.

⁷³ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 57.

⁷⁴ J.C. Cavadini, *Pride*, op. cit., p. 680.

⁷⁵ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 54–55 (quote from p. 55).

Another Augustinian-themed remark that Benedict makes about Jesus' "servant-love" is that it "makes us fit for God, makes us 'clean'."⁷⁶ By speaking of Christ's love as purifying, Benedict recalls his earlier treatment of Matt 5:8, where he previously marshaled this Augustinian motif. Benedict later speaks of Christ's love as purifying at the conclusion of his treatment of the Footwashing. But before resuming this topic, Benedict introduces another Augustinian motif into his interpretation of the Footwashing. When interpreting Jesus' declaration to Peter: "You are clean [*katharoi*]" (John 13:10), he speaks to the purifying power of faith. This is the second component of the Footwashing relevant for present purposes.⁷⁷

Benedict first situates Jesus' words in John 13:10 with respect to Israel's purification rites and their re-focusing by Jesus in Mark 7:1–20. Purification rites in Israel were ordered to making one properly disposed to be near God's presence. Benedict then observes that in Mark 7:17–20, Jesus refocuses the topic of purity onto people's interiority, moral dispositions and conduct, i.e. the heart. When asking how the heart becomes pure, Benedict appeals to Acts 15:5–11, the same text which proved important for Augustine in the maturation of his thought on the matter. At the Jerusalem Council, Peter declares that God "purified [the Gentiles'] hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). Like Augustine, Benedict emphasizes that this purification of the heart by faith is something that God does in people: "Faith cleanses the heart. It is the result of God's initiative towards man. It is not simply a choice that men make for themselves."⁷⁸ Faith is a gift and work of God in people: "Faith comes about because men are touched deep within by God's Spirit, who opens and purifies their hearts."⁷⁹

Benedict elaborates on the purifying power of faith by appealing to two other Johannine texts.⁸⁰ First, Benedict cites John 15:3, a section of Jesus' teaching on the Vine and the Branches where he tells his disciples, "You are already pruned [lit. cleansed; Greek: *kathairei*] because of the word which I have spoken to you." Jesus' word is his revelation, and it has the power to purify and transform those who take it in by faith.⁸¹ As Benedict puts it, Jesus' word "penetrates them, transforms their intellect, their will, their 'heart', and opens it up in such a way

⁷⁶ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 57.

⁷⁷ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 57–61.

⁷⁸ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 58–59.

⁷⁹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 59.

⁸⁰ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 59.

⁸¹ See W.M. Wright IV, *Lectio Divina and the Powerful Presence of God's Word: Insights from the Vine and the Branches (John 15:1–8)*, [in:] *Lectio Divina: Assimilating the Holy Word in Seminary Formation*, ed. J. Keating, Omaha, NE 2023, pp. 5–24; W.M. Wright IV,

that it becomes a seeing heart.”⁸² The second text is from Jesus’ prayer in John 17, where he petitions the Father with respect to his disciples: “Sanctify them in the truth; your Word is truth” (John 17:17). Benedict again mentions that the language of sanctification picks up Israel’s cultic practices to make a priest fit to enter God’s presence and there offer worship. In John 17, Jesus associates sanctification with the truth that is the Word of God. So understood, Benedict remarks, the disciples “must be immersed in [the Word of God] in order to be freed from the impurity that separates them from God.”⁸³ As John’s Gospel teaches, the Word of God (i.e. the truth) is Jesus’ himself (cf. John 1:1; 14:6), and thus, it is Jesus, whom believers take in by faith, who purifies the heart and makes people able to enter into God’s presence.

Benedict concludes his treatment of John 13:10 by revisiting the contrast with Neoplatonist ascent.⁸⁴ Whereas in Neoplatonism, purification unto reunion with the divine One is fundamentally a human action and process of dematerializing, in Christianity, by contrast, purification is fundamentally a divine action, the work of “the incarnate God who makes us truly pure and draws creation into unity with God.”⁸⁵ Having taken on a human nature, the Son draws people into union with God by drawing them into communion with himself. Purification is God’s action in people, which he works in them through the gifts of faith and love. Both of these gifts presuppose the spiritual communion with Christ himself, who indwells people by faith and whose love comes to be realized in people through transformed conduct.

Benedict develops these themes in a third component of the Footwashing episode: the love command which is described in John 13:34 as “new.”⁸⁶ After reiterating that purification is God’s work in people, Benedict then considers the place of human action when Jesus commands his disciples “to wash one another’s feet” (13:14). He opens up the relation between God’s gift and human action by employing the patristic (and notably Augustinian) categories of *sacramentum* and *exemplum*. Benedict defines *sacramentum* as “the entire mystery of Christ—his life and death—in which he draws close to us, enters us through his Spirit, and transforms us.”⁸⁷ Put differently, the *sacramentum* is

F. Martin, *Encountering the Living God in Scripture: Theological and Philosophical Principles for Interpretation*, Grand Rapids, MI 2019, pp. 24–35, 61–77, 232–236.

⁸² Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 59.

⁸³ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 59.

⁸⁴ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 60–61.

⁸⁵ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 60.

⁸⁶ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 61–65.

⁸⁷ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 62.

the indwelling reality of the risen Jesus, who “cleanses’ us, renewing us from within, [and] ... unleashes a dynamic of new life.”⁸⁸ So understood, the gift that is the indwelling *sacramentum* effects communion between Christ and the Christian such that “he now acts in us and our action becomes one with his.”⁸⁹ Christ’s love comes to operate within and through the loving conduct of those spiritually united to him. This is why, according to Benedict, the love command is called “new.”⁹⁰ It is not new in the sense of being a higher or more intense moral requirement. Rather, it is new in that it rests upon a “new foundation of being that is given to us,” i.e. the indwelling Christ.⁹¹

Benedict mentions that Augustine developed his thinking on this matter over the course of his *Homilies on the Sermon on the Mount*.⁹² He moved from regarding the sermon as a more rigorous moral teaching to a greater emphasis on God’s mercy and his action to purify the heart as indicated in Matt 5:8. For Augustine, Benedict writes, “only by letting ourselves be repeatedly cleansed, ‘made pure’, by the Lord himself can we learn to act as he did, in union with him.”⁹³ As one yields to Christ’s action to cleanse the heart, the more one’s communion with him grows and produces loving conduct.

This basic structure—the indwelling presence of Christ issuing forth in believers’ loving practice—recalls Ratzinger’s analysis of the relationship of faith and love in Augustine. For Augustine, Ratzinger states, love issues forth from faith by which Christ dwells within the believer; it is the “turning to the world out of the power of inwardness.”⁹⁴ He characterizes love on Augustine’s account as “the extension of the foundational decision of faith, of the decision for descent into daily life.”⁹⁵ Benedict’s analysis of the love command in terms of *sacramentum* and *exemplum* unfolds along these lines. Believers enter into spiritual union with Christ, who indwells them by faith (i.e. *sacramentum*). The indwelling reality of Christ grounds a new basis of life, cleanses the heart, and issues forth in the believer’s transformed life of Christian charity (i.e. *exemplum*).⁹⁶

⁸⁸ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 62.

⁸⁹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 62.

⁹⁰ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 63–64.

⁹¹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 64.

⁹² Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 64–65.

⁹³ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 64.

⁹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 560 (“Weltzuwendung aus der Kraft der Innerlichkeit heraus”).

⁹⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Der Weg...*, op. cit., p. 560 (“Insofern ist die caritas einfach die Verlängerung der Grundentscheidung des Glaubens, der Entscheidung zum Absteigen in den Alltag hinein”).

⁹⁶ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 65.

The Father and the Son

The third place where Benedict references Matt 5:8 with respect to an Augustinian notion of purification is his discussion of the Father-Son saying in Matt 11:25–27 (cf. Luke 10:21–22).

Essential for Benedict’s interpretation of this passage is the closing verse: “no one knows the Father except the Son and the one to whom the Son wishes to reveal [him]” (Matt 11:27). Benedict begins his explication by stating two important principles: first, “Only the Son truly ‘knows’ the Father”; second, with a subtle allusion to the Greek philosophical principle that like is known by like, “Knowing always involves some sort of equality [or sameness; *Gleichheit*].”⁹⁷ Developing this second principle, Benedict writes, “Every process of coming to know something includes in one form or another a process of assimilation, a sort of inner unification of the knower with the known.”⁹⁸ Benedict integrates these two principles and brings them to bear on the identity of Jesus as the Son: “Truly to know God presupposes communion with him, it presupposes oneness of being with him. ... [And this is] what ‘the Son’ is and what the term means: perfect communion in knowledge, which is at the same time communion in being.”⁹⁹ Knowing God follows upon one’s being in communion with God in some manner. As the Son, Jesus’ knowledge of the Father is perfect on account of his complete union in being with the Father. Since Jesus has this perfect communion with the Father in being and knowledge, he can freely share it with others. The implication of this association, according to Benedict, is that “all real knowledge of the Father is a participation in the Son’s filial knowledge of him, a revelation that he grants.”¹⁰⁰

In addition to the union of being and knowing between the Father and the Son, Benedict also treats the union of their wills.¹⁰¹ To support this point, Benedict cites Jesus’ prayer in Gethsemane, where Jesus unites his human will with the divine will.¹⁰² Benedict sees the same dynamic at work in the Will

⁹⁷ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 340; German text from *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 391. For discussion of the principle that ‘like is known by like,’ see Aristotle, *De an.* I.2 (403b–404b); III.3 (427a).

⁹⁸ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 340. He also acknowledges that this union of knower and known will differ according to the particular modality of each’s being.

⁹⁹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 340.

¹⁰⁰ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 341.

¹⁰¹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 341.

¹⁰² Cf. Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 2, pp. 157–161.

Petition of the Lord's Prayer.¹⁰³ When he previously discussed this petition, Benedict wrote of Jesus: "his oneness with the Father's will is the foundation of his life. The unity of his will with the Father's will is the core of his very being."¹⁰⁴ That is, Jesus' perfect obedience to the Father's will marks his identity as the Son.¹⁰⁵ By instructing his disciples to pray the Will Petition, Jesus teaches his disciples to similarly conform their wills to God's will—and so live as sons of the Father. Benedict writes, "together with him, the Son, we may unite our wills with the Father's will, thus becoming sons in our turn, in union of will that becomes union of knowledge."¹⁰⁶ As Jesus invites people to participate in his knowing of the Father, so does he invite them to unite their wills, along with him, to the Father's will. This is how Jesus' disciples live their identity as the Father's adopted sons.

Benedict connects believers' identity as the Father's adopted sons with their designation as "little ones" (Matt 11:25). "The little ones" are believers, whom the Father wills to receive Jesus' revelation. Benedict develops this category by way Paul's remarks in 1 Corinthians about the weak and foolish. In 1 Cor 1:18–29, Paul teaches that God chose the weak and foolish in the world to shame the strong and wise. Later in 1 Cor 3:18, Paul writes, "If anyone among you thinks that he is a wise person in this age, let him become a fool so that he may become wise."

As Benedict interprets these passages together, he asks, "What ... is meant by 'becoming a fool' by being 'a little one', through which we are opened up for the will, and so for the knowledge, of God?"¹⁰⁷ The answer, Benedict suggests, lies in the pure in heart beatitude in Matt 5:8.

The pure of heart beatitude spells out "the path of conversion that opens us up to being drawn into the Son's filial knowledge."¹⁰⁸ Taken in light of his interpretation of Matt 11:25, purity of heart involves incorporation into the Son's own being and thus coming to share in his knowledge of the Father. Moreover, in light of the foregoing comments about becoming "little ones," sons of the Father, purity of heart involves receptivity and obedience to the Father's will. Benedict writes the following: "Purity of heart is what enables us to see. Therein consists

¹⁰³ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, pp. 147–150.

¹⁰⁴ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 149.

¹⁰⁵ See also W.M. Wright IV, *The Lord's Prayer: Matthew 6 and Luke 11 for the Life of the Church*, Series: Touchstone Texts, Grand Rapids, MI 2023, pp. 41–43, 51–56, 157–160.

¹⁰⁶ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 341.

¹⁰⁷ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 342.

¹⁰⁸ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 343.

the ultimate simplicity that opens up our life to Jesus’ will to reveal. We might also say that our will has to become a filial will. When it does, then we can see.”¹⁰⁹

Benedict closes this discussion by stating, “to be a son is to be in relation ... [and] it involves giving up the autonomy that is closed in upon itself.”¹¹⁰ Put differently and in more explicitly Augustinian terms, self-enclosed autonomy is characteristic of pride, and the remedy for such pride is the humility of becoming a little one. For becoming a little one means entering into communion with Jesus the Son in humility, faith, and love. In humility, a person receives the Son’s revelation, his very self, and so comes to participate in his filial knowledge of the Father by faith. Furthermore, this acceptance of the Son’s revelation in faith further involves the uniting of one’s will to that of Jesus and thus of the Father, i.e. love. On Benedict’s reading, faith, love, and spiritual communion with Jesus the Son are all interconnected, and they all work the purification of the heart.

Conclusion

Benedict’s references to purification of the heart in his *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy are much informed by Augustine’s theological epistemology and his interpretation of the “pure of heart” beatitude (Matt 5:8). Following Augustine, Benedict speaks of the heart as the “organ” by which the human being comes to see and know God. The heart, however, must be purified because its vision has been obscured by sin. The purification or cleansing of the heart is worked by God in people through their communion with Jesus in faith and love. By entering into communion with Jesus, one’s heart is cleansed by faith as one comes to share in his knowledge of the Father. Moreover, communion with Jesus founds the purification of the heart worked by his humility and love, which become operative and transformative of one’s conduct as one’s will becomes aligned with God’s will. With Augustine, Benedict understands the purification of the heart to be a graced process of intellectual and moral conversion, grounded in the believer’s communion with Christ, which begins in this life and culminates in heaven where the saints enter fully into the presence of God and see him.

¹⁰⁹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 343.

¹¹⁰ Benedict XVI, *Jesus...*, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 343.

Bibliography

- Aristotelis, *De Anima*, ed. W.D. Ross, Oxford 1956.
- Armstrong A.H. (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Later Greek and Early Medieval Philosophy*, Cambridge 1967.
- Augustine, *Confessions*, transl. H. Chadwick, New York 1991.
- Augustine, *De ordine*, [in:] *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 32, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1841, cols. 977–1020.
- Augustine, *De quantitate animae*, [in:] *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 32, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1841, cols. 1035–1080.
- Augustine, *De Trinitate*, [in:] *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 42, ed. J.-P. Migne, Paris 1886, cols. 819–1098.
- Augustine, *Homilies on the Gospel of John 1–40*, transl. E. Hill, ed. A.D. Fitzgerald, Hyde Park, NY 2009.
- Augustine, *Letters*, vol. 3: (131–164), transl. Sister W. Parsons; Series: Fathers of the Church 20, New York 1953.
- Barnes M.R., *The Visible Christ and the Invisible Trinity: Mt. 5:8 in Augustine's Trinitarian Theology of 400*, "Modern Theology" 19 (2003), pp. 329–355.
- Bourke V.J., *Wisdom from St. Augustine*, Houston, TX 1984.
- Cavadini J.C., *Pride*, [in:] *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. A.D. Fitzgerald, Grand Rapids, MI 1999, pp. 679–684.
- Clifford R.J. *Psalms 1–72*, Series: Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries, Nashville, TN 2002.
- Cushman R.E., *Faith and Reason*, [in:] *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine*, ed. R.W. Battenhouse, New York 1955, pp. 287–314.
- Davies W.D., Allison D.C., *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., Series: International Critical Commentary, Edinburgh 1988–1997.
- Dupont J., *Les Béatitudes*, 3 vols., Paris 1969–1973.
- Lam Cong Quy J., *Der Einfluss des Augustinus auf die Theologie des Papstes Benedikt XVI*, "Augustiniana" 56 (2006), pp. 411–432.
- MacDonald S., *Augustine*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology*, eds. W.J. Abraham, F.D. Aquino, Oxford 2017, pp. 354–368.
- Martin F., Wright IV W.M., *The Gospel of John*, Series: Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture, Grand Rapids, MI 2015.
- McGregor P.J., *Heart to Heart: The Spiritual Christology of Joseph Ratzinger*, Eugene, OR 2016.
- Ratzinger J., *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, transl. G. Harrison, San Francisco, CA 1986 [1984].
- Ratzinger J., "In the Beginning...": *A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall*, transl. B. Ramsey, Grand Rapids, MI 1995 [1986].
- Ratzinger J., *Part I: The Church and Man's Calling: Introductory Article and Chapter 1: The Dignity of the Human Person*, [in:] *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 5: *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*, transl. W.J. O'Hara, ed. H. Vorgrimler, New York 1969, pp. 115–163.
- Ratzinger J., *Der Weg der religiösen Erkenntnis nach dem heiligen Augustinus*, [in:] *Kyriakon: Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, vol. 2, eds. P. Granfield, J.A. Jungmann, Münster Westfalen 1970.
- Ratzinger J./Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, transl. A.J. Walker, New York 2007.

- Ratzinger J./Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, transl. P.J. Whitmore, New York 2012.
- Ratzinger J./Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth Part Two: Holy Week—From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, transl. P.J. Whitmore, San Francisco, CA 2011.
- Ratzinger J./Benedikt XVI, *Jesus von Nazareth*, vol. 1: *Von der Taufe im Jordan bis zur Verklärung*, Freiburg–Basel–Wien 2007.
- Ratzinger J./Benedikt XVI, *Jesus von Nazareth*, vol. 2: *Vom Einzug in Jerusalem bis zur Auferstehung*, Freiburg–Basel–Wien 2011.
- Ratzinger J./Benedikt XVI, *Jesus von Nazareth* [vol. 3]: *Prolog: Die Kindheitsgeschichten*, Freiburg–Basel–Wien 2012.
- Rowland T., *Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford 2008.
- Simmons D., “*We shall be life him, for we shall see him*”: Augustine’s De Trinitate and the Purification of the Mind, “International Journal of Systematic Theology” 15 (2013), pp. 240–264.
- Teske R.J., *Augustine of Hippo on Seeing with the Eyes of the Mind*, [in:] R.J. Teske, *Augustine of Hippo: Philosopher, Exegete, and Theologian: A Second Collection of Essays*, Milwaukee, WI 2009, pp. 77–95.
- Teske R.J., *St. Augustine and the Vision of God*, [in:] *Augustine: Mystic and Mystagogue*, eds. F. Van Fleteren, J.C. Schnaubelt, J. Reino, New York 1994, pp. 287–308.
- Van Fleteren F., *Acies mentis*, [in:] *Augustine through the Ages: An Encyclopedia*, ed. A.D. Fitzgerald, Grand Rapids, MI 1999, pp. 5–6.
- Wright IV W.M., *Lectio Divina and the Powerful Presence of God’s Word: Insights from the Vine and the Branches (John 15:1–8)*, [in:] *Lectio Divina: Assimilating the Holy Word in Seminary Formation*, ed. J. Keating, Omaha, NE 2023, pp. 5–24.
- Wright IV W.M., *The Lord’s Prayer: Matthew 6 and Luke 11 for the Life of the Church*, Series: Touchstone Texts, Grand Rapids, MI 2023.
- Wright IV W.M., Martin F., *Encountering the Living God in Scripture: Theological and Philosophical Principles for Interpretation*, Grand Rapids, MI 2019.

WILLIAM M. WRIGHT IV (PHD) – Professor of Catholic Studies and Theology at Duquesne University (Pittsburgh, USA). He specializes in New Testament studies, premodern Christian exegesis, and the theological interpretation of Scripture in the Catholic tradition. He is the author of numerous books and articles, including *The Lord’s Prayer: Matthew 6 and Luke 11 for the Life of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI 2023) and (with Francis Martin) *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids, MI 2015) and *Encountering the Living God in Scripture: Theological and Philosophical Principles for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids, MI 2019).

Roland Millare

St. John Paul II Foundation, Houston, USA
roland@forlifeandfamily.org
ORCID: 0009-0006-2054-4509

The Renewed Christocentric Synthesis in Joseph Ratzinger's Logos-centric Symphony

Odnowiona synteza chrystocentryzmu w *Logos*-centrycznej
symfonii Josepha Ratzingera

ABSTRACT: This article aims to present Joseph Ratzinger's Christocentric approach to the question of the relation between faith and reason. Modernity introduces the separation between faith and reason, which results in the limitation of reason and the subordination of *logos* to *ethos*. This disunity, however, between faith and reason and the primacy of the *ethos* over *logos* affects the nature and mission of theology. In contrast to the loss of the integrative harmony between faith and reason, Joseph Ratzinger argues for the distinction and unity between faith and reason built upon the primacy of *logos* and a Christocentric approach. The author also intends to prove that although Ratzinger describes his theology as "fragmentary" and "incomplete," he has gifted the Church with a renewed theological symphony that flourishes only in conjunction with the gift of faith working in concert with reason. In Ratzinger's view only faith can enable reason to overcome the self-imposed limitation developed by modern thinkers such as Immanuel Kant. Finally, the article will demonstrate that the crowning achievement of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's theology is the recognition of the primacy of love as embodied by the saints who are witnesses of the transformative power of knowing and loving Jesus, the Incarnate *Logos*.

KEYWORDS: Benedict XVI, Joseph Ratzinger, faith and reason, logos vs ethos, modernity, spiritual Christology, mission of theology, Christocentric approach, primacy of love, Incarnate Logos

АБСТРАКТ: В niniejszym artykule przedstawiona zostanie kwestia relacji między wiarą a rozumem w ujęciu Josepha Ratzingera. Nowoczesność wprowadza rozdział między wiarą a rozumem, co skutkuje ograniczeniem rozumu i podporządkowaniem *logosu* etosowi. Ten brak jedności między wiarą i rozumem oraz prymat etosu nad *logosem* wpływa następnie na naturę i misję teologii. Wbrew temu postulowanemu brakowi integrującej harmonii między wiarą a rozumem, Joseph Ratzinger dowodzi

jedności wiary i rozumu jako całości zbudowanej na prymacie *logosu* i podejściu chrystocentrycznym. Autor artykułu zamierza udowodnić, że chociaż Ratzinger określa swoją teologię jako „fragmentaryczną” i „niekompletną”, to zostawił Kościołowi nowatorską „symfonię” teologiczną opartą na połączeniu daru wiary z rozumem. Wykazane zostanie, w jaki sposób – według Ratzingera – wiara może umożliwić rozumowi przewyżczenie ograniczeń narzuconych przez współczesnych myślicieli, takich jak Immanuel Kant. W ostatniej części artykułu pokazane będzie, że ukoronowaniem teologii Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI jest uznanie prymatu miłości uosabianej przez świętych, którzy świadczą o przemieniającej mocy poznania i miłości do Jezusa, Wcielonego *Logosu*.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Benedykt XVI, Joseph Ratzinger, wiara i rozum, logos vs etos, nowoczesność, chrystologia duchowa, misja teologii, podejście chrystocentryczne, prymat miłości, Logos Wcielony

Joseph Ratzinger was known as the “Mozart of Theology” because of his great gift of harmonizing various disciplines within theology, such as fundamental, dogmatic, liturgical, and moral theology into a beautiful and unified symphony (*symphonia*).¹ Although Ratzinger describes his work as “incomplete” or “fragmentary,”² his gift of synthesis offers theology a path towards renewal as he lays the foundation for a theology that is not isolated within itself, but fully open to the dialogue of the whole history of Tradition:

I have never tried to create a system of my own, an individual theology. What is specific, if you want to call it that, is that I simply want to think in communion with the faith of the Church, and that means above all to think in communion with the great thinkers of faith. The aim is not isolated theology that I draw out of myself but one that opens as widely as possible into the common intellectual pathway of the faith. For this reason exegesis was always very important. I couldn't image a purely philosophical theology. The point of departure is first of all the word. That we believe the word of God, that we try really to get to

¹ This appellation of the “Mozart of Theology” was coined by Joachim Cardinal Meisner. He contends that Ratzinger deserves this title because “His theology is not only true and good, but it is also beautiful” (https://www.erzbistumkoeln.de/export/sites/ebkportal/erzbistum/erzbischof/.content/documentcenter/predigten_jcm/Predigten/jcm_pr_070415_papst-gd-berlin.pdf [access: 14.08.2023]). In Ratzinger's estimation, the term “symphony” (*symphonia*) expresses the Church's “understanding of the synthesis of unity and multiplicity which exists within ecclesial community.” J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology: Approaches to Understanding Its Role in the Light of the Present Controversy*, transl. A. Walker, San Francisco, CA 1995, p. 83.

² See J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, transl. H. Taylor, San Francisco, CA 2004, p. 10; J. Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, transl. B. McNeil, San Francisco, CA 2006, p. 8.

know and understand it, and then, as I said, to think it together with the great masters of the faith.³

One of the keys to Ratzinger's theological symphony is the notion that theology thrives in communion with great thinkers from the patristic, scholastic, modern, and contemporary eras. The theological symphony composed by Joseph Ratzinger is built upon the foundation of a knowledge *and* love of the Incarnate Word that takes its point of departure from the study of Sacred Scripture. While rejecting a purely philosophical or rationalist theology, his integrative theology emphasizes the fundamental harmony between faith and reason in.⁴

Modern theology has been hampered by the arrogance of reason divorced from faith, the subordination of *logos* to *ethos*, the rejection of the role of the Magisterium in guiding the development of theology, and the fragmentation of theology into isolated specialized academic fields. One of the legacies of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI is "a theology that wants to know more out of love for the beloved" that "is stirred by love and guided by love."⁵ By contrast, there is a theology that is characterized by "the arrogance of reason" that seeks only "to dominate everything."⁶

As a humble co-worker in the vineyard of the Lord, Joseph Ratzinger builds upon Romano Guardini's primacy of *logos* over *ethos* (*Der Primat des Logos vor dem Ethos*)⁷ to offer a rich theology that preserves the unity of faith. First,

³ J. Ratzinger, P. Seewald, *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium*, transl. A. Walker, San Francisco, CA 1997, p. 66.

