

**PONTIFICAL UNIVERSITY
ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE, MAYNOOTH**

**THE CHURCH AS SPHERE OF GROWTH IN AUTHENTIC
FREEDOM:
AN EXPLORATION IN THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL WRITINGS
OF JOSEPH RATZINGER**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY IN CANDIDACY
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF DIVINITY**

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF REVEREND PROFESSOR BRENDAN LEAHY

2013

**And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son
into our hearts, crying “Abba! Father!”**

**So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir,
through God. . . . For freedom Christ has set us free (Gal 4:6-7; 5:1).**

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Most Rev. William Crean, bishop of Cloyne for his generous support and encouragement during the latter stages of these studies and to Most Rev. Dermot Clifford, apostolic administrator of Cloyne (2009-2013) for initially permitting me to undertake doctoral studies in theology. I am truly grateful to Most Rev. Brendan Leahy, bishop of Limerick for guiding, supporting, and encouraging me in the research and writing process of this dissertation. My gratitude is very much extended to the staff and students of the Pontifical Faculty of Theology at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, the staff and students of the Fakultät für Katholische Theologie in Universität Regensburg, the staff of the Papst Benedikt Institut, Regensburg, especially its former director Rev. Professor Rudolf Voderholzer who has since been ordained Bishop of Regensburg, and the Goethe Institut in Dublin. Along the way I have been privileged to have had conversations and assistance from many people. I am most grateful to Rev. Professor Liam Tracey, Rev Professor Michael Conway, Rev. Dr. Oliver Treanor, Rev. Dr. Vincent Twomey, Dr. Mary McCaughey, and Peter John McGregor. I want to pay a special tribute to Mr Donal McMahon for his comments on the text. I thank my brother priests in Cloyne and beyond for always encouraging me and enquiring about my progress. To my mum and dad, brothers and sister for looking on with great patience and care at my preoccupation with theological research. My extended family and friends have always been there with their prayer and encouragement. I will never forget the kindness of the parish community of Saggart, Rathcoole, Newcastle and Brittas in the Archdiocese of Dublin, and the parish communities of Midleton and Fermoy in my own diocese for encouraging me in both my priestly ministry and my studies in these years. At times, many of them have asked me the most incisive questions and have helped me to ground my reflections in the reality of ecclesial life today. Finally, I give thanks to the heavenly Father for granting me the health and strength to bring this work to this important juncture.

ABBREVIATIONS

AA	<i>Apostolicam actuositatem</i>
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
AG	<i>Ad gentes divinitus</i>
CA	<i>Centesimus annus</i>
CD	<i>Christus dominus</i>
CDF	<i>Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith</i>
Civ	<i>De Civitate Dei</i>
CL	<i>Christifideles laici</i>
CN	<i>Communione notio</i>
Conf	<i>Confessionum libri XIII</i>
CV	<i>Caritas in veritate</i>
DCE	<i>Deus caritas est</i>
DH	<i>Dignitatis humanae</i>
DI	<i>Dominus Iesus</i>
DonV	<i>Donum Veritatis</i>
DS	<i>Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum (43rd ed.)</i>
DV	<i>Dei verbum</i>
EE	<i>Ecclesia de eucharistia</i>
EN	<i>Evangelii nuntiandi</i>
Epis. Rom	<i>Ignatius of Antioch, Letter to the Romans</i>
GS	<i>Gaudium et spes</i>
GS:AEL	<i>Joseph Ratzinger Gesammelte Schriften: Auferstehung und Ewiges Leben</i>
GS:LVK	<i>Joseph Ratzinger Gesammelte Schriften: Zur Lehre des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils</i>
GS:TL	<i>Joseph Ratzinger Gesammelte Schriften: Theologie der Liturgie</i>
GS:ZV	<i>Joseph Ratzinger Gesammelte Schriften: Kirche – Zeichen unter den Völkern</i>
Haer	<i>Adversus haereses</i>
Hex	<i>Collationes in Hexameron</i>
LC	<i>Libertatis conscientia</i>
LG	<i>Lumen gentium</i>
LN	<i>Libertatis nuntius</i>
OT	<i>Optatam totius</i>
PG	<i>Pastores gregis</i>
PL	<i>Migne, Patrologia Latina</i>
RM	<i>Redemptoris mater</i>
SC	<i>Sacrosanctum concilium</i>
SM	<i>Sacramentum mundi</i>
SS	<i>Spe salvi</i>
ST	<i>Summa Theologiae</i>
Trin	<i>De Trinitate</i>
TWNT	<i>Theologische Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</i>
UR	<i>Unitatis redintegratio</i>
VS	<i>Veritatis splendor</i>

INTRODUCTION

In Washington in 1990, Joseph Ratzinger posed what he understood to be a fundamental question about the human condition: “what is freedom and where does man find that road which doesn’t just go anywhere, but leads to true freedom, to the real ‘promised land’ for human existence?”¹ Twenty years earlier, he voiced a similar concern for freedom and its full and proper flourishing: “[t]here is a cry for liberation from the prison of positivism, as there is too, for liberation from a form of faith that has allowed itself to become a burden instead of a vehicle of freedom.”² At all times, both in those years and up to the present day, he has explored and promoted an answer to the question that considers the Church as *Raum der Freiheit* – as “locus” or “sphere” of freedom in terms of divine-human relationality,³ the liturgy,⁴ reconciliation,⁵ faith,⁶ hope,⁷ theological endeavour,⁸ and society.⁹

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, “God and Freedom: Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life,” *Origins* 19 (1990): 591.

² Joseph Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 29. On another occasion he observed that the Church and theology waste too much time on small background skirmishes, without investing enough time in asking the basic questions. See Joseph Ratzinger & Marcello Pera, *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam*, trans. Michael F. Moore (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 126-7.

³ See Joseph Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche* (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1992), xiv; *Komm Heiliger Geist! Pfingstpredigten* (Donauwörth: Verlag Erich Wewel, 2005), 53; “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin,” in *Auferstehung und Ewiges Leben*, eds. Rudolf Voderholzer et al., vol. 10 of *Joseph Ratzinger Gesammelte Schriften*, eds. Gerhard Ludwig Müller et al. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2012), 1182 (hereafter *GS:AEL*); *Dogma und Verkündigung* (Donauwörth: Erich Wewel, 2005), 217-18; *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2007), 185-86; *Schauen auf den Durchbohrten: Versuche zu einer spirituellen Christologie* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1984), 34; *Wendezeit für Europa? Diagnosen und Prognosen zur Lage von Kirche und Welt* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1991), 126; *Gott und die Welt. Glauben und Leben in unserer Zeit: Ein Gespräch mit Peter Seewald* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2005), 160, 311; *Der Geist Der Liturgie in Theologie der Liturgie*, eds. Rudolf Voderholzer et al., vol. 11 of *Joseph Ratzinger Gesammelte Schriften*, eds. Gerhard Ludwig Müller et al. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2008), 42 (hereafter *GS:TL*); *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens: Kirche als Communio* (Sankt Ulrich Verlag GmbH: Augsburg, 2002), 221, 250-51; Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan bis zur Verklärung* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007), 113.

⁴ See Joseph Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik: Neue Versuche zur Ekklesiologie* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1987), 232; *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn: Christusglaube und Liturgie in der Gegenwart* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2007), 108, 159.

⁵ See Joseph Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott. Vier Predigten über Schöpfung und Fall: Konsequenzen des Schöpfungsglaubens* (Einsiedeln, Freiburg: Johannes, 2005), 75; *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen: Kirche heute Verstehen* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005), 99, 132; *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem bis zur Auferstehung* (Freiburg: Herder, 2011), 261; Benedict XVI, *Licht der Welt. Der Papst, die Kirche und die Zeichen der Zeit: Ein Gespräch mit Peter Seewald* (Freiburg: Herder, 2011), 165.

⁶ See Joseph Ratzinger, “Das Ende der Zeit” in *Ende der Zeit: Die Provokation der Rede von Gott. Dokumentation einer Tagung mit Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger, Johann Baptist Metz, Jürgen Moltmann, und Eveline Goodman-Thau in Ahaus*, ed. Tiemo Rainer Peters & Claus Urban (Mainz: Matthias-Grünewald, 1999), 91; *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 106; *Gott und die Welt*, 390.

It is a rich and dynamic expression intended to acknowledge the nuanced and multifaceted challenge existing today for ecclesial theologians who wish to reflect on the concept of freedom in its relation to (modern) religious man.

The purpose of this dissertation is to consider how cogently Ratzinger presents the case for the Church's presence in the world as a liberating force for humanity. It asks: how does Ratzinger characterise the Church as a sphere beneficial to humanity's yearning for liberation in a time when disgruntlement towards it has, arguably, increased exponentially?¹⁰

⁷ See Joseph Ratzinger, *Aus meinem Leben: Erinnerungen 1927-1977* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1998), 47; *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn: Christusglaube und Liturgie in der Gegenwart* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2007), 72.

⁸ See Joseph Ratzinger, "Zum Begriff des Sakraments" in *GS:TL*, 231-32; *Wesen und Auftrag der Theologie: Versuche zu ihrer Ortbestimmung im Disput der Gegenwart* (Einsiedeln, Freiburg: Johannes, 1993), 92-93; "Das Ende der Zeit," 92.

⁹ See Ratzinger, *Salz der Erde. Christentum und katholische Kirche im 21. Jahrhundert: Ein Gespräch mit Peter Seewald* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1996), 176; *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 48, 167, 175; *Christlicher Brüderlichkeit in Kirche – Zeichen unter den Völkern*, eds. Rudolf Voderholzer et al., vol. 8 of *Joseph Ratzinger Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rudolf Voderholzer (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2010), 93 (hereafter *GS:ZV*).

¹⁰A disgruntlement and unease, it must be noted, that does not originate outside the Church. There is a growing realisation within the Church that, on the one hand, the most disaffected people can often be the Church's own members while, on the other hand, some of the greatest evils perpetrated in the name of the Church today have been done by some of its own members. In his Tübingen lectures of 1967, Ratzinger expressed this reality: "for many people today the Church has become the main obstacle to belief. They can no longer see in her anything but the human struggle for power, the petty spectacle [*das kleinliche Theater*] of those who, with their claim to administer official Christianity, seem to stand most in the way of the true spirit of Christianity." His analysis and response to this internal danger would become a consistent mark of this theology: "the Church is most present not where organising, reforming and governing are going on but in those who simply believe and receive from her the gift of faith that is life to them. Only someone who has experienced how, regardless of changes in her ministry and form, the Church raises men up, gives them a home and a hope, a home that is hope – the path to eternal life – only someone who has experienced this knows what the Church is, both in days gone by and now" (Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J.R. Foster [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004], 340, 344). With regard to the obstacles to faith that can emanate from within the confines of the Church itself, a series of five homilies and addresses by Benedict XVI during Spring 2010 are of note. He offered these meditations on the nature of the Church when he was under scrutiny himself for his approach to child-safeguarding during his tenure as Archbishop of Munich and Freising from 1977 to 1982. The apocalyptic tone of these homilies comes from the mind of someone trying to make sense of a deep crisis in the Church. See Pope Benedict XVI, Homily for Celebration of the Palm Sunday of the Passion of the Lord (28 March 2010): AAS 102 (2010), 221-226; Homily for Eucharistic Concelebration with Members of the Pontifical Biblical Commission (15 April 2010): AAS 102 (2010), 276-80; Homily for Eucharistic Concelebration for Pastoral Visit to Turin, 2 May 2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20100502_torino_en.html (accessed 19 September 2011); Homily for the Solemnity of Pentecost (23 May 2010), AAS 102 (2010), 331-335; Regina Caeli Address for the Solemnity of Pentecost, 23 May 2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/angelus/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_reg_20100523_pentecoste_en.html (accessed 19 September 2011). Luis Gonzáles-Carvajal, Professor of Moral Theology at Comillas Pontifical University (Madrid) attempts to capture the problematic of contemporary ecclesial membership by identifying three types of disenfranchised believers: Christians disappointed by the Church, those who believe without belonging (believers wielding an expressive individualism), and those who belong without believing (i.e. cultural Christians). See "Christians without a Church," *Concilium* 2011 (2): 95-

In doing so, it will be necessary to consider his understanding of how the contemporary cultural and philosophical attitude toward freedom emerged, to research and present the tenets of his anthropology of liberation, and finally, to study how his presentation of ecclesiology may be fruitful in realising growth in authentic human freedom.

The nucleus of his approach is found in his desire to reconcile the form of faith as a statement of meaning with a scientific, technological worldview which, at its heart, is a positive development but incapable of imparting the spirit of selfless service that keeps humanity true to itself:

[Die Menschheit] braucht einen Sinnzusammenhang, der die Kraft des Dienens gibt, der innere Freiheit von der Welt schafft und dadurch die Fähigkeit verleiht, in der Absehung von sich selbst zu leben und zu wirken, weil die Hoffnung des Menschen tiefer gründet, als die Hoffnungen seiner äußeren Karriere reichen. All das kann aber auf die Dauer nicht bestehen ohne die Mächtigkeit eines in sich selber zweckfrei lebendigen Glaubens. Insofern ist Dienst am Glauben auch heute und gerade heute eine Existenznotwendigkeit für den Menschen. Der Techniker, der um neue Möglichkeiten materiellen Überlebens ringt und der Gläubige, der im Dienst am Glauben steht und neue Wege spirituellen Überlebens sucht, arbeiten an den zwei Seiten einer einzigen gemeinsamen Aufgabe. Sie sollten sich nicht gegeneinander ausspielen lassen, sondern einander die Hände reichen zu dem einen Auftrag, dem sie dienen.¹¹

100. A typical ecclesiological question that captures this membership-dilemma, so to speak, was formulated in a German newspaper on 24 February 2011: “Is the Church still experienced as a place where God is openly effective – not only in the aesthetics of its rites or a vague longing for transcendence, but in its liberating power?”[translation mine] (Hans Kessler, Eberhard Schockenhoff and Peter Walter, “Die Kirche steht sich selbst im Weg,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 24 February 2011, <http://www.fr-online.de/kultur/debatte/die-kirche-steht-sich-selbst-im-weg/-/1473340/7406240/-/index.html> (accessed 19 September 2011).

¹¹ Ratzinger, *Dogma und Verkündigung*, 257 (“Mankind needs a framework of meaning that imparts the strength to serve, which creates an interior freedom from the world and thereby gives individuals the ability to live and work unselfishly, because a man’s hope is more deeply rooted than his external career aspirations. Yet all that cannot last without the mighty force of living faith that is in itself disinterested. In this regard, service to the faith is an existential need for man, even today and especially today. The technician who strives to find new possibilities of material survival and the believer who is at the service of the faith and seeks new ways of spiritual survival are working at two different sides of one and the same common task. They should not allow themselves to be played off against each other but, rather, should extend to each other a helping hand with the one project to which they are committed” [Joseph Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, ed. Michael J. Miller, trans. Michael J. Miller & Matthew J. O’Connell (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 227]).

0.1. Relevance of the Topic – A Cultural Perspective with Ecclesial Ramifications

A shift in western culture over the past 500 years exacts a need to reengage with the topic of human freedom. From an ecclesiological perspective, the Church's visible institutional presence is destined to be probed by the new cultural trends within western society. Today, the West tends to pride itself on the maintenance of a liberal democratic polity with a value-system comprised of (at a minimum) individual liberty, privacy, free speech, due process of law and equality before the law, representative and transparent government, and a regime of equal rights and entitlements for all. And even if this set of values is not always fully realisable, it serves as the western world's defining aspiration.

Anthony Clifford Grayling (b. 1949), former professor of Philosophy at Birkbeck College, University of London and long-time associate of the neo-atheist movement in the UK, says this aspiration has been the result of a singular process of "enfranchisement."¹² To his mind, the progress made in human "enfranchisement" has necessitated the final breaking of the hegemony of a single Church over the lives of individuals, as well as the overriding of absolute monarchy, replacing it with more representative systems of government and citizen participation. He says: "[b]oth processes were occasionally revolutionary but mostly evolutionary, plagued by setbacks, made slow and difficult by the reluctance of both religious and temporal powers to give anything away. Many died in furthering these processes – in fire at the church's stake, in chains in royal dungeons, on the battlefield."¹³ On the other hand,

¹² Anthony Clifford Grayling, *Towards the Light: The Story of the Struggles for Liberty and Rights that Made the Modern West* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 2. Grayling defines "enfranchisement" as consisting of "the increasing liberty of the individual, the growth of the idea that individuals have rights and claims and the freedom to assert them even against the constituted authority of the land" (ibid.). See also his *The Good Book: A Secular Bible* (London: Bloomsbury, 2011), where Grayling takes the broad outline structure of the Judeo-Christian Bible but replaces the text with so-called non-religious material from the history of thought. In September 2010, Grayling joined fifty-five other public figures in opposing Benedict XVI's state visit to Scotland and England. See "Harsh Judgements on the Pope and Religion." *The Guardian*, 15 September 2010, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/sep/15/harsh-judgments-on-pope-religion> (accessed 15 March 2012).

¹³ Grayling, *Towards the Light*, 3. Grayling acknowledges the demonstrable progress made whereby the twenty-first century western citizen enjoys many freedoms in spite of the cost and sacrifice made in attaining them: "it remains true that today's ordinary western citizen is, in sixteenth-century terms, a lord: a possessor of rights, entitlements, opportunities and resources that only an aristocrat of that earlier period could hope for" (2). While

and particularly from the perspective of the twentieth century, the world has experienced an unparalleled series of ideological and bloody misuses of freedom. Paradoxically, the same century was marked by an unprecedented cry for freedom to be definitively procured.

According to former professor of Moral Theology at Maynooth's Pontifical University, Vincent Twomey, by the time Pope Paul VI (1897-1978) published *Humane Vitae* in 1968 entire populations were motivated by the condition of freedom's possibility:

Freedom was the new catchword – freedom from the constraints of the past, freedom from alienating authorities (Church, State, and traditional families), freedom from the limits imposed on us by our bodies, freedom of expression, including sexual expression. Anything goes. Within the Church, the reforms of the Second Vatican Council were being implemented with haste, above all through the introduction of the new rite of Mass. They engendered a sense of freedom from what was perceived as the shackles of tradition. Change was in the air, not least in the field of moral theology, which the Council had stressed was in need of a radical rethink, which it was.¹⁴

In the intervening time, much has happened, with historical causality increasingly being blamed for the continuing vulnerability of the western way of life. Even someone like Grayling muses on the present troubled state of western culture: the phenomenon of terrorism, the changing demographics of western populations in decline, and a general malaise towards the price paid for freedom by our predecessors. He believes that the gains of previous generations are so precious and yet so precariously at risk that only an affirmative answer must be given to the last part of his question: “Do we record the fact that the age of

the struggle for freedom has, by no means, confined itself to the modern democratic movement, there is certainly no doubt that the struggle for freedom has grown in intensity to a point hitherto unknown since the twilight of the European feudal order and its hierarchical restrictions. From such a perspective, Grayling can be said to be representative of the perceived narrative, as it were, of institutional revolution over the course of the preceding five hundred years of Western civilisation. For an account of how European society has interacted with the concept of freedom from the earliest times, see Christian Meier, *Kultur, um Freiheit willen. Griechische Anfänge – Anfang Europa?* (München: Siedler, 2009); David Wengrow, *What Makes Civilisation? The Ancient Near East and the Future of the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). For a somewhat more polemical account of the role the Catholic Church played in the roots of Western society from the Dark Ages onwards, see Thomas E. Woods, *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilisation* (Washington D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2005). This latter book, albeit polemical in tone, is an example of some writers in the United States at present who believe themselves bound to respond to an anti-Catholic bias which considers the story of Catholicism to be solely one of enforced ignorance, repression and stagnation. Woods strives to correct the historical record through the lens of Catholicism's contribution to monasticism, education, science, architecture, law, economics, social works and morality.

¹⁴ D. Vincent Twomey, *Moral Theology after Humane Vitae: Fundamental Issues in Moral Theory and Sexual Ethics* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2010), 9.

liberty might have passed its best point, after so brief a period of flourishing, or do we fight to keep all that the struggle to win it gained for us?”¹⁵

There are others, however, who are not so uncritical of the modern concept of human freedom. Writing in 1950, Romano Guardini (1885-1968), a professor of philosophy and theology at the University of Munich, felt that in the preceding thirty years, humanity had come to distrust its own nature and, had begun to search for liberation in opposition to the Judaeo-Christian heritage that creation was created good by God who is good.¹⁶ Analogous to the shift in the perception of nature, Guardini believed that the new sense of the finite would bring a changed attitude to the understanding of person and subjectivity, the outcome of which would lead to “the not-human man” and the “not-natural nature.” This would bring humanity towards an existence consisting of the freedom to further their lordship of creation, even to its last doomed consequences:

This mastery will be open to him because he has permitted himself utter freedom: the freedom to determine his own goals, to dissolve the immediate reality of things, to employ its elements for the execution of his own ends. These things he will do without any consideration for what had been thought inviolate or untouchable in nature. He will ignore that strong sense of the sacredness of nature which had endured within mankind’s earlier vision.¹⁷

Canadian philosopher, Charles Taylor (b. 1931), who has arguably produced the most important recent study on subjective relationality and culture, uses more contemporary terminology to capture the shift in perspective which has taken place. He asks about the belief structures of western society: “why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in say, 1500 in our western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even

¹⁵ Grayling, *Towards the Light*, 11. See also Grayling’s *Liberty in the Age of Terror: A Defence of Civil Liberties and Enlightenment Values* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009) where he re-examines the grounds for the western value of liberty in the face of governmental responses to the phenomenon of terrorism.

¹⁶ See Romano Guardini, *The End of the Modern World*, trans. Joseph Theman et al. (Delaware: ISI Books, 2001). At one point he suggests that “[n]ature is no longer experienced wondrously as a rich source bestowing harmony on all things, as wisely ordered of itself, as benevolent with its favours” (53).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 74.

inescapable?”¹⁸ For him, the rise of the “secular age” is a unique phenomenon within the history of western civilisation. Though notoriously difficult to define, for him “a secular age is one in which the eclipse of all goals beyond human flourishing becomes conceivable; or better, it falls within the range of an imaginable life for masses of people.”¹⁹ It is the result of a societal principle which declares human flourishing to be no longer a good, but *the* good, beyond which no ultimate goal exists. For the first time in history, he says, a self-sufficient or “self-sufficing humanism” has come to be widely available which carries no allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing.²⁰

¹⁸ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press, 2007), 25. Taylor’s starting point in this book is an investigation of how, in respect of the belief structures of western society, unbelieving is more problematic than believing in the year 1500, while believing is more problematic than unbelieving in the year 2000.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

²⁰ See *ibid.*, 14-22. As one would expect, there are various prognoses available in respect of the effects and impact of “modernity” upon the western mindset. For his part, Taylor tends to be largely representative of a scholarly consensus that believes “modernity brings about secularity” and “[it] is the fruit of new inventions, newly constructed self-understandings and related practices, and can’t be explained in terms of perennial features of human life” (21-22). Taylor is personally interested in the phenomenon of secularity from three perspectives: secularised public spaces, the decline of belief and practice, and the new conditions of belief. Boston College Theology Professor, Michael J. Buckley has a similar approach to Taylor, in that the modern secular milieu is of a new variety, not seen before in the history of humanity. His evidence begins at the time of the 18th dynasty Pharaoh Akhenaten and his son Tutankhamun (c. 1341- 1323BC). See *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 1-36; *Denying and Disclosing God: The Ambiguous Progress of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). Two helpful and significant contributions towards understanding this phenomenon of the “secular” (which is derived from the Latin *saeculum* meaning “generation” or “age” and has become shorthand for the ideology that shapes contemporary society without reference to the divine) include the work of Eric Voegelin (1901-85), who reflected upon the behavioural revolution in political science in pre- and post-World War II Europe and America; and David Walsh, who produced a series of books in the 1990s which sought to recover the spiritual foundations of freedom. He observed that the reality of God and the validity of perennial philosophy and Christian teaching are dramatically reaffirmed in light of the spiritual disarray wrought by the modern experiment of secular humanism. See Eric Voegelin, *Modernity without Constraint: The Political Religions, The New Science of Politics, and Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, Manfred Henningsen, ed., (vol. 5 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, eds. Paul Caringella et al.[Columbia: The University of Missouri Press, 2000]); David Walsh, *After Ideology: Recovering the Spiritual Foundations of Freedom* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990); *The Growth of the Liberal Soul* (Columbia, Missouri: University of Missouri Press, 1997); *The Modern Philosophical Revolution: The Luminosity of Existence* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008). I should also mention James McAdams, ed., *The Crisis of Modern Times: Perspectives from The Review of Politics, 1939-1962* (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), a collection of essays on the views of American and European émigré intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s who, reflecting on the emergence of the dictatorial regimes in Germany and Russia and the looming threat of even more devastating European warfare, believed in the need to rethink the reigning philosophical perspectives of the time. They provide an important view of the situation facing the West at the height of the twentieth century’s cultural crisis. For a positive appraisal of secularism as something born from and requiring Christianity, see Graeme Smith, *A Short History of Secularism* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008).

Representative of those who are severely critical of the trajectory of the modern understanding of freedom in the West is the Orthodox theologian, David Bentley Hart (b. 1965). Responding to what he sees as the sinister narrative of the anti-religious polemic of neo-atheism, he argues that being entirely modern – which few he concedes actually are – is to believe in nothing:

Modernity's highest ideal – its special understanding of personal autonomy –requires us to place our trust in an original absence underlying all of reality, a fertile void in which all things are possible, from which arises no impediment to our wills. . . We trust, that is to say, that there is no substantial criterion by which to judge our choices that stands higher than the unquestioned good of free choice itself, and that therefore, all judgement, divine no less than human, is in some sense an infringement upon our freedom.²¹

For Hart, the ethos of modernity has become nihilism, not in the sense of a rejection of various truths that can be identified within the world but rather a rejection of the notion that there is some total of eternal “Truth” beyond the world governing our reality. While most people, believers and unbelievers (in God) alike, acknowledge the placing of desirable limits upon the exercise of human free-will, Hart point out that the chief value of the age remains the “inviolable liberty of personal volition.” If we conform authentically to the age in which we live, we place ourselves, not at the disposal of God or gods or the Good, “but before an abyss, over which presides the empty power of our isolated wills, whose decisions are their own moral index. This is what it means to have become perfect consumers: the original nothingness of the will gives itself shape by the use it makes of the nothingness of the world – and thus we are free.”²²

Such a “shift,” or at least a version thereof, could not be ignored by the Church, as it was bound to impact on the outlook of the believing community. For the Roman Catholic

²¹ David Bentley Hart, *Atheist Delusions: The Christian Revolution and Its Fashionable Enemies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 21.

²² *Ibid.*, 22-3. Out of respect to Hart, it is important to point out that he acknowledges that this scenario is “a wilfully extreme formulation of the matter, and life is rarely lived at the extremes. For most of us, the forces of conformity that surround and seduce us – political, religious, patriotic and popular – are necessary shelters against the storm of infinite possibility” (23). Nevertheless, what he depicts assists us coming to an understanding of the probabilities built into the modern notions of freedom and autonomy.

Church, the twentieth century has been a period of intense reflection upon the theme of freedom. Jesuit theologian, Avery Dulles (1918-2008), recently described as the “dean of Roman Catholic ecclesiology,”²³ observes that a new stimulus to a theology of freedom was provided by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). It strove to bring forms of ecclesial life abreast of the cultural developments of the West since the Enlightenment: “[t]he Council, through such approaches to the question of Christian freedom, contributed to make this subject a priority item on the agenda of the post-conciliar Church.”²⁴ In light of this, Dulles describes his own vision for the Church as that of a “liberating agency.”²⁵ To his mind, “[t]he Church [being] par excellence the place where Christ is at work through his Spirit, carrying on his liberating task, [. . .] the Christian is therefore both a person being liberated and one taking part in the liberation of many others.”²⁶

However, Dulles equally acknowledges the contemporary context and is not blind to “the situation of the Church as an institution gives cause for concern,”²⁷ while the former President of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, Walter Kasper (b. 1933), says that “[t]he excess of regimentation and bureaucracy in the contemporary Church very often buries the freedom of the children of God and makes the idea of creative love wither

²³ See Thomas P. Rausch, *Towards a Truly Catholic Church: An Ecclesiology for the Third Millennium* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2005), xii.

²⁴ Avery Dulles, *A Church to Believe In: Discipleship and the Dynamics of Freedom* (New York: Crossroads, 1982), 67.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 71. The Council’s perceptiveness is instanced in the declaration *Dignitatis humanae* (*DH*) and the form of religious freedom which the State ought to ensure for each person in society. Valuable attention to human freedom can also be found in the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern world *Gaudium et spes* (*GS*), under the subheadings “The Situation of Man Today” (*GS*, 4-10), “The Excellence of Freedom” (*GS*, 17), “Communitarian Nature of Man’s Vocation: Design of God” (*GS*, 24), “Rightful Autonomy of Earthly Affairs” (*GS*, 36), “Human Activity Infected by Sin” (*GS*, 37), “Mutual Relationship of Church and World” (*GS*, 40-45). Nevertheless, work remains to be done on studies dedicated to the Church’s role in bringing about the fullness of authentic freedom. The issue of Liberation Theology in the twentieth century also called the Magisterium to reflect on the contemporary Christian understanding of freedom. The initial magisterial reflection prompted by this issue came from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith in its 1984 Instruction on Certain Aspects of “Theology of Liberation” *Libertatis nuntius* (*LN*). This was followed in 1986 with the Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation *Libertatis conscientia* (*LC*). These documents were designed to set out the framework for a Christian understanding of freedom.

²⁶ Dulles, *A Church to Believe In*, 71.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2. At another point Dulles says “[t]he Church is understood in terms of dogmas, laws, and hierarchical agencies which impose heavy demands of conformity. To be a good Catholic, according to the popular view, is simply to adhere to the beliefs and practices demanded by the office-holders” (3).

away.²⁸ A commonly held perception today is that the Catholic Church itself is anything but a place of freedom. Today, it is clear to both detractor and devotee alike that the Church is not immune from having questions asked of it regarding the attitudes towards liberation which it evinces in its daily witness.

Conceivably, one could speculate in several directions as to why some have come to recognise the Church as an oppressive institution. For his part, Ratzinger begins his search for an answer by interpreting the shifting cultural dynamics of western society at large. In his analysis, the Catholic Church will very much be part of this story. In the past, a large part of western theological history emphasised freedom in relation to the question of free-will and the moral agent's striving to carry out the precepts of the God of Christendom.²⁹ However, as a consequence of the increasing emphasis on the integrity of the autonomous individual, the modern secularising ethos has seen the emphasis on freedom gradually shift away from the human "act" and towards the freedom of the human person *per se*.³⁰ Ratzinger engages with this emerging new emphasis on freedom at the level of personhood and works towards an

²⁸ Walter Kasper, *Faith and the Future*, trans. Robert Nowell (Burns and Oates: London, 1985), 60. See also his *Theology and Church*, trans. Margaret Kohl (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 19-108.

²⁹ From a moral theology perspective, the encyclical letter *Veritatis splendor* (VS) puts forward the "free-will" question which today is expressed in terms of the alleged conflict between freedom, the law, conscience and truth. It briefly recalls the essential characteristics of freedom in discerning obedience to the moral law: "freedom of conscience is never freedom 'from' the truth but always and only freedom 'in' truth" (VS, 64). The Belgian Dominican priest, Servais Pinckaers (1925-2008), has traced the history of moral theology, pinpointing in particular the impact of the fourteenth century Franciscan School critique of Thomas Aquinas (1225-74). Through the influence of William of Ockham (1288-1349), a "freedom of indifference" comes to supersede the longer established "freedom for excellence". The latter – the power to engage in excellent actions as a free choice proceeding from both will and reason – was exchanged for freedom as the first faculty of the human person whose act does not originally depend on anything but one's own choice. This new approach as the power to choose indifferently between contraries means that nature is no longer the source of freedom but rather nature is now subordinated to freedom. In this view, law becomes the source of morality, and human actions are now, by nature, indifferent. Because law becomes wholly dependent on God with no prior basis in nature, no reason exists other than the divine will itself. Were God's will to change, then so would the precepts of the moral law. Therefore morality becomes a legal obligation to be followed rather than the discovery of, and formation in, happiness. See Servais Pinckaers, *Morality: The Catholic View*, trans. Michael Sherwin (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine's Press, 2001), 65-81; *The Sources of Christian Ethics*, trans. Mary Thomas Noble (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 240-53; 327-468.

³⁰ See Karl Rahner, *Gnade als Freiheit: Kleine theologische Beiträge* (Freiburg: Herder, 1968); Eunan McDonnell, *The Concept of Freedom in the Writing of St Francis de Sales* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2009); David B. Burrell, *Learning to Trust Freedom: Signs from Jewish, Christian and Muslim Traditions* (Scranton: University of Scranton Press, 2010).

“ontology of freedom.”³¹ While by no means disregarding the free action of the moral agent, he prioritises the application of fundamental theology in his discussion of authentic freedom. Only from this starting point, to his mind, can the actions of the free agent take on their full significance.

0.2. From a Philosophy of Freedom to a Liberation Ecclesiology?

As a study of Ratzinger’s ecclesiology from the perspective of his christocentric anthropology, this dissertation may be viewed as the expansion of his philosophy of freedom into a “liberation ecclesiology.” While it is not the first time the latter attribution has been applied to Ratzinger, it is not a term he himself has ever used.³² Therefore, a cautionary note is required to preclude this dissertation itself from being misconstrued as a comparative study with Latin American liberation theology.³³ On the other hand, the term “liberation ecclesiology” itself was used in 1996 by the Mexican Jesuit and Professor of Ecclesiology at the Theological Institute in Mexico city, Alvaro Quiroz Magaña (b. 1942), to describe the Church as the sacrament of historical liberation, as the sign and servant of the Reign of God. Magaña also said it promoted the need to overcome divisions in the Church and the importance of new forms of service and ministries, along with new forms of Church structure.³⁴ What is of note from the Latin American experience is Magaña’s encounter with

³¹ Ratzinger uses this phrase when referring to neo-chalcedonian christology in *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 92.

³² John Allen has explored the idea that Pope Benedict XVI’s preaching does incorporate a liberation theology. See “The Pope’s lonely liberation theology,” *The Irish Catholic*, 24 November, 2011, 19.

³³ The liberation theology debate as it emerged in Latin America is an important one and has been documented and researched by others. See James V. Schall, ed., *Liberation Theology in Latin America* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982); Leonardo and Clodovis Boff, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1987); Rosino Gibellini, *The Liberation Theology Debate* (London: SCM Press, 1987); Ian Linden, *Liberation Theology: Coming of Age?* (London: Catholic Institute for International Relations, 1997). In recent times, liberation theology has been invoked as the inspiration for other movements in theology such as black, feminist, praxis, environmental and political theologies. See Ivan Petrella, *The Future of Liberation Theology* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2004); Christopher Rowland, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Liberation Theology*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

³⁴ See “Ecclesiology in the Theology of Liberation” in *Readings in Church Authority: Gifts and Challenges for Contemporary Catholicism*, eds. Gerard Mannion et al. (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 78-86. Gerard Mannion is one of the people most prominently advocating a form of Liberation Ecclesiology in the Anglophone world at the present time. See Gerard Mannion, “Liberation Ecclesiology,” in *The Routledge Companion to the Christian*

the oppression of the poor: “[w]e went to them to bring them the gospel of liberation, and we discovered that we were being evangelised by them.”³⁵

Nonetheless, Magaña has an awareness of the universal aspect of the nature of freedom when he says one of the tasks of an ecclesiology of liberation is “to continue to demonstrate to the greater church the legitimacy of this way of being church. . . . A greater openness on the part of the church in the difficult times of this winter of faith may be decisive if the people are to have life.”³⁶ Magaña’s acknowledgement of the universal ecclesial participation in the search for freedom can be considered significant from a Western perspective if one recognises that the paralysis oppressing people in western societies is largely of a different order. It can therefore be argued that if Christ is the liberator of the entire cosmos, then an ecclesiology of liberation cannot be something confined to the subjugated countries of the world who, by and large, have been paralysed by the pervasiveness of capitalism.³⁷

To the extent, then, that “liberation ecclesiology” is cognisant of the western dilemma of freedom and constraint, it provides an acceptable term to describe the reflections which Ratzinger makes on the Church as sphere of growth in freedom. His primary motivation is the understanding that there is *poverty* in Western societies, albeit of a different order, but nonetheless an oppression of the human person ensnared in a “winter of faith.” He sees the western cry for additional freedom as both an essential part of human nature and a symptom

Church, eds. Gerard Mannion and Lewis Mudge (New York: Routledge, 2008), 421-442. See also T. Howland Sanks and Brian H. Smith, “Liberation Ecclesiology: Praxis, Theory, Praxis,” *Theological Studies* 38 (1977): 3-38.

³⁵ Alvaro Quiroz Magaña, “Ecclesiology in the Theology of Liberation” in Mannion et al., *Readings in Church Authority*, 80.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁷ The Radical Orthodoxy movement in contemporary theology, through Daniel M. Bell’s reflection on the present state of liberation theology, points out that global capitalism has effectively triumphed in the world despite the resistance of Latin American Liberationists in the twentieth century. While both capitalism and its Christian resistance are both movements built on human desire, Bell is convinced that only the refusal to cease suffering liberates human desire from its capitalist captivity. Bell says this will be the future legacy of the rise and “failure” of Latin American liberationists. See Daniel M. Bell, *Liberation Theology after the End of History: The Refusal to Cease Suffering* (London: Routledge, 2001).

of the denial of the truth about humanity's destiny. In this context, his motivation is precisely that of an ecclesiological liberationist: to liberate the Church in the West from its Babylonian Exile.³⁸

0.3. Focus of Dissertation Research

Various scholars have compiled introductory studies of Ratzinger's life and work but research dedicated specifically to his ecclesiology from the perspective of freedom remains to be undertaken. In terms of the general topic of liberty in the Church, Ratzinger's writings have largely been assimilated by theologians from the perspective of his (and his Congregation's) interface with the emergence of liberation theologies, and the topic of academic freedom within catholic theology.³⁹ One of Ratzinger's own former students, and now retired professor of fundamental theology at Freiburg University, Hansjürgen Verweyen,

³⁸ The exilic theme is one that attracts Ratzinger, as this dissertation will demonstrate below.

³⁹ Particularly during his tenure as Prefect at the *CDF*, there is a body of opinion critical of a perceived heavy-handedness in dealing with theological "dissent" and with liberation theology. See Juan Luis Segundo, *Theology and the Church: A Response to Cardinal Ratzinger and a Warning to the Whole Church*, trans. John W. Diercksmeier (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1985); Harvey Cox, *The Silencing of Leonardo Boff: The Vatican and the Future of World Christianity* (Oak Park, Illinois: Meyer-Stone Books, 1988); John Allen, *Pope Benedict XVI* (London: Continuum, 2005); Michael Fahey, "Joseph Ratzinger as Ecclesiologist and Pastor," *Concilium* 141 (1981): 76-83. With regard to the topic of theological "dissent," for example, John Allen suggests that Ratzinger jettisoned academic freedom from theology: "By insisting so strongly on the need for theologians to bind themselves to the Church, many believe Ratzinger has eclipsed the even more fundamental need for both to bind themselves to the gospel" (John Allen, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 294). Another has described Ratzinger's years as Curial Cardinal as an "era in which many theologians were very discouraged" (James Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger: Wise Cautions & Legitimate Hopes* [New York: Paulist Press, 2009], 80). See also the following series of articles, James Corkery, "Speak Freely – but Watch your Back," John Wilkins, "Bishops or Branch Managers? Collegiality after the Council," and Philip Cremin, "From *Peritus* to Pope: Benedict XVI and the Council," in *Doctrine and Life* 62 (December 2012): 10-46. In regard to the Liberationists in South America, the charge is made that Ratzinger sought to debate an "immanentism" in liberation theology that actually never existed. See Juan Luis Segundo, *Theology and the Church*, 152-56. Segundo also claims that Ratzinger's mind-set "seemed to come from a European who reads European phenomena and tendencies into a non-European context" (ibid., 3). Another charge made against Ratzinger is that his personal theological views exercised an influence on the positions taken by his (then) Congregation in Rome. Allen says many believe that Ratzinger "functioned not as a neutral arbiter of 'orthodoxy' . . . but as an advocate of the reaction against the post-conciliar period that took shape in journals such as *Communio*" (John Allen, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 260). For an account of the charge that Ratzinger used his position as Prefect in this way, see James Massa, *The Communion Theme in the Writings of Joseph Ratzinger: Unity in the Church and in the World through Sacramental Encounter* (PhD diss., Fordham University, 1996), 3-7. When Ratzinger himself was pressed on this issue, his response was that the Prefect and the Professor are the same person but with differing responsibilities – "in that sense then, there is a difference but no contradiction" (Joseph Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, eds. Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfnür, trans. Henry Taylor [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005], 229-30).

is perhaps typical in this regard.⁴⁰ Verweyen surveys the historical emergence of liberation theology in Latin America in general, and in Chile in particular. Then, while acknowledging the correctness of Ratzinger's analysis of this situation in principle, Verweyen decries the strangeness of the intervention of a European intellectual perspective which is not only alien, but perhaps even obscurantist to concrete indigenous efforts to tackle structural injustice in South America. Verweyen points out that indicative of Ratzinger's approach is his call to represent the "logic of faith" in terms that embody a real response to lived experience, as opposed to any notion that seeks to build the kingdom of God on earth solely through human strength.⁴¹ Inevitably, however, introductory studies like Verweyen's cannot be expected to capture the theological rationale behind the academic positions which Ratzinger has articulated in his writings. The focus of this dissertation research will be to pinpoint and analysis the core rationale that informs Ratzinger's understanding of freedom.

In the first instance, Peter Hoffmann, professor of dogmatic and fundamental theology at the Catholic Institute of Klobenz-Landau University, makes the general observation that there is a "mozartische Ton" ("mozart-like tone") to Ratzinger's work which appeals to people who tend towards an ontological or universal vision of the Christian mystery.⁴² Hoffmann suggests that Ratzinger develops his vision through the collective context of objective statements of faith – one tenet of faith points to all others and therefore cannot be understood in isolation from them. Hence there is an echo of a symphonic perichoresis, so to speak, whereby all doctrinal formulas are equally close to the centre. Hence, faith is not defined so much by individual concepts but remains an incomprehensible mystery. In effect, Hoffman maintains, Ratzinger has confidence in the premise that exploring the Christian faith

⁴⁰ See Hansjürgen Verweyen, *Joseph Ratzinger-Benedikt XVI. Sie Entwicklung seines Denkens* (Darmstadt, Primus, 2007), 117-25.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 121. Verweyen avoids mentioning that many of the leading figures in Latin American liberation theology either spent time living and studying in northern Europe or took some of their inspiration from European intellectuals such as Jürgen Moltmann and Johann Baptist Metz.

⁴² Peter Hofmann, ed., *Joseph Ratzinger: Ein theologisches Profil* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2008), 9.

does not lead to a *reductio in mysterium* but that when “recognised as a whole, faith develops its own *ratio*.”⁴³ The overarching locus of Ratzinger’s vision is the mystery of God. To carry forward Hoffmann’s analogy, God is the “composer” of a living symphony. Michael Schneider, professor of dogma and liturgy at the Sankt Georgen Graduate School of Philosophy and Theology in Frankfurt am Main, reiterates this point in Ratzinger’s work: “Everything in human existence is determined by how Joseph Ratzinger stresses the question of God.”⁴⁴ Given that Ratzinger’s frame of reference for his treatment of freedom over the years has been precisely through this divine-human spectrum, an in-depth study of the issue represents a good example of how to penetrate and access his universal vision of the Christian mystery. This dissertation is dedicated to coming to terms with how Ratzinger links his understanding of freedom with the overall Christian mystery.

Schneider’s also makes another key observation which informs virtually every strand of Ratzinger’s presentation of the Christian understanding of freedom: “The question of truth and the question of freedom go together in human life. But the question of truth, as well as the reality of man, is based on the question of God. The reason for this is found in the early Christian confession that Jesus is ‘*substantially equal with the Father*’.”⁴⁵ The theme of the inseparability of truth and freedom (cf. John 8:32) is key to understanding Ratzinger’s proposal for an ecclesial understanding of human freedom. Other theologians, including Laurence Paul Hemming, research fellow at Lancaster University, and Robert Tilley, lecturer in Biblical Studies at the Catholic Institute of Sydney have, each in his own way, addressed Ratzinger’s search for truth but neither of them sufficiently discussed the challenge to the Church’s mission posed by modern understandings of freedom. Nor did they sufficiently

⁴³ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁴ Michael Schneiders, “Primat des Logos vor dem Ethos Zum theologischen Diskurs bei Joseph Ratzinger” in Hofmann, *Joseph Ratzinger: Ein theologisches Profil*, 15.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 21

address the presuppositions upon which Ratzinger builds his arguments.⁴⁶ Hence, the first task of this thesis will be to demonstrate that freedom is a theme that emerges from Ratzinger's examination of the philosophical cross-pressures within western societies in general, and the Church in particular. The dissertation will be particularly concerned with identifying the nature of the suspicion with which the Church is presently viewed. Reflection upon the impasse that emerges here helps Ratzinger identify a way forward.

The work of Irish-born theologian, Gerard Mannion, has been very much concerned with the present-day situation of postmodernity.⁴⁷ In the course of presenting his analysis of the modern cultural narrative of western society, he identifies a form of neo-exclusivism which is becoming increasingly problematical. To his mind, neo-exclusivism has grown up in response to postmodernity's shunning of absolutes, and a discourse that engages positively

⁴⁶ See Laurence Paul Hemming, *Benedict XVI: "Fellow Worker for the Truth,"* (London: Burns & Oates, 2005); Robert Tilley, *Benedict XVI and the Search for Truth* (Leominster: Gracewing, 2007). A notable aspect of Ratzinger's analysis of cultural trends in more recent times has been his association with the idea of a "dictatorship of relativism" and, from his perspective, the "content" of truth is fundamental to addressing it. This was particularly evident in a homily delivered on 18 April 2005. See Joseph Ratzinger, Homily for Mass *pro eligendo romano pontifice*, 18 April 2005, http://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_20050418_en.html (accessed 13 February 2012). On that occasion he said the goal of true humanism is friendship with Christ, which gives the criterion by which "to distinguish the true from the false and deceit from truth." The proceedings of a symposium which took place in America in response to this homily were subsequently published. See "A 'Dictatorship of Relativism'? Symposium in Response to Cardinal Ratzinger's Last Homily," *Common Knowledge* 13 (2007): 214- 455. Unfortunately, the issue of freedom rarely appeared in any great detail, and no paper in ecclesiology was delivered. The contributions considered Ratzinger's call for public discussion with secular intellectuals on matters of significant general concern on personal, social and political life. It was largely critical of Ratzinger's anti-relativistic position. Since then, Gediminas T. Jankunas has offered an in-depth study of how Ratzinger views the relativistic mentality and his proposals for overcoming it. While he comprehensively goes into the causes of relativism, and Ratzinger's engagement with them, there is little by way of presentation of how the Church is a constitutive part of growth in authentic human freedom based on the truth of human nature. See Gediminas T. Jankunas, *The Dictatorship of Relativism: Pope Benedict XVI's Response* (New York: St. Paul's, 2011). See also Thomas R. Rourke, *The Social and Political Thought of Benedict XVI* (New York: Lexington Books, 2010). An interesting doctoral dissertation, undertaken by Pablo Blanco Sarto in 2005, combined a thematic and chronological approach to situate Ratzinger in the milieu of a post-reformation Lutheran-Germanic context. Sarto's main interest was to consider theology as Ratzinger does – as faith reasoned. Sarto finds that the modern assumption of a dichotomy between truth and its perceived opposites of history, freedom and culture is resolved through the proper understanding of the role of reason in theology. See Pablo Blanco Sarto, *Fe y razon en el pensamiento de Joseph Ratzinger* (PhD diss., Universidad de Navarra, 2005), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/305361257?accountid=12309> (accessed 20 September 2011).

⁴⁷ See Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007). Mannion's chief thesis is the promotion of the positive aspects of virtue ethics (personal and communal motivation) in order to "empower" a pastoral and praxis-orientated ecclesiology and create a virtuous community: "the key question in forming any vision of the church should be how to enable the enhancement of justice, freedom and love within and outside the Christian community, but never one without the other" (172; cf. 206). See also Lieven Boeve and Gerard Mannion, eds., *The Ratzinger Reader: Mapping a Theological Journey* (London: T & T Clark, 2010).

with relativist thought. From the perspective of Catholicism, he believes that the Vatican is experiencing a rise in neo-exclusivism which, born out of a fear of postmodernity, endeavours to impose an ecclesiological unilateralism that stems from a universalist *communio* ecclesiology⁴⁸: “[w]hat Vatican II intended to be guiding and facilitative teaching is turned into more rigid, fixed, and determined dogma.”⁴⁹ With Ratzinger’s writings on Vatican II’s ecclesiology of communion to the fore of his critique, Mannion says “a pessimistic assessment of the state of contemporary culture and the contemporary world vis-à-vis the Church has been one of the most consistent elements of [Ratzinger’s] writings.”⁵⁰ Calling for resistance to this burgeoning neo-exclusivism, Mannion suggests its popularity is associated with an anti-pluralistic polemic that is ultimately counterproductive in the post-modern environment.⁵¹

Despite his critique of Ratzinger however, it seems to me that Mannion’s core question is not one Ratzinger would dismiss. In fact, as this dissertation demonstrates, it is one which Ratzinger addresses: “What sort of ecclesiological methodology might be developed in light of such ‘postmodern critical consciousness,’ and how could an ecclesiology embrace and respect, indeed celebrate the other *as* other, while remaining

⁴⁸See Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 44, 67-71.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 50; cf. 47-49, 58-63, 67-71, 109-124. Mannion believes *Lumen gentium* is read too narrowly and *Gaudium et spes* is not read at all by some of those interpreting Conciliar theology.

⁵⁰ Boeve and Mannion, *The Ratzinger Reader*, 82. In the end, however, it is difficult not to think that Mannion writes almost with Ratzinger in the background as his “foil” against whose ecclesiology he proposes his own. Mannion’s energy is directed towards critiquing Church leadership and down-playing the necessity of authority. Ratzinger is one of his moving targets throughout. See Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 118, 236.

⁵¹ Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 147, 162. An interesting contribution here is the recent dissertation by Sean Christopher Paul who researched the work of Ratzinger and Walter Kasper in an attempt to develop a theology of “ecclesial fruitfulness.” Paul was seeking a more adequate way of defining “Church” over against the current impasse of Catholic ecumenical ecclesiology’s inability to attribute the term “Church” to those communities traditionally understood to possess an invalid Eucharist and ministry. Essentially, “ecclesial fruitfulness” is theologically rooted in the Holy Spirit. He draws out the contribution to ecclesiology of both theologians, proposing in the end, that the Church is the sign and icon of the Spirit of the Risen Christ, who is the fruitfulness of God in and to the world. The “fruitfulness” of the Church is the Spirit effectively realizing the mystery of God’s salvation given in Jesus Christ through the preaching of the Word, the celebration of the sacraments (particularly the Eucharist), and through fostering communion among all local churches and ecclesial communities. See Sean Christopher Paul, *By their Fruits you shall know them: Ecclesial Fruitfulness as a Standard of Protestant and Anglican Ecclesiality drawing on the works of Joseph Ratzinger and Walter Kasper* (PhD diss., Boston College, 2011).

comfortable in the celebration of fundamentals of its own tradition?”⁵²

In terms of specific studies of Ratzinger’s ecclesiology, attention can be drawn to a number of studies, including James Massa’s research at Fordham University in 1996.⁵³ Massa shows how Ratzinger’s interpretation of *communio* is a fruitful instrument for addressing a multiplicity of theological problems, particularly, ecumenical issues of unity. However, while there is an ecumenical urgency to Massa’s work, there is a cultural imperative behind this study. In a milieu where Ratzinger feels freedom has undergone a remarkable metamorphosis into a form of isolation and personal enslavement, this thesis focuses on how Ratzinger envisages ecclesiology responding to such cultural developments.

In 1998, Miroslav Volf (b. 1956) conducted a three-way ecclesiological study of catholic, orthodox and “free church” tradition using Joseph Ratzinger to illustrate the viewpoint of Roman Catholic theology.⁵⁴ Volf points out that the key to Ratzinger’s approach is that of *Christus totus*. This concern for the “whole” expresses itself in a “spirituality of divestment” that corresponds to Ratzinger’s basic understanding of communality.⁵⁵ Christian “divestment” – which could also be described as self-dispossession in the name of Christian discipleship – is related to the “whole” of the human person’s reality. The goal of ecclesiology, which Volf attributes to Ratzinger, is for the human being to become an *anima ecclesiastica*: “a person who has come to herself and who at the same time stands as a free

⁵² Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 159.

⁵³ James Massa, *The Communion Theme in the Writings of Joseph Ratzinger: Unity in the Church and in the World through Sacramental Encounter* (PhD diss., Fordham University, 1996).

⁵⁴ See Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 29-72.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 60-1. Ratzinger’s focus on the “whole” has its counterpart in a principle of personal responsibility that answers on behalf of the whole. This is above all true in the case of the Bishop of Rome. A fundamental principle of Ratzinger’s highlighted by Volf is that in the Church the law of totality and of personality both hold true: “As opposed to any individual or communal particularism, Ratzinger underscores the totality: A Christian, a local Church, and also a bishop are always constituted in terms of the whole and are directed toward the whole. It cannot be otherwise, since the primary category of his ecclesiology is *Christus totus*. It follows from this that the totality is to be understood in terms of the principle ‘individual.’ This principle has a soteriological and christological basis. . . . An ecclesiology of universal communion therefore calls for an ecclesiology of the responsible personality – not least of all on the level of the individual who answers for the totality” (Miroslav Volf, *Trinität und Gemeinschaft: Eine ökumenische Ekklesiologie* [Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1996], 55).

being in communion with fellow human beings and with the triune God.”⁵⁶ A spirituality of divestment is an important theme which Ratzinger develops in his ecclesiology through the notion of the purification of man’s image into its true form. How Ratzinger develops what Volf has highlighted in a cursory way as “divestment” forms an important part of this thesis. It will mean exploring more fully the theme of relationality and the safeguarding of personal freedom in the midst of the Church’s social – and therefore, institutional – setting.

Dennis M. Doyle, professor of Religious Studies at the University of Dayton, Ohio, conducted an examination of communion ecclesiologies which led him to the conclusion that Ratzinger’s particular interest in *communio* lies in a just vision of the human person and society. Doyle points out that for Ratzinger, the Church is the “event” whereby human history is drawn into the sphere of the divine and “as the place where the transcendent enters the world, [the Church] must warn the world about its own pretensions to wholeness, and must urge the world to accept what is humanly possible while it looks beyond itself for its ultimate fulfilment.”⁵⁷ However, Doyle doesn’t explore how Ratzinger envisages the Church assuming this responsibility to be vigilant on behalf of, or for the sake of human civilisation. Indeed, from the perspective of authentic human freedom, one needs to ask why is it the case that the Church finds itself in a position of needing to “warn”? What is the content of this “warning”? And finally, how should it perform, if at all, this task of “warning”? This dissertation will look at how Ratzinger’s ecclesiology visualises the pastoral need for vigilance on the part of the Church when faced with the reality of the possibilities and limitations of human nature.

Against the backdrop of the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*, Cistercian monk and Abbot of Heiligenkreuz Abbey in Austria, Maximilian Heinrich Heim (b. 1961), measures Ratzinger’s work against the intention of the Council.⁵⁸ Alongside dealing with the

⁵⁶ Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 66.

⁵⁷ Dennis Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions* (New York: Orbis, 2000), 114-15.

⁵⁸ Maximilian Heinrich Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger – Kirchliche Existenz und existentielle Theologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2005).

Church's hierarchical constitution, Heim studies Ratzinger's view of the Church as sacrament, as the "Body of Christ" and as the "People of God."⁵⁹ What emerges is a "eucharistic *communio* ecclesiology"⁶⁰ and a sophisticated view of Church as sacrament which Heim suggests is a "synthesis of [Ratzinger's] ecclesiology corresponding to the theological axiom *lex orandi – lex credendi*. It is true, according to this rule, that the Church, which by her nature is constituted by the Eucharist, must recognise God's primacy as her *extra nos*, on which she lives."⁶¹ In other words, the Church becomes itself through the acceptance of its orientation from outside of itself. This seems to carry Volf's awareness of Ratzinger's spirituality of divestment onto the explicitly ecclesial level. Ratzinger himself sheds light on the proper orientation of ecclesiology in the *Foreword* to Heim's work:

In der Konstitution *Lumen Gentium* redet die Kirche letztlich nicht von sich selbst, bespiegelt nicht sich selber, wie man bei einer oberflächlichen Lektüre meinen könnte. Der erste Satz des Textes lautet: "Christus ist das Licht der Völker." Dieses Licht spiegelt sich auf dem Antlitz der Kirche. Sie ist – wie die Väter sagen – der Mond, der sein ganzes Licht von der Sonne, von Christus nimmt. Die Kirche hat, recht verstanden, ihr Wesen nicht in sich selbst, sondern im Verwiesensein und im Verweisen über sich hinaus. Pater Heim zeigt diese christologische Struktur der Kirchenlehre des Konzils auf, die notwendigerweise eine theo-logische Struktur ist: In Christus ist der Mensch, die menschliche Natur, mit Gott vereint. Das Menschsein ist durch ihn hineingenommen in die trinitarische Dynamik: Der Sohn führt zum Vater im Heiligen Geist. Es geht um Gott, und nur so handeln wir recht vom Menschen.⁶²

Heim's exhaustive work focused on Ratzinger's *fundamental* ecclesiology. The task of carrying such fundamental orientations forward from particular perspectives remains. For example, Ratzinger's own comments make the connection between ecclesiology and

⁵⁹ Ibid., 231-397.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 480.

⁶¹ Ibid., 475-76.

⁶² Ibid., 7 ("In the Constitution *Lumen gentium* the Church does not speak of herself in the final analysis, does not reflect on herself, as one might conclude from a superficial reading. The first sentence of the document reads: "Christ the light of humanity." This light is reflected upon the face of the Church. She is – as the Fathers of the Church say – the moon that receives all of its light from the sun, from Christ. Correctly understood, the Church's essence is found, not in the Church herself, but rather in her orientation [Verwiesensein] and her referring [Verweisen] to one beyond herself. Father Heim shows this christological structure of the Council's teaching about the Church, which is necessarily a theo-logical structure: In Christ, man – human nature, is united with God. Through him, humanity has been taken up into the Trinitarian dynamic: The Son leads to the Father in the Holy Spirit. It is about God, and only in this way do we treat the subject of man correctly" [*Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology. Fundamentals of Ecclesiology with Reference to Lumen Gentium*, trans. Michael J. Miller [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007], 1-2]).

anthropology. This dissertation takes up one of Ratzinger's ecclesiological perspectives – namely from the point of view of human freedom. When Heim speaks of freedom in his study, he only touches relatively briefly on issues relating to conscience, truth, and liberation theology.⁶³ At one point he alludes to the fact that Ratzinger believes the situation of humanity cannot be resolved solely from within its historical setting:

Ratzinger's own response to the distress of poverty is guided by a comprehensive vision of man, which formulates what is distinctive in the Christian idea of freedom in a perspective that is historical and yet also goes beyond history. He is convinced that man's freedom "can only exist in the correct mutual allocation of these freedoms, and this is possible only if they all take the freedom of God and his truth as their criterion."⁶⁴

All the time, in the background to Ratzinger's ecclesiology, Heim detects a mindfulness of the problematical position of modernity in intellectual history. A chief component of this problematic is modernity's perception of freedom and it will be on this issue that this dissertation begins its engagement with Ratzinger.⁶⁵ From this starting point, it will trace Ratzinger's search for a way of presenting the Church as a place of liberating meaning.

Emery de Gaál who, as a Catholic Priest of the Diocese of Eichstätt, Bavaria and associate professor at the University of St Mary of the Lake, Archdiocese of Chicago, is acquainted with both Anglophone and Germanic theological traditions.⁶⁶ He says that from the perspective of Catholic theology, the newness of the anthropological shift that comes to a climax in the twentieth century was in need of both direction and substance. In this context, de Gaál believes Ratzinger is *the* "anti-Nietzsche"⁶⁷ who plays a significant role in initiating an epochal christological shift:

⁶³ Ibid., 154-59, 202-03, 207-12.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 210, quoting Joseph Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe? The Church in the Modern World: Assessment and Forecast*, 2d. ed., trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), 79.

⁶⁵ See Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger– Kirchliche Existenz*, 467-75, where Heim says that the central issues of intellectual history influenced Ratzinger's reception of the Council and any one of them would be deserving of a monograph of its own. Freedom is such an issue and I will propose that it deeply impacts his approach to ecclesiology.

⁶⁶ See Emery de Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christological Shift* (New York: Palgrave MacMillian, 2010).

⁶⁷ De Gaál borrows this phrase from the German author Botho Strauß in the German daily newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* on 20 October 1994.

Benedict XVI is challenging modernity to a revision of the suppositions and assumptions Nietzsche had instilled in such a sustained and lasting manner. A loss of purpose and of values has become the norm for many people. Nihilism has become the practical worldview, altering all areas of life. Nietzsche claimed, “Christianity is the greatest misfortune that had befallen humankind.” Benedict XVI’s response is “Jesus Christ is the greatest fortune imaginable for humankind.”⁶⁸

De Gaál backs up this view of Ratzinger’s contribution to personalist christology through the prism of a freedom lived within the sacramental life of the Church:

[Ratzinger’s] concern is not primarily an academic or cerebral one but is rather the result of a personal encounter with Jesus Christ as a believer living the sacramental life of the Catholic Church. For Ratzinger, God is the reality of charity that constitutes a human being in freedom. God’s invitation to covenantal relationality actuates full freedom in the individual human being. . . . In the Christian Redeemer, the unity and the whole of reality become tangible. God’s only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, demonstrates for every age again what genuinely fulfilled human existence is. Ratzinger perceives this as a predicatory figuration of the central call of human beings, namely, as being *called to freedom*. Jesus Christ points to the central reality that every human being is called to consciously conform himself or herself to and find fulfilment in the acceptance of oneself as proexistence, that is, as existence “for” others. The proexistence of Jesus Christ’s crucifixion makes concrete charity possible. Thus, genuine and edifying change in this world occurs not by modifying structures but by transforming human persons towards genuine freedom.⁶⁹

From a sacramental starting point, De Gaál sets out to explore the nature of Christian brotherhood, evangelisation and worship, demonstrating Ratzinger’s belief that Christ gives the world identity and meaning. While sharing De Gaál’s motivation to explain the positive message of liberation to be found in Ratzinger’s work, the focus of this dissertation diverges from De Gaál by examining the significant emphasis placed on ecclesiology in Ratzinger’s treatment of freedom. Against the background of a cultural context that has become increasingly disillusioned, suspicious – and even hostile – to the possibility that the Church supports and fosters human freedom, this dissertation researches Ratzinger’s presentation of the Church as a liberating force for humanity today.

One of the foremost Ratzingerian experts from Ireland and associate professor of theology at Milltown Institute in Dublin, James Corkery undertook graduate studies on the

⁶⁸ De Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, ix-x.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

Bavarian in 1991.⁷⁰ Highlighting two tenets in Ratzinger’s theology as “unmakable” salvation and “receiving” anthropology, Corkery laments that, apart from the principle of love, a greater overall soteriological coherence was not achieved by him – at least up to that point. This dissertation, by studying Ratzinger’s ecclesiology from the perspective of human freedom, seeks to determine to what extent his vision of the Church can reduce this soteriological deficit. In the context of the question-mark that is said to hang over the Church’s ability to be a positive force for human liberation today, the relevance of this question for ecclesiology seems all the more pressing. In this task, we have the benefit of an additional twenty years of maturation in Ratzinger’s own theological reflection. In light of his numerous publications since 1991 – not least through his *Jesus of Nazareth* series⁷¹ – I will deepen and update Ratzingerian research in the area of the human person’s aspiration to the fullness of freedom.

Interestingly, in a more recent publication, Corkery seems to have come to the view that it will be through ecclesiology that the requisite coherence in Ratzinger’s anthropology will emerge. He notes that Ratzinger’s primary motivation is to be a pastor *of* the Church and his writings are oriented towards that end: “[they] are focused on showing to the men and women of his time that the Church’s faith is the pathway to genuine humanity.”⁷² In other words, the Christian Creed, in the broadest sense, is the metaphysical key to human flourishing. In describing Ratzinger’s approach as an “ecclesial hermeneutic of trust,”⁷³ Corkery does sound a note of caution: “[f]undamental hope in the Church will remain pivotal for [Ratzinger’s] entire theological journey. . . . This method is rooted in his history and leads

⁷⁰ See James Corkery, *The Relationship between Human Existence and Christian Salvation in the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger* (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1991).

⁷¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan bis zur Verklärung* (Freiburg: Herder, 2007); *Von Einzug in Jerusalem bis zur Auferstehung* (Freiburg: Herder, 2011); *Jesus von Nazareth. Prolog: Die Kindheitsgeschichten* (Freiburg: Herder, 2012).

⁷² James Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger’s Theological Ideas: Wise Cautions & Legitimate Hopes* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 37. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth: Christianity and the Catholic Church at the End of the Millennium: An Interview with Peter Seewald*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 259.

⁷³ See Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger: Wise Cautions & Legitimate Hopes*, 136, 139.

him at times to too much scepticism regarding the world and too much idealism regarding the Church.”⁷⁴ However, despite Corkery’s cautionary note, he concedes that “even today – long after the dispute over liberation theology – [Ratzinger] still, when writing about initiatives to improve *material* well-being, emphasises the soul, the whole person, integral liberation.”⁷⁵ This dissertation seeks to come to terms with Ratzinger’s overall approach to the pastoral care of persons and their freedom, and how he links this with the mission of the Church.⁷⁶ The overarching orientation of Ratzinger’s approach is that the human person cannot survive long without “truth” – without accepting the truth of their nature.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 92.

⁷⁶ Mary A. Ehle undertook a comparative study of the anthropologies of Joseph Ratzinger and Leonardo Boff in Marquette University, Wisconsin, in 2002 which showed that both share a concept of the person as relational. The two theologians represent what Ehle discerns as the two definable trajectories in missiology in the period since the Second Vatican Council. The first is an evangelical, spiritualising mission that aims to draw all people into ecclesial communion (Ratzinger) while the second emphasizes the socio-political character of the Church’s mission which works for liberation and justice (Boff). Ehle contends that these are not inimical to one another. She introduces the Trinitarian theology of Bernd Jochen Hilberath who, working with an understanding of the divine person as *Selbstand* (or *Autonomie*) *in relation*, provides a communicative concept of the person which sees the divine person in its proper distinctiveness while maintaining the unity of the three in communicative relation. She maintains that the imbalance of seemingly opposing missiologies is addressed when the person is allowed to exist in freedom and in dynamic relation. See Mary A. Ehle, *A Trinitarian Ecclesiology of Communion and the Mission of the Church: Beyond the Debate between Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Leonardo Boff: The Contribution of Bernd Jochen Hilberath* (PhD diss., Marquette University, 2002).

⁷⁷ We can note here the ecclesiological attitude of contemporary Popes to the issue of the truth about the person and their liberation. It became an explicit part of papal teaching in the wake of the challenge which Latin American liberationists directed towards the universal Church, particularly in western capitalist strongholds. After the Synods of Bishops in 1971 on justice in the world, and in 1974 on the relationship between freedom from oppression and full freedom, or salvation of mankind, Paul VI issued the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii nuntiandi* (*EN*) to clarify the connection between the evangelical mission of the Church and human liberation or advancement. Blessed John Paul II based his address to the third general conference of the Latin American Episcopate of 28 January 1979 on *Evangelii nuntiandi*’s emphasis on the distinctive character of the Gospel – a character of divine origin (cf. *EN* 32). See John Paul II, Address to the Third General Conference of the Latin American Episcopate: AAS 71 (1979), 188-196. He insisted that the three pillars upon which any authentic theology of liberation rests are: “truth about Jesus the Saviour” (I, 2), “truth about the Church,” (I, 9; III, 1) and “truth about mankind” (I, 9). The key ecclesiological point of the address was that “[t]hanks to the Gospel, the Church has the truth about man. This truth is found in an anthropology that the Church never ceases to fathom more thoroughly and to communicate to others” (III, 1). In 1984, the *CDF* recalled this teaching in *LN*, V, 8 and XI, 5. Overall, the debate on human freedom and liberation in the world caused the Pontiffs to re-evaluate the nature of the Church in relation to the liberation movements springing up everywhere. The direction Paul VI took at that time can already be seen when he addressed the United Nations in 1965 with the belief that the Church is the “the expert in humanity.” See Paul VI, *Address to the United Nations*, 4 October 1965, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651004_united-nations_fr.html (accessed 17 December 2012). The phrase was used subsequently in the *CDF* Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World which was issued on 31 May 2004, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_en.html (accessed 17 December 2012). Pope Benedict XVI returned to this phrase in the Sunday Angelus

In light of the foregoing interpretations and readings of Ratzinger's approach to freedom by various scholars, I propose that this dissertation proceed in a threefold manner. In the first instance, it considers how Ratzinger deals with the shifting cultural context that challenges the Church's mission. Second, it seeks to draw out from Ratzinger's writings the foundations upon which he builds a Christian understanding of authentic freedom. Finally, it elucidates the proposal for the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom that emanates from his ecclesiology.

0.4. Methodology

In order to assist the reader with the material that follows, it is important to clarify some points with regard to methodology. Due to the prolific nature of his writings, Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI presents the researcher with a theological quandary: what constitutes his personal, speculative writings as opposed to his magisterial pronouncements? For the purposes of the present research, his books, articles, occasional speeches and lectures up until his election as Pope in 2005 constitute the primary research texts whereas all official Church documents and pronouncements made in his name as Bishop of Rome constitute secondary, albeit important sources for the purpose of interpretation.⁷⁸ In what follows, references to 'Benedict XVI' or 'Benedict' will apply only to statements which he made in the course of his pontificate.

I considered whether a chronological study of his writings would be advantageous due

address of 12 July 2009, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/angelus/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20090712_en.html (accessed 20 September 2011).

⁷⁸ Others have made the same and, in my opinion, necessary distinction, even if on occasion it becomes impossible to avoid some overlapping on certain questions. See D. Vincent Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI: The Conscience of our Age. A Theological Portrait* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 34-35; Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology*, 14-15. Indeed it is possible here to be guided by the distinction Ratzinger himself makes. In the *Foreword* to the first volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*, he said: "It goes without saying that this book is in no way an exercise of the Magisterium, but is solely an expression of my personal search 'for the face of the Lord' (Ps. 27:8). Everyone is free, then, to contradict me. I would only ask my readers for that initial good will without which there can be no understanding" (Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker [London: Bloomsbury, 2007], xxiii-xxiv).

to the length of his theological career, but, ultimately, I found myself concurring with the consensus of other commentators who conclude that a “fundamental continuity is noticeable” in his work which demonstrates “a firm internal consistency throughout fifty years.”⁷⁹ Therefore, I believe it is more beneficial to research the principal tenets underpinning his approach.⁸⁰

The research is presented in three major sections spread out over eight chapters, concluding with an overall evaluation of the findings. **Section I** looks at the contemporary issue of freedom in light of Ratzinger’s life and theology. From a biographical perspective, **Chapter 1** sets out how Ratzinger’s theological vision comes to be marked by a discernible sensitivity to the theme of human freedom. **Chapter 2** details how Ratzinger has paid close

⁷⁹ See Lieven Boeve and Gerard Mannion, eds., *The Ratzinger Reader: Mapping a Theological Journey* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 11-12, 83, 87. Boeve points out that as early as 1978, Robert Tura was suggesting the existence of *un primo Ratzinger* and *un secondo Ratzinger*. See Robert Tura, “Joseph Ratzinger,” in P. Vanzan and H.J. Schultz, eds., *Lessico dei Teologi del secolo XX* (Brescia: Mysterium Salutis, 1978), 750-752. Nevertheless, the majority view of both admirer and detractor alike is that Ratzinger’s theology has remained remarkably consistent. See also Hofmann, *Joseph Ratzinger: Ein theologisches Profil*, 9; Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 31; Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger’s Theological Ideas*, 29; Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 121. Most also acknowledge that there has been some development in him, in that “at the time of the Council [he] took positions that he later no longer holds” (Boeve and Mannion, *The Ratzinger Reader*, 11). This seems perfectly reasonable for a theologian in the course of half a century of reflective engagement with issues of faith and culture. His life demonstrates that consistency and openness to change are not mutually exclusive. The pastoral and cultural issues have naturally evolved, but not the heart of the Judeo-Christian and biblical tradition which he draws on to respond to them. In general terms, one might say that in the fifties, the issue for him was the fundamental nature of Christianity as a whole; in the sixties, it was the nature, value and direction of reform; in the seventies and eighties, it was the understanding of the relationship between theology and the Magisterium, the global issues of clashing ideologies and the future of human existence; in the nineties, issues of theological dissent continued along with questions about Europe, ecumenism and the moral dilemma of ever-increasing discoveries in bioethical sciences; in the new millennium, issues of internal Church corruption and abuses, as well as religious freedom and increasing instances of Christian persecution. Finally, one might say that the exposition of the fundamental nature of Christianity as a whole, and christology in particular, has returned and accompanies Ratzinger’s Petrine ministry.

⁸⁰ Throughout the dissertation, when quoting substantial portions of Ratzinger’s writings, I indent them, using the original German, Italian or English texts where applicable. In the corresponding footnote, I will include the published English translation, where available, but subject to occasional and acknowledged correction on my part where necessary, for the sake of greater accuracy. For the sake of coherency for the reader, shorter quotations in the main text will be in English unless the point being made requires otherwise. Throughout the text that follows, in the vast majority of cases, I have preferred to use short titles as opposed to acronyms for Ratzinger’s works. However, where practicable, I have availed of the *Gesammelte Schriften* initiative which is underway in Regensburg. It is a project begun in 2008 under the patronage of Bishop Gerhard Ludwig Müller at the *Institut Papst Benedikt XVI* in Regensburg. It is envisaged that a sixteen volume set of his edited writings will be published. See <http://www.institut-papst-benedikt.de/joseph-ratzinger-gesammelteschriften-jrgs.html> (accessed 17 December 2012). These will take the form of an abbreviated acronym in the dissertation’s footnotes. With regard to inclusive language I try to maintain a consistent usage throughout the study but it is not always possible when the materials used predate the current sensitivity to the inclusive form. For the sake of authenticity, I do not alter material which I quote directly. Occasionally, “man” will be used in the sense of human civilisation as a whole. This form is used solely because it furnishes more efficient syntax.

attention to the evolving perception of the concept of freedom in western society. This informs his view of how the present cultural situation has come about in society in general and in the Church in particular. He argues that one cannot be isolated from the other because every Church member lives in – and is influenced by – the societies with which they are associated. When society at large is suffering a crisis of meaning in respect of freedom, Christian believers are not impervious to the broad spectrum of cultural trends and inclinations.

In this section we see that Ratzinger's life, given the times in which he lived, led him to a deep concern with the idea of freedom. In his writing, he undertakes a philosophical and cultural analysis of the modern era, the roots of which he attributes to a one-sided and uninhibited form of “anarchic freedom” that has increasingly become dominant in society. In practice, Ratzinger visualizes this in terms of a tripartite synthesis of belief in progress, the canonisation of science and the promise of perfection for humanity within history. The distrust towards authority and the imposition of constraints which are the fruits of this synthesis convince him that anarchic freedom has left its mark on Christianity, causing a range of emotions from disappointment and resentment to anger and indignation with hierarchical and authoritarian ecclesiologies.

Section II examines Ratzinger's presentation of a Christian understanding of freedom and the role of the Church as a sphere where it can be realised in the human person. **Chapter 3** examines Ratzinger's christology and its concentration on the concept of authentic freedom that reaches back into the story of God's people in Israel, and forward through to the Church's ecumenical Councils and teachings. Of particular significance for Ratzinger, in this regard, is neo-chalcedonian christology. By incorporating Ratzinger's anthropological outlook, **Chapter 4** extends and completes the preparations for identifying true freedom. What emerges is a christocentric anthropology, with Christ as the centre of possibility for

human freedom. **Chapter 5** sets out how Ratzinger's ecclesiology integrates his vision of being human and the possibility of encounter with the liberating Christ. The Church, as the sphere that renders this encounter possible, leads to the proposal of the existence of a liberation ecclesiology in Ratzinger's writings. This embraces the four dimensions of sacrament, faith, hope and love. This section concludes that authentic freedom consists of a sincere human posture with regard to God, in which the Church, as the place of encounter with the Crucified, empowers the human person to establish and develop the authenticity of their posture.

Section III comprises three succinct chapters proposing the Church as sphere of growth in authentic human freedom. They are "manifestations" for learning and practicing the Christian understanding of authentic freedom to which Ratzinger devotes significant reflection: the Church at worship as the school of human freedom (**Chapter 6**), the Church's role of oversight (**Chapter 7**) and the Church as witness (**Chapter 8**). The themes coincide with three key ecclesial relationships: the individual believer and God; the communal gathering of believers with Christ and with one another; the outreach of the believer to the other. In the exposition of these relationships, the cross-pressures of dealing with the temporal and supernatural aspects of ecclesiality come into focus. None of these "manifestations" is enough on its own. Therefore, the Church cannot afford to neglect any of them. While each of them may present a distinctive aspect of ecclesial life, all three are interrelated in a way that promotes a freedom granting the human person the opportunity to live and grow in accordance with the truth of their nature. The expectation is that, through the Church, each person can come to trust the Christian understanding of the human person, and can also come to accept the possibilities and constraints of freedom that coincide with human nature. The dissertation concludes with an appraisal of Ratzinger's overall contribution to the theology of human freedom, as well as indications for some future areas of research.

SECTION I: CONTEXTS

The opening section of this dissertation shows how the formative influences on Joseph Ratzinger as a theologian and pastor feed into his responses and approaches to the issue of freedom. While he is undeniably influenced by growing up in twentieth-century Germany, fraught as it was by harsh abuses of freedom, he is also someone persuaded by the intellectual and spiritual riches of Europe, the liturgical heritage of Roman Catholicism, and the security of a stable family environment. As a result of this combination of influences, Ratzinger represents a significant voice in the study of the Church as it endeavours to respond to humanity's thirst for freedom. He is troubled by the one-sidedness of the contemporary understanding of freedom and remains convinced that only the full expression of the truth about authentic freedom such as is found in the catholic tradition can remedy the deficiencies that beset present understandings of liberation. In order to dialogue comprehensively with Ratzinger's perspective, it is necessary to appreciate the contexts which shaped it.

CHAPTER 1: Discovering the Importance of Freedom: Formative Influences on Joseph Ratzinger and his Theology

1.0. Introduction

Joseph Ratzinger and his generation were born into a European society compelled to reflect deeply on the complexities associated with the issue of human freedom. In large measure, this was a consequence of the rise and fall of Nazi and Communist supremacy in the twentieth-century. While a person or a generation cannot be determined exclusively by the circumstances of life-experience, these undoubtedly exert a major influence on the consciousness of one's reality. The aim of this chapter will be to demonstrate how both Ratzinger's personal circumstances and scholarly endeavour evolved in a way that gave him reason to be mindful of freedom as a theological issue in the modern era.¹ In order to show that a legitimate case can be made for understanding Ratzinger as a theologian responsive to the theme of freedom, this chapter examines a number of areas – his formative years and his attitude to ideology, the impact of his initial academic studies in university, his views on the human person and the steady refinement of his theological method.

1.1. A Life Marked by the Theme of Freedom

Born on 16 April 1927 at Marktl am Inn in the Bavarian region of Germany, Joseph Aloisius Ratzinger was the son of a police officer whose career was curtailed by his quiet resistance to the anti-Catholicism of local Nationalist officials. The Concordat signed between the Vatican and the Nazi State in 1933, supposedly to secure the Church's freedom, soon gave way to the severest political and social tensions.² Conscripted in 1943 with

¹ The intention therefore is not to produce a comprehensive biography or to conduct an exhaustive survey of his published works. A helpful recent addition to Ratzinger studies, chronicling his published works up to the point of his election as Pope, is Vinzenz Pfnür, ed., *Das Werk: bibliographisches Hilfsmittel zur Erschließung des literarisch-theologischen Werkes von Joseph Ratzinger bis zur Papstwahl* (Augsburg: Sankt Ulrich, 2009).

² For Ratzinger's personal account of life in the "Shadow of the "Third Reich"" see *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977*, 13-40. See also Georg Ratzinger, *Mein Bruder, der Papst* (München: F.A. Herbig, 2011) for autobiographical information on the Ratzinger family. For further biographical details, in addition to the books on Ratzinger mentioned in the Introduction, I would draw attention to Heinz-Joachim Fischer, *Benedikt XVI – Das Porträt* (Freiburg: Herder, 2005); David Gibson, *The Rule of Benedict: Pope Benedict XVI and His*

classmates, he served in an anti-aircraft corps that defended Munich, and dug trenches near the Hungarian border. In April 1945, as his country descended into chaos, Ratzinger deserted, only to find US troops billeted in his home. He was held as a prisoner-of-war for about a month.³ These years influenced Ratzinger's view of the role of the Catholic Church in society. Amid the turmoil generated by the rise of National Socialism in Germany, the Ratzinger family in the traditionally Catholic state of Bavaria imparted to the young Joseph what Heim calls an *existential ecclesiality* – “the habit of life in the Church that is prior to and indispensable for all ecclesiological reflection.”⁴

In his biography of Ratzinger, John Allen says the Bavarian theologian would come to understand the twelve years of the Third Reich as a “trial by fire” for the Catholic Church.⁵ However, Allen argues that Ratzinger's written reflections on *die Nazizeit* tend to be more philosophical than personal. “One gets the impression”, he observes, “that the Third Reich has meaning for Ratzinger today primarily as an object lesson about church and culture, and only the details consistent with that argument have passed through the filter of his memory.”⁶ In any case, the years of growing up in this environment would have a permanent impact upon the theologian of later years. He recalls the atmosphere in Germany at the end the war and the collective consciousness of the time that the Church was the place of resistance to an ideology that brought such devastation:

Die folgenden Monate der wiedergewonnenen Freiheit, die wir nun erst so recht zu schätzen lernten, gehören zu den schönsten Erinnerungen meines Lebens. . . . Niemand zweifelte, daß die Kirche der Ort unserer Hoffnungen war. Sie war trotz mancher menschlicher Schwachheiten der Gegenpol zu der zerstörerischen Ideologie der braunen Machthaber gewesen; sie war in dem Inferno, das die Mächtigen

Battle with the Modern World, 2nd ed. (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2007); Peter Seewald, *Benedikt XVI: Ein Porträt aus der Nähe* (Berlin: Ullstein Buchverlage, 2007).

³ See Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth-Century Catholic Theologians: From Neoscholasticism to Nuptial Mysticism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 183-187.

⁴ Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology*, 146.

⁵ See Allen, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 23. For a critical appraisal of the role of German Catholicism during the rise of National Socialism and its impact on the young Joseph Ratzinger, see *ibid.*, 9-33.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17. See also Aidan Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 2nd ed. (London: Burns & Oates, 2007), 5-11; Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 12-15.

verschlungen hatte, stehengeblieben mit ihrer aus der Ewigkeit kommenden Kraft. Es hatte sich bewährt: Die Pforten der Hölle werden sie nicht überwältigen. Wir wußten nun aus eigener Anschauung, was das ist – “die Pforten der Hölle” –, und wir konnten auch mit unseren Augen sehen, daß das Haus auf dem Felsengrund gehalten hatte.⁷

In November 1945, the 18-year-old Ratzinger began seminary formation for the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising and was ordained to the priesthood on 29 June 1951. By 1957, he had researched and completed both his doctoral thesis on St. Augustine (354-430), and his professorial dissertation on St Bonaventure (1221-74), in the department of fundamental theology at the University of Munich.⁸ He has since held academic positions at the University of Bonn (1959-1963), the University of Münster (1963-1966), the University of Tübingen (1966-1969), and the University of Regensburg (1969-1977).⁹

⁷ Ratzinger, *Aus meinem Leben*, 45-47 (“The months that followed were full of a sense of newly won freedom, something we were only now learning really to treasure and this period belongs to the most beautiful memories of my entire life. [. . .] No one doubted that the Church was the locus of all our hopes. Despite many human failings, the church was the alternative to the destructive ideology of the brown rulers; in the inferno that had swallowed up the powerful, she had stood firm with a force coming to her from eternity. It had been demonstrated: The gates of hell will not overpower her. From our own experience we now knew what was meant by ‘the gates of hell,’ and we could also see with our own eyes that the house built on rock had stood firm” [Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 40-42]). His assessment of the Nazi regime is primarily based on the logic of Christian belief and the conviction of its adherents. Both of these appealed to him. Two key factors in this were firstly, the example of his parents, especially his father, who criticised the direction in which National Socialist policies were headed and secondly, the Christian resistance to the unfolding events. “My father,” Ratzinger writes in his memoirs, “was one who with unflinching clairvoyance saw that a victory of Hitler’s would not be a victory for Germany but rather a victory of the Antichrist that would surely usher in apocalyptic times for all believers, and not only for them” (Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 27). The major impact of those who bore witness to Christ was characterised for him in the spirit of German Catholics in the immediate post-war period: “Despite the extreme differences of our experiences and perspectives, we were bound together by a great sense of gratitude for having been allowed to return home from the abyss of those difficult years. This gratitude now created a common will to make up finally for everything we had neglected and to serve Christ in his Church for new and better times, for a better Germany and for a better world” (ibid.).

⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche*, rev. ed. (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1992); *Die Geschichtstheologie des heiligen Bonaventura*, rev. ed. (St. Ottilien: EOS, 1992).

⁹ One of the popularly highlighted events in the life of Ratzinger was his call to Tübingen University. Hans Küng was the dean of the catholic faculty of theology at Tübingen who proposed calling Ratzinger from Münster to take up Tübingen’s second chair in dogmatic theology. Küng recalls the motivation for his proposal: “[a]lthough he is only 37, he enjoys great respect, as his career so far shows. He has his own direction of research and at the same time is very open to contemporary questions – the basis for a good collaboration. I had also found him personally congenial at the time of the Council. So he seems to me an almost ideal appointment. And this is the argument which, contrary to all custom, I present right at the beginning of the meeting of my faculty. As dean and at the same time occupant of the parallel chair, I feel justified in doing so. With resounding success. My proposal is accepted unanimously: Joseph Ratzinger – and this is very unusual – is to be put on the list for the call *unico loco* (in other words, without mentioning a second or third candidate)” (Hans Küng, *My Struggle for Freedom* in vol. 1 of *Memoirs*, trans. John Bowden [London: Continuum, 2003], 453). Küng spoke at that time of their “like-mindedness” as colleagues, acknowledging that he was aware that Ratzinger was more steeped in the neo-scholastic tradition than himself, while he also attached more importance to the authority of the Fathers. Before the chair was offered to Ratzinger, Küng was asked by colleagues in July 1965 whether these differences were a risk. He replied that different emphases and directions of research can only be an

In his thirties he attended the Second Vatican Council (1962-65) as a *peritus* to Josef Cardinal Frings (1887-1978) of Cologne. In those years he was representative of a younger generation of scholars who were frustrated by what they called the roman school of theology – a form of neo-scholasticism that did not allow much room for the use of conceptual frameworks other than scholastic categories that were characterised by an intense interest in logical and linguistic analysis, and the systematic presentation of Christian beliefs.¹⁰ He was created bishop and cardinal by Pope Paul VI in 1977 and appointed Prefect of the *CDF* by Pope John Paul II in 1981. On April 19 2005, in his seventy-ninth year, Joseph Cardinal

advantage. Moreover, Ratzinger's chair was "dogmatic theology and the history of dogma," whereas his own was "dogmatic and ecumenical theology" (454). Ratzinger spent only three years at Tübingen which was something that Küng regretted for he felt he was losing "the best possible colleague." Küng maintained that "shaken by his negative experiences in the student revolts, Ratzinger decides to leave Tübingen. This is made easy for him since he has a call to Regensburg in Bavaria up his sleeve" (Hans Küng, *Disputed Truth* in vol. 2 of *Memoirs*, trans. John Bowden [London: Continuum, 2007], 122-23). Although he is careful not to intrusively over-analyse Ratzinger's actions in the restless years of the 1960s, Küng considers it something of a tragedy that Ratzinger retreated from the turbulent atmosphere of Tübingen. He thinks that Ratzinger was attracted by the prospect that under the conservative Bishop Graber of Regensburg he would have all that he needed for peaceful, honest scholarly work: "The one thing that is certain is that Ratzinger retreated from Tübingen, beyond doubt in the front line of scholarship, into theologically well-behaved Regensburg and the province of a reactionary German bishop, representative of Marianism and curialism" (ibid., 127). Ratzinger and Küng are often pitted as rivals. However, Küng's *Memoirs* speak of Ratzinger in generally respectful tones. And it is reasonable to conclude the feeling to be mutual, for Ratzinger speaks of Küng's "winning openness and straightforwardness" although their paths would diverge considerably in later years (cf. Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 135). Küng's lament about Ratzinger's "retreat" from frontline scholarship – often portrayed as a turning toward a position of conservatism – is contradicted somewhat by his assertion that in fact there is little if any difference between the Ratzinger of 1958 who committed himself to writing a dogmatics (which never materialised) and the 80-year-old Pontiff who presents a spiritual and meditative christological volume, *Jesus of Nazareth*, in 2007. Küng says that fundamentally, Ratzinger could have written that volume in Tübingen (cf. Küng, *Disputed Truth*, 134). It is of note that Ratzinger's Tübingen colleagues, Küng and the Lutheran Jürgen Moltmann both highlight a similar reaction on his part to the revolutionary demonstrations at Tübingen. Ratzinger is basically frightened by the abyss of nihilism which the world faces were it to continue on its present course. Küng describes Ratzinger as harbouring "an almost apocalyptic anxiety" (120), while Moltmann says that "for [Ratzinger] the apocalyptic vision of the future of Christianity's little flock in the great dangers of the world apparently remained" (Jürgen Moltmann, *A Broad Place: An Autobiography*, trans. Margaret Kohl [London: SCM Press, 2007], 162). For critical commentary on the theology of these Tübingen colleagues, see Hermann Häring's *Hans Küng: Grenzen durchbrechen* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1998) and *Theologie und Ideologie bei Joseph Ratzinger* (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 2001). Ratzinger, for his part, has always disputed the contention that he has changed, although he does confirm that the "exhausting controversies" of these years in Tübingen did "change his attitude" to the attractiveness of the call to the new Bavarian university which had been in the offing since its foundation in 1962 (Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 140). He strongly emphasizes the continuity of his vision in *Milestones*, 132-151. An informative account of the charge that Ratzinger changed from a pre-Conciliar liberal thinker to the Catholic Church's chief protagonist of conformism is provided by D. Vincent Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI: The Conscience of Our Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press), 44-50.

¹⁰ For his own personal recollection of his formative theological studies, see Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 46-60. For an account of his frustration with the scholastic academic climate, see Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 5-10.

Ratzinger was elected to succeed John Paul II as bishop of Rome, taking the name Benedict XVI.

Ratzinger's life story and temperament is such that it gives him a sense of the need to reach out in dialogue based on truth, and particularly the truth of faith. His desire to dialogue in this way was often overshadowed by the regulatory role he held at the *CDF*. However, as Pope his motives in this regard came to light in a clearer way. Ratzinger has always been attracted and motivated by the scholarly life and it is from here that he has had the greatest impact. When the literary agent John Thornton reflects on Ratzinger's way of life, he describes it in terms of having "survived the horrors of Nazi Germany and the turbulence of the Marxist revolution of the sixties, always serving the Church he loves with unwavering will, profound intelligence, and great heart and soul, in a life marked by joy and gratitude."¹¹ Thomas Rausch, professor of catholic theology at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, expresses the distinctive form of Ratzinger's desire for dialogue by contrasting it with the "hegemony of the post-modernist ethos so present in the academy today." He points out that for Ratzinger, "dialogue must always be a search for the truth, not simply a *modus vivendi*."¹² Without the common search for truth, Ratzinger believes intellectual life – and ultimately human civilisation – will be enslaved in a process of de-absolutisation.¹³

¹¹ John F. Thornton and Susan B. Varenne, eds., *The Essential Pope Benedict XVI: His Central Writings and Speeches* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007), xv. See Joseph Murphy, *Christ our Joy: The Theological Vision of Pope Benedict XVI* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), who has conducted a study of the theme of "joy" as a *leitwort* acting as an entry point into Ratzinger's thought.

¹² Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 37-38. Such an approach, Rausch points out, allowed Benedict's papacy gain a significant level of respect from other religious leaders in a rather unexpected way. Rausch goes on to say that Benedict XVI wanted a dialogue with Islam, but, "unlike his predecessor, he calls for reciprocity in relationships, that is, religious freedom for Christians in Muslim countries (a mosque in Rome but not a church in Riyadh), not as a quid pro quo but as the honouring of a basic human right. In an address to the Roman Curia in December 2006, he said that the Muslim world is faced with the same tasks that the Enlightenment imposed on the Catholic Church and which it addressed fruitfully at the Second Vatican Council, namely, that it must welcome what he called 'the true conquests of the Enlightenment, human rights and especially the freedom of faith and its practice, and recognize these also as being essential elements for the authenticity of religion'" (38). See Address of His Holiness Benedict XVI to the Members of the Roman Curia at the Traditional Exchange of Christmas Greetings (22 December 2006): AAS 99 (2007), 34-35. Rausch continues by saying that Benedict was a realist whom other religious leaders, particularly in Islam, found credible in a world where there is a lot of

A Pope's platform is an international one and it was during his apostolic voyages that Benedict XVI's desire to engage in dialogue was most in evidence. On these trips, he made a conscious effort to reach out to representatives from the various worlds of culture, politics and education to speak with them about the relationship between reason and faith in society, the dignity and freedom of nations and their peoples, and the purpose and formation of just laws. Among his more significant apostolic voyages in terms of highlighting the issue of freedom in a materially rich but often spiritually impoverished world were those to France (September 2008), the Czech Republic (September 2009), Portugal (May 2010), the United Kingdom (September 2010), Germany (September 2011) and Benin in West Africa (November 2011).¹⁴

The convergence of scholarship and experience in Ratzinger's life is highly significant. George Weigel describes him as "a man thoroughly convinced that ideas have real-world consequences and that decent human societies cannot be built on a foundation of

scepticism shown towards westerners in leadership roles. Hence, Rausch concludes by saying that Benedict's "style is blunt, with a professorial instinct to isolate real issues and address them directly. While this has cost him, it is not a bad thing. Even his controversial address at Regensburg in 2006 managed to lift up these questions of reason and faith, and thus of human rights and religious authority in Islam, as well as Islam's attitude toward violence done in its name. In a moment in history when most Muslims perceive Europe as completely secular, if not irreligious, Pope Benedict is perhaps the one world leader who can command their respect, raising these issues, precisely because he speaks as a leader who is also a believer. While his style as pope is far more pastoral and positive, he has no intention of compromising what he understands as the truth of the faith" (Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 39).

¹³ "De-absolutisation" is not a word used by Ratzinger himself but it has been used by the Irish journalist John Waters to describe the shift in culture which we identified in § 0.1. Waters believes it is a more accurate word than "secularisation" to describe the cultural change that is taking place in Ireland and further afield. It denotes that "our societies are being reconstructed to obscure from sight any possibility of a consciousness of an infinite, eternal or absolute dimension. The idea of mystery is being abolished in the construction of a new ceiling calculated to create the illusion that human beings can function within a self-defined, even a self-created space" (John Waters, *Beyond Consolation* [London: Continuum, 2010], 152).

¹⁴ These talks and homilies are available from

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/travels/2008/index_francia_en.htm (accessed 14 July 2010); http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/travels/2009/index_repubblica-ceca_en.htm (accessed 14 July 2010); http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/travels/2010/index_portogallo_en.htm (accessed 15 July 2010); http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/travels/2010/index_regno-unito_en.htm (accessed 27 February 2012); http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/travels/2011/index_germania_en.htm (accessed 27 February 2012); http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/travels/2011/index_benin_en.htm (accessed 17 December 2012).

falsehoods.”¹⁵ The memory of the devastation of his homeland that he carries from his youth motivates him to bring the fruits of his scholarship to the work of evangelisation and the exposition of the Christian faith. Vincent Twomey’s evaluation of Benedict’s papacy is that, even in this office, his pastoral outreach remained, as before, motivated by the desire to teach and to further the Church’s mission to liberate the world. In a sense, the Papacy has liberated him for this mission:

[. . .] the customs officer is now at home, where he can take off his uniform and be himself with his family. . . . His election as Pope, therefore, will bring about one important change. He can now speak on his own terms to the Church and to the world as pastor and theologian – for him both terms are almost interchangeable, since theology is about the ultimate truth of our existence that heals and sets us free, inner liberation being the end of all pastoral activity.¹⁶

1.2. Theological Attitude towards Ideology

For Ratzinger, a very significant aspect of the existence of the Church in society stems from his belief that growth in authentic freedom depends on the relative absence of ideology, something which the experience of National Socialism and Marxist Communism did not afford him or his fellow Germans. For him, religion has an important role in the public space. He believes that the world of reason and the world of faith need each other and must not be afraid of entering into a robust dialogue for the good of civilisation as a whole. Benedict XVI’s address to British civil society in 2010 represents one of the most succinct renderings of this issue that he has ever given. In it he describes “a two-way process” that results from asking the question of where do legislators find the ethical foundations for political choices. On the one hand, it is beyond the competence of religion to provide concrete political solutions but on the other hand, “[t]he Catholic tradition maintains that the objective norms governing right action are accessible to reason, prescinding from the content

¹⁵ George Weigel, *God’s Choice: Pope Benedict and the Future of the Catholic Church* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 217.

¹⁶ D. Vincent Twomey, preface to Murphy, *Christ our Joy*, xi-xii.

of revelation.”¹⁷ In the two-way process envisaged by the Pope, religion purifies and illuminates reason in the discovery of objective moral principles, while at the same time reason purifies and restructures distorted forms of religion such as sectarianism and fundamentalism. He believes that such an ordering of the dynamics of the polity respects the nature of being human, both individually and collectively, and represents the best chance society has of precluding the malice of ideological intent going unchecked.¹⁸

Some believe that contact with suppressive ideological regimes has resulted in Ratzinger’s evaluation of modernity being “ambiguous at best.”¹⁹ There can be little doubt that the memories of his youth, coupled with his academic studies, have influenced his view of historical and social realities. This is perhaps nowhere more readily observable than in his approach towards ideology. The destructive Nazi ideology attracted him to the logic of the Augustinian tendency to contrast the wisdom of the world with that of the Church, while the student revolts of the principally Marxist-inspired events of 1968 led him to a re-examination of the limitations of all worldly progress. Corkery says that Ratzinger has an Augustinian heart which means he writes passionately, but with a passion that counters.²⁰ The historical events in Europe provided him with much material for reflection, making him very wary of

¹⁷ Benedict XVI, Meeting with the Representatives of British Society, including the Diplomatic Corps, Politicians, Academics and Business Leaders (17 September 2010): AAS 102 (2010), 637. The key passage from the perspective of this dissertation is the following: “This ‘corrective’ role of religion vis-à-vis reason is not always welcomed, though, partly because distorted forms of religion, such as sectarianism and fundamentalism, can be seen to create serious social problems themselves. And in their turn, these distortions of religion arise when insufficient attention is given to the purifying and structuring role of reason within religion. It is a two-way process. Without the corrective supplied by religion, though, reason too can fall prey to distortions, as when it is manipulated by ideology, or applied in a partial way that fails to take full account of the dignity of the human person. Such misuse of reason, after all, was what gave rise to the slave trade in the first place and to many other social evils, not least the totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century. This is why I would suggest that the world of reason and the world of faith – the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief – need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and on-going dialogue, for the good of our civilization.”

¹⁸ To Ratzinger’s mind, human freedom is respected when the State does not attempt to regulate and control everything. This is a point which Benedict XVI made in his 2005 encyclical, *Deus caritas est* in the context of the role of the Church: “[. . .] the formation of just structures is not directly the duty of the Church, but belongs to the world of politics, the sphere of the autonomous use of reason. The Church has an indirect duty here, in that she is called to contribute to the purification of reason and to the reawakening of those moral forces without which just structures are neither established nor prove effective in the long run” (29).

¹⁹ Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 56. See also Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 17-44; Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger’s Theological Ideas*, 24-36.

²⁰ Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger’s Theological Ideas*, 25.

any ideological tendencies in society.

To Ratzinger's mind, Christian faith is distinct from the perversion of truth that is ideology. In particular, he highlights the enslavement unleashed upon a society when a critical mass of its members succumbs to an ideological mindset. One of his most poignant reflections on the fragility of the human way of life was his address in the Cathedral of Bayeux to an ecumenical gathering that was remembering D-Day on 6 June, 2004:

Damals – vor 60 Jahren – ging es darum, Europa und die Welt von einer menschenverachtenden Diktatur zu befreien: Der Mensch wurde zertreten, gebraucht und missbraucht für den Wahn einer Macht, die eine neue Welt schaffen wollte. Von Gott wurde zwar gesprochen, aber er war nur ein Etikett, um dem eigenen Willen Absolutheit zu verleihen. Nicht der Wille Gott zählte, sondern allein der eigene Wille zur Macht, und darum war im Menschen nicht mehr das Bild Gottes zu erkennen, vor dem wir in Ehrfurcht stehen müssen, sondern nur noch das "Menschenmaterial," mit dem man arbeitete, das man verachtete, wie man in Wirklichkeit Gott selbst verachtete. Eine ungezählte Schar von Menschen wurde dafür in den Konzentrationslagern wie Material "verbraucht." Und eine nicht weniger große Zahl junger Menschen ist auf den Schlachtfeldern gefallen, deren Gräber wir heute ehren.²¹

Towards the end of the address, Ratzinger spoke on the question of humanity's future and how it is essential to constantly grapple with ethos and responsibility even – and especially – in the midst of the misuse of freedom. He juxtaposes human freedom and openness to the future as a tension which must remain, irrespective of whether or not one inhabits the most unjust of all possible worlds:

Da ist dann über diese Geschichte zum einen die Vorhersage, dass die menschliche Freiheit immer wieder missbraucht werden wird und daher immer wieder das Unrecht Macht erlangen wird in der Welt. . . . Obwohl Gott der Freiheit zum Bösen viel Raum lässt (allzu viel kommt uns immer wieder vor), lässt er die Welt niemals ganz aus seinen Händen fallen. . . . Es gibt nicht die Magie des Fortschritts, die ein für alle Mal richtig eingerichtete Welt, die dann ja auch eine Welt ohne Freiheit wäre. Gott hält die

²¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Werte in Zeiten des Umbruchs: Des Herausforderungen der Zukunft bestehen* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2005), 138 ("Sixty years ago the great task was to liberate Europe and the world from a dictatorship that despised man: man was trampled upon, used, and misused in the service of a madness that wanted to create a new world. The ideology did indeed speak of God, but his name was only a label used to confer absoluteness on its own will. It was not the will of God that counted but only the party's will for power. This meant that the image of God, before which we must stand in reverence, was no longer recognised in man. All that existed was the 'human material' with which the ideology worked, but which it despised – just as in reality it despised God. An innumerable host of people were 'used up' as material in the concentration camps, and a no less numerous host of young men died on the battlefields; we honour their graves today" [Joseph Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, trans. Brian McNeil (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2006), 117]).

Welt, aber er hält sie wesentlich auch durch unsere Freiheit, die wir als Freiheit zum Guten der Freiheit des Bösen entgegenstellen müssen. Der Glaube schafft nicht die bessere Welt, aber er weckt und festigt die sittlichen Kräfte, die Dämme gegen die Flut des Bösen bauen; er weckt und stärkt die Freiheit des Guten gegen die Versuchung, unsere Freiheit zum Bösen zu missbrauchen.²²

For the most part, Ratzinger's writings on ideology are based on the western cultural experience, or at least have their foundations there.²³ For him Christianity in Europe is bound to the fate of Europe itself.²⁴ He sees the recovery of an authentic understanding of freedom as necessary for upholding Europe's cultural identity and to avoid plummeting yet again into the shadow of irrational ideology. One of the developments of western culture which Ratzinger resists in his opposition to contemporary ideologies is the emergence of an autonomous human reason that not only comprises an overstated confidence in its own ability but becomes "inhumane and hostile to creation." Listening for the *ethos* of creation, as we will come to see in this dissertation, is an important element of his rationale for determining the parameters for authentic freedom:

Die Ambivalenz der Neuzeit beruht darauf, daß sie zusehends die Wurzeln und den Lebensgrund der Freiheitsidee verkannte und zu einer Emanzipation der Vernunft drängte, die dem Wesen der menschlichen Vernunft als einer nicht-göttlichen Vernunft von innen her widerspricht und darum selbst unvernünftig werden mußte. Als Inbegriff der Neuzeit erscheint schließlich zu Unrecht jene vollkommen autonomisierte Vernunft, die nur noch sich selbst kennt, damit aber blind geworden ist und in der Zerstörung ihres Grundes inhuman und schöpferfeindlich wird. . . . So

²² Ratzinger, *Werte in Zeiten des Umbruchs*, 141-42 ("[. . .] we have the prediction about the history of our world, that human freedom will continually be misused and that injustice will seize power again and again in the world. . . . [But] although God allows the freedom to choose evil considerable space in the world [too much space, we are often inclined to think], he never lets the world fall completely out of his hands. . . . There is no magic progress, no world correctly regulated once and for all, for that would be a world without freedom. God holds the world in his hands, but he does so to no small extent by means of our freedom, and we must use it – as a freedom to choose the good – to oppose the freedom of evil. Faith does not create a better world, [*but it awakens and strengthens the moral forces that build dams against the flood of evil*], it does call forth and strengthen the freedom of the good against the temptation to misuse our freedom to do evil" [Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, 121]). The clause in italics does not appear in this English translation. While it does not materially change the point Ratzinger is making, I have added my own translation of the missing words which are found in the original German text.

²³ Many of these are occasional writings that were subsequently compiled into anthologies. They include Joseph Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future; Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Essays in Ecclesiology* (trans. Michael J. Miller et al.; San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008); *A Turning Point for Europe; Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004); *Values in a Time of Upheaval*; with Godfried Cardinal Danneels, Franciszek Cardinal Macharski and Archbishop Dermot J. Ryan, *Handing on the Faith in an Age of Disbelief*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006); *Europe: Today and Tomorrow*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007).

²⁴ See Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 209-222.

müssen von der Neuzeit als wesentliche und unverzichtbare Dimensionen des Europäischen die relative Trennung von Staat und Kirche, die Gewissensfreiheit, die Menschenrechte und die Eigenverantwortung der Vernunft übernommen, zugleich aber gegenüber ihrer Radikalisierung die Gründung der Vernunft in der Ehrfurcht vor Gott und vor den grundlegenden sittlichen Werten, die aus dem christlichen Glauben kommen, festgehalten werden.²⁵

1.3. Encounter with Augustinian Ecclesiology: Self-Surrender in Love

In a 1992 foreword to a new edition of his doctoral thesis, Ratzinger spoke about an exegesis of the Church Fathers which consisted of a tension between spirit and letter. To his mind, this points the way towards a process of *Christologisierung*, or “*Christolification*,”²⁶ by which he means that talk of the People of God, in terms of the Church in the economy of salvation, can only occur in a “christological transposition or, as we may say, in a pneumatological interpretation.”²⁷ The Church as a concrete gathering not of “some indefinite community of all honest men,”²⁸ but rather

²⁵ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 207 (“The ambivalence of the modern era is based on the fact that it obviously failed to appreciate the roots and the real-life basis of the idea of freedom and urged an emancipation of reason that intrinsically contradicts the nature of human reason [which is not divine] and therefore necessarily became unreasonable itself. The epitome of the modern era appears – wrongly, in the final analysis – to be that completely autonomous reason which no longer recognises anything but itself and has thereby gone blind and, through the destruction of its own foundations, becomes inhumane and hostile to creation. . . . Thus, we must adopt from the modern era, as an essential and indispensable dimension of what is European, the relative separation of Church and state, freedom of conscience, human rights, and reason’s responsibility for itself, while resisting its radicalisation by holding fast to the foundations of reason in reverence to God and for the fundamental moral values that come from the Christian faith” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 218-19]). To understand further how providential Ratzinger considers the encounter between faith and reason to be, see *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 193-222; *Truth and Tolerance*, 85-109; *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 47-53. In the context of liberation theology, we can see how Ratzinger applies this theory in practice. He sees the emergence of liberation theology as by no means a native or spontaneously home-grown product of Latin America but that “[o]riginally at least it was the creation of intellectuals, and intellectuals who were born or educated in the rich West. . . . [It] is part of that ‘export to the Third World of myths and utopias which have been worked out in the developed West...’” Ratzinger describes the potential of the West to influence the wider world as a modern-day form of imperialism: “It is as it were an attempt to test, in a concrete scenario, ideologies that have been invented in the laboratory by European theoreticians. In a certain respect, therefore, it is a kind of cultural imperialism, even if it is portrayed as the spontaneous creation of the disenfranchised masses” (*The Ratzinger Report*, 186-187). Some liberation theologians were frustrated with Ratzinger’s theory on this. See Allen, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 137-141, for a critical account of the liberationist’s view of Europe’s theoretical interest in their work. For analysis on Ratzinger’s reflections on the topic of Europe and the Christian heritage, see James V. Schall, *The Regensburg Lecture* (South Bend, Indiana: St. Augustine Press, 2007), 69-89; Dale T. Irvin, “Benedict XVI, the Ends of European Christendom, and the Horizons of World Christianity,” in William G. Rusch, ed., *The Pontificate of Pope Benedict XVI: Its Premises and Promises* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B Eerdmans, 2009), 1-20; Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith*, 105-122.

²⁶ Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, xvii.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, xiv.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, xvii.

Volk Gottes wird Kirche, wenn es von Christus und vom Heiligen Geist neu versammelt wird. Erst durch eine christologisch-pneumatologische Lektüre und nicht in seiner buchstäblichen Direktheit wird Volk Gottes zu einem Begriff für Kirche. . . . Kirche ist Volk Gottes nur im und durch den Leib Christi.²⁹

This view of the giving of the self over to Christ's Body as the concrete place of encounter with God and his people is a discovery made by Ratzinger through his contact with the writings of Augustine and has remained a constant theme. For him sacramental encounter is a real encounter. He has consistently promoted the concept of encounter throughout his lifetime by vigorously representing it as a self-surrendering of one's person to the person of Christ – surrender into true freedom.

In his own *Memoirs*, Ratzinger expressed the deep impression which Henri de Lubac's book *Catholicisme* had upon him.³⁰ To his mind "De Lubac was leading his readers out of a narrowly individualistic and moralistic mode of faith and into the freedom of an essentially social faith, conceived and lived as a *we* – a faith that, precisely as such and according to its nature, was also hope, affecting history as a whole and not only the promise of a private blissfulness to individuals."³¹ While, in the twentieth century, de Lubac's promotion of the social dimension of dogma countered a narrow-minded individualistic Christianity, Ratzinger maintains that today, its advantage lies in offsetting the danger of a sociological horizontalism which views the sacraments as merely celebrations of the community, while discounting – to the point of ridicule – a personal dialogue between God

²⁹ Ibid., xiv ("[P]eople of God are Church, when they are assembled by Christ and the Holy Spirit. Only through a christological and pneumatological reading, and not in a direct immediacy, is the people of God a term for Church. . . . Church is people of God only in and through the Body of Christ" [own translation]).

³⁰ See Henri de Lubac, *Catholicisme: les aspects sociaux du dogme* (Paris: Les Editions du Cerf, 1947).

³¹ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 98. In a 1988 *Foreword* to an English translation of de Lubac's *Catholicism*, Ratzinger acknowledged that he was very influenced by the French theologian's trinitarian theology, saying that "the idea of the community and universality, rooted in the trinitarian concept of God, permeates and shapes all the individual elements of Faith's content. The idea of the Catholic, the all-embracing, the inner unity of I and Thou and We does not constitute one chapter of theology among others. It is the key that opens the door to the proper understanding of the whole" (Joseph Ratzinger, foreword to *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* by Henri de Lubac, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard & Elizabeth Englund [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988], 11). Furthermore, Ratzinger acknowledges that de Lubac's 1939 book *Corpus Mysticum* imparted to him a new understanding of the unity of the Eucharist and the Church. This opened up insights beyond those he had already received and prepared him for "the required dialogue with Augustine, something I had already been attempting for a long time in different ways" (Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 98).

and the individual. Under the direction of his much-loved Professor, Gottlieb Söhngen (1892-1971), Ratzinger undertook his doctoral studies in Augustine's ecclesiology, which according to his 1992 foreword, was a providential preparation for the central ecclesiological debates of the post-Conciliar era:

Was die Beziehung zur heutigen theologischen Debatte angeht, so hat das Buch, wie mir scheint, gerade im nachkonziliaren Disput um die Kirche eine unerwartete Aktualität gewonnen. Das Konzil hat, wie man weiß, dem Begriff Volk Gottes neues Gewicht gegeben und ihm ein ganzes Kapitel der Konstitution über die Kirche gewidmet. Liest man dieses Kapitel im Kontext des gesamten Textes, so sieht man, daß die Volk-Gottes-Aussagen in einem untrennbaren und organischen Zusammenhang mit allen übrigen großen Leitworten der ekklesiologischen Überlieferung stehen und mit ihnen zu einer Synthese verschmolzen sind, in der ich eine vollständige Bestätigung der wesentlichen Ergebnisse meines Buches, eine völlige innere Einheit der grundlegenden Sehweise von Kirche finde. Die Benennung der Kirche als Sakrament, die das Zweite Vatikanum aus der vorangehenden Theologie der Zwischenkriegszeit aufgenommen hat, bezeichnet klar die christologisch-pneumatologische Transposition des Volk-Gottes-Begriffs; auch für das Zweite Vatikanum ist Ekklesiologie unlöslich an Christologie und Pneumatologie gebunden, womit zugleich der trinitarische Charakter von Gottes Handeln in der Geschichte angesprochen ist, den die Kirchenkonstitution herausstellte und der dann noch entschiedener und konsequenter im Dekret über die Missionen (*Ad gentes*) durchgeführt ist.³²

Ratzinger undertook his doctoral studies on Augustine from a historical theology perspective. By taking Augustine's life in three stages, Ratzinger situated the North African's

³² Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, xviii-xix ("As for the relationship to contemporary theological debate, the book has I think, precisely in the post-conciliar Church debates, gained the unexpected topicality. The Council has, as we know, given new weight to the term People of God and devoted an entire chapter of the Constitution on the Church to it. If one reads this chapter in the context of the entire text, one sees that the statements about the People of God have an inseparable and organic connection with all the other great *Leitworten* from the ecclesiological tradition. It fuses them into a synthesis, a complete interior unity that expresses the fundamental mode of seeing of Church. In it I find an acknowledgement of the main findings of my [own] book. The designation of the Church as sacrament, which Vatican II absorbed from the preceding inter-war period in theology, refers clearly to the christological-pneumatological transposition of the People of God concept. And the Second Vatican Council's ecclesiology linked indissolubly christology and pneumatology, while also addressing the Trinitarian nature of God's action in history. This emerged in the Constitution on the Church and then more decisively and consistently in the Decree (*Ad gentes*) on the missions" [own translation]). From the time of this research onwards, the indispensable resource of the Fathers of the Church was clearly a priority for Ratzinger. From the perspective of ecclesiology, it allowed him to come to terms with the meaning of the term *ἐκκλησία*: "It was quite clear . . . that the main emphasis in the study that I was assigned to write would be on the People of God as a new hermeneutical key for the purpose of clarifying the patristic view of what the Church is. . . . It became evident that Augustine (like the Fathers of the Church in general) was completely in line with the New Testament, in which the expression 'People of God' appears mostly in quotations from the Old Testament and almost exclusively designates the people of Israel and, thus (if you will), the Church of the Old Covenant. The new community called together by Christ, in contrast, was named *Ecclesia*, which means assembly, a term having both an eschatological and a cultic aspect" (xiii). For a more recent discussion of this philological point, see Ratzinger's *Called to Communion*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1996), 29-40.

growing comprehension of the nature of the Church against two historical situations: dogmatically, against the Catholic sect of the Donatists and, apologetically, against the declining pagan culture of the Roman west.³³ These two perspectives helped Ratzinger to see that self-surrender in love is God's will for the human person's response to the divine invitation to communion in the Church.

The pagan response to the weakening supremacy of Rome was to call for the restoration of the traditional sacrificial offerings to the gods which were necessary for the blessedness (*beatitudo*) of the State. Augustine's theological response was that human *beatitudo* consists precisely in loving union with the one God. Love (*amor*) is the power by which man is thrust towards *beatitudo*. And *beatitudo* is possible only through self-surrender. Love, in this way, becomes the foundational principle of the Church. Ratzinger points out

³³ Ratzinger finds that the early Augustine is attracted to the universally accessible claim which the Church makes, proposing to mediate to the many what was to the philosophically minded of his day a completeness of salvation attainable only by very few (cf. Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, 2-12). Great emphasis is placed on the "infirmity" which Augustine felt was man's plight. Man himself could not sustain or re-create the momentary vision of God which once came to him (cf. *Conf.* VII. 10, 16). Although Augustine's early writings are largely philosophical, Augustine "snatches up the Bible again – and understands it anew" (Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, 9). Since man, on his own, is unable to bear the pure form of divine "food," the Word of God mingles itself with flesh. In the Church, divine humility has provided a medicine by its own example for the sickness from which no person is immune. Ratzinger can be seen to be warming to a Christian Platonism for he cautions against presuming that Augustine's neo-platonic beliefs – that this world is an *Abstrahlung* (reflection) of a more real and truly intelligible world beyond our own – are incompatible with the Gospel (cf. Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, 16). The journey which Augustine made from Neo-Platonism to biblical faith was fostered by contact with the thought of north African ecclesiology in the work of Tertullian, Cyprian and Optatus of Milevis. Ratzinger researches their thought (cf. 48-123) and from this begins to draw out Augustine's understanding of the meaning of the Church as the "people" and "house" of God. Remarking that Augustine's theology, like every great theology, grew out of "polemic against error" (against the Donatist controversy), Ratzinger says that without error "movement of a living, spiritual kind is hardly thinkable" (124). The shifting of focus in Augustine's writing, as Ratzinger understands it, is the movement from an intellectual emphasis to a concrete expression of *caritas*. Whereas previously, salvation may have been calculated in terms of intellectual insight, it now means that being in the Church is simultaneously a being-in-love. The Church is now situated within the *mundus intelligibilis* which had been heretofore the preserve of non-corporeal realities. The Church has a "revelation-character," being the "factual appearing of the Invisible in this world" (153). The mature Augustine's theology is formed from the debate with the last representatives of pagan culture. While also found in his sermons on John's Gospel and on the Psalms, it finds its most detailed expression in *De civitate Dei*. Thomas Rausch captures, in summary, the approach which Ratzinger adopted in his dissertation: "In it he contrasted the ancient Roman 'city of the gods' and its cult with the true City of God now revealed in the Church where true worship takes place. True worship means human life lived according to God's will and God's revelation. . . . But in a pagan state or secular society, when human activity is no longer governed by a proper relationship with God, the demonic takes over. When God's law is not honoured, life is no longer held sacred, materialism and consumerism rule, and the autonomous self emerges with all its self-aggrandising tendencies" (Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 47). See also Lewis Ayres, "Ordered, transformed universe," *The Tablet* (24 July 2010): 10-11, for a discussion on the value of viewing Ratzinger as an Augustinian thinker.

that it is along these lines that Augustine is able to oppose to “the ancient Roman city of the gods and their *cultus*, the City of God now revealed in the Church as the site of lawful and saving worship. The fundamental constitution which forms it from within is love.”³⁴ For Augustine the principal meaning of sacrificial worship is human life itself, lived according to God’s will. It is through sin that human contact with God is no longer capable of governing one’s being or behaviour. Union with a mediator who shares mortality with us, in addition to *beatitudo* with God, becomes the way Christ is revealed in the scriptures as the Saviour of the world. Hence, as Aidan Nichols points out, it is out of Christ’s “own *miser cordia*, ‘mercy,’ [that he] will assume our *miseria*, ‘wretchedness,’ to withdraw us from subjection to demons, and replace us in relationship to God.”³⁵ Augustine’s analysis of love as self-surrender, in contrast with some form of self-sufficiency as a defence mechanism, becomes a key feature of Ratzinger’s ecclesiology and the Church’s role as sphere of growth in freedom.

From the ecclesiological perspective, the question that emerges is how does the mediator’s sacrifice become that of other human beings whose flesh he has assumed (Rom. 1:3), whose first-fruits he has become (1Cor 15:23), whose voice he has made his own as the head of the body, the Church (Col 1:18)? In continuity with other apologetical and patristic writers from the tradition,³⁶ Augustine says we are united to Christ through the Spirit that dwells within us. Christ’s Spirit is the *caritas* of Christ which the Holy Spirit implants in the human heart. With this *caritas*, the autonomy of the individual is breached, and the realm of the community of Christ’s body, the Church, is formed. Although the *corpus Christi* is not directly accessible to us, we may seek and find its presence in the sacrament of the Eucharist,

³⁴ Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, 190-191. See for example, *Civ. X*, 1-7.

³⁵ Aidan Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 2nd ed. (London: Burns & Oates, 2007), 31.

³⁶ See Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, 197-205 where he surveys early Church apologists like Irenaeus, Melito of Sardis, Methodius of Olympus; the anti-Arian thinkers, Athanasius and Hilary of Poitiers; as well as John Chrysostom and Cyril of Alexandria.

its sign in space and time.³⁷ The close connection which Ratzinger discovers between Augustine's christology and ecclesiology will continue to influence him throughout his life as a theologian. The Church is the place where human self-sufficiency is overturned in favour of an environment where authentic *communio* can be endorsed and supported. As the body of Christ, the Church is the universal House of God through which authentic freedom is realised.

With regard to the presence of the *Civitas Dei* – or God's citizenry³⁸ – in the world, Ratzinger supports the value of the Roman legal and philosophical tradition. He says that when historical theology speaks of the Fathers uniting classical western antiquity and biblical thought, it is generally understood as referring to the Christian reception of Hellenistic philosophy. He suggests that this is a somewhat false dichotomy which emphasises the genius of Greek over Roman thought. To his mind, on the other hand, the Latin concern for law and the State is extremely valuable but all too rarely noticed. For him, the contact which the Church's Latin-speaking apologists made with Roman philosophy makes it an "inner factor in Christian theology."³⁹ On this point, Aidan Nichols suggests that implicitly here, Ratzinger "is claiming that the historical theologian, and notably the student of the Latin Fathers, is well

³⁷ Ibid., 209-210. This is also an essential theme in Ratzinger's ecclesiology which will be founded on a *communio* principle. In this area, the work of Henri de Lubac is pioneering, for he was the first in modern times to systematically formulate what can be described as 'eucharistic ecclesiology.' See Henri de Lubac, *The Splendor of the Church*, trans. Michael Mason (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), esp. 15-50; 126-160; *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, 67-81; 93-105. See also Paul McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995). For a comprehensive account of the gradual evolution of eucharistic ecclesiology, see Dennis M. Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology* (New York: Orbis, 2000).

³⁸ Ratzinger says Augustine and the Fathers in general do not use the term *Civitas Dei* to mean a theocracy but rather a "Bürgerschaft Gottes," or a citizenry of God. (Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, xvi). What he discovered in his study of Augustine was that the image of the Church as "house of God" acts as a complement that offsets purely sociological interpretations of the Church understood as "people of God." It also admits of several possible ecclesiological categories – familial, spiritual and cultic: "Because 'house' means *die Sippe* [the clan, the family] in the language of the ancients – and points back towards the basic form of the archaic 'people' concept, 'people' is the extended family, the tribe. If church is called 'house,' it may be available even before an early form of the people of God concept, and allows for an unfolding in different directions. . . . Regarding the importance of family, alongside the word 'house of God,' the sanctuary or temple comes into view and with it a ritualistic or cultic view of church, which may also be a spiritualization of the cultic concept: The actual temple is for those who believe in Christ, the community of people called by God. The idea of sacrifice, which belongs to the temple motif, is connected to the living God, so that, from an examination of the concept, one could expect the beginnings of a theology of the liturgy" [own translation] (xiii).

³⁹ Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, 187.

equipped to enter into debate about the relationship between Church and State, politics and the Gospel. In due course Ratzinger will make his own contributions in this area, in the form of a theology of political ethics.”⁴⁰

1.4. Coming to Terms with Salvation History through Bonaventure

Ratzinger’s post-doctoral research into Bonaventure’s (1221-74) theology of history had a major, almost providential influence on his life as a twentieth-century theologian.⁴¹ In the mid-twentieth century the idea of salvation history was moving to the centre in catholic theology. In Ratzinger’s own words, “[r]evelation now appeared no longer simply as a communication of truths to the intellect but as a historical action of God in which truth becomes gradually unveiled.”⁴² The issue to his mind was that of the connection between salvation history and metaphysics. In other words, how could eternal “Being” or that which is particular, be accessible in history and time? And from the Christian perspective: in what sense is it possible to reconcile the metaphysical concept of eternity with the temporal realm of experience without enslaving either one or both of them? He presents the question which critics of metaphysics ask:

Has not the “Hellenization” of Christianity, which attempted to overcome the scandal of the particular by a blending of faith and metaphysics, led to a development in a false direction? Has it not created a static style of thought which cannot do justice to the dynamism of the biblical style?⁴³

When Bonaventure was Minister General of the Franciscans in the thirteenth-century, he was confronted with serious divisions within the Order. Some of this conflict arose

⁴⁰ Aidan Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 30. I am indebted to Nichols’ research for alerting me to this aspect of Ratzinger’s exploration of Augustine.

⁴¹ See the foreword to the American edition in Joseph Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), xi.

⁴² Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 104. His *Doktorvater*, Gottlieb Söhngen had determined that because Ratzinger had concluded his work in patristic theology it made sense to turn to the Middle Ages. Ratzinger himself also knew of Söhngen’s interest in Bonaventure so for him, the Franciscan minister general of the thirteenth-century seemed to present a logical development in his theological endeavours: “since the [doctoral] dissertation had dealt with an ecclesiological theme, I was now to turn to the other great thematic area of fundamental theology, namely, the concept of revelation” (ibid.).

⁴³ Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, xi.

through the influence of Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202).⁴⁴ While Bonaventure found much about the Joachimite doctrine problematic, not least the tensions which it created within the Franciscan order, he nevertheless saw St. Francis (1181-1226) as a sign of the possibility that a new age had indeed dawned. Ratzinger, for his part, found himself unable to accept the subtle dualism this set up between the time of Christ and the final consummation of history. Through his *Habilitationsschrift* research of the thirteenth-century Franciscan controversies, and the *Collationes in Hexaemeron*, which was Bonaventure's response to the problem posed by Joachim, Ratzinger reproached forms of eschatology that were disposed to "a new inner-worldly messianic hope," "a new salvation of history," and "an inner-historical transformation of the Church." Ratzinger says that such views reject "that with Christ the highest degree of inner-historical fulfilment is already realised so that there is nothing left but

⁴⁴ Aidan Nichols views Ratzinger's encounter with thirteenth-century Franciscan controversies as a prophetic preparation for the future circumstances of Ratzinger's own theological engagements. The Joachimite doctrine taught that "prior to history's entry into God's eternity there will be a 'last age' in which the poverty of the Church's Jerusalem beginnings will blossom again in a reign of the poor on earth. Before the name 'liberation theology' was ever heard of, Ratzinger had to arrive at some judgement about this uncanny thirteenth-century anticipation of liberationist eschatology" (Nichols, *The Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 43). Heim takes a similar position by saying that Bonaventure resisted efforts to divide Christ and the sacramentally ordered Church from the pneumatological and prophetic Church of the poor. The division was intended as a utopian promise for the subjugated. Such issues would emerge again with the question of liberation theology. See Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger – Kirchliche Existenz*, 162-63. Bonaventure's theology of history was largely precipitated by the Joachimite question which Bonaventure was caught up in after his election as Minister-General of the Franciscan order in 1257. The trinitarian doctrines of the charismatic Cistercian abbot from Calabria, Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202) were, at the time, inspiring a group of Franciscans who came to be known as the "Spirituals." At the same time, Bonaventure found himself at the head of this relatively young religious order which was strained to breaking point by the claims of Joachim's sympathisers. The "Spirituals," already considered the most spiritual of the new mendicant orders, saw themselves as representing the beginning of a new age of the Spirit arising out of the tribulation of the last days. Joachim himself had claimed that the third age – the age of the Spirit introduced by St. Francis and his community – would dawn in the mid-thirteenth century. Joachim of Fiore's trinitarian doctrine was condemned by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 although his reputation for sanctity was safeguarded (cf. Norman Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I- Lateran V* [vol. 1 of *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*; ed. Norman Tanner; London: Sheed & Ward 1990], 231-233). Joachim's view that history could be divided into consecutive epochs found its model in the Trinitarian view of God. The Age of the Father would give way to the age of the Son and later the Spirit. This latter age was to be lived in the liberty of the *spiritualis intellectus* proceeding from the Old and New Testaments and would see the rise of new religious orders to convert the whole world and usher in the "Ecclesia Spiritualis." Joachim never advanced his doctrine of the third age to a point of endangering ecclesiastical authority, but his expectations concerning history had a far-reaching influence in the following centuries among groups who carried his ideas to revolutionary conclusions, notably certain Franciscans and Fraticelli. See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, eds. F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, 3rd. rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 883.

an eschatological hope for that which lies beyond history.”⁴⁵ He believes that the vehicle through which revelation is imparted to us is via history as time and space but that the content of revelation itself can in no way be blurred. Therefore, he advocates a christocentric view of reality which has a distinction but no dualism between the content and mode of revelation, as opposed to the competitive antagonism that one finds between inner-worldly progressivist, and other-worldly metaphysical eschatologies. At its core, Ratzinger found himself unable to accept that the desire for progress could be satisfied solely from within history. Viewing the potential of human dignity and freedom in that way does not reflect the truth of human nature nor is it in line with the pattern of eschatology in the New Testament because:

Denn hier ist in gewissem Sinn ein neues, zweites Ende neben Christus aufgerichtet, und wenn er auch noch immer als Mitte alle Dinge trägt und hält, so ist er doch nicht mehr einfach das Telos, in dem alles mündet und in dem die Welt beendet und überwunden ist.⁴⁶

A dualistic view of reality could never satisfy the human desire for happiness and, as such, according to Ratzinger, Bonaventure’s *Collationes in Hexaemeron* represented “a battle against a self-sufficient philosophy standing over against faith.”⁴⁷ From his research, Ratzinger concluded that “philosophy must be integrated into the truth coming from Revelation.”⁴⁸

For his own part, the encounter with Bonaventure’s eschatology would enable Ratzinger to appropriate the christocentricity that was becoming a major theme of Catholic dogma in the middle of the twentieth-century.⁴⁹ Bonaventure presses God’s revelation to the point where Christ occupies the very centre of all time and activity, even of all the sciences. Christ is the *medium distantiae*, or defining centre, in his Crucifixion:

⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, 13-14.

⁴⁶ Ratzinger, *Die Geschichtstheologie des heiligen Bonaventura*, 117 (“For here, in a sense, a new, second end adjacent Christ is erected, and although he still bears and holds all things, he is no longer simply the *telos* in whom everything flows, and in whom the world is ended and overcome” [own translation]).

⁴⁷ Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, 160.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ A particularly helpful handbook to Bonaventure’s christology is Ilia Delio, *Simply Bonaventure: An Introduction to His Life, Thought, and Writings* (New York: New City Press, 2001).