⁴ Ratzinger's theological approach is characterized by a fundamental integration between faith and reason. See S. Wiedenhofer, *Die Theologie Joseph Ratzingers/Benedikts XVI.: Ein Blick auf das Ganze*, Series: Ratzinger-Studien 10, Regensburg 2016, pp. 381–422. For an excellent summary of the integrative approach of Ratzinger's synthetic theology, see P. Blanco Sarto, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: Nuclear Ideas*, "Theology Today" 68/2 (2011), pp. 153–173.

⁵ Benedict XVI, *Vigil on the Occasion of the International Meeting of Priests*, June 10, 2010, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2010/june/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100610_concl-anno-sac.html [access: 14.08.2023].

⁶ Benedict XVI, *Vigil on the Occasion of the International Meeting of Priests*, op. cit.

⁷ On the influence of Guardini's theme of the primacy of the *logos* over *ethos* in the theology of Joseph Ratzinger, see S.O. Horn, *Zum existentiellen und sakramentalen Grund der Theologie bei Ratzinger—Papst Benedikt XVI, "Didaskalia"* 38/2 (2008), pp. 301–310; F.-X. Heibl, *Theologische Denker als Mitarbeiter der Wahrheit: Romano Guardini und Papst Benedikt XVI*, [in:] *Symphonie des Glaubens: Junge Münchener Theologen im Dialog mit Joseph Ratzinger / Benedict XVI.*, eds. M.C. Hastetter, C. Ohly, G. Vlachonis, St. Ottilien 2007, pp. 77–101. On the primacy of *logos* over *ethos* in the theology of Joseph Ratzinger, see J. Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger's Theological Ideas: Wise Cautions and Legitimate Hopes*,

we will outline the fragmentation of theology in light of modernity. Second, we will emphasize the importance of Ratzinger's Christocentrism as a foundational theological synthesis. Third, we will highlight the harmony between faith and reason in Ratzinger's theology. Finally, we will conclude our study by demonstrating the unity between theology and sanctity achieved by Ratzinger's theological synthesis that has been predicated upon the centrality of Christ and the primacy of the *Logos*.

The dark eve of modernity

The line of demarcation between the modern and pre-modern world is the distinction that led to the choice between the "freedom of production" and the "freedom of the truth."⁸ Ratzinger turns to the thought of Giambattista Vico (1668–1774) to distinguish between these two types of freedom and their distinct conceptions of the truth. On the one hand, there is a truth that is exclusively produced (*verum quia factum*); on the other hand, there is a truth that is prior to our own making (*verum est ens*).⁹ The modern world introduces a separation between truth and freedom, which is one of the fruits of the subordination of *logos* to *ethos*, which becomes a leitmotiv during the Enlightenment. In his Regensburg Lecture, Benedict XVI outlined the contours of modernity as progressive stages of a dehellenization.¹⁰

The Protestant Reformation and the *sapere aude*, emblematic of the philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), are key milestones/manifestations during the first stage of dehellenization. Martin Luther (1483–1546) affirmed the principle of *sola scriptura*, which rejected metaphysics in favor of a liberated faith in God's word. Elsewhere, Ratzinger contends that Luther's *sola scriptura* "inaugurated a new era of antagonism to philosophy."¹¹ Philosophy becomes synonymous with the righteousness based upon works and is representative of

Mahwah, NJ 2009, p. 31; R. Millare, *A Living Sacrifice: Liturgy and Eschatology in Joseph Ratzinger*, Steubenville, OH 2022, pp. 15–56; P. Blanco Sarto, "Logos". *Joseph Ratzinger y la Historia de una Palabra*, "Límite. Revista de Filosofía y Psicología" 1/14 (2006), pp. 57–86.

⁸ J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., p. 37.

⁹ J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., p. 36.

¹⁰ The citations for the text of this speech will come from the official English translation of the Vatican, which is printed in J.V. Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture*, South Bend, IN 2007, pp. 130–148. I will employ the numbers used by Schall and cite the text as "The Regensburg Lecture."

¹¹ J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., p. 18.

the spirit of the Antichrist in Luther's estimation. Philosophy is antithetical to righteousness that comes from grace and Christ alone, and is reduced by Luther to "the sheer corruption of theology."¹² The absence of the full strength of the *logos* as a result of the development of a theology apart from metaphysics logically leads to the affirmation of the *ethos* or will of the individual in Luther's theology. In Luther's "The Freedom of the Christian Man," he introduces a movement in favor of the individual who has a sacrosanct "freedom of conscience as against ecclesiastic authority."¹³ Thus the *ethos* of the individual trumps the *logos* and *ethos* articulated by the authority of the Church as Luther's view leads to unfettered subjectivity.¹⁴

Kant pushes further the limitation of reason and the exaltation of freedom that we have seen in Luther's thought. According to Benedict XVI, Kant set aside reason for the sake of faith "with a radicalism that the Reformers could never have foreseen."¹⁵ In Kant's view, reason is incapable of metaphysical knowledge. In Kant's work, *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason*, Ratzinger concludes that on "the basis of our ability to perceive and to know things" according to Kant "it is crazy to believe in miracles, mysteries, and channels of grace."¹⁶ The limited reason developed in Kant's epistemology leads to an equivocation of Enlightenment with absolute freedom. The primacy of *ethos* becomes more pronounced with Kant and paves the way for the progress of dehellenization.

The second stage of dehellenization unfolds with the development of nineteenth and twentieth century liberal theology, as espoused by Lutheran theologian Adolf von Harnack (1851–1930). This form of dehellenization ties in with Kant's "self-limitation of reason."¹⁷ Reason is limited by what can be

¹² J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., p. 19.

¹³ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, op. cit., pp. 236–237.

¹⁴ For an insightful survey into Luther's thought as it sets the stage for modernity, see M.A. Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, Chicago, IL 2008, pp. 101–169.

¹⁵ The Regensburg Lecture, no. 35.

¹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, op. cit., p. 131.

¹⁷ The Regensburg Lecture, no. 40. Ratzinger explains the self-limitation imposed by Kantian epistemology: "According to Kant, man cannot perceive the voice of being in itself; he can hear it only indirectly, in the postulates of practical reason, which remain so to say as the last narrow slit through which contact with the really real, with his eternal destiny, can still reach him. For the rest, for what the activity of his reason can substantively grasp, man can go only so far as the categorical allows. He is therefore limited to the positive, to the empirical, to "exact" science, in which by definition something or someone Wholly Other, a new beginning from another plane has no room to occur." (J. Ratzinger, *Biblical Interpretation in Conflict: On the Foundations and the Itinerary of Exegesis Today*, [in:]

empirically measured because matter or nature is limited to what is visible. Benedict explains the fatal consequences of this misguided and limited *logos*: “The subject then decides on the basis of his experiences, what he considers tenable in matters of religion, and the subjective ‘conscience’ becomes the sole arbiter of what is ethical.”¹⁸ The radical autonomy of the individual and an ethic based on utility, power, and pleasure remain the “moral” norm in contemporary secular culture. Consequently, *logos* becomes subordinated to *ethos*; the arbitrary will of the individual reigns supreme.

The third stage of dehellenization, which Benedict believes is the present stage of development, favors the maturation of Christianity by rejecting the Hellenism achieved within the early history of the Church because it is “initial inculturation which ought not to be binding on other cultures.”¹⁹ The rejection of the synthesis between Athens (reason) and Jerusalem (faith) is incomprehensible because Benedict notes “the relationship between faith and the use of human reason are part of the faith itself.”²⁰ Modernity is predicated upon the separation between faith and reason and the subsequent triumph of the autonomous individual will over the influence of other people or institutions. Dehellenization has created the conditions for a so-called progress that promises liberation, but leads to further/continued enslavement and potential abolition of the human person in varying contexts. This form of materialist progress has manifested itself in Marxism, in certain forms of liberation theology,²¹ and political theology. These varying forms of materialism affirm the view that “reason is the product of the unreasonable; truth does not precede man but

Opening Up the Scriptures: Joseph Ratzinger and the Foundations of Biblical Interpretation, eds. J. Granados, C. Granados, L. Sánchez-Navarro, Grand Rapids, MI 2008, p. 18). For more commentary on the effect of Kant on the relationship between faith and reason in general, see J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, op. cit., pp. 130–137; and J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 13–41.

¹⁸ The Regensburg Lecture, no. 48.

¹⁹ The Regensburg Lecture, no. 51.

²⁰ The Regensburg Lecture, no. 53.

²¹ Gerhard L. Cardinal Müller argues that “we can understand liberation theology on the whole to be a socially applied *nouvelle théologie*, as formulated by Henri de Lubac, or, also to be a theology of grace, as developed by Karl Rahner, now applied to history and society.” (G. Gutiérrez, G.L. Müller, *On the Side of the Poor: The Theology of Liberation*, transl. R.A. Krieg, J.B. Nickoloff, Maryknoll, NY 2015, p. 81). Unfortunately, Müller does not expand his explication to distinguish whose liberation theology has been influenced by Henri de Lubac versus Karl Rahner. Also see G. Müller, *Ratzinger and the Liberation Theologians*, “First Things” March (2023), <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2023/03/ratzinger-and-the-liberation-theologians> [access: 14.08.2023].

comes into being as his construct. 'Orthodoxy' can only ever be the product of orthopraxis, even though the plan must hurry ahead of praxis."²²

The Kantian impositions and limitations of reason have led to the development of progress that undermines the nature/essence and freedom of the person. The so-called Enlightenment obscures the potential of reason. Further the subordination of *logos* to *ethos* gives rise to the radical autonomy of the individual while an ethic based on utility, power, and pleasure remains the "moral" norm in contemporary secular culture. The study of sacred theology becomes decoupled from its relationship to philosophy, particularly the study of being. In modern theology, the disharmony between theology and philosophy will lead to the debates concerning the *analogia entis*²³ and the relation between salvation history and metaphysics. Subsequently, this will lead to a conception of eschatology as the antithesis to salvation history.²⁴

Pure rational theology will lead to the separation of theology from faith and reduction of the divinely inspired character of Scripture to the historical and cultural study of the Bible. The authority of the Magisterium is viewed as a hindrance to the freedom of theology, whereas theology can only flourish within and in communion with the Church.²⁵ Healthy plurality in theology is overshadowed by a narrow overspecialization in a particular area of theology or a theology trapped in the monologue of one particular thinker. Finally, the subordination of *logos* to *ethos* gives way to the dominance of a practical or pastoral theology that is more concerned with praxis than with doctrine.²⁶ For Ratzinger, the only way forward for the future of theology is to reaffirm the primacy of *Christ* the *Logos*. The fundamental Christological truth affirmed at Chalcedon and thereafter, expressed simply as "Jesus *is* Christ, God *is* man,"²⁷ is the ultimate synthesis between eschatology and history. The Incarnation and the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ remain the ultimate means by which theology can recover its identity and mission.

²² J. Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology*, transl. M.J. Miller et al., San Francisco, CA 2008, p. 155.

²³ The preeminent figures in the debates concerning the *analogia entis* are Karl Barth (1886–1968) and Erich Przywara (1889–1972). For insightful essays from a variety of contributors, see T.J. White (ed.), *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, Grand Rapids, MI 2011.

²⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, transl. Sister M.F. McCarthy, San Francisco, CA 1987, pp. 171–181.

²⁵ J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 45–50; J. Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism...*, op. cit., pp. 153–155.

²⁶ J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 78–82.

²⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., p. 190; emphasis in the original.

Christ be our Light

An isolated autonomous individual needs the liberation that comes forth from the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word. In his personalist/personalistic theology, Ratzinger often repeats varying forms of the same refrain to emphasize the inherent relationship between the “I” and the “thou”: “The key to the *I* lies with the *thou*; the way to the *thou* leads through the *I*.”²⁸ Jesus Christ is the definitive word spoken by the Father who offers humanity via the Church the truly salvific Tradition. Ratzinger describes this tradition as the “tradition of Jesus, who lives his life from the Father, who receives himself from the Father and continually gives himself back to the Father.”²⁹ In contrast to the subordination of *ethos* to *logos* in modernity, Christ has revealed Himself as the ultimate *Logos* whose essence is “doing and God’s being is the life that overcomes death.”³⁰ Modernity offers a false freedom built upon the foundation of an autonomous individual who exists solely for himself. Christianity, on the other hand, offers an authentic *Logos* built upon a personal communion with God who is a “being for” (The Father), “being from” (Jesus the Son), and a “being-with” (The Holy Spirit).³¹ Jesus Christ enables all of the faithful to enter into this dynamic communion of Trinitarian love whereby the “I” exists in a relationship with the “thou.”

The Incarnation is the definitive/ultimate moment that reveals the meaning of the *Logos* anew. Originally, the Greek term *logos* meant “meaning” (*ratio*), which the Incarnation changes into “word” (*verbum*). Ratzinger comments on this shift in meaning: “He who is here is Word: he is consequently ‘spoken’ and, hence, the pure relation between the speaker and the spoken to. Thus *logos* Christology as ‘word’ theology, is once again the opening up of being to the idea of relationship.”³² The definitive shift of the word as “ratio” to the word as “verbum” moves theology in a personalist/personalistic direction. Elsewhere, Ratzinger maintains that God is simply reason or objective meaning, “but he is speech, relation. Word and Love. He is sighted reason, which sees and hears, which can be upon and has a personal character. The ‘objective’ meaning of the world is a subject, in relation to me.”³³ The personalist/ic emphasis in his Christology leads Ratzinger to emphasize that we can both know and love the *Logos*.

²⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*..., op. cit., p. 80.

²⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*..., op. cit., p. 93.

³⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*..., op. cit., p. 99.

³¹ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, op. cit., p. 248.

³² J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, transl. J.R. Foster, San Francisco, CA 2004, p. 189.

³³ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 189.

Ratzinger's spiritual Christology emphasizes the synthesis between Jesus's human and divine natures as the foundation for the various levels of *symphonia* within theology.³⁴ Ratzinger argues that the ultimate goal of the Third Council of Constantinople (AD 680–681) was “the achievement of a spiritual Christology.”³⁵ In Ratzinger's estimation, the Third Council of Constantinople (AD 680–681) deepened the Church's understanding of the union of Jesus's two natures as it “teaches that the unity of God and man in Christ involves no amputation or reduction in any way of human nature.”³⁶ Further, the Third Council of Constantinople “abolishes all dualism or parallelism of the two natures, such as had always seemed necessary in order to safeguard Jesus' human freedom.”³⁷ The latter theological insight is a critical contribution as it distinguishes between the two wills of Jesus and affirms the freedom by which the two wills unite. In light of this development, Ratzinger argues, “This free unity—a form of unity created by love—is higher and more interior than a merely natural unity. It corresponds to the highest unity there is, namely trinitarian unity.”³⁸ Jesus freely submits his human will to the divine will, which offers definitive insight into the nature of human freedom.

Drawing upon the insight of St. Maximus the Confessor (580–662),³⁹ Ratzinger argues “There are not two ‘I's in him, but only one. The Logos speaks

³⁴ J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 82–90.

³⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to Spiritual Christology*, transl. G. Harrison, San Francisco, CA 1986, p. 9. On the significance of the Christology of the Third Council of Constantinople as an interpretation of the teaching of the Council of Chalcedon, see A.E. Meiers, *Eschatos Adam: Zentrale Aspekte der Christologie bei Joseph Ratzinger/Benedikt XVI*, Regensburg 2019, pp. 170–180.

³⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 38.

³⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 38.

³⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 39. Ratzinger elaborates on Constantinople III's use of the Trinitarian doctrine for the sake of Christology: “The highest unity there is—the unity of God—is not a unity of something inseparable and indistinguishable; rather, it is a unity in the mode of communion—the unity that love creates and love is. In this fashion, the Logos takes the being of the man Jesus into his own being and talks about it with his own ‘I: ‘I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me’ (Jn 6:38). It is in the obedience of the Son, in the unity of both these wills in the one assent to the will of the Father, that the communion between human and divine being is consummated.” (J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 92).

³⁹ On the volitional analogy of Maximus and its relationship to Ratzinger's spiritual Christology, see V.C. Anyama, *Primacy of Christ: The Patristic Patrimony in Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's Analogy in Theology*, Eugene, OR 2021, pp. 117–123. On the significance of the Christology articulated by the Council of Constantinople III and the related theology of St. Maximus the Confessor, see A. Riches, *Ecce Homo: On the Divine Unity of Christ*, Grand Rapids, MI 2016, pp. 128–152; E.T. Oakes, *Infinity Dwindled to Infancy: A Catholic*

in the I-form of the human will and mind of Jesus; it has become his I, has become adopted into his I, because the human will is completely one with the will of the Logos.⁴⁰ This complete subordination of Jesus's human "I" to the divine "Thou" is the model for every human person who desires to embrace what it means to become a Christian. According to the Christian view, man grows in freedom to the extent that he is able to engage in the dynamic of living "for" the other in Christ. Freedom is not achieved by the assertion of my own will in accordance with the whims of my desires; rather, freedom is the fruit of surrendering my own will to the will of Christ. The Incarnation enables the human person to enter into the life and prayer of Jesus Himself. Spiritual Christology extends from the person of Jesus Christ to all of the faithful willing to subordinate themselves to the freedom of the divine life.

The Council of Chalcedon was careful to affirm both the oneness and the distinction between the two natures of Christ. On the one hand, the Council affirms that the oneness of the two natures of Christ must be recognized "without confusion or change, without division or separation."⁴¹ On the other hand, the Council also stresses their distinction "was never abolished by their union but rather the character proper to each of the two natures was preserved as they came together in one Person and one hypostasis." This Christological synthesis is a model for, as we will see below, the harmony between faith and reason.⁴²

and Evangelical Christology, Grand Rapids, MI 2011, pp. 153–168; A. Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, New York 2006, pp. 48–62; Meiers, *Eschatos Adam...*, op. cit., pp. 174–178; and D. Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford 2004, pp. 34–59, 99–174.

⁴⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One...*, op. cit., p. 39.

⁴¹ H. Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum: Compendium of Creeds, Definitions and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, ed. P. Hünermann, San Francisco, CA 2012, p. 556.

⁴² Benedict XVI highlights this parallel between the relationship between philosophy and theology and the Christological formula of Chalcedon: "I would say that Saint Thomas's idea concerning the relationship between philosophy and theology could be expressed using the formula that the Council of Chalcedon adopted for Christology: philosophy and theology must be interrelated 'without confusion and without separation.'" (Benedict XVI, *Lecture by the Holy Father Benedict XVI at the University of Rome La Sapienza*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080117_la-sapienza.html [access: 14.08.2023]). I am indebted to Fr. Aidan Nichols for highlighting this parallel. A. Nichols, *Conversation of Faith and Reason: Modern Catholic Thought from Hermes to Benedict XVI*, Chicago, IL 2011, p. 205.

The essential harmony between faith and reason

Modernity is characterized by an approach to truth that is consistent with Giambattista Vico's description of the truth, which we have outlined above, as *verum quia factum*: "all that we can truly know is what we have made for ourselves."⁴³ The created displaces the identity and role of God, the Creator. Having been created in the image and likeness of God, the human person has the ability to utilize the *logos* freely: "Man can rethink the *logos*, the meaning of being, because his own *logos*, his own reason, is *logos* of the one *logos*, thought of the original thought, of the creative spirit that permeates and governs his being."⁴⁴ The human person has been entrusted with a great freedom and a responsibility. Only the synthesis of faith and reason and the primacy of *logos*/*the Logos* over *ethos* can ensure that the human person does not undermine his own existence vis-à-vis a *logos* characterized by "makeability" or *techne*.⁴⁵

The subordination of *logos* to *ethos* is the foundation of the mathematical and so-called scientific understanding of the human person. Modern anthropology displaces God for the human person: the person "does not need to regard it as impossible to make himself into the God who now stands at the end as *faciendum*, as something makeable, not at the beginning, as *logos*, meaning."⁴⁶ This is the ultimate form of hubris as the creature rejects its proper *logos* to usurp/appropriate the position of a Creator, and will define *logos* according to his subjective preferences. The very foundations of anthropology and ethics

⁴³ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 59.

⁴⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 59.

⁴⁵ The Irish theologian James Corkery comments that this attitude of "makeability" characterizes the "second phase of modernity (the phase of so-called 'technical rationality') that inflated human capability and suggested that the hoped-for future was ours to shape." (J. Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger's Theological Ideas...*, op. cit., p. 53). On this notion of "makeability," Corkery maintains that Ratzinger has been influenced by Hans Freyer. See H. Freyer, *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, Stuttgart 1955, pp. 15–31. For an overview of this theme of "makeability" (*Machbarkeit*) throughout the writings of Ratzinger, see R. Weimann, *Dogma und Fortschritt bei Joseph Ratzinger*, Paderborn 2012, pp. 65–78.

⁴⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 66. The dominance of *techne* is a fundamental root of the prevalence of power that consumes humanity as Ratzinger comments elsewhere: "Man is now capable of making human beings, of producing them in test tubes (so to speak). Man becomes a product, and this entails a total alteration of man's relationship to his own self. He is no longer a gift of nature or of the Creator God; he is his own product." (J. Ratzinger, *That Which Holds the World Together: The Pre-political Moral Foundations of a Free State*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, J. Habermas, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, ed. F. Schuller, transl. B. McNeil, San Francisco, CA 2006, p. 65).

are so undermined that they cannot be fully restored without establishing the necessary harmony between faith and reason. The self-limitation imposed by Kant and other modern thinkers must be reversed. The only way to expand the scope of reason is through the harmony between faith and reason.

The common good of society is at stake when the relationship between faith and reason is broken. In his dialogue with Jürgen Habermas (b. 1929), Ratzinger argues for the reciprocal relation between reason and faith, “which are called to purify and heal each other.”⁴⁷ As we have pointed out above, in his Regensburg lecture Benedict XVI underscores the unity between faith and reason, the possible consequences for the separation between faith and reason, and the primacy of the *Logos*. As in his inaugural lecture as a professor of theology at the University of Bonn, Benedict highlights the unity between the reason of the Greeks (the God of philosophers) and the faith of the Jews (the God of faith) in the development of Christianity.⁴⁸ In Regensburg, that accentuates the use of *logos* in the Johannine tradition that typifies the “profound harmony between what is Greek in the best sense of the word and the Biblical understanding of faith in God.”⁴⁹ According to St. John, the *logos* has existed from the beginning, and this *Logos* is God.⁵⁰

On January 17, 2008, Benedict XVI was scheduled to give another lecture at La Sapienza University in Rome on the relationship between faith and reason. Hostile protests from faculty members and the student body resulted in the cancellation of the lecture. Nevertheless, the text of this lecture was made available to the public. As we alluded to above, the speech highlights the parallel between the relationship with faith and reason can be outlined in terms of the Christological formula of Chalcedon. Philosophy and theology are related to

⁴⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Reason and Faith for a Common Ethics: A Dialogue with Jürgen Habermas*, [in:] J. Ratzinger/ Benedict XVI, *Faith and Politics*, transl. M.J. Miller et al., San Francisco, CA 2018, p. 195.

⁴⁸ Ratzinger’s inaugural lecture has been published with a commentary by Heino Sonnemans (J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der theologia naturalis*, ed. H. Sonnemans, Leutesdorf 2005). For a summary and further commentary on this inaugural lecture, see E. de Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift*, New York 2010, pp. 73–77; E. de Gaál, *O Lord, I Seek Your Countenance: Explorations and Discoveries in Pope Benedict XVI’s Theology*, Steubenville, OH 2018, pp. 71–81; H. Verweyen, *Joseph Ratzinger—Benedikt XVI.: Die Entwicklung seines Denkens*, Darmstadt 2007, pp. 28–30. Also see J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., pp. 116–161 for further commentary on the themes from his Bonn lecture.

⁴⁹ The Regensburg Lecture, no. 17.

⁵⁰ The Regensburg Lecture, no. 18.

each other “without confusion.” Both philosophy and theology “must preserve its own identity. Philosophy must truly remain a quest conducted by reason with freedom and responsibility; it must recognize its limits and likewise its greatness and immensity.”⁵¹ Simultaneously, philosophy and theology are also “without separation,” which for Benedict means that

philosophy does not start again from zero with every thinking subject in total isolation, but takes its place within the great dialogue of historical wisdom, which it continually accepts and develops in a manner both critical and docile. It must not exclude what religions, and the Christian faith in particular, have received and have given to humanity as signposts for the journey.⁵²

Philosophy and theology have an intrinsic relationship that should be directed towards the attainment of truth.

The Enlightenment seals the fate of a trajectory that began with late medieval theology's separation of faith from reason. In his Regensburg lecture, Benedict argues that voluntarism introduces the subordination of *logos* to *ethos*. The measure for the truth becomes solely what an individual wills (*verum quia factum*). Ratzinger argues that the Enlightenment narrows the concept of reason to “what is reproducible.”⁵³ From this, Ratzinger concludes that as reason becomes more positivistic “it restricts itself to what can be demonstrated over and over experimentally.”⁵⁴ Reason ceases to be reason in the proper sense when it abandons the identification of *logos* in favour of the pursuit of *ethos*. Whereas post-Enlightenment culture has disengaged from its religious roots and the role of metaphysics, Christianity must once again recall that it is “the religion of the *Logos*.”⁵⁵ Beyond the positivism and relativism of the present age, Christianity must reorient reason with a *logos* that is both a way to know and to love. Ratzinger argues that the “primacy of the Logos” and “the primacy of love” are indistinguishable.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Benedict XVI, *Lecture by the Holy Father...*, op. cit.

⁵² Benedict XVI, *Lecture by the Holy Father...*, op. cit.

⁵³ J. Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism...*, op. cit., pp. 150.

⁵⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism...*, op. cit., pp. 150.

⁵⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, transl. B. McNeil, San Francisco, CA 2006, pp. 46–49.

⁵⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, op. cit., p. 182. See K. Koch, *Gott ist Logos und Liebe: Versuch eines theologischen Porträts von Papst Benedikt XVI.*, [in:] K. Koch, *Das Geheimnis des Senfkorns: Grundzüge des theologischen Denkens von Papst Benedikt XVI.*, Regensburg 2010, pp. 14–44.

Love and reason are “two pillars of reality: the true reason is love, and love is the true reason.”⁵⁷ The unity of faith and reason is the thesis of Christian culture, which is constantly contrasted with the antithesis of Enlightenment culture, which separates reason from faith, and consequently limits the scope of reason. The Incarnation of the Logos in the Person of Jesus Christ introduces the ultimate synthesis that enables individuals to enter into a larger communion through the act of faith and creative reason. Consequently, it is the saints who become the true measure of theology.

The sanctifying mission of sacred theology

The separation of theology from reason, knowledge from love, and theology from sanctity would have been a foreign concept for the Church Fathers and medieval schoolmen. The primacy of the *Logos* and the primacy of love in the theology of Joseph Ratzinger, which we have outlined above, represents his synthesis between two distinct approaches to theology represented by the theology of St. Thomas Aquinas and the theology of St. Bonaventure. Ratzinger describes the Thomistic primacy of the logos as “a view of theology in which the meaning of christocentrism consists in transcending oneself and, through the *history* of God’s dealing with making possible the counter with the *being* of God himself.”⁵⁸ The theology of St. Thomas is essential to recovering the significant role of ontology within both philosophy and theology. Ratzinger argues that “philosophy as such cannot do without ontology and that theology is no less obliged to have recourse to it. The exclusion of ontology from theology does not emancipate philosophical thinking but paralyzes it.”⁵⁹ St. Thomas affirms the distinction and proper autonomy of philosophy and theology without introducing a separation/division between the two disciplines. According to St. Thomas, philosophy is a science which “proceed[s] from a principle known by the natural light of intelligence,” whereas theology “proceeds from principles established by the light of a higher science, name the science of God and the blessed.”⁶⁰ Although there is a clear distinction between the human and the divine, reason and faith work together to lead the believer to know and to

⁵⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, op. cit., p. 183.

⁵⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., p. 319.

⁵⁹ J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., p. 22.

⁶⁰ STH, I, q. 1, a. 2.

assent to the truth. In his affirmation of the primacy of the *Logos*, St. Thomas gives priority to the intellect, which does not preclude the role of the will.⁶¹

St. Bonaventure approaches theology in a different way than St. Thomas; he emphasizes that God is the subject of sacred theology and that reason is limited when it becomes a “violence of reason” (*violentia rationis*) that is incompatible with faith.⁶² The pride or violence that is inimical to the flourishing of faith is tempered by the primacy of love. Benedict XVI commenting upon the theology of St. Bonaventure, posits that “One who loves wants to know his beloved better and better.”⁶³ Consequently, true theology is motivated by the love for God. Both St. Thomas and St. Bonaventure hold that the ultimate goal of man is happiness, but they define this goal in distinct ways. For St. Thomas, the ultimate goal is for the person/man to see God, whereas for St. Bonaventure, the final goal is to love God.⁶⁴ These complimentary approaches find a new synthesis in Ratzinger, who as we have seen above, holds the view that we are called to both know *and* to love the *Logos*.

The ultimate synthesis in the *symphonia* of Ratzinger’s theology is the transformation of the believer by grace into an “I” of Christ. The point de départ for Ratzinger is St. Paul’s Letter to the Galatians: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (2:20).⁶⁵ The movement from the “no longer I” to the “I” of Christ begins with baptism.⁶⁶ Baptism only marks the start of the journey that continues by deeper conversion and transformation through the act of faith. The full flourishing of theology requires the rational reflection of philosophy and its integral connection with faith. The unity between faith and theology is fully expressed in the lives of the saints.

The peak of the crescendo in Ratzinger’s *symphonia* is the sanctity of the saint. Ratzinger argues that “[T]he saints, are the true, the normative majority by which we orient ourselves. Let us adhere to them; they translate the divine

⁶¹ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Faith and Theology: Address on the Occasion of the Conferring of an Honorary Doctorate in Theology by the Theological Faculty of Wrocław/Breslau*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, eds. S.O. Horn, V. Pfnür, transl. H. Taylor, San Francisco, CA 2005, pp. 21–27.

⁶² J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 320–321; J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 26–27.

⁶³ Benedict XVI, General Audience, March 3, 2010, *St. Bonaventure*, [in:] Benedict XVI, *Doctors of the Church*, Huntington, IN 2011, p. 190.

⁶⁴ Benedict XVI, *St. Bonaventure*, op. cit., pp. 190–191.

⁶⁵ J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 50–55.

⁶⁶ J. Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology...*, op. cit., pp. 52–53; J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., p. 33: “Baptism means, then that we lose ourselves as a separate, independent ‘I’ and find ourselves again in a new ‘I.’”

into the human, eternity into time, they teach us what it is to be human.”⁶⁷ The relationship between ontology and history is embodied by the saints insofar as they allow the influence of grace to move them to become “no longer I.” Thus Ratzinger notes “the work of the theologian is ‘secondary’ with regard to the real experience of the saints.”⁶⁸ Theology and sanctity must reunite for the former to be relevant for contemporary culture. The “science of the saints,” Ratzinger contends “is the reference point of theological thinking and the guarantee of its legitimacy.”⁶⁹ Sanctity alone enables the full sight/vision of knowledge and love to reach its end: communion with God.

Conclusion

Ethos or praxis depend upon the fundamental *logos* that should precede it. Ratzinger posits, “Faith’s *praxis* depends on faith’s truth, in which man’s truth is made visible and lifted up to a new level by God’s truth. Hence, it is fundamentally opposed to a *praxis* that first wants to produce facts and so establish truth.”⁷⁰ Modernity’s separation of faith and reason and the subordination of *logos* to the primacy of *ethos* has led to the dominance of the “makeability/doability” of truth. Relativism, utilitarianism, positivism, skepticism, and nihilism are the poisoned fruits of this foundation. Theology, philosophy, and all disciplines suffer from modernity’s narrow self-limitation of reason.

Despite the “fragmentary” or “incomplete” nature of his theology, Ratzinger offers a way forward for the Church and her relationship with modern culture by a consistent affirmation of the primacy of the *Logos* and the centrality of Christ within his theological *symphonia*. People in today’s society must choose between a materialist *logos* with which truth is reduced to what can be created/made, or a sacramental *logos*, with which truth is received. The materialist *logos* has left us with a blind reason “by cutting itself off its roots in the faith of a historical and religious culture and wishing now to be nothing more than empirical reason.”⁷¹ This form of disintegrative reason leaves humanity and the Church with the cacophony of a “disjointed pluralism of a selective Christianity” with each individual asserting his own subjective perception of

⁶⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, transl. A. Walker, San Francisco, CA 1996, p. 155.

⁶⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, op. cit., p. 109.

⁶⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, op. cit., p. 109.

⁷⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., p. 70.

⁷¹ J. Ratzinger, *Truth, Value, Power: Touchstones of Pluralistic Society*, [in:] J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Faith and Politics*, transl. M.J. Miller et al., San Francisco, CA 2018, p. 145.

the truth.⁷² This form of pluralism coupled with relativism will only result in further disunity, alienation, and irrational forms of violence if the subordination of *logos* to *ethos* reaches its fruition. What is needed in contemporary society is a new Enlightenment wherein the minds and hearts of believers are guided by “the true Light, that enlightens every man” (John 1:9).

The theology of the saints in Joseph Ratzinger offers hope for the renewal of the nature and mission of sacred theology. The notion of communion (*communio*) is a central idea that has a consistent note in Ratzinger's theological *symphonia*. Communion is the *logos* of Ratzinger's sacramental worldview, which precedes the sacred *ethos* of self-giving love. One of the lasting legacies of Ratzinger's theology is that the primacy of the *logos*, the centrality of Christ, and the hope of renewal is bound up with the saints: “Saints, in fact, reformed the Church in depth, not by working up plans for new structures, but by reforming themselves. What the Church needs in order to respond to the needs of man in every age is holiness, not management.”⁷³ The saints are living embodiments of the authentic enlightenment that began with the grace given at baptism. The saints are a testimony to the unity of divine grace and human freedom. Their science/knowledge/insight expands reason once again to remind us that the heart of Christianity is a Person, the incarnation of the Logos, who can be known and loved through the harmony of faith and reason. The saints are testimony to the wisdom of St. Paul: God's will is our sanctification (1 Thess 4:3).

Bibliography

- Anyama V.C., *Primacy of Christ: The Patristic Patrimony in Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's Analogy in Theology*, Eugene, OR 2021.
- Bathrellos D., *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of Saint Maximus the Confessor*, Oxford 2004.
- Benedict XVI, General Audience, March 3, 2010, *St. Bonaventure*, [in:] Benedict XVI, *Doctors of the Church*, Huntington, IN 2011, pp. 175–193.
- Benedict XVI, *Lecture by the Holy Father Benedict XVI at the University of Rome La Sapienza*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080117_la-sapienza.html [access: 14.08.2023].

⁷² J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *The Divine Project: Reflections on Creation and the Church*, eds. M. Langer, K.-H. Kronawetter, transl. C. Faucheux, San Francisco, CA 2022, p. 166.

⁷³ J. Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report: An Interview with Vittorio Messori*, transl. S. Attanasio, G. Harrison, San Francisco, CA 1985, p. 53.

- Blanco Sarto P., *Joseph Ratzinger: Razón y Cristianismo. La victoria de la inteligencia en el mundo de las religiones*, Madrid 2005.
- Blanco Sarto P., "Logos". *Joseph Ratzinger y la Historia de una Palabra*, "Límite. Revista de Filosofía y Psicología" 1/14 (2006), pp. 57–86.
- Blanco Sarto P., *La Teología de Joseph Ratzinger: Una Introducción*, Madrid 2011.
- Blanco Sarto P., *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger: Nuclear Ideas*, "Theology Today" 68/2 (2011), pp. 153–173.
- Corkery J., *Joseph Ratzinger's Theological Ideas: Wise Cautions and Legitimate Hopes*, Mahwah, NJ 2009.
- Denzinger H., *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum: Compendium of Creeds, Definitions and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*, ed. P. Hünermann, San Francisco, CA 2012.
- Freyer H., *Theorie des gegenwärtigen Zeitalters*, Stuttgart 1955.
- Gaál E. de, *O Lord, I Seek Your Countenance: Explorations and Discoveries in Pope Benedict XVI's Theology*, Steubenville, OH 2018.
- Gaál E. de, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift*, New York 2010.
- Gillespie M.A., *The Theological Origins of Modernity*, Chicago, IL 2008.
- Gutiérrez G., Müller G.L., *On the Side of the Poor: The Theology of Liberation*, transl. R.A. Krieg, J.B. Nickoloff, Maryknoll, NY 2015.
- Heibl F.-X., *Theologische Denker als Mitarbeiter der Wahrheit: Romano Guardini und Papst Benedikt XVI*, [in:] *Symphonie des Glaubens: Junge Münchener Theologen im Dialog mit Joseph Ratzinger / Benedict XVI*, eds. M.C. Hastetter, C. Ohly, G. Vlachonis, St. Ottilien 2007, pp. 77–101.
- Horn S.O., *Zum existentiellen und sakramentalen Grund der Theologie bei Joseph Ratzinger—Papst Benedikt XVI*, "Didaskalia" 38/2 (2008), pp. 301–310.
- Koch K., *Gott ist Logos und Liebe: Versuch eines theologischen Porträts von Papst Benedikt XVI*, [in:] Koch K., *Das Geheimnis des Senfkorns: Grundzüge des theologischen Denkens von Papst Benedikt XVI*, Regensburg 2010, pp. 14–44.
- Louth A., *Maximus the Confessor*, New York 2006.
- Meiers A.E., *Eschatos Adam: Zentrale Aspekte der Christologie bei Joseph Ratzinger/Benedikt XVI*, Regensburg 2019.
- Millare R., *A Living Sacrifice: Liturgy and Eschatology in Joseph Ratzinger*, Steubenville, OH 2022.
- Müller G., *Ratzinger and the Liberation Theologians*, "First Things" March (2023), <https://www.firstthings.com/article/2023/03/ratzinger-and-the-liberation-theologians> [access: 14.08.2023].
- Nichols A., *Conversation of Faith and Reason: Modern Catholic Thought from Hermes to Benedict XVI*, Chicago, IL 2011.
- Oakes E.T., *Infinity Dwindled to Infancy: A Catholic and Evangelical Christology*, Grand Rapids, MI 2011.
- Ratzinger J., *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to Spiritual Christology*, transl. G. Harrison, San Francisco, CA 1986.
- Ratzinger J., *Biblical Interpretation in Conflict: On the Foundations and the Itinerary of Exegesis Today*, [in:] *Opening Up the Scriptures: Joseph Ratzinger and the Foundations of Biblical*

- Interpretation*, eds. J. Granados, C. Granados, L. Sánchez-Navarro, Grand Rapids, MI 2008, pp. 1–29.
- Ratzinger J., *Called to Communion*, transl. A. Walker, San Francisco, CA 1996.
- Ratzinger J., *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, transl. B. McNeil, San Francisco, CA 2006.
- Ratzinger J., *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology*, transl. M.J. Miller et al., San Francisco, CA 2008.
- Ratzinger J./Benedict XVI, *The Divine Project: Reflections on Creation and the Church*, eds. M. Langer, K.-H. Kronawetter, transl. C. Faucheux, San Francisco, CA 2022.
- Ratzinger J., *Faith and Theology: Address on the Occasion of the Conferring of an Honorary Doctorate in Theology by the Theological Faculty of Wrocław/Breslau*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, eds. S.O. Horn, V. Pfnür, transl. H. Taylor, San Francisco, CA 2005, pp. 21–27.
- Ratzinger J./Benedict XVI, *Der Gott des Glaubens und der Gott der Philosophen. Ein Beitrag zum Problem der theologia naturalis*, ed. H. Sonnemans, Leutesdorf 2005.
- Ratzinger J., *Introduction to Christianity*, transl. J.R. Foster, San Francisco, CA 2004.
- Ratzinger J., *The Nature and Mission of Theology: Approaches to Understanding Its Role in the Light of the Present Controversy*, transl. A. Walker, San Francisco, CA 1995.
- Ratzinger J., *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, transl. Sister M.F. McCarthy, San Francisco, CA 1987.
- Ratzinger J., *The Ratzinger Report: An Interview with Vittorio Messori*, transl. S. Attanasio, G. Harrison, San Francisco, CA 1985.
- Ratzinger J., *Reason and Faith for a Common Ethics: A Dialogue with Jürgen Habermas*, [in:] J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Faith and Politics*, transl. M.J. Miller et al., San Francisco, CA 2018, pp. 182–195.
- Ratzinger J., *That Which Holds the World Together: The Pre-political Moral Foundations of a Free State*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, J. Habermas, *The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion*, ed. F. Schuller, transl. B. McNeil, San Francisco, CA 2006, pp. 53–80.
- Ratzinger J., *Truth and Tolerance*, transl. H. Taylor, San Francisco, CA 2004.
- Ratzinger J., *Truth, Value, Power: Touchstones of Pluralistic Society*, [in:] J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Faith and Politics*, transl. M.J. Miller et al., San Francisco, CA 2018, pp. 95–151.
- Ratzinger J., *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, transl. B. McNeil, San Francisco, CA 2006.
- Ratzinger J., Seewald P., *Salt of the Earth: The Church at the End of the Millennium*, transl. A. Walker, San Francisco, CA 1997.
- Riches A., *Ecce Homo: On the Divine Unity of Christ*, Grand Rapids, MI 2016.
- Schall J.V., *The Regensburg Lecture*, South Bend, IN 2007.
- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, transl. The Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Westminster, MD 1981.
- Verweyen H., *Joseph Ratzinger—Benedikt XVI.: Die Entwicklung seines Denkens*, Darmstadt 2007.
- Weimann R., *Dogma und Fortschritt bei Joseph Ratzinger*, Paderborn 2012.
- White T.J. (ed.), *The Analogy of Being: Invention of the Antichrist or the Wisdom of God?*, Grand Rapids, MI 2011.
- Wiedenhofer S., *Die Theologie Joseph Ratzingers/Benedikts XVI.: Ein Blick auf das Ganze*, Series: Ratzinger-Studien 10, Regensburg 2016.

ROLAND MILLARE (STD) – serves as Vice President of Curriculum and Director of Clergy Initiatives at the St. John Paul II Foundation, Houston, TX, USA. He serves as an adjunct professor of theology at the University of St. Thomas, the University of Dallas, and the Josephinum Diaconal Institute (USA). He is author of the book, *A Living Sacrifice: Liturgy and Eschatology in Joseph Ratzinger* (Steubenville, OH 2022). He is a member of the Society of Catholic Liturgy and the Academy of Catholic Theology.

Emery de Gaál

University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, USA
edegaal@usml.edu
ORCID: 0000-0001-6490-1076

A Call to Authentic Discipleship: Pope Benedict XVI, Kierkegaard and *Entweltlichung*

Wezwanie do autentycznego uczniostwa –
papież Benedykt XVI, Kierkegaard i *Entweltlichung*

ABSTRACT: The article pursues the aim of demonstrating that both Pope Benedict XVI and Søren Kierkegaard call for genuine Christian discipleship. They apprehend in Christianity ever anew the danger of a bourgeois accommodation of the Christian gospel to the prevalent *Zeitgeist*. In the first part of this article the author presented the views of Kierkegaard, for whom threat comes from the state-established Danish Lutheran Church. The second part of the article discusses the viewpoint of Joseph Ratzinger. In his opinion, the threat may also come from a close relationship between Christianity and the state. The real danger in the 20th century was graver than that in 19th century Denmark. It comes from secularised Christology, from emphasis being put on the humanity of Jesus which ignores His divine personhood and nature. The last part of the article draws attention to the essential differences between the approaches adopted by both thinkers and the solutions proposed by them, which, however, only accentuated the greatness of these intellectuals. In his own words, Kierkegaard will always remain “a little pinch of cinnamon.” In contrast to the Danish radical Christian, by writing seminal texts from within the wisdom of the ever self-same Catholic Church, Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, especially on account of his *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy, inaugurates *à la longue* an epochal Christocentric shift. Assuredly, posterity will honour him with the title “Doctor of the Church.”

KEYWORDS: Benedict XVI, Joseph Ratzinger, introduction to Christianity, Søren Kierkegaard, discipleship, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Christocentric shift, *Entweltlichung*, Hegelian system, das Ganze im Fragment

ABSTRAKT: W artykule wykazano, że zarówno papież Benedykt XVI, jak i Søren Kierkegaard wzywają do autentycznego chrześcijańskiego uczniostwa. Dostrzegają w chrześcijaństwie wciąż na nowo niebezpieczeństwo mieszczańskiego dostosowania

chrześcijańskiej Ewangelii do panującego *Zeitgeistu*. W pierwszej części artykułu przedstawiono stanowisko Kierkegaarda, dla którego zagrożenie to pochodziło od ustanowionego przez państwo Duńskiego Kościoła Luterńskiego. W drugiej części tekstu omówiono poglądy Josepha Ratzingera. Jego zdaniem o ile zagrożenie może wynikać także z bliskiego związku chrześcijaństwa z państwem, o tyle prawdziwe niebezpieczeństwo w XX wieku było poważniejsze niż to w XIX-wiecznej Danii. Pochodziło ono z „niskiej” chrystologii, z podkreślania człowieczeństwa Jezusa i ignorowania boskiego statusu Jego osoby i natury. W ostatniej części artykułu zwrócono uwagę na różnice w podejściach autorów i znaczącą odmienną proponowanych przez nich rozwiązań, co uwydatniło wielkość obu myślicieli. Kierkegaard, według jego własnych słów, pozostanie zawsze „szczyptą przyprawy”. W przeciwieństwie do radykalnego duńskiego chrześcijanina Ratzinger/Benedykt XVI, pisząc swoje dzieła (zwłaszcza trylogię *Jezus z Nazaretu*) oparte na mądrości wiecznie tego samego Kościoła katolickiego, inauguruje *à la longue* przełomowy zwrot chrystocentryczny. Z pewnością potomni uhonorują go tytułem „doktora Kościoła”.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Benedykt XVI, Joseph Ratzinger, wprowadzenie w chrześcijaństwo, Søren Kierkegaard, uczniostwo, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, zwrot chrystocentryczny, Entweltlichung, system heglowski, das Ganze im Fragment

Introduction

Admittedly, comparing Pope Benedict XVI (1927–2023) to the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) is *prima facie* surprising and might strike one as completely unwarranted: too obvious are the asymmetries. In glaring contrast to the Danish thinker, Joseph Ratzinger is one of the most celebrated theologians in recent memory, while Kierkegaard died in obscurity. The former – a universally acclaimed Catholic thinker, the latter – a philosopher who critiqued his own Lutheran Church. Pope Benedict makes but once mention of Kierkegaard, namely in his internationally acclaimed theological bestseller *Introduction to Christianity*.¹ The Lutheran thinker assumed Reformation anthropology throughout his philosophy, as expressed in the clear sobriety of his native Protestant churches, while the Bavarian Ratzinger is joyfully mindful of the transformation of fallen human nature by supernatural grace, as exuberantly celebrated in the baroque and rococo Catholic churches

¹ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, transl. J.R. Foster, San Francisco, CA 2004, p. 39. M.D. Dinan, M. Pallotto, *Joseph Ratzinger's "Kierkegaardian option" in Introduction to Christianity*, “International Journal of Philosophy and Theology” 80/4–5 (2019), pp. 390–407.

of his home country.² What unites both, however, is the earnestness with which both call upon Christians of all denominations to seriously follow Jesus Christ, and – whether invited or scorned – remind them of the cost of serious Christian discipleship. For both, Jesus Christ is not an abstract, philosophical proposition, but an existential reality. Both have become in their respective unique life paths uncomfortable, disconcerting callers in the desert, second to John the Baptist.

One may think in this context also of the German Lutheran witness of faith and martyr: Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906–1945). Still, unlike in the case of Ratzinger, Bonhoeffer's heroic legacy has not sunk into *damnatio memoriae*. Certainly, Ratzinger also draws inspiration from Russian philosopher Vladimir Soloviev (1853–1900), who had penned the unsettling, prophetic *History of the Anti-Christ*. He mentioned the Russian thinker in a homily delivered at St. Peter's Church in New York in 1988.³ In this brief text, Soloviev correctly foresees a situation in which the majority of Christians will subscribe to a bourgeois-pleasing reinterpretation of Jesus Christ supplied by a celebrated Scripture scholar, who actually is the Anti-Christ, while the remnant of real Christians will be marginalized and frowned upon, which is reminiscent of the Arian crisis in the fourth century. While teaching in Münster, Ratzinger recommended Soloviev's book as background reading to retreatants.

The world is God's good creation and Jesus Christ is its true king; not only of the Church and her believers. "World" is an ambiguous term as regards the Bible and St John, because of its eschatological the-already-and-not-yet. Some examples underline this: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). This is contrasted with the Apostle Paul's warning not to conform to the world (Rom 12:2). This rather negative view is shared by John the Evangelist, whom Ratzinger often quotes. "If the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you" (John 15:18). Our Lord underscores this again, saying: "I am not praying for the world, but they are in the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours" (John 17:9); and finally, "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world" (John 17:16).

Bonhoeffer begins in 1937 his *Nachfolge (Discipleship)* with the familiar words corresponding to the title: "Cheap grace is the mortal enemy of our church. Our

² E. de Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI. The Christocentric Shift*, New York 2010, pp. 13–20.

³ E. de Gaál, *The Theology...*, op. cit., pp. xiii, 81, 111, and 146.

struggle today is for foolish grace.”⁴ This tension between the world and the divine order is acutely experienced by all Christians. While Kierkegaard opts for a radical primacy of the divine, Ratzinger’s view is more balanced: giving eloquent expression to the Catholic “*et ... et,*” “as well as.”⁵ There is an inner relationship between *fides* and *ratio* surpassing and contradicting Kierkegaard’s fideism and Neo-Scholasticism’s rationalism. Ratzinger argues that Christ intends to be incarnate ever again in the *hic et nunc*.

Addressing in 1967 a restive body of students and educated people from different academic disciplines with utopian Marxism in the air, young Professor Ratzinger uses Kierkegaard’s analogy of a Christian preacher. A circus clown tries to convince people of an extremely serious message until in the end the village is engulfed in flames. Ratzinger warns his audience, listening with bated breath, that one cannot take the Christian gospel lightly, as a mere option.⁶ Prior to his lectures, collected in the *Introduction to Christianity*, he had penned these words:

This is precisely what ultimately constitutes man as man, that he reaches beyond the world, that he is capable of the Absolute, that he carries in himself that referentiality of existence which points him beyond all world contexts to the Eternal Self, and which thus also gives him the surplus value which protects him as a partner of God from any appropriation by the merely worldly.⁷

Kierkegaard – a necessary signpost and corrective

In intellectual history, Kierkegaard is an enigmatic character. His writings are quirky and yet central. He is a great counterweight to the grand systematisers and rationalizers that had immediately preceded him. He is self-consciously fragmentary, off-beat, one may say – provocatively bizarre. He incurred public opposition and scorn. Quite deliberately he opted for a non-bourgeois existence:

⁴ D. Bonhoeffer, *Nachfolge*, München 1983, p. 13.

⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Weggemeinschaft des Glaubens, Kirche als Communio*, Augsburg 2002, p. 254.

⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, op. cit., p. 39.