Die verlorene Mitte eines Kreises findet man wieder durch zwei rechtwinklig sich schneidende Geraden, d.h. durch ein Kreuz. Das will sagen: Christus hat durch sein Kreuz die Geometrie-Aufgabe der Weltgeschichte endgültig gelöst, hat mit seinem Kreuz die verlorene Mitte des Weltenkreises konstruiert und damit der Bewegung des Einzellebens zunächst, aber dann auch der Menschheitsgeschichte überhaupt ihre Richtung und ihren Sinn wiedergegeben.⁵⁰

Captivated by this christocentric insight, Ratzinger says “the theory of the cycle of time is exposed as the primordial heresy” which is tantamount to reducing human freedom to falsehood because it would, of necessity, be cyclical and destined to mechanical repetition. Christ as the defining centre, on the other hand, was able to bring resolution to an Aristotelianism which held to a philosophical doctrine of the eternity of the world, symbolised most frequently as an eternal circle.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *Die Geschichtstheologie des heiligen Bonaventura*, 147 (“The lost centre of the circle can be found again by means of two intersecting lines at right angles, that is, by a cross. That is to say that Christ, through his cross, solved the geometry object of the history of the world. With his cross, Christ has finally constructed the lost middle of the cyclical world, and thus renders direction and meaning, firstly, to the movement of the individual life, but then also to the history of mankind” [own translation]). By presenting Christ as the centre – the *medium distantiae* – Ratzinger draws the conclusion that Bonaventure regards the doctrine of the eternally cyclical character of the world to be a philosophical error. See *ibid.*, 144-48 for a full discussion on the circular and linear concept of time in Bonaventure. From his engagement with the medieval theologian, Ratzinger understands that the concepts of time and history find resolution in the message of Christianity, even if in Bonaventure it may be expressed in a way that seems somewhat primitive for the modern mindset: “Actually, it is not a question of a returning movement, but of a unified, progressive, ascending movement. But the ascent of this movement is realised in such a way that the basic structural law of the earlier level is repeated on the higher level. So we might be justified in speaking of a spiral, and here we would find an indication of the connection between the idea of a circle with the idea of a progressive line. Bonaventure always remains conscious of the unique and unrepeatable character of that which takes place in history” (Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, 147).

⁵¹ See Ratzinger, *The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, 148. The greater part of the final chapter of Ratzinger’s, *Habilitation*, entitled “Aristotelianism and the Theology of History,” is a discussion of the influence of Christian revelation upon Aristotelian metaphysics. Latin Averroism, the mid-thirteenth century introduction into Europe of the thought of Aristotle that changed the predominantly Platonic understanding of theology, promulgated that it was possible to arrive at twin truths, namely one reached through reason and the other through faith. In Ratzinger’s view, Bonaventure’s endeavour to work out the relationship between history and metaphysics by viewing theology as “nothing other than the understanding of Scripture,” (67) was an attempt to halt the influence of Aristotelian ideas. Philosophy was becoming increasingly self-sufficient as an autonomous discipline based on natural reason. For all the positive insights, Ratzinger concludes that Bonaventure’s thought not only developed in an anti-Aristotelian direction, but developed “into a general anti-philosophical attitude” (160). See Rik Van Nieuwenhove, “Catholic Theology in the Thirteenth Century and the Origins of Secularism,” *Irish Theological Quarterly* 75 (2010): 339-354, which amends the view that medieval Catholic theology was uniform in its response to Aristotelianism. Nor is it the case that the introduction of Aristotle’s works, per se, caused the separation of faith and reason, theology and philosophy. In fact, Van Nieuwenhove suggests it was Bonaventure’s lack of trust in reason that indirectly contributed to the separations. The thomistic response, on the other hand, placed a greater trust in reason. Ultimately, Van Nieuwenhove concludes, the ability to recognise the untenable nature of autonomous reason, together with the capacity to acknowledge the integrity of philosophy are important elements to be kept in balance in any modern theological response to secularism.

In subsequent years Ratzinger continued to warn against the tendency to measure history, without qualification, by the progress made from within it. In the *Preface* to a compilation of writings which were first published in 1982, he restated the importance of understanding the value of history for the present: “A frequently recurring problem in the intellectual climate of our age is that of reconciling history with the present – of transforming the events and words of a time now past into the realities and needs of the present.”⁵² In a passage where he interprets the human consciousness of history as the immediate form of all religious experience, he claims there is an important sense in which salvation comes to humanity through history. It is incumbent therefore on every new generation to struggle with establishing the right societal form for humanity. History ensures “the individual is no longer exposed alone to the abyss of his own existence but sees himself as the member of a race, a nation, a culture that bestows directly upon him the form and direction of that existence, that guarantees him safety, freedom, life – that is ‘salvation’.”⁵³ Ratzinger claims that people are interested in the faith of the Church to the extent that it transmits an explanation for the meaning of existence. This faith proves its trustworthiness by demonstrating within history the credibility of the truths it promulgates:

Der Mensch vertraut sich unmittelbar nicht deswegen dem Glauben der Kirche an, weil er durch historische Beweise zu der Überzeugung gekommen ist, daß die im Neuen Testament berichteten Ereignisse das unwiderlegliche Zentrum aller Geschichte sind, sondern deswegen, weil er in der vom Glauben geformten und gefüllten Welt den tragenden Boden seines Lebens findet, der ihm Sinn und Heil und Heimat gibt. . . . [D]ies alles gewährt ihm die ruhige Sicherheit, die ihn sein Dasein erfüllen läßt und die er auch mit dem Preis mancher Mühsal zu bezahlen bereit ist; die konkret anwesende christliche Geschichte gibt ihm Form und Freiheit seines Lebens und wird deswegen als Heil hingenommen.⁵⁴

⁵² Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 9.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁵⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre: Bausteine zur Fundamentaltheologie* (Donauwörth: Eric Wewel, 2005), 160-61 (“Man directly entrusts himself to the faith of the Church, not because he came, by historical evidence, to the conclusion that the events in the New Testament are the irrefutable centre of all of history, but because he finds the sustaining basis of his life in a world shaped and completed by faith, one that gives him meaning and salvation and a home. . . . [A]ll this allows him the quiet assurance that lets him fulfil his

Nevertheless, theory cannot guarantee success. When the Church fails to give expression to the meaning of existence, doubts about the capacity of religious history to uphold human salvation precipitates a humanitarian crisis and an absence of freedom:

Erst wo diese Geschichte anfängt, in Widerspruch zu fundamentalen Erfahrungen seines Lebens zu treten, wo sie, statt den Menschen zu bergen, ihn zerteilt und zerreißt, wo sie, statt einen Weg zu geben, das Dilemma der Existenz ins Unerträgliche steigert, wo sie endlich in ihrer eigenen Gestalt zu schwanken beginnt und sich selbst fraglich macht, da wird solche Geschichte zum Problem. Es entsteht der Verdacht, daß die Geschichte nicht zum Wesen hinführt, sondern es betäubt, daß sie nicht Heilung, sondern Opium ist, nicht Weg zum Eigentlichen, sondern die Form der Entfremdung. Wo solchermaßen das Geschichtsbewußtsein erschüttert ist, gerät der geschichtlich seiende Mensch selbst in die Krise, er muß fragend und handelnd sich einen neuen Weg bahnen.⁵⁵

In such a scenario, an impulsive desire to reject history portrays “progress” as the norm and goal of human behaviour and as its highest moral qualification. Ratzinger is distinctly uncomfortable with a vision of history which views progress – namely, the dealings of humanity with the material world – as the way to bring forth a new humanity or a new society. The human person, born in history, cannot be reduced to an evolutionary process whose only measure is found in its contribution to a future as yet unknown.

Progress is no doubt a positive part of integral human development but Ratzinger says that every person is a reminder of the boundary limits to progress, closing the door to a false escape into the future. The danger with an overstated philosophy of secular history, with its faith in progress, is that human freedom becomes negligible. Rather than the creation of a unique person of possibility, each individual merely joins a process of securing progress. On

existence, and for which he is ready to pay the price of many hardships. The concrete presence of Christian history gives shape and freedom to his life and is therefore accepted as salvation” [own translation]).

⁵⁵ Ibid., 161 (“But when this history begins to enter into conflict with the fundamental experiences of his life, when it cuts and tears him rather than shelters him, when instead of offering a way it makes the dilemma of existence increasingly unbearable, [and] when, finally, it begins to falter in its own form and makes itself questionable, then such history become a problem. There is then the suspicion that history does not lead to being, but is deafens, that it is not healing but opium, not a way to the essential, but a form of alienation. When historical consciousness is shaken in such a way, the historically existent man gets himself into a crisis, and he must question and struggle to carve a new path” [own translation]).

the other hand, a philosophy of salvation history respects human freedom and humanity's quest for liberation, now no longer seen as the pursuit of "ideal" historical conditions:

Der Mensch als Mensch bleibt sich in primitiven wie in technisch entwickelten Situationen gleich und steht nicht einfach deshalb höher, weil er mit besser entwickelten Geräten umzugehen gelernt hat. Das Menschsein beginnt in allen Menschen neu. Deswegen kann es die endgültig neue, fortgeschrittene und heile Gesellschaft nicht geben, auf die nicht bloß die großen Ideologien gehofft haben, sondern die – nachdem die Hoffnung auf das Jenseits abgebaut wurde – immer mehr zum allgemeinen Hoffnungsziel wird. Eine endgültig heile Gesellschaft würde das Ende der Freiheit voraussetzen. Weil aber der Mensch immer frei bleibt, in jeder Generation neu beginnt, darum muss auch die rechte Form der Gesellschaft immer neu in den je neuen Bedingungen errungen werden.⁵⁶

1.5. Exploring the Truth of Being Human

Ratzinger's ideas on the human person cannot be described satisfactorily merely as an anthropology. For him what is at issue is the Christian vision of the person taken as a whole, encompassing the individual person's creation and relationship with their creator, their presence in the world and relationship with others, their destiny and religious identity. His own participation in the deliberations of the Council, and his observations regarding the reception of the Council's teachings on being human, demonstrate his striving to understand "the totality of the self" which marks his approach.⁵⁷

During the course of the debates on *Schema XIII* that led to the drafting and promulgation of the Conciliar Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, Ratzinger says the Council Fathers began debating the idea a new way of speaking which, for authoritative decrees,

⁵⁶ Ratzinger, *Werte in Zeiten des Umbruchs*, 23-24 ("Man, precisely as man, remains the same both in primitive and in technologically developed situations. He does not stand on a higher level merely because he has learned to use more highly developed tools. Mankind begins anew in every single individual. This is why it is not possible for the definitively new, ideal society to exist – that society built on progress, which not only was the hope of the great ideologies, but increasingly became the general object of human hope once hope in a life after death had been dismantled. A definitively ideal society presupposes the end of freedom. But since man remains free and begins anew in every generation, we have to struggle in each new situation to establish the right societal form" [Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, 25-26]).

⁵⁷ See Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 393.

might substitute a missionary orientation focused on proclamation.⁵⁸ However, he detected in the *Schema* a structural problem, namely, the dichotomy between biblicism and modernity, whereby biblical citations were little more than ornamental, while theological statements were largely divorced from their own origins. Even though the draft text began with the honourable motive of avoiding a systematic and one-sided neo-scholasticism in order to speak to modern man, Ratzinger believed the result was that “the Bible is pushed back even more than it was by [the drafters] scholastic predecessors.”⁵⁹ In the urgency “to replace authoritarian disposition with dialogue,”⁶⁰ an impression was given which led one to ask, “what does it all mean for people, when everything can be described perfectly well without theology?”⁶¹ The dichotomy prompted Ratzinger to stress the fact that

Es gibt da außer dieser doch recht einleuchtenden Vorstellung vom Menschen als einem Wesen, das zur Herrschaft über die Welt berufen ist und das sich frei über sein Schicksal zu entscheiden vermag, auch noch die Christologie, die besagt, dass der Mensch nur von Christus erlöst werden kann.⁶²

The impression which the drafters of the text gave was that

[. . .] die Verfasser selbst das Christologische, die zentralen christlichen und durchaus nur im Glauben anzunehmenden Aussagen, für eine zweite Welt ansahen, die neben der ersten des ordentlichen, gewöhnlichen Lebens einherläuft und mit der man die Menschheit nicht vorzeitig und nicht unnötig behelligen sollte.⁶³

To Ratzinger’s mind, the danger of faith becoming an ideology looms large here. If faith had only to do with a “second world,” then those who seek refuge there would be seeking asylum from reality. Ratzinger says that either faith in Christ really concerns the

⁵⁸ See Joseph Ratzinger, “Die letzte Sitzungsperiode des Konzils” in Rudolf Voderholzer et al., eds. *Zur Lehre des Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzils*, vol. 7 of *Joseph Ratzinger Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Gerhard Ludwig Müller (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2012), 547-552 (hereafter *GS:LVK*). Translations from this text are my own.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 544. Ratzinger says the French drafters of the document wanted to speak to contemporary man by not beginning immediately with ultimate theological considerations. They were motivated by the need to leave the theological ghetto and avoid scholarly jargon.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 540.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 545.

⁶² *Ibid.* (“Besides this rather obvious idea of man as a being who is called upon to rule the world and able to decide freely about his fate, there is also still christology, which says that man may only be redeemed by Christ.”)

⁶³ *Ibid.* (“[. . .] that christological, and central Christian statements are anticipated only in faith and that this is a second world running next to the first and immediate world of regular, common life, and people need not be prematurely and unnecessarily bothered with it.”)

centre of human existence in such a way that the one who accepts it is the one in a position to begin describing the human mode of existence realistically, or else the world of faith is a world separate from the ordinary world of experience. Ratzinger tries to liberate theology from the error of proposing that the human person traverses two separate worlds. He describes this issue of contact between faith and the world of today as “the dilemma between the claim of faith and the claim of freedom in dialogue.”⁶⁴ On the one hand, there is an obvious need for dialogue but this ought not to be at the expense of the person of faith holding to the true content of their beliefs. Indeed, he said, to proceed on the basis of the *Schema* – that faith is “a conversational search into obscure matters” – would be dishonest, for it would be to suggest that for a person of faith, the act of sifting through the experience of modernity is enough to unearth the meaning of human existence. To portray the faith community as a parallel stream of consciousness, as if it did not equally consist of frail human beings as much as the general population, “as if the ‘People of God’ were one sociological group, among others, which then seeks to be combined with other groups,” is equivalent to a situation whereby “the spiritual claims of faith [are] scaled so large as to be profoundly over-reached.”⁶⁵ As Benedict XVI said in 2012 about the nature of dialogue: “[w]e do not possess the truth, the truth possesses us: Christ, who is the truth, has taken us by the hand, and we know that his hand is holding us securely on the path of our quest for knowledge.”⁶⁶ Therefore the person of faith is not so much claiming to make a contribution to the anomalies outstanding in society, as they are witnessing to the very meaning which upholds the human person and society in the first instance. Only this can underpin the true nature of the dialogue between faith and the world of today. Hence, Ratzinger says

⁶⁴ Ibid., 546.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 547.

⁶⁶ See Benedict XVI, Address to the Members of the Roman Curia at the Traditional Exchange of Christmas Greetings, 21 December 2012, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121221_auguri-curia_en.html (accessed 21 December 2012).

Aber der Partner weiß ja in Wirklichkeit doch, dass der Glaubende die Sache gar nicht für so dunkel halt und halten kann, wenn er wahrheit glaubt. Er fühlt sich leicht durch den Anschein des Suchens und Fragens hintergangen, wenn er bedenkt, dass der Glaube den Zweifel nicht zum Inhalt, sondern zum Gegensatz hat.⁶⁷

Ratzinger believes that the *Schema*, while motivated by the desire for dialogue, was driven by “an almost naïve progressivist optimism, which was hardly aware of the ambivalence of all external progress.”⁶⁸ And progress, as we saw from his study of Bonaventure, is something Ratzinger views as having “an almost eerie two-facedness” – as having the capacity to make possible both human self-destruction and genuine humanisation.⁶⁹ Here one meets the Rubicon of the Christian view of the one and *whole* human person as both a material *and* spiritual being. To Ratzinger’s mind, the dignity of creaturehood implies belonging to the universe and, at the same time, being in relation to God. In an interview given in 2000, Ratzinger speaks of “the double nature of man” which refers to the “something” more which does not come from the earth and which has not simply been developed, but rather is completely new – God’s own breath (cf. Gen 2:7):

Der christliche Glaube sagt, daß das, was hier über den ersten Menschen mitgeteilt wird, von jedem Menschen gilt. Daß jeder einzelne Mensch einerseits biologisch entstanden ist, andererseits aber mehr ist als nur ein Produkt vorhandener Gene und einer DNA, sondern etwas, was direct von Gott herkommt. Der Mensch hat den Atem Gottes. Er ist gottfähig, er kann das Materielle, das Geschaffene überschreiten. Er ist einmalig. Er steht in Gottes Augen und ist in einer besonderen Weise auf ihn zugeordnet. In ihm ist tatsächlich ein neuer Atem, das göttliche Element, in die Schöpfung hereingetragen. Dieses besondere Geschaffensein von Gott zu sehen ist sehr wichtig, um die Einzigkeit und Würde des Menschen und damit den Grund aller Menschenrechte zu erkennen. Es gibt dem Menschen die Ehrfurcht vor sich selber und vor dem anderen. In ihm ist Gottes Atem da. Er sieht, daß er nicht nur eine Kombination von Bausteinen ist, sondern eine persönliche Idee Gottes.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ *GS:LVK*, 546 (“However, the partner in dialogue knows that, in reality, the believer does not hold to things so obscurely. The believer could not if he truly believes. The partner feels slightly cheated by the appearance of searching and disputing, when he considers that doubt is not the content, but the opposite of faith.”)

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 549.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 556. See this dissertation § 1.4.

⁷⁰ Ratzinger, *Gott und die Welt*, 66-67 (“The Christian faith says that what we learn here about the first man is true of every man. That each and every human being has, on the one hand, a biological origin and yet, on the other, is more than just a product of the available genes and DNA, but comes directly from God. Man has within him the breath of God. He is capable of relating to God. He can pass beyond material creation. He is unique. He stands in the sight of God and is in a special sense directed toward God. There is indeed a new breath within him, the divine factor that has been introduced into creation. It is most important to see this special creation by God in order to perceive the uniqueness and value of man and thereby, the basis of all human rights. [*It gives the*

Ratzinger approaches his study of the human person in relational terms between Creator and creature. To his mind, respecting God's will for creation safeguards against misunderstanding the truth about human nature. In his vision, the relationality present between Creator and creature respects the truth that "[e]very person comes, of himself, out of the freedom of God and stands in that freedom as of his own right."⁷¹

The essential tension in human existence, as Ratzinger expresses it, is that with the greatness of humanity comes the danger of falling from greatness. This tension, however, ought not to lead to a dualistic anthropology designed to neutralise the truth about being human by splitting up the material and spiritual nature of creaturehood. For Ratzinger, such a move would mean not merely capitulating to a false understanding of humanity but would undermine human freedom, which is, being created free and being free to be creative.⁷²

Corkery says that Ratzinger's view of the person includes a "*normed* freedom":

So our true situation is as follows: we have a responsibility to shape our lives, always in fidelity to what we have received as created beings. This means that our dialogue with our Creator is a *genuine* dialogue in which we are neither cut loose in history without a compass to guide us nor so rigidly pre-sketched that we have no freedom of our own. Our freedom is a *normed* freedom – not blind and directionless, but guided by the light of what is given to us with our creation. And our *history* is a struggle between living in line with the "pull" of this created, relational freedom or else rejecting this "pull" and striking out, in an attempted independence of all relationships, towards a relationless existence that is, ultimately, a refusal to love.⁷³

people reverence for themselves and for others.] God's breath is within him. He sees that he is not just a combination of biological building blocks, but a personal conception of God" [Ratzinger, *God and the World: Believing and Living in Our Time*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 76-77]). The clause in italics does not appear in this English translation. I have added my own translation of these missing words which are found in the original German text.

⁷¹ Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 137.

⁷² See Benedict XVI, Address to the Members of the Roman Curia at the Traditional Exchange of Christmas Greetings, 21 December 2012,

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121221_auguri-curia_en.html (accessed 21 December 2012).

⁷³ Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger's Theological Ideas*, 41-42. One of Ratzinger's key lines of enquiry is the connection he draws between freedom and love. He bases his argument on an anthropology – which, to his mind is inadequate – that maintains that dependence is a perversion of love because it leads to an untenable infringement on one's autonomy: "God did not create a god of evil; he did not make an alternative counter-god. What he did create was freedom and the state of affairs that our judgement is often unable to hold firm under the pressure of that freedom. . . . And the threat always develops in this way: the greater a being is, the more it wants to determine its own life. It wants to be less and less dependent and, thus, more and more itself a kind of god, needing no one else at all. This is how the desire arises to become free of all need, what we call pride.

A particularly significant insight into Ratzinger's view of the human person came in a 1985 response to questions about Jean-Jacques Rousseau's (1712-1778) Enlightenment view that the human person is good by nature and is only corrupted by false education and by social structures in need of reform (i.e. a change of "system" would allow a person to live peaceably with oneself and others). Ratzinger said that if he was ever freed from his curial responsibilities, he would devote himself to the theme of original sin and the rediscovery of its authentic reality, for this is critical to the Christian understanding of the human person:

[. . .] wenn man nicht mehr versteht, daß sich der Mensch in einem Zustand der (nicht nur ökonomischen und sozialen und folglich in einer mit seiner eigenen Anstrengungen allein nicht lösbaren) Entfremdung befindet, versteht man nicht mehr die Notwendigkeit des Erlösers Christus. Die ganze Struktur des Glaubens ist somit bedroht. Die Unfähigkeit, die "Ersünde" zu verstehen und verständlich zu machen, ist wirklich eines der schwerwiegendsten Probleme der gegenwärtigen Theologie und Pastoral.⁷⁴

In all of this, a criticism sometimes levied against Ratzinger's understanding of the Church-world binary is that it contains a disproportionately negative view of the human person inspired by a neo-platonic-Augustinian repudiation of worldly experience in favour of a petrified and secure otherworldliness.⁷⁵ As we saw previously, Augustine's vision of a weak human countenance does influence Ratzinger's approach to ecclesiology and the need for a mediator to heal humanity of its *infirmiorem aspectus* (frailty of face/being).⁷⁶ Indeed, one commentator writes that "Ratzinger's thought remains deeply influenced by the pessimism about the human evident in Augustine. The confidence one finds in Aquinas

There is always a certain temptation intrinsic in all spiritual being. It consists in a kind of perversion by which love is seen as dependence and no longer as the only gift that can truly bring me alive. So that one sees this relationship no longer as life-giving, but as a limitation of one's own independence" (Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 125). See this dissertation § 5.3.

⁷⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Zur Lage des Glaubens: Ein Gespräch mit Vittorio Messori* (München: Neue Stadt, 1985), 79-80 ("[I]f it is in fact no longer understood that man is in a state of alienation [that is not only economic and social and, consequently, one that is not resolvable by his efforts alone], one no longer understands the necessity of Christ the Redeemer. The whole structure of the faith is threatened by this. The inability to understand 'original sin' and to make it understandable is really one of the most difficult problems of present-day theology and pastoral ministry" [Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 79]).

⁷⁵ See Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger's Theological Ideas*, 49-51; Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 49-52; Gibson, *The Rule of Benedict*, 156-62; Allen, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 35-6.

⁷⁶ Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, 9. See *Conf. VII. 10.16*: ". . . et reverberasti infirmitatem aspectus mei, radians in me vehementer. . ." (" . . . you beat back the infirmity of my being, radiating your light forcibly upon me . . ."). See this dissertation § 1.3.

concerning the integrity of human knowing and willing is absent in Ratzinger.”⁷⁷ James Corkery, too, identifies a pessimistic outlook in Ratzinger, describing his approach to the person as being built on a “spirituality of discontinuity” where “the Christian is the human turned around.” Thus Ratzinger has a “stark, reversing, radically self-emptying (and rather Balthasarian) anthropology.”⁷⁸

While he may be accused in this way of an outmoded pessimism, it is precisely Ratzinger’s unsentimental approach to the human person that leads him to focus on the issue of human freedom in an ecclesiological context. In 1975, some years after his first commentary on the Council, he acknowledged that while *Gaudium et spes* was entirely in keeping with the Church’s tradition by forming “a kind of *summa* of Christian anthropology,”⁷⁹ he was nevertheless uneasy about its concept of “world” (particularly in the document’s *Preface* and despite many attempts to clarify it in sub-section two) which, to his mind, was pre-theological and which precisely in that form had exercised a marked influence on contemporary ecclesiology:

⁷⁷ Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 50. In Rausch’s view, Ratzinger’s instincts in relation to the accomplishments of modernity draw him towards the somewhat more pessimistic view of the human person in Calvin and Luther rather than the confident view of human nature found in Aquinas and many modern commentators. Hence, Ratzinger “frequently quotes Luther, and, like Luther, he emphasises a *theologia crucis*, a theology of the cross that stresses the priority of grace over human achievement, philosophical reason, or ecclesial power” (50). This dissertation will contest the notion that the integrity of knowing and willing are absent in Ratzinger. See this dissertation §§ 2.2.4., 4.2. and 9.1.4.

⁷⁸ Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger’s Theological Ideas*, 50-51. Corkery gives an accessible and informative account of Ratzinger’s basic anthropological stance in a chapter entitled “On Being Human.” See *ibid.*, 37-51. While his judgement is characteristically respectful, it nonetheless considers Ratzinger’s outlook on the human person to be deficient: “Overall, I incline away from the starkness of the Ratzinger anthropological approach. This may reflect a failure in spiritual insight on my part, not least about the seriousness of human sinfulness and the depth of our need for repentance. Yet, an excessive concentration on the need to be changed can miss other things – and can even cause the stimulus to repentance that comes with seeing other things to be missed. For example, what of the ordinary goodness encountered in everyday life – not only those who will one day be saints (Ratzinger’s ‘simple, humble’ believers) – but also in those who live the drudgery of existence with some grumbling, to be sure, but mostly with graciousness and, if not quite with that, certainly with humour and generosity” (50). There is a remarkable consistency between Corkery’s current position on this and the standpoint he took on the issue in his doctoral dissertation in 1991. See Corkery, *The Relationship between Human Existence and Christian Salvation*, 470-493.

⁷⁹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 379.

Mit “Welt” ist im Grunde der Geist der Neuzeit gemeint, dem gegenüber sich das kirchliche Gruppenbewußtsein als ein getrenntes Subjekt erfuhr, das nun nach heißem und kaltem Krieg auf Dialog und Kooperation drängte.⁸⁰

His concern is that the weakening of ecclesial identity which this document leaves itself liable to in its attempt to dialogue with the world, paradoxically manages to isolate the Church in the very place in which it does not want to find itself:

Die Konstitution versteht unter “Welt” ein Gegenüber zur Kirche. Der Text soll dazu dienen, beide in ein positives Verhältnis der Kooperation zu bringen, dessen Ziel der Aufbau der “Welt” ist. Die Kirche kooperiert mit der Welt, um die Welt aufzubauen – so könnte man die prägende Vision des Textes charakterisieren. Undeutlich bleibt dabei, ob die kooperierende Welt und die aufgebaute Welt ein und dasselbe sind; undeutlich bleibt, was in jedem Einzelfall mit Welt gemeint ist. Jedenfalls aber kann man feststellen, daß die Verfasser, die sich selbst als die Sprecher der Kirche wissen, von dem Gefühl ausgehen, selber nicht Welt, sondern ihr gegenüber und bisher auch in einem unbefriedigenden Verhältnis oder noch in gar keinem Verhältnis zu ihr zu stehen. Demgemäß könnte man eine Art von Getto-Komplex konstatieren: Die Kirche wird als geschlossene Größe erfahren, drängt aber dazu, diese Situation zu überwinden. Unter Welt sind anscheinend die gesamte wissenschaftlich-technische Realität der Gegenwart und alle Menschen verstanden, die sie tragen bzw. in ihrer Mentalität beheimatet sind.⁸¹

Ratzinger is distinctly uncomfortable with the suggestion that the Christian has nothing in common with “modern” man unless both believe. To his mind, belief does not exclude the believer from the modern world which, ultimately, is the only world into which mortals are born. Therefore, the Christian is bound to present the intrinsic authority of God’s truth by proclamation of the Gospel without directly impeding, but rather enhancing the good that is

⁸⁰ Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*, 400 (“‘World’ is basically the spirit of the modern age, over against the Church’s group consciousness of being a separate subject, which now, after a hot and cold war, is urged to dialogue and cooperation [own translation]).

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 397 (“The Constitution defines ‘world’ as a counterpart to the Church. The text is intended to bring both into a positive relationship of cooperation, which aims to build the ‘world.’ The Church cooperates with the world, to build up the world – one might characterize thus the defining vision of the text. It remains unclear whether the world that cooperates and the world that is being constructed are one and the same; it is indistinct as to what is meant by the world in each case. In any case, however, one can find that the authors, who know themselves as the spokespersons for the Church, operate from the feeling of not being the world, but as standing in opposition to it, and that even up to now they were in an unsatisfactory relation or even in no relation to her. Accordingly, one could find a form of ghetto complex: The Church is experienced as an enclosed reality, but is pushing to overcome this situation. Under the term ‘world,’ the document appears to mean the entire scientific and technological reality of the present and all the people who are located in such a mentality” [own translation]). The sense of the German word *gegenüber* is difficult to convey here. It could also be translated as something akin to “counterpart.” Ultimately, Ratzinger conveys the idea that the logic behind the drafting of *GS* is that a world-Church dichotomy be acknowledged as a negative presumption that has dogged intellectual history. Therefore the time for a *rapprochement* has come. Ratzinger takes issue with both the idea that the Church and the world be perceived as parallel universes, and the idea that they become subsumed into one another until all definition of the supra-historical goal of creation is lost.

within modern culture. Faith ought not to obstruct what is good in the world but rather to inform each human person of the possibilities and limits of their God-given nature. For Ratzinger, on-going personal and internal conversion to truth is the dialogue which brings about improved relationships with God and amongst the human family.

Ratzinger's discomfort with naive optimism towards the "world" is something that will come to dominate his thought more and more as he moves from the university setting to Rome. While on the one hand, he couldn't be accused of having an overly optimistic view of human nature, on the other hand, with regard to the issue of whether his anthropology merits designation as a form of Augustinian pessimism or sincere Christian realism, the overriding factor is his pastoral concern for humanity. As James Corkery says, there is a "pastoral concern that marks his writing – particularly his writings on the human being. These are focused on showing to the men and women of his time that the Church's faith is the pathway to genuine humanity."⁸² Tracey Rowland is even pithier in her medicinal analysis:

For Ratzinger, the whole point of *Gaudium et spes*, correctly interpreted, is that a "daring new" Christocentric theological anthropology is the medicine that the world needs, and that it is the responsibility of the Church to administer it. He is critical of interpretations which would transform Christianity into what he provocatively calls a "poorly managed haberdashery that is always trying to lure more customers."⁸³

⁸² Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger's Theological Ideas*, 37.

⁸³ Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 46. The extended quotation from Ratzinger helps to broaden out the context of Rowland's words: "[w]hat Christian renewal should mean in the concrete depends on how we answer the question: 'What does "Christian" really mean?' – not the question: 'What does contemporary society demand?' Unfortunately, although Christianity is not a department store that must anxiously gear its advertising to the tastes and desires of its clientele because it has merchandise to sell off that it neither wants nor needs, it is all too often compelled to act as though it were. But if this were its nature, we could confidently predict its imminent bankruptcy. Actually, however, the Christian faith is rather (to use the admittedly one-sided and weak image) the divine medicine that would never adapt itself to the wishes of its clientele and to what pleases them, for that would be to destroy them utterly. Its role must be to require them to turn away from imaginary need, which is in reality their sickness, and to entrust themselves to the guidance of the faith. In terms of this imagery we can distinguish true from false reform by saying: true reform is that which is concerned with the hidden reality of Christianity, which allows itself to be challenged and formed by it; false reform, on the contrary, is that which does not lead but trails behind and so transforms Christianity into a poorly managed haberdashery that is always trying to lure more customers. It should be noted that this is by no means a criticism of what we call today 'on-going pastoral care'" (Joseph Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes: Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie* [Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1969], 95-96; repr. in *Co-Workers of the Truth: Meditations for Every Day of the Year* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992], 340-41).

While the issue of pessimism or realism in Ratzinger may remain a matter of debate amongst scholars, his theology is impossible to comprehend without acknowledging the direction in which it lies – namely, a pastoral concern calling for a close connection between anthropology and ecclesiology. His experiences of the Council and its reception, coupled with his own studies, make him cautious of the pitfalls associated with the promise of inner-worldly perfection without personal conversion. As we shall see in the following chapters, further examination of his anthropology and ecclesiology from the perspective of human freedom confirms the close link between these two areas of Ratzinger’s theology.

1.6. Emergence of a *Christological Hermeneutic*

In the final subdivision of this survey of Ratzinger’s formative influences, I want to draw attention to a selection of lectures and reflections that date from 1967 to 2011.⁸⁴ They track the development of his theological method and show a maturing and a refinement of the rationale behind his theology. It can be identified as the “christological hermeneutic” of Ratzinger’s theology.

Firstly, it is significant that Ratzinger periodically re-examines his approach to theology in tandem with his observations on contemporary biblical and hermeneutical scholarship. The scenario of a widening gap between exegesis and dogma has exercised Ratzinger for years. This impasse, the corollary of which is an increasing polarity between history and faith, has led to a situation of “isolated biblicism,” on the one hand, and

⁸⁴ This important set of texts includes Ratzinger’s 1967 commentary on *Dei verbum* “Dogmatische Konstitution über die Göttliche Offenbarung” in *Das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil. Konstitutionen, Dekrete und Erklärungen: Kommentare* (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), 498-528, 571- 583; his 1978 lecture at the catholic theology faculty of the University of Eichstätt, “Zum Begriff des Sakraments” in *GS:TL*, 215-32; his 1989 lecture at the Lutheran Centre for Religion and Society in New York, “Biblical Interpretation in Conflict” in *God’s Word: Scripture-Tradition-Office*, eds. Peter Hünemann and Thomas Söding, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 91-126; his 1990 presentation “On the ‘Instruction concerning the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian’” in *Wesen und Auftrag der Theologie: Versuche zu ihrer Ortbestimmung im Disput der Gegenwart* (Einsiedeln, Freiburg: Johannes, 1993), 89-95; and the *Forewords* to the two volumes of his *Jesus of Nazareth* series, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe*, 10-23; *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 10-14.

“ecclesio-monism” on the other.⁸⁵ His particular approach matures as a consequence of the need to liberate exegesis and dogma from suspicion of one another and bring them into a renewed relationship of complementarity. For him the very future of catholic theology depends on overcoming this dialectical opposition which, explicit from the time of the Reformation, has been exacerbated by epistemological theories since the advent of the Enlightenment.⁸⁶ Investigating the causes of the suspicion between exegesis and dogma is beyond the scope of this study. What I want to trace is how Ratzinger, over the course of many years, refines his vision for “doing” theology in a way that overcomes a dilemma which, to his mind, is a crisis in the meaning of sacrament.

For Ratzinger, grasping the nature of sacrament entails a certain relationship to scripture as the referential context for Christ. This requires that scriptural texts be read not merely *rückwärts* [backwards] in order to fix them in their respectively oldest sense (important as this process is), “but that we learn, at the same time, to read them *vorwärts* [forwards] from the dimension of the future perspective towards their wholeness and unity – in the difference and unity between promise and fulfilment.”⁸⁷ Ultimately, Ratzinger says, “the decision as to whether catholic theology is possible is based on the idea of the unity of Scripture.”⁸⁸

⁸⁵ See Ratzinger, “Dogmatische Konstitution über die Göttliche Offenbarung,” 575, 511 (respectively).

⁸⁶ See *ibid.*, 506-28; “Zum Begriff des Sakraments,” in *GS:TL*, 231; “Biblical Interpretation in Conflict,” 111-14.

⁸⁷ Ratzinger, “Zum Begriff des Sakraments,” in *GS:TL* 231.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* Ratzinger’s belief in the unity of the biblical text allows him to say that the “christological” and “typological” in theology can be interpreted in the same way when *mysterium*, *typus* and *sacramentum* are viewed as equivalents. For him, this way of approaching Scripture brings out the new that occurs in Christ and gives guidance for understanding the *Christusgehalt* [christological content] of the biblical text. This sacramental approach keeps the unity of the Scriptures in view. Indeed “[w]hoever holds that such a manner of dealing with the Bible is illicit, might perhaps gain a literal understanding of the Old Testament but, with that, the New Testament and his understanding of the Old are spurned from its roots” (225). Ratzinger refers his readers to Henri de Lubac, *Histoire et esprit: L’Intelligence de L’Écriture d’après Origène* (Paris: Éditions Mouton, 1950); Jean Daniélou, *Sacramentum futuri: Etudes sur les origines de la typologie biblique* (Paris: Beauchesne 1950); Maximino Arias-Reyero, *Thomas von Aquin als Exeget: Die Prinzipien seiner Schriftdeutung und seine Lehre von den Schriftsinnen* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1971).

While the historical critical method's reading of biblical texts backwards, without recourse to the event to which they ultimately point, presents difficulties for theology, Ratzinger holds that the solution does not lie in denying or banning it. Rather, "the method should be set within the context of the faith of the Church."⁸⁹ For Ratzinger, sacrament is a reality that renders to history its truest meaning: "[i]n sacrament the whole continuum of history is existent: past, present and future. It must extend down into the roots of the *memoria* of overall salvation history, so that the people of today, whose nature it is to be open to a future beyond death, meet in the present the presence of salvation."⁹⁰ This broad sacramental view of historical realities continuously informs his reflections on the challenges facing theological methodology in light of the discovery of critical biblical interpretation.

In 1967, while speaking of Article 24 of *Dei Verbum* which is devoted to the role of Scripture in theology, Ratzinger says the Council consciously avoided an "isolated biblicism" fascinated with a literal immediacy of the words – a fascination that cannot avoid enslavement to the interpreter's own particular intellectual tradition. To prevent isolated biblicism, Ratzinger says it must be recognized that Scripture "is the word of God only as and in the human word; it also includes an element of mediation and cannot be dissolved into a direct immediacy of the divine." Hence, Scripture's special importance "is ultimately based on the fact that it is as a whole, the word of revelation, because it is inspired, which cannot be said of any other document of the Christian past, and thus proves Scripture to be the fundamental form of 'tradition'."⁹¹

In 1978, Ratzinger further elaborated on his discomfort with an exegesis which subordinated or even dismissed the concept of "event," while relying upon the "words" of

⁸⁹ Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die Göttliche Offenbarung," 576. For example, one finds Ratzinger using phrases such as the "ecclesial nature of exegesis" and the "inner tension of Church exegesis," to describe this view (cf. *ibid.*, 575-76). For him, a faith perspective cannot be removed and must be acknowledged as a tension within the work of exegesis.

⁹⁰ Ratzinger, "Zum Begriff des Sakraments," in *GS:TL*, 232.

⁹¹ Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die Göttliche Offenbarung," 578-79.

Scripture as the sole category for interpretation. He also articulated the need to uphold the inner unity of scripture. In the early Church, Scripture was understood as a unity, whose words, by means of *typologisch-sakramental*, were not merely open to the past, but transparent to the future.⁹² To his mind, the possibility of a catholic theology depends on overcoming the dialectic of word and event, in favour of an *analogia scripturae*.⁹³ In other words, a discontinuity which dismisses the event to which the words point must be countered by a teleological principle, which holds to the interior claim of the biblical text itself. Ratzinger's principle is, as we have seen him express it, "*Die Schrift ist im ganzen Sacramentum*" ["Scripture is throughout *Sacramentum*"].⁹⁴

In 1989, Ratzinger further clarified the importance, as he saw it, of the unity of "word" and "event." When separated in a dualistic schema, "the biblical word [is cut] off from creation and abolishes the interrelationship of meaning between the Old and New Testaments in favour of a principle of disconnectedness."⁹⁵ On the other hand, from Ratzinger's perspective, revelation must ultimately be greater than the news about it: "The biblical word bears witness to the revelation but does not contain it in such a way that the revelation is completely absorbed in it and could now be put in your pocket like an object. The Bible bears witness to the revelation and yet the concept of revelation goes beyond that."⁹⁶ It follows from this that, "[t]here is a surplus of meaning in an individual text, going beyond its immediate historical setting, and that is why there was the possibility of taking it up in a new historical context and setting it within a wider matrix of signification – *the right*

⁹² See Ratzinger, "Zum Begriff des Sakraments," in *GS:TL*, 230.

⁹³ Ratzinger, "Biblical Interpretation in Conflict," 121.

⁹⁴ See Ratzinger, "Zum Begriff des Sakraments," in *GS:TL*, 223.

⁹⁵ Ratzinger, "Biblical Interpretation in Conflict," 121. One of clearest examples of the unity of Scripture in practice in Ratzinger's theology is his exegesis of the biblical texts relating to Mary. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion: Meditations on the Church's Marian Belief*, trans. John M. McDermott (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), 9-29, 75; *Mary: God's Yes to Man: John Paul's Encyclical Redemptoris Mater*, trans. Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 11-21; Joseph Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 84-93. See

⁹⁶ Ratzinger, "Biblical Interpretation in Conflict," 122-23.

of 'rereading' it [emphasis added]."⁹⁷ At the same time, Scripture as a whole has its own status: "[i]t is more than a text pieced together from what the individual authors may have intended to say, each in his own historical setting."⁹⁸ This "right of rereading" does not diminish Ratzinger's regard for Scripture, but, in fact, substantiates the "typological-sacramental" approach: "[t]he text as a whole is 'our master.' In its entirety, it expresses a purpose that goes beyond what we may suppose were the intentions of the individual sources."⁹⁹

As important and necessary as historical methods are, Ratzinger has always been consistent in maintaining they are not able to "reconstruct" or create faith. To attempt to do so would involve "the absurdity of making faith the function of historical research and expose it to scientific criteria, the certainty of which cannot go beyond a very moderate form of probability and is on quite another level from that of faith."¹⁰⁰ Something more is required to liberate Christ from the immediate historical consciousness. He says two processes of interpretation are required for a legitimate scriptural exegesis:

[c]ertainly, texts have to be referred back to their historical setting and interpreted in their historical context. Then, however, in a second process of interpretation, they must also be seen from the perspective of the movement of history as a whole and of Christ as the central event. Only harmony between the two methods results in understanding the Bible. . . . One of the tasks of any appropriate interpretation is that of recognising the inner self-transcendence of the historical word in question and thereby the inner correctness of rereadings in which the Bible event and meaning are progressively intertwined with one another. Methods can and must be found that correspond to this task.¹⁰¹

Between 2007 and 2011, thoughts distilled over many years reach their culmination for Ratzinger when he introduces the methodological intention of his *Jesus of Nazareth* series. Finally, he says, he is able to classify his approach as equivalent to a "christological

⁹⁷ Ibid., 123.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 124.

¹⁰⁰ Ratzinger, "Dogmatische Konstitution über die Göttliche Offenbarung," 525.

¹⁰¹ Ratzinger, "Biblical Interpretation in Conflict," 121-22.

hermeneutic.” In line with previous remarks, Ratzinger holds to the concept of the inner unity of the Scriptures which point to Christ as the key to the whole, and as the centre of history. With this hermeneutic, a sacramental understanding of Scripture resolves, without dissolving, the tension between promise and fulfilment, between Old and New Covenant. Through a christological hermeneutic, the words of scripture are not merely *sacramenta futuri* – sketchy or figurative drafts of the future, but rather depictions or illustrations of the present, the expression and fruit of the Christ event. In Christ, the μυστήριον of God in person (Col 1:27), the difference between word and event is overcome and “the right of ‘rereading’” Scripture is acknowledged as a concrete form of theology in the present tense.¹⁰² Furthermore, Ratzinger says that while the unity of Scripture cannot be the conclusion of a purely historical process, neither can it be inimical to historical reason. This unity, unfolded in light of Jesus Christ, introduces us to the God of revelation who coincides with the God who is reason: “[t]his Christological hermeneutic which sees Jesus Christ as the key to the whole and learns from him how to understand the Bible as a unity, presupposes a prior act of faith. It cannot be the conclusion of a purely historical process”¹⁰³

¹⁰² Ratzinger believes a revelatory religion is a dialogical religion. It elicits a response on the part of the one receiving the revelatory gift: “[T]he dialogue with God is always carried on in the present; his address ‘no longer do I call you servants . . . but . . . friends’ (John 15:15) is given here and now with the intention of forcing us to reply. Thus we can see how the idea of revelation also outlines a conception of man: man as the creature of dialogue who, in listening to the word of God, becomes contemporaneous with the presentness of God and in the fellowship of the word receives the reality which is indivisibly one with this word: fellowship with God himself” (Ratzinger, “Dogmatische Konstitution über die Göttliche Offenbarung,” 525). In the *Foreword* to volume one of *Jesus of Nazareth*, he develops his rationale for an exegesis based on respecting the unity of Scripture – a technique known as canonical exegesis. For him, canonical exegesis – the reading of individual texts of the Bible in the context of the whole – “does not contradict historical-critical interpretation, but carries it forward in an organic way toward becoming theology in the proper sense” (Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, xix).

¹⁰³ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, xix. In the *Foreword* to this book Ratzinger reveals in further detail his methodology for interpreting the figure of Jesus. What he says of the Gospels could also be applied to his view of Revelation as the source for theology: “The main implication of [a christological hermeneutic] for my portrayal of Jesus is that I trust the Gospels. Of course, I take for granted everything that the Council and modern exegesis tell us about literary genres, about authorial intention, and about the fact that the Gospels were written in the context, and speak within the living milieu, of communities. I have tried, to the best of my ability, to incorporate all of this, and yet I wanted to try to portray the Jesus of the Gospels as the real, ‘historical’ Jesus in the strict sense of the word. . . . I believe that this Jesus – the Jesus of the Gospels – is a historically plausible and convincing figure” (xxi-xxii). See also an address he gave to German-speaking bishops on the eve of the solemn inauguration of the Second Vatican Council regarding the schema *On the*

He took the opportunity in the *Foreword* to the second volume of *Jesus of Nazareth* to clarify this. Confirming his task as an attempt to be faithful to the methodological principles of exegesis called for in *Dei verbum* 12, Ratzinger is guided by a “hermeneutic of faith,” while at the same time adopting a responsible attitude towards historical reason, which is a necessary component of that faith. “Scholarly exegesis,” he says, “must recognise that a properly developed faith-hermeneutic is appropriate to the text and can be combined with a historical hermeneutic, aware of its limitations, so as to form a methodological whole.”¹⁰⁴ Hence, in his “christological hermeneutic,” Ratzinger advances a new synthesis of faith and history, predicated on a broad sacramental understanding of reality.¹⁰⁵

Ratzinger has long held that faith is a gift which occurs in the Church or not at all. Just as a person cannot believe on their own, neither can one believe through one’s own power but “only when there is an authorisation to believe that is not within my power and does not come from me but rather goes before me.”¹⁰⁶ The act of “collective listening,” found in the “christological hermeneutic,” not only sets the parameters for theology, it avoids the danger of “ecclesio-monism” and makes of theology an ecclesial action:

Sources of Revelation, De fontibus revelationis (cf. *Acta Synodalia* I/3, 14-26). Ratzinger’s address can be found in Jared Wicks, ed., “Six Texts by Prof. Joseph Ratzinger as *peritus* before and during the Vatican Council,” *Gregorianum* 89 (2008): 269-275, 295-309. This lecture highlights some of Ratzinger’s earliest thoughts on the relationship between Scripture and tradition, the question of biblical inspiration and inerrancy which includes the question of *scriptura in ecclesia*, the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, and the correct way to integrate both into the whole of salvation and secular history.

¹⁰⁴ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, xv.

¹⁰⁵ See Joseph Ratzinger, “Biblical Interpretation in Conflict,” 114-26, where Ratzinger sets out the basic elements of the biblical hermeneutics he proposes. By his own admission, the work of another generation of critical scholarship will be required to fully work out the correct relationship between the hermeneutics of faith and history (cf. *ibid.*, 113-4). Nevertheless he outlines, in skeletal format, five basis elements of the new synthesis. These include treating the text on its own terms – as theological in the strict sense – and not by the standards of the natural sciences; allowing for the possibility that God can enter into history in a way that respects the radicalism of the Bible; seeking a new relationship between event and word which recognises the inner self-transcendence of the historical word; abiding by a concept of revelation which transcends the historical word; and finally, a reappraisal of all that has occurred in the methods of exegesis over the last hundred years, in particular the realisation that exegetes do not stand on neutral ground outside history or the Church. See also Luis Sánchez-Navarro and José Granados, eds., *Escritura e interpretación. Los fundamentos de la interpretación bíblica* (Madrid: Ediciones Palabra, 2003) for a series of reflections by Scripture scholars occasioned by Ratzinger’s 1989 lecture in New York. It reflects on the way forward for theology in the light of a situation whereby the historical-critical interpretation of Scripture has made its contribution but has all but run its course in both Protestant and Catholic exegesis.

¹⁰⁶ Ratzinger, “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin,” in *GS:ZV*, 1180.

In der Verbindung der zwei Hermeneutiken . . . habe ich versucht, ein Hinschauen und Hinhören auf den Jesus der Evangelien zu entwickeln, das zur Begegnung werden kann und *sich im Mithören mit den Jüngern Jesus aller Zeitem doch gerade der wirklich historischen Gestalt vergewissert* [emphasis added].¹⁰⁷

In 1990, Ratzinger had already outlined the contours of this new synthesis of faith and history in his commentary on the magisterial document *Donum veritatis*. By means of two observations, Ratzinger insists on the ecclesial perspective of theological method. At the heart of *Donum veritatis* is the insight that faith precedes theology. If theology were to abandon the ground of what God has said and thought before us, it would annul its own constitution. For the people of God – as recipient of the gift of faith – theology remains a task which is never completely fulfilled in history, nor through the private ideas of a theologian:

Die Wahrheit des Glaubens ist nicht dem isolierten einzelnen gegeben, sondern Gott hat mit ihr Geschichte und Gemeinschaft bauen wollen. Sie hat ihren Ort in dem gemeinschaftlichen Subjekt des Volkes Gottes, der Kirche. . . . [Die Kirche] ist als gemeinsames, die Enge der einzelnen überschreitendes Subjekt die Bedingung der Möglichkeit, daß Theologie überhaupt wirksam werden kann.¹⁰⁸

A second important presupposition is the ecclesiological frame used to deal with the theologian's mission. Rather than opting for a simplistic magisterium-theology dualism, Ratzinger says *Donum Veritatis* presented “the framework of the triangular relationship defined by the people of God, understood as the bearer of the *sensus fidei* and the common

¹⁰⁷ Benedict XVI, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 13 (“In the combination of the two hermeneutics . . . I have attempted to develop a way of observing and listening to the Jesus of the Gospels that can indeed lead to personal encounter and that, *through collective listening with Jesus's disciples across the ages can indeed attain sure knowledge of the real historical figure of Jesus* [emphasis mine]” [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, xvi-xvii]). It is interesting the note, particularly in light of the ecclesiology of communion, that the concept of encounter as a stand-alone concept in christology is inadequate for coming to understand the sacramental life of the Church. Encounter with Christ in the Church leads to communion with Christ and with one another. “Encounter” and “communion” are mutually inclusive dynamics in the life of believers. The encounter with Christ leads to communion in his Body, the Church. One highly commendable study of the ecclesial implications of Christ as the sacrament of God and as the primordial sacrament is Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, trans. Paul Barrett (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963). This book has lost none of its profundity, despite the relative lapse in time since publication.

¹⁰⁸ Ratzinger, *Wesen und Auftrag der Theologie*, 92-93 (“The truth of faith, in fact, is not bestowed upon the isolated individual, for God has willed instead to build history and community with it. It has its place in a common subject: the people of God, the Church. . . . Insofar as the Church is a corporate subject which transcends the narrowness of individuals, she is the condition which makes theological activity possible” [Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology: Essays to Orient Theology in Today's Debates*, trans. Adrian Walker, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 104-5]).

locus of all faith, the Magisterium and theology.”¹⁰⁹ This living environment, as it were, means that “the Church, as a living subject which endures amidst the changes of history, is the vital milieu of the theologian.”¹¹⁰ It follows that theology remains historically relevant only by acknowledging this triangular matrix. By inserting oneself into it, and participating in the organic structure of it, the “Church is not an organisation which the theologian must regard as alien and extrinsic to thought.”¹¹¹ Understanding the Church as the *konkreten Ort* [concrete location] or subject of theology is a sacramental reality and only within the living community does theology fulfil its task of contemplating the things of God.¹¹²

In essence, the act of being bound to the faith of the Church liberates the individual theological ego because “the subject who pursues theology is not the individual scholar but the Catholic community as a whole, the entire Church.”¹¹³ This is how Ratzinger sees his work and the authority under which theologians are licensed to operate. Abiding in the “we”

¹⁰⁹ Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 104-5. Ratzinger says that the development of dogma in the course of the last two centuries is an example of how closely this triangular relationship works. The dogmas that were solemnly proclaimed in this period became possible because the *sensus fidei* discerned them, whereas “the Magisterium and theology followed its lead and tried slowly to catch up with them” (105). In 1967, Ratzinger had previously stressed the importance of understanding that the progress of the “word” in the time of the Church is not simply a function of the hierarchy, but is anchored in the whole life of the Church. As locus for theology, the Church is capable of bringing faith and history into necessary dialogue: “The whole spiritual experience of the Church, its believing, praying and loving intercourse with the Lord and his word, causes our understanding of the original truth to grow and in the today of faith extracts anew from the yesterday of its historical origin what was meant for all time and yet can be understood only in the changing ages and in the particular way of each. In this process of understanding, which is the concrete way in which tradition proceeds in the Church, the work of the teaching office is one component (and, because of its nature, not a productive one), but it is not the whole” (Ratzinger, “Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation,” in vol. 3 of *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, ed. Herbert Vorgrimler; trans. William Glen-Doepel [New York: Crossroads, 1989], 186). When he says the teaching office is not a “productive” element in the growing understanding of the words and realities that have been handed down to us in the Church, he is referring to the fact that the Magisterium does not necessarily, nor in all cases, take the pneumatological initiative in the life of the Church. Insofar as it operates at the collective level of the discernment of spirits in purifying and discerning authentic pneumatological action, the Magisterium mostly operates retrospectively, confirming, so to speak, the authentic work of the Holy Spirit.

¹¹⁰ Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 105.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² By 1978, his focus on bringing faith and history into fruitful dialogue was already touching upon the order of a sacramental, and consequently, ecclesial viewpoint: “The understanding of sacrament therefore requires the historical continuity of God’s action and its *konkreten Ort* [concrete location] as the living community of the Church which is the sacrament in the sacraments. In other words: the biblical word can only bear and be present if it is not only word, but has a living subject and if it belongs to a living context which will be dependent on it and, in turn, borne by it” (Ratzinger, “Zum Begriff des Sakraments,” in *GS:TL*, 231-32).

¹¹³ Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 71.

of the Church ensures that its dogmas are “not walls that prevent us from seeing. On the contrary, they are windows that open upon the infinite.”¹¹⁴ For him, it is the Church as “Theologian” rooted in the Scriptures that guarantees the legitimacy of theology’s scientific enquiry because “she will not be turned into an instrument of destruction for the Word of God, but remains the mother, the living agent, within whom the Word is alive.”¹¹⁵ This can only remain the case under certain conditions and all those in positions of responsibility in the Church are subject to those conditions: “[t]hey are not allowed to impose their own opinions on the Church as doctrines, but must see themselves within the great community of faith, and at its service, and must learn to listen to the Word of God. They must allow themselves to be judged and purified by this Word, in order that they may be able to convey it correctly.”¹¹⁶

In short, Scripture has a major formative influence on Ratzinger’s theological outlook. A remark that indicated his approach to theology via the prior act of faith, and the listening to “history” in the broadest understanding of “the right to reread” it, came in 1997 when he emphasised a scriptural starting point not dependent on individual subjective interpretation but rather grounded in the faith of the Church and in dialogue with contemporary thought. He is convinced that such an approach liberates the individual theologian from being overly subjective and protects the Church from false philosophies:

Ich habe nie versucht, ein eigenes System, eine Sondertheologie zu schaffen. Spezifisch ist, wenn man es so nennen will, daß ich einfach mit dem Glauben der Kirche mitdenken will, und das heißt vor allem mitdenken mit den großen Denkern des Glaubens. Das ist keine isolierte, aus mir selbst herausgezogene Theologie, sondern eine, die möglichst breit sich öffnet in den gemeinsamen Denkweg des Glaubens hinein. Deshalb war für mich die Exegese immer sehr wichtig. Ich könnte mir keine rein philosophische Theologie denken. Der Ausgangspunkt ist zunächst

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 72.

¹¹⁵ Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 356.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 356-57. One of Ratzinger’s ways of living up to this criterion for theologians is the sentiment which he regularly expresses at the beginning of many of his works. He commonly says that his writings “are a mere sketch, more question than answer. But perhaps it is precisely the incomplete character of these . . . that may provide a spur to further thinking on these subjects” (Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, 7-8).

einmal das Wort. Daß wir das Wort Gottes glauben, daß wir versuchen, es wirklich kennenzulernen und zu verstehen und dann eben mitdenken mit den großen Meistern des Glaubens. Von daher hat meine Theologie eine etwas biblische Prägung und eine Prägung von den Vätern, besonders von Augustinus. Aber ich versuche natürlich, nicht Halt zu machen in der alten Kirche, sondern die großen Höhepunkte des Denkens festzuhalten und zugleich das zeitgenössische Denken mit ins Gespräch hereinzuziehen.¹¹⁷

1.7. Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the theme of freedom marks Ratzinger in a personal and professional way. Witness to the terror and destruction inflicted upon society by unchecked perversions of truth, he has reflected over many years on the delicate balance between the ideal and the real in human nature. His experience of ideology produces a tension in his writing between the potential for good and the danger of wickedness accompanying the endowment of the human person with freedom. This helps explain why he has such a strong sense of theology's role in the search for truth and it is equally the reason why he points out that theology is not a self-governing academic exercise of autonomous reason. In fact, theology gains its legitimacy from within the collective subject of Christ in his Church. This insight, in itself, liberates theology from the temptation to override the "christological hermeneutic" – that collective listening *with* the Church which dialogues not only with the Scriptures, but also with historical reason. The method of "listening" which Ratzinger advocates in his own work, allows him to take, as it were, a panoramic view of a theological issue without ignoring present-day challenges or the fundamental truths that must inform

¹¹⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Salz der Erde*, 70 ("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 the faith. The aim is not an 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 imagine 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 know and understand it and then, as I said, to think it together with the great masters of the faith. This gives my theology a somewhat biblical character and also bears the stamp of the Fathers, especially Augustine. But it goes without saying that I try not to stop with the ancient Church but hold fast to the great high points of thought and at the same time to bring contemporary thought into the discussion" [Joseph Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth, Christianity and the Catholic Church at the End of the Millennium: An Interview with Peter Seewald*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1997), 66]).

future illumination. His scholarly encounters with Augustine and Bonaventure prepared him, on the one hand, for the intense twentieth-century scrutiny of the place of the Church in the modern world while, on the other, it made him cautious of inner worldly promises of liberation. His contact with these two theologians would cement in his mind the challenge for the catholic theologian to present a credible link between ecclesiology and anthropology. For Ratzinger, the modern understanding of freedom is where this link has been severely tested. Now that we can see why Ratzinger has cause to be sensitive to the issue of the Church and human freedom, Chapter 2 will look at his analysis of the theoretical understandings of freedom as they emerge in the modern era.

CHAPTER 2: Reading the Contemporary Cultural and Ecclesial Dynamics of Freedom

2.0. Introduction

Ratzinger's point of departure regarding the relevance of discussing the theme of freedom is that the issue "gets its specific contours from the modern era, which begins with the Enlightenment."¹ In fact, he maintains this historical period "claims to be in a special way the history of freedom, in which the nature of freedom comes to light for the very first time."² To his mind, one must study "the question of what freedom is and what it cannot be within the panorama of this history" because in it, "for the first time, [man] no longer has to accept history as an unalterable fate but can guide his own destinies and thus shape history as a process of liberation."³ At the same time, Ratzinger is under no illusions about the complexities of the topic. Something of its "problematic and inscrutable nature" rapidly surfaces, he says, when one considers how remarkable it is that the experience of freedom and constraint applies even to Western societies "which with good reason can call themselves 'free'."⁴ The outcome of the contemporary (western) way of life, he says, has been that an

¹ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 176.

² Ibid. See also his *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, 25-38, where he looks at the foundations of the Enlightenment as being substantially defined by the right to liberty above all else. In the course of his writings, he specifically dedicated two reflections to the modern intellectual history of freedom. See Joseph Ratzinger, "Freiheit und Bindung in der Kirche," *Verein der Freunde der Universität Regensburg* 7 (1981): 5-21 (repr. in *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 165-82; and "Freiheit und Wahrheit," *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 24 (1995): 562-42 (repr. in *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz: Das Christentum und die Weltreligionen* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2004), 187-208. The former first appeared at the pinnacle of Ratzinger's professorial career and before his appointment in the Vatican, while the latter came after fifteen years in the high-profile posting as Cardinal Prefect at the *CDF*.

³ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 176.

⁴ Ibid., 175. Referring to the predominantly Western fascination with non-stop modernisation, he feels that western societies have, to a great extent, relinquished the ties of custom and tradition that formerly helped determine the shape of the polity: "[o]nly now, with his emancipation from the constraints of nature and superstition, does man himself begin to become the acting subject of history" (176). Indeed, while "a hitherto almost unimaginable freedom of movement" has resulted, so has "a centralisation of services and anonymity of ordinances" entered into the daily lives of people to such an extent that "one may have doubts about whether the modern history of freedom has really produced an appreciable increase in freedom and whether the area of freedom and the area of compulsion have not just shifted" (175). Paradoxically, the centralising of services and the faceless, impersonal nature of so many of the prescriptions of modern civil authorities are causing people to experience their daily lives as far more constraining and restricted than they feel necessary: "from the determination of the slope of the roof to rules about gravestones, from traffic regulations to an establishment for

“abundance of regulations, reaching into everyday life, produces an odd sense of restriction, boredom with institutionally organised freedom and a cry for a better, radical, anarchic freedom.”⁵ He maintains that the sensation has increased of feeling hemmed in by an excess of institutionally organised freedom. This cry for freedom anticipates – consciously or subconsciously – the revolutionary abolition of institutional forms because they are believed to be what inhibits progress in history.

This chapter has a three-fold intention. Firstly, it examines Ratzinger’s etiology of freedom in modern intellectual history. This is to facilitate, secondly, an analysis of how Ratzinger’s understanding of freedom has contributed to his interpretation of the broad cultural dynamics present in contemporary western societies. The prevailing societal mentality, in turn, cannot but in some way impact upon believers’ perception of contemporary ecclesial dynamics. Thirdly, therefore, this chapter investigates Ratzinger’s evaluation of the impact of the modern expression of freedom upon the Church’s self-understanding, part of which will involve briefly summarising Ratzinger’s basic orientations regarding the question of freedom in contemporary ecclesiology.

universal education that harnesses teachers and students to a network of legal prescriptions resulting from – what else? – efforts to safeguard the citizens’ rights to freedom” (ibid.).

⁵ Ibid., 175. Simon Oliver, in his essay “What is Radical Orthodoxy?” in *The Radical Orthodoxy Reader*, ed. John Milbank and Simon Oliver (London: Routledge, 2009) 6-12, shows the change which has taken place in modernity regarding views of the social, political and, indeed, the whole cosmic body. The governing principle of modern thought tends to be *power*, with all the forces of nature and society governed by competing claims to, or expressions of, power. The medieval world knew power struggles also, but these were considered to be intrusions into a created order in which peace formed the ontological norm. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite (c. 500AD) and Nicholas of Cusa (1401-64) were advocates of a world view where hierarchy was crucial because it embodied the different talents, skills, characters, etc, which make up a body whose parts are mutually enhancing. In a view that is alien to the modern mindset, a hierarchically instituted society was a place of security for its adherents whereas the weakening of the institution increases the potential for abuses of power: “the more complex a hierarchy the more it contains within itself checks and balances in relation to power. Different parts of the political, ecclesial or cosmic body balance each other and ensure a measure of equality. To the extent that hierarchies become simple and ‘flat,’ the opportunity for the accumulation and abuse of power in just one part of the hierarchy duly emerges” (8).

2.1. Freedom as a “One-Sided” Idea in Modern Intellectual History: From Luther to Sartre

Ratzinger’s prioritisation of the issue of freedom stems from his belief that “the crisis in the history of freedom in which we find ourselves arises from an unclarified and one-sided conception of freedom.”⁶ Because of his belief that the modern concept of freedom owes much of its genesis to the European Enlightenment era, he poses the question: “Are the foundations of the European Enlightenment, upon which our path to freedom is built, false – or at least, defective?”⁷ In the background of Ratzinger’s considerations are his personal memories of totalitarian ideologies: “[w]e recall how many opinions and systems have already laid claim to the concept of truth; how often the claim of truth in that way has been the means of limiting freedom.”⁸ This experience convinces him that the concepts of freedom and of truth are intimately bound to one another. To search for truth in an unscceptical manner – almost to the point of being dispassionate for the sake of truth itself – is true freedom. Only then can the prospect of ideological intolerance be minimized. From this perspective, Ratzinger says that coming to an authentic understanding of freedom obliges us to put these two questions “what is freedom?” and “what is truth?” anew, and also to renew our search for the relation between the two.⁹

Ratzinger holds that “people have narrowed down the concept of freedom to individual rights and freedoms and have thus robbed it of its human verity.”¹⁰ This is the broad general context for Ratzinger’s presentation of the theoretical foundations of the present situation and one can discern that his approach takes the form of a “timeline” from

⁶ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 245.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 235. In fact, he feels so strongly that the idea of freedom has evolved into a position of such dominance in our day that it is the very reason which justifies calling the present age “modern” in the first instance. Ratzinger’s belief that freedom is the issue that defines the modern era is significant: “[T]he era that we call modern times has been determined from the beginning by the theme of freedom; the striving for new forms of freedom is the only basis upon which to justify such a division into periods” (236).

⁸ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁹ See *ibid.*, 235-36.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 245.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) in the sixteenth century through to Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-80) in the twentieth.

Ratzinger believes that the publication of Luther's *Von der Freiheit eines Christenmenschen* in 1520 marks a decisive moment in the shifting relationship between authority and individual conscience.¹¹ It was a document that struck up a cry for freedom and precipitated a mass movement which transformed the face of the medieval world. By advocating salvation by means of personal faith in Christ rather than via the order of the community, the professed irrelevance of the whole ordered system of the medieval Church became the stimulus for greater freedom. Hence, freedom of conscience was set against the authority of the Church, and the order which had existed to support and save was called into question as a burden devoid of redemptive value:

Daß plötzlich das ganze Ordnungssystem der mittelalterlichen Kirche letztlich nicht mehr zählte, wurde als ein ungeheurer Befreiungsschub empfunden. Die Ordnungen, die eigentlich tragen und retten sollten erschienen als Last; sie binden nicht mehr, das heißt sie haben keine Erlösungsbedeutung mehr. Die Erlösung ist Befreiung, Befreiung vom Joch der überindividuellen Ordnungen.¹²

Ratzinger stresses that while it would be wrong to talk of an ethos of individualism at the time of the Reformation, the new significance of the individual and the transposition of the relationship between individual conscience and authority was “a characteristic trait.”¹³ In a second phase of modern history, Ratzinger believes this new understanding took concrete shape.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), corresponding to the growing emphasis on personal, individualistic faith, brought forth his *sapere aude* – dare to use your reason – which urged

¹¹ See Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian*, trans. Mark D. Tranvik (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008).

¹² Ratzinger, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz*, 191 (“The fact that, suddenly, the whole institutional system of the medieval Church no longer ultimately counted for anything was felt to be an enormous liberating thrust. The institutions that were actually supposed to support and save people appeared to be a burden; they were no longer obligatory, which meant they no longer had any significance for redemption. Redemption is liberation, being liberated from the yoke of supra-individual institutions” [Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 236-7]).

¹³ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 237.

individual reason to break free from the bonds of unquestioned authority.¹⁴ People should no longer be satisfied with a juvenile standing in the world but should seek a fully developed status as is their entitlement. The time for blind submission to authority and tradition is exposed as incompatible with the ability of people to make use of their own reason:

Freiheit zeigt sich hier als Befreiung von der normativen Kraft der Überlieferung: Nicht Wille und Einsicht eines anderen können mehr binden, sondern nur die eigene Einsicht weist dem Willen den Weg. Vernünftigkeit ist zugleich Selbstbestimmung, die die von den Autoritäten her kommende Fremdbestimmung ablösen will.¹⁵

All authority must be under scrutiny and only what is reasonably verifiable is allowed validity. Kant's philosophical program is also a political one for if reason is to reign, no other authority is admitted other than that of reason – what is not accessible to reason cannot be binding. Nevertheless, Ratzinger makes the point that it was never Kant's intention to simply replace constraint with a lack of constraint. Rather, the aim was to release people from the shackles of “external determination and replac[e them] with reasonable constraint, namely, with the constraint that follows from insight.”¹⁶ Therefore the spirit of the Enlightenment has nothing to do with arbitrariness because rationality itself constrains; irrationality does not represent a realistic alternative to that. Clearly, Ratzinger says, it is seen that “freedom is constraint” in that it leads to the binding force of the truth that has been understood.¹⁷

Ratzinger notes the friction that arises when the new dissatisfaction with authority and tradition encounters the challenge of coping with the social dimension of freedom – something which it must do if it is to stand up to scrutiny. Up to then, the traditions which

¹⁴ See Immanuel Kant, “Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?,” *Berlinische Monatschrift* 4 (1784): 481-94. Kant says that the “Enlightenment is man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity is the inability to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. The immaturity is *self-incurred* if its cause is not lack of understanding, but lack of resolution and courage to use it without the guidance of another. The motto of enlightenment is therefore: *Sapere aude!* Have courage to use your own understanding!” (quoted in Hugh Barr Nisbet, “An Answer to the Question: ‘What is Enlightenment?’” in *Immanuel Kant's Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991], 54).

¹⁵ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 167 (“Freedom manifests itself here as liberation from the normative force of tradition: the will and insight of another can no longer constrain; only one's own insight shows the individual will the way. Rationality is at the same time self-determination, which intends to take over from external determination by the authorities” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 177]).

¹⁶ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 177.

¹⁷ See *ibid.*

reason desired to emancipate itself from had been the tried and tested means of regulating human coexistence. Indeed, peaceful co-existence had depended on observing those traditions. However, the result of the new confidence in reason was a watershed moment in human self-understanding:

[Autorität und Überlieferung] gaben die Rollen vor, in denen Menschsein ausgelegt war und sich sinnvoll leben ließ. Der Grundgedanke der Aufklärung war demgegenüber ganz einfach: An die Stelle ererbter Sozialregeln muß die Einsicht treten; die vernünftige Gesellschaft wird eine Gesellschaft der Vernünftigen sein.¹⁸

As a result, a heretofore unknown clarity is brought to the question of human self-understanding by an innovative and concentrated reflection upon the issue of freedom:

Erst die Aufklärung hat die alten Freiheiten der Stände, die vielfältigen Gliederungsgestalten der alten Gesellschaft mit ihren Freiheitsräumen beseitigt und sich bei dieser Zerstörung gewachsener Freiheiten als Exekutor der höheren Freiheit gewußt, die die höhere Einsicht verleiht.¹⁹

Ratzinger maintains that the “strange ambiguity of all the liberation processes that would repeatedly manifest themselves over the course of history becomes unmistakably clear here for the first time.”²⁰ Within this will to emancipation, he discerns two diverse, even

¹⁸ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 167 (“[Authority and tradition] provided the roles in which human existence was interpreted and could be lived meaningfully. The fundamental idea of the Enlightenment was in contrast, quite simple: insight must step in to replace inherited social rules; the reasonable society will be a society of reasonable persons” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 177]).

¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 167 (“The Enlightenment was the first social movement to do away with the old freedoms of the various states of life, the manifold and diversified forms of old society with their respective spheres of freedom, and in destroying these well-developed freedoms, it considered itself the executor of the higher freedom that higher insight bestows” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 177]).

²⁰ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 177. Debates in the sixteenth and seventeenth-century had centred on the issue of whether grace destroys human freedom. For example, the Jesuits and Dominicans argued about the right approach. The balance – never satisfactorily resolved – rests in respecting and affirming both God’s absolute omnipotence and the freedom of the human will. When challenged by this dilemma, the Protestant Reformers and Jansenists tried to resolve it by denying the freedom of the human will. In Catholic theology there has been no agreement on what makes an actual grace efficacious. This is exemplified in the dispute between the Dominican, Dominic Báñez (1528-1604) and the Jesuit, Luis de Molina (1525-1600). In Báñezian theory, the efficacy of a grace depends on the character of the grace itself. In the Molinist theory, grace is given to each individual under circumstances that God foresees to be congruous with the dispositions of the one receiving the grace itself. Given that there is a difference between efficacious and sufficient grace, the issue is whether the difference is found in the grace itself or in human freedom. If the difference is in the grace, it means that grace is efficacious by its own intrinsic power. If it is found in human freedom, then grace becomes efficacious by the extrinsic activity and assent of the will. Despite the dilemma, in every Catholic theory, theologians agree that efficacious grace does not force the will, nor destroy human freedom. In fact it is defined Catholic teaching from the Council of Trent that the human will remains free under the influence of efficacious grace and therefore, efficacious grace is not irresistible. See *DS*, 1554. In 1653, Pope Innocent X condemned the proposition of Bishop Jansenius (that “in the condition of fallen nature interior grace is never resisted”) as anathema. See *DS*, 2002. In 1748, Pope Benedict XIV stated that the views of the Dominican,

antithetical, social philosophies and political programs. On the one hand, an Anglo-Saxon current which consists of a predominantly natural-rights orientation and a tendency towards constitutional democracy as the only realistic system of freedom. And secondly, at the other end of the spectrum, the radical approach of Rousseau which aims ultimately at autarchy.²¹

“Natural Rights Thinking” holds that from creation the human person has rights which must be enforced if there is to be justice: “Freedom is not granted to man from without; he has rights because he was created free.”²² Ratzinger says that such thinking gives rise to the idea of human rights for it points to rights that are naturally present in man himself prior to all legal constructs. As well as being a revolutionary idea that opposes the absolutism of the State and the caprice of positive legislation, it is also a metaphysical idea that exerts an ethical and legal claim upon *being* itself. Thus within human nature itself, there is a dignity that bestows not only a juridical claim on our liberation but also its measure. This is in line with the Stoic concept of nature, as found in Romans 2, which, when placed within the context of the theology of creation, suggests that the Gentiles know the law “by nature” and, as such, are a law unto themselves (Rom. 2:14). Nevertheless, Ratzinger highlights the specific element that changes when this idea moves into modernity: the juridical claim of

Jesuit and some other schools can safely be held even while not explaining the problem completely satisfactorily. See *DS*, 2564-2565. It was an exercise in the Pope’s desire for the freedom of theological schools. Other schools of thought which were not explicitly mentioned by Benedict XIV’s decree are voluntarism, a school of thought that regards the will as superior to the intellect and emotion, and determinism, which, in broad terms, believes everything that happens is predestined or caused by antecedent conditions. Ultimately, the truth that the human will remains free under the influence of grace must be retained for it is also the presupposition for the meritoriousness of good works.

²¹ Autarchy is not to be mixed up with autocracy. The word "autarchy" is from the Greek: αὐτάρκεια, which means "self-sufficiency" (derived from αὐτο-, "self," and ἀρκέω, "to suffice"). Most commonly it implies economic independence, but Ratzinger seems to be indicating some form of radical self-governance. It is sometimes confused with autocracy (αὐτοκρατία), namely, a system of government by one person with absolute power.

²² Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 238. For a recent and very thorough survey of human rights in the modern era of moral reasoning which looks at three theorists which are representative of different traditions, see Michael Shortall, *Human Rights and Moral Reasoning. A comparative investigation by way of three theorists and their respective traditions of enquiry: John Finnis, Ronald Dworkin and Jürgen Habermas* (PhD diss., Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2009). The three traditions studied by Shortall are the natural law tradition (Finnis); the liberal tradition (Dworkin); and the critical tradition (Habermas).

nature vis-à-vis the existing forms of government demands, above all, that the State and other institutions respect the rights of the individual:

Als Natur des Menschen wird es vor allem angesehen, daß er Rechte gegen die Gemeinschaft hat, Rechte, die vor der Gemeinschaft zu schützen sind: Die Institution erscheint als der Gegenpol zur Freiheit; als Träger von Freiheit erscheint das Individuum und als ihr Ziel die volle Emanzipation des Individuums.²³

The complexities and constraints inherent in the democratic embodiment of freedom led to a second development in intellectual circles, namely a basis for an autarchy of freedom. Ratzinger, in this regard, mentions two philosophers from the modern era. Firstly, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) whose influence, although more radical than modern natural-rights thinking, finds a point of contact with it, because they both contend that the human person's nature means that he has rights against society, rights that have to be protected from society. And secondly, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), whose intellectual conception of freedom took practical historical shape, Ratzinger says, in Karl Marx (1818-1883) and Marxism. Ratzinger suggests that both Hegel and Rousseau influenced Marxist ideas because they altered the anthropological self-understanding of humanity. Thus their contributions are important for the way freedom has come to be perceived today.

Rousseau's concept of nature is anti-metaphysical and correlative to his dream of total, absolutely unregimented freedom. For him everything created by reason and will is a corruption and contradiction of nature.²⁴ As such, the concept of nature is not itself shaped by the idea of justice, so that the law of nature precedes all our institutions. In its place, the order of society which has evolved over time, and which authority and tradition have placed upon society, is deemed to go against humanity's natural capacities. Ratzinger sees this radical line

²³ Ratzinger, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz*, 193 ("It is seen as being the nature of man, above all, that he has rights against society, rights that have to be protected from society: the institution appears as the opposite pole to freedom; the individual appears as supporting freedom and as its goal, the emancipation of the individual" [Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 239]).

²⁴ See Kimmo Kontio, "The Idea of Autarchy in Rousseau's Natural Education: Recovering the Natural Harmony?" in *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research* 47 (2003): 3-19.

of thought, “which ultimately aims at complete freedom from any rule”²⁵ as continued by Nietzsche, who sets a beguiling Dionysian dynamic in opposition to an ordered Apollonian one. The ordered activity of reason that Apollo stands for spoils the free and unimpeded intoxication of nature.²⁶ In Ratzinger’s own expression, “*Der Schrei nach Freiheit*” now begins to exert itself in an extreme form.²⁷

Hegel’s approach was an understanding of history as a whole as the history of freedom. History makes its way dialectically even through things that are opposed to freedom. In such an analysis, Ratzinger says, “one must say that anyone who sides with the logic of history serves freedom. Actions taken contrary to this logic are detrimental to freedom, because they are opposed to the process of freedom.”²⁸ While Ratzinger says this understanding of freedom remains somewhat sketchy in Hegel, it becomes fully operative in the writings of Karl Marx:

[. . .] daß freiheitsgemäß handelt, wer sich dem Gefälle der Geschichte anschließt, das auf die klassenlose Gesellschaft mit innerer Notwendigkeit zutreibt. Das Einstimmen in diese Notwendigkeit ist Handeln für die Freiheit.²⁹

²⁵Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 238.

²⁶Nietzsche’s first work, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1872), sets out his theory that Greek tragedy is built upon a wedding of two principles which he associates with the deities Apollo and Dionysus. See Bernd Magnus and Kathleen M. Higgins, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): “The Apollonian principle, in keeping with the characteristics of the sun god Apollo, is the principle of order, static beauty, and clear boundaries. The Dionysian principle, in contrast, is the principle of frenzy, excess, and the collapse of boundaries. . . . Greek tragedy, as he saw it, confronted the issue of life’s meaning by merging the perspectives of the two principles’ (22). Ratzinger himself makes references to P. Köster, *Der sterbende Gott, Nietzsches Entwurf übermenschlicher Größ* (Meisenheim: Hein, 1972) and R. Löw, *Nietzsche Sophist und Erzieher* (Weinheim: Acta humaniora, 1984).

²⁷See Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 165.

²⁸Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 180.

²⁹Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 170 (“[T]he person who acts in freedom is the one who aligns himself with the momentum of history, which is driven by an inner necessity toward the classless society. Joining in with this necessity is acting on behalf of freedom” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 180]). Ratzinger offers two examples of the perilous fascination of this viewpoint for humanity. In Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s novel, *The First Circle*, the old communist, Lev Rubin, even in prison believed the organs of the party were “the positive forces of history” and “whoever undermined it stood objectively in the way of progress. And had to be swept away” (*The First Circle*, trans. Thomas P. Whitney [New York, Harper and Row, 1968], 193-198, citation on 196). Ratzinger also highlights pp. 32-37; 378-86; 408-15. The second example refers to Ernesto Cardenal’s book, *In Cuba*, trans. Donald D. Walsh (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1974), which contains the conviction that anyone who wants to be a true Christian today must also be a Marxist. Cardenal even believed that the kingdom of God coincided with the Castro regime. Ratzinger says that, by 1978, Cardenal “self-critically noted that he had gradually become ‘partisan’: partisanship is the decisive perspective, and only someone who is conditionally ‘partisan’ liberates” (Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 181).

Because he holds that Marx sets out Hegel's vision in very practical terms, Ratzinger identifies a Marxist vision in which the proletariat is the bearer of future history.

Consequently, the bearer of the logic of history is the proletariat party – the Communist party. Accordingly, “the history of freedom becomes identical to the history of the party; it is partisan history.”³⁰ Ratzinger believes such logic has an impact on anthropology:

Praktisch ausgedrückt: Wer im Sinne der Parteilogik handelt, und nur wer dies tut, handelt freiheitsgemäß. Wenn die Logik der Partei Verhaftungen und Terror verlangt, ist selbstverständlich auch dies freiheitsgemäßes Handeln, weil es ja in der auf die Freiheit zuführenden Logik steht.³¹

The Marxist partisan interpretation of freedom, to Ratzinger's mind, is accompanied by a specific anthropology which is penetrating, to an ever greater extent, the present day significance of human education. It is so, he believes, because even if comprehensive vigilance against partisanship is difficult to regulate, its concomitant anthropology, promising unrestrained freedoms, can be very attractive. He believes it amounts to a “pedagogy of freedom,” which brings Enlightenment thinking to its irrational yet logical conclusion:

Den Menschen zu konkreten Werthaltungen zu erziehen, erscheint als eine Versklavung seines Wesens, ja, Erziehung überhaupt ist Vergewaltigung unter die Herrschaft von Autorität und Überlieferung. Nur eine einzige Pädagogik scheint angemessen und scheint wirklich Pädagogik der Freiheit: die Erziehung zur Rebellion gegen alle vorgegebenen Werte, die unbegrenzte Freimachung des Menschen, der sich “kreativ” erst selber entwirft.³²

In summary, Ratzinger's contention is that, in an ever-increasing way over the last two hundred years, various forms of the Enlightenment's cry for freedom have repeatedly erupted *against* a democratically constituted form of freedom. Ratzinger suggests that the paradigmatic example of this is the after-effect of the French Revolution: although it began

³⁰ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 181.

³¹ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 170 (“In practical terms, those who act according to party logic, and only those, act in keeping with freedom. When party logic demands arrests and terror, then it goes without saying that such action is in keeping with freedom because, after all, it is consistent with the logic that leads to freedom” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 181]).

³² Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 171 (“Educating a human being to cherish specific values seems to be an enslavement of his nature; indeed, education in general is violence under the rule of authority and tradition. Only one pedagogical method seems appropriate, a real pedagogy of freedom: education to rebel against all preconceived values, the unlimited liberation of the human being, who is himself the first to design himself ‘creatively’” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 181]).

with the idea of a constitutional democracy, it soon cast off these fetters and set out on the path of Rousseau's conception of autarchy, inevitably becoming a bloody dictatorship.³³

To Ratzinger's mind, Marxism in particular continued in this radical vein, deriving its fascination from the premise that it promises a grander and bolder freedom than can be realised in democratic society. In his estimation, two aspects of Marxism are relevant to the concept of freedom in the modern period and to the question of freedom's relationship with truth. First and foremost, the existence of freedom requires the establishment of equality. Once tied to equality, freedom is indivisible, existing, as such, only when freedom has been achieved for all. The solidarity of those struggling for the freedom of all comes before the vindication of individual liberties: "[t]hat means that in pursuit of the goal of complete freedom, some renunciation of freedom is required."³⁴ Hence, while the future promise of unbounded freedom is made, the present struggle demands the temporary subordination of freedom to equality and the rights of the individual to those of the community.

Secondly, and consequently, the freedom of the individual depends upon the structure of the whole. Therefore the struggle for freedom requires the changing of the world's structure rather than primarily securing the rights of the person. For Ratzinger, Marxism is an intellectual construct which cannot honour its promises but ends up taking refuge in mythology. He says that "a blind man could see that none of the structures that have been constructed, for the sake of which the renunciation of freedom is demanded, truly renders freedom possible."³⁵ The myth is that a new structure would yield a new humanity and that these structures will only work with new people who are entirely different from what they are now. There is a lie in Marxism that exposes the falsehoods within it:

³³ See Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 239-41.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

Wenn in der Forderung der Solidarität und in der Idee der Unteilbarkeit der Freiheit der moralische Charakter der Marxismus liegt, so wird in seiner Ankündigung des neuen Menschen eine Lüge deutlich, die auch den moralischen Ansatz paralyisiert. Teilwahrheiten sind einer Lüge zugeordnet, und daran scheitert das Ganze: Die Freiheitslüge hebt auch die wahren Elemente auf. Freiheit ohne Wahrheit ist keine Freiheit.³⁶

The final consequence of the priority of partisanship promoted under the guise of human solidarity is that the promise of human freedom requires a rebellion on the part of the human person against preconceived authority and tradition in favour of innovatively designing new structures that at some indeterminate future point would guarantee freedom. Ratzinger's portrayal of the modern intellectual context of freedom brings to light a fundamental irony: a belief that freedom is best served by the orderly structures of authority and tradition in society is exchanged for a promise that structures – new and different ones – will bring about the definitive but, also, elusive, emancipation of humanity.

However much the values of autarchy and self-interest are advanced by Marxist philosophy, they are even more to the fore, according to Ratzinger, in the work of the twentieth-century existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). Because Sartre views the human person in terms of pure existence, without a predetermined essence, what one is and what one ought to be are not pre-determined. Ratzinger's understanding of this philosophical approach is that humanity must be defined anew "out of the nothingness of an empty freedom."³⁷

Sartre's philosophy epitomises for Ratzinger the present-day cultural milieu. Sartre says that in contrast to animals, man has no nature. Animals live out their existence according to the laws they are born with, not being required to deliberate on the meaning of their life.

³⁶ Ratzinger, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz*, 195 ("If the moral character of Marxism lies in promoting solidarity and in the idea of the indivisibility of freedom, in its heralding of a new man a lie could be seen that also paralyzed the initial moral effort. Partial truths are made subordinate to a lie, and thus the whole thing comes to grief: the lies about freedom cancel out the elements of truth. Freedom without truth is no freedom" [Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 242]).

³⁷ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 182.

Man's essence, on the other hand, is undetermined and, as such, is an open question. Man must set about discerning what he understands by "humanity," what he wants to do with it and how he wants to fashion it. Ratzinger observes that Sartre regards man as condemned to freedom and as such "man has no nature, but is simply freedom. He has to live his life in some direction or other, yet it runs out into nothingness even so. His meaningless freedom is man's hell."³⁸ What Ratzinger finds most disturbing about this is the separation of freedom from truth and the way Sartre brings it to its most radical conclusion: truth has no measure. Ratzinger defines this extreme version of a one-sided understanding of freedom – which is untethered and groundless – as anarchic freedom:

Die Freiheit hat keine Richtung und kein Maß. Aber diese völlige Abwesenheit von Wahrheit, die völlige Abwesenheit jeder auch sittlichen und metaphysischen Bindung, die absolut anarchische Freiheit als Wesensbestimmung des Menschen enthüllt sich für den, der sie zu leben versucht, nicht als höchste Steigerung der Existenz, sondern als Nichtigkeit des Lebens, als absolute Leere, als die Definition von Verdammnis.³⁹

The anthropological presupposition underpinning such a definition, Ratzinger believes, must be anathema for a Christian world-view. The human person is not a meaningless thing launched out into the world in order to construct the meaning of life: "being freed from truth does not engender pure freedom; rather it abolishes it. The anarchistic freedom, taken to a radical conclusion, does not redeem man; rather, it makes him into a faulty creation, living without meaning."⁴⁰

With the thought of Sartre, Ratzinger presents the culmination of the transformation which the issue of freedom underwent over the last five hundred years. From a belief that authority and tradition, personified, so to speak, in societal institutions, best understood and

³⁸ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 244. Ratzinger refers to "Kreatürlichkeit und menschliche Natur: Anmerkungen zum philosophischen Ansatz von Jean-Paul Sartre," in Josef Pieper's *Über die Schwierigkeit heute zu glauben* (Munich: Kösel, 1974), 304-21.

³⁹ Ratzinger, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz*, 197 ("Freedom is without direction or measure. Yet this complete absence of truth, the complete absence also of any kind of moral or metaphysical restraint, the absolute anarchic freedom of man constituted by his self-determination, is revealed, for anyone who tries to live it out, not as the most sublime exaltation of existence, but as a life of nothingness, as absolute emptiness, as the definition of damnation" [Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 244]).

⁴⁰ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 245.

protected the freedom of citizens, an extremist form of freedom has emerged which is not merely emancipation from tradition and authority but emancipation from one's very nature. A metamorphosis in anthropology has taken place: where once people trusted that their emancipation came through trusting in civilisation's institutions, there now stands distrust, even towards human nature itself. Logically, humanity seems destined to release itself even from the truth of its own essence. For Ratzinger, this amounts to a severance of truth from human freedom which can never satisfy or bring happiness and purpose to humanity:

Die Idee der Freiheit ist hier bis zu ihrer letzten Radikalität vorangetrieben, nicht mehr bloß Emanzipation aus Überlieferung und Autorität, sondern Emanzipation auch aus der Schöpfungsidee "Mensch," Emanzipation vom eigenen Wesen, völlige Indeterminiertheit, die für alles offensteht. Aber gerade diese Freiheit erscheint zugleich als die Hölle; frei sein heißt verdammt sein. So schlägt die radikale Freiheitsidee um in die Parteilichkeit, die an die Stelle des verlorenen Wesens tritt und dem Menschen Halt und Richtung geben soll.⁴¹

From an overall perspective, Ratzinger concludes that "the political, the philosophical and the religious problems of freedom have become an indissoluble whole" and "anyone looking for ways forward into the future must keep the whole of this in view and cannot make do with superficial pragmatic action."⁴² Ratzinger's "timeline" of freedom "from Luther to Sartre" is premised by his sensitivity to the anarchic potential accompanying the debasement of institution and tradition within intellectual history. He perceives a shift in the understanding of man's essence and nature, as well as in the expectations associated with human freedom in the course of this period. All of this impacts upon contemporary cultural and ecclesial dynamics. To these we now turn.

⁴¹ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 171-72 ("The idea of freedom here has been taken to its most radical extreme: no longer mere emancipation from tradition and authority, but now emancipation from the idea of "man" as a creature, emancipation from one's own nature, complete indeterminacy that is open to everything. But this very freedom appears simultaneously to be hell; to be free means to be damned. Thus the radical idea of freedom abruptly turns into partisanship, which replaces the lost essence and is supposed to give man stability and a sense of direction" [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 182]).

⁴² Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 243-44.

2.2. Contemporary Cultural Dynamics of Freedom

The dilemma which Ratzinger believes the issue of human freedom faces today is that it has become “a magical word”; the yearning for it rings out throughout the world which has had the taste of freedom but which has also experienced the feeling that it is threatened and restricted on every side.⁴³ This uneasy tension forms the background for his optimism, as well as his suspicion, towards the contemporary cultural dynamics of freedom. Three broad lines of exploration feature in his writings and these feed into what he terms the “modern synthesis.” They can be described as the limitations of scientific reason; a growth in scepticism in the aftermath of the Enlightenment’s unfulfilled promises of progress and freedom; and an increasing sense of weariness with unaided reason and the majority principle.

2.2.1. The Limitations of Scientific Reason

Today, technological culture affects the religious sensibilities of human beings in a manner different from that of previous cultural epochs. In the past, direct encounters with the natural world were important starting points for religious experience because God is known through the things he makes (Rom 1:20). However, in a world that appreciably bears the mark of human work and organisation, this source of significant religious experience in nature is declining. Ratzinger does not demonise technology, since God gave the earth to humanity to be subdued (Gen 2:15, 1:28); nevertheless, while “science can serve humanity . . . it can also become an instrument of evil. Indeed, it is science that has the potential to make evil truly terrible.”⁴⁴ Hence, while technology is not the only hazardous activity of humanity – for one can say that every human initiative bears within itself a certain risk and the potential for destruction – Ratzinger still suggests that technology can lead to worship of the human itself because the progress made feels like the conquering of the uncultivated forces of nature.

⁴³ See Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 175. See also *Truth and Tolerance*, 231-36.

⁴⁴ Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, 45, 32.

With such confidence in human ability, “the world has become irreversibly profane and humans appear worthy of homage for bringing about progress.”⁴⁵ An enormously high expectation has emerged, Ratzinger says, that science will solve the questions of deep human need and heal the woes of suffering. Many hope to evade ethical struggles. From the Renaissance onward, and in a fully-fledged way since the age of the Enlightenment, Europe has developed a scientific rationality as a type of cultural colonialism. Ratzinger believes that, thanks to the technological culture which science has made possible, scientific rationality is imposing uniformity on the world:

E sulla scia di questa forma di razionalità, l’Europa ha sviluppato una cultura che, in un modo sconosciuto prima d’ora all’umanità, esclude Dio dalla coscienza pubblica, sia che venga negato del tutto, sia che la Sua esistenza venga giudicata non dimostrabile, incerta, e dunque appartenente all’ambito delle scelte soggettive, un qualcosa comunque irrilevante per la vita pubblica. Questa razionalità puramente funzionale, per così dire, ha comportato uno sconvolgimento della coscienza morale altrettanto nuovo per le culture finora esistite, poiché sostiene che razionale è soltanto ciò che si può provare con degli esperimenti.⁴⁶

However, the positivist and pragmatic nature of modern scientific-minded persons is not the final word even though “man seems to be drugged by the narrow topicality, capable of perceiving only the tattered rags of reality.” Ratzinger believes that “[modern man] is

⁴⁵ Wicks, “Six Texts,” 258. This is a quotation from lecture notes Ratzinger prepared for Cardinal Josef Frings for a lecture delivered in Genoa on 20 November 1961. The full text is published as “Kardinal Frings über das Konzil und die modernen Gedankenwelt,” in *Herder Korrespondenz* 16 (1961/62): 168-74. Another text which Ratzinger prepared in October 1965 contributed to a reformulation of no. 9 of Schema XIII *De ecclesia in mundo huius temporis* at the Second Vatican Council. Ratzinger’s text, worked on with Pierre Hauptmann, the lead redactor for the whole schema, became a step towards the creation of a new paragraph – no. 10 of the final document, *Gaudium et spes*. It aims to speak from faith about the human predicament and deeper human questions. People know, Ratzinger claims, that they can’t bring the forces of the world under full control and that the ancient human questions remain and pose themselves: “[Human beings] know obscurely that their own good will lacks the ability to direct rightly the forces that they themselves cause to emerge and which can later either oppress or help them. By these forces they appear to be gradually coming to rule over all things. . . . Thus, in the midst of all the inventions and external progress, the ancient questions of the human race remain and pose themselves: What is the meaning of pain, evil, and death, which in spite of such great progress still exist? What follows after this life? To what purpose is all this?” (Wicks, *Six Texts*, 292). See also Wicks, “Six Texts,” 246-249, for the background to the formulation of this text which was furnished to Wicks from the papers of Hauptmann by the Archives of the *Institut Catholique de Paris*.

⁴⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *L’Europa di Benedetto nella crisi delle culture* (Siena: Cantagalli, 2005), 35-36 (“In the wake of this form of rationality, Europe has developed a culture that, in a manner hitherto unknown to mankind, excludes God from public awareness. His existence may be denied altogether or considered unprovable and uncertain and, hence, as something belonging to the sphere of subjective choices. In either case, God is irrelevant to public life. This is a purely functional rationality that has shaken the moral consciousness in a way completely unknown to the cultures that existed previously, since it maintains that only that which can be demonstrated experimentally is ‘rational’” [Ratzinger, *Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures*, 30]).

insecure most of all at the point where exact science abandons him, and it is the measure of his abandonment that first makes him aware of how narrow the slice of reality is in which science gives him security.”⁴⁷

Ratzinger argues that the implication of an increased confidence in, or even dependence upon, scientific reason is that certain long established structures that supported human living – namely the family, the Church, morality, and God – become the antithesis of freedom. Suspicion materialises in relation to the conventional structure of created existence that “God obliges man; [that] morality is a basic form in which the obligation to him is expressed”; and that “[t]he Church and family are figures in which this obligation assumes a concrete social form.”⁴⁸ This presents a major challenge to the entire human race. Ratzinger fears that humanity is tempted more and more to resign itself to recognising science and technology as the sole barometers of progress in human freedom. Faced with such a situation, Benedict XVI in the Encyclical *Spe salvi (SS)* acknowledged the need for Christianity to make a more coherent attempt to balance the brilliance of the scientific age with the broad vision of hope that accompanies the Christian message:

Science can contribute greatly to making the world and mankind more human. Yet it can also destroy mankind and the world unless it is steered by forces that lie outside it. On the other hand, we must acknowledge that modern Christianity, faced with the successes of science in progressively structuring the world, has to a large extent restricted its attention to the individual and his salvation. In so doing it has limited the horizon of its hope and has failed to recognise sufficiently the greatness of its task – even if it has continued to achieve great things in the formation of man and in care for the weak and the suffering.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, 28.

⁴⁸ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 243.

⁴⁹ *SS*, 25.

2.2.2. The Aftermath of Enlightenment Confidence in Progress and Freedom

In the aftermath of the great confidence placed in the epistemic power of universal reasoning at the time of the Enlightenment, Ratzinger reflects upon the meaning of freedom for the average person today:

Unter Freiheit versteht man heute im allgemeinen die Möglichkeit, alles zu tun, was man will und nur das zu tun, was man selber möchte. Freiheit – so verstanden – ist Beliebigkeit.⁵⁰

In its extreme form, this view of freedom can be complete only if there is no governance in the State and no obligation to other people or things. For Ratzinger this is symptomatic of an ethic of resignation whereby the human person retreats into the self and avoids the possibility of communal forms of society. The idea to be striven for is the unrestricted ability of every individual to do what he or she wants and to have everything at their disposal. Hence, “[i]n the scale of values with which each man is concerned, to live a life worthy of humanity, freedom seems to be the truly fundamental value and to be the really basic human right of them all.”⁵¹ In more precise terms, Ratzinger says freedom, as it is commonly understood today, “would mean that our own will was the only criterion for our action and that this will would be able to want to do anything and also be able to put into practice anything it wanted.”⁵² If the ethic of resignation and loss of hope in societal institutions is to be tolerated,

⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 230 (“[b]y freedom one generally understands today the possibility of doing everything one wants and of doing only what one would like. Thus understood, freedom is arbitrariness” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 242]).

⁵¹ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 231. Ratzinger gives four contemporary examples of where one may find the presupposition that freedom exists as the highest good to which all other goods are subordinate: in legislation, political activity, religious proclamation and the natural sciences: “In legislation, artistic freedom and freedom of speech take precedence over every other moral value. Values that conflict with freedom, that could lead to its being restricted, appear as shackles, as ‘taboos,’ that is to say, as relics of archaic prohibitions and anxieties. Political action has to demonstrate that it furthers freedom. Even religion can make an impression only by depicting itself as a force for freedom for man and for mankind. . . . In addition there is the scepticism fostered by natural science regarding anything that cannot be precisely explained or demonstrated: that all seems in the final analysis to be just subjective judgement, which cannot claim to be obligatory for people in general” (ibid.). From here, Ratzinger goes on to compare the contemporary acceptance of freedom as the primordial value with the sceptical attitude towards truth as it is found in Pilate’s question to Christ, “what is truth?” (John 18:38), drawing the conclusion that “[a]nyone who claims to be serving the truth with his life, and with his words and actions, must be prepared to be regarded as an enthusiast or a fanatic. For ‘Our line of sight to all above is blocked’; this quotation from Goethe’s *Faust* sums up the way we all feel about it” (232).

⁵² Ibid., 232.

and one is, nevertheless, to make progress in freedom, one cannot admit of any obligations within one's social network: "[i]n this view liberation consists in throwing off all obligations. Every obligation appears as a fetter that restricts freedom; every obligation one eliminates means progress in freedom."⁵³

It is Ratzinger's belief, however, that in the shadow of the extremist Enlightenment appeal for the protection of individual freedom, a form of scepticism is emerging, because the rich promises made to people have not materialised in their experience. Hence a key implication of the modern intellectual history of freedom is not the critical appraisal of this or that structural mechanism within society itself. Rather, it is to question the very possibility of attributing meaning to the human way of life in general:

Gerade angesichts der Grenzen der Demokratie wird der Ruf nach einer totalen Freiheit lauter. Nach wie vor, ja zusehends gelten "Gesetz und Ordnung" als Gegensatz zu Freiheit. Nach wie vor erscheinen Institution, Überlieferung, Autorität an sich als Gegenpole von Freiheit. Der anarchische Zug des Freiheitsverlangens verstärkt sich, weil die geordneten Formen gemeinschaftlicher Freiheit nicht befriedigen. Die großen Verheißungen der aufbrechenden Neuzeit wurden nicht eingelöst, aber ihre Faszination ist ungebrochen. Die demokratisch geordnete Form von Freiheit kann man heute nicht mehr bloß durch diese oder jene Gesetzesreform verteidigen. Die Frage geht an die Grundlagen selbst. Es geht darum, was der Mensch ist und wie er als einzelner und im ganzen richtig leben kann.⁵⁴

On the other hand, he believes that the radical current of the Enlightenment has not lost its appeal even if various strands of it have not been able to realise the promises of freedom which they made. Consequently, a common query today is that "perhaps there is no such thing as truth? Perhaps there is no such thing as being right or the right thing to do?"⁵⁵

⁵³ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 243.

⁵⁴ Ratzinger, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz*, 196-97 ("Precisely in view of the limitations of democracy, the call for total freedom is growing louder. Now as ever – indeed, quite noticeably – 'law and order' is seen as the opposite of freedom. Now as ever, institutions, tradition, authority as such appear as the opposite pole from freedom. The anarchistic trait in the demand for freedom is growing stronger, because people are not satisfied with the ordered forms of social freedom. The great promises of the dawn of the modern era were not redeemed, yet their fascination is unbroken. Nowadays the democratically ordered form of freedom can no longer be defended just by this or that reform of the law. The foundations are being called into question. It is a matter of what man is and of how he, as an individual and as a whole, can live the right life" [Joseph Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 243]).

⁵⁵ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 242.

The transformation in the understanding of freedom has resulted in considerable complexity for intellectual thought, in general, and for theology in particular: “Scepticism is growing, and the reasons for it are becoming stronger, yet the desire for the absolute is not to be set aside.”⁵⁶ The issue for humanity at the end of the twentieth century, as Ratzinger sees it, is the challenge to not be overcome by weariness with the emptiness and meaninglessness of life as it has been experienced through ever-spiralling levels of human brutality in the form of self-inflicted wounds. Here, above all, we can see Ratzinger’s anxiety to see the proper pattern of freedom reinstated:

Sich von den großen sittlichen und religiösen Kräften der eigenen Geschichte abzuschneiden ist Selbstmord einer Kultur und einer Nation. Die wesentlichen moralischen Einsichten zu pflegen, sie als ein gemeinsames Gut zu wahren und zu schützen, ohne sie zwanghaft aufzuerlegen, scheint mit eine Bedingung für das Bleiben der Freiheit gegenüber allen Nihilismen und ihren totalitären Folgen zu sein.⁵⁷

In Ratzinger’s estimation, the phenomenon of growth in scepticism is a consequence of flagrant inequalities in liberal capitalism coming on the heels of the material failures of Marxism in the economic and social realm. To his mind, it actually gives notice of a new, albeit subtle turning towards morality and religion:

⁵⁶ Ibid. While Ratzinger is better known for his critique of Marxist ideas, he also criticizes the practice of democracy in western societies. In fact, he says people’s uneasiness with their experience of democracy can be seen in the intensification of the impression that democracy is still not the right form of freedom. In this regard, the Marxist critique of democracy is not completely misplaced and one can see how the present climate increases distrust towards institutions and the machinery of the State. He asks are elections free in an era where the outcome can be manipulated by advertising and by a small number of commentators who dominate public discourse to great effect. He believes it is not unrealistic to say that a new oligarchy is at work which determines what passes for modern and progressive. The cruelty with which public intimidation campaigns and character assassinations are pursued is testament to the idea that anyone who gets in the way of the prevailing agenda is a “foe to freedom” and an enemy to freedom of expression. He also questions the motivation behind the decision-making process of representative bodies. The intensity with which special-interest lobbies have been increasingly exposed as interfering with the democratic representative process causes suspicion about whether the welfare of the community as a whole truly guides the decision-making process. This raises the question whether the system of majority determination is conducive to freedom. The overall issue is one of a system of governance in which trust rather than despair marks the governed: “In this confusion of forces the problem of society becoming ungovernable is an ever greater threat: the desire of opposing groups for domination blocks the freedom of the whole” (243).

⁵⁷ Ratzinger, *Wert in Zeiten des Umbruchs*, 47 (“A culture and a nation that cuts itself off from the great ethical and religious forces of its own history commits suicide. The cultivation of essential moral insights, preserving and protecting these as a common possession but without imposing them by force, seems to be the one condition for the continued existence of freedom in the face of all the nihilisms and their totalitarian consequences” [Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, 52]).

Liberalismus und Marxismus hatten darin übereingestimmt, daß sie der Religion sowohl das Recht wie die Fähigkeit zur Gestaltung der öffentlichen Dinge und der gemeinsamen Zukunft der Menschheit absprachen. Im Gärungsprozeß der zweiten Jahrhunderthälfte ist Religion als eine nicht auszutilgende Kraft des individuellen wie des sozialen Lebens neu entdeckt worden; es wurde sichtbar, daß die Zukunft der Menschheit nicht an ihr vorbei geplant und gestaltet werden kann.⁵⁸

This new interest in religion may give comfort to faith, but the inherent danger here, to Ratzinger's mind, is a temptation which ought to be obvious to all sides – to view religion as an instrument to serve political ideas. However, the positive power of religion is that another perspective on life opens up again: “[r]eligion, which had been seen only a short time before as the embodiment of superstition and oppression, appeared as an agent of freedom; it emerged again as a public force that relativized the dominant power.”⁵⁹ A technological civilisation, albeit a positive development, cannot adequately do justice to the grandeur of human nature and dignity. Therefore, a cultural dynamic operative in the evolution of the modern understanding of freedom is that humanity, in Ratzinger's opinion, finds itself at a major crossroads:

Der Mensch, der sich auf das exakt Wissbare beschränken will, gerät in die Krise der Wirklichkeit, gerät gerade so in den Entzug der Wahrheit. Es gibt den Schrei nach dem Glauben in ihm, den unsere Weltensünde nicht aufhebt, sondern nur noch dramatischer werden lässt. Es gibt den Ruf nach Befreiung aus dem Kerker des Positiven, freilich auch den Ruf nach Befreiung von einer Gestalt des Glaubens, die ihn selbst zur Last statt zur Form der Freiheit werden lässt.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Wendezeit für Europa*, 7 (“Liberalism and Marxism were in agreement in refusing religion both the right and the capacity to shape public affairs and the common future of mankind. In the maturation process of the second half of the twentieth century, religion has been discovered anew as an ineradicable force both of individual and social living. It has become clear that one cannot plan and shape the future of mankind while prescind from religion” (Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 8; cf. *ibid.*, 31, 96-100, 106-7).

⁵⁹ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 98. Ratzinger says that “enlightened” Europe had been predicated on the insight that religion would disappear of its own accord if those societal affiliations inspired by organised religion were to change. Finally, however, due to the slow progress of this assumption, the possibility was increasingly left open that religion would never completely cease to exist altogether. Therefore “the question of God arose precisely within the intelligentsia of the natural sciences. A science that was becoming aware of its limitations recognised that the real answers lay outside what it in itself could offer. At the same time as the question about God flared up in the midst of the strictest rationality, the thirst for the eternal – which clearly is imprinted in the depths of our soul – made itself heard anew out of the depths of human existence” (97-8).

⁶⁰ Joseph Ratzinger, *Glaube und Zukunft* (München: Kösel, 2007), 33-34 (“The man who wants to limit himself to what is knowable in exact terms is caught up in the crisis of reality: he beholds the withdrawal of truth. Within himself he hears the cry of faith, which the spirit of the hour has not been able to stifle but has only made all the more dramatic. There is a cry for liberation from the prison of positivism, as there is, too, for liberation from a form of faith that has allowed itself to become a burden instead of the vehicle of freedom” [Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, 28-29]).

2.2.3. Unaided Reason and the Majority Principle

Throughout the course of the twentieth-century, in the consciousness of many nations, the State has gradually moved from being something positive to being viewed as something unreasonably restrictive. Having once been seen as the custodian of the law shared by the community and as providing the community and the individual with protection against arbitrary and hostile action, “the law appears [now] as a means of maintaining obligations and thus unfreedom.”⁶¹ When “law and order” become negative concepts, the net result in the consciousness of many is that “[t]he use of force in the service of law is thus a power of oppression, whereas the use of force against the legal order of the state is a struggle for liberation and freedom and, thus, positive.”⁶² The moral life is viewed in the same way, breaking free from conventional morality being considered real morality: “[e]verything that serves the destruction of obligations and thus the struggle for freedom is good; everything that preserves obligations is bad.”⁶³ Ratzinger identifies the programme that lies behind this modern turning-round of perspective as ultimately theological:

Gott wird nicht mehr als eine dem Menschen gegenüberstehende Wirklichkeit anerkannt, aber der Mensch selbst möchte so werden, wie er sich vorstellt, daß eine Gottheit wäre, wenn es sie gäbe: schrankenlos frei, von keiner Grenze eingeengt.⁶⁴

While Ratzinger acknowledges that there can indeed be unjust laws and evil State rule which calls for resistance, he says there are elements of truth to be found in the basic point of departure and in the particulars of uninhibited liberty. This is despite the fact that “the vision as a whole is a distortion of truth and hence also a distortion of freedom.”⁶⁵ The point of departure, “becoming like God” (cf. Gen 3:5) – when correctly understood – is of the very essence of being human. But ultimately, Ratzinger believes the hidden theological core of the

⁶¹ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 243. See also A.C. Grayling, *Liberty in the Age of Terror: A Defence of Civil Liberties and Enlightenment Values* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).

⁶² Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 243.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 231 (“God is no longer recognised as a reality standing over against man; rather man himself would like to become what he imagines a deity would be if one existed: boundlessly free and unrestricted by any limit” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 243]).

⁶⁵ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 244.

radical will to freedom is based on the projection of an extreme egoism that is alien to both Creator and creature. Were it to prevail, Ratzinger's big concern – the prophecy of Sartre – would be fulfilled:

Ganz frei sein, ohne die Konkurrenz anderer Freiheit, ohne ein Von und ein Für – dahinter steht nicht ein Gottes-, sondern ein Götzenbild. Der Urrirtum solch radikalisierten Freiheitswillens liegt in der Idee einer Göttlichkeit, die rein egoistisch konzipiert ist. Der so gedachte Gott ist nicht ein Gott, sondern ein Götze, ja, das Bild dessen, was die christliche Überlieferung den Teufel — den Gegengott — nennen würde, weil darin eben der radikale Gegensatz zum wirklichen Gott liegt: Der wirkliche Gott ist seinem Wesen nach ganz Sein-Für (Vater), Sein-Von (Sohn) und Sein-Mit (Heiliger Geist). Der Mensch aber ist Gottes Ebenbild eben dadurch, daß das Von, Mit und Für die anthropologische Grundfigur bildet. Wo man sich von ihr zu befreien versucht, bewegt man sich nicht auf Göttlichkeit zu, sondern auf Entmenschlichung, auf Zerstörung des Seins selbst durch Zerstörung der Wahrheit. Die jakobinische Variante der Befreiungsidee (nennen wir die neuzeitlichen Radikalismen einmal so) ist Rebellion gegen das Menschsein selbst, Rebellion gegen die Wahrheit, und darum führt sie den Menschen — wie Sartre scharfsichtig gesehen hat — in eine Existenz des Selbstwiderspruchs, die wir Hölle nennen.⁶⁶

Hence, an understanding of freedom which defines itself *against* the State and communal forms of society is a major challenge today. For Ratzinger, this implies that freedom is an anthropological issue, insofar as it enquires into the authentic form of freedom which accords with the truth of human nature. His solution to one-sided, anarchic forms of freedom, which he defines as “the rule of caprice,”⁶⁷ lies in proposing a realistic anthropology – one other than what masquerades as humane and life-giving in the present era: “Anarchy . .

⁶⁶ Ratzinger, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz*, 200 (“Being completely free, without the competition of any other freedom, without any ‘from’ or ‘for’ – behind that stands, not an image of God, but the image of an idol. The primeval error of such a radically developed desire for freedom lies in the idea of a divinity that is conceived as being purely egotistical. The god thus conceived of is, not God, but an idol, indeed, the image of what the Christian tradition would call the devil, the anti-god, because therein lies the radical opposite to the true God: the true God is, of his own nature, being-for [Father], being-from [Son], and being-with [Holy Spirit]. Yet man is in the image of God precisely because the being for, from and with constitute the basic anthropological shape. Whenever people try to free themselves from this, they are moving, not towards divinity, but towards dehumanising, towards the destruction of being itself through the destruction of truth. The Jacobin variant of the idea of liberation [let us just use that term for modern forms of radicalism] is a rebellion against being human in itself, rebellion against truth, and that is why it leads people – as Sartre percipiently observed – into a self-contradictory existence that we call hell” [Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 248]). The Jacobin Club, along with its most famous member, Maximilien de Robespierre (1758-94), was a notorious political influence upon the development of the French Revolution. Their subsequent association with the French Government of 1793-94 and the “Reign of Terror” means that to this day, the terms Jacobin and Jacobinism are used as pejoratives for radical, left-wing revolutionary politics.

⁶⁷ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 244.

. is not appropriate to man because he is ordered, not to isolation, but to relationship.”⁶⁸ When society understands itself as continually oriented towards ever greater freedoms, accompanied with the interminable pursuit of ever-fresh forms of democratic structures, a fundamental question arises in Ratzinger’s mind regarding the “majority” principle: can and may the majority accomplish everything? Can it declare whatsoever it desires to be law which then constrains everyone “or does reason trump the majority, so that something contrary to reason cannot really become law?”⁶⁹ The question arises as to who has authority to say what is reasonable, since it must be asked whether a majority decision also bears within itself the measure of reason. Ratzinger is not trying to provoke a revolutionary attitude toward democracy but rather attempts to underpin its foundational presuppositions and limitations. He says that democracy cannot be value-neutral:

Im letzten kann das demokratische System nur funktionieren, wenn bestimmte Grundwerte – nennen wir sie die Menschenrechte – von allen als gültig anerkannt werden und dem Zugriff der Mehrheit entzogen bleiben. . . . Das bloß formale demokratische System der Machtbegrenzung und Machtverteilung funktioniert aus sich allein nicht.⁷⁰

In other words, the democratic rule of society presupposes an ethos with specific contents that is commonly accepted and commonly adhered to in practice, even if compelling arguments for it cannot be as easily adduced as can the argument for the simple majority. Here the State comes up against a moral constraint which it must presuppose but cannot itself establish, and therefore, cannot itself guarantee. For Ratzinger, “the formal structure of [democratic] institutions is bound up with the material specificity of an ethos that belongs to

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 179.

⁷⁰ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 169 (“Ultimately the democratic system can function only when certain fundamental values – let us call them human rights – are recognised by everyone as valid and remain exempt from the reach of the majority. . . . [T]he merely formal democratic system of limited power and the separation of powers does not function in and of itself” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 179]).

the Socratic and Christian tradition.”⁷¹ The question one is left with today is: what authority determines ethical legitimacy?

In relation to the operation of formal democratic structures, Ratzinger points out that what had for so long been the self-evident requirement of the institutions of State to look “beyond themselves” for ethical legitimacy is no longer the case. He says that even in the aftermath of the bloodshed of the Religious wars in Europe (c. 1524-1646), “the essential fundamental moral convictions that Christianity had imprinted on people’s souls were still certainties taken for granted and it seemed that unaided reason could perceive the pure evidential character of these convictions.”⁷² However, by the time the twentieth-century had run its course, “unaided reason” had collaborated with ideological movements to produce intense violent destruction of individuals and whole societies:

Die Entwicklungen dieses Jahrhunderts haben uns gelehrt, dass es diese Evidenz als in sich ruhende und verlässige Grundlage aller Freiheit nicht gibt. Der Blick auf die wesentlichen Werte kann der Vernunft sehr wohl verloren gehen. . . . Freiheit kann sich selbst aufheben, ihrer selbst überdrüssig werden, wenn sie leer geworden ist.⁷³

The resolve to alert people to the vulnerability of a society predicated on, and governed by an unaided reason fused with majority rule, lead Ratzinger to pose a two-fold question – namely, what is essential and what is non-essential for growing in freedom today: “What must be protected in order to have freedom? What should be freed from control because constraint is inappropriate?”⁷⁴ Ratzinger calls for a new appreciation of the idea that

⁷¹ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 179.

⁷² Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, 49-50.

⁷³ Ratzinger, *Wert in Zeiten des Umbruchs*, 45 (“The developments of the twentieth century have taught us that this evidential character – as a subsistent and reliable basis of all freedom – no longer exists. It is perfectly possible for reason to lose sight of essential values. . . . Freedom can abolish itself. Freedom can weary of itself when it has become empty” [Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, 50]). The implications of Ratzinger’s reflections on modern democracy, which are strongly overshadowed by memories of twentieth-century ideological abuses, come from his awareness of the fragility inherent in the delicate balancing of freedoms required to ensure that a democratic State operates authentically. The institutions of freedom can easily be perceived as institutions of restriction, running the risk of contradicting their own reason for being. Elections are the means of empowering citizens and the elected parliament emerges as the indispensable way of distilling the public will.

⁷⁴ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 180. As a contemporary example, Ratzinger points to the phenomenon of venting all of a society’s discourse in the media. This is increasingly perceived as representing

“the modern State is a *societas imperfecta* – imperfect not only in the sense that its institutions always remain as imperfect as its inhabitants, but also in the sense that it needs forces from outside of itself in order to continue being itself.”⁷⁵ Hence, Ratzinger believes that the existence of imperfections within the modern State and its failure to fulfil the promise of total freedom for its citizens rekindles in people the idea that “the existence of the state points beyond itself. It becomes a question of another sort of community.”⁷⁶

It can be said that for Ratzinger, a secure social sphere negates an ethic of scepticism because it augments the virtue of hope. As Pope he has continued this theme. Hence locating a sphere where the human person feels secure but not constrained is an immense challenge, but upon the attempt to do so rests the future of humanity itself because if there is no goal or certainty in which humanity can hope and trust, it will lose its hunger to live in the present – the time which every generation is obliged to live in: “[t]he present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey.”⁷⁷ This is a key point of connection for Ratzinger between anthropology and ecclesiology. Firstly however, we must comment on his analysis of how modern-day cultural dynamics feeds into what he calls the “modern synthesis.”

the truly liberated society. However, because such a practice seems to have accelerated a correlative reduction in the values of the received moral tradition, he asks whether this trend is more the favouring of the rights of a small group over the rights and dignity of the many. He asks “[d]oes this not create a monopoly of a few, with a momentum that carries it further and further in one direction and thereby restricts freedom of opinion as well, because one position increasingly claims to be the only correct one and prevails?”(ibid).

⁷⁵ Ibid., 199-200. As Pope, he has set out the challenge facing politicians involved in democratic decision-making: “For most of the matters that need to be regulated by law, the support of the majority can serve as a sufficient criterion. Yet it is evident that for the fundamental issues of law, in which the dignity of man and of humanity is at stake, the majority principle is not enough: everyone in a position of responsibility must personally seek out the criteria to be followed when framing laws. . . . In terms of the underlying anthropological issues, what is right and may be given the force of law is in no way simply self-evident today. The question of how to recognize what is truly right and thus to serve justice when framing laws has never been simple, and today in view of the vast extent of our knowledge and our capacity, it has become still harder” (Benedict XVI, Address to the Members of the Federal German Parliament in Berlin [22 September 2011]: ASS 103 [2011], 664-65).

⁷⁶ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 179.

⁷⁷ SS, 1.

2.2.4. Cultural Diagnosis: The Modern Synthesis

Ratzinger gathers the three dynamics discussed above into a “modern synthesis.” This is comprised of the temptation to unite the present-day assumptions of “belief in progress, the absolutization of the scientific-technical civilisation and the promise of the new humanity, of the messianic kingdom.”⁷⁸ He sees it as a temptation arising from a world-view whereby morality loses its evidential character, and focus turns instead towards the exclusiveness of technical reason and the destruction of ethos. The Bonaventurian influence on Ratzinger’s understanding of history, which was observed in Chapter 1, informs his presentation of the philosophical dynamics underpinning these attitudes.

In the first place, Ratzinger believes the idea of progress is tied to the post-Hegelian philosophy of history, which proposes a mechanistic interpretation of history. In socialism, progress was regarded as whatever served the construction of socialism, whereas for superficial liberalism, in a no less partisan way, everything that removes constraint appears as progress and consequently freedom is equated with the absence of ties:

Wo immer Fortschritt als ein notwendiger Prozeß gesetzlicher Entwicklung der Geschichte angesehen wird, ist er unterhalb des eigentlich Menschlichen angesiedelt und im tiefsten gegen den Menschen konzipiert. Personale Freiheit und ethische Eigenverantwortung können dann nur als Störfaktoren solcher Gesetzlichkeiten angesehen werden.⁷⁹

Secondly, the canonisation of the scientific-technical civilisation logically feeds into progressivism. Science, in the contemporary sense of the term, refers to the realm of the necessary, as that which can be reduced to strict rules and admits only objectively-verifiable certainties. In practice, science “cannot deal with the realm of what is free, that is, with the genuinely human dimension of man and his social bonds.”⁸⁰ The attempt to treat the human

⁷⁸ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 129.

⁷⁹ Ratzinger, *Wendzeit für Europa*, 64-65 (“Whenever progress is seen as a necessary process of the legitimate development of history, it is located below the level of what is genuinely human and in its depths it is conceived against man. Personal freedom and ethical responsibility for oneself can then be seen only as factors that interfere with such legitimacy” [Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 95]).

⁸⁰ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 92.

person “scientifically,” in a narrow sense, includes a determinism which means nothing “human” is possible outside of the strict natural laws of necessity:

Eine Wissenschaftsidee, die sich am Unfreien bildet, wird auf den Bereich der Freien, des Menschlichen übertragen, um eine “Physik des Menschen” zu ermöglichen, in der es notwendige Gesetze und exakte Voraussagen gibt. Die Theorie fordert hier – konsequent genommen – ihrem Wesen nach die Ausschaltung des Faktors Freiheit.⁸¹

The final part of this temptation – the promise of the perfection of the kingdom within history – is, to Ratzinger’s mind, the logical result of progressivist-determinism: “in the face of growing social distress and inescapable Christian responsibility . . . it is characteristic that one now speaks simply of the ‘kingdom’ – without mentioning God – and that this is understood as the ideal human society.”⁸² However, if the aim of faith and the task of all theology is *to work* towards bringing about the “kingdom,” then the central word of faith becomes a purely political concept: “Faith itself thereby becomes political ideology. Politics has absorbed faith into itself.”⁸³

The idea that, by entering the laws of history, one might construct an earthly paradise is inimical to freedom and is therefore inhuman for it presupposes that history will, at some point, be based on definitive structures rather than on freedom. Ratzinger, however, says,

Die Zukunft bleibt immer offen, weil menschliches Zusammenleben immer unter dem Zeichen menschlicher Freiheit steht und daher immer auch in der Möglichkeit des Versagens. Das aber bedeutet: Das Feld des politischen Handelns ist nicht die Zukunft, sondern die Gegenwart.⁸⁴

Ratzinger believes that the future, even the history of the future, so to speak, is best served by being good today and thereby shaping a spirit of responsibility for what is good both today and tomorrow. To his mind, the paradox of the myth of inner-worldly eschatologies “consists

⁸¹ Ratzinger, *Wendezeit für Europa*, 63 (“An idea of science that is formed on the basis of what is not free is transposed to the realm of what is free, namely, the human realm, in order to make possible a ‘physics of man’ in which there exists necessary laws and exact predictions. If this theory is taken consistently, it demands by its very nature the exclusion of the factor of freedom” [Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 93-94]).

⁸² Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 75.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Ratzinger, *Wendezeit für Europa*, 98 (“[t]he future always remains open, because human life lived in common always revolves around human freedom and therefore always has the possibility of failure. But this means that the field of political activity is not the future but the present” [Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 140-41]).

in the fact that one does not wish to free man for freedom but from freedom; that one wishes to achieve the absolute – the definitive society – precisely by excluding the absolute criterion – God.”⁸⁵

This synthesis is the systematic exclusion of the divine from the shaping of history and human life because it necessarily neglects to factor in freedom – both human and divine. The “genuinely new” and remarkable thing about “this strange trinity is . . . that this structure now replaces the concept of God, and necessarily excludes it, since it takes its place.”⁸⁶ While there may be a growth in a more discerning attitude towards aspects of science, progress, and historical interpretation today, Ratzinger believes the temptation to combine them remains.

Technology and science look set to continue developing with an immanent necessity into the future. Ratzinger says we cannot turn back to dreams of pre-technological paradises and expect future generations of live without the technical advancements we ourselves enjoy. Belief in technology’s ability to construct a new world on its own terms must leave God out of what happens in history and consign the question of his existence to the private, arbitrary realm. However, to do so – to give no rights to God in public life – means the “export [of] technical skills without ethos, and ultimately against ethos; . . . the spirit of having and making things, along with the escape into the empty promise of a ‘tomorrow’ [that] will fill the whole world.”⁸⁷ A way forward, therefore, can only be found through a broader affirmation.

⁸⁵ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 145. Ratzinger refers here to the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin’s (1770-1843) observation on this type of mythologizing: “Still it is man’s desire to make the state his heaven that has made the state hell” (quoted in Helmut Kuhn, *Der Staat* [Munich: Kösel, 1967], 38).

⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 130.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 132. If one were looking for an even more condensed summary of the consequences of Ratzinger’s analysis of contemporary cultural dynamics, it resides in the idea of modern rationalism which “declares the irrational to be the origin of the rational. This means that it must declare the basis of freedom to be that which is not free, that is, freedom, like reason, is a by-product of the self-construction of the world” (115; cf., *ibid.*, 112). Marcello Pera, lecturer in political philosophy at the Pontifical Lateran University in Rome, and one-time president of the Italian Senate (2001-2006), reflects on Pascal’s wager to live “as if God existed,” making a very penetrating prediction on the outcome of the exclusion of the Christian God from western culture: “To live as if

Ratzinger is convinced that only the idea of the unconditional, the idea of God, can prevent the formation of an artificial unity of humanity that extinguishes at the same time the forces that truly unite it – i.e. the great ethical convictions that humanity has in common. In opposition to the potential “destruction of all traditional cultures through the universalization of the scientific objectification of the world and the goal-oriented rational organisation of life,”⁸⁸ Ratzinger puts forward a “Christian synthesis.” This synthesis, lived out by the members of the Church, proposes to society an authentic human freedom in harmony with the will of God. However, to develop this point further at this stage of our study would be premature.

Ratzinger has an awareness that one-sided views of freedom “are at work also in the ecclesiastical crisis and have left their mark on the struggle within Church today.”⁸⁹ This means that an important preparatory task for studying his ecclesiology is to consider how the modern notion of freedom has marked the Church’s life. The final part of this chapter now turns to this consideration.

2.3. Contemporary Ecclesial Dynamics of Freedom

In light of all that Ratzinger has said in terms of the evolution of the understanding of freedom in intellectual history, there is no surprise in the fact that he believes the Church is compelled to answer the criticism that its own inner life can often be anything but a place

God existed means to deny man that giddy feeling of omnipotence and absolute freedom which at first elates him and then depresses and degrades him. It means recognising our finite condition and becoming aware of the ethical limitations of our actions. This amounts to establishing our rights and acknowledging our duties. . . . Without the Christian vision of the human person, our political life is doomed to become the mere exercise of power and our science to divorce itself from moral wisdom; our technology to become indifferent to ethics and our material well-being blind to our exploitation of others and our environment. Without that vision, our encounter with ‘the other’ – the poor, the sick, the dying, the needy or outcast of any gender, race, or age – can only deteriorate into violence and manipulation, and our civilisation will cut itself off from the principles that first baptised and nurtured it. Yes, *velut si Deus daretur* is the moral condition necessary in order for us to cultivate hope” (Marcello Pera, *Why We Should Call Ourselves Christians: The Religious Roots of Free Societies*, trans. L.B. Lappin [New York: Encounter Books, 2011], 60).

⁸⁸ Robert Spaemann, “Universalismus oder Eurozentrismus?” in Krzysztof Michalski, ed., *Europa und die Folgen* (Stuttgart: Keltt-Cotta, 1988), 320.

⁸⁹ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 182.

where people feel free.⁹⁰ On account of the present-day conception of freedom, coming to terms with the tension between individuals and institutions is of fundamental importance. Such a discussion is especially important in contemporary ecclesiology. This subdivision is divided into three parts. Firstly, there is a discussion of the growing feeling of bitterness towards a Church that appears as a barrier to freedom rather than anything else. This is followed by looking at the Church from the specific perspective of freedom in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council. And finally, it lays out the basic orientations of Ratzinger's ecclesiology as he seeks a way forward in understanding the Church as sphere of growth in authentic human freedom.

2.3.1. The Church as a Barrier to Freedom? The Experience of *Bitterkeit*⁹¹

Ratzinger has an awareness of the complexity of the disdain with which the Church can be viewed: "Why does the Church incur the dislike of so many men, even of believers, even of those who yesterday could be reckoned among the most faithful and who despite their pain, probably still are today?"⁹² Broaching an answer, he suggests that while for some it is the case that the Church has become too worldly and for others she is not worldly enough, "most people have trouble with the Church because she is an institution like many others, which as such restricts my freedom."⁹³

Ratzinger points out that the modern critique of the Church which is often the source of the bitterness is especially complex and doubly burdensome because the obstacles which it

⁹⁰ See Joseph Ratzinger, "Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin," in *GS:ZV*, 1182-85; *Called to Communion*, 133-40; "The End of Time," 95-6; *God and the World*, 92-3; *What It Means to Be a Christian: Three Sermons*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 43-49.

⁹¹ The strong word, *Bitterkeit* ("bitterness") is used by Ratzinger in a lecture originally prepared for the annual "Meeting for Friendship among the Peoples," organised in Rimini by the *Comunione e Liberazione* ecclesial movement. The lecture, originally entitled "A Company in Need of Reform," specifically reflected upon dissatisfaction with the Church and is a good example of Ratzinger's intellectual honesty in openly identifying the discontent felt by people with the Catholic Church. The text is reprinted in *Called to Communion*, 133-156, at 135. See also *Deus caritas est (DCE)*, 3.

⁹² Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 134.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

erects reach into a person's most personal and most intimate depths. This is principally because Church rules for ordering life make a claim upon the entire life of the human person and are thus about more than merely supporting one's temporal welfare. Ultimately, the Church's *raison d'être* rests in its claim to offer a more vital support to humanity than the services and ministrations of State regulation. He points out that the Church's rules purport to "inwardly affect my course in life, telling me how I am supposed to understand and shape my freedom . . . demand[ing] of me decisions that cannot be made without painful renunciation."⁹⁴ Ratzinger tries to capture the contemporary critique of the Church through a series of questions:

Will man uns nicht die schönsten Früchte im Garten des Lebens verweigern? Wird uns nicht der Weg ins Weite versperrt durch die Enge so vieler Gebote und Verbote? Wird das Denken nicht ebenso an seiner Größe gehindert wie das Wollen? Muss Befreiung nicht notwendig der Ausbruch aus solcher geistiger Bevormundung sein? Und wäre nicht die einzige wirkliche Reform, dies alles abzuschütteln.⁹⁵

Alongside anti-institutional sentiment, Ratzinger believes "bitterness" with the Church has a second specific cause, akin to the interminable search for meaning that takes place in the human person. Because of the harsh nature of life and the pressures of daily living, "a secret hope still looks to the Church, which, it is felt, ought to be a kind of island of the good life, a tiny oasis of freedom into which one can withdraw now and then."⁹⁶ Because of the inexorable human search for meaning, the disappointment with the Church has a particular quality. In one way or another, people's hopes of liberty seem to be even more severely crushed by the Church, given that, of all places, there is an understood expectation that it will surely provide a zone that heralds a better world:

⁹⁴ Ibid., 135.

⁹⁵ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 131 ("Is this not intended to deny us the sweetest fruits in the garden of life? Is not the way into the wide open closed by the restrictive confines of so many commandments and prohibitions? Is not thought kept from reaching its full stature just as much as the will is? Must not liberation consist in breaking out of such immature dependency? And would not the only real reform be to rid ourselves of the whole business?" [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 135]). The contemporary critique of the Church is very often summed up in the so-called "Canon of Criticism" which includes the topics of women's ordination, contraception, abortion, homosexuality, celibacy, infallibility, and the remarriage of divorced persons. See Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 181-213.

⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 135.

[. . .] weil man sich im Stillen von ihr mehr erwartet als von allen weltlichen Institutionen. In ihr sollte sich der Traum von der besseren Welt erfüllen. In ihr wenigstens möchte man den Geschmack der Freiheit verkosten, der Erlöstseins – das Heraustreten aus der Höhle, wie Gregor der Große im Anschluss an Plato formuliert.⁹⁷

When viewing the Church, therefore, modern sensibilities tend to become even more sensitive to the constraining nature of institutional arrangements. On the other hand, while the dream of a better world emanating from the Church seems extinguished because the empirical evidence suggests it has settled for institution and everything human, the bitterness cannot cause the idea of the Church to disappear. The dream of something better cannot be extinguished from the human heart.

When Ratzinger analyses, from a theological perspective, the prevalence of anti-institutional sentiment in conjunction with the human search for meaning, he describes the phenomenon of a *thirst for freedom*. It is “the form in which the yearning for redemption and the feeling of unredemption and alienation make their voices heard today.”⁹⁸ A bitterness arises because on the one hand “the call for freedom demands an existence uncramped by prior givens that keep me from fully realising myself and throw up external obstacles to my chosen path” while, on the other hand in the Church, “on all sides we run into such roadblocks that hold us at a standstill and prevent us from continuing on our way.”⁹⁹ As a result, when this “thirst” has cause to encounter a resignation not dissimilar from that which people generally have experienced in the post-liberalist and post-marxist milieu,¹⁰⁰ it is composed of the temptation to disillusionment, followed by an irrational attempt at constructing a “space” that satisfies the yearnings of our will:

⁹⁷ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 131-32 (“[. . .] because in their heart of hearts people expect more of her than that of all worldly institutions. It is in the Church that the dream of a better world should be realised. There, at least, one would hope to know the taste of freedom, of redeemed existence – to emerge from the cave, as Gregory the Great expresses it in language borrowed from Plato” [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 135]). See Gregory the Great, *Hom. in Ezechielem*. II, 1, 17: PL 76, 948 A; Plato, *The Republic* Bk. VII: 514a-520a.

⁹⁸ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 134.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ See this dissertation § 2.2.2.

Weil [die Kirche] nicht so ist, wie die Träume zeigen, versucht man verzweifelt, sie so zu machen, wie man sie wünscht: zu einem Ort aller Freiheiten einem Raum der Entschränkung unserer Grenzen, zum Experiment von Utopia, das es doch irgendwo geben muss.¹⁰¹

This call for adaptation – akin to that of a political promise to create a better world – subscribes to the premise that we must establish a better Church “as a first step towards a political goal: a Church full of humanity, pervaded by a spirit of brotherhood and large-minded creativity, a place of reconciliation of all and for all.”¹⁰² Rousseau’s philosophy, as representative of an ethic of autarchy and a revolution against institutionalism, bolsters the disillusionment felt by people with the ecclesiastical structure they see about them. Strong echoes here also of the belief in progress to achieve earthly perfection. Because fraternity is not a permanent or universal reality in the community, the institution is viewed as wrongly configured. In Ratzinger’s view this can partially be accounted for by the fact that “[i]n today’s world-view, the ideas of autonomy and of anti-authoritarianism, if we can put it like that, have become extremely dominant.”¹⁰³ Taking these ideas to their logical conclusion, Ratzinger says they imply that “if the autonomous subject has the last word, then its desires are simply unlimited.”¹⁰⁴

Ratzinger believes the dissatisfaction with everything not in harmony with the radically autonomous subject is a major cultural and ecclesial problem today. However, to offset this Ratzinger says the Church of the twentieth-century has acted as a counter pole, as a force against repression, as that other form of society which he spoke about previously: “The twentieth century has made it plain in a hitherto unknown way that precisely the bond of communion that is the Church is a counterforce against all worldly, political, and economic

¹⁰¹ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 132 (“Because the Church is not as our dreams picture her to be, a desperate attempt is undertaken to bring her into conformity with our wishes: to make her a place for every freedom, a space where we can move freed of our limits, an experiment in utopia, which, after all, must exist somewhere” [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 136]).

¹⁰² Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 136.

¹⁰³ Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 167.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

mechanisms of oppression and uniformization.”¹⁰⁵ Ratzinger acknowledges that there has been a growing misunderstanding of the Church’s nature due to one-sided notions of freedom ungrounded in truth and devoid of content, which revolt against the inevitable obligations and constraints that accompany an authentic, well-adjusted freedom. In response to this, he will argue that, in fact, the Church “gives men a place of freedom and sets a sort of ultimate limit to oppression.”¹⁰⁶

2.3.2. The Church in the Aftermath of Vatican II

The question of the Church in the aftermath of Second Vatican Council is a multifaceted one, but from the perspective of freedom, Ratzinger focused on two themes in particular – the image of the Church as “people of God,” and liberation theology. Of major concern in ecclesiology was the fact that confusion about the Church’s nature and identity became particularly acute during this era. As little as two years after the Council, Ratzinger sensed in people a feeling of disappointment with its work which amounted to an anti-climax or an atmosphere of unfulfilled expectations. In 1966, he began questioning the viability of some of that expectation in the first place:

Die Welt, die für einen Moment erstaunt aufgehört und sich mit freudiger Zustimmung dem Konzil zugewandt hatte, geht längst wieder ihren Geschäften nach, und zu guter Letzt ist die Kirche doch Kirche geblieben und der Glaube eher noch mühseliger, weil ausgesetzt, schutzloser geworden: Sei es, daß in dem Beifall von 1962 wirklich etwas aufgeklungen war von einer geheimen Sehnsucht, das Höhere und Ewige, das sich uns so sehr verbirgt, möchte nun faßbarer und näher werden, weniger verzäunt durch tausend Vorschriften und weniger verdeckt durch die Last der Vergangenheit, die auf dem liegt, was sich als Gottes Offenbarung uns anbietet – sei es, daß man sich in seiner eigenen Weltlichkeit bestätigt fühlte und von solchen Empfindungen her auf eine Verweltlichung der Kirche hoffte.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 165.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes*, 303 (“The world, which had for a moment been turned towards the Council to give it a joyous approval, has long since returned to its business, and in the end the Church still remained the Church, and faith rather more arduous than ever because of being exposed and more vulnerable: could it be that the applause of 1962 had touched upon a secret longing for something higher and eternal – which hides itself so much from us – that would now be closer and more comprehensible, less fenced off by a thousand regulations and less obscured by the weight of the past which covers over that which offers itself to us as God’s revelation?”)

He further contends that the Council's immediate aftermath contributed to further disagreement and divided opinions amongst groups of the faithful. For some the Council had been "nothing but a conglomerate of cautious compromises, a victory of diplomatic caution over the power of the Holy Spirit who wants not complicated syntheses, but the simplicity of the Gospel."¹⁰⁸ For others it manifested a scandal that, in its fascination with popularity in the world and with material things, amounted to a "cheapened, reductive Christianity."¹⁰⁹ For Ratzinger himself, it was the designation of the Church as "people of God" in the document *Lumen gentium*, on the one hand,¹¹⁰ and the emergence of liberation theology,¹¹¹ on the other, which epitomise the prevailing atmosphere.

For those who felt the Council provided a major breakthrough in ecclesiology, the second chapter of *Lumen gentium* brought to the fore the designation of the Church as the "people of God," a biblical term comprehensive enough to foster the ecumenical movement and retain the eschatological nature of the historical, albeit mystical Body of Christ.¹¹² However, Ratzinger says, the designation was quickly swamped by an "enthusiasm over the discovery [that] far exceeded what the biblical foundations themselves could support."¹¹³ A reductionist tendency, which relegated a great deal of conciliar ecclesiology, turned "people" into a sociological and political term detached from its biblical roots: "[t]hus 'People of God' becomes the vehicle of an anti-hierarchical and anti-sacral idea of Church, indeed, a

Or could it be that one felt the Church was about to come to terms with the world and thereby confirm people in their own worldliness?" [own translation]).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 303-4.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 304.

¹¹⁰ Ratzinger deals with the reception of the term "people of God" after the Vatican Council in a number of places. Some of the more key writings have recently been gathered in *GS:ZV*, 205-332. See also Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism, Politics*, 23-35, 182-85; "Communio ein Program" *Internationale katholische Zeitschriften Communio* 21 (1992): 454-63; *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 110-12; a lecture delivered in Benevento in June 2002, "Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity," http://www.doctrinafidei.va/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020602_ratzinger-eucharistic-congress_en.html (accessed 24 May 2011). See also Heim's commentary on how Ratzinger deals with this in *Joseph Ratzinger-Kirchliche Existenz*, 310-397.

¹¹¹ Ratzinger's key writings on the theology of liberation have recently been gathered in *GS:AEL*, 489-641. See also this dissertation §§0.2., 0.3., and 1.2.

¹¹² See Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 23-35.

¹¹³ Ibid., 29.

revolutionary category suitable for developing a new concept of Church.”¹¹⁴ Ideas such as “the grass-roots Church, ‘Church from below,’ Church of the people, the congregation as the entity responsible for all actions, both religious and socio-political”¹¹⁵ were bolstered by this.

Ratzinger notes that

“Volk Gottes” wurde immer mehr im Sinn von Volkssouveränität aufgefaßt, als Recht zur gemeinsamen, demokratischen Bestimmung aller darüber, was Kirche sein und was sie tun sollte. Gott, der durch den Genitiv “Gottes” als der eigentliche Schöpfer und Souverän dieses Volkes angesprochen ist, blieb in solchen Überlegungen aus dem Spiel; er war eingeschmolzen in das sich selbst begründende und gestaltende Volk.¹¹⁶

It became a veritable slogan for the ideas of freedom emanating from Europe – east and west – at the time. The western push for more democratisation, with its concomitant majority principle, and the call from the east for the proletariat to seize power from aristocratic élites, were cross pressures in the general cultural environment encouraging anti-institutional understandings of the Church. However, these political struggles led the “horizontal” to dominate this scriptural term, disregarding the theological foundation which ought to have been its ground. Ratzinger says, this “reduces the Church to the level of a party. Parties may, after some time, discard an old program and replace it with a new one, which they see for now as better, until yet another takes its place.”¹¹⁷ The application of “people” to a general political interpretation was predicated on the hope that popular sovereignty was at long last being applied to the Church. Ratzinger concludes that this shift in approach – so fundamentally anti-theological – is a key element in the growing disillusionment and bitterness facing the Church. It was a situation that

[. . .] gab Anlaß zu ausgiebigen Strukturdebatten, in denen je nach Lage “Demokratisierung” mehr westlich oder mehr im Sinn der östlichen “Volksdemokratien” ausgelegt wurde. Allmählich ist das “Wortfeuerwerk” (N.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 34.

¹¹⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, “Communio ein Program,” *Internationale Katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 5 (1992): 458 (“‘People of God’ was more and more understood in the sense of popular sovereignty, as a right to the common, democratic determination of all as to what the Church ought to be and what it should do. God, who is spoken about by the genitive ‘of God’ as the real creator and sovereign of this People, remained out of play in such considerations; he had melted into the self-causative and creative People” [own translation]).

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 458-59 [own translation].

Lohfink) um den Volk-Gottes-Begriff heruntergebrannt, zum einen und hauptsächlich weil diese Herrschaftsspiele sich selbst entlarvt haben und der nüchternen Arbeit im kirchlichen Alltag Platz machen mußten, zum anderen aber auch, weil solide theologische Arbeit unwidersprechlich das Umhaltbare solcher Politisierungen eines in sich ganz anders gelagerten Begriffs zum Vorschein gebracht hat. . . . Genau den Gottesbegriff hatte man bei dem “Feuerwerk” um dieses Wort weggelassen und es damit gänzlich seines Sinnes beraubt. Denn eine Kirche, die nur für sich selber da ist, ist überflüssig. Und die Menschen merken das als bald. Die Kirchenkrise, wie sie sich in der Krise des Volk-Gottes-Begriffs spiegelt, ist “Gottes-krise”; sie resultiert aus dem Weglassen des Wesentlichen. Was bleibt, ist nur noch ein Streit um Macht. Den gibt es anderwärts in der Welt schon genug, dazu brauchen wir die Kirche nicht.¹¹⁸

In the background here is Ratzinger’s sensitivity to philosophies which lead in the direction of “the claim of the absolute subordination of the individual to the collective.”¹¹⁹

For him, while on the one hand, “community” is a vital and relevant part of the Christian economy, on the other, he believes that detaching it from the universal and sacramental Church is not in keeping with its ecclesial essence. In such a case, the “official Church,” like all major political and commercial structures, would be simply perceived as a power-base that hampers personal freedom, whereas the local faith community would be seen as a place where everyone participates in everything and thus freedom is realised:

¹¹⁸ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 110-12 (“[. . .] gave rise to extensive debates over structures, in which – depending on the situation – “democratization” was interpreted more in the Western sense or more in the sense of the Eastern ‘people’s democracies.’ Gradually the ‘verbal fireworks’ (N. Lohfink) surrounding the concept of “People of God” burned away, in the first place (and mainly) because each of these power games unmasked the others and had to give way to down-to-earth work in the everyday Church, yet also, on the other hand, because solid theological work made quite manifest, in a way that was beyond contradiction, how such politicizing of a concept which was in itself entirely different was untenable. . . . The idea of God is the very thing that had been left aside in the “fireworks” surrounding this term, and it had thereby been deprived of its entire meaning. For a Church that is there only for her own sake is superfluous. And people notice it straightaway. The crisis concerning the Church, as it is reflected in the crisis concerning the concept of ‘People of God,’ is a ‘crisis about God’: it is the result of leaving out what is essential. What then remains is merely a dispute about power. There is already enough of that elsewhere in the world – we do not need the Church for that” [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 127-29]). In regard to the careful exegetical work carried out on the “people of God” concept, Ratzinger refers to Bochum University exegete, Werner Berg: “[d]espite the paucity of passages in which the turn of phrase ‘People of God’ is to be found – and to that extent, ‘People of God’ is a fairly rare biblical concept – we can nonetheless hold fast to some elements in common: the phrase ‘People of God’ expresses the ‘being related to God,’ the ‘relationship established by God,’ the close connection between God and those people referred to as the ‘People of God,’ that is to say, in a ‘vertical direction.’ The turn of phrase is less suitable for describing the hierarchical structure of this community, above all if the ‘People of God’ is described ‘as opposed to’ the officeholders. . . . Nor, on the basis of the biblical understanding of it, is this turn of phrase appropriate as a cry of protest against those in office: ‘We are the People of God’” (“Volk Gottes” – Ein biblischer Begriff?,” in W. Geerlings and M. Seckler, eds., *Kirche sein: Nachkonziliare Theologie im Dienst der Kirchenreform: Festschrift für H.J. Pottmeyer* [Freiberg: Herder, 1994], 20 [quoted in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 128).

¹¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 33.

Der Überdruß an den anonymen Großgesellschaften trägt das Seinige dazu bei, um den Gedanken der sich selbst bestimmenden Gemeinde als Ausweg erscheinen zu lassen und von ihm her Kirche als Oase der Freiheit anzubieten. . . . Aber wo das Element Gemeinde isoliert und vom großen Strom der sakramentalen Gemeinschaft der ganzen Kirche abgegrenzt wird, verflüchtigt sich die Freiheit der Gemeinde ins Spielerische und wird leer. Die autonome Gemeinde sinkt zur reinen Sozialpflege und zur Freizeitgemeinschaft ab; das kultische Tun wird irrational oder zum bloßen Ritus der Gemeinschaftlichkeit, die sich selbst feiert. Wieder zeigt sich, daß die Eigenständigkeit als solche noch nicht Freiheit ist.¹²⁰

Consequently, Ratzinger believes it is an error to attempt to locate a comprehensive human freedom solely in the political arena because it compels the essence of the human person to fit into the realm of popular politics. This would be to curtail the ontological dignity of the person and destroy freedom. But because political attempts at creating complete freedom inevitably fail, Ratzinger believes many in the Church turn to a radical idea of freedom and its promise of progress. This is expressed theologically through the conduit of prophetic promise. This was most clearly exemplified for him in liberation theology.

It is Ratzinger's view that the emergence of liberation theology had the potential to confirm the theological importation of an anarchic form of freedom into ecclesial life.¹²¹ He is instinctively wary of any anthropological attitude that exalts progress within history to a point where "the whole of history appears as a process of progressive liberations whose

¹²⁰ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 174-75 ("Discontent with large, impersonal associations plays its part in making the idea of the self-determining faith community seem to be a way out that can turn the Church into an oasis of freedom. . . . But when the element of local community is isolated and set apart from the mainstream of the sacramental communion of the whole Church, the community's freedom is reduced to triviality and becomes empty. The autonomous community is reduced to a group for purely social concerns and leisure activities; its act of worship becomes irrational or a mere rite of fellowship that celebrates itself. Again, it is evident that autonomy as such is not yet freedom" [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 184-85]).

¹²¹ We have previously treated the topic of liberation theology in this dissertation in §§0.2., 0.3. and 1.2. At this point, however, we arrive at Ratzinger's primary misgiving about the direction in which its earliest proponents were taking it – i.e. the potential repercussions of the politicization of ecclesial life. Speaking from a personal perspective, he admits that his main struggle was that it was painfully difficult to enter into dialogue with the early waves of liberationists because they clung tightly "to that illusory myth which blocks the path of the reforms and intensifies misery and injustices, namely, the myth of the class struggle as an instrument in creating a classless society" (Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 189). Ratzinger is convinced that some liberationists borrowed Marxist thought in an insufficiently critical manner that risks damaging Christian faith and Christian living. This is also borne out by the thrust of *LN*, which was issued under his leadership at the *CDF*. For a more thorough account of Ratzinger's underlying approach, see *The Ratzinger Report*, 169-90; *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 239-47; *A Turning Point for Europe*, 88-101.

mechanism we are gradually able to explain and that we are thus able to steer ourselves.”¹²²

A fascinating promise seems to open up for humanity which, Ratzinger says, “over-exaggerates the real meaning of human nature in just as detrimental a way as previous generations under-estimated it.”¹²³ Echoing his concern with the modern synthesis, Ratzinger insists that “[w]herever progress is seen as a necessary process of the legitimate development of history, it is located below the level of what is genuinely human and in its depths it is conceived against man.”¹²⁴ To his mind, what is theologically unacceptable and socially dangerous is an inadequate anthropology that would see the sacralising of revolution – the mixing up of the Bible, christology, politics, sociology and economics. This would be to absolutize and sacralise a theory concerning the socio-political order, which would merely succeed in “producing a dreamy fanaticism that can lead to even worse injustices and oppression, ruining in the praxis what the theory has proposed.”¹²⁵ In fact, the sacralising of an incomplete picture of human nature is precisely what condemns to slavery the poorest who genuinely need to be liberated:

Wenn man anhand von Bibel und Tradition in brüderlicher Weise versucht, die Abweichungen [der Mythos vom Klassenkampf als Instrument zur Schaffung einer klassenlosen Gesellschaft] aufzuzeigen, erhält man schnell das Etikett von “Dienern,” “Lakaien,” der herrschenden Klassen, die sich dadurch die Macht sichern wollen, daß sie sich auch auf die Kirche stützen. . . . Von dieser Seite wird jede unserer Stellungnahmen, mag sie noch so überdacht und respektvoll erfolgen, *a priori* zurückgewiesen, weil man sich auf die Seite der “Herren” stellen würde. Dabei wird die Sache der Untersten gerade von jenen Ideologien verraten, die sich für das Volk stets als Quelle von Leiden erwiesen haben.¹²⁶

¹²² Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 240.

¹²³ See Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 241: “[M]an himself can become the engineer of his history. He need no longer wager on the always unsure and fragile character of his good will and of his moral decisions. He now sees into the inner texture of the process of freedom and can create the conditions in which the will is good in itself, just as we have hitherto lived in conditions in which it is bad in itself.”

¹²⁴ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 95.

¹²⁵ Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 190.

¹²⁶ Ratzinger, *Zur Lage des Glaubens*, 201 (“If one tries in a fraternal way to indicate the aberration [that a class struggle is an instrument that creates a classless society] by referencing the Bible and tradition, one quickly obtains the label of ‘servants,’ or ‘lackeys’ of the ruling classes, who hope to secure the power by which the Church itself is buttressed. . . . Our opinions, even if they be considered and respectful, are rejected a priori, because it would be to side with the ‘Master classes.’ Hence, the neediest in this matter are betrayed by the very ideologies that have always proved to be the source of people’s suffering” [own translation]).

Ratzinger's point in all this is that the overthrow of a regime by means of revolutionary violence against societal structures perpetuating violence is not *ipso facto* the beginning of a just regime. The paradox of forms of liberation theology which indiscriminately assume materialist anthropologies¹²⁷ is that they relativise the truth and sanction, unwittingly, a major fact in our world: "[that] millions of our own contemporaries legitimately yearn to recover those basic freedoms of which they were deprived by totalitarian and atheistic regimes which came to power by violent and revolutionary means, precisely in the name of the liberation of the people."¹²⁸

At stake here is the matter of how theology can uphold the truth about freedom, without falling into aberrations of the truth about Christian freedom. In a somewhat personal remark, Ratzinger highlights the high stakes which the debate about the nature of authentic freedom raises for theology:

Schmerzlich betrifft einen sodann auch diese – bei Priestern und Theologen vorhandene – so unchristliche Illusion, daß man einen neuen Menschen und eine neue Welt schaffen könne, nicht indem man jeden einzelnen zur Bekehrung ruft, sondern indem man nur auf die sozialen und ökonomischen Strukturen einwirkt. Es ist gerade die persönliche Sünde, die in Wirklichkeit den ungerechten sozialen Strukturen zugrunde liegt. An der Wurzel und nicht am Stamm oder an den Ästen des Baumes der Ungerechtigkeit müßte man ansetzen, wenn man wirklich eine menschlichere Gesellschaft will. Es handelt sich hier um grundlegende christliche Wahrheiten, und doch werden sie mit Geringschätzung als "entfremdend" und "spiritualistisch" zurückgewiesen.¹²⁹

In light of developments in the post-Conciliar era, Ratzinger has sometimes said the Church finds itself in a situation of "Babylonian exile" today.¹³⁰ It languishes in an exilic

¹²⁷ See *LN*, XI, 8.

¹²⁸ See *ibid.*, XI, 10.

¹²⁹ Ratzinger, *Zur Lage des Glaubens*, 202-3 ("It is painful to meet so unchristian an illusion - among priests and theologians - that one can create a new man and a new world, not by each individual being called to conversion, but by acting only on the social and economic structures. For, in reality, it is precisely on personal sin that unjust social structures are based. If one really wants a more humane society, then one must begin at the root and not with the trunk or the branches of the tree of injustice. This is about basic Christian truths, and yet they are dismissed with contempt as 'alienating' and 'spiritualist'" [own translation]).

¹³⁰ See Joseph Ratzinger, "Ist die Eucharistie ein Opfer?" in *GS:ZV*, 259-70; "Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin" in *GS:ZV*, 1169-85; *The Yes of Jesus Christ: Spiritual Exercises in Faith, Hope and Love*, trans. Robert Nowell (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1991), 50-53; *In the Beginning . . . : A Catholic Understanding of Creation and the Fall*, trans. Boniface Ramsey (London: T & T Clark, 1995), 10-11, 31-32; *Called to*

situation of captivity as the result of internal division, mistrust and insecurity: “Amid a world that strives for unity, the Church is divided into nationalist resentment in the denunciation of the unfamiliar, in the glorification of the self.”¹³¹ But how, he wonders, has the Church found itself in this Babylonian captivity at the moment when a new Pentecost was being hoped for? How is it that, as the Council seemed to be poised to reap a rich harvest, disintegration emerges from so great a surge towards unity? Employing the use of metaphor, Ratzinger believes that the great post-conciliar effort to understand the Church was motivated by the same increment in exactitude to which the natural sciences submit:

Es scheint wir sind bei unserem Bemühen um das Verständnis der Kirche, das schließlich auf dem Konzil zu einem aktiven Ringen um sie, zu einem konkreten Arbeit an der Kirche geworden ist, so nahe an eben diese Kirche herangekommen, dass nun eine Wahrnehmung des Ganzen nicht mehr gelingt, dass wir vor Häusern nicht mehr die Stadt, vor Bäumen nicht mehr den Wald zu sehen vermögen.¹³²

A scientific-technological rationalism conditions us to see each detail with such precision that we come to pass more easily over the whole of which it is part. Ratzinger says that “an increment in exactitude represents loss in truth.”¹³³ Hence, he affirms, the intense effort at

Communion, 31, 43; *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 19-23; *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 296-98. Ratzinger employs this biblical comparison to capture the phenomenon felt within the Church of abandonment by God, on the one hand, and forgetfulness of God, on the other. In biblical tones, it conveys his worries about the direction in which the Church finds itself post-Vatican II and it is a theme he has returned to many times. Gradually but steadily distancing itself from its homeland and its nature, Ratzinger says the Church has found itself in a state of exilic turmoil. Preoccupation with its own internal history and operations has caused the Church to interminably question its heretofore secure self-understanding. The excesses of time spent wrangling over partisan interests has caused the loss of the inward recognition of God’s presence in the Church. In time this has led to the breakdown of its external structure and its eventual “exile” – that is, the collapse of its freedom and the expansion of a situation of slavery. A unity built without God, or even, against him, ends in confusion and total destruction, in hatred and in chaos of all against all (cf. Gen 11:1-9): “[. . .] Ratzinger displays dismay at and, indeed, disdain for those whom he perceives to be allowing the Church itself, and theology alike, to be led astray by secular ideas and trends. . . . Too many, he continues, have become obsessed with changing church structures, patterns of ministry and the like, so that the Church itself becomes of secondary importance. Ecclesiology becomes bogged down in a ‘battle about machinery.’ The ‘real problem,’ however, is the ‘crisis of faith.’ . . . His conclusion is that unbelief has taken a firm foothold in the Church, thanks to this blurring of distinctions” (Mannion and Boeve, *The Ratzinger Reader*, 94-95). See also *ibid.*, 82; Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity*, 99; Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 39.

¹³¹ Ratzinger, “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin,” in GS:ZV, 1170 [own translation].

¹³² *Ibid.*, 1171 (“It seems that in our efforts to understand the Church, which, at the time of the Council, finally became an active struggle for Church, and concrete work upon the Church, we have come so close to it that we can no longer perceive it as a whole, not the city for the houses, or the wood for the trees” [own translation]).

¹³³ *Ibid.* Ratzinger’s point here is that individual parts cannot exist independently of the whole from which they come. Like one of the early Fathers of the Church he explains the truth in metaphor: “Indisputably precise as is all that the microscope shows when we look through it at a section from a tree, it may obscure truth if it makes us forget that the individual is not just an individual, but has life within the whole, which is not visible under the

reform has caused everything else to be forgotten and the Church becomes “only a structure that can be changed, and which constantly causes us to ask what can be altered, in order to make the Church more efficient for the functions that someone or other thinks appropriate.”¹³⁴ Hence, the “almost unparalleled over-emphasis on the official elements in the Church,”¹³⁵ aimed at liberating the Church from rigidity and the inauguration of a simpler ministry in the spirit of the Gospel, has cultivated an alienation in people who find that the Church today seems to consist of little more than conversations about institutional and ministerial regulations. Ecclesiology, Ratzinger says, has let “questions about the Church exhaust themselves in a battle about machinery.”¹³⁶

Ratzinger observes that the strategic narrative surrounding the Church in the West does not exhibit signs that arose in faith but seems instead to display the main obstacles to accepting it.¹³⁷ Because of the disillusionment and alienation that exists vis-à-vis the official Church, he believes that the acceptable catchphrase has become “trust is good, but control is better.”¹³⁸ If we cannot trust the nature of the Church to fulfil its promise to liberate, then we have to retake power and control the outcome more actively. This mentality coincides considerably with the development of democracy as the most appropriate guarantor of freedom in the modern era. The temptation is to depart from the Church’s true nature because

microscope and yet is true – truer indeed, than the isolation of the individual” (ibid.). On another point consistent with the Church Fathers, a rhetorical and melodic manipulation of language – something particularly evident in Augustine – can regularly be observed in Ratzinger’s writing. A typical example of it is the quotation from the main text to which this footnote refers: “[. . .] Gewinn an Exaktheit Verlust an Wahrheit” [own translations].

¹³⁴ Ibid., 1171-72 [own translations used until the end of this subdivision].

¹³⁵ Ibid., 1172.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ See ibid., 1175.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

“[t]he sacramental principle is no longer self-evident; the only reliable thing is democratic control.”¹³⁹

The key “myth” which Ratzinger observed in this situation was something he was already worried about during the Council itself, namely, the misguided attempt in the twentieth-century to find an unrealistic common ground between faith and unbelief.¹⁴⁰ In the first place, Ratzinger says, this is an internal dilemma for the Church because alienation and unbelief amongst its own members has become a key issue. There are Church members today who have long since given up on the Church’s Creed, but who nevertheless regard themselves, in good conscience, as genuinely progressive Christians. The standard by which these people rate the Church is the “efficiency with which it operates.”¹⁴¹ In a similar fashion, the public at large saw the Council as a triumph for the world, believing that the Church was poised to give it its endorsement:

Der Beifall für das Konzil kam zum Teil auch von denjenigen, die selbst gar nicht vorhatten, Gläubige im Sinn der christlichen Überlieferung zu werden, aber einen “Fortschritt” der Kirche in Richtung auf ihren eignen Entscheid als Bestätigung ihres Weges begrüßten.¹⁴²

For Ratzinger, on the other hand, faith or belief is not an authenticator of current practice. He thinks that certain attempts at accommodating faith and unbelief are not helpful to anybody. In fact, he says, the blurring of the lines of demarcation between faith and unbelief is a situation intolerable to both believer and unbeliever alike:

Nur anfangs schien das Ergebnis dieser Verwischung Befreiung zu sein. Heute ist klar, dass trotz aller Zeichen der Hoffnung, die [Kirche] gibt, aus diesem Vorgang

¹³⁹ Ibid. The viewpoint regarding the democratic systems in the Church which are compatible with the sacramentally determined form of Church governance are explored along with their necessary distinctions in Joseph Ratzinger & Hans Maier, *Demokratie in der Kirche* (Limburg: Lahn-Verlag, 1970).

¹⁴⁰ See this dissertation §1.5.

¹⁴¹ Ratzinger, “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin,” in *GS:ZV*, 1173.

¹⁴² Ibid. (“The applause for the Council came in part from those who had no intention themselves in being believers in the sense of the Christian tradition, but welcomed the ‘progress’ of the Church in the direction of their own views as a confirmation of their way of life” [own translation]).

nicht eine moderne, sondern eine rundum fragwürdig gewordene und tief zerrissene Kirche hervorgekommen ist.¹⁴³

Ratzinger is of the view that the compromise that was promoted between the Church and the secular world overwhelmed ecclesial life towards the end of the twentieth-century and has turned out to be a conciliation that allows neither party to function according to its area of competence for the good of the whole in which they are part. The blurring of the lines leads in the direction of a questionable solution which ultimately entails “taking theological predicates and considering them as wholly political.”¹⁴⁴ If the Church is no longer a reality of faith, it becomes an accidental organisation of the faithful which permits urgent remodelling in accordance with prevailing sociological theories. Hence, the Church would languish in exile from its own essence and reality. For him, there is a vulnerability associated with a secular society predicated on, and governed by, unaided reason fused with majority rule. To his mind secular society points to a different type of community beyond itself – to a faith community that must not collapse, nor be subsumed into the operations of civil governance.

2.3.3. Basic Orientations of an Ecclesiology of Liberation

In light of the cultural and ecclesial dynamics at work today in the understanding of freedom, five basic orientations mark Ratzinger’s writings in coming to terms with the tension between human freedom as a “new” individuating reality requiring unqualified preservation and protection, on the one hand, and a social good that is never a commodity within purely private ownership, on the other. These orientations can be summarised as: the human thirst for freedom, the response to modern rationalism, the reawakening of the reality

¹⁴³ Ibid., 1174 (“Only at first did this blurring seem to be a liberation. Today it is clear that despite all the signs of hope that there are, the Church that has come out of this process is not a modern, but a roundly questionable, and deeply torn apart Church” [own translation]). Ratzinger is keen to point out here that this is not the whole story, for many positive things have happened including a new accessibility of the liturgy, a greater awareness of social problems, a better understanding between separated Christians, the removal of much anguish that had arisen from a false and liberalistic faith. However, such advances were not the distinguishing features of the general climate of the Church which Ratzinger experienced in the late sixties and seventies.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 1175.

of God, the challenge of ecclesial life in a “desert” environment, and the recovery of a sense of interiority.

In terms of a positive ecclesiological discourse, Ratzinger’s point of departure is the human thirst for freedom which resonates in the human person. He views this as a process full of inadequate, albeit necessary, stages over the course of one’s lifetime:

[E]very stage along this road . . . brings with it the realisation that it is only a stage, that nothing of what [man] has attained really corresponds to his longing. The desire for freedom is the voice of God’s image in us; it is the desire to “sit at God’s right hand,” to be “like God.” A liberator who would be worthy of the name has to push open this door, and all empirical forms of freedom will have to be judged accordingly.¹⁴⁵

Secondly, in respect of what we have seen in this chapter, it can be said that coming to terms with the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom entails a specific question: how can Christianity respond to the modern rationalism which enslaves the truth about the human person through a synthesis of belief in progress, the canonisation of technological-scientific thought and the promise of the perfection of humanity within history.¹⁴⁶ The positivistic outlook which the modern synthesis establishes in the modern psyche becomes acutely problematic in coming to terms with the issue of human freedom. Today, this expresses itself, by and large, through the desire to live unhindered. From the perspective of human freedom, Ratzinger identifies positivism’s premise by saying that “life should give itself to humans without their giving [of] themselves”:

Nach allen Genüssen, nach allen Befreiungen und allen Hoffnungen, die man daran knüpfte, bleibt ein Viel-zu-Wenig. Leben als Mühsal zu bestehen und so anzunehmen, wird unerträglich. Es sollte sich selbst unerschöpflich gebende, grenzenlos strömende Lust sein. Zweierlei ist also wirksam: zum einen die Gier nach Fülle, nach

¹⁴⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, “God and Freedom,” 592.

¹⁴⁶ See this dissertation § 2.2.4. Ratzinger deliberately calls this triad of ideas a “synthesis” because none of these lines of reasoning can be identified as singularly responsible for present day cultural dynamics, nor does any one of them necessarily outweigh the others in importance or influence. However, to Ratzinger’s mind, these philosophical perspectives have the potential to contribute to the modern narrative that underpins intellectual discourse, and shapes behavioural attitudes.

Unendlichkeit, die mit den Begrenzungen unseres Lebens kontrastiert; zum anderen der Wille, dies Ganze ohne Schmerz, ohne Anstrengung einfach zu haben.¹⁴⁷

In addition to the theological categorising of positivism as “a denial of love which leads to the flight into lies,” Ratzinger identifies it with a false image of God – as

[. . .] die Leugnung Gottes und die Anbetung eines Idols. . . . Gott wird so in der Weise des Arius verstanden, für den Gott keine Außenbeziehung haben kann, weil er nur ganz er selber ist.¹⁴⁸

Thirdly, and consequently, in terms of the co-existence of God and humanity, Ratzinger links the human consequences of the modern synthesis with an erroneous manifestation of the biblical datum that the human person is made in the image of God (cf. Gen 1:27). In this mistaken amalgam, the true God becomes the real enemy of the human person, whereby humanity falsely comes to believe that accepting God would be to live a lie. If God is perceived as a rival, there comes about a turning-away from love, from trinitarian love as unconditional self-giving. Ratzinger believes such a scenario reveals how “serious the sickness of our civilisation is.”¹⁴⁹ He seeks a reawakening of the reality of God, without whom, he says, all human effort remains incomplete. Today, discovering this insight anew is a primary pastoral concern:

Wir vermögen heute im Allgemeinen nicht mehr einzusehen, dass die Sache mit Gott etwas höchst Reales, ja der eigentliche Schlüssel für unsere tiefsten Nöte ist. . . . In der Tat wird es keine Heilung geben, wenn Gott nicht wieder als der Konstruktionspunkt unserer ganzen Existenz erkannt wird. Nur im Miteinander mit Gott wird menschliches Leben eigentliches Leben. Ohne ihn bleibt es unterhalb der Schwelle seiner selbst und zerstört sich selbst. Das rettende Miteinander mit Gott aber wird nur möglich in dem, den er gesandt hat, durch den er selbst ein Gott-mit-uns ist. Wir können dieses Miteinander nicht “herstellen.” Christus ist deshalb das Leben,

¹⁴⁷ Ratzinger, *Ein Neues Lied für Den Herren*, 45-46 (“After all the pleasures, all the emancipations, all the hopes they have pinned to [life], there remains a ‘much-too-little.’ To cope with life as trial and tribulation and to accept it as that becomes unbearable. Life should be a delight that gives of itself inexhaustibly and streams boundlessly. Two emotions are operative here: on the one hand, the greed for completeness, for infinity, which contrasts with the limitations of our life; on the other hand, the desire simply to have all this without pain, without effort” [Joseph Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord: Faith in Christ and Liturgy Today*, trans. Martha M. Matesich (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 30]).

¹⁴⁸ Ratzinger, *Ein Neues Lied für Den Herren*, 46 (“[t]he denial of God and the worship of an idol. . . . God is thus understood in the manner of Arius who thought that God cannot have any relationship outside of himself because only he is completely himself. Humans want to be such a god, one to whom everything flows and who gives nothing himself” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 30-1]).

¹⁴⁹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 31.

weil er uns ins Miteinander mit Gott bringt. Allein von dorthin kommt der Quell des lebendigen Wassers.¹⁵⁰

Fourthly, then, in Ratzinger's mind, the question which becomes a task for ecclesiology is: "[h]as not the world with all its capabilities and powers become a desert in which we can no longer find the living font?"¹⁵¹ The context for any ecclesiology is the challenging environment which the Church is called upon to occupy today. His particular perspective rests on the fact that he has never been convinced by the post-conciliar desire to adjust more appropriately to worldly matters than heretofore. For him, "an orientation of the Church towards the world which would be its turn away from the cross, could not lead to a renewal of the Church, but only to its end."¹⁵²

Finally then, he is convinced that the way to overcome the allurements of modern rationalism is for each person to reclaim a real sense of interiority. In 1973, his rationale for this was already at a mature stage, triggered by the debate over Church structures:

There has been some renewal, but we have to delve deeper still to discover just what the Council really intended. The council wanted to pave the way for the full flowering of the church's life; instead we have confusion. . . . The difficulties are due more to the failure to understand the underlying reason for structures in the first place and thus the need for reform. Obsession with structural reform – however good and necessary in itself – has distracted us from the radical renewal the council called for: inner or interior renewal. The council called for the transformation of the world through a church intensely conscious of her divine mission and newly awake to the responsibilities arising from the saving *Mysterion* which she is: in other words, the council called for a church made up of men and women open to the transforming activity of God's grace and united, not by democratic consent, but by the one objective, in the one Spirit, and within the one divinely-given structure.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *Ein Neues Lied für Den Herren*, 46-47 ("Today we are generally no longer capable of seeing that the matter of God is something real, indeed, the true key to our deepest human needs. . . . Indeed, there will be no cure if God is not recognised as the structural core of our whole existence. Only in togetherness with God, being with God, does human life become real life. Without him it remains below its threshold and destroys itself. Redemptive togetherness or union with God, however, is possible only in the one whom he sent and through whom he himself is a God-with-us. We cannot 'construct' this togetherness. Christ is the life because he leads us into this union with God. It is only from there that the wellspring of living water comes" [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 31]).

¹⁵¹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 32.

¹⁵² Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes*, 317 [own translation].

¹⁵³ Desmond O Grady, "The Ratzinger Round," *The Month* 6 (1973): 409.

In the same interview, Ratzinger spoke about the benefits, even the necessity, of “interior liberty” as the proper way of engaging society with a “committed detachment” worthy of the Christian life:

For me, the priority must be given to the urgent question of how to discover God in our life. . . . I’m talking about what may awkwardly be described as coming into contact with God, finding him as the basis of our being and all our acts – discovering that real sense of interiority which gives us an independence from the things of this world and a new relationship to them. . . . This union with God is, ultimately, the only real basis on which community with others can rest. Our interior liberty enables us to live in community, and to see and serve the needs of all, especially the poor. The type of committed detachment which is the byproduct of this interior liberty destroys the roots of all forms of exploitation including the lust for power inherent in political activity; and it opens the eyes to the injustices that are concealed in every system.¹⁵⁴

With this emphasis on the interior, which correctly orients external human activity, the direction of Ratzinger’s approach to the contemporary question of freedom is fully disclosed. Beginning from the self-evident truth that every person desires freedom, which is the premise for both Judeo-Christian and post-Enlightenment hypotheses, Ratzinger indicates that the latter involves something that one creates and protects, while the former is something one accepts and ascends towards. He is troubled by the one-sidedness of the positivist mentality, and remains convinced that only the full expression of the truth about authentic freedom can remedy the deficiencies that mark current views on the subject.

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter makes it clear that one cannot understand Ratzinger’s treatment of the issue of freedom apart from his understanding of the modern history of ideas. From an ecclesiological perspective, he says the challenge for the Church is two-fold: the need to define its identity in a changing world, and the task of orienting itself authentically in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, a time when the Church has been confronted by both the positive and negative cultural and intellectual influences of the age. The question of what constitutes authentic human freedom, both in theory and in practice, lies at the heart of

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 411.

Ratzinger's ecclesiology. He tries to measure the effects of the shift towards human self-sufficiency by weighing it against the inextinguishable human yearning for meaning. This is a very difficult challenge for ecclesiology because the Church is necessarily an institutional entity.

What Ratzinger concludes is that, in recent times, the Church has found itself entangled in exilic moments of confusion and mistrust. The consequences of this, to his mind, are varying degrees of anti-institutional sentiment, appeals for alteration based on feelings of disillusionment, and, in some cases, a debilitating resignation towards the status quo.

Ratzinger is of the view that, in light of the ideological calamities of the twentieth-century, the challenge from an ecclesiological perspective is to bring people to an awareness of the need for a renewed exploration of the human person, and the need to acknowledge another sort of community beyond civic society. In other words, Ratzinger will approach the subject of authentic freedom through a two-fold exploration of anthropology and ecclesiology.

Hence, Section II will be a foundational treatment of the christological, anthropological and ecclesiological contours of Ratzinger's arguments.

SECTION II: FOUNDATIONS

Following on from the contextual study of Section I, this section undertakes a foundational treatment of the christological, anthropological and ecclesiological contours of Ratzinger's arguments and demonstrates the interrelated nature of these three fields of theology in his treatment of the topic. Chapter 3 looks at how the figure of Christ the liberator is evident in Ratzinger's narrative, neo-chalcedonian and pauline christology, his intention being to avoid interpreting Christ solely in terms of a historic, futuristic or fashionable figure. Chapter 4 continues by examining Ratzinger's argument from the anthropological perspective. His anthropology is always Christ-centred because, to his mind, what it is to be human and free finds its greatest illumination in Christ. This chapter looks at the meaning of being human and free in the world, compares the modern synthesis of thought with a Christian synthesis and philosophy of freedom, and reviews the human response to its nature. In Ratzinger's theology, the human response to its own nature takes the form of a discourse on sin as suppressed truth. Furthermore, he views the human person in terms of the three interdependent categories of dependency, relationality and limitation. He carries this triptych of insights into his ecclesiology – particularly in terms of an ecclesiology of liberation. Chapter 5 takes us into the realm of ecclesial life and demonstrates the close connection that exists in Ratzinger's thought between christological anthropology and ecclesiology. Through a sacramental framework, Ratzinger studies the ecclesial dimensions of the three theological virtues in an attempt to understand how the Church is the sphere of growth in authentic freedom. Ultimately, for Ratzinger, if an ecclesiology of liberation is to be sincere in its proposals, it will have to cope with both our "failed" and "final" freedoms.

CHAPTER 3: The Foundations of Human Freedom – Christological Contours

3.0. Introduction

When Joseph Ratzinger began publishing his *Jesus of Nazareth* series in 2007, he described it as a project born from a “long gestation”¹ which is “in no way an exercise of the magisterium, but is solely an expression of [his] personal search ‘for the face of the Lord’ (Ps 27:8).”² His self-professed starting point is Jesus’ relatedness to God since his approach “sees Jesus in light of his communion with the Father, which is the true centre of his personality; without it, we cannot understand him at all, and it is from this centre that he makes himself present to us still today.”³ The series represented his most thorough attempt at harnessing the “christological hermeneutic,” developed over the course of his theological career.⁴

This chapter begins by setting out the dimensions of the figure of Christ as liberator. Secondly, from the perspective of freedom, three focal points of his christology emerge as relevant – namely, a narrative christology encompassing the Exodus, the passage from Moses to the new Moses; a neo-chalcedonian christology of the two wills in Christ; and a pauline understanding of freedom. These focal points form the ground upon which Ratzinger bases his own understanding of authentic human freedom. From this foundation, Chapter 4 will look at freedom from a Christian anthropological perspective, while Chapter 5 considers how Ratzinger’s understanding of freedom informs his ecclesiology.

3.1. The Dimensions of the Figure of Christ

Writing in the year 2000, Ratzinger described his search for the figure of Christ in terms of a “narrative christology,”⁵ the basic orientation being “to put the question of God and the question of Christ in the very centre, which then leads to a ‘narrative Christology’

¹ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, xi.

² *Ibid.*, xxiii.

³ *Ibid.*, xiv.

⁴ See this dissertation § 1.6.

⁵ Ratzinger, preface to the new edition of *Introduction to Christianity*, 29.

and demonstrates that the place for faith is in the Church.”⁶ This opposes any temptation to diminish the divinity of the incarnate Son or weaken his incarnate existence, and it promotes the concept of “relatedness” as a christological category. In christology, Ratzinger is motivated by the desire “to warn about the necessary change of the trend of our mainline theological positions.”⁷ By this he means that, unlike the christological temptations of past historical periods, the threat of monophysitic bias is negligible in our day. Instead, the very opposite is potentially hazardous:

[. . .] einer einseitigen Trennungschristologie (Nestorianismus), in der über dem Bedenken der Menschheit Christi seine Gottheit weitgehend verschwindet, die Einheit der Person Christi aufgelöst wird und Rekonstruktionen des bloßen Menschen Jesus dominieren, die mehr die Ideen unserer Zeit als die wahre Gestalt unseres Herrn spiegeln.⁸

If *logos* – as creative reason and love in the beginning – is decisive for the Christian image of God on the one hand, and simultaneously forms the core of christology, on the other, then Ratzinger says “the indivisibility of faith in God and faith in the incarnate Son Jesus Christ is only confirmed once more.”⁹ Relatedness of the Son as person in the Trinity has become Ratzinger’s principal christological category for understanding the true dimensions of the figure of Christ because he believes “we will not understand Jesus any better or come any closer to him if we bracket off faith in his divinity.”¹⁰ If God truly assumed a human nature in Jesus, then he participates, as man, in the presence of God, which embraces all ages and prevents the man Jesus from withdrawing irrevocably into the past, into a faint, indistinct recollection: “If God is not in Christ, then he retreats into an immeasurable distance, and if God is no longer a God-with-us, then he is plainly an absent

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 11.

⁸ Ratzinger, *Ein Neues Lied für den Herrn*, 23 (“A one-sided separation Christology [Nestorianism] in which, when one reflects on the humanity of Christ, his divinity largely disappears, the unity of his person is dissolved, and reconstructions of merely the human Jesus dominate, which reflect more the ideas of our times than the true figure of our Lord” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 10]).

⁹ Ratzinger, preface to the new edition of *Introduction to Christianity*, 28.

¹⁰ Ibid.

God and thus no God at all: A god who cannot work is not God.”¹¹

The category of *relatedness* allows Ratzinger to employ the help of historical methodology and its abundance of findings about biblical times. A christological hermeneutic is at work in his belief that the Scriptures can “reveal a way and a figure that is worthy of belief.” This “requires faith, but the aim unequivocally is not, nor should be, to give up serious engagement with history.”¹² For him, “[t]he *factum historicum* is not an interchangeable symbolic cipher for biblical faith but the foundation on which it stands: *Et incarnatus est* – when we say these words, we acknowledge God’s actual entry into real history.”¹³ In fact, Ratzinger is so convinced that Christianity is a faith bound to history that he says that if we push this history aside, Christian faith as such disappears and is recast as some other religion. It is not surprising, then, that Ratzinger’s narrative christology commences from within the heart of biblical history – the liberation event of Exodus. However, this is not merely the rendition of a story from the Bible. Ratzinger consciously activates the Christian narrative on freedom from within the drama of Israel’s Exodus under Moses: the “liberation from the dominion of death in Egypt and release for the Exodus, for the journey into the freedom of the promise.”¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, xxiii.

¹³ Ibid., xv.

¹⁴ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 21. For a series of critical evaluations of Ratzinger’s christology and his method in the *Jesus of Nazareth* series, see Adrian Pabst and Angus Paddison, eds., *The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth: Christ, Scripture and the Church* (London: SCM Press, 2009); and the entire issue of *Concilium* 3 (2008), which is a series of appraisals of Ratzinger’s first volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*. Ratzinger’s strong desire to protect the unity of the Scriptures is one of the key motivations behind his narrative approach and it is set within the strong anti-Marcionist and anti-Gnostic threads that runs throughout many of his writings. To his mind, this approach is designed to avoid unnecessary rupture between the Old and New Testaments. See, for example, “Zum Begriff des Sakraments,” in *GS:TL*, 219, 230; *Behold The Pierced One*, 79; *Called to Communion*, 68, 271; *Handing on the Faith in an Age of Disbelief*, 24; *The God of Jesus Christ: Meditations on the Triune God*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 42-3, 111; *A Turning Point for Europe*, 76-7, 107, 161; *Dogma and Preaching*, 92, 252; *A New Song for the Lord*, 88; *In the Beginning*, 8-18; *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration* 1, 121. For a concise account of the impact of Gnosticism in the first centuries of Christianity, and Marcion’s influence in Rome from 140 AD onwards when he announced a root and branch separation of Old and New Testaments, in an attempt to secure freedom from the law as the response to faith (cf. Gal 4:24-26), see Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 42-52, 89-92, 100-7.

Before coming to the particulars of Ratzinger's narrative christology, it will be important to clarify more carefully his perspective – metaphysically as well as narratively and historically – by looking at two avenues of his thought, namely, the metaphysical logion of the New Testament: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever (Heb 13:8); and the figure of Christ as liberator.

3.1.1. Christ “Yesterday,” “Today,” “Forever”

In coming to terms with Jesus Christ as a metaphysical figure, Ratzinger considers it important that we don't understand “today” too narrowly. Marking out the dimensions of the figure of Christ, over and above the predispositions and fashionable prejudices of a given era – something which a christological hermeneutic methodology requires – is a task akin to a metaphysical narrative, so to speak. To avoid imprisoning the figure of Christ as a carbon copy of the society in which he is proclaimed, Ratzinger believes a prior act of faith, in addition to historical consciousness, must be taken into consideration.

In an attempt to describe Christ's broad dimensions, Ratzinger invokes the Risen One as being “the same yesterday and today and forever” (Heb 13:8). He says that taking seriously the “sameness” of Christ together with the dimensions of time, ensures that our listening to the Scriptures and sources “correct[s] our present age when it gets lost in its own fantasies.”¹⁵ In this way the lasting significance of the historical dimension is respected without overshadowing the present. Moreover, Christ is risen and because he is not locked

¹⁵ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 11. Ratzinger, as he often does, takes the historical benchmark of the Enlightenment as a defining moment in human thought-processes. With regard to modern theology, he says a very penetrating focus on the Christ of “yesterday” began in the Enlightenment. Luther accused the Church of subordinating the scriptures to itself with the result of dismissing the historical “once” of yesterday that cannot be repeated. The Church, thereby, only mirrors her own present, disregarding the true Christ by proclaiming a Christ of “today” without his essential and fundamental “yesterday.” The Enlightenment radically systematised this insight: “Only the Christ of yesterday, the historical Christ, is in fact the real Christ; everything else is later fantasy. Christ *is* only what he *was*. . . . But the more authentic this Jesus was supposed to be, the more fictitious he became through this rigid confinement to the past” (12). Ratzinger believes the search for a purely historical Jesus locked Christ into the past. For a fuller treatment of Ratzinger's considerations of the search for Jesus in historical biblical methodology, see Ratzinger, “Biblical Interpretation in Crisis” in *God's Word: Scripture-Tradition-Office*, 91-126; *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, xi-xxiv. See also Scott W. Hahn, *The Biblical Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos, 2009), 13-113.

into the past, we encounter him in the present. Indeed, our encounter with Christ always begins with “today.”

There is, however, a third factor: Jesus’ whole message is focused on leading people to the kingdom of God. Thus Christ is *always* coming to us from eternity. With this dimension of Christ’s reality the very boundaries of time are transcended. In this way, Ratzinger seeks to apply the full dimensions of the understanding of Jesus in a *suspenseful tension*, so to speak: “we can see Jesus correctly today only if we understand him in union with the Christ of ‘yesterday’ and see in the Christ of yesterday and today the eternal Christ.”¹⁶ To his mind, these New Testament dimensions both integrate and surpass our initial awareness of the proportions of reality:

Wer Christus bloß gestern sehen will, findet ihn nicht, und wer ihn nur heute haben möchte, begegnet ihm gleichfalls nicht. Zu ihm gehört von Anfang an, dass er war, ist und kommen wird. . . . [D]iese Beanspruchung aller Dimensionen der Zeit ruht aber wiederum darauf, dass er sein irdisches Leben als ein Ausgehen vom Vater und zugleich als ein Bleiben bei ihm wusste, also Ewigkeit ins Spiel und in Verbindung mit Zeit brachte. Wenn wir uns selbst einer Existenz verweigern, die sich in diese Dimensionen ausspannen lässt, können wir ihn nicht verstehen.¹⁷

In a further elaboration, Ratzinger points out that every great period in the history of the faith has been required to form afresh the image of Christ through a journey of discernment. And although the first encounter with Christ occurs in the present, to ensure one is searching for the “whole Christ” rather than a fraction of him, one must heed the Christ of yesterday as he reveals himself in the sources – especially the Scriptures.¹⁸ It is a case of a

¹⁶ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 11.

¹⁷ Ratzinger, *Ein Neues Lied für den Herrn*, 25 (“Whoever wants to see Christ only yesterday does not find him; likewise, whoever would like to have him only today does not encounter him. Right from the beginning it is of his essence that he was, is, and will come again. . . . In turn, this claim to all the dimensions of time is based on his own understanding of his earthly life: he perceived it as a going forth from the Father and simultaneously as a remaining with him; thus he brought eternity into play with and connected it to time. If we deny ourselves an existence that can span these dimensions, we cannot comprehend him” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 12]).

¹⁸ Ratzinger shares some concrete examples of the figure of “Christ today” from the history of Christianity. For early Christianity, it was the image of the shepherd carrying the lost sheep – humanity – on his shoulders. When caught in the pathless undergrowth with no way out, Christ is there to carry us. Following the defeat of Arianism, the first images of the Παντοκράτωρ (pantocrator) of Christ – the ruler on his heavenly throne – emerged in iconography. See Christoph Schönborn, *God’s Human Face: The Christ-Icon*, trans. Lothar Krauth

careful listening process:

Wenn ich ihm dabei ganz zuhöre und ihm nicht aufgrund eines dogmatisierten Weltbildes wesentliche Teile seiner Erscheinung wegschneide, sehe ich ihn offen in die Zukunft hinein und sehe ihn kommen, von der Ewigkeit her, die Vergangenheit, Gegenwart und Zukunft zugleich umfasst. Gerade wo solches ganzheitliches Verstehen gesucht und gelebt wurde, ist dann Christus immer ganz “heute” geworden, denn wirkliche Kraft über das Heute und im Heute hat nur, was Wurzeln im Gestern und Kräfte des Wachstums für das Morgen besitzt und über alle Zeit hinaus in Berührung mit dem Ewigen steht.¹⁹

3.1.2. Christ as Liberator

In line with these broad dimensions, Ratzinger has reflected on some of the fascinating depictions of Christ which present themselves today. One such image, “Christ the liberator, the new Moses on the new exodus,” begs the question “[w]hat is freedom, and where do we find the path that does not lead merely anywhere, but to real freedom, to the true ‘promised land’ of human existence?”²⁰ Ratzinger is conscious that, in light of the modern understanding of freedom, aspects of such an image will need to be carefully outlined on the basis of scriptural witness. This is achieved not by dissolving the dimensions linking time and eternity but, rather, by acknowledging their existence and responding to them. In order to pull the contemporary “image of Christ” into the indispensable tension of “yesterday – today –

(San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 13-14. In the attempt to portray the “historical Jesus” as he appeared on earth, it was acknowledged that God dwelt in the human being Jesus – Jesus is God’s icon, letting the world see the invisible through the visible. By the time of the Romanesque period, the Latin Middle Ages depict the triumphant Christ on the cross which is his throne. The Romanesque image of the cross makes the Resurrection discernible in the Crucified One so that our individual crosses become perceptible as the promise concealed in Christ’s “Cross-Throne.” Gothic art rendered the humanity of Jesus evident through ever increasing depictions of the terrifying and unmerited horror of Christ’s suffering. He suffers as we do, and more than we do, but without the light of imminent triumph. It is precisely this God which acts as the great comforter and assurance of salvation. Finally, in the image of the Pietà, Christ appears as a dead man on the lap of a mother full of sorrow. God seems to be dead in this world and only words from afar offer consolation: in the night is sorrow but with the morning joy (cf. Ps 30:5) – it is the knowledge that there is an Easter. Ratzinger concludes that “the lesson of these images of ‘Christ today’ remains valid because all of them are drawing on a vision that knows also Christ yesterday, tomorrow and forever” (Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 13-14).

¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Ein Neues Lied für den Herrn*, 26 (“If, in the process, I listen to him carefully and do not excise essential parts of his appearance because of a dogmatically asserted worldview, I see him open to the future and I see him coming from eternity which embraces the past, the present, and the future, all at once. Where such a holistic understanding has been sought and lived, there Christ has always completely become ‘today’ for only that which has roots in yesterday and powers of growth for tomorrow and which is in touch with the eternal beyond all time has real power over and in the present” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 13]).

²⁰ Ratzinger, “God and Freedom,” 591. This was the opening quotation in this dissertation’s introduction. The framework of Ratzinger’s narrative christology now provides its proper context.

forever,” Ratzinger calls upon the axiom of the Johannine designations for Christ as the “way,” the “truth,” and the “life” (John 14:6). In particular, Christ the “way” correlates with Exodus and liberation and, in so doing, presents us with an entry point for examining “Christ the liberator” – the leader in the new Exodus from slavery to freedom. Ratzinger believes that a relevant figure of Christ as liberator who can communicate to our time will emerge from this endeavour.

Ratzinger proposes that encountering Jesus Christ today vividly recalls the biblical perspective of Israel’s Exodus as a “way out into the open, into the wide open space of freedom.”²¹ This is an acknowledgement by Ratzinger of the great yearning for freedom indicative of our age. Because of this interminable longing, Ratzinger says the feeling of not being where we should or could be puts us in the predicament of the disciples who ask Jesus where is the way and how can we traverse it (cf. John 14:4-5). Ratzinger points to the New Testament use of the word ἐξοδος which, in the Gospels, is found only in Luke’s transfiguration narrative (Luke 9:31). Its immediate sense there is simply that of “departure.” Its context is the conversation of Moses and Elijah with the Lord and the “Exodus” Jesus is about to accomplish in Jerusalem. Ratzinger says “[t]hese two men, who themselves suffered greatly for the sake of God, are speaking of the Passover of Jesus, the exodus of his cross.”²² He says both are valid interpreters of the Exodus, as both precede Jesus along the way of the passion. Moses leads the Exodus out of Egypt; Elijah symbolically returns to Sinai when Israel – albeit geographically still in the Promised Land – forgets about God and leads a pre-Exodus lifestyle. As Ratzinger interprets it, the “way,” before anything else, is linked with covenant:

Man hat das Wort vom Sinai, die Weisung des Bundes, die das innere Ziel des Exodus war, als Fessel abgeworfen, um zur selbstgemachten Freiheit zu kommen, die sich als die tiefste Tyrannei erweist. So muss Elija symbolisch zum Sinai

²¹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 15.

²² *Ibid.*, 17. Εξοδος also appears in 2Pet 1:15 in the context of a departure from the present world.

zurückgehen, den Rückweg Israels nachwandern, um ihm vom Gottesberg her die Frucht des Exodus neu zurückzubringen. Bei Elija wird auf diese Weise das eigentliche Wesen der Exodusgeschichte sichtbar: Im Exodus handelt es sich weder um einen bloß geographischen noch um einen nur politischen Weg. Man kann diesen Weg nicht auf der geographischen und nicht auf der politischen Landkarte festmachen. Exodus, der nicht zum Bund führt, und dort, im Leben aus dem Bund heraus, sein “Land” findet, ist kein wirklicher Exodus.²³

In the context of Sinai, where God spoke “I am YHWH” to begin the Decalogue (cf. Exod 20:2; Deut 5:6), and subsequently directed that we listen to God’s Son, his Beloved (cf. Luke 9:35), Ratzinger believes Jesus is presented as “the living Torah, the covenant in person, in whom the law turns to gift.”²⁴ Ratzinger says that the Exodus of Israel and the Exodus of Jesus touch each other, bringing about the Passover of Christ: “Jesus’ ‘exit’ in Jerusalem is the real and definitive exodus in which Christ walks the path into the open, into freedom.”²⁵

However, to comprehensively present all the dimensions of Christ the liberator, Ratzinger says the aspect of the Resurrection is necessary. He invokes here the Letter to the Hebrews which, knowing Jesus’s Exodus does not end in Jerusalem, portrays Christ as opening “the new and living way . . . through the curtain,” that is through his “flesh” (cf. Heb 10:20). The Promised Land into which he arrives is the state of being seated “at the right hand of God” (cf. Mark 12:36; Acts 2:33; Rom 8:34). With this New Testament axiom and the convergence of ideas in the image of “liberator,” Ratzinger defines freedom’s cry within the human person:

²³ Ratzinger, *Ein Neues Lied für den Herrn*, 30 (“The message of Sinai, the covenantal instructions that were the inner goal of the exodus, had been thrown off as a fetter in order to achieve a self-made freedom, which proved to be the most extreme kind of tyranny. For this reason Elijah symbolically has to return to Sinai, has to retrace Israel’s way in order to bring her anew the fruits of the exodus from God’s mountain. The authentic nature of the exodus story thus becomes visible in Elijah: exodus refers neither to a geographical nor a political way. This path cannot be traced on a geographical or political map. An exodus that does not lead to the covenant and does not find its ‘land’ in living according to the covenant is not a true exodus” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 17]). Ratzinger has addressed these ideas more comprehensively in *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 247-52.

²⁴ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 18.

²⁵ Ibid. Ratzinger expands this through allusions to various Jewish festivals in the parallel Matthean text (cf. Matt 16:13-28; 17:1-9), as well as through the overall Lucan context of Jesus’ entire public ministry as a going up to Jerusalem – his whole existence as the Exodus that sees him portrayed as the true Moses, as well as fulfilling the destiny of Israel.

In jedem Menschen lebt der Durst nach Freiheit und nach Befreiung; bei jeder Etappe, die er auf diesem Weg erreicht, wird ihm aber auch bewusst, dass es nur eine Etappe war und dass nichts von dem Erreichten seinem Verlangen wirklich entspricht. Der Durst nach Freiheit ist die Stimme der Gottebenbildlichkeit in uns; es ist der Durst “zur Rechten Gottes zu sitzen,” “wie Gott” zu sein. Ein Befreier, der den Namen verdienen will, muss die Tür dorthin aufstoßen, und alle empirischen Formen der Freiheit müssen von dort ihr Maß nehmen.²⁶

Ratzinger enquires into the significance of Jesus’ Exodus, and its enactment, by looking to two sayings that relate to the promise of “sitting at the right hand”: the promise we hear in the parable of the last judgement made to the sheep who are “blessed by [his] Father” (Matt 25:34), and the saying in the dialogue with the sons of Zebedee, where Jesus tells James and John that sitting at his right or left is for those whom it has been prepared (Mark 10:40). On the one hand, the promise belongs to the ones who act in regard to the “least” in his family (cf. Matt 25:31-40) and, on the other, it depends on the will of the Father and entails, as its condition, drinking from the cup that Jesus drinks and receiving the baptism with which he is baptised (cf. Mark 10: 35-40). Here Ratzinger combines the Matthean framework of Peter’s profession of faith and the transfiguration as events connected to Jesus’s prophecy of his death and resurrection. Peter opposes Jesus’ own words about his “Exodus” because he misunderstands the power of “sitting on the right.” Jesus brusquely says to Peter, “Get behind me Satan” (Matt. 16:23). This sheds light on the liberation Jesus brings:

Petrus übernimmt das Geschäft des Versuchers in dem Augenblick, in dem er einen Exodus ohne das Kreuz propagiert – einen Exodus, der nicht in die Auferstehung hineinführt, sondern in die irdische Utopie. “Weg und hinter mich” – diesem Versuch, den Exodus auf ein empirisches Ziel zu begrenzen, stellt Jesus die Forderung der Nachfolge entgegen. Die existentielle Entsprechung zum Gedanken des befreienden Weges ist Nachfolge als Weg ins Freie, als Befreiung.²⁷

²⁶ Ratzinger, *Ein Neues Lied für den Herrn*, 32 (“The thirst for freedom and liberation lives in every human being; but at every stage reached on this journey we become aware that it was only a stage and that nothing from what has been attained really corresponds to our desire. The thirst for freedom is the voice of our being made in the image and likeness of God; it is the thirst ‘to sit at the right hand of God,’ to be ‘like God.’ A liberator who wishes to deserve the name must push open the door to this reality, and all empirical forms of freedom have to measure up to it” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 19]).

²⁷ Ratzinger, *Ein Neues Lied für den Herrn*, 33-34 (“Peter assumes the role of the devil the moment he disseminates the idea of an exodus without the cross – an exodus that leads not to the resurrection but to an earthly utopia. ‘Get behind me’ – Jesus opposes this attempt to limit the exodus to an empirical goal with the command to follow him. The existential equivalent of the idea of the liberating way is following or imitation as the way into the open, as liberation” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 20]).

This inter-textual convergence of ideas helps Ratzinger clarify the importance of the theme of “following” or “imitation” in New Testament Exodus theology. To his mind it needs to be understood as a broad christological category as opposed to one restricted solely to a form of narrow moralism. Only on its christological basis does “imitation” also become a moral task. If we confine imitating Christ to the adoption of certain programmatic ideas, we limit the Christian faith to being an inventor of a contemporaneous platform, which others go on to develop further. Ratzinger says that this, even if initially attractive, is as arbitrary as it is inadequate, compromising the dignity and true source of freedom:

Die Zuflucht zu solchen Verkleinerungen des Nachfolgedankens und damit der Botschaft vom Exodus rührt häufig von einer Logik her, die auf den ersten Blick einleuchtend wirkt: Jesus sei zwar Gott und Mensch gewesen, aber wir seien nun einmal nur Menschen; wir könnten ihm nicht in seinem Gottsein, sondern nur als Menschen nachfolgen. Mit einer solchen Auslegung denken wir indes viel zu klein vom Menschen, von unserer Freiheit, und fallen völlig aus der Logik des Neuen Testaments heraus, in dem sich der kühne Satz findet: “Werdet Nachahmer Gottes” (Eph 5:1).²⁸

The call to follow or imitate, when expressly viewed as a christological category, ensures that Christian faith is not confined simply to the human virtues of Jesus or a strictly human agenda. Rather it encompasses his entire way “through the curtain” (Heb 10:20). The entire, or new Exodus means that Christ opens this way for us, Ratzinger says, because only in this way do we come out into the open, into freedom. He asserts that “Jesus’s call can only be comprehended from the broad paschal context of the entire Exodus, which goes ‘through the curtain’.”²⁹ This clarifies that “[i]mitation has the dimension of moving toward the divine communion, and this is why it is tied to the paschal mystery.”³⁰ To be Christ’s follower, is

²⁸ Ratzinger, *Ein Neues Lied für den Herrn*, 34 (“The recourse to such minimizations of the notion of imitation and hence of the message of exodus often rests on a logic that at first glance seems plausible: Jesus may have been both God and man, but we are, after all only humans; we cannot imitate him in his divinity, but can follow him only as a human. With such an interpretation, however, we think all too little of human beings and of our freedom and forsake the logic of the New Testament in which the bold sentence can be found: ‘Therefore be imitators of God’ (Eph 5:1)” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 21]).

²⁹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 21. Recalling Jesus’ sayings about the promise of sitting at God’s right hand, Ratzinger says imitation can validly be defined in terms of baptism, cup, and love (22). He quotes St Basil, *On the Holy Spirit*, XV, 35, as one example of this commonly held view among the Church Fathers.

³⁰ Ibid.

above all else, to take up one's cross and follow (cf. Mark 8:34).

Ratzinger rounds out his reflections on Christ the liberator by suggesting that imitation entails a conversion that accepts the promise of Christ in its entirety. This conversion requires that one be prepared to lose one's whole life to this promise. It further calls for the end of isolation and the beginning of an ecclesial existence: to go "beyond self-reliance [. . .] entrusting ourselves to the mystery, the sacrament in the community of the Church, in which God enters my life as agent and frees it from its isolation."³¹ Ratzinger says conversion of this calibre is "a cross held into the Easter mystery, although this does not mean it is less painful."³² Imitation of Christ the liberator, in this fashion, means Christ himself becomes the "way," and he becomes truly present "today" in my life and in the life of "a world that is in itself anything but a 'promised land.'"³³

3.2. Christology and Freedom

With his concept of imitation, Ratzinger arrives at the heart of the connection between Christ and human freedom. At this point, three focal points from his christology present themselves as relevant to the discussion: a narrative christology encompassing the passage from Moses to the new Moses, a neo-chalcedonian christology of the two wills in Christ, and a pauline discussion of freedom as participation in Being itself, identification with the dignity of Being itself, and education towards the fullness of personhood.

3.2.1. Narrative Christology: The New Moses

One needs to be reticent about claiming that a narrative christology is Ratzinger's sole entry point into New Testament christology,³⁴ which in itself is an immense terrain.

³¹ Ibid., 22.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 23.

³⁴ For example, looking at the theme of messianic fulfilment from the perspective of narrative christology alone, Ratzinger constructs a veritable narrative time-line which consists of a number of the major scriptural characters and motifs: Jesus is the climactic fulfilment of the promises made in and through the leaders of Israel. Jesus is the lamb, the new **Isaac** who allowed himself be caught, bound and slain (cf. Gen 22:9). He didn't merely look

Nevertheless it is true that he formulates his understanding of the new Moses in conjunction with his reflections on the covenantal gift of law wrought by way of Exodus to Sinai, and the character of biblical prophecy as the seeing and knowing of God “face to face” (cf. Ex 33:11-23; Deut 5:4, 34:10; Judg 6:22).³⁵ By following this portion of Ratzinger’s biblical christology, we will observe him arriving at a figure of Christ on the Cross whose death

upwards (cf. Gen 22:13) but actually entered heaven and since then the barrier between God and man is broken down (cf. Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 114-121). During Jesus’ conversation with Nathanael, he reveals himself as the new **Jacob**. While the Patriarch had dreamt of a ladder that reaches up to heaven (cf. Gen 28:10-22; John 1:51), “[t]his dream has become a reality with Jesus. He himself is the ‘gate of heaven,’; he is the true Jacob, the ‘Son of Man,’ the patriarch of the definitive Israel” (Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 171-172; cf. *ibid.* 240). The “royal” theology of the Ancient Near East, which was transformed by Israel from a theology of begetting into one of election, was further developed into a theology of hope in the king to come as evidenced by texts such as Psalm 2. It “defines Jesus as the true heir to the universe, as heir to the promise in which **Davidic** theology culminates” (cf. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 216-228, at 220). Referring to the Johannine image of water, Ratzinger says that “John sees the risen Lord, his body, as the new **Temple**, which is awaited not just by the Old Testament, but by all peoples (cf. Jn 2:21). . . . It shows the body of Jesus to be the real Temple, built not of stone nor by human hands; hence – because it signifies the living indwelling of God in the world – it is, and will remain, the source of life for all ages’ (Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 238-248, at 247). In line with the seventh Beatitude (Matt 5:9), Ratzinger draws the parallel of Jesus as the true **Solomon** – the bringer of peace (*ibid.*, 84-85). At another point, Ratzinger uses the “**Son of Man**” motif as a way of bringing together many strands of Old Testament tradition, particularly those of Daniel with the Psalms and Isaiah, culminating in the “beloved son” (cf. Mark 12: 6) Jesus (*ibid.*, 321-345; *Introduction to Christianity*, 216-228). Through the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Lk 16:19-31), Ratzinger shows that Jesus is the sign which his generation demanded and, even more than that, Christ, “the true **Lazarus**, has risen from the dead – and he has come to tell us so” (Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 211-217, at 217; *Behold the Pierced Ones*, 112). Ratzinger’s narrative approach to christology is perhaps best confirmed by his own personal affirmation of his methodology in the preface to the new edition of *Introduction to Christianity*: “I believe that I was not mistaken as to the fundamental approach, in that I put the question of God and the question about Christ in the very centre, which then leads to a ‘narrative Christology’ and demonstrates that the place for faith is in the Church. This basic orientation, I think, was correct” (Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 29).

³⁵ The new or true **Moses** is a theme that has grown in prominence over the years in Ratzinger’s christology. Significant mention of the theme can also be found in Ratzinger’s “Ist die Eucharistie ein Opfer?” in *GS:TL*, 264; *The God of Jesus Christ*, 22-24, 61-2, 110; *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 189; *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 41-48; *A New Song for the Lord*, 5, 15, 19, 27; *God and the World*, 281; *A Turning Point for Europe*, 76-83. However, in his *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, it becomes a very explicit and mature part of his thought. It is mentioned on at least seventeen separate occasions, which makes it by far one of the most recurring themes in the book. See *ibid.*, 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 65, 80, 122, 144, 235-7, 241, 244, 245, 264, 304, 307-318; 346-349. In particular Ratzinger considers Matthew to have put together a portrait of Jesus as the new Moses at the Sermon on the Mount (cf. *ibid.*, 65), while Luke depicts Jesus’ entire public life as a going up to Jerusalem so that the Son’s whole existence appears as an Exodus in which Jesus is Moses as well as Israel (cf. *A New Song for the Lord*, 18-19). Ratzinger returns to the theme of Moses in *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 37, 81-82, 90-91, 132, 147, 164, 173, 203. If the theme of the New Moses is a linchpin, so to speak, for the first volume in that series, the theme of the new or true worship in Christ is its equivalent in the second volume. As examples, see *ibid.*, 40, 78, 134-45, 148, 223, 230-34, 237-39. It will be necessary to take this theme into account in more detail in Chapter 4. For now it is enough to observe that the consistency with which he returns again and again to the great liberation event in the life of the people of God is clear evidence of the priority with which Ratzinger holds biblical christology to be a narrative of freedom. Following his thought on motif of new worship is a beneficial way of coming to terms with the christocentricity necessary to appreciate the true nature of freedom. In fact it would make for a very interesting comparative study to read *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week* as a companion book to Ratzinger’s *Spirit of the Liturgy*. It seems to me to be absolutely valid because liturgical motifs are very pronounced in Ratzinger’s second volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*.

liberates and draws all life to God. Ratzinger's narrative christology is essentially the practical application of his "christological hermeneutic" as discussed in Chapter 1.

Ratzinger's conviction is that on the way of Exodus to Sinai, the divine-human encounter was concretised in Torah. However, he says, if the full dimensions of Christ are not respected, one of the chief consequences is an "inversion of symbols," whereby the "historical" becomes the sole determinant of "today" and "forever."³⁶ Within the context of this inadequate religious consciousness, which is based on the presupposition that traditional biblical faith is predisposed to a flight from reality, Ratzinger sets about clarifying the internal logic of God's will for his people that is depicted in biblical narrative. He focuses on the Exodus narrative and examines the type of freedom to which "Sinai" points.³⁷ He makes five observations regarding the goal of the Exodus, the basic direction indicating that the objective of the way of Exodus to Sinai is the freedom to worship and the just ordering of society.

Firstly, it is clear from Moses' conversation with Pharaoh that he is not after a civic State *per se* but a place to worship God and offer sacrifice as God himself wanted (Exod 5:3;

³⁶ See Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 239-255, at 247-8. By reading history backwards, and especially biblical history, both Moses and Christ are misunderstood, because Christ is subjected to political criteria and Moses is defined by omitting the forward dynamic to which he points. The result is an "inversion" of the relation between the Old and the New Testaments. To Ratzinger's mind, the "inversion" means that the Exodus is often viewed today as a "political" reality whereas baptism is considered to be in the realm of the mystical. In this logic, baptism points the way *to* the Exodus. The Christian fulfilment of symbols, which is the celebration of the sacraments, is logically drawn into this political dynamism. Ratzinger believes the effect of this inversion of symbols is that "Jesus is interpreted backwards with reference to Moses" while "Moses . . . is interpreted forward with reference to Marx. And this line of interpretation now becomes decisive for the reading of the Bible in general, whether it be a question of the Eucharist, the kingdom of God, the Resurrection, or even the figure of Jesus" (248). Ratzinger's concern is that when baptism, for example, is interpreted as the symbol of liberation, then the Exodus acts as a symbol of political and revolutionary action in general. This makes the Bible and the sacraments very topical even if their original meaning is hardly of interest anymore. People are attracted to this as it doesn't display any detachment from a sense of reality. Ratzinger fears that a modern-day nominalism may be at play in regard to biblical faith for "in the end, one prefers an obviously false relation between the Bible and reality to an understanding of the Bible that appears entirely unreal" (ibid.). On the particular point of the reversal of the Old and New Testament in Christian consciousness, Ratzinger directs readers to *LN*, X, 14. See also Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 5-6, where Ratzinger makes interesting comments on what remains key for him in the debates around "theologies of liberation," particularly in relation to the inversion of symbols argument which he resists.

³⁷ See Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 248. Ratzinger says the mere procuring of an autonomous State with the presence of boundaries and self-governance does not lead automatically to an internally free State. If it did, the liberation problems of Latin America, for example, would have been settled following the dissolution of Spanish and Portuguese colonial governments.

cf. 5:17; 8:21-24; 9:13; 12:31³⁸). Secondly, and above all else, however, the goal of the Exodus is Sinai and the covenant with God from which the Israelite law proceeds. In other words, Ratzinger says, “[t]he goal is the discovery of a system of law that provides justice and thus builds up the right relationships of men with one another and with all creation.”³⁹ Thirdly, he maintains the goal of the Exodus is liberation because this covenant champions and protects humanity’s relationship with God and it is this which justifies and orders all other relationships: “the figure of freedom is the covenant and . . . the form in which freedom is realised is the right relation of men to one another described in the Law of the covenant, and this relation is derived from the right relation to God.”⁴⁰ Fourthly, the goal of the Exodus is to make Israel into a people from a gathering of tribes and to give to it as a people its freedom and its own dignity as well as its own historical mission. In this regard, Ratzinger says it must be remembered that, biblically, “an assemblage of men becomes a ‘people’ through a common system of law and that man does not live justly when he remains in an unjust relation vis-à-vis God.”⁴¹ Finally, while it is most certainly part of the freedom of a people to possess a “land” of its own, it remains subordinate to “Sinai,” in the sense that a people continually has the potential to destroy itself from within and return to an Exilic or pre-Exodus existence:

Denn wenn Israel in seinem Land den Sinai verliert, d.h. wenn es das Recht, den Bund zerstört und die Ordnung der Freiheit durch die Unordnung der Willkür ablöst, dann ist es hinter den Exodus wieder zurückgegangen; dann lebt es im eigenen Land und doch in Ägypten, weil es seine Freiheit von innen her zerstört. Das Exil bringt diesen schon vorangegangenen inneren Verlust der Freiheit durch den Verlust der Gerechtigkeit nur äußerlich-politisch zur Anschauung.⁴²

³⁸ Ratzinger says that the close connection between land and Torah also becomes clear in Joshua 1:7ff; 22:5; 23:6.

³⁹ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 249.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 237 (“For if Israel loses Sinai in its land, that is, if it destroys the Law and the covenant and dissolves the order of freedom through the disorder of caprice, then it has returned to its pre-Exodus condition; it then lives in its own land and yet is still in Egypt, because it destroys its freedom from within. The Exile makes visible in a merely external, political way the prior loss of freedom through the loss of justice” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 249]). For further development of Ratzinger’s thought on the significance and true goal of the Exodus, see *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 14-23. Despite Pharaoh’s

On account of his reflections on the Exodus event, Ratzinger concludes that its truly liberating element resides in the institution of the covenant between God and humanity, which is concretised in the Torah – in the regulations of justice that are the shape of freedom. He emphasises the fact that the Exodus did not happen because of particular acts of boldness or particular competences on Moses' part, but through "Sinai" – a religious event, the sacrifice of the *pasch* (cf. Exod 12: 1-28; 12:43-13:16), which anticipates an essential ingredient of the Torah – the ability to encounter the divine:

Darin drückt sich ein in der Religionsgeschichte immer wieder begegnetes Urwissen der Menschheit darüber aus, daß Freiheit und Gemeinschaftsbildung letztlich weder durch Gewalt noch durch bloße Tüchtigkeit zu erreichen sind, sondern durch eine Liebe, die zum Opfer wird und die Menschen erst in ihrer Tiefe miteinander verbindet, weil sie sie die Dimension des Göttlichen berühren läßt. So ist im Kern des alttestamentlichen Befreiungsgeschehens ansatzweise das vorhanden, was dann in der Gestalt Jesu Christi offen hervortritt und von ihm her zur Mitte einer neuen Freiheitsgeschichte wird.⁴³

The motif of Jesus as the New Moses has its context in this struggle for liberation

readiness to offer three compromises (cf. Exod 8:27, 10:11, 24) as a result of the divine command: "Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness" (Exod 7:16), Moses cannot "subject worship to any form of political compromise. . . . In all this, the issue is not the Promised Land: the only goal of the Exodus is shown to be worship, which can only take place according to God's measure and therefore eludes the rules of the game of political compromise" (16). Israel's election was not about mere national autonomy for that would reduce Israel to the level of all the other nations. Land, by itself, is an indeterminate good. It becomes a true good and a real gift when it is the place where God reigns: "[t]hen it will not be just some independent state or other, but the realm of obedience, where God's will is done and the right kind of human existence developed" (17). In the covenant of Sinai, the relationship between "land" and "worship" is revealed: both cult and life lived according to the will of God make up the true worship of God. Steadfast adherence to the law of God which orders human affairs correctly is the necessary condition for life in community and freedom, for people without a common rule cannot live. Without a common rule of law, a community "destroys itself in anarchy, which is a parody of freedom, its exaltation to the point of abolition. When every man lives without law, every man lives without freedom" (18). To Ratzinger's mind, law and worship cannot be completely separated for worship is what provides the common rule of law with its proper measure: "Worship, that is, the right kind of cult, of relationship with God, is essential for the right kind of human existence in the world. It is so precisely because it reaches beyond everyday life. Worship gives us a share in heaven's mode of existence, in the world of God, and allows light to fall from that divine world into ours. . . . It lays hold in advance of a more perfect life, and in so doing, gives our present life its proper measure. A life without such anticipation, a life no longer opened up to heaven, would be empty, a leaden life" (21). The land which accompanied the Exodus and the issue of the right to freedom of worship continues to be an important issue for Ratzinger, see his *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 82-84.

⁴³Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 238 ("In this is expressed a primordial knowledge of humanity, one encountered ever again in the history of religion, that freedom and the formation of community are ultimately to be obtained, not through the use of force or through mere industry, but through a love that becomes sacrificial and that first binds men together in their depths because it lets them touch the dimension of the divine. Thus, at the core of the Old Testament liberation event, there is incipiently present that which later emerges openly in the figure of Jesus Christ and from him becomes the means to a new history of freedom" [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 250]).

prior to Israel's Exodus from Egypt. It is inextricably linked to the purpose of creation in the first instance. It consists of the right to freedom of worship, that is, the people's right to their own liturgy, to the act of encounter and adoration of their creator God. Only in the course of time does the reason for the gift of "land" become clear. It was given "as a space for obedience, a realm of openness to God, that was to be freed from the abominations of idolatry."⁴⁴ From the biblical viewpoint, the concept of obedience to God, and its consequent right ordering of the earth, is an essential component of the concept of freedom and the concept of land.

The Exile (cf. 2Kgs 24-25; 2Chr 36:5-21) – the withdrawal of the land – can only be correctly understood, to Ratzinger's mind, from this perspective of openness and obedience to the Creator and creation. Ratzinger says that the land itself had become a zone of idolatry and disobedience, and its possession, therefore, had become a contradiction. The scattering of Israel, however, led to the positive view that the diaspora might create "space for God and thus fulfil the purpose of creation suggested by the first creation account (cf. Gen 1:1-2, 4),"⁴⁵ namely, the separation of light from darkness. The promise of liberation and the goal of freedom are fulfilled in the sanctioning of adoration which calls all of creation to a life of obedience:

Der Sabbat ist das Ziel der Schöpfung, er gibt ihr Wozu an: Sie ist da, weil Gott einen Raum der Antwort auf seine Liebe, einen Raum des Gehorsams und der Freiheit schaffen wollte.⁴⁶

The Mosaic liberation theme also very much occupies Ratzinger's understanding of biblical prophecy. Here also, it is the context of obedience and freedom that permits

⁴⁴ Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 83.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan*, 113 ("The Sabbath is the goal of creation, and it shows what creation is for. The world exists, in other words, because God wanted to create a zone of response to his love, a zone of obedience and freedom" [Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 83]). For further reflection on the meaning of the Sabbath as actively "resting" and as the "core of social order," see Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 108-112. For more extended analysis by Ratzinger, see *A New Song for the Lord*, 73-97.

Ratzinger to link the major covenantal and prophetic traditions of the Hebrew Bible. He centres his comments on Deut 18:15 – a promise which is “of decisive importance for understanding the figure of Jesus.”⁴⁷ Moses, the speaking voice in Deuteronomy, says here that “[t]he Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brethren – him you shall heed.”⁴⁸ Ratzinger observes that “the object of this promise is not a king of Israel and king of the world – a new David, in other words – but a new Moses. Moses himself . . . is interpreted as a prophet.”⁴⁹ Ratzinger intends here to demonstrate the prophetic quality inherent in the promise of the new Moses as liberator of God’s people.⁵⁰

Ratzinger says that, in fact, the figure of the prophet gains its true meaning in this Deuteronomic promise for “‘there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses,’ we read, ‘whom the Lord knew face to face’” (Deut 34:10). Ratzinger believes the book of Deuteronomy itself promotes a re-reading of Deut 18:15 that specifies the “unique and essential” quality of Moses: he speaks with the Lord “face to face.”⁵¹ Thus we are taken to

⁴⁷ Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 1.

⁴⁸ This is the full translation of Deut 18:15 provided by Ratzinger in *ibid.*, 236. He makes appeal to this passage frequently throughout the book, see pp. 65, 122, 126, 236, 264-6.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵⁰ While “prophecy” can be found all over the surrounding religious world as a characteristic motivated by the universal human preoccupation with its own ultimate origin and unrelenting yearning to penetrate “the hiddenness of the future . . . so that he can avoid perdition and set out towards salvation” (Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 1), Ratzinger says the prophetic designation of Moses is used to depict an element of the uniqueness of Israel’s faith. Deuteronomy contrasts the surrounding “soothsaying” – the attempt to “seiz[e] control of the future” – with the “way of faith” which is to be realised through responsiveness to the divine provision of prophets who interpret the present and the future (cf. *ibid.*, 2-3).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 3. See Joseph Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 24-27, for a concise account of Ratzinger’s interpretation of the Christian meaning of the contrast between Moses and Christ and their seeing “face to face” (Exod. 33:20-23; cf. 2 Cor 3:4-4:6). Contrasting Exodus 32-34 with Paul’s christological reinterpretation (2Cor 3:4-4:6) and Stephen’s discourse (Act 7: 1-53), Ratzinger says the fulfilment motif in christology emerges: “Like Moses [cf. Exod 32:31-32], Jesus had presented himself upon the mountain as a sin offering. The offer of Moses had not been accepted. Christ however, had in fact allowed himself to be made sin for us and had taken the curse upon himself for us (Gal 3:13). He stands henceforth as an advocate for us in the presence of the Father (1John 2:1). And he is the one who remains henceforth face to face with the Father: more than a prophet, more than a friend, he is the Son. He is able to see the face of God, and in his face the glory of God becomes visible to us (2Cor 4:6). From this moment on man’s search for the face of God has become more concrete: it consists in the encounter with Christ, in friendship with him who no longer calls us servants but friends (John 15:15)” (26). Of the early Fathers who interpret Exod 33, Ratzinger is particularly attracted to Gregory of Nyssa, who says that being able to see God only from the back means nothing other than that the encounter with God means to walk after Jesus; that the only way we can see God is by following Jesus, which means walking behind him and thus going along behind God’s back (27, n. 13; cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Moysis*, PG 44, 408D). Ratzinger says that Christ, by the entire way he lived, especially in the Paschal Mystery of his suffering, death, Resurrection, and Ascension,

the heart of biblical prophecy, which is quite other than the surrounding soothsaying present in other societies:

[Der Prophet] ist nicht dazu da, um Ereignisse von morgen oder übermorgen mitzuteilen und so der menschlichen Neugier oder dem menschlichen Sicherheitsbedürfnis zu dienen. Er zeigt uns das Gesicht Gottes, und damit zeigt er uns den Weg, den wir zu nehmen haben. Die Zukunft, um die es in seiner Weisung geht, reicht weiter als das, was man von Wahrsagern zu erfragen sucht. Sie ist Wegweisung in den eigentlichen "Exodus" hinein, der darin besteht, dass in allen Wegen der Geschichte der Weg zu Gott als die eigentliche Richtung gesucht und gefunden werden muss. Prophetie in diesem Sinn steht in strenger Entsprechung zum Ein-Gott-Glauben Israels, ist seine Umsetzung ins konkrete Leben einer Gemeinschaft vor Gott und zu Gott hin.⁵²

At this point Ratzinger appeals to Exodus 33 which not only portrays Moses' speaking with God "as with a friend" but also depicts God as refusing to let Moses see his face. God only lets Moses see his back (cf. Exod 33:23). Both Jewish and Christian mysticism have relied on this text to "discern how far contact with God can extend in this life and where the boundaries of mystical vision lie."⁵³ The point is that "limits" apply to Moses' relationality with God. This enables Ratzinger to say:

So trägt die Verheißung eines "Propheten wie mich" unausgesprochen noch eine größere Erwartung in sich: dass dem letzten Propheten, dem neuen Mose, geschenkt werde, was dem ersten Mose versagt blieb – wirklich und unmittelbar Gottes Angesicht zu sehen und so vollends aus dem Schauen und nicht bloß vom Hinsehen auf den Rücken Gottes her sprechen zu können. So ist damit dann auch von selbst die Erwartung verbunden, dass der neue Mose Mittler eines höheren Bundes sein werde als der, den Mose vom Sinai bringen konnte (vgl. Hebr 9:11-24).⁵⁴

presents us with the itinerary for "seeing" God. See also Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 304.

⁵² Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan*, 29 ("[The prophet's] task is not to report on the events of tomorrow or the next day in order to satisfy human curiosity or the human need for security. He shows us the face of God, and in so doing he shows us the path that we have to take. The future of which he speaks reaches far beyond what people seek from soothsayers. He points out the path to the true 'exodus,' which consists in this: Among all the paths of history, the path to God is the true direction that we must seek and find. Prophecy in this sense is a strict corollary to Israel's monotheism. It is the translation of this faith into the everyday life of a community before God and on the way to him" [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 4]).

⁵³ Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 5.

⁵⁴ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan*, 30-31 ("The promise of a 'prophet like me' thus implicitly contains an even greater expectation: that the last prophet, the new Moses, will be granted what was refused to the first one – a real, immediate vision of the face of God, and thus the ability to speak entirely from seeing, not just from looking at God's back. This naturally entails the further expectation that the new Moses will be the mediator of a greater covenant than the one that Moses was able to bring down from Sinai (cf. Heb 9:11-24)" [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 5-6]).

Thus the promise of Deut18:15 is of a prophet whose distinguishing note “will be his immediate relation with God, which enables him to communicate God’s will and word first-hand and unadulterated.”⁵⁵ This is Ratzinger’s restatement of the classic messianic expectation formula and he reads it in light of the conclusion of the prologue to John’s Gospel: ‘No one has ever seen God; it is only the Son, who is nearest to the Father’s heart who has made him known’ (John 1:18). In this way Jesus is the fulfilment of the promise of the new prophet:

Bei [Jesus] ist nun vollends verwirklicht, was von Mose nur gebrochen galt: Er lebt vor dem Angesicht Gottes, nicht nur als Freund, sondern als Sohn; er lebt in innerster Einheit mit dem Vater.⁵⁶

Ratzinger believes this relationship with the Father is central to the New Testament figure of Christ: everything we are told about Jesus’ words, deeds, sufferings and glory is anchored here and leaving it out of the presentation of Christianity is to craft something “self-contradictory and, in the end, unintelligible.”⁵⁷ The general reaction to Jesus’ words in the Gospels is proof that his teaching is not the product of human learning – it is interpretation with authority (cf. Matt 7:29; Mark 1:22). Jesus’ filial existence is the essence of Ratzinger’s understanding of the figure of Christ – the inner grounding of Jesus’ very existence is “seeing and knowing face-to-face”:

Die Lehre Jesu kommt nicht aus menschlichem Lernen, welcher Art auch immer. Sie kommt aus der unmittelbaren Berührung mit dem Vater, aus dem Dialog von “Gesicht zu Gesicht” – aus dem Sehen dessen heraus, der an der Brust des Vaters ruhte. Sie ist Sohneswort. Ohne diesen inneren Grund wäre sie Vermessenheit.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 5.

⁵⁶ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan*, 31 (“What was true of Moses only in fragmentary form has now been fully realised in the person of Jesus. He lives before the face of God, not just as a friend, but as a Son; he lives in the most intimate unity with the Father” [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 6]).

⁵⁷ Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 6.

⁵⁸ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan*, 31-32 (“Jesus’ teaching is not the product of human learning, of whatever kind. It originates from immediate contact with the Father, from ‘face to face’ dialogue – from the vision of the one who rests close to the Father’s heart. It is the Son’s word. Without this inner grounding, his teaching would be pure presumption” [Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 7]). In his discussion of the Son’s filial existence, Ratzinger refers to Jesus’ frequent withdrawals “to the mountain” to spend nights in prayer with his Father. Fundamental for understanding Jesus’ identity, Ratzinger believes these texts lift the veil of mystery a little, allowing us to comprehend the consequence of who

Ratzinger's use of Deuteronomy conceives of a forward-looking messianic promise for a "prophet like Moses" (Deut 34:10) that is assisted by a re-reading of Deuteronomy itself (and by a conceptually related passage in Exodus). It is a fascinating narrative reading of Israel's prophetic tradition but it doesn't prevent Ratzinger for observing a "curious melancholy" hanging over the conclusion of the fifth book of Moses. Hence the promise concerning "a prophet like me" (Deut 18:15) remains unfulfilled: real liberation, which is more than possession of land, awaits a new prophetic figure:

[. . .] mit jenem Wort nicht einfach die Einsetzung des Prophetenstandes gemeint war, den es ja gab, sondern anderes und weit mehr: die Ankündigung eines neuen Mose. Es war sichtbar geworden, dass die Landnahme in Palästina nicht der Einzug in Heil gewesen war; dass Israel immer noch seiner eigentlichen Befreiung harrte; dass ein Exodus radikalerer Art nötig war und dass es dafür eines neuen Mose bedurfte.⁵⁹

A further characteristic of biblical prophecy emerges here which is indispensable for understanding the figure of Christ the liberator: "prophets fail" and "Jesus places himself in the line of the prophets."⁶⁰ Ratzinger says this failure, most pronounced in the figure of Jesus crucified, is actually the source of freedom:

Der Prophet scheitert: Seine Botschaft widerspricht zu sehr der allgemeinen Meinung, den eingefahrenen Lebensgewohnheiten. Erst durch das Scheitern hindurch wird sein Wort wirksam. Dieses Scheitern des Propheten bleibt als dunkle Frage über der ganzen Geschichte Israels stehen, und es wiederholt sich in gewisser Weise immer wieder in der Geschichte der Menschheit. Es ist zunächst immer neu auch das

Jesus is: "This 'praying' of Jesus is the Son conversing with the Father; Jesus' human consciousness and will, his human soul, is taken up into that exchange, and in this way human 'praying' is able to become a participation in this filial communion with the Father. . . . He who sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. John 14:9). The disciple who walks with Jesus is thus caught up with him into communion with God. And that is what redemption means: this stepping beyond the limits of human nature, which had been there as a possibility and an expectation in man, God's image and likeness, since the moment of creation" (7-8). Ratzinger dedicates an entire chapter of *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan* to the filial identity of the Son. See also Ratzinger, *The Way of Jesus Christ*, 13-14, where he alludes to the fact that philologically, the word "person" has its origins in the word "face"; and Benedict XVI, General Audience, 16 January 2013, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2013/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20130116_it.html (accessed 16 January 2013). See also Roger Scruton, *The Face of God: The Gifford Lectures 2010* (New York: Continuum, 2012).

⁵⁹ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan*, 28 ("[. . .] these words do not refer simply to the institution of prophecy, which in fact already existed, but to something different and far greater: the announcement of a new Moses. It had become evident that taking possession of the land in Palestine did not constitute the chosen people's entry into salvation; that Israel was still awaiting its real liberation; that an even more radical kind of exodus was necessary, one that called for a new Moses" [Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 3]).

⁶⁰ Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 189.

Geschick Jesu Christi: Er endet am Kreuz. Aber gerade aus dem Kreuz kommt die große Fruchtbarkeit.⁶¹

The parables are particularly enlightening for Ratzinger at this point. He juxtaposes, and then proceeds to mutually interpret, the abstruse statement of Jesus in answer to the question as to the reason for his preaching in parables (Mark 4:11-12), and the Johannine logion summarising the mind of Jesus on the multiple “seed” parables (John 12:24). He says that, unexpectedly, the link with the original context of Jesus’ difficult remark about the meaning of the parable of the sower (Mark 4:1-9) sheds light on Jesus as liberator.⁶²

The image of the seed has a significant presence throughout the Gospels in the preaching of the kingdom— the seed is the presence of what is to come in the future, because that which is to come is here already in a hidden way. Ratzinger says, connecting it to the Deuteronomic expectation of prophetic climax, Jesus’ preaching is “the presence of a promise.”⁶³ He points out that it is in the context of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem for the events that would culminate in the sacrifice at Passover that Jesus summarises the manifold seed parables and unveils their full meaning: “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John

⁶¹ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan*, 228-29 (“Prophets fail: Their message goes too much against general opinion and the comfortable habits of life. It is only through failure that their word becomes efficacious. This failure of the Prophets is an obscure question mark over the whole history of Israel, and in a certain way it constantly recurs in the history of humanity. Above all, it is also again and again the destiny of Jesus Christ: He ends up on the Cross. But that very Cross is the source of great fruitfulness” [Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 189-90]).

⁶² Referring to the parables of Jesus, Ratzinger says that one peculiar saying (cf. Mark 4:11-12) – Jesus’ general answer about the reason for preaching in parables – stands in the way of seeing in them the hidden, multi-layered invitations to faith in Jesus as the kingdom of God in person. Ratzinger quotes from what he describes as Joachim Jeremias’ “painstakingly argued translation” of this text in which Jesus cites Isaiah 6:9f: “To you [that is, to the circle of disciples] has God given the secret of the Kingdom of God: but to those who are without, everything is obscure, in order that they (as is written) may ‘see and not see, may hear and yet not understand, unless they turn and God will forgive them’ [Isa 6:9]” (see Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 189 [quoting Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, rev. ed., trans. S.H. Hooke (London: SCM Press, 1963), 17]). In order to understand whether or not God is “partisan” by using parables to lock rather than open doors on all but a select few, Ratzinger says we have to read Jesus’ words in light of Isaiah whom he quotes and, in light of his own path to Jerusalem. Isaiah’s sentiments are even more terrifying than the ones Jesus highlights. They say: “Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts, and turn to be healed” (Isa 6:10). This scathing account of the frustrating nature of biblical prophecy is the context for Ratzinger’s understanding of the failure of the prophets – their message is too radical for the comfortable habits of this world and so they are silenced by the necessary force. In Christ, this prophetic failure is fruitfulness.

⁶³ Ratzinger *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 190.

12:24; 1Cor 15:36-38). For Ratzinger, this means that “[Jesus] himself is the grain of wheat. His ‘failure’ on the Cross is exactly the way leading from the few to the many, to all: ‘And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself’ (John 12:23).”⁶⁴

Through the failure of the prophets, personified in Jesus’ own failure, the source of freedom reaches its deepest meaning. This dying of the “seed” is the method for opening the eyes and ears of all. “Failure” in the eyes of many becomes precisely the “way” an orientation of obedience and freedom is accomplished whereby people “turn and God will forgive them” (Mark 4:12). Ratzinger believes that it is on the Cross that the parables are fully unlocked. In his farewell discourse, Jesus exclaims that “I have said this to you in parables [i.e. veiled discourse]; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in parables but tell you plainly of the Father” (John 16:25). Ratzinger believes it is because the parables allow the mystery of Jesus’ divinity to be seen that they are signs of contradiction. Indeed the parables themselves become part of the mystery of the Cross because they speak of it in a hidden way. To his mind, the parables are prophetic “stations on the way to the Cross” for in them, Jesus, the true Moses, “is not only the sower who scatters the seed of God’s word, but also the seed that falls into the earth in order to die and so bear fruit.”⁶⁵ Failure, precisely understood then, is God’s power in the world, but what are the mechanics of it as it leaves Calvary and heads out into history? This is an important aspect of Ratzinger’s narrative christology to which we now turn.

3.2.1.1. Source of God’s Power in the World: Christ’s Union with the Divine Will

In order to illustrate the theme of God’s power in the world, revealed in Christ as the “seed” who dies and bears fruit (John 12:24; cf. 1Cor 15:36-38), one approach Ratzinger pursues is to take two Matthean texts which represent, in an antithetical way, what God’s power is and is not. The first text is the third temptation of Jesus (Matt 4:8-10). Upon the high

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 191.

mountain and able to survey the kingdoms of the world, the devil offers Jesus the “splendour of power” (Matt 4:8) which “signifies being able to do what you want, enjoying what you want, having everything at your disposal and being able to choose the place of honour. . . . It is that deceitful ‘being like God,’ that caricature of the likeness of God with which the devil always fools people and parodies God’s freedom.”⁶⁶ The devil offers power on his terms – at a price: whoever wants to dominate has to oppress, getting something out of it for oneself. In the devil’s logic, a redeemer needs to be more powerful than the society which is being redeemed. However, far from condemning civic power in society, Ratzinger purifies it by rejecting the identification of God’s power with civic power.

Der Satan bietet Macht an, natürlich zu seinen Preisen: Macht, die auf Schrecken, auf Furcht, auf Eigensucht, auf Vergewaltigung des anderen und auf der Vergötzung des Ich beruht. Aber – so scheint er zu sagen – das ist eben die Macht. Anders kann man sie nicht haben. Wer herrschen will, muss unterdrücken, braucht die Drohung der Gewalt und soll dann andererseits etwas davon haben. Und wie sollte die Welt erlöst werden, wenn der Erlöser keine Macht hat? Also ist es wohl klar, dass der Retter, wenn er überhaupt etwas bewirken will, das Angebot der Macht annehmen und sich ihren Spielregeln fügen muss.⁶⁷

This opens up a very important tenet of Ratzinger’s approach to ecclesiology, because, to his mind, the temptation to power has continued throughout all of history. This does not mean he wants to confuse or condemn civil power but rather to reject the temptation which Jesus had rejected:

Immer wieder haben die Mächtigen der Welt der Kirche Macht angeboten und mit der Macht natürlich auch die Spielregeln ihrer Macht aufzudrängen versucht. Aber die Berufung der Kirche ist es nicht, ein messianisches Reich aufzurichten, in dem dann Menschenmacht als Gottes Macht ausgegeben und angebetet wird. Die Macht der politischen Herrschaft oder der technischen Verfügung kann und darf nicht die Weise ihrer Macht sein. Damit ist nicht staatliche Macht überhaupt verurteilt, auch nicht das unter dem Maß der Gerechtigkeit stehende Schwert, wie Röm 13:1-7 zeigt. Wohl

⁶⁶ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 48.

⁶⁷ Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn*, 61 (“Satan offers power – of course at a price: power based on terror, fear, selfishness, the rape of others, and the idolization of oneself. But – so he seems to be saying – that is exactly what power is. You cannot have it any other way. Whoever wants to dominate has to oppress, requires the threat of force, and should, on the other hand, get something out of it. And how should the world be redeemed if the redeemer does not have power? It is therefore perfectly obvious that the saviour has to accept the offer of power and adhere to its methods if he wants to accomplish anything at all” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 48]).

aber ist die Identifizierung von Kirchenmacht und Staatsmacht, von Gottes Macht und Staatsmacht und die darin liegende Verabsolutierung menschlicher Macht überhaupt verurteilt, als ob diese Art von Macht auch selbst die Erlösung sein könne. Es ist eine bestimmte Idee von Erlösung, ein falsches Menschen- und Gottesbild abgewiesen, das Gott zur Karikatur macht, indem es den Menschen auf den Glanz der Macht und damit auf den Schein des Menschseins reduziert.⁶⁸

The second Matthean text, the closing scene and commissioning of disciples (Matt 28:16-20), is another mountain scene and Jesus is again standing on the mountain, in view of the kingdoms of the world is all their splendour. But now he can say that all power in heaven and on earth has been given to him, and for this reason, it is “all power” (Matt 28:18). His power, in other words, comes to him from heaven as well as from earth. Ratzinger points out that what he refused on the Mount of Temptation is now his but in a completely different way, since his power comes from a completely different source and he now sends out his disciples as messengers and bearers of it. He speaks as the Risen One, having passed through death, “and only in this manner – through death, from the other side and toward the other side – does he have power, which, however, for that very reason spans not only what appears, but everything – heaven and earth, and time up to its limits and beyond.”⁶⁹

Ratzinger says a third mountain appears in-between the Mountain of Temptation and the Mountain of Mission, which simultaneously separates and connects both moments in the revelation of divine power: “Jesus climbed the mountain of his crucifixion as Isaac had once climbed Moriah.”⁷⁰ Ratzinger comes to an understanding of the nature of divine power by focusing on the word “all”:

⁶⁸ Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn*, 61-62 (“Over and again the powerful of the world have offered the Church power, and, along with this power, they have naturally tried to impose the methods of *their* power as well. But it is not the mission of the Church to set up a messianic kingdom in which human power poses and is worshipped as God’s power. The power typical of political rule or technical management cannot be and must not be the style of the Church’s power. By this statement we are not condemning civil power in general nor the sword which is subject to the criterion of justice as Rom 13:1-7 shows. We are, however, condemning the identification of Church power with civil power and of God’s power with civil power as well as the absolutizing of human power in general that this entails, as if this kind of power could itself be redemption. We are rejecting a particular concept of redemption, a false image of human beings and of God that makes a caricature of God by reducing the human being to the splendour of power and so to a pretense of humanity” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 48-49]).

⁶⁹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 50.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

[Satans] Höhen sind Höhen der Eigenmacht, des losgebundenen Selbstverfügens im Alleshaben und Alledürfen, das doch zur sinnlosen Lebenslüge wird, weil das “Alles” des Habens und des Genießens immer nur ein winziges Etwas, eher ein Nichts als ein Etwas ist und der wirklich für Alles geschaffene Mensch sehr wohl die Nichtigkeit dieses “Alles” erfährt. Die Höhe des Kreuzigungsberges aber besteht darin, dass Jesus alles Haben und Dürfen weggegeben hat, auf das reine Nichts der völligen Nacktheit hin, die nicht einmal mehr eine Stelle auf dem Boden hat.⁷¹

As such, the divine power which legitimates Jesus’ mission entails the putting aside of “all” possessions and privileges, something his own prayer life already prefigured in his “thy will be done” (Matt 6:10) which he spoke to the Father. In the complete unity of his will with the Father’s, he attains the real “all.”

At this moment, Ratzinger says, Jesus is at the highest peak of being for he is one with the true God, who is not a despot or pleasure-lover, but eternal truth and eternal love. This restores the true image of God and of humanity in contrast to the caricature of God and humans which lay behind the satanic offer of “being like God.” These three Mounts in the life of Christ also clarify, for all time, the nature of divine power and the basis of obedience which marks the relationship between the Father and the Son. It entails the Son seeking unity with the will of the Father. This contrasts with earthly power in that it confronts the advocates of pseudo-liberation with the source of its true and lasting counterpart:

Jesus hat auch im irdischen Nichts, gegen die Macht der Gewalt und ihr Alleskönnen standgehalten im Einssein mit Gottes Willen. Er ist eins mit Gott und darum eins mit der wirklichen Macht, die Himmel und Erde, Zeit und Ewigkeit umspannt. Er ist eins mit Gott, sodass Gottes Macht seine Macht geworden ist. Die Macht, die er nun vom Berg der Erhöhung aus verkündet, ist Macht aus den Quellen des Kreuzes und damit der radikale Gegensatz zur Willkürmacht des Alleshabens, Alledürfens und Alleskönnens.⁷²

⁷¹ Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn*, 63 (“Satan’s heights are the heights of doing things on one’s own authority, of uninhibitedly determining oneself in possessing all things and being permitted all things. This nevertheless becomes a sham existence since the ‘all’ that is possessed and enjoyed is always only a tiny bit more of a nothing than a something, and the human person who has really been created for all things learns the futility of *this* ‘all’ very well indeed. The height of the mountain of crucifixion consists in Jesus’ having relinquished all possessions and privileges all the way down to the pure nothingness of complete nakedness, which then does not even have a place on the ground anymore” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 50]).

⁷² Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn*, 63-64 (“In his earthly nothingness but in unity with the will of God, Jesus also stood firm against the power of force and its being able to do all things. He is one with God and therefore one with real power that encompasses heaven and earth, time and eternity. He is one with God, so that God’s power has become his power. The power he now proclaims from the mountain of exaltation is power

The conclusion of the prologue to John's Gospel could easily be considered as a decisive factor in Ratzinger's narrative christology: "No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest the Father's heart who has made him known" (John 1:18).⁷³ As an expression of the christological hermeneutic, Ratzinger's narrative approach maintains the unity of Scripture by drawing upon the Mount of Calvary as the locus of the Messiah who is the embodiment of the Law, foretold in the Prophets. As we have seen, Ratzinger points out that the Mount of Calvary lies between the Mounts of Temptation and Mission. The invitation to "imitation" is to take up the Cross and follow him (cf. Matt 16:24; Mark 8:34, 10:21; Luke 9:23) and, as the revelation of the authentic nature of divine obedience, it is expressed in the christological category of "sonship":

Kindsein wird mit Nachfolge Christi identisch. Das Wort vom Vatergott wird so ein Anruf an uns selbst: als "Kind," als Sohn und Tochter zu leben. "Alles, was mein ist, ist dein," sagt Jesus im Hohepriesterlichen Gebet zum Vater (John 17:10), und dasselbe hat der Vater zum älteren Bruder der verlorenen Sohnes gesagt (Lk 15:31). Aus diesem Bewusstsein zu leben, lädt uns das Wort "Vater" ein. So wird auch der Wahn der falschen Emanzipation überwunden, der am Anfang der Sündengeschichte der Menschheit stand. Denn Adam will auf das Wort der Schlange hin selbst Gott sein und Gottes nicht mehr bedürfen. Es wird sichtbar, dass "Kindsein" nicht Abhängigkeit, sondern jenes Stehen in der Beziehung der Liebe ist, das die menschliche Existenz trägt, ihr Sinn und Größe gibt.⁷⁴

With the understanding of divine power as gift from the Father and unity in obedience with the will of God, Ratzinger's narrative christology reaches its apex: Christ's union with the Father's will as the source of authentic freedom. Human freedom, from this perspective,

coming from the roots of the cross and is thus radically opposed to the unrestrained power of possessing all things, being allowed all things, and being able to do all things" [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 50-51]).

⁷³ See Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 6. For an account of the use of the Johannine Gospel in Ratzinger's christology and the questions which it raises, see John Redford, *Who is John?: The Fourth Gospel Debate After Pope Benedict XVI's Jesus of Nazareth* (London: St. Pauls Publishing: 2008). See also this dissertation §§ 3.2.1. and 7.2.

⁷⁴ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan*, 172-73 ("Our sonship turns out to be identical with following Christ. To name God as Father thus becomes a summons to us: to live as a 'child,' as a son or daughter. 'All that is mine is thine,' Jesus says in his high priestly prayer to the Father (John 17:10), and the father says the same thing to the elder brother of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:31). The word *father* is an invitation to live from our awareness of this reality. Hence, too, the delusion of false emancipation, which marked the beginning of mankind's history of sin, is overcome. Adam, heeding the words of the serpent, wants to become God himself and to shed his need for God. We see that to be God's child is not a matter of dependency, but rather of standing in the relation of love that sustains man's existence and gives it meaning and grandeur [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 138-39]).

will require further contemplation of the concept of imitation, in the specific sense already discussed above. This would be imitation understood as a conversion that accepts in its entirety the promise of Christ that he is the “way” to authentic freedom, preparedness to lose one’s whole life to this promise, and the ending of one’s isolation and self-sufficiency for the beginning of an ecclesial existence. This will be taken up in the following chapters.

Alongside this narrative form of christology, Ratzinger places significant emphasis on the doctrine of the two wills in Christ. He does this through the lens of so-called neo-chalcedonian christology. This also sheds light on the condition of human freedom in interaction with divine freedom.⁷⁵ If Ratzinger’s narrative christology is an attempt to take seriously the unity of the Scriptures in its proclamation of the way of Exodus to Sinai and the New Moses, the doctrine of the two wills is a very specific attempt to come to terms with how freedom is operative in the person of Christ, the “one and the same Christ . . . acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation.”⁷⁶

3.2.2. Neo-chalcedonian Christology

In line with Ratzinger’s apprehension of Nestorian or separationist tendencies within christology, it is not surprising to observe him looking into the early history of theology for assistance in renewing an ethos of unity and synergy in the figure of Christ. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the humanity of Jesus was being newly emphasised but such debates go back much earlier and were worked out in the christological dogma declared at the Council of Chalcedon (451AD) and in its aftermath. Ratzinger’s interest in this period,

⁷⁵ However, as will be demonstrated in § 9.1.3. of this dissertation, Ratzinger does not sufficiently deal with the nature of divine freedom and its relationship with human freedom – at least not to the same extent as a theologian such as Hans Urs von Balthasar. Ratzinger’s entry point is almost invariably that of Christ as “Son.” The christocentric nature of the neo-chalcedonian approach is a case in point.

⁷⁶ See Council of Chalcedon’s “Definition of Faith” in Norman Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I- Lateran V*, 86.

colloquially known as “neo-chalcedonian,”⁷⁷ lies in a leading figure among Dyothelite theologians, Maximus the Confessor (c. 580- c.562).⁷⁸ To his mind, the value of Chalcedon and its subsequent deliberations was incalculable in regard to elaborating the theme of authentic human freedom. Ratzinger’s study of neo-chalcedonian christology provides him with the basis for creaturely insertion or participation into the divine life that renders us free. His contention is that the chalcedonian affirmation of humanity and divinity in Christ retains its meaning only if the mode of unity is clarified. And while the Council had defined Christ’s unity by speaking of “one person,”⁷⁹ it was a formula whose implications largely remained unspecified at the time. Ratzinger’s attaches great importance to the subsequent clarifications

⁷⁷ The validity of this term is not altogether undisputed. For example, neo-chalcedonian theologians are not readily identifiable nor are their distinguishing characteristics. Neither is it clear what has been its impact on western theology. It is generally accepted that the term was coined a century ago by Joseph Lebon, in his book *Le monophysisme Sévérien: étude historique, littéraire et théologique sur la résistance monophysite au Concile de Chalcédoine jusqu’à la constitution de l’Église jacobite* (Lovain: van Linthout, 1909), 409, n. 2, 411. See also *ibid.*, 119-23, 155-63, 507, 522. Aloys Grillmeier says the following: “J. Lebon created this expression in imitation of the terms old-Niceneism and neo-Niceneism, which had become customary for the history of doctrine of the fourth century between 325 and 381” (Aloys Grillmeier and Theresia Hainthaler, *From the Council of Chalcedon to Gregory the Great: The Church of Constantinople in the Sixth Century* [London: Mowbray, 1995], 429-30). The term itself broadly refers to the historical period from the Council of Chalcedon (451AD) until the aftermath of the christological controversies of the 7th century. At its heart it was the debate over theological approaches to the issues of *energeia* (act) and will in Christ. From the 4th century onwards, two approaches emerged in christology which, in the 7th century, eventually came into conflict. They were Monoenergism-Monothelitism and Dyenergism-Dyothelitism. In the debates that ensued, Maximus the Confessor helped to move forward the position of two wills in Christ. This later emerged as the orthodox position of Christianity. See Grillmeier and Hainthaler, *From the Council of Chalcedon to Gregory the Great*, 327-338, 429-62; Hans von Loon, *The Dyophysite Christology of Cyril of Alexandria* (Leiden: Brill 2009), 30-47.

⁷⁸ In the Germanic world, Maximus’ theology has been promoted primarily by Hans Urs von Balthasar through his book, *Kosmische Liturgie: Das Weltbild Maximus’ des Bekenner*, 3rd ed. (Johannes Verlag, 1988), and in the Anglophone world through Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (New York: Routledge, 1996). Further studies have been carried out by Schönborn, *God’s Human Face*, 102-33; Aidan Nichols, *Byzantine Gospel: Maximus the Confessor in Modern Scholarship* (London: T. & T. Clark Publishers, 1994); Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Open Court, 1995); Demetrios Bathrellos, *The Byzantine Christ: Person, Nature, and Will in the Christology of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Adam G. Cooper, *The Body in St Maximus Confessor: Holy Flesh, Wholly Deified* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). According to Cyril Hovorun, Maximus the Confessor was “an integral part of the united polemical effort against Monenergism-Monothelitism” and “[a]ny consideration of [him] as a self-sufficient theologian or thinker apart from the context of the Monenergism-Monothelitism controversy may be misleading since he composed his best christological writings in response to the challenge of Monenergism-Monothelitism” (*Will, Action and Freedom: Christological Controversies in the Seventh Century* [Boston: Brill Academic, 2008], 2-3). Andrew Louth further nuances this view by saying that “[a]lthough Maximus the Confessor is a speculative theologian of genius, he does not see himself, as would some later theologians, as *constructing* a theological system. He sees himself as interpreting a tradition that has come down to him, and interpreting it for the sake of others” (Louth, *Maximus the Confessor*, 21).

⁷⁹ See Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I- Lateran V*, 83-86.

at the Third Council of Constantinople (680-81), because he believes “the unity of divinity and humanity in Christ which brings ‘salvation’ to man is not a juxtaposition but a mutual indwelling. Only in this way can there be that genuine ‘becoming like God,’ without which there is no liberation and no freedom.”⁸⁰

3.2.2.1. Synergy of Two Wills in Christ’s Sacrifice of Obedience

For the most part, the unity of the human and divine wills in Christ’s person and his consequent freedom were the clarifications to which Constantinople III addressed itself.⁸¹ On the one hand, it taught that the unity of God and man in Christ involves no amputation or reduction in any way of human nature. In fact, God brings humanity for the first time to its real fullness. And, on the other hand, the Council abolishes all dualism or parallelism in the perception of the doctrine of the hypostatic union – something which had always seemed necessary in order to safeguard Jesus’ human freedom. Such parallelisms promote the idea that freedom is somehow circumvented when a human will is taken up into the will of God. Constantinople III analysed the chalcedonian “two-ness” and “one-ness” in Christ by reference to the concrete issue of two wills in the Son’s personhood. Ratzinger skilfully analyses the Council’s theological reasoning:

Es hält nachdrücklich fest, daß es einen eigenen Willen des Menschen Jesus gibt, der nicht vom göttlichen Willen absorbiert ist. Aber dieser menschliche Wille folgt dem göttlichen Willen und wird so, nicht auf naturale Weise, sondern auf dem Weg der Freiheit ein einziger Wille mit ihm: Die metaphysische Zweiheit eines menschlichen und eines göttlichen Willens wird nicht aufgehoben, aber im *personalen* Raum, im Raum der Freiheit, vollzieht sich beider Verschmelzung, so daß sie nicht natural, aber personal *ein* Wille werden. Diese freie Einheit – die von der Liebe geschaffene Weise der Einheit – ist höhere und innerlichere Einheit als eine bloß naturale Einheit. Sie entspricht der höchsten Einheit, die es überhaupt gibt, der trinitarischen. Das Konzil erläutert diese Einheit mit einem im Johannesevangelium überlieferten Herrenwort:

⁸⁰ Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 38. Ratzinger makes a very similar comment some years later which is worth noting. It is equally based on moving away from parallelism towards mutual indwelling: “In fact only that unity of divinity and humanity which in Christ is not parallelism, where one stands alongside the other, but real compenetration – compenetration between God and man – means salvation for mankind. Only thus in fact does that true ‘being with God’ take place, without which liberation and freedom do not exist” (Joseph Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter: Spiritual Reflections for the Lenten Season*, trans. Mary Groves [New York, Crossroads, 2006], 100).

⁸¹ See Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I- Lateran V*, 124-130.

“Ich bin vom Himmel herabgestiegen, nicht um meinen Willen zu tun, sondern den des Vaters, der mich gesandt hat” (Joh. 6:38). Hier spricht der göttliche Logos, und er spricht vom menschlichen Willen des Menschen Jesus in der Weise, daß er ihn *seinen* Willen, den Willen des Logos nennt. Das Konzil zeigt mit dieser Exegese von Joh. 6:38 die Subjekteinheit in Jesus auf. In ihm sind nicht zweierlei Ich, sondern nur ein einziges: Der Logos spricht vom menschlichen Wollen und Denken Jesu im Ich-Stil; es ist sein Ich geworden, in sein Ich aufgenommen, weil der menschliche Wille mit dem Willen des Logos völlig eins und mit ihm reines Ja zum Willen des Vaters geworden ist.⁸²

Prior to the deliberations of Constantinople III, Maximus the Confessor interpreted the complex landscape of christological dogma in this period. Ratzinger believes he made an influential contribution to the final outcome of the future Council’s deliberations by arguing for avoidance of both dualistic and hybrid varieties of christology.⁸³ Christ is the incarnate Word in the identifiable freedom of his person: “there is the complete union on the personal level, the synthesis of freedoms from which a personal, not a natural unity results.”⁸⁴

Maximus’ way of illuminating this whole context is by referring to Jesus’ Prayer on

⁸² Ratzinger, *Schauen auf den Durchbohrten*, 34-35 (“It resolutely maintains that, as man, Jesus has a human will which is not absorbed by the divine will. But this human will follows the divine will and thus becomes one will with it, not in a natural manner but along the path of freedom. The metaphysical two-ness of a human and a divine will is not abrogated, but in the realm of the *person*, in the realm of freedom, the fusion of both takes place, with the result that they become *one* will, not naturally, but personally. 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. The Council illustrates this unity by citing a dominical word handed down to us in the Gospel of John: ‘I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me’ (Jn 6:38). Here it is the divine Logos who is speaking, and he speaks of the human will of the man Jesus as his will, the will of the Logos. With this exegesis of John 6:38 the Council indicates the unity of the subject in Christ. There are not two ‘I’s’ in him, but only one. The Logos speaks 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. United with the latter, it has become a pure Yes to the Father’s will” [Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 38-39]). Ratzinger reiterated this analysis in *Journey to Easter*, 101. He gives further mention to the issue of the human and divine wills in Christ and the on-going christological relevance of the early Councils in *A New Song for the Lord*, 9-11, 23-8; *The God of Jesus Christ*, 30, 90; *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 81. He makes mention of the central distinction which had been worked out by Maximus the Confessor and was applied in Constantinople III: the distinction between the Θέλημα φυσικόν [*Thelema physikón*] [natural will] (which belongs to nature and thus exists separately in Christ’s godhead and manhood) from the “gnomic” Θέλημα (i.e. “inclination,” which is identical with the *liberum arbitrium* [free will] and pertains to the human person). This distinction is more common in eastern theology and was partly an attempt to come to terms with a postlapsarian human existence which is in contradistinction to the harmony of the creature with God and with one another that is characteristic of human life in its natural state. It is an intricate theory whereby Maximus attempted to bifurcate the concept of the will. Its complexities are clearly elucidated by Ian A. McFarland, “‘Naturally and by grace’: Maximus the Confessor on the operation of the will,” in *Scottish Journal of Theology* 58 (2005): 410-433.

⁸³ See Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 9-10.

⁸⁴ Ibid. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* quotes Maximus on the issue of the unity of Christ’s personhood: “The human nature of God’s Son, *not by itself but by its union with the Word*, knew and showed forth in itself everything that pertains to God” (CCC, 473; cf. Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones et dubia* 66: PG 90, 840A).

the Mount of Olives, which expresses Jesus' unique relationship with God the Father.⁸⁵ It is a

⁸⁵ For an in-depth analysis of Maximus the Confessor's approach to the scene on the Mount of Olives (Mark 14:32-42; cf. Matt 26:36-46; Luke 22:39-46; John 12:27-28; Heb 5:7-10), see Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy*, 207ff, esp. 263-275. At various stages over the years, Ratzinger refers to the New Testament retention of the Aramaic (or Hebrew) prayer address, "Abbā, Father" (cf. Mark 14:36; Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). See, for example, Joseph Ratzinger, *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 49; *Introduction to Christianity*, 223-28, 276; *The God of Jesus Christ*, 72, 68; *Behold the Pierced One*, 20-21, 41; *Journey to Easter*, 94; *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 344, 354; *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 154, 161-2. Joachim Jeremias has been attributed with popularising "Abbā" to mean "Daddy" or "Papa" (cf. James Barr, "Abbā isn't 'Daddy'," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 39 [April 1988]: 28-47). However, other scholars have also contributed to this simplification. See James G. D. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1975), 21-26; *Christology in the Making* (London: SCM Press, 1980), 22-23; Marcus J. Borg, *Jesus: A New Vision* (San Francisco: Harper, 1987) 45, as well as TWNT articles by Kittel on ἄββα, and Schrenk on πατήρ. Even though Barr builds a counter-critique to Jeremias' explanation of Abbā which had become a "great favourite with students and with preachers," he admits that "Jeremias seems to have stopped short of saying [Abbā is Daddy] explicitly" (Barr, "Abbā isn't 'Daddy,'" 28). Barr's intention was to conduct a philological argument aimed at countering the impression which had built up as a result of the "babbling sound" explanation. Nevertheless, the rare nature of the New Testament usage of Abbā still remains something of an enigma. Others, including Barr to a certain degree, do not completely reject the possibility that the use of ἄββα is genuinely attributable to Jesus and that its Christian usage was prompted by an authentic tradition of Jesus' own prayer (cf. Barr, "Abbā isn't 'Daddy'": 39; John Ashton, "Abba," *ABD* 1:7-8). However, the weight of evidence for this varies, and remains inconclusive. The point is also sometimes made that the tenderness of the cry (Mark 14:36) of the Abbā prayer in the Garden contrasts sharply with the cry of abandonment and distance (Mark 15:34) which comes from the Cross (Barr, "Abbā isn't 'Daddy,'" 28; Joachim Jeremias, *The Prayer of Jesus* [London: SCM Press, 1967], 57). For his part, Ratzinger acknowledges the demonstration of the intimate form of address in Joachim Jeremias, *Abba: Studien zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 15-67, and says that even though Jeremias later amended his earlier view that Abba was merely a childish stammer (cf. *TWNT* 5:984f), the fundamental perception remains: "To the Jewish way of thinking it would have been disrespectful and therefore unthinkable to address God with this familiar word. It was something new and unheard of that Jesus should have dared to take up this step. . . . The 'Abba' of Jesus' prayers reveals the very heart of his relationship to God" (cf. *Introduction to Christianity*, 224, n.23). Writing in 2008, John M. McDermott is in agreement with this argument on the nature of Sonship: "Throughout the New Testament Jesus is the Father's sole Son and heir (Mark 12:6-7), the one who addresses him as Abba and teaches the disciples to pray 'our Father.' Jesus always distinguishes 'my Father' from 'your Father.' The only time he says 'our Father' happens when he teaches others, his disciples, to pray. He is clearly the mediator to others of divine sonship, access to the Father" (John M. McDermott, "Didn't Jesus Know He Was God? Mark 10:17-22," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 73 [2008]: 328). Ratzinger's interest in the term is connected to the relationship which it indicates between the Father and the Son – it expresses the "unicity" of the Son (cf. *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 344). It appears in his work when he discusses the Christian re-interpretation of the terms "Son of Man," "Son," and "I am" (cf. *Introduction to Christianity*, 216-228; *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 319-355). It was because the meanings of these terms went through so many difficult stages of discernment and fierce debate, that the Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) adopted the word "homoousios": "[t]his term did not Hellenise the faith or burden it with an alien philosophy. On the contrary, it captured in a stable formula exactly what had emerged as incomparably new and different in Jesus' way of speaking with the Father" (*Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 355). Rather than focusing on the term as an immediate disclosure of the nature of the personality of the Father, Ratzinger actually considers the word to contribute to the revelation of Jesus' self-understanding as "Son" in dialogue with the Father. It is only in this way that this prayer address collaborates in revealing the Father. It is interesting, therefore, to note how Ratzinger deals with this somewhat ambiguous New Testament logion. He surveys its linguistic usage as it develops in the surrounding polytheistic, cultural milieu outside the immediate biblical narrative. He then observes it as it makes its way into the monotheistic culture of the New Testament narrative and the sequence of events in the early Church. Ratzinger uses the term Abbā, which is preserved by Mark and Paul, as a helpful interpretative key to the overall structure of divine revelation that takes a narrative form. This makes for an interesting comparison with an alternative approach, such as that of C. Kavin Rowe in *Early Narrative Christology: The Lord in the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2009), who focuses on a narrative interpretation that remains, with all possible consistency, within the narrative world of the text and the intended meaning therein.

prayer scene looking into the inner life of the Word-made-flesh, revealing to us, Ratzinger believes, a sentence which remains the measure and model of all prayer: “Not what I will but what you will” (Mark 14:36). From Jesus’ human will, Ratzinger describes what happens:

Der menschliche Wille Jesu ordnet sich dem Willen des Sohnes ein. Indem er dies tut, empfängt er dessen Identität, nämlich die völlige Unterordnung des Ich unter das Du, das Sich-Schenken und Übereignen des Ich ans Du: Dies ist ja das Wesen dessen, der reine Relation und reiner Akt ist. Wo Ich sich an Du verschenkt, wird Freiheit, weil die “Form Gottes” aufgenommen wird.⁸⁶

Conversely, from the viewpoint of the divine will, Ratzinger maintains that Christ’s freedom can be even more comprehensively understood:

Der Logos erniedrigt sich so, daß er den Willen eines Menschen als seinen annimmt und mit dem Ich dieses Menschen zum Vater spricht, sein Ich diesem Menschen überträgt und damit das Reden eines Menschen in das ewige Wort in sein seliges “Ja, Vater” umwandelt. Indem er diesem Menschen sein Ich, seine eigene Identität zueignet, befreit er den Menschen, erlöst ihn, macht ihn zu Gott.⁸⁷

Understanding the synergy of the two wills in Christ from the standpoint of the sacrifice of obedience on the part of the Son, Ratzinger says the real meaning of “God made man” can now be taken “in both hands”: “the Son transforms the anguish of a man into his own filial obedience, the speech of the servant into the Word which is the Son.”⁸⁸ By revisiting part of the history of the christological debates, Ratzinger says we can understand how our liberation is achieved through our participation in the “Son’s” freedom. The result of

⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *Schauen auf den Durchbohrten*, 36 (“Jesus’ human will assimilates itself to the will of the Son. In doing so, 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 pure act. Wherever the I gives itself to the Thou, there is freedom because this involves the reception of the ‘form of God’” [Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 41]).