⁷ “Dies eben ist das, was letztlich den Menschen als Menschen konstituiert, dass er über Welt hinausreicht, dass er des Absoluten fähig ist, dass er jene Verwiesenheit des Daseins in sich trägt, die ihn über alle Weltzusammenhänge hinaus verweist auf das Ewige Selbst hin, und die ihn damit auch den Mehrwert gibt, der ihn als Partner Gottes vor jeder Vereinnahmung durch das bloß Welthafte schützt” (J. Ratzinger, *Was ist der Mensch. Vortrag, Tübingen Ende 1966/ Anfang 1967*, Tonbandaufnahme B. Suermann, [in:], *Mitteilungen des Institut-Papst-Benedikt XVI.*, vol. 1, ed. R. Voderholzer, Regensburg 2008, p. 43).

breaking off from his father – at least for a time – and deciding to remain unmarried. He provoked a quarrel with the satirical weekly “*The Corsair*” (Danish: “*Corsaren*”) and this magazine mercilessly reciprocated him by running a series of articles critical of the strange philosopher. Little wonder that he became the object of public ridicule. He fell into depression and became more and more isolated from Danish society. In 1846 he considered the possibility of becoming a Lutheran minister and giving up his career as a philosopher. Finally, he turned away from this prospect and began producing a series of edifying Christian texts. Soon, two major works followed: *The Sickness unto Death* and *Practice (or Training) in Christian*.⁸ Oftentimes his Christian motivations are ignored. A philosophical⁹ or aesthetic¹⁰ valorisation is preferred. But this comes at the cost of not doing justice to his central concerns. In the year 1930 Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) does greater justice to him in his dissertation *Geschichte des eschatologischen Problems in der modernen deutschen Literatur*, where he compares Kierkegaard and Friedrich Nietzsche.¹¹ Kierkegaard fired a passionate broadside against the established Danish Lutheran state Church and its supposed spiritual complacency thereby he antagonized his countrymen even further. He objected to calling the deceased Lutheran bishop Jakob Peter Mynster “a witness to truth” in a eulogy. The obituary composed by Mynster’s successor, Bishop Hans Lassen Martensen, merely secured the Lutheran Church’s prestigious social status and lucrative income. He advocated radical disengagement from all worldly affairs.¹² He critiqued Martin Luther’s cosiness under the protection of the ruler of Saxony and considered celibacy and religious life indispensable for the Church’s credible Christian witness: even speaking of a *character indelibilis*, a term commonly reserved for Catholic priests.¹³

⁸ S. Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition of Edification and Awakening*, transl. A. Hannay, London 1989; S. Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity, and the Edifying Discourse Which ‘Accompanied’ It*, transl. W. Lowrie, Oxford 1941.

⁹ M. Theunissen, W. Greve (eds.), *Materialien zur Philosophie Søren Kierkegaards*, Frankfurt am Main 1979.

¹⁰ Famously in his dissertation 1933; T.W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard. Konstruktion des Ästhetischen*, Frankfurt am Main 1986.

¹¹ H.U. von Balthasar, *Geschichte des eschatologischen Problems in der modernen deutschen Literatur*, Einsiedeln 1998.

¹² S. Kierkegaard, *The Moment and Late Writings*, eds., transl. H.V. Hong, E.H. Hong, Princeton, NJ 2009; M. Kieffhaber, *Christentum als Korrektiv. Untersuchungen zur Theologie Søren Kierkegaards*, Mainz 1987, pp. 110–135.

¹³ H. Roos, *Søren Kierkegaard auf der Suche nach dem wahren Christentum*, Series: Institut für europäische Geschichte, Mainz, Vorträge 30, Wiesbaden 1961, p. 22. H. Roos, *Kierkegaard nachkonziliar*, Series: Kriterien 5, Einsiedeln 1967, pp. 67–81.

One of Kierkegaard's great nemeses was the German philosopher Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel (1770–1831), who had produced one of the greatest syntheses of human thought. He divined in Hegel's grand edifice an *Ersatz* reconciliation. In Kierkegaard's view the unhappy consciousness of Hegel that lacked a grasp of a whole as personal meaning, could have been a chance to embrace faith. Alas, Hegel sublimates this sense of alienation from the whole by establishing such a synthesis occurring in history by way of an inexorable process – lacking personal volition, mercy, adoration and virtue. Rather, to the Berlin thinker, the grand symphony occurs in the human mind, where the interpenetration of the infinite and finite occurs. To Danish Kierkegaard such a view ignores the inescapably postlapsarian state of the human being, but – more importantly – also the human pining to personally encounter the divine. All of history attests to human existence being roiled and conflicted as it is already in some kind of relationship with the numinous. It seeks a form of reconciliation it cannot self-generate. Hegel neither confronted the inevitability of evil nor that of personal guilt. He saw the abstract entity of humankind becoming quite solipsistically in the give and take of history the bearer of good tidings on a suprapersonal level.

In contrast to Hegel's great harmony in which all of humankind is moving towards in one, grand, collective movement, Kierkegaard emphasizes the individual, the particular, the unique, the tragic and the salutary moment. This is brought out eloquently in his writings *The Concept of Anxiety*¹⁴ and *Sickness unto Death*. The last and ultimate reality is the individual person standing in disarmed solitude before God and forced to address his reality, discovering to his anguish his estrangement from God, being lost in sin and despair. The fallen human being faces guilt and from such guilt experience flows the awareness of having passed definitively and irreversibly a boundary which leads to despondency and sickness unto death. Such a situation is inescapable. To Kierkegaard's mind it is a question of existential veracity to acknowledge it. Nothing within human reach can lift us up; this includes *pace* to German Idealism, the human mind, the preferred space of action for Hegel.

As Kierkegaard develops in *Philosophical Fragments*,¹⁵ salvation must come from without. It requires a radical leap of faith that puts to shame all the great rational constructs. All human beings need to move from a mere aesthetic,

¹⁴ S. Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Oriented Deliberation in View of the Dogmatic Problem of Hereditary Sin*, transl. A. Hannay, New York 2015.

¹⁵ S. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, eds., transl. H.V. Hong, E.H. Hong, Princeton, NJ 1987.

uninvolved posture to an ethically grounded sense of responsibility and finally towards commitment on a third and final level, which he calls the religious level of conversion. The Socratic or Hegelian mindset is content to articulate thoughts which are immanent to and seemingly affirm the human person. Such Socratic thinking must be interrupted to reach *the* moment.¹⁶ In Jesus, a radically new question comes to the fore. Christ must become the *pierre de touche* for the human being's subsequent life. Man must admit that he is not in possession of the truth – unlike Hegel – and discover that he is untruth. Only the human being is responsible for such alienation from God. God alone saves him from his self-destructive imprisonment. Such is the nature of the fleeting moment, when man experiences divine mercy or providence, such when Abraham is willing to sacrifice his only son Isaac. This moment becomes the fullness of time, when the eternal enters the temporal, personal realm.¹⁷ Here God acts out of sheer, self-emptying charity.

God appears provocatively in the form of a servant. Such lowliness is not mere livery. The human mind must reel at this “paradox” – contra Hegel. The cerebral, passionless mind à la Kant flees from this reality and retreats to the limited range of human reason as the last and final court of appeal, writing off the paradox as irrational absurdity.¹⁸ Against Kant and Hegel, Kierkegaard favors loyalty to the paradox of the incarnation.

Ratzinger's spirited defense of Christian discipleship

Since the 1960's, Ratzinger had increasingly appeared as an at times isolated, upright prophet in an increasingly secularized German Catholic Church. This becomes glaringly obvious when considering the German public's reaction – *unisono* both secular and Catholic – to the speech he delivered to 1,500 men and women representing Catholic intellectuals and people working for the institutional Church at all levels – from chanceries to parishes, while visiting Germany in Freiburg im Breisgau on September 25, 2011 in its concert building, ever since famous. There he questioned with a calm voice and the serene style of a gentleman much like St. John Henry Newman (1801–1890) this particular Church's suspiciously confident self-perception, structures and lifestyle. Without

¹⁶ Here is not the proper place to critique Kierkegaard's claim that Socrates intended a sweeping unified grasp of reality in the Hegelian sense.

¹⁷ S. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments...*, op. cit., pp. 9–22.

¹⁸ S. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments...*, op. cit., pp. 37–54.

discussing the merits of his arguments, let alone responding equally graciously, the German *Verbandskatholizismus* (associational Catholicism) reacted with scorn and rejection to his, almost Kierkegaardian admonishments. He said: “Blessed Mother Teresa was once asked what in her opinion was the first thing that would have to change in the Church. Her answer was: you and I.”¹⁹

All Catholics baptized are equally members of the Church and are called to personal conversion to Christ ever afresh. Reorientation to its source, Jesus Christ, rejuvenates the Church. He elaborated: “In the concrete history of the Church, however, a contrary tendency is also manifested, namely that the Church becomes self-satisfied, settles down in this world, becomes self-sufficient and adapts herself to the standards of the world.”²⁰ He continued:

Secularizing trends – whether by expropriation of Church goods, or elimination of privileges or the like – have always meant a profound liberation of the Church from forms of worldliness, for in the process she as it were sets aside her worldly wealth and once again completely embraces her worldly poverty. In this she shares the destiny of the tribe of Levi, which according to the Old Testament account was the only tribe in Israel with no ancestral land of its own, taking as its portion only God himself, his word and his signs. At those moments in history, the Church shared with that tribe the demands of a poverty that was open to the world, in order to be released from her material ties: and in this way her missionary activity regained credibility.²¹

The project of *Entweltlichung* had been a *cantus firmus* throughout his life. In 1958 he had used the term when discussing *The New Pagans and the Church* in a lecture.²² In 1966 he had used the term again in a talk titled *Weltoffene Kirche* (a Church Open for the World). He wrote: “De-worldliness of the Church, which, as it were, strips itself of its worldly wealth and again assumes all its worldly poverty.”²³

¹⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Concert Hall, Freiburg im Breisgau, September 25, 2011*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110925_catholics-freiburg.html [access: 16.02.2022].

²⁰ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address...*, op. cit.

²¹ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address...*, op. cit.

²² J. Ratzinger, *Die neuen Heiden und die Kirche*, “Hochland” Oktober, 1958; reprinted in J. Ratzinger, *Kirche, Zeichen unter den Völkern: Schriften zur Ekklesiologie und Ökumene*, Series: Gesammelte Schriften 8/2, Freiburg im Breisgau 2010, p. 1149.

²³ J. Ratzinger, *Entweltlichung der Kirche, die sich gleichsam ihres weltlichen Reichtums entblößt und wieder ihre ganze weltliche Armut annimmt*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Zur Lehre des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils: Formulierung – Vermittlung – Deutung*, Series: Gesammelte

Had his 2011 words been given the proper attention they deserved, people would have discovered that he did not advocate the abolition of the debatable Church tax, but a change of heart. Neither structures nor bureaucracy, but the inner mindset needs to be converted to Christ. Christians are called to evangelize, “to proclaim the gospel to all creatures” (Mark 16:15). As he bore out to a full house:

The Church ... must constantly rededicate herself to her mission. The three Synoptic Gospels highlight various aspects of the missionary task. The mission is built first of all upon personal experience: “You are witnesses” (*Lk* 24:48); it finds expression in relationships: “Make disciples of all nations” (*Mt* 28:19); and it spreads a universal message: “Preach the Gospel to the whole creation” (*Mk* 16:15). Through the demands and constraints of the world, however, this witness is constantly obscured, the relationships are alienated, and the message is relativized. If the Church, in Pope Paul VI’s words, is now struggling “to model itself on Christ’s ideal”, this “can only result in its acting and thinking quite differently from the world around it, which it is nevertheless striving to influence” (*Ecclesiam Suam*, 58). In order to accomplish her mission, she will need again and again to set herself apart from her surroundings, to become in a certain sense “unworldly”.²⁴

The Holy Father emphasized the need for a proper orientation towards the transcendent reality, in order for the created order to find its proper gravitational centre and purpose. Therein lies the actual point of the gospel. With these words Benedict XVI slipped into the role of an emaciated John the Baptist or of the revolutionary Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1492). Like an uneasy prophet, Ratzinger reminded his audience of their lost, suppressed mission amid all worldly concerns. Like a prophet of old, Benedict forecast the future after a clear and unvarnished analysis. This is fulfilled today even more. Much like consulting firms, also elements of the Church prefer impersonal “structural reorganization” versus personal conversion of hearts. Such forms of immunization vis-à-vis the truth which is Jesus Christ, disinvite a much-needed correction of self. Such a mindset – *incurvatus in eo ipso* – detects in spiritualizing impulses annoying interruptions that must be pushed aside and vilified. A systemic complacency sets in, enamored with its own goals and values. The institutional Church in

Schriften 7/2, Freiburg im Breisgau 2012, p. 999. Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Wendezeit für Europa?*, Einsiedeln 1991. It is there that the term “Entweltlichung” is mentioned as well.

²⁴ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address...*, op. cit.

Germany is a closed system developing its own laws. Such self-obsession is fatal for the Church as she is by her very nature open to God and reaches out to the ends of the world. He observed: "... the Church, ... gives greater weight to organization and institutionalization than to her vocation to openness towards God, her vocation to opening up the world towards the other."²⁵

He might have added that the Church has her origin in God – *inter alia* her origin is to be found in the angel's annunciation to Our Lady. The Church has her beginnings in Mary's trusting *fiat*. Mary is the first believer, believing more in "the greater possibilities of God" than in her own talents and priorities.²⁶

The tempting *Verweltlichung*, or secularization, prompts the Church to seek adulation and confirmation by a world wholly oblivious to the spiritual and divine, and thus the need arises for her to conform to the world even more. Such a foolishly re-configured Church, however, has little to offer the world. She becomes unattractive. Membership in her is uninspiring. Contingency must not define an entity which by her very nature is of divine origin – and indeed finds such an effort wholly unfulfilling. One expects of her tolerance in the mundane sense; eclectic indifference, clad in the garments of humanitarianism, but in its core egoistic. In order to win such a Church over, to coopt her, she is being granted tempting privileges: such as permission to instruct in German public schools and to collect taxes.

On the other hand, *Entweltlichung* or desecularization allows the sovereign God to define the mission and the criteria for authentic life. For a Christian, the Balthasarian *Sendung* or mission, the vertical cross, rules over any horizontal, quantifiable function. For such a conversion to occur, every Christian must pine for the Second Coming of the Lord, must convert his heart ever anew. There must be an urgent sense of a need for redemption. The point should not be to resurrect the old, long bygone social (feudal) status for/of the institutional Church. As the Pope bears out:

It is not a question here of finding a new strategy to relaunch the Church. Rather, it is a question of setting aside mere strategy and seeking total transparency, not bracketing or ignoring anything from the truth of our present situation, but living the faith fully here and now in the utterly sober light of day, appropriating

²⁵ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address...*, op. cit.

²⁶ Cf. H.U. von Balthasar, J. Ratzinger, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, San Francisco, CA 2005.

it completely, and stripping away from it anything that only seems to belong to faith, but in truth is mere convention or habit.²⁷

Benedict XVI does not take up the cudgels for a manoeuvre initiating a withdrawal of the Church from the world in order to cast off worldliness, but *au contraire*, to be faithful to her Lord and Master and for her to become a leaven, a blessing *for* the world; in the sense of an inspired and inspiring engagement in the world. For, as he continued:

History has shown that, when the Church becomes less worldly, her missionary witness shines more brightly. Once liberated from material and political burdens and privileges, the Church can reach out more effectively and in a truly Christian way to the whole world, she can be truly open to the world. She can live more freely her vocation to the ministry of divine worship and service of neighbour. ... The Church opens herself to the world not in order to win men for an institution with its own claims to power, but in order to lead them to themselves by leading them to him of whom each person can say with Saint Augustine: he is closer to me than I am to myself (cf. *Confessions*, III,6,11). He who is infinitely above me is yet so deeply within me that he is my true interiority. This form of openness to the world on the Church's part also serves to indicate how the individual Christian can be open to the world in effective and appropriate ways.²⁸

These were words of unusual, prophetic clairvoyance. Since then the Church in Germany has lost much in membership and political relevance. Previously, it had been the case that German politicians of all parties and worldviews, including the president and chancellor, would attend German Catholic Church Diets (*Katholikentage*). For roughly five years this is no longer a given. The Church in Germany has lost her deep faith, unambiguous testimony and clear vision that had marked her during the Nazi regime. The abuse crisis has further compounded this. The terrible crimes painfully highlight the distressing fact that the Church is perceived as unable to offer the sacrament of reconciliation as visible punishment for the perpetrators and healing to victims, let alone articulate meaning of suffering. Christ's cross is absent from the German Catholic institution. The Pontiff had foreseen such a scenario:

²⁷ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address...*, op. cit.

²⁸ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address...*, op. cit.

This scandal, which cannot be eliminated unless one were to eliminate Christianity itself, has unfortunately been overshadowed in recent times by other painful scandals on the part of the preachers of the faith. A dangerous situation arises when these scandals take the place of the primary *skandalon* of the Cross and in so doing they put it beyond reach, concealing the true demands of the Christian Gospel behind the unworthiness of those who proclaim it.²⁹

Scandals must be relentlessly exposed – that is clear for Benedict XVI. There is no gainsaying, he laicized more bad clergy than any other pope in history. But an honest examination of conscience must not serve as an excuse to reinvent, or worse, to deny outright divine revelation. Ultimately therein too, lies Ratzinger's provocation in the eyes of the world and of German associational Catholicism (*Verbandskatholizismus*). The mission and the essence of the Church must not be obscured. The source of all mercy and renewal is the life-giving power of the Most Holy Trinity. This is the message of the prophet Benedict XVI.

Conclusion: Kierkegaard versus Ratzinger – John the Baptist versus Athanasius and Gregory the Great

In the eulogy for his *Doktorvater* Gottlieb Söhngen (1892–1971), Professor Ratzinger preached in 1971:

In the breadth of his thinking lay his greatness and also his fate. For he who asks questions so comprehensively cannot present a closed synthesis. Söhngen knew this; he knew that the hour of theological sums had not yet struck again. He knew that he would have to be content with fragments. But he always tried to see the whole in the fragment [*das Ganze im Fragment*] to think the fragments from the whole and to design them as reflections of the whole. This also indicates his basic intellectual attitude: Söhngen was a radical and critical questioner. Even today one cannot ask more radically than he did. But at the same time he was a radical believer.³⁰

²⁹ Cf. Benedict XVI, *Address...*, op. cit.

³⁰ "In der Weite seines Denkens lag seine Größe und auch sein Schicksal. Denn wer so umfassend fragt, kann keine geschlossene Synthese vorlegen. Söhngen wußte das; er wußte, daß die Stunde der theologischen Summen noch nicht wieder geschlagen hat. Er wußte, daß er sich mit Fragmenten begnügen mußte. Aber er hat sich immer bemüht, das Ganze im Fragment zu schauen, die Fragmente vom Ganzen her zu denken und als Spiegelungen

Here one detects a surprising consonance between Kierkegaard, Söhngen and Ratzinger: the deliberate affirmation of the fragmentary nature of human cognition, the elevation of the human imagination to higher plateaus and the rejection of grand systems. On this point Ratzinger not only rejects Hegelianism with Kierkegaard, but at the same time, as a Catholic theologian – also neo-scholasticism. Neo-scholasticism had still been regnant in his Freising seminary. Faith is far more than the human mind's assent to propositions.³¹

In reaction to the French Revolution (1789), neo-scholastic theologians tried to push back Enlightenment by demonstrating the superior intelligibility of the Catholic statement. Alas, especially in the wake of Vatican I (1869/1870), it became quite rigid and impersonal, denying the need for a creative plurality. It emphasized authority and became formalistic. On the positive side, it did gain a synthetic power that deepened faith and consolidated the Church. By the time Ratzinger entered seminary it had become too impersonal, spent and exhausted.³²

Kierkegaard had no appreciation for the Church as a sacramental reality. There is no social component in his understanding of Christian existentialism. There only exists to his mind the lonesome individual in front of the awe-inspiring God, as he does not take into account the *communio*-forming reality of the Eucharist. Seemingly, nowadays, the immanentized eschatological hope of Hegel, the welfare state and consulting firms reign supreme.

In contradistinction, both thinkers underscore the absolute primacy of Christian faith. Kierkegaard writes: "Today nobody will stop with faith; they all go further. It would perhaps be rash to inquire where to. ..." ³³ To both, contemporary forms of Christianity appear shallow and rootless because they lack a clear sense of sin and divine mercy. Both remind us that only God can

des Ganzen zu entwerfen. Damit ist zugleich seine geistige Grundhaltung angedeutet: Söhngen war ein radikal und kritisch Fragender. Auch heute kann man nicht radikaler fragen, als er es getan hat. Aber zugleich war er ein radikal Glaubender" (J. Ratzinger, *Der Glaube ist es der das Fragen ermöglicht*, "30 Giorni" 24/1-2 [2006], http://www.30giorni.it/articoli_id_10221_15.htm [access: 20.02.2022].)

³¹ J. Ratzinger, *Milestones. Memoirs 1927-1977*, San Francisco, CA 1988, pp. 41-60.

³² T. Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford 2008, pp. 2-7. Cf. W. Kasper, *Die Methoden der Dogmatik*, Munich 1967; G.A. McCool, *The Neo-Thomists*, Milwaukee, WI 1994; G.A. McCool, *From Unity to Pluralism*, New York 1999; G.A. McCool, *Nineteenth Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method*, New York 1999.

³³ S. Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling, Dialectical Lyric by Johannes de Silentio*, transl. A. Hannay, London 1986, p. 23.

bridge “the infinite qualitative distinction between time and eternity.”³⁴ Both believe that the quest for the historical Christ is unfortunate as it actually distracts from the actual personal nature of faith. The paucity of extra-biblical evidence for the historical Christ leads precisely to a liberation towards genuine faith and personal self-surrender. Both thinkers affirm the historicity of the figure of Jesus Christ. To “redeem” faith Kierkegaard embraces the absurd – much like Tertullian’s supposed *credo quia absurdum*;³⁵ not, however, Pope Benedict XVI. Ratzinger knows of the supreme *logoscity*: i.e. the rationality of all being and that of the human mind is indebted to Jesus Christ and related to Him. Also in its postlapsarian state human rationality owns a deep kinship with the eternal *Logos*. Ratzinger’s approach is more balanced. Faith is not a blind leap. The human being possesses a fragment that points to that whole it does not possess. The content of faith is not fully revealed at first, but its rationality gradually takes on greater contours in the strength of the divine *Logos*, who is present in the Church.

Adamantly, both reject clerical or political power, and would now decry the contemporary omnipresence of the media or the dominance of artificial intelligence in the lives of Christians. All three threaten the interiority of the human being. God and the human person are two exalted realities beyond the reach of such categories.

In sum, Kierkegaard is correct in modestly calling his thoughts “a little pinch of cinnamon.”³⁶ Quite deliberately, he merely intended to refer to a greater truth than the one of his own design. Therefore, it is accurate to designate him “a second John the Baptist.” On the other hand, it seems an accurate assessment to call Pope Benedict XVI “a second Athanasius” and “a second Pope Gregory the Great.” Like Athanasius, he resolutely defended the integrity of the Christological dogma. Like Gregory the Great, who amid the collapsed Roman Empire would prepare the basis upon which the Carolingian Empire would be positioned, Benedict XVI leaves the legacy of the *Jesus of Nazareth* trilogy. This is a solid

³⁴ S. Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity...*, op. cit., p. 139; G. Dorrien, *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology: Theology without Weapons*, Louisville, KY 1999, p. 67.

³⁵ This is an Enlightenment misconstrual as Tertullian in *De Carne Christi* writes: “and the Son of God died; it is [utterly] credible, because it is unfitting; and he was buried and rose again; it is certain, because it is impossible.” et mortuus est dei filius: [prorsus] credibile est, quia ineptum est. et sepultus resurrexit: certum est, quia impossibile. P. Harrison, “*I Believe Because it is Absurd*”: *The Enlightenment Invention of Tertullian’s Credo*, “Church History” 86/2 (2017), pp. 339–364.

³⁶ H.V. Hong, E.H. Hong (eds.), *Søren Kierkegaard’s Journals and Papers*, vol. 1, Bloomington, IN 1967, < 709, pp. 331f.

fare to master future challenges and to establish a revigorated, global Christian culture. Benedict XVI's theological contributions will inaugurate a significant and long-lasting Christocentric shift. It will not be based on propositional truths à neo-scholasticism, nor on love for grand systems à Hegel, nor will it resuscitate ecclesiastical glories, such as the *flabelli* (peacock fans), but it will open Christianity to a genuine, personal conversion of heart to the second person of the Blessed Trinity, Jesus Christ. Assuredly, the Church will honor him one day as a Doctor of the Church.

The first year of ministry after his ordination in 1951 brought Ratzinger to the Munich parish of *Heilig Blut* (Precious Blood). During the Nazi-Regime this parish brought forth two lay martyrs: Ludwig Baron von Leonrod and Franz Sperr, and two priest martyrs: Hermann Josef Wehrle and Alfred Delp SJ. They protested against the cruelties of Hitler and his minions and had consequently been executed as witnesses to Christ.

Expressing admiration for the brave testimony of these men for the spiritual truth of Jesus Christ over materialistic ideology, Ratzinger penned on May 24, 1952 the following words in the *Poesiealbum* (autograph album) belonging to a little girl in one of his religion classes in *Heilig Blut* Parish:

However the winds blow
 You should stand against them
 When the world falls apart
 Your brave heart may not despair.
 Without the heart's bravery which
 Has the courage to withstand unshakably
 The spirits of the time and the masses,
 We cannot find the way to God
 And the true way of Our Lord.³⁷

He signed the poem "In remembrance of your teacher of religion, Joseph Ratzinger."

³⁷ "Wie auch die Winde wehen: / sollt ihnen zum Trotze stehen; / Wenn auch die Welt zerbricht – Dein Tapferes Herz verzaget nicht. // Ohne die Tapferkeit des Herzens, die den Mut / hat, unerschütterlich den Geistern der Zeit und / der Masse zu trotzen, können wir den Weg zu Gott und den wahren Weg unseres Herren nicht finden." (E. de Gaál, *The Theology...*, op. cit., p. 20, incl. n. 35). Cf. B. Pursell, *Benedict of Bavaria: An Intimate Portrait of the Pope and His Homeland*, North Haven, CT 2008, p. 80.

Bibliography

- Adorno T.W., *Kierkegaard. Konstruktion des Ästhetischen*, Frankfurt am Main 1986.
- Balthasar H.U. von, *Geschichte des eschatologischen Problems in der modernen deutschen Literatur*, Einsiedeln 1998.
- Balthasar H.U. von, Ratzinger J., *Mary: The Church at the Source*, San Francisco, CA 2005.
- Benedict XVI, *Address at "Meeting with Catholics Engaged in the Life of the Church and Society"*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110925_catholics-freiburg.html [access: 16.02.2022].
- Benedict XVI, *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Concert Hall, Freiburg im Breisgau, September 25, 2011*, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2011/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20110925_catholics-freiburg.html [access: 16.02.2022].
- Bonhoeffer D., *Nachfolge*, München 1983.
- Dinan M.D., Pallotto M., *Joseph Ratzinger's "Kierkegaardian option" in Introduction to Christianity*, "International Journal of Philosophy and Theology" 80/4–5 (2019), pp. 390–407.
- Dorrien G., *The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology: Theology without Weapons*, Louisville, KY 1999.
- Gaál E. de, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI. The Christocentric Shift*, New York 2010.
- Harrison P., "I Believe Because it is Absurd": *The Enlightenment Invention of Tertullian's Credo*, "Church History" 86/2 (2017), pp. 339–364.
- Hong H.V., Hong E.H. (eds.), *Søren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, 6 vols., Bloomington, IN 1967–1978.
- Kasper W., *Die Methoden der Dogmatik*, Munich 1967.
- Kieffhaber M., *Christentum als Korrektiv. Untersuchungen zur Theologie Søren Kierkegaards*, Mainz 1987.
- Kierkegaard S., *The Concept of Anxiety: A Simple Psychologically Oriented Deliberation in View of the Dogmatic Problem of Hereditary Sin*, transl. A. Hannay, New York 2015.
- Kierkegaard S., *Fear and Trembling, Dialectical Lyric by Johannes de Silentio*, transl. A. Hannay, London 1986.
- Kierkegaard S., *The Moment and Late Writings*, eds., transl. H.V. Hong, E.H. Hong, Princeton, NJ 2009.
- Kierkegaard S., *Philosophical Fragments/Johannes Climacus*, eds., transl. H.V. Hong, E.H. Hong, Princeton, NJ 1987.
- Kierkegaard S., *Sickness unto Death: A Christian Psychological Exposition of Edification and Awakening*, transl. A. Hannay, London 1989.
- Kierkegaard S., *Training in Christianity, and the Edifying Discourse Which 'Accompanied' It*, transl. W. Lowrie, Oxford 1941.
- McCool G.A., *From Unity to Pluralism*, New York 1999.
- McCool G.A., *The Neo-Thomists*, Milwaukee, WI 1994.
- McCool G.A., *Nineteenth Century Scholasticism: The Search for a Unitary Method*, New York 1999.
- Pursell B.C., *Benedict of Bavaria: An Intimate Portrait of the Pope and His Homeland*, North Haven, CT 2008.
- Ratzinger J., *Entweltlichung der Kirche, die sich gleichsam ihres weltlichen Reichtums entblößt und wieder ihre ganze weltliche Armut annimmt*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Zur Lehre des Zweiten*

- Vatikanischen Konzils: Formulierung – Vermittlung – Deutung*, Series: Gesammelte Schriften 7/2, Freiburg im Breisgau 2012, p. 999.
- Ratzinger J., “*Der Glaube ist es der das Fragen ermöglicht*,” “30 Giorni” 24/1–2 (2006), http://www.30giorni.it/articoli_id_10221_15.htm [access: 20.02.2023].
- Ratzinger J., *Introduction to Christianity*, transl. J.R. Foster, San Francisco, CA 2004.
- Ratzinger J., *Milestones. Memoirs 1927–1977*, San Francisco, CA 1998.
- Ratzinger J., *Die neuen Heiden und die Kirche*, “Hochland” Oktober, 1958; reprinted in J. Ratzinger, *Kirche, Zeichen unter den Völkern: Schriften zur Ekklesiologie und Ökumene*, Series: Gesammelte Schriften 8/2, Freiburg im Breisgau 2010, pp. 1143–1158.
- Ratzinger J., *Was ist der Mensch. Vortrag, Tübingen Ende 1966/ Anfang 1967*, Tonbandaufnahme B. Suermann, [in:] *Mitteilungen des Institut-Papst-Benedikt XVI.*, vol. 1, ed. R. Voderholzer, Regensburg 2008, pp. 28–32, 41–49.
- Ratzinger J., *Weggemeinschaft des Glaubens, Kirche als Communio*, Augsburg 2002.
- Ratzinger J., *Wendezeit für Europa?*, Einsiedeln 1991.
- Roos H., *Kierkegaard nachkonziliar*, Series: Kriterien 5, Einsiedeln 1967.
- Roos H., *Søren Kierkegaard auf der Suche nach dem wahren Christentum*, Series: Institut für europäische Geschichte, Mainz, Vorträge 30, Wiesbaden 1961.
- Rowland T., *Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, Oxford 2008.
- Theunissen M., Greve W. (eds.), *Materialien zur Philosophie Søren Kierkegaards*, Frankfurt am Main 1979.

EMERY DE GAÁL (REV. PROF.) – Chairperson and Professor in the Department of Dogmatic Theology, University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary, Chicago, IL, USA. Most recently authored *O Lord, I Seek Your Countenance. Explorations and Discoveries in Pope Benedict XVI’s Theology* (Steubenville, OH 2018) and *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI. The Christocentric Shift* (New York 2010). Author of over 60 articles, including several entries to reference books on Pope Benedict XVI.

Tim Perry

Providence Theological Seminary, Otterburne, Canada
Tim.Perry@prov.ca

Joseph Ratzinger: Evangelical Ecumenist or How to Argue With a Traditional Protestant Over the Immaculate Conception

Joseph Ratzinger jako ewangeliczny ekumenista, czyli jak spierać się
z tradycyjnym protestantem o niepokalane poczęcie

ABSTRACT: This paper presents a trend among some traditional Protestant theologians to regard Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI as a sympathetic fellow-traveller and ecumenical dialogue partner, focusing on his implementation of the texts of the Second Vatican Council throughout his career, his unique approach to ecumenical dialogue, and his *biblical* focus when defending the Immaculate Conception in *Daughter Zion*. His robust Catholic commitment coupled with his thoughtful canonical exegesis makes him a valuable dialogue partner with those Protestants who have similar ecclesial and theological commitments on the other side of the Reformation.

KEY WORDS: Joseph Ratzinger, Benedict XVI, ecumenism, evangelicalism, Protestant, Catholic, dialogue, Mary, Immaculate Conception, Mariology, Vatican II

ABSTRAKT: Niniejszy artykuł opisuje tendencję zauważalną wśród niektórych tradycyjnych teologów protestanckich, którzy obserwując wytrwale wprowadzanie w życie tekstów Soboru Watykańskiego II przez Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI, jego oryginalne podejście do dialogu ekumenicznego i skupienie na biblijnych podstawach w obronie niepokalnego poczęcia w książce *Córa Syjonu*, postrzegają go jako pełnego zrozumienia towarzysza podróży i partnera dialogu ekumenicznego. Niezachwiana katolicka postawa Ratzingera/Benedykta w połączeniu z przemyślaną egzegezą kanoniczną czyni go cennym partnerem dialogu z tymi protestantami, którzy wykazują podobne do niego zaangażowanie na rzecz swojego Kościoła i teologii po drugiej stronie sporu zapoczątkowanego w okresie reformacji.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Józef Ratzinger, Benedykt XVI, ekumenizm, ewangelikalizm, protestant, katolik, dialog, Maryja, Niepokalane Poczęcie, mariologia, Sobór Watykański II

Introduction

Theology is the church's enterprise of thought, and the only church conceivably in question is the unique and unitary church of the creeds. Therefore, theology may be impossible in the situation of a divided church, its proper agent not being extant—unless, of course, one is willing to say that a particular confessional or jurisdictional body simply is the one church. To live as the church in the situation of a divided church—if it can happen at all—must at least mean that we confess we live in radical self-contradiction and that by every churchly act we contradict that contradiction. Also theology must make this double contradiction at and by every step of its way.

Robert W. Jenson, 1997¹

I was introduced to Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI, when I was assigned *The Spirit of the Liturgy*² as part of my formation for ordination in 2010. Much like Barth's Romans was in the playground of the theologians, this book was a bomb for me. Formed from the cradle in revivalist evangelicalism, I took it for granted that “worship” (by which we meant music) had to induce a psycho-emotional response in the worshippers; the components of the worship service were to be selected or deleted, arranged or based on the end in view, whether it was evangelism, encouragement, exhortation, etc. Ratzinger taught me that worship was about God: gathering in the name of his Son and in the Power of the Spirit to offer thanks and praise to the Father. Indeed, to be so united to Christ through Word and Sacrament as to participate in the very life of God. From that explosive encounter on, Joseph Ratzinger slowly but surely displaced John Calvin and Karl Barth as the theologian to whom I first turned for catechetical preparation, sermons, and for the sheer love of reading theology. Ratzinger knew how to worship. Ratzinger knew how to think. And he did both with a heart full of the love of Jesus.

*Introduction to Christianity*³ taught me how to teach theology; *Teaching and Learning the Love of God*⁴ challenged my vocation to ordained ministry; *Eschatology*,⁵ how to prepare my people (and me) to meet the Lord in death;

¹ R.W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1: *The Triune God*, New York 1997, p. vii.

² J. Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, San Francisco, CA 2000.

³ J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, San Francisco, CA 2004.

⁴ J. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, *Teaching and Learning the Love of God*, San Francisco, CA 2017.

⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, San Francisco, CA 2007.

*Daughter Zion*⁶ deepened my understanding of Mary in New Testament by engaging with the Old Testament. I could go on—I sometimes wonder if I singlehandedly maintain Fr. Joseph Fessio's salary at Ignatius Press! Certainly, I am grateful for his bringing English editions of Ratzinger's work to North America.

I was once advised by a senior theologian that if I aspired to be a good theologian, I ought to apprentice myself to one both brilliant and holy. "Read everything they ever wrote!" he said. "And make sure they're holy and not just brilliant." Knowing this theologian to be very Reformed, I sheepishly admitted that I had already apprenticed myself to Ratzinger, by then Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Imagine my relief when I could almost see him smiling behind his keyboard as he typed, "Me, too."

Why does Benedict speak so powerfully to me and to my friend? At first glance, an answer is not immediately forthcoming. After all, very few of his books are aimed at a general audience, let alone a Protestant one. They are for the Catholic faithful and, more narrowly, to their clergy. Furthermore, however much I recognize in Benedict a fellow pilgrim deeply in love with Jesus, his thought challenges the convinced Protestant at almost every step.

But that's precisely the place at which Benedict is so very valuable for me. I know I disagree with him and I'm pretty sure what I'm disagreeing about (and I often find out my disagreement needs nuance or is just plain wrong). I know this much because across the Reformation divide, he and I equally believe in Truth with a capital T. Together, we confess the reality of Revelation even if Ratzinger and I disagree over just what has been revealed. And that grants a certain foundation from which we can be open to surprising avenues of not only deepened mutual understanding but also agreement. This even as I daily move further from other Protestants for whom questions of truth and the revealed nature of Christian doctrine have been "sociologized" or "historicized" away. From the common commitment to the Truth, and to him who is the Truth, Joseph Ratzinger has become my teacher.

This paper works out just what "my teacher" means with specific reference to the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Here is a point at which Protestants and Catholics are undoubtedly at logger-heads, a point at which "convergence-ecumenism"⁷ has yielded little of significance. Is there another way? I would like to suggest there is in three steps. First, I summarize my perception of Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI as a peculiar kind of traditional Catholic, who

⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion: Meditation on the Church's Marian Belief*, transl. J.M. McDermott, San Francisco, CA 1983.

⁷ The term is Robert W. Jenson's.

doesn't neatly fit into either progressive or traditionalist pigeon-holes. Second, I point out the way in which Ratzinger's traditionalism has shaped a unique approach to ecumenical dialogue that similarly traditional Protestants intuitively "get." And third, I explore this approach as it is found in Ratzinger's treatment of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception in *Daughter Zion*.

Ratzinger the Traditional Catholic

I have always said, and even still say, that it was important that something [i.e., the Traditional Latin Mass] which was previously the most sacred thing in the Church to people should not suddenly be completely forbidden. A society that considers now to be forbidden what it once perceived as the central core—that cannot be. The inner identity it has with the other [i.e., the Novus Ordo Mass] must remain visible. So for me it was not about tactical matters and God knows what, but about the inward reconciliation of the Church with itself.

Joseph Ratzinger, 2016⁸

Above, I mentioned that my first serious introduction to Joseph Ratzinger took place in 2010 and that is true insofar as it is the beginning of my serious interaction with him as a theologian and, eventually, spiritual director at a distance. But it was not my first meeting. That came five years before, right about now. On April 19, 2005, I was on sabbatical at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Canada, finishing up a manuscript that would become *Mary for Evangelicals*.⁹ I was on the second floor with a number of students watching the television, its camera focused on the balcony overlooking St. Peter's Square. When the words, "Habemus Papam," were heard, the audience in which I stood erupted in cheers and tears. When it became clear that Ratzinger was indeed the man, if anything the cheers became louder. I went up two floors to the faculty lounge, naively expecting to see certainly a more reserved, but similarly positive response among my faculty colleagues. Instead, I was greeted by a normally subdued theologian literally goose-stepping down the hall and angrily muttering in German. If other faculty colleagues were not as overt, they agreed that this

⁸ Benedict XVI, P. Seewald, *Last Testament: In His Own Words*, transl. J. Phillips, London 2016, p. 201.

⁹ T. Perry, *Mary for Evangelicals: Toward an Understanding of the Mother of Our Lord*, Downers Grove, IL 2006.

was a very dark day indeed. Two very strong, diametrically opposed reactions to the man I would come to admire. In the intervening years, I became well acquainted with the caricature of the *Panzerkardinal*, God's Rottweiler who, for some at least, could not put a foot right (which is to say, left).

When I began to read Ratzinger seriously, please keep in mind I write as an outsider with some distance from the subject, I simply did not see the man my colleagues in Ottawa so intensely and personally despised. Rather, I met a man who accurately foresaw from a half-century away the travails of late modern Western Christianity, both Catholic and Protestant;¹⁰ and who was convinced that the Second Vatican Council rightly plotted the way forward for the Catholic Church to meet those travails.¹¹ Who did not, in fact, suddenly morph from progressive to traditionalist after 1968, but remained a particular kind of progressive throughout. A progressive who, like St. John Henry Newman,¹² saw doctrinal development through the lens of a "hermeneutics of continuity" in which the Council clarified, deepened and developed what had come previously rather than initiating a rupture which rendered everything up for grabs.¹³ There is, in other words, a tradition, which remains understandable to itself throughout developments that the inevitability of being-in-history brings.

I can think of no better example of the "tradition in progress" on display than the *motu proprio*, *Summorum Pontificum*, of 2007.¹⁴ On the one hand, as his explanation quoted above makes clear, *Summorum Pontificum* demonstrates Benedict's sincere conviction that the *Novus Ordo Mass* does not simply replace Pope John XXIII's 1962 Mass because it cannot. Likewise, this was not an attempt to roll back the clock on liturgical reform, though that is how

¹⁰ J. Ratzinger, *The New Pagans and the Church: A 1958 Lecture by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)*, transl. K. Baker, "Homiletic and Pastoral Review" January 30, 2017, <https://www.hprweb.com/2017/01/the-new-pagans-and-the-church/> [access: 15.06.2023]; J. Ratzinger, *What Will the Future Church Look Like?*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, San Francisco, CA 2009, pp. 101–118.

¹¹ Cf. Peter Seewald's account of the Council in P. Seewald, *Benedict XVI: A Life*, vol. 1: *Youth in Nazi Germany to the Second Vatican Council 1927–1965*, London 2020.

¹² J.H. Newman, *An Essay on The Development of Christian Doctrine*, London 1909 [1845].

¹³ Benedict XVI, *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Roman Curia Offering Them His Christmas Greetings*, Thursday, 22 December 2005, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia.html [access: 15.06.2023].

¹⁴ Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter, *Given Motu Proprio, Summorum Pontificum: On the Use of the Roman Liturgy Prior to the Reform of 1970*, July 7, 2007, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20070707_summorum-pontificum.html [access: 15.06.2023].

Ratzinger's critics sometimes presented it.¹⁵ Rather, for Ratzinger, both forms of the mass reflect a common "inner identity," that is only seen when each is visible. Development, certainly, but not replacement.

At the same time, the 1962 Mass was not returned unaltered; it too, if it was to retain its truthfulness, had to develop. The ancient "prayer for the Jews" simply could no longer be used after World War II and the momentous changes in Jewish/Christian relations and understanding that followed. This was not done for the sake of good interfaith manners (indeed, it remains a prayer for the Jews' conversion and continues to face criticism), but because the old prayer no longer spoke truly in the new context. Once that became apparent the prayer was quickly changed.¹⁶ But it was not simply a matter of excising the prayer or inserting the very different prayer found in the *Novus Ordo*. In Ratzinger's words,

One had to have a form of the prayer created that fitted with the spiritual style of the old liturgy, but which was at the same time consonant with our modern understandings of Judaism and Christianity. ... I'm still happy today that I managed to change the old liturgy for the better at that moment.¹⁷

Both prayers, it seems, were to sit side by side, each reflecting one facet of the complicated relationship between Jews and Christians.

So what to make of all of this? On the one hand, I have yet to meet the revanchist so feared by liberal Catholics (and Protestants) when I read Ratzinger; on the other, neither do I see the stalwart defender of the historically immune, pristine faith so-prized by some Catholic traditionalists. I see a Vatican II progressive who, unlike the Hans Küng/Edward Schillebeeckx progressives, reads the Council as bringing forth treasures new and old (Matt 13:52), as preparing, clarifying, and deepening the tradition in order that the tradition might speak evangelistically and prophetically to the modern world.¹⁸

¹⁵ See R. Schmit, *Attempt to Resurrect pre-Vatican II Mass Leaves Church at Crossroads*, "National Catholic Reporter" December 8, 2012, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/attempt-resurrect-pre-vatican-ii-mass-leaves-church-crossroads> [access: 15.06.2023].

¹⁶ See *Nota della Segreteria di Stato*, "L'Osservatore Romano" 148/31 (2008), p. 1.

¹⁷ Benedict XVI, Seewald, *Last Testament...*, op. cit., p. 198.

¹⁸ One of the most interesting early readings of the Council by a self-identified evangelical Protestant argues rightly that Vatican II left the struggle for the Catholic Church not between the traditionalists and the progressives, but between developmental and revolutionary progressives, represented ideally by Ratzinger and Küng respectively. See D. Wells, *Revolution in Rome*, Downers Grove, IL 1973. See also, T. Perry, *Evangelicals*

Ratzinger the Ecumenist

Certainly division is harmful, especially when it leads to enmity and an impoverishment of Christian witness. But if the poison of hostility is slowly removed from the division, and if, through mutual acceptance, diversity leads no longer to mere impoverishment but rather to a new wealth of listening and understanding, then during the transition to unity division can become a *felix culpa*, a happy fault, even before it is completely healed... Even as separated brethren, we can be one.

Joseph Ratzinger, 1986¹⁹

I understand that Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI, is a polarizing figure, drawing out strong reactions among critics and admirers. One of his Catholic critics, a friend of mine, quipped when I expressed admiration for his leadership of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF), “It’s easier for you. As a Protestant, you’ll never be under his thumb.” Perhaps unkindly expressed, but there is an element of truth to it. It *is* easier for me to admire someone with whom there never was or will be a direct hierarchical relationship. Nevertheless, I believe my reading of his theological position as a “developmental progressive,” can be supported by the evidence better than other options available.

What does Ratzinger, as a developmental progressive, bring to ecumenism? That’s the next question to be considered. I will not tackle it fully. Not only is it more fully addressed elsewhere in this conference (and I have no desire to demonstrate my ignorance more than I already have!) but also, Carl Trueman has already penned *the* evangelical, indeed, robustly Protestant response to Ratzinger’s peculiar ecumenical vision.²⁰ Because I cannot add to or argue with Prof. Trueman in any substantive way, I will simply unpack the quote with which this section opened.

I observe first of all that, Ratzinger both assumes division among Christians and that its healing will be a divine work. This assumption is notable for two reasons. First of all, it acknowledges that “convergence ecumenism,”—so named

and the Reception of the Second Vatican Council, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Vatican II*, eds. C. Clifford, M. Faggioli, New York 2023, pp. 556–569.

¹⁹ J. Ratzinger, *On the Progress of Ecumenism: A Letter to the Theologische Quartalschrift, a Periodical Published in Tübingen*, [in:] *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology*, transl. M.J. Miller et al., San Francisco, CA 2008, p. 135.

²⁰ C.R. Trueman, *Is the Pope (Roman) Catholic? Joseph Ratzinger on Ecumenism*, [in:] *The Theology of Benedict XVI: A Protestant Appreciation*, ed. T. Perry, Bellingham, WA 2019, pp. 152–167.

by Robert W. Jenson—has failed. I know I'm risking caricature here, but I would describe convergence ecumenism as a largely political project that treats doctrinal disagreement as secondary, focusing instead on removing practical barriers to mutual recognition of "true churches," and therefore, intercommunion among them. Given that goal, there are precious few achievements to point to so far. But pragmatics is not Ratzinger's concern. He rejects convergence ecumenism because it treats truth as a secondary matter. More on that in a moment. Moreover, convergence ecumenism is Protestant in its DNA. Therefore, no matter how "successful" it might turn out to be—and the history of the last 50 years is ambivalent—it cannot be fully embraced by a Catholic.

Unpacking that leads to the second reason for the assumption's notability. Ratzinger's position on the primacy of the Catholic Church, that she solely can claim the title, *Church* with a capital C, is notable precisely because it's *not* his. Rather, it is the position of Vatican II. Whatever elements of sanctification and truth are found outside it, the Church subsists in the Catholic Church. Indeed, those external elements naturally drive toward union with the Catholic Church.²¹ Those elements come from Christ, lead to Christ and "belong by right to the one Church of Christ."²² The CDF's repetition of these sentiments in the 2000 document, *Dominus Iesus*²³—with footnotes!—was greeted with consternation. Many Protestants and not a few Catholics saw the document as an ecumenical setback. I remain genuinely confused—again, as a Protestant, on the outside—as to why. And even more confused when responsibility for the "setback" was laid almost exclusively at the feet of the then Cardinal Prefect rather than the Congregation he led, or the Council the document quoted, or the then Pope himself, who said much the same thing in the more positively received encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*,²⁴ published only five years previously. Ratzinger on ecumenism is faithful to the Council to the letter!

Following the path set by Vatican II, then, Ratzinger's ecumenical aims are more modest and more hopeful than the convergence ecumenists.²⁵ More

²¹ Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, no. 8.

²² Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, no. 3.

²³ Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, no. 17.

²⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*.

²⁵ It is striking that the Joint Declaration on Justification, published between *Ut Unum Sint* and *Dominus Iesus*, and for which Ratzinger deserves at least much credit/blame, does *not* signal the end of the Reformation, but more modestly proposes that in the light of significant areas of agreement on the doctrine those areas of disagreement that persist ought not to be regarded as church dividing. Cf. *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church*, October 31, 1999, <http://www.christianity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/luterani/dialogo/>

modest because divisions over matters of truth persist; so deep are they that only God will finally heal them. Until God does, the purposes of ecumenism remain (1) to acknowledge, repent of, and reject hostility and violence. Thankfully, this has largely been accomplished in Europe and North America. Where Christianity is a young religion, however, such anti-Gospel behavior continues and so Ratzinger's call remains potent. And (2) to overcome the impoverishment of division and through it work to create a wealth of understanding. Which brings us to hope. Where the ecumenists are looking to accomplish a political rapprochement more elusive than that sought after by the Koreans, Ratzinger knows the matter belongs to Him for whom nothing is impossible. If we pursue a wealth of mutual understanding, God may sanctify and augment our efforts by bringing good out of the evil of division, turning it ultimately into a happy fault.

This Augustinian language, claimed by both Protestants and Catholics resonates with me and I have seen it in my own life. One of my prized possessions is a copy of a letter sent by Pope Benedict XVI to Todd Hains of Lexham publishing house to express his gratitude for an anthology of essays I edited under the title, *The Theology of Benedict XVI: A Protestant Appreciation*.²⁶ He wrote, "Their studies show sincere love for Jesus Christ, deep intellectual honesty and the readiness to give witness to the Truth. Such publications are an expression of authentic ecumenical dialogue. United in the one Lord Jesus Christ, with best greetings, I am sincerely yours ..."²⁷ These essays were not fawning; neither were they unnecessarily polemical. They were legitimate attempts to get to grips with the thought of a theologian who the essayists believed, had much to teach us regardless of disagreements. This it seems to me is a more realistic and finally more hopeful ecumenism that confidently and prayerfully leaves full visible communion in the hands of him who implored his Father that we would be one.

So what does Ratzinger bring to ecumenism? A vision that is, I believe, at once more realistic and modest *and* more daring and hopeful than that that has been typically practiced since Vatican II. Neither rigidly traditionalist nor straightforwardly progressive, it is deeply indebted to the texts of the Second Vatican Council, and one that is actually attractive to Protestants (like me) who have similar convictions from the other side of the Reformation.

documenti-di-dialogo/1999-dichiarazione-congiunta-sulla-dottrina-della-justification/en.html [access: 15.06.2023].

²⁶ T. Perry (ed.), *The Theology of Benedict XVI: A Protestant Appreciation*, Bellingham 2019.

²⁷ Pope Benedict XVI, *Letter to Todd R. Hains*, August 27, 2020 [author's archive].