⁸⁷ Ratzinger, *Schauen auf den Durchbohrten*, 36 (“[T]he Logos so humbles himself that he adopts a man’s will as his own and addresses the Father with the I of this human being; he transfers his own I to this man and thus transforms human speech into the eternal Word, into his blessed ‘Yes, Father.’ By imparting his own I, his own identity, to this human being, he liberates him, redeems him, makes him God” [Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 41]). Significantly, Pope Benedict has dedicated a number of homilies and discourses to the christology of Maximus by specifically returning to the scene on the Mount of Olives and discussing the nature of Christ’s freedom and the personal union of the divine and human wills in him. See Benedict XVI, General Audience, 25 June 2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20080625_en.html (accessed 25 April 2012); General Audience, 1 February 2012, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20120201_en.html (accessed 25 April 2012); Homily for Mass of the Lord’s Supper, 5 April 2012, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20120405_coenadomini_en.html (accessed 15 January 2013).

⁸⁸ Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 41.

the personal unity of wills is that “the greatest possible change has taken place in man, the only change which meets his desire: he has become divine.”⁸⁹

Ratzinger takes up the drama of Gethsemane again in his *Jesus of Nazareth* series.⁹⁰ Not only does he say that “nowhere else in sacred Scripture do we gain so deep an insight into the inner mystery of Jesus,”⁹¹ but that here, in Jesus’ prayer at Gethsemane, where Jesus falls on his face taking up “the prayer posture of extreme submission to the will of God, of radical self-offering to him, . . . the whole of our redemption is made present.”⁹² Once again, he accredits Maximus with making a decisive contribution to a confusing christological landscape. In this recent reflection on his part, Ratzinger provides further analysis of Maximus’ contribution, employing it to shed light upon how the existence of freedom and obedience in the figure of Christ contributes to the understanding of human freedom.

Ratzinger begins by pointing out that there are two parts to Jesus’ prayer which correspond to the confrontation between the two wills. He describes them as the “natural will” of the man Jesus, which resists the looming destruction, pleading that he be spared from it, and the “filial will” which abandons itself totally to the Father’s will. John 12:27-28 is a prime example of the confrontation: “Father, save me from this hour . . . Father, glorify your name.” What is at work here, according to Ratzinger, is that the anguish of Jesus’ human soul impels him to pray for deliverance from this hour, while the awareness of his mission indicates that the glorification of God’s name comes through him being innocently stripped of all dignity in the impending horror of the Cross. Ratzinger says that this “confrontation” fully manifests God’s identity:

[D]er Gott, der im Abgrund seiner Liebe, im Sich-selber-Geben allen Mächten des Bösen die wahre Macht des Guten antgegenstellt. Jesus hat beide Bitten ausgesprochen, aber die erste, die um “Rettung,” ist in die zweite, die um Gottes Verherrlichung im Geschehen seines Willens, eingeschmolzen – und so ist der

⁸⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁹⁰ See Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 145-66.

⁹¹ Ibid., 157.

⁹² Ibid., 153-54.

Widerstreit im Innern der menschlichen Existenz Jesu zur Einheit geführt.⁹³

When coming to terms with the meaning of human freedom, Ratzinger is convinced that in the figure of Christ the irreducible duality of human and divine willing requires that the proper modes of “nature” and “person” must be clarified. Hence, the “natural will” of Jesus’ human nature is present but there is only *one* “personal will,” drawing the “natural will” to itself. Crucially, Ratzinger says, “this is possible without annihilating the specifically human element, because the human will, as created by God, *is ordered* [emphasis mine] to the divine will. In becoming attuned to the divine will, it experiences its fulfilment, not its annihilation.”⁹⁴ In formal theological terms, Ratzinger says, the ground for this is that

[. . .] dass der menschliche Wille schöpfungsgemäß auf die Synergie (das Zusammenwirken) mit Gottes Willen hin tendiert, dass freilich durch die Sünde aus Synergie Opposition geworden ist: der Mensch, dessen Wille sich im Einstimmen in Gottes Willen vollendet, fühlt nun seine Freiheit durch den Willen Gottes gefährdet. Er sieht im Ja zum Willen Gottes nicht die Möglichkeit, ganz er selbst zu sein, sondern die Bedrohung seiner Freiheit, gegen die er sich zur Wehr setzt.⁹⁵

The reason why Ratzinger suggests that Gethsemane expresses the whole of redemption is that the synergy of wills in Christ restores the true human greatness, while the human yearning to be “like God” is given an authentic interpretation:

Das Drama des Ölbergs besteht darin, dass Jesus den Naturwillen des Menschen aus der Opposition in die Synergie zurückholt und damit den Menschen in seiner Größe wiederherstellt. In dem menschlichen Naturwillen Jesu ist sozusagen in ihm selbst der ganze Widerstand der menschlichen Natur gegen Gott anwesend. Unser aller Eigensinn, die ganze Opposition gegen Gott ist da, und ringend zieht Jesus die widerständige Natur in ihr eigentliches Wesen hinauf.⁹⁶

⁹³ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 177-78 (“[. . .] the God who, in the unfathomable depth of his self-giving love, sets the true power of good against all the powers of evil. Jesus uttered both prayers, but the first one, asking for deliverance, merges into the second one, asking for God to be glorified by the fulfilment of his will – and so the conflicting elements blend into unity deep within the heart of Jesus’ human experience” [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 157]).

⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 160.

⁹⁵ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 182 (“[. . .] the human will, by virtue of creation, tends toward synergy (working together) with the divine will, but that through sin, opposition takes the place of synergy: man, whose will attains fulfilment through becoming attuned to God’s will, now has the sense that his freedom is compromised by God’s will. He regards consenting to God’s will, not as his opportunity to become fully himself, but as a threat to his freedom against which he rebels” [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 160]).

⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 182-83 (“The drama of the Mount of Olives lies in the fact that Jesus draws man’s natural will away from opposition and back towards synergy, and in so doing he restores man’s true greatness. In Jesus’ natural human will, the sum total of human nature’s resistance to God is,

Quoting Christoph Schönborn, Ratzinger says that what emerges from the agony of Gethsemane is that the synergy of the two wills, moving from opposition to union, is accomplished through “the sacrifice of obedience.”⁹⁷ In the prayer to the Father, “not my will but yours,” (Luke 22:42) the natural human will is completely subsumed into the “I” of the Son. The Son’s whole being – his “I” – is in total self-abandonment to the “thou” of God the Father. Ratzinger concludes that “[t]his same ‘I’ has subsumed and transformed humanity’s resistance, so that we are all now present within the Son’s obedience; we are all drawn into sonship.”⁹⁸

3.2.2.2. The “Son”: Laboratory of Freedom

Ratzinger echoes Maximus and Constantinople III by describing Jesus’ prayer movement in the Gethsemane scene as “freedom’s laboratory.” It consists of “that prayer which enters into the praying of Jesus and becomes the prayer of Jesus in the Body of Christ.”⁹⁹ In Ratzinger’s theology, this image clarifies the manner of our liberation via our participation in the Son’s freedom. Participation in Christ’s actual “praying,” as an action in “freedom’s laboratory,” comprises an on-going dynamism which reveals humanity’s true vocation and dignity as free creatures worthy of participation in God:

Hier und nirgendwo sonst geschieht jene tiefgreifende Verwandlung des Menschen, deren wir bedürfen, damit die Welt besser wird. Denn nur auf diesem Weg erlangt das Gewissen seine tiefste Rechtheit und seine unerschütterliche Kraft. Und wiederum nur aus solchem Gewissen kann jene Ordnung der menschlichen Dinge entstehen, die der Würde des Menschen entspricht und sie schützt – eine Ordnung, die in jeder Generation aus dem wachen Gewissen des Menschen neu gesucht werden muß, bis das Reich Gottes kommt, das Gott allein aufrichten kann.¹⁰⁰

as it were, present within Jesus himself. The obstinacy of us all, the whole of our opposition to God is present, and in his struggle, Jesus elevates our recalcitrant nature to become its real self” [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 161]).

⁹⁷ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 161 (quoting Schönborn, *God’s Human Face*, 126-27).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 42. See also *Journey towards Easter*, 103.

¹⁰⁰ Ratzinger, *Schauen auf den Durchbohrten*, 37 (“Here and nowhere else takes place that radical change in man of which we stand in need, that the world may become a better place. For it is only along this path that conscience attains its fundamental soundness and its unshakable power. And only from such a conscience can there come that ordering of human affairs which corresponds to human dignity and protects it. Every generation

Ratzinger believes that Maximus' reflections bring the Johannine words, "He who sees me sees the Father" (John 12:45) to a climax, sketching the outline of a christology where the visible figure of Christ is not misunderstood as static and one-dimensional, nor as belonging merely to the world of the senses. The truth manifested here, in the "laboratory," is that "[t]he one who looks upon the figure of Christ is taken up into his exodus . . . He is led upon the Easter way of Passover and learns how to see in the visible more than the visible."¹⁰¹ The Crucified One turns out to be "the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). By placing the emphasis on Jesus' sacrifice of obedience, Ratzinger undertakes to show what a biblical theology of liberation consists of:

Im Exodus der Liebe Christi, das heißt im Übergang vom Gegensatz zur Gemeinschaft, der durch das Kreuz des Gehorsams führt, ist wirklich Erlösung, das heißt Befreiung geschehen. Dieser Exodus führt aus der Knechtschaft der *philautia*, der Selbstverfallenheit und Selbstverschlossenheit, in die Liebe Gottes hinein: "In Christus ist die menschliche Natur fähig geworden, der Liebe Gottes ähnlich zu sein . . . Die Liebe ist die Ikone Gottes." Darum sieht, wer Christus den Gekreuzigten, sieht, den Vater – ja, das ganze trinitarische Geheimnis.¹⁰²

As is communicated from his approach to the Gethsemane scene, Ratzinger's core belief is that christology is born of prayer or not at all and this is never more the case than when he comes to describe the full human and divine dimensions of the figure of Christ.¹⁰³ If Christ is, in his prayer, "freedom's laboratory," then our prayer, as it enters into the filial

has to seek anew this right ordering of the world in response to a conscience that is alert, until the kingdom of God comes, which God alone can establish" [Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 42]).

¹⁰¹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 25. Ratzinger is heavily dependent on the research into Maximus's theology in Schönborn, *God's Human Face*, esp. pp. 102-33.

¹⁰² Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn*, 40 ("In the exodus of Christ's love – that is, in the transition from opposition to community which goes through the cross of obedience – redemption, that is, liberation, truly occurs. This exodus leads from the slavery of *philautia*, the slavery of self-conceit and self-containment, into the love of God: 'In Christ, human nature has become capable of being the love of God. . . . Love is God's icon.' For this reason, whoever sees Christ, the Crucified One, sees the Father – indeed the entire trinitarian mystery" [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord: Faith*, 26 (quoting Schönborn, *God's Human Face*, 129)]).

¹⁰³ See Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 46. Ratzinger has a series of seven theses which promote the active ground of Jesus' existence, namely his constant communication with the Father, to the point where Jesus died praying and, since the centre of the person of Jesus is prayer, it is essential to participate in his prayer if we are to know and understand him (cf. *ibid.*, 15-46). Currently, Peter John McGregor is undertaking doctoral studies on Ratzinger's spiritual christology at the Australian Catholic University, under the title: "Heart to Heart: The 'Spiritual Christology' of Joseph Ratzinger."

existence of Jesus, becomes *the* prayer in the Body of Christ and here is the only place where the radical change that humanity needs can occur:

Das Sein-wollen wie ein Gott ist das innere Leitmaß aller Befreiungsprogramme der Menschheit. Weil das Verlangen nach Freiheit im Wesen des Menschen begründet ist, ist er auch von Anfang an auf der Suche danach “wie Gott” zu werden. In der Tat – alles andere ist dem Menschen schlußendlich zu wenig. . . . Wo von der Sohnesbeziehung Jesu zum Vater die Rede ist, wird die Frage nach der Freiheit des Menschen und nach seiner Befreiung an ihren eigentlichen Nerv geführt, ohne den alles andere ins Leere zielt. Eine Befreiung des Menschen ohne Gottwerdung betrügt den Menschen, sein auf das Unbegrenzte zielendes Verlangen.¹⁰⁴

The “laboratory” where human liberation is achieved - the Body of Christ – is needed for the world to prosper. The “yes” in Jesus’s prayer opposes all approximations of freedom, since in him alone is the human person’s will able to identify with the will of the Father:

[. . .] il Logos si abbassa fino ad assumere come sua la volontà di un uomo, e parla al Padre con l’“io” di questo uomo, trasferisce il suo “io” in questo uomo, e con ciò trasforma la parola di un uomo nell’eterna parola, nel suo beato “Sì, Padre.” Mentre egli dona a questo uomo il suo “Io,” la sua propria identità, egli libera l’uomo, lo salva, lo divinizza. Quello che in realtà significa la frase “Dio è diventato uomo,” possiamo qui toccarlo quasi con mano: il Figlio trasforma l’angoscia di un uomo nell’obbedienza di Figlio, trasforma il parlare del “servo” nella parola che è del “Figlio.” Così diventa comprensibile anche il modo della nostra liberazione, della nostra partecipazione alla libertà del Figlio.¹⁰⁵

In conclusion, there is no doubt that Ratzinger gives significant credit to Maximus for orienting christology on its proper course after the uncertainty and confusion of the christological controversies of early Christianity. He believes that Maximus’ thought serves to lead christology to the authentic meaning of Christ as liberator – the true Moses:

¹⁰⁴ Ratzinger, *Schauen auf den Durchbohrten*, 30-32 (“Wanting to be like God is the inner motive of all mankind’s programs of liberation. Since the yearning for freedom is rooted in man’s being, right from the outset he is trying to become ‘like God.’ Indeed anything less is ultimately too little for him. . . . The question of Jesus’ filial relationship to the Father gets to the very root of the question of man’s freedom and liberation, and unless this is done everything else is futile. Any liberation of man which does not enable him to become divine betrays man, betrays his boundless yearning [*which aims at what is infinite*]” [Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 33-35]). I have added the words in italics to capture the full sense of the original text.

¹⁰⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Il Cammino Pasquale: Corso di esercizi spirituali tenuti in Vaticano alla presenza di S.S. Giovanni Paolo II* (Milano: Ancora 2006), 90 (“The Logos stoops to assume as his own the will of man, and speaks to the Father with the ‘I’ is this man and thereby transforms the word of a man into the eternal Word, into his own blessed ‘Yes, Father.’ While giving to this man his own ‘I,’ his own identity, the Logos frees the man, saves him, divinizes him. We here touch almost palpably on the reality meant by the phrase “God became man.” The Son transforms the anguish of a man into the obedience of the Son, transforms the speech of the ‘servant’ into the words of the Son. Thus becomes comprehensible also our way of liberation, our sharing in the freedom on the Son” [Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 102]).

Nun ist Maximus Confessor alles andere als ein Monophysit; ihm ist ja wesentlich die Überwindung der letzten Spielart des Monophysitismus, nämlich des Monotheletismus zu verdanken. Für ihn ist wesentlich, dass wir gerade im Menschen Jesus wirklich den Vater ansehen; seine ganze Theologie des Ölbergs und des Kreuzes, des Exodus der Menschheit im neuen Mose, verlöre sonst ihren Sinn. Aber Maximus ist so auch die entschiedenste Überwindung des Nestorianismus, der uns vom Geheimnis der Trinität abschneidet und die Mauer der Transzendenz wieder praktisch undurchdringlich macht. Bleiben wir aber diesseits der Mauer, dann sind wir Knechte, nicht Freunde.¹⁰⁶

As we leave Ratzinger's reflections on the christological controversies, it can be seen that he endeavours to invoke them to inform the theological discussion on freedom in our day. Being drawn into the sphere of "Sonship," the drama of Jesus's prayer as the "sacrifice of obedience" has ecclesiological implications for humanity and its growth in freedom. Christ's filial Sonship enables an adopted sonship of humanity in the laboratory of freedom that is Christ's prayer. This doesn't preclude or compromise human freedom but rather gives it its fullest meaning as obedience and openness to the will of the Creator.

In considering the implications of the unity in the divine person, Ratzinger says an image of Christ that embraces God and man entails a call to "imitation" – that is, to participate in the prayer of Jesus because such participation fulfils the yearning for freedom which builds up within the human heart. Growth in authentic freedom can be achieved where a person participates in this "laboratory" of unity and freedom, i.e. "where his own will is refashioned, where he allows himself to be expropriated and inserted into the divine will, where he advances toward that God-likeness through which the kingdom of God can come."¹⁰⁷ Ratzinger will find St. Paul's treatment of freedom helpful in grounding the scriptural basis for this. It will be taken up in the next subdivision and in Chapter 4.

¹⁰⁶ Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn*, 41-42 ("Maximus the Confessor is hardly a monophysite; he takes credit for essentially overcoming the last variety of monophysitism, namely monotheletism. For him it is essential that precisely in Jesus, the human being, we are really looking at the Father; otherwise the whole theology of the Mount of Olives and the cross, of the exodus of humanity in the new Moses, would lose its meaning. But in the same way Maximus is also the most determined conqueror of Nestorianism, which cuts us off from the mystery of the Trinity and again makes the wall of transcendence essentially impassable. If we remain on this side of the wall, however, then we are slaves, not friends" [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 27]).

¹⁰⁷ Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 46.

3.2.3. A Pauline Understanding of Freedom

From the perspective of a theological discussion on the theme of freedom, Ratzinger's reflections on St. Paul were occasioned mainly as a consequence of his interaction with liberation theology during the early period of his time at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.¹⁰⁸ The interaction challenged his interpretation of Christian liberation, while his reflections on pauline theology grounded his analysis of the implications of a Christian notion of freedom for the human person. As a result it forms an important plank in Ratzinger's work on the topic of freedom, yielding important insights to his overall vision, particularly in terms of identification with Christ and the status of the free person.

3.2.3.1. The Pauline Appropriation of the Greek Concept of ἐλευθερία

Ratzinger reflects on the word for freedom frequently found in St. Paul's writings, ἐλευθερία (cf. Rom 6:20, 8:21; Gal 2:4, 3:28, 5:1, 13; 1Cor 7:21, 22, 9:1, 19,10:29, 12:13; 2Cor 3:17; Eph 6:8; Col 3:11). In the political vocabulary of the Greeks, ἐλευθερία in no way implied, as it does today, the idea of freedom of choice or the possibility of doing as one pleases. Instead, it asserted the opposite to the concept of life as a slave by expressing the status of full membership of the relevant social structure, family or *polis*, in addition to the full rights and responsibilities that accompany it. The free man was one who was at home, one belonging to his household:

Es bedeutet den Vollbesitz der Rechte, die volle Zugehörigkeit, das Zu-Hause-Sein und so, aus dem vollen Mitsein und der vollen Mitverantwortung, die vollberechtigte Mitbestimmung in der Gestaltung der Geschicke. Frei ist, wer zu Hause ist, d.h. wer wirklich zum Haus gehört. Freiheit hat mit Beheimatung zu tun. Freiheit ist mit Rechtsbesitz, mit einer Seinshöhe identisch; erst eine Folgerung daraus ist dann die

¹⁰⁸ The articles dealing with freedom that gave rise to these reflections by Ratzinger first appeared in the 1980's. This was also the time of some of his most active communication with liberation theologians. See "Freiheit und Bundung in der Kirche," *Verein der Freunde der Univeristät Regensburg* 7 (1981): 5-21; and "Freiheit and Befreiung: Die anthropologische Vision der Instruktion 'Libertatis conscientia'," *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 5 (1986): 409-24; repr. in Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 175- 192, 239- 255 respectively. Ratzinger's reflections on this aspect of the pauline corpus are inspired mostly by the Letter to the Galatians. An important recent contribution to 20th century Germanic pauline studies on the topic of freedom is Wayne Coppins' doctoral dissertation from the University of Cambridge, *The Interpretation of Freedom in the Letters of Paul: With Special Reference to the German Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

Mitbestimmung der Geschicke, die aus der Zugehörigkeit kommt, und die andere Weise der Tätigkeit gegenüber dem Knecht, dem die “knechtliche Arbeit” zugewiesen wird, während der Freie die Muße und die angemessenen Künste des Freien pflegt.¹⁰⁹

Ratzinger proceeds from here to explain that, in biblical usage, the word is given a new depth of meaning. In Paul’s allegory of Sarah and Hagar (Gal 4:21-31), the “free” person is the one born of Sarah, the freeborn wife of Abraham, and has the right of inheritance in the household. The slave is the one born of a slave-girl who does not live in the household but had been permitted temporary lodgings. Initially then, the difference between “free” and “not free” is not found in their activities (cf. Gal 4:1) but rather in their status – in the kind of membership included in inheritance rights, and rights of possession. Hence to be free is to be heir – to be oneself a possessor; freedom is identical with the status of son (cf. Gal 4:5). Ratzinger can thus say that “only from this difference in being does the different manner of acting follow at the appointed time.”¹¹⁰ In other words, freedom is *status-related* rather than *activity-related* and this status informs the approach one takes towards one’s activities. As a result, our actions do not gain us freedom *per se*, but the understanding of the nature of our freedom influences the way we live. Therefore, to Ratzinger’s mind, the pauline interpretation of the Greek concept of ἐλευθερία logically flows from the status of one’s membership of Christ – it is to “[f]ulfil the law of Christ” (Gal 6:2).

¹⁰⁹ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 176 (“It means the possession of full rights, full membership, being at home, and thus, on the basis of this full association and full share in responsibility, full entitlement to have a say in the shaping of human destinies. The free man is one who is at home, that is, one who really belongs to the household. [*Freedom has to do with the provision of a (spiritual) home*]. Freedom is identical with the possession of rights and with a certain ontological dignity: an initial consequence of this is the ability to have a say in determining fates, which results from the fact of belonging, along with a different manner of activity from that of the servant, to whom ‘servile work’ is assigned, whereas the free man devotes himself to leisure and the appropriate arts of the free man” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 186-87]). The sentence in italics has been added because the English translation cited here overlooks this sentence which is found in the original German text. For insight into the creation and evolution of the Greek polis, and the life of freedom within it, see Christian Meier, *Kultur, um der Freiheit willen Griechische Anfänge – Anfang Europa?* (München: Siedler, 2009).

¹¹⁰ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 187. Ratzinger relies here on Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962) for his interpretation of adopted sonship in Christ as found in Gal 3:27: “[The putting on of Christ] is therefore not the expression of an ethical relationship but of a relationship of being with Christ. It marks the start of [jointly] sharing in Christ’s being . . .” (173).

Following this somewhat abstract reflection in the 1980's, Ratzinger returned to the pauline treatment of freedom in volume one of *Jesus of Nazareth*, under the heading "The Torah of the Messiah."¹¹¹ There he clarifies the idea that an authentic Christian freedom is intimately bound to a universalization of the Torah which, for Paul, amounts to the "Law of Christ" (Gal 6:2). Galatians 5 is Paul's passionate defence of freedom from the Law and Ratzinger suggests that Paul is referring to the Messiah who was expected to bring a "renewed Torah,"¹¹² when he says, "[f]or freedom, Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery" (Gal 5:1). But when Paul expands this to "do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love be servants of one another" (Gal 5:13), Ratzinger believes he is explaining that freedom is "in the service of good, freedom that allows itself to be led by the Spirit of God. It is precisely by letting oneself be led by God's Spirit, that one becomes free from the Law."¹¹³ Ratzinger finds in this the paradox of Paul's message: "[t]he 'law of Christ' is freedom." He continues: "[t]his freedom has content, then, it has direction, and it therefore contradicts what only apparently liberates man, but in truth makes him a slave."¹¹⁴

Only if Christ possesses divine authority does the universalization of the law accomplish its purpose. The "'Torah of the Messiah' is totally new and different – but it is precisely by being such that it fulfils the Torah of Moses."¹¹⁵ Jesus brings "the gift of universality, which was the one great definitive promise to Israel and the world . . . [and is] extended now in Jesus' new family to all nations over and above the bonds of descent according to the flesh."¹¹⁶ In this new understanding of freedom wrought by universalization

¹¹¹ See Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 99-127.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 99.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 100. See Gal 5:16 – 6:10.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 116-17.

of the people of God, obedience opens up in a completely new way – into filial communion with the will of God:

Das Vehikel dieser Universalisierung ist die neue Familie, die als ihre einzige Voraussetzung die Gemeinschaft mit Jesus, die Gemeinschaft im Willen Gottes hat. Denn das Ich Jesu steht nun eben doch nicht als ein eigenwilliges, in sich kreisendes Ego da. “Wer den Willen meines Vaters erfüllt, der ist für mich Bruder und Schwester und Mutter” (Mk 3:24f): Das Ich Jesu verkörpert die Willensgemeinschaft des Sohnes mit dem Vater. Es ist ein hörendes und gehorchendes Ich. Die Gemeinschaft mit ihm ist Sohnesgemeinschaft mit dem Vater – ist auf neuer und höchster Ebene Ja zum 4. Gebot. Sie ist Eintreten in die Familie derer, die zu Gott Vater sagen und es sagen können in Wir derjenigen, die mit Jesus und – durch das Hören auf ihn – dem Willen des Vaters geeint sind und so im Kern jenes Gehorsams stehen, den die Tora meint.¹¹⁷

In a sense, then, what is understood as “filial Sonship” in christology disseminates into ecclesiology as “filial communion.” To Ratzinger’s mind, being “called to freedom” (cf. Gal 5:13) is, so to speak, freedom for universality. It is not blind or arbitrary but, as Ratzinger explains, it is a “‘seeing’ freedom, anchored in communion of will with Jesus and so with God himself.”¹¹⁸ The universalization of Israel’s faith and hope, and the parallel liberation from the letter of the Law for a new communion, is tied to Jesus’ authority and his claim to

¹¹⁷ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan*, 149-50 (“The vehicle of this universalization is the new family, whose only admission requirement is communion with Jesus, communion in God’s will. For Jesus’ ‘I’ is by no means a self-willed ego revolving around itself alone. ‘Whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother’ (Mark 3:34f.): Jesus’ ‘I’ incarnates the Son’s communion of will with the Father. It is an ‘I’ that hears and obeys. Communion with him is filial communion with the Father – it is a yes to the fourth commandment on a new level, the highest level. It is entry into the family of those who call God Father and who can do so because they belong to a ‘we’ – formed of those who are united with Jesus and, by listening to him, united with the will of the Father, thereby attaining to the heart of the obedience intended by the Torah” [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 117]).

¹¹⁸ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 119. A very important tenet of Ratzinger’s christological hermeneutic is present in the background here. In stating that “[t]he proper interplay of Old and New Testaments was and is constitutive for the Church,” (121) he points out that a major issue for the nascent Church was the contention between Paul and the so-called Judaizers in Galatia. What is of fundamental importance for the Christian world here is “the connection between transcendence and fulfilment” (120). This is the coming to terms with universalization that is based on what Ratzinger calls a “‘seeing’ freedom” (119). On the one hand, Paul was aware that “a literal application of Israel’s social order to the people of all nations would have been tantamount to a denial of the universality of the growing community of God,” while, at the same time, he could see that “concrete juridical and social forms of political arrangements are no longer treated as a sacred law that is fixed *ad litteram* for all times and so for all peoples” (118). As a consequence, the Torah of the Messiah had another focal point which was a key tenet of living the Christian life. Rather than fastening to literal juridical and social forms, “[t]he decisive thing is the underlying communion of will with God given by Jesus. It frees men and nations to discover what aspects of political and social order accord with this communion of will and so to work out their own juridical arrangements. . . .The concrete political and social order is released from the directly sacred realm, from theocratic legislation, and is transferred to the freedom of man, whom Jesus has established in God’s will and taught thereby to see the right and the good” (ibid.). “Seeing” freedom, from this perspective, is a risky affair on God’s part, but nevertheless an essential part of the faculty of freedom, namely the willing of (uncoerced) filial communion. It is the “anchoring” in filial communion of will with Jesus that permits the form of “sight” by which one can live and “see,” so to speak, with the mind of God.

Sonship. On the other hand, Jesus' universalization into a new family would be wholly false if he spoke only as "a liberal reform[er] rabbi" and not with the full authority of the Son. If Jesus did not possess a divine authority, he would be "enticing us to disobedience against God's commandments."¹¹⁹ As Son, however, his interpretation of Torah is the beginning of a new communion in "a new, free obedience."¹²⁰ Ratzinger continues:

Der Sprung in die Universalität, die dafür notwendige neue Freiheit, kann nur durch einen größeren Gehorsam ermöglicht werden. Er kann als geschichtsbildende Kraft nur wirksam werden, wenn die Autorität dieser neuen Auslegung nicht geringer ist als die des ursprünglichen Textes selbst: Es muss eine göttliche Autorität sein. Die neue, universal Familie ist das Wozu der Sendung Jesu, aber seine göttliche Autorität – das Sohnsein Jesu in der Gemeinschaft mit dem Vater – ist die Voraussetzung, damit dieser Ausbruch ins Neue und Weite ohne Verrat und ohne Eigenmacht möglich wird.¹²¹

All of this gives a timely context to Ratzinger's earlier reflections on Paul. Reflecting on the meaning of the pauline approach, Ratzinger made four important statements regarding the freedom wrought by the universalization of the Torah. Firstly, the baptised ascend to full membership in respect of the people of God. From the status of being aliens they now belong to "the Israel of God" (Gal 6:16), with "unrestricted civil rights,"¹²² so to speak. Secondly, citizenship of Israel coincides with the moment when the tuition necessary in childhood ceases to have force (Gal 4:4) and is surpassed. What begins to apply to all is the law of the Son, the law of Christ: "[t]his is a consequence of their ontological status, that is, of the fact that through the Spirit of Christ they participate in the ontological status of Jesus Christ himself."¹²³ As such, these citizens are the *πνευματικοί*, the spiritual (Gal 6:1). Thirdly, and

¹¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 119-20.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von der Taufe im Jordan*, 152-53 ("The leap into universality, the new freedom that such a leap requires, is possible only on the basis of a greater obedience. Its power to shape history can come into play only if the authority of the new interpretation is no less than the authority of the original: It must be a divine authority. The new universal family is the purpose of Jesus' mission, but his divine authority – his Sonship in communion with the Father – is the prior condition that makes possible irruption of a new and broader reality without betrayal or high-handedness" [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 120]).

¹²² Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 188.

¹²³ Ibid.

consequently, following the law of Christ in a spiritual way isn't numinous but very concrete – even sacrificial. It means following in one's very own person, the person of Christ:

Das Gesetz Christi leben heißt also: gemäß dem Seinsstatus des Pneumatikers, in der Weise des Pneuma leben. Das schließt die Kreuzigung des Fleisches “mit seinen Leidenschaften und Begierden” ein (Gal 5:24); was es alles ausschließt, deutet Paulus in einem Lasterkatalog mit 15 Titeln an, von dem er sagt, daß er sich fortsetzen ließe (Gal 5:19-21).¹²⁴

In this way, Ratzinger indicates important aspects of the content of the pauline understanding of Christian freedom, namely, it is through baptism that God's people commences free and fully-fledged citizenship of the holy city, the new Jerusalem (cf. Rev. 3:12; 21:2); moreover the status of citizenship, and the rights of freedom which it entails, do not exist without effort. Hence, the fourth thing Ratzinger wants to stress in relation to the pauline meaning of Christian freedom is that it does not facilitate self-absorption but insists upon self-sacrifice for others: “freedom is not without its demands; neither is it arbitrary. It constrains to such an extent that it can be called a ‘crucifixion’.”¹²⁵

3.2.3.2. Defining Freedom: Ontological Citizenship in Christ

With his sights set on the criticisms he makes of freedom as a philosophical theme in the modern era, as discussed in Chapter 2 above, Ratzinger puts forward a corrective to the escalating one-sidedness of the human goal “to be like God.” In light of his study of Paul, he proposes a biblical vision of the “cry for freedom” that perennially arises in the human person, but which is not grounded in what he perceives as modern reductionisms. To his

¹²⁴ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 177 (“To live the law of Christ means, therefore, to live according to the ontological status of the spiritual man, in the way of the Spirit. This includes crucifying the flesh ‘with its passions and desires’ (Gal 5:24). Paul suggests the sorts of things it excludes in a list of fifteen vices, noting that it could be extended (Gal 5:19-21)” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 188]). St. Paul's list of vices, as Ratzinger indicates, is by no means exhaustive but it signals the undeniably destructive nature visited upon those who do not live by the Spirit: “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before, those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal 5:19-21).

¹²⁵ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 188.

mind, these isolate particular aspects of freedom and diminish the possibility of an authentic theological understanding:

Das “Sein-wie-Gott” ist zweifellos Ziel gerade auch der radikal emanzipativen Pädagogiken, die eine unumschränkte, gotthafte Freiheit und Allverfügung im Visier haben. Das Ziel ist richtig, nur das Gottesbild falsch: Sein wie Gott heißt sein wie der trinitarische Gott. Es heißt darum sein wie der gekreuzigte Christus.¹²⁶

From the *status-related* perspective, he maintains it is possible to attempt a biblical definition of freedom. Tentatively proceeding to do so, he supplies three elements to his definition, all of which converge on an idea that can be described as ontological citizenship in Christ. It consists of *participation* in “being” itself, *identification* with the dignity of one’s own being, and *education* towards the fullness of Personhood.

Firstly, freedom is something other than indeterminacy. For Ratzinger, freedom is *participation* in “being”:

[Freiheit] ist Partizipation, und zwar nicht bloß Partizipation an einem bestimmten Sozialgebilde, sondern Partizipation am Sein selbst. Sie bedeutet: Selbsteigentümer des Seins und nicht Unterworfener des Seins sein. Nur von da aus kann ja auch Gott als die Freiheit in Person definiert werden: weil er Totalität des Seinsbesitzes ist.¹²⁷

Secondly, Ratzinger says, this leads one to say that freedom is identical with *Seinshöhe* [ontological dignity].¹²⁸ This comes about provided that ontological dignity is truly *Höhe* [elevated]. Ratzinger does not clarify his words sufficiently here, aside from making a relatively unsubstantiated connection between freedom and love. He appears to be saying that a truly elevated view of freedom is to be understood as an identification with the dignity of

¹²⁶ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 178 (“‘To be like God’ is no doubt the goal of radically liberating pedagogical theories, too, which set their sights on an unfettered, godlike freedom with everything at its disposal. The goal is correct; it is just that the image of God is wrong: to be like God means being like the trinitarian God. Therefore, it means to be like Christ crucified” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 188]).

¹²⁷ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 178 (“[Freedom] is participation, and not just participation in a given social structure, but participation in being itself. It means to possess being oneself and not to be subject to being. Only from this point of view can God also be defined as freedom in person, because he is the possession of being in its totality” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 188]).

¹²⁸ See Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 178. It is impossible to translate the nuanced meaning of this somewhat obscure expression into English. One could render it as “exaltation of being,” “dignity of being” or as “ontological dignity.” In any case, in the context in which Ratzinger uses it, it carries the sense of “high being” – namely that freedom is a reality consistent with the highest or truest echelons of one’s being.

one's own being – this identification and dignity ultimately being a gift of love that is “gifted” (to us) *in* love. Authentic freedom furnishes us with a dignity that would otherwise be denied us.¹²⁹

Thirdly, making progress in the way of freedom involves being led in the ways of this ontological dignity, into the fullness of personhood. This is the true sense of “being like God.” Through education in the fullness of freedom, the person is being led into θεώσις. Since freedom identified with *Seinshöhe* only makes sense if it is truly “dignified,” Ratzinger believes the Christian content of freedom is about empowering humanity to grow and reach the fullest expression of the true characteristics of personhood:

Darum ist Pädagogik der Freiheit Führung in diese Seinshöhe hinein, Erziehung zum Sein, Erziehung zur Liebe und damit Führung in die θεώσις hinein, Führung in die Vergöttlichung.¹³⁰

In summary, Ratzinger takes Paul's *status-related* notion of ἐλευθερία and defines the biblical concept of freedom as *participation* in the life of God that comes about through being *educated* for creaturely divinisation or ontological citizenship in Christ.¹³¹ This pedagogy of freedom communicates the authentic contents of *identification* with *Seinshöhe* – a legitimate equilibrium, so to speak, in the relationship between God and humanity such as is capable of authentically fulfilling the human person's yearning to be “like God.” In Ratzinger's view,

¹²⁹ Despite the lack of clarity, the idea being outlined here does seem to be in keeping with a frequently recurring point of view found in Ratzinger's anthropological writings – namely, the need for the human person to acknowledge the truth of one's human nature and one's creatureliness. See this dissertation §§ 4.1.3.1. and 4.3.

¹³⁰ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 178 (“That is why the pedagogy of freedom is guidance in this ontological dignity, education for being, education for love, and thus guidance in θεώσις, guidance in divinization” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 188]). We can note here two variations in spelling for the Greek word for divinization – θεώσις and θείωσις. Although Ratzinger uses the latter, it is a case of an itacism – both are correct but are expressions of different orthographies in the ancient and patristic world. For a contemporary in-depth study of the history of deification from its birth as a second century metaphor with biblical roots to its maturity as a doctrine central to the spiritual life of the Byzantine Church, see Norman Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); see also Stephen Finlan and Vladimir Kharlamov, eds., *Theōsis: Deification in Christian Theology*, (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2006); Daniel A. Keating, *Deification and Grace* (Ave Maria: Sapientia Press, 2007).

¹³¹ Even though Ratzinger does not make the connection with the great christological hymns of the pauline corpus, it would be easy to identify the ἐν Χριστῷ and ἐν αὐτῷ, found repeatedly in Eph 1:3-10 and Col 1:12-20, with the theme of ontological citizenship.

when humanity's interpretation of God is viewed realistically from a biblical, and therefore trinitarian perspective, then the nature of humanity can also be understood authentically, especially the possibilities and perils of its insatiable yearning for liberation. Within the structure of the pauline understanding of freedom – an understanding which Ratzinger is keen to incorporate into his theology – “the pedagogy of love as a pedagogy of *θειώσις* is necessarily a pedagogy of the Cross.”¹³² Authentic human freedom, in Ratzinger's theology, is based on one's qualitative relationship in respect of God rather than on any quantitative retention of self-determination and the absence of constraint.¹³³

3.3. Conclusion

Ratzinger's christology is grounded on the premise that the figure of “Christ today” is in danger of being limited to the point where it could be prevented from achieving a broad, all-embracing recognition in the lives of believers. With this in mind, his narrative christology is largely an attempt to combine both mystery and reality in contemporary theology. From the point of view of considering the christological foundations of freedom, Ratzinger recalls the great liberating narrative of the Exodus in Israel's history in order to ensure that all the “dimensions” of the figure of Christ receive their proper context. If Israel's

¹³² Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 188. Love, as a dimension of Ratzinger's ecclesiology, as well as a pedagogy in the way of love, is something that will be addressed in detail in Chapter 5.

¹³³ For example one could be a liberated person while an inmate in a State prison – even more liberated than one's oppressors. As an instance of what he means about education in the way of the Cross, Ratzinger, in *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 188, n. 11, mentions the moving testimony of the experience of freedom from Sheila Cassidy in “Beten in Bedrängnis,” *Geist und Leben* 53 (1980): 81-91. She reports of her experience as a Christian in a Chilean jail alongside female companions, many of whom were unbelievers and Marxists: “We discussed the concept of freedom thoroughly and came to the conclusion that the intellectual and spiritual freedom that we had was something very real, even though we were surrounded by walls a meter thick, barbed wire, and men with machine guns. We were really quite free. The ones enslaved were the men who held us prisoners” (89). The experience is summed up for Ms. Cassidy in Lovelace's poem “To Althea from Prison”:

If I have freedom in my love
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone, that soar above,
Enjoy such liberty.

Ratzinger says a similar experience is found chapter 17 of Solzhenitsyn's *The First Circle* (London: Merlin, 1970): “You can tell old You-know-who – up there – that you only have power over people so long as you don't take *everything* away from them. But when you've robbed a man of *everything* he's no longer in your power – he's free again” (107). One could also add here Vietnamese Cardinal, François Xavier Nguyen Van Thuan and Benedict XVI's reference to his thirteen-year imprisonment. See *SS*, 32.

goal is the freedom *to* worship on Sinai, its source is none other than the freedom *of* worship which takes place *within* the inner life of God itself. Then, in the fullness of time, Christ's "yes" was revealed in the prayer of Jesus through the totality of his surrender, and the synergy of his human and divine wills. In this way, the Son is the gift who destroys isolation and reveals relationality as the norm of relationship for all time, and for eternity. Ultimately, Christ turns out to be the gift of *life* itself, the pattern or *truth* by which life is measured, and the *way* which must be freely assented to in order to obtain the fruits of *Seinshöhe*.

Ratzinger's biblical definition of freedom, chiefly sponsored by St Paul, insists on *participation* in the life of "being" itself, *identification* with the truth of one's own being, and *education* in the way of personhood. In his view, this "enquiry into freedom, and freedom as a problem of being, includes also an enquiry about God, the problem of God."¹³⁴ This explains his emphasis on the filial relationship within the Trinity, and the human-divine relationship within the figure of Christ. To Ratzinger's mind, Christ warrants being portrayed in all his dimensions so that contentment with a "fashionable Jesus" does not become too narrow an objective for theological research. This search for the figure of Christ, if it is not to be a futile exercise in biblical conceptualism on Ratzinger's part, must find its way towards a fruitful anthropology grounded upon his christological presuppositions. One of the ways in which Ratzinger achieves this is to undertake an anthropology of liberation which asks, how is the end of "becoming like God," i.e. being divinized, to be achieved? To this we now turn.

¹³⁴ Ratzinger, *Journey towards Easter*, 98.

CHAPTER 4: The Shape of Human Freedom: Anthropological Contours

4.0. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the anthropological aspects of Ratzinger's writings from a human freedom perspective. The chapter is divided into three subdivisions: the first looks at the human search for meaning, with particular reference to the life of faith. It will do so, on the one hand, through an epistemological analysis of being in the world and, on the other hand, through a narrative analysis of Ratzinger's writings concerning the scriptural categories of monotheism and creatureliness. This brings up the notion of the concept of truth as an inevitable dimension of the search for meaning. What emerges here is the need for the human person to take up a "yes" or "no" posture of dialogical orientation with regard to God. The second subdivision deals with Ratzinger's comparison of the modern synthesis of intellectual thought with what he advances as the Christian synthesis and philosophy of freedom. The third and final subdivision explores Ratzinger's presentation of the nature of sin as suppressed truth, and the exaltation of mere appearance. It enables him to bring forth a threefold theological framework which defines the ground of authentic human freedom. Ultimately, in a situation where the "anarchistic trait in the demand for freedom is growing stronger,"¹ it will be Ratzinger's contention that the exposition of Christian anthropology can embody an authentic philosophy of freedom proper to the human person.

4.1. Being Human and Free in the World

At this point we are returning to Ratzinger's comment that "the political, the philosophical and the religious problems of freedom have become an indissoluble whole" and "anyone looking for ways forward into the future must keep the whole of this in view and cannot make do with superficial pragmatic action."² Ratzinger opens up two foundational avenues of enquiry in regard to being human and free in a complex world: through an

¹ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 243.

² *Ibid.*, 243-44. See this dissertation § 2.1.

epistemological analysis of faith in the context of the human quest for meaning, and through an understanding of human personhood as being grounded in divine personhood.

The standard Christian interpretation of human origins rests on the insight that humanity finds itself torn between the original impulse of creation and its own historical and political ambition and momentum. No longer what was produced at the hands of the Creator, humanity “is burdened with another element that produces, beside the innate tendency *toward God*, the opposite impulse *away from God*.”³ The temptation to distrust is present in humanity because of an impulse toward destruction – a wish to say “no.”⁴ Ratzinger has called this the “tragic face of human history.”⁵ While in God, pure freedom is expressed as an eternal “yes,” human freedom is endowed with the capacity to say “yes” or “no” to the ground of meaning that sustains us. Otherwise, freedom could not be an authentic part of human existence.⁶ Ratzinger does not call this anthropological view into question, but rather addresses himself to interpreting its significance for understanding the human faculty of freedom.

4.1.1. The Human Act of Faith: Quest for Meaning and the Freedom of Making

This subdivision looks at Ratzinger’s existential analysis of the human action of belief. Ratzinger’s objective is to analyse the fabric of the structure of belief in a world predicated on ever-greater autonomy. To his mind, finding the “meaning” that gives sufficient reason to uphold one’s existence is more than a matter of finding a reason to simply persist with life. Rather, “belief,” understood as the discovery of meaning, is a vehicle for the freedom to participate meaningfully with the truth of creation as a whole. For him, the act of believing “does not belong to the relationship ‘know-make’ . . . typical of the intellectual

³ Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 51.

⁴ See *ibid.*, 52. Ratzinger highlights Rom 7:14-20 regarding the inner contradiction in human consciousness.

⁵ Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 35.

⁶ For an introductory overview of these issues from the anthropological perspective, see Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 88-108.

context of ‘makability’ thinking, but is much better expressed in the quite different relationship [of] ‘stand-understand’.”⁷ This is central to Ratzinger’s deliberations on the topic of freedom because with the aid of this distinction, he maps out the meaning of the human act of faith.

Ratzinger’s existential analysis of faith commences with Isa 7:9. He translates it as follows: “If you do not believe [if you do not *hold* (תִּצְקֶינִי) firm to Yahweh], then you will have no *foothold* [תִּצְקֶינִי].”⁸ Ratzinger exploits the fact that there is a wordplay here on the one Hebraic root word אָמַן (‘*mn* or *āmēn*). This word – which, Ratzinger says, incorporates the meanings of truth, firmness, firm ground, as well as loyalty, entrusting oneself, taking one’s stand on something – points to the fact that “faith in God appears as a holding on to God through which man gains a firm foothold for his life.”⁹ Faith, as defined here, is trustfully standing firm and understanding the meaning that upholds. Ratzinger concludes, faith is “entrusting oneself to that which has not been made by oneself and never could be made and which precisely in this way supports and makes possible all our making.”¹⁰

With this line of reasoning, Ratzinger wants to pinpoint two human attitudes to reality: practical knowledge and faith. The former is part of a “know-make” mentality, while the latter consists in a “stand-understand” orientation. For him, it is the case that both modes of thought are necessary and legitimate, but neither one ought to be unwittingly absorbed into the other: the former is in the realm of “makability” and the latter is the realm of “meaning.” By the former, Ratzinger is referring to an attitude that seeks the verifiability of facts, “the limitation to ‘phenomena’” that “directs [man’s] attention to the future of what he himself can

⁷ See Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 68-74, here at 68.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 70.

create.”¹¹ The latter – a assumed part of the ancient and medieval world – is the entrusting of self to the ground that upholds, to the creative original spirit, the *Creator Spiritus* in which thinking and making are one and the same thing. It is the attitude that understands “being” itself as apprehensible because God, pure intellect, created it and he created it by thinking it. Therefore, “all being is meaningful, *logos*, truth. . . . [and] it follows from this traditional view that human thinking is the rethinking of being itself, rethinking of the thought that is being itself.”¹²

Parsing one or other of these attitudes in isolation is a temptation of every age. In 2012, Benedict XVI said that “[w]hen the freedom to be creative becomes the freedom to create oneself, then necessarily the Maker himself is denied and ultimately man too is stripped of his dignity as a creature of God, as the image at the core of his being.”¹³ With the ascendancy of the “makability” attitude, linked as it is to the modern understanding of freedom, Ratzinger believes a radical anthropocentrism has occurred. When the link with the metaphysical fullness of being was broken, humanity sought refuge in that which it could control within its own powers:

[. . .] die Stelle der alten Gleichsetzung von Wahrheit und Sein die neue von Wahrheit und Tatsächlichkeit tritt, erkennbar ist nur das “Faktum,” das, was wir selbst gemacht haben. Nicht dem Sein nachzudenken ist die Aufgabe und Möglichkeit des

¹¹ Ibid., 58, 65, respectively. See ibid., 57-69. Ratzinger deepens the “stand-understand” notion by explaining that the Christian attitude to belief, as expressed in *āmēn*, means it is on the *logos* that I take my “stand” – this truth is the only ground suitable for humanity to “stand”: *āmēn* “expresses the abandonment of oneself to what we can neither make nor need to make, to the ground of the world as meaning, which first discloses to me the freedom to make” (75). This subdivision is looking at what Ratzinger means by this. Ratzinger develops the point by saying: “the Christian act of faith intrinsically includes the conviction that the meaningful ground, the *logos*, on which we take our stand, precisely because it is meaning, is also truth” (76). With regard to the Greek word *logos*, Ratzinger says it displays in its range of meanings a certain correspondence with the Hebrew *לֵב*. The ideas of word, meaning, rationality, truth are all included in its semantic range. Continuing the word-play then, he says that “meaning or sense that is not truth would be nonsense” (ibid.). An interesting Jewish perspective on the search for meaning is opened up in Jonathan Sacks, *The Great Partnership: God, Science and the Search for Meaning* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2011).

¹² Ibid., 59. Ratzinger further elaborates on this understanding that creation, as a whole, is meaningful: “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” (ibid.).

¹³ Benedict XVI, Address to the Members of the Roman Curia and Papal Representatives for the Traditional Exchange of Christmas Greetings, 21 December 2012. See

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2012/december/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20121221_auguri-curia_en.html (accessed 3 February 2013).

menschlichen Geistes, sondern dem Faktum, dem Gemachten, der Eigenwelt des Menschen, denn nur sie vermögen wir wahrhaft zu verstehen. . . . Inmitten des Ozeans des Zweifels, der nach dem Zusammenbruch der alten Metaphysik am Beginn der Neuzeit die Menschheit bedroht, wird hier im Faktum das feste Land wieder entdeckt, auf dem der Mensch versuchen kann, sich eine neue Existenz zu erbauen. Die Herrschaft des Faktums beginnt, das heißt die radikale Zuwendung des Menschen zu seinem eigenen Werk als dem allein ihm Gewissen.¹⁴

With the advance of an evolutionary, historical understanding of the world, Ratzinger points to the situation whereby “the world finally appeared no longer as the form of housing of being but as a process whose continual expansion is the movement of being itself.”¹⁵ The result is that today, humanity seems no longer in a position to look beyond itself except on the level of “facticity,” including even a view that he himself is a fact, albeit, a largely “random” one. Thus Ratzinger’s analysis concludes that humanity is in a curious situation today:

In dem Augenblick, in dem eine radikale Anthropozentrik einsetzt, der Mensch nur noch sein eigenes Werk erkennen kann, muss er doch zugleich lernen, sich selbst als ein bloß zufällig Gewordenes, auch nur als “Faktum,” hinzunehmen. Auch hier wird ihm gleichsam der Himmel eingerissen, aus dem er zu kommen schien, und nur die Erde der Fakten bleibt in seinen Händen zurück – die Erde, in der er jetzt mit den Spaten die mühsame Geschichte seines Werdens zu entziffern sucht.¹⁶

For Ratzinger, this line of reasoning is the tangible consequence of the transformed contemporary consciousness towards human freedom. Nevertheless, in seeking to assuage the dialectic between “meaning” and “makability” in the pastoral setting, he puts forward the premise that the human being has to make a decision with regard to meaning because on the

¹⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum: Vorlesung über das Apostolische Glaubensbekenntnis* (München: Kösel, 2007), 54-55 (“[. . .] the old equation of truth and being is replaced by the new one of truth and factuality; all that can be known is the *factum*, that which we have made ourselves. It is not the task of the human mind – nor is it within its capacity – to think about being; rather it is to think about the *factum*, which has been made, man’s own particular world, for this is all we can truly understand. . . . In the midst of the sea of doubt that threatened to engulf man at the beginning of the modern period after the collapse of the old metaphysics, the *factum* was here discovered as the dry land on which man could try to build a new existence for himself. The dominance of the fact began, that is, man’s complete devotion to his own work as the only certainty” [Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 61-62]).

¹⁵ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 62.

¹⁶ Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum*, 56 (“At the very moment when radical anthropocentrism set in and man could know only his work, he had to learn to accept himself as merely a chance occurrence, just another ‘fact.’ Here, too, the heaven from which he seemed to come was torn down, so to speak, and he was left with just the earth and its facts in his hands – the earth in which he now sought with the spade to decipher the laborious history of his development” [Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 63]).

level of “makability” one is incessantly threatened by meaninglessness. In the end no person can completely avoid the realm of belief. Belief is a human way of taking a stand in the totality of reality in a way that cannot be reduced to practical knowledge. The human being, he says, cannot live for long without love, without meaning, even if worldly affluence is abundantly present. Ratzinger’s anthropological insight is based on the dictum that “meaning is not derived from knowledge”:

Aus dem Stumpf der Ungewissheit, des Nicht-leben-Könnens zieht sich niemand selbst empor, ziehen wir uns auch nicht, wie Descartes noch meinen konnte, durch ein “Cogito ergo sum,” durch eine Kette von Vernunftschlüssen, heraus. Sinn, der selbst gemacht ist, ist im Letzten kein Sinn. Sinn, das heißt der Boden, worauf unsere Existenz als ganze stehen und leben kann, kann nicht gemacht, sondern nur empfangen werden.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum*, 66 (“No one can pull himself out of the bog of uncertainty, of not being able to live, by his own exertions; nor can we pull ourselves up, as Descartes still thought we could, by a *cogito ergo sum*, by a series of intellectual deductions. Meaning that is self-made is in the last analysis no meaning. Meaning, that is, the ground on which our existence as a totality can stand and live, cannot be made but only received” [Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 73]). Ratzinger points out that the believer and unbeliever paradoxically share a common ground which adds to the dilemma of human finitude. He says there is one question that invariably persists in human consciousness. John the Baptist anxiously asked it in his darkest hour: “Are you really he?” (cf. Matt 11:2) This is the question of the believer repeatedly confronted with unbelief. It is a question required by intellectual honesty and reason’s responsibility. Humanity’s situation before the question of God marks a real dilemma for humanity, since the power of unbelief, Ratzinger says, can be linked to the insecurity of human existence. When a believer is threatened by doubt, it is not this or that dogma that provides the stumbling block *per se* but the fragility of the whole structure. Ratzinger elaborates on the implications of this dilemma by identifying common cause between believer and non-believer: “If, on the one hand, the believer can perfect his faith only on the ocean of nihilism, temptation and doubt, if he has been assigned the ocean of uncertainty as the only possible site for his faith, on the other, the unbeliever is not to be understood undialectically as a mere man without faith. Just as we have recognised that a believer does not live immune to doubt but is always threatened with the plunge into the void, so now we can discern the entangled nature of human destinies and say that the nonbeliever does not lead a sealed-off, self-sufficient life, either” (Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 44-45). See also *ibid.*, 21, 28; *What it means to be a Christian*, 21-31; *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 33; *God and the World*, 27-41. For Ratzinger, no matter how much an unbeliever may regard the “mystical” to have been discarded in favour of what is immediately certain, he or she “will never be free of the secret uncertainty about whether positivism really has the last word” (Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 45). The non-believer can never be absolutely certain of the autonomy of what he or she has seen and interpreted as a whole. Just as a believer knows him or herself to be constantly threatened and tempted by unbelief, so a non-believer is equally troubled by doubts about unbelief. Faith remains a temptation and a threat to a positivistic worldview with its permanently self-contained world. There is, Ratzinger says, no escaping the dilemma of being a human being: evading the “uncertainty of belief” leads to an experience of the “uncertainty of unbelief” which can never, with certainty, fully eliminate the possibility that belief may, after all, be the truth and the meaning that uphold us. Ratzinger says that “it is not until belief is rejected that its unrejectability becomes evident” (45). He speaks of Martin Buber’s (1878-1965) unavoidable “perhaps” which haunted a child of the Enlightenment so much that in the very act of rejection the experience of the unrejectability of the God-question was felt. See *ibid.*, 46, where Ratzinger recounts the Austrian born Jewish philosopher’s account of the interaction between a Rabbi and a scholar of the Enlightenment. The scholar becomes haunted by the Rabbi’s words: “My son, the great scholars of the Torah with whom you have argued wasted their words on you; as you departed you laughed at them. They were unable to lay God and his Kingdom on the table before you, and neither can I. But think, my son, perhaps it is true” (Martin Buber, *Werke 3: Schriften zum Chassidismus* [Munich, Kosel-Verlag, 1963], 348). Ratzinger

Ratzinger then seeks to find the place of convergence between his epistemological analysis of the basic attitude of belief and the Christian mode of belief. He says “to believe as a Christian means in fact entrusting oneself to the meaning that upholds me and the world; taking it as the firm ground on which I can stand fearlessly.”¹⁸ However, Ratzinger is careful to avoid exceeding the limits of the human intellect. He sets about confirming the human capacity to receive meaning by pointing out that both practical knowledge and belief are limited. On the one hand, belief is not knowledge in the sense of calculability, but equally, practical knowledge is limited since its very methodology renounces the search for “meaningful” truth. The human approach to truth emerges here – our capacity to understand (truth) rests upon the ground of meaning upon which we stand:

Die Form, wie der Mensch mit der Wahrheit des Seins zu tun erhält, ist nicht *Wissen*, sondern *Verstehen*: Verstehen des Sinnes, dem er sich anvertraut hat. Und freilich werden wir hinzufügen müssen, dass nur im Stehen sich das Verstehen eröffnet, nicht außerhalb davon. Eines geschieht nicht ohne das andere, denn Verstehen bedeutet, den Sinn, den man als *Grund* empfangen hat, als *Sinn* zu ergreifen und begreifen. Ich denke, dies sei die genaue Bedeutung dessen, was wir mit Verstehen meinen: dass wir den Grund, worauf wir uns gestellt haben, als Sinn und als Wahrheit ergreifen lernen; dass wir erkennen lernen, dass der *Grund Sinn* darstellt.¹⁹

develops Buber’s idea further in *Introduction to Christianity*, 56-7, 70. Thus, Ratzinger says, what emerges is that “both the believer and non-believer share, each in their own way, doubt and belief, if they do not hide from themselves and from the truth of their being” (46-47). Neither person can quite get away untroubled, since for a believer, faith is present *against* doubt and, for a non-believer, faith is present *through* doubt and in the *form* of doubt. Doubt saves both sides from remaining imprisoned in their own world and languishing in absolute self-sufficiency. Doubt opens an avenue of communication allowing the believer to share in the fate of the unbeliever, while the form which belief takes provides a constant challenge to the unbeliever. Ratzinger maintains that the basic pattern of human existence lies in finding the finality of one’s existence in this unceasing and unavoidable rivalry between doubt and belief, temptation and certainty.

¹⁸ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 74.

¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum*, 70 (“The tool with which man is equipped to deal with the truth of being is not *knowledge* but *understanding*: understanding of the meaning to which he has entrusted himself. And we must certainly add that ‘understanding’ only reveals itself in ‘standing,’ not apart from it. One cannot occur without the other, for understanding means seizing and grasping as *meaning* the meaning that man had received as *ground*. I think this is the precise significance of what we mean by understanding: that we learn to grasp the ground on which we have taken our stand as meaning and truth; that we learn to perceive that *ground* represents *meaning*” [Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 77]). In the argument that meaning elicits understanding, it is a short step for Ratzinger to imply that understanding is an intrinsic property of faith. Knowledge of the functional aspects of the world cannot bring about a satisfactory understanding of the world, or of being. Ratzinger says understanding grows out of belief. Hence he says, in the theological discussion of God: “believing and understanding belong together no less than believing and ‘standing,’ simply because standing and understanding are inseparable” (Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 78). Our “understanding” only makes sense when it is conceived of as more than the mere ability to apprehend; it is the apprehension of the fact that we are comprehended. Only then, precisely because it comprehends us, does understanding furnish us with meaning.

Ratzinger is careful, however, to avoid the impression that the mode of Christian belief is a mere “possession” of meaning, because that would paradoxically bear the hallmarks of practical knowledge as understood in the present context. The point he asserts is that the trust required of a recipient of “meaning” is not a blind surrender to the irrational: “On the contrary, it is a movement toward the *logos*, the *ratio*, towards meaning and so towards truth itself, for in the final analysis the ground on which man takes his stand cannot possibly be anything else but the truth revealing itself.”²⁰

Ratzinger says that Christians understand their existence as a response to the reason, the *logos*, that upholds and maintains all things. He advocates the attitude that “receiving precedes making”²¹ and the primacy of the invisible as the truly real. This doesn’t reduce the value of “making,” but, on the contrary, defines the “*die Freiheit des Machens*” or “the freedom of making” as a gift to be respected.²² Thus, the proper context of the “freedom of making” is that of a creative and participative faculty bestowed upon us by God to contribute to the world in which we live:

Christlicher Glaube . . . bedeutet die Option dafür, dass das Nichtzusehende wirklicher ist als das zu Sehende. Er ist das Bekenntnis zum Primat des Unsichtbaren als des eigentlich Wirklichen, das uns trägt und daher ermächtigt, mit gelöster Gelassenheit uns dem Sichtbaren zu stellen – in der Verantwortung vor dem Unsichtbaren als dem wahren Grund aller Dinge. Insofern ist freilich – man kann es nicht leugnen – christlicher Glaube in doppelter Hinsicht ein Affront gegen die Einstellung, zu der uns die heutige Weltsituation zu drängen scheint.²³

4.1.2. Human Freedom and Relativity in the Manner of Christ

The second line of enquiry which Ratzinger pursues regarding being human and free in the world is an understanding of human personhood derived from divine personhood.

²⁰ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 75.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 73.

²² Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum*, 67.

²³ *Ibid.*, 66-67 (“Christian belief . . . means opting for the view that what cannot be seen is more real than what can be seen. It is an avowal of the primacy of the invisible as the truly real, which upholds us and hence enables us to face the visible with calm composure – knowing that we are responsible before the invisible as the true ground of all things. To that extent it is undeniable that Christian belief is a double affront to the attitude that the present world situation seems to force us to adopt” [Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 74]).

Modern intellectual history has demonstrated the vast ground of possibility that comes with being a person endowed with freedom. In the Christian world-view, the human person finds themselves in the midst of Christ's "yes" to the will of the Father, and their own freedom to decide whether or not to participate in this. In any event, Ratzinger says, intellectual honesty demands that we address the unavoidability of human finitude. He once described finitude as marking the "real burden of our existence"²⁴ to the point where "an immense feeling of futility pervades everything."²⁵ The possibility of saying "no" to God is present in the nature of finite creatures, but has developed in history. We are built for love but we can also withdraw and isolate ourselves, desiring self-sufficiency. For the finite creature, "faith is always given only in the context of a fragile freedom." This is what Ratzinger describes as "God's great gamble."²⁶ This essential tension is correlative to humanity's undeniable greatness. What looks like a gamble in human vocabulary is a challenge to the human race to share in God's fundamental attitude of trusting in human greatness. The heart of the human dilemma is the great peril that accompanies great potential:

[Der Mensch] ist zum Größten berufen, aber seine Freiheit kann den anderen Versuch, Größe gegen Gott haben zu wollen und zu einem Gegengott zu werden, zu einer wirklichen Bedrohung werden lassen. Sie kann sein Absturz sein, so daß er zu einem zerstörerischen Dämon wird. Manchmal möchten wir zu Gott am liebsten sagen, hättest du den Menschen doch weniger groß gemacht, dann wäre er auch weniger gefährlich. Hättest du ihm die Freiheit nicht gegeben, dann könnte er nicht so weit abstürzen. Und doch wagen wir es dann letztlich nicht zu sagen, weil wir auch dankbar sein müssen, daß Gott die Größe geschaffen hat. Und wenn er das Risiko der Freiheit des Menschen und damit aller ihrer Abstürze auf sich nimmt, dann können wir zwar schauern vor dem, was dabei geschehen kann, und müssen versuchen, alle positiven Kräfte zu mobilisieren, aber wir müssen auch das Grundvertrauen, das Gott in den Menschen hat, mitteilen.²⁷

²⁴ Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 31.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁶ Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 55. See also *ibid.*, 278-81.

²⁷ Ratzinger, *Gott und die Welt*, 102 ("[Man] is called to greatness, but his freedom can allow the contrary temptation, that of wanting to be great over against God and thus to become a kind of anti-God, to develop into a serious threat. This is always liable to be his fall from greatness, so that he turns into a demon of destruction. Sometimes we even feel like saying to God, if you had only made man a little less great, then he would be less dangerous. If you hadn't given him his freedom, then he would not be able to fall so far. And yet, we don't quite dare to say it in the end, because at the same time we are grateful that God did put greatness into man. And if he takes upon himself the risk inherent in man's freedom and all the falls from greatness it involves, then we feel horrified by the thought of what that might mean, and we have to try to summon up all the positive forces at our

Nevertheless, in this “gamble,” the temptation for human self-emancipation from God remains, since “God, in a completely understandable logic of existence, appears in his infinitude to be a threat to our finitude, and that for this reason men and women want to be free of God in order to be free themselves.”²⁸ If God – and by extension, all other persons – are rivals to individual freedom, is there any way in which one can live harmoniously with them, or must the primacy of self-sufficiency cause the human person to be mistrustful of all, including God? If there is any possibility of building harmony in the relationship between God and personal freedom, the description of the relationship that pertains between God and the human person endowed with freedom must be carefully delineated. Ratzinger does this by considering the theme of personhood in God.

In line with patristic trinitarian theology, Ratzinger points out that the three persons in the Trinity exist as natural relations as opposed to persons as substances. While the substance is one, on the level of dialogical reality, God is pure relativity towards the other: “[i]n God, person means relation.”²⁹ Ratzinger suggests that Johannine theology provides the clearest testimony to the “phenomenon of pure relativity as the nature of person.”³⁰ For example it is the same Christ who uses the formulas, “The Son cannot do anything of himself” (John 5:19) and “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). This is central to Ratzinger’s argument in characterising a divine from a purely human relationality:

Gerade deswegen, weil [der Sohn] nichts von sich allein hat, weil er sich nicht als eine abgegrenzte Substanz neben den Vater stellt, sondern *in* der totalen Relativität auf ihn hin ist, nichts anderes darstellt als die Relativität auf ihn hin, die keinen Vorbehalt des bloß Eigenen sich ausgrenzt, darum sind sie eins.³¹

command, but we also have to share in God’s fundamental attitude of putting trust in man” [Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 119]).

²⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *The End of Time? The Provocation of Talking about God*, eds. Tiemo Rainer Peters & Claus Urban, trans. Matthew Ashley (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 82.

²⁹ Ratzinger, *Dogma und Preaching*, 186.

³⁰ Ratzinger, *Dogma und Verkündigung*, 208.

³¹ *Ibid.* (“Precisely because [the Son] has nothing of his own alone, because he is not defined as a substance in addition to the Father, but in total relativity towards him, in a relatedness which does not marginalise what is properly his own – precisely thus are they one” [own translation]).

Ratzinger finds a moment of profound illumination here regarding the biblical meaning of person: “*not* a self-enclosed substance, but rather the phenomenon of total relatedness, which of course can ultimately enter into its fullness only with the one who is God, yet which is a signpost pointing the way for all personal being. Thus . . . we have reached the point at which the doctrine about God passes into Christology and anthropology.”³² To be a person, then, is to be relational. Instead of there being a contradiction of ownership at the point of pure relatedness, Ratzinger surmises that the impact of this phenomenon clarifies the meaning of both God and the human person:

Dein Ich ist einerseits dein Allereigenstes und zugleich das, was du am wenigsten von dir selber hast, was am meisten dein Nichts-Eigenes ist, das erst vom Du her überhaupt als Ich sein kann. . . . Dies ist nun zwar zunächst nur eine Aussage über die Dreieinigkeit, aber zugleich doch die Grundaussage darüber, worauf es im Begriff Person überhaupt ankommt, die Eröffnung des Personbegriffs in den menschlichen Geist hinein und sein tragender Ursprung.³³

Ratzinger believes the opening up of a Christ-centred anthropology occurs when Christ says to his followers, “[w]ithout me you can do nothing” (John 15:5), and when he prays “that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:11):

Damit gehört nun zum Wesen auch der Jüngerexistenz, daß der Mensch nicht den Vorbehalt des bloß Eigenen setzt, nicht die Substanz des abgeschlossenen Ich zu bilden sich müht, sondern in die reine Relativität auf den anderen hin und auf Gott hin eintritt, und so gerade wahrhaft zu sich selber kommt und in die Fülle seines Eigenen, weil er in die Einheit mit dem hinein tritt, auf das hin er relativ ist.³⁴

When relativity towards the other is understood as constituting personhood without prejudicing one’s own identity, Ratzinger says the significance of Christ’s personhood and human freedom are mutually illuminated. What truly distinguishes human consciousness is

³² Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 188.

³³ Ratzinger, *Dogma und Verkündigung*, 210 (“Your self is, on the one hand, what is most peculiarly yours, and, at the same time, that which you own the least in and of yourself, that which is most truly not your own, which can be ‘I’ at all only in terms of a ‘Thou.’ . . . Now initially this is only a statement about the Trinity, yet, at the same time, it is the fundamental statement about what matters in the concept of person in general, the inauguration of the concept of person in the life of the human mind and the origin that supports it” [Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 189]).

³⁴ Ratzinger, *Dogma und Verkündigung*, 208-9 (“Thus it is part of the nature of discipleship also that man does not reserve what is merely his own, does not strive to develop the substance of his self-enclosed ego, but rather enters into pure relativity directed toward the other and toward God and precisely in this way truly comes to himself and comes into the fullness of what is his own, because he enters into union with that to which he is related” [Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 187]).

its ability to reflect not only on itself and being in general, but on the wholly other, the transcendent God. Central to this understanding of relativity is that “such being-totally-with-the-other as we find in [Christ] does not abolish his being-with-himself, but rather brings it to fulfilment.”³⁵ As the “second Adam” (cf. Rom 5:12-14; 1Cor 15:42-49), Scripture means to characterise Christ as the true fulfilment of the idea of the human person, by adding the idea of “we” to the ideas of “I” and “you”:

In Christus, dem Menschen, der ganz bei Gott ist, wird das Menschsein nicht aufgehoben, sondern kommt zu seiner höchsten Möglichkeit, die im Sich-überschreiten ins Absolute hinein und im Eingeholtwerden der eigenen Relativität in die Absolutheit der göttlichen Liebe besteht. . . . Denn Christus, den die Schrift als den letzten Adam, also als den endgültigen Menschen benennt, erscheint in den Zeugnissen des Glaubens als der umfassende Raum, in dem sich das Wir der Menschen zum Vater hin sammelt. Er ist nicht nur ein Vorbild, hinter dem hergegangen wird, sondern er ist der einbegreifende Raum, in dem sich das Wir der Menschen sammelt auf das Du Gottes hin.³⁶

The dynamic characterisation of the human person flowing from Christ, the new Adam, is that of a “signpost indicating where humanity is tending, since as long as history is under way, humanity never completely catches up with itself.”³⁷ Such a definition factors in the historicity of the human person: a human being constituted in terms of relativity towards the eternal, implies a being on the “way” in the manner of human history.

This leads Ratzinger to a related point which, in fact, is an opening argument towards the existence of an ecclesial reality for the human person endowed with freedom. Ratzinger believes a viewpoint which modern and Christian philosophy does not fully appreciate is that

³⁵ Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 194.

³⁶ Ratzinger, *Dogma und Verkündigung*, 217-18 (“In Christ, the man who is entirely with God, humanity is not abolished but, rather, arrives at its highest potential, which consists of self-surpassing that leads into the absolute and of having one’s own relatedness caught up into the absolute character of divine love. . . . For Christ, whom Scripture call the last Adam and, thus, the ultimate man, appears in the testimonies of the faith as the comprehensive space in which the We of men is gathered in to the Father. He is not only a model to be followed, but he is also the inclusive space in which the We of mankind is gathered into the Thou of God” [Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 194-95]).

³⁷ Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 194. One is reminded of the Fourth Lateran Council’s teaching on the similarity and distinction between divine and human personhood: “For between creator and creature there can be noted no similarity so great that a greater dissimilarity cannot be seen between them” (See Norman Tanner, ed., *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils: Nicaea I- Lateran V*, 232). Freedom is such an innate part of both human and divine identity, that the paradoxical tension of likeness and irreducible gap between creator and creature, as expressed by the Council, can be legitimately applied here.

the Christian economy doesn't consist merely of a dialogical principle of a pure "I-Thou" relationship. Neither on the side of human beings nor on the side of God does a merely pure "I" or a pure "thou" exist. In fact on both sides the "I" is integrated into a greater "we." Ratzinger thus claims that a fundamental aspect of the theological concept of person is that not even God can be seen as a pure and simple "I" towards which the human person tends. What a Christian concept of God does is it "expressly denies the divine monarchy in the sense of ancient philosophy" and, as a matter of principle, "has given to multiplicity the same dignity as unity."³⁸ This communitarian "we" which, when fully understood, means that God exists only as a "we," also prepares the space of the human "we." In this sense Ratzinger says the relationality of personhood teaches us that "[t]he one Christ is . . . the We into which Love, namely, the Spirit, gathers us, who thus signifies the bond uniting us at the same time with one another and to the common Thou of the one Father."³⁹

At this point, we have come to see that Ratzinger understands personhood in relational terms – a relationality of the "I" and "Thou" that permits of a "we."⁴⁰ This

³⁸ Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 195.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 196. In the past, Ratzinger has been critical of what he describes as the anthropological turn in Augustine's doctrine of the Trinity. The "we" reality of God that comes to light in the three-fold liturgical formula *per Christum in Spiritu Sancto ad Patrem* was one of the most fundamental developments of the Western Church and impacted upon the concept of the Church and the understanding of the human person. But gradually the full varacity of the "we" reality of God was bracketed off and "squeezed into the individualistically narrowed I-Thou relationship, which in this narrowness ultimately loses the Thou as well. As a consequence of Augustine's doctrine on the Trinity, in fact, the Divine Persons were entirely enclosed within God's interior and to the outside God became a pure I; thus the entire We-dimension lost its place in theology and the individualised I-Thou relationship became increasingly narrow, until finally, in transcendental philosophy (for example, Kant's), the Thou can no longer be found, either" (*ibid.*). It was from an unlikely source, he says – the work of Feuerbach – that a breakthrough occurred into personal reality between the "I" and the "Thou." It stimulated theology to reflect more deeply on the origin of our being. Interestingly, and in a subsequent note to the original text, Ratzinger said his judgement of Augustine on this issue was harsh because "for Augustine the 'psychological doctrine of the Trinity' remains an attempt at understanding that is kept in balance by factors in tradition" (*ibid.* n. 12). Far more radical, to Ratzinger's mind was Aquinas' separation of the philosophical doctrine of the one God and the theological doctrine of the Trinity. It even led Aquinas to justify the formula "God is *una persona*" – something which had been anathema in the early Church. See *ST III*, q.3, a.3 ad I. For more on the effects of Augustine's trinitarian insights in the history of theology, see Thomas J. Norris, *A Fractured Relationship: Faith and the Crisis of Cultures* (Dublin: Veritas, 2007), 209-242.

⁴⁰ Ratzinger's epistemological analysis presupposes that the Christian mode of belief is that of personal encounter because its central formula is expressed not by "I believe in something," but "I believe in you." Through the relationship of Jesus with the Father, Christ is not a neutral observer but, as the *logos*, is the witness to the presence of the eternal in the world. Through him the meaning of the world is present before us and "it vouchsafes itself to us as love that loves even me and makes life worth living by this incomprehensible gift of a

constitutes the fullness of personal freedom-in- relation without prejudicing one's own identity, and legitimises the human aptitude for creativity. It is also understood, at this stage, that Ratzinger believes the situation of being free and human in the world is predicated on holding to a meaning that can uphold the whole of one's existence, including the burden of finitude. To Ratzinger's mind, the idea at the root of a person's inner security is the harmony they enjoy within themselves. Living out of this affirmation, only the one who can accept oneself can also accept the "Thou," and the world:

Der Grund dafür, daß ein Mensch das Du nicht akzeptieren, mit ihm nicht ins reine kommen kann, liegt darin, daß er sein Ich nicht mag und dann erst recht nicht ein Du annehmen kann. . . . Sein Ich wird ihm nur akzeptabel dadurch, daß es zuerst von einem anderen Ich akzeptiert ist. Er kann sich selbst nur lieben, wenn er zuvor von einem anderen geliebt ist. . . . Erst indem das Leben angenommen wird und sich als angenommenes vorfindet, wird es annehmbar. Der Mensch ist das merkwürdige Wesen, das nicht nur der physischen Geburt, sondern der Gutheissung bedarf, um bestehen zu können.⁴¹

Furthermore, Ratzinger says the affirmation that leads to self-acceptance requires the "I" to hear from beyond the self: "It is good that you exist" in an act that is more than a linguistic formula. Ratzinger says it must come from an "act of the entire being that we call

love free from any threat of fading away or any tinge of egoism" (Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 79). The meaning of the world therefore resides in a trustworthy "you" – one that is not itself an open question but the ground of all that is. Faith is the finding of a "you" that upholds me in this world with not only the promise, but the guarantee of indestructible love: "Christian faith lives on the discovery that not only is there such a thing as objective meaning but that this meaning knows me and loves me, that I can entrust myself to it like the child who knows that everything he may be wondering about is safe in the 'you' of his mother. Thus in the last analysis believing, trusting, and loving are one, and all the theses around which belief revolves are only concrete expressions of the all-embracing about-turn, of the assertion 'I believe in you' – of the discovery of God in the countenance of the man Jesus of Nazareth" (80). See also *ibid.*, 21-22; *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 78-84; *God and the World*, 41-45, 54, 85-86, 96-100, 110-12; *Truth and Tolerance*, 158. See also Markus Rutsche, *Die Relationalität Gottes bei Martin Buber und Joseph Ratzinger* (Norderstedt: GRIN Verlag, 2007).

⁴¹ Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*, 83 ("The reason is that a person cannot accept 'thou,' cannot come to terms with him, lies in the fact that 'I' does not like the self, and therefore cannot accept a 'thou'. . . . His 'I' is only acceptable to him if it is first accepted by another 'I.' He can only love himself, if he has firstly been loved by someone else. . . . Only when life is accepted and is perceived so, does it becomes acceptable. Man is the strange creature that requires not only physical birth, but affirmation, in order to survive" [own translation]). Ratzinger provides three examples which verify his view: A mother gives not only physical life but total life to a child when she turns its tears into smiles. The phenomenon known as hospitalism comes from the same insight. It was a paediatric diagnosis used in the 1930's to describe infants who deteriorated in hospital because of lack of social contact between infants and a caregiver. It was believed that poorly funded hospitals experience less of this because they could not afford incubators and consequently the hospital staff regularly held the infants in their arms; finally, Ratzinger believes the violent disturbances of this present generation also have their root here: "the magic of the revolution is no longer merely protest against repairable injustices, but an objection to being itself, which has not experienced its acceptance and therefore assumes its unacceptability" (*ibid.*).

love [for] it is the way of love to will the other's existence and, at the same time, to bring that existence forth again." As such "[t]he key to the *I* lies with the *thou*; the way to the *thou* is via the *I*."⁴² This brings into focus a fundamental question for Ratzinger: "Is it true, then, when someone says to me: 'It is good that you exist?' Is it really good?" Or, as Ratzinger probes,

Kann seine Liebe, die mich will, nicht letztlich ein tragischer Irrtum sein? Wenn die Liebe, die mich zum Sein ermutigt, nicht auf Wahrheit beruht, dann muß man am Ende auch der Liebe fluchen, die mich betrügt, die etwas festhält, was eigentlich besser zerstört würde.⁴³

Formulated as an indirect critique and response to the contemporary experience of life espoused by Sartre and others, Ratzinger says this apparently so simple act of liking myself, of being at one with myself, actually raises the question of the whole universe because it "raises the question of truth: Is it good that I exist? Is it good that anything at all exists? Is the world good?"⁴⁴ Ratzinger believes the reticence today to enthusiastically affirm that existence is good has become the source of an incessant anxiety and despair in humanity: "Love alone cannot do. If the truth is against it, it is in vain. Only when truth and love coincide, man can be happy: only the truth liberates."⁴⁵ In this way, the meaning that upholds consists of a dependable and steadfast justice.

As we have seen in this subdivision, Ratzinger's verbalises the human disquiet about the dilemma of finitude by asking: can we trust our creation? His answer is "yes" – in faith we can accept the truth of being a creation that is loved and upheld by God. Ratzinger believes that, ultimately, trusting in our origin must be a prerequisite for believing in our destination.⁴⁶ When the inescapability of the "perhaps" of both belief and unbelief is linked to

⁴² Ibid., 84. See also Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 99-104.

⁴³ Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*, 84 ("Can this love that wills me ultimately be a tragic mistake? If the love that encouraged me to be, is not based on truth, then I must also end up cursing the love that betrays me, that holds something that would actually be better were it destroyed" [own translation]).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid. For more in-depth reflection on this, see Ratzinger, "Vorfragen zu einer Theologie der Erlösung," in Leo Scheffczyk, ed., *Erlösung und Emanzipation* (Freiburg: Herder, 1973), 141-55.

⁴⁶ Ratzinger's epistemological analysis is an endorsement that "not our love for God but God's love for us" (1John 4:10) is the rational basis for human existence. See Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 88-97.

the unavoidability of one's finitude, Ratzinger believes the inner tension of human existence is truly felt. He defines authentic human freedom as being in relation to, and in distinction from, the absolute relativity of divine freedom. The differentiation implies that the human person takes up a particular orientation in relation to the trustworthy meaning that grounds all reality. In other words, in freedom, the human person is afforded the dignity of addressing one's "yes" or "no" with regard to God's constant "yes." Unlike the pure relativity existent in the divine freedom of the Triune God, human freedom is qualitatively different. For the human person there is the distinct possibility of saying "no" to the meaning upholding one's origin and destiny. This is partly occasioned by the reality of doubt which penetrates the search for a meaning on which to build one's life; otherwise the human "yes" is not erected freely as an act of trust in the truth and meaning that upholds. This provokes the question of what the basic pattern of the human person's "yes" looks like. In this task, Ratzinger proceeds by contemplating the *monotheism* wrought by the biblical pilgrimage from Exodus to Sinai. Truth is a necessary component of the search for meaning and the presence of the "freed" person on Sinai calls for the acceptance of a truth, namely the truth of *creatureliness*, on the part of humanity. This is the basic pattern to which Ratzinger makes reference, and it links the particularity of the human person's "yes" to the universal truth contained in the inner meaning of creation.

4.1.3. Categories of Authentic Human Freedom: Monotheism and Creatureliness

Following on from our concentration on Ratzinger's existential analysis of faith and personhood, we now turn to two specifically scriptural categories of authentic freedom. For Ratzinger these consist of monotheism and creatureliness. The former implies a form of Christian universalism based on the claim to truth which accompanies the insight that the only real human salvation is found in Christ Jesus (cf. Acts 4:12; 1Tim 2:5; Eph 4:4; John 8:12; 10:9; 11:25; 14:6; 1John 4:14; 5:11). The latter, at least from the perspective of this

study of Ratzinger's writings, refers to the particularity of human freedom to say "yes" or "no" to the truth of creatureliness. This subdivision will look at these positions and examine how Ratzinger envisages both of them converging at the covenantal site at "Sinai," where the truth about the one God can be encountered in a sphere that empowers the human person into recognising the truth about oneself, and into taking up a posture of dialogical orientation with regard to God.

4.1.3.1. The Monotheistic Revolution: Approaching the Truth that Frees

Firstly, the position that Christianity assigns itself in the history of religions is one that was basically expressed long ago: it sees in Christ the only real human salvation, and thus, its final freedom. Of this Ratzinger says

Nicht Machttrieb war der Ausgangspunkt des christlichen Universalismus, sondern die Gewißheit, die rettende Erkenntnis und die erlösende Liebe empfangen zu haben, auf die alle Menschen Anspruch haben und auf die sie im Innersten ihres Wesens warten. Die Mission wurde nicht als Zugewinn von Menschen für den eigenen Machtbereich betrachtet, sondern als pflichtgemäßes Weitergeben dessen, was für alle bestimmt war und wessen alle bedurften.⁴⁷

However, he says, strong doubts have arisen today that cannot be ignored about the certitude of saving knowledge: "[t]he history of the worldwide mission is seen by many, not as the history of the spreading of liberating truth and love, but to a great extent as the history of a process of alienation and of domination by force." He believes this requires of Christians "a

⁴⁷ Ratzinger, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz*, 46 ("[i]t was not the drive to power that launched Christian universalism but the certitude of having received the saving knowledge and the redeeming love to which all people have a claim and for which, in the inmost depths of their being, they are waiting. The mission was regarded, not as the acquisition of people for their own sphere of domination, but as the passing on, as a matter of obligation, of something meant for everyone and of which everyone stood in need" [Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 55-56]). Ratzinger has always been concerned with the theological meaning of universalism in the context of salvation history. See *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, 75-84; *Faith and the Future*, 20-33; *What does it mean to be a Christian*, 35-40, 50-62; *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 1-5, 92-93; *God and the world* 33-4, 48, 85-89.

radical process of reflection about what they are and what they are not, what they believe and what they do not believe, what they have to offer and what they cannot offer.”⁴⁸

Ratzinger begins by describing belief in a single God as a “monotheistic revolution.”⁴⁹ As religious experience moved beyond the primeval experience of the divine and the subsequent mythical religions, the monotheistic revolution advanced in Israel’s history until, subsequently and in full measure, the face of God was revealed to humanity in the person of Christ.⁵⁰ But, Ratzinger asks, are Christian faith and the modern age compatible? This is a key question because the increasingly widespread thrust of the modern age is the claim that to “have” recognisable and essential “truth” is an obsolete piece of presumption. Renouncing the claim to truth in the Christian faith is increasingly put forward as the only approach to peaceful co-existence of human persons compatible with the virtue of tolerance, a virtue indicative of the modern age.

Ratzinger’s writings contain three basic attitudes towards reality that mark human intellectual history. They are the magical, the metaphysical and the scientific.⁵¹ To his mind, the first two mark out the vast bulk of human history, while the third, the scientific, is a more recent phenomenon. The significance for the argument on freedom which Ratzinger wants to highlight here is the fact that Israel’s Exodus instituted the monotheistic revolution in relation

⁴⁸ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 56-57. As an example, Ratzinger quotes a text penned by Leonardo Boff entitled “I cinquecento anni della conquista dell’America Latina: Un ‘venerdì santo’ che dura ancora oggi”: “1492-1992 are dates that in the perspective of native and black South Americans mark out a way of the cross, with countless stations of suffering and a Good Friday that has now lasted for five hundred years. The European Christians . . . conquered bodies with the sword and dominated souls with the cross . . . For the natives and for the enslaved Africans, Christianity appeared as a religion of the enemy who subjugated and killed people. For them, the gospel could not be a message of joy; rather it was bad news, which brought misfortune. . . 1992 could be the year that represents the resumption of their religions, which were just and worthy, the coming of God to his peoples through these religions, and the peoples started on their way to God through them.”

⁴⁹ Ratzinger’s use of the term “monotheistic revolution” can be seen very succinctly described in *Truth and Tolerance*, 28-32. He provides a detailed account of the unity and diversity of religions and the emergence of the Judeo-Christian faith within the history of religions in *ibid.*, 15-44.

⁵⁰ See particularly Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 116-136; *The God of Jesus Christ*, 20-25; *Credo for Today: What Christians Believe*, trans. Michael J. Miller et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2009), 21ff. We have already seen Ratzinger’s enthusiasm for narrative christology and the unity of the Scripture. See this dissertation §§ 1.6. and 3.2.1.

⁵¹ See Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 57. See also 39-69; 137-61; *Truth and Tolerance*, 15-79.

to the polytheistic religion of Egypt. Egypt is the place of (magical) poly-theism, poly-truth, relativism, whereas Sinai was the (metaphysical) worship mountain of the One God, living and true. The events relating to “Sinai” introduce a metaphysical attitude to life – and bring a consciousness of true and false into the world. The metaphysical attitude to life holds that the good, the truth and God are but the one question and ought not to be separated.

Jan Assmann, an Egyptologist from the University of Heidelberg whose views Ratzinger critiques, has claimed that professing the oneness of God and of truth has brought nothing but conflict into the world.⁵² Assmann names this phenomenon as the “Mosaic distinction”⁵³ – something which he says was a watershed in the history of religion as a whole. It amounted to the introduction of a distinction between true and false in the realm of religion. Hitherto, the gods of polytheistic religions often presided in functional equivalence one to another and as such were interchangeable with each other. The concept of true and false religion was somewhat alien to the ancient polytheistic religions. However, the new and revolutionary scenario – belief in a single god – meant the new religion was, of its nature, an “anti-religion.” It excluded everything that went before it as paganism, and was a medium, not of intercultural translation but the alienation of one culture from another. Assmann contends that it was at this moment that the concept of idolatry began to develop as the greatest of all sins. Ratzinger quotes the follow words of Assmann:

In der Vorstellung vom goldenen Kalb, der biblischen “Ursünde” des monotheistischen Ikonoklasmus . . . ist das Haß- und Gewaltpotential festgeschrieben,

⁵² The full extent of the Ratzinger-Assmann discussion can be found in *Truth and Tolerance*, 210-31. See Jan Assmann, *Moses der Ägypter: Entzifferung einer Gedächtnisspur* (München: Hanser, 1998).

⁵³ See Erich Zenger, “Was ist der Preis des Monotheismus? Die heilsame Provokation von J. Assmann,” in *Herder-Korrespondenz* 55 (2001):187, where Assmann is quoted as explaining this concept in the following manner: “By the ‘Mosaic distinction,’ I mean the introduction of a distinction between true and false in the realm of religion. Hitherto, religion had been based on the distinction between pure and impure, or between sacred and profane, and had no place at all for the idea of ‘false gods’ . . . , whom one should not worship.” See Jan Assmann, *Moses der Ägypter*, 17-23.

das sich in der Geschichte der monotheistischen Religionen immer wieder aktualisiert hat.⁵⁴

Ratzinger says the conclusion to be drawn from Assmann's depiction of monotheism is self-evident:

Der Exodus ist rückgängig zu machen; wir müssen zurück nach "Ägypten" – das heißt: Die Unterscheidung von wahr und unwahr im Bereich der Religion muß aufgehoben werden, wir müssen wieder zurück in die Welt der Götter, die den Kosmos in seinem Reichtum und seiner Vielfalt ausdrücken und daher keinen gegenseitigen Ausschluß kennen, sondern gegenseitiges Verstehen ermöglichen.⁵⁵

Ratzinger believes that what is happening – subconsciously at least – is the search for a way back into the world of "Egypt." Ratzinger believes such an aspiration separates the question of the good and the true – something that often happens in the scientific age – with the result that the question of God falls from memory. When the metaphysical criterion of God beyond human manipulation collapses, the good is decided by the majority or by sectarian factions. Then truth is relegated to an endless groping for meaning in obscurity. For Ratzinger, the true and the good cannot be separated for to do so means that the distinction between good and evil loses its basis.⁵⁶ One cannot – no matter how hard one tries – be set totally free from the distinction between what is good and what is not. Ratzinger believes science is a good and necessary discipline on so many levels, but as sole criterion, a scientific attitude to life means that truth is provisional until the next experiment requires a revision. A

⁵⁴ Assmann, *Moses der Ägypter*, 20 ("In the portrayal of the golden calf, the biblical 'original sin' of monotheistic iconoclasm . . . the potential for hate and for violence was set down in writing, and in the history of monotheistic religions this has ever and again taken concrete form" [quoted in *Ratzinger, Truth and Tolerance*, 212]).

⁵⁵ Ratzinger, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz*, 172 ("[T]he Exodus must be reversed; we must go back to 'Egypt' – that is to say, the distinction between true and untrue in the realm of religion must be done away with; we must return to the realm of the gods, which are an expression of all the wealth and the variety of the cosmos and thus do not ever exclude one another but rather facilitate mutual understanding" [Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 213]).

⁵⁶ See Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 223-231. Ratzinger extends the argument to "the Mosaic-Socratic distinction," whereby Greek thought equally implies the convergence of the true and the good: "Plato was right when he identified the highest divinity with the idea of good . . . if we cannot know the truth about God, then the truth about what is good and what is bad remains equally inaccessible. Then there is no good and evil; only the reckoning up of consequences remains: ethics is replaced by calculation" (230). What Ratzinger implies here is that the three questions, concerning truth and good and God are but one single question and if there is no answer, then the essential things in life evade us. Then human existence is genuinely burdened and tragic – and paradoxically, through its very absence, it becomes possible to understand what redemption really means.

metaphysical world-view, on the other hand, which biblically is depicted by humanity bowing down before Sinai, acknowledges that truth has a deeper root. And to relativize truth is to relativize the very meaning of good and evil, the very possibility of human society.⁵⁷ Without a communal and relational structure to human society, Ratzinger says the human family could not survive long and would end up on a downward spiral towards definitive slavery.

Ratzinger makes a very close connection here between truth and the possibility of authentic freedom. While it may look like the Mosaic distinction sanctioned the “canonisation of intolerance,”⁵⁸ Ratzinger says it is in fact the case that the one God is a jealous God (Exod 34:14; Deut 6:15), who unmasks the “gods,” confirming that they are not God. Therefore “the plural of ‘God’ is as such a lie” and “a lie always means a lack of freedom, and it is no mere chance, above all no untruth, that in Israel’s memory Egypt appears as the house of slavery, as the place of lack of freedom.”⁵⁹ Quoting John 8:32, Ratzinger says that if humanity does not live by truth, it languishes in Egypt, in slavery:

Nur die Wahrheit macht frei. Wo Nützlichkeit über Wahrheit gestellt wird, wie es im Fall der gespaltenen Wahrheit geschieht . . . wird der Mensch Sklave der Nützlichkeit und derer, die darüber entscheiden können, was das Nützliche ist. In diesem Sinn ist zunächst die “Entmythisierung” notwendig, die die Götter ihres falschen Glanzes und damit ihrer falschen Macht entkleidet, um dann ihre “Wahrheit” herauszustellen, das heißt zu erklären, welche realen Mächte und Wirklichkeiten hinter ihnen stehen.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ratzinger sometimes uses the term *techne* to denote a quasi-exclusive technological society. For example, see *Introduction to Christianity*, 58-66. This idea, which strongly echoes Ratzinger’s interpretation of modern rationalism, keeps recurring in his writings. See this dissertation §§ 2.2. to 2.2.4. To his mind, this is a society that often makes attempts to live without the metaphysical criterion of God, and so finds itself enslaved in a cycle of perpetual belief in progress and a promise of a future that is empty and can never fulfil the human yearning for happiness. In fact, when God is removed as the personal partner of humanity and exists merely as a type of formal principle, or “higher being,” the world convinces itself that it would be better off with a moral optimism, and to live as if God approved of our actions.

⁵⁸ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 227.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 227-28.

⁶⁰ Ratzinger, *Glaube – Wahrheit – Toleranz*, 184 (“Only the truth will set you free. Wherever usefulness is set above truth, as happens in the case of the division of truth . . . then man becomes a slave to practical purposes and to those who make the decisions about what is useful and practical. In this sense the ‘demythologising’ is necessary to strip the gods of their false glamour and thereby of their false power, so that the ‘truth’ of them may stand out, that is, to explain which worldly powers and real entities stand behind them” [Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 228]). In the interface between Christianity and the history of religions in general, Ratzinger discerns two phases of engagement, namely, transformation and continuity: the gods are no longer gods since

The Ratzinger-Assmann exchange is a discussion on the various basic attitudes towards reality which the human spirit has entertained in history. To Ratzinger's mind, the interaction between "Egypt" and the Mosaic distinction clarifies that the Judeo-Christian economy cannot abandon or disregard the question of truth. In contrast, he takes the view that the technical-scientific attitude of the modern era desires to severely limit the application of truth. As the predominant human attitude today, it has meant that a new concept of reality has gradually developed in modern consciousness which is based on a constriction of truth:

Wir haben es aufgegeben, das verborgene Ansehen der Dinge zu suchen, in das Wesen des Seins selbst hinabzuloten; solches zu tun erscheint uns als fruchtloser Versuch, die Tiefe der Seins gilt uns als letztlich unerreichbar.⁶¹

Ratzinger concludes that more and more we have limited ourselves to our own perspective – that which is visible and within our measuring grasp suffices for us. He says we resign ourselves to thinking "[w]e can deal with [the restriction to phenomena] and thus create for ourselves a world in which we can live as men."⁶² In order to offset what he sees as the universalization of the human spirit to the exclusion of all else, Ratzinger looks to the particularity present within the doctrine of creation.

4.1.3.2. Acknowledging the Truth of Creatureliness

The search for salvific truth, then, may possess universal quality, but Ratzinger is equally conscious of the particularity inherent in the truth of creatureliness – that each person is created free and out of love. The Judaeo-Christian doctrine of creation, Ratzinger says, is a statement that the universe comes from freedom, love and reason. The Babylonian Exile, along with the encounter it brought with the forces of Babylonian religion and its creation

the question of truth has itself deprived them of their heretofore divinity, bringing about their downfall. But at the same time, the truth about the gods emerges: they are reflections of divinity whose hidden significance is purified and fulfilled through the question of truth. As such, a "transposition" of the gods is something that does occur when they are viewed as steps in the search for the true God and for his reflection in creation.

⁶¹ Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum*, 52 ("We have given up seeking the hidden 'in-itselfness' of things and sounding the nature of being itself; such activities seem to us to be a fruitless enterprise; we have come to regard the depth of being as, in the last analysis, unfathomable" [Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 58]).

⁶² Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 58.

account of *Enuma Elish*, was the moment when the doctrine of creation became a dominant theme for Israel. Gen 1:1-2:4a, albeit based on very ancient traditions, emerges from this time.⁶³ In fact, to Ratzinger's mind, it is only when John the Evangelist consciously redeployed the first words of the Bible, reading them in light of Christ, that we meet the "conclusive and normative scriptural creation account" of John 1:1-3.⁶⁴ It then becomes possible, in a definite way, to encounter what the reason, or "Word" is, that appears throughout the Bible and which God desires us to absorb.⁶⁵ Because God's reason and, therefore, the cause and meaning of existence, resides in the doctrine of creation, Ratzinger believes our freedom rests upon properly living in harmony with its content:

[. . .] brauchen wir den Schöpfungsglauben auch heute nicht zu verstecken. Wir dürfen ihn nicht verstecken, denn nur wenn die Welt aus Freiheit, aus Liebe und Vernunft kommt, nur wenn dies die eigentlich tragenden Mächte sind, können wir einander trauen, können wir in die Zukunft hineingehen, können wir als Menschen leben. Nur weil Gott der Schöpfer aller Dinge ist, ist er ihr Herr und nur darum können wir beten zu ihm. Denn dies bedeutet, daß Freiheit und Liebe nicht ohnmächtige Ideen, sondern daß sie die Grundmächte der Wirklichkeit sind.⁶⁶

⁶³ See James B. Pritchard, ed., *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 28-35. This Babylonian creation myth viewed the world as a dragon's body and human beings as created from the dragon's blood. This foreboding picture of creation described how "the world was produced out of a struggle between opposing powers and that it assumed its form when Marduk, the god of light, appeared and split in two the body of the primordial dragon. Subsequently, heaven and earth came to be from this sundered body. Thus the firmament and the earth were produced from the sundered body of the dead dragon, but from its blood Marduk fashioned human beings" (Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 12). See also W. C. Lambert and Simon Parker, *Enûma Eliš. The Babylonian Epic of Creation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

⁶⁴ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 15. Of course, the Gen 1:1-2:4a creation account is not the only recounting of the activity of the Creator in creation. Immediately after it comes another with differing imagery (Gen 2:4-25), while the psalms and wisdom literature, each, in their own way, attempt to clarify faith in creation. Accordingly, one decisive fact emerges for Ratzinger: the Old Testament is not the end of the road. The wisdom literature provides the final bridge towards the message of Christ in the New Testament. Therefore, almost all the literary genres of the Hebrew Scriptures assert the notion of belief in the creation of the world by God, developing it in different ways and with different emphases. These include the decidedly anthropomorphic account of Gen 2: 4b-25, as well as the Sethite genealogy of Gen 5:1-7. The prophets of the Exile also highlight the salvific aspects of the mystery of creation (cf. Isa 40ff; Jer 32:17-18; 33:25-6). The psalms often proclaim creation's mysterious nature in praise of the Creator (cf. Ps. 8, 104, 136; see also 19, 33, 148). The wisdom literature emphasises the rational and intellectual aspects of creation, in which beauty and order are to the fore (cf. Prov 3:19-20; 8:22-31; Sir 1:1-9; Job 38-39; Wis 1:14; 6:7; 9:1-2; 11:17, 21-26; 14:3; 19: 6-9, 22). The New Testament, as Ratzinger points out, also continues the biblical reflection upon the theme of creation.

⁶⁵ Echoing here his christological hermeneutic, he reiterates that Christians read the Old Testament with and through Christ. This "frees us from the slavery of the letter, and precisely thus does [it] give back to us, renewed, the truth of the images" (Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 15). See this dissertation § 1.6.

⁶⁶ Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 27 ("[W]e must not in our own day conceal our faith in creation. We may not conceal it, for only if it is true that the universe comes from freedom, love, reason, and that these are the real underlying powers, can we trust one another, go forward into the future, and live as human beings. God is the Lord of all things because he is their creator, and only therefore can we pray to him. For this means that freedom

What, then, in specific terms, does Ratzinger mean by saying the ground of human possibility corresponds to a universe that comes from freedom, love and reason? For him the reasonableness of the universe provides us with access to meaning – that is, to God’s reason: “[e]ven if [human] reason itself cannot perhaps give an account of it, it searches in faith and finds there an answer that it had been looking for.”⁶⁷ Ratzinger makes the case that faith in creation is reasonable. There is what he calls the “that” of creation – the fact of a beginning – which points to the power present at the beginning that could say “[l]et there be. . .” The core insight of the biblical creation account is *that* God created the world. The world is not a chaos of mutually opposed forces, nor is it a dwelling place for demonic powers from which human beings must protect themselves. Instead, creation comes from the one power – “God’s eternal reason, which became – in the Word – the power of creation.”⁶⁸ This, so to speak, liberates us from the need for Assmann’s “Egypt” because in the Word which is present at the very beginning of creation, Ratzinger says “we come into contact with the real primordial force of the world and with the power that is above all powers.”⁶⁹

Knowing there is a free, rational and loving Creator liberates us from the need to revolt against the “that” of created existence. Creation is ultimately good because the universe is not the product of darkness and unreason. It comes, Ratzinger believes, “from intelligence, freedom, and from beauty that is identical with love. Seeing this gives us the courage to keep on living, and it empowers us, comforted thereby, to take upon ourselves the adventure of life.”⁷⁰ The key consequence of such a universe is dependency: if God is the Lord of all things, then the truth of creatureliness follows. The biblical account of creation, Ratzinger says, “means to give some orientation in the mysterious region of human-

and love are not ineffectual ideas but rather that they are sustaining forces of reality” [Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 18]).

⁶⁷ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 21.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 25.

beingness.”⁷¹ Both humility and consolation accompany the statement that God formed man from the dust of the ground (Gen 2:7):

Demütigung – denn damit wird uns gesagt: Du bist kein Gott, du hast dich nicht selbst gemacht, und du verfügst nicht über das All; du bist begrenzt. Du bist ein Wesen zum Tod wie alle Lebendige, du bist nur Erde. Aber es ist auch Tröstung; denn es wird uns so auch gesagt: Der Mensch ist kein Dämon, wie es bisweilen scheinen könnte, kein böser Geist. Der Mensch ist nicht geformt aus negativen Mächten, sondern er ist gebildet aus Gottes gutter Erde.⁷²

This leads to Ratzinger’s observation of two basic models which exist today with regard to the connection between faith in creation and the freedom of the human person. Ratzinger expresses here the particularity of human freedom to say “yes” or “no” to the dependency at the heart of creatureliness. Ratzinger calls them the Gnostic and the Christian models. At its core, the Gnostic model is the repudiation of creation because of disenchantment with its refusal to be regulated. Its overall effect is the rejection of the mystery of suffering, of love and of vicarious atonement in favour of control over the world, and the regulation of life through knowledge. Love, freedom and reason are principles that are too insecure as a foundation for life because, from a human perspective, they depend on something too unpredictable and unenforceable to manage. What is awaited may fail to appear, making one permanently dependable and powerless in the face of uncertainty. It would be like “a permanent risk factor, a source of insecurity over which I have no control.”⁷³ Thus a beautiful promise becomes an unbearable feeling of dependence, of subjection. This risk factor must be eliminated:

Im gnostischen Weltbild, antik oder modern, erscheint Schöpfung als Abhängigkeit, Gott als Grund von Abhängigkeit. . . . Die gnostische Option zielt daher auf Wissen und auf Machen durch Wissen als die einzig zuverlässige Erlösung des Menschen, die

⁷¹ Ibid., 42.

⁷² Joseph Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 48 (“Something humbling because we are told: You are not God, you did not make yourself, and you do not rule the universe; you are limited. You are a being destined for death, as are all things living; you are only earth. But something consoling too, because we are also told: The human being is not a demon or an evil spirit, as it might occasionally appear. The human being has not been formed from negative forces, but has been fashioned from God’s earth” [Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 43])

⁷³ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 96.

sich deshalb auch nicht der geschaffenen Welt vertraut, sondern der zu erschaffenden, die kein Vertrauen mehr braucht, sondern nur Können.⁷⁴

On the other hand, Ratzinger says, the Christian model opposes this because it considers the human being to *be* dependent – creatureliness can be disputed only by denying human nature itself. Dependency means the human person can live only from others and by trust. In fact, dependency in the form of love bolsters the meaning of one’s existence:

Abhängigkeit aber hat dann nichts Degradierendes mehr, wenn sie die Form der Liebe hat, denn dann ist sie nicht mehr Abhängigkeit, nicht mehr Verminderung des Eigenen durch die Konkurrenz des anderen, sondern dann konstituiert sie gerade das Eigene als Eigenes und befreit es, denn Liebe hat ja wesentlich die Form “ich will, daß Du bist,” sie ist das Creativum, die einzig schöpferische Macht, die anderes als anderes hervorbringen kann ohne Neid, das Eigene zu verlieren. Der Mensch ist abhängig – das ist seine primäre Wahrheit. Weil es so ist, kann nur die Liebe ihn erlösen, weil nur sie Abhängigkeit in Freiheit umwandelt.⁷⁵

Ratzinger compares the two alternative models and concludes that human beings will only succeed in destroying their redemption – destroying themselves – if they eliminate love so as “to be on the safe side” and say “no” to “creation as love and to mak[ing] that love the foundation of one’s life.”⁷⁶ Ratzinger underscores the christological basis of this by invoking the crucified God as the visible certainty that creation is the trustworthy expression of dependency in the form of love.⁷⁷

The fundamental Christian attitude to creatureliness is one of humility – not in a mere ethical sense, but *humility of being*: “being as receiving, accepting oneself as created and

⁷⁴ Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 92 (“In the Gnostic view of the world, whether ancient or modern, creation appears as dependence, and God as the reason for dependence. . . . The Gnostic option aims at knowledge and at power through knowledge, the only reliable redemption of humankind. Gnosticism will not entrust itself to a world already created but only to the world still to be created. There is no need for trust, only skill” [Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 97]).

⁷⁵ Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 93 (“[. . .] there is nothing degrading about dependence when it takes the form of love, for then it is no longer dependence, the diminishing of self though competition with others. Dependence in the form of love precisely constitutes the self as self and sets it free, because love essentially takes the form of saying, ‘I want you to be.’ It is creativity, the only creative power, which can bring forth the other without envy or loss of self. Humans are dependent – that is the primary truth about them. And because it is, only love can redeem them, for only love transforms dependence into freedom” [Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 98-99]).

⁷⁶ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 99.

⁷⁷ See Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 91-105. See also this dissertation § 3.2.1.

dependent on ‘love’.”⁷⁸ If we try to undermine our nature, we rob it of its worth. We end up with what Ratzinger calls a “monism of grace.”⁷⁹ Ratzinger cites the text of 1Cor 15:46, saying we must not skip the sequence of physical first, *then* the spiritual, for if we do, creation is denied and grace is deprived of its foundation. Human dependency is not the removal of our particularity or uniqueness, but rather the freedom to share in the fullness of our identity:

Eine Selbstlosigkeit, die das eigene Ich aufheben will, verfällt der Ichlosigkeit und wird so gerade auch Du-Losigkeit. Als Verlästerung der Schöpfung kann sie nie Vehikel der Gnade werden, sondern nur des “odium generis humani,” der gnostischen Zerfallenheit mit der Schöpfung, die zuletzt auch keine Gnade mehr will und wollen kann. . . . Die christliche Liebe muß aber als Glaube an den Schöpfer zugleich die Annahme meiner selbst als Schöpfung und das Lieben der Schöpfung des Schöpfers in mir selbst enthalten und zu der Freiheit, mich anzunehmen wie irgendein Glied am Leib Christi hinführen.⁸⁰

In order not to undermine human nature, but maintain the truth of its dependency, Ratzinger says the doctrine of creation is inseparably included within the doctrine of redemption. Redemption is based on an irrevocable “yes” to creation, to the truth of human nature, whereas “[t]he fundamental opposition set up by modernity between loving and making turns out to be identical with the opposition between trusting being and doubting being (the forgetting of being, the refusal of being).”⁸¹ This is significant in Ratzinger’s search to uncover the inadequacies in the modern synthesis of thought, with its over-optimistic belief in progress and in creativity which binds humanity to the production of the world, as opposed to the meaning of dependency inherent in the doctrine of creation. It is a burden of existence which the *creatum* – the created – cannot bear and was never designed to

⁷⁸ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 99.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁸⁰ Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 90 (“A selflessness that tries to abolish one’s own ‘I’ degenerates into ‘I-lessness’ and then ‘Thou-lessness’ follows directly. This undermining of creation can never become a vehicle of grace, but only of an *odium generis humani* [hatred for human race], a Gnostic disenchantment with creation, which ultimately does not and cannot desire grace any longer. . . . No, Christian love presupposes faith in the Creator. It must include acceptance of myself as his creature and love of the Creator’s creation in me; it must lead to the freedom to accept myself as well as any other member of the Body of Christ” (Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 94-95)). See Tacitus, *The Annals* 15.44.

⁸¹ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 100.

bear. The truth of creatureliness resides in the “hopelessness of taking a stand against creation [for] [e]ven ‘creativity’ can only work with the *creatum* of the given creation.”⁸² For Ratzinger, we proceed authentically with the future only if we do not lose creation.⁸³

4.1.4. Dialogically Related in Christ to God

A genuine correspondence between Creator and creature which, to Ratzinger’s mind, supplants the “monologue of the self-sufficient mind” with “the fateful dialogue of God with man,” leads him to speak about the idea of *dialogischen Hinordnung auf Gott* or a posture of dialogical orientation with regard to God.⁸⁴ At this point in Ratzinger’s discussion of human freedom, there is a convergence of creation and covenant. In this subdivision we will see the significance which Ratzinger places in the movement of creation towards Sinai, the place of covenant, of worship, of sacrificial submission, and of liberation. It is God’s will that the entire life of God’s people be directed towards a posture of dialogical orientation through the cultic, eschatological and social elements of what Ratzinger calls the “Sabbath structure of creation.” In effect, the movement towards Sinai becomes a *pathway* to a lifestyle conforming to a posture of liberating dialogical orientation.

Ratzinger’s christology informs the direction of his reflections here. While to God alone can be ascribed the fullness of freedom, because only God is the possession of being in totality, he says that does not mean that humanity must retreat into its creaturely shell without

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ The importance of this has never left Ratzinger. As recently as 2011, he made the same assertion: “[T]he unredeemed state of the world consists precisely in the failure to understand the meaning of creation, in the failure to recognise truth; as a result, the rule of pragmatism is imposed, by which the strong arm of the powerful becomes the god of this world” (Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 193). It is interesting to note too, that in Benedict XVI’s speech to the Pontifical Council *Cor unum* of 19 January 2013, he expressed in positive terms the anthropology which the Church is committed to promoting. He described it as “the promotion of man according to God’s plan, man in his integral dignity, with respect for his twofold vertical and horizontal dimension. . . . The Christian vision of man is, in fact, a great ‘yes’ to the dignity of the person called to intimate communion with God, a filial communion, humble and confident. The human being is neither an individual subsisting in himself nor an anonymous element of the collective. He is rather a singular and unrepeatable person intrinsically ordered to relationship and sociality.” See

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2013/january/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20130119_pc-corunum_it.html (accessed 20 January 2013).

⁸⁴ See Ratzinger, *Dogma und Verkündigung*, 309-10. For translation, see *Dogma and Preaching*, 270.

hope of greatness and remain somehow incomplete in the dilemma of finitude. Ratzinger is convinced that, as a goal, “being like God” remains the correct one. Achieving the way to it depends on coming to terms with the truth – the possibilities and parameters – of creatureliness and the will of the Creator. To be like God is to be like the trinitarian God which is to be like Christ crucified. From a pauline perspective, Ratzinger has understood freedom not as indeterminacy but as participation – “not just participation in a given social structure, but participation in being itself.”⁸⁵ This is the comprehensive meaning of divinisation and the destiny of the covenant between God and creation – “yes” to the “yes” of God:

Der Mensch ist nicht unübersteiglich in seine Endlichkeit eingeschlossen. Gewiß, er muß zunächst seine Endlichkeit anzunehmen lernen. Er muß anerkennen, daß er nicht autark und nicht autonom ist. Er muß die Lüge der Beziehungslosigkeit und der Beliebigkeit aufgeben. Er muß ja sagen zu seiner Bedürftigkeit, ja zum anderen, ja zur Schöpfung, ja zur Grenze und zur Weisung seines eigenen Wesens. Frei ist noch nicht, wer bloß zwischen Beliebigem wählen kann.⁸⁶

For Ratzinger, the biblical account of creation presents an alternative way of speaking about reality to that of the modern synthesis. It is marked by numbers that do not merely reproduce the universe’s mathematical structure, but the inner design of its fabric – in other words, the idea according to which it was constructed. Ratzinger places an emphasis on the presence of the number seven. For him, the scheme of seven days governs the whole. It heralds the rhythm of life, including human life. He concludes that “we human beings are not bounded by the limits of our own little ‘I’ but that we are part of the rhythm of the universe . . . and thus, thanks to this interlinking, are fitted into the logic of the universe.”⁸⁷ But this

⁸⁵ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 188.

⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 243 (“Man is not inescapably enclosed in his finitude. Certainly, he must first learn to accept his finitude. He must recognise that he is not self-sufficient and autonomous. He must give up the lie of unrelatedness and of arbitrariness. He must say Yes to his neediness, Yes to the other, Yes to creation, Yes to the limits and precepts of his own essence. He who can merely choose between arbitrary options is not yet free” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 255]).

⁸⁷ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 26-27. For his exegesis of Genesis 1:1-2:4, Ratzinger relies on Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion (London: SPCK, 1984), 74-177; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, trans. John H. Marks (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1963), 43-65; Josef Scharbert, *Genesis 1-11* (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1983). Along with the number seven, he highlights the number ten. The words “God

numerical-typology is not only connected to the cosmic significance and rhythm of “seven.” The deeper meaning of the rhythm itself is that “[c]reation is oriented to the sabbath, which is the sign of the covenant between God and humankind.”⁸⁸ This leads him to say that creation is designed in such a way that it is oriented to worship. Created reality is assigned its proper significance when it lives with a view to worship – worship being the freedom to take up a dialogical orientation with regard to truth and love which converge as one with God’s will for his people:

Anbetung in einem richtigen Sinn verstanden heißt, daß ich mein Wesen erst als Beziehungssein, richtig lebe, daß ich damit die *innere Idee* meines Seins richtig lebe. Und dann ist es ein Leben, das auf den Willen Gottes, nämlich auf das Einverständnis mit der Wahrheit und mit der Liebe zugeht. Es geht nicht darum, irgend etwas zu machen, damit Gott auch seine Freude hat. Anbetung heißt, den Pfeilflug unseres Daseins anzunehmen. Zu akzeptieren, daß nichts Endliches mein Zweck ist und mich daher verpflichten kann, sondern daß ich hinausreiche über alle anderen Zwecke. Nämlich in das innere Einssein mit dem, der mich als Beziehungspartner gewollt hat und mir gerade darin die Freiheit gegeben hat.⁸⁹

In the realm of worship, it is Christ’s perfect obedience to the Father – above all on the Cross – which opens the definitive sphere of human liberation. Christ takes on a human body and through it a new obedience becomes possible which surpasses all human efforts at abiding in the covenant: “[o]ur own morality is insufficient for the proper worship of God” in the sense that Christ’s “perfect obedience”, which fulfilled love on the cross, “draws us all with him and at the same time wipes away all our disobedience through his love.”⁹⁰ In this understanding, the person of Christ becomes the true worship and the total answer to God in

said” appear ten times underlining that the Ten Commandments are, as it were, “an echo of the creation; they are not arbitrary inventions for the purpose of erecting barriers to human freedom but signs pointing to the spirit, the language and meaning of creation; they are a translation of the language of the universe, a translation of God’s logic, which constructed the universe” (Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 26).

⁸⁸ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 27.

⁸⁹ Ratzinger, *Gott und die Welt*, 96 (“Worship, understood in the correct sense, means that I am truly myself only when I form relationships, that only then am I true to the *inner ideal* of my being. And my life is then tending toward the will of God, that is to say, toward a life more closely in agreement with truth and with love. It is not a matter of doing something to please God. Worship means accepting that our life is like an arrow in flight. Accepting that nothing finite can be my goal or determine the direction of my life, but that I myself must pass beyond all possible goals. That is pass beyond them into being inwardly at one with him who wished me to exist as a partner in a relationship with him and who has given me freedom precisely in this” [Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 111-12]).

⁹⁰ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 235.

which we can participate. Matthew and Mark tell us that on the Mount of Olives, Jesus fell on his face (cf. Matt 26:39; Mark 32:35). Ratzinger says this is Jesus in “the prayer posture of extreme submission to the will of God, of radical self-offering to him.”⁹¹ In Christ the posture of dialogical orientation with regard to God is total. Ratzinger points out that our “metamorphosis” or “our being reshaped in a way that takes us beyond this world’s scheme of things. . . and into the will of God” takes place in our being drawn into sacramental, bodily fellowship with Christ.⁹²

Ratzinger says that sacrifice is at the heart of all religious worship, but it is almost always viewed as having something to do with destruction – handing over to God a reality precious to humankind: something precious to the human being is taken from them for the appeasement of the heavens. This is a key moment in understanding human freedom because Ratzinger says the shape of true surrender to God looks very different – it is the union of humanity and creation with God:

Gottzugehörigkeit hat nichts mit Zerstörung oder Nichtsein zu tun, wohl aber mit einer Weise des Seins: Sie bedeutet das Heraustreten aus dem Status der Trennung, der scheinbaren Autonomie, des Seins nur für sich selber und in sich selber.⁹³

Ratzinger says the true heart of sacrifice and the purpose of the world is “love-transformed mankind, the divinization of creation and the surrender of all things to God: God all in all (1Cor 15:28).”⁹⁴ This means, to his mind, that the goal of worship and the goal of creation, as a whole, are the same: “divinisation, a world of freedom and love.”⁹⁵ This convergence implies that the pathway of history dynamically intertwines with the cosmic such that the doctrine of creation means “the cosmos is not a kind of closed building, a stationary container

⁹¹ Ibid., 153. This line of argumentation is in keeping with the New Testament tradition of humanity’s total self-giving as a sacrifice of praise (cf. Heb 13:15-16; 1Pet 2:5).

⁹² See Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 117-18. There are also strong echoes here of Ratzinger’s sacramental theology. See this dissertation § 5.1.

⁹³ Ratzinger, *Der Geist Der Liturgie* in *GS:TL*, 43 (“Belonging to God has nothing to do with destruction or non-being; it is rather a way of being. It means emerging from the state of separation, of apparent autonomy, of existing only for oneself and in oneself” [Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 28]).

⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 28.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

in which history may by chance take place. It is itself movement, from its one beginning to its one end.”⁹⁶ Ratzinger calls this dynamic of worship “spiritual creation”: the inauguration of God’s dealings with humanity, the phenomenon whereby the covenant completes creation:

[. . .] und so die geistige Schöpfung, die Schöpfung des Bundes, ohne den der geschaffene Kosmos ein leeres Gehäuse bliebe. So stehen Schöpfung und Geschichte, Schöpfung, Geschichte und Kult in einem Wechselverhältnis: Schöpfung wartet auf den Bund, aber der Bund vollendet die Schöpfung und bewegt sich nicht neben ihr. Wenn aber der Kult – recht verstanden – die Seele des Bundes ist, dann heißt dies, dass er nicht nur den Menschen rettet, sondern die ganze Wirklichkeit in die Gemeinschaft mit Gott hineinziehen soll.⁹⁷

However, respect for the right of the free creature to utter “no” to the will of God the Creator puts into context, for Ratzinger, the belief that the truest goal of the Exodus from Egypt was “Sinai”⁹⁸: a place to worship God rightly in obedience to the Law and the Covenant, so that an order of freedom can prevail over the pre-Exodus disorder of caprice. This context demonstrates the precise chronology of Ratzinger’s theology: *Creation because Covenant*. Only this allows the human person to utter “yes” to the will of the Creator because this sequence of events demonstrates the purpose of creation. He says that “if creation is meant to be a space for the covenant, the place where God and man meet one another, then it must be thought of as a space for worship.”⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ratzinger, *Der Geist Der Liturgie* in *GS:TL*, 43 (“Thus begins the spiritual creation, the creation of the covenant, without which the created cosmos would be an empty shell. Creation and history, creation history, and worship are in a relationship of reciprocity. Creation looks toward the covenant, but the covenant completes creation and does not simply exist alone with it. Now if worship, rightly understood, is the soul of the covenant, then it not only saves mankind but is also meant to draw the whole of reality into communion with God” [Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 27]). See also *Credo for Today*, 46.

⁹⁸ On the theological significance of “Sinai” from the Christian perspective, see Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 13-23.

⁹⁹ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 26. In *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 103-27, Ratzinger engages with the work of Rabbi Jacob Neusner (b. 1932), and subscribes to his assessment of the real and valid content of the Sabbath: “[o]n that day we do celebrate creation. For six days we make things; on the seventh, we appreciate them. . . . [However] not working on the Sabbath stands for more than nit-picking ritual. It is a way of imitating God” (Jacob Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus* [McGill-Queen’s University Press: Montreal, 2000], 74-75). This prompts Ratzinger to add that “the Sabbath is therefore not just a negative matter of not engaging in outward activities, but a positive matter of ‘resting,’ which must also be expressed in a spatial dimension. . . . The Sabbath is not just a matter of personal piety; it is the core of the social order” (Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 108). Ratzinger goes on to cite Neusner again on the theme of “rest” which is an integral element of the Sabbath: “[t]his day makes eternal Israel what it is, the people that, like God in creating the world, rest from creation on the seventh day” (Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus*, 74).

In order to further the link between creation and covenant, Ratzinger depicts the Sabbath as “the day when the human being, in the freedom of worship, participates in God’s freedom, in God’s rest, and thus in God’s peace.”¹⁰⁰ The Sabbath, Ratzinger believes, provides “a vision of freedom,” whereby “creation moves toward the Sabbath, to that day on which man and the whole created order participates in God’s rest, in his freedom.”¹⁰¹ Ratzinger says the inner biblical view is that creation and worship belong together. The Sabbath is the sign of the covenant between God and humanity – by summing up the inward essence of the covenant, it reveals the intention behind the account of creation:

Schöpfung ist, damit ein Ort sei für den Bund, den Gott mit den Menschen schließen will. Das Ziel der Schöpfung ist der Bund, die Liebesgeschichte zwischen Gott und Mensch. Die Freiheit und die Gleichheit der Menschen, die der Sabbat wirken soll, ist keine rein anthropologische oder soziologische Vision; sie ist nur theologisch denkbar: Nur wenn der Mensch im Bund mit Gott steht, wird er frei, erscheint die Gleichheit und die Würde aller Menschen.¹⁰²

Ratzinger had previously expressed a similar view, whereby creation and covenant are not merely ordered towards one another but that “right from the start creation came to be so that there would be a place for the covenant. . . . [T]he covenant can only exist if it conforms to the yardstick of creation” (Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 84). In an even more focused comment, with regard to the Jewish feast of Atonement, he confirms that the purpose of creation is nothing other than the bringing of God and humanity into harmonious relationship – into a singular relational “yes”: “According to rabbinic theology, the idea of the covenant – the idea of establishing a holy people to be an interlocutor for God in union with him – is prior to the idea of the creation of the world, and supplies its inner motive. The cosmos was created, not that there might be manifold things in heaven and earth, but that there might be a space for the covenant, for the loving ‘yes’ between God and his human respondent. Each year the Feast of Atonement restores this harmony, this inner meaning of the world that is constantly disrupted by sin, and it therefore marks the high point of the liturgical year” (Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 78). Celebrated on the 10th day of the seventh month, the Day of Atonement was the day when Israel’s sins were repented and atoned for. Only in this ceremony was the sacrificial blood of the sin-offering applied to the inner sanctuary, the Holy of Holies (cf. Lev 16:1ff; 23:26ff; Num 29:7ff). The national guilt of Israel was laid symbolically upon a “scapegoat” who was then expelled into the desert (cf. Lev 16:8, 10, 20, 26). For more on the connections between covenant and creation, see works by Bernhard W. Anderson, ed., *Creation in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984); Bernhard W. Anderson, *Creation versus Chaos: The Reinterpretation of the Mythical Symbolism in the Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987); *From Creation to New Creation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁰ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 30-31. On Ratzinger’s theology of the Sabbath and the day of God’s freedom, see also *The God of Jesus Christ*, 20; *A New Song for the Lord*, 80-89; *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 24-34; *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 106-22; *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 257-59; “Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity” (Benevento: June 2002), http://www.doctrinafidei.va/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020602_ratzinger-eucharistic-congress_en.html (accessed 24 May 2011).

¹⁰¹ Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 25.

¹⁰² Ratzinger, *Der Geist der Liturgie*, in *GS:TL*, 42 (“Creation exists to be the place of the covenant that God wants to make with man. The goal of creation is the covenant, the love story of God and man. The freedom and equality of men, which the Sabbath is meant to bring about, is not a merely anthropological or sociological vision; it can only be understood *theo*-logically. Only when man is in covenant with God does he become free. Only then are the equality and dignity of all men made manifest” [Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 26]). Ratzinger views the significance of this Sabbath ordinance within creation through the lens of an observation from 2Chro 36:21: “All the days that it lay desolate it kept Sabbath to fulfil seventy years.” Ratzinger says that

Describing the link between creation and covenant as “the Sabbath structure of Creation,” Ratzinger says it speaks of the rhythm of freedom, leisure and worship in life.¹⁰³

Celebrating the Sabbath, which means celebrating the covenant, implies returning to the source and wiping away the defilement which human activity accumulates over time.

Celebrating Sabbath is an act of “going forth into a new world in which there will be no longer slaves and master but only free children of God – into a world in which humans and animals and the earth itself will share together as kin in God’s peace and freedom.”¹⁰⁴

Ratzinger believes this is the context for Christ’s desire to clarify the meaning of the Sabbath.

In the Old Testament, the Sabbath is the day when fraternal fellowship of all creatures is re-established in the midst of a world where equality and freedom are absent:

An ihm kehrt die Schöpfung für eine Atemlänge lang wieder an ihren Ausgangspunkt zurück: An ihm sind alle frei von der Freiheit Gottes her. Das Wirken Jesu am Sabbat

Israel’s self-examination during the Exile, led to the Chronicler’s observation that while Palestine lay empty during the exilic period, Israel remained free to enjoy the Sabbaths it had missed because of infidelity to the Torah and Covenant. In this way, harmony with creation was being restored so that the exiles may return. For the Exiles “looking back, all other sins seem secondary in the face of this fundamental unfaithfulness, in the face of this locking oneself into the self-made world of work which negates God’s sovereignty” (Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 86). The Exile was the consequence of Israel’s “no” to the will of God the Creator. The reason for the seemingly inordinate punishment of God upon his people and upon himself through the loss of the land, the Temple and even worship lies in the people’s rejection of God’s rest with its attendant leisure, worship, peace and freedom: “They brought the earth into the slavery of their activity and thereby enslaved themselves. Therefore God had to give them the Sabbath that they denied themselves. In their ‘no’ to the God-given rhythm of freedom and leisure they departed from their likeness to God and so did damage to the earth. Therefore they had to be snatched from their obstinate attachment to their own work. God had to begin afresh to make them his very own, and he had to free them from the domination of activity, *Operi Dei nihil praeponatur*: The worship of God, his freedom and his rest come first. Thus and only thus can the human being truly live. . . . The Creator alone is humanity’s true saviour, and only if we trust the Creator shall we find ourselves on the way to saving the world of human beings and of things” (Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 32-39). Ratzinger quotes from the rule of St Benedict: *Operi Dei nihil praeponatur* – “Nothing must be put before the service of God.” Ratzinger believes this is not an expression of otherworldly piety but a clear and sober translation of the creation account and its meaning. He says “[n]othing ought to be preferred to the work of God . . . This phrase represents the correct attitude with respect to the preservation of creation as opposed to the false worship of progress, the worship of changes that crush humankind, and the calumny against the human species that destroys the earth and creation and keeps it from its goal’ (ibid. 38-39).

¹⁰³ See Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 30. His application of this phrase is inspired especially by the work of Karl Heinz Schwarte, *Die Vorgeschichte der augustinischen Weltalterlehre* (Bonn: Rudolf Habelt-Verlag, 1966), 220-56. Also of interest in this area is Josef Pieper, *Leisure: The Basis of Culture*, trans. Alexander Dru (New York: Pantheon Books, 1952).

¹⁰⁴ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 31. Ratzinger wants to underline the fact that the Mosaic law developed from the idea that the Sabbath brings about universal equality. The Sabbath ordinance was extended from the weekly Sabbath to include every seventh year as a Sabbath during which earth and human beings can rest in a public way. Furthermore, every seventh year times seven was called a great Sabbath year in which all debt was to be remitted and all purchases and sales annulled. In this way the earth was to be received back from the creating hands of God, and everyone begins anew. See 2Chr 36:21. In historical terms, it appears that this latter ordinance was never carried out in full.

richtet sich nicht gegen den Sabbat, sondern ist ein Kampf um seinen ursprünglichen Sinn: ihn als Tag der Gottesfreiheit zu wahren und ihn nicht unter den Händen der Kasuisten zu seinem eigenen Gegenteil, zu einem Tag verquälter Kleinlichkeit werden zu lassen.¹⁰⁵

If it can be maintained that the Sabbath is more than a pious ritual, as Ratzinger says, then he argues that only the honouring of the full breadth of the Sabbath rest - its cultic, social and eschatological elements – can guarantee the space for dialogical orientation with regard to the covenantal relationship between God and his creation. The Sabbath is cultic in as much as it signals the rhythm and relationality between God and creature – “the Sabbath is the day of God’s freedom and the day of human participation in God’s freedom”¹⁰⁶; the Sabbath is social in that it is more than remembrance of Israel’s liberation from slavery – it is “an active exercise of freedom” anticipating “creation’s release from anxiety”¹⁰⁷; it is eschatological in that through the opening up of the messianic age “we become practiced in the way of life of the world to come.”¹⁰⁸ To Ratzinger’s mind, only these dimensions permeating one another provide the correct understanding of the unifying nature of the biblical creation account and worship: “[h]ere cult means the liberation of humans through their participation in the freedom of God and thus the liberation of creation itself, its release into the freedom of the children of God.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Joseph Ratzinger, *Der Gott Jesus Christi: Betrachtungen über den Dreieinigen Gott* (München: Kösel, 2006), 23-24 (“On the Sabbath, the creation returns for a moment to its point of origin. On the Sabbath, all are free, thanks to God’s own freedom. Jesus’ working on the Sabbath is not directed against the Sabbath. Rather he is fighting to establish its original meaning, preserving it as the day of God’s freedom, so that the hands of the casuists may not pervert it into the opposite, that is, a day of tormented petty-mindedness” [Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 20-21]). Some may question Ratzinger’s use of the Sabbath in defence of the Christian doctrine of freedom, but see his *A New Song for the Lord*, 87-89, where he defends his approach by saying that theologies that oscillate between a form of Marcionism and politico-socio interpretation of the inter-testamentary period fail to grasp the true essence of the Scriptures. For example, Ratzinger says that at the time of Jesus’ defence of the Sabbath, the real significance of it was not at issue; rather, the point was “to defend the essential meaning of the Sabbath as a feast of freedom over against a practice that has turned it into a day of nonfreedom” (87).

¹⁰⁶ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 85.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 86.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 87.

The sphere in which one will come to utter one's "yes" will be during the course of one's lifetime and in the context of "spiritual creation" in history. This cosmic alignment is of great consequence and is represented in Ratzinger's understanding of the spiritual creation of God's will whose end lies in covenantal relationship, in dialogical orientation, in the realisation of humanity's presence in the midst of God – in divinization. There is a tension and a potentiality inherent in the human response of "yes" or "no" to God's "yes." Ratzinger expresses this tension through the dialectic of the modern synthesis and a Christian philosophy of freedom. To this we now turn.

4.2. Comparing the Modern and Christian Syntheses

A key moment in coming to terms with the shape of human freedom in Ratzinger's anthropology is his depiction of a dialectic between the modern synthesis and his cultural diagnosis on the one hand, and the Christian synthesis and its philosophy of freedom, on the other.¹¹⁰ Up to now, this chapter has been coming to terms with how Ratzinger builds his argument for human and divine relations in a sphere governed by reason, love and freedom. It now examines the merits of his argument when set against his understanding of the flow of contemporary cultural developments.

Firstly, let us briefly recall Ratzinger's characterisation of "functional truth," which encapsulates the rationalism which is at play when he looks at the modern synthesis and the expanding one-sided understandings of freedom:

An dieser Stelle ist man als moderner Mensch versucht zu sagen: Uns ist dank der Wissenschaft die Schöpfung lesbar geworden. . . . Ja wirklich, in der großartigen Mathematik der Schöpfung, die wir im genetischen Code des Menschen heute lesen können, vernehmen wir die Sprache Gottes. Aber leider nicht die ganze Sprache. Die funktionelle Wahrheit über den Menschen ist sichtbar geworden. Aber die Wahrheit über ihn selbst – wer er ist, woher er kommt, was er soll und was das Gute ist oder das Böse – die kann man leider auf solche Weise nicht lesen. Mit der wachsenden Erkenntnis der funktionellen Wahrheit scheint vielmehr eine zunehmende Erblindung

¹¹⁰ See this dissertation § 2.2.4. See also Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 128-37. On the understanding of the Christian synthesis, see *ibid.*, 112-17, 162-63, 177-80; *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 255.

für “die Wahrheit” selbst Hand in Hand zu gehen – für die Frage nach dem, was wir wirklich sind und was wir wirklich sollen.¹¹¹

With his modern synthesis, Ratzinger captures a particular philosophical viewpoint predicated on conveying “the feeling of breaking through barriers and of liberation . . . that do not hold man in the tiresome balance of faith but offer him practical forms of self-redemption.”¹¹² It promotes the withdrawal of the idea of God to the private realm and the extinguishing of the objective “Good” which informs our knowledge of the good. As a result, the one God is not so much seen as life’s originating principle, but as remote and unconcerned about what happens and what causes strife in the earthly realm. The phenomenon arises where “worship is directed, not to the only good one . . . but to the many ambiguous powers who concretely beset our life and with whom one must come to terms.”¹¹³ In keeping with his understanding of the desire to get behind the monotheistic revolution, Ratzinger describes this as a “chronic defection from the one God.”¹¹⁴ For Ratzinger, this defection from the principle that upholds life generates a one-sidedness that leads in the direction of modern rationalism and the gradual exclusion of the elements of the Christian synthesis:

Der Mensch, der den einen guten Grund aller Dinge als zu fern, zu unsicher und zu unwichtig ausklammert, um sich statt dessen den näheren Mächten zuzuwenden, erniedrigt sich selbst. Die Dekomposition der christlichen Synthese, vor der wir stehen, muß im letzten auch zu einer Desintegration des Menschen selbst führen.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 217 (“At this point, modern man is tempted to say: Creation has become intelligible to us through science. . . . Indeed, in the magnificent mathematics of creation, which today we can read in the human genetic code, we recognise the language of God. But unfortunately not the whole language. The functional truth about man has been discovered. But the truth about man himself – who he is, where he comes from, what he should do, what is right, what is wrong – this unfortunately cannot be read in the same way. Hand in hand with growing knowledge of functional truth there seems to be an increasing blindness toward ‘truth’ itself – toward the question of real identity and purpose” [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 193]). See also Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 110-17.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 162.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ Ratzinger, *Wendzeit für Europa*, 115 (“The man who excludes the one good foundation of all things as too distant, too uncertain and too unimportant, so that he may turn instead to the powers that lie closer at hand, abases himself. The decomposition of the Christian synthesis facing us must ultimately also lead to a disintegration of man himself” [Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 163-64]).

When this view is contrasted with Ratzinger's Christian synthesis, it takes us into the inner workings of his philosophy of freedom. We will now consider these two philosophical viewpoints in Ratzinger's writings.

4.2.1. A Christian Philosophy of Freedom: Synthesis of Thinking, Willing and Feeling

The actual content of Ratzinger's "Christian synthesis" is something he outlines as a philosophical principle. He presents a synthesis of thinking, willing and feeling as a summation, or more accurately, as a culmination of his overall approach to authentic freedom.¹¹⁶ To begin with, he says authentic freedom takes shape when "essence, willing and acting [*Wessen, Wollen und Tun*"] have at last coincided in [man]. . . . In this way, man can touch the infinite in the finite, and unite himself to it, and thus become infinite precisely in the recognition of limits."¹¹⁷ This resonates closely with Ratzinger's three-fold pattern of divinisation which he describes in terms of participation, identification and education in the way, the truth and the life of being. Furthermore, from an anthropological perspective, Ratzinger's presentation consists of a triadic formulation echoing the imperatives to accept the truth of creaturely essence, to enter the prayer of the Son, and to submit to a dialogical orientation of trust with the meaning that upholds one's life.¹¹⁸

In a noteworthy, indeed informative change in terminology that helps us understand Ratzinger's rationale, he recognises the challenging nature of this philosophy: "This synthesis of understanding, will and feeling [*Verstand, Wille und Gefühl*"] is not easy."¹¹⁹ If we

¹¹⁶ See Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 112-17, 162-63, 177-80.

¹¹⁷ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 255. The original German text can be found in *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 243.

¹¹⁸ See this dissertation §§ 3.2.3.2. and 4.1.3.2.

¹¹⁹ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 162. The original German text can be found in *Wendezeit für Europa*, 114. There are two other formulations of the Christian synthesis in Ratzinger's writings which are similar, namely "understanding, will and heart" in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 296 and "reason, will and emotion" in *A Turning Point for Europe*, 179. It is impossible to ignore the echoes of St. Augustine's philosophy of memory (see esp. *De Trinitate*, and chapters 10 and 11 of the *Confessions*) in Ratzinger's account of the Christian synthesis. Although Ratzinger himself doesn't allude to it, there can be little doubt that he is persuaded by Augustinian thought here. In *De Trinitate*, Augustine seeks the image of God in the human soul. This is because he was already convinced that Gen 1:26 implies that the image of God in human beings is to be found in the

consider both formulations of his philosophy of freedom, we find, in the first instance, that “essence” and “understanding” are two sides of the one search for truth. From the perspective of Ratzinger’s reflections on human freedom, the trajectory of this search is towards the acceptance of creatureliness, the mode and object of which is an authentic participation in the life of being itself. This object is enhanced by considering the category of “will” or “willing.” This calls to mind the figure of Christ and relationality within God – the filial, dialogical worship conducted in God. Christ becomes the sphere of access for humanity into the legitimate identification with the truth of being. Christ discloses this sphere for us in two respects. On the one hand, the essence of the Incarnate Son’s assent to the Father’s will is revealed. On the other hand, the possibility of coming to terms with the truth of the creaturely essence frees up the human person for realistic and fruitful relationality in a posture consistent with a dialogical orientation with regard to God. In other words, the universal

incorporeal soul (cf. *Conf.* 3.7.12; 5.10. 19-20). This led him to single out three aspects of the mind – memory, understanding and will – which are not three separate minds but one mind. Like the persons of the Trinity they are three related as one by mutual relations (cf. *Trin.* 10.11.18). There is on-going debate about the significance of memory within Augustine’s writings, particularly in the move from Platonic reminiscence to his later belief in the illumination of the mind by the light of eternal reason. However, there seems to be agreement that the philosophy of memory is conducted through a “typical Augustinian move from the exterior to the interior and from the inferior to the superior.” See Roland Teske, “Augustine’s Philosophy of Memory” in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, eds. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 148-58, at 151. In the search for the “interior” and “superior,” Augustine’s discussion of memory, understanding and will is engaged in coming to terms with the search for happiness which is to rejoice over God, for God and because of God (cf. *Conf.* 10.22.32). And if God is the truth, then joy in the truth is the happy life (ibid., 10.22.33). The dynamic behind Augustine’s philosophy is that each human recollection involves a trinity: “that which is hidden in memory even before it is thought of, that which results in thought when it is seen, and the will which forms a link between the two of these” (*Trin.* 11.7.12). There can be false memories to which the will ignores the true object of its remembering (ibid. 11.8.15), but there is also, according to Augustine, a case for saying that memory does not merely commit events and sounds to itself. Rather it understands and falls in love with them: “But when we believe to be true what we hold in thought and love what we ought to love, we then live in accord with the trinity of the inner man” (ibid., 13.20.26). There is even a sacramental tone to Augustine’s reflections. The words we speak aloud are signs of the inner words that we have come to understand and love (cf. ibid., 15.11.20). Ratzinger doesn’t use the word “memory” when he speaks about the philosophy of freedom but uses the words “essence,” “understanding” and “thinking.” Indeed, in *Called to Communion*, 114, Ratzinger gives a clear indication of what he seeks to imply here, by using the terminology of “knowledge” alongside that of understanding and will. He maintains that without the apostles’ communion with Jesus, their knowledge, understanding and will remains obsolete in respect of the apostolic mission. This is quite significant as regards where Ratzinger is coming from when he invokes his triadic philosophy of freedom. At the heart of it, both Ratzinger and Augustine refer to a similar dynamic – that there is a primacy of memory or knowledge just as there is a primacy of the Father who is first in the Trinity, “for without memory, the gaze of our thought has no object to return to” (*Trin.* 15.21.41). Hence we see Ratzinger’s rationale for spending a lot of time coming to terms with the meaning that upholds us – the object of our knowledge that is more than functional but the very doorway to understanding the meaning of human existence.

promise of salvation and the particular response of humanity are validly reconciled in the person of the Son. This is further illuminated by looking at the third component of Ratzinger's formula: "acting" and "feeling." Here, once more, one is confronted with mutually inclusive ideas. Within the sphere of divine-human relationality, the meaning that upholds comes into focus as the prospective ground upon which to build one's life. This meaning, if it can be found to be trustworthy, allows one to act, to feel and therefore to love. It is the gift of love received and the act of love undertaken which ultimately educate the human person in the way of being and towards an authentic "being like God" existence.

In the Christian synthesis, all three elements coincide in the expression of authentic freedom. Consequently, feeling meets reason and for Ratzinger, this aspect is a particular flashpoint for much of the one-sided theological and ecclesiological misunderstandings of the age. In the 19th century, he says, "an intellectual truce" was introduced between feeling and reason, particularly through the work of Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) who had been striving to save religion from the excesses of reason by defining it as feeling and taste for the infinite.¹²⁰ However, this undermined both elements. The concept of "reason" was injured because it became detached from meaning, causing it to resign itself to the realm of what is functional and to accepting itself as no longer capable of recognising the truth of existence about humanity, creation and God. It also damaged "feeling," introducing an apersonal piety which corresponds to an apersonal philosophy lacking the courage to believe in the personal God who hears us via a bond of relationality. As a result, "[w]e no longer dare for the most part to presume that we could recognise truth in the essence of our questioning. This false humility abases man, making our action blind and our feeling empty."¹²¹

¹²⁰ See Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 113-15. For a concise introduction to Schleiermacher and the origins of modern theology, see Martin Henry, *On Not Understanding God* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1997), 140-160.

¹²¹ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 113-14.

In this scenario, all religions exist merely on the plane of higher emotion and, therefore, are interchangeable. They become vehicles to serve “the noblest goals of mankind with the thrust of the best feelings and to be instruments for the construction of a society of universal peace.”¹²² However, Ratzinger is clear that while universal peace is a noble goal, “a religion that is nothing more than a means to attain particular goals is debased just as much as a religion that is allowed to govern only as feeling.”¹²³ While it is certainly the case that “reason” and “feeling” are components of religious activity in general and Christianity in particular, Ratzinger says they can “retain their power only when they do not lose their own inherent interconnection. This interconnection consists in the fact that faith takes up feeling and redeems it from its indeterminacy by giving it its true ground: the feeling for the infinite is based on the truth that there exists an infinite God and that he addresses us, the finite ones.”¹²⁴

At this stage, yet another citation from Ratzinger’s philosophy of freedom adds an additional and important perspective. When he refers to the “[c]ooperation of thinking, willing and feeling in faith [*denken, wollen und fühlen*],”¹²⁵ he explains that his vision consists of a Christian philosophy of freedom as a reality born out of faith. He goes on to say, its supreme manifestation consists of the relational encounter of two freedoms, divine and human, in dialogical orientation:

Christliches Beten . . . ist Antwort von Freiheit auf Freiheit, Begegnung der Liebe. Wiederum trägt die Tendenz zur apersonalen Frömmigkeit ein Stück Wahrheit in sich: Sie sucht nach der Überwindung der Differenz, die uns von dem anderen und von den anderen trennt. Aber die Rücknahme des Seins, die Resignation, die darin liegt, rettet nicht. Wenn die Begegnung zweier Freiheiten Liebe wird, dann gerade geschieht Überwindung der Differenz. Nicht die Leugnung der Person, sondern ihr

¹²² Ibid., 114.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., Joseph Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 114-15.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 112. The original German text can be found in *Wendezeit für Europa*, 77. See also *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 112; *God and the World*, 33.

höchster Akt, die Liebe, schafft jene Einheit, nach der wir uns als Geschöpfe des dreieinigen Gottes vom Grund unserer Existenz her sehnen.¹²⁶

Ratzinger opens up this insight of Christian freedom as a reality born of faith by saying it makes the highest demands on believers, because it greatly esteems the human person. The Christian synthesis sets a very elevated ideal when it asserts the convergence of one's reason and feeling with one's will as that which is in keeping with the truth of one's being. This sharply contrasts, in Ratzinger's view, with the philosophy underpinning modern rationalism, which on account of its "methodological self-limitation, declares the irrational to be the origin of the rational."¹²⁷ Hence, the contours of modern rationalism's relationship with reason and freedom are disclosed:

Das schließt ein, daß [moderne Rationalismus] das Unfreie als Grund des Freien erklären muß, daß also Freiheit wie Vernunft ein Abfallprodukt aus der Selbstmontage der Welt ist. Demgegenüber geht der Glaube, der den Logos als Anfang weiß, vom Primat der Freiheit aus. Nur die Bindung an den Logos gewährleistet die Freiheit als Strukturprinzip des Wirklichen.¹²⁸

4.2.2. Christian Freedom: Other than Indeterminacy

It is the openness and uncontrollability of freedom that makes it so unsettling from the human perspective. The resistance to total regulation is also what permits authentic freedom to defy assimilation to the modern cultural dynamics of rationalism. Ultimately, in order to be genuine, love as an encounter between two freedoms evades total conceptual cohesion:

[Die Philosophien des Notwendigen] bieten Gebrauchsanweisungen, um mit Notwendigkeit die bessere Welt herbeizuführen. Die Philosophie der Freiheit, die aus dem Glauben kommt, kann das nicht. Sie hat keine Weltformel. Oder besser gesagt:

¹²⁶ Ratzinger, *Wendzeit für Europa*, 80 ("Christian praying . . . is the response one freedom makes to another freedom, an encounter of love. Once again, the tendency to apersonal piety bears a portion of truth in itself: it seeks to overcome the difference that separates us from the Other and from others. But the withdrawal of existence, the resignation that this contains, does not save. The difference is overcome precisely when the encounter of two freedoms becomes love. It is not the denial of the person but rather the person's highest act, namely, love, that creates that unity for which we yearn from the depths of our existence, as creatures of the triune God" [Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 116-17]).

¹²⁷ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 115.

¹²⁸ Ratzinger, *Wendzeit für Europa*, 79-80 ("This means that [modern rationalism] must declare the basis of freedom to be that which is not free, that is, that freedom, like reason, is a byproduct of the self-construction of the world. Against this, faith, which knows the Logos as the beginning, has the primacy of freedom as its starting point. Only the link to the Logos guarantees freedom as the structural principle of what really exists" [Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 115-16]).

Ihre Weltformel ist die Freiheit der Liebe Gottes, die uns in Jesus Christus ruft und immer neu der Freiheit des Menschen den Weg zeigt.¹²⁹

In the challenge of reconciling creatureliness with an authentic “being like God” existence, Ratzinger addresses whether the Christian philosophy of freedom means that being a creature represents a withdrawal and retreat into finitude and arbitrariness. Juxtaposing the two forms of syntheses, he says the Christian experience of God is that of “self-obligation in triune love and, thus, pure freedom. To be an image of this God, ‘to become like him,’ is man’s vocation.”¹³⁰ The modern synthesis, on the other hand, which promotes an “unlimited arbitrariness of the ability to do all has an idol as its model and not God.”¹³¹ The truth about authentic human freedom, Ratzinger says, is that one “who can merely chose between arbitrary options is not yet free.”¹³² Hence to be free, in the truest sense of the human yearning for liberty, is the vision of a person, who can embark in faith upon the explicit path to divinisation, correctly understood. Authentic freedom, in this context, is not the perusal of arbitrary options but a movement whereby the human person becomes one with their essence and therefore, with truth itself. Therefore, to Ratzinger’s mind, freedom has to be other than indeterminacy, while “constraints are an essential, formal part of freedom” that cannot be ignored, be it on the moral or ontological level. He continues:

[. . .] Indeterminiertheit nicht das Wesen menschlicher Freiheit bildet, auch wenn zunächst das Verlangen nach Freiheit wie von selbst in diese Richtung vorstößt. Freiheit muß positiv definiert werden, wenn sie positiv sein soll. . . . Sie wäre . . . in der Richtung des Selbstbesitzes zu suchen, als Möglichkeit der Selbstverwirklichung, der Verwirklichung des eigenen Wesens und seiner Möglichkeiten.¹³³

¹²⁹ Ratzinger, *Wendzeit für Europa*, 80 (“[Philosophies of what is necessary] offer user’s instructions on how to bring about the better world by necessity. The philosophy of freedom that comes from faith cannot do this. It has no simple formula for the world. Or, to put it more exactly, its formula for the world is the freedom of God’s love, which calls us in Jesus Christ and ever anew shows the path for man’s freedom” [Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 116]).

¹³⁰ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 255.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 172 (“[. . .] indeterminacy does not constitute the essence of human freedom, even though the longing for freedom at first pushes ahead almost automatically in this direction. Freedom must be defined positively if it is to be something positive. . . . [W]e should look for it along the lines of self-possession, as the possibility for self-realisation, the realisation of one’s own essence and authentic nature and of one’s possibilities” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 182]).

Furthermore, growing in freedom is growing in the capacity to take the measure of one's actions from within, without the need to obey external constraint. Therefore, authentic freedom is consistent with the concepts of self-possession or self-realisation. Ratzinger thus concludes that "he who is free has become one with his essence, one with the truth itself. For he who is one with the truth no longer acts according to external necessities and constraints."¹³⁴

Where Ratzinger's understanding of human freedom comes under most scrutiny is when he deals with the issue of sin. In fact, this furnishes him even further with a theological vocabulary to speak about authentic freedom as against its one-sided derivatives. The final subdivision of this chapter looks at Ratzinger's reflections on this.

4.3. Acknowledging the Truth of Human Nature: Sin as Suppressed Truth

From the perspective of a Christian synthesis, an authentic philosophy of freedom whereby one's acting coincides with one's willing and essence necessitates *participation* in the prayer of Christ, *identification* with the person of Christ and *education* in the mission of Christ.¹³⁵ However, as an approach to the goal of creation, the freedom and love envisaged in the notion of divinisation is often hampered by the disharmony of human activity. When Ratzinger categorises sin as the suppression of truth, it leads him to an explicit presentation of a three-fold convergence of insights which are implicitly present throughout his anthropological literature, characterising the human person as dependent, relational, and limited.

To Ratzinger's mind, society today has erected a psychological barrier, so to speak, that inhibits discussion of sin. For example, he says that "sin has become almost everywhere

¹³⁴ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 255.

¹³⁵ See this dissertation § 3.2.3.

today one of those subjects that are not spoken about.”¹³⁶ In an atmosphere of quantification, where technical and scientific reason holds sway, objective codes of behaviour – something not manufactured by us but coming from the inner goodness of creation – are increasingly non-existent. Ratzinger says that such objective standards are viewed more and more as an affront to personal freedom: “People today know of no standard; to be sure they do not want to know of any because they see standards as threats to their freedom.”¹³⁷ As such, an absurdity has entered reality in that “sin has become a suppressed subject, but everywhere we can see that, although it is suppressed, it has nonetheless remained real.”¹³⁸ Despite this irrational suppression, he says the effects of sin and guilt remain, and they require assuagement from another source:

Weil [die verdrängte Wahrheit der Schuld] dennoch da ist, muß er sie angreifen und zertreten. Weil es so steht, d.h. weil der Mensch Wahrheit verdrängen, aber nicht beseitigen kann und weil er an der verdrängten Wahrheit erkrankt, darum ist es eine der Aufgaben des heiligen Geistes, “die Welt der Sünde zu überführen” (Joh 16:8f).¹³⁹

In contrast to the view that objective standards threaten freedom, Ratzinger says human beings can be healthy only when they stop suppressing and destroying truth. He invokes the third chapter of Genesis as a guide to suppressed truth. In the first instance, the attraction to cast off the covenant is at work in this text. Ratzinger says the portrayal of Adam’s temptation epitomizes Israel’s temptation and, in general terms, the nature of temptation and sin in every age. Temptation doesn’t begin with outright denial of God, but rather through the planting of doubt which lures one from trust to mistrust. This is a dangerous provocation for “[t]here is indeed a great deal of enlightenment when one doubts the covenant, experiences mistrust, demands freedom, and renounces obedience to the

¹³⁶ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 62.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 63. Ratzinger comments upon the aggressiveness with which society today indulges in a blame-culture, demeaning the other person and demanding a scapegoat wherever misfortune strikes. He says the desire to change the world by violent means amounts to a suppressed reality of guilt, which people do not want to admit.

¹³⁹ Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 66 (“[S]ince [the suppressed reality of guilt] is still there, they have to attack it and destroy it. As long as the situation remains thus – that is, as long as people suppress the truth but do not succeed in doing away with it, as long as they are suffering from this suppressed truth – it will be one of the tasks of the Holy Spirit to ‘convince the world of sin’ [John 16:8]” [Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 63]).

covenant as a straitjacket that prevents one from enjoying the real promises of life.”¹⁴⁰ The inner nature of temptation is that it has a very attractive irrationality, whose main purpose is to convince people that the covenant is not a gift but enslavement and an obstacle to influential power and autonomy:

Es ist so leicht, dem Menschen einzureden, daß dieser Bund nicht Gabe und Geschenk sei, sondern Ausdruck eines Neides gegenüber dem Menschen, daß er ihn seiner Freiheit und der köstlichsten Dinge des Lebens beraube. Mit dieser Verdächtigung des Bundes kommt der Mensch dann auf den Weg, auf dem er sich selbst seine Welt erbaut. Anders gesagt: Darin ist der Vorschlag an den Menschen eingeschlossen, daß er die Grenze seines Wesens nicht annehmen solle; daß er die Grenze von Gut und Böse, die Grenze des Sittlichen überhaupt, nicht als eine Grenze betrachten, sondern sich einfach freimachen solle und könne, indem er sie wegläßt.¹⁴¹

Ratzinger, then, believes the nature of human guilt is found in the story of Adam.

When covenantal order is cast into doubt, it leads to a denial of the order which comprises the nearness of the God of the covenant. Ratzinger maintains this denial of the covenantal order leads to the very heart of sin – to the denial of creatureliness on the part of humanity – because it refuses to accept the standard and the limitations that are implicit in it. In this scenario, human beings “do not want to be creatures, do not want to be subject to a standard, do not want to be dependent. . . . [This] is what slavery is and from slavery one must free oneself.”¹⁴² Dependence on God’s creative love is an external imposition when the creature itself wants to be God. In this new scenario, the other becomes a rival: “Human beings who consider dependence on the highest love as slavery and who try to deny the truth about themselves, which is their creatureliness, do not free themselves; they destroy truth and love.”¹⁴³ For Ratzinger then, it is clear that sin is, in its essence, a renunciation of the truth

¹⁴⁰ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 67. On the theme of the serpent in Genesis 3 Ratzinger relies on Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, 237-241; von Rad, *Genesis*, 83-99.

¹⁴¹ Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 68-69 (“It is so easy to convince people that this covenant is not a gift but rather an expression of envy of humankind and that it is robbing human beings of their freedom and of the most precious things of life. With this doubt people are well on their way to building their own worlds. In other words, it is then that they make the decision not to accept the limitations of their existence; it is then that they decide not to be bound by the limitations imposed by good and evil or by morality in general, but quite simply to free themselves by ignoring them” [Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 67]).

¹⁴² Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 70.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 70-71.

and a defacement of the integrity of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, i.e. a denial of human limitation and creatureliness (cf. Gen 2:16-17; 3:6-7). Denial of the limitations imposed by good and evil, which are the inner standard of creation, is to deny the truth and live in mere appearance – in suppressed truth.

Ratzinger points out a further characteristic of sin which emerges in Genesis 3, namely that it is not merely framed in terms of an abstract possibility but rather as a personal deed. There is the sin of a particular person who stands at the origin of humankind and with whom the history of sin begins. In other words, sin begets sin, and therefore all the sins of history are interlinked. Ratzinger says theology's use of the "misleading and imprecise"¹⁴⁴ term for this – "original sin" – can seem absurd from our viewpoint since guilt is something purely personal. Ratzinger believes that coming to an answer on what theology means by the term "original sin" demands nothing less than a better understanding of the human person. Within the context of this doctrine, Ratzinger makes three statements of clarification. They form the core of his model of authentic freedom: dependency, relationality and limitation, correctly understood.¹⁴⁵

4.3.1. Authentic Freedom: Acceptance of Dependency, Relationality, Limitation

Firstly, authentic human freedom requires the acceptance of dependency: no human being is closed in upon oneself or can live from oneself alone. Life is received every day from without, not merely at the moment of birth. The "self" exists not merely within itself but also outside of itself. Human beings "live in those whom they love and in those who love

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 72. Although Ratzinger has never produced a text specifically dedicated to the doctrine of original sin, references to it appear intermittently throughout his writings. He believes it is the key to unravelling many of the contentious issues within theological anthropology today. As we saw in this dissertation § 1.5., he has expressed an interest in writing specifically on making the doctrine of original sin comprehensible to the modern world. See also *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 49, 93; *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 74; *Daughter Zion*, 62-71; *Introduction to Christianity*, 249, 266-69; *Faith and the Future*, 17; *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 241; *In the Beginning*, 71-77; *The End of Time*, 20; *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 31; *God and the World*, 86-88; *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 101, 252-3.

¹⁴⁵ See Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 72-4.

them and to whom they are ‘present’.”¹⁴⁶ Sin is the forgetting or rebuffing of this foundational element of human nature.

Secondly, authentic freedom requires the acceptance of relationality. The human person possesses life only by way of relationship. Only in and with “you” can “I” be myself, whereas being “alone” is inadequate: “to be truly human means to be related in love, to be *of* and *for*.”¹⁴⁷ Sin’s point of entry is precisely “the rejection of relationality.”¹⁴⁸ As a disturbance of relationship, sin is not restricted to the individual for it touches the other person involved in the relationship. Ratzinger says this is the root meaning of “original sin” – sin is an offence that always touches others, that alters the world and damages it:

Weil es so ist, gilt: Wenn das Beziehungsgefüge des Menschseins vom Anfang her gestört wird, tritt jeder Mensch fortan in eine von der Beziehungsstörung geprägte Welt ein. Mit dem Menschsein selbst, das gut ist, fällt ihn zugleich eine von der Sünde gestörte Welt an. Jeder von uns tritt in eine Verflechtung ein, in der die Beziehungen verfälscht sind. Jeder ist deshalb schon von seinem Anfang her in seinen Beziehungen gestört, empfängt sie nicht, wie sie sein sollten. Die Sünde greift nach ihm und er vollzieht sie mit.¹⁴⁹

The third clarification follows from this: authentic freedom requires the acceptance of limitation. Ratzinger says it is clear that human beings alone cannot save themselves and humanity’s innate error is precisely the desire to do it for themselves. This desire is the crux of false freedom:

Erlöst, d.h. frei und wahr werden, können wir nur, wenn wir aufhören, ein Gott sein zu wollen; wenn wir auf den Wahn der Autonomie und der Autarkie verzichten. Wir können immer nur erlöst *werden*, d.h. wir werden wir selbst, wenn wir die rechten Beziehungen empfangen und annehmen. Unsere zwischenmenschlichen Beziehungen aber hängen daran, daß das Maß der Geschöpflichkeit allenthalben im Lot ist, und gerade da sitzt die Störung. Weil die Schöpfungsbeziehung gestört ist, darum kann nur der Schöpfer selbst unser Erlöser sein. Erlöst werden können wir nur, wenn der,

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 72.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 73.

¹⁴⁹ Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 73 (“To the extent that this is true, when the network of human relationships is damaged from the very beginning, then every human being enters into a world that is marked by relational damage. At the very moment that a person begins human existence, which is a good, he or she is confronted by a sin-damaged world. Each of us enters into a situation in which relationality has been hurt. Consequently each person is, from the very start, damaged in relationships and does not engage in them as he or she ought. Sin pursues the human being, and he or she capitulates to it” [Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 73]).

von dem wir uns abgeschnitten haben, neu auf uns zugeht und uns die Hand reicht. Nur das Geliebtwerden ist Erlöst-werden, und nur die Liebe Gottes kann die gestörte menschliche Liebe reinigen, das von seinem Grund her verfremdete Beziehungsgefüge wiederherstellen.¹⁵⁰

When Ratzinger considers the New Testament response to this human situation, his anthropological and christological considerations converge quite significantly. He says the Old Testament account of human beginnings points beyond itself, to the One in whom God endured the human refusal to accept its limitations – the one, as it were, who entered into “suppressed truth” in order to restore humanity to itself. Ratzinger points to Phil 2:5-11 as the briefest and most telling response to the narrative of Genesis 3. He says that although the pauline hymn may have its sights on a different version of the story of the Fall (cf. Job 15:7-8), it reverberates with a sense of Jesus as the one who is really “like God.” Being “Son” means total relationality, and relationality views dependency as positive.¹⁵¹ From the human perspective, the desire to be omnipotent as the route to unimpeded autonomy melts at the moment when dependency is perceived in the relationship between the Son and the Father:

Und darum klammert der wirklich Gottgleiche sich nicht an seine Autonomie, an die Grenzenlosigkeit seines Könnens und Wollens. [Der Sohn] geht den umgekehrten Weg: er wird der ganz Abhängige, er wird der Knecht.¹⁵²

Taking the route of love rather than power, Jesus can descend into Adam’s lie – that of suppressed truth – and raise up again the truth written into creation. Christ, as the New Adam, is the open invitation to relationship. The Cross as the “place of his obedience,” where

¹⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 73 (“We can only be saved – that is, be free and true – when we stop wanting to be God and when we renounce the madness of autonomy and self-sufficiency. We can only be saved – that is, become ourselves – when we engage in the proper relationship. But our interpersonal relationships occur in the context of our utter creatureliness, and it is there that the damage lies. Since the relationship with creation has been damaged, only the Creator himself can be our saviour. We can be saved only when he from whom we have cut ourselves off takes the initiative with us and stretches out his hand to us. Only being loved is being saved, and only God’s love can purify damaged human love and radically re-establish the network of relationships that have suffered from alienation” [Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 73-74]).

¹⁵¹ The Johannine relationality texts highlighting the relationship of the Son and the Father find their context here. See, as examples, John 1:1-3, 14, 18; 5: 19-30, 43-47; 6: 44-46; 7:16-18; 8:28; 11:41-42; 14:1-17:26.

¹⁵² Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 75 (“[T]he one who is truly like God does not hold graspingly to his autonomy, to the limitlessness of his ability and his willing. He does the contrary: he becomes completely dependent, he becomes a slave” [Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 75]).

Christ is completely open, now becomes “the true tree of life.”¹⁵³ With the discovery of the true tree of life, the moment of true “enlightenment” is reached. On the one hand, humanity is indeed a “divine project”¹⁵⁴ – the fruit of love which creative “Reason” was audacious enough to conceive. While on the other hand, God is obedient because self-sacrifice means being motivated to the point where dependence is freedom grounded in truth and love. Ratzinger says that Christ, by his life, death and resurrection, has erected the true pole of the earth, which is the liberation of humanity from “our rejection of our limitations and from the lie of our autonomy.”¹⁵⁵ In Christ, freedom is authentic because love and truth are one:

Von diesem Baum her kommt nicht das Wort der Verführung, sondern das Wort der rettenden Liebe, das Wort des Gehorsams, in dem Gott selbst gehorsam geworden ist, und uns so seinen Gehorsam als Raum der Freiheit anbietet. Das Kreuz ist der wieder zugänglich gewordene Lebensbaum.¹⁵⁶

As a way of approaching the communal or ecclesial aspect of Christ’s “yes,”

Ratzinger looks to Augustine’s philosophy of history, viewing it as a commentary on the tension inherent in free creatures within a world created in freedom and out of love.¹⁵⁷ For Augustine, history was the struggle between two kinds of love – “self-love reaching the point of contempt for God . . . [and] love of God carried as far as contempt for self.”¹⁵⁸ This is precisely the history into which the Church enters and Ratzinger, through his christological anthropology, has presented the contemporaneous manifestation of this dynamic. It is the dynamic between the meaning that sustains human life on the one hand, and the limitation to functional truth or feasibility on the other:

Die Liebesfähigkeit, das heißt die Fähigkeit, auf das Unverfügbare in Geduld zu warten und sich von ihm beschenken zu lassen, wird erstickt durch die schnellen Erfüllungen, in denen ich auf niemanden angewiesen bin, aber auch nie aus mir heraustreten muß und darum auch nie in mich hineinfinde. Diese Zerstörung der

¹⁵³ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 76.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

¹⁵⁶ Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 75 (“From this tree comes not the word of seduction, but the word of the saving love, the word of obedience, in which God himself has become obedient, and his obedience is offered us as sphere of freedom. The cross is the tree of life become accessible again” [own translation]).

¹⁵⁷ See Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 178-79.

¹⁵⁸ *Civ.*, Bk. XIV, 28.

Liebesfähigkeit gebiert die tödliche Langeweile. Sie ist die Vergiftung des Menschen.¹⁵⁹

Finally, Ratzinger moves to a eucharistic theology to redress the human “mentality of power and activity”¹⁶⁰ that threatens creation. Carrying forward the image of the Cross as the true tree of life, Ratzinger considers the Eucharist to be the abiding presence of the fruit of true life in our midst. Unlike the serpent’s promptings of doubt in the inner goodness of creation, the open invitation to receive and eat of the Eucharist is to accept the “yes” of Christ’s obedience. It is the “yes” from the crucified Lord that sets the standard of our creatureliness and freedom:

Darum ist Eucharistie als Gegenwart des Kreuzes der bleibende Lebensbaum, der allezeit in unserer Mitte steht und uns einlädt, Frucht des wahren Lebens zu empfangen. Dies schließt ein, daß Eucharistie niemals bloß eine Art von Gemeinschaftspflege sein kann. Sie zu empfangen, vom Baum des Lebens zu essen, das bedeutet darum, den gekreuzigten Herrn zu empfangen, also seine Lebengestalt, seinen Gehorsam, sein Ja, das Maß unseres Geschöpfseins anzunehmen. Es bedeutet, die Liebe Gottes anzunehmen, die unsere Wahrheit ist – jene Abhängigkeit von Gott, die uns nicht Fremdbestimmung bedeutet, so wenig dem Sohn die Sohnschaft Fremdbestimmung ist: Gerade diese “Abhängigkeit” ist Freiheit, weil sie Wahrheit ist und Liebe.¹⁶¹

In his anthropology, Ratzinger aims to oppose “the lie of human autonomy”¹⁶² by concentrating upon Christ’s presence in the world as the presence of meaning for the human person. Sustaining this presence from day to day is the subject of his ecclesiology and will be the subject of the next chapter. For him the Church “must fulfil the task in which her identity

¹⁵⁹ Ratzinger, *Wendzeit für Europa*, 127 (“The capacity to love, that is, the capacity to wait in patience for what is not under one’s control and to let oneself receive this as a gift, is suffocated by the speedy fulfilments in which I am dependent on no one but in which I am never obliged to emerge from my own self and thus never find the path into my own self. This destruction of the capacity to love gives birth to lethal boredom. It is the poisoning of man” [Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 179-80]).

¹⁶⁰ Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 35.

¹⁶¹ Ratzinger, *Im Anfang Schuf Gott*, 75-76 (“Therefore the Eucharist, as the presence of the cross, is the abiding tree of life, which is ever in our midst and ever invites us to take the fruit of true life. This means that the Eucharist can never be merely a kind of community builder. To receive it, to eat of the tree of life, thus means to receive the crucified Lord and consequently to accept the parameters of his life, his obedience, his ‘yes,’ the standard of our creatureliness. It means to accept the love of God, which is our truth – that dependence on God which is no more an imposition from without than is the Son’s sonship. It is precisely this dependence that is freedom, because it is truth and love” [Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 76-77]).

¹⁶² Ratzinger, *In the Beginning*, 77.

is based: to make God known and to proclaim his Kingdom. . . . She must prepare space for the divine.”¹⁶³

4.4. Conclusion

Chapter 4 builds on the findings of Chapter 3 which investigated the christological foundations of Ratzinger’s understanding of authentic freedom. His treatment of human freedom reveals an existential framework that can be summarised in three points. In the first instance, there is a qualitative difference between divine and human freedom which takes us to the core of christology. As the creaturely prerogative to reply “yes” or “no” to God’s eternal “yes” to creation, human freedom is a determining factor that imbues all of history. christology becomes the bedrock of Ratzinger’s approach to this because Christ’s “yes” clarifies that monotheism and creatureliness are the categories upon which an authentic Christian freedom is to be properly expressed. From the anthropological perspective, the former is the category of being in which the human person comes to know ontological citizenship in Christ; the latter is the category of truth in which the human person comes to accept one’s dependency, relationality and limitation. These become the existential parameters for how Ratzinger will circumscribe anthropology and ecclesiology. In the yearning for liberty, for a “being like God” existence, relationality views dependency and limitation as positives.

Second, and subsequently, Ratzinger’s attempt to analyse the modern synthesis of thought, setting it in dialectical tension with the triadic formula of the Christian synthesis, is a significant theological examination of the content of an authentic freedom. It affords him not only the opportunity to reflect on the dynamics of Christian freedom, but it also acts as an antidote for the tendency of extreme self-sufficiency in contemporary societies. For Ratzinger, the modern synthesis buffers itself against the idea of the unconditional – of God –

¹⁶³ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 178.

and seeks the universalization of a scientific objectification of reality. Against this, he contends that an authentic human freedom consists in the truthful human orientation with regard to God. This, in turn, furnishes the “tools” of science, technology and historical consciousness with their proper locus within society.

Thirdly, human beings do not exist relationally only in the direction of the Creator, but also towards one other. There is a communal aspect to the “yes” of humanity which is motivated by a sacrificial love modelled on the Son’s “yes” to the Father. It emerges particularly clearly when Ratzinger deals with the tract on sin. The fundamental insight of the whole discussion on the shape of human freedom is Ratzinger’s belief that the necessary and inevitable questions of humanity are ultimately ontological questions – questions of liberty and truth. Unless the human person wrestles with them and with the doubt which accompanies them in the present day, there can be no harmony in one’s life. In this regard, Ratzinger says the Church must be prepared to suffer and to witness, and to do so freely, convinced of the truth about God and the human person:

[Die Kirche] muß überzeugen, denn nur, indem sie Überzeugung schafft, öffnet sie den Raum für das, was ihr übergeben ist, und immer nur auf dem Weg der Freiheit, das heißt über Verstand, Wille und Gefühl zugänglich werden kann.¹⁶⁴

Opening up this aspect of Ratzinger’s work will be the task of Chapter 5.

¹⁶⁴ Ratzinger, *Wendezeit für Europa*, 126 (“[The Church] must convince, for it is only by convincing that she opens up space for what has been entrusted to her; and this can be made accessible only along the path of freedom, which means via reason, will and emotion” [Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 179]).

CHAPTER 5: Growth in Human Freedom: Ecclesiological Contours

5.0. Introduction

On 4 June 1970, Ratzinger delivered a lecture at the *Katholischen Akademie* in Munich in response to a predominantly existential enquiry which carried a great urgency in its formulation, “Why I am still in the Church.”¹ In the course of the lecture, he provided four basic points which were seminal and would continue to inform his ecclesiology throughout his professional life. In the first instance, he points out that, at its deepest level, the Church belongs to God and is “gift” for us. Secondly, one cannot believe in God on one’s own because faith requires a community. Thirdly, to love means to serve the other to the point of sacrifice rather than to satiate the self in personal aggrandisement. And fourthly, hope can be authentic only when based on truth and an authentic recognition of the contours of human freedom. To this end, the Church is portrayed as a custodian of the liberating truth that God reveals in Jesus Christ.²

Hence this chapter is divided into four subdivisions. It proposes that one approach to Ratzinger’s ecclesiology is to study it in terms of an overarching sacramental framework that embraces the ecclesial dimensions of the theological virtues of faith, love and hope.³

¹ See Joseph Ratzinger, “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin” in *GS:ZV*, 1169-85. An English translation can be found in Ratzinger, *Credo for Today*, 181-200.

² David L. Schindler has recognised that Ratzinger “rarely writes on any churchly matter that does not manifest its implications for man and culture; and vice versa. Indeed this indissoluble linking is one of the main distinguishing features of his theology” (David L. Schindler, introduction to *Joseph Ratzinger in Communion: The Unity of the Church* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010], ix). From such a perspective, it is possible to frame Ratzinger’s ecclesiology in terms of the Church’s impact upon human civilisation and vice versa.

³ It is important to note that while it is necessary to make specific choices in dealing with various ecclesiological themes for illustrative purposes, none of the dimensions explored can exist in isolation. The advantage of the proposed approach is that, from a largely existential starting point, the four perspectives indicate the *raison d’être* of the Church today by uncovering the main themes which lay the ground for Ratzinger’s understanding of Church as sphere of growth in authentic human freedom. His decidedly existentialist approach on Ratzinger’s part has afforded him, at various junctures over the years, the opportunity to reflect upon the reasons behind the ecclesial needs of humanity and the human requisite for God’s intervention in history. It will be important to keep in mind that three core relationships mark the discussion of the Church as “sphere”: firstly, the individual person’s growth in freedom through *personal interaction* with the Church; secondly, *communal fellowship* within the Church community; and finally, *missionary outreach* and the value of an ecclesial presence within the setting of wider, civil society. These interconnected “layers” will remain largely implicit in the present chapter as we set out Ratzinger’s ecclesiology but will be explicitly expressed in Section III when we reflect on some of

Following an examination of the important aspects of Ratzinger’s sacramental framework – something which acts like an overarching postulate – the dimensions of faith, love and hope will be introduced, and their concomitant ecclesiological themes will be developed. This final chapter of Section II studies Ratzinger’s ecclesiology in light of his christocentric anthropology with the intention of yielding insight into the Church as sphere of growth in authentic human freedom.

5.1. A Sacramental Framework: God’s Church, not “our” Church

The primordial canvas from which Ratzinger launches his existential enquiry into the Church can be explained in terms of “ownership.” His guiding principle here is: “‘his Church’ lives behind ‘our Church’ . . . [and] we cannot change this situation. . . . I can stand by [Christ] only if I stand by and in his Church because . . . at the deepest level it is not our Church but precisely ‘his’.”⁴ One can discern a sacramental underpinning to his approach here. With regard to us, the heart of his approach to the meaning of sacrament is based on receptivity of gift on the part of the human subject: “I give what I myself cannot give; I do something that is not my work; I am on a mission and have to become the bearer of that which another has committed to my charge.”⁵ One can distinguish in these remarks, the reception, possession and communication of that which one has not created for oneself – the authority to communicate what is received is found in another. This is a liberating vision for it shifts the burden of possession and accomplishment away from the receiver.⁶ The starting point – a “self-expropriation for the other, this leave-taking from oneself, this self-

the inferences of his thought. Ratzinger’s ecclesiology is constantly engaged in coming to terms with the necessary balance to be struck between the personal and communal aspects of ecclesial life and the avoidance of an individualist mentality in the Church. In the context of freedom, this balance is particularly relevant in the modern age which puts a very high value on personal integrity.

⁴ Ratzinger, “Why I am still in the Church,” in *Credo for Today*, 193. See also *The Ratzinger Report*, 48-49.

⁵ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 115.

⁶ However, the receiver should not be understood as passive in this process. Paul O’ Callaghan delivered a very interesting paper on this at an International Theology Symposium held at the Pontifical University, Maynooth in June 2012. See Paul O Callaghan, “The Anthropological Roots of Communion,” in *Proceedings of the International Symposium of Theology: The Ecclesiology of Communion Fifty Years after the Opening of Vatican II*, vol. 2 of 50th *International Eucharistic Congress* (Dublin: Veritas, 2013), 287-301.

dispossession and selflessness” – is the “movement away from self” that conforms us to the mystery of the Trinity. Thereby, the *imago Dei* is consummated in us and the fundamental pattern according to which we were created is brought to new life. Created in the image of the Trinity, the truth about each person is that only the one who loses oneself finds the true self.⁷

Concretely, Ratzinger says, it is the Church, in spite of all its frailty, that presents the God of Jesus Christ to us. He asks where would one look for Christ were it not for the continuity of his Church? Christ would evaporate, over time, without the Church to hold Christ up for us. Ratzinger says this elementary fact must stand right at the beginning. Therefore, as true as it is to say that the Church must ever and again check itself against the measure of Christ, “there is ultimately no opposition between Christ and Church.”⁸ Because the Church gives birth to Christ ever anew in the faith and prayer of people in all ages, Ratzinger says, it gives “a light, a support, and a standard without which humanity would be unimaginable.”⁹ Hence, it can be said of Ratzinger that preceding any existential analysis of “ownership,” his ecclesiological writings are founded on a *theo*-logical foundation, in the strict sense, which opens up the importance of christology and ecclesiology. This entails a eucharistic ecclesiology advocating an ecclesial encounter with Trinitarian *communio* at the heart of God’s plan of salvation. In Ratzinger’s ecclesiology, along this path of sacramental and ecclesial receptivity is growth in authentic freedom.

5.1.1. Eucharistic Ecclesiology: Freedom in *Communio*

If, as Ratzinger maintains, it is in the Church that we encounter Christ and the Christian faith, then the Church is our “contemporaneity with Christ: there is no other.”¹⁰ In his writings, the Church is seen as a divine-human reality constituting a covenantal *communio* – that is, God and humanity in a process of unification. The source of that unity is the

⁷ See Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 115-16. See also *ibid.*, 118, 143, 146.

⁸ Ratzinger, “Why I am still in the Church,” in *Credo for Today*, 193.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁰ Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 60.

Eucharist, the sacrament of the paschal mystery by which God, in Christ, reunites sinful humanity with himself. Communion in, and with the one body and blood of Christ transforms the faithful interiorly into the one body of Christ that is the Church (cf. Rom 12:4; 1Cor 6:6; 10:17; 12:12,13,20; Eph 2:16; 4:4; Col 3:15) – “Body of Christ” being, in Ratzinger’s understanding, the most distinctive New Testament and patristic description of the new people of God.¹¹

¹¹ Ratzinger says that participation in the eucharistic sacrifice is the opening up of the Church as the body of Christ. To Ratzinger’s mind, the Body of Christ in the Eucharist as constitutive of the ecclesial body coincides with his overall approach to the meaning of sacrament: “In the Eucharist we receive the Body of the Lord, and, thus, become one body with him; we all receive the same Body and, thus, ourselves become ‘all one in Christ Jesus’ (Gal 3:28). The Eucharist takes us out of ourselves and into him, so that we can say, with Paul, ‘It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me’ (Gal 2:20). I, yet no longer I – a new and greater self is growing, which is called the one body of the Lord, the Church” (Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 102-3). In essence this is Ratzinger’s very pauline viewpoint on ecclesiology and is succinctly presented in *ibid.*, 90-111. To participate in sacramental communion means becoming the Church, because it means becoming one “Body” with Christ. Ratzinger says that this “being one Body” needs to be understood as Paul intends it: as, “two becoming one” (cf. 1Cor 6:16) along the lines of husband and wife – one flesh and yet two; two and yet one. Ratzinger maintains that personal liberty is not to be hampered but rather cultivated and fulfilled: “the difference is not abolished but is swallowed up in a greater unity” (103). Ratzinger says 1Cor10:1-22 deepens these ideas: as one can come under the power of idols and be ruled and shaped by them, so it is, analogously, albeit differently, that partaking of the one bread is participation in Christ’s one body: “the religious attitude towards Communion and that towards the Church blend into one another: the one bread makes us into one body; the Church is simply that unity created by eucharistic Communion, the unity of the many in and through the one Christ” (103-4). For an in-depth account of Ratzinger’s treatment of the conciliar understanding of the term people of God and the modern misleading variations which became fashionable following the Council, see his *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 13-35; his lecture in Aversa in September 2011, “The Ecclesiology of Vatican II,” <http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdfeccv2.htm> (accessed 15 August 2010); his lecture in Rome in November 2000, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church, *Lumen gentium*,” <http://www.ewtn.com/library/curia/cdfeccl.htm> (accessed 26 September 2008). The people of God motif, as it was popularised in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council has always concerned Ratzinger. He fears it has been construed in a reductionist way that gives it a sociological and political interpretation which “becomes the vehicle of an anti-hierarchical and anti-sacral idea of Church, indeed, a revolutionary category suitable for developing a new concept of Church” (Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 26-27). He is apprehensive of a Marxist understanding of “the proletariat” being transferred into a self-understanding of the Church’s membership. He says that sometimes even the placement of the chapter on the people of God before the chapter on the hierarchy in *Lumen gentium* is taken to be positive proof that the Church’s understanding of hierarchy and laity has changed. However, to his mind, this chronology simply demonstrates that “all belong to the People of God; here the topic being treated is the Church as a whole and her nature” (28). For him, christology and sacrament are essential, co-determining factors in accepting the biblical people of God motif as a designation for the Church: “The word *Ecclesia*-Church is the New Testament variation on and transformation of the Old Testament ‘People of God’ concept. It is used because it contains the notion that only new birth in Christ causes the non-people to become a people. . . . [W]e cannot simply say that Christians *are* the People of God. From the empirical perspective, they are a non-people, as any sociological analysis can quickly demonstrate. And God is nobody’s property; no one can claim him for himself. The non-people of the Christians can be God’s People only through incorporation into Christ, the Son of God and the Son of Abraham. Even if we speak about the People of God, christology must remain the centre of the teaching about the Church, and, consequently, the Church must be thought of essentially in terms of the sacraments of baptism, Eucharist, and holy orders. We are People of God by virtue of the crucified and risen Body of Christ and in no other way. We become it only in living association with him, and only in this context does the expression have any meaning. The Council made this connection beautifully clear by highlighting another fundamental word for the Church along with the

For Ratzinger, eucharistic ecclesiology implies that the Church is a visible as well as spiritual reality, at once local and universal, a communion of communities, whose visible unity is manifested and guaranteed by the apostolic succession in union with the petrine ministry of the bishop of Rome. Part of the context for this visibility or concreteness in Ratzinger's theology is that "[m]ankind needs a framework of meaning that imparts the strength to serve, which creates an interior freedom from the world and thereby gives individuals the ability to live and work unselfishly, because a man's hope is more deeply rooted than his external career aspirations."¹² Therefore, "[a] church that only 'functions,' that is merely 'functional,' no longer accomplishes its special purpose: to be the space in which we step out of the world of agendas and into the freedom of God."¹³

In terms of developments in twentieth-century ecclesiology, Ratzinger believes that although "the term 'communion' does not occupy a central place in the Council,"¹⁴ the word has, in the gradual process of understanding the Council, become the "synthesis for the essential elements of the conciliar ecclesiology."¹⁵ Highlighting the semantic and secular roots of *κοινωνία* in its Hebraic and Greek context,¹⁶ Ratzinger says the Church is not solely the synthesis of these semantic meanings, because "in Jesus, a new event takes place in that

expression "People of God": the Church as sacrament. One remains faithful to the Council only if one always reads these two central terms for its ecclesiology – sacrament and People of God – together and always thinks of them together. Here it becomes apparent how far ahead of us the Council still is: the idea of the Church as sacrament has scarcely entered into our consciousness" (26-27).

¹² Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 227. See this dissertation § 4.1.1.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 242. Vincent Twomey describes Ratzinger's approach by saying that "the goal of the Church, her basic mission, is the incorporation of humanity into the life-rhythm of the Trinitarian God" (Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 59).

¹⁴ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 129.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁶ See Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One*, 84. See also his *Ministers of Your Joy. Meditations on Priestly Spirituality*, trans. Robert Nowell (London: St. Paul's Publishing, 1989), 108ff. In Greek, the word has secular roots meaning community, fellowship (common property, common work or common values). In Hebrew, the corresponding term is *habhûrâ*, which likewise can be translated as fellowship or cooperative. Three aspects present themselves: "As early as the first century B.C., the group of the Pharisees call themselves *habhûrâ*; since the second century A.D. the term is also used for the rabbis; and ultimately the word applied to those (at least ten in number) assembled for the Passover meal. This latter usage shows quite clearly how easily it could be applied to the mystery of the Church: the Church is the *habhûrâ* of Jesus in a very deep sense – the fellowship of his Passover, the family in which his eternal desire of eating the Passover with us (cf. Luke 24:15) is fulfilled" (Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One*, 84).

the only God actually and really enters into communion by taking flesh in human nature.”¹⁷

The Church is the product of a heretofore non-existent reality in the life of humanity:

Der eine, transzendente Gott des Alten Testaments deckt sein innerstes Leben auf, zeigt, daß er in sich selbst Dialog ewiger Liebe ist. Weil er in sich selbst Beziehung ist – Wort und Liebe –, darum kann er sprechen, fühlen, antworten, lieben. Weil er Beziehung ist, kann er sich auf tun und Beziehung seines Geschöpfes zu sich selber schaffen. In der Fleischwerdung des ewigen Wortes vollzieht sich jene Kommunion zwischen Gott und dem Sein des Menschen, seiner Kreatur, die vorher mit der Transzendenz des einzigen Gottes unvereinbar schien.¹⁸

At the service of this *κοινωνία* between God and his people is the sacramental meaning of the Church. Consequently Ratzinger states the equation: “Church is communion . . . not only between human beings, but as a result of the death and resurrection of Jesus, communion with Christ, the incarnate Son, and hence communion with the eternal triune Love of God.”¹⁹ In other words “the brotherhood of Christians in the Lord is raised – through the Christ-event – above the realm of ideas to the dignity of true actuality.”²⁰

Again, and again in his ecclesiology, in light of the necessary connection between Trinitarian *communio* and the Body of Christ’s destiny in God, Ratzinger makes use of an existential approach to faith, to the “we” of the Church’s social structure. However, it is important to note that without seeking to give the impression that he advocates “a distortion of trinitarian doctrine and an intolerably oversimplified fusion of Creed and Church polity,”²¹

¹⁷ Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One*, 87.

¹⁸ Ratzinger, *Schauen auf den Durchbohrten*, 73 (“The one, transcendent God of the Old Testament unveils his innermost life and shows that, in himself, he is a dialogue of eternal love. Since he himself is relationship – Word and Love – he can speak, feel, answer, and love. Since he is relationship, he can open himself and provide his creature with a relationship with him. In the Incarnation of the eternal Word there comes about that communion between God and the being of man, his creature, which up to now had seemed irreconcilable with the transcendence of the only God” [Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One*, 86-87]).

¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Behold The Pierced One*, 86.

²⁰ Ratzinger, *The Meaning of Christian Brotherhood*, 50. Trinitarian *communio* is a defining feature for the Church’s constitution. The Church’s point of departure, as well as its centre, is the event of encounter with Christ that leads to fellowship with God: “Fellowship with God is mediated by the fellowship of God with man, which is Christ in person; the encounter with Christ brings about fellowship with him and, thus, with the Father in the Holy Spirit; on this basis it unites men with one another” (Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 130). While the sacramental perspective on *communio* is given here as an overall framework to Ratzinger’s ecclesiology, his remarks on ecclesial *communio* will be taken up again in this dissertation § 5.2.2. See also Tracey Rowland, “Ratzinger the Romantic,” *The Tablet* (10 July 2010): 9-11.

²¹ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 39. Ratzinger says that to superficially take the fundamental “we” form of divinity as the structural prescription for worldly structures is naively inadequate because of the

it remains the case that the God professed in the Creed is a “we” which, by analogy, epitomizes the basic thrust for the action of the Church as a “we.” While respecting the limits of the analogy by not simply equating the “we” of God and the Church, Ratzinger says the fundamental form of divinity – unity in the trinitarian relations of I-you-we as opposed to a lonely self-reflection of thought within an absolute and indivisibly self-contained “I” – precedes all other instances of “we.” Nevertheless, for Ratzinger, relationality among human persons is modelled on their image and likeness of God since the very beginning. If the goal of the Church is the incorporation of humanity into the life-rhythm of the Trinitarian God via its gift of contemporaneity with Christ, then, in light of Ratzinger’s understanding of authentic freedom, exposing the lie of self-sufficiency and awakening a realisation of humanity’s nature as dependent, relational, meaningful, and as other than indeterminacy, is the task of the Church in every age.²²

5.1.2. *Successio Apostolica*: The Spiritual Office of Receptivity in the Church

The Church as gift of contemporaneity with Christ has come to be expressed in the concept of apostolic succession (*successio*). This is the sacramental office which Ratzinger describes as “the God-given authority originating precisely in self-dispossession, in not speaking in one’s own name.”²³ From the perspective of freedom, the sacramental context of receptivity of gift highlights an important facet of ecclesiology, namely, whether we can be

inherent weaknesses and limitations associated with finite reality. The basic thrust of such thinking within ecclesiology is that “God’s ‘we’ must be a model for the action of the Church as a ‘we’” (38). Arianism was a political theology favoured by the emperors precisely because it supplied a divine analogy for a political monarch whereas the trinitarian view terminated the theological justification for political monarchy. However, even the trinitarian model goes too far if it claims that the exercise of the primacy by a single man in Rome is the result of an erroneous Arian model. To keep with the three persons in God, the argument goes, the Church should be led by a college of three – this triumvirate, acting together, would be “pope.” Ratzinger says some see in this the panacea for ecumenism because it appears to derive immediately from *theo*-logy and the concept of God. It might then be possible to see the papacy – a chief barrier to unity for non-Catholic Christians – as the definitive vehicle for bringing about the unity of all Christians if a Roman Catholic, an Orthodox and a Protestant got together to form a “papal troika.” Ratzinger’s theology of personal response is designed to counteract such a theology which discounts the dissimilarity between the reality of the eternal God and the limitations of temporal existence.

²² See this dissertation §§ 4.1.1., 4.1.4., 4.2.2 and 4.3.1.

²³ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 118. See *ibid.*, 119; *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 184; *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 98-99.

satisfied that such contemporaneity is authentic. Even from the earliest days of the Church, there has been a temptation to fallaciously contrast christology and pneumatology to the point where the christological-incarnational focus on sacrament effects a curtailment of the freedom of the children of God (Rom 8:21) in conjunction with a side-lining of what flows from the pneumatological-charismatic tradition. However, Ratzinger says, because the Trinity invalidates any understanding of God as a communion of three gods, in favour of one single God in the relativity of persons, “Christ and the Spirit are properly distinguished only if, by considering their difference, we can learn better to understand their unity.” He continues: “Christ as the Lord can be there among us and for us only because the Incarnation was not his last word.” When the pneumatological christology of Paul and the farewell discourses in John are taken seriously, Ratzinger says, we realise “[t]he new presence of Christ in the Spirit is . . . the necessary presupposition for there being sacraments or any presence of the Lord in the sacraments.”²⁴

Successio is a difficult concept in an age suspicious of external authority structures with the potential to encroach upon individual liberty. Nevertheless, it is central to the sacramental constitution of the Church. Ratzinger explains that apostolic succession is not an attempt to lead us independently of God’s Spirit but is precisely the reception of contemporaneity with Christ that is prerequisite for ecclesial life in the first instance:

Die Bindung an die Linie der *successio* bedeutet . . . daß uns das sakramentale Amt nie selbst zur Verfügung ist, sondern immer wieder durch den Geist gegeben werden muß, eben das Geist-Sakrament ist, das wir nicht selber schaffen, nicht selber einsetzen können. Die funktionale Kompetenz als solche reicht dafür nicht aus, sondern die Gabe des Herrn ist nötig.²⁵

²⁴ See Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 183-84.

²⁵ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 158 (“[t]he link with the line of *successio* means . . . that the sacramental office is never at our disposal but has to be given by the Spirit again and again, that it is the sacrament of the Spirit, which we can never provide and never institute for ourselves. Functional competence as such is not sufficient; the gift of the Lord is requisite” [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 184]). See also Ratzinger and Karl Rahner, *Episkopat und Primat* (Freiburg: Herder, 1961), 37-59; *Called to Communion*, 65-94, 117-25.

The *successio* principle, therefore, is oriented so as to prevent “pneumatic anarchy” (i.e. autonomous pneumatology) in the Church.²⁶ Ratzinger recalls that the notion of *successio* was comprehensively assimilated during the anti-gnostic polemics of the second century. Its purpose was to oppose unwritten, secret traditions with the true apostolic tradition of the apostolic Church. For the early anti-gnostic theologians, the uninterrupted apostolic succession was the proof of the illegitimacy of the sporadic, unwritten traditions of Gnostic preaching. Ratzinger notes that at the outset, *successio* and *traditio* were synonymous in meaning and always consist in a personal freedom predicated on self-dispossession:

“Überlieferung” ist eben gar nie einfaches, anonymes Weitergeben von Lehre, sondern ist personengebunden, ist lebendiges Wort, das im Glauben seine konkrete Wirklichkeit hat. Und umgekehrt: Nachfolge ist nicht ein Übernehmen von Amtsgewalten, die ihrem Träger dann zur Verfügung stehen, sondern sie ist Indienstnahme für das Wort, Zeugenamt am anvertrauten Gut, das über seinem Träger steht, so daß er ganz hinter dem zurücktritt, was er überkommen hat, gleichsam – mit dem wunderbaren Bilde Jesajas und Johannes’ des Täufers zu sprechen – nur Stimme ist, die dem Wort die Lautwerdung schafft in der Welt.²⁷

When God’s word is tied to the witness of that word in a personal sense, it is guaranteed the freedom of unambiguous meaning as opposed to “a mere word floating in isolation.”

Simultaneously the witness stands as one self-dispossessed, free of “self” and bound to another: “linked to the Pneuma, the Paraclete who authenticates the truth and opens up the

²⁶ See Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 119. Ratzinger is not implying by this term that charism in the Church is something negative but rather that an interpretation of God the Holy Spirit that is detached from God the Father and from Christ cannot yield an authentic account of the action of God’s will in the world.

²⁷ Ratzinger and Rahner, *Episkopat und Primat*, 45-46 (“‘Tradition’ is never a simple, anonymous passing on of doctrine, but is personal, is the living word, concretely realised in the faith. And ‘succession’ is not a taking over of official powers, which then are at the disposal of their possessor, but is rather a dedication to the word, an office of bearing witness to the treasure with which one has been entrusted. The office is superior to its holder, so that he is entirely overshadowed by that which he has received; he is, as it were – to adopt the image of Isaiah and John the Baptist – only a voice which renders the word articulate in the world” [Joseph Ratzinger and Karl Rahner, *The Episcopacy and the Primacy*, trans. Kenneth Barker et al. [New York, Herder and Herder, 1962], 46-47). It is significant to note that historically, the principle of *successio-traditio* was formulated prior to texts of the New Testament being understood as scriptural. For example, the New Testament texts themselves do not carry any consciousness of being “Scripture.” Ratzinger points out that in the consciousness of the individual New Testament writings, “the Old Testament is Scripture while the gospel of Christ is precisely ‘Spirit,’ which teaches understanding of the Scripture” (Ratzinger and Rahner, *The Episcopacy and the Primacy*, 49). However, Ratzinger says, this does not mean that “succession” and “word” have to be opposites: “[. . .] if true apostolic succession is bound up with the word, it cannot be bound up merely with a book, but must, as the succession of the word, be a succession of preachers, which in turn cannot exist without a ‘mission,’ i.e., a personal continuity reaching back to the apostles. Precisely for the sake of the word, which in the New Covenant is not to consist in dead letters but in a living voice, a living succession is necessary” (53).

memory and, in his turn binds the witness to Christ.”²⁸ In other words, there is a personal witness structure of the Church which demands that the witness be personally responsible for the gift received:

Diese Bindung an das Pneuma und an seine Wesensweise – “nicht aus sich selbst, sondern was er hört” – nennen wir in der Sprache der Kirche “Sakrament.” Das Sakrament bezeichnet den dreifachen Knoten Wort – Zeuge – Heiliger Geist und Christus, der die eigentliche Struktur neutestamentlicher Nachfolge beschreibt.²⁹

In light of Ratzinger’s remarks, apostolic succession is a constitutive part of the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom for it ensures that clandestine, speculative assertions cannot infiltrate or subjugate the covenantal relationship of God the Father and his children, a relationship grounded in God’s Son as eternal Word and realised through God’s Spirit as divine witness (cf. Rom 8:14-17). Understanding *successio* in this way requires a particular understanding of freedom – one in which the believer acknowledges one’s dependency, and one’s need for education as a participative “hearer” of the word rather than merely a passive “reader”:

[Es] wird gerade und erst in solchem Verständnis der der Kirche verliehenen Gabe des Wortes der Mensch immer wieder in vollem Ernst in die Situation eines “Hörers des Wortes” verwiesen, eines Hörers, der selbst keine Gewalt über das Wort hat,

²⁸ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 67-68.

²⁹ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 64 (“This binding of the witness to the Pneuma and to his mode of being – ‘not of himself, but what he hears’ – is called ‘sacrament’ in the language of the Church. Sacrament designates a three-fold knot – word, witness, Holy Spirit and Christ – which describes the essential structure of the New Testament” [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 68]). Ratzinger says the available testimony of the Pastoral Epistles and the Acts of the Apostles suggests that the “the apostolic generation already gave to this interconnection of person and word in the believed presence of the Spirit and of Christ the form of the laying on of hands” (Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 68). In Ratzinger’s presentation of sacrament, the impression can sometimes be given that he prefers a Christo-monism to the exclusion of the pneumatological. I think this impression is unwarranted. There is no dichotomy between Christ and the Spirit *in fact*, even if there can appear to be tension in *our understanding* between christomonistic institutionalism (or juridicism) and pneumatological charism. In Ratzinger’s own work, for example, he makes use of the pneumatological logion 2Cor 3:17 (cf. *Called to Communion*, 33). Furthermore, as the “three-fold knot” indicates, Ratzinger is anxious to define sacrament in terms of witness and Spirit. For him the *word* is always “tied to” the (apostolic) *witness* who is guided by the *Spirit* (cf. *ibid.*). That is a definition of sacrament which incorporates the *message*, the *messenger* and the *Spirit of the message*. In a paper delivered at the IEC Theology Symposium held at the Pontifical University, Maynooth in June 2012, Oliver Treanor stressed the need for inclusion of the Spirit in the work of *successio*. See Oliver Treanor, “The Eucharist: Apostolicity of Communion,” in *Proceedings of the International Symposium of Theology: The Ecclesiology of Communion Fifty Years after the Opening of Vatican II*, vol. 2 of *50th International Eucharistic Congress* (Dublin: Veritas, 2013), 446-463. It is also of note here that there is both a broad and more specific sense of apostolicity. Here Ratzinger is speaking about the narrow sense of the apostolic office or ministry. However, the whole Church is apostolic by nature and the apostolic ministry is at the service of that. Again, Treanor is helpful in this regard.

sondern der in jenem reinen Empfangen steht, das “Glauben” heißt. Und solches “Glauben” ist jeder individualistischen Verengung entrissen, es ist durch das “Hören” immerfort dem Du zugekehrt, jener großen Gemeinschaft der Glaubenden, die in Christus “ein einziger” zu werden berufen ist (Gal 3:28).³⁰

5.1.3. The Episcopal Office: Safeguarding from Pneumatic Anarchy

Within the ecclesial structure of *successio*, Ratzinger says the “once-always” of the mystery of Christ cannot be ignored. Because of it we can never escape into a “free-floating Pneumatology, never leave behind the solid earth of the Incarnation, of God’s action in history,” and conversely “this once-for-all element is only mediated in the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of the risen Christ.”³¹ Ratzinger says, Christ has passed through the veil of the flesh and has set free, within what is once for all, that which endures forever. The Incarnation does not stop with the historical Jesus but, transformed in the Resurrection, is present at all times and in all places.

Ratzinger sets out a two-fold definition of the episcopal office with reference to the *successio* principle. Firstly, the office guarantees the continuity and unity of the faith. He describes continuity as sacramental – i.e. as something we receive and cannot create ourselves. It ensures, as it were, that “‘one’s own spirit’ is not parading as the Holy Spirit” – a “suspicion [which] is always appropriate whenever someone speaks on his own account and ‘of himself’; that contradicts the characteristic action of the Holy Spirit, which is typified by ‘not speaking on his own authority’ (John 16:13) – in this area truth and originality can easily enter into opposition.”³² Ratzinger thereby brings the meaning of two inseparable

³⁰ Ratzinger and Rahner, *Episkopat und Primat*, 51 (“[. . .] it is precisely and only in such an understanding of the gift of the Word to the Church, that man is forced, continually and in all earnestness, into the position of a ‘Hearer of the Word,’ a hearer who himself has not power over the Word, but remains in that purely receptive frame of mind which is called ‘believing.’ Such ‘believing’ is stripped of all individualistic limitation. Because it is based on ‘hearing,’ it is continually directed to a ‘thou,’ to that great community of the faithful who are called to become ‘one person’ in Christ (Gal 3:8)” [Ratzinger and Rahner, *The Episcopacy and the Primacy*, 54]).

³¹ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 184.

³² *Ibid.*, 39.

components of sacrament into unity in the *successio apostolica* – namely, the “once-only” of the incarnational-christological, and “ever-new” of the charismatic-pneumatological:

[. . .] bleibt als Kern dieses Begriffs die sakramentale Struktur der Kirche festzuhalten, in der sie das Erbe der Apostel, das Erbe Christi immer neu empfängt. Durch das Sakrament, in dem Christus durch den Heiligen Geist handelt, unterscheidet sie sich von allen anderen Institutionen. Das Sakrament bedeutet, daß sie vom Herrn her als “Geschöpf des Heiligen Geistes” lebt und immerfort neu geschaffen wird.³³

Secondly, *successio* encapsulates a practical task which reaches beyond the management of local Churches: the apostles’ successors have to see to it that Jesus’ commission to carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth is carried out. This leads to Ratzinger’s observation, as found in St Irenaeus (d. 202), that bishops are responsible “for seeing that the Church does not become a sort of federation of local Churches, just existing as such side by side, but retains her universality and unity. They have to carry forward the universal impetus of what is apostolic.”³⁴ To Ratzinger’s mind there exists a danger in understanding the Church’s nature in purely institutional and bureaucratic terms and forgetting its charismatic dimension due to a one-sided administrative understanding of apostolic succession: “the offices of the apostolic succession might atrophy into a mere service undertaken in the local Church, the universality of Christ’s commission might be lost from view and from within our hearts.”³⁵

On the basis of the sacramental dimension, Ratzinger says “[. . .] the Church is not like a circle, with a single centre, but like an ellipse with two foci, primacy and

³³ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 172 (“[. . .] we keep hold of the sacramental structure of the Church, within which she receives ever anew the heritage of the apostles, the heritage of Christ. Through the sacrament of orders, in which Christ is acting through the Holy Spirit, she is distinguished from other institutions. The sacrament means that she lives as ‘a vessel of the Holy Spirit,’ founded on the Lord, and is constantly being re-created” [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 201]).

³⁴ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 190. See also Ratzinger and Rahner, *Episkopat und Primat*, 52-59; Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 83-103. As examples of Irenaeus’ perspective, see *Haer.* 1, 10, 2; 3, 3, 1-2.

³⁵ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 191.

episcopacy.”³⁶ The dialectic between the primacy and the episcopacy is a necessary tension for ensuring the Church’s freedom to maintain fidelity to Christ, in the Spirit, in every new generation. As a result of the apostolic succession, the “once-for-all” element of faith is guaranteed for the temporal pilgrimage of the Church, while an interdict against ignoring the “ever new,” as well as safeguarding against pneumatic anarchy, is firmly established through the personal witness structure of the Church. The dual universal-local ecclesial dynamic safeguards the *vita evangelica* from the human will to power and the desire for self-sufficiency.³⁷

5.1.4. A Free Response: The New Structure of Personal Responsibility

Thus far, we have seen that Ratzinger’s understanding of sacrament specifies the responsibility of gift on the part of the witness. To his mind, the coming of Christ leads to “a new structure of personal responsibility” within Christianity. In salvation history, the

³⁶ Ratzinger and Rahner, *The Episcopacy and the Primacy*, 43. He takes this image from Heribert Schaaf, *De Corpore Christi Mystico* (Freiburg: Herder, 1959), 307. He says the reference to the bishop of Rome is the primary relationship to be ascertained for the catholicity and the apostolicity of other sees. However, Rome also requires the testimony of “real Catholicity” in order to remain true. Thus, he describes the picture that emerges from the dual universal-local ecclesial dynamic: “The Church is the living presence of the divine Word. This presence is made concrete in those persons (the bishops) whose basic function is to hold fast to the word, who are, then, the personal embodiment of ‘tradition’ (παράδοσις) and to this extent are in the apostolic line of ‘succession’ (διαδοχή). . . . Just as the other sees need the apostolic testimony of Rome in order to be Catholic, so Rome needs their Catholic testimony, the testimony of real fullness, in order to remain true. Without the testimony of reality, Rome would negate its own meaning. . . . The majority of the bishops has, from time immemorial in the Church, been determined not simply by the externally greater number, but by the weight of the sees. And there can be no number large enough to counterbalance the decisive weight of the See of St. Peter. Anything else would mean substituting some sort of profane arithmetic for the holy bond of tradition” (Ratzinger and Rahner, *The Episcopacy and the Primacy*, 59-61). See also Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes: Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie*, 257-61; *Called to Communion*, 47-74; *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 259-63. In *Called to Communion*, 69, n. 20, Ratzinger highlights Vincent Twomey’s doctoral study which compellingly points to the preeminent and normative place of Rome – the site of Peter’s martyrdom – within the three petrine sees of Rome, Antioch and Alexandria. See Vincent Twomey, *Apostolikos Thronos* (Aschendorff: Münster, 1982).

³⁷ See Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 191-208, where he undertakes a commentary on the emergence and buoyancy of apostolic movements in the Church. He demonstrates the facilitative role, so to speak, played by the apostolic succession in safeguarding the requisite freedom for the Church’s mission to witness and discern the things which contribute to the unity of the Church. Even through all the difficulties of ecclesiastical history, he says, “it has always been possible to make a place in the Church for the great new upsurges of life” (203). The point he says is “that the apostolic movements appear in history in forms that are ever new – necessarily so, because they are the Holy Spirit’s answer to the changing circumstances in which the Church is living. . . . [M]ovements certainly cannot be organisationally introduced according to plans by the authorities. They have to be given us, and they are given. We simply have to pay attention to them: by the gift of discernment, pick up what is right in them and learn to overcome what is not useful” (ibid.).

communal dealing of God with his people is clear but so too is personal responsibility. This is Ratzinger's basic insight into the structure of the Bible: "[t]he 'we' does not dissolve the 'I' and 'you', but rather it confirms and intensifies them so as to make them almost definitive."³⁸ In his view, this means that the practice of "naming" in the Bible is very important, to the point where a biblical name has the equivalence of the philosophical concept "person"³⁹: God and human beings have names and therefore they can be addressed and can address. In the history of revelation, the human person is called by name and is held personally responsible. In the New Testament, this concept reaches its fullest measure when the people of God are henceforth generated, not by birth, but by means of a call and a response. This is what Ratzinger calls the new structure of personal responsibility whereby the idea of a collective consigne of a whole people functioning as a sort of corporate individual vis-à-vis world history, in collective punishment, liability, penance and pardon, no longer applies as it used to.⁴⁰ The "new people" is now also characterised by a structure of personal responsibility which is manifest in the personalising of the cultic event: each one is named in baptism and each one is thereafter called to do personal penance.

As regards the episcopal office, it essentially exists in a collegial "we" – in a "we" which gives robust significance to the individual "I" which, in this case, is the community of a local Church represented by a bishop. For a local Church, fitting itself into a "we," which as a whole carries on the apostolic heritage, means that "collegiality fulfils its meaning only if the individual bishop really and faithfully represents his individual Church" within the "we" of all the bishops. In this way, and "through him a piece of ecclesiastical plenitude is truly

³⁸ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 39.

³⁹ See Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 15-25. See also Hans Urs von Balthasar, "Umkehr im Neuen Testament," *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift* 3 (1974): 481-91. An English translation of this key article can be found in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Spirit and Institution* (vol. 4 of *Explorations in Theology*, trans. Edward T. Oakes [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995]), 245-260. A selection of Ratzinger's major articles in the area of anthropology have been very helpfully gathered in David L. Schindler and Nicholas J. Healy, eds., *Anthropology and Culture* (vol. 2 of *Joseph Ratzinger in Communion* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2013]).

⁴⁰ See Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 39-42.

inserted into the whole of the Church's unity.”⁴¹ A bishop is related, on the one hand, to his brothers (“thou”) in the same office, but also to his brothers and sisters (“we”) who are, by the same grace as himself, baptised in the name of Christ. This impacts upon the entire nature of the Church’s freedom since “there can be no egotism of dioceses and congregations caring only for themselves, while simply abandoning all others to God and the Holy See.”⁴² As a consequence, to Ratzinger’s mind, collegiality as an ecclesial principle “is not only a statement about the nature of the episcopal office, but about the *structure of the Church as a whole*.”⁴³ As a key principle best captured by the term “brotherliness,” Ratzinger says collegiality raises the question about how precisely the particularity of the structure of personal responsibility can be reconciled with the communality or *fraternitas* structure informing ecclesial life.

In the modern understanding of freedom, unity is decoupled from human dependency. Ratzinger believes this is opposed to the meaning of collegial fraternity. To his mind, the giving of one’s “I” in dependence upon God and one another is precisely the way unity comes about. This follows onto the ecclesial level, whereby the implication of Ratzinger’s sacramental dimension is that the local Church cannot go on living if isolated from the “whole.” He says the Church is not solely in a particular locality nor is it the property of a

⁴¹ Joseph Ratzinger, “Die pastoralen Implikationen der Lehre von der Kollegialität der Bischöfe” in *Das neue Volk Gottes*, 215 (own translation).

⁴² *Ibid.* (own translation).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 220 (own translation). Ratzinger says that the broader ecclesial principle implied by the word collegiality means “that the one Church is built from the communion of the many local churches together, and therefore also the unity of the Church necessarily includes the element of multiplicity and plenitude. . . . The collegiality of the bishops is the expression of the fact that the Church should be (under, and in the security guaranteed by the primacy) an ordered multiplicity” (220-22) (own translation). Ratzinger has lauded the Second Vatican Council’s revitalization of the concept of collegiality as the “we” structure of the faith, and as something more than a functional feature of Church governance. It is a fundamental law that reaches into every individual level and relationship in the Church to the point where it is “possible to demonstrate that the ‘we’ structure was part of Christianity in the first place” (Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 37). From such a context, Ratzinger has always considered Christianity to have a social structure. That is why the modern notion of freedom as radical self-sufficiency and independence clashes so intensely with the Christian worldview. A believer, Ratzinger says, can never stand on their own: “[T]o become a believer means to emerge from isolation into the ‘we’ of the children of God; the act of turning to the God revealed in Christ is always a turning also to those who have already been called. The theo-logical act as such is always an ecclesial act, which also has a characteristically social structure” (*ibid.*).

particular individual: “[t]he Church is not just here, but throughout the earth; the Church is not just today, but also yesterday and tomorrow. Only when both are accepted – unity with others, with the whole, and unity with those who went before us in faith, unity with the Church of all times – is the Church truly present.”⁴⁴ Therefore, the believer’s response to God’s gift, while personal, remains insufficient, if approached in a solely individualistic way. The personal response of the believer is authentic to the extent that its motivation is for the “whole”, as it were, and never for the “self” only. Thus an essential feature of the Church is its will to self-dispossession, its “non-autonomy”:

Denn den fleischgewordenen Christus, der das eigentliche Leben der Kirche ist, und der in jeder kirchlichen Versammlung ganz unter uns weilt, diesen Christus, der damit jede in seinem Namen geschehende Versammlung ganz zu Kirche machen will, kann man nicht für sich allein haben. Er ist im Einzelnen ganz und er ist im Ganzen nur Einer. Daher kann man ihn nicht ohne das Ganze und erst recht nicht gegen das Ganze haben. Und daher ist das grundlegende Kriterium dafür, ob eine Gemeinde in *seinem* Namen versammelt und mithin Kirche ist, ihr Stehen im Ganzen. Ihr grundlegendes Kriterium ist ihre Unabgeschlossenheit, ihre Nichtautonomie, ihre Offenheit ins Ganze der Kirche hinein. Ihr Kriterium ist, daß sie nicht etwas besonderes sein will, sondern an diesem Ort die eine Kirche verkörpert, die überall dieselbe und nur so sie selber ist.⁴⁵

The sacramental framework – the attitude of openness and receptivity to the gift of God – places freedom at the heart of the Church’s constitution. At least, that is, freedom understood in terms of relationality, dependency and limitation. In the midst of the human yearning for transcendence, a sacramental perspective unburdens humanity of false perceptions of its nature and destiny. While a sacramental framework sustains Ratzinger’s assertion of personal responsibility before the will of God, he does not claim this by

⁴⁴ Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 230. There are strong echoes here of Ratzinger’s reflections on diachronic and synchronic dimensions of the Church’s life. See this dissertation § 7.5.

⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *Dogma und Verkündigung*, 240 (“For no-one can have for himself alone the Incarnate Christ, who is the authentic life of the Church and dwells wholly among us in every church gathering, this Christ who desires to make every gathering that occurs in his name wholly his Church. He is wholly in the individual and in the whole he is only One. Hence no one can have him without the whole and certainly not in opposition to the whole. And, hence, being part of the whole is the foundational criterion for whether a congregation gathers in *his* name and, consequently, is Church. Its foundational criterion is its not being self-contained, its non-autonomy, its openness to the whole of the Church. Its criterion is that it does not want to be something special but, rather, embodies at this place the one Church, which is the same everywhere and only in that way is herself” [Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 214]).

compromising the “we” structure of the faith. There is a faith dimension to Ratzinger’s ecclesiology which ensures that the communal aspect of ecclesial life is not negligible, even in the face of a society that makes a virtue out of independence. By coming to terms with the truth that the “I” is complete within the “whole,” Ratzinger contemplates Christ’s “Body” in terms of the “whole” and consequently, as sphere of growth in authentic human freedom. Ultimately, a personal-communal ecclesial dynamic is not reserved to the episcopal office, but permeates the entire nature of the Church:

Wie niemand für sich allein Christ sein kann, sondern nur zusammen mit den anderen, mit der lebendigen Gemeinschaft der Glaubenden, so kann auch keine Gemeinde, keine Region für sich allein Kirche sein. Sie kann es nur durch die Öffnung ins Ganze hinein und durch die Einordnung in die apostolische Überlieferung, deren Garanten die Apostel und ihre Nachfolger sind.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ratzinger, *Dogma und Verkündigung*, 261 (“[. . .] just as no man can be a Christian by himself but only together with others, with the living community of believers, so too no congregation, no region, can be Church by itself. It can do so only by opening itself up to the whole and by being aligned with the apostolic tradition, of which the apostles and their successors are the guarantors” [Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 230]). It is arguably the case that the universal-particular dynamic in ecclesiology received its most dramatic highlighting in the well-known debate between Walter Kasper and Ratzinger over the validity of the ontological priority of the universal Church. Sparked off by a 1992 letter from the CDF, “Letter to Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion,” it led to a very public debate between the two German theologians on the relationship of the universal Church with local (or diocesan) Churches. It is thoroughly summarized by Kilian McDonnell in “The Ratzinger/Kasper Debate: The Universal Church and local Churches,” *Theological Studies* 63 (June 2002): 227-250, and in “Walter Kasper on the Theology and Praxis of the Bishop’s Office,” *Theological Studies* 63 (Dec 2002): 690-711; Richard P. McBrien, *The Church: The Evolution of Catholicism* (New York: Harper Collins: 2008), 426, n. 8; Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology*, 357-382; Anne Hunt, *Trinity: Nexus of the Mysteries of Christian Faith* (New York: Orbis, 2005), 130-137. Avery Dulles made a significant interjection into the debate in 2001 which appears to have resolved it, at least for the present time. See “Ratzinger and Kasper on the Universal Church,” *Inside the Vatican* (June 2001), 12-14. The article’s key statement is significant because of who enunciated it as much as it is for its contents: “The ontological priority of the Church universal appears to me to be almost self-evident, since the very concept of a particular church presupposes a universal Church to which it belongs, whereas the concept of the universal Church does not imply that it is made up of distinct particular churches The Church as we find it today is made up of many particular churches and does not exist without them any more than they exist without it. It is impossible to belong to either the universal or the particular church without belonging to both” (13). Dulles points out that both Ratzinger and Kasper acknowledge the teaching that the one Church of Christ comes into being both in and from the particular churches (cf. *LG*, 23) – for the former there is a “mutual precedence,” for the latter, “a simultaneous mutual priority.” Indeed, in somewhat pragmatic fashion perhaps, Dulles concludes that “[i]n this age of globalisation and multiple inculturation, it is more imperative than ever to have a vigorous office that safeguards the unity of all the particular churches in the essentials of faith, morality, and worship” (14). A very helpful addition to the debates on the universal-local dynamic can be found in Christopher Ruddy, *The Local Church: Tillard and the Future of Catholic Ecclesiology* (New York: Crossroad, 2006).

5.2. The Faith Dimension: Belief Requires Community

If an essential feature of ecclesial life is “self-dispossession,” then consideration of the thesis that the Church is a sphere of growth in authentic freedom is no longer merely a question about institutional integrity but about personal faith within the whole:

Wenn ich sage “Ich glaube,” dann heißt dies eben, daß ich die Grenze meiner privaten Subjektivität überschreite, um in das gemeinsame Subjekt der Kirche wie in ihr die Zeiten und die Grenzen der Zeit überschreitendes Wissen einzutreten. Der Glaubensakt ist immer ein Akt des Beteiligtwerdens an einem Ganzen; er ist ein Akt der *Communio*, ein Sich-einfügen-lassen in die *Communio* der Zeugen, so daß wir mit ihnen und in ihnen das Unberührbare anrühren, das Unhörbare hören, das Unsichtbare sehen.⁴⁷

A faith dimension, which in many respects is correlative to the sacramental framework, informs Ratzinger’s ecclesiology here, and its basic premise is that a person cannot go on believing on their own, but only as one among fellow believers. For Ratzinger, faith is the power of union whose archetype is Pentecost, where people who were otherwise unknown to one another could participate in the miracle of communal understanding. Faith, Ratzinger says, occurs in the Church or not at all. Just as a person cannot go on believing on their own, neither can one believe through one’s own resources alone – a self-acquired faith is a self-contradiction that guarantees precisely what one is without faith. In like fashion, a self-made Church that exists by its own “graces” is a contradiction: “[a]lthough faith demands communion, it is the sort of communion that has authority and takes the lead, not the sort that is my own creation, the instrument of my own wishes.”⁴⁸ This opens out into a key ecclesiological principle for Ratzinger: “Either this Jesus was more than a man, so that he had an inherent authority that was more than the product of his own arbitrary will, or he was

⁴⁷ Joseph Ratzinger with Godfried Cardinal Danneels, Franciszek Cardinal Macharski and Archbishop Dermot J. Ryan, *Die Krise der Katechese und ihre Überwindung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1983), 27 (“When I say ‘I believe,’ then this means precisely that I am going beyond the limits of my private subjectivity so as to enter into the collective subject of the Church and, in her, to enter into the knowledge that transcends the ages and the limits of time. The act of faith is always an act of becoming a participant in a totality; it is an act of *communio*, a willingness to be incorporated into the communion of witnesses, so that we with them and in them may touch the untouchable, hear the inaudible, and see the invisible” [Ratzinger, *Handing on the Faith in an Age of Disbelief*, 27-28]).

⁴⁸ Ratzinger, “Why I am still in the Church,” in *Credo for Today*, 194.

not. . . [E]ither an authority proceeded from him that extends and lasts through the ages, or else he left no such authority behind.”⁴⁹ If Christ is more than the leader of a religious or civic movement, then he is not dependent on human reconstruction and the power which he left behind him remains operative. The Church and faith in Christ meet at this point.

Above and beyond packages of dogmas and complex philosophies, “Christian faith is being touched by God and witnessing to him.”⁵⁰ It is because “[t]he Church is the most intimate place of the encounter between Jesus and mankind, in his act of giving himself to us,”⁵¹ that Ratzinger maintains “[t]he Church is not there for her own sake but should be the instrument of God for gathering men to him, so as to prepare for the moment when God shall be ‘everything to everyone’ (1Cor 15:28).”⁵² From a faith perspective, the Church jettisons self-centred autonomy:

Was der Kirche Bedeutung gibt, ist in der Sicht des Glaubens die Tatsache, daß sie mehr ist als Produkt zweckmäßigen menschlichen Handelns und geschichtlicher Entwicklungen. Sie stellt vielmehr den Raum einer realen Begegnung zwischen Gott und Menschen in dieser Welt dar, einer Begegnung, die nicht nur einzelne zu Gott führt, sondern sie zugleich zueinander bringt, sie zu einer neuen Familie werden läßt.⁵³

5.2.1. Ecclesio-Knowledge: The Primacy of God

In an attempt to understand the contribution of faith to the freedom of the human person, Ratzinger advances the scenario of a God-free world.⁵⁴ To his mind, forgetfulness of God places humankind on a trajectory of self-destruction. A community which has no place

⁴⁹ Ibid., 194-95.

⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 286.

⁵¹ See Ratzinger, “Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity,” § 2.

⁵² Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 129. See *Called to Communion*, 29-33, where Ratzinger comments on the Church’s self-description as *ekklesia* as the dynamic movement of gathering into the one Church of Jesus Christ.

⁵³ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 221 (“What gives the Church significance is, in the view of faith, the fact that she is more than the result of purposeful human activity plus historical development. She represents, rather, the sphere of a concrete encounter between God and man in the world; an encounter that not only brings individuals to God, but at the same time leads them to one another, makes them into a new family” [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 254-55]).

⁵⁴ See Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 284-98.

for God would, in his view, become a kind of hell.⁵⁵ On the basis of this scenario, he believes the mission of the Church is threefold: firstly, it is witnessing to God. Secondly, this witness opens up barred and darkened windows so that God's light can shine among us. Thirdly, this means that there is room for God's presence once more because, as hell is God's absence, heaven is his presence. Hence he provides a forthright characterisation of the Church as necessary for humanity:

Kirche ist dazu da, daß Gott, der lebendige Gott, bekanntgemacht werde – dazu, daß der Mensch lernen kann, mit Gott, unter seinen Augen und in der Gemeinschaft mit ihm zu leben. Kirche ist dazu da, das Vordringen der Hölle auf die Erde zu bannen and sie durch das Licht Gottes bewohnbar zu machen.⁵⁶

Ratzinger's exhortation that the Church ought to express the primacy of God in its life simultaneously conjures up a concrete application of the Christian philosophy of freedom, as well as the synergy of wills which he advocates strongly in the course of his reflection.⁵⁷ In line with the third petition of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt 6:10), Ratzinger says, "[w]herever God's will is carried out is heaven, and there earth

⁵⁵ Ratzinger is particularly sensitive to this possibility because of his own youth in Germany, and its close proximity to the Iron Curtain. See this dissertation §§ 1.1. and 1.2. In his understanding, twentieth-century atrocities turned out to be hell despite being partially constructed on the premise of bringing about a future with humanity as its own master. Ratzinger paints a disconcerting scenario: "[w]herever God is not, hell comes into existence; it consists simply in his absence. . . . That does not imply that there cannot be – as in fact there are – atheists with high ethics. Yet I venture to maintain that these ethics are based on the lingering glimmer of the light that once came from Sinai – the light of God. Far-distant stars, now already dead, may still be shining upon us. Even when God seems to be dead his light may be around. Yet Nietzsche rightly pointed out that the moment when the news that God is dead has reached everywhere, the moment in which his light would finally be extinguished can only be frightful" (Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 285). For analysis of the Nietzschean death of God theory – commonly associated with Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Gay Science*, § 108,125, see Bernd Magnus & Kathleen M. Higgins, eds., *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 35-38, 90-118, 223-251, 307-319, 326-7.

⁵⁶ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 250 ("The Church is there so that God, the living God, may be made known – so that man may learn to live with God, live in his sight and in fellowship with him. The Church is there to prevent the advance of hell upon the earth and to make the earth fit to live in through the light of God" [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 286]). Ratzinger's understanding of the Church as the domain of God's presence is consistent with a call by him for the Church to be filled more and more with the divine. He says that only on the basis of God's presence can the Church be humanised for without his presence within it, the Church would fast become a fabricated super-structure insufficient for human well-being: "[w]hat makes the Church the Church . . . are those elements that do not derive from merely human activity. They alone distinguish the Church from all other communal groupings and accord her the quality of being unique, being irreplaceable" (Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 255).

⁵⁷ See this dissertation §§ 2.2.4., 3.2.2.1. and 4.2.

can become heaven.”⁵⁸ Ecclesial life is about making it possible to discern the knowledge of God’s will and bringing the human person’s will into harmony with it (cf. Col 1:9-10). The Church as the receptacle of God’s will implies that it is a sphere of, what may be called, ecclesio-knowledge – a form of collective knowledge whereby a living proclamation of the primacy of God’s will for his people is learnt and enjoyed.⁵⁹ As a whole, Ratzinger says, the Church exhibits knowledge not born of private expertise or technical mastery, but of God’s intimacy towards humanity that is made known through the full revelation of Christ in the world.⁶⁰

However, the primacy of God and his loving will cannot be fully known by taking an academic note of his existence. On the contrary, knowledge of God’s will occurs in, and through the faith community. Ratzinger therefore says that ecclesial membership requires an “all-embracing assent” to God’s will which concerns the whole person, including their will, for otherwise it comes to nothing.⁶¹ The Church exhorts the taking of an informed decision by the human person with respect of assent towards, or repudiation of God’s will. It is when the “whole” person commences taking a positive decision in this regard that ecclesio-knowledge becomes fruitful in the life of the believer. In this way, the Christian synthesis takes concrete shape in the discernment of God’s will for the human person within the community of faith.

For Ratzinger then, growth in authentic freedom is found along the route of the giving of the whole self to this ecclesio-knowledge of the primacy of God’s will. However, in light

⁵⁸ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 286. See also *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 147-50.

⁵⁹ It is important to say that “ecclesio-knowledge” is not a term Ratzinger has ever used. Rather it is my attempt, from the perspective of the human subject, to capture the on-going, collective reception in the Church of the primacy of God and his will for creation. It presupposes a sacramental understanding that such knowledge is gifted to each new generation down through history. In this way, humanity is empowered to participate in the uninterrupted ecclesial discernment of the divine will.

⁶⁰ See Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 286-87.

⁶¹ In this regard, I wish to draw attention to Ratzinger’s comment that knowing God requires the whole person: knowledge, will and heart. In other words, coming to know God’s will, which is coming to knowledge of the truth about the meaning of oneself, entails the use of our reason, the decision to trust and the capacity to love. See especially Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 255. When one or more elements of this all-embracing assent are deficient, the believer’s ecclesial membership increasingly suffers from fragility.

of the all-embracing assent required of a believer confronted with the intimacy of revelation in Christ, the Church can never be a matter of simply maintaining membership for to do so would be the beginnings of a human power-bloc intent on supremacy over other sections of the human race. Consequently, religious freedom is of the essence of a legitimate ecclesiology. This is the principle behind the Ratzinger's view that "[t]he Church is not there for her own sake."⁶² The Church has a task to perform in the world and for humanity. It is to prevent the self-destruction of humanity by avoiding an eclipse of God in the world:

Nur deswegen muß [die Kirche] überleben, weil ihr Verschwinden die Menschheit in den Strudel der Gottesfinsternis und so der Verfinsternung, ja, der Zerstörung des Menschlichen hineinziehen würde. Wir kämpfen nicht um Selbsterhaltung, wir wissen uns mit einer Sendung betraut, die uns Verantwortung für alle auferlegt.⁶³

Ratzinger believes the Church is in decline the moment it becomes a self-absorbed organisation pursuing its own ends. That is why the Church has to measure herself, and be measured by others for the extent to which the presence of God is alive in its members. That's why Ratzinger's benchmark for the Church is the primacy of God. To his mind, a primacy of the knowledge of God's will means the Church is there for humanity "so that the world may become a sphere for God's presence, the sphere of the covenant between God and men."⁶⁴

5.2.2. *Communio* Ecclesiology: Safeguarding Personal Integrity

Ratzinger, then, envisages that God's creative will for the human person and the Church encounter one another very concretely in the realm of freedom. As we saw in Chapter 4, the way the creation story (Gen 1:1-2:4) moves towards the Sabbath is the biblical way of expressing creation's inner basis and purpose: "It is there in order that the covenant may come to be in which God freely gives his love and receives the response of love."⁶⁵ The

⁶² Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 287.

⁶³ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 250-51 ("The only reason she has to survive is because her disappearance would drag humanity into a whirlpool of the eclipse of God and, thus, into the eclipse, indeed the destruction, of all that is human. We are not fighting for our own survival; we know that we have been entrusted with a mission that lays upon us a responsibility for everyone" [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 287]).

⁶⁴ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 287.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 288.

dialogical orientation of humanity – a human posture freely undertaken with regard to God – consists of this encounter with God and one’s response, affirmative or negative, in return.⁶⁶

This sphere of divine-human encounter in Ratzinger’s ecclesiology is expressed in the category of *communio*.

It is a concern – and particularly in the modern era – that personal integrity be maintained while not, at the same time, forgetting humanity’s social nature. Ratzinger believes that a *communio* ecclesiology safeguards this dynamic.⁶⁷ Through the Incarnation of the Word, God determined to encounter humanity as a social and historical being: “God wants to come to men through men. God has approached men in such a way that through him, and on account of him, they can find their way to one another. Thus the Incarnation includes the communal and historical aspects of faith.”⁶⁸ With this view, Ratzinger

⁶⁶ See this dissertation §§ 4.1.4 and 4.3.

⁶⁷ Ratzinger is a long-term advocate of *communio* ecclesiology. A number of his writings in this area have been helpfully gathered together in *GS:ZV*, 519-604. Acknowledging that *communio* did not occupy a central place in the Second Vatican Council, he believes that “if properly understood it can serve as a synthesis of the essential elements of the Council’s ecclesiology” (Joseph Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of Vatican II,” § III, <http://www.ewtn.com/library/CURIA/CDFECCV2.HTM> [accessed 25 May 2011]). He pinpoints the extraordinary Synod of Bishops in 1985 as the place where the Council’s ecclesiology was reflected upon and fruitfully synthesised for the first time into an “ecclesiology of communion.” To his mind, however, a misunderstanding may arise from the temptation to abandon altogether the hierarchical ecclesiology of the First Vatican Council in favour of a solely communitarian or horizontal sense of the Church. If taken in that way, he feels *communio* would support a “pluralist” ecclesiology that was a type of federal union opposing a centralist conception of Church. It would also stress the exchange of giving and receiving among local Churches with regard to worship, discipline and doctrine. While no doubt, such co-operation is vital in the life of discipleship, were it to become the overarching ecclesial model, shaped as it is by the inevitable horizontalism that stems from a network of multiple communities, Ratzinger believes it would be akin to a conciliarist ecclesiology which, since the fifteenth century, has left its own wound in the Church’s memory. In Ratzinger’s view, the horizontal dimension of *communio*, if promoted to the exclusion of the vertical, would ratify the idea of self-determination. See Ratzinger, “Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity.” See also *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 93-96; Benedict XVI, *Light of the World: The Pope, the Church and the Signs of the Times*, trans. Michael J. Miller and Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 155-162, where we get a glimpse of the Pope’s personal views on reform in the Church. For an overview of Conciliarism in the life of the Church, see *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. “Conciliar Theory.”

⁶⁸ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 165. Taking the incarnational approach to reality means that time, and the social nature of humanity are valid features of our relationship with God. Because the Word of God took bodily human form, christology and ecclesiology are forever inseparable. Ratzinger describes the connection between Christ and the Church as the “ecclesial depth of Christology” (166). Ratzinger’s core insight is that it is through Christ that the Church fulfils its purpose. He highlights this through the following biblical insight which is the basis of an incarnational ecclesiology encompassing the tension between the “one” and the “many”: “God’s action brings into being ‘the People of God,’ and ‘the People of God,’ on the basis of Christ become ‘the body of Christ,’ in accordance with the profound interpretation of the promise to Abraham offered by Paul in the Letter to the Galatians. This [promise] is made – thus it is that Paul reads the Old Testament – to ‘the seed’ of

concludes, Christian faith is never simply spiritual and inward, nor a subjective, private relationship with Christ; rather it is entirely concrete and ecclesial, involving a mutual self-giving of persons, resting on the just ordering of obligations assented to in freedom:

Eine rechte Vision des Menschen aber muß von einer Beziehung ausgehen, in der jeder Person und frei bleibt und gerade so dem anderen verbunden ist. Sie muß Beziehungslehre sein und einen Typ von Beziehungen suchen, der kein Zweck-Mittel-Verhältnis ist, sondern Sich-Geben von Personen.⁶⁹

In Ratzinger's writings, the self-giving of persons – an idea wholly consistent with his understanding of human freedom as the acceptance of dependency, relationality and limitation – manifests the theological, social and personalist character of a *communio* ecclesiology. Ratzinger highlights three New Testament texts which, at various levels, are grounded upon free and mutual self-giving relationality: 1John 1:3-4, 1Cor 10:16ff and 2Cor 13:13. Amongst these, the Johannine text is given pre-eminence.⁷⁰

For him, 1John1: 3-4 contains the essential elements for correctly understanding the theological character of *κοινωνία*. *Communio*, he says, is primarily a theological notion extending into the realm of ontology. In the first instance, as we saw from its correlation with trinitarian and eucharistic *communio*, the object of ecclesial *communio* is union with the Son of God who comes to humanity in and through the Church.⁷¹ From this, its social aspects find their inner depth. Fellowship (*κοινωνία*) among human beings is born in this union and it

Abraham: that is, not to many, but to one. God's action is aimed accordingly at getting us, the many, to be, not merely 'at one,' but 'one' – sharing in his bodily life with Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16f., 28)" (165-6).

⁶⁹ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 233 ("A correct vision of man must proceed from a relationship in which each one remains a free person and is joined to the other precisely as such. It must be a doctrine of relationship and seek a type of relationship that is not a means-end relationship but the self-giving of persons" [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 245]).

⁷⁰ For the sake of reader accessibility, I quote the three texts here: "[W]e declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship (*κοινωνίαν*) with us; and truly our fellowship (*κοινωνία*) is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" (1John 1: 3-4); "The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing (*κοινωνία*) in the blood of Christ? The bread that we bless is it not a sharing (*κοινωνία*) in the Body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1Cor 10:16-17); "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion (*κοινωνία*) of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2Cor 13:13).

⁷¹ See this dissertation § 5.1.1.

merges into fellowship with the Triune God because encountering Christ creates communion, through him, in the Holy Spirit, with the Father.⁷²

In the second text (cf. 1Cor 10:16-17), the character of *communio* is deepened by St Paul, who explores its social character. From this, Ratzinger finds evidence for his conviction that “[t]he ecclesiology of communion at its very foundation is a Eucharistic ecclesiology.”⁷³ Through the Eucharist, “ecclesiology becomes more concrete while remaining totally spiritual, transcendent and eschatological.” He continues,

[i]n the Eucharist, Christ, present in the bread and wine and giving Himself anew, builds the Church as His Body and through His Risen Body He unites us to the one and triune God and to each other. The Eucharist, celebrated in different places is universal at the same time, because there is only one Christ and only a single body of Christ.⁷⁴

The *communio* model, rooted in the corporate personality of the “single Christ,” offers a basis for both safeguarding and resolving the tension between the freely assenting individual believer and the social nature of Church membership.⁷⁵ It accounts for the identity of each free subject within the corporate whole. Communicating with Christ in the Eucharist is the affirmation of the “commingling of Christ’s life with our own” and, by being inserted into the movement of Christ’s life, “[o]ur existence is ‘dynamised’ in such a way that each of

⁷² While there is no mention of the Holy Spirit in 1John 1:3-4, Ratzinger finds resolution in Jesus’ Johannine farewell discourses (John 13-17). The discourses indicate a further point: the goal of *communio* is the fullness of joy. Ratzinger says the Church carries within her an eschatological dynamic. The present time of sorrow, according to John 16:20, 22, 24, will turn to joy with Christ’s definitive return. When this verse is compared with the invitation to invoke the Spirit in Luke 11:13, Ratzinger believes “joy” and the “Holy Spirit” are equivalent. In summary, he maintains that, biblically, an ecclesiology of communion is invaluable because of its theological, ecclesiological and soteriological character. See Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of Vatican II,” § III.

⁷³ Ratzinger, “The Ecclesiology of Vatican II,” § III.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ On the semitic conception of corporate personality and how this stands in the background to Ratzinger’s ecclesiological understanding of the Body of Christ, see Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 33-40; *Introduction to Christianity*, 234-43. Ratzinger develops this concept, which is the notion that “we are all Adam, a single person writ large,” into the idea of nuptiality – the union of “Bride” and “Body”: “Christ and the Church are one body in the sense in which man and woman are one flesh, that is, in such a way that in their indissoluble spiritual-bodily union, they nonetheless remain unconfused and unmingled. The Church does not simply become Christ, she is ever the handmaid whom he lovingly raises to be his Bride and who seeks his face through these latter days” (*Called to Communion*, 39).

us can become a being for others.”⁷⁶ Consequently, all who commune with his one body are configured to Christ and, though many, are members of one body (cf. Rom 12:4-5; 1Cor 12:12-31). This necessarily involves a social dimension as it unites one person organically with every other person receiving Christ: if my being united to Christ means I am together with my neighbour, then “the individual realities of my communicating and being part of the life of the Church are inseparably linked to one another.”⁷⁷ To Ratzinger’s mind, the Church is not born as a federation of communities but rather can only begin from the one Lord and from the one body which is formed by communion in the one bread:

[The Church] becomes one not through a centralised government but through a common centre open to all, because it constantly draws its origin from a single Lord, who forms her by means of the one bread into one body. Because of this, her unity has a greater depth than that which any other human union could ever achieve. Precisely when the Eucharist is understood in the intimacy of the union of each person with the Lord, it becomes also a social sacrament to the highest degree.⁷⁸

Hence the fundamental structure of ecclesial *communio* expresses a reciprocal communion on the theological and social levels: “communion with Jesus becomes communion with God himself, communion with the light and with love; it becomes in this way an upright life, and all of this unites us with one another in the truth. Only when we regard communion in this depth and breadth do we have something to say to the world.”⁷⁹ For Ratzinger, fellowship and unity in the truth preserve all that is best in the human person, both individually and collectively.

Alongside the theological and social levels, Ratzinger acknowledges a third element, namely, the personalist character of *communio*. This copper-fastens his argument for the preservation of personhood within the self-giving of persons that is integral to ecclesial life.

The realisation that communion among the faithful can only follow from communion

⁷⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, “Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity,” § 2, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20020602_ratzinger-eucharistic-congress_en.html (accessed 24 May 2011).

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

between God and the human person is described by Ratzinger as an “all-encompassing third” element because communion is not merely something between two individual human beings.⁸⁰ While it may be our common human nature that creates the possibility that we can communicate with one another, nature alone, Ratzinger states, is not sufficient to communicate the inner sensibility of persons. Conscious of the modern anxiety regarding a potential loss of personal autonomy through submission to an authority figure, Ratzinger states an anthropological principle: “individuality separates, personhood opens” because personhood, by nature, is relational. The deepest identity of personhood is “point[ing] beyond the self to a greater something, even a greater someone.” This all-embracing third element binds precisely because it is greater than the individual. Ratzinger believes one further step is required here: for a person, this “third” is not external but is itself within each individual: “This third, which in truth is the first, we call God. In him we touch ourselves. Through him – not in any other way – the depths of communion are reached.”

The third scriptural text (2 Cor 13:13) is operative at this point. The Christian tradition, as expressed in this pauline liturgical greeting, interprets *κοινωνία* as an outright description of the Holy Spirit. Concretely, this means that our communion with one another is through Christ in the Holy Spirit “so that [communion among people] becomes a community – “Church” in the genuine sense of the word.”⁸¹ God’s communication of himself in the historical fact of the Incarnation means that Christ’s humanity is opened up through the Holy Spirit in such a way that it embraces all of us, so that all can be united in a single body, in a single common flesh. Hence, the pneumatic anarchy which he seeks to avoid in the Church is overcome through pneumatological communion with Christ and with one another.⁸²

⁸⁰ Ratzinger, “Communio – ein Program,” 460 (own translation).

⁸¹ Ibid. (own translation).

⁸² When Ratzinger speaks about the need for more “divinity” in the Church, he is referring to the pneumatological activity which gives the Church its correct orientation and is the corrective to ecclesiologies

With regard to whether submission to the Church's sacramental authority under the guise of an ecclesiology of communion might be merely the surrender of personal integrity by another name, Ratzinger finds illumination in the convergence of the sacramental framework and faith dimension of his ecclesiology. Jesus, the one who is bearer of divine power (cf. Matt 7:29, 21:23; Mark 1:27, 11:28; Luke 20:2, 24:19) announces a message he did not engineer but is himself "sent" on the mission assigned him by the Father.⁸³ In the context of his Resurrection, Jesus' mission passes over into the office of the apostles – those who have been sent: "Jesus confers his power upon the apostles and thereby makes their office strictly parallel to his own mission."⁸⁴ Ratzinger points out that the structure of Jesus' mission involves his entire being – it is relationship, the significance of which is expressed in a Johannine parallelism: "The Son can do nothing of himself" (John 5:19, 30) and "Without me you can do nothing" (John 15:5). From this, Ratzinger proposes that the "nothing" of ecclesial authority is centred on the mission Christ receives from the Father. Ratzinger states that Jesus links the apostles to himself and they share with Jesus this "nothing" which "expresses at once the power and impotence of the apostolic office."⁸⁵ The "nothing" of ecclesial authority unburdens the Church from having to engineer the content of its mission, just as the Father unburdens the Son in the fulfilment of his mission. While the transparency of both is comparable, it is not identical. This is a key moment in Ratzinger's ecclesiology as regards the nature of authority found in the Church. The authority which the Church possesses is not an act of the arbitrary will of the apostles and their successors. Therefore,

"from below" which presuppose that one may regard the Church as a merely sociological entity and that Christ, as an acting subject, has no real significance. In Ratzinger's opinion, ecclesiologies undertaken solely "from below" imply that one can no longer speak of a Church at all but only of a society which sets religious goals for itself. Ratzinger contends, on the other hand, that the Lord is *one* wherever he is found and consequently, there is but one Church and the prospective union of humanity is an indispensable definition of the Church.

⁸³ See Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 112-125.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 113. Ratzinger points to Jesus' words to the Twelve that "[h]e who receives you receives me" (Matt 10:40; cf. Luke 10:16; John 13:20). A series of texts of this nature from the four Gospels show Jesus' transmission of his own power to the Twelve and the parallelism indicative in their one mission: Matt 9:8, 10:1, 21, 23, 40; Mark 6:7, 13:34; Luke 4:6, 9:1, 10:16,19; John 13:20,17:18, 20:21.

⁸⁵ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 114.

submission to it is not the surrender of personal integrity. It is a paradigmatic expression of the Christian philosophy of freedom – apostleship is bound to participation in the mission of Christ and never to human resources alone:

Von sich aus, aus den eigenen Kräften ihres Verstandes, ihrer Erkenntnis, ihres Willens können sie nichts tun, was sie als Apostel tun sollen. . . . Nichts von dem, was apostolisches Tun konstituiert, ist Produkt eigenen Vermögens. Aber gerade in diesem “Nichts” des Eigenen liegt ihre Gemeinschaft mit Jesus, der ja auch ganz vom Vater ist, nur durch ihn und in ihm, und überhaupt nicht bestünde, wenn er nicht ständiges Herkommen vom Vater und Sichzurückgeben an der Vater wäre.⁸⁶

Hence, it is this having of “nothing” by themselves alone that draws the apostles into communion with the mission of Christ. This is what gives the authority of the Church legitimacy and assures the community of faith that they can trust the sacramental authority of the Church because it participates in the “nothing” of Christ. With this insight, Ratzinger returns to the sacramental structure of the Church’s mission and the fulfilment of the fundamental pattern of human life: “[t]his bond to the Lord, which enables man to do what he cannot do but what the Lord does, is synonymous with the sacramental structure.”⁸⁷ This “giving” in mission of what does not come from oneself yields a sacramental principle which is the fundamental ecclesiological statute and orientation for the Church’s authority structure: “One can receive what is God’s only from the sacrament, by entering into the mission that makes me the messenger and instrument of another.”⁸⁸

In the community of faith then, Ratzinger says the sacramental quality of the new mode of mission respects personal integrity, for the *communio* of the Church requires receptivity in freedom for its fruitfulness:

⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 111 (“On their own, by the force of their own understanding, knowledge and will, the apostles cannot do anything they are meant to do as apostles. . . . Nothing that makes up the activity of the apostles is the product of their own capabilities. But it is precisely in having ‘nothing’ to call their own that their communion with Jesus consists, since Jesus is also entirely from the Father, has being only through him and in him and would not exist at all if he were not a continual coming forth from and self-return to the Father” [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 114-15]). There are strong echoes here of the Christian philosophy of freedom. See this dissertation §§ 4.2. to 4.2.2.

⁸⁷ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 116.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 115.

Zur Kirche gehört wesentlich das Element des Empfangens, so wie Glaube vom Hören kommt und nicht Produkt eigener Entschlüsse oder Reflexionen ist. Denn Glaube ist Begegnung mit dem, was ich nicht erdenken oder durch Leistungen herbeiführen kann, sondern was mir eben begegnen muß. Wir nennen diese Struktur des Empfangens, des Begegnens “Sakrament.” . . . Kirche kann man nicht machen, nur empfangen, und zwar empfangen von dort her, wo sie schon ist und wo sie wirklich ist: aus der sakramentalen Gemeinschaft seines durch die Geschichte hindurchgehenden Leibes.⁸⁹

One can legitimately conclude of Ratzinger’s thought that the person who is growing in authentic freedom is one who trusts and receives their being from another. Only such an understanding of the source of receptivity in respect of the human person can provide the platform for validly holding the principle of self-expropriation as a life-giving conduit leading to genuine human liberation. As the sphere in which the human person grows in authentic freedom, Ratzinger maintains that the Church is the locus for bringing us out of ourselves and towards the “Other,” and therefore all “others”:

Glaube und Sakrament bleiben konstitutiv für die Kirche. Anders verliert sie sich selbst. Sie hat dann auch der Menschheit nichts mehr zu geben. Sie lebt davon, daß der Logos Fleisch geworden ist, daß die Wahrheit Weg wurde. Die von der Bibel und den Vätern entwickelte Sicht der Kirche und der christlichen Existenz ist mehr als ein “Paradigma,” mehr als eine epochale Anschauungsform. In ihr werden wir aus den Paradigmen herausgeführt zur Berührung mit der Wirklichkeit selbst (vgl. Mk 4:18; Joh 16:25). Darin eben besteht “Offenbarung”; dies ist der Kern unserer Befreiung – das Herausgeführtwerden aus dem Spiegelkabinett der Bilder und der historischen Anschauungen in die Begegnung mit der Realität, die uns in Christus geschenkt wird.⁹⁰

⁸⁹ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 18-19 (“One essential element of Church is receiving, just as faith comes from hearing and is not the product of one’s own decisions and reflections. For faith in an encounter with something I cannot devise or bring about by my own efforts; instead, it is something that has to come to meet me. We call this structure of receiving, of encountering, ‘sacrament.’ . . . Church cannot be made but only received, that is to say, received from a source where she already exists and really exists: from the sacramental communion of [Christ’s] Body as it makes its way through history” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 19-20]).

⁹⁰ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 230 (“Belief and sacrament remain constitutive for the Church. Otherwise she just gets lost. And then she no longer has anything to offer to mankind. She draws her life from the Logos having become flesh, from the truth having become a way. The view of the Church developed from the Bible and the Fathers is more than a ‘paradigm,’ more than one era’s view of life and the world. Here we are led out of all the paradigms into contact with the truth itself (see Mark 4:18; John 16:25). That in fact is what ‘revelation’ consists of; this is the core of our liberation – being led out from the cabinet of mirrors of images and historical points of view and into the encounter with the reality that is vouchsafed to us in Christ” [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 264-65]).

5.3. The Love Dimension: Faith that Works through Freedom and Love

Thus far, this chapter has presented the ground upon which Ratzinger understands ecclesial identity to be built, i.e. through the spiritual office of receptivity and ecclesio-knowledge. “Knowledge of God,” he says, “may be compared to the knowledge of someone in love: it concerns me as a whole; it also demands my will; and it comes to nothing if it does not attain this all-embracing assent.”⁹¹ Talk of knowledge, will and love brings us immediately into the realm of Ratzinger’s Christian synthesis. The sacramental framework and faith dimension set a criterion for participation in ecclesial life by advocating trust in the primacy of God’s will and the acceptance of sacramental authority from outside the self. Now the question arises about the practicability of such a demanding vision. For example, can the human person enjoy freedom against this backdrop of such ostensibly idealistic criteria? Can Ratzinger’s ecclesiology deal convincingly with the challenge of transgression within the Church itself? This leads us towards a third aspect of his ecclesiology – the love dimension. Its basis is that “a person sees only to the extent that he loves.”⁹² In other words, there is an axiomatic correspondence between human freedom and the will to self-expropriation for the “beloved” who is not merely an “other” anymore.

Love is a virtue of many elements but for our purposes, this subdivision concentrates on how Ratzinger deals with the ecclesial response to God who loved us first (cf. 1John 4:10, 19) and how this shapes growth in authentic freedom. This response takes the form of occupying an authentic worship posture whose heart is the Eucharist. It is within this perspective that relationality becomes truly concrete in the theme of “call and response.”⁹³ It takes the form of the Church’s martyrological profile. To love wholeheartedly – in this instance, God, through Christ in his Church – means to freely sacrifice everything for the

⁹¹ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 287.

⁹² Ratzinger, “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin,” in *GS:ZV*, 1182 (own translation).

⁹³ See this dissertation § 5.1.4.

beloved. This is also where Ratzinger deals with the life of grace. God's goodness opens up the space which, over time, becomes the signpost of faith whereby humanity may come to know what is right, and make the wholehearted sacrifice necessary for its realisation. To his mind, the Church occupies this space which is the sphere of nonpartisan worship in the upper room. The Church is also the advocate for witnesses who are expert in a human vigilance capable of counteracting the cheapening of grace in history. Through its witnesses – the *communio sanctorum* – the Church itself becomes a sphere of vigilance for the world, helping its peoples to come to terms with the truth of human nature as dependent, relational and limited.

5.3.1. The Upper Room: Moulding the Posture of Self-Giving

In the context of ecclesial life, Ratzinger turns to the liturgy when he reflects on how one's love for the other grows. He believes that when genuine love propels one to give oneself to, and for the beloved, there is a missionary dynamic at the heart of the self-giving posture of the "lover." For a Christian believer, Ratzinger says this requires a specifically eucharistic posture. In this way, the Church has a heart – the Eucharist – which is the fulfilment of Jesus' promise at the beginning of Holy Week: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). Understood correctly, he says, the Eucharist is "the mystical heart of Christianity, in which God mysteriously comes forth, time and again, from within himself and draws us into his embrace."⁹⁴ Without its burning heart, apostles could not preach nor could martyrs shed their blood. Through the Eucharist, "[t]he heart must remain the heart, that through the heart, the other organs may serve aright."⁹⁵ To his mind then, love is anchored in truth, and this ontology of love, so to speak,

⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 121. He quotes Ignatius of Antioch on this point: "Christianity is not the result of persuading people; rather it is something truly great," (*Epis. Rom.* 3:3).

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 122. See 1 Cor 12:12-31; Col 1:18; 2:18-20; Eph. 1:22-23; 3:19; 4:13. Ratzinger refers to the insights of Thérèse of Lisieux in this regard. See Thérèse of Lisieux, "Manuscrit B (Lettre à soeur Marie du Sacré-Coeur)," in *Oeuvres Complètes* (De Brouwer: Cerf and Desclée, 1992), 225f. Thérèse knew that the heart of the Church

brings him to the setting of the “upper room” as the place of eucharistic celebration. In this sphere, the believer’s self-giving or missionary faith comes from God and leads to God:

Gerade dann, wenn die Eucharistie “im Obergemach,” im Innenraum ehrfürchtigen Glaubens ohne andere Absichten als die, Gott zu gefallen, recht gefeiert wird, entspringt aus ihr Glaube: jener Glaube, der dynamischer Ursprungsort von Mission ist, in der die Welt zur lebendigen Opfertgabe wird – zur heiligen Stadt, in der es dann keinen Tempel mehr gibt, weil Gott, der Allherrscher selbst ihr Tempel ist und das Lamm.⁹⁶

To Ratzinger’s mind, a key element identifying the eucharistic celebration since its institution is the attractiveness of truth for its own sake. The celebration demonstrates an inner connection between worship and mission: “[w]hat was impressive about it was particularly its sheer lack of a practical purpose, the fact that it was being done for God and not for spectators. . . . The very selflessness of this standing before God and turning the gaze toward God was what allowed God’s light to stream down into what was happening and for it to be detected even by outsiders.”⁹⁷ In this respect, Ratzinger finds it a great “anthropocentric error” to construct the liturgy solely for the community where God does not actually play any role. The focus would then be purely on winning people over and keeping them satisfied. Such undue attempts at “arm-twisting” so to speak, would deny the possibility of the human heart falling in love with God as God, because “[n]o faith can be aroused that way . . . since faith has to do with God, and it is only where his closeness is felt, where human intentions

was love and she herself, though never leaving the environs of the Carmel, was a missionary (and later patroness of mission) – a loving person, present to Christ at the heart of the Church. In this regard, Ratzinger suggests that missionary exhaustion is the result of our thinking upon external activities and forgetfulness of the deeper centre from which missionary activity flows. This centre, simply called “love” and “heart” by Thérèse, is the Eucharist.⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 106 (“It is at that point, when the Eucharist is being celebrated aright ‘in the upper room,’ in the inner sphere of reverent faith, and without any aim or purpose beyond that of pleasing God, that faith springs forth from it: that faith which is the dynamic origin of mission, in which the world becomes a living sacrificial gift, a holy city in which there is no longer any temple, because God the ruler of all is himself her temple, as is the Lamb” [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 122]). In order to make his argument, Ratzinger undertakes a typology of the “Upper Room” (cf. *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 90-122) as the sphere of eucharistic celebration. He begins with a Russian legend which displays something of the inner connection between worship and mission. The legend, which recalls the origins of Christianity in Russia, tells how Prince Vladimir of Kiev had been dissatisfied with Islamic, Jewish and Roman Catholic rituals of worship. It was only when two of his ambassadors returned to court, utterly inspired by a Greek Orthodox liturgy they experienced in the Church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople – not knowing whether they had been in heaven or on earth – that the decision in favour of Orthodox Christianity was made. See Petro Bilaniuk, *The Apostolic Origin of the Ukrainian Church* (Parma, Ohio: Protection of the Blessed Virgin Mary Ukrainian Catholic Parish, 1988).

⁹⁷ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 92.

take second place to reverence before him, that the credibility comes about that creates belief.”⁹⁸

For Ratzinger the meaning of the “upper room” is that the theological significance of faith and the arousal of love in the human person are part of the one action of worship. For him, without falling in love, without yearning to worship God in the “upper room,” there can be no justifiable case for Christian mission. The Eucharist, though not in itself directly orientated to awakening people’s faith in a missionary sense, is at the heart of faith, nourishing and perpetually calling missionary activity into proper perspective:

[Die Eucharistie] schaut primär auf Gott und zieht die Menschen in diesen Blick hinein, zieht sie hinein in den Abstieg Gottes, der ihr Aufstieg in die Gottesgemeinschaft wird. Sie will Gott gefallen und Menschen dazu führen, daß sie dies auch als den Maßstab ihres Lebens ansehen. Und insofern ist sie freilich in einem tieferen Sinn Ursprung von Mission.⁹⁹

Ratzinger is building up here a notion of Christian freedom concentrated on a new obedience born out of love. As we have already seen, Ratzinger’s christocentric approach to the life of faith is predicated upon the primary biblical relationship between the Father and the Son, the content of which is based on obedience.¹⁰⁰ The notion that this crucified form of existence becomes the ecclesial form of love is a theme that Ratzinger takes up in the second part of *Jesus of Nazareth*:

⁹⁸ Ibid., 93. One could speculate on whether or not Ratzinger has John Henry Newman’s *Grammar of Assent* in mind here. Written against the background of British empiricism, Newman’s work is divided into two parts and deals with two aspects of how assent is not contrary to human nature. The topics under discussion are belief without full understanding and belief without absolute proof. Ratzinger does not explicitly mention Newman in this discussion of eucharistic celebration but the issue raised here is no less than the “credibility” of the faith today – of a kind to prompt a full and free assent. In the *Grammar*, Newman raises the idea of the illative sense which is that faculty of the mind which closes the logic-gap in concrete situations. Newman maintains that in concrete life, incontrovertible proof in favour of a decision is not possible. Hence, while the illative sense is not without its risk, it is comparable to Aristotle’s *phronesis* or practical wisdom. It assists in closing the gap between converging probabilities and full assent.

⁹⁹ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 94 (“[The Eucharist’s] gaze is primarily directed toward God, and it draws men into this point of view, draws them into the descent of God to us, which becomes their ascent into fellowship with God. It aims at being pleasing to God and at leading men to this as being likewise the measure of their lives. And to that extent it is, of course, in a more profound sense, the origin of mission” [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 94]).

¹⁰⁰ See this dissertation § 3.2.2.1.

Denn der leibhafte Gehorsam Christi ist ja als offener Raum dargestellt, in den wir mit hineingenommen werden und durch den unser eigenes Leben einen neuen Zusammenhang findet. Das Mysterium des Kreuzes steht nicht einfach uns gegenüber, sondern bezieht uns mit ein und gibt unserem eigenen Leben einen neuen Rang.¹⁰¹

When Christ takes on a human body, a new obedience becomes possible which surpasses all possible human discharge of the commandments of the law: “[o]ur own morality is insufficient for the proper worship of God” in the sense that Christ’s “perfect obedience” to the Father, which fulfilled love on the cross, “draws us all with him and at the same time wipes away all our disobedience through his love.”¹⁰² In this new understanding, true worship is the doorway to the living human being. The whole human person becomes a total answer to God, and is shaped by God’s healing and transforming word. It is Christ’s self-giving in obedience that takes us and brings us to God. That is true worship in Ratzinger’s ecclesiology.¹⁰³

From a human perspective, Ratzinger says the worshipping posture means “[k]eeping one’s gaze freely fixed upon God in order to receive from him the criterion of right action and the capacity for it – that is what matters.”¹⁰⁴ This posture is also the basis for his view that the liturgical community, and the larger communion of the Church it represents, is a

¹⁰¹ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 260 (“The incarnate obedience of Christ is presented as an open space into which we are admitted and through which our own lives find a new context. The mystery of the Cross does not simply confront us; rather, it draws us in and gives a new value to our life” [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 236]).

¹⁰² Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 235.

¹⁰³ More than anywhere else, the scene on the Mount of Olives is where Ratzinger expresses this obedient prayer posture: the Son’s “prayer posture of extreme submission to the will of God, of radical self-offering to him” (Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 153). This line of argumentation is in keeping with the New Testament tradition of humanity’s total self-giving as a sacrifice of praise (cf. Heb 13:15-16; 1Pet 2:5). See this dissertation §§ 3.2.2.2. and 4.1.4.

¹⁰⁴ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 288. The theme of worship as the true human sacrifice, based particularly on Rom 12.1, occurs at various junctures in Ratzinger’s writings. See *Truth and Tolerance*, 129-30; *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 114-118; *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 80, 236-37. It seems to me that the theme of the new or true worship in the person of Christ is the most recurring theme of this latter book. It is present in every chapter culminating in Chapter 8 on the crucifixion and burial of Jesus (Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 202-40). A human person becomes “a living sacrifice” when they offer their body as total worship – in a manner similar to Christ.

sphere of freedom.¹⁰⁵ Paul's phrase in Rom 12:1 (λογικὴν λατρείαν, a phrase that has been translated in a variety of ways into English) opens up Ratzinger's understanding of worship as humanity's entrance into its freedom. Ratzinger himself – translating it at one juncture as *rationabilis oblatio*, “the rationally directed worship conformed to the *logos*, or ‘spiritual worship’”¹⁰⁶ – says the true sacrifice to God is that of the human person's inmost being, itself transformed into worship. Consequently, Ratzinger says, in our worship

Wir bitten darum, daß der Logos, Christus, der das wahre Opfer *ist*, uns selber in sein Opfern hineinnehme, uns “logisiere,” uns wortgemäßer, wahrhaft vernünftiger mache, so daß sein Opfer unseres wird und von Gott als unseres angenommen, uns zugerechnet werden kann. . . . Wir bitten . . . daß wir selbst mit Christus Eucharistie und so für Gott wohlgefällig werden.¹⁰⁷

This “metamorphosis,” as Ratzinger describes it, is “our being reshaped in a way that takes us beyond this world's scheme of things, beyond sharing in what ‘people’ think, say and do, and into the will of God.”¹⁰⁸ Hence Ratzinger envisages it as a recasting of the human person in terms of the Christian synthesis and its philosophy of freedom. The worship posture of the whole person leads to metamorphosis or “logification” which, from the perspective of ecclesial life, consists of ever-increasing union with the will of God. As Ratzinger says of Rom 12, St. Paul goes on precisely to explain the shape of the transformation away from being conformed to this world and into the new life of Christ (Rom 12:2). Therefore, to Ratzinger's mind, the transformation of the gifts at the Eucharist has to be extended as far as us, as persons, in the process of moulding our posture of self-giving. Through our willing participation in Christ's sacrificial banquet, the one body of Christ forms itself in and through individual persons who, becoming members one of the other (cf. Rom 12:4-5), are simultaneously growing in authentic freedom:

¹⁰⁵ See Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 242-245.