Ratzinger the Evangelical

The aim of [canonical exegesis] is to read individual texts within the totality of the one Scripture, which then sheds new light on all the individual texts... If you want to understand the Scripture in the spirit in which it is written, you have to attend to the content and to the unity of Scripture as a whole.

Joseph Ratzinger, 2007²⁸

Should we want “proof” texts of the chief Marian teachings, perhaps it can be this: if one takes John 1 as what it is, John’s equivalent of Matthew’s and Mark’s [sic] birth stories, and inserts Mary explicitly into her places in the story, the Marian doctrines immediately result.

Robert W. Jenson, 1999²⁹

The title of this last section is a little tongue in cheek. What, after all, does evangelical mean? On a strict reading of the Greek, of course Ratzinger is an evangelical thinker insofar as his thought is grounded in the announcement of the good news that Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, rose on the third day. On a European/German reading of the term, where evangelical simply means Protestant, he’s not. But what happens when an American inflection is added?

Evangelicalism is a peculiar sort of Anglo American Protestantism organized around four nodes: conversionism (one does not inherit Christian faith; one becomes a Christian), crucicentrism (the work of Christ in his passion is the central theme of evangelical spirituality), biblicism (the Bible [alone] is the source and norm for theological thought), and activism (encompassing both evangelism and social action, evangelicals have historically been committed to working for social transformation according to Gospel norms).³⁰ If this meaning of the word “evangelical” is taken, the matter is, I would suggest, a bit more complex. Of course, Ratzinger is not a Protestant. But his writings show an affinity for argumentation that Protestants get at an intuitive level. We do read Catholic

²⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, transl. A.J. Walker, New York 2007, p. xviii.

²⁹ R.W. Jenson, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2: *The Works of God*, New York 1999, p. 204.

³⁰ Commonly called the Bebbington Quadrilateral, these four nodes have been scrutinized, criticized, and amended by church historians both friendly to the evangelical movement and not. But it has held up remarkably well in the 35 years since it was first propounded in D. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, London 1989.

theologians from across the spectrum, but some of them require us to work harder than others. Even those with whom way may be largely sympathetic, like Pope St. John Paul II, come to the task of theology in a very different way. Ratzinger, however, *feels* familiar because his vocabulary is biblical, while his mode, style, and cadence are all largely Augustinian. He rather paints us as King Agrippa to his St. Paul: “Almost, thou persuadest me...” (Acts 26:28).

With that in mind, I turn finally to Ratzinger’s defense of the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception as it is found in his slim volume on Mariology, *Daughter Zion*.³¹ I have chosen this work because at first glance its ecumenical value is not readily apparent.³² It was not written for a mixed audience, but to those Catholics, who, in the years following the Council, have begun to wonder about the place of Mary in doctrine and devotion. Ratzinger wants to strengthen Marian belief in a time of diminishment. In addition to the audience, the subject matter is also problematic. Mary remains a flashpoint for disagreement. Whatever rapprochement may have been achieved especially in the decades following the Council, more traditionally minded believers continue to part quite sharply on Marian matters. Evangelicals will remember that Mary came to embody *all* the concerns of the Reformation. Traditional Catholics will add to those arguments the deep emotions encountered when someone criticizes one’s mother. The modern dogmas are themselves especially neuralgic. I chose this work because it invites the question: “What on earth can this book say about the Immaculate Conception to an evangelical Protestant?”

Ratzinger takes on the challenge of rearticulating the doctrinal and devotional significance of Mary *by appealing to Scripture*. And here, again, he is a man of the Council. He follows Pope St. Paul VI’s instructions in *Marialis Cultus* closely. Specifically, he will present Mary within the bounds provided by Holy Scripture as much as possible, and he will do so in a way that will not unnecessarily antagonize non-Catholic readers.³³ So, the audience is foreign and the subject matter is fraught, but the method is familiar and the style not immediately off-putting. So, perhaps there’s some room there after all.

The objections Ratzinger raises at the outset are familiar to Protestants: the Immaculate Conception is absent from the Bible, it is diametrically opposed to what is (namely, the universality of sin and the corresponding need

³¹ J. Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*..., op. cit.

³² I treat the work as a whole in T. Perry, “Behold the Handmaid of the Lord”: Joseph Ratzinger on Mary, [in:] *The Theology of Benedict XVI: A Protestant Appreciation*, ed. T. Perry, Bellingham 2019, pp. 118–135.

³³ Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*. See esp. nos. 29–37.

for saving grace).³⁴ We do not have space to expand on these objections here. But no matter. Ratzinger is not interested in rebutting them directly. Rather, he circumvents them in a way Protestants will then find intriguing: they are themselves *insufficiently biblical!*

Where evangelical Protestants would immediately point to the paucity of Marian material in the New Testament in general, Ratzinger would start off by turning us to the Old Testament, and specifically to the repeated theme in the prophets of the holy remnant: those faithful among the people of God who did not “bow the knee to Baal.”³⁵ Typological reading of the Old Testament in this way, for so long foreign to Protestant exegesis, and evangelical exegesis in particular, has been returning especially over the last two decades. So, even if the subject matter—Mary as typological fulfilment of the remnant—is new, the move is not. His next move takes us to the Old Testament. *If* it is right to read Mary in this way, i.e., as the embodiment of faithful Israel, then it must surely also be right to read Mary in the light of the New Testament’s faithful community, i.e. the Church. Thus, St. Paul’s exalted ecclesiological language of Eph 5:27, is seen in Mary. She foreshadows and renders visible the Church’s eschatological reality, which brings us to this third, dogmatic move. The Immaculate Conception, theologically, means that sin is not natural to humanity, but an aberration. She is in her immaculacy, truly human. Thus, her graces, which are the graces of the Church are at the same time the hope of every believer. Grace has not removed Mary from us as it has allowed us through her to glimpse the end of all who are united to her Son, our Savior.

The near half-century since *Daughter Zion* was published, of course, has not led to a renewed ecumenical engagement over the Dogma of the Immaculate Conception, even if there has been some positive engagement about Mary in general.³⁶ And here I think we need to remember Ratzinger’s realism about Christian division: the divides are real, deep, and so persistent that it will be nothing less than a divine work that heals them. My own conviction is, we would actually have to be closer than we currently are to engage fruitfully in that kind of discussion. We Protestants are a fissiparous bunch, after all, and even if some of us would like to carry on such a conversation, very few on our side are actually listening because we no longer believe we want to Reform the

³⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion...*, op. cit., p. 62.

³⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion...*, op. cit., p. 65.

³⁶ See, e.g., D. Bolen, G. Cameron (eds.), *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, London 2006.

church and therefore treat division as a scandal. On the contrary, it is a fact of our ecclesial life that, if not quite celebrated, is certainly not painful.³⁷

In hope, however, we evangelicals ought to recognise the ecumenical reward of listening closely to this argument for the following reasons. It turns us back to consider our reception of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture. If we are beginning to return to patristic modes of reading the first Christian Scriptures (and we are), then different conversations about what that text *means* and *how* it means are going to take place. On this, Ratzinger is a master teacher—indeed the reception of the Old Testament as Christian Scripture is one of his favourite themes, running through his entire corpus. Second, Ratzinger turns those of us who are confessionally oriented (Lutherans, Presbyterians, Anglicans, etc.) back to our own confessions, there perhaps to be surprised. For not only is Mary consistently presented as “the Blessed Virgin,” but that is merely a contraction of “Ever-Virgin” of the earliest confessions, some of which also call her “pure,” and even “immaculate.”³⁸ What do these words mean when they are uttered not by a Pope, but by, for example, Huldrych Zwingli, the Reformer of Basel?

Third, we may actually need to reconsider the charge that the Immaculate Conception is (to repurpose Article 20 from the Thirty-Nine Articles), grounded upon no warranty of Scripture. In the second quote with which this section began, Lutheran theologian Robert W. Jenson provocatively suggested that the modern Marian dogmas result when readers place Mary where she belongs in the prologue of John’s Gospel. I have a similar idea in mind, but I want to use a different analogy. Evangelicals are fractious. We like to fight. One of the things we fight about is baptism. Is it necessary? Who can be baptized? What does baptism look like? These are open questions among evangelical believers. Salvation Army members, for example, say no to the first. On the second, Baptists say: believers only! Lutherans, Anglicans, and Presbyterians open the font to the children of believers. On the third, immersion, pouring or sprinkling is a division from which entire denominations have been made. When it comes to the Bible, Baptists and other “believers-only” evangelicals point to the book of Acts with its lack of infant baptisms as their key support. Magisterial Protestants on the other hand invoke Paul’s theology of baptism in Rom 6 and the New Testament appropriations of the Red Sea and Noah’s Ark as baptismal images as not just permitting the baptism of infants, but demanding it. This

³⁷ For more on this, see P.J. Leithart, *The End of Protestantism: Pursuing Unity in a Fragmented Church*, Grand Rapids, MI 2016.

³⁸ See T. Perry, *Mary in the Reformed Confessions*, “Ad Fontes: A Journal of Protestant Letters” Spring (2023), pp. 11–17.

is an ongoing debate. Consideration of Ratzinger's argument likely will not persuade those who, like the aforementioned Baptists, require explicit New Testament justification before they will assent to the Immaculate Conception. On the other hand, it might at least invite Magisterial Protestants to reconsider their objections because it treats the Old Testament in a manner analogous to the New Testament's treatment of the Old in baptism. So, will Ratzinger make Marian devotees of us? Likely not. But for those of us who receive him as our teacher, he will force us to reconsider our theology of Scripture, our own confessional history, and our own exegesis of Scripture in potentially fruitful ways, ways I wager we would not have considered without ecumenical engagement. I can't help but think that such exercises are small indications of what, in the end, will be regarded as a "happy fault," in a grand sweep of God's dealings with his people.

Conclusions

In this paper, I've tried to sketch how a convinced Protestant who is nonetheless scandalized by the division in Western Christianity can come to a deep appreciation for the thought of Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI. That thought is accessible to some Protestants because of its biblical focus and Augustinian shape. It is so clearly and winsomely expressed that it easily clears away misunderstanding and stimulates theological reflection in his own tradition. This paper has been self-referential because it is so much my own story. I have apprenticed myself to a brilliant and godly theologian and I have benefitted. My plea to other Protestants is the plea of Barth to his Catholic students: "Read Ratzinger!" My plea to my separated brothers and sisters is to keep giving us such gifts! We need them. And my hope is that you will see just what a gift you have given us not in God's Rottweiler, but in God's border collie—a faithful companion of the Good Shepherd.

Bibliography

- Bebbington D., *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s*, London 1989.
- Benedict XVI, *Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Roman Curia Offering Them His Christmas Greetings*, Thursday, December 22, 2005, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2005/december/documents/hf_ben_xvi_spe_20051222_roman-curia.html [access: 15.06.2023].
- Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter, Given Motu Proprio, *Summorum Pontificum: On the Use of the Roman Liturgy Prior to the Reform of 1970*, July 7, 2007, https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/motu_proprio/documents/hf_ben-xvi_motu-proprio_20070707_summorum-pontificum.html [access: 15.06.2023].
- Benedict XVI, *Letter to Todd R. Hains*, August 27, 2020 [author's archive].
- Benedict XVI, Seewald P., *Last Testament: In His Own Words*, transl. J. Phillips, London 2016.
- Bolen D., Cameron G. (eds.), *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*, London 2006.
- Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Declaration *Dominus Iesus*, 2000.
- Jenson R.W., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 1: *The Triune God*, New York 1997.
- Jenson R.W., *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2: *The Works of God*, New York 1999.
- John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Ut Unum Sint*, 1995.
- Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by the Lutheran World Federation and the Catholic Church*, October 31, 1999, <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/luterani/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/1999-dichiarazione-congiunta-sulla-dottrina-della-giustificazione/en.html> [access: 15.06.2023].
- Leithart P.J., *The End of Protestantism: Pursuing Unity in a Fragmented Church*, Grand Rapids, MI 2016.
- Newman J.H., *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, London 1909 [1845].
- Nota della Segreteria di Stato*, "L'Osservatore Romano" 148/31 (2008), p. 1.
- Paul VI, Apostolic Exhortation *Marialis Cultus*, 1974.
- Perry T., "Behold the Handmaid of the Lord": Joseph Ratzinger on Mary, [in:] *The Theology of Benedict XVI: A Protestant Appreciation*, ed. T. Perry, Bellingham, WA 2019, pp. 118–135.
- Perry T., *Evangelicals and the Reception of the Second Vatican Council*, [in:] *The Oxford Handbook of Vatican II*, eds. C. Clifford, M. Faggioli, New York 2023, pp. 556–569.
- Perry T., *Mary for Evangelicals: Toward an Understanding of the Mother of Our Lord*, Downers Grove, IL 2006.
- Perry T., *Mary in the Reformed Confessions*, "Ad Fontes: A Journal of Protestant Letters," Spring (2023), pp. 11–17.
- Perry T. (ed.), *The Theology of Benedict XVI: A Protestant Appreciation*, Bellingham, WA 2019.
- Ratzinger J., *Daughter Zion: Meditation on the Church's Marian Belief*, transl. J.M. McDermott, San Francisco, CA 1983.
- Ratzinger J., *Eschatology*, San Francisco, CA 2007.
- Ratzinger J., *Introduction to Christianity*, San Francisco, CA 2004.
- Ratzinger J./Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, transl. A.J. Walker, New York 2007.

- Ratzinger J., *The New Pagans and the Church: A 1958 Lecture by Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI)*, transl. K. Baker, "Homiletic and Pastoral Review" January 30, 2017, <https://www.hprweb.com/2017/01/the-new-pagans-and-the-church/> [access: 15.06.2023].
- Ratzinger J., *On the Progress of Ecumenism: A Letter to the Theologische Quartalschrift, a Periodical Published in Tübingen*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology*, transl. M.J. Miller et al., San Francisco, CA 2008, pp. 132–138.
- Ratzinger J., *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, San Francisco, CA 2000.
- Ratzinger J./Benedict XVI, *Teaching and Learning the Love of God*, San Francisco, CA 2017.
- Ratzinger J., *What Will the Future Church Look Like?*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, San Francisco, CA 2009, pp. 101–118.
- Schmit R., *Attempt to Resurrect pre-Vatican II Mass Leaves Church at Crossroads*, "National Catholic Reporter" December 8, 2012, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/spirituality/attempt-resurrect-pre-vatican-ii-mass-leaves-church-crossroads> [access: 15.06.2023].
- Second Vatican Council, Decree on Ecumenism *Unitatis Redintegratio*, 1964.
- Second Vatican Council, Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen Gentium*, 1964.
- Seewald P., *Benedict XVI: A Life*, vol. 1: *Youth in Nazi Germany to the Second Vatican Council 1927–1965*, London 2020.
- Trueman C.R., *Is the Pope (Roman) Catholic?: Joseph Ratzinger on Ecumenism*, [in:] *The Theology of Benedict XVI: A Protestant Appreciation*, ed. T. Perry, Bellingham, WA 2019, pp. 152–167.
- Wells D.F., *Revolution in Rome*, Downers Grove, IL 1973.

TIM PERRY (PHD) – Professor of Theology and Church Ministries at Providence Theological Seminary (Otterburne, Canada). Member of the Evangelical/Catholic Dialogue Group co-sponsored by the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Author of several articles and essays on Pope Benedict XVI and the editor of *The Theology of Benedict XVI: A Protestant Appreciation* (Bellingham, WA 2019).

Marco Vanzini

Pontificia Università della Santa Croce, Italy
vanzini@pusc.it
ORCID: 0009-0007-3137-9454

“How is man saved?” An Essential Contribution by Joseph Ratzinger to the Theology of Religions

“W jaki sposób człowiek jest zbawiany?” – nowatorski wkład
Josepha Ratzingera w teologię religii

ABSTRACT: The article aims to present Joseph Ratzinger’s thought in the field of theology of religions, according to which both the salvific universality of Christ and the necessity of the Church for the salvation of every man (and thereby the deepest meaning of being Christian) appear inseparably. The author shows how Ratzinger outlines a vision with two focal points: the objective aspect of salvation with the theological understanding of the vicarious representation of Christ (and the Church with him) and the subjective conditions of salvation with a reflection on the human being. In the article, it is thus demonstrated how an essential salvific relationship – a synthesis of faith and love – can be established between man and God. It is further shown that Ratzinger also highlights the role which Christianity, together with world religions, can play in the common search for the truth about God and man, contributing to the unity of the human family. The article concludes with an observation that the depth of Ratzinger’s reflection on the question of salvation contributes to illuminating fundamental aspects of the complex theological problem of religions.

KEYWORDS: salvation, salvific relationship with God, vicarious representation, Church, truth in religions, theology of religions, Christianity and religions

ABSTRAKT: Celem artykułu jest przedstawienie myśli Josepha Ratzingera w dziedzinie teologii religii, zgodnie z którą zarówno zbawcza uniwersalność Chrystusa, jak i konieczność Kościoła dla zbawienia każdego człowieka (a tym samym najgłębszy sens bycia chrześcijaninem) są nierozdzielne. Autor pokazuje, że wizja Ratzingera koncentruje się wokół dwóch aspektów: teologicznego rozumienia zbawczego pośrednictwa Chrystusa (a wraz z nim Kościoła) oraz refleksji nad istotą ludzką i subiektywnymi warunkami zbawienia. W dalszej części artykułu wykazano, w jaki sposób między człowiekiem a Bogiem może zostać nawiązana istotna relacja zbawcza – synteza wiary

i miłości. Pokazano również, że Ratzinger podkreśla rolę, jaką chrześcijaństwo wraz z religiami świata może odegrać we wspólnym poszukiwaniu prawdy o Bogu i człowieku, przyczyniając się do jedności rodziny ludzkiej. Artykuł kończy się spostrzeżeniem, że głębia refleksji Ratzingera nad kwestią zbawienia przyczynia się do naświetlenia fundamentalnych aspektów złożonego teologicznego problemu religii.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: zbawienie, zbawcza relacja z Bogiem, zbawcze pośrednictwo, Kościół, prawda w religiach, teologia religii, chrześcijaństwo a religie

Introduction

Joseph Ratzinger's theological reflection is known to be accompanied, from beginning to end, by his interest in religions.¹ His thought regarding the relationship between Christianity and other religions, along with the resultant fundamental questions on salvation are far too abundant to be discussed in a short essay.² Though he did not elaborate a systematic thought, he helped to illuminate fundamental aspects of the complex theological problem of religions. It is on one of these aspects, of particular relevance, that we would like to focus our attention. It regards the clarification of *what the salvation of man is, what it consists of in its present realization, albeit in an incipient way*. For Ratzinger, it is a fundamental question for human existence which has always motivated philosophical research and which, at the same time, is "one of the main questions

¹ He himself recalls that the importance of the theme of religions was clear to him from the first years of teaching fundamental theology in Freising and Bonn, between 1955 and 1963. Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance. Christian Belief and World Religions*, San Francisco, CA 2004, p. 15. It is also significant that the fruit of his latest efforts, published posthumously under the name of Benedetto XVI, *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale*, Milano 2023, contains no fewer than three chapters dedicated to clarifying the nature of religion and to various themes of dialogue between Christianity and religions.

² See for this: S.V. Advani, *From Religious Pluralism to a Unity in Diversity. An Exploration and Analysis of Joseph Ratzinger's Theology of Religions*, Roma 2022; P. Blanco Sarto, *Joseph Ratzinger: Razón y Cristianismo. La victoria de la inteligencia en el mundo de las religiones*, Madrid 2005; more synthetic essays are those of: C. O'Regan, *The Theology of Religions of Benedict XVI*, [in:] *Evangelization as Interreligious Dialogue*, eds. J.C. Cavadini, D. Wallenfang, Eugene, OR 2019, pp. 45–79; E. Anton, *Joseph Ratzinger's Soteriological Inclusivism*, "The Journal of Theological Studies" 69/1 (2018), pp. 170–190; P. Rodríguez Panizo, *El cristianismo y las religiones según Joseph Ratzinger*, [in:] *El pensamiento de Joseph Ratzinger, teólogo y papa*, ed. S. Madrigal, Madrid 2009, pp. 243–275; P. Coda, *Sul posto del cristianesimo nella storia delle religioni. Rilevanza a attualità di una chiave di lettura*, "PATH" 6/1 (2007), pp. 239–253.

in the current theological debate.”³ In the words we have chosen as the title of this contribution, he poses the question: “How is man healed? How does he become righteous?”⁴ This question lies at the very heart of the problem: it is from here that the reflection on “Religion, Truth and Salvation” should properly begin.⁵ And it is with this interpretation that, in our opinion, Ratzinger succeeds in making a series of clarifications and insights that develop an essential theological understanding of the salvific relationship between man and God, from which also the reflection on the relationship between Christianity and religions can greatly benefit.

A first clarification involves critiquing the underlying approach to theology of religions, which forms the basis for distinguishing between exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism: Ratzinger believes that the question of religions is too easily identified with that of salvation. There is a tendency, on the one hand, to consider religions in an undifferentiated and generic way, circumventing the a more precise knowledge of individual religions and of their spiritual profile from a phenomenological point of view in order to recognize in them the common elements but also the notable differences;⁶ on the other hand, above all, one loses sight of the fact that the problem of salvation has to do with the whole of human existence and with the mystery of God’s action, which is at variance with the attempt to find solutions which are too general. Ratzinger provocatively asks: “How do we know that the theme of salvation should only be tied to religions? Do we not have to approach it, in a far more discriminating

³ Thus Ratzinger expressed himself in 1999, in a conference on the encyclical *Fides et ratio*, collected in J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., pp. 183–209, here 202.

⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 202. In the English edition, the German term “heil” is translated as “healed.” We think it more meaningful, given the context of the expression, to translate it as “saved,” as in the Italian edition (cf. J. Ratzinger, *Fede, verità, tolleranza. Il cristianesimo e le religioni del mondo*, Cantagalli, Siena 2012, p. 213). This is also what we have done in the title of this study.

⁵ This is the title of the paragraph in which Ratzinger poses this question, as the origin and guiding thread of all subsequent reflection on the relationship between salvation, truth and religions.

⁶ See the *Preliminary Remarks* with which Ratzinger introduces his 1963 essay on the place of the Christian faith among the world’s religions, in J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., pp. 15–19. The need for a better knowledge of the various religions in order to elaborate an adequate theology is indicated also in International Theological Commission, *Christianity and the World Religions*, 1996, no. 5. The importance of the approach given by Ratzinger to the question of religions and of the methodological approach that derives from it is underlined by P. Coda, *Sul posto del cristianesimo...*, op. cit., pp. 239–242.

manner, from human existence as a whole? And should not the highest respect for the mystery of God's activity always be our guide?"⁷

Through this initial clarification, Ratzinger's approach to the theme of man's salvation achieves a depth rarely encountered in other authors. Already in some of his 1960s writings, including the essay *No Salvation Outside the Church?*,⁸ we can see the outline of fundamental concepts concerning both the subjective and objective conditions of the relationship with God who renders man just and "saved." These ideas are further expounded in his later interventions from the 1990s, which are collected in the volume *Truth and Tolerance*. The central role of Christ in the salvation of man, including non-Christians, naturally emerges within the scope of this same reflection along with a first, invisible mode of the Church's participation in Christ's redemptive mediation. The first and second parts of this study will be dedicated to examining Ratzinger's vision of man's salvific relationship with God, as elaborated in the writings mentioned above.

A second important clarification made by Ratzinger is made possible by the first: having focused on the theme of salvation, distinguishing it from that of religions, allows one to look at the latter in a more serene and objective manner. Thus, the inescapability of the question of truth emerges clearly in Ratzinger's reflection, emphasizing the necessity of recognizing what is right, authentically "human," and what genuinely unites humans with God and among themselves. It becomes clear that it is to the extent that religions lead man to the true good, and ultimately to the one Good which is God, that they, as well as cultures, can contribute to man's salvific encounter with God. The reflection on the value of truth – even from the perspective of interreligious dialogue – and on the contribution that the Christian faith can bring in this regard is developed by Ratzinger, especially in his works produced after 1990, and it is to these that we will refer to in the third part of our study.

Before concluding this introduction, it is worth highlighting a reason for the particular interest in the analysis of Joseph Ratzinger's thought that we present here. The proposal of the German theologian and Pontiff not only sheds light on the limitations of exclusivist and pluralist positions in the field of theology

⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 53.

⁸ The original text, *Kein Heil außerhalb der Kirche?* [1965], has only recently been partially translated into English by Jared Wicks and published in L. Boeve, G. Mannion (eds.), *The Ratzinger Reader: Mapping a Theological Journey*, London 2010, pp. 154–159. In the following we will refer, when possible, to the English translation; in the missing parts we will use our own translation, based on the Italian version, J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza fuori della Chiesa?*, [in:] *Il nuovo popolo di Dio* [1969], Brescia 1992, pp. 365–389.

of religions.⁹ It also has the unique ability to outline a theology of the religious relationship in which one understands how such a relationship can truly be established, by the grace of God, in the heart of every man, whatever the circumstances of his life, without sacrificing the uniqueness of Christ’s mediation and the necessity of the Church united to him, but rather emphasizing them. Indeed, Ratzinger demonstrates how the uniqueness of Christ’s mediation does not contradict but rather establishes and makes possible both the universality of salvation and the necessary role of the Church. This perspective thus also reveals the limitations of the theological position that, in order to affirm the necessity of faith and belonging to Christ in his Body, the Church, or the value of the Church’s mission, tends to ultimately reduce the scope of the salvific offer addressed in Christ to all men, emphasizing the difficulty of fulfilling the conditions it requires. Such a position has a long tradition, revived during the period of great missionary fervour between the 19th and 20th centuries and today supported, understandably, in opposition to the claims of salvific universalism typical of some pluralist theologies of religions.¹⁰ What is unsatisfactory in such a position is that it simultaneously obscures not only the light and the strength of the Father’s goodness towards every man but also the splendour of the salvation that He has revealed and accomplished in sending his Son, who became man, died, and rose for us. It is precisely this goodness and splendour that are highlighted in Joseph Ratzinger’s proposal.