¹⁰⁶ Ratzinger, *Truth and Tolerance*, 130.

¹⁰⁷ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 101 (“[w]e ask that the Logos, Christ, who *is* the true sacrifice, may himself draw us into his act of sacrifice, may ‘logify’ us, make us ‘more consistent with the word,’ ‘more truly rational,’ so that his sacrifice may become ours and may be accepted by God as ours, may be able to be accounted as ours. . . . We are asking . . . that we ourselves might become a Eucharist with Christ and, thus become acceptable and pleasing to God” [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 116]).

¹⁰⁸ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 117-18.

[Die Verwandlung der Gaben bringt uns] aus dem verengten Eigenwillen heraus in die Einheit mit dem Gotteswillen hinein. Der Eigenwille . . . ist in Wirklichkeit Unterwerfung unter die Schemata einer Zeit und dem Anschein entgegen Sklaverei; der Gotteswille ist Wahrheit und das Hineingehen in ihn daher Ausbruch in die Freiheit hinein.¹⁰⁹

5.3.2. Call and Personal Response: The Martyrological Profile of the Church

To Ratzinger's mind, then, a person who undertakes a worshipping posture in the Church becomes a witness. While the direct object of one's love is God, this reveals itself as God's will for unity with all of creation. Ratzinger's particular use of the word witness, as in the Greek term *μάρτυς*, is far removed from the stereotypical conception of martyrdom ranging from super-human stories of fearless heroism to bloodshed by political actors who kill others and themselves in the hope of being showered with blessings in the afterlife.¹¹⁰ Nor is Ratzinger particularly concerned with distinguishing "red" and "white" martyrdom.¹¹¹ For him, the value of witness is more nuanced than solely dying for one's faith. Ratzinger follows closely the understanding of Ignatius of Antioch (died c. 115) and the nascent

¹⁰⁹ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 102 ("[The transformation of gifts brings us] out of our restricted self-will out into union with the will of God. Self-will, however, is in reality a subordination to the schemes and systems of a given time, and, despite appearances, it is slavery; the will of God is truth, and entering into it is thus breaking out into freedom" [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 118]). It is interesting to find Ratzinger quoting a saying of Alfred Delp, the German Jesuit who was executed by the Nazis: "Bread is important, freedom is more important, but more important is unfailing worship [*die unverlorene Anbetung*]." In another place Ratzinger seems to continue with this worship motif: "Where this order of goods is not respected but turned upside down, justice is no longer done and the suffering individual is no longer cared for; instead the very realm of material goods is ruined and destroyed as well. Where God is viewed as something secondary, which can be set aside temporarily or altogether for the sake of more important things, then precisely these supposedly more important things fail" (Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 89-90).

¹¹⁰ See Michael L. Budde and Karen Scott, eds., *Witness of the Body: The Past, Present and Future of Christian Martyrdom* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011), vii. Other informative material, which attempts to critique a fatalistic understanding of martyrdom and reorient it towards its more intrinsic value of witness and total self-sacrifice, includes Craig Hovey, *To Share in the Body: A Theology of Martyrdom for Today's Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2008); Rona M. Fields et al., *Martyrdom: The Psychology, Theology and Politics of Self-Sacrifice* (London: Praeger, 2004); Michele T. Gallagher, *Reason is Beguiling: On the Mystery of Martyrdom and of Total Self-Gift* (New York: Alba House, 2000).

¹¹¹ In the earliest days of Christianity, the term *μάρτυς* was originally used of the Apostles as the witnesses of Christ's life and Resurrection (cf. Acts 1:8. 22). It was the spread of imperial persecution against Christians that caused the word to be extended to those undergoing hardships for the faith until finally it became restricted to those who suffered death for their Christian faith. See *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, s.v. "Martyr."

Church.¹¹² It is an exhortation to witness and imitation – the prospect of one’s actual physical death being fortuitous, so to speak, to the action and motive of the witness. Ratzinger’s interest here is the endeavour to present the freedom of a witness who has fallen in love – the freedom of the martyr – as a constitutive element of the Church. For him, something constitutive of the Church is expressed through the witness-posture of its members.¹¹³

At the heart of this aspect of the love dimension, whereby witness to God’s will for unity is freely undertaken, human freedom experiences the tension between the “individual” and the “collective.” A collective can either support individuals in a productive way or subsume them in a destructive way so that neither party grows nor prospers. For Ratzinger, the theologies of personality and communality are mutually inclusive and the re-establishment of the connection between them is an essential feature of an ecclesiology that wishes to promote growth in authentic human freedom. He maintains the link resides in the witness of the believer who has been called by name and responds to this personal expression of love.

It is in the sacramental framework, where the believer’s authentic response entails the characteristics of “non-autonomy” and motivation for the “whole,” that the basis for the believer-witness is found.¹¹⁴ In reflecting upon personal response as something motivated by the call of God in one’s life, Ratzinger looks to the martyrological profile of the Church to reconcile the biblical structure of personal responsibility and the human requisite for

¹¹² See Joseph Ratzinger, “Magisterium of the Church, Faith, Morality,” in *Problems of the Church Today* (Washington: United States Catholic Bishops Conference, 1976), 74-83, for an account of Ratzinger’s agreement with the understanding of martyrdom found in Ignatius.

¹¹³ Candida Moss’s superb study of early Christian texts presents a very credible portrait of this reality: *The Other Christs: Imitating Jesus in Ancient Christian Ideologies of Martyrdom* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010). Even though Ratzinger doesn’t detail the historical context of martyrdom in the emerging Church in any great depth, I believe Moss’s interpretation of early Christianity closely adheres to the framework of his approach: “If Christians are exhorted to imitate the actions of Christ, if discipleship entails suffering like Christ, and if Christ the true martyr blazes the way for his followers, then dying for Christ was not just a possibility; it was an obligation. . . . The gospel-worthy martyr does not offer him- or herself for martyrdom but eagerly embraces it once the sentence is passed” (ibid. 22-48).

¹¹⁴ See this dissertation § 5.3.3.

dependence, and consequent relationality.¹¹⁵ Ratzinger claims the Church has always held that, as imperfect as its members are, there has never been anonymous leadership of the Christian community.¹¹⁶ The naming of the leadership – the names of the saints and the names of those who bear responsibility for unity – is profoundly in keeping with the central structure of New Testament faith. For Ratzinger, this emphasis upon particularity is the origin of Christian witness, reaching to the core of the meaning of personal responsibility in the Church:

Dem Zeugen Jesus Christus entsprechen die Zeugen, die, eben weil sie Zeugen sind, mit Namen für ihn eintreten. Das Martyrium als Antwort auf das Kreuz Jesus Christi ist nichts anderes als die letzte Bekräftigung dieses Prinzips der unabtretbaren Namentlichkeit, der namentlich haftenden Person. Zeugenschaft impliziert Namentlichkeit, Zeugenschaft aber ist – als Antwort auf Kreuz und Auferstehung – Ur- und Grundform christlicher Nachfolge überhaupt.¹¹⁷

Chief amongst Ratzinger's reflections in this regard is what he calls the "martyrological structure of the primacy."¹¹⁸ Ratzinger finds the martyrological principle

¹¹⁵ See this dissertation §§ 4.3.1. and 5.1.4.

¹¹⁶ See Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 39-42. As examples, Ratzinger refers to St. Paul's naming of himself as responsible for the communities he founded, while also addressing by name those who hold authority with him and under him. Ratzinger also points to the fact that the New Testament texts were, for the most part, attributed to a name of apostolic origin, while the liturgical prayers of the eucharistic celebration contained the names of martyrs and saints, as well as prayers for the named leadership of the Church. From the earliest times, lists of Popes and bishops have been an important part of the personal liability which leaders have had for the communities in their care.

¹¹⁷ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 39 ("[T]o the *one witness*, Jesus Christ, correspond *the many witnesses* who, precisely because they are witnesses, stand up for him by name. Martyrdom as a response to the Cross of Jesus Christ is nothing other than the ultimate confirmation of this principle of uncompromising particularity, of the named individual who is personally responsible. Witness implies particularity, but witness – as a response to the Cross and Resurrection – is the primordial and fundamental form of Christian discipleship in general" [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 40-41]). On a number of occasions, Ratzinger has outlined and developed his thoughts on how the new covenant in Christ emerges as the culmination of the legal (cultic) and prophetic traditions that echo in deuterio-Isaiah's suffering servant (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-9; 52:13 – 53: 12). The new and perfect form of sacrifice is to be man's self-surrender. The true sacrifice was the worship that testified to God by one's whole and entire existence. See Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes*, 249-57; "Ist die Eucharistie ein Opfer," in *GS:TL*, 259-70; *Called to Communion*, 26- 27; *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 110; *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 115-144. The Suffering Servant reflects a theology developed during the Babylonian Exile when Israel had neither temple nor cultic worship. In God's seeming abandonment, Ratzinger says it became possible for Israel to make a new discovery: "Israel itself, in its rejection, bruised and exiled, is humanity's sacrifice before the face of God; the sufferings of the people themselves are worship and sacrifice to God and not some other ritual. Israel gets to know a new and more central form of sacrifice than even the Temple could offer: Martyrdom, in which the ritual sacrifice is superseded by the gift of human self-surrender" (Ratzinger, "Ist die Eucharistie ein Opfer," in *GS:TL*, 267 [own translation]).

¹¹⁸ See Joseph Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 42. He makes his argument here largely through the historical retelling of a controversial ecclesiastical debate about the primacy which Cardinal Reginald Pole conducted with King Henry VIII, Archbishop Cranmer and Bishop Sampson (cf. *ibid.*, 43-49). The result of the

anchored not only in the triune God who, by the Son's Incarnation, became a radical witness to himself, but also in the petrine theology of the New Testament, whereby Peter makes a profession of faith and by so doing is able to become a witness for the Church. A call and a response unite in the witness who is open to receiving the responsibility of witnessing:

Das Wir der Kirche beginnt mit dem Namen desjenigen, der namentlich und als Person zuerst das Christusbekenntnis vortrug: "Du bist der Sohn des lebendigen Gottes (Matt 16:16). . . . Das Credo zu sprechen ist nie eigenes Werk des Menschen, und so kann der, der im Gehorsam des Bekenntnisses sagt, was er aus sich selbst nicht sagen kann, auch tun und werden, was er aus Eigenem nicht tun und werden könnte."¹¹⁹

Ratzinger says the "we" of the future Church was something included in Jesus' prayer when "[h]e pleads for unity for his future disciples."¹²⁰ The response to God's call is to create unity with God and among ourselves. Regarding the precise nature of the unity Jesus prays for, Ratzinger begins by expressing what unity cannot be, namely, a solely inner-worldly phenomenon: "Unity does not come from the world: on the basis of the world's own efforts, it is impossible. The world's own efforts lead to disunion, as we can all see. Inasmuch as the world is operative in the Church, in Christianity, it leads to schisms."¹²¹ On the contrary, Ratzinger says, unity can only come from the Father through the Son. It entails the "glory" which the Son gives and is granted in the Spirit. Christ's "glory" is his presence as the fruit of the Cross – the fruit of his transformation through death and Resurrection. Yet this fruit is not

debate, as Ratzinger recalls it, is that "personal responsibility serves unity" (49). In the clash between the political aims of the State and the universal nature of the Church of Jesus Christ, the bondage of the witness by which the chair of Peter is bound ensures that personal witness cannot be suppressed, despite the ulterior motives of the State. Therefore, the primacy, "as a testimony to the profession of faith in Christ is to be understood first in terms of the witness for which personal responsibility is taken in martyrdom, as the verification of one's witness to the Crucified who is victorious upon the Cross" (44). And furthermore, the primacy "figures essentially as a guarantee of the contrast between the Church in her catholic unity and the secular power, which is always particular" (ibid.).

¹¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 39-40 ("The 'we' of the Church begins with the name of the one who in particular and as a person first uttered the profession of faith in Christ: 'You are . . . the Son of the living God' (Matt 16:16). . . . To recite the Creed is never man's own work, and thus the one who says in the obedience of the profession of faith what he cannot say on his own can also do and become what he could not do and become by his own resources" [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 41]).

¹²⁰ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 93. Four times Jesus makes his plea that the world "recognise" that he is sent by the Father (cf. John 17:11, 21, 22, 23). Ratzinger says no discourse on ecumenism can afford to overlook this.

¹²¹ Ibid., 95.

invisible. God's power – which Ratzinger describes as “immanence . . . become ontological” in Jesus¹²² – reaches into the midst of the world in which God's witnesses live and as such, unity must be of a kind that the world can “recognise” and thereby come to believe:

Das nicht von der Welt Kommende kann und muss durchaus etwas in der Welt und für die Welt Wirksames und auch für sie Wahrnehmbares sein. Die Zielsetzung der Einheitsbitte Jesu ist gerade, dass durch die Einheit der Jünger für die Menschen die Wahrheit seiner Sendung sichtbar wird. Die Einheit muss erscheinen, und zwar als etwas, das es in der Welt sonst nicht gibt; als etwas, das aus den eigenen Kräften der Menschheit nicht erklärbar ist und daher das Wirken einer anderen Kraft sichtbar macht.¹²³

It is the visible presence of the humanly inexplicable unity of Jesus' disciples down through the centuries that vindicates Jesus as the “Son” in the eyes of faith: “[h]ence God can be recognised as the creator of a unity that overcomes the world's inherent tendency toward fragmentation.”¹²⁴ In the face of the anthropological intractability of fragmentation, Ratzinger believes that visible unity remains an urgent task for Christians of every age because invisible unity alone is not sufficient to witness to God's power. Visible unity, freely undertaken by God's witnesses, is the concrete sign that humanity can (and has) fallen in love with the one God. Ratzinger says that from the beginning the unity of the future Church was dependent on the faith Peter proclaimed at Capernaum in the name of the Twelve, when others were turning

¹²² See Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 90-93, at 92. Ratzinger coins this phrase to help describe the significance of the “name” in God's plan of love. Through the revelation of God's name in the words, “I have manifested your name to the men that you gave me out of the world . . .” (John 17:26), Jesus is once more depicted as the new Moses bringing to completion the revelation of God's name at the burning bush. The name meant that God could be invoked by Israel as they entered covenant relationship with him. Ratzinger says, God's name means his “immanence” in the midst of people, so that he is entirely there for them. However, at the same time, he infinitely surpasses everything human and everything worldly. This is what stands behind Jesus' words to manifest God's name. It is not some new word but in Jesus, a new mode of God's presence is enacted: “[i]n Jesus, God gives himself entirely into the world of mankind: whoever sees Jesus sees the Father (cf. John 14:9)” (91-92). God's immanence, effective in the Old Testament in the form of the word and liturgical celebration, has now become, in Ratzinger's view, ontological, for, in Jesus, God has truly become man – God has entered our very being. The divine mode of ontological immanence, revealed in Christ's continual approach to humanity, “is aimed at the transformation of the whole of creation, so that it may become in a completely new way God's true dwelling place in union with Christ” (92).

¹²³ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 113-14 (“While it does not come from the world, it can and must be thoroughly effective in and for the world, and it must be discernible by the world. The stated objective of Jesus' prayer for unity is precisely that through the unity of the disciples, the truth of his mission is made visible for men. Unity must be visible; it must be recognisable as something that does not exist elsewhere in the world; as something that is inexplicable on the basis of mankind's own efforts and that therefore makes visible the workings of a higher power” [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 96]).

¹²⁴ Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 96.

away: “We have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (John 6:69). Through the unity of the disciples then, the world may recognise Jesus as the one sent by the Father.

For Ratzinger, this “recognising” and “believing” is not something merely intellectual however. Rather it involves being touched by God’s love and being changed. Ratzinger says that through the visible unity inherent in the disciples and in their mission “the world as a whole is to be torn free from its alienation, it is to rediscover unity with God.”¹²⁵ But how, Ratzinger enquires, does such a universalism sit with the harshness of Jesus’ prayer (cf. John 17:9): “I am praying for them; I am not praying for the world”? The inner unity of these seemingly contradictory sentiments can only be grasped by understanding there are two senses in which John uses the word “cosmos” or “world”:

Zum einen verweist es auf die ganze gute Schöpfung Gottes, besonders auf die Menschen als seine Geschöpfe, die er liebt bis zur Weggabe seiner selbst im Sohn. Zum anderen spricht das Wort von der Menschenwelt, wie sie geschichtlich geworden ist: In ihr ist Korruption, Lüge, Gewalt sozusagen “das Natürliche” geworden.¹²⁶

With these words, that which has been implicit in Ratzinger’s deliberations on unity comes to the fore, as does the dialectic between God’s creation and the historical march of humanity in time and space. All of this impinges upon the martyr touched by God’s love. Ratzinger says the historical state of humanity, which philosophers have described in their respective ways, is known as “original sin” in the eyes of faith.¹²⁷ Overcoming this dialectical situation in human nature calls for the believer-martyr to exert the whole of one’s being in respect of their beloved. This, we know, means for Ratzinger, the martyr’s assent of intellect,

¹²⁵ Ibid., 100.

¹²⁶ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 118 (“On the one hand, it refers to the whole of God’s good creation, especially to men: his creatures, whom he loves to the point of the gift of himself in the Son. On the other hand, the word refers to the human world as it has evolved in history. Corruption, lies, and violence, have, as it were, become ‘natural’ to it” [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 100]).

¹²⁷ Ratzinger says various thinkers in modern intellectual history have grappled with the historical human condition. For example, Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) spoke of a second nature that in the course of history has supplanted the first; (the early) Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) talks of human nature being reduced to the impersonal – to existing in a state of “inauthenticity”; Karl Marx (1818-1883) expounded the state of human alienation (cf. Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 100-1). See this dissertation § 4.3.

will and heart to God's will. Hence, human freedom is intimately bound up with the martyrological profile of the Church which begins with Peter but includes every believer's confession of faith in its scope. The price of this is the "sacrifice" of self for the world in analogous fashion to Christ so that the world may come to recognise that the unity which God desires above all else expresses a love which is eternal:

Diese Art von "Welt" muss verschwinden; sie muss umgewandelt werden in die Welt Gottes. Gerade dies ist die Sendung Jesu, in die die Jünger hineingenommen werden: die "Welt" aus der Entfremdung des Menschen von Gott und von sich selbst herauszuführen, damit sie wieder Welt Gottes werde und damit der Mensch wieder ganz er selbst werde im Einswerden mit Gott. Diese Umwandlung kostet freilich das Kreuz, und sie kostet auch die Martyriumsbereitschaft der Zeugen Christi.¹²⁸

The historical human condition and the theology of martyrdom merge in Ratzinger's thought when he speaks of an ecclesiology of liberation. He says that the founding of the Church can be seen in Jesus' prayer for unity (cf. John 17) even if the word "Church" is absent. The Church is nothing other than the sphere that orients humanity and God to each other in a precise relationship where neither party suffers diminution:

Denn was ist Kirche anderes als die Gemeinschaft der Jünger, die durch den Glauben an Jesus Christus als den Gesandten des Vaters ihre Einheit empfängt und hineingehalten ist in die Sendung Jesu, die Welt zur Erkenntnis Gottes zu führen und sie so zu retten?¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 118-19 ("The present 'world' has to disappear; it must be changed into God's world. That is precisely what Jesus' mission is, into which the disciples are taken up: leading 'the world' away from the condition of man's alienation from God and from himself, so that it can become God's world once more and so that man can become fully himself again by becoming one with God. Yet this transformation comes at the price of the Cross; it comes at the price of readiness for martyrdom on the part of Christ's witnesses" [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 101]). An essay by James Schall, entitled "Chesterton, The Real Heretic: The Outstanding Eccentricity of the Peculiar Sect Called Roman Catholics" in James V. Schall, *The Mind that is Catholic: Philosophical & Political Essays* (Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 33-44, expresses the difficult route which must be travelled by a disciple of Jesus. Through the lens of Chesterton, Schall considers the freedom of the will as something other than voluntarism – a form of medieval thinking, often attributed to Duns Scotus that gives pre-eminence to the will over the intellect. Voluntarism insists that the will itself is the total cause of its own volitions. In its extreme form it asserts that the human person "wills" or creates one's own redemption. Christianity, on the other hand, proclaims the "will" as "the power by which we decide whether or not we choose to live in the universe *that is*, in the redemption that is given us, not the one we make for ourselves" (43).

¹²⁹ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 119 ("For what else is the Church, if not the community of disciples who receive their unity through faith in Jesus Christ as the one sent by the Father and are drawn into Jesus' mission to lead the world toward the recognition of God – and in this way to redeem it?" [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 101]).

5.3.3. Loving the Church: The Convergence of Divine Gentleness and Human Vigilance

Witness in the Church is not without risk for both the Church and the witnesses themselves. The love that motivates witness carries the temptation of blinding one into either ignorance about, or hostility towards, shortcomings that can arise within the human family in general and the Church community in particular. Ratzinger's principle, as expressed above – that a person sees only to the extent that he or she loves¹³⁰ – not only brings the witness to the point of being able to love from within the Church, but, even further, to the point of a living relationship with the Church itself. From the ecclesial perspective, growing to love Christ in the Church – because Christ is never absent from it – means that one does not need to dilute the positives nor airbrush the negatives out of any given epoch of the Church's life. In this sense, love that cooperates with truth is in a process of reaching its highest expression and rightful liberation. There is a noble freedom in reaching such a degree of love but if it is detached from the truth of the object that is loved then it risks causing harm to the subject or the object, or both.

Today, Ratzinger observes, a great deal of the Church's membership are distinctly uneasy with talk of loving the Church itself. In general terms, this manifests itself in two ways. On the one hand, there are those who are so blinded by love that they become impulsive defenders of the Church, incapable of perceiving the defects amongst its members and its administration. He says it is precisely this attitude that “preserves love in a blindness which overlooks [the Church's] own limitations and dangers.”¹³¹ On the other hand, there are those whose enmity is so overpowering towards the Church that it stifles them from positively participating in the on-going renewal that ecclesial life requires. In fact, he says there are people with such a “clear-sightedness of denial and hatred . . . [that] they can see

¹³⁰ See this dissertation § 5.3.

¹³¹ Ratzinger, “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin,” in *GS:ZV*, 1183 (own translation).

only what is suited to them: the negative.”¹³² He says a “negativity” that contains the human posture of denial and hate cannot be constructive. Love is a risk; in fact, to love is to risk encounter with destructivity but not necessarily to be dominated by it:

Ohne ein gewisses Maß an Liebe findet man nichts. Wer sich nicht ein Stück weit wenigstens in das Experiment des Glaubens, in das Experiment mit der Kirche einlässt, bejahend einlässt, es nicht riskiert, mit den Augen der Liebe zu schauen, ärgert sich nur. Das Wagnis der Liebe ist die Vorbedingung des Glaubens. Wird es gewagt, so braucht man nichts von den Dunkelheiten der Kirche zu verbergen.¹³³

Ratzinger says discomfort with talk about loving the Church is built on the premise that love is the antithesis of criticism – that somehow to criticise is to dishonour one’s love for a beloved – whereas, in fact, “true love is neither static nor uncritical.” He continues:

Wenn es überhaupt eine Möglichkeit gibt, einen anderen Menschen positiv zu verändern, dann doch nur, indem man ihn liebt und so ihn langsam wandeln hilft, von dem, was er ist, zu dem hin, was er sein kann. Sollte es bei der Kirche anders sein?¹³⁴

To love the Church is to participate in its constructive contribution to society.

Ratzinger believes genuine reform which achieves positive change has always been the result of “watchful individuals who, with the gift of discernment, loved the Church ‘critically’ and were willing to suffer for her.”¹³⁵ Therefore, to Ratzinger’s mind, it is an “illusion” to want to become a sort of “transcendental subject, in which only the absolute has validity.”¹³⁶ Echoing the modern synthesis which prides itself on self-reliance, Ratzinger says it is a “contradiction in terms” to want “to remain in a Church that we must first make so that it will be worth remaining in.”¹³⁷ The love dimension of Ratzinger’s ecclesiology has a different departure

¹³² Ratzinger, “Why I am still in the Church,” in *Credo for Today*, 197. These contrasting attitudes to the Church, both of which are trends originating from within the Church’s membership today, share an inability to contribute constructively to ecclesial life and mission. See also this dissertation § 2.3.1.

¹³³ Ibid. (“Without some measure of love one finds nothing. One who does not get involved, at least for a little while, in the experiment of faith, in the experiment of becoming affirmatively involved with the Church, who risks not looking with the eyes of love, only vexes themselves. The wager of love is the condition of faith. Once wagered, one need not conceal the darkness of the Church [own translation]).

¹³⁴ Ibid., 1184 (“If there is ever a way to change another person positively, it can be only by loving him, thus helping him slowly change from what he is, into what he can be. Should it be any different with the Church?” [own translation]).

¹³⁵ Ratzinger, “Why I am still in the Church,” in *Credo for Today*, 200.

¹³⁶ Ratzinger, “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin,” in *GS:ZV*, 1184 (own translation).

¹³⁷ Ibid., 1184-85 (own translation).

point: authentic human growth requires the continued “suffering [of] the tension between the ideal and the actual in human nature”¹³⁸:

In der Kirche zu bleiben, weil sie es wert ist, dass sie bleibt; weil sie es wert ist, dass sie geliebt und durch Liebe allzeit neu über sich hinaus zu sich selbst verwandelt wird – das ist der Weg, auf den die Verantwortung des Glaubens auch heute weist.¹³⁹

Ratzinger says this “wager of love” asserts that, alongside the history of scandals in the Church one finds a history of liberating graces that has been kept alive by people “who are living witnesses to the liberating power of Christian faith.”¹⁴⁰ Together with the scandals which the Church experiences, a sense of beauty through “incomparable works of art . . . great cathedrals . . . music. . . the dignity of the Church’s liturgy and . . . the reality of festival” is not accidental but engenders the impulse of the gospel, because “something that could express itself in that way cannot be mere darkness.”¹⁴¹

Ratzinger believes the lives of the saints give eloquent testimony to that determined love towards the Church which yearns for excellence within it. The truth about humanity’s nature and destiny does not lie in the illusion of a sorrow-free existence in this world or in the deception that “one can become a human being without conquering oneself, without the patience of renunciation and the toil of overcoming oneself.”¹⁴² It is through the realisation of the necessity to continue “suffering in the self and by becoming free from the tyranny of egotism through suffering that one finds one’s truth, one’s joy, and one’s happiness.”¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Ibid., 1182 (own translation).

¹³⁹ Ibid., 1185 (“To remain in the Church, because it is in itself worthy to remain, because it is worth loving and through love is transformed ever anew into its truer self – that is the way in which the responsibility of faith expresses itself today, as always” [own translation]).

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 1184 (own translation).

¹⁴¹ Ratzinger, “Why I am still in the Church,” in *Credo for Today*, 198. The proceedings of the second and third Fota International Liturgical Conferences have paid particular attention to Ratzinger’s approach to beauty in the life of the Church. See D. Vincent Twomey and Janet E. Rutherford, eds., *Benedict XVI and Beauty in Sacred Art and Architecture* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2011); Janet E. Rutherford, ed., *Benedict XVI and Beauty in Sacred Music* (Dublin: Four Courts, 2012).

¹⁴² Ratzinger, “Why I am still in the Church,” in *Credo for Today*, 197.

¹⁴³ Ratzinger, “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin,” in *GS:ZV*, 1182 (own translation). This approach to human happiness echoes Ratzinger’s theologies of the Cross and of sacrament. Through the sacrifice of self-dispossession, one finds the true self and, therefore, freedom: “A human being in fact is saved in no other way but through the Cross, through acceptance of his own passion and that of the world, which in God’s Passion

Ratzinger says the saints express the way “the Church has carried through history a vestige of light that cannot be ignored.”¹⁴⁴ Their fidelity in the face of adversity demonstrates that freedom is not dependent upon the ability to engineer a comfortable existence for oneself. Instead, the fidelity of the saints offers considerable testimony to the world of the love God bears for humanity and vice versa. Ratzinger maintains that from the outset of the Church’s self-reflection, the *communio sanctorum* has expressed a most satisfactory definition of the Church across history, supplying it with the necessary openness to its cosmic nature:

Kirche wird . . . nicht von ihren Ämtern und von ihrer Organisation her definiert, sondern von ihrem Gottesdienst her: als Tischgemeinschaft um den Auferstandenen, der sie allerorten versammelt und eint. . . . Man fing an, Kirche nicht mehr bloß als Einheit des eucharistischen Tisches zu verstehen, sondern als Gemeinschaft derer, die von diesem Tisch aus auch untereinander eins sind. Von da aus tritt dann sehr bald eine kosmische Weite in den Kirchenbegriff ein: Die Gemeinschaft der Heiligen, von der hier die Rede ist, überschreitet die Todesgrenze; sie verbindet alle jene miteinander, die den einen Geist, seine einige, lebenspendende Macht empfangen haben.¹⁴⁵

There is a sense, then, particularly evident in the lives of the saints, of the need to bear the tension of what is to come in juxtaposition to the mere falling into line with the ways of the world as it has evolved in history. The power to witness here offers the world something else – a testimony to the life of grace.

Ratzinger uses the vocabulary of divine *gentleness* and human *vigilance* to capture the prospective power of the believer motivated to witness by their love for the Church. Indeed, it is the convergence of grace and human freedom in the martyr that demonstrates divine justice

became the site of liberating meaning. Only in this way, in this acceptance, does a human being become free. All offers that promise it at less expense will fail and prove to be deceptive” (Ratzinger, “Why I am still in the Church,” in *Credo for Today*, 197).

¹⁴⁴ Ratzinger, “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin,” in *GS:ZV*, 1183 (own translation).

¹⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *Einführung in das Christentum*, 316-17 (“[. . .] the Church is not defined as a matter of offices and organisations but on the basis of her worship of God: as a community at one table around the risen Christ who gathers and unites them everywhere. . . . The Church began to be seen, not just as the unity of the eucharistic table, but also as the community of those who through this table are united among themselves. Then from this point a cosmic breath very soon entered into the concept of Church: the communion of saints spoken of here extends beyond the frontier of death; it binds together all those who have received the one Spirit and his one, life-giving power” [Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 334-35]). As Pope, his first full set of Wednesday general audience catecheses was built around the theme of the nascent apostolic community, the Church Fathers, the teachers and the saints who contributed to the Church’s welfare and progression through history. See Benedict XVI, *La Santità non passa mai di moda* (Rome: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2009).

for all. God's justice, in essence, is a relationality bound to a freedom with the force of truth. God, in the "obstinacy of divine grace" and acting out of freedom, respects the terms of the covenantal relationship.¹⁴⁶ In this regard, "gentleness" emanates from God as the fruit of the submission of the Son to the will of the Father.¹⁴⁷ Human freedom demands God's gentleness if there is to be true justice administered justly. Otherwise, divine freedom would be a tyranny wrecking the possibility of human growth in authentic freedom. The mystery of God, Ratzinger says, is precisely "that he acts so gently, that he only gradually builds up *his* history within the great history of mankind . . . that he continues to knock gently at the doors of our hearts and slowly opens our eyes if we open our doors to him. . . . Not to overwhelm with external power, but to give freedom, to offer and elicit love."¹⁴⁸

Ratzinger says the counterpart to divine "gentleness" is human "vigilance."¹⁴⁹ His admonition to vigilance is the basic attitude demanded of humanity in the "interim time" of our present existence. It entails doing what is right in the sight of God:

Wachheit bedeutet zuallererst Offenheit für das Gute, für die Wahrheit, für Gott, mitten in einer oft unerklärlichen Welt und mitten in der Macht des Bösen. Sie bedeutet, dass der Mensch mit aller Kraft und mit großer *Nüchternheit* das Rechte zu

¹⁴⁶ See Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes*, 249-57, at 254. This phrase that is translated in the main text – ". . . Dennoch der göttlichen Gnade . . ." needs a note of explanation. The German word "dennoch," normally used in the sense of an adverb in German, is repeated twice over by Ratzinger in the upper case – ". . . einem Dennoch, dem Dennoch der göttlichen Gnade . . ." It seems to capture the sense of "nevertheless," "besides," or "notwithstanding" which Ratzinger's theology of grace is trying to convey. It could be translated as "obstinacy." As such, the Church is holy because it is founded on the irrevocable obstinacy of divine grace. He is speaking about the final and unsurpassable character of the Church rooted, as it is, in the incarnation of the divine Word. To his mind, the Church exists as the perpetual witness and actual place of God's salvation of sinners. One can say therefore, that it is even proper to the Church that the people who form it be sinners because in itself, it is born from grace. The Church is not founded on the morality of man, but rather on the grace issued against the amorality of man, on the incarnation of God.

¹⁴⁷ See Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 275-77. Ratzinger says it is difficult for us to come to terms with a divine justice that is "gentle," as opposed to the impression – often taken for granted – of an impregnable authority befitting of divinity. He says we are often tempted to ask the question of St Jude Thaddeus at the Last Supper: "Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?" (John 14:22). Why, for example, Ratzinger continues, does God not resist his enemies? Why are there only ever a few to witness (e.g. Abraham, Israel, the disciples of Jesus) to the greatness of someone possessing the powers inherent in the obstinacy of grace?

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 276.

¹⁴⁹ See *ibid.*, 48, 152-3, 287-8.

tun versucht, dass er nicht nach seinen eigenen Wünschen lebt, sondern nach der Wegweisung des Glaubens.¹⁵⁰

In other words, this attitude of *sobriety* is the route to unity with God's will for creation whereby growth in authentic freedom is nurtured. To Ratzinger's mind, the *sobriety* in this dialectic between God's "gentleness" and human "vigilance" means that confining Christianity to just a jubilant message in which there can be no judgement distorts its very nature and curtails God's freedom. Models of Christianity that do not allow for divine judgement refashion the truth about God and humanity by discounting the fact that God values human freedom enough to let us learn to use it authentically or otherwise:

Der Glaube bestätigt nicht den Hochmut des schlafenden Gewissens, die Selbstherrlichkeit derer, die ihre eigenen Wünsche zur Norm ihres Lebens erklären und Gnade damit zu einer Entwertung Gottes und des Menschen umschmelzen, weil Gott ohnedies nur zu allem ja sagen kann und darf. Wohl aber wird dem leidenden und ringenden Menschen gewiß, daß "Gott größer ist als unser Herz" (1John 3:20) und daß ich in allem Versagen voller Zuversicht sein darf, weil Christus auch für mich gelitten und im voraus für mich bezahlt hat.¹⁵¹

Hence, an important implication of the love dimension in Ratzinger's ecclesiology is the concept of Church as *magistra* – as educator in human "vigilance" so as to avoid the cheapening of grace. Ratzinger says evil must be dealt with, while it is the concept of

¹⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 313 ("Vigilance means first of all openness to the good, to the truth, to God, in the midst of an often meaningless world and in the midst of the power of evil. It means that man tries with all his strength and with great *sobriety* to do what is right; it means that he lives, not according to his own wishes, but according to the signpost of faith" [emphasis added] [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 288]). Ratzinger is guided here by the eschatological parables in the Gospels, particularly those of the watchful doorkeeper (Mark 13:33-36), the vigilant servant (Luke 12:42-48) and the wise and foolish virgins (Matt 25:1-13). By retuning to one of his favourite scenes from the life of Jesus, Ratzinger gives the example of Gethsemane as the place where the admonition to vigilance is at its most sombre. Jesus, greatly troubled and distressed, asks the group of three disciples to remain and keep watch (Mark 14:33-34). Ratzinger says that despite the immediacy of the scene, Gethsemane also points ahead to the later history of Christianity: "Across the centuries, it is the drowsiness of the disciples that opens up possibilities for the power of the Evil One. Such drowsiness deadens the soul . . . [I]n its state of numbness, the soul prefers not to see all this; it is easily persuaded that things cannot be so bad, so as to continue in the self-satisfaction of its own comfortable existence. Yet this deadening of souls, this lack of vigilance regarding both God's closeness and the looming forces of darkness, is what gives the Evil one power in the world" (Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 153).

¹⁵¹ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 97 ("Faith does not reinforce the pride of a sleeping conscience, the vainglory of people who make their own wishes the norm of their life, and who thus refashion grace so as to devalue both God and man, because God can then in any case only approve, and is only allowed to approve, everything. Yet any one of us who is suffering and struggling can be certain that 'God is greater than our hearts' [1John 3:20] and that whatever my failures, I may be full of confident trust, because Christ suffered for me, too, and has already paid the price for me" [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 111]).

freedom rooted in truth and love which safeguards divine justice. The fact that “God now confronts evil himself, because men are incapable of doing so” expresses the “‘unconditional’ goodness of God which can never be opposed to truth or the justice that goes with it.”¹⁵² With human freedom being respected within the sphere of the divine, the human person is given the space and support needed for one’s liberation to come to fruition. To Ratzinger’s mind, this requires the Church to educate society in the ability to accept human dependency, relationality and limitation.¹⁵³ The ecclesial “space” enabling the divine longing for humanity to come to this fulfilment also forms the basis for the hope dimension of Ratzinger’s ecclesiology. Indeed, the virtue of hope has the capacity to locate ecclesiology in its proper perspective – beyond inner-worldly institutional structures towards a divine-human dialogue on the prospect of salvation (Rom 8:24):

Die große Erwartung an die christliche Existenz bleibt, dass sie das ganz Andere, das nirgends Aufzufindende, die heile Gemeinschaft und damit die Heilung, auch des eigenen Inneren, schenke. Aber diese Erwartung wird transponiert auf das Irdisch-Institutionelle der Kirche, die die heile Gesellschaft sein müsse, und kann dann nur in heillosem Zorn enden. . . . Die Verleugnung der Hoffnung zugunsten der Sicherheit, vor der wir hier stehen, beruht auf der Unfähigkeit, die Spannung auf das Kommende hin zu ertragen und sich der Güte Gottes zu überlassen.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 133. The blood of animals, albeit a sign of hope for a greater obedience that may be redemptive, cannot by itself be the atonement for sin that brings God and humanity together. Christ’s “blood”, on the other hand, is “the total gift of himself, in which he suffers to the end all human sinfulness and repairs every breach of fidelity by his unconditional fidelity” (134). Ratzinger, as we have seen, calls this the “new worship” established by Jesus, “drawing all mankind into his vicarious obedience” (ibid.). For Ratzinger, Christ’s obedience establishes the dynamic of love into which the Church is drawn.

¹⁵³ See this dissertation § 4.3.1.

¹⁵⁴ Ratzinger, *Auf Christus schauen*, 91-94 (“The great expectation of Christian life remains that it should bestow the totally other, that which is nowhere to be found, the ideal community and with it the healing even of one’s own inner self. But this expectation is transposed to the earthly and institutional aspect of the Church that is expected to be the ideal community, and as a result it can only end in unholy rage. . . . The denial of hope in favour of security that we are faced with here rests on the inability to bear the tension of waiting for what is to come and to abandon oneself to God’s goodness” [Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 79-82]).

5.4. The Hope Dimension: Only Truth Frees¹⁵⁵

As we begin the final part of this chapter, it is by now understood that the heart of Ratzinger's ecclesiology of liberation is his presentation of the Church as the sphere whereby the world is perpetually invited to the "new worship" that configures the human person's "whole" life to the Son's obedience to the Father. As a final point, then, the virtue of hope comes into focus: hope based on the ecclesial vision of how God and humanity can reach one another throughout time and for eternity is a faith reality that constitutes a major component of Ratzinger's approach to freedom. His aim is to achieve the appropriate equilibrium between the temporal pull in the human condition on the one hand, and the eschatological pull, on the other.

This subdivision looks firstly at how Ratzinger shapes an eschatology that understands the Church as sphere which gathers a people who must contend with a "failed freedom."¹⁵⁶ And secondly, it looks at how Ratzinger comes to terms with the Church's movements in the landscape of the final shape of freedom. The ground for his vision in this regard is based on the "last things" of hell, purgatory and heaven. Freedom is a major factor in his attempt to formulate an integrated eschatological vision that does justice to life here and here-after. The hope dimension of Ratzinger's ecclesiology is a very good example of his treatment of freedom, and the importance which he places on the correct understanding of the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom.

¹⁵⁵ It is of note that all of Pope Benedict's encyclicals have placed their emphasis on the theological virtues of hope and love. *Deus caritas est (DCE)* is, in part, an extended treatise on how the Church becomes the concrete expression of the encounter between God and humanity which, grounded in freedom, expresses itself as a love story. See in particular, *DCE* 17-30. *Spe salvi (SS)* advocates a renewal in a personal understanding of hope that is not individualistic or egotistical. Indeed, as a consequence of the findings of this dissertation, one can say that the entire orientation of Ratzinger's ecclesiology of liberation has the same intention. For its perspective on freedom, see *SS*, 24-31. *Caritas in veritate (CV)*, a social encyclical, and somewhat more exhortative in nature, addresses the great challenge for the Church today – to love in truth. From the perspective of ecclesial life, see *CV*, 9, 17-18, 29-31, 56-57, 68-77.

¹⁵⁶ See Ratzinger, "The End of Time," 23.

5.4.1. Failed Freedom: Ecclesiology Shaped by an Integral Eschatology

From Ratzinger's ecclesiological perspective, Christian hope engenders a truthful acknowledgement of the human condition in addition to a realistic appreciation of what should be the legitimate parameters of human activity. In the first place, this means that humanity cannot go on living without truth. When the truth about humanity is denied, a subculture of illusion begins to inhabit civilisation under the guise of authenticity. Slowly, the discrepancy between truth and untruth demolishes reality. In Ratzinger, this scenario yields the following statement on the hope engendered by faith:

Ich bleibe in der Kirche, weil ich den nur in ihr und nicht letztlich gegen sie vollziehbaren Glauben als eine Notwendigkeit für den Menschen, ja, für die Welt ansehe, wovon sie lebt, auch wo sie ihn nicht teilt. Denn wo es Gott nicht mehr gibt – und ein schweigender Gott ist kein Gott – da gibt es die der Welt und dem Menschen vorgängige Wahrheit nicht mehr.¹⁵⁷

This gives Ratzinger a focus which he subsequently described as “the integral character of Christian hope,”¹⁵⁸ pointing to the eschatological pull upon the entire cosmos, as well as on the individual. He points out that a constant feature of the history of ideas is that life is centrally marked by death such that “in every age man's consciousness of life has been at the same time a consciousness of death, or at least of mortality.”¹⁵⁹ Death is not something that simply marks the conclusion of a life; the very movement of life and death mutually

¹⁵⁷ Ratzinger, “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin,” in *GS:ZV*, 1181 (“I stay in the Church because I recognise the faith that can be acquired only in the Church and not against it, as a necessity for people, and indeed for the world, for by it the world lives, even where it does not share it. For where God is no more – and a silent God is no God - there is no longer any truth antecedent to the world and people” [own translation]). See *SS*, 1-2, where Benedict XVI describes the content of Christianity as “life-changing.” In the opening paragraph, the intention of the Pope is to comprehend the nature of the conviction inherent in Christian hope and how it impacts upon Christian living: “the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey.” In the second paragraph, he fleshes this out: “[w]e see as a distinguishing mark of Christians the fact that they have a future: it is not that they know the details of what awaits them, but they know in general terms that their life will not end in emptiness. Only when the future is certain as a positive reality does it become possible to live the present as well. So now we can say: Christianity was not only ‘good news’—the communication of a hitherto unknown content. In our language we would say: the Christian message was not only ‘informative’ but ‘performative.’ That means: the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known—it is one that makes things happen and is life-changing. The dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life.”

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein, 2d ed. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1988), 158.

¹⁵⁹ Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 243.

define one another. In the attempt to imbue life with meaning, one inevitably comes before the terror and senselessness of death. Simultaneously, Ratzinger says, a constant for the believer is the yearning for some form of transcendence. Immanence alone is too narrow for him. While denials of an after-life can cause an initial glorification of this present life above all else, there follows quite quickly “an enormous devaluation of life”: no longer surrounded by the seal of the holy, life can be thrown away when it no longer gives pleasure. Ratzinger says the denial of the after-life is the denial of eternal responsibility as well as eternal hope, the consequence being “the abolition of man.”¹⁶⁰ The lust for life can change into disgust with life and its emptiness. Contrary to this line of reasoning, he says it is the prospect of the Rubicon of death that imbues life with meaning here now and hereafter. From this perspective, Ratzinger says,

Der Mensch braucht das Ethos, um er selbst zu sein. Das Ethos aber braucht den Schöpfungs- und den Unsterblichkeitsglauben, das heißt es braucht die Objektivität des Sollens und die Endgültigkeit von Verantwortung und Erfüllung. Die Unmöglichkeit eines davon abgeschnittenen Menschseins ist der indirekte Beweis für die Wahrheit des christlichen Glaubens und seiner Hoffnung. Diese Hoffnung ist das Rettende für den Menschen, auch und gerade heute. . . . Ohne die frohe Botschaft des Glaubens besteht das Menschsein auf die Dauer nicht. Die Freude des Glaubens ist seine Verantwortung: Wir sollten sie mit neuem Mut in dieser Stunde unserer Geschichte ergreifen.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ See Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 45-46. Ratzinger borrows this phrase from a book by C.S. Lewis, which is entitled *The Abolition of Man or Reflections on Education with Special Reference to the Teaching of English in the Upper Forms of Schools*, rev. ed. (London: Fount, 1999). See *A Turning Point for Europe*, 35-46.

¹⁶¹ Ratzinger, *Wendezeit für Europa*, 29 (“[m]an needs morality in order to be himself. But morality requires faith in creation and immortality, that is, it needs the objectivity of obligation and the definitiveness of responsibility and fulfilment. The impossibility of a human existence cut off from these is the indirect proof of the truth of the Christian faith and of its hope. It is this hope that saves man, today, as ever – indeed, precisely today. . . . Without the good news of faith, human existence does not survive in the long run. The joy of faith is its responsibility: we should seize it with new courage in this hour of our history.” [Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 45-46]). See *SS*, 24-26. It is in the context of the possibility of preserving hope in the future that Ratzinger endeavours to formulate an integral eschatology straddling the spheres of eternity and this present life. He says the question for us is whether it is good to be alive and to be a human being? He says it is impossible to answer this question affirmatively unless there is a goodness that is bestowed on each person which is stronger than all one’s failures: “If we cannot show a picture of life in which even pain, hardship and death are meaningful and belong to a larger whole, then we cannot rehabilitate human existence” (Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 160).

In Ratzinger's vision, the Church's mandate to speak the truth about the human person ought to impact upon how its members engage with their surroundings.¹⁶² However, he also finds an inherent risk in the temptation of putting trust in idealistic or simplistic ideas of freedom. To his mind no one today can seriously claim that the world is free of suffering or on the cusp of unrestricted liberty. This is immortalised for him in the fact that no optimism can talk its way around the events at Auschwitz. Indeed, he says, the reality of Auschwitz begs the question for some as to whether the price of freedom in human history has been at too great a risk to the stability of the human race.¹⁶³

In light of this new consciousness about human behaviour and its capacity for destruction, Ratzinger argues that the source of human hope must be realistic and grounded in truth. Within the context of the eschatological pull on creation, human freedom is a complex reality to decipher. In the end, he says, the formulation of the question about whether it would be better if freedom had not existed is beyond our ability to understand. But we have to reckon with the fact that there exists "a failed freedom . . . which 'rigidifies' from below, which misuses the time that is given to it and leaves it a wreck."¹⁶⁴ The New Testament evidence, on the other hand, suggests the possibility that "fallen freedom" and "misused time" can be taken hold of and reconciled by a love that fills the space of the wreckage left in their wake. In a new action on God's part which is centred in Christ, infinite love reaches beyond creation, because "only an infinite love, with its compassion, is strong enough to overcome hostility and make love credible again in the face of the fear of being dependent and the craving for the autonomy that, seemingly, is the only appropriate way for freedom to

¹⁶² His view is that there is the "real danger [today] of reducing Christianity to individualism and otherworldliness. Both of these rob the Christian faith of its vital power. Here in fact, lies the task of contemporary eschatology: to marry perspectives, so that person and community, present and future, are seen in their unity" (Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 12).

¹⁶³ See Ratzinger, "The End of Time," 23-24. See also Benedict XVI, Address during visit to Auschwitz Camp, Poland, 28 May 2006, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060528_auschwitz-birkenau_en.html (accessed 8 February 2013).

¹⁶⁴ Ratzinger, "The End of Time," 23.

take.”¹⁶⁵ For Ratzinger, encounter with love of this calibre informs and cultivates one’s attitude towards the possibilities of authentic freedom in this life.

On three separate occasions in his writings Ratzinger weighs up the schema of time and history which had been passed down from Greek antiquity and taken up by medieval eschatology in a modified form. Within the medieval schema humanity has a special place grounded in the act of creation itself. It characterised creation and time according to the two directional elements “*exitus-reditus*,” i.e., “turning outwards” (*Auskehr*) and “turning inwards” (*Einkehr*).¹⁶⁶ In the ancient Plotinian construct of the formula, which was later very closely associated with Gnostic philosophy, *exitus*, by virtue of which there is any non-divine being in the first place, appeared not as a going forth but as a *fall* – a ruinous exclusion and distancing from divinity. As such, finitude itself was already a kind of sin. In this view, *reditus* means redemption or liberation from finitude, which, as such, “is the real burden of our existence.”¹⁶⁷ By contrast, Ratzinger says, Christian thought strongly distinguishes between the movements of *exitus* and *reditus*. Christianity teaches that created, finite matter

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. In allusions to *kenosis*, or the self-emptying of God, Ratzinger highlights the length to which infinite love goes in order to instil true hope in humanity: “Only a God who leaves behind the distant position of creator and lord, even taking on the dependency of a slave, who does the servant’s work of washing feet, only this God and his love have the power to take hold of the cosmos of freedom and to empower love as genuine autonomy, as true freedom. All of this may strike non-believers as naive or mythological, but how could the audacity of God not seem mythological to our emancipated rationality?” (ibid.)

¹⁶⁶ See Ratzinger, “The End of Time,” 17-25; *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 29-34; *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 55-57, 61-2, 65. Ratzinger disproves of overly simplistic demarcations of time and eternity which suggest that the Judeo-Christian tradition introduced a linear notion of time – with a beginning and end – as a replacement for the philosophical tradition which, up to that point had a cyclical notion bordering on the “timeless.” Even in the Christian view of the world, Ratzinger says, many small circles of individual life are inscribed in the one great cycle of history that moves from *exitus* to *reditus*: “The small circles carry within themselves the great rhythm of the whole, give it concrete forms that are ever new, and so provide it with the force of its movement. And in the one great circle there are also the many circles of the lives of different cultures and communities of human history, in which the drama of beginning, development and end is played out. . . . The totality of the small circles reflects the great circle. The two – the great circle and the small circles – are interconnected and interdependent. And so worship is bound up with all three dimensions of the cross-shaped movement: the personal, the social, and the universal” (Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 29-30).

¹⁶⁷ Ratzinger, “The End of Time,” 19. Ratzinger says it is easy to see how such views are readily identifiable with the Christian message. Original Sin can be equated with the fall into the finite, for it is a product of the fall and is revoked in the new ascent. But there can be hopelessness here in this vision too because “the finite time of the on-going fall continues to exist, and for those who do not ascend, it becomes an empty and endless cycle” (20).

does not have a negative origin. In God's creative act carried out in freedom, the dialogue of love between Creator and creature begins:

Exitus ist nicht zunächst Abfall aus dem Unendlichen, die Entzweiung des Seins und damit die Ursache allen Elends der Welt, sondern *exitus* ist vorab etwas durchaus Positives: der freie Schöpfungsakt Gottes, der positiv will, daß es das Geschaffene als etwas Gutes ihm gegenüber gebe, aus dem eine Antwort der Freiheit und der Liebe zu ihm zurückkommen kann. Nichtgöttliches Sein ist daher nicht in sich schon etwas Negatives, sondern ganz im Gegenteil positive Frucht eines göttlichen Wollens. Es beruht nicht auf einen Sturz, sondern auf einer Setzung Gottes, die gut ist und Gutes schafft. Der Seinsakt Gottes, der geschaffenes Sein bewirkt, ist ein *Freiheitsakt*. Insofern ist im Sein selbst von seinem Grund her das Prinzip Freiheit anwesend.¹⁶⁸

The challenge facing an integral eschatology, as it comes to terms with the present *and* the future, is that the freedom of the creature tends towards “bend[ing] back the positive *exitus* of creation.”¹⁶⁹ It is the creature's freedom that brings about the disintegration into “fall” and the will to independence that says “no” to *reditus*. Freedom creates an eschatological tension in the human person, equipping one with a disposition capable of rejecting one's Creator and defying the eschatological pull towards eternity. In such a scenario, “love is understood as dependence and is rejected; in its place comes *autonomy* and self-sufficiency: to exist only from oneself and in oneself; to be a god *sui generis*.”¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, it is also the case that the will to turn back inwards proves impossible for the creature alone. This is the place of christology in Ratzinger's schema, for now, he says, redemption needs a redeemer, who freely sets in motion a power to heal. The Church is the

¹⁶⁸ Ratzinger, “Das Ende der Zeit,” 27 (“*Exitus* is not primarily a fall from the infinite, the splitting of being and thereby the cause of all the world's misery; rather, *exitus* is to begin with something completely positive: the free creative act of God whose positive will is that there be created beings as something good in contrast to God, from which the response of freedom and love can come back to God. This is why non-divine being is not in itself already something negative, but the opposite: the positive fruit of the divine will. It is not rooted in a fall but in the positing of God who is good and who creates what is good. The act of being on the part of God that effects created being is an *act of freedom*. To this extent the principle of freedom is present in being itself from the ground up” [Ratzinger, “The End of Time,” 20]). Christianity's *exitus* – the free creative act of God – aims at *reditus*, but not to the detriment of created being. As a result, “the coming-into-its-own of the creature as an autonomous creature answers back in freedom to the love of God, accepts its creation as a command to love, so that a dialogue of love begins – that entirely new unity that only love can create. In it the being of the other is not absorbed, not annulled, but rather becomes wholly what it is precisely in giving itself” (Ratzinger, “The End of Time,” 20-21). For Ratzinger, freedom is central to making the dialogue of love operative and consequently an integral part of coming to terms with a realistic appraisal of the creaturely encounter with the Creator. See this dissertation §§ 4.1.4 and 5.3.1.

¹⁶⁹ Ratzinger, “The End of Time,” 21.

¹⁷⁰ Ratzinger, “The End of Time,” 21.

prolongation of this loving transformation in time as it attempts to orient the human race into an authentic posture in regard to God, just as Christ did in his own person in the hour of his departing. Christ's *metábasis* ["departing"] from this world is the hour to which his ministry is directed, the hour of love (*ἀγάπη*) that reaches to the end. Thus, Christ in the Church effects the formation of the great family of God:

Das Ausgehen Jesu hingegen setzt zunächst einmal schon die Schöpfung nicht als Abfall, sondern als positiven Willensakt Gottes voraus. Es ist dann ein Prozess der Liebe, die gerade im Absteigen ihr wahres Wesen erweist – aus Liebe zum Geschöpf, aus Liebe zum verlorenen Schaf – und so im Absteigen das wahrhaft Göttliche offenbart. Und der heimkehrende Jesus streift nicht seine Menschheit wie etwas Verunreinigendes wieder ab. Das Ziel seines Abstiegs war das Annehmen und Aufnehmen der ganzen Menschheit, das Heimkehren mit allen Menschen – die Heimkehr von "allem Fleisch." Neues geschieht in dieser Heimkehr: Jesus kehrt nicht allein zurück. Er streift das Fleisch nicht ab, sondern zieht alle in sich hinein (John 12:32). Die Metabasis gilt dem Ganzen. Wenn im 1. Kapitel des Johannes-Evangeliums gesagt ist, dass die "Seinigen" (*ídiói*) ihn nicht annahmen (1:11), so hören wir nun, dass er die "Seinigen" bis ans Ende liebt (13:1). Im Absteig hat er neu die "Seinigen" – die große Familie Gottes – gesammelt, sie aus Fremden zu "Seinigen" gemacht.¹⁷¹

To Ratzinger's mind, therefore, the sphere of time and space essentially has to do with freedom and the great movement of love. There is an eschatological tension in divine-human relationality that entails both love and freedom. God's creative freedom creates a space for human freedom by means of a cosmic movement. Above all, it is Christ's foundational breakthrough as prototype of the *exitus-reditus* pattern that enables the human person to accomplish an analogous metaphysical journey, a journey based on mutual love. It is because of the "double" action of Christ's original movement that human freedom can effect the creature's *reditus*. Hence, humanity is not neutral within creation. Human freedom has an

¹⁷¹ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth: Von Einzug in Jerusalem*, 72-73 ("Jesus' going out . . . presupposes that creation is not a fall, but a positive act of God's will. It is thus a movement of love, which in the process of descending demonstrates its true nature – motivated by love for the creature, love for the lost sheep – and so in descending it reveals what God is really like. On returning, Jesus does not strip away his humanity again as if it were a source of impurity. The goal of his descent was the adoption and assumption of all mankind, and his homecoming with all men is the homecoming of 'all flesh.' Something new happens in this return: Jesus does not return alone. He does not strip away the flesh, but draws all to himself (cf. John 12:32). The *metábasis* ['departing'] applies to all. If in the Prologue of John's Gospel we read that 'his own' (*ídiói*) did not accept him (cf. 1:11), we now hear that he loves 'his own' to the end (cf. 13:1). In descending he has reassembled 'his own' – the great family of God – from strangers he has made them 'his own'" [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 55-56]).

inner trajectory that can bring humanity to their goal: “the homecoming that is the goal of [humanity’s] movement can only happen as a freedom that gives itself back and finds itself completely in so doing.”¹⁷² Crucially then, and contrary to the views of antiquity, *reditus* is not a re-absorption of time into non-time but the way that time becomes definitive. This homecoming’s end is not time’s dissolution but a way of continuing in existence through “an illuminated freedom that finds its definitive state in the fusion of love and truth.”¹⁷³

In brief, valuing freedom is the ground of Ratzinger’s eschatology. From the ecclesial perspective, the relationality between God and humanity is approached solely on the basis of the freedom specific to both partners. The union of the two gradually comes to pass over the course of time and history. It is a loving transformation of humanity from “going it on one’s own, around not needing the other . . . [to] being turned towards the other, who must rescue me from the snare that I can no longer undo on my own.”¹⁷⁴

5.4.2. Final Freedom: The Landscape of the Definitiveness of Responsibility and Fulfilment

From an ecclesial perspective, hope is grounded on God who, by a sovereign and free act, has created a “space” or “time” for the life of freedom to come into force. But this space or time must have value and cannot be purely provisional in nature if it is to be meaningful.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² Ratzinger, “The End of Time,” 22.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 21.

¹⁷⁵ Introductory remarks in Ratzinger’s monograph, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 1-15, are informative in this regard. He says in our day, “[h]umanity is waking up to the significance of eschatology because the question of the future of the whole has once more become urgent” (15). While having been for centuries a final tract in theology centred on the doctrine of the last things, suddenly, with the historical process in crisis, theologies of hope, futurity and liberation place theology, per se, before the alternatives of faith in God or a religious pathos and appeal to human emotion directed exclusively towards the future. To Ratzinger’s mind, this leads to a situation where it almost seems legitimate for theology to choose religion against God. This calls to mind Ratzinger’s study of Bonaventure and thirteenth-century theology. We can recall here that a program of practical action, begun through Joachim of Fiore’s (c.1130-1202) threefold periodization of history calibrated via the triune God, is pinpointed by Ratzinger as initiating an unprecedented interest in concrete utopias. He says the belief in progress engendered by the assurances of these utopias has become the determinative element in political thought since the nineteenth century. He considers Marxism as a particularly notorious example. See this dissertation §§ 1.2 and 2.1. Ratzinger observes that such secularisation of Christian eschatological thought sucks the sap out of faith awareness. In his view, the new faith placed in progress has sometimes meant that the quest for happiness goes into temporary suspension for the sake of the future of the world. As a result of this

Ratzinger knows that at its most radical the issue of time must eventually wrestle with the question about “time’s end.” This is why he devotes his resources to developing an eschatology which informs the vocation of the Church. To his mind, “whoever investigates the beginning and end of time must also ask what there is outside of and above time.”¹⁷⁶ Thus, he believes, the way we see God – and the rationally responsible free decision of our “yes” or “no” to him – determines our capacity to appropriate or squander time through our actions. As this response become definitive over the course of one’s lifetime, the human person enters into their final posture with regard to God.

The ecclesiological implications of the eschatological pull upon creation requires that the Church’s collective worshipping posture – which enables the individual creature’s freedom to utter “yes” or “no” to God – is a theme that must be addressed. Ultimately, it is through the lens of the last things that Ratzinger will deal with the prerogative inherent in human freedom to respond to the Creator’s invitation to authentic encounter and unity. This subdivision shows how Ratzinger connects hell, purgatory and heaven in a way that fosters personal, authentic freedom without losing sight of the Church’s legitimate concern for unity, and for reality as a whole. He builds up a doctrinal landscape, so to speak, whereby hell underscores the seriousness with which the Creator takes human freedom, purgatory renders the Church as central to accomplishing the authentic human posture before the merciful God, while heaven constitutes the final shape of this posture.

Firstly, Ratzinger is convinced that the existence of hell corroborates the seriousness with which God takes human freedom.¹⁷⁷ What God gives his creature is the love through

new interest in the creation of a new world, an older eschatology has been pushed back into a corner where it stands bearing the dismissive label “salvation of the soul.” This is detrimental to the understanding of freedom because, somehow, its personal aspect gets lost within the striving towards a soon-to-be- realised “whole.” This is the context in which he presents his doctrine of the last things.

¹⁷⁶ Ratzinger, “The End of Time,” 25.

¹⁷⁷ See Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 216-18. Ratzinger says that Christ, as it were, “descends into Hell and suffers it in all its emptiness; but God does not, for all that, treat man as an immature being

which all creaturely dependence and limitation can be transformed. The human person does not create the assent to such love solely by his own power and “yet the freedom to resist the creation of that assent, the freedom not to accept it as one’s own, this freedom remains.”¹⁷⁸

Crucially, Ratzinger adds, “[h]eaven reposes upon freedom, and so leaves to the damned the right to will their own damnation.”¹⁷⁹ This perspective unreservedly takes the wilful activity of the human person seriously because, through the definitiveness of responsibility and fulfilment, the irrevocable takes place, including perdition.

The doctrine of everlasting punishment preserves the real content of hope because the idea of mercy which accompanies it is the ground for a suffering, hope-filled faith that trusts the One who enters the nothingness of hell freely, and on our behalf. To Ratzinger’s mind, this seriousness takes tangible form in the Cross. This teaches us, firstly, that evil is not unknown to God and that “he himself entered into the distinctive freedom of sinners but went beyond it in that freedom of his own love which descended willingly into the Abyss.”¹⁸⁰ Secondly, this descent means that the divine response is able to draw freedom, precisely as freedom, to itself. As a consequence, Christ’s descent and dark night of the suffering soul cannot be fully appreciated except by entering into communion with his darkness via suffering faith. At this point, the social nature of the Church requires that “[o]ne draws near

deprived in the final analysis of any responsibility for his own destiny” (216). The article of faith from the Apostles’ Creed, *Christus descendit ad infernos* – Christ’s descent into hell – has been considered part of the catholic tradition from a very early stage (cf. CCC, 631-35). Hans Urs von Balthasar has been credited with engaging with this in the twentieth-century. See, for example, *Theologie der Drei Tage* (Einsiedeln: Benzinger, 1970). However, his theology of descent has been critiqued by Alyssa Lyra Pitstick as containing significant differences to the traditionally received doctrine. See Alyssa Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ’s Descent into Hell* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007), where she outlines in great detail Balthasar’s thought and her critique of how he over-extends the meaning of the tradition on Christ’s descent into hell. Ratzinger enters into nothing of the same detail on this issue as Balthasar or Pitstick, but nevertheless, he says the idea of eternal damnation has a firm place in the New Testament and in Jesus’ words, having also been shaped within the Judaism of the two centuries prior to Christ. In this regard Ratzinger references a variety of texts: Matt 25:41; 5:29 and parallels; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 18:8 and parallels; 5:22; 18:9; 8:12; 24:51; 25:30; Luke 13:28; 2Thess 1:9; 2:10; 1Thess 5:3; Rom 9:22; Phil 3:19; 1Cor 1:18; 2Cor 2:15; 4:3; 1Tim 6:9; Rev 14:10; 19:20; 20:10-15; 21:8. See also Ratzinger’s “Farewell to the Devil?” in *Dogma and Preaching*, 197-205; and SS, 41-48.

¹⁷⁸ Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 216.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 217.

to the Lord's radiance by sharing his darkness. One serves the salvation of the world by leaving one's own salvation behind for the sake of others."¹⁸¹ Therefore, hell is not a threat to be hurled at people, but neither is it a neutral logic that discounts human actions as inconsequential for salvation. Rather, it, and the merciful action of God accompanying it, corresponds to the Church's presence in time: "[. . .] a challenge to suffer in the dark night of faith, to experience communion with Christ in solidarity with his descent into the Night. One draws near to the Lord's radiance by sharing his darkness."¹⁸²

If hell is the doctrine that expounds the seriousness with which God respects human freedom, then purgatory, for Ratzinger, expresses the ecclesial nature of hope. It highlights that the Christian promise has proven its worth for it "signifies that the walls separating

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 218. Here the issue of definitive damnation is present. For Ratzinger, hell and God's mercy reside together throughout history. However, apart from what has been revealed by God, divine mercy and judgement remain, in all truth, beyond our full comprehension. Theology in general is very reticent to delve too deeply here for we dare not claim to know the mind of God in relation to individual judgement at the end of time. Ratzinger is no different in that regard. However, in *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 65-72, he does seem to broach the issue of the possibility of definitive damnation via John 13. He takes the characters of Peter and Judas and deals with their respective responses to the gift of friendship with the Lord. In the period prior to his passion, Jesus even had to endure the infidelity of his inner circle of friends in order to fulfil the Scriptures and the anguish of history to the bitter end. Of Judas' actions in John's Gospel, which states that "after the morsel, Satan entered into him" (John 13:27), Ratzinger says "[a]nyone who breaks off friendship with Jesus, casting off his 'easy yoke,' does not attain liberty, does not become freed, but succumbs to other powers. . . . [H]e betrays this friendship because he is in the grip of another power to which he has opened himself" (68). The fall of Judas was ultimately definitive because he could no longer believe in forgiveness. Even his remorse turns to despair – he no longer sees Christ's light; he only sees himself and his dark side. Ratzinger says Judas "shows us the wrong type of remorse: the type that is unable to hope, that sees only its own darkness, the type that is destructive and in no way authentic. Genuine remorse is marked by the certainty of hope born of faith in the superior power of the light that was made flesh in Jesus" (69). John concludes his passage about Judas by saying: "[a]fter receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night" (John 13:30). In Judas we encounter one who passes from the light into the night by no longer being capable of conversion. On the other hand, when Peter falls, it remains possible for him to be healed through conversion. He refused Jesus' approach to wash his feet, but Jesus must help Peter to see that God's power is different – the Messiah must pass through suffering into glory, leading others on the same path. The theme then turns to martyrdom. Peter enthusiastically wants to follow Jesus: "Why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you?" (John 13:37) Shortly after, Peter will rashly follow up on his words by rushing in with his sword to the Mount of Olives. But "martyrdom," Ratzinger says, "is no heroic achievement: rather is it a grace to be able to suffer for Jesus. [Peter] must bid farewell to the heroism of personal deeds and learn the humility of the disciple" (70). He still had some way to go for, in order to keep abreast of the developments in the forecourt of the High Priest's palace, Peter claimed not to know Jesus: "[Peter's] desire to rush in – his heroism leads to his denial (John 18:17). . . . His heroism falls to pieces in a small-minded tactic. He must learn to await his hour" (71-72). Learning the posture of freedom as a disciple of the Lord is to receive the grace of martyrdom. It consists of "[n]ot telling God what to do, but learning to accept him as he reveals himself to us; not seeking to exalt ourselves to God's level, but in humble service letting ourselves be slowly refashioned into God's true image" (72).

¹⁸² Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 218.

heaven and earth, and past, present and future, are now as glass.”¹⁸³ Following Clement of Alexandria, who speaks about the “purifying” and “educative” power of the fire (cf. 1Cor 3:10-15), Ratzinger says there takes place an ascending transformation whereby the soul is transformed into a *sōma* or “body” of ever greater pneumatic perfection. The ecclesial aspect of Christian existence finds space here. There is no room in this for unjustifiable demarcations of the personal life-principle of the soul and the glorified body. Ratzinger says: “[t]he process of purification is, on all its levels, an activity of reciprocal caring. . . . [T]he anchoring of a person in the Church is not something which death disrupts or destroys. Even when they have crossed over the threshold of the world beyond, human beings can still carry each other and bear each others’ burdens.”¹⁸⁴

The “fire” is the Christ-transforming power liberating a closed-off or autonomous human heart. Ratzinger says that gauging this purification by temporal measurement is unproductive for it ignores the specificity of the human spirit in its simultaneous relationship with, and differentiation from, the world. For Ratzinger, purgatory is a thoroughly ecclesial reality. It is not “some kind of supra-worldly concentration camp” administering indiscriminate punishment but “the inwardly necessary process of transformation in which a person becomes capable of Christ, capable of God and thus capable of unity with the whole communion of saints.”¹⁸⁵

Two lines of Ratzinger’s ecclesiological reflection respond to whether the purgative dynamic amounts to some form of spiritual barter. Some query whether so highly

¹⁸³ Ibid., 9.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 225-27. Ratzinger follows the thought of Clement of Alexandria here. Indicative of the Alexandrian rather than western tradition, Ratzinger says the Pauline and Johannine belief is that the real frontier is not that of earthly life and non-life but rather, between that of being with Christ, on the one hand, and being without him or against him, on the other (cf. Phil 1:21; John 3:16-21): “The decisive step is taken in baptism: while the fundamental option of the baptismal candidate becomes definitively established with death, its full development and purification may have to await a moment beyond death, when we make our way through the judging fire of Christ’s intimate presence in the companionable embrace of the family of the Church” (227).

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 230.

personalised a process of encounter and transformation of the “I” in the “fire” of purgatory can have the intercessory Church as a third party. Ratzinger himself asks whether substitution can form part of so personal a process. In the first instance, he says that because the human being is not a closed monad, the whole ecclesial body has a role in “intercession.” He says there is even a sense in which the “whole” Church “judges” or “straightens out” the “I” because the encounter with Christ is encounter with his whole body. There is a fundamental element to this “straightening out” of the “I” that is essential to grasp in order to avoid misunderstanding the Church’s role in the judgement reserved to God alone. When Ratzinger speaks of the Church’s “straightening” role, he is thinking of intercessory “judgement”:

Ob die anderen ihm fluchen oder ihn segnen, ihm vergeben und seine Schuld in Liebe umwandeln – das ist ein Teil seines eigenen Geschicks. Daß auch die Heiligen “richten,” das heißt, daß die Begegnung mit Christus eine Begegnung mit seinem ganzen Leib, mit meiner Schuld gegen die leidenden Glieder dieses Leibes und mit seiner aus Christus quellenden verzeihenden Liebe ist. . . . Diese Fürbitte ist der eine, grundlegende Aspekt ihres “Richtens” – eben durch [die Heiligen] Richten gehören sie als Betende und Rettende in die Fegfeuerlehre und die ihr entsprechende christliche Praxis hinein. “J’espère en toi pour moi” – ich hoffe in dir für mich, hat Péguy einmal großartig gesagt; gerade wenn es um das Ich geht, ist das Du als Hoffnung angerufen.¹⁸⁶

The second approach to the possibility of substitution is the relation between purgatory and the Church’s penitential practice. Self-substituting love, by which Ratzinger means simply the possibility of helping and giving, is a central Christian reality, and purgatory implies that such love is not limited by death.¹⁸⁷ Rather, it stretches out to encompass the entire communion of saints, on both sides of the portals of death. In the

¹⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben*, 184 (“Whether the other curses or blesses, forgives and transforms our guilt in love – it is a part of our fate. The saints ‘judge’ [‘straighten’], that is, the encounter with Christ is an encounter with his whole body, with my debt to the suffering members of this body and with the overflowing forgiving love of Christ. . . . Intercession is one fundamental aspect of this ‘straightening’ – [the saints] are, by their straightening, praying and saving power, part of the doctrine of Purgatory and its corresponding Christian practice. [Charles] Péguy once beautifully said, ‘J’espère en toi pour moi’ - I hope in you for me. Especially when it comes to the ‘I,’ the ‘you’ is invoked as the form of hope” [own translation]). The Church’s role in “judging” could easily be misunderstood. It is therefore important to keep in mind that intercessory “judgement” has its source in the divine and just Judge. As relational beings, Ratzinger says, we share in the lives of others. In fact we are ourselves only by being in relation to others by love or hate – in guilt or in grace. Therefore my “I” has a “say” in the lives of all the saints and all the saints have a “say” in my “I.”

¹⁸⁷ See Ratzinger, *Eschatologie: Death and Eternal Life*, 233.

relation between purgatory and the Church's penitential practice, Ratzinger outlines "the true primordial datum," as specified in the earliest days in 2Macc 12:42-45: "the capacity, and the duty, to love beyond the grave." For the Church, "what is primary is the praxis of being able to pray, and being called upon to pray."¹⁸⁸

With this connection between prayer and the Christian idea of self-substitution, Ratzinger comes to acknowledge heaven as the final shape of love. For him, Christian tradition says that what is "above" expresses the "definitive completion of human existence which comes about through the perfect love towards which faith tends."¹⁸⁹ In keeping with the primacy of christological interpretation, he says heaven is not a futuristic wish list but the sheer description of what happens in the encounter with Christ:

Nach dem "Himmel" fragen, heißt daher nicht, in schwärmerische Phantasie angleiten, sondern jene verborgene Gegenwart tiefer erkennen, die uns wahrhaft leben läßt und die wir uns doch immer wieder durch das Vordergründige verdecken und entziehen lassen.¹⁹⁰

In ecclesiological terms, Ratzinger says heaven is not some extra-historical place to which one goes. Essentially, "[h]eaven's existence depends upon the fact that Jesus Christ, as God, is man and makes space for human existence in the existence of God himself. One is in heaven when, and to the degree, that one is in Christ." This means that heaven is, first and foremost, "a personal reality," forever shaped by its historical origin in the paschal mystery.¹⁹¹ In a sense, "heaven" is the word used in Christianity to locate *die Kultstätte Gottes* – the cultic sphere where the dialogical worship posture which the Church takes up with respect to God identifies most fully with the posture which the Son takes up with respect to his Father.¹⁹² The glorified Christ stands in a continuous posture of self-giving with his

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Ratzinger, *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben*, 185 ("To raise the question of 'heaven' is not to slip into a rapturous fantasy, but to recognize that deep hidden presence that makes us truly live, even if we cover it over again and again with the superficial and let it escape from us" [own translation]).

¹⁹¹ Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 234.

¹⁹² See Ratzinger, *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben*, 186.

Father to the point, in fact, where Jesus himself is that self-giving. Therefore, if heaven is our becoming one with Christ, it takes on the nature of adoration:

[. . .] in [Christus] ist der vordeutende Sinn jedes Kultes erfüllt: Christus ist der endzeitliche Tempel, der Himmel das neue Jerusalem, die Kultstätte Gottes. Der Bewegung der mit Christus vereinten Menschheit auf den Vater hin antwortet die Gegenbewegung der Liebe Gottes, die sich dem Menschen schenkt. So schließt der Kult in seiner himmlischen Vollendungsform die trennungslose Unmittelbarkeit von Gott und Mensch ein, die von der theologischen Überlieferung als Anschauung Gottes bezeichnet wird. . . . die reine Durchdringung des ganzen Menschen von der Fülle Gottes und seine reine Offenheit, die Gott “alles in allem” und so ihn selbst grenzenlos erfüllt sein läßt.¹⁹³

While this christological statement absolutely enshrines the personal nature of heaven, Ratzinger notes its associated ecclesiological feature. If heaven depends on being in Christ, then it must equally involve a co-being with all others making up the body of Christ. The heavenly sphere, and by extension, the doctrine of the last things, enshrines in Christianity the belief that the communal elevates the personal while simultaneously dismissing isolation. Heaven is the open society of the communion of saints – this is how it becomes the fulfilment of all human *communio*. This is why the Church knows about a cult of the saints: “That cult does not presuppose some mythical omniscience on the part of the saints, but simply the unruptured self-communion of the whole body of Christ – and the closeness of a love that knows no limit and is sure of attaining God in the neighbour, and the neighbour in God.”¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Ibid. (“[. . .] In [Christ] the meaning of all worship is fulfilled: Christ is the eschatological Temple of Heaven, the New Jerusalem, the cultic space for God. The movement of humanity united with Christ to the Father is answered in the counter-movement of God's love that gives itself to man. Thus worship in its heavenly perfection includes a form of immediacy between God and man that knows no separation. The tradition refers to this as the contemplation of God . . . the pure penetration of the entire people by the fullness of God. God is ‘all in all’ [cf. 1Cor 15:28] and so the human person enters his boundless fulfilment” [own translation]).

¹⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 235. Ratzinger says that the glorification of the human is not at the expense of the disclosure of God's face but rather its consequence. In Christ, the definitiveness of responsibility and fulfilment becomes not only the expression of divine reverence for human freedom in its response to the will of the Father in heaven. It equally pledges the Creator's responsibility toward creation and the ceaseless invitation to loving unity in the new creation that is being prepared in freedom and justice within the body of Christ. As the advent of the final and wholly Other, Ratzinger says heaven's “definitiveness stems from the definitiveness of God's irrevocable and indivisible love” (237). In the Christian world-view, every moment is taken seriously, entering definitiveness, and must be accounted for. Otherwise human life itself lacks consistency and human freedom is devoid of genuine content. See also *ibid.*, 215-16, 237; *A Turning Point for Europe*, 46; “The End of Time,” 22-25.

Contrary to the principles of anarchic freedom, the integration of the “I” into the “whole” body of Christ is not its self-dissolution but its purification, and the actualisation of its highest potential. Ratzinger says that heaven is thereby individual for everyone because each receives the love offered by the totality in the manner suggested by one’s irreplaceable uniqueness (cf. Rev 2:17b). In Christian tradition, heaven is not merely the gift of sheer grace but also personal “reward”:

[. . .] das will sagen Antwort auf *diesen* Weg, auf *dieses* Leben, auf *diesen* Menschen mit seinem Tun und seinen Erleidnissen, daß er aber zugleich doch ganz Gnade geschenkter Liebe ist. . . . [E]s genügt, zu wissen, daß Gott jeden auf seine Weise und jeden ganz erfüllt.¹⁹⁵

At the very point of our most definitive and personal status before God, we are at our most free as members of Christ’s body, because “reward” ought to encourage us not to ponder on our access to this or that privilege of Church membership. Ratzinger says concern for the size of one’s barn as collection point for wealth in the world to come is not freedom. Rather it is being enabled to give unreservedly to others who make up the “whole.” Therefore “[i]n the communion of the body of Christ, possession can only consist in giving, the riches of self-fulfilment in the passing on of gifts.”¹⁹⁶

Ratzinger presents a landscape of the last things which is very relevant to the Church and its mission in the world. Christ’s exaltation – “the entry of his humanity into the life of the triune God through the resurrection”¹⁹⁷ – is not his departure from the world but rather his new mode of presence to the world. Ratzinger says that from this perspective heaven means participation in this new mode and thus the fulfilment of what baptism began in us. That is why heaven escapes spatial determination for it is neither inside nor outside the space of our world and it cannot be detached from the cosmos as a mere “state.” Much more concretely, it

¹⁹⁵ Ratzinger, *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben*, 187 (“[. . .] that is to say that it is a response to *this* way, in *this* life, on *this* man with his deeds and experiences but at the same time that it is still purely giftedness of grace and love. . . . [I]t is enough to know that God has fulfilled each in his own way and to the fullest” [own translation]).

¹⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 236.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

demonstrates “that power over the world which characterises the new ‘space’ for the body of Christ, the communion of saints. Heaven is not a ‘spatial’ above but an ‘essential’ above.”¹⁹⁸ Ratzinger says heaven comes about in two historical phases – in the first instance it is “the open history of Christ’s body, and therewith of all creation which is still under construction . . . [and] . . . will only be complete when all the members of the Lord’s body are gathered in.”¹⁹⁹ Secondly, there comes the perfecting of the body of Christ in the *plērōma* or fullness of the “whole Christ” in cosmic completion: “the individual’s salvation is whole and entire only when the salvation of the cosmos and all the elect has come to full fruition.”²⁰⁰

In Ratzinger’s presentation of the last things, human freedom is given the utmost seriousness and respect by God, while the Church is viewed as the convocation of human life into an orientation of worship or adoration in respect of God. The existence of hell upholds that seriousness, purgatory displays the Church’s intercessory posture, while heaven is the essence of true freedom where the human is definitively set in a posture of adoration and love of the divine; it is the definitive upholding of the covenantal pledge between Creator and creation. With this doctrine, which Ratzinger is keen to re-establish in the mind of Christian theology because it furnishes humanity with hope, definitive liberation consists in the necessary balance of the personal, communal and social aspects of authentic human freedom:

Das Heil des einzelnen . . . ist erst ganz und voll, wenn das Heil des Alls und aller Erwählten vollzogen ist, die ja nicht einfach nebeneinander *im* Himmel, sondern miteinander als der eine Christus *der* Himmel sind. Dann wird die ganze Schöpfung “Gesang” sein, selbstvergessene Gebärde der Entschränkung des Seins ins Ganze

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 237. For this reason, Ratzinger believes the traditional images of heaven, such as “above,” or as “on-high,” can be both legitimate and limited in scope. Heavenly imagery is false when it removes heaven’s relation to the world, or integrates it totally as the world’s “upper story.” He believes that images of heaven in the human mind retain their truth when they evoke transcendence over, and freedom from, the world’s constraints.

Ratzinger says that the Scriptures do not tolerate the supremacy of a single image. Instead many images keep open a perspective on the indescribable. Personally he has a preference for the image of the new heaven and new earth, whereby all of created reality is to be drawn into blessedness.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 238.

hinein und zugleich Eintreten des Ganzen ins Eigene, Freude, in der alles Fragen aufgelöst und erfüllt ist.²⁰¹

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter builds on the findings of Chapter 3 and 4, thereby bringing Section III to its conclusion. It presents Ratzinger's ecclesiology from the perspective of his christological and anthropological approaches to the theme of freedom. During the course of his study of the Church, Ratzinger underlines the three theological virtues and these have provided direction to this exposition of his ecclesiology. His treatment of these virtues, however, takes place in the context of an overarching sacramental framework which is dedicated to the receptivity of gift whereby humanity is continually enabled to encounter and share communion with God.

In the first instance, Ratzinger's reflections on the Church develop from the Father's loving will, through Christ and in the Spirit, to be at one with humanity. While trinitarian *communio* is the primordial basis for unity, it cannot be unilaterally applied to the Church's role of bringing Creator and creature into authentic relationality. Such union cannot merely take cognisance of the dynamics of divine freedom, but must also integrate the specific characteristics of human freedom. Over the course of Section III as a whole, it has been demonstrated that Ratzinger works out the shape of human freedom through his reflections on christological anthropology.

In Chapter 3, we saw Ratzinger makes three foundational points concerning the divine initiative in Christ. In his narrative christology, he points to Christ as the new Moses, the one who truly leads the way to liberation; in his neo-chalcedonian christology he finds the

²⁰¹ Ratzinger, *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben*, 188 ("The salvation of the individual . . . is total and full when the salvation of the cosmos and all of the elect is complete, which means not simply being side by side *in* heaven, but, heaven is being with each other as the one Christ. Then the whole of creation will be 'song,' discharged of the limitations of self, the individual permeates the whole and, at the same time, there is the entrance of the whole into the individual. It is joy whereby all issues are resolved and satisfied" [own translation]).

necessary ground for the personal union of the divine and human wills; and finally, through the pauline doctrine of ontological citizenship in Christ, he explains that the human race gains participative access to the Father's loving will. Then, in Chapter 4, in relation to the human receptivity of the divine initiative, Ratzinger addresses the need to purify the human desire to "be like God," since erroneous understandings of this desire are what have continually hampered the human approach to God. Ratzinger perceives a need to clarify the categories of authentic human freedom. He does this through the concepts of monotheism and creaturehood. When these are properly understood, he believes the truth about the Creator, on the one hand, and the truth about creation, on the other, make possible a relationship that leads to authentic union. It requires a dialogical orientation which, on the part of the human person, entails a worshipping posture. The person of Christ is, in himself, the new worship in which God's people can participate, but in order to do so, the wholehearted acceptance of our creaturely disposition is required. To Ratzinger's mind, this means being bound to the truth of who we are. He believes this implies an acceptance of creaturely dependency, relationality and limitation. This acceptance creates the conditions for sincere openness to relationship.

Then, as this dissertation moves into Chapter 5, it comes to light that this openness to relationship on the part of the human person grounds Ratzinger's view of the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom. He finds the Church to be the means and the goal of God's convocatory will for unity, on the one hand, and the means and goal of humanity's will for transcendence, on the other. In broad terms, the "knowledge" which one comes into contact with in the Church consists of an active understanding of the origin and goal of one's life. This is what shapes growth in authentic freedom. The Christian philosophy of freedom, dedicated as it is to the *whole* person's assent to the Father's will, is designed to promote such growth. The knowledge which one comes into contact with in the communal sphere of ecclesial life is an ecclesio-knowledge of the primacy of God and the divine will for unity. In

other words, it is knowledge that comes to us in, and through the community. Because this “sustaining” knowledge comes to us as gift, both our willing and our acting are called to give wholehearted assent to it. The whole person is thereby brought into deeper contact with the truth that frees. Ultimately, this knowledge is encounter and union with the person of Christ, who is the full revelation of God’s will.

Chapter 5 points to Ratzinger’s contention that when one authentically embraces the “call and response” dynamic of Christianity, one is led “out beyond [oneself] into the infinite breadth of God’s greatness and love.”²⁰² As the sphere gifted with bestowing meaning upon a created realm that wrestles with the significance of its own existence, he argues that the Church makes known the living God by being the domain of Christ’s eucharistic presence in the world. It is in this presence that humanity encounters God’s will. Therefore, upholding a belief in the nature, dignity and duty of true Christian freedom, such as this thesis is dedicated to articulating on the basis of Ratzinger’s writings, has a communal or social aspect. Chapter 5 brings out this aspect of his ecclesiology. The faculty to relate socially in a way that upholds human relationality and dependency comes from theological *communio*, in the strict sense – i.e. the communion present in God, and ontologically opened out unto creation, so to speak, through Christ and in the Spirit. However, it is the introduction of what Ratzinger calls the all-embracing “third,” or personalist element of *communio* which leads the human person forth towards the true shape of human freedom. Human resources alone are not enough: only through communion with the living God can we come to our true selves. In Ratzinger’s succinct axiom: “we touch ourselves in him.”²⁰³ Ratzinger says the communal aspect supports a personalist transformation that leads from encounter to union. In order that “self-expropriation” be a positive expression of this transformation and growth in freedom, the dispositions of trust and receptivity are required. These can exist only on the basis that they

²⁰² Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 93.

²⁰³ Ratzinger, “Communio – ein Program,” 460.

are not imaginary and have their source in a truth and a meaning that is prior to the human agent in whom they are active.

At the conclusion of Section III, another important finding is that Ratzinger speaks of human freedom as something that is the object of the utmost respect on the part of God. On this issue, Chapter 5 explains Ratzinger's use of the language of divine gentleness and human vigilance. The response on the part of the human race to God's gentleness ought not to be a presumptuousness about our capacity to act but a *vigilance* which acknowledges that true justice is correlative with divine judgement. Vigilance on the part of the creature, as Ratzinger views it, consists of openness to the good and the true. This brings a *sobriety* to the way persons endowed with freedom approach life. For the human race, Ratzinger says, being loved in freedom by God is both a risk and a responsibility. This could hardly be more applicable than when one discusses the possibility of "loving the Church" – particularly in light of the present-day discredit and shame brought upon it by some of its members. As we saw in the discussion of loving the Church in Chapter 5, Ratzinger believes that such love needs to steer a course between perfunctory blindness to the failings of the Church's membership, on the one hand, and irrational vilification of the mission of Christ's Church, on the other.

Ratzinger believes that in order to preserve the seriousness of human freedom, it has to operate in tandem with the truth of both creatureliness and monotheism. The alternative to the human race being illuminated by the truth about itself – i.e. the descent into a subculture of illusion – would amount, in Ratzinger's eyes, to the irreparable ruination of human life. Therefore, as we see from his treatment of our "failed" and "final" freedoms, it is when one's freedom and eschatological destiny together impact upon one's present that one's actions correspondingly impact upon one's destiny. If they don't, then being human and free is a contradiction. For Ratzinger, the only position that bestows appropriate dignity on human

nature is one that respects its freedom to the greatest possible extent. In his view, there is finality about the passage of time which ensures that each moment of human life is valuable. The human person, therefore, shoulders a responsibility for the proper use of their freedom in the choices they make, in an effort to ensure that every moment of time is accounted for to their credit in the sight of God. From an ecclesiological perspective, there is in this a process of growth in authentic freedom, which has its primary source in Christ's obedience to the will of the Father and its secondary source in humanity's participation in that obedience. In the end this obedience takes the form of a self-giving posture of adoration.

Ultimately, it is Ratzinger's contention that no Christian account of human freedom can get off the ground without acknowledging the nature of the gift of love freely offered and reciprocated. In all this the human person is no mere neutral receptacle of sacramental grace. Christ is the guardian of the balance between personal and communal encounter which anarchic freedom threatens to destroy. He enables the human person to live fidelity *within* the truth of human nature by empowering him or her to trust the "Other" and live authentically in relation to all others. The human person grows in freedom by being true to the self. The Church is the custodian of the ecclesio-knowledge that enables humanity achieve its full potential. It is a high calling. Ratzinger believes that despite the blunders which the Church has been party to in the centuries of its earthly pilgrimage, it remains witness to, and communicates the truth about, human dignity. In this way, it remains the sphere of growth in authentic freedom for the benefit of the world to which it ministers.

SECTION III: MANIFESTATIONS

An ecclesiology of liberation is primarily the study of the Church from the perspective of the human person's yearning for freedom. Based upon research from Sections I and II, as well as a number of significant statements from the period of Benedict XVI's papacy, Section III sets forth a three-fold manifestation of the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom: the Church at worship, the Church in oversight, and the Church as witness. Chapter 6 describes how the Church at worship operates as a school of formation in the way of authentic freedom. It finds that the truly personal heart of human freedom extends beyond the strictly cultic sphere of the Church's liturgy, so that it is the human person who becomes a living sacrifice of praise in harmony with the truth of the divine will for creation. Chapter 7 considers how the Church's mode of oversight exists as a vehicle and advocate for growth in freedom. It assesses the competency of the episcopal ministry and how this opens up five avenues of enquiry in Ratzinger's ecclesiology. Finally, Chapter 8 presents Ratzinger's vision for the practice of authentic freedom in the world, a vision that consists of a personal, communal and societal dimension. As a whole, the various "levels" of Ratzinger ecclesiology of liberation ensure that the Church can never exhaust itself through personal aggrandisement, institutional supremacy or social work. In addition to the personal responsibility of ecclesial membership, Ratzinger maintains that the Church must contend with its communal life *ad intra* and missionary endeavour *ad extra*. All of these elements are interlinked and mutually inclusive. Consequently, growth in freedom requires taking personal responsibility, acknowledging the need for institutional supports, and the dying to self that is the true motive of the Christian life.

CHAPTER 6: The Church at Worship: The School of Human Freedom

6.0. Introduction

At the indispensable personal level of relationality, it is Ratzinger's contention that the contours of authentic freedom find their orientation in the matrix of Christian worship. In this dissertation, we have seen Ratzinger establish that the link between dialogical worship and growth in authentic freedom requires total worship, or the assent of the whole self – at least to the best of one's ability. The Son's prayer to the Father consists in the synergy of two wills as the perfect "laboratory" of freedom. To the extent that the human person participates in the total worship of the Son, one is growing in authentic freedom. Worship is the firmest expression of this relationality: "Only if man, every man, stands before the face of God and is answerable to him, can man be secure in his dignity as a human being. Concern for the proper form of worship, therefore, is not peripheral but central to our concern for man himself."¹ Worship, for Ratzinger, is something that can never be confined to liturgical rites alone, although these, in themselves, carry immense respect in his work.² For him, a posture of dialogical worship is an on-going deeply personal event of encounter, uniting the themes of freedom, and the Church as Christ's body. As the space where, over the course of time, worship becomes a ritualised reality in the personal life of a believer, the Church exists as a recognisable school of freedom.

This opening chapter of Section III deals with the personal nature of the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom. The discussion will be taken in three stages. Firstly, by considering Ratzinger's demonstration of the affirmatory nature of prayer, his whole approach to the theme of human freedom re-emerges, with "worship" serving as a *leitwort*, so

¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 7.

² See Joseph Ratzinger, "Zum sakramentale Begründung christlicher Existenz," in *GS:TL*, 197-214, where he outlines the basic tone of his sacramental theology. This ought to be read in conjunction with his article "Zum Begriff des Sakrament," in *GS:TL*, 215-32, a work which has been referred to previously in Chapters 1 and 3 of this dissertation. These articles were originally delivered as academic lectures by Ratzinger in 1965 and 1978 respectively.

to speak, grounding a substantial portion of his overall argumentation on the matter. Ratzinger presents worship as the primordial ecclesial vehicle for progressing human liberation. In essence, prayer is a communication and therefore an act of fellowship that implies an ecclesial identity. Secondly, the chapter looks at two elements of the act of faith which impact greatly on the discussion of freedom, namely trust and obedience. Thirdly, this chapter draws upon a particular teaching from Benedict XVI's pontificate, namely "human ecology." This expresses the Church's responsibility to abide by God's will in its advocacy of a society that protects and respects the "laws" that govern creaturehood, thereby helping the human family to grow in authentic freedom.

6.1. Prayer as Affirmatory, Purificatory and Identificatory

The primary way in which the Church manifests itself as sphere of growth in human freedom is through the prayer of its members – in both a personal and communal sense. To Ratzinger's mind, the Church at worship is the internal ground upon which it can be the school of human freedom. Prayer facilitates assent to the ground of being which purifies us and furnishes us with an identity by which we can live our freedom in a worthy manner. By way of contrast with a "religious impersonalism" that is the consequence of an intensifying "faint-heartedness which no longer believes in the power of God over nature, in the Creator of heaven and earth,"³ Ratzinger proposes a threefold structural basis to prayer. He describes

³ Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 47. Religious impersonalism – namely, the idea that God cannot hear and speak, that God is not a person – runs counter to the heart of Christianity. Ratzinger says that an important strand in the history of religion has been consistent with such an idea. For example, he says the Asiatic religions are one such strand and the Gnostic phenomenon of the separation of creation and redemption has been another. In fact he holds that a revival of Gnosticism is "perhaps the most sober threat to the spiritual and pastoral work of the Church" (46). In terms of prayer, he says, Gnosticism presents itself as a refuge for religious terminology and ritual where religion can continue even after faith has been lost: "it is nostalgia for the beauty of religion, but it is also weariness of the heart, which no longer has the strength of faith" (ibid.). This loss of fervour and personal faith generates a contempt for creation and bodily things which leads to contempt for salvation history. In this progressive religious impersonalism, Ratzinger says, "[p]rayer is replaced by interior exercises, the search for the void as a place of freedom" (47). The other term which Ratzinger uses to capture this phenomenon is "self-transcendence," which, in his view is the product of a retreat from trinitarian faith into a form of "ephemeral monotheism" (Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 22): "Initially what happens is that people become uncertain about the christological and trinitarian mystery; its relationship to exegesis is felt to be problematical; it is regarded as a Hellenistic scheme projected into the universe of linear time, a necessary element of its age but now no longer

it as affirmatory of the one source of love, power and the good, as purificatory of the self, and as identificatory with our social nature. This does not represent a “method” of prayer *per se* but rather its “inner intentionality.”⁴

In the first place, prayer is an act of consent whose tenor is *affirmatory* of reality.

Ratzinger says prayer is a free act of intimacy made possible because one’s affirmation of the world, of being and of oneself rests on the ground of being that in itself is good: “it is good to be. . . . [W]henver I am able to say Yes, I am (to that extent) free, liberated.”⁵ Therefore “man could speak with God if he were drawn to share in this internal speech.”⁶ Consequently, prayer “is essentially a relation between persons and hence ultimately the affirmation of the person.”⁷

intelligible. But the retreat to a rationally presented monotheism is always merely the first step. The next step is the abandonment of the relational categories of creation and revelation. Thus this God himself fades into the concept of ‘transcendence.’ The possibility of prayer being ‘heard’ dwindles, and faith becomes ‘self-transcendence’. . . . This pseudo-religiosity cannot be expected to last, however, all the more since its content is too unstable, following every wind of change because it is not oriented to truth, being merely a matter of ‘relation,’ addressing a something which does not reciprocate that relation. It is trying to be a *relatio pura* which no longer contains anything that can be objectified. . . . I believe that as far as religion is concerned, the present age will have to decide ultimately between the Asiatic religious world view and the Christian faith. I have no doubt that both sides have a great deal to learn from each other. The issue may be which of the two can rescue more of the other’s authentic content. But in spite of this possibility of mutual exchange, no one will dispute the fact that the two ways are different. In a nutshell one could say that the goal of Asiatic contemplation is the escape from personality, whereas biblical prayer is essentially a relation between persons and hence ultimately the affirmation of the person” (22-24).

⁴ Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 27. For further reflection by Ratzinger on the inner structure of petitionary prayer, see “Praying in Our Time” in *Dogma and Preaching*, 104-115.

⁵ Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 27. Ratzinger says that the affirmatory nature of Christian prayer holds the key to making the whole world a celebration.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25-6.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 24. For Ratzinger, the contextual framework here is the affirmative relationality found in the tri-personal God. The ability of the human person to consent via one’s free “yes” to God is possible precisely because God is speech or word. God’s nature is to speak, hear and reply: “Only because there is already speech, ‘Logos,’ in God can there be speech, ‘Logos’ to God. Philosophically we could put it like this: the Logos is the onto-logical foundation for prayer. . . . Since there is relationship within God, there can also be a participation in this relationship. We can relate to God in a way which does not contradict his nature” (25). The tri-personal God of Christianity is someone who addresses the creature and to whom the creature can turn. See *ibid.* 16-18. The novelty and vulnerability of “the Christian synthesis” – Ratzinger’s favoured term for the Christian theology of freedom – lies in the fact that it adopts what the enlightened philosophers call absolute and incommunicable “ground”, “being” or “god,” attributing to “it” a relativity that shares in the status of Creator, Redeemer and personality. The prospect of timeless eternity receives its response in the Incarnation: “[i]t is not that God is time, but he has time” (26). In this way, Ratzinger says, human speech becomes, in an unconfused but inseparable way, a component in divine speech – that which is God’s inner nature. Ratzinger draws this insight from Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theology of History* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 29-50. At the same time, however, Ratzinger emphasizes the importance of the distinction between the uniqueness of the Son’s

Secondly, Ratzinger says the affirmatory nature of Christian prayer is, by definition, *purificatory* because it is an act of being. It is very specifically an act of consent to the one source of goodness at the heart of reality: “[p]rayer is an act of being . . . not affirmation of myself as I am and of the world at it is, but affirmation of the ground of being and hence a purifying of myself and of the world from this ground upward.” All purification, he continues, stems from Christ who, as the “rocklike basis of affirmation,”⁸ is always “yes” in himself (cf. 2 Cor 1:19f). Ratzinger says purification leads to the discovery of the active power of prayer. In words crafted to counter the influence of the modern synthesis in contemporary culture, Ratzinger depicts prayer as that which yields a deep security, which acts as “a foil to the hectic world of self-made man,” but which “is by no means a flight from the world but rather entrusts people with the task of purifying the world and empowers them to carry it out.”⁹

relationship with the Father and our participation in that relationship. He points out that “Abbā” can only be said together with Jesus for “only in fellowship with him can we recognise the world’s ground in a way that invites our Yes” (*The Feast of Faith*, 28). In relation to us then, “the ‘Our Father’ is this same ‘Abbā’ transposed into the plural for the benefit of those who are his” (27). The Father remains somehow ambivalent without the response of the Son. Ratzinger says the perceived “patrocentrism” of “Abbā” presupposes the christological character of prayer. Hence it is the Son who guides the path of purification which leads to, what Ratzinger calls, the door of the Yes. As fellowship with the “Son,” Christian prayer is a continual “looking to,” “talking with,” “being silent with,” “listening to,” “doing and suffering with,” Christ.

⁸ Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 27.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 28. One of the major contemporary theological issues of concern to Ratzinger is the seeming contradiction in the modern cultural value system between love and truth. In order to bolster the idea of prayer as an act of affirmation of being, Ratzinger puts forward an argument for the consistency of the power, love and goodness present at the core of reality. He says that contemporaneous with an attitude of religious impersonalism, there develops a doubt about the nature of reality. People query whether God can help us if natural laws are required to run the course of their nature without the possibility of divine interventions. This allows him to comment on the inconsistency at the heart of the contemporary social narrative on truth and love. If God does not act, then, he surmises, how “God” is God? If God doesn’t help, love is not the ultimate power in the world and love is not in harmony with the truth: “if love and truth are at variance, what ought we to do: follow love as against truth, or follow truth as against love? The commandments of God, whose heart is love, would no longer be true, and what contradictions would we not find then at the centre of reality?” (Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 44-45). He believes the whole history of ideas would be confronted with a major dilemma if power, love and truth do not go together. If that were the case, then reality would be marked by a fundamental contradiction because it would be inherently tragic. Ratzinger believes natural philosophy and religion ultimately fails human thought at this point in the human dilemma. He looks to Jesus’ simple invocation to pray – “Ask and you will receive” (cf. Matt 7:7; 21:22; Luke 11: 9). It is the response to “the most profound questions of human thought with the assurance that only the Son of God can give” (*ibid.*). Understanding the harmony of power, truth and love at the core of reality leads Ratzinger to a view of reality imbued with meaning rather than contradiction. Nothing is excluded. God’s goodness and power knows only one delimiting factor: evil. The good God gives only good things. Prayer for everything that is good means there are no boundaries for

When Ratzinger speaks about the constancy of the “yes” of Jesus Christ, and the order of good at the core of reality, he brings the discussion on prayer into the realm of christology as an act of fellowship. In this way, prayer becomes the task of those who come to know that God is at the heart of reality, is always free to act, and can always act in favour of that which is good. Ratzinger says that God, in Christ, participates and operates in time in the form of love.¹⁰ In Jesus, love becomes the “causality” operative in the transformation of creation. This means that in any place or at any time, love-causality can freely exercise its influence. As a cause, love does not render invalid mechanical causality, but uses and adopts it. God is free to exercise the power of love always in answer to prayer. To Ratzinger’s mind, Christians, as those who pray, have a high calling: “To pray is to put oneself on the side of this love-causality, this causality of freedom, in opposition to the power of necessity.”¹¹ Here then, the freedom to love is opposed to the bondage of a necessity which, by definition, usurps the possibility of selfless, heroic acts of love. Only God, who is ultimate power and trustworthiness, can be the source of a reality that is not a tragedy: “[p]ower and goodness, in this world so often taken as separate, are identical in the ultimate root of being.”¹² This ultimate power, this supreme reason is, at the same time, pure goodness and the source of all confidence.¹³ To Ratzinger’s mind, then, prayer is very specifically an act of consent to the single source of love, power and the good.

the praying person who consents to the goodness of being. Such a person can ask for everything because there is no boundary between the big and little things, between material and spiritual things, body and soul, the daily bread and the kingdom of heaven. Ratzinger says, prayer is “completely human, prayer is communion with the God-man, with the Son. . . . [P]rayer which with a fearless confidence brings all the reality and poverty of life under the eyes of omnipotent goodness” (48).

¹⁰ The act of fellowship, which is prayer becoming a real exchange between God and man, occurs “[t]hrough the Spirit of Christ, who is the Spirit of God.” It is through the Spirit that we share in Christ’s human nature: “in sharing in [Christ’s] dialogue with God, we can share in the dialogue which God *is*” (Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 26).

¹¹ Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 32.

¹² Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 45.

¹³ Hence, one finds Ratzinger saying that prayer which is permeated by a christology conversant with the goodness of the Creator of heaven and earth is the bulwark against Gnostic diminutions: “A Redeemer without power, a redeemer divorced from the Creator would not be in a position to give us true redemption. And

The theme of prayer allows Ratzinger demonstrate that what has been said about prayer as the human person's participation in the divine dialogue of love between the Father and the Son takes place in the personal sphere of one's freedom. The following passage, which reflects his interest in neo-chalcedonian theology, is of key importance in coming to terms with Ratzinger's notion of an authentic Christian freedom. At Constantinople III, he says, the Church clarified that

[. . .] che esiste una specifica volontà dell'uomo Gesù, che non è assorbita dalla volontà divina. Ma questa volontà umana segue la volontà divina e così diventa con essa una sola volontà, non però in modo coatto, ma per via di libertà. La duplicità metafisica di una volontà umana e di una divina non viene eliminata, ma nell'ambito personale, nell'area della libertà, si compie una fusione di tutte e due, così che essa diventa non un'unica volontà naturale, ma una volontà personale. Questa libera unità – un modo di unità creato dall'amore – è un'unità più alta è più intima di un'unità puramente naturale. Essa corrisponde alla più alta unità che possa esistere, quella trinitaria.¹⁴

The doctrine of the synergy of wills reveals the sphere we have seen Ratzinger describe as the “laboratory of freedom.”¹⁵ What happens in this laboratory is that the Church at worship joins the prayer of Christ. Therefore, the laboratory of freedom can be extended to incorporate the Church within the scope of its meaning in the sense that it “springs from sharing in the prayer of Jesus.”¹⁶ From the perspective of the believer, the unity of wills attains “the greatest

therefore we glorify the immense glory of God. Prayer and praise are inseparable. Prayer is the concrete recognition of God's immense power and glory” (Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 45).

¹⁴ Ratzinger, *Il Cammino Pasquale*, 89 (“[. . .] there exists a specific will of the *man* Jesus that is not absorbed into the divine will. But this human will follows the divine will and thus becomes a single will with it, not, however, in a forced way but by way of freedom. The metaphysical duplicity of a human will and a divine will is not eliminated, but in the personal sphere, the area of freedom, there is accomplished a fusion of the two, so that this becomes not *one single natural will* but *one personal will*. This free union – a mode of union created by love – is a union higher and more intimate than a purely natural union. It corresponds to the highest union which can exist, the union of the Trinity” [Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 101]). With regard to the prayer of Jesus on the Mount of Olives, Ratzinger offers an explanation of the synergy of wills from the perspective of human nature: “Jesus assumes, as it were, the fall of man, lets himself fall into man's fallenness, prays to the Father out of the lowest depths of human dereliction and anguish. He lays his will in the will of the Father's: ‘Not my will but yours be done.’ He lays the human will in the divine. He takes up all the hesitation of the human will and endures it. It is this very conforming of the human will to the divine that is the heart of redemption. For the fall of man depends on the contradiction of wills, on the opposition of the human will to the divine, which the tempter leads man to think is the condition of freedom. Only one's own autonomous will, subject to no other will, is freedom. ‘Not my will, but yours. . .’ – those are the words of truth, for God's will is not in opposition to our own, but the ground and condition of its possibility. Only when our will rests in the will of God does it become truly will and truly free” (Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 187). See this dissertation § 3.2.2.

¹⁵ Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 103. See this dissertation §§ 3.2.2.1. to 3.2.2.2.

¹⁶ Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 93.

conceivable transformation of any person, which is at the same time the one thing ultimately desirable: divinization.”¹⁷ Ratzinger says that the profound change in the person which can occur in this laboratory is precisely what the world needs. It leads to a “vigilant” human conscience, which needs to be born anew in every generation, for the on-going ordering of human affairs that corresponds to human dignity and defends it.¹⁸

Thirdly, Ratzinger says the impact of worship centred upon an act of fellowship with Christ implies an ecclesial *identity*. The locus of this identification with Christ will necessarily mean that all those involved in this worship are identified with one another in Christ. Facilitated by the Spirit, this locus is what we know as “Church.” Ratzinger says the Church that suggests itself in Christian worship can be defined as “the realm of man’s discovery of his identity through the identification with Christ which is its source.”¹⁹ The reality which “Church” signifies excludes the limited individualistic personalism that inspires anarchic freedom. The Church allows all the “I’s” along with my “I” to have genuine encounter with the “Thou” of God: “[t]he Christian believer discovers his true identity in [Christ] who, as ‘the first-born of all creation,’ holds all things together (Col. 1:15ff.), with the result that we can say that our life is hidden with him in God (Col 3:3).”²⁰

Ratzinger says the Church as a whole is a model for authentic personal identity. As it is a “body,” its bodily unity welds the two-ness of “I” and “Thou” into a profound one-ness. It is unity through the unifying power of love. As he envisages it, prayer facilitates this union and unity: “In finding my own identity by being identified with Christ, I am made one with him; my true self is restored to me, I know that I am accepted, and this enables me to give

¹⁷ Ibid., 103.

¹⁸ See Ratzinger’s understanding of human vigilance in this dissertation § 5.3.3. On the issue of conscience, see this dissertation § 8.1.

¹⁹ Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 26.

²⁰ Ibid., 29. For more on the concepts of identity and identification in the Church, see Joseph Ratzinger and Karl Lehmann, *Mit der Kirche leben* (Freiburg: Herder, 1977).

myself back to him.”²¹ Through this act of fellowship, whereby personal identification within the “whole” is initiated, the key to authentic freedom is found – the gift of speech that becomes a prayer:

Die Vorgabe des Wortes aus ihrem die Zeiten hindurchgehenden Dialog der Liebe mit dem, der mit ihr ein Fleisch werden wollte, wandelt sich zur Gabe der Sprachfähigkeit. In der Gabe der Sprache aber bin ich erst wirklich mir selbst gegeben und so gerade allen anderen von Gott her zurückgegeben, übergeben und damit frei.²²

Echoing the mariology of the Second Vatican Council,²³ Ratzinger concludes that it is within the perspective of the maternal Church that the “words” of prayer becomes very practical. As “mother,” the language of the Church becomes our language.²⁴ I learn to pray by praying with others. Prayer is impossible in isolation, or solely through one’s own strength. For the Church at worship to be a school of freedom, it must primarily express itself in a relational act of communication. Ratzinger takes the example of the intimate relationship of a mother and child to explain his insight. Over time the words of the prayers learned from one’s elders enable one to feel one’s way more and more into the fullness of the mystery. The words are a growing organism, so to speak, lived and prayed by countless people that simultaneously transform those who pray them. However, Ratzinger says that linguistic or rational understanding alone, if held as a sole criterion, would be the completely wrong approach to

²¹ Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 29.

²² Joseph Ratzinger, *Das Fest des Glaubens: Versuche zur Theologie des Gottesdienstes* (Einsiedeln: Johannes 1981), 28 (“We are given an anticipatory share in the Church’s perennial dialogue of love with him who desired to be one flesh with her, and this gift is transformed into the gift of speech. And it is in the gift of speech, and not until then, that I am really restored to my true self; only thus am I given back to God, handed over by him to all my fellow men; only thus am I free” [Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 30]). This emphasis on identification causes Ratzinger to invoke the patristic and medieval schema of the *anima ecclesiastica*. Through the affirmation of Being in itself and the purification of my being that occurs in prayer, the human person is supported in becoming an *anima ecclesiastica* – a personal embodiment of the Church. The *anima ecclesiastica* contains the themes of both identity and purification: “it is a surrendering of oneself and a being drawn into the innermost nature of what we mean by ‘Church’” (29-30). The praying Church renders the gift of speech operative within us and makes of us a gift to other people. See Robert W. Jenson, “Anima Ecclesiastica” in *God and Human Dignity*, eds. R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 59-71; Stephen Ackermann, “The Church as Person in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,” *Communio* 29 (2002), 238-249.

²³ See esp. *LG*, 52-69. See also Tom Norris, “The Church’s Marian Profile and the Reception of Vatican II’s Ecclesiology,” in *Proceedings of the International Symposium of Theology: The Ecclesiology of Communion Fifty Years after the Opening of Vatican II*, vol. 2 of 50th International Eucharistic Congress (Dublin: Veritas, 2013), 362-81.

²⁴ On the Mother of God as a type of the Church and the attribution of maternal language to the Church itself in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ, see *LG*, 60-65.

prayer for “[h]ow could reason grow and develop if it regarded its own premature limitations as normative”²⁵:

Ich lerne beten im Mit-Beten, nämlich mitbeten mit der Mutter, im Annehmen der Vorgabe ihrer Wörter, die sich mir allmählich im Mitreden, Mitleben und Mitleiden mit Sinn füllen. Natürlich muß ich nach dem Sinn dieser Worte immer wieder nachfragen. . . . Schon weil es so ist, kann ich nicht einfach anfangen, unter Übersprungung der Kirche mit Christus allein reden zu wollen: eine christologische Gebetsform ohne Kirche läßt das Pneuma aus und läßt den Menschen aus.²⁶

There is one final important aspect to Ratzinger’s notion of prayer, namely, the ability to discern good from evil. The structure of prayer as an “authorisation,” so to speak, to seek all that is good with regard to the human person, means that prayer becomes “a road to conversion, the way of divine education, the way of grace: by praying we must learn which things are good or not.”²⁷ In learning the difference between good and evil, he says, our baptismal promise to renounce Satan and all his works is fulfilled. In this way, Christian prayer is the reception of a mode of vision and it becomes the responsibility of every believer. The request for a heavenly endorsement of *my* way is not Christian prayer. Prayer is a process of transformation into *God’s* way, in and through the faith *communio*. To Ratzinger’s mind, this purificatory approach to personal prayer makes the Church at worship the school of human freedom. Because prayer is the purification of our desires, the sincere and total human posture required for it is the way of growth towards the true and free self:

La preghiera separa nella nostra vita la luce dalle tenebre e compie in noi la creazione nuova, ci fa creatura nuova. Perciò è così importante che nella preghiera presentiamo di fatto tutta la nostra vita agli occhi di Dio, noi cattivi, che desideriamo tante cose cattive. Nella preghiera noi impariamo la rinuncia a questi nostri desideri, cominciamo a desiderare le cose buone, per diventare buoni parlando con lui, che è la

²⁵ Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 31.

²⁶ Ratzinger, *Das Fest des Glaubens*, 28 (“I learn to pray by praying with others, with my mother for instance, by following her words, which are gradually filled out with meaning for me as I speak, live and suffer in fellowship with her. Naturally I must be always asking what these words mean. . . . And that is precisely why it is impossible to start a conversation with Christ alone, cutting out the Church: a christological form of prayer which excludes the Church also excludes the Spirit and the human being himself” [Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 30]).

²⁷ Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 48.

bontà stessa. L'esaudimento divino non è una semplice conferma della nostra vita, è un processo di trasformazione.²⁸

When he discusses prayer, it can be said that Ratzinger prioritises neither quantity nor formulary. He speaks instead about the ground and purpose of the whole notion of prayer as “the deepest root and enduring premise of faith.”²⁹ His portrayal is based on prayer as an act of communication and affirmation where one cannot pray alone because the “I” cannot communicate without a “thou.” While this can seem restrictive of personal freedom in a cultural milieu imbued with the modern synthesis, Ratzinger maintains that prayer is an act of fellowship that compels an ecclesial identity and maternal purification.

6.2. Ecclesial Faith and Freedom: The Act of Trust and Obedience

The suspicion that forms of faith entailing submission of one's person to the greater corporate subject of the one Church are a violation of one's freedom provokes the question of the effect of worship in the human person: in what way specifically is the Church the sphere that turns us towards God and others? Ratzinger understands faith as an act of trust, on the one hand, and an act of obedience, on the other. He sees growth in an ecclesial faith as consistent with the relational structure of human nature. This, in turn, effects a revolution within the self that opens the “I” to the whole body of the Church.

According to Ratzinger, affirmation of God in one's prayer life stems from the gift of understanding how God lives: “[God] loves us not, because *we* are good, but because *he* is good.”³⁰ Committing ourselves to a life lived in this way is the inception within us of what he

²⁸ Ratzinger, *Il Cammino Pasquale*, 39 (“Prayer separates light from darkness in our life and accomplishes in us the new creation, makes us new beings. Therefore it is so important that in prayer we do in fact present our whole life before the eyes of God, we who are evil, who desire so many bad things. In prayer we learn renunciation of our own desires. We begin to desire good things, to become good by talking to him who is goodness itself. The divine response is not simply confirmation of our life but a process of transformation” [Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 48]).

²⁹ Ratzinger, *Journey to Easter*, 93.

³⁰ Ratzinger, *What it Means to be a Christian*, 69.

calls a “Copernican Revolution.” Faith then consists of a movement of trust, so to speak, in God’s goodness from a pre- to a post- Copernican matrix:

Denn wir alle tragen jene angeborene Illusion mit uns, kraft deren ein jeder sein Ich als den Mittelpunkt nimmt, um den herum sich die Welt und die Menschen zu drehen haben. Wir alle müssen uns immer wieder dabei entdecken, dass wir die anderen Dinge und Menschen nur in Beziehung zum eigenen Ich konstruieren und sehen, sie gleichsam als Satelliten betrachten, die sich um den Mittelpunkt unseres Ich herumdrehen. Christwerden ist . . . etwas sehr Einfaches und dennoch sehr Umwälzendes. Es ist genau dieses, dass wir die kopernikanische Wende vollziehen und uns nicht mehr als den Weltenmittelpunkt betrachten, um den die anderen sich zu drehen haben, weil wir stattdessen anfangen, im vollen Ernst zu bejahen, dass wir eins von vielen Geschöpfen Gottes sind, die gemeinsam sich um Gott als die Mitte bewegen.³¹

Ratzinger says that when God becomes my centre, love is orientated correctly, with the result that the believer reaches the “inward freedom of love.”³² In Ratzinger’s presentation, faith and love meet at the point where the believer comes to know the reorientation of the self towards God and articulates a response of “yes” in favour of it. To his mind, faith, and the finding of one’s true self, begins precisely at the point where we realise we tend to suffer from a “deficiency” based on a pre-Copernican illusion of life:

Glauben heißt letztlich gar nichts anderes als zugeben, dass wir ein solches Defizit haben; es heißt, die Hand aufmachen und sich beschenken lassen. In seiner einfachsten und innersten Form ist der Glaube nichts anderes als jener Punkt in der Liebe, an dem wir erkennen, dass wir auch selbst nötig haben, beschenkt zu werden. Glaube ist so jener Punkt in der Liebe, der sie erst als Liebe wirklich ausweist; er besteht darin, dass wir die Selbstgefälligkeit und Selbstzufriedenheit dessen überwinden, der sich genug ist und sagt: Ich habe alles getan, ich brauche keine Hilfe mehr. Erst in solchem “Glauben” endet der Egoismus, der eigentliche Gegenpol der Liebe. Insofern ist Glaube in der wahren Liebe mit anwesend; er ist einfach jenes Moment an der Liebe, das sie wahrhaft zu sich selber führt: die Offenheit dessen, der

³¹ Joseph Ratzinger, *Vom Sinn des Christseins: Drei Predigten* (München: Kösel, 2005), 93-94 (“For we all carry within us that inborn illusion by virtue of which each of us takes his own self to be the centre of things around which the world and everyone else have to turn. We all necessarily find ourselves, time and again, construing and seeing other things and people solely in relation to our own selves, regarding them as satellites, as it were, revolving around the hub of our own self. Becoming a Christian . . . [is] something quite simple and yet completely revolutionary. It is just this: achieving the Copernican revolution and no longer seeing ourselves as the centre of the universe, around which everyone else must turn, because instead of that we have begun to accept quite seriously that we are one of many among God’s creatures, [*all of which circle around God as the centre*]” [Ratzinger, *What it Means to be a Christian*, 70-71]). This English translation is perfectly acceptable to me except for the final phrase, which I have italicised in order to indicate that I have translated it more accurately for the reader. See also *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 112-15; *Faith and the Future*, 41.

³² Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 113.

nicht auf seinem eigenen Können besteht, sondern sich als Beschenkt und als Bedürftigen weiß.³³

Hence Ratzinger concludes that, as the form of human trust, the consequence of faith is a movement drawing the believer closer to the truth of their existence and, hence, towards authentic freedom. It is “the finding of a ‘you’ that upholds me.”³⁴ Faith, he says,

[. . .] ist eine Eröffnung der Wirklichkeit, die nur dem Vertrauenden, dem Liebenden, dem als Mensch Handelnden zukommt, und als solche nicht abkünftig von Wissen, sondern ursprünglich wie dieses, ja tragender und zentraler für das eigentlich Menschliche als dieses.³⁵

Here Ratzinger implies the inadequacy of scientific rationalism because technical and scientific knowledge alone is insufficient as a technique by which to order one’s life.

Ratzinger believes this insight liberates if taken seriously because it means that faith “is not primarily a colossal edifice of numerous supernatural facts, standing like a curious second order of knowledge alongside the realm of science, but an ascent to God, who gives us hope and confidence.”³⁶

To Ratzinger’s mind, however, the message behind the Copernican imagery is as disconcerting as it is liberating for he maintains that few, if any, of us could claim to be definitively “post-Copernican.” The pre-Copernican illusion lingers on, whereby other people

³³ Ratzinger, *Vom Sinn des Christseins*, 98-100 (“Ultimately, faith means nothing other than admitting that we have this kind of shortfall; it means opening our hand and accepting a gift. In its simplest and innermost form, faith is nothing but reaching that point in love at which we recognise that we, too, need to be given something. Faith is thus that stage in love which really distinguishes it as love; it consists in overcoming the complacency and self-satisfaction of the person who says, ‘I have done everything, I don’t need any further help.’ It is only in ‘faith’ like this that selfishness, the real opposite of love, comes to an end. To that extent, faith is already present in and with true loving; it simply represents that impulse in love which leads to its finding its true self: the openness of someone who does not insist on his own capabilities, but is aware of receiving something as a gift and of standing in need of it” [Ratzinger, *What it means to be a Christian*, 74-75]). As is eminently clear from Ratzinger’s approach to worship, the “yes” of faith, as an act of communication, is a participation in the “yes” of Jesus Christ to the Father and all that flows from it. The consequence is “liberation from the repression that is opposed to the truth, liberation of my ego from its going against the grain of its being, so as to respond to the Father and say ‘yes’ to love, ‘yes’ to being, to say that ‘yes’ that is our redemption and that overcomes the ‘world.’ In this way faith by its inmost essential nature involves other people: it is a breaking out of the isolation of my ego that is its own illness” (Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 36).

³⁴ Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 80. See this dissertation § 4.1.

³⁵ Ratzinger, *Glaube und Zukunft*, 35 (“Faith is a disclosure of reality that comes only to the one who trusts, loves, and acts as a human being; as such it is not a derivative of knowledge but is more primordial than this, indeed more basic and central to what is essentially human than this” [own translation]).

³⁶ Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, 30.

are deemed “real” only with regard to their association with the “self.” Ratzinger addresses this existential situation through the law of superabundance.³⁷ He says the idea behind superabundance reveals the characteristic of the whole story of God’s dealings with humanity and it points towards that sphere of encounter where one comes to the freedom to live as God wills. Indeed, the characteristic trait of divinity in creation itself is revealed, namely, “that superabundance of generosity which is essential to God’s way of acting, that way of doing things which in the process of creation squanders millions of seeds so as to save *one* living one.”³⁸ Ratzinger says that this “lavishness” – which is the personal mark of the Creator – ought likewise to become our basic rule of existence before God and others.

This law of superabundance, or the life of grace, gives Christianity its seriousness: “First, God moves to meet us, and then we can go along with him; then our inner powers are freed.”³⁹ The act of faith, as a pre-eminent form of trust, so to speak, is the breaking down of subjectivity to the point where the ego finds itself in a new and greater ego through a process of dissolution of the former and rebirth into the latter (cf. Gal 2:20). This new ego, into which the “I” is liberated by faith, not only unites one with Jesus but, in fact, with all those taking the same path. Faith, in other words, is necessarily what Ratzinger calls *kirchlicher Glaube* (“churchly” or ecclesial faith)⁴⁰:

Er lebt und bewegt sich im Wir der Kirche, eins mit dem gemeinsamen Ich Jesu Christi. In diesem neuen Subjekt fällt die Mauer zwischen mir und dem anderen; die Mauer, die meine Subjektivität von der Objektwelt trennt und sie mir unzugänglich macht, die Mauer zwischen mir und der Tiefe des Seins. In diesem neuen Subjekt bin

³⁷ See Ratzinger, *What it Means to be a Christian*, 77-83.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 79-80. At the heart of Ratzinger’s reflection here is the Paschal Mystery, which in itself is the “ultimate and unheard-of event” that always defies the calculating minds of “correct thinkers,” constituting “a final unheard-of lavishness” that gives God’s very self away in order to save humanity and bring them to their goal. All of this was done after lavishly producing an entire universe in order to prepare a place on earth for the mysterious creature – the human being.

³⁹ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 294. Ratzinger says that in prayer we experience the primacy of grace which “makes it possible for us to experience the primacy of Christ and the primacy of inwardness and of holiness” (*ibid.*). When speaking of pastoral practice from this perspective, he says that if such primacy is not respected, it is hardly surprising that pastoral initiatives fail, leaving us frustrated and disheartened. Therefore, he suggests: “[o]ver and above all our activism, we have to learn anew the primacy of inwardness – the mystical component of Christianity has to gain renewed force” (295). See this dissertation §§ 2.3.3. and 7.2.

⁴⁰ See Ratzinger, *Auf Christus schauen*, 44.

ich gleichzeitig mit Jesus, und alle Erfahrungen der Kirche gehören auch mir, sind mir zu eigen geworden.⁴¹

Just as Ratzinger envisages prayer effecting a “Copernican revolution” in the human ego, this is equally the case for the whole community that makes up the Church. As the communion of those who pray, it must always be conscious of the need for transparency in respect of the source of its collective authority. Only in this way does the Church have a contribution to make to the societal situation within which it resides. Therefore, the freedom to be a positive force for society requires that the Church “must not be spared the pain of conversion, which expects of us what we cannot achieve on our own.”⁴²

This act of trust, as part of an ecclesial manifestation of faith, carries an implicit requirement of obedience in faith to God’s will. For Ratzinger, there is a sense in which the believer must become a “foreigner,” so to speak, if faith is to be experienced as assembly and as unity. The “revolution” calls for a counter-intuitive process whereby “people entering the realm of faith must leave behind what is merely their own and let catholicity, the turning of themselves over to the whole, happen to them as an on-going process.”⁴³ In Ratzinger’s view, detachment based on the decentralisation of the ego becomes the route to wholeness and genuine catholicity:

Es ist notwendig, dass [die Glaubende] die Fremdheit . . . auf sich nehmen, die dazu nötig ist, dass Heimstatt für das Ganze an allen Orten werde, dass gleichsam dasselbe Haus an allen Orten begegne. . . . Nur wer sich selbst auf den Weg gemacht hat, von sich frei zu werden, wenigstens ein paar Schritte getan hat, kann dem Fremden begegnen und Heimat anbieten.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Ibid. (“It lives and moves in the ‘we’ of the Church, one with the common ‘I’ of Jesus Christ. In this new subject the wall between myself and others falls down: the wall that divides my subjectivity from objectivity and makes it unattainable for me, the wall between me and the depth of being. In this new subject I am contemporaneous with Jesus, and all the experiences of the Church are mine too, and have become my own” [Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 36-37]). See also *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 82ff.

⁴² Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 67.

⁴³ Ibid., 113.

⁴⁴ Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn*, 126 (“[. . .] it is imperative that the faithful take upon themselves the condition of being foreign, which is necessary so that there be a home for the whole in all places, so that the same home, as it were, is encountered everywhere. . . . Only those who have set out on the path to become free of themselves, only those who have taken at least a few steps can meet foreigners and offer them a home” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 114]).

Furthermore, Ratzinger argues for the ecclesial aspect of obedience from the viewpoint that if we are to render God concrete and relevant in the world, we must guard against turning him into a mere projection of our own desires. This means maintaining a “relationship of awe and obedience towards the Bible” which does not “turn [the Scripture] into a dead thing that we assemble and disassemble at our pleasure.”⁴⁵ For Ratzinger the condemnation of the “living Speaker” of the biblical texts to the past by certain forms of scriptural exegesis is the enslavement of the *Christusgehalt* or christological form of the Bible.⁴⁶ He believes that if we are to know the meaning of obedience, we have to dispense with privatised understandings of God made in our image and recover respect for the true image of God revealed and taught in the “inner self-transcending of the words into the word of God.”⁴⁷ Only this type of faith is worthy of the God found in the Scriptures and avoids humanistic reductionisms.⁴⁸

The contemporary antagonism towards institutional realities, something of which is expressed in the debate regarding the relationship between the Church and Scripture, has an acute effect on the impression that obedience in faith knowingly destroys individuality and deliberately seeks to invalidate personal choice. With the burgeoning of institutional structures in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council, Ratzinger believes the temptation to let “authority” turn into a power struggle has increased. In other words, to his mind, an

⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 61-62.

⁴⁶ See this dissertation § 1.6.

⁴⁷ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 62. See this dissertation § 3.1.

⁴⁸ To the fore of Ratzinger’s criticisms here are the modern forms of scriptural exegesis that do not respect the canonical and inspired nature of the biblical texts, nor the emergence of texts from within the Judaeo-Christian community: “If individuals or different groups continually create their own Bible by means of separating the sources and criticizing the tradition and then place this Bible in opposition to the unity of Scripture and the Church, this is no longer obedience to God’s word. It is rather an apotheosis of their own position with the help of a text-montage whose selection and omissions are ultimately based on the positions they want. Historical-critical exegesis can be a wonderful means for a deeper understanding of the Bible if its instruments are used with that reverent love which seeks to know God’s gift in the most exact and careful way possible. It does not, however, achieve its purpose when it is no longer a path to more careful listening but keeps the texts on tenterhooks, so to speak, in order to coerce answers from it which it wanted to withhold” (Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 61-62).

institution can be overburdened by too many institutionalised structures. In this situation, a turning towards communities and *against* institutions escalates by means of seeking refuge in small autonomous groups. This has happened to varying degrees within the Church.⁴⁹

From the ecclesiological perspective, Ratzinger says, overbearing institutional structures can rapidly overwhelm the personal “space” of the individual. This quickly turns into a debate about the nature of authority and the mandate to exercise it. He believes that when there is a competitive atmosphere in a parish community between the person of the priest or lay leader, and the universal Church, there is a distinct possibility that the former is someone speaking in his or her name only. If that is the case, then “[t]he motivator’s personal ability now counts more than the authority in which he or she stands.”⁵⁰ The result is that “authority is being replaced with power, power that has been given and must be returned through one’s own ability.”⁵¹ When the authority exercised in the Church is motivated by reliance upon the self and is not transparent to God’s power, then that which is essential in the Church is lost:

Das Eigentliche an der Kirche ist nicht, dass es sympathische Menschen in ihr gibt, was wahrhaftig immer zu wünschen ist und was gewiss auch immer der Fall sein wird. Das Eigentliche ist ihre Exusia: Ihr ist Macht, Vollmacht gegeben, Worte des Heils zu sagen und Taten des Heils zu tun, die der Mensch braucht und die er aus Eigenem nie zu geben vermag. Niemand kann sich selbst das Ich Christi oder das Ich Gottes zueignen. Mit diesem Ich aber spricht der Priester, wenn er sagt: “Dies ist mein Leib” und wenn er sagt: “Ich vergebe dir deine Sünden.” Nicht der Priester vergibt sie – das würde wenig zählen –, sondern Gott vergibt sie, und das allerdings ändert alles. Aber welch schaudererregender Vorgang ist es, dass ein Mensch das Ich Gottes in den

⁴⁹ Ratzinger observes that from an ecclesiological perspective, small groups have manifested themselves in designations such as “base communities,” “voice of the faithful” and “the Church from below.” He provides a very incisive commentary on the rationale for these groups: “Here [people] experience sympathy and good will; here mutual understanding rules, not laws. A little oasis of humanness in the spirit of Jesus seems to open up, but unfortunately it is constantly being disrupted by the unreasonable demands and manifestations of the larger Church, which exercises her power and, with her ancient ideas, mercilessly rides roughshod over the group’s beautiful world. The result is group against Church, parish community against institution. Where the community represents the place for hope, the institution stands for the threat of the powerful” (Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 65). The instinct to concretise the faith in localised situations is valid. However, Ratzinger suspects that the motive behind such groups stems from the present-day dissatisfaction with excessive amounts of ecclesiastical institutionalisation rather than from the desire to build up the body of the faithful, and the missionary outreach which flows from that.

⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 66.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Mund nehmen darf! Er kann es nur von jener Vollmacht her, die der Herr seiner Kirche gegeben hat. Ohne diese Vollmacht ist er ein Sozialarbeiter, nichts sonst. Das ist ehrbar, aber in der Kirche suchen wir eine höhere Hoffnung, die aus einer größeren Macht kommt. Wenn diese Worte der Vollmacht nicht mehr gesprochen werden und wenn sie nicht mehr durchsichtig bleiben auf ihren Grund hin, hilft die menschliche Wärme der kleinen Gruppe wenig. Das Wesentliche ist verloren, und die Gruppe wird es sehr bald spüren.⁵²

The act of obedience required of the believer merges with the act of trust necessary for faith. Both obedience and trust challenge a culture that privileges egocentric freedom and esteems some form of the “modern synthesis” amongst its pre-eminent belief structures. Ratzinger makes two approaches to this challenge based on the christological teachings of the communion of wills and the spectacle of the cross.

Firstly, obedience in faith to God’s will – albeit initially counter-intuitive – sets up the direction and posture which permits the human person grow in authentic freedom. In line with the neo-chalcedonian perspective of his christology, Ratzinger says faith is obedience in the sense that “[i]t is the unity of our will with God’s will and precisely in this way imitation of Christ, for the essential aspect of his own path is his journey into unifying his will with God’s will.”⁵³ Ratzinger says the Marian dimension of faith helps in understanding what, in

⁵² Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn*, 80-81 (“What makes the Church real is not that there are likable people in her, which is really always desirable and will certainly always be the case as well. The reality is her *exousia*: she is given the power, the authority to speak words of salvation and to perform deeds of salvation which humans need and can never achieve on their own. No one can usurp the ‘I’ of Christ or the ‘I’ of God. The priest speaks with this ‘I’ when he says ‘This is my body’ and when he says ‘I forgive you your sins.’ It is not the priest who forgives them – that would not count for much – but God who forgives them, and this definitely changes everything. But what a shaking event it is that a human being is permitted to utter the ‘I’ of God! The priest can do it only on the basis of that authority which the Lord has given his Church. Without this authority he is nothing but a social worker. This is an honourable profession, but in the Church we are looking for higher hopes, which come from a greater power. If these words of authority are no longer spoken and if they no longer remain transparent so that their foundation is visible, then the human warmth of the small group is of little use. What is essential has been lost, and the group will become aware of this very soon” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 66-67]). Ratzinger uses the Greek word ἐξουσία in a precise sense. It implies a conferred power based upon an underlying power inherent in a legal justice system. Therefore it is a power arising out of obedience, grounded in the right to do something or the right over something. It implies an influence over something or someone (cf. Luke 12:11; 1Cor 11:10; 1Pet 3:22). See Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 51. It is therefore very close to the pauline appropriation of the Greek term ἐλευθερία. See this dissertation § 3.2.3.2.

⁵³ Joseph Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 59. See this dissertation § 3.2.2.1.

essence, is the ability to affirm the power of God as the source of the good.⁵⁴ To his mind, Mary displays the authentic posture of Christian obedience:

Der Akt des Glaubens, durch den [Maria] Gottes Tür in die Welt wurde und so den Raum der Hoffnung, des “Selig” in ihr freigab, ist seinem Wesen nach ein Akt des Gehorsams: Mir geschehe nach deinem Willen – ich bin mit meinem Sein in einem Dienstverhältnis zu dir hin. Glauben heißt bei ihr: Sich-zur-Verfügung-Stellen, Ja sagen. Im Akt des Glaubens bietet sie Gott ihre eigene Existenz als Raum seines Wirkens an. Glaube ist nicht eine Haltung neben anderen, sondern Verfügung über das eigene Sein – in den Willen Gottes und so in den Willen der Wahrheit und der Liebe hinein.⁵⁵

In the second instance, to comprehend obedience as a liberating virtue in the Christian context, Ratzinger calls us to relearn “the piety of the cross”⁵⁶ which Mary endured in her Son’s abandonment: “precisely the darkness in which Mary stands is the completion of the communion of wills with him. The cross is the place of completion of the communion of wills and, he continues, this “place of final non-deliverance is the place where redemption really emerges.”⁵⁷ Ratzinger says practising the cross is not some nostalgic, sentimental or passive piety but the accompaniment of the crucified Christ and being taken up into his way. He says the “piety” of overcoming the self to the point where one becomes a freely offered sacrifice, inwardly accepting whatever suffering may be imposed, is to gain one’s serenity and allow the “brilliance of faith [to] shine forth for all to see.”⁵⁸ In this way, Ratzinger believes we actually move into a posture of responsibility with regard to our true nature,

⁵⁴ See Joseph Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 45-56.

⁵⁵ Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn*, 72-73 (“The act of faith by which [Mary] became God’s door to the world and thus set free the place of hope, the ‘blessed’ in her is by its very nature an act of obedience: Let it happen to me according to your will – with my very being I am in a relationship of service to you. Faith for her means making oneself available, saying yes. In an act of faith she offers God her own existence as a place for his work. Faith is not just one posture among others but directing your own being – toward the will of God and thus toward the will of truth and love” [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 59]). Echoing John Paul II’s 1987 Encyclical, *Redemptoris mater*, Ratzinger highlights the need for every member of the Church to strive for this Marian “yes.” The word freedom in the Christian life represents the giving up of one’s body for God’s work as exemplified in Mary – the obedient making of “her whole self available as the place of God’s action. In this word Mary’s will and the will of the Son coincide. . . . For God’s entry into this world, for God’s birth to come about, there must be this Marian yes, this coincidence of our wills with his will over and over again” (Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 60). See also Joseph Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Maria – Gottes Ja zum Menschen: Papst Johannes Paul II, Enzyklika “Mutter der Erlösers”* (Herder: Freiburg, 1987), 116ff.

⁵⁶ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 60.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 61. On this point, Ratzinger refers to Romano Guardini’s work *Die Macht: Versuch einer Wegweisung* (Arche: Würzburg: 1952), 99.

thereby removing the myth that obedience necessarily triggers a destructive injury to personal freedom:

Glaube ist Gehorsam; er bedeutet, dass wir Wesengestalt unseres Seins – die Geschöpflichkeit – wieder erlernen und damit wahr werden. Er bedeutet, dass wir die Beziehung der Verantwortung als Grundform unseres Lebens erkennen und damit Macht aus Bedrohung und Gefahr zur Hoffnung wird.⁵⁹

Through a faith built on trust and obedience, the human person is enabled to become the living sacrifice of praise within the sphere of the Church (Rom 12:1; Heb 13:15; cf. Lev 7:11-18) and in this way accomplishes the posture of the true self. What is taking shape here is an ecclesiology of liberation in the writings of Ratzinger that is founded on the efficaciousness of the personal worshipping posture of each believer. This posture is premised on the worshipper's intensifying "yes" to God in the act of ecclesial faith. Before concluding this examination of the liberating quality of worship, it would be beneficial to explore a very concrete manifestation of growth in freedom which Pope Benedict XVI proposed, namely, human ecology – the respecting of nature, its possibilities and its constraints. Arguably, it is the synthesis and culmination of much of his life's work on the theme of freedom.

6.3. Worship and Human Ecology

When Benedict XVI wrote the social encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate* (CV), in 2009, he acknowledged his immediate predecessor's contribution to the themes of "social" and "human" ecologies. In the encyclical, Benedict carries forward this idea by giving its anthropological premise an ecclesiological context capable of shaping human coexistence. "The Church," he says, "has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air

⁵⁹ Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn*, 74 ("Faith is obedience; it means we relearn the essential form of our being – our nature as creatures – and in this way become authentic. It means that we recognise the relationship of responsibility as the basic form of our lives and that as a result power changes from being a threat and a danger to hope" [Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 61]).

as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction.”⁶⁰ Calling for a human ecology, correctly understood, the Pope is harnessing a theme which has been at the core of his own studies over many years, namely, the idea that humanity fails to grow in authentic freedom to the extent that it denies or rejects the possibilities and limits inherent in its nature.⁶¹ The Church at worship opens the window onto the parameters of nature consistent with being human. In this way, it becomes an authentic living sacrifice of praise.

Two of the most significant references to human ecology can be identified in the Pope’s address to the Curia at Christmas 2008 and in his address to the Bundestag in Berlin in 2011.⁶² Reflecting on various aspects of pneumatology in 2008, he said that the Church’s profession of faith in the Creator Spirit means that the Church cannot limit itself to passing on the message of salvation to the faithful. It has a responsibility towards creation which includes protecting humanity from self-destruction:

If the Church speaks of the nature of the human being as man and woman, and demands that this order of creation be respected, this is not some antiquated metaphysics. What is involved here is faith in the Creator and a readiness to listen to

⁶⁰ CV, 51. Benedict XVI cites John Paul II’s 1991 Encyclical letter *Centesimus Annus*, 36.

⁶¹ This has been confirmed recently through the publication in Germany of a combined anthology of lectures from both Ratzinger’s theology and Benedict XVI’s teachings. The selection of texts was guided by Prof. Dr. Siegfried Wiedenhofer, a long-time assistant of Professor Ratzinger at Tübingen and Regensburg Universities. Wiedenhofer selected writings which date from 1970 to 2011. See Benedikt XVI, *Die Ökologie des Menschen: Die großen Reden des Papstes* (München: Pattloch, 2012).

⁶² William L. Patenaude has noted that Benedict XVI’s message on the Occasion of World Food Day 2011 contains striking similarities to both the Pope’s social encyclical and his speech at the *Bundestag*. In the message, the Pope says “it is a question of adopting an inner attitude of responsibility, able to inspire a different life style, with the necessary modest behaviour and consumption, in order thereby: to promote the good of future generations in sustainable terms; the safeguarding of the goods of creation; the distribution of resources and, above all, the concrete commitment to the development of entire peoples and nations.” Patenaude goes on to say that here is a Pope who, with his call for “an inner attitude of responsibility,” is attempting to bridge the ideological divide between environmentalists who exclude Divine Revelation, on the one hand, and forms of spirituality which disregard any talk of creation and ecology, on the other: “These are the words of no mere secular ecologist. These exhortations to temper consumption through adopting an inner attitude of responsibility are the prophetic proclamations of the Catholic view of ecology: one rooted in faith as well as reason; one concerned not just for the good of the natural world, but also for the common good of the fallen human race; one that seeks to offer the laws of life to a world revelling in death; and one that presupposes that before you or I can consider saving the world, we must first seek to save souls” (William L. Patenaude, “The Orthodoxy of Catholic Ecology,”

http://www.catholicworldreport.com/Item/1434/the_orthodoxy_of_catholic_ecology.aspx#.UXEWIbWG1kI [accessed 20 August 2012]).

the “language” of creation. To disregard this would be the self-destruction of man himself, and hence the destruction of God’s own work. What is often expressed and understood by the term “gender” ultimately ends up being man’s attempt at self-emancipation from creation and the Creator. Man wants to be his own master, and alone – always and exclusively – to determine everything that concerns him. Yet in this way he lives in opposition to the truth, in opposition to the Creator Spirit. Rain forests deserve indeed to be protected, but no less so does man, as a creature having an innate “message” which does not contradict our freedom, but is instead its very premise.⁶³

What is interesting here is the way in which the Pope uses the standard language of environmentalists to remind his audience that humanity is called to respect the parameters of nature in general, and of human nature in particular. He takes the widely acknowledged principle of environmental protection and expands it into an ecclesial anthropology based on the notion of growth in authentic human freedom. The Church’s proclamation of “human ecology” requires it to “witness to the Creator Spirit present in nature as a whole, and, in a special way, in the human person, created in God’s image. . . to defend love against sex as a consumer good, the future against the exclusive claims of the present, and human nature against its manipulation.”⁶⁴

⁶³ See Pope Benedict XVI, Address to the Members of the Roman Curia for the Traditional Exchange of Christmas Greetings (22 December 2008): ASS 101 (2009): 48-54.

⁶⁴ Ibid. Indeed, earlier still in his Pontificate, the seeds of this “ecology” can be deciphered. Participating in a theological discussion with Italian clergy in 2007, he spoke about the human capacity and need to practice “education in listening” in the face of all the forms of modern deafness in order to avoid the destruction of the foundations of human existence. Freedom must be understood as a shared freedom whereby we listen to, and respect the common values of nature in general and human nature in particular. See Meeting of the Holy Father Benedict XVI with the Clergy of the Dioceses of Belluno-Feltre and Treviso in the Church of St Justin Martyr, Auronzo di Cadore, 24 July 2007, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/july/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070724_clero-cadore_en.html (accessed 19 August 2012). While there are numerous times throughout the meeting where this idea of listening and respecting the laws of nature are present in the Pope’s words, the key passage is found in his dialogue with Fr. Claudio: “In the depths of our being, not only can we listen to the needs of the moment, to material needs, but we can also hear the voice of the Creator himself and thus discern what is good and what is bad. . . . Today, we can all see that man can destroy the foundations of his existence, his earth, hence that we can no longer simply do what we like or what seems useful and promising at the time with this earth of ours, with the reality entrusted to us. On the contrary, we must respect the inner laws of creation, of this earth, we must learn these laws and obey these laws if we wish to survive. Consequently, this obedience to the voice of the earth, of being, is more important for our future happiness than the voices of the moment, the desires of the moment. . . . We need the experience that human freedom is always a shared freedom and can only function if we can share our freedom with respect for the values that are common to us all. It seems to me that with these steps it will be possible to make people see the need to obey the voice of being, to respect the dignity of the other, to accept the need to live our respective freedom together as *one* freedom, and through all this to recognise the intrinsic value that can make a dignified communion of life possible among human beings.” In his *World Day of Peace Message* of 2007, Pope Benedict made a reference to human ecology which,

In his address to the Bundestag in Berlin in 2011, Benedict XVI returned to the theme of human ecology in the context of human freedom and its prerequisite of respect for the parameters of human nature. The address was a critique of the positivistic thinking that blocks humanity from its truest nature and destiny.⁶⁵ The Pope said in Berlin that “[m]an too has a nature that he must respect and that he cannot manipulate at will. . . . Man is not merely self-creating freedom.” The Pope went to the very core of this idea when he said that “[m]an does not create himself. He is intellect and will, but he is also nature, and his will is rightly ordered if he listens and accepts himself for who he is, as one who did not create himself. In this way and in no other, is true human freedom fulfilled.” The allusion here to Ratzinger’s own presentation of the “Christian synthesis” of human freedom gives a clear indication that human ecology is not a foreign concept to his own theological endeavours. An important ecclesial expression of growth in freedom manifests itself in this concept, namely, the idea of the Church on pilgrimage seeking a conversion of heart consistent with the nature of the human person.

in turn, he says must lead to a “social ecology” and “ecology of peace”: “All this means that humanity, if it truly desires peace, must be increasingly conscious of the links between natural ecology, or respect for nature, and human ecology. Experience shows that *disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence*, and vice versa. It becomes more and more evident that there is an inseparable link between peace with creation and peace among men. Both of these presuppose peace with God. The poem-prayer of Saint Francis, known as “the Canticle of Brother Sun”, is a wonderful and ever timely example of this multifaceted ecology of peace” (Pope Benedict XVI, Message for World Day of Peace 2007 [8 December 2006], 8, *Insegnamenti* II, 2 [2006], 779). The Pope’s annual *World Day for Peace* messages provide interesting material for anyone wishing to follow up on the notion of a peace ecology and the prerequisite necessary for its flourishing – i.e. respect for the environment alongside respect for a true humanism that doesn’t exclude the Creator. Of particular interest are the messages for the years 2006-08 and 2010-12. See

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/messages/peace/index_en.htm (accessed 20 August 2012).

⁶⁵ See Benedict XVI, Address to the Members of the Federal German Parliament in Berlin (22 September 2011): AAS 103 (2011), 663-69. The Pope used the image of a man-made concrete bunker to capture the suffocating atmosphere created by a monopoly of positivist reason: “The positivist approach to nature and reason, the positivist world-view in general, is a most important dimension of human knowledge and capacity that we may in no way dispense with. But in and of itself it is not a sufficient culture corresponding to the full breadth of the human condition. Where positivist reason considers itself the only sufficient culture and banishes all other cultural realities to the status of subcultures, it diminishes man, indeed it threatens his humanity. . . . In its self-proclaimed exclusivity, the positivist reason which recognises nothing beyond mere functionality resembles a concrete bunker with no windows, in which we ourselves provide lighting and atmospheric conditions, being no longer willing to obtain either from God’s wide world. And yet we cannot hide from ourselves the fact that even in this artificial world, we are still covertly drawing upon God’s raw materials, which we refashion into our own products. The windows must be flung open again, we must see the wide world, the sky and the earth once more and learn to make proper use of all this.”

The motif of pilgrimage in Ratzinger is the forerunner to the call for “ecology” in Pope Benedict’s teaching. In Ratzinger’s presentation of anthropology, he perceives the call of the human person as a pilgrimage centred on the divine will that purifies him or her. In Ratzinger’s theology of freedom, a pilgrimage focused on the divine will is not, as can be perceived today, a sort of “heteronomous rule being imposed upon man.” Rather, he says, it is “in the assenting to the will of God that our being made truly similar to God is actually effected, and we become what we are: the image of God.”⁶⁶ Because its nature is that of pilgrimage, Christian conversion “cannot come about in a single moment of conversion, but rather, is the path of an entire life.” No human life is over and done in one moment and therefore the “rectification of a life can be accomplished only in the totality of this path.”⁶⁷

On the other hand, however, even for Christianity which claims to know God and various tenets of faith, Ratzinger says the reality is that every so often over the course of our lives, God’s presence slips from our living memory:

[. . .] brauchen wir es daher nicht alle immer wieder, dass er sich gleichsam unseren Sinnen in den Weg stellt, dass er unser Gesicht berührt, in unsere Ohren hineinredet und damit Erinnerung lebendig werden lässt und so uns Leben gibt. – Leben, das immer fortschreitet und das daher bis zum Tode hin nicht zu Ende getan ist, sondern das Bekehrung bis zum Tode bleibt.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 296.

⁶⁷ Ratzinger, *Credo for Today*, 139. This quotation comes from an essay entitled “The Communion of Saints: What do they really mean for us?” which originally appeared in Franz Breid, ed., *Buße-Umkehr: Formen der Vergebung* (Stet: W. Ennsthaler Verlag, 1992), 250-56. During the course of the essay, Ratzinger takes up Augustine’s philosophy of memory and uses it to explain how the bringing forth of the remembrance of God in our fading memory of God is conversion – the setting of one’s life to rights again. He says that it is through the saints that God reminds us of himself. Ratzinger’s tripartite structure of the human person’s freedom as understanding, will and heart resembles very closely Augustine’s analogy of the human mind as “memory, understanding and will,” which, in itself was a series of psychological analogies or images of the three Persons in one God. The three aspects of the mind are distinguished by their mutual relations but not as three separate human “minds”. The wholeness of the person as a reflection of the *imago dei* is important (*Conf. X-XI; Trin. X-XV*). See this dissertation §§ 4.2. to 4.2.2.

⁶⁸ Joseph Ratzinger, *Credo für heute: Was Christen glauben*, eds. Holger Zaborowski and Alwin Letzkus (Freiburg in Breisgau: Herder, 2006), 145 (“[. . .] do we not all . . . need again and again for him to stand in the way of our senses, as it were, to touch our face, to speak to our hearing, and thereby to make remembrance come alive and thus give us life? – a life that continues to march onward and that, therefore, is not over until death but, rather, continues to be conversion until death” (Ratzinger, *Credo for Today*, 139).

Just as the whole human person – understanding, will and heart – is required for assent to knowledge of the divine will, only the whole person can embark upon a pilgrimage towards God. Therefore, pilgrimage comes by way of the gift of ecclesio-knowledge of God. This informs the ground of the believer’s hope which, in turn, motivates love without cost and self-denial without anxiety:

Praktisch bedeutet dies, daß wir Gott nicht kennen können, wenn wir nicht bereit sind, uns auf seinen Willen einzulassen, ihn zum Maß und zur Richtung unseres Lebens zu nehmen. Noch konkreter heißt das: Zur Weggemeinschaft des Glaubens, zur Weggemeinschaft auf Gott zu, gehört das Leben nach den Geboten.⁶⁹

To illustrate the way of pilgrimage from the perspective of freedom, Ratzinger refers to St. Augustine’s personal experience of “remembrance.”⁷⁰ In Augustine’s own pilgrimage, he had received the “remembrance” of God quite some time prior to his whole person being able to convert. The will, in other words, does not simply do what the intellect knows. It took time before Augustine “became capable of pronouncing the ‘yes’ of the whole man who not only knows something about God in his intellect but gives his will over to the will of God and thereby becomes true.” Ratzinger highlights four important insights from Augustine’s experience of the operation of the human will. Firstly, as just stated, the will is both free and not free at the same time for it cannot simply do what knowledge recommends to it. Second, the will is embedded in our emotions and sentiments. These are the “unconscious and preconscious preliminary decisions of our life, our passions, our feelings.” In the third place, then, should God want remembrance of himself to be truly a breaking in and a becoming of a way in us, it is not enough for him to manifest himself to our intellect. Consequently, and

⁶⁹ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 258 (“In practice this means we cannot know God unless we are prepared to accept his will, to take it as the yardstick and the orientation for our lives. In still more practical terms, that means that living in accordance with the Commandments is a part of belonging to the pilgrim fellowship of faith, the fellowship of those travelling towards God” [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 296]).

⁷⁰ The following quotations in the text are from Ratzinger, *Credo for Today*, 141-2. Two recent collections in English translation that gather together many of Augustine’s writings on grace and freedom are *On the Free Choice of the Will, On Grace and Free Choice, and Other Writings*, ed. & trans. Peter King (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); *Selected Writings on Grace and Pelagianism*, ed. Boniface Ramsey; trans. Roland Teske (New York: New City Press, 2011).

finally, God has to enter and make himself present to our feelings, emotions and preconscious decisions.

Therefore, human affectivity becomes both the sphere which can, on the one hand, weigh down and hinder while, on the other, it is can also open and liberate. Ratzinger says that here, in the emotions, a most profound centre of the mystery of God is revealed: “the God who takes upon himself the trouble of reminding . . . has not only touched our understanding, but our hearts.” The God who reaches into our heart and our feelings is capable of making our intellect and will free. Therefore, to Ratzinger’s mind, the human person becomes free, and is enabled to say “yes” to the divine will when God shows us, in *our* heart, that *he* is “kind” and can be trusted. The will is freed and we become pilgrim converts. Life really opens up in us “[o]nly when we begin to love God, that is, only when we begin to recognise that the truth is worth living, that the Commandments are not an external imposition but, rather, are in the service of love, only when we learn to see this in Christ does our will become free; only then do we become converts; then life really begins in us.”

To Ratzinger’s mind, the urgent task for members of the Church on their way of pilgrimage is the “reawakening of joy in God, joy in God’s revelation and in friendship with God.”⁷¹ Reawakening joy in an ecclesial context is a considerable challenge in an environment where the collective consciousness comprises varying degrees of suspicion towards the authoritarian motives of institutions. Ratzinger endeavours to show that the joy

⁷¹ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 297. He believes that in our time the Commandments are an example of how people tend to recoil from references to law and obligation by perceiving them as negative ideas that remove joy, and as a barrier to friendship based on genuine equality. The result is that references to the Commandments as the expression of God’s law have become quite muted. He surmises that a suspicion of legalism and moralism has played no small part in this situation. Indeed, he says their content remains external when they are not illuminated by the inwardness of God within us and by the way of Christ going before us. If, as is very often the case, God’s will for creation is not viewed in the light of the law of superabundance, then its expression, as articulated in the Commandments, is certainly legalism and moralism. On the other hand, Israel repeatedly rejoiced in outbursts of joy and thankfulness at knowing God’s will (cf. Ps 119). For example, when the courage of the Israelites ebbed after the exile, the priest Ezra cried out: “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh 8:10). As argued in this dissertation § 2.3.2., Ratzinger believes that the Church is experiencing a type of exilic wilderness at present.

inherent in human liberation consists precisely in the opening up of the possibility of affirming an authority figure that loves and that can be trusted. He believes the Church is called to refocus attention on the insight that not only does humanity need an authority figure but it needs to know that this authority figure loves, even to the point of forgiveness. Only an authority in which love and power unite can satisfy this need. This explains why Ratzinger is so keen to view worship as an action of affirmation of the ground of being. In Ratzinger's understanding, the Church is the sphere in which humanity can discover such authority – the personal God – and be reconciled with him.

Ratzinger's underlying critique of suspicion towards authority consists in the observation that "man cannot bear sheer morality, he cannot live by it; it becomes a 'law' for him that provokes contradiction and engenders sin."⁷² The temptation is to redefine the law to the point where it is expedient and human guilt can be dissolved more readily. Here again, the principle Ratzinger invokes is that the human person's authentic liberation requires the experience of being acknowledged and loved by the Other. In the realm of reconciliation, this implies that the human person needs an authority to recognise the presence of human guilt, for without it human existence gradually erodes as people go into denial about the reality of their being and of Being itself. The denial of human guilt induces an ever-increasing spiral of enslavement: "where forgiveness – true forgiveness guaranteed by authority – is not recognised or believed, morality must be cut down to size so that the conditions of sinful action can never actually occur for the individual."⁷³ Ratzinger's argument is that a methodology of freeing the world through changing the conditions of the very possibility of

⁷² Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 150. While there is a growing realisation today that technical progress is questionable, even destructive, when decoupled from moral responsibility, and that there can be no reform of humanity without moral renewal, nonetheless, to Ratzinger's mind, there remains "a fog of discussions" veiling the criteria for human morality. See Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith*, 66-83.

⁷³ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 150.

guilt is ultimately too cheap.⁷⁴ He believes that liberation based on the denial of human sinfulness and guilt is fictional and cannot bring about the renewal to which it aspires. He proposes that the true structure of forgiveness and reconciling renewal consists of a circular link between morality, forgiveness and expiation which ought not to be forced apart at any point. Whether a person can find redemption depends on the undivided existence of this circle:

Moral behält ihren Ernst nur, wenn es Vergebung – wirkliche, vollmächtige Vergebung – gibt; sonst fällt sie in den reinen und leeren Konditionalis zurück. Wirkliche Vergebung aber gibt es nur, wenn der “Kaufpreis” da ist, der “Gegenwert,” wenn die Schuld ausgelitten ist, wenn Sühne existiert.⁷⁵

⁷⁴ Ratzinger finds this view in the work of Albert Görres, “Schuld und Schuldgefühle,” *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift* 13 (1984): 430-43. He highlights two sections from Görres’ argument: “Psychoanalysis has found it difficult to admit that among other guilt feelings there are also some that can be traced back to real guilt. It cannot accept these data without embarrassment . . . because its philosophy does not recognise freedom . . . its determinism is the opium of the intellectuals. In the psychoanalytic mind, Sigmund Freud far surpassed the poor unenlightened Rabbi Jesus. He, in fact, could only forgive sins and still found it necessary to do so, whereas Sigmund Freud, the new Messiah from Vienna, did far more: he rid the intellectual world of sin and guilt” (ibid. 438). Yet it remains the case that “[i]n the household economy of the soul, feelings of guilt are . . . necessary, indispensable . . . for psychic health. Thus anyone who is so cool that he no longer experiences feelings of guilt where they are appropriate ought to try with all his might to recover them” (433). Ratzinger touches on this himself in a lecture he delivered in Munich in 1974 entitled “Die Zukunft des Heils,” in *GS:AEL*, 489-509.

⁷⁵ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 146 (“Morality retains its seriousness only where there is forgiveness – real forgiveness ensured by authority; otherwise it lapses back into the pure empty conditional. But true forgiveness exists only when the ‘price,’ the ‘equivalent value,’ is paid, when guilt is atoned by suffering, when there is expiation” [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 151]). Ratzinger makes the point that the Torah knits these three elements of morality, forgiveness and expiation together, whereas the Enlightenment attempted to extract an eternally valid moral law from the Old Testament while discarding the rest. In other words the latter sought a universally valid morality through the exclusion of guilt and the need for forgiveness through expiation. Ratzinger says the attempt was bound to fail as it was a classic expression of Pelagianism, where the active-passive balance of divine and human action somehow gets skewed. For more detailed discussion on Ratzinger’s views of modern day pelagianism, see Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 81-87. He suggests there are two recurring forms of pelagianism which, on the face of it, appear relatively harmless. On the one hand, a “bourgeois liberal pelagianism” says that if God exists and cares, he won’t make demands of the moral agent in the way the Church teaches, while, on the other hand, a “pelagianism of the pious” doesn’t want any forgiveness from God but rather the security, reward and right to blessedness that comes from rigorous religious practice. These attitudes harden the human heart against itself, others and God: “man needs God’s divinity but no longer his love. [Man] puts himself in the right, and a God that does not cooperate becomes his enemy. The Pharisees of the New Testament are an eternally valid representation of this deformation of religion. The core of this Pelagianism is a religion without love that in this way degenerates into a sad and miserable caricature of religion” (82). Especially in the latter form, one finds a fear and inability to endure the tension of awaiting the giftedness of love. When the hope of being loved is impoverished, anxiety gives rise to a striving for security in which no uncertainty can be allowed to remain. Ratzinger says that in such a scenario, “[l]ove does not now overcome fear because the egoistic person does not want to entrust himself or herself to its kind of certainty that can always only be a certainty of dialogue” (83). On the other hand, he says, there is also a form of “fear” which is compatible with love and is central to Christian freedom: “the fear of hurting the beloved, of destroying the foundations of love by one’s own fault. Liberalism and the Enlightenment want to talk us into accepting a world without fear: they promise the complete elimination of every kind of fear. They would like to get rid of every ‘not yet,’ every reliance on other people and their inner tension, even though this is something that belongs essentially to hope and love. Anyone who liberates man from fear in this way liberates him from hope and love

When this circle is taken with the seriousness with which Ratzinger credits it, he says morality comes to exert a very concrete claim over Christians because it becomes, as it were, more “reasonable,” while the freedom to accept or reject the way of forgiveness comes to be treated with the utmost seriousness in God’s eyes. The pilgrimage of faith is truly something to which assent in freedom is necessary. In the act of faith, a double *ablatio* (removal) occurs through the action of purification and renewal which “allow[s] the true inherent form to re-emerge and . . . restore to us in a wholly new way the feeling of freedom and of being at home.” Active faith, he continues, “breaches the wall of finitude and opens up an unobstructed view into the broad spaces of eternity.” Ultimately, as understood by Ratzinger, the human person “is in need of liberating ‘removal’.”⁷⁶ In the human person’s existential situation— not totally corrupt but nonetheless fallen – the *noble form* is not immediately visible: “we all stand in need of a true sculptor who removes what distorts the image; we are in need of forgiveness, which is the heart of all true reform.”⁷⁷ Ratzinger says the Church “is not a communion of those ‘who have no need of the physician’ (Mark 2:17) but a communion of converted sinners who live by the grace of forgiveness and transmit it themselves.”⁷⁸

too” (83-4). The psalmist’s tradition that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Ps 111:10) means that being able to sin belongs to the existential situation of humanity since the Fall, and this “risk” is, as it were, the ontic-ground of a properly ordered fear. The Christian task, Ratzinger says, is to purify fear and build up the right kind of courage to deal with the ultimate fear of death which is an alarming fear surrounding the finiteness of human life: “Anyone who loves God know that there is only *one* real threat for man, the danger of losing God. . . . Anyone who abandons God in order to be free from this true fear comes under a tyranny of fear without hope” (85).

⁷⁶ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 148.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Ratzinger says the Church’s role in forgiveness can be seen from the three decisive steps of its birth in the New Testament (cf. *ibid.* 148-9). Firstly, consigning the keys to Peter (Matt 16:19) reveals that the Church’s core authority is “an authority to let in, to bring home, to forgive.” Secondly, the same reality is again revealed during the course of the Last Supper in the inauguration of the new communion from and in the Body of Christ. It is made possible in the shedding of the Lord’s blood “for many, for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28). Finally, when Jesus establishes the communion of peace with the Eleven, he does it by giving them the authority of forgive (John 20:19-23).

⁷⁸ Ibid., 149. An attentive reading of the New Testament reveals, to Ratzinger’s mind, that forgiveness is neither a magic formula nor a superficial forgetting of the “crust of dirt and filth that has overlaid the image” (*ibid.*). Forgiveness can never be licence to forget the unpleasant aspects of human nature. In actual fact, Ratzinger invokes the image of God as “Sculptor” to demonstrate that forgiveness is the acknowledgement of a real process of change being carried out: “[t]he removal of guilt truly *gets rid* of something; the proof that forgiveness has come in us is that penance springs up from us” (*ibid.*). Ratzinger believes the Church’s task today is to remind the world of the seriousness of the action of forgiveness and to reintroduce the world of

Finally, through the removal of the “dust and filth that disfigure God’s image in me,”⁷⁹ Ratzinger returns to the ecclesial action of pilgrimage in the meeting of the “I” and all the other “I’s” who are likewise in God’s image. This is true above all in the configuration of each believer to Christ – *the* image of God without qualification. Ratzinger looks to the pauline imagery of giving birth and dying (cf. Gal 2:20; 2Cor 5:17) to demonstrate that the Church is gradually being formed and brought to fullness by the freely undertaken renewal of each individual member who is incorporated into it. This captures his understanding of the structure of prayer as an affirmation of the Other who becomes my motivating centre. In this way, the Church at worship is a school of human freedom – true to both its existential, and its as yet-to-be realised nature:

Ich bin meiner Isolation entrissen, in eine neue Subjektgemeinschaft aufgenommen; mein Ich ist dem Ich Christi eingefügt und damit demjenigen aller meiner Brüder verbunden. Nur von solcher Tiefe der Erneuerung des Einzelnen her wird Kirche, wird Gemeinschaft, die im Leben und Sterben verbindet und trägt. Erst wenn wir das ganz bedenken, sehen wir die Kirche in der rechten Größenordnung.⁸⁰

6.4. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates three avenues of approach in Joseph Ratzinger’s ecclesiology, whereby worship is not a word restricted to formal liturgies or expressions of popular piety. Instead, it is extended to a wide-ranging vision inclusive of several aspects of relationality. In the first place, when human beings come to know the source of power, love and goodness in their world as trustworthy, worship becomes an act of communication and

human beings to its Sculptor without whom it cannot be renewed. Encountering one’s Sculptor, albeit initially painful and counter-intuitive, is the source of true joy. Forgiveness is “an active-passive event” which, in light of human freedom, means that the pain of conversion becomes an active self-transformation, where “[f]orgiveness and penance, grace and personal conversion are not contradictions but two sides of one and the same event” (ibid.). The integrated event of reconciling renewal in each of us is made up of the *passive* reception of forgiveness and grace as a gift from outside oneself, and the *active* deed of penance and personal conversion: “This fusion of activity and passivity expresses the essential form of human existence, for all our creativity begins with our having been created, with our participation in God’s creative activity” (ibid.).

⁷⁹ Ibid., 153.

⁸⁰ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 147 (“I am wrested from my isolation and incorporated into the communion of a new subject; my ‘I’ is inserted into the ‘I’ of Christ and consequently joined to the ‘I’ of all my brothers. Only from such deep renewal of the individual does Church come into being as a communion that binds us together and sustains us in life and death. Only if we think this entirely through do we see the Church in the right order of magnitude” [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 153]).

fellowship, and the Church manifests itself *ad intra* as sphere of freedom by becoming a living sacrifice of praise. Secondly, the Church at worship effects a “revolution” within the individual who prays. This motivates them to live for the other person, even to the point of forgetfulness of the self. Thirdly, when worship is understood in this comprehensive way, it impacts on the Church as sphere of freedom by engaging it in a pilgrimage through history. At this *ad extra* level, above and beyond the Church’s inner workings, each pilgrim who participates in liberating *ablatio* reminds the world of God’s will for humanity, and the boundaries and possibilities of human nature.

Furthermore, the self-sacrificial posture of the Church at worship depends on the act of faith grounded in trust and obedience. As a result, humanity can joyfully participate in the discovery of the merits of creaturehood. The Church must avoid tendencies that diminish the possibility of believers being enabled to assent in trust and obedience to God’s will. Its authority derives from God, in whom power and love converge. When people feel unable to trust, they easily become suspicious of any advances made in their direction. On the other hand, knowing one is accepted and loved by the “Other” who is trustworthy, makes it possible for one to freely and authentically love all others in an act of obedience of the will.

For Ratzinger, the Church that suggests itself in worship is the pilgrim fellowship of faith together with Christ who is its source. As the depository of a new mode of vision, worship grows into a responsibility – a call for detachment from one’s “ego” and for the assumption of a life of fellowship and ecclesial identity amongst other pilgrims for the good of the “whole.” In this movement towards responsibility, the creaturehood of humanity is part of the tension between nature and grace – a pre- and post-Copernican mix, so to speak. Ratzinger says the finding of the true self begins with the realisation that we suffer from a “deficiency” belonging to a pre-Copernican phase of faith. Hence true faith is the recognition of the need to be given something. The sacramental framework of the Church is operative

here because technical and scientific knowledge is not enough to sustain the human intellect. However, on the other hand, ecclesio-knowledge – collective listening and comprehension of the primacy of God’s will – while necessary, can seem to pose a threat to individual freedom. In Mary, Ratzinger finds a model of someone whose self-giving throws light on the Cross as the place of God’s action. From the human perspective, she exemplifies the place of completion of the communion of wills. The task for the Church is to remind the human race that trust in God is a virtue that liberates; pilgrimage focused on the divine will is the way of truth; and renewal in the world comes about through acknowledging the seriousness of love in the divine gift of forgiveness.

At the heart of this two-fold worshipping dynamic of trust and obedience, Ratzinger envisages a pilgrimage of purification for the human person. Humanity is purified along the way in order to attain its full identity and dignity. During the pontificate of Benedict XVI, human ecology manifested itself as one of the highlights of Ratzinger’s ecclesiology of liberation. It was a call for the “laws” that govern creaturehood to be respected. Like one of the early Church Fathers, the Pope took the language of the day and *christianised* it by imbuing the contemporary compulsion towards environmental protection with the equally valid necessity of human protection.

In all this, Ratzinger argues that the Church at worship is the Church visibly transparent to the source of its authority, but without being tempted to take the power of the institution into its own possession. In other words, Ratzinger believes the Church can be a sphere of growth in authentic freedom for the individual believer, as well as for local Church communities and for the world at large, provided the “I” of the self does not replace the common “I” of Christ as the source of ecclesial authority. Taken together, the concrete implication would be a genuine catholicity – the turning of the self over to the “whole” so that the Church lives as a “home” that may be encountered everywhere. In this context,

ecclesial office must be a “window” and not a “wall” within the local Church while, at the same time, the individual believer is called to be a “foreigner” in that same Church. For example, he maintains that if authority is misappropriated in the Church, “the officeholder who should personalise the institution and make it present in his person becomes a wall instead of a window, opposes it instead of letting it become, in the suffering and struggle of his own faith, something close to us worthy of trust.”⁸¹ In any discussion regarding freedom in the modern context, it will be important to capture the essence and direction whereby the office-holder should order their office. This will be taken up in Chapter 7 in relation to the episcopal office since this is the form of office which Ratzinger most frequently reflects upon.

⁸¹ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 67.

CHAPTER 7: The Church and the Office of ἐπίσκοπος: Overseeing Growth in Authentic Freedom

7.0. Introduction

In recent decades, and particularly since the Second Vatican Council, ecclesiology has come to view episcopal ministry in terms of the interplay between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood. In 2003, *Pastores gregis* (PG) pointed to three “layers,” so to speak, operative in this interplay, namely witness, holiness, and responsibility. Indeed, a sign of the importance being attached to the interplay was the language of *perichoresis* – a term more commonly associated with trinitarian theology:

The interplay between the common priesthood of the faithful and the ministerial priesthood, present in the episcopal ministry itself, is manifested in a kind of "perichoresis" between the two forms of priesthood: a perichoresis between the common witness to the faith given by the faithful and the Bishop's authoritative witness to the faith through his magisterial acts; a perichoresis between the lived holiness of the faithful and the means of sanctification that the Bishop offers them; and finally, a perichoresis between the personal responsibility of the Bishop for the good of the Church entrusted to him and the shared responsibility of all the faithful for that same Church.¹

Ratzinger’s own reflections on episcopal ministry are very much in keeping with these emerging features of the Church’s self-understanding. Chapter 6 considered in detail the life of sanctification in the context of human freedom as understood by Ratzinger. The remainder of Section III will focus more closely on the notions of responsibility and witness. Chronologically, and logically, this present chapter follows from the study of the Church at worship and precedes the examination of the Church as witness – the former mainly concerned with the Church *ad intra*, the latter with the Church *ad gentes*. This scheme corresponds to the way in which Ratzinger envisages the vocation of the ἐπίσκοπος. To his

¹ John Paul II, *Pastores gregis*, 10. The apostolic exhortation points out that “the Bishop is above all else, like every other Christian, a son and member of the Church. . . . Together with all the faithful he shares in the incomparable dignity of the children of God, a dignity to be lived out in communion and in a spirit of gratitude and fraternity. On the other hand, by virtue of the fullness of the sacrament of Holy Orders, the Bishop is also the one who, before the faithful, is teacher, sanctifier and shepherd, charged with acting in the name and in the person of Christ.” Moreover, in its chapter on the hierarchical constitution of the Church, *Lumen genitum* says: “those ministers, who are endowed with sacred power, serve their brethren, so that all who are of the People of God, and therefore enjoy a true Christian dignity, working towards a common goal freely and in an orderly way, may arrive at salvation” (LG, 18).

mind, there are elements of responsibility pertaining to both the internal life of the Church, and the mission to the nations, for which the episcopal ministry is accountable. The bishop is called to exert a centrifugal effect upon the Church towards the society in which it lives. He thereby oversees the centripetal movement of all creation in Christ. This recalls the famous dictum of Augustine, “*Vobis enim sum episcopus; vobiscum sum christianus.*”²

This chapter follows the responsibilities of bishops from Ratzinger’s perspective on freedom. It affords this study the opportunity to open up some of the main issues pertaining to the Church and freedom today, namely, religion liberty, the status of reason, the attitude towards authority, the flow of charisms in ecclesial life, and the readiness to suffer for the sake of the truth. This takes us into a number of important areas confronting the Church today in its commission to oversee the work of God’s plan of salvation. Therefore, while the episcopal ministry is the subject of this chapter, it is the subject only in so far it as it creates the conditions enabling the Church as a whole to be the sphere of growth in authentic freedom. It becomes clear that a bishop’s immediate physical presence is not required in every geographical space where there is to be the realisation of human liberation. For Ratzinger the link between the bishop and authentic freedom is indirect.³ He believes the bishop is the servant of God’s will by being an indispensable custodian of the sphere chosen for the realisation of God’s definitive union with creation.

7.1. Custodian of Religious Liberty

One characteristic of the episcopal ministry upon which Ratzinger reflects is the bishop as custodian of religious liberty. He points out that the Gospel is for all and the

² Augustine, *Sermo* 340, 1: *PL* 38, 1483 (“For you I am a Bishop and with you I am a Christian”).

³ The Greek word which later becomes associated with the episcopal office aptly captures Ratzinger’s vision of the figure of the bishop in the growth of authentic freedom. The bishop is one who is literally looking (σκοπος), or a watcher (σκοπός) on (ἐπί). The theme of freedom is a paradigmatic example of this ministry. On the one hand, the indirect nature of the bishop’s ministry gives requisite space for each person to formulate their free response to God. While, on the other hand, the bishop is charged with continually reminding the Church, and society in general, of the need for “oversight” motivated by the responsibility of care for others (Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:2; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet 2:25; cf. Heb 13:17).

responsibility of the apostles' successors is to guarantee this possibility. From the perspective of episcopal ministry, he says this principle is true in two ways: there is the right to be able to choose one's faith freely, and secondly, the right to live as a believing Christian.⁴ From the bishop's perspective, this implies the need to preserve the integrity of the Christian faith and to bear a responsibility for the public affairs of society. The Church, therefore, must be attentive to the claims of religious freedom and, consequently, to the free space that must be safeguarded in order to articulate the right to believe:

In diesen Zusammenhang gehört auch das klassische Thema der *libertas ecclesiae*, das Recht der Kirche, Kirche zu sein und auf die ihr eigene Weise zu leben. Das Recht zu glauben ist der eigentliche Kern menschlicher Freiheit; wo dieses Recht verfällt, folgt der Verfall aller weiteren Freiheitsrechte mit innerer Logik nach. Dieses Recht ist zugleich die eigentliche Freiheitsgabe, die der christliche Glaube in die Welt getragen hat.⁵

Ratzinger discusses the right to be able to choose one's faith freely from the perspective of the Christian religion. He says it is the Church's responsibility to present the objective content of faith in a full and authentic manner so that, in effect, one can make a properly informed decision with regard to it. Nevertheless, he says it is always an important task to strike the balance between the unity of faith and the freedom of theology because "what is at stake is, on the one hand, the fundamental right of the faithful to the authentic, unadulterated faith, and, on the other hand, the right to a faith that is presented in contemporary thought patterns and language."⁶ For him a purely institutional understanding

⁴ See *DH*, 2-15.

⁵ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 181 ("Pertinent to this also is the classical theme of *libertas ecclesiae*, the Church's right to be Church and to live in the way that is her own. The right to believe is the real core of human freedom; when this right is forfeited, it follows logically that all further rights and freedoms fail. This right is at the same time the authentic gift of freedom that the Christian faith has brought into the world" [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 192]). Ratzinger goes on to say that despite the common opinion to the contrary, *libertas ecclesiae* cut asunder for the first time the identification of state and religion – "depriving the state of its totalitarian claims, and, with its distinctive character vis-à-vis the governmental sphere, the faith has given man the assurance that his own being with God and in the presence of God is reserved for him, an assurance in which God calls him with a name that no one else knows (Rev 2:17). Freedom of conscience is the core of all freedom" (ibid.). See *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s. v. "libertas ecclesiae," <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/339325/libertas-ecclesiae> (accessed 6 November 2011).

⁶ Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 192. On occasion in recent years, Ratzinger has pointed out that the task of representing the content of faith must become a priority because many of its concepts can seem outmoded to the present generation. He views it as a challenge of "translation," and *Verwesentlichung* . . . *das*

of Church remains superficial, while a purely sociological understanding causes one to always be frustrated by individual people or particular events. Consequently, he believes that if we want to see the Church in its proper liberating perspective, “we must look at her . . . above all from the standpoint of her liturgy. That is where she is most herself; that is where she is ever and ever again touched and renewed by the Lord. For in the liturgy we must in fact live the Church by starting from the Holy Scripture, from the sacraments, from the great prayers of Christendom.”⁷ In the liturgy, he says, the Church is a “living organism, whose life cycle derives from Christ himself.”⁸

Chapter 6 has already identified the emphasis which Ratzinger puts on the Church at worship as a school of authentic freedom. The bishop is to make this a possibility in the life of the Church. The motive that ought to inform the episcopal task in this regard is the possibility of participation in the unadulterated faith and sacraments of the Church.⁹ This grounds access to a worshipping posture that grounds the basis for divinisation and true freedom:

In der Kirche geht es um Freiheit im tiefsten Sinn des Wortes, um die Eröffnung der Teilhabe am göttlichen Sein. Die grundlegende Freiheitsordnung der Kirche muß es daher sein, daß Glaube und Sakrament, in denen diese Seinsteilhabe vermittelt wird, ungeschmälert und unverfälscht zugänglich sind. . . . Nur so wird das Grundrecht der Gläubigen gewahrt, den Glauben zu empfangen, die Liturgie des Glaubens zu feiern und nicht der Privatmeinung der Amtsträger ausgeliefert zu sein.¹⁰

Grundlegende (“essentialisation” of the basics) of the Christian faith. See Ratzinger, *Gott und die Welt*, 383. See also Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 63,135-6.

⁷ Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 343. For his comments on overbearing institutionalism in the Church, see *Salt of the Earth*, 173,192; *God and the World*, 361; *Ratzinger Report*, 66-7.

⁸ Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 343.

⁹ With due regard for Can. 843 of the *Code of Canon Law* regarding the proper disposition and preparation for the reception of the Church’s sacraments, Ratzinger is echoing here the right of the faithful to be assisted in their worship by their Pastors. It is specifically mentioned that such assistance includes the spiritual riches of the Church, especially the word of God (cf. Can. 213 and 214). See also CCC, 1269.

¹⁰ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 180 (“The Church is concerned with freedom in the deepest sense of the word, with opening up the prospect of participation in divine being. Hence the Church’s fundamental ordinance with regard to freedom must be that the faith and the sacraments, in which this ontological participation is communicated, are accessible in an undiminished and unalloyed form. . . . Only in this way is the fundamental right of the faithful safeguarded: the right to receive the faith and to celebrate the liturgy of the faith, and not to be at the mercy of the private opinion of those in ecclesiastical authority” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 180]). In this context, *libertas ecclesiae* copperfastens the right of people to the Church’s liturgy in the public space. With this freedom, the Church can present an authentic, unadulterated faith

With regard to the bishop's responsibility for the public affairs of the world, Ratzinger links this role with Christianity's claim to truth. He claims to have reflected at length on the idea of the truth of Christianity being used in a way that demonstrated "sheer arrogance . . . and even a lack of respect for others."¹¹ After much reflection on the issue, he has come to the conclusion that "if we abandon the concept of truth, then we abandon our foundations."¹² He says the basic claim of Christianity is to tell the truth that enlightens us about God, the world, and ourselves. His stance on this aspect of religious liberty in society seems to be influenced not only by the religious persecution in the Europe of his own formative years, but also by the on-going, sometimes quite subtle persecution of religion in the drive towards the primacy of the secular in societies increasingly portrayed as post-Christian. Ratzinger is convinced that humanity "is capable of truth" which "comes to rule not through violence but rather through its own power."¹³ However, he balances this out by emphasizing that "Christianity works only *indirectly*, through men, through their freedom, on the shaping of the world. It is not itself already the establishment of a new political and social system, which would banish calamity [emphasis added]."¹⁴ Ratzinger says that the Church, by not conforming to a uniform world-view, is free to remain a "counterpole; she is present as a

to the human person who, as the Second Vatican Council states, "has the right to seek the truth in religious matters so that, through the use of appropriate means he may prudently form judgements of conscience which are sincere and true" (*DH*, 3). In this regard, Ratzinger says the freedom required by the Church is exemplified in the nature of the Vatican State and the Pope's need for freedom in his ministry: "the Vatican State . . . is in fact only a provisional arrangement. The Pope does not strictly need to have a state – but he does need freedom, a guarantee of secular independence; he cannot stand in the service of some government" (Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 381). After becoming Pope himself, Ratzinger commented on the freedom which binds people to the petrine ministry. The Pope, he says, does not possess coercive power: "his 'power' exists only to the extent that there is conviction, that people realise that we belong together and [that] the Pope has a task that he has not given himself. It is only when there is [such] conviction that the whole enterprise can succeed. Only through the conviction of the common faith can the Church maintain a common life" (Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 138). Hence while the Pope is precisely one who does not create his program of governance, he "incarnates this constraint laid upon the Church" and, by conviction of faith, is "a protective barrier against arbitrary action" (Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 377, cf. 381).

¹¹ Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 263. See *Light of the World*, 50-51.

¹² Joseph Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 263. He has provided an extended analysis of the cultural issues that challenge Christianity's claim to truth in *Truth and Tolerance*, 138-258. On the issue of the search for truth which is often set against the present-day assumption that the possession of truth is an arrogant presumption, see this dissertation § 8.3.

¹³ Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 51.

¹⁴ Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 220.

worldwide communion, as a force against repression.”¹⁵ In light of the twentieth-century’s experience of coercive regimes, Ratzinger insists the Church “gives men a place of freedom and sets a sort of ultimate limit to oppression.”¹⁶ Furthermore, in a cultural milieu where the authority of the natural sciences is predominant and the questions essential to humanity are often side-lined into the subjective realm, Ratzinger says the courage to recognise truth is essential, as is “in all humility . . . knowing [one’s] own fallibility, [so as to] seek to be a co-worker of the truth.”¹⁷

Ratzinger wants to stress the fact that the “indirect” role of the Church in the civic well-being of a society must be understood in a very precise way, for otherwise the bishop would endanger the principle of religious freedom as enunciated by the Second Vatican Council. Religious freedom requires the bishop to acknowledge the autonomy of earthly things and the competence of the State. In this way a bishop “avoids mixing faith and politics and serves the freedom of all by refusing to allow faith to be identified with a particular form of politics. The Gospel prescribes certain truths and values to politics, but it does not respond to concrete questions concerning particular political and economic issues.”¹⁸ He says that all members of the Church are bound precisely by the autonomy of earthly realities because “[o]nly in this way does the Church remain an open space of reconciliation among the parties; only so is she preserved from becoming a party herself.”¹⁹ This indirect contribution of the Church to society is based upon a freedom which, transparent to truth and goodness, safeguards against theocracy on the one hand, and ensures that the Church remains authentic “salt” and “light,” on the other.²⁰

¹⁵ Ibid., 165.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 263.

¹⁸ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 101.

¹⁹ Ibid., 102. See *GS*, 36; *AA*, 7.

²⁰ See Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 272. As Pope, Benedict XVI proposed a noteworthy analysis of the pressure sometimes being exerted on the Church in the area of religious liberty. He suggests that a “negative tolerance” –

In parallel with the two directions he proposes for the analysis of the theme of religious freedom, i.e. to right to choose one's faith freely and the right to live as a believing Christian, Ratzinger distinguishes two corresponding directions in the bishop's ministry: to bear responsibility for presenting the truths of the Christian faith in their integrity, and to bear due responsibility for the public affairs of the world. Against coercive forces and oppressive ideologies which rise up from time to time within human history, the bishop is called to be the *ἐπίσκοπος*, the overseer of a sphere where growth in authentic freedom is communicated as a permanent and viable manifestation of God's will for the human person. In large measure, the theme of religious liberty has a bearing on all the other characteristics of the bishop's ministry which Ratzinger highlights, and which the remaining subdivisions of this chapter will examine: advocating creative reason and bearing magisterial authority as *ad intra* prerequisites for presenting the integrity of the faith; testifying to a readiness to suffer and a willingness to bear the prophetic voice in the Church as *ad extra* consequences of maintaining a dialogue with the cultural and historical progress of human civilisation.

i.e. the imposition upon everyone of well-established modes of thought in the name of tolerance – is growing and is resulting in the abolition of tolerance. From the Christian perspective, this would potentially lead to the Church being unable to meaningfully express itself visibly, as well as the suppression of the living-out of the tenets of one's religious convictions. One can point to the closure of Catholic adoption agencies in the UK as a concrete example of this phenomenon. The Pope says the following: "When, for example, in the name of non-discrimination, people try to force the Catholic Church to change her position on homosexuality or the ordination of women, then that means that she is no longer allowed to live out her own identity and that, instead, an abstract, negative religion is being made into a tyrannical standard that everyone must follow. That is then seemingly freedom – for the sole reason that it is liberation from the previous situation. In reality, however, this development increasingly leads to an intolerant claim of a new religion, which pretends to be generally valid because it is reasonable, indeed, because it is reason itself, which knows all and, therefore, defines the frame of reference that is now supposed to apply to everyone. In the name of tolerance, tolerance is being abolished: that is a real threat we face. The danger is that reason – so-called Western reason – claims that it has now really recognised what is right and thus makes a claim to totality that is inimical to freedom. I believe that we must very emphatically delineate this danger. No one is forced to be a Christian. But no one should be forced to live according to the 'new religion' as though it alone were definitive and obligatory for all mankind" (Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 52-53).

7.2. Advocate for Creation and Creative Reason

Alongside wanting bishops to be custodians of religious liberty in society, Ratzinger calls for the episcopal ministry to be an advocate for creation and creative reason.²¹ This insight is grounded on the fact that Ratzinger does not deem the autonomy of earthly realities absolute while, at the same time, he is conscious that the boundary between civil society and anarchy becomes dubious when a certain ethical minimum is disregarded. When Benedict XVI addressed leaders of civil society in Westminster Hall in 2010, he laid out the Roman Catholic perspective on ethical foundations for political choices and the avoidance of a crass rationalism:

The Catholic tradition maintains that the objective norms governing right action are accessible to reason, prescinding from the content of revelation. According to this understanding, the role of religion in political debate is not so much to supply norms, as if they could not be known by non-believers – still less to propose concrete political solutions, which would lie altogether outside the competence of religion – but rather to help purify and shed light upon the application of reason to the discovery of objective moral principles. This “corrective” role of religion *vis-à-vis* reason is not always welcomed, though, partly because distorted forms of religion, such as sectarianism and fundamentalism, can be seen to create serious social problems themselves. And in their turn, these distortions of religion arise when insufficient attention is given to the purifying and structuring role of reason within religion. It is a two-way process. Without the corrective supplied by religion, though, reason too can fall prey to distortions, as when it is manipulated by ideology, or applied in a partial way that fails to take full account of the dignity of the human person. Such misuse of reason, after all, was what gave rise to the slave trade in the first place and to many other social evils, not least the totalitarian ideologies of the 20th century. This is why I would suggest that the world of reason and the world of faith – the world of secular rationality and the world of religious belief – need one another and should not be afraid to enter into a profound and ongoing dialogue, for the good of our civilisation.²²

To Ratzinger’s mind, the content of the natural law can never simply be produced at will by the State because what is in itself wrong cannot be made right by a legislative act. In other words, the natural law is antecedent to civil legislative acts and such acts respect human persons to the extent that they respect the natural law written into creation. The Church is

²¹ See Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 102. See also Benedict XVI, Message for the World Day of Peace 2011, *Religious Liberty: The Path to Peace* (1 January 2011), 8: AAS 103 (2011), 52-53.

²² Benedict XVI, Meeting with the Representatives of British Society, including the Diplomatic Corps, Politicians, Academics and Business Leaders (17 September 2010): AAS 102 (2010), 636-37.

required to step forward, Ratzinger says, as an advocate of creation and of creative reason and the bishop has a prominent role to play in this regard. The prescribing of the bishop's role here contains an undeniable correspondence to Ratzinger's endorsement of human ecology:

[. . .] obliegt den Christen die Aufgabe, die Hörfähigkeit für die Stimme der Schöpfung zu erhalten. Der Bischof muss darum ringen, dass die Menschen nicht taub werden für das Grundlegende, das Gott in jedes Herz eingeschrieben hat, in die Natur des Menschen und der Dinge selbst. Der heilige Gregor der Große hat einmal sehr schön gesagt, der Bischof müsse eine "Nase" haben, das heißt das Gespür, das ihn unterscheiden lässt zwischen positiv und negativ [*Hom. In Ezech* I,11,7: PL 76, 909A]. Das gilt innerkirchlich und gilt der Welt gegenüber. Gerade der Respekt vor dem Eigenen der weltlichen Ordnungen verlangt, dass die Kirche auch als Anwalt der Schöpfung auftrete, wo im Gewirre des Selbstgemachten deren Stimme überschrien wird. Der Bischof wird es als seine Verantwortung ansehen, dass die Gewissen geweckt werden und dass in diesen elementaren Bereichen nicht der Eindruck entstehen kann, die Kirche spreche nur für sich selbst.²³

In concrete terms, Ratzinger presents a three-fold interwoven philosophical, christological and ecclesiological approach whereby the bishop, within the mandate of the Church, is an advocate for creative reason. In the first instance, as a λόγος religion (John 1:1; cf. Gen 1:1), Christianity claims that creation is carried out through the "Word." In biblical terms, this means "reason" has a creative power. Ratzinger says that the situation of the unknown God at the Areopagus (cf. Acts 17:27-28) demonstrates the agnostic mentality – people who don't know God in a personal way, but yet feel unable to exclude him. Ratzinger believes the Areopagus scene "presupposes that man is in some sense waiting for God and yet cannot of his own resources reach him, so that he is in need of preaching, of the hand that

²³ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 100 ("[. . .] the task of preserving the capacity to hear the voice of creation falls upon Christians. The bishop must struggle to keep men from becoming deaf to the fundamental principles that God has inscribed in every heart, in the nature of man and of reality itself. St Gregory the Great once made the beautiful remark that the bishop must have a 'nose,' that is, that sense that allows him to distinguish between positive and negative [*Hom. In Ezech. I,11,7: PL 76, 909A*]. This is true within the Church and with regard to the world. The very respect for the proper identity of worldly laws requires that the Church should step forth as the advocate of creation wherever its voice is shouted down in the babble of self-constructed values. The bishop will consider himself responsible for the awakening of consciences and for the obviation of the impression that in these areas of fundamental concern, the Church is speaking for herself alone" [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 102]). For a comprehensive account of Ratzinger's understanding of the relationship between the Church and the State, see Hansjürgen Verwey, *Joseph Ratzinger – Benedict XVI. Die Entwicklung seines Denkens* (Darmstadt: Primus, 2007), 114-34; Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 80-120; Thomas R. Rourke, *The Social and Political Thought of Benedict XVI* (New York: Lexington Books, 2010).

helps him over into the sphere of his presence.”²⁴ In this regard, Christian faith appeals to creative reason as – in Ratzinger’s phrase – “the transparency of creation in revealing the Creator.”²⁵ Therefore, to his mind, “an urgent task for the Church in our century” is for its preaching to engage with “the struggle for the new presence of the rationality of faith.”²⁶ He is clear that faith cannot afford to withdraw into a kind of system of symbols, devoid of reason, which would release an alluringly “homely” feeling of being able to choose a random vision of life with no basis in truth. This would be to maintain a “buffer” or “comfort zone” for the individual who wants to escape the truth of the existential nature of humanity as found in creation:

[Der Glaube] braucht den weiten Raum der offenen Vernunft, er braucht das Bekenntnis zum Schöpfergott, denn ohne dieses Bekenntnis wird auch die Christologie verkleinert, sie redet dann nur noch indirekt von Gott, indem sie sich auf eine besondere religiöse Erfahrung bezieht, die aber notwendig begrenzt ist und eine unter anderen Erfahrungen wird.²⁷

This brings Ratzinger to the second and predominantly christological element of how the Church is of service as advocate for creative reason. Inspired by the text of John 1:18, where it is revealed that the Son makes known the Father in the world, Ratzinger says “the Church has to make [God] more widely known; she has to bring men to Christ and Christ to men, so as to bring God to them and them to God.”²⁸ The Church shows that the face of Christ is God’s “bridge between man and God so that man may become truly himself.”²⁹ However, he says, the teachings about Christ must not linger simply upon a representative

²⁴ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 286.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 290.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 291.

²⁷ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 254 (“[Faith] needs the wide realm of open reason; it needs the confession of faith in the Creator God, for without this confession of faith even Christology is diminished; it then talks only indirectly about God, by referring to a particular religious experience, while this, however is necessarily limited and would then become just one experience among others” [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 291]).

²⁸ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 292.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

cultural figure from religious experience. It is necessary that the full dimensions of the figure of Christ the liberator be upheld.³⁰

Finally, then, the explicit place of ecclesiology emerges when Ratzinger says the Church's task, in every age, is "to show people this path and offer a pilgrim fellowship in walking it."³¹ Chapter 6 has already considered Ratzinger's understanding of the liberating nature of pilgrimage. Now we look at the ecclesial conditions of pilgrimage, so to speak, which the bishop is required to uphold and guarantee. In the first place, pilgrimage is a rich description for the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom: it conveys the knowledge of God's will, growing and deepening within the human person and moving him or her into an authentic dialogical worship-posture with regard to God. As a path demanding the involvement of the whole of one's being, it is the dawning of growth in authentic freedom. Ratzinger proposes the travellers to Emmaus (Luke 24: 13-35) as paradigmatic examples for the pilgrim fellowship path. The scene portrays

[. . .] ein Unterwegssein mit dem lebendigen Wort Christus, der uns das geschriebene Wort, die Bibel auslegt, sie selbst zum Weg werden läßt, auf dem das Herz brennend wird und so am Ende sich die Augen öffnen: Die Schrift, der wahre Baum der Erkenntnis, öffnet uns die Augen, wenn wir gleichzeitig vom Baum des Lebens, Christus, essen. Dann werden wir wahrhaft sehend, und dann leben wir wirklich.³²

In Ratzinger's description of the Emmaus scene, the Church on pilgrimage is comprised of three components: "the fellowship of disciples, the Scriptures and the living

³⁰ The journey of faith which Ratzinger envisages here is demonstrated in the examples of the centurion's confession before the Crucified One (Mark 15:39), or Thomas' confession in the Lord (John 20:28). In Ratzinger's vision, this journey calls us to go the way of the great arc in Matthew from the Annunciation story to the great missionary speech of the risen Lord: God is with us always, to the close of the age (Matt 1:23; 28:20). See also Ratzinger's discussion of the rationale behind the dimensions of the figure of Christ in this dissertation § 3.1.

³¹ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 293. See also *Salt of the Earth*, 264. On the nature of pilgrimage, see this dissertation § 6.3.

³² Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 255-56 ("[. . .] travelling together with Christ the living Word, who interprets for us the written word, the Bible, and turns that into the path, the path along which our heart starts to burn and thus our eyes are finally opened: Scripture, the true tree of knowledge, opens our eyes for us if at the same time we are eating of Christ, the tree of life. Then we become truly able to see, and then we are truly alive" [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 293]).

presence of Christ.”³³ In the broadest terms, fellowship or *communio*, the word of God, and the sacramental presence of Christ become the tasks to be attended to while on this pilgrimage. The bishop, as servant, ensures their possibility for pilgrims. The pilgrimage undertaken by the Church becomes *communio* through the presence of the living Christ in the opening of the scriptures and the breaking of bread in the upper room.³⁴ Because the upper room is not an isolated space but the anticipated wedding feast of the Lamb, Christ leads us not just to God but to one another. Pilgrim fellowship implies, by definition, that isolated autonomy is not God’s will for his people:

Sie muß als Weggemeinschaft mit unseren Sorgen, mit dem Wort Gottes, mit Christus erfahrbar werden und uns auf die Gabe des Sakraments hinführen, in dem das Hochzeitsmahl Gottes mit der Menschheit immer wieder vorweggenommen wird.³⁵

Ratzinger points out that the giving of actual form to this pilgrimage in the concrete individual fellowships of diocese, parish and ecclesial movements is, and remains a central task of the Church. Therefore, the principal individual elements of this travelling require the attention of the bishop and are three-fold: prayer, celebration and reconciliation³⁶ – prayer that promotes the primacy of inwardness, and liberation from activism within the Church³⁷; celebration, especially that of the “Sabbath,” that allows the world to regain the true rhythm of creation, and to rejoice, truly free, in all that is good³⁸; and reconciliation, in the sacrament

³³ Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 293.

³⁴ See this dissertation § 5.3.1.

³⁵ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 256 (“It must become possible to experience this fellowship as a pilgrim fellowship with our cares, with the word of God, and with Christ, and it has to lead us onward to the gift of the Sacrament, in which the marriage feast of God with mankind is ever and again anticipated” [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 294]).

³⁶ See Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 295-98.

³⁷ See this dissertation § 6.1. The importance of the Church at worship is essential to Ratzinger’s presentation of an ecclesiology of liberation, because, in the first instance, prayer is “really what makes the Christian a Christian” (Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 294).

³⁸ See this dissertation § 4.1.4. Ratzinger believes that reclaiming Sunday as the first day of the week and the day of Resurrection is an urgent task for the Church because it is the great family day for the family of God. Furthermore, the experience of celebration is necessary to come to understand the real value of the Church. He points out that the Church cannot be known merely through its committee meetings and discussion documents. To attempt to do so leaves the impression that the Church is “an offense, because she either becomes the object of our own constructive activities, or she appears as something imposed upon us from outside, something alien” (Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 295). Here we can especially see the sacramental framework of Ratzinger’s ecclesiology come to the fore – Church is a gift coming from God and transparent to him. We are free to be pilgrims to the extent that the Church can “vouchsafe [for] us the experience of celebration” and we

of which we are freed from the pride of self-sufficiency and pointed towards a reawakening of joy, even in the midst of the challenges that often seek to overwhelm and bind us.

Ultimately, Ratzinger envisages pilgrimage as an inner journey of reconciliation towards the heights of God. From an ecclesiological perspective, pilgrimage is the discovery, in ecclesio-knowledge, of the primacy of God's will. By virtue of his office, the bishop must be to the fore in service and oversight of this pilgrimage of discovery, always conscious of creating the conditions conducive to prayer, celebration and reconciliation. In Ratzinger's vision, pilgrimage has a strong mystical component and, through coming to know God's will for one's life, it is an essential factor in the discovery of joy:

Die Weggemeinschaft des Glaubens, die wir Kirche nennen, soll eine Gemeinschaft im Steigen sein, Gemeinschaft, in der sich jene Reinigungen an uns vollziehen, die uns der wahren Höhe des Menschseins, der Gemeinschaft mit Gott fähig machen. Im Maß der Reinigung wird das Steigen, das anfangs so mühsam ist, zusehends zur Freude. Diese Freude muß immer mehr aus der Kirche herausleuchten in die Welt hinein.³⁹

7.3. Exercising Magisterial Authority

A third element to which Ratzinger devotes attention is the bearing of magisterial authority in the Church. The matter of how a bishop administers this responsibility is multifaceted. From the contemporary perspective, the debate often pivots around the opposing elements of the autonomy of personal conscience, on the one hand, and the charism of infallibility, on the other. Ratzinger believes that a deeper comprehension of magisterial

assent to it: "We know the Church from within only if we experience her at that moment when she is transcending herself, when the Lord enters into her and makes her his dwelling and, thereby, makes us his brothers and sisters. That is why the dignified celebration of the Eucharist is so important, a celebration in which the Church's dispossession of herself must appear. We do not make the liturgy ourselves. We do not think something up, as profane festival committees do, in the way that quizmasters proudly present something. The Lord comes. The liturgy derives from him, has grown up from the apostles in the faith of the Church; we enter into it; we do not construct it. That is the only way there can be celebration, and celebration – as the anticipation of future freedom – is essential for man" (295-96).

³⁹ Ratzinger, *Weg Gemeinschaft des Glaubens*, 260 ("The pilgrim fellowship of faith, which we call the Church, should be a fellowship in climbing, a fellowship in which those processes of cleansing are effected in us that render us capable of the true heights of human existence, of fellowship with God. In the same measure as we are cleansed, the climbing, which is at first so difficult, rapidly becomes a joy. This joy must more and more shine forth from the Church into the world" [Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 298]).

authority is necessary today in order to overcome the conflicting and polemical nature of much of the discussion in this area.

In recent decades, Ratzinger believes exchanges relating to magisterial authority have been obscured by negative portrayals of the charism of infallibility. However, from the ecclesiological perspective, he points out that, “*auctoritas* cannot be reduced to infallibility.”⁴⁰ In the attempt to re-interpret the frequently held perception of episcopal heavy-handedness, he argues that binding authority, in general, could never be the prerogative of infallibility alone because then everything in society would be oriented to an ethos of the mandatory. That would make validity and invalidity the only measures in society. Such a society would become accustomed to believing that things which do not affect validity are trivial and, ultimately, interchangeable since they fall outside the narrow limit of a legally defined minimalism. In the ecclesial context, where doctrinal decisions are often perceived to exist solely on the grounds of infallibility, the effect over time would be that “there could be no certainty shared by the whole community.”⁴¹ Ratzinger says the gift of making an infallible pronouncement that has been conferred upon the Church should not be withdrawn but it only makes sense when it is “embedded in a vital structure of common certainty in faith.”⁴²

In this regard, Ratzinger highlights the positive development in the *CDF* Instruction *Donum Veritatis (DonV)* with regard to the development of doctrine and the role of the Magisterium in defining the various forms of binding authority. He says that the document

[. . .] sagt – wohl erstmalig in dieser Offenheit –, daß es Entscheidungen des Lehramtes gibt, die nicht ein letztes Wort in der Sache als solcher sein können,

⁴⁰ Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 113.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 112. See also *God and the World*, 356, 378-80; *Salt of the Earth*, 124. In terms of structuring social order, Ratzinger says a healthy society can exist only when its laws are regarded as binding and are issued by the legitimate authority. This is lived even more intensely in the Church: “For a community which is based essentially upon common conviction, *auctoritas* is indispensable where its principal tenets are concerned, and precisely an *auctoritas* whose word can mature and become purer through living development” (Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 113). That there are differing degrees of authority, up to and including the infallible, “does not imply however, that lower-ranking *auctoritas* does not rate as *auctoritas* at all” (*ibid.*).

sondern bei aller grundsätzlichen Verankerung in der Sache zunächst auch ein Signal pastoraler Klugheit, eine Art einstweiliger Verfügung sind.⁴³

In other words, while the kernel of a teaching remains valid, the particulars can stand in need of improvement. Particular aspects of an individual teaching can be superseded after having fulfilled their pastoral function in a given situation. Thus magisterial authority, so inimical to modern sensibilities, is presented by Ratzinger as an example of how *auctoritas* remains indispensable for the health of human relationships, even to the point of being able to hold together the inevitable tension between perpetually valid principles and pastoral circumstances.

Ratzinger expressed the contours of this new approach to authority in his commentary on the 1990 Instruction.⁴⁴ The Instruction itself was largely occasioned by a debate within the Church about the nature of academic freedom for theologians. The presupposition at the heart of *Donum veritatis* is the insight that faith precedes theology. This is a further invocation of the sacramental framework which guides so much of what Ratzinger says in ecclesiology. In this instance, if theology were to abandon the ground of what God has said and thought before us, it would annul its own constitution. He goes further by saying that for the people of God – as recipient of the gift of faith – theology remains a task which is never completely fulfilled in history, nor through the private ideas of an individual theologian:

Die Wahrheit des Glaubens ist nicht dem isolierten einzelnen gegeben, sondern Gott hat mit ihr Geschichte und Gemeinschaft bauen wollen. Sie hat ihren Ort in dem gemeinschaftlichen Subjekt des Volkes Gottes, der Kirche. . . . [Die Kirche] ist als gemeinsames, als Enge der einzelnen überschreitendes Subjekt die Bedingung der Möglichkeit, daß Theologie überhaupt wirksam werden kann.⁴⁵

⁴³ Ratzinger, *Wesen und Auftrag der Theologie*, 94 (“[*DonV*] states – perhaps for the first time with such candor – that there are magisterial decisions which cannot be the final word on a given matter as such but, despite the permanent value of their principles, are chiefly also a signal for pastoral prudence, a sort of provisional policy” [Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 106]).

⁴⁴ See Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 101-7.

⁴⁵ Ratzinger, *Wesen und Auftrag der Theologie*, 92-93 (“The truth of faith, in fact, is not bestowed upon the isolated individual, for God has willed instead to build history and community with it. It has its place in a common subject: the people of God, the Church. . . . Insofar as the Church is a corporate subject which transcends the narrowness of individuals, she is the condition which makes theological activity possible” [Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 104-5]).

When it comes to the issue of the magisterium and theology, the exercise of magisterial authority and the theologian's mission come into contact with each other in a very particular way. As discussed in Chapter 2, Ratzinger believes there is a triangular relationship between the people of God, understood as the bearer of the *sensus fidei* and the common locus of all faith, the Magisterium, and theology which forms a specific ecclesiological frame for dealing with diverse ecclesial vocations.⁴⁶ In response to the issue of academic freedom for theologians, Ratzinger envisages the matrix of bishop, theologian and the people of God as a fruitful formula for the encounter with authority in the Church as it is vested in the Magisterium. He points out that such an encounter should not aim at undermining the competence of the bishop nor the theologian. On the one hand, bishops must exercise the role of the Church's living magisterium, i.e. as "the sole authentic interpreter of the Word of God, written or handed down, by virtue of the authority which it exercises in the name of Christ."⁴⁷ On the other hand, the theologian is at the "service of doctrine, implying as it does the believer's search for an understanding of the faith." This makes theology "something

⁴⁶ See Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 104-5; this dissertation § 1.6. For Ratzinger, differentiating faith and theology is very important. It is a distinction contingent on the authority of the truth and unity of faith across history, and is what allows faith and theology to be in relationship in the first instance: "If the possibility of indicating the essentials of the faith 'without distortion' is necessary to the faith itself, then there must be an authority able to exercise this function. In consequence the Church herself must have a voice; she must be capable of expressing herself as Church and of distinguishing false belief from the true faith. This implies that faith and theology are not identical and that each has its own characteristic voice but that the voice of theology is dependent upon that of faith and oriented toward it. Theology is interpretation and must remain such. When it no longer interprets but, so to speak, lays hands on the substance of the faith and alters it by inventing a new text for itself, it ceases to be theology. . . . Unity rests in faith, while theology is the domain of plurality. To that extent, the very act of fixing the common reference point – faith – makes plurality in theology possible" (92-3). Ratzinger also stresses the dynamic vested in the truth and unity of faith as theology comes to terms with making faith perceptible. He says theology needs to be capable of acknowledging the "plurality" of language inherent in the truth and unity of faith as it traverses history. Otherwise, it will become redundant: "the basic tension between the Old and New Testaments already indicates to what an extent the truth of faith can become accessible in language only within the inner coherence of the whole, and not in separate propositions. If one strikes out the continuity of the subject which organically traverses the whole of history and which remains one with itself throughout its own transformations, nothing is left beyond contradictory speech fragments which cannot subsequently be brought into any relation. The tendency to search for what is most ancient and original behind present developments is the logical conclusion of the loss of the binding element which holds history together and unifies it in the midst of its contradictions. Theology becomes archaeology and busies itself with exhuming the authentic ideal behind what really appears before our eyes as Christianity. Such reconstructed Christianity, however, is always a selective Christianity, which loses the tension and the wealth of the whole. The disjointed pluralism of subjectively minted selective Christianities comes to replace the inner plurality of the symphony of faith" (ibid., 94-5).

⁴⁷ See *DV*, 10.

indispensable for the Church.”⁴⁸ In terms of the interface between these two spheres of competence, it is understandable that the work of a theologian can, by its very nature, invoke a certain tension with the Church’s pastors. Likewise, the triangular vision which Ratzinger espouses, and which is expressed in *Donum Veritatis*, is not without its inner tensions. However, in and of itself, such tensions are not necessarily something negative. In fact, provided the “tensions do not spring from hostile and contrary feelings, they can become a dynamic factor, a stimulus to both the Magisterium and theologians to fulfil their respective roles while practicing dialogue.”⁴⁹

From the perspective of those amongst the people of God who are neither professional theologians nor pastors – the third element of the ecclesiological frame, so to speak – Ratzinger also tries to heal the perception that Church authority is something negative and heavy-handed. In the first instance, he says it is incumbent on the bishop to duly respect the maturity of the laity and provide the conditions and resources whereby they are empowered to courageously witness to, and live out their beliefs in the conduct of daily life. A cross-pressure operating against such collaboration, Ratzinger says, is an ideology of politics which views everything through the aspect of power. Thus, he says, “[i]f I see the Church only under the aspect of power, then it follows that everyone who doesn’t hold an office is *ipso facto* oppressed. . . . I think that this ideology, which suspects that everywhere and always what’s at stake is basically power, destroys the feeling of solidarity not only in the Church but also in human life as such.”⁵⁰ Ratzinger strongly advocates the need to escape from the

⁴⁸ *DonV*, 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 165-66. On 14 February 2013, during a meeting with the clergy of Rome, Benedict XVI delivered a very personal address on his recollections of the Second Vatican Council. He presented an example of the ideology of power politics which he believes to be so destructive. He spoke of the fact that over and above the “real Council of the Fathers” which took place in the twentieth-century, a “virtual Council of the media” was also conducted whose voice at the time was more readily accessible and drowned out, to a large extent, the work of the Council Fathers. The Pope says, this virtual Council, whose influence is waning today, was based on a political hermeneutic. For the media, the Council was a political struggle between power blocs within the Church. The media then took the side of those who seemed most allied to their own perspective on the world. See

notion of power as the Church's ultimate goal and the only category for explaining the world and the communion present within itself. The reason for there being a Church at all, he says, is to impart to us eternal life – true life. He says that were the exercise of power in the Church to descend to the level of a mere association of power politics, it would be nothing but an absurd spectacle.⁵¹

One final point, which as yet is only in its infancy, is found in a contribution which Benedict XVI made in an address delivered to the diocese of Rome in 2009.⁵² In relation to the role of the laity, he said it is no longer acceptable for lay members of the Church to be viewed as “collaborators” of the clergy. Rather, against a backdrop of authentic formation in the vision of the Church as the people of God in the Body of Christ, consecrated and lay people must be recognised as “co-responsible” for the life of the Church, thereby fostering the consolidation of a mature and committed laity. In the world of the future, Ratzinger is convinced that the voice of Christianity will operate within a complex network of various levels of discipleship where not everyone has the same task, but consists of people who live out their faith in society together with those “who represent the central reserve of faith for

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2013/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20130214_clero-roma_en.html (accessed 22 February 2013).

⁵¹ See Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 166; *God and the World*, 275. In the context of the recent phenomenon of lay and clerical representative associations, it is Ratzinger's view that a Church run as if it were made up of two groupings of laity and clergy rests on a false basis: “the notion has formed that [clergy and laity] have to determine together what it is possible to believe today, what kind of Church we should construct. And in doing this we would, so to speak, have to deprive the clergy of their power and to ensure that the laity have their due say” (Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 387). For him, the correct relationship has another basis. On the one hand, the normal form of being a Christian is that of the lay person who reshapes the world by living out the Gospel in society. And, on the other hand, clergy understand their role correctly by standing in obedience to God as guaranteed by the Pope, thereby ensuring that people do not shape the Church in accordance with their own wishes but that it remain in the hands of the Lord. See Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 388.

⁵² See Benedict XVI, Address to the Opening of the Pastoral Convention of the Diocese of Rome on the theme “Church Membership and Pastoral Co-Responsibility,” 26 May 2009, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2009/may/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20090526_convegno-diocesi-rm_en.html (accessed 10 September 2012).

proclamation and for the spiritual life of the Church.”⁵³ This greater attention to the vocation of each person is an important pathway ensuring genuine growth in human freedom.

7.4. Living the Tension between the Prophetic and Hierarchic Charisms

In every generation of the Church’s life, there has to be a coming to terms with the necessary tension between the prophetic and hierarchic charisms. Chapter 5 considered how the *successio* principle ensures the Church does not descend into pneumatic anarchy.⁵⁴ At the same time, however, discernment of the movement of the God’s Spirit is an undertaking which Ratzinger views not merely as a responsibility but as a duty. In this context, he insists that it is beyond doubt that the Christian tradition admits of differing emphases and that “it is necessary constantly to open and broaden the seductive, but unilaterally juridical, conception of Church as an institution by keeping our eyes on the dimension of pneumatology.”⁵⁵ One of Ratzinger’s approaches to the episcopal exercise of authority is from the perspective of this tension, not in terms of the episcopacy opposing other believers but rather *all* believers standing before the truth which makes a claim on the whole of humanity.

In 1962, Ratzinger reflected upon the criteria for justified criticism within the Church. His more recent contributions to this debate were largely occasioned by events that led to the preparation and publication of *Donum veritatis* in 1990. These have been gathered into the book entitled *The Nature and Mission of Theology*.⁵⁶ By looking at Ratzinger’s 1962

⁵³ Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 388. Ratzinger highlights the common vocation of the laity and the Magisterium to serve the good in society: “The Magisterium can credibly and effectively state only what is also present and living in the Church as a whole. And the converse is also true, of course: the living communities of the Church constantly need the encouragement that assures them of their identity and through which they themselves again are then stimulated to live what they are. When we say: ‘The Church must be a force of resistance,’ then we should have in mind precisely this common obligation of Christians as a whole and not merely the Magisterium. As I said, the discernment of spirits – not everything that is modern is bad, not everything that is modern is good – is also, I believe, a very important virtue, without which the Church cannot proclaim her word and perform her service” (Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 273).

⁵⁴ See this dissertation § 5.1.3.

⁵⁵ Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 119. See also *LG*, 4, 12.

⁵⁶ See Ratzinger, *Das Neues Volk Gottes: Entwürfe zur Ekklesiologie*, 249-66. The original article appeared as “Freimut und Gehorsam. Das Verhältnis des Christen zu seiner Kirche” in *Wort und Wahrheit* 17(1962): 409-21. Ratzinger wrote this article at the time of the Second Vatican Council when the need for justified criticism

reflections and their continuation in his more recent considerations, this subdivision presents the bishop as a catalytic figure weighing up the nuances and necessary tensions in the relationship between the prophetic and hierarchic charisms in ecclesial life. If Ratzinger's 1962 reflections may be described as his attempt to come to terms with the prophetic charism of critical protest in the Church from the point of view of the "activist," his 1990 reflections were undertaken more from the perspective of magisterial responsibility. The former dealt largely with the need for a sincere critique of the inner life of the Church, whereas the latter leaves an opening for the responsibility which the Church bears – particularly in the person of the bishop – for the affairs of the world.

In his 1962 essay, Ratzinger laid out five criteria for consideration when one feels impelled to give critical protest or witness within the Church. Discerning one's prerogative in terms of the freedom to protest requires careful consideration of these parameters. However, before specifying them, it is important to recognise that his comments are premised by two observations: the Church as the irrevocable place of God's grace in light of the Paschal Mystery, and the inability of humanity to realise its end through its own resources alone.

In Israel, prophets were freely chosen by God alongside the Temple and hereditary priesthood. The faith placed in the law, worship and institution lived alongside the "free" word of God's prophetic voices. Prophetic criticism protested against the self-sufficiency of institutions who substituted ritual for conversion of human hearts. It also protested against abuses of the divine commission to Israel for selfish ends, thereby safeguarding God's word against human distortion. As a result, prophets met with persecution by those holding power in the establishment but nevertheless the prophetic voices were recognised as the true voice

of the Church was an idea evolving with new force. See Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 101-20.

of God.⁵⁷ With the coming of Christ, temple worship and the prophets have been irrevocably subsumed once and for all into the very person of the Son (cf. John 2:19). As one who suffered and endured till the end because of the repudiation of self-glorification, Christ found himself within the prophetic line – his own body becoming the true self-offering (cf. Heb 10:5ff; Ps 40).⁵⁸

Despite Jesus' remonstrations with the religious status quo of his day, he not only honoured the authority of Israel's teachers to the end (Matt 23:2ff), but completed his task *within* Israel as did the apostolic preaching in the post-resurrection period. It was when the followers of Jesus came to understand that God's alliance with Israel had been conditional upon the keeping of the "whole" Law that there came about a split between the apostles and Judaism which was extraordinarily painful (Rom 9-11). This had been a conditionality based on the letter of the Law, and was beyond solely human capability. Ratzinger argues that because of this painful fragmentation between the apostles and Judaism, the full bloom of the Church's mystery remains to be fulfilled. He believes this confirms the need for legitimate criticism since "the nature of grace being absolute implies, of itself, human inadequacy and the capacity to criticise those to whom it relates."⁵⁹ Therefore, it is impossible to contemplate

⁵⁷ Ratzinger points out that this was the case even with someone like the King of Babylon who became the Lord's "servant" when the destruction of the Temple was to become an act of God's word over and above the purity of pharisaical homage in the sanctuary (Jer 25:9; 26: 1-15).

⁵⁸ Ratzinger suggests that Stephen's preaching (cf. Acts 7:1-53) was an early attempt at a Christian theology that continued in a similar vein to that of the prophets. Stephen's discourse states that God sides with those suffering against the institution. In this regard Jesus is placed on the side of the family of the persecuted which, from the scriptural viewpoint, was the family of the prophets. Jesus is viewed as fulfilling the prophecies, not because several prophecies are attributed to having been fulfilled by him but because he endured suffering to the end for the repudiation of the self-glorification carried on within the levitical institutions. Therefore, Stephen's preaching, while in line with the prophetic stream, introduces the prophetic to a changed context of "always bursting open the ceremonial form to demand from people – instead of the rites – their obedience, their heart," (Ratzinger, *Das Neues Volk Gottes*, 252 [own translation]). Ratzinger repeats these christological fulfilment formulas with regard to the status of the temple and expands on them in *Jesus of Nazareth. Holy Week*, 28-41. He also makes comments on the role of prophecy in *Jesus of Nazareth. From the Baptism in the Jordan*, 1-4, 122-27. See this dissertation § 3.2.1. See also *God and the World*, 210-11, 289-90, 357-62. See also Oscar Cullman, *The Christology of the New Testament*, trans. Shirley C. Guthrie and Charles A.M. Hall (Norwich: SCM Press Ltd., 1963), 13-50.

⁵⁹ Ratzinger, *Das Neues Volk Gottes*, 256 [own translation].

the Church independently of the people in it – an idealised Church divorced from the human element does not bear a truthful resemblance to the actual historical reality:

Die Kirche lebt durch die Menschen in dieser Weltzeit, sie lebt trotz des göttlichen Geheimnisses, das sie in sich trägt, doch auf wahrhaft menschliche Weise. Auch die Institution als Institution trägt an der Last der Menschlichkeit mit; auch die Institution trägt mit an der unheimlichen Eigenmacht des Menschlichen, Strauchelstein zu sein – wer wüßte das nicht? Und dennoch, ja gerade so ist die Kirche, die heilige, die sündige Kirche, Zeugnis und Wirklichkeit der durch nichts zu besiegenden Gnade Gottes, seiner allzeit größeren Huld, die uns mitten in unserer Unwürdigkeit liebt. Gerade in ihrer Schwachheit ist und bleibt die Kirche Evangelium Gottes, Frohbotschaft von einem Heil, das all unser Begreifen und Hoffen übersteigt.⁶⁰

Significantly then, the new christological structure of faith implies that obedience *as* obedience becomes the obligation to bear witness, to strive for the integrity of the Church, and to counter the descent into Babylon. The prophetic line in the Church, then, is irrevocably transformed from that which previously existed. The Good News is that anguished humanity is in need of, and able to receive grace from an irrevocable source through the law of

⁶⁰ Ratzinger, *Das Neues Volk Gottes*, 259-60 (“The Church lives through people in this world in a truly human way, despite the divine mystery which it carries within itself. The institution as institution also bears the burden of humanity, and the institution bears the uncanny power of human self-possession to be the stumbling block – who does not know that? And yet, even so the Church remains the holy and sinful Church, witness and realisation of the fact that nothing conquers God’s grace, his ever-greater benevolence that loves us in the middle of our unworthiness. Especially in its weakness, the Church is and remains God’s Good news, glad tidings of a salvation which exceeds all our understanding and hope” [own translation]). To help explain this holy-sinful dynamic, see *Das neues Volks Gottes*, 257-61, 62-63, where Ratzinger takes the example of Peter and the exegetical difficulty of the close proximity of Πέτρος (“Rock”), Σατανᾶ (“Satan”) and σκάνδαλον (“stumbling block”) in the Gospel of Matthew. He says that while this may be a cause of scandal for some, it contains no impossibility *per se* for the biblical way of thinking (cf. Matt 16:18, 23). In real life, so to speak, the story of “rock” and “block” are often intertwined with one another. He alludes to this through the quite dramatic example of the mentality that designates King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon as “God’s Servant” (Jer 25:9; 26:1-15). With regard to Peter, Ratzinger describes the biblical mentality as follows: “When it comes to Peter alone, speaking from ‘flesh and blood,’ then he may be Satan and a stumbling block. But if he is not dependent on flesh, if God takes him into his service, then he can really be God’s instrument, truly the ‘cosmic rock’” (258 [own translation]). Today, Ratzinger says, we seem to have lost the biblical mentality, preferring instead the triumph of man to God and the non-admittance of the power of grace. For example, he says we create an idealised figure of the apostle when we say that the “Peter of the denial” is “Peter prior to Easter” and the “post-Pentecost Peter” is the “rock.” Yet in both it is the identical Peter – stumbling-block and rock in one. Peter who, after Pentecost, compromises his Christian freedom (Gal 2:1f) for fear of the Jews is the same person who, in the face of apostolic apostasy, exclaimed “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). On another occasion, Ratzinger used the image of “stumbling block” to express the prophetic contradiction or “scandal” which the Church is called to exhibit in the world. From the perspective of the Church as witness, Ratzinger says it is always a matter of differentiating the primary from the secondary scandal: “The secondary scandal consists in our actual mistakes, defects, and over-institutionalisations, but the primary scandal consists precisely in the fact that we stand in opposition to the decline into the banal and the bourgeois and into false promises. It consists in the fact that we don’t simply leave man alone in his self-made ideologies” (Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 124).

superabundance.⁶¹ Nevertheless, the prophetic posture remains a difficult, unpopular one unlike the attitude of false prophets who, to Ratzinger's mind, tend to prize "undisputed convenience"⁶² and the avoidance of conflict:

Der Gehorsam, der im Zeugnis des Leidens dennoch Gehorsam bleibt, der Gehorsam, der Wahrhaftigkeit ist, der von der eifernden Kraft der Liebe beseelt wird, ist der wahre Gehorsam, der die Kirche befruchtet hat die Jahrhunderte hindurch und sie immer wieder zurückgeführt hat aus der babylonischen Versuchung an die Seite ihres gekreuzigten Herrn.⁶³

Here Ratzinger is drawing upon, and connecting, the themes of truth and love with the freedom to bear witness within God's vehicle of grace. The Church requires people who understand freedom in a way that allows their humility and obedience to be equal in stature to their passion for truth. Ratzinger goes further and says that the Church can ill-afford persons who unconsciously extol the status quo, but needs, above all else, "people who give witness in spite of all possible misunderstanding and challenge, people who, in one word, love the church more than convenience and the unruffled course of their own destiny."⁶⁴

Consequently, Ratzinger says, one who is impelled to give critical protest, or witness within the Church needs to consider various aspects of the question. In this context he puts forward his five points for consideration.⁶⁵ Firstly, one must consider whether a criticism can be rationally justified. Secondly, one must equally consider the theological importance of the proposed criticism – the deposit of faith itself cannot be opposed.⁶⁶ Thirdly, criticism *itself* must be open to reassessment and criticism *of itself* – subjecting one's own opinions to thorough and candid inspection is an act of obedience that liberates. Fourthly, the person

⁶¹ See this dissertation § 6.2.

⁶² Ratzinger, *Das Neues Volk Gottes*, 263.

⁶³ Ibid. ("The obedience which remains obedient [even] in the witness to suffering is true obedience. True obedience is motivated by the crusading force of love which has enriched the Church through the centuries, and has returned the Church again and again from the Babylonian temptation to the side of her crucified Lord" [own translation]).

⁶⁴ Ibid. [own translation].

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 263-65. See this dissertation § 5.3.3.

⁶⁶ The setting of the deposit of faith as the threshold beyond which theological dissent must not go is a central part of the rationale of *Donum Veritatis*. The fact that we can point to a 1963 essay by Ratzinger on this topic offsets still further the view that he began as a "liberal" and turned into something else after the events of 1968.

contemplating critical witness within the Church needs to bear in mind that an incredulous world surrounds us and personal faith is not immune from this influence. In fact, he says, due to the infirmity of one's own faith, there is the temptation to adopt a self-righteous posture of victimhood, to become frustrated by the undervaluing of one's motives by others. As a consequence, he says, the fragile nature of faith implies that it "can too easily lapse when a person withdraws behind the barrier of criticism, finally deteriorating into the resentment of one misunderstood."⁶⁷ These four criteria encourage varying degrees of discretion of the part of the one voicing a specific criticism of the ecclesial way of life. However, Ratzinger's fifth criterion applies to every member of the Church, regardless of whether or not they feel duty-bound to give voice to a critique of Church life: the search for the truth takes precedence over utility. This requires every member to bear public witness to the forgiveness that transforms the daily life of the Church into its truest self.⁶⁸

In 1990, revisiting his study of the hierarchic and prophetic traditions which the Church inherited, Ratzinger suggested a three-point framework for how the pneumatological cooperates with the institutional in ecclesial life. At the heart of it is the freedom of pneumatological movement which the episcopal ministry must allow for in the governance of the Church. His aim is to contribute to an ecclesiology that moves beyond portrayals of the Church grounded on a dualism based on an implied irreconcilability between the streams of prophetic and apostolic tradition.⁶⁹ The three-point framework helps contextualise the

⁶⁷ Ratzinger, *Das Neues Volk Gottes*, 264 [own translation]). There are echoes here of an issue which Ratzinger frequently revisits, namely the "simple faith" of believers which can contrast with the arrogance of the intellectual elite. "Simple" in this context does not mean simplistic but rather, unpretentious. See his *Zeitfragen und Christlicher Glaube: Acht Predigten aus den Münchner Jahren* (Würzburg: Naumann, 1982), 19-22; *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 322-31.

⁶⁸ Ratzinger is keen to stress that the restrictions which he advocates are not meant to muzzle the prophetic element within the Church. Such restrictions are necessary, only in so far as they serve to integrate free expression into the organism of Christ's body where the law of truth is equal to the law of love. And even in this regard, he says there can be "no absolute rule except for the call to an obedient decision [made] in the knowledge of faith" (Ratzinger, *Das Neues Volk Gottes*, 264).

⁶⁹ See Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 118-20. See also *Ratzinger Report*, 151-53.

perspective required of the episcopal ministry when confronted with critical protest from within the Church.

Firstly, insofar as it is possible to inquire into the deepest essence of the prophetic beneath the great variety of guises in which it reveals itself, Ratzinger says the prophet has a direct mission from God and ultimately can appeal only to this specific commission. Therefore prophecy can be had only at the price of false prophecy. The fact of the matter is that only in retrospect does it become clear who the authentically prophetic voices are.

Secondly, in relation to the Church's magisterial office, it is clear that truly prophetic figures have been given to the Church of every age. Hence the ministerial office "is exposed to the risk of disregarding prophetic voices on account of their being uncomfortable."⁷⁰ In this environment, the discernment of spirits, already a commission of the Church in Thessalonica (cf. 1Thess 5:9ff), remains a permanent task of the Church:

[. . .] müssen wir alle uns immer wieder wachsam durch solche Anrufe befragen lassen und offen bleiben für die Gegenwart des Geistes, die durchaus unbequem sein kann. . . . Zu ihr gehört sowohl das Annehmen berechtigter Kritik oder neu sich auftuender Wege für die Kirche wie der Schutz der Gläubigen vor den Verfälschungen des Evangeliums, vor einer Verwässerung des Glaubens durch Weltgeist, der sich als Heiliger Geist ausgibt.⁷¹

Thirdly, learning to discern can only be "in a deep interior union with Christ, in an obedience to the Word of God which finds ever-new expression in our lives and in an inner rooting in the living Church of all places and times."⁷² Overall, it is evident here again that Ratzinger invokes three primordial characteristics of the bishop's office – ordering God's people towards the sacramental life and encounter with the living Christ, towards obedience

⁷⁰ Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 120.

⁷¹ Ratzinger, *Wesen und Auftrag der Theologie*, 107 ("[W]e must all allow ourselves, in an attitude of vigilance, to be called into question again and again by such challenges and must remain open to the presence of the Spirit, who can be altogether uncomfortable. . . . Both the acceptance of justified criticism and the protection of the faithful from falsifications of the Gospel, from an adulteration of the faith by the spirit of the world which passes itself off as the Holy Spirit, are integral parts of this discernment" [Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 120]).

⁷² Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 120.

to the Scriptures, and towards *communio* in the Church. This recalls very clearly the architecture of pilgrimage for which the bishop is responsible.⁷³ In addition, it behoves us all to admit the constant need for forgiveness and correction. Obedience to what is true and trustworthy is liberation even in spite of the conflict and suffering which it may entail.

In the context of both the institutional and pneumatological aspects of ecclesial life, the claim which the Church makes upon a person is all-embracing, but it becomes fruitful through the equally all-embracing assent of the person to this “claim.” In his view, the question must also become one about the status of the Church’s prophetic voice amidst the movement towards the “standardisation of man” which modern rationalism promotes. Therefore, he argues, it is important for believers to be mindful that critical protest and witness cannot be reserved to the Church’s inner workings alone.⁷⁴ For example, he asks whether the Church is merely one societal voice among others, whose authority is limited by personal conscience, or whether it is of a different order whose freedom is essential for the prosperity of humankind.⁷⁵ His answer rests on the fact that the Church is the sphere in which the human person can come to the meaning of oneself and the human community, above and beyond one’s network of concurrent roles in society – something often believed to convey the order of freedom in the modern age:

Wenn jeder Sozialkörper nur relativ ist, wenn jeder nur Gehorsam innerhalb seines Ordnungsbereichs und der damit verbundenen sozialen Rolle verlangen darf, muß das nicht auch für die Kirche gelten? Muß dann nicht auch sie als Verband unter Verbänden gesehen werden und ihre Autorität entsprechend begrenzt verstehen? Muß dann nicht auch für die Kirche das Gewissen, das Letzte und Eigentliche der Persönlichkeit, oberhalb aller sozialen Rollen als unantastbar und unberührbar gelten? Muß sie sich nicht auf den von ihr vertretenen Interessen- und Bedürfnisbereich, die

⁷³ On the nature of pilgrimage and its structural aspects for which the bishop is responsible, see this dissertation §§ 6.3 and 7.2 respectively.

⁷⁴ For example, he says the Church is called to be a sign of contradiction in the world, but its protest must be rational: “[O]pposition ought not to arise from a taste for contradiction in principle. Nor indeed from a reactionary attitude, nor from an incapacity to adjust to the contemporary world or to face the future. [The Church] must always preserve the capacity to be open to what is good in any period, to whatever new possibilities it opens up – which will always reveal entirely new dimensions of the Word of God” (Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 358).

⁷⁵ See Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 76.

Regelung des religiösen Bedürfnisses zurückziehen? Hier entsteht freilich die umgekehrte Frage: Was ist religiöses Bedürfnis, religiöses Interesse? Ist es ein begrenztes Bedürfnis neben und mit anderen, dem Bedürfnis nach Nahrung, nach Kleidung, nach Erholung, nach beruflicher Erfüllung usw.? Oder ist nicht etwa das religiöse Bedürfnis gerade der Ausdruck der eigentlichen, letzten Bindung des Menschen, in der es nun ganz und gar um ihn selber geht? Und ist dann nicht von selbst die Gemeinschaft, die diesem letzten Bedürfnis zugeordnet ist, in dem die Identitätsfindung des Menschen auf dem Spiele steht, auch der eigentliche Identifikationsort des Menschen, in dem er alle Rollen überschreitet? Wo sonst und wie sonst sollte er sie überhaupt überschreiten und irgendwann und irgendwo dann doch in allen Rollen er selber sein? Muß also die Gemeinschaft, die diesem Bedürfnis zugeordnet ist, nicht notwendig ganz anderer Art sein als alle übrigen Gemeinschaften?⁷⁶

An important point emerges here for Ratzinger about the freedom inherent in the formation of the Church community: “[. . .] unlike the state, to which I belong without my consent prior to joining any association and which, in this sense, is a compulsory corporation, the Church is a voluntary society which is unmistakably characterised by a certain content without which it would be purposeless.”⁷⁷ In general terms – assuming this content exists – the Church “receives her contours from a faith which is defined by content and . . . owing to this, she can embrace only those who are willing and able to accept this content as their own.”⁷⁸ This difficult path of assenting to the content of faith was addressed by Ratzinger in 1962 when he claimed it consisted of “an obedience that comes from truth and leads to truth.”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Ratzinger, *Wesen und Auftrag der Theologie*, 64 (“If every social body is merely relative, if it is entitled to demand obedience only within its legitimate competence and the social role connected with it, must this not also apply to the Church? Must not even the Church, then, regard herself as one association among others possessing a correspondingly limited authority? Must it not follow that the conscience, the ultimate and most intimate element of personhood, counts even for the Church as something inviolable above every social role? Must not the Church keep to the sphere of interests and needs delegated to her, that is, the regulation of the religious need? At this point, however, the opposite question arises: What is this religious need, this religious interest? Is it a circumscribed need alongside of and together with others, like the need for food, clothing, recreation, professional fulfilment and so on? Or is not the religious need the expression of man’s ultimate characteristic bond, which affects his very being in its entirety? Consequently, is not the community ordered to this ultimate need – a need which brings into play the discovery of man’s identity – also ipso facto where man truly finds out who he is and thereby proves himself superior to every role? In what other setting and by what other means could man ever transcend his roles and always maintain his own identity no matter where and when he plays them? In fact, must not the community established to provide for this need be wholly different in kind from all other communities?” [Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 74-75]).

⁷⁷ Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 83.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes*, 263 [own translation].

In the tension between the prophetic and hierarchic charisms, Ratzinger concludes that it is incumbent upon the Church today to trust more readily the binding claim which truth makes on humanity. He repeats his sensitivity to overt institutionalism in the Church by asking whether it could be rebuked “for sometimes having too little confidence in the victorious power of the truth that lives in faith, for barricading itself behind external safeguards, instead of trusting the truth which lives in freedom and has no need of such defences?”⁸⁰ Ratzinger calls for *Freimut*, the “boldness” or “frankness” which is one of the basic Christian attitudes of the New Testament.⁸¹ He says that one cannot but look to Paul’s account of his rebuke of Peter’s conduct with observant Jews in Antioch (cf. Gal 2:11-14). In the exchange Peter stands self-condemned (v.11). Ratzinger says Paul’s attentiveness to the binding force of the truth of the Gospel allowed him, with sincere forthrightness, to demonstrate a boldness which transformed the historical course of the Church’s life. Peter too, Ratzinger points out, was liberated enough by the truth to remain open to Paul’s admonishments:

Wenn es die Schwäche Petri gewesen war, die Freiheit des Evangeliums aus Furcht vor den Jakobusleuten zu verleugnen, so war es seine Größe, daß er die Freiheit des heiligen Paulus hinnahm, der ihm, “ins Angesicht widerstand.” Die Kirche lebt heute noch von dieser Freiheit, die ihr den Weg in die Heidenwelt erstritten hat.⁸²

There is no easy resolution to the tensions raised here. Ratzinger’s view is that by acknowledging the presence of the various charisms that make up the life of the Church, including those in tension, we diminish the possibility of overlooking their inner promptings. The Church as sphere of growth in freedom is, at least to some degree, dependent upon the sincere and collective discernment of its leaders.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 265 [own translation].

⁸¹ See *ibid.*, 266. Ratzinger says that in a time when the thirst for freedom has been palpable and generations have walked out of the Church for the sake of freedom, what a powerful phenomenon it would be if St. Paul’s words were to become a visible expression of the Church’s faith: “Wherever the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2Cor 3:17).

⁸² Ratzinger, *Das neue Volk Gottes*, 265 (“If it had been the weakness of Peter to deny the freedom of the Gospel for fear of James’s people, it was his greatness that he accepted the freedom of St. Paul, who ‘resisted [him] to the face.’ The Church still lives by this freedom, by which it fought its way into the Gentile world” [own translation]).

7.5. Being Ready to Suffer

A fifth element of the bishop's mission pertaining to authentic freedom, to Ratzinger's mind, is the readiness to suffer. In his view, this readiness reveals the concrete content of love and it flows from the love dimension of his ecclesiology – namely, that one will give everything for that which one loves. The inner freedom to reach this level of preparedness can only be on the basis of love. It is an unintended, but anticipated consequence of the bishop's work. In point of fact, the readiness to suffer, in Ratzinger's analysis, is a primary characteristic of the bishop's life, even though the martyrological profile of the Church is most certainly not reserved solely to those in episcopal ministry. By following Ratzinger's analysis of this aspect of the bishop's commission, the manifestation of the martyrological dimension of faith is equally highlighted for all in the Church.

The perspective from which Ratzinger approaches the topic is the question of whether love may have grown cold in the Church, with less people willing to suffer for the good of the other. He looks again to the historical entry of the Church into the world through the pattern of the prophetic:

Die Kirche hat das Erbe der Propheten übernommen, das Erbe derer, die um der Wahrheit willen gelitten haben. Sie ist selbst als Kirche der Martyrer in die Geschichte eingetreten, sie hat als ganze die prophetische Funktion des Leidens für die Wahrheit getragen. So kann das Prophetische nicht tot sein in ihr, es hat vielmehr in ihr seine eigentliche Heimat.⁸³

The readiness, motivated by love, to suffer for the truth is particularly important in the context of the bishop's exercise of governance. Ratzinger fears that the call to personal responsibility in governance is in danger of destabilising because it is becoming detached from this "readiness." It is generally accepted today, he says, that even if a person with responsibility for governance acts with the greatest of ethical responsibility, monarchy – the

⁸³ Ibid., 261 ("The Church took over the inheritance of the prophets, the heritage of those who had suffered for the truth. The Church itself entered history as a Church of the martyrs, and has, as a whole, borne the prophetic function of suffering for the truth. Thus the prophetic is not dead in the Church, but has rather made its true home in it" [own translation]).

sole rule of one person – is always dangerous, because rigid, unilateral positions are always a possibility. Therefore, while acknowledging that governance in society generally has moved towards collegial structures, with their affiliated checks and balances, Ratzinger wants to stress that there are drawbacks here too because responsibility can slip into anonymity: “[i]n the end, no one has to answer for what is done, because it is the group that has decided, and everyone knows that he is not wholly identical with the group.”⁸⁴ Ratzinger’s major concern is that the occasional majorities upon which collegiality depends “are products of chance and are too unstable to be the ultimate source of rights.”⁸⁵ Administrative anonymity, he believes, can weaken the willingness to suffer out of love for the best interests of those whom one governs.⁸⁶

In response to this new situation, Ratzinger says that the Church’s universal nature means that the bishop is called to service in the name of universality – for the “whole.” Therefore, episcopal governance can never be contemporaneous with merely the present moment. In Ratzinger’s ecclesiology, universality is the deepening of the ramifications of the “we” character of the Church of all times. The bishop’s service in this regard, ensures that the Church can never be enslaved by the trends or impulses of a particular generation. The episcopal ministry extends diachronically as well as synchronically with regard to time.⁸⁷

The Church is therefore, in a manner of speaking, a diachronic democracy:

Eine Mehrheit, die sich irgendwo gegen den Glauben der Kirche aller Zeiten bilden würde, wäre keine Mehrheit: Die wahre Mehrheit in der Kirche ist diachron, die

⁸⁴ Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 87.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Episcopal anonymity is inimical to Ratzinger’s understanding of petrine and episcopal ministries. See this dissertation § 5.3.2.; *Salt of the Earth*, 257; *Ratzinger Report*, 61-63.

⁸⁷ See Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 99-100; *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 143; *Salt of the Earth*, 189. To put it another way, Ratzinger says, death is no longer a limit to the Church’s mission: “in this Body [that is, the Church], past, present and future interpenetrate. The bishop never represents himself alone, and he does not proclaim his own ideas; he is an emissary and, as such, is the messenger of Jesus Christ” (Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 99).

Zeiten übergreifend, und nur wenn man auf diese ganze Mehrheit hört, bleibt man im apostolischen Wir.⁸⁸

Therefore, to Ratzinger's mind, the freedom that we rightly expect from and in the Church cannot be achieved by observing the simple majority principle. The Church lives sacramentally in obedience to Christ, not democratically in submission to the will of the prevailing majority:

[Die Freiheit] beruht nicht darauf, dass sich möglichst viele gegen möglichst wenige durchsetzen. Sie beruht darauf, dass niemand seinen eigenen Willen den anderen auferlegen darf, sondern alle sich gebunden wissen an Wort und Wille des Einen, der unser Herr und unsere Freiheit ist.⁸⁹

Ratzinger anticipates here the requirement on the part of all believers for a free personal response in, and amongst, as it were, the diachronic "we" structure of faith because the Church's diachronic "reach" is able to liberate the individual ego from itself while also opening the person to one's authentic future: "[f]aith explodes the self-absolutization of individual presents; by opening them to the faith of all times, it liberates them from ideological delusion and at the same time holds open the future."⁹⁰ A distinguishing characteristic of the bishop's mission in this context is to be "spokesman of this diachronic majority, of the voice of the Church that unites all epochs,"⁹¹ and never merely the voice of one particular epoch or sectorial interest. This view of governance is not intended to clash with the secular authority per se but rather to uphold the voice of the voiceless.⁹² In

⁸⁸ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 97 ("A majority that formed at some juncture against the faith of the Church of all times would be no majority: the true majority in the Church reaches diachronically across the ages, and only when one listens to this plenary majority does one remain in the apostolic 'we'" [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 99]).

⁸⁹ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 141 ("[. . .] freedom does not rest on the fact that as many as possible prevail against as few as possible. Its basis is rather that no one may impose his own will on the others, since all know themselves to be bound to the word and will of the One who is our Lord and our freedom" [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 146]).

⁹⁰ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 99.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² See Ratzinger, *Zeitfragen und Christlicher Glaube*, 22-23, where he further elaborates on what he calls the Church's true "demokratischer Auftrag" or democratic mandate. Those holding ministerial office are the voice of those who do not have a voice in society. A group which Ratzinger is particularly keen to acknowledge, as has become evident in the course of this chapter, are those who are not professional theologians, trained orators or commentators. They depend on the episcopal ministry to represent them and their "simple," unpretentious faith in Christ in the face of cursory fashions and trends.

particular, this creates a certain tension between bishops and the political rulers of the day, and leads to a degree of suffering on the part of the former, who may stand for the minority view.

In terms of the Church's constitution, Ratzinger believes it contains important differences when weighed against the contemporary conception of governance. In fact, he believes that there is a parallelism between the episcopacy and the primacy that expresses "the mutual implication of the personal and the community dimensions" of the Church's constitution.⁹³ He suggests that they provide

[. . .] ein Zusammenspiel des Gemeinschaftsprinzips und der personalen Verantwortung auf allen Ebenen, wenn auch mit ganz unterschiedlicher rechtlicher Qualität. Der Pfarrer ist mit seiner Gemeinde verbunden; der Bischof mit seinem Presbyterium und mit den Mitbischöfen; der Papst mit der Gemeinschaft der Bischöfe. Aber zugleich gibt es eine letzte persönliche Verantwortung, die unabtretbar, unersetzbar und in kein Kollektiv hinein auflösbar ist – auf der Ebene der Pfarrei, auf der Ebene des Bistums, auf der Ebene der Gesamtkirche.⁹⁴

Consequently, Ratzinger strongly advocates viewing Church governance – which used to be regarded as monarchical episcopacy – in terms of personal responsibility:

Die Kirche wird in Personen greifbar und haftbar. Diese Personen können nicht willkürlich entscheiden, sondern sie müssen es tun aus ihrer Gewissensbindung an den Glauben der ganzen Kirche heraus. Die Kirche als Gemeinschaft, die auf dem Gewissen steht, kann es sich leisten, das Gewissen in ihrer Verfassung in Anspruch zu nehmen und darin Gemeinschaft und Personen aneinander zu binden.⁹⁵

The bishop's call to personal responsibility, then, which Ratzinger puts forward, is to be understood in conjunction with a readiness to suffer. Given the centrifugal force, so to speak, operative in the bishop's mission as the one called to robustly represent the local to the

⁹³ Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 86.

⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *Wesen und Auftrag der Theologie*, 75 ("[. . .] a harmonious cooperation between the principle of community and the principle of personal responsibility at every level, even though there is a wide difference in juridical character from level to level. The parish priest is linked to his community; the bishop to his presbyterate and to his fellow bishops; the Pope to the communion of bishops. At the same time, there is a final personal responsibility which cannot be waived, substituted or dissolved into any collective, whether at the level of parish, of the diocese or of the universal Church" [Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 87]).

⁹⁵ Ratzinger, *Wesen und Auftrag der Theologie*, 76 ("The Church becomes tangible and answerable in persons; these persons cannot make decisions arbitrarily but only insofar as they are bound in conscience to the faith of the universal Church. Since the Church is a communion which stands on conscience, for purposes of government, she can legitimately requisition conscience in order to establish a bond between the community and individual persons" [Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, 87]).

universal Church and the universal in the local Church, to serve truth in a world of lobbyists and ideologues, to be an advocate of creation, to live life as a witness and in the obedience of personal responsibility, Ratzinger says it is abundantly clear that the readiness to suffer belongs to the episcopal office and to understand it in any other way is to disregard its essence:

Man redet heute viel von der prophetischen Aufgabe der Kirche. Das Wort wird manchmal mißbraucht. Aber wahr ist doch, daß die Kirche sich nie einfach mit dem Zeitgeist liieren darf. Sie muß die Laster und Gefährdungen einer Zeit ansprechen; sie muß den Mächtigen ins Gewissen reden, aber auch den Intellektuellen, denen auch, die banausisch und gemütlich an den Nöten einer Zeit vorbeileben wollen und so fort. Als Bischof fühlte ich mich verpflichtet, mich dieser Aufgabe zu stellen. Zudem waren die Defizite zu offenkundig: Ermüdung des Glaubens, Rückgang der Berufungen, Sinken des moralischen Standards gerade auch unter den Menschen der Kirche, zunehmende Tendenz zur Gewalt und vieles andere. Mir klingen immer die Worte der Bibel wie der Kirchenväter im Ohr, die die Hirten mit großer Schärfe verurteilen, die wie stumme Hunde sind und, um Konflikte zu vermeiden, das Gift sich ausbreiten lassen. Ruhe ist nicht die erste Bürgerpflicht, und ein Bischof, dem es nur darauf ankäme, keinen Ärger zu haben und möglichst alle Konflikte zu übertünchen ist für mich eine abschreckende Vision.⁹⁶

In contrast to the modern ideals of unfettered liberty, the occupational constraints which Ratzinger outlines here can seem irrelevant to the point of the ridiculous. Nevertheless, Ratzinger wants to insist that “in the exercise of [its] authority [the Church] must also take Christ’s suffering upon herself. What – let’s put it in a purely human way – gives Christ credibility is, in fact, that he suffered. And that is also the credibility of the Church. For this reason, she also becomes most credible where she has martyrs and confessors. And where things go comfortably, she loses credibility.”⁹⁷ Therefore, as is highlighted through the

⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Salz der Erde*, 87-88 (“There is a lot of talk today about the Church’s prophetic task. The word is sometimes misused. But it is true that the Church may never simply align itself with the *Zeitgeist*. The Church must address the vices and perils of the time; she must appeal to the consciences of the powerful and of the intellectuals, not to mention of those who want to live narrow-minded, comfortable lives while ignoring the needs of the time, and so forth. As a bishop I felt obliged to face this task. Moreover, the deficits were too obvious: exhaustion of the faith, decline in vocations, lowering of moral standards even among men of the Church, an increasing tendency toward violence, and much else. The words of the Bible and of the Church Fathers rang in my ears, those sharp condemnations of shepherds who are like mute dogs; in order to avoid conflicts, they let the poison spread. Peace is not the first civic duty, and a bishop whose concern is not to have any problems and to gloss over as many conflicts as possible is an image I find repulsive” [Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 82]).

⁹⁷ Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 193-94.

martyrological structure of the Church in Ratzinger's ecclesiology, the bishop, as overseer of the sphere of growth in freedom, occupies a space in the Church accompanied by suffering and ridicule:

Wer es vor allem als Ehre oder als einflussreiche Stellung ansehen würde, ginge an seinem Wesen vorbei. Ohne die Bereitschaft des Leidens kann diese Aufgabe nicht wahrgenommen werden. Gerade so steht der Bischof in der Gemeinschaft mit seinem Herrn; gerade so weiß er sich als "Diener eurer Freude" (2 Kor 1:24).⁹⁸

7.6. Conclusion

Chapter 7 has examined the ways in which Ratzinger sees the figure of the bishop as a constitutive part of the Church's capacity to uphold and foster the space where growth in authentic freedom becomes a reasonable and realisable prospect. In a societal matrix that is noticeably anti-institutional, the bishop, as the one charged precisely with bearing the necessary tension between the charismatic and institutional aspects of Christian tradition, upholds an office that is latent with potential for being misunderstood. This brings about an element of personal suffering which is to be embraced. Significantly, Ratzinger does not view the diversity of the charismatic and hierarchic charisms as the consequence of two lines of separate, and separating, tradition (cf. Matt 5:17; 11:13; 22:40). In fact, he seems to be suggesting that a healthy tension between the prophetic and the hierarchic is precisely the response to both anti-charismatic and anti-institutional sentiment.

Overarching this view in Ratzinger is that idea that religious liberty is a necessary part of the Church's constitution because through it, those who love the faith give their assent to its contents and work for excellence, both internally and with regard to the ecclesial mission in the world. The striving for a faith that is reasonable, that has a mature relationship with those in authority and that is sensitive to the flow of charisms within the Church are all

⁹⁸ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 100 ("Whoever regarded this office above all as an honour or as an influential position would misunderstand its essential nature. Without the readiness to undergo suffering, this task cannot be exercised. Precisely in this way, the bishop is in communion with his Lord; precisely in this way he knows himself to be a 'servant of your joy' (2Cor 1:24)" [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 103]).

constituent parts of how the Church exists as sphere of growth in authentic freedom. The bishop is at the heart of this in a sacramental way that is transparent to God's plan of salvation. If the apostle is always sent to the ends of the earth (cf. Matt 28:19), then the mission of the bishop cannot be exhausted solely within the Church. This is further enhanced by the fact that "[t]he Church can never stop at the circle she has gathered."⁹⁹ Thus, while the bishop may be an overseer of freedom *ad intra* – of the internal ordering of the Christian life, – his mission also shares in a responsibility for the “whole,” *ad gentes* – as an advocate of the Catholic understanding of the goodness of creation to all peoples of the earth.

In Chapter 6, we saw that Ratzinger's vision is one of believers growing in authentic freedom by means of prayer and a holistic lifestyle of dialogical worship. This ought to be supported by God's gift of the *successio* framework so that believers can trustingly keep to a path of pilgrim fellowship, while simultaneously becoming an attractive invitation to the whole world to actively participate in a life lived in trust and surrender to the truth of human nature. Ratzinger invokes the mystical tradition by describing the ecclesial pilgrimage as one that is centred on the primacy of inwardness that makes known God's will. He believes this comes about when the human person strives to harmonise themselves with the inner rhythm of Sunday celebration and freedom, thereby coming to know their need for reconciliation with their Creator and Redeemer.

The study of the figure of the bishop in this chapter opens up key aspects of Ratzinger's vision of an ecclesiology of liberation. Through episcopal oversight, the Church is sustained according to God's will as the sphere or meeting place of the personal and communal levels of the “I” and the “thou.” The personal relationship of a believer with the local Church is of great consequence but remains incomplete unless open to the whole body of Christ in, and through, time. The gift of faith deepens through communal encounter with

⁹⁹ Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 231.

the Lord in prayer and this demolishes the lie of human self-sufficiency. This simultaneously opens the “I” to the “thou” at a *personal* and *communal* level.

However, the Church in history is not self-serving and an end in itself. This facet of Ratzinger’s ecclesiology began to emerge in the final subdivision of Chapter 7. At a *societal* level, the Church opens itself up for the benefit of the whole human family. Ratzinger’s vision remains incomplete and lacking in a vital component unless we attend more comprehensively to the Church’s societal role in the world at large. In the ecclesiology of liberation, there is the Church’s mission *ad gentes*. To this we now turn.

CHAPTER 8: The Church as Witness: Practising Freedom in the World

8.0. Introduction

As a consequence of contemporary value systems, Ratzinger believes Christianity must acknowledge the fact that the psyche of believers, no less than that of other members of society, is possessed of a desire to safeguard personal autonomy. In and of itself a good and noble development, he points out that for members of the Church it can lead to “a flight from the demands of Christianity and an attempt to have as much of the powers of religion as possible and to give as little of oneself as possible, to have to commit oneself as little as possible.”¹ At the same time, he says it has to be remembered that “God does not want to have slaves, whom he simply renders righteous and whom he himself does not take at all seriously. It is, rather, a matter of his making men into genuine partners, into real conscious agents, who then on the basis of this beginning that he has given them, become capable themselves of cooperating and who are also responsible in this cooperation.”²

The challenge for the Church as witness is to come to terms with the notion of how “our manner of thinking and our actions become thinking and action with Christ and of Christ.”³ In the face of this, Ratzinger believes there is a need for a growing awareness of “that none-too-easy balance between a proper incarnation in history and the indispensable tension toward eternity.”⁴ This chapter is divided into three sub-divisions dealing with how

¹ Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 235.

² Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 452.

³ General Audience of 13 April 2011 in Benedict XVI, *Holy Men and Women of the Middle Ages* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2012), 240.

⁴ Ratzinger, *Ratzinger Report*, 116-17. These comments were made in the context of attempting to build a spirituality suitable for the present time. Ratzinger says the early post-conciliar era’s desire for openness to the world was sincere, albeit somewhat extremist in its fervour. For him, Christianity has to acknowledge its difference with respect to cultural trends and fashions in society. In language that can be interpreted as a pessimistic outlook on surrounding cultures, he cautions against naïve conformity with the spirit of the times: “Here, too, we must discover the courage of nonconformism in the face of the trends of the affluent world. Instead of following the spirit of the times, we ourselves must witness that spirit of nonconformity with evangelical seriousness. We have lost the sense that Christians cannot live just like ‘everybody else.’ . . . Today more than ever the Christian must be aware that he belongs to a minority and that he is in opposition to everything that appears good, obvious, logical to the ‘spirit of the world,’ as the New Testament calls it. Among the most urgent tasks facing Christians is that of regaining the capacity of nonconformism, i.e. the capacity to

the Church can bear witness in the world through fidelity to its own values, including that of authentic freedom. To Ratzinger's mind, this witness commences with a conscientious assent to God's will on the part of the person who then engages with the world by embarking upon a life of martyrdom and sanctity. This, in turn, challenges others to contemplate following the same path of conscientious assent to the Church's mission. As a result, Ratzinger proposes that the Church's life of worship and its visible social framework would be incomplete and self-serving without the acknowledgement of Jesus' commission to the apostles: "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). His vision is that each human person at worship, who becomes a living sacrifice of praise together with all others in communion with Christ and with one another, is capable of transforming the world by means of a credible pattern of Christian witness.

8.1. The Personal Level of Conscience

At the level of personally undertaking witness in the name of the Church, Ratzinger gives primacy to conscience. In the present time, personal conscience is often pitted against the authoritative Church. Ratzinger seeks resolution to this in the inner workings of conscience which, he says, can be found through contemplation of the "subjectivity" and "interiority" that originate in the intellectual and spiritual processes of the human person. He understands subjectivity as the responsibility for decision-making from which the free creature cannot shrink, and interiority as the taking root within oneself of a certainty about something that is true. This sub-division researches how Ratzinger understands that the Church's capacity to witness is, to some extent at least, predicated on the individual believer coming to terms with a life of interiority. It is the challenge of harmonising in oneself the

oppose many developments of the surrounding culture. In other words, today we must revise this euphoric view of the early post-conciliar era" (114-15). In the new cultural environment facing the Christian, Ratzinger speaks of the need for "[o]ases of true life [that arise] in the desert" (116). See his reflections on civil religion in this dissertation § 8.3.

subjectivity inherent in the law of freedom and the interiority that facilitates the assimilation of truth. In Chapter 5, we have seen Ratzinger view the Church as the receptacle of the ecclesio-knowledge of the primacy of God, as the sphere of the sacramental community of revelation.⁵ We now turn to the significance of conscience in establishing that the Church, as this receptacle, lives in, and with, the fallible human community of history. Conscience stipulates that the law of freedom and the truth of human nature be observed in a manner consistent with the communication of the divine will.

In the first instance, and notwithstanding the fact that subjectivity is unavoidable in the moral decision-making process, Ratzinger points out that if it becomes isolated as the moral agent's sole criterion, it orients the human conscience on a course that is increasingly self-referential. This is inimical to Ratzinger's understanding of authentic freedom because it excludes the human person from a wealth of external resources and means of knowledge above and beyond the powers of self-governance and the autonomous individual. With a purely subjective conscience, "[n]o door or window would lead from the subject into the broader world of being and human solidarity."⁶ Ratzinger's difficulty with the subjective approach is that there is little or no chance of prioritising God in the lived conscience. On the other hand, interiority, which is the inner journey to the heights of God, and defines the human person as a pilgrim, is founded on letting the priority of God take root in us. As Pope, he has described "interiority" as something which enables people to break through "the sound barrier of finitude" by means of the interior realisation that I am more than material life.⁷ At this personal and intimate level, Ratzinger believes the space is found whereby human subjectivity can grow in its assent to the primacy of God. In such a context, the "yes" of faith

⁵ See this dissertation § 5.2.1.

⁶ Joseph Ratzinger, *On Conscience* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 12.

⁷ Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 179.

is always an event that happens in freedom.⁸ Such interior freedom, Ratzinger says, is vital for believers:

[. . .] Christentum zum Ersticken verurteilt sein würde, wenn wir nicht etwas von Verinnerlichung erfahren, in der der Glaube persönlich in die Tiefe des eigenen Lebens hinabsinkt und in ihr mich trägt und erleuchtet. Bloße Aktion und bloß intellektuelle Konstruktion reichen nicht aus. Besinnung auf Einfachheit und auf Innerlichkeit und auf die außer- und ürrationalen Wahrnehmungsformen von Realität ist sehr wichtig.⁹

In dealing with subjectivity and interiority as modes of human reasoning, both of which are indispensable in the life of freedom, Ratzinger believes the issue of conscience reveals the acute challenge facing the Church today. He says that conscience is too often depicted as “the bulwark of freedom in contrast to encroachments of authority,”¹⁰ such that a morality of conscience and a morality of authority are viewed as opposites. However, he classifies it as undeniable that judgements of conscience can contradict each other. Therefore, there can be no real freedom in a scenario that assumes the impossibility of there being such a thing as an erroneous conscience: “placing freedom in opposition to authority overlooks something. There must be something deeper if freedom and, therefore, human existence are to have meaning.”¹¹

In looking for what this something deeper might be, Ratzinger turns to John Henry Newman’s famous toast in his letter to the Duke of Norfolk.¹² For many people today, the “toast” represents an accurate rendering of the opposition between (subjective) conscience and (ecclesiastical) authority. However, Ratzinger points out that for Newman the midway

⁸ See *ibid.*, 174-75; cf. 62-63, 155-58, 179. Interiority is an idea which Ratzinger regularly mentions. He draws it from the mystical tradition of prayer but doesn’t ever really develop it in any significant detail. See Ratzinger, *Ratzinger Report*, 116; *Salt of the Earth*, 267, 269-70.

⁹ Ratzinger, *Salz der Erde*, 284 (“[. . .] Christianity will be doomed to suffocation if we don’t learn something of interiorisation, in which faith sinks personally into the depths of one’s own life and in that depth sustains and illuminates. Mere action and mere intellectual construction are not enough. It’s very important that we recall simplicity and interiority and the extra- and supra-rational forms of perceiving reality” [Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 267]).

¹⁰ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 11.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹² Newman’s toast: “Certainly if I am obliged to bring religion into after-dinner toasts (which indeed does not seem quite the thing), I shall drink – to the Pope, if you please, – still, to Conscience first, and to the Pope afterwards.” Quoted in Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 23.

point which establishes the connection between authority and subjectivity is truth. In Ratzinger's terminology, this would imply the "necessity to obey recognised truth [rather] than [one's] own preferences."¹³ To his mind, this is the awakening of interiority in the human person:

Conscience for Newman does not mean that the subject is the standard vis-à-vis the claims of authority in a truthless world, a world that lives with a compromise between the claims of the subject and the claims of the social order. Much more than that, conscience signifies the perceptible and demanding presence of the voice of truth in the subject himself. It is the overcoming of mere subjectivity in the encounter of the inferiority of man with the truth of *God*.¹⁴

Ratzinger points to this interior recognition of truth as the primal level of conscience.¹⁵ Calling it *anamnesis*, he describes it as akin to "an original memory of the good and the true (they are identical) [that] has been implanted in us . . . an inner ontological tendency within man, who is created in the likeness of God, toward the divine."¹⁶ While it is not a conceptually articulated knowing, it is a capacity to recall and hear an echo of that which one's nature points towards and seeks. It is *anamnesis* of the Creator, which is identical to the ground of one's existence. In short, Ratzinger suggests, "[c]onscience also signifies in some way the voice of God within us."¹⁷ At the primal level, Ratzinger interprets

¹³ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 25.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See *ibid.*, 30-41 for a full account of Ratzinger's rendering of the two levels of conscience. The first, ontological level of conscience was known as *synderesis* in the Middle Ages. The focus of this dissertation is on this first level of conscience as distinct from the second narrower level which comes into play as the act of judgement in a particular situation and is, of its nature, always unique. Ratzinger tries to recover a greater focus on this first level, preferring to define it by the platonic term *anamnesis* (recollection, primal memory). The second level, *conscientia*, proceeds from the *anamnesis*, as the faculty of judgement and decision. While the modern understanding has focused largely on the second level, Ratzinger tries to reaffirm the medieval tradition of two levels of conscience. Otherwise the necessary decision-making process of every free creature is decoupled from knowledge and truth and what remains is the virtual impossibility of free actions performed by responsible moral agents. For an exhaustive analysis of Ratzinger's understanding of conscience, see Twomey, *Pope Benedict XVI*, 80-137. It is to be noted, however, that Twomey describes the "Gordian knot at the heart of [the] contemporary crisis in the Church and in the world [as] . . . the triumph of subjectivity, the denial of man's capacity for truth, and so, for God" (Twomey, *Benedict XVI*, 121). This may seem contradictory to the constructive definition of subjectivity which I attribute to Ratzinger, namely, the responsibility in decision-making from which the free creature cannot shrink. From the perspective of the human will, of course, it is correct to say that the subject is responsible for their choices but the point that Twomey puts across is that when the subject is the sole factor in moral decision-making, then it leads precisely to the denial of any authoritative voice beyond the self. The exclusion of such a voice would indeed turn into a triumph for subjectivity.

¹⁶ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 32.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 59.

Newman's "toast" by saying that *anamnesis* "expresses the thought of a kind of co-knowledge of man with God, and precisely from here there emerges the absoluteness with which conscience asserts its superiority over any and all authorities."¹⁸ What Ratzinger calls "anthropology of conscience" consists in a double-tiered *anamnesis*. In the first place, *anamnesis* needs help "from without" to become aware of itself; secondly, it has a "maieutic function" imposing nothing foreign but bringing to fruition "from within" what is proper to *anamnesis*, namely, its interior openness to the truth.¹⁹ Again Ratzinger believes this is consistent with the meaning of Newman's "toast" and the papal mandate not to exert external constraint but to support the "sureness of Christian memory" from within:

The true sense of the teaching authority of the pope consists in his being the advocate of the Christian memory. The pope does not impose from without. Rather, he elucidates the Christian memory and defends it. For this reason the toast to conscience indeed must precede the toast to the pope, because without conscience there would not be a papacy. All power that the papacy has is power of conscience. It is service to the double memory on which faith is based – and which again and again must be purified, expanded, and defended against the destruction of memory that is threatened by a subjectivity forgetful of its own foundation, as well as by the pressures of social and cultural conformity.²⁰

Following closely a distinction made by the German philosopher Robert Spaemann (b. 1927), Ratzinger says conscience is an organ, not an oracle.²¹ An organ is part of one's essence, it is not something made outside of us, and yet it requires growth, training and practice. Hence, to Ratzinger's mind, the human being is a speaking essence but becomes so only in so far as one learns speech from others: "Conscience requires formation and

¹⁸ Ibid., 51-52.

¹⁹ See *ibid.*, 34-36. When Ratzinger speaks about truth in this context, he is speaking about the truth of who we are, the truth of human nature. This recalls the categories of monotheism and creatureliness which Ratzinger calls upon when coming to terms with human freedom. See this dissertation §§ 4.1.3. to 4.1.3.2.

²⁰ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 36. Memory is an important term for Ratzinger. He believes that "memory" plays a significant role in the anthropological foundation of the concept of tradition. Through the operation of human intellect, memory allows the cumulative wisdom of human experience to accompany us through history. In other words, memory generates tradition by realising it in history. As a result, tradition is constitutive of that which is truly human. In fact, he argues that memory actually becomes tradition through communication, through the "sharing-with" (*Mit-teilung*) of memory. To his mind, tradition is the trans-temporal passage of memory in history. Tradition is, in effect, the transcendence of "today" in both directions – past and future. However, in the modern-age tradition has come to be regarded as the binding of humanity to the past – as something opposed by the human orientation to the future. See Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*, 88-106.

²¹ See *ibid.*, 61, where Ratzinger cites from Robert Spaemann, *Moralische Grundbegriffe* (Munich: Beck, 1982), 79-83.

education. It can become stunted, it can be stamped out, it can be falsified so that it can only speak in a stunted or distorted way. The silence of conscience can become a deadly sickness for an entire civilisation.”²² According to Ratzinger, it is this “silencing” of the primal level of conscience that is the primary locus in the struggle for an authentic philosophy of freedom. He highlights the contemporary logic that stands in the way of the Christian understanding of truth: “Is not the truth, at least as the faith of the Church shows it to us, too lofty and difficult for man?”²³ In reply to such logic, Ratzinger believes that truth requires the Church to recognise itself as “the advocate of the reason of creation” in the maelstrom of society where there is confusion about the nature of the world’s origin and its freedom.²⁴

Ratzinger says a tension accompanies the Church’s task because the temptation inherent in modern rationalism is to believe that “freedom, like reason, is a by-product of the self-construction of the world.”²⁵ Contrary to this, to his mind, the presentation of a Christian synthesis that listens to creative reason via the “link to the Logos, guarantees freedom as the structural principle of what really exists.”²⁶ To Ratzinger’s mind, this is the heart of the Church’s vocation – to accompany conscience as the human person strives towards authentic freedom. Ultimately, he concedes, the repudiation of the authentic philosophy of freedom by the Church would be the renunciation of its guardianship of being and its own moral significance – “the Church would betray, not only her own message, but the destiny of humanity.”²⁷ The Church, he says, “must set standards, and she must awaken both the will

²² Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 62. There are echoes here of Ratzinger’s image of the maternal Church forming our voice to dialogue and pray. See this dissertation § 6.1.

²³ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 38.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 67. In practice, this extends the bishop’s role of oversight to the whole Church. See this dissertation § 7.2.

²⁵ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 115. It may be helpful here to recall Ratzinger’s vision of modern rationalism as an intellectual synthesis formed from the assumptions of belief in progress, an absolutization of scientific-technical civilisation, and the promise of the new humanity within time and history. See *ibid.* 114-16; this dissertation § 2.2.4.

²⁶ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 116.

²⁷ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 67-68.

and the power of people to respond to these standards.”²⁸ The task of the Church is concretely realised when it strives to awaken the primal level of conscience.

If it is the Church’s task to awaken this primal level of conscience, in what way does it endeavour to fulfil this commission? Ratzinger says that Christian morality requires a “we” – which, in terms of the diachronic nature of the Church, means “it requires a link with the experience of past generations and with the primitive wisdom of humanity.”²⁹ Consequently, the question of moral theology and its relationship with divine revelation is one that he is anxious to address. Ratzinger points to four sources of moral knowledge which ensure that human civilisation permanently has the prospect of living in a manner consistent with its nature: an examination of reality and the reason which knows and explains reality, conscience, the wisdom of tradition, and the will of God. These cooperate with each other, broadening out a debate in danger of being restricted to a struggle for freedom premised on the impossibility of there being such a thing as an erroneous conscience in the face of external authority.

Ratzinger says that just as an exclusively subjective conscience can be an erroneous organ, similarly “the various concrete community experiences of different races and peoples are valuable as signposts for human behaviour, but by themselves cannot be considered sources for morality.”³⁰ In other words, notwithstanding the fact that the community is undoubtedly an aid to morality, the experience of the community alone cannot provide a sure and lasting basis to sustain moral reasoning. Consequently, Ratzinger says

[i]t is impossible in the long run to have a society that lives, as it were, only as a reaction from what is negative and evil. If a society wishes to survive, it must to a certain extent return to the primitive virtues, to the basic standard models of humanity.³¹

²⁸ Ibid., 45.

²⁹ Ibid., 54.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

Therefore, while he acknowledges the value of reliance on common historical experience and custom, Ratzinger believes there are limits to its efficacy. It can happen that “important areas of life in a society . . . become corrupt, so that the predominant custom of men and women does not guide but seduces, as in a society with the custom of cannibalism, slavery, or the dependence on drugs.”³² Consequently, he says, there is an unconditional character to morality which must, ultimately, have recourse to the unconditional character of God’s will: in its origins “morality was founded on a divine revelation of will, out of which alone a community could emerge and in accord with which the survival of the community as such was guaranteed.”³³ To Ratzinger’s mind, the Church, as the sphere of the sacramental community of revelation dwelling in and with this fallible human community of history, sustains the law of freedom in moral decision-making. The Church supports growth in authentic freedom through its advocacy of a synthesis of understanding, will and heart on the part of the human person. Thereby, the Church upholds that

[. . .] God alone can be the measure of man and . . . only the divine will can unconditionally oblige man. Christian faith is further convinced that revelation situates us in the community life model of a “we” whose nature and direction cannot be explained simply in terms of the human will alone.³⁴

The Church, Ratzinger believes, anticipates an important confirmation of its divine commission in the fact that, within it, the four sources of moral knowledge interpenetrate and illuminate each other. Were any of these to be isolated, they would be insufficient to act as the pathway to moral decision-making. Alongside conscience, as the voice of the Creator within, there is the need for an examination of the concrete world, even though, as Ratzinger says, “reality” alone is not enough. The wisdom of tradition is a third and necessary source which is formed by the living “we” which, for the believer, is concretely realised via the diachronic community of the Church. These three sources together, Ratzinger says –

³² Ibid., 54-55.

³³ Ibid., 55.

³⁴ Ibid.

“objectivity, tradition, and conscience – in turn point to the divine commandments.”³⁵ The fourth source, the will of God, is what makes for true morality because “only the will of God can establish the boundary between good and evil, which is something different from the boundary between what is useful or not or what is proved and what is unknown.”³⁶

Through this four-fold configuration, the Church’s teaching “brings conscience to expression.”³⁷ At the level of personal being, Ratzinger’s presentation for coming to terms with conscience accords very well with the concept of human ecology and the need to respect human nature. Of the two forms of synthesis that Ratzinger proposes as marking the axis of tension in the modern intellectual history of freedom, the Christian synthesis, as opposed to modern rationalism, affirms the equation that “the language of being, the language of nature, is identical with the language of conscience.”³⁸ The Church, as advocate for the reason of creation, upholds that “[t]here is a reason for being, and when man separates himself from it totally and recognises the reason only of what he himself has made, then he abandons what is precisely moral in the strict sense.”³⁹

Few theologians today doubt that the medieval and metaphysical Christian self-understanding has altered in the course of the modern era and that it remains a development which theology has still not systematically comprehended.⁴⁰ Ratzinger is convinced that the basis for a resolution lies in the observance of the Creator Spirit that marks the universe. This is possible he says, because, “[o]ne can point out that human freedom gives us a glimpse of the original creative freedom, of God; or that human seeking and questioning cannot come to

³⁵ Ibid., 57.

³⁶ Ibid. See also Ratzinger, “The Church’s Teaching Authority – Faith – Morals,” in Heinz Schürmann et al., *Principles of Christian Morality*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 47-73.

³⁷ Ratzinger, *On Conscience*, 57.

³⁸ Ibid., 67.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 77-82. His description of this medieval view is that “God had his fixed place in the gradated structure of the world: the firmament; metaphysics was tangible, as it were, in the hierarchy that led from the nethermost and dullest level, the earth, to ever higher and more spiritual spheres and finally to the pure light, to the Mover of the universe” (78).

rest in positivistic findings alone and urges us on to the creative ‘Thou’ without whom the ‘I’ remains inexplicable.”⁴¹ For the Church as witness, proclaiming a Creator God means affirming him as the universal “yes” to creation. This ought to be central to the life of faith because Christianity is secure in the knowledge of the unity of the Father and the Son, of Creator and Redeemer, and understands God as both the origin and measure of all that is.⁴²

From the perspective of an ecclesiology of liberation, Ratzinger holds the personal level of conscience as essential for ecclesial life. This is true because conscience, to his mind, is where one grows in a life of interiority, whereby subjectivity and truth mutually interpret and purify each other. The free creature is bound to the responsibility of decision-making, but must seek external supports which guide the freedom to seek the truth. A believer engaged with what Ratzinger elucidates as a double-tiered *anamnesis* becomes a significant part of the Church’s commission to witness by drawing society’s notice to the primacy of God in creation. This primal level of conscience accepts help from outside itself to become aware of its situation, on the one hand, and it lives an interior openness to the truth from within itself, on the other. The truth to which Ratzinger refers is both the encounter with the original creative freedom upon which life is grounded, and the consequent truth inherent in human nature to which humanity and its prosperity is ordered. Growth in authentic freedom manifests itself through this ordering of human life. A human person who engages with

⁴¹ Ibid., 81.

⁴² Christology forms the ground of Ratzinger’s reflections on the theology of creation. From an ecclesiological perspective, his account of conscience is grounded in the belief that ecclesial communion grows through the life of interiority in each believer, since Christ, the *logos* in creation, is the perfect form of one’s own humanity: “[. . .] what is universal about creation connects with what is quite personal about conscience: in the conscience, in the quiet knowledge that man shares with the inmost foundation of creation, the Creator is present as Creator to the man. The Christian God is a God of conscience: he is the completely interior God, because he is the completely universal One. As the Lord, he is at the same time the deepest centre of our self. . . . [A]s Logos, God is ‘over all’ and ‘in all’ at the same time. He is not a foreign exterior for things but, rather, their inmost interior. . . . But precisely in this most profound in-being [*In-sein*], his infinite transcendence [*Über-sein*] remains. In Jesus of Nazareth I encounter the most authentic features of my self, and therefore I can speak with him, therefore I can understand him, therefore I can become one body, that is, one single existence with him and those who are his. Therefore, however, I also remain ever on the way to him, because he is always infinitely more” (Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 93-95).

subjectivity and with truth in this way is sincerely living in a way consistent with the will of the Creator and is thereby witnessing to a positive force for good in the world.

8.2. The Communal Level of Martyrdom and Sainthood

Alongside the indispensable personal assent of conscience required of those participating in the life of the Church, Ratzinger highlights the compelling nature of communal witness as a presence in society. Here, he proposes the need for a two-fold manifestation of martyrdom and sainthood. In the modern world, Ratzinger believes the combined witness of martyrdom and sanctity proposes a precise principle to the world: “[l]ife reaches farther than our biological existence.”⁴³ This principle serves to remind the world of the widest possible dimensions of truth and the fullest dimensions of the human person’s freedom. For this to be meaningful, Ratzinger’s ecclesiological assertion is that the Church must exhibit authenticity born out of conviction and not coercion:

[Die Kirche] muß überzeugen, denn nur, indem sie Überzeugung schafft, öffnet sie den Raum für das, was ihr übergeben ist, und immer nur auf dem Weg der Freiheit, das heißt über Verstand, Wille und Gefühl zugänglich werden kann. Die Kirche muß leidensbereit sein, nicht durch Macht, sondern durch den Geist, nicht durch institutionelle Stärke, sondern durch Zeugnis, durch Liebe, Leben, Leiden dem Göttlichen den Raum bereiten und so der Gesellschaft helfen, ihre moralische Identität zu finden.⁴⁴

Firstly, with regard to the ground of witness, Ratzinger believes the Church manifests itself through its martyrological profile of call and response.⁴⁵ Consequently, if it is the case that the bonds of communion in ecclesial life reach farther than our biological existence, then Ratzinger believes that rendering witness entails a twofold internal-external dynamic. Where there is no longer anything worth dying for – anything worth the effort of total self-

⁴³ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 155.

⁴⁴ Ratzinger, *Wendzeit für Europa*, 126 (“[The Church] must convince, for it is only by convincing that she opens up space for what has been entrusted to her; and this can be made accessible only along the path of freedom, which means via reason, will and emotion. The Church must be ready to suffer. She must prepare space for the divine, not through power but through spirit, not through institutional strength but through witness, through love, life and suffering: and in this way she must help society to find its moral identity” [Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 179]).

⁴⁵ See this dissertation § 5.3.2.

dispossession – then even life itself is no longer worth living. Ratzinger wants to show that the task for the Church is to create a sphere of *ablatio* within the person whereby the martyr, for the sake of the “whole”, dies to self and lives for Christ. This also echoes the purificatory role of prayer.⁴⁶ However, sustaining faith on this scale requires a community of purpose. Ratzinger invokes St Paul, saying that the one “communion-ing” with Christ has one’s eyes opened enough to learn that “[n]one of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself. If we live, we live for the Lord; if we die, we die for the Lord; whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (Rom 14:7f).⁴⁷ In the setting of ecclesial communion, the martyr reveals that suffering which subjects itself to a concrete application of *ablatio* carries meaning for the whole and thus turns to rejoicing as the fulfilment of God’s will. Hence, in the midst of a two-fold invisible-visible dynamic, the martyr is true to self, while the Church, as a whole, is completed as God, in Christ, willed it:

In der Gemeinschaft mit Christus wird der Schmerz sinnvoll, nicht nur für mich selbst, als Prozess der “ablatio,” in der Gott die Schlacken von mir nimmt, die sein

⁴⁶ See this dissertation § 6.1.

⁴⁷ In relation to Ratzinger’s presentation, it is important to appreciate that *ablatio* incorporates the burden of suffering which people carry. In the structure of faith, he maintains that “[a] world-view that is incapable of giving even pain meaning and value is good for nothing. It falls short precisely at the hour of the most serious crisis of existence” (Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 155). He says people who have nothing else to add except that we must fight against suffering deceive us. While it is true that everything should be done to lessen the needless suffering of innocent people, he points out that it is also true that there is no human life without suffering. To his mind, *ablatio* reveals the deep Christian meaning of suffering as purificatory. Consequently, “he who is incapable of accepting suffering is refusing himself the purifications that alone allow us to reach maturity” (ibid.). From the ecclesiological perspective, martyrdom expresses the Christian meaning of suffering, and it is a concrete realisation of ecclesial communion. The martyr’s external witness for the sake of the Church’s visible unity is combined with their internal witness for the sake of the Church’s invisible union with the Father. The former is conducted within an oft-times sceptical and unreceptive world; the latter as a process of on-going reconciliation and personal renewal. While Ratzinger does not use the language of the invisible and visible dimensions in relation to martyrological witness, I have introduced them here because, it seems to me that both dimensions, which are necessarily and mutually inclusive in the martyr, render present a concrete application of the visible and invisible elements of ecclesial communion. As is the case with the Eucharist, martyrdom is not the beginning of ecclesial communion. Rather, it is its lived expression: “The celebration of the Eucharist . . . cannot be the starting-point for communion; it presupposes that communion already exists, a communion which it seeks to consolidate and bring to perfection. The sacrament is an expression of this bond of communion both in its invisible dimension, which, in Christ and through the working of the Holy Spirit, unites us to the Father and among ourselves, and in its visible dimension, which entails communion in the teaching of the Apostles, in the sacraments and in the Church’s hierarchical order. The profound relationship between the invisible and the visible elements of ecclesial communion is constitutive of the Church as the sacrament of salvation” (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter on the Eucharist in its Relationship to the Church, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia* [17 April 2003], 35: AAS 95 [2003], 457; cf. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion, *Communio notio* [28 May 1992], 4: AAS 85 [1993], 839-840).

Bild verdecken, sondern über mich hinaus fürs Ganze, so dass wir alle mit St. Paulus sagen können: “Nun aber freue ich mich meiner Leiden für euch und ergänze so in meinem Fleische, was an den Drangsalen Christi noch fehlt für seinen Leib, die Kirche (Kol 1:24).⁴⁸

With regard to the effects of *ablatio*, Ratzinger looks at the concept of forgiveness and authentic renewal rendered to the Church and the world by the action of martyrs. He says that renewal and reform in the community comes through the act of forgiveness and reparation on the part of each individual member. Grounded in the faith dimension of his ecclesiology, whereby faith requires community, Ratzinger says “[f]orgiveness, together with its realisation in me by way of penance and discipleship, is first of all the wholly personal centre of all renewal.”⁴⁹ And because true forgiveness touches the very core of the person, it gathers people together and becomes the “centre of the renewal of the community.”⁵⁰ Only with such self-sacrificing faith can the Church witness in the world to the place of true life: “It is only then that [the Church] will become a spacious house with many mansions; it is then that the multiplicity of the gifts of the Spirit will be free to operate in her.”⁵¹ Ratzinger says the Church comes into being ever anew as a communion that binds in life and death through the deep and personal renewal rendered by martyrdom. Indeed, to his mind, it is the martyrological that brings us to see the Church in the right order of magnitude:

Die Kirche, das ist nicht nur die kleine Gruppe von Aktivisten, die sich an einem Ort zusammenfinden, um gemeindliches Leben in Gang zu bringen. Die Kirche – das ist auch nicht bloß die Schar derer, die sich sonntags zur Eucharistiefeier zusammenfinden. Endlich – die Kirche ist auch mehr als Papst, Bischöfe und Priester,

⁴⁸ Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 149 (“In communion with Christ, pain becomes meaningful, not only for myself, as a process of *ablatio* in which God purges me of the dross that conceals his image, but beyond me, for the whole. So that we can all say with St. Paul: ‘But now I rejoice in my sufferings for you and so complete in my flesh what is still lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church’ [Col 1:24]” [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 155]).

⁴⁹ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 153.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 156. The theme of death to self and rebirth in Christ is not an optional course of action when considered from the viewpoint of the New Testament evidence, nor is it confined to pauline texts. Taking up and following Christ’s cross (Matt 16: 24-26; Mark 8:34-9:1; Luke 9:23-34) is the beginning of saying goodbye to self-sufficiency (Luke 14:25-33), and of putting our passions and desires in proper perspective (Gal 5:34; 1Pet 2:24). Considering oneself dead (Col 3:3-7; Rom 6:11-14; 7:4-6; 8:12-13) is sharing in Christ’s death which is not optional for the one following him (John 12:24; Rom 6:2-4; 12:1-2; Gal 6:14). This dying with Christ (Rom 6:5-11) is what opens up life in him (Col 2:12, 14, 20; 3:1; 2Tim 2:11; 2Cor 5:15, 17; Titus 2:11; Eph 4:22-25; Gal 2:19-20).

die Träger des sakramentalen Auftrags. Alle die Genannten gehören zur Kirche, aber der Radius der “Weggenossenschaft,” in die wir mit dem Glauben eintreten, reicht weiter – über die Grenzen des Todes hinaus.⁵²

In the important area of justice and peace in the world – something that very much concerns the martyrological – Ratzinger believes it is very important to distinguish between what the Church “must do . . . and what she neither can nor should do.”⁵³ The Church’s great task is “to keep alive, in fidelity to her holy tradition, the basic criterion of justice and to detach it from the arbitrariness of power.”⁵⁴ This, in turn, consists of a responsibility for the Church to carry conviction and to help every generation to see with and through Jesus what they cannot see by their own powers, so that, in the conflict between utility and truth, truth does not suffer. It equally requires that the Church be an educator to “break open the prison of positivism and awaken man’s receptivity to the truth, to God, and thus to the power of conscience.”⁵⁵ Ratzinger says that collectively, as believers, witness to this receptivity operates in a two-fold manner. On the one hand, believers are themselves inspired and formed in the Church to witness in the world. On the other hand, through their witness, believers form and inspire non-believers towards belief or civil religion or both.⁵⁶ Thus we can say that the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom consists of an internal movement within believers and an external movement from believers. In large measure, this captures the essence of our research so far in this chapter.

With regard to what the Church must not do in society, Ratzinger urges the renunciation of direct political action. In other words, the Church must accept it is not the

⁵² Ratzinger, *Zur Gemeinschaft gerufen*, 147- 48 (“The Church is not only the small group of activists who come together in a given place in order to set parish life in motion. Nor is the Church merely the crowd of those who meet on Sunday to celebrate the Eucharist. Finally, the Church is also more than the pope, bishops and priests, the holders of sacramental office. All those whom we have mentioned belong to the Church, but the radius of the ‘company’ (*compagnia*) into which we enter by faith reaches farther – beyond the limits of death” [Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 153-54]).

⁵³ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 60.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 61.

⁵⁶ See this dissertation § 8.3.

sole arbitrator of political reason – the autonomy of political reasoning is to be respected. It must therefore bear in mind that highlighting the foundational sources and principles of secular law forms part of its responsibility, whereas formulating specific answers to concrete political questions does not: “[the Church] points out paths for reason to follow, and yet reason’s own responsibilities remain.”⁵⁷ The Church forms people in accordance with the basic criterion of truth and inspires them to witness and live by it. The Church, therefore, cannot enforce peace and harmony in the world, nor have Church leaders any authority to take direct political action. Ratzinger says the Church “must not be transformed into a kind of political peace movement, whose only *raison d’être* would be the attaining of perpetual world peace. . . . [A] God who becomes the means to supposedly higher ends is no longer God; in fact, he has given away his divinity to something higher, whose cause he must serve.”⁵⁸

An important ecclesiological insight which emerges here from Ratzinger’s reflections on the relationship between the Church and society is that “[o]nly when [the Church] respects her limits is she limitless.”⁵⁹ In other words, the collective witness of the Church and its members must come to terms with their rightful place in the civic space, thereby helping all members of society to make a positive contribution to the common good.⁶⁰ Otherwise, “[t]he Church does less, not more, for peace if she abandons her own sphere of faith, education,

⁵⁷ Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 63.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 64-5. Ratzinger says that the key role in the building up of peace is to instil an ethos of reconciliation in a world where there are immensely complex and difficult political conflicts between people and nations. The Church “must give men the strength to survive and, with the power of forgiveness, awaken the capacity to make a new start. Only a man who can forgive can build and preserve peace” (64).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁶⁰ He believes the “challenge of the hour” is that, “despite all the Christian self-criticism which has become ever more intense and radical since the Enlightenment, we ought to find our way back to an awareness of the great moral tradition of Christianity, to the pre- or meta-dogmatic core (so to speak) of its moral constants, and to recognise this as our spiritual and intellectual identity, on the basis of which we can live” (Ratzinger, *A Turning Point for Europe*, 177). Against this background he asks that the Church be true to its nature and not allow itself to be downgraded to a mere means for morality – something the liberal state wished for. To try to justify the Church’s presence in the world through the usefulness of its social works would be self-deprecating: “The more the Church aims directly at what in her ought to be something ‘of itself extraneous,’ so to speak, the more she will fail in this attempt” (*ibid.*). For Ratzinger, to attempt to “sneak past the faith, removing the provocative character of the Trinity and life beyond death as well as the biblical narratives by reducing these to the level of symbols” is to “bracket off dogma” because it is viewed as invalid. It is “to bow to that ‘fear of the truth’ in which the spiritual and intellectual decline of the present day has its roots” (178).

witness, counsel, prayer, and serving love in order to transform itself into an organisation for direct political action.”⁶¹

In order to achieve this, Ratzinger says, the Church as witness must be mindful of its prerogatives and limitations in the commission to preach the Gospel by conviction and not coercion. From the perspective of an ecclesiology of liberation, the Church-society question entails the prospect of a believer being able to freely and fruitfully witness to their beliefs for the good of society. Ratzinger’s opposition to promises of inner-worldly realisations of perfect liberation is precisely because it sterilises any such prospect of freely communicated witness beyond the mandatory political narrative of the day. His view is that “there is no definitive human condition within history.”⁶² A freedom brought about by historical necessity in that way would not be freedom and, in this respect, Ratzinger maintains that to attempt to create the “natural laws of freedom” is self-contradictory. The human person, at every moment, remains free to accept or reject the mantle of martyrdom in the world – there cannot be coercion:

[. . .] kann es innerhalb der menschlichen Geschichte niemals eine endgültig stabile, unumkehrbare Gesellschaftsordnung geben, weil der Mensch frei bleibt und daher auch die Freiheit behält, Gutes zu Negativem zu verändern. Würde ihm diese Freiheit von irgendeiner Gesellschaft endgültig genommen, so wäre diese Gesellschaft die absolute Tyrannei und damit gerade keine gut geordnete Gesellschaft.⁶³

Such a definitively liberated society, Ratzinger says, could only be definitive slavery. Were such a definitively structured milieu the norm, acknowledging and witnessing to the capacity of Christian love and virtue, above and beyond one’s externally assembled environment, would be irrational. For that reason the freedom to decide for or against expressing oneself in Christian witness always remains an open question. Only as an “open question” can there be

⁶¹ Ratzinger, *Wendezeit für Europa*, 43 [own translation].

⁶² Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 253. See this dissertation §§ 2.1 to 2.2.4.

⁶³ Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 229 (“[A] definitive[ly] stable, irreversible social order can never exist within history because man remains free and thus retains his freedom to change the good into the negative. Were this freedom to be taken from him by some society, this society would be an absolute tyranny and, thus, not a well-ordered society at all” [Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 241]).

any concept of martyrological outreach in the name of the Church. If freedom is to be free, so to speak, it has to contain the capacity to act above and beyond the prevailing cultural and socio-economic conventions of the day. To Ratzinger's mind then, the collective witness of the Church's presence in society upholds the fact that the Christian philosophy of freedom opposes a deterministic society devoid of divine and human initiative.

The law of freedom, then, makes room for God's action in the world and, to Ratzinger's mind, the foremost example of this in the course of the Church's history is found in the witness of human sanctity. In the context of the Church's witness, Ratzinger believes the "communion of saints" is a fitting attribution to describe its demeanour and mission. In fact, the saints demonstrate that the universal call to holiness is the basis for the life of joy and freedom.⁶⁴ He points out that, contrary to one-sided hagiographical narratives that leave us with the impression of other-worldliness, the saints are not self-sufficient beings. He describes them as windows that look onto God's eternity. He says one ought to consider them as "older brothers and sisters in the family of God. They want to take us by the hand and lead us, and their lives tell us: 'If this person or that could do it, why can't I?'"⁶⁵ Ratzinger has long held the belief that saints are signs that tell the world that sanctity is real, giving people the strength to strive in that direction.⁶⁶ In other words, a believer's everyday goodness demonstrates the truth of faith.

In the context of a general audience that concluded two years of Catecheses on the saints, Benedict XVI said that in the great plurality amongst the communion of saints, there exists an openness to the Holy Spirit which transforms them "like small pieces in the great mosaic of holiness that God continues to create in history, so that the face of Christ may shine

⁶⁴ See Chapter 5 of *Lumen gentium*. See also Benedict XVI, Meeting with the Parish Priests and the Clergy of Rome, February 14, 2013. See

http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2013/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20130214_clero-roma_en.html (assessed March 6, 2013).

⁶⁵ Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 362.

⁶⁶ See Ratzinger, *God and the World*, 457-58.

out in the fullness of its splendour.”⁶⁷ During the course of the audience, the Pope pointed out that a holy life, rather than being primarily the result of one’s own efforts, “has its deepest root in the grace of baptism, in being grafted on to the Paschal Mystery of Christ, by which his Spirit is communicated to us, his very life as the Risen One.”⁶⁸ Nevertheless, while the Pope acknowledges that the deep root of holiness is baptismal grace and its transformative power in the human person, “God always respects our freedom and asks that we accept this gift and live the requirements it entails, and he asks that we let ourselves be transformed by the action of the Holy Spirit, conforming our will to the will of God.”⁶⁹ Part of the drama of the present time, to Ratzinger’s mind, is the way in which a causality of love founded on freedom is confronted with a growing determinism which has lost faith in the freedom to choose to love.⁷⁰ As Pope he quotes the Second Vatican Council to clarify that “the soul of holiness” is “charity lived to the full.”⁷¹

Even in the 1970’s Ratzinger was grappling deeply with this question of the Church’s presence in society and had largely formulated a view on it which was based on the sanctity of its members. From the crisis of today, he said at the time, the Church of tomorrow will emerge, and while it will be smaller, it will be a more spiritualised and simplified Church making greater demands on its members. In fact, he forecasted that the Church that will

⁶⁷ General Audience of 13 April 2011 in Benedict XVI, *Holy Men and Women of the Middle Ages*, 243. On that occasion, Benedict XVI described the saints as “signposts” for the Church’s life – the few great saints and the many inconspicuous saints make it clear, he says, that the concept of holiness must be understood in a sufficiently broad sense because sanctity manifests itself in many forms. In a personal note, the Pope noted that “[t]his goodness, which [the saints] have developed in the faith of the Church, is for me the most reliable apology of Christianity and the sign of where the truth lies.”

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ See Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith*, 31-32.

⁷¹ Benedict XVI, *Holy Men and Women of the Middle Ages*, 240-41, quoting from *LG*, 42: “Indeed, in order that love, as good seed may grow and bring forth fruit in the soul, each one of the faithful must willingly hear the Word of God and accept His Will, and must complete what God has begun by their own actions with the help of God’s grace. These actions consist in the use of the sacraments and in a special way the Eucharist, frequent participation in the sacred action of the Liturgy, application of oneself to prayer, self-abnegation, lively fraternal service and the constant exercise of all the virtues.” The same article in the constitution goes on to speak of martyrdom as the making of a profession of faith in the midst of persecution and the transformation of a believer into the image of the Master. See also *Salt of the Earth*, 282-83; *God and the World*, 278-81.

emerge will be more in keeping with the law of freedom and will come to be seen as “home,” where life and hope beyond death are found:

Denn die Menschen einer ganz und gar geplanten Welt werden unsagbar einsam sein. Sie werden, wenn ihnen Gott ganz entschwunden ist, ihre volle, schreckliche Armut erfahren. Und sie werden dann die kleine Gemeinschaft des Glaubenden als etwas ganz Neues entdecken. Als eine Hoffnung, die sie angeht, als eine Antwort, nach der sie im Verborgenen immer gefragt haben.⁷²

It is in this context that he acknowledges the lives of the saints as a principal source of inspiration whereby the Church can authentically reside in the civic space. In Ratzinger’s broad vision of sanctity, saints – official and inconspicuous – are people drawn from the world who strive for holiness of life and whose hearts stretch out in hope and love. He says that “islands of spiritual concentration” will very much be found in the landscape of the Church’s future as a means of manifesting a mode of being consistent with humanity’s social nature:

So wird aber sichtbar, dass menschliche Kreativität, die nicht Empfangen und Teilhaben sein will, ihrem Wesen nach widersinnig und unwahr ist, weil der Mensch überhaupt nur durch Empfangen und Teilhabe er selber sein kann. . . . In der Kulturkrise, die wir durchleben, kann überhaupt nur aus Inseln geistiger Sammlung neue kulturelle Reinigung und Einigung hervorbrechen.⁷³

When Ratzinger speaks about the “fortuitous majorities” which can form from time to time in the Church but which are not mandated to decide its path, to the fore of his mind is the diachronic majority of the communion of saints which he proposes as an obvious and authentic alternative. He believes it is the saints that form “the normative majority by which

⁷² Ratzinger, *Glaube und Zukunft*, 153-54 (“Men in a totally planned world will find themselves unspeakably lonely. If they have completely lost sight of God, they will feel the whole horror of their poverty. Then they will discover the little flock of believers as something wholly new. They will discover it as a hope that is meant for them, an answer for which they have always been searching in secret” [Ratzinger, *Faith and the Future*, 118]). See also *The Ratzinger Report*, 114-117; *Salt of the Earth*, 254-275; *God and the World*, 441-450; *Light of the World*, 133-85.

⁷³ Ratzinger, *Ein neues Lied für den Herrn*, 163-72 (“[. . .] it becomes apparent that human creativity that does not want to be receptivity and participation is by its very nature absurd and untrue since humans can only be themselves through receptivity and participation. . . . In the crisis of culture we are experiencing, it is only from islands of spiritual concentration that a new cultural purification and unification can break out at all” [Ratzinger, *A New Song*, 151-59]).

we orient ourselves.”⁷⁴ This is so because adherence to them will show us how to “translate the divine into the human, eternity into time; they teach us what it is to be human and they never abandon us in our pain and solitude.”⁷⁵ In the context of the communion of saints, which extends diachronically as well as synchronically with regard to time, the mission of the Church becomes tangible in the daily lives of real people throughout the generations.⁷⁶

Ratzinger believes that appealing to the lives of the saints draws attention to, and prioritises a “beauty” that points beyond itself to the transcendent source of all beauty in God:

I have often affirmed my conviction that the true apology of the Christian faith, the most convincing demonstration of its truth against every denial, are the saints, and the beauty that the faith has generated. Today, for faith to grow, we must lead ourselves and the persons we meet to encounter the saints and to enter into contact with the Beautiful.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 154. Ratzinger includes the following footnote where he finds Cardinal Meisner of Cologne to be in agreement with his own view: “Democracy in the Church means to accord the right to be heard in the present-day generation of Christians to the generations who have believed, hoped, loved and suffered before us” (Joachim Meisner, *Wider die Entsinlichung des Glaubens* [Köln: Verlag Styria Graz, 1990], 35). The “normative” majority in the Church is already spoken about in this dissertation § 7.5. Here it is consolidated in terms of the communion of saints.

⁷⁵ Ratzinger, *Called to Communion*, 154.

⁷⁶ Pope Benedict addressed the pupils of the catholic schools of England, Wales and Scotland in 2010 during a State visit by saying that among those listening to him were some of the future saints of the 21st century. He went on to describe how the road to sainthood begins with an encounter with the love of God: “Not only does God love us with a depth and an intensity that we can scarcely begin to comprehend, but he invites us to respond to that love. You all know what it is like when you meet someone interesting and attractive, and you want to be that person’s friend. You always hope they will find you interesting and attractive, and want to be your friend. God wants your friendship. And once you enter into friendship with God, everything in your life begins to change. As you come to know him better, you find you want to reflect something of his infinite goodness in your own life. You are attracted to the practice of virtue. You begin to see greed and selfishness and all the other sins for what they really are, destructive and dangerous tendencies that cause deep suffering and do great damage, and you want to avoid falling into that trap yourselves. You begin to feel compassion for people in difficulties and you are eager to do something to help them. You want to come to the aid of the poor and the hungry, you want to comfort the sorrowful, you want to be kind and generous. And once these things begin to matter to you, you are well on the way to becoming saints” (Benedict XVI, Address to Pupils, St. Mary’s University College, Twickenham, 17 September 2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2010/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20100917_mondo-educ_en.html [accessed 27 September 2012]).

⁷⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, “The Beauty and the Truth of Christ,” *L’Osservatore Romano* (Weekly Edition in English), November 6, 2002, 6. See also Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 38. The themes of sainthood and beauty as the true apologists for a Church which can be both majestic and scandal-ridden is long-standing in Ratzinger. In the 1970’s he said that “[t]he beauty of the great cathedrals, the beauty of the music that has grown within the faith, the dignity of the Church’s liturgy, even the reality of festival which one doesn’t make but can only receive, the shaping of the year into the Church’s year in which the then and the now, time and eternity penetrate – all that is, in my view, not a trivial coincidence. Beauty is the splendour of truth. . . and the distortion of beauty is the irony of lost truth, I might add” (Ratzinger, “Warum ich noch in der Kirche bin,” in *GS:ZV*, 1183 [own translation]). He also spoke of Christian sanctity, saying that “even today, if you keep your eyes open, you can still meet people who are a living testimony to the liberating force of Christian faith. And there is no shame in being a Christian and to remain so because of the people who exemplify Christianity for us, making

The challenge for the Church, as Ratzinger perceives it, is to reintroduce the world to the beauty of creation, to a beauty that restores wholeness to people and gives them a glimpse of the meaning of authentic freedom – “freedom which does not destroy, but gathers and purifies.”⁷⁸

One of the ways in which Ratzinger builds an argument concerning beauty is through the platonic ideas taken up by the fourteenth century Byzantine theologian, Nicholas Cabasilas (c.1319-91). Ratzinger stresses Cabasilas’ view that beauty “wounds” like an arrow and, in so doing, awakens man to his ultimate destiny. Accordingly, the greatness of the wound already shows how the “arrow” struck its target while the longing for the beautiful indicates who it was that inflicted the wound.⁷⁹ Far from an escape into mere aestheticism or irrationalism, Ratzinger believes contact with beauty liberates because it “is the very way in which reason is freed from dullness and made ready to act.”⁸⁰ However, he says, after events such as Auschwitz, a simple harmonious, aesthetically pleasing beauty is no longer sufficient. The paradox of a disfigured Christ is precisely what can speak to us in the post-Auschwitz world. What is often forgotten, however, is that while paradox is contrast, it is not necessarily contradiction: “The One who is the Beauty itself let himself be slapped in the face, spat on,

it something credible and lovable (1183-84 [own translation]). The compilation of liturgical reflections in Ratzinger’s *Images of Hope: Meditations on Major Feasts*, trans. John Rock and Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006) gives further testimony to his position. I would draw attention to the aesthetical theology which he offers on the apse mosaic of San Clemente in Rome. At the centre of the mosaic there is the cross of Christ which reaches into, and fructifies creation at the same time as stretching upward towards the hand of the Father that is descending: “The world moves from the Cross upward to the freedom and expanse of the promises of God” (76). See also his *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, 115- 156. A striking example that demonstrates the fact that sainthood and beauty remain strong themes for him can be found in Benedict XVI’s homily for the Solemnity of the Epiphany on 6 January 2012. When meditating upon the composition of the star that guided the wise men to Christ, he confers the title “stars of God” upon those men and women who help to guide the way of the Church to its Lord: “The wise men from the East, who feature in today’s Gospel, like all the saints, have themselves gradually become constellations of God that mark out the path. In all these people, being touched by God’s word has, as it were, released an explosion of light, through which God’s radiance shines upon our world and shows us the path. The saints are stars of God, by whom we let ourselves be led to him for whom our whole being longs”

(http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2012/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20120106_epifania_en.html [accessed 8 January 2012]).

⁷⁸ Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 158.

⁷⁹ See Ratzinger, “The Beauty and the Truth of Christ,” 6; *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 32-41. See Nicholas Cabasilas, *Life in Christ*, trans. Margaret Lisney (London: Janus, 1995).

⁸⁰ Ratzinger, “The Beauty and the Truth of Christ,” 6.

crowned with thorns; . . . However, in his Face that is so disfigured, there appears the genuine, extreme beauty: the beauty of love that goes “to the very end.”⁸¹

For Ratzinger, contact with the dimension of the beautiful is an urgent task for the Church. This seems particularly true at the ecclesial level of witness and sanctity when one considers that Christ imposes a condition on the Church: that people let themselves be wounded by him and believe in a “Love” who sets aside external beauty so as to proclaim, in this way, the authentic truth of the beautiful. If the Church is to be a liberating force that “humanises” the world, Ratzinger asks “how can she do that if at the same time she turns her back on beauty, which is so closely allied to love?”⁸² For him, a love that knows the truly beautiful – the disfigured form of Christ – leads to the holiness of life which gives the Church its credibility in a world that prioritises external superficiality. However, the liberating mission to outline the authentic meaning of beauty extends beyond the confines of the Church’s interior life. The Church, to Ratzinger’s mind, is the sphere that extends outwards, via the saints who express, *ad gentes*, lives of beauty that save ⁸³:

[Die Kirche] soll – wie es vom alttestamentlichen Tempel gesagt ist – Stätte der “Herrlichkeit” sein und freilich so auch Stätte, in der die Klage der Menschheit vor das Ohr Gottes gebracht wird. Sie darf sich nicht im gemeindlich Brauchbaren beruhigen; sie muß die Stimme des Kosmos wecken und, indem sie den Schöpfer verherrlicht, dem Kosmos seine Herrlichkeit entlocken, ihn selbst herrlich und damit schön, bewohnbar, liebenswert machen. Die Kunst, die die Kirche hervorgebracht hat, ist neben den Heiligen, die in ihr gewachsen sind, die einzige wirkliche “Apologie,” die sie für ihre Geschichte vorzubringen hat. . . . Die Kirche muß anspruchsvoll

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 124.

⁸³ It is worth noting that in his Angelus Address for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception in 2008, Benedict XVI stated that one finds in Mary “the reflection of the beauty that saves the world: the beauty of God resplendent on the Face of Christ. In Mary this beauty is totally pure, humble, free from all pride and presumption.” This reflection followed a commentary by him on the presence of original sin in the world which, he said, was a result of the envy of the devil (cf. Wis 1: 13-14; 2: 23-24) “who, rebelling against God, deceived men and women and induced them to rebel as well.” In line with his post-Auschwitz sobriety regarding good and evil in the world, the Pope concludes that “[t]his is the drama of the freedom which God accepts to the very end for love, but promises that a woman's son will crush the head of the ancient serpent (Gen 3: 15)” (http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/angelus/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20081208_en.html [accessed 8 January 2012]). See this dissertation §1.5.

bleiben; sie muß eine Heimstatt des Schönen sein, sie muß den Streit um die “Vergeistigung” führen, ohne den die Welt zu einem “ersten Kreis der Hölle” wird.⁸⁴

In an address to artists in 2009, Benedict XVI consolidated these reflections by alluding to the notion that an artist’s work can generate an opening onto the mystery of the transcendent. Such beauty, he says, can “shock” us and thereby “reawaken” in us thoughts of our final destiny. However, he also says that beauty can find itself in opposition to a form of art which is designed to “dazzle” us into a blindness that deceives. To his mind, authentic beauty incorporates a sacred dimension which liberates and gives a sense of direction to human life today:

Too often . . . the beauty that is thrust upon us is illusory and deceitful, superficial and blinding, leaving the onlooker dazed; instead of bringing him out of himself and opening him up to horizons of true freedom as it draws him aloft, it imprisons him within himself and further enslaves him, depriving him of hope and joy. It is a seductive but hypocritical beauty that rekindles desire, the will to power, to possess, and to dominate others, it is a beauty which soon turns into its opposite, taking on the guise of indecency, transgression or gratuitous provocation. Authentic beauty . . . unlocks the yearning of the human heart, the profound desire to know, to love, to go towards the Other, to reach for the Beyond. If we acknowledge that beauty touches us intimately, that it wounds us, that it opens our eyes, then we rediscover the joy of seeing, of being able to grasp the profound meaning of our existence, the Mystery of which we are part; from this Mystery we can draw fullness, happiness, the passion to engage with it every day.⁸⁵

It cannot be denied, as we have moved through the communal level of the Church’s martyrological outreach, that both witness and sanctity are intensely personal concepts.

Ratzinger’s argument is that when one introduces the presuppositions of the social nature of the human person and the “we” structure of the Church, it becomes clear that the spiritual

⁸⁴ Ratzinger, *Das Fest des Glaubens*, 109 (“As the Old Testament speaks of the Temple, the Church is to be the place of ‘glory,’ and as such, too, the place where mankind’s cry of distress is brought to the ear of God. The Church must not settle down with what is merely comfortable and serviceable at the parish level; she must arouse the voice of the cosmos and, by glorifying the Creator, elicit the glory of the cosmos itself, making it also glorious, beautiful, habitable and beloved. Next to the saints, the art which the Church has produced is the only real ‘apologia’ for her history. . . . It is this glory which witnesses to the Lord, not theology’s clever explanations for all the terrible things which, lamentably, fill the pages of her history. . . . The Church must maintain high standards; she must be a place where beauty can be at home; she must lead the struggle for that ‘spiritualisation’ without which the world becomes the ‘first circle of hell’” [Ratzinger, *The Feast of Faith*, 124-25]). See *The Ratzinger Report*, 129-30 where he links sanctity and beauty with the art that grows up from within it. He says that “[a] theologian who does not love art, poetry, music and nature can be dangerous. Blindness and deafness toward the beautiful are not incidental: they are reflected in his theology” (130). See also *A New Song*, 224-25.

⁸⁵ Benedict XVI, Address to Artists (21 November 2009): AAS 101 (2009), 1048-49.

forces necessary to fulfil Jesus' commission are acquired through participation in ecclesial life. The qualitative effect upon the "I" of the martyr and the saint entering into the "we" of the Church furnishes the inner life of faith with its collective force for the good.⁸⁶

The communal level of the Church as witness deals primarily with believers' posture with regard to society and how they can, as members of the Church, live in the civic space in a way that does not compromise their faith, on the one hand, but makes a contribution to the common good, on the other. In terms of sanctity, it is Ratzinger's conviction that the Church must be wary of falling into a false kind of Christian progressivism which submits itself to the standards of the modern or post-modern age. He says, "[i]f we Christians simply stand by and utter soothing words in this situation, we are completely superfluous."⁸⁷ On the other hand, in a time when the perception is that the Church has nothing to offer but words of moral prohibition, whose only real function is condemnation and restriction, Ratzinger says, the way the Church witnesses in the world and presents itself needs re-examination.

In the public space today, there is an implied prohibition on talk of God, Christ and many of the central matters of faith because they are incomprehensible to it. On the contrary, Ratzinger believes that the proclamation of the life of faith has an inner coherence which warrants its presence in society. To his mind, the task for the Church today is to discern the differing emphases between the inner life of faith and the public presentation of the Church's words. He says such distinctions are not betrayals of God's word, the totality of which must

⁸⁶ There ought to be no particular surprise in the fact that Ratzinger would be drawn to the theme of personal sanctity in his ecclesiology. When pursued on the tension between the personal and the communal, he always tends to prioritise the personal aspects of ecclesial life. Hence the Church can never, he believes, exhaust itself in the erection of new sophisticated structures. To his mind, the real contribution of the Church comes about when people "strive to let what is ours disappear as much as possible so what belongs to Christ may become more visible" (Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 53). He believes this challenging commission in the world is well known to the saints, who bring about reform "not by working up plans for new structures, but by reforming themselves." Above all else, therefore, he concludes that "[w]hat the Church needs in order to respond to the needs of man in every age is holiness, not management" (ibid.). See also ibid., 67.

⁸⁷ Ratzinger, *A New Song*, 29.

always be kept alive by those mandated to do so. Instead, he says it is simply the search for the means of opening the channels of communication in the public space that cannot admit the logic of creative reason at present. Hence, the prohibition on conversations about the inner life of faith can be turned into an advantage. Ratzinger suggests that people of faith liberate themselves from trying to transmit the whole structure of faith, and focus more carefully on how to communicate those tenets of faith that need to be articulated for the good of all who inhabit the public space today:

Im inneren Glaubensleben, dort, wo man den eigentlichen Kern des Glaubens verkündet, können die einzelnen Dinge richtig aufeinander bezogen werden und könnten dann solche Verbote auch ihren Stellenwert in einem viel größeren und positiven Ganzen haben. Alles möglichst öffentlich machen zu wollen, verzerrt sozusagen die Proportionen. Die Kirche muß überlegen, wie sie die Binnenverkündigung, die ein gemeinsames Glaubensgefüge aussagt, und das Reden in die Welt hinein, in dem nur Teilwahrnehmungen erfolgen können, in die richtige Proportion bringt.⁸⁸

This twofold, internal-external dynamic spans both the human person's innermost conscience and social nature. By simultaneously recognising the need to honour the whole of the gift of faith while maintaining an authentic and respectful dialogue in the world, Ratzinger suggests that a new mode of ecclesial lifestyle is called for today. He himself takes up the challenge to rethink the Church's presentation of itself in the public space by reflecting on its mission to be a "convincing community."⁸⁹ To this we now turn.

8.3. The Societal Level of Civil Religion

The context for Ratzinger's approach to ecclesial life in the public space is predominantly that of the Church's contribution to the common good. It was summarily stated by him in 1970: "[The Church] cannot exchange her message for social service, but the

⁸⁸ Ratzinger, *Salz der Erde*, 182-83 ("In the inner life of faith, where the real core of faith is proclaimed, individual elements can be correctly related to one another, and in that case such prohibitions could have their proper place in a much larger and positive whole. To want to make everything as public as possible distorts, you might say, the proportions. The Church has to consider how to establish the right proportion between internal proclamation, which expresses a common structure of faith, and how she speaks to the world, where only part of what she says will be understood" [Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 171-72]).

⁸⁹ Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 171.

power of this message will again and again bring forth new social initiatives, just as she surpasses the scope of these initiatives and leads to that greater good which will continue to be a requirement for man even in a technological society.”⁹⁰ However, it was the fortuitous encounter with Marcello Pera in 2004 on the theme of Europe’s future that clarified Ratzinger’s ecclesiology regarding how the Church can present itself in the civic space without losing its fundamental identity.⁹¹ To his mind, the Church’s visible fidelity to its true nature is likely to take shape through the idea of “creative minorities” in society.⁹² He attributes the context for his remarks to what he calls the “Spengler-Toynbee debate” regarding the possible future direction of Europe. Out of the dialogue with Pera grew Ratzinger’s understanding of civil religion.

The German historian and philosopher, Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), identified a progressive life cycle in the history of cultures as a movement from birth to a gradual rise towards a period of high flourishing followed by slow decline and death. Ratzinger describes it as a “biologistic” thesis which attracted much opposition, not least from the British historian Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) who defined the difference between technical progress and true progress as spiritualisation. While Toynbee, like Spengler, saw the West as undergoing something of a cultural crisis, he attributed it to the abandonment of its religious roots in favour of a cult of technology, nationalism and militarism.

Ratzinger says that while the “Spengler-Toynbee debate” necessarily remains open because none of us knows the future, Toynbee foresaw its resolution in the rekindling of the

⁹⁰ Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 217.

⁹¹ See Ratzinger and Pera, *Without Roots*. This book records an exchange which originally took place in 2004 between the then Cardinal Ratzinger and Marcello Pera (b. 1943), an Italian philosopher and president of the Italian Senate from 2001 until 2006. In May 2004, the two men delivered lectures at separate events on their concerns about the spiritual, cultural and political situation today in the West, and particularly in Europe. They also made some tentative suggestions towards a solution. When they realised the common cause of their reflections, they exchanged letters in the form of a response to the approach taken by the other and clarified further the expression of their own respective positions. See also Marcello Pera, *Perché Dobbiamo Dirci Cristiani* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore S.p.A., 2008).

⁹² See Ratzinger and Pera, *Without Roots*, 67-69, 80, 95, 106, 120-23, 126.

West's Christian heritage. Ratzinger is more agreeable to the latter's optimism for the future because "[r]ather than a biologicistic vision, [Toynbee] offered a voluntaristic one focused on the energy of creative minorities and exceptional individuals."⁹³ The fate of society, Ratzinger says, "always depends on its creative minorities" and, for this reason, "Christian believers should look upon themselves as just such a creative minority, and help Europe to reclaim what is best in its heritage and to thereby place itself at the service of all humankind."⁹⁴ In the context of the search for the source of spiritual strength in a society suffering from a steady, disconcerting loss of vitality, Ratzinger sets out his vision of civil religion, outlining it in four principal theses. They include the nature of a creative minority as a motivating force oriented beyond the Church and for society; the presence of a sphere of contact and a reference point that leavens the whole; the creative minority itself that lives from the Church's divine origins; and the opportunity for dialogue among people passionate about the search for truth.

⁹³ Ibid., 68. See Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History. Abridgement of Volumes I-VI by D.C. Somervell* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁹⁴ Ratzinger and Pera, *Without Roots*, 80. In the course of the written exchange between the two men, Pera describes Ratzinger's invocation of Toynbee's idea as "courageous and dramatic" (95). Pera enthusiastically agreed with Ratzinger's view that the secularity aimed at by the biologicistic vision cannot deal with the spiritual condition of the human person: "[a]bsolute profanity, supposing that there is such a thing, is an absolute vacuum in which neither the happy majority nor the creative minorities can exist" (106). On 12 December 2011, Jonathan Sacks delivered a lecture at the Gregorian University in Rome entitled "Has Europe lost its Soul?" In similar fashion to Ratzinger and Pera, his point was that if Europe is severed from its Judeo-Christianity heritage, then its identity is in danger of annihilation. During the course of the lecture he warned about the precarious situation Europe faces today: "For the task ahead of us is not between Jews and Catholics, or even Jews and Christians in general, but between Jews and Christians on the one hand, and the increasingly, even aggressively secularising forces at work in Europe today on the other, challenging and even ridiculing our faith. If Europe loses the Judaeo-Christian heritage that gave it its historic identity and its greatest achievements in literature, art, music, education, politics, and as we will see, economics, it will lose its identity and its greatness, not immediately, but before this century reaches its end. When a civilisation loses its faith, it loses its future. When it recovers its faith, it recovers its future. For the sake of our children, and their children not yet born, we – Jews and Christians, side-by-side – must renew our faith and its prophetic voice. We must help Europe recover its soul." See http://www.unigre.it/eventi/Lord_Sacks/documenti/111212_PUG_BEА_testo_Lord_Sacks_en.pdf (accessed 12 May 2012). A helpful collection of essays on the theme of Europe in Ratzinger/Pope Benedict's thought has recently been published. See Clemens Sedmak and Stephan O. Horn, eds., *Die Seele Europas: Papst Benedikt XVI und die europäische Identität* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 2011). See also David L. Schindler, "Truth, Freedom, and Relativism in Western Democracies: Pope Benedict XVI's Contribution to *Without Roots*," *Communio* (2005): 669-81; William Newton, "Two Trials, One Truth – Benedict XVI on Church and State," *The Furrow* (2012): 81-86.

Firstly, Ratzinger defines civil religion as that which “overcomes the boundaries between denominations and gives voice to values that sustain society rather than console the individual.”⁹⁵ He says this approach presupposes the existence of creative minorities. Such a minority, which he also refers to as a “convinced minority,” is a motivating force of “human beings who in their encounters with Christ have discovered the precious pearl that gives value to all life (Matt 13:45ff), assuring that the Christian imperatives are no longer ballast that immobilizes humanity, but rather wings that carry it upward.”⁹⁶ These creative minorities, while *in* the Church, are oriented “beyond the Church and for society” because “through their persuasive capacity and their joy, they reach other people and offer them a different way of seeing things.”⁹⁷ Creative minorities are not sectarian in nature but rather through them a convincing model of life emerges which also becomes, over time, an opening towards a knowledge that cannot emerge from life’s repetitive routine. As Pope, Benedict XVI also spoke about the need for protective zones which support the believer’s effective participation in the public space:

Tatsächlich brauchen wir gewissermaßen Inseln, wo der Glaube an Gott und die innere Einfachheit des Christentums lebt und ausstrahlt; Oasen, Archen Noahs, in die der Mensch immer wieder fliehen kann. Schutzräume sind die Räume der Liturgie. Aber auch in den unterschiedlichen Gemeinschaften und Bewegungen, in den Pfarreien, in den Feiern der Sakramente, in den Übungen der Frömmigkeit, in den Wallfahrten und so weiter versucht die Kirche, Abwehrkräfte zu geben und dann auch Schutzräume zu entwickeln, in denen im Gegensatz zu dem Kaputten um uns herum auch wieder die Schönheit der Welt und des Lebendürfens sichtbar wird.⁹⁸

Secondly, creative minorities are the concrete realisation of the Church as “salt,” “light” and “yeast” (cf. Matt 5:13-14; 13:33) for believers and “God-fearers” alike. When the

⁹⁵ Ratzinger and Pera, *Without Roots*, 120.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 120-21.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Ratzinger, *Licht der Welt*, 206 (“It is true that we need something like islands where faith in God and the interior simplicity of Christianity are alive and radiant; oases, Noah’s arks, to which man can always come back for refuge. Liturgical spaces offer such protective zones. But there are also various communities and movements, the parishes, celebrations of the sacraments, exercises of piety, pilgrimages, and so forth, in which the Church attempts to instil powers of resistance as well as to develop protective zones in which the beauty of the world, the gift of being alive, also becomes visible in contrast to the rampant brokenness around us” [Ratzinger, *Light of the World*, 176-77]). See also *ibid.*, 184; *God and the World*, 388-89.

credibility of a minority group is sufficiently great, spheres of contact, of reference and of belonging, which we all need, are automatically created. Ratzinger suggests that the Church may have forgotten to be a hospitable place for all – members and seekers alike – who can see in it “a reference point that indicate[s] the way of life.” In this way, Ratzinger says, “[m]eeting places that become ‘yeast’ – a persuasive force that acts beyond the more closed sphere until it reaches everybody – should therefore be formed around the minorities that have been touched by faith.”⁹⁹ He says a “minority Church . . . will live in small vital circles of really convinced believers who live their faith. But precisely in this way she will, biblically speaking, become salt of the earth again.”¹⁰⁰

Thirdly, “these creative minorities can clearly neither stand nor live on their own” but “live naturally from the fact that the Church as a whole remains and that it lives in and stands by the faith in its divine origins.”¹⁰¹ Such origins are not manufactured by human will but are recognised as a gift that the Church community is duty-bound to transmit. In a two-way process, “[t]he minorities renew the vitality of this great community at the same time as they draw on its hidden life force, which forever generates new life.”¹⁰² To Ratzinger’s mind, in the upheaval the Church is experiencing in some parts of the world – moving from being identified with great societies to these steadfast and pioneering groupings – the importance of keeping what is essential to humanity from being destroyed is of the greatest importance:

Der Kirche hat deshalb einerseits die Flexibilität nötig, veränderte Einstellungen und Ordnungen in der Gesellschaft annehmen und Lösungen von bisherigen Verflechtungen vornehmen zu können. Andererseits hat sie um so mehr die Treue nötig, um das zu bewahren, was den Menschen Mensch sein läßt; was ihn überleben läßt, was seine Würde bewahrt. Sie hat dieses festzuhalten und ihn nach oben hin,

⁹⁹ Ratzinger and Pera, *Without Roots*, 122. See also T. Howland Sanks’ work *Salt, Leaven and Light: The Community called Church* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1992). After a historical survey of the Church in a western-European context, Sanks reflects on the challenges and possibilities facing ecclesiology. In a chapter entitled “Liberating Ecclesiology,” he advocates that the Church in the U.S.A. should not adopt, but can learn from Latin American liberation theology so as to become “a sign, a sacrament of integral salvation in and for the world” (185).

¹⁰⁰ Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 222.

¹⁰¹ Ratzinger and Pera, *Without Roots*, 122.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 123.

nach Gott hin, offenzuhalten; denn nur von dorthier kann die Kraft des Friedens in dieser Welt kommen.¹⁰³

Finally, he says there is no reason why secularists and believers should not move towards each other in openness. Believers never relinquish the search for truth, while “seekers” are also people touched by truth, often in the most conscientious way and thus cannot be classified as unbelievers. Because both are partakers of the truth, the distinction between Catholics and secularists is relative. To Ratzinger’s mind, secularists are not a denomination or a rigid block but rather are very often

[. . .] uomini che cercano appassionatamente la verità, che soffrono per la mancanza di verità dell’uomo, riprendendo proprio così i contenuti essenziali della cultura e della fede e spesso rendendoli, con il loro impegno, ancora più luminosi di quanto possa fare una fede scontata, accettata più per abitudine che per conoscenza sofferta.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Ratzinger, *Salz des Erde*, 237 (“The Church therefore needs, on the one hand, the flexibility to accept changed attitudes and laws in society and to be able to detach herself from the inter-connections with society that have existed until now. On the other hand, she has all the greater need for fidelity in order to preserve what enables man to be man, what enables him to survive, what preserves his dignity. She has to hold fast to this and keep him open toward what is above, toward God; for only from there can the power of peace come into this world” [Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 222]).

¹⁰⁴ Joseph Ratzinger and Marcello Pera, *Senza radici: Europa, Relativismo, Cristianesimo, Islam* (Milano: Mondadori, 2004), 112 (“[. . .] people who passionately seek the truth, who are pained by the lack of truth in humankind. Consequently, they return to the essential contents of culture and faith, and through their commitment often make these contents even more luminous than an unquestioned faith, accepted more out of habit than out of the sufferings of the conscience” [Ratzinger and Pera, *Without Roots*, 123-24]). For Benedict XVI, the present time exhibits the clash of two spiritual worlds – that of faith and secularism. He poses two questions from this: “[w]here is secularism right? Where can and must faith adopt the forms and figures of modernity – and where must it offer resistance?” (Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 57). From his perspective, particularly through his encounter with bishops in Third World countries, he is of the opinion that “[t]his great struggle pervades the whole world today” (ibid.). He says “the great task of this hour” is to help people recognise the great treasure that they have – “the sight of God” – so that “they themselves, then, as a result of the strength of their own faith, [can] enter into conflict with secularism and are capable of carrying out the discernment of spirits” (ibid.). From this view, Benedict XVI sets out his vision for people of faith in society: “We can only hope that the inner strength of the faith that is present in people will then become powerful public thinking too, and that society does not simply fall into the abyss” (58). To the Pope’s mind, there is a fundamental symbiosis between the presence of God in the world and human prosperity. Nine years before becoming Pope, he explained that a healthy society – such as one from the modern period founded upon Christian democracy – “rests upon the sacrality of values guaranteed by faith, values that are beyond the reach of man’s arbitrary will” (Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 226). Ratzinger is at his most apocalyptic when he speaks about the “abyss” which results from the total absence of the sacral element in the life of humanity. Even for pre-Christian paganisms, he says, there were ties with the gods which still embodied fundamental values that set limits to evil. However, he is personally convinced by the empirical evidence of the history of the great atheistic dictatorships of the twentieth-century that “the fall of the Church, the disintegration and the absence of the faith as a formative power, actually does drag the world down into the abyss. . . . [I]f the ethical power represented by Christianity were suddenly torn out of humanity, mankind would lurch to and fro like a ship rammed against an iceberg, and then the survival of humanity would be in greatest jeopardy” (227). Returning to his comments as Pope, he reflects on the way forward through the “clash” of spiritual values by presenting his belief that prioritizing God is the way to come to an authentic understanding of the human person: “I think that our major

If the Church is to be a witness to authentic freedom through its convinced and convincing minorities, then he says “the Christian model of life must be manifested as a life in all its fullness and freedom, a life that does not experience the bonds of love as dependence and limitation but rather as an opening to the greatness of life.” Then, even though living the great values of Christian tradition remains a major challenge, the creative minorities can “instil the courage needed to live it.”¹⁰⁵

Civil religion then, is a means of dialoguing with civil society groupings who do not necessarily share the common convictions of faith held by the Church. In light of this, a source of potential conflict for the Church is the challenge to uphold the truth of faith in the face of an intellectual climate which sees the claim to any possession of truth as arrogance.¹⁰⁶ For Ratzinger, this is actually a missiological issue centred on the intricate concept of “the right to evangelise.” It is a matter of the convinced minorities of the Church striking a balance between their responsibility before the gift of truth and the avoidance of “spiritual colonialism” that would subject others to “my” culture and “my” ideas. As a response to the view that recipients of truth are either arrogant or ignorant or both, Ratzinger says one has to distinguish and unpack the search for truth that is being critiqued here, as well as the nature of the truth-claim made by Christianity:

[. . .] was ist das für eine Suche, die nie ankommen darf? Sucht sie wirklich, oder will sie in Wahrheit gar nicht finden, weil es das Gefundene nicht geben darf? . . .

task now, after a few fundamental questions are clarified, is first of all to bring to light God’s priority again. The important thing today is to see that God exists, that God matters to us, that he answers us. And conversely, that if he is omitted, everything else might be as clever as can be – yet man then loses his dignity and his authentic humanity and, thus, the essential thing breaks down. That is why, I think, as a new emphasis we have to give priority to the question about God” (Benedict XVI, *Light of the World*, 65).

¹⁰⁵ Ratzinger and Pera, *Without Roots*, 126. It is important to note in this instance that Ratzinger uses the words “dependence” and “limitation” as they are more commonly understood nowadays, that is, with the contemporary connotation of constraint, and domination by another. Throughout the course of his own reflections on human freedom, on the other hand, he has attempted to imbue these words with the positive Christian meaning of dialogical relationship with God. See this dissertation § 4.3.1.

¹⁰⁶ See Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 68-72. With regard to the intellectual climate within which the Church operates, he says: “Today it has become an irresistibly forceful prejudice to dismiss as simplistic and, at the same time, arrogant, those who are reputed to believe that they ‘have’ the truth. Such people are supposedly incapable of dialogue and ultimately cannot be taken seriously. For nobody ‘has’ the truth. All of us, the argument goes, can only be searching for it” (68-69).

Natürlich kann die Wahrheit keine Habe sein; das Verhältnis zu ihr muß immer demütige Annahme sein, die um die eigene Gefährdung weiß und Erkenntnis als Geschenk annimmt, dessen ich unwürdig werden kann, dessen ich mich nicht rühmen darf, als sei es meine eigene Sache. Wenn es mir gegeben ist, so ist es Verantwortung, die mich auch für den anderen in Dienst nimmt.¹⁰⁷

What emerges for Ratzinger here is that a believer cannot abdicate the freedom that comes with the responsibility of gift – the gift of truth concerning God. To other groupings who do not confess Jesus as true God, this position can seem, at best, presumptuous. However, it is precisely this perspective, Ratzinger says, that places a great urgency on Christians to

[. . .] wir solche Erkenntnis nicht als unsere Leistung ansehen, sondern der Wahrheit treu bleiben, daß die Begegnung mit dem Wort auch für uns nur Geschenk ist, das uns gegeben wurde, damit wir es weitergeben, umsonst, wie wir es empfangen haben. Gott hat eine Wahl getroffen, die einen für die anderen und alle füreinander eingesetzt, und wir können nur in Demut uns als unwürdige Boten erkennen, die nicht sich selber verkündigen, sondern mit heiliger Scheu von dem sprechen, was nicht das Unsrige ist, sondern von Gott kommt.¹⁰⁸

While the primacy of truth is something Ratzinger believes needs to be retrieved as a central tenet of Christian life, he also says that holding Jesus Christ as the unique and

¹⁰⁷ Ratzinger, *Unterwegs zu Jesus Christus* (Sankt Ulrich Verlag GmbH: Augsburg, 2005), 69 (“[. . .] what kind of search is this that can never reach a conclusion? Is it really searching or is it just an unwillingness to find, because what is found is not supposed to exist? . . . Naturally, truth cannot be a possession; my relationship to it must always be a humble acceptance, in the awareness that I myself can endanger it; I accept the knowledge as a gift of which I am unworthy, about which I may not boast, as though it were my own. If it is given to me, then that is a responsibility that puts me in the service of others as well” [Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 69]). This was an issue that came to the fore in the year 2000 with the publication of the declaration, *Dominus Iesus* during Ratzinger’s stewardship of the *CDF*. The declaration reiterated the uniqueness and salvific universality of Christ and the Church. See *Dominus Iesus* (6 August 2000): AAS 92 (2000), 742-765. Most of Ratzinger’s reflections on this issue are found in his book *Truth and Tolerance*. See also Stephen J. Pope and Charles Hefling, eds., *Sic et Non: Encountering Dominus Iesus* (New York: Orbis, 2002). To Ratzinger’s mind, there is a tension today between what he calls habitual Christianity (being content “with mere ritualised observances and the customs with which [people] were brought up” [*On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 76]) and the responsibility of gift in the truth. He says St Paul felt this responsibility of gift (1Cor 9:16) as did Jeremiah long before that (Jer 20:8-9). The parable of the fearful servant who hid his master’s talent because he was afraid (Matt 25:14-30) is also ultimately to be understood from this perspective. Ratzinger says that the “talent” – the treasure of the truth – given to us must not be hidden. Instead, it is meant to be spent boldly so that it can take effect. Knowledge of God passed on in this way becomes the “leaven” that permeates and renews humanity. Ratzinger says that he observes the West busily burying this treasure out of cowardice and laziness because we do not want to be illuminated by it ourselves. This way of living, by the least line of resistance, seems to consist in living a life untroubled by the burden of the *responsibility of gift*. But the gift should urge us on so that the ends of the earth might see the power of God (Isa 52:10; Ps 98:3). See *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 71-72.

¹⁰⁸ Ratzinger, *Unterwegs zu Jesus Christus*, 70 (“[. . .] not view such knowledge as our own accomplishment but that we instead remain loyal to the truth that the encounter with the Word is a gift for us, too, which was given to us so that we might give it to others, freely, as we have received it. God made a choice, established some for others and all for one another, and we can only acknowledge in humility that we are unworthy messengers who do not proclaim ourselves but rather speak with a holy fear about something that is not ours but that comes from God” [Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 70]).

universal mediator of salvation is not a call to disparage other perspectives.¹⁰⁹ His guiding principle here is that we should not fear the truth for it “does not destroy; it purifies and unites.”¹¹⁰ For him, the acknowledgement that Christ satisfies the deepest longing of the human person stands “opposed to the resignation of those who say that man is incapable of truth and to the convenient inaction of letting everything continue as before.”¹¹¹ In actual fact,

[. . .] sagt auch der Glaube, daß die Unähnlichkeit zwischen dem von uns Erkannten und der eigentlichen Wirklichkeit in sich selbst immer unendlich größer ist als die Ähnlichkeit (*DS* 806). Aber diese unendliche Unähnlichkeit macht doch Erkenntnis nicht zur Nichterkenntnis, Wahrheit nicht zur Unwahrheit. Mir schient, man müsse die Sache mit der Anmaßung umkehren: Ist es nicht Anmaßung zu sagen, Gott könne uns nicht das Geschenk der Wahrheit machen? Er könne uns die Augen nicht öffnen? Ist es nicht eine Verachtung Gottes zu sagen, wir seien nun einmal blind geboren, und Wahrheit sei nicht unsere Sache? Ist es nicht eine Degradierung des Menschen und seiner Sehnsucht nach Gott, uns nur als ewig im Dunkel Tastende anzuerkennen? Und damit geht dann Hand in Hand die wirkliche Anmaßung, daß wir eben selber Gottes Stelle einnehmen und bestimmen möchten, wer wir sind und was wir tun und aus uns und der Welt machen wollen.¹¹²

In Ratzinger’s understanding, the truth can and must have no other weapon other than itself. Today, he says, a key insight which we need to recover is the idea that “knowing and searching are not mutually exclusive.”¹¹³ If this is true in general, then it is true in particular for the life of faith. Knowledge of the truth, while not excluding further deepening in one’s understanding, can set one free to cooperate with Christ’s mission in society over and above any egotistical predispositions. Ratzinger concludes that one who both believes and says “we have found love” has to pass this gift on, knowing that it does not do violence, nor destroy the

¹⁰⁹ See *DV*, 2.

¹¹⁰ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 74.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 76.

¹¹² Ratzinger, *Unterwegs zu Jesus Christus*, 69-70 (“our faith says that the dissimilarity between what we know and the true reality in itself is always infinitely greater than the similarity [Lateran Council, *DS* 806]. But this dissimilarity still does not turn knowledge into ignorance, truth into falsehood. It seems to me that we should turn this question about presumption the other way round: It is not presumptuous to say that God cannot give us the truth as a gift? That he cannot open our eyes? Does it not show contempt for God to say that, once we have been born blind, truth is not our concern? Is it not degradation of man and of his longing for God to claim that we human beings are merely groping in the dark forever? Hand in hand with us, furthermore, goes the real presumption, namely, that we and we alone would like to take God’s place and determine who we are and what we do and what we want to make out of ourselves and the world” [Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 69]).

¹¹³ Ratzinger, *On the Way to Jesus Christ*, 69-70.

identity of the other, nor disrupt cultures. Ratzinger believes this gift sets people and cultures free to realise their potential. This “passing on” is the fulfilment of a responsibility.

Only in this way can the Church’s missionary task be understood today as responsibility and accountability before the primacy of truth but never as spiritual colonialism. There is always the freedom to assent to the gift of truth, initially through a creative minority, and subsequently in the passing on of the “Love” that has been received. The Church’s witness conducted in the name of truth in the public space, must never be severed from the practice of freedom on the part of the missionary, nor in relation to the potential recipients of the grace to believe. The love dimension of Ratzinger’s ecclesiology is operative here, for one is prepared to give only to the extent to which one loves. Ratzinger says that participating in the Church’s witness requires,

[. . .] zuallererst Martyriumsbereitschaft, Bereitschaft, sich selbst um der Wahrheit willen und der anderen willen zu verlieren. Nur so wird sie glaubwürdig; . . . Denn nur dann wird der Primat der Wahrheit aufgerichtet. Und dann ist auch die Idee der Anmaßung von innen her überwunden.¹¹⁴

8.4. Conclusion

Chapter 8 has looked at Ratzinger’s view of the Church in the public space in terms of his understanding of human freedom. He addresses a number of discernible levels. They consist of the personal, communal and societal. Ultimately, they are interrelated. The personal level holds the primary place in his ecclesiology of liberation because without conscientious assent to the primacy of God, the Church does not have a witness, nor does society have someone wilfully proposing the Christian patrimony for the common good. With this free assent, Ratzinger believes the human person participates in an internal-external dynamic which nourishes the faith life of the individual person and contributes to the well-

¹¹⁴ Ratzinger, *Unterwegs zu Jesus Christus*, 71 (“[. . .] in the first instance readiness for martyrdom, a willingness to lose oneself for truth’s sake, and the sake of others. Only then will [Christians] be credible; . . . [b]ecause only then is the primacy of truth erected. And then also, the idea of the presumption [of truth] is overcome from within” [own translation]).

being of the social dimension of the whole human family. Furthermore, by renouncing direct political action, the Church trusts that every informed conscience is capable of contributing to the shaping of a just society. For Ratzinger, the Church must ground its life on its truest nature – on maintaining the priority of God and human access to him. He is convinced that a morally credible and fruitful society flows from this prioritisation.

In the modern world, where the medieval view of fixed coordinates for the divine in the heavenly firmament is no longer revered, Ratzinger believes the human freedom to say “yes” to creation is an act of the greatest importance. At all times, however, because of this very freedom, the decision to be a witness always remains an open question tested by the prevailing cultural environment in which one dwells. As a creature with the faculties of will, intellect and heart, conscientious assent to God involves an openness to creative reason which, from the Christian perspective, is openness to the Logos. For Ratzinger, this openness is encounter with Christ who leads into the inner life of God – the human person’s truest happiness and authentic freedom.

Ratzinger has a strong interest in the lives of the saints as a concrete entry point into the theme of freedom. If it is the great calling of the creature endowed with freedom to choose to live relationally, then, he says, the saints demonstrate the delicate balance of fidelity to the promise of eternity alongside a genuinely incarnate way of life in history. There is a noticeable tendency in Ratzinger to put a higher premium on the personal realm more than on the communal in ecclesiological debates. When he deals with the saints, he does this to the extent that personal holiness counts for more in the Church than management or structures. Such a vision is oriented towards a Church based on the law of freedom and this will necessarily mean a smaller group who, with a full heart, strive for the holiness to which they assent. To his mind, therefore, indifference is the recipe for a lack of credibility in the

Church, while a convinced minority can transparently involve itself in what Ratzinger calls civil religion.

From an ecclesiological perspective, Ratzinger believes the presence of these minorities concretely manifests “salt,” “light” and “yeast” in the world. It is the level of credibility manifested by the minority that leads to the further voluntary building-up of these spheres of contact and of relationality. However, he is careful to emphasize that these spheres are not self-sustaining, but live from the Church as a whole which stands by the faith in its divine origins. Therefore, the minority draws on the hidden life-force of the universal Church while simultaneously contributing to its renewed vitality.

Section III has brought together personal, communal and societal aspects of the Church through the prism of worship, oversight and witness. Arguably, what has been presented is a proposal mapping out the importance of the theme of an ecclesiology of liberation in Joseph Ratzinger’s writings. From the Christian perspective, Ratzinger has argued that growth in authentic freedom is bound to an inner, personal assent to God’s will which comes towards us and is overseen through the divinely instituted social framework of the Church. Moreover, he argues that such growth expresses itself in terms of a common witness, manifesting itself for the good of the whole. This is a concentric approach to the Church that becomes possible when Christ the Son is the centre of the Church which is ever his Body. The witness of believers who have been lovingly formed in the Church is an inspiration in the world and a living invitation to wholeheartedly “Follow me” (Matt 4:19).

CONCLUDING EVALUATION

In order to bring this research to a conclusion, it is important to undertake an overall assessment of Ratzinger's thought as it relates to the thesis of the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom. Primarily, I propose to do this by evaluating the significance of his contribution, highlighting both its constructive aspects as well as its limits. In order to achieve this, I will focus on six broad themes which demonstrate the chief characteristics of Ratzinger's line of reasoning as it pertains to an ecclesiology of liberation. One may loosely (but not entirely as there is some overlapping) characterise these themes in terms of the three main sections of the dissertation – there are two subdivisions dedicated to each section. Secondly, I will briefly highlight three potential avenues of enquiry which Ratzinger opens up to the reader but doesn't fully exploit. These themes merit further ecclesiological investigation.

9.1. The Significance of Ratzinger's Contribution

9.1.1. Cultural, Ecclesial and Existential Contexts Underpinning Ratzinger's Approach

This dissertation has argued that, in order to avoid misunderstanding Ratzinger's approach to freedom, it is necessary to contextualise his ecclesiology within the cultural, ecclesial and existential contexts that shape his life's work. By gathering together these contexts in an integrated way, it is possible to determine that both Ratzinger's personal and public life have fostered in him a specific interest in the ecclesiology of liberation.

As demonstrated in Section I, Ratzinger's formative years saw his familiarity with an idyllic and religious Bavarian homeland juxtaposed with the experience of national socialist and marxist politics. These memories remained with him throughout his studies of patristic and medieval theology, forming in him the belief that the Church had an essential contribution to make to any liberation from human aberration:

[Ratzinger's] was a twilight (literally a two-light) childhood and adolescence, in which there existed a communal reality that could be trusted and a communal reality that clearly could not be trusted. The first, of course, was the Church, the second the Nazi authorities. The first was ever more experienced as the guarantor of human freedom, the second, however, as its indisputable enemy. The first embodied the wisdom of God and told the truth about human beings; the second embodied the false wisdom of a destructive ideology that completely effaced the truth about human beings.¹

Furthermore, throughout the course of this dissertation, we have seen Ratzinger promote an ecclesial faith. He envisages that such a faith should permeate and empower the whole of one's existence, tempering, on the one hand, the human yearning for autonomous expressions of freedom while, on the other, cautioning against irresponsible naivety in respect of human sinfulness. This dissertation proposes that the pervasive influence of lived, as well as erudite Catholicism in Ratzinger's own life means that he is one who is not oblivious to the "bitterness" people experience with the Church – particularly when recounting feelings of constraint, even subjugation by its agencies. He views his theological mandate in terms of contributing to an illumination of the redemption of the Church's Exile in Babylon. He is motivated by the need for a liberating *ablatio* as the core personal centre of reform of all institutional reality in general, and the Church in particular. This concentration on the "personal core" explains why there is such a pronounced tendency in Ratzinger to give precedence to the personal aspects of ecclesial life. To his mind, institutional restructuring without personal reform offers, at best, temporary respite from the inescapable responsibility of each person to strive for a personal integrity consistent with the truth of human nature.

¹ Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger's Theological Ideas*, 22. Corkery says the growing opposition between the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world in Ratzinger's outlook fuels his passion for truth, giving him "an eye to what is going on in the world and to what Christian faith has to say about it" (20). As an example of the deep impact his formative years had on him, Ratzinger's own cousin who was diagnosed with Downs Syndrome was taken by the Nazis and murdered because his was considered a "life not worth living." See Georg Ratzinger, *Mein Bruder, der Papst* (Munich: F.A. Herbig, 2011), 139. Nonetheless, Corkery, for his part, remains unconvinced by Ratzinger's preference to accentuate so strongly the negative in the human person. That is not to say, however, that Corkery denies such a need: "[. . .] there are theological roads taken and roads not taken; and a direction, a signposted road, emerges for this young theologian's developing mind. His will be a theology less inclined to seek for 'seeds of the Word' or for grace hidden in the human mess of things and more inclined to identify the pollutants that distort and seduce a humanity that is constantly in need of healing and conversion. It will, on the whole, be a theology more attuned to the tensions between what is godly and what is worldly rather than to the harmonies between the two" (26). See also this dissertation §§ 1.1., 1.2. and 1.5.

Maximilian Heim refers to Ratzinger's approach as "existentielle Kirchlichkeit" or "existential ecclesiality,"² namely, the lived habit of an ecclesial lifestyle that is acquired over time and is indispensable for constructive ecclesiological reflection. Heim considers this point fundamental to understanding Ratzinger's contribution on two counts. On the one hand, there is Ratzinger's own personal longevity at the centre of the upheaval and renewal in Christian theology that has taken place over the course of the twentieth-century. On the other hand, he has the experience of contributing to these theological developments from the differing perspectives of professor, peritus, pastor, prefect and, finally, as Pope. Heim rightly concludes that Ratzinger cannot be accurately understood apart from the course of the twentieth-century, the turbulent history of which has marked him so deeply and which he, in return, has dedicated his life to interpreting from the Christian perspective, above all in terms of the course set for the Church by the Second Vatican Council:

No serious survey of Ratzinger's ecclesiology can ignore the historical theological background in response to which his theology takes on its own contours. In his life in the Church, Ratzinger directly confronted the tensions of the controversies that broke out in the wake of Vatican II and made it clear that the Church herself is going through a time of transition. Concretely this means that we must inquire into the central issues of intellectual history that, on the one hand, informed this ecclesial assembly and, on the other hand, had an important influence on Ratzinger's reception of the Council.³

In the upheaval experienced by theology in the first half of the twentieth-century, existentialism, a school of philosophy that treats the existence of the subject as a preeminent determinant, exerted a major influence on Ratzinger. He says the "philosophy of dialogue" of Martin Buber (1878-1965) was "a spiritual exercise that left an essential mark" on him because of its philosophical personalism.⁴ Over the course of this dissertation, the centrality of dialogue in Ratzinger's presentation has been evident, even to the point where human freedom forms the ground for the basis of divine-human relationality. There is even a sense in

² Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger – Kirchliche Existenz und existentielle Theologie*, 144.

³ *Ibid.*, 467-68. This English translation is taken from Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology*, 509.

⁴ Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977*, 44.

which Ratzinger can be described as an existential theologian, albeit with some qualification. His is a “personal existentialism grounded in Jesus Christ.”⁵ He employs this relatively recent form of philosophical scholarship to re-examine the Church’s tradition as it encounters modern day theological and anthropological impasses.

Ratzinger employs existentialist insight to develop a personalism which does not ignore the communal but anchors it, ontologically, in freedom. Ratzinger is able to bring his expertise as a historian of dogma to bear on the topic of freedom when he discusses neo-chalcedonian christology.⁶ Erwin Dirscherl, Professor of Dogmatics and the History of Dogma in Regensburg University, says that Ratzinger was able to demonstrate “the existential level of ‘koinonia’.”⁷ To Ratzinger’s mind, the issue of human freedom is fully determined in the person of Christ as had already been established at Constantinople III. Ratzinger is an existentialist in so far as he engages this school of philosophy as an interpretative guide for communicating the Church’s christological teaching on issues of freedom pertaining to the divine and human wills in Christ. From an ecclesiological perspective, Dirscherl says Ratzinger formulates an ontology of freedom by means of existential analysis. Such an ontology shapes a unity in communion between God and his

⁵ See De Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, 20. Both Corkery and Rowland have highlighted the influence of key nineteenth and twentieth-century philosophers upon Ratzinger at a time when existentialism was increasingly coming to the fore. As well as the Jewish philosopher Martin Buber (1878-1965) Ratzinger was impressed by the personalist scholars, Ferdinand Ebner (1882-1931) and Alois Dempf (1891-1982) because their insights were so compatible with Augustine. See Corkery, *Joseph Ratzinger’s Theological Ideas*, 23-2; Rowland, *Benedict XVI: A Guide for the Perplexed*, 3-4, 13ff; Jankunas, *The Dictatorship of Relativism*, 40. Christopher Collins, in particular, is of the view that the religious existentialism found in Martin Buber’s 1923 landmark essay, “Ich und Du,” had an important influence on theology in general and on Ratzinger in particular. Collins says that Buber spoke of an isolation, anxiety and alienation amongst his contemporaries, the antidote to which lay in humanity’s return to the dialogue with “the Eternal Thou.” See Christopher S. Collins, *The Word Made Love: The Dialogical Theology of Joseph Ratzinger* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2013), 13. Ratzinger himself, however, is aware that “[t]he admission of existentialism into theology . . . was not without its dangers for theology.” In particular, he saw in it the potential for “the existentialist reduction, especially in the doctrine about God . . . [which] took biblical hope as its basis but inverted it by keeping the religious ardour but eliminating God and replacing him with the political activity of man” (Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927-1977*, 137). Nevertheless, Ratzinger is clearly attracted to the potential which dialogical theology presents for a personalist existentialism founded in Christ as a way of engaging contemporary culture in the sphere of its own concerns. Nowhere is this more evident than in his treatment of the theological topic of freedom.

⁶ See this dissertation § 3.2.2.

⁷ Erwin Dirscherl, “Gott und Mensch als Beziehungswesen: Die theologische und anthropologische Denkfigur Joseph Ratzingers ausgehend von der Christologie” in Frank Meier-Hamidi & Ferdinand Schumacher, eds., *Der Theologe Joseph Ratzinger* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2007), 62.

people. In other words, a unity via the freedom of a reciprocal “yes” that always respects the difference and otherness between God and humanity.

In retrospect, when one engages with the evidence – be it the deep cultural and political impressions made on him in his formative years in Germany, the enquiring nature of his unwavering faith, or his prolonged engagement with intellectual history – it seems inevitable that Ratzinger would be someone who would develop a keen interest in exploring an ecclesiology of liberation.

9.1.2. The Value of Etiology in Theological Research

The relevance and dependability of etiological research in the theological sciences is a question very much raised by the way Ratzinger approaches the issue of freedom. He tends to rely heavily on his own interpretation of the genesis of human freedom in the modern era. Consequently, the accuracy of his etiological narrative is significant because, generally speaking, the inferences he makes form the basis for his theological arguments, or at least they form part of the dialectic upon which he posits the Christian notion of freedom. He has been charged in the past with a lack of attention to detail in this regard.⁸ For his part, it can be said that Ratzinger presents a sort of “timeline” of the intellectual history of freedom, but without deeming it definitive.⁹ For him, the priority is to arrive at a point where his cultural diagnosis confirms the effects of the modern synthesis – that triptych of modern-day issues which he believes collaborate over time in generating an anarchic form of human freedom.

The approach of Charles Taylor in his book, *A Secular Age*, is instructive for analysing the merits of Ratzinger’s “timeline.” Arguably the most ambitious articulation of the conditions of religious and cultural trends of the modern age that has been published in

⁸ For example, Ratzinger’s own former student, Hansjürgen Verweyen, has critiqued him for his misrepresentation and lack of awareness of the actual content of Karl Marx’s politico-economic views. See Hansjürgen Verweyen, *Joseph Ratzinger – Benedikt XVI. Die Entwicklung seines Denkens* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2007), 124-25.

⁹ See Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 166, 172.

recent years, Taylor's study takes account of the incomplete nature of all attempts to chart the "cross pressures" of intellectual and social history in analytical narrative form. However, he equally acknowledges the necessity of such attempts if one is to reach an understanding of "how we got there." He cautions that etiological scholarship is a hazardous, albeit essential task to undertake:

[. . .] our sense of where we are is crucially defined in part by a story of how we got there. . . . And just because we describe where we are in relating the journey, we can misdescribe it grievously by misidentifying the itinerary. . . . Our past is sedimented in our present, and we are doomed to misidentify ourselves, as long as we can't do justice to where we come from. This is why the narrative is not an optional extra, why I believe I have to tell a story here. . . . I can only give the barest bones of the story, and touch on some of the major transitions. My hope is that a general picture of the dynamic involved will emerge from this skeleton account. But such a diachronic account is indispensable.¹⁰

Therefore, while Taylor avoids framing his etiological projections in definitive terms, he remains clear that "telling the story can't be elided; but it isn't sufficient of itself. In fact, the whole discussion has to tack back and forth between the analytical and the historical."¹¹ In this context, Ratzinger's approach is a valid way of coming to understand the historico-cultural dynamics of freedom. While there is undoubtedly more "tacking" to be observed in Taylor's work than with someone such as Ratzinger, nevertheless, the latter is just as keenly aware of the advantages of the etiological narrative of "how we got there" – i.e. of a diachronic reading of how the past resides in the present.¹²

It is helpful to note a third voice in this debate – that of Robert Barron (b. 1959),

¹⁰ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 29. Ruth Abbey, Political Science Professor at the University of Notre Dame, has demonstrated the limitations in Taylor's attempt to narrate the past conditions of experience in "A Secular Age: The Missing Question Mark," in Ian Leask, ed. *The Taylor Effect: Responding to a Secular Age* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), 8-25.

¹¹ Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 29.

¹² It could further be noted that Taylor's time frame is virtually identical to that of Ratzinger, namely the preceding five hundred years. While the former set himself the task of charting how "for the first time in history a purely self-sufficient humanism came to be a widely available option. . . . [that is] a humanism accepting no final goals beyond human flourishing, nor any allegiance to anything else beyond this flourishing," (Taylor, *A Secular Age*, 18), the latter was focused on coming to terms with how freedom has become a veritable *magisches Wort* for many things, despite the problematic and inscrutable nature of the concept (cf. Ratzinger, *Kirche, Ökumene und Politik*, 165). In many respects they share the concern of wanting to understand more comprehensively the gradual *autonomisation* of society, even though Ratzinger's ecclesiological focus carries him onto the meaning of the martyrological – that which precisely takes one beyond a solely temporal flourishing towards the good of the whole.

rector of Mundelein Seminary and President of the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Chicago. In his book, *The Priority of Christ: Towards a Post Liberal Catholicism*, he offers an etiological analysis of the shift from the pre-modern to the modern that bears a striking resemblance to Ratzinger's presentation.¹³ What is significant here is to observe how Barron's etiology is capable of broadening the context of the "shift" more comprehensively than Ratzinger by introducing Duns Scotus (1266-1308) and William of Ockham's (1287-1347) univocal conception of being which was opposed to Thomas Aquinas' (1225-74) analogical understanding of being. While Thomas held that God was the sheer act of being in itself and creatures were secondary analogues for whom God is inescapably mysterious, Scotus, in an attempt to make God more immediately intelligible, shifted the focus onto describing God and human creatures as being of the same basic metaphysical category – differing only in degree but not in essence. Such a conflation of distinct entities into one had the tendency to make one of the parties, man, impatient of all views of a divine realm governing the human one. In this way, Scotism contributed to the human being growing ever more antagonistic to divine being, who is now seen as a rival. Hence, it played its part in paving the way for the exacerbation of such antagonism in the modern period of the Enlightenment and beyond.¹⁴

¹³ See Robert Barron, *The Priority of Christ: Towards a Post Liberal Catholicism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Brazos Press, 2007), 12-18.

¹⁴ See *ibid.*, 13-14. However, it cannot be claimed that Ratzinger is completely unaware of the contribution made by Scotus or that he deliberately excluded the medieval philosopher from his deliberations. For example, it is worth noting that as Pope he devoted part of his general audience of 7 July 2010 to Duns Scotus' treatment of human freedom. See http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20100707_en.html (accessed 8 December 2012). On that occasion, Benedict XVI said Scotus explained a point to which modernity is very sensitive, namely human freedom and its relationship with the will, and the mind or intellect. Benedict said Scotus "underlines freedom as a fundamental quality of the will, introducing an approach that lays greater emphasis on the will. Unfortunately, in later authors, this line of thinking turned into a voluntarism, in contrast to the so-called 'Augustinian and Thomist intellectualism.'" For St Thomas Aquinas, who follows St Augustine, freedom cannot be considered an innate quality of the will, but, the fruit of the collaboration of the will and the mind. Indeed, an idea of innate and absolute freedom - as it evolved, precisely, after Duns Scotus - placed in the will that precedes the intellect, both in God and in man, risks leading to the idea of a God who would not even be bound to truth and good. The wish to save God's absolute transcendence and diversity with such a radical and impenetrable accentuation of his will does not take into account that the God who revealed himself in Christ is the God 'Logos,' who acted and acts full of love for us. Of course, as Duns Scotus affirms, love transcends knowledge and is capable of perceiving ever better than

By extending his etiological analysis back from Luther into the thirteenth-century, Barrow helps to broaden out the line of reasoning. In turn, this helps to inform the student of the topic more comprehensively. Lacking this further layer of analysis, Ratzinger does not lay out his etiology with the same clarity. However, it should also be said that ultimately there is no contradiction between the findings in Section I of this dissertation, and Barron's conclusion that the enemy of freedom "[f]or many of the fathers of modernity . . . is nothing other than those traditional institutions (supported by the voluntarist conception of God) that bind the will and quash individual initiative and imagination."¹⁵

With regard then to the value of etiological research, Ratzinger demonstrates that it is an important part of approaching a theological topic. His expertise in the history of dogma helps him in this regard. However, his actual handling of the genesis of the modern history of freedom is neither detailed enough nor exhaustive enough to be deemed definitive. As Barron's etiological research makes evident, the fact that it surpasses Ratzinger's investigation demonstrates the evolving nature of contemporary scholarship and its

thought, but it is always the love of the God who is 'Logos.' In the human being too, the idea of absolute freedom, placed in the will, forgetting the connection with the truth, does not know that freedom itself must be liberated from the limits imposed on it by sin. All the same, the Scotist vision does not fall into these extremes: for Duns Scotus a free act is the result of the concurrence of intellect and will, and if he speaks of a 'primacy' of the will, he argues this precisely because the will always follows the intellect." In light of these comments, it is possible to argue that Ratzinger's etiology of the genesis of the modern notion of freedom extends backwards, prior to Luther, into mediaeval theology. However, because this is a papal teaching, I did not include it in the main deliberations on Ratzinger's theology. Nonetheless, it is worth noting that Benedict XVI still regards the issue of freedom very much alive and worthy of inclusion in the weekly papal catechesis sessions in Rome.

¹⁵ Barron, *The Priority of Christ*, 15. Barron gives time to analysing the emergence of voluntarism – the primacy of the [divine] will at the cost of [divine] knowledge or reason: "Whereas in Aquinas' participation metaphysics the created universe is constituted *by its rapport with God*, on Occam's reading it must realise itself through disassociation from a competitive supreme being. A further concomitant of this individualistic ontology is voluntarism. Since the metaphysically dense and natural link between God and creatures has been attenuated, any connection between the divine and the nondivine has to be through will. God's relation with his rational creatures is therefore purely legalistic and arbitrary. This understanding of divine power influenced Occam's conception of the human will as well. Finite freedom is, for him, absolute spontaneity, an action promoted by nothing either interior or exterior to the subject. Accordingly, human power is a distant mirror of divine power: both are self-contained, capricious, absolute, and finally irrational. The most obvious practical consequence of this nominalist and voluntarist metaphysics is that divine and human freedom find themselves pitted against one another, God imposing himself arbitrarily on a necessarily reluctant and resentful humanity" (14). Barron's contention from this is that modernity and decadent forms of Christianity – often portrayed as opposites – are both unsound. He says that in most of the disputes, there are "advocates for the prerogatives of the voluntarist God facing down advocates of the voluntarist self." He says both "need to be saved, precisely by that person who throws everything off, including and especially the competitive understanding of God and the world that produced the conflict between them in the first place" (16). Ratzinger is certainly not unaware of the voluntarist idea and his emphasis on the advocacy of creative reason by the Church is a counterbalance to it.

understanding of historico-cultural contexts. Despite any shortcomings, Ratzinger's etiological investigation functions by bringing him to the point where he commences his constructive proposal for a Christian understanding of freedom, As Taylor points out, in this inexact science, so to speak, there is a balance to be struck between the historical *and* analytical which can enhance or even rework our understanding of the past.

9.1.3. Nuanced Christocentricity

A major characteristic of Ratzinger's approach to a Christian understanding of freedom, as demonstrated by Section II of this dissertation, is a christocentricity which he repeatedly draws upon to build up of his arguments. This is the consequence of his long-time interest in promoting and perfecting the nuances of a christological hermeneutic.¹⁶ However, the central role played by Christ does raise a query as to whether Ratzinger achieves an overarching christocentricity to the detriment of the place of the Father, the Holy Spirit and Mary in the Christian economy. In addressing this misgiving, it is important to point out that we are simply dealing with emphases within Ratzinger's theology, without in any way suggesting that he makes deliberate exclusions of mariological or pneumatological considerations.

An initial remark to be made with regard to trinitarian theology as a whole is that Ratzinger's priority is the presentation of a treatise on *human* freedom. Consequently, he lacks a detailed investigation of the metaphysical nature of divine freedom, in and of itself. He considers the relationality between divine and human freedom only to the extent that it takes in the human subject. Unlike a theologian such as von Balthasar, who gives substantial time to dealing with freedom in the context of the analogy of being, Ratzinger's priority is specifically pastoral.¹⁷

¹⁶ See this dissertation § 1.6.

¹⁷ See Thomas G. Dalzell, *The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 2nd ed. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2000), 59-100. Despite the difference in emphasis, Ratzinger's

One of Ratzinger's key christological criteria is that "[w]ithout Jesus, we do not know what 'Father' truly is." And since he considers the filial relationship with the Father to be at the foundation of Jesus' being, Ratzinger says that "[a] Jesus who was not continuously absorbed in the Father and was not in continuous intimate communication with him would be a completely different being from the Jesus of the Bible, the real Jesus of history." Such "uninterrupted prayerful communication" is equally essential to the Father, because God the Father would also be someone else if he were not addressed in this way.¹⁸ It is significant here that Ratzinger's intent is pastoral. One finds him correlating what he describes as the precarious status of fatherhood in society with humanity's overarching need and prerequisite for divine fatherhood. For Ratzinger, divine fatherhood furnishes human fatherhood with appropriate meaning. In reality, he says, it is not God's existence which is endangered today but humanity's:

Wo menschliche Vaterschaft verschwindet, ist Gott nicht mehr sagbar und denkbar. Nicht Gott ist tot, sondern im Menschen ist das weithin erstorben, was die Voraussetzung dafür wäre, dass Gott lebt in der Welt. Die Krise der Vaterschaft, die wir heute erleben, gehört zum Kern der Krise der Humanität, die uns bedroht. Wo Vaterschaft nur noch entweder als biologischer Zufall ohne menschlichen Anspruch oder als Tyrannis erscheint, die man abwerfen muss, da ist etwas am Grundgefüge des Menschseins verletzt. Zur Gänze des Menschseins bedarf es des Vaters in jenem wahren Sinn, in dem er durch den Glauben in Erscheinung getreten ist: als Verantwortung für den anderen, die ihn nicht beherrscht, sondern ihn freigibt zu sich selbst: als Liebe, die den anderen nicht vereinnahmen möchte, aber ihn auch nicht einfach in seiner Vorfindlichkeit bestätigt und das für Freiheit ausgibt, sondern ihn für seine innerste Wahrheit will, die in seinem Schöpfer ist. Solches Vatersein ist freilich nur möglich unter der Voraussetzung der Annahme des eigenen Kindseins.¹⁹

dialogical worship argument is in substantial agreement with Dalzell's account of Balthasar's work: "Human freedom . . . is the power to accept the measure God has set for one. By proportioning himself or herself to Christ and participating in his relationship of proportionality with God, the individual subject is enabled to be what God wants him or her to be and to progressively reveal God in the world" (287).

¹⁸ See Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 33-34. To Ratzinger's mind, Jesus' prayer life reveals the fatherhood of God in the life of the Trinity: "Jesus does not merely touch [God the Father] from the outside; he belongs to the divinity of God, as Son. Before the world was made, God is already the love of Father and Son. He can become our Father and the criterion of all fatherhood precisely because he himself is Father from eternity. In Jesus' prayer, the inner life of God becomes visible to us: we see how God is. Faith in the Triune God is nothing other than the exposition of what takes place in Jesus' prayer" (34).

¹⁹ Ratzinger, *Der Gott Jesu Christi*, 39-40 ("Where human fatherhood disappears, it is no longer possible to speak and think of God. It is not God who is dead; what is dead (at least to a large extent) is the precondition in man that makes it possible for God to live in the world. The crisis of fatherhood that we are experiencing today is a basic aspect of the crisis that threatens mankind as a whole. Where fatherhood is perceived only as a biological accident on which no genuinely human claims may be based, or the father is seen as a tyrant whose

His prioritisation of the filial relationship in God and his interest in the pastoral implications of divine paternity are important indicators highlighting the fact that Ratzinger does not neglect God the Father in his theology. For the most part, however, he views the Father through the eyes of the Son. This is very much consistent with his attraction to Johannine theology, such as is found in John 14. As a consequence of his emphasis on this “Father-Son” relationality, he penetrates the synergy of wills at the core of the person of Christ very effectively and from there, he is able to justify the dialogical orientation which he believes underpins authentic human freedom and the way to the Father.

An initial reading of Ratzinger’s work could also leave one with the impression that pneumatology is also eclipsed by the dominant christocentric narrative. Emery de Gaál has compiled an exhaustive account of Ratzinger’s contribution to the retrieval of the christological focus of theology over the course of the 20th century. In it, he laments the “comparative paucity of references to the Holy Spirit” in Ratzinger’s theology. However, this is a somewhat questionable, albeit quantitatively justifiable analysis of Ratzinger’s christocentric approach.²⁰ While it is true that Ratzinger’s concentration on Christ is more voluminous, it is Ratzinger’s wariness of excesses in any direction which gives him the natural instinct to never speak pneumatologically without it being rooted in Christ and in the Church.²¹ For example, he naturally leans towards the universal, towards the “whole,” in

yoke must be thrown off, something in the basic structure of human existence has been damaged. If human existence is to be complete, we need a father, in the true meaning of fatherhood that our faith discloses, namely, a responsibility for one’s child that does not dominate him but permits him to become his own self. This fatherhood is a love that avoids two traps: the total subjugation of the child to the father’s own priorities and goals, on the one hand, and the unquestioning acceptance of the child as he is, under the pretext that this is the expression of freedom, on the other. Responsibility for one’s child means the desire that he realize his own innermost truth, which lies in his Creator. And naturally, a fatherhood of this kind is possible only if one accepts one’s own status as a child” [Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 29-30]). See Jean-Pierre Batut, “Calling Fathers ‘Father’: Usurping the Name of God?,” *Communio* 36 (2009): 295-308, for valuable distinctions on the intrinsic nature of human paternity and maternity. In fact this entire issue of *Communio* contains a series of eight articles on various aspects of paternity which are helpful in light of Ratzinger’s concern for fatherhood in contemporary society.

²⁰ See De Gaál, *The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI*, 303, n.4.

²¹ See Ratzinger, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics*, 29-35.

disputes between the universal and the particular in ecclesiology. He then tries to interpret and safeguard the particular from the perspective of the universal. So, for example, he will acknowledge the positive advances made by science and technology, while also cautioning against the temptation to supplant God with them. Liberation theology is a good example of such a “particular” development in the Church which Ratzinger seeks to interpret from the perspective of the universal Church. On the other hand, when it comes to personal membership of the Church he never departs from the belief that the true reform depends upon the liberating *ablatio* or “removal” undertaken in the human person with a free heart.

The wariness of an isolated pneumatology divorced from the mission of the Son explains the strong emphasis which Ratzinger places on the sacramental aspect of the *successio* principle. From the perspective of human freedom, his desire to purify pneumatic anarchy is the clearest example of his approach.²² When, for example, Ratzinger sets about arguing in great and discriminating detail for the episcopal principle in the Church, he lays himself open to the charge of maintaining the status quo of top-down Roman regulation.²³ However, such a charge fails to see his argument as having its context in an overall christocentric framework which has, in fact, sought to mitigate any perception of monarchical or hierarchal dominance in the Church and has in this way constituted a very valuable contribution to catholic ecclesiology. Nevertheless, the broader trinitarian context is also required here in order to perceive the full breadth of Ratzinger’s perspective of self-dispossession, whether at the level of the divine persons in God, the crucified Christ’s prayer posture of extreme submission, or the believer’s dialogical orientation with regard to God and one another. Only by recognising Ratzinger’s examination of the institutional and prophetic charisms from the perspective of “not my will but your will” (Luke 22:42), does one come to

²² See this dissertation § 5.2.2.

²³ For a good guide to Ratzinger’s time as head of the *CDF* and the charge against him of sponsoring a centralisation of the Church through hierarchical domination, see Jesús Martínez Gordo, *The Christology of J. Ratzinger-Benedict XVI in the light of his Theological Biography* (Barcelona: Edicions Rondas, 2009), 17-19.

understand his original intention. He is repeatedly reassured by the pauline pneumatological dictum whereby the human person is being transformed and liberated as a result of a dialogical orientation that beholds the divine: “The Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.” (2Cor 3:17-18; cf. Exod. 34:34).²⁴

On the issue of mariology, it is particularly noteworthy that one does not find more direct references to Mary in the present research.²⁵ As I explored the topic, the presence of Mary didn’t impact to any great extent upon the natural flow of Ratzinger’s presentation, such is the all-encompassing christocentric nature of his work. While Ratzinger’s mariological reflections contain some of his most stimulating exegetical analyses and are interspersed with patristic references, they demonstrate a good example of the weakness of the largely occasional nature of his theology, the consequence, no doubt, of his increasing responsibilities in Church governance throughout the course of his lifetime. Nevertheless, notwithstanding their fragmentary nature, there are three collections of lectures and addresses on mariology which are relevant to the present discussion.²⁶

For the most part, Ratzinger’s interest in mariology is entirely consistent with the direction set by the Second Vatican Council, which was to shape a more complete

²⁴ See, for example, *GS: ZV*, 60, 211, 233, 348, 369, 467, 1026, 1224.

²⁵ See this dissertation §§ 6.2., 6.4. and 8.2.

²⁶ See Joseph Ratzinger, *Die Tochter Zion: Betrachtungen über den Marienglauben der Kirche* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1977); *Maria: Gottes Ja zum Menschen* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1987); Joseph Ratzinger and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Maria: Kirche in Ursprung* (Einsiedeln, Freiburg: Johannes, 1997). Ratzinger’s writings have been classified as “fragmentary” by Vincent Twomey. See his *Pope Benedict: Conscience of our Age*, 41, 44, 59. He says Ratzinger’s writings are “fragmentary and mostly unfinished, but taken together, they nonetheless constitute a single, unified body of work. . . . Like his university lectures, all his writings are contributions to an on-going debate, first the scholarly debate within his own discipline – theology – and, later, as he became more pastor than scholar, the public debate about the future of society and, above all, the Church’s role in it” (36). According to Twomey, the largely occasional nature of Ratzinger’s theological writings is the consequence of his onerous life as a curial cardinal in Rome. Twomey also describes Ratzinger as an “original thinker” (42) whose writings are, in many instances, “seminal” (44).

understanding of the nature of the Church through Mary.²⁷ Ratzinger is keen to heighten awareness that, from the New Testament era until the time of Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153), the content of mariology had been conceived primarily in terms of ecclesiology. After that time it emerged with an integrity of its own within theology, while the idea of an isolated marian piety gathered momentum. For his part, Ratzinger believes that “we cannot assign Mariology to Christology alone or to ecclesiology alone (much less dissolve it into ecclesiology as a more or less superfluous exemplification of the Church).”²⁸ Even with this

²⁷ See Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Maria: Kirche im Ursprung*, 14–30. The correlation of ecclesiology and mariology was a key debate of the Second Vatican Council. The Fathers voted in favour of placing its teaching on Mary within the context of the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church. In a lecture at a Congress which he attended in 2000, Ratzinger briefly sets out the path of mariology in the deliberations of the Council. In this text, Ratzinger acknowledges the wisdom of the Council Fathers in seeking to gain a more precise correlation between Mary and the Church. See “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution, *Lumen gentium*,” in Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 150-51. In this correlation, Ratzinger says, one can come “to comprehend the supra-individual nature of the person and the supra-institutional nature of the community, as the very point at which both person and community are taken back to their origins through the power of the Lord, of the new Adam.” On the issue of mariology at the Council, see also Thomas Norris, “The Church’s Marian Profile and the Reception of Vatican II’s Ecclesiology” in *Proceedings of the International Symposium of Theology: The Ecclesiology of Communion Fifty Years after the Opening of Vatican II*, vol. 2 of 50th International Eucharistic Congress (Dublin: Veritas, 2013), 362-81.

²⁸ Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 29. For more on Ratzinger’s understanding of Mary as ecclesial person, see *ibid.*, 21-25, 30, 61-79; *Daughter Zion*, 67-8, 77-81; *Mary: God’s Yes to Man*, 33-37. The heart of his approach to the personification of the Church in Mary can be seen in the following statement which is worth quoting at length: “Everything said about the *ecclesia* in the Bible is true of her, and vice versa: the Church learns concretely what she is and is meant to be by looking at Mary. Mary is her mirror, the pure measure of her being, because Mary is wholly within the measure of Christ and of God, is through and through his habitation. And what other reason could the *ecclesia* have for existing than to become a dwelling for God in the world? God does not deal with abstractions. He is a person, and the Church is a person. The more that each one of us becomes a person, person in the sense of a fit habitation for God, daughter Zion, the more we become one, the more we are the Church, and the more the Church is herself. The typological identification of Mary and Zion leads us then, into the depths. . . . [Mary] does not wish to be just this one human being who defends and protects her own ego. She does not regard life as a stock of goods of which everyone wants to get as much as possible for himself. Her life is such that she is transparent to God, ‘habitable’ for him. Her life is such that she is a place for God. Her life sinks her into the common measure of sacred history, so that what appears in her is, not the narrow and constricted ego of an isolated individual, but the whole, true Israel. This ‘typological identification’ is a spiritual reality; it is life lived out of the spirit of Sacred Scripture; it is rootedness in the faith of the Fathers and at the same time expansion into the height and breadth of the coming promises” (*Mary: The Church at the Source*, 66-7). However, he emphasizes that the “typological” is not at the cost of history: “The cavalier divorce of ‘biology’ and theology omits precisely man from consideration; it becomes a self-contradiction insofar as the initial, essential point of the whole matter lies precisely in the affirmation that in all that concerns man the biological is also human and especially in what concerns the divinely-human *nothing* is ‘merely biological.’ Banishment of the corporeal, or sexual, into pure biology, all the talk about the ‘merely biological,’ is consequently the exact antithesis of what faith intends. For faith tells us of the spirituality of the biological as well as the corporeality of the spiritual and the divine. On this point the choice is between all or nothing. The attempt to preserve a spiritual, distilled remainder after the biological element has been alienated denies the very spiritual reality which is the principal concern of the faith in the God become flesh” (*Daughter Zion*, 52-53). See also *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 29. It is also interesting to note Ratzinger’s presentation of the Church and Mary in his most recent book. Despite the relative prominence of Mary in the infancy narratives, he makes only one short reference to Mary as the image of the Church (cf. *Jesus of Nazareth: The*

noble intention, however, it is arguable that Ratzinger fails to fully exploit the Marian dimension of the Church in his theory of authentic freedom. This is despite the fact that the means by which to do so can readily be found in his writings. Nevertheless, Ratzinger's mariological reflections are in basic agreement with the findings of this research – namely, to magnify God (which was Mary's song of dialogical worship) is to free ourselves *for* him and orient ourselves towards the will of the Father. Again, it is only a question of emphasis here because one most certainly cannot accuse Ratzinger of not addressing the figure of Mary in the life of the Church. In fact, Ratzinger simply exchanges the liturgical language of posture and worship for that of Mary in the scriptures:

Den Herrn groß machen – das bedeutet: nicht sich selbst, den eigenen Namen, das eigene Ich groß machen wollen, sich ausbreiten und Platz verlangen, sondern ihm Raum geben, daß er mehr anwesend sei in der Welt. Es bedeutet, das wahrer zu werden, was wir sind: nicht eine verschlossene Monade, die nur sich selbst darstellt, sondern Bild Gottes. Es bedeutet, frei werden von dem Staub und dem Ruß, der das Bild undurchsichtig macht, es verdeckt und in der reinen Verwiesenheit auf ihn wahrhaft Mensch werden.²⁹

One of Ratzinger's key points is that the person of Mary underscores the logic that unites christology, ecclesiology and soteriology. She operates at the level of the “the *nexus mysteriorum* - the intrinsic interwovenness of the mysteries in their irreducible mutual otherness and their unity.”³⁰ By the same token, Ratzinger says “[m]ariology is an essential component of a hermeneutics of salvation history,” thereby ensuring that a one-sided *solus Christus* is not overstated.³¹ Such an ordering of salvation history is essential to the theme of freedom. Ratzinger is clearly aware of this, even if it is not something he regularly commits

Infancy Narratives. 126). In fact, in general terms, there are only two other explicit references to ecclesiology in the book as whole (cf. 33, 86).

²⁹ Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Maria: Kirche im Ursprung*, 65-66 (“To magnify the Lord means, not to want to magnify ourselves and take up more space, but to give him room so that he may be more present in the world. It means to become more truly what we are: not a self-enclosed monad that displays nothing but itself, but God's image. It means to get free of the dust and soot that obscures and begrimes the transparency of the image and to become truly human by pointing exclusively to him” [Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 75]). In this context also, Ratzinger mentions once again, albeit in passing, the work of Maximus the Confessor and his contribution to greater understanding of the synergy of wills in Christ.

³⁰ Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 29.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 31.

to writing. It forms the basis of the nuptial mysticism which is an explicit part of his sacramental, “body of Christ” ecclesiology:

[. . .] [Christologie] von einem Christus sprechen muß, der “Haupt und Leib” ist, das heißt, der die erlöste Schöpfung in ihrer relativen Selbständigkeit mitumfaßt. Dies weitet aber zugleich den Blick über die Heilsgeschichte hinaus, weil es einer falsch verstandenen Alleinwirksamkeit Gottes gegenüber die Realität des Geschöpfes in den Blick bringt, das von Gott zur freien Antwort berufen und befähigt ist. In der Mariologie wird sichtbar, daß die Gnadenlehre nicht auf Rücknahme der Schöpfung hinausläuft, sondern das definitive Ja zur Schöpfung ist: Mariologie wird so zur Gewähr für die Eigenständigkeit der Schöpfung, zur Bürgschaft des Schöpfungsglaubens und zum Siegel einer recht gedachten Schöpfungslehre.³²

There is an admission here by Ratzinger of the necessity to focus on the *type* of freedom inherent in creation. For his part, he speaks about Mary’s “yes.” While, it is not the same as the “yes” of Jesus Christ, neither can it be severed from it. In his *Jesus of Nazareth* series, Ratzinger invokes Bernard again here to speak of the radical nature of Mary’s role in the plan of salvation – namely, God’s dependence on human obedience to his will:

Nach dem Versagen der Stammeltern ist die ganze Welt verdunkelt, unter der Herrschaft des Todes. Nun sucht Gott einen neuen Eingang in die Welt. Er klopft bei Maria an. Er braucht die menschliche Freiheit. Er kann den frei geschaffenen Menschen nicht ohne ein freies Ja zu seinem Willen erlösen. Die Freiheit erschaffend, hat er sich in gewisser Weise vom Menschen abhängig gemacht. Seine Macht ist gebunden an das unerzwingbare Ja eines Menschen. So zeigt Bernhard, wie Himmel und Erde in diesem Augenblick der Frage an Maria gleichsam den Atem anhalten. Wird sie ja sagen? Sie zögert . . . Wird ihre Demut sie hindern? Dies eine Mal – so sagt Bernhard zu ihr – sei nicht demütig, sondern hochgemut! Gib uns dein Ja! Das ist der entscheidende Augenblick, in dem aus ihrem Mund, aus ihrem Herzen die Antwort kommt: “Mir geschehe nach deinem Wort.” Es ist der Augenblick des freien, demütigen und zugleich großmütigen Gehorsams, in dem sich die höchste Entscheidung menschlicher Freiheit ereignet.³³

³² Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Maria: Kirche im Ursprung*, 25 (“Christology must speak of a Christ who is both ‘head and body,’ that is, who comprises the redeemed creation in its relative subsistence. But this move simultaneously enlarges our perspective beyond salvation history, because it counters a false understanding of God’s sole agency, highlighting the reality of the creature that God calls and enables to respond to him freely. Mariology demonstrates that the doctrine of grace does not revoke creation; rather it is the definitive yes to creation. In this way, mariology guarantees the ontological independence of creation, undergirds faith in creation, and crowns the doctrine of creation, rightly understood” [Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 31]).

³³ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth. Prolog: Die Kindheitsgeschichten*, 46 (“After the error of our first parents, the whole world was shrouded in darkness, under the dominion of death. Now God seeks to enter the world anew. He knocks at Mary’s door. He needs human freedom. The only way he can redeem man, who is created free, is by means of a free ‘yes’ to his will. In creating freedom, he made himself in a certain sense dependent upon man. His power is tied to the unenforceable ‘yes’ of a human being. So Bernard portrays heaven and earth as it were holding its breath at this moment to the question addressed to Mary. Will she say yes? She hesitates . . . will her humility hold her back? Just this once – Bernard tells her – do not be humble but daring! Give us your

For Ratzinger, Mary's "yes" has three discernible features. In the first instance, there is God's "pure 'yes'" to Mary in her immaculate state. In her freedom from original sin, "Mary reserves no area of being, life, and will for herself as a private possession: instead precisely in the total dispossession of self, in giving herself to God, she comes to the true possession of self. Grace as dispossession becomes response as appropriation."³⁴ This leads to the second aspect – Mary's free, wholehearted "yes" to the Father's will, whereby she "makes her body, her very self, into the place of God's presence. In this Yes, therefore, Mary's will and the Son's will coincide."³⁵ And thirdly, Mary is called to accept her passion – the sword shall pierce her heart and she must learn to release the Son she bore:

Sie muß das Ja zu Gottes Willen, das sie Mutter werden ließ, zu Ende führen, indem sie zurücktritt und ihn in seine Sendung entläßt. . . . Das Aufnehmen und das Verfügbarsein ist der eine Schritt, der von ihr verlangt wird; das Lassen und das Freigeben der andere. Erst so wird ihre Mutterschaft ganz: Das "Selig der Leib, der dich getragen" wird erst wahr, wo es eingeht in das andere Selig: "Selig, die das Wort Gottes hören und es befolgen," (Lk 11:27f.). So ist Maria vorbereitet auf das Geheimnis des Kreuzes, das an Golgatha nicht einfach endet. Ihr Sohn bleibt Zeichen des Widerspruchs, und sie bleibt so bis zuletzt in den Schmerz dieses Widerspruchs hineingehalten, in den Schmerz der messianischen Mutterschaft.³⁶

Hence, while Ratzinger does not give mariology an explicit place in his overall theology of freedom, the elements to allow one to synthesize the best merits of his ecclesiology of liberation can be found in it. It is a relatively short step to identify Mary as the pre-eminent example of the Christian synthesis which he is endeavouring to formulate. The figure of Mary contributes to the formulation of the content of the human "yes" that stands at the heart

'yes'! This is the crucial moment when, from her lips, from her heart, the answer comes: 'Let it be to me according to your word.' It is the moment of free, humble yet magnanimous obedience in which the loftiest choice of human freedom is made" [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, 36]).

³⁴ Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 70.

³⁵ Ratzinger, *Mary: God's Yes to Man*, 25-26.

³⁶ Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Maria: Kirche im Ursprung*, 67 ("She must complete the Yes to God's will that made her a mother by withdrawing into the background and letting Jesus enter upon his mission To accept and to be available is the first step required of her; to let go and to release is the second. Only in this way does her motherhood become complete: the 'blessed is the womb that bore you' comes true only when it enters into the other beatitude: 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it' (Luke 11:27-28). By this means Mary is prepared for the mystery of the Cross, which does not simply end on Golgotha. Her Son remains a sign of contradiction, and she is thus kept to the very end in the pain of this contradiction, in the pain of her messianic motherhood" [Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 76]).

of one's dialogical orientation with regard to God. This "yes," as exemplified in Mary, is acceptance and availability, followed by surrender and release for God's will, even to the point where one can assent to the suffering that can accompany fellowship with Christ who remains a sign of contradiction in the world. Ultimately, Ratzinger's presentation of Mary's "yes" concretely demonstrates the dynamic of the martyrological profile of the Church – a dynamic integral to his ecclesiology of liberation.

There can be no doubting the christological core of Ratzinger's work. However, this ought not to be read as a displacement of trinitarian or mariological perspectives. It is a case, rather, that in the gift of the Son, Ratzinger believes the face of God is revealed in and for the world. For Ratzinger, the sacrificial nature of the life of Jesus of Nazareth opens up the martyrological contours of faith, and of freedom. Miroslav Volf points out that in the face of his *Christus totus*, there is no "hierarchology" in Ratzinger the theologian.³⁷ Instead his concern for the "whole" expresses itself in a "spirituality of divestment" that corresponds to Ratzinger's basic understanding of communality.³⁸ In effect, Ratzinger's nuanced christocentricity is his doorway unto incomprehensible mystery. Not without merit, therefore, one finds Christopher Ruddy of Catholic University of America, going so far as to state that Ratzinger's ecclesiology exhibits the tone of a mystic:

Contrary to popular impression and even caricature, his ecclesiology is not a repressive "hierarchology," but thoroughly sacramental, centred above all on the eucharistic celebration. Its dominant tone is mystical, even romantic, in its emphases upon the communal, the interior and intuitive, the familial. Most fundamental perhaps, is his sense of divine gift: the church and its liturgy are to be received by men and women in wonder, rather than actively made or constructed.³⁹

³⁷ See Volf, *After Our Likeness*, 53.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 60-61. See this dissertation § 0.3.

³⁹ Ruddy, *The Local Church*, 100. On the charge of "hierarchology," Ruddy cites Thomas Weiler, *Volk Gottes – Leib Christi: Die Ekklesiologie Joseph Ratzingers und ihr Einfluß auf das Zweite Vatikanische Konzil* (Mainz: Matthias-Grünwald-Verlag, 1997).

9.1.4. An Opening-up of Affective Ecclesiology

Faith is comprised of both objective and subjective characteristics. From a sacramental perspective, the terms *ex opere operato* and *ex opere operantis* are used to capture the same reality. When coming to terms with the life of the Church, it is possible to speak of a similar dynamic through the notions of effective and affective ecclesiology. In other words, there are objective and subjective aspects in the life of the Church which define the dynamics of our relationship with it as a whole.

The effective aspect implies that the Church objectively fulfils its purpose. This purpose is the same today as always, namely the definitive gathering of God's people and the revelation of God's glory in the world. Ratzinger's ecclesiology has a strong effective quality. This is particularly evident in his approach to the scriptures through a christological hermeneutic. Furthermore, his unmistakable alignment of the Church's mission with truth gives effective and binding force to his ecclesiology by making a claim on the creaturely status of the human person.

Alongside the notion of truth in his writings, the equally dominant theme of love ensures that the dignity of being created free can never be circumvented or disregarded. The specific theme of human freedom opens up the field of affective theology and is potentially of great importance for the study of an ecclesiology of liberation. Affectivity, concerned as it is with the recognition of our emotions or feelings, is something very common in the study of psychology. However, it has not been given so much attention in the present-day study of the Church. Nevertheless, the attempt to come to terms with authentic freedom has led Ratzinger to include "feeling" or "heart" as part of the Christian synthesis. This opens up the possibility of a greater emphasis upon the affective on the part of the human person, particularly in the approach to the Church and, in turn, in the Church's significance for the world.

In terms of the findings of this dissertation, Ratzinger's position is that the free

creature orients oneself towards God through the maturation of believing affectivity. He considers the whole-hearted human “yes” to God as the relational analogue of God’s “yes” to creation. In this lies the human person’s authentic freedom. Assistant professor of theology at St Louis University in Missouri, Christopher Collins, has studied Ratzinger’s dialogical theology and he points out that the dynamics of our relationship with God are ultimately, and necessarily, asymmetrical:

Ratzinger sees God as the one who *speaks*. Humanity is best understood as those who listen to God’s Word and then are able to respond. God and humanity are dialogue partners. But this is not a dialogue of equals; it is necessarily *asymmetrical*. It matters who speaks the first word. For Ratzinger, God is always the one taking the initiative, and humanity is always in the posture of responsiveness. So for Ratzinger all of reality is dialogical, but dialogical in an asymmetrical manner.⁴⁰

This is a very helpful contribution to the terminology which can be used when discussing Ratzinger’s dialogical approach, particularly on the topic of freedom. Collins says that Ratzinger has an “affective sensibility”⁴¹ which has accompanied him through life. In fact, Collins substantiates the findings of this dissertation, particularly when he describes Ratzinger’s vision of Christian freedom in terms of the worshipping posture that was already anticipated in biblical antiquity (Exod 7:16): “the essence of God’s call to his people, and therefore the fullness of the freedom God has in mind for them, is ultimately rooted in their capacity to enter into this worship, into this dialogue with the living God.”⁴² Growth in freedom resides in the human assent which, ultimately, is ordered to the Church’s effective role in the plan of salvation. Taken together, the effective and affective characteristics of ecclesial life are integral to Ratzinger’s vision of the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom. He says “inner agreement with God,” which to his mind follows the pattern of *ablatis*, “has its inner way: forgiveness is healing, that is to say, it demands the return to the

⁴⁰ Collins, *The Word Made Love*, xii. Gerald O’ Collins offers a similar interpretation of freedom through God, and in reciprocity in “What is Real Freedom?,” *The Pastoral Review* 7 (November/December 2011): 10-15.

⁴¹ Collins, *The Word Made Love*, 4.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 9. See this dissertation § 4.1.4.

truth.”⁴³ This is Ratzinger’s vision for an ecclesial lifestyle:

Zum glücklichen Leben gehört also das innere Einvernehmen mit Gott. Nur wenn diese Grundbeziehung stimmt, können auch alle anderen Beziehungen richtig werden. Deswegen ist es wichtig, ein Leben lang und von Jugend auf das Denken mit Gott, das Fühlen mit Gott das Wollen mit Gott zu lernen und einzuüben, damit daraus Liebe werde und damit Liebe der Grundton unseres Lebens wird. Wenn das der Fall ist, versteht sich die Nächstenliebe ganz von selbst. Denn wenn der Grundton meines Lebens Liebe ist, dann kann ich den Mitmenschen gegenüber, die Gott mir auf den Weg gestellt hat, wiederum nur aus dem Ja, aus dem Vertrauen, der Zustimmung und der Liebe leben.⁴⁴

While Ratzinger invests time into highlighting the three elements of thinking, willing and feeling, proposing that they combine to bring about a Christian philosophy of freedom in the human person, he does not engage in any meaningful epistemological analysis of how the affective – the heart – relates to knowledge, nor does he explicitly investigate or seek assistance from previous treatments of affectivity in the Christian tradition. Despite his desire to promote the affective aspect, his lack of deeper analysis on this point does leave him open to the potential charge of not adequately substantiating his theological propositions on the topic of Christian freedom.

On this issue of the affective in the Christian tradition, the Eastern Orthodox Metropolitan of Pergamon, John Zizioulas, makes an insightful contribution. On the epistemological level, he points out that it was Makarius the Egyptian (300-90) who introduced early Christian theology to the faculty of heart. Makarius had been responding to the work of Origen (185-254) and Evagrius Ponticus (345-99) who had expressed the view that there is a direct relationship between God and the human mind. This implied that the mind is the link between God and man, and consequently, the means of our knowledge of

⁴³ Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 94.

⁴⁴ Ratzinger, *Auf Christus schauen*, 124 (“Inner agreement with God thus belongs to the happy life. Only if this fundamental relationship is right can all the other relationships be right. For that reason it is important throughout one’s life and from one’s youth onwards to learn and to practice thinking with God, feeling with God, willing with God, so that love may grow from this and become the keynote of our life. If that is the case, love of neighbour becomes self-evident. For if the keynote of my life is love, then as far as concerns those whom God has placed on my way I can once again only live on the basis of this assent, this trust, this agreement, and this love” [Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 112]).

God. Zizioulas points out that such an idea ran the risk of excluding from our knowledge of God everything perceived by the human senses. In such a situation, the confession of the Word became flesh is not easily reconcilable with the view that the human mind appears to be able to perceive God directly, without any interaction with the material world. Even though Makarius' introduction of the faculty of heart did not seek to create a division between the notions of mind and emotion in the human person, his contribution to the epistemological debate was largely misinterpreted because the classical Greek view understood that the heart was the source of emotions. In the theology of Israel, on the other hand, the heart was understood as the faculty of cognition precisely because it was the instrument of obedience. The following words by Zizioulas clarify that the affective is very much a Christian ideal from the beginning, and essential for understanding human freedom:

The heart represents man's obedience and so it knows God as God, since the pure in heart "shall see God" (Matthew 5:9). The heart is the place of freedom, where we say "yes" or "no" to one another and to God. The obedient heart does God's will. So knowledge of God is not an issue simply of intellect or of emotion but of obedience. For those formed by the Greek worldview and coming the terms with the teaching