The salvific relationship with God as a synthesis of faith and love: the subjective aspect of salvation

To address this first aspect, we refer specifically, as mentioned before, to Ratzinger’s essay *No Salvation Outside the Church?* In this essay, after demonstrating through historical analysis that a non-exclusivist interpretation of the patristic

⁹ As C. O’Regan’s essay *The Theology of Religions of Benedict XVI*, op. cit., convincingly shows.

¹⁰ The book of Ralph Martin, *Will Many Be Saved? What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization*, Grand Rapids, MI 2012, is a good example of the theological position to which we refer. The author develops his argument on the basis of the final paragraph of *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16, in which the Council warns against man’s danger of getting lost in the search for truth and of living without God, finally emphasizing the indispensable role of missions. Drawing on this text, the author seems to want to limit the scope of the affirmation that salvation is possible for every man even without explicit knowledge of the Gospel, specifying the severity of the conditions under which this can really happen, in order not to induce Catholics to lose the evangelizing tension.

formula is possible – and indeed required by the overall logic of the Christian faith – he addresses the question of how salvation is concretely realised in man’s life: that is, what are the “subjective conditions” of salvation.¹¹ Ratzinger responds how an essential and salvific relationship between man and God is realised. At the same time, the “objective conditions of possibility” of such a relationship emerge naturally; that is, as we shall see, the intimate connection between the actions of the subject and the redemptive work of Christ.¹²

Ratzinger begins by investigating what is required, according to Sacred Scripture, for a man to be saved or, as he puts it: “what a man must properly have to be a ‘Christian’.”¹³ He notes that the New Testament’s answer consists of two complementary parts. The first and fundamental requirement is love: “he who has love has everything. It suffices fully, completely, unconditionally.”¹⁴ This answer emerges from various Gospel passages, prominently Matt 25:31–46,¹⁵ where *agape* appears as the sole criterion of judgment, and the “sacrament of the brother” is presented as “the only sufficient way of salvation.”¹⁶ Therefore, it is understood that God does not demand explicit recognition of Him from us; instead, He asks to be received in the other man, in our neighbour: “He continually comes to meet us in the least, He who had to become ‘the least’ of men.”¹⁷ In summary, man is saved not because he explicitly knows the Lord, but because he is open to “a ‘human’ relationship and encounter with the God hidden in man.”¹⁸

¹¹ In his text, Ratzinger divides the question of salvation into two paragraphs entitled respectively: a. The Subjective Aspect of the Question; b. The Objective Aspect. See J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation Outside the Church?*, [in:] *The Ratzinger Reader: Mapping a Theological Journey*, eds. L. Boeve, G. Mannion, London 2010, pp. 155–157.

¹² “In the above attempt to determine the subjective components of salvation (i.e. of the ‘Votum Ecclesiae’), the matter of the intrinsic necessity of the objective factor also arose” (J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 157).

¹³ J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., p. 381. The sense in which he uses this expression is not identified with the concept of “anonymous Christianity” on which, as he notes, many clarifications need to be made (cf. J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 157). It intends to indicate which attitude is designated as the “basic law [or constitution: *Grundgesetz*] of God” (ibid.), valid for man in general.

¹⁴ J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., p. 381.

¹⁵ In addition to Matt 22:35–40 par., and Rom 13:9. See J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., p. 381.

¹⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., p. 381.

¹⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., p. 381.

¹⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., p. 381. Ratzinger recalls here Matt 7:21 (“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven”).

At this point, however, Ratzinger observes that we must honestly recognize that we are not capable of truly loving. “No one really has love (cf. *Rom* 3:23). All our love is always corrupted and deformed by selfishness.”¹⁹ This realization motivates the second part of the New Testament’s answer to the question of what truly saves us. It is true that “by right we would be condemned, but Christ covers the *deficit* of our life with the overabundance of his representative love. Only one thing is necessary: that we open our arms and accept the gift of his benevolence.”²⁰ With St. Paul, Ratzinger recognizes that this interior gesture of openness to love, to the Lord’s benevolence is, in its essence, “faith.” He is aware that in its full and authentic sense, faith “presupposes all the fullness of the realities witnessed by the Bible,” but he affirms that the existence of “something like ‘a faith before faith’” can be recognized.²¹ So what, then, does this faith consist of? Ratzinger explains that it lies in the attitude of the *poor in spirit* (the *anawim* of Israel), in rejecting *hybris*, self-complacency, self-justification, and self-enclosure. It is the attitude that enables one to receive the Gospel when it is given; therefore, the developed faith is precisely the continuation of that essential form of faith understood as openness to the gift of love.

Now we can present Ratzinger’s synthesis of the faith-love attitude that constitutes the substance of the salvific relationship with God:

It [the New Testament] says simultaneously, ‘Love alone suffices,’ and ‘Only faith suffices.’ Both together, however, express an attitude of self-transcendence, in which the human being begins to leave his egoism behind and to go forth towards the other. Therefore, the brother, the fellow human being is the actual testing ground of this attitude; in his You, the You of God comes to the human being incognito.²²

¹⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., p. 381.

²⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., p. 382.

²¹ J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., p. 382. Ratzinger hints at the fact that this essential understanding of faith as opening oneself to the gift of the Lord’s representative love, is found in St. Paul. For the expression “faith before faith” he refers directly to Congar, to the German edition of his book: Y. Congar, *The Wide World My Parish. Salvation and its Problems*, Baltimore, MD–London 1964, pp. 104–110. Congar also employs two other complementary formulas, as we shall see: “grace before grace” and “love before charity.” The expression “grace before grace” is also found in Jean Daniélou, another author well known to Ratzinger, who refers it to the “preparation” that the Word carries out in the heart of the pagan and which makes his will “good.” Cf. J. Daniélou, *The Work of John the Baptist* [1964], Baltimore, MD–Dublin 1965, pp. 107–108.

²² J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., pp. 155–156.

An attitude of “overcoming oneself towards the other”: this, for every man, appears to be the way of living *an essential synthesis of faith and love*, which is founded on the openness to the gift of God’s love and realized in the good done to the brother, in whom God Himself is reached and encountered, though “incognito.”²³

At this point, Ratzinger broadens the view to show that, in addition to the other, to the neighbour as the primary way of encountering God (as the “primary incognito of God”), there are also many other forms in which God comes to us in disguise: “many of the realities of the religious and profane order can become a call to and a help in the saving exodus of self-transcendence.”²⁴ Therefore, it is possible to positively evaluate all the elements of truth and goodness present in the religious traditions to which the individual man belongs, as they help in his relationship with God. We will discuss this further in greater detail.

It is essential to note that at the root of the movement towards the other lies the openness (faith) of man to God’s benevolence and love. This openness, which draws man out of his own self-centeredness and makes him capable of being open to his neighbour, requires a free decision. Specifically, it necessitates listening to one’s conscience, where each person can hear “the call of God common to all,” the voice that commands what is true and good in religious systems but also what is not infrequently misunderstood in them: the precept “that every person be human to his fellow human being, that he should love.”²⁵ Ratzinger identifies this call heard in conscience with what he previously described as “faith and love” in an essential sense when he says, “Living according to conscience does not mean enclosing oneself in one’s so-called convictions, but following this call that is made to every person: the call to faith and love.”²⁶ Years later, as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, when he spoke on the topic of Christianity and religions, his treatment of the subjective aspect of the question remained substantially unchanged, although he was more attentive to the widespread relativism in religious and non-religious contexts, and therefore more sensitive to the question of truth and the objectivity of the good. His response to the question posed in the title of this essay, therefore, sounds like this: salvation begins here on earth and must consist of a form of life that makes man more “human” and, in doing so, more conformed to God; salvation consists in becoming righteous, it always has to do “with the unity

²³ Even with regard to the encounter with God in disguise, “incognito,” Ratzinger refers to Y. Congar, *The Wide World My Parish...*, op. cit., pp. 117–128.

²⁴ J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 156.

²⁵ J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 157.

²⁶ J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 157.

of the good, with the unity of what is true – with the unity of God and man.”²⁷ Referring to St. Paul in Rom 2:14, Ratzinger indicates moral conscience as the “organ” in which man finds his unity and can listen to God.²⁸ However, it is still about listening to God’s call to love and following it. Without making overly precise distinctions, Ratzinger indicates both the conscience and the heart as the place of listening to God, and affirms that “it is thus possible for us to transcend what is merely subjective in order to turn toward each other and toward God. And this is salvation.”²⁹

At this point, it is useful to highlight two aspects: the role that belongs to man in the dynamic of salvation and the action of Christ, who, with his love, compensates for man’s *deficit*. Regarding the first aspect, it should be noted that the salvific dynamism Ratzinger has in mind is by no means an automatism. Salvation is genuinely offered to every man, but it must be accepted; it requires man’s freedom, his assent.³⁰ Ratzinger is keen to emphasise that a readiness for *conversion* is also always necessary as well, since for man it is a question of going out of himself, in the direction of authentic humanity, of true good. This is precisely one of the points in which Ratzinger’s proposal differs from the Rahnerian approach to the problem of the salvation of non-Christians, where

²⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 205.

²⁸ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., pp. 206–207. Here Ratzinger refers to his book, *Wahrheit, Werte, Macht*, Freiburg im Breisgau 1993 (new ed. 1999).

²⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 207. In his essay, E. Anton emphasizes conscience as the point of encounter of man with God (cf. E. Anton, *Joseph Ratzinger’s Soteriological Inclusivism*, op. cit., pp. 179–180); in our opinion, also on the basis of other contexts of Ratzinger’s thought, it would be equally correct to speak of the heart, as the center of man which is “touched” by God’s love and made capable of loving in turn. Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., pp. 99, 173, 207; see also the reflection about the “touch” of *Logos* in the heart of man as the motive of the act of faith, in J. Ratzinger, *Fede e teologia. Discorso in occasione del conferimento del titolo di dottore «honoris causa» in teologia da parte della Facoltà teologica di Breslavia/Wroclaw*, [in:] J. Ratzinger/Benedetto XVI, *Fede, ragione, verità e amore*, Torino 2009, pp. 117–126. The vocabulary of the “touch” of love in the heart, is also present in some passages of the encyclical *Lumen Fidei*, whose first draft was prepared, as is known, by Benedict XVI; cf. Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*, 2013, no. 31.

³⁰ As Anton notes, Ratzinger’s proposal can be qualified as an optimistic vision on the salvation of men, but certainly not as a sort of *apokatastasis* (cf. E. Anton, *Joseph Ratzinger’s Soteriological Inclusivism*, op. cit., pp. 182–183). Already in his 1963 article on vicarious representation, Ratzinger specified: “It is also clear that the salvation arising in virtue of vicarious representation does not arrive mechanically in a person, but requires in the recipient some kind of openness and readiness.” J. Ratzinger, *Stellvertretung*, [in:] *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*, vol. 2, ed. H. Fries, München 1963, pp. 566–575; we refer to the English translation by Jared Wicks: *Vicarious Representation*, “Letter and Spirit” 7 (2011), p. 219.

man's need for conversion is not adequately taken into account. An explicit critique of Rahner's position will be formulated by Ratzinger in *Principles of Catholic Theology*.³¹ Here, he summarizes Rahner's view with the formula: "He who... accepts his existence... says... Yes to Christ."³² However, for Christian conscience it is clear that man is not only called to self-acceptance but also to convert, not simply to remain as he is, but to discern a just self-acceptance and true self-realization as opposed to decisions of self-affirmation that do not really make man go out of himself, in the direction of truth and love.³³ Here echoes what he had already written in *No Salvation Outside the Church?*: "there are things that will never be able to be an incognito of God."³⁴ In the last part of our study, we will see how Ratzinger's conviction on this matter naturally connects with what he says about the role of religions in bringing man closer to salvation.

The second point that deserves attention concerns God's action in the heart of man who opens up to the essential attitude of faith and love. It is evident that, for Ratzinger, "Christ's representative love," the gift of his benevolence, is a dynamic principle, a force that, once received by man, acts in his heart making him capable of genuine love, which, if left to himself, he would be incapable of. There is, therefore, a gift of God in the human heart; a gift that,

³¹ J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, San Francisco, CA 1987. Pedro Rodríguez Panizo offers a comment to Ratzinger's critique (cf. P. Rodríguez Panizo, *El cristianismo y las religiones según Joseph Ratzinger...*, op. cit., pp. 252–257). Regarding the genesis, well before the publication of *Principles of Catholic Theology* of Ratzinger's criticism of Rahner's proposal, see what he himself explains in J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., pp. 16–17.

³² J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., p. 165. This is, according to Ratzinger, the "formula of Christian existence," in which Rahner's theoretical elaboration is condensed. Its most extreme expression is the following: "the Christian is not so much an exception among men as simply man as he is" (*ibid.*, p. 166). It is a formula in which Ratzinger sees not only the loss of the "newness of Christianity" but also what is in fact "man's self-affirmation. To be a Christian is to accept oneself" (*ibid.*, pp. 166–167).

³³ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology...*, op. cit., p. 171. The fact that Rahner's conception of salvation "overlooks the drama of change and renewal that is central to Christianity" was reaffirmed by Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI also in one of his latest interventions, an interview given in 2015 and published in English with the title *The Christian Faith Is Not an Idea but a Life*, <https://insidethevatican.com/magazine/people/interview/christian-faith-not-idea-life/> [access: 1.06.2023]; the Italian translation, by Jacques Servais, is contained in Benedetto XVI, *Che cos'è il cristianesimo...*, op. cit., pp. 85–95. Anton observes that Ratzinger also speaks of the need for conversion in his *Eschatology*, with regard to purgatory, reiterating the same thought later, as Pontiff, in the encyclical *Spe Salvi*. See E. Anton, *Joseph Ratzinger's Soteriological Inclusivism*, op. cit., pp. 186–189.

³⁴ J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 156.

though Ratzinger does not explicitly use the term “grace” in the context of *No Salvation Outside the Church?*, is genuinely Christ’s grace communicated through the Spirit.³⁵ Likewise, Yves Congar, in the text to which Ratzinger extensively references in his essay, reflecting on the attitude of “faith before faith” and “love before charity,” which constitute an implicit desire for God in the heart of the non-Christian and therefore an orientation towards Christ and the Church,³⁶ affirms: “A love before charity must be a true love,” that is “a self-giving love.” And provocatively asks: “may it not be thought that when there is love [...] a true selfless love [...] there is grace from God, an initial giving in relation to life and the meaning of the world, whose complete fulfillment will be in Paradise?”³⁷ In the same years as the publication of the essay on the salvation of non-Christians in its definitive version in *Neues Volk Gottes* (1969), while commenting on *Gaudium et Spes* 22, Ratzinger strongly emphasized that man’s salvation is essentially the work of God, which consists of man being associated with Christ’s paschal mystery through the mysterious action of the Spirit.³⁸ In short, man’s *deficit* of love is not merely compensated by Christ’s representative love “from outside,” extrinsically; that love, in a real communication of grace, is given to man himself, who must indeed welcome

³⁵ In *Vicarious Representation*, which provides the theological basis for the idea of Christ’s representation service employed in *No Salvation...*, Ratzinger clearly states that the attitude of essential faith which can constitute the subjective aspect of salvation in man requires, in order to have sense, to also consider the objective aspect: the service of Christ (and of the Church with him), and therefore the “doctrine of grace” (J. Ratzinger, *Vicarious Representation*, op. cit., p. 219).

³⁶ Congar uses as magisterial doctrinal references: the encyclical *Mystici Corporis* (1943) of Pius XII with the concept of “relation to the Mystical Body” of the Church of those who, even without belonging to it, are justified and therefore possess supernatural faith and love (cf. Y. Congar, *The Wide World My Parish...*, op. cit., p. 102); above all, the *Letter of Pius XII to the Archbishop of Boston* of 8 August 1949, with the concept of the implicit desire to conform one’s will to that of God (cf. *ibid.*, pp. 117ff). Ratzinger too, in his essay on salvation, refers to these magisterial places and, in his reflection, proposes the attitude of faith and love that we have described as the essence of a “votum,” an implicit desire for Christ and the Church (cf. J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., pp. 377, 381, 384, 385). Y. Congar, *The Wide World My Parish...*, op. cit., pp. 121–122.

³⁷ Y. Congar, *The Wide World My Parish...*, op. cit., pp. 121–122.

³⁸ Cfr. J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man’s Calling. Introductory Article and Chapter I*, [in:] *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 5, ed. H. Vorgrlimer, New York – London 1969, pp. 159–163. We note in passing that, according to Ratzinger, the text of *Gaudium et Spes* 22 surpasses and improves the expressions of *Lumen Gentium* 16 about “the salvation of the many” and should be taken as a reference text for further reflections. This does not correspond to Martin’s belief that *Lumen Gentium* 16 is the fundamental conciliar text on the salvation of the many, and that the other texts do nothing but build on what is stated here (cf. R. Martin, *Will Many Be Saved?...*, op. cit., pp. 7–10).

it in the attitude that Ratzinger calls “faith” and make it operative in “love,” in his self-transcendence towards others and, ultimately, towards God. In this way, man already begins to become righteous, more “human,” converting and conforming to God in himself and in his relations with others.³⁹

The necessity of Christ and the Church. The objective aspect of salvation

As noted by Ratzinger, regarding what was said about the subjective aspect of salvation, “the matter of the intrinsic necessity of the objective factor also arose.”⁴⁰ It has already been stated that Jesus’ “representative service,”⁴¹ his love “for” men, is necessary to heal the radical insufficiency of man’s love, which is otherwise corrupted and turned inward by selfishness.⁴² This is the objective foundation and the intrinsic element of the subjective attitude of faith and love discussed earlier. And it is here that the Church’s participation in the salvation of every man also comes into play. The Church, participating in Christ’s representative service and love, also partakes in the salvation of all. In Ratzinger’s words:

Every time a human being is saved, according to Christian belief, Christ is at work. Where Christ is, however, the Church is also involved, because he did not want to remain alone [...] he created a ‘body’ for himself. ‘Body of Christ’ means just

³⁹ Ratzinger (*Vicarious Representation*, op. cit., p. 212) specified that “the conferral of salvation on ‘the many’ does not follow magically and automatically. Instead, those who are saved must be converted and give their interior compliance.”

⁴⁰ J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 157.

⁴¹ We observe that the English translation frequently employs the expression “substitutionary ministration,” while the Italian translation prefers “servizio di rappresentanza” (that we can translate: *representative service*). We think the second expression is preferable, as it better reflects the concept of “vicarious representation” [*Stellvertretung*], indicating that Christ’s role is more a “representative” than a “substitutionary” role. See the clarification offered by B. Lleó, *La representación vicaria (Stellvertretung) en la teología de Joseph Ratzinger*, Roma 2022, pp. 20–21.

⁴² “The whole of humanity lives from Jesus Christ’s act of love, from the ‘for’ in which he situated his life (cf. Mark 10:45; 14:23 in view of Isa 53:10–12).” (J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 157). Understanding the person and mission of Christ as essentially “being for” (as well as “being from” as generated and sent by the Father), is a fundamental characteristic of J. Ratzinger’s Christology (and therefore of Anthropology). Suffice it to mention J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, New York 1970, pp. 135–136, 167, 180.

that: the participation human beings to Christ’s ministry, so that they become, so to speak, his ‘organs’ and he can no longer be thought of without them.⁴³

This is the most fundamental modality in which the Church, inseparably connected to Christ, serves the salvation of all. She is, in this sense, necessary for all humanity. It is a mysterious and invisible way, yet absolutely real. Here is also found the answer to the question that Ratzinger starts with in his essay: “Why are we Christians after all?” Why carry the “weight” of this name when others might save themselves in a seemingly, at least apparently, more comfortable way?⁴⁴ Ratzinger’s answer deserves to be quoted in its entirety, as it appears in *Vicarious Representation*:

Being Christian appeals to human beings in their generosity and in the large-heartedness of being ready, like Simon of Cyrene, to serve under the world-historical cross of Jesus Christ, and so to take on the burden of all history and thereby to render service to true living. Christians will not look aside enviously to compare the weight of the burdens laid on them with what seem to be much lesser burdens laid on the others, whom we do believe will arrive in heaven. [...] This service does not have its greatness in our being saved while the others are lost – which would be the attitude of the envious older brother and of the workers of the first hour – but it is great because the others also reach salvation *through* this our service!⁴⁵

But how can we understand, in its intrinsic dynamics, this participation of the Church and the Christian in the work of salvation accomplished by Christ? Well, the biblical and dogmatic foundation of both Christ’s role and the Church’s participation can be found, as we have already mentioned, in the reality of “vicarious representation.” Ratzinger had already reflected on it in his early theological writings, and in the essay we are examining, he offers an application of this category – which he considers essential for understanding the entire economy of salvation and, above all, its Christological foundation – to the theme of the salvation of non-Christians. Therefore, in the section dedicated to the objective aspect of salvation, Ratzinger refers to what he had written in *Vicarious Representation*.⁴⁶ The central importance that this category

⁴³ J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 158.

⁴⁴ See J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., pp. 365–366, 379–380.

⁴⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Vicarious Representation*, op. cit., p. 218. Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., p. 387.

⁴⁶ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Nessuna salvezza...*, op. cit., p. 385, note 39.

holds in Ratzinger's theological conception has been recently highlighted.⁴⁷ We are particularly interested in noting its efficacy in illuminating, as Ratzinger does in *No Salvation Outside the Church?*, the fundamental modality of the Church's participation in communicating Christ's gift of grace to men. The reason for this efficacy is, in our opinion, the fact that Ratzinger connects his previous reflection on vicarious representation with the analysis of salvation made from the perspective of the subject and its intrinsic requirements, namely faith and love understood in an essential sense.

Thus, Ratzinger's proposal achieves greater depth, at least in this regard, compared to other proposals, even those to which he acknowledges his indebtedness. Compared to Karl Barth, whom he credits with having revived the doctrine of vicarious representation,⁴⁸ Ratzinger surpasses the crudely dialectical nature of Barth's thought, and emphasizes divine mercy as the motive for the salvific economy, the eminently personal nature of vicarious representation, and love – for God and for others – as its essence. Vicarious representation is a service of love: primarily in Christ, to whom all humanity owes the real possibility of salvation; but it is so also in those who, reached by his saving action, “become like him” and live with him the “constant Pascha of the transition from being for itself into being for one another.”⁴⁹ Ratzinger feels particularly indebted to Henri de Lubac, whom he recognizes for his contribution to the reflection

⁴⁷ In his translation of the article, in 2011, J. Wicks already noted the central importance of the concept of pro-existence as Christ's representative role (cf. J. Ratzinger, *Vicarious Representation*, op. cit., p. 209); the first dedicated essay is: C. Ruddy, “For the many”: *The Vicarious-Representative Heart of Joseph Ratzinger's Theology*, “Theological Studies” 75 (2014), pp. 564–584; E. Anton, *Joseph Ratzinger's Soteriological Inclusivism*, op. cit., examines the category of vicarious representation in Ratzinger's theology to classifying it as a type of inclusivism; and recently an extensive study has been published on it by B. Lleó, *La representación vicaria...*, op. cit.

⁴⁸ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Vicarious Representation*, op. cit., p. 217. An analysis of the roots and influences on Ratzinger's thought regarding the category of vicarious representation is carried out in B. Lleó, *La representación vicaria...*, op. cit.: see pp. 66–77 for the influence of K. Barth, that Ratzinger approaches thanks to the study of Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Karl Barth. Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie* (1951). With Balthasar, Ratzinger shares the positive evaluations but also the reservations regarding the Barthian dialectic, pushed almost to the point of “logical inconsistency” (ibid., pp. 75–76).

⁴⁹ J. Ratzinger, *No salvation...*, op. cit., p. 158. Ratzinger expresses himself in a similar way in his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes* 22, explaining how salvation consists in being associated with the paschal mystery of Christ and therefore also with the saving mission itself. Cf. J. Ratzinger, *The Church and Man's Calling...*, op. cit., pp. 160–162.

on vicarious representation and the related concept of pro-existence.⁵⁰ The French theologian, a pioneer and leading figure in theological reflection on religions,⁵¹ understands the necessity of the Church for salvation in the light of the relationship that exists, in God's plan, between the Church and the whole of humanity. In this unitary vision, dear to the Fathers, the Church is the one who receives Christ's form and must make the whole of humanity participate in it; suggesting an extension of the dogma of the communion of saints, de Lubac argues that one must think of a real communication of grace that reaches all of humanity from the Church. Every grace present and operative in the Church and in Christians must, therefore, be thought of as "*gratia gratis data*," given in view of others.⁵² Compared to de Lubac's soteriological doctrine, Ratzinger's analysis more precisely focuses on the effect of grace in the human heart, in overcoming oneself toward the other and toward true good.

Ratzinger's vision is undoubtedly very close to that of Congar, to whom he refers in various parts of his essay on salvation. Even the French theologian, reflecting on the interior constituents of salvation, on how it is prepared and realized in the heart of the man who does not know Christ, insists on love – a love endowed with a certain character of absoluteness, driving towards the overcoming of oneself, especially towards the other man, who can be a "sacrament," the presence of God in disguise.⁵³ Undoubtedly acute in his interior

⁵⁰ Cf. Ratzinger's interview *The Christian Faith Is Not an Idea but a Life*, op. cit. In the bibliography to J. Ratzinger, *Vicarious Representation*, op. cit., one can find the work of H. de Lubac, *Catholicisme. Les aspects sociaux du dogme*, Paris 1938. As, Lleó notes, Ratzinger draws inspiration above all from the Adamic Christology and the social dimension of Christianity elaborated by Henri de Lubac (cf. B. Lleó, *La representación vicaria...*, op. cit., pp. 60–66, 411).

⁵¹ Henri de Lubac is mentioned, together with J. Daniélou, in International Theological Commission, *Christianity and the World Religions*, no. 4; his theology of religions and of salvation has been deeply studied by Ilaria Morali, *La salvezza dei non cristiani. L'influsso di Henri de Lubac sulla dottrina del Vaticano II*, Bologna 1999; I. Morali, *Le religioni non cristiane secondo Henri de Lubac*, "Lateranum" 64 (1998), pp. 533–557; cf. also G. Trapani, *H. de Lubac e il rapporto tra il cristianesimo e le religioni*, [in:] *Gesù Cristo e l'unicità della mediazione*, ed. M. Crociata, Milano 2000, pp. 128–157.

⁵² See especially chapter VII, entitled *Salvation through the Church*, in H. de Lubac, *Catholicism. A Study of Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind*, New York 1958, pp. 107–125, in which de Lubac repropose with some variations what he had already affirmed in a conference in Strasbourg in 1933. For an analysis of the doctrine presented here, see: I. Morali, *La salvezza dei non cristiani...*, op. cit., pp. 24–44, 50–53.

⁵³ "There is one thing that is privileged to be a paradoxical sign of God, in relation to which man are able to manifest their deepest commitment – our Neighbour. The sacrament of our Neighbour!" (Y. Congar, *The Wide World My Parish...*, op. cit., p. 124).

analysis, Congar perhaps remains less effective than Ratzinger in grounding the objective possibility of salvation in the biblical and theological category of Christ's vicarious representation and of the Church with him. Nevertheless, Congar approaches this notion by identifying the biblical principle of the "*pars pro toto*" and that of the "first-fruits" as the characteristic way in which God operates the salvation of "the many" through the few who represent them. Ratzinger takes up this idea from Congar,⁵⁴ but only to clarify that the Church's quantitatively limited presence in the world does not invalidate the universality of her saving function: "in order to be salvation for all, the Church does not have to correspond physically to that all. Its nature is far more, [...] to be the few through whom God wants to save the many."⁵⁵

We could certainly further explore the link in Ratzinger's thought between the doctrine of vicarious representation and that of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation. The Church lives by Christ's representative service, which finds its highest expression in his *pascha* of death and resurrection, continually made present and active in the Eucharist. Therefore, the Church is a community that, through participation in the Eucharist, becomes the Body of Christ and capable of its own salvific dynamism – of his "being for" – which embraces all of humanity and the cosmos.⁵⁶

However, this reflection would divert us from our objective, which is to show what Ratzinger considers the most proper theme of theology and dialogue between religions: namely the common reflection on truth and good, on the unity between God and man. Contributing to this search is a second way in which the Church serves the world, and here she finds as companions all the subjects and instances capable of contributing to the growth of humanity in the direction of truth and good: among these are, undoubtedly, cultures and, above all, religions.

⁵⁴ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 159; the reference is to Y. Congar, *The Wide World My Parish...*, op. cit., pp. 11–16.

⁵⁵ J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 387.

⁵⁶ In 1964, in the same years in which he wrote his texts on vicarious representation and on the salvation of non-Christians, Ratzinger also published an essay on the Church as a universal sacrament of salvation in which these ideas are already present: J. Ratzinger, *Zeichen unter den Völkern*, [in:] *Wahrheit und Zeugnis*, eds. M. Schmaus – A. Läpple, Düsseldorf 1964, pp. 456–466. Perhaps the most significant text on the subject, however, is the one written in 1977, and published in English as: J. Ratzinger, *The Church as the Sacrament of Salvation*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, San Francisco, CA 1987, pp. 44–55. For a reflection on this issue, see F. Ocariz, *La Iglesia, sacramentum salutis según J. Ratzinger*, "PATH" 6/1 (2007), pp. 161–181.

Culture, religion, and faith: the question of truth

For the considerations that we will now develop, we will largely rely on the contributions gathered in the volume *Truth and Tolerance. Christian Belief and World Religions*.⁵⁷ As we have already mentioned, Ratzinger criticizes the formulation of the problem of salvation that underlies the distinction between exclusivism, inclusivism, and pluralism because it too easily identifies the problem of religions with that of salvation, which, on the contrary, concerns truth and the authentic good of man and the whole of his existence.⁵⁸ By relieving the discourse on religions of the burden of having to exhaustively clarify their relationships with salvation, Ratzinger turns his gaze to what religions can truly dialogue about and what they can journey towards together: namely, the question of truth.

Indeed, he further extends the vision, encompassing cultures, which, in fact, always have a religious nucleus, as they confront the problem of the divine in various ways. On closer inspection, every culture, to the extent that it is authentically human, holds a potential universality, insofar as “the same human nature” is at work and “there is a common truth of humanity alive” in it.⁵⁹ The dignity of a culture is demonstrated precisely in its openness, “in its power to develop further, to let itself be purified and thus to become better adapted to the truth and to man,”⁶⁰ as it also contains elements that do not truly express the human, that clam up and divorce from other cultures. Therefore, it is precisely in relation to this vision of the diverse cultures, their dignity, and their limits in relation to the truth of man, that the particular self-understanding of the Christian faith emerges:

It knows very well, if it is aware and uncorrupted, that there is a great deal of what is human in its particular cultural forms, a great deal that needs purifying and opening up. But it is also certain that it is at heart the self-revelation of truth itself, and therefore, redemption. For the real problem of mankind is the darkening of truth. This distorts our action and sets us against one another, because we bear our own evil within ourselves, are alienated from ourselves, cut off from the ground of our being, from God. If truth is offered, this means a leading out of alienation and thus out of the state of division; it means the vision

⁵⁷ The volume, published in 2004, collects interventions by J. Ratzinger that can be dated for the most part to the 1990s.

⁵⁸ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., pp. 53–54.

⁵⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., pp. 59–60.

⁶⁰ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 60.

of a common standard that does no violence to any culture but that guides each one to its own heart, because each exists ultimately as an expectation of truth.⁶¹

The role that the Christian faith plays from a point of view that we could call “sociological-historical,” borrowing the expression used by Ratzinger himself in *No Salvation Outside the Church?*, seems to be essentially outlined.⁶² Besides her invisible service in the order of grace, the Church is called to perform a further service for the unity of humanity. By proclaiming the truth about God and man, fully revealed in Christ, she can foster the authentic development of cultures towards man’s true dignity and facilitate their friendly encounter.

What holds true for cultures applies, even more so, to religions, concerning which Ratzinger states: “the Christian faith, which carries within itself the great heritage of the religions and which opens up this heritage to the *Logos*, to true reason, could offer a new basis to them at the deepest level.”⁶³ This is the point where one of the most characteristic ideas of Ratzinger’s thought on religions and on their relationship with Christianity strongly emerges. He assigns a decisive role to the *question of truth*, which is, in itself, a gift and a liberation for man, never an alienation or an instrument of power or intolerance. He opposes the idea of *equivalence* among religions in the name of a conception of the divine as absolutely ineffable, such as that typical of the great Asian religions, which accepts all human attempts to grasp and express the divine at the price of radically relativizing them. Such a conception, foundational to some versions of the current pluralistic approach to the theme of religions as ways of salvation, is contested by Ratzinger not only based on the conviction that it is essential for man to seek the truth, but also on the basis of the fundamental self-awareness of the Christian faith.⁶⁴ The Christian faith does not arise as the deepening of a “mystical” experience. In the Christian sense, “experience” is rather delimitable with the categories of “encounter,” “otherness,” and “event.” Indeed, the experience of faith is:

⁶¹ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., pp. 66–67.

⁶² In J. Ratzinger, *No Salvation...*, op. cit., p. 158, referring to the necessity of the Church’s ministry to humanity, he states: “I believe that this idea can be made clear in a very concrete sociological-historical way. If there were no Church anymore [...] the world would look quite different.”

⁶³ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 78.

⁶⁴ Cf. the fine essay by C. O’Regan, *The Theology of Religions of Benedict XVI*, op. cit., on Ratzinger’s critique of the pluralistic conception in the field of the theology of religions; see in particular the synthetic vision outlined in pp. 47–48.

the result of an event, not of reaching deeper into ourselves. This is exactly what is meant by the concept of revelation: something not ours, not to be found in what we have, comes to me and takes me out of myself, above myself, creates something new. That also determines the historical nature of Christianity, which is based on events and not on becoming aware of the depths of one's own inner self, what is called "illumination". The Trinity is not the object of our experience but is something that has to be uttered from outside, that comes to me from outside as "revelation". The same is true for the Incarnation of the Word, which is indeed an event and cannot be discovered in one's inner experience.⁶⁵

As we have already noted concerning the subjective conditions of salvation, Ratzinger also emphasizes that the Christian conscience cannot renounce two fundamental concepts: *conversion* and *mission* simply because it "believes that in Christ the living God calls us in a unique way, which demands obedience and conversion."⁶⁶

In addressing the question of religions as possible ways of salvation, Ratzinger once again points to the *criterion of truth* as a rule for discerning what can bring man closer to God or not. He notes: "the theory has been fairly generally accepted that the religions are paths of salvation. Perhaps not the proper, ordinary path of salvation, but – if at all, then 'extraordinary paths of salvation': one attains salvation through all the religions, that has become the current view."⁶⁷

This vision corresponds both to the widespread ideal of tolerance and to the modern image of God. However, it is a fundamentally relativistic conception that must confront a very concrete problem, namely the fact that "what each of these religions demands of people is, not just different from, but contrary to what is demanded by others. [...] It is being silently assumed that all contents are basically of equal use." But in this way "the question of truth is excised from the question concerning religions and the matter of salvation."⁶⁸ Instead, we must honestly acknowledge, says Ratzinger, that: "there are in fact sick and degenerate forms of religion, which do not edify people but alienate them. [...] And even religions whose moral value we must recognize, and which are on their way toward the truth, may become diseased here and there."⁶⁹

⁶⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., pp. 88–89.

⁶⁶ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 105.

⁶⁷ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 202.

⁶⁸ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 203.

⁶⁹ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 204.

Of course, not even Christianity is exempt from this danger, as it can sometimes take pathological forms.⁷⁰ This means, for Ratzinger:

religion demands the making of distinctions, distinctions between different forms of religion and distinctions within a religion itself, so as to find the way to its higher points. By treating all content as comparably valid and with the idea that all religions are different and yet actually the same, you get nowhere. [...] The renunciation of truth does not heal man.⁷¹

To make this discernment, we need to ask ourselves what salvation, eternal life, truly means and how it relates to man's life on earth. In short, we need to ask ourselves how man is truly saved. Here, Ratzinger's thought naturally reconnects with what we have seen regarding the first aspect addressed: the essential relationship between man and God in truth and love. It is worth quoting in full a passage from *Truth and Tolerance* partially mentioned before:

Future salvation must make its mark in a way of life that makes a person "human" here and thus capable of relating to God. That in turn means that when we are concerned with the question of salvation, we must look beyond religions themselves and that this involves standards of right living that one cannot just relativize at will. I would say, therefore, that salvation begins with man becoming righteous in this world – something that always includes the two poles of the individual and society. There are kinds of behaviour that can never serve man's growth in righteousness and others that are always a part of man's righteousness. *That means that salvation does not lie in religions as such, but is connected to them, inasmuch as, and to the extent that, they lead man toward the one good, toward the search for God, for truth, and for love.* The question of salvation therefore always carries within it an element of the criticism of religion [...]. It has in any case to do with the unity of the good, with the unity of what is true – with the unity of God and man.⁷²

In this search for the unity of truth and goodness, for the true communion between God and man, between religions, among them Christianity, fertile ground for dialogue can be found, which can foster the unity of the human family. While deeply aware of the indispensable gift of truth bestowed by God

⁷⁰ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 204.

⁷¹ J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 204.

⁷² J. Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance...*, op. cit., p. 205 (emphasis is ours).

in revelation and in its culmination in Christ, Ratzinger manifests a radical confidence in interreligious dialogue. It is vital, certainly, that this dialogue does not renounce the search for truth and is accompanied, in each of the partners, by a healthy critical attitude towards one’s own religion; it must also be a dialogue where communication of one’s own knowledge of God to others is not abandoned.⁷³ It is in such reciprocal listening that Ratzinger identifies nothing less than a way of listening to truth itself, almost its “revealing.”⁷⁴

Conclusions

It has been shown how, although he did not develop a systematic thought within the theology of religions, Joseph Ratzinger managed to outline, in its essential features, a vision in which both the salvific universality of Christ and the necessity of the Church for the salvation of every man (and thereby the deepest meaning of being Christian) appear inseparably. He also highlights the role that Christianity, together with world religions, can play in the common search for the truth about God and man, contributing to the unity of the human family. This vision has its focal points, on the one hand, in the theological understanding of the vicarious representation of Christ (and the Church with him), and on the other hand, in the reflection on the human person and on the subjective conditions of salvation. The depth of Ratzinger’s reflection on both aspects of the question of salvation allows him to reach a clarity that is not easily found in other authors.

Rightly, Emil Anton thinks that Ratzinger’s conception can be qualified as a “restrictive inclusivism,” characterized by a “strong soteriological optimism.”⁷⁵

⁷³ These are criteria for dialogue between religions set out in J. Ratzinger, *Many Religions – One Covenant. Israel, the Church and the World*, San Francisco, CA 1999, pp. 109–113. With respect to the last criterion, i.e. the value of the Church’s *mission*, we will not dwell on the subject. We simply point out two of the reasons for the Church’s mission that Ratzinger gives elsewhere: love or good always asks to communicate itself – *bonum diffusivum suum* (cf. J. Ratzinger, *No salvation...*, op. cit., p. 159); the joy always asks to be shared (Benedetto XVI, *Che cos’è il cristianesimo...*, op. cit., p. 14).

⁷⁴ As Ratzinger explains with regard to religions and explicitly of the Christian one: “the concrete religion in which faith is lived out must continually be purified on the basis of truth, that truth which shows itself, on the one hand, in faith and, on the other hand, reveals itself anew through dialogue, allowing us to acknowledge its mystery and infinity.” (J. Ratzinger, *Many Religions – One Covenant...*, op. cit., p. 111).

⁷⁵ Cf. E. Anton, *Joseph Ratzinger’s Soteriological Inclusivism*, op. cit., pp. 189–190. “Joseph Ratzinger can be characterized as a restrictivist inclusivist, which means that he restricts

Ratzinger does not apply general solutions, such as considering religions as salvific mediations *per se*, nor does he reduce the salvific scope of Christ's work by thinking that the non-Christian is less easily capable of being saved compared to the believer who communicates in the Eucharist. The superabundance of grace that benefits the latter is also to the advantage of the former. And the former, on the other hand, is secretly called to self-transcendence, to convert from his selfishness, and to commit himself to the decision for the true good, thus encountering in love for the other, the God who is Love. Together, as men listening to God and engaging in reciprocal dialogue, they can contribute to the search for the full truth.

If it is true that, as Ratzinger observed in 1977, the Second Vatican Council intended to show that the Church's mission is the salvation of the world, that she is the sacrament of salvation for the world,⁷⁶ he contributed to illuminating this affirmation, justifying at the same time the sense of belonging to the Church, the veritable and not reduced possibility of salvation for those who do not visibly belong to it, and the positive value that religion can have both in the individual's path of salvation and in building humanity in truth and good.

Bibliography

- Advani S.V., *From Religious Pluralism to a Unity in Diversity. An Exploration and Analysis of Joseph Ratzinger's Theology of Religions*, Roma 2022.
- Anton E., *Joseph Ratzinger's Soteriological Inclusivism*, "The Journal of Theological Studies" 69/1 (2018), pp. 170–190.
- Benedetto XVI, *Che cos'è il cristianesimo. Quasi un testamento spirituale*, Milano 2023.
- Benedict XVI, *The Christian Faith Is Not an Idea but a Life*, <https://insidethevatican.com/magazine/people/interview/christian-faith-not-idea-life/> [access: 1.06.2023].
- Blanco Sarto P., *Joseph Ratzinger: Razón y Cristianismo. La victoria de la inteligencia en el mundo de las religiones*, Madrid 2005.
- Coda P., *Sul posto del cristianesimo nella storia delle religioni. Rilevanza a attualità di una chiave di lettura*, "PATH" 6/1 (2007), pp. 239–253.

God's salvific work in followers of other religions primarily to their conscience and secondarily to the impetus given by certain positive elements in their religions, not extending it to the various religious systems *per se*" (ibid., p. 189). The author refers to the classification proposed by G. D'Costa, *Christianity and World Religions. Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions*, Oxford 2009, pp. 6–7. Anton's essay rightly criticises in some aspects Ambrose Mong's analysis of Ratzinger's soteriological thought: cf. A. Mong, *Are Non-Christians Saved? Joseph Ratzinger's Thoughts on Religious Pluralism*, London 2015.

⁷⁶ Cf. J. Ratzinger, *The Church as the Sacrament of Salvation*, op. cit., pp. 48–51.

- Congar Y., *The Wide World My Parish. Salvation and Its Problems*, Baltimore, MD–London 1964.
- Daniélou J., *The Work of John the Baptist* [1964], Baltimore, MD–Dublin 1965.
- D’Costa G., *Christianity and World Religions. Disputed Questions in the Theology of Religions*, Oxford 2009.
- Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*, 2013.
- International Theological Commission, *Christianity and the World Religions*, 1996.
- Lleó B., *La representación vicaria (Stellvertretung) en la teología de Joseph Ratzinger*, Roma 2022.
- Lubac H. de, *Catholicism. A Study of Dogma in Relation to the Corporate Destiny of Mankind*, New York 1958.
- Martin R., *Will Many Be Saved? What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization*, Grand Rapids, MI 2012.
- Mong A., *Are Non-Christians Saved? Joseph Ratzinger’s Thoughts on Religious Pluralism*, London 2015.
- Morali I., *Le religioni non cristiane secondo Henri de Lubac*, “Lateranum” 64 (1998), pp. 533–557.
- Morali I., *La salvezza dei non cristiani. L’influsso di Henri de Lubac sulla dottrina del Vaticano II*, Bologna 1999.
- Ocáriz F., *La Iglesia, sacramentum salutis según J. Ratzinger*, “PATH” 6/1 (2007), pp. 161–181.
- O’Regan C., *The Theology of Religions of Benedict XVI*, [in:] *Evangelization as Interreligious Dialogue*, eds. J.C. Cavadini, D. Wallenfang, Eugene, OR 2019, pp. 45–79.
- Ratzinger J., *The Church and Man’s Calling. Introductory Article and Chapter I*, [in:] *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, vol. 5, ed. H. Vorgrlimer, New York–London 1969, pp. 159–163.
- Ratzinger J., *The Church as the Sacrament of Salvation*, [in:] J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, San Francisco, CA 1987, pp. 44–55.
- Ratzinger J., *Fede e teologia. Discorso in occasione del conferimento del titolo di dottore «honoris causa» in teologia da parte della Facoltà teologica di Breslavia/Wroclaw*, [in:] J. Ratzinger/Benedetto XVI, *Fede, ragione, verità e amore*, Torino 2009, pp. 117–126.
- Ratzinger J., *Fede, verità, tolleranza. Il cristianesimo e le religioni del mondo*, Siena 2012.
- Ratzinger J., *Introduction to Christianity*, New York 1970.
- Ratzinger J., *Many Religions – One Covenant. Israel, the Church and the World*, San Francisco, CA 1999.
- Ratzinger J., *No Salvation Outside the Church?*, [in:] *The Ratzinger Reader: Mapping a Theological Journey*, eds. L. Boeve, G. Mannion, London 2010, pp. 154–159; Italian version: *Nessuna salvezza fuori della Chiesa?*, [in:] *Il nuovo popolo di Dio* [1969], Brescia 1992, pp. 365–389.
- Ratzinger J., *Principles of Catholic Theology. Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, San Francisco, CA 1987.
- Ratzinger J., *Stellvertretung*, [in:] *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*, vol. 2, ed. H. Fries, München 1963, pp. 566–575; English translation by Jared Wicks: *Vicarious Representation*, “Letter and Spirit” 7 (2011), pp. 209–220.
- Ratzinger J., *Truth and Tolerance. Christian Belief and World Religions*, San Francisco, CA 2004.
- Ratzinger J., *Zeichen unter den Völkern*, [in:] *Wahrheit und Zeugnis*, eds. M. Schmaus, A. Läpple, Düsseldorf 1964, pp. 456–466.

- Rodríguez Panizo P., *El cristianismo y las religiones según Joseph Ratzinger*, [in:] *El pensamiento de Joseph Ratzinger, teólogo y papa*, ed. S. Madrigal, Madrid 2009, pp. 243–275.
- Ruddy C., “For the many”: *The Vicarious-Representative Heart of Joseph Ratzinger’s Theology*, “Theological Studies” 75 (2014), pp. 564–584.
- Trapani G., *H. de Lubac e il rapporto tra il cristianesimo e le religioni*, [in:] *Gesù Cristo e l’unicità della mediazione*, ed. M. Crociata, Milano 2000, pp. 128–157.

MARCO VANZINI (REV. PROF.) – is a priest and Associate Professor of Fundamental Theology at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross. Doctorate in Physics and Theology, is the author of several specialist articles and contributions in collective works on theological topics and two monographs, the last of which is entitled: *Il Dio di ogni uomo: Una introduzione al mistero cristiano* (Rome 2018). His research focuses on issues of fundamental theology, with special reference to the religious phenomenon, the theological method and the relationship between science and theology. He is Coordinator of Studies of the Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross and Editor-in-Chief of the journal “Annales Theologici.”

Table of Contents

Spis treści

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY TEOLOGIA SYSTEMATYCZNA

GIULIO MASPERO	5
Ratzinger's Trinitarian Ontology and Its Patristic Roots: The Breakthrough of <i>Introduction to Christianity</i>	5
Trynitarna ontologia Ratzingera i jej patrystyczne korzenie: nowatorskie ujęcie we <i>Wprowadzeniu w chrześcijaństwo</i>	5
DARIUSZ KOWALCZYK	35
Il mistero della Trinità secondo Joseph Ratzinger/Benedetto XVI	35
The Mystery of the Trinity according to Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI	35
Tajemnica Trójcy według Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI	35
JANUSZ KRÓLIKOWSKI	61
Theology of the Word of God in the Apostolic Exhortation <i>Verbum Domini</i> by Benedict XVI	61
Teologia słowa Bożego w adhortacji apostołkiej <i>Verbum Domini</i> Benedykta XVI	61
SŁAWOMIR ZATWARDNICKI	85
Christological "Once for All" of the Revelation versus Marian Dogmas in Joseph Ratzinger's Theology	85
Chrystologiczne „raz jeden” objawienia a dogmaty maryjne w teologii Josepha Ratzingera	85
JACEK FRONIEWSKI	137
Voice of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI in Defence of the Eucharist as a Propitiatory Sacrifice in the Context of the Catholic-Protestant Controversy	137
Głos Josepha Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI w obronie Eucharystii jako ofiary przełagalnej w kontekście kontrowersji katolicko-protestanckiej	137
PETER JOHN MCGREGOR	179
Placing Joseph Ratzinger within the "Synthetic" Tradition of the Theological Anthropology of the Heart	179
Nauczanie Josepha Ratzingera na tle „syntetycznej” tradycji teologicznej antropologii serca	179

WILLIAM M. WRIGHT IV	219
Augustine and “the Pure in Heart” in Benedict XVI’s <i>Jesus of Nazareth</i>	219
Augustyn i „czyste serce” w trylogii <i>Jezus z Nazaretu</i> Benedykta XVI	219
ROLAND MILLARE	243
The Renewed Christocentric Synthesis in Joseph Ratzinger’s Logos-centric Symphony	243
Odnowiona synteza chrystocentryzmu w <i>Logos-centrycznej symfonii</i> Josepha Ratzingera	243
EMERY DE GAÁL	263
A Call to Authentic Discipleship: Pope Benedict XVI, Kierkegaard and <i>Entweltlichung</i>	263
Wezwanie do autentycznego uczniostwa – papież Benedykt XVI, Kierkegaard i <i>Entweltlichung</i>	263
TIM PERRY	281
Joseph Ratzinger: Evangelical Ecumenist or How to Argue With a Traditional Protestant Over the Immaculate Conception	281
Joseph Ratzinger jako ewangeliczny ekumenista, czyli jak spierać się z tradycyjnym protestantem o niepokalane poczęcie	281
MARCO VANZINI	297
“How is man saved?” An Essential Contribution by Joseph Ratzinger to the Theology of Religions	297
“W jaki sposób człowiek jest zbawiany?” – nowatorski wkład Josepha Ratzingera w teologię religii	297

REVIEWERS OF WROCLAW THEOLOGICAL REVIEW NO. 2/2023

- Rev. Prof. John Berry (University of Malta, Malta)
 Rev. Prof. Pablo Blanco Sarto (University of Navarra, Spain)
 Rev. Prof. Dr Hab. Szymon Drzyżdzyk (Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland)
 Rev. Prof. Dr Hab. Krzysztof Kaucha (John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, Poland)
 Rev. Prof. Dariusz Kowalczyk (Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy)
 Rev. Prof. Dr Hab. Janusz Królikowski (Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland)
 Prof. Peter McGregor (Catholic Institute of Sydney, University of Notre Dame, Australia)
 Prof. Roland Millare (St. John Paul II Foundation, Houston, TX, USA)
 Prof. Tracey Rowland (University of Notre Dame, Australia)
 Rev. Prof. Dr Hab. Henryk Seweryniak (Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland)
 Rev. Prof. Dr Hab. Józef Warzeszak (Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland)
 Rev. Prof. Dr Hab. Włodzimierz Wołyniec (Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland)
 Prof. William M. Wright IV (Duchesne University, Pittsburgh, PA, USA)
 Rev. Dr Hab. Grzegorz Bachanek, Associate Professor (Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland)
 Rev. Dr Hab. Jacek Kempa, Associate Professor (University of Silesia, Poland)
 Rev. Dr Hab. Zbigniew Kubacki, Associate Professor (Catholic Academy in Warsaw, Poland)
 Rev. Dr Hab. Waldemar Linke, Associate Professor (Cardinal Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland)
 Rev. Dr Adrian Podaru, Associate Professor (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania)
 Rev. Dr Hab. Robert Woźniak, Associate Professor (Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland)
 Dr Emil Anton (University of Helsinki, Finland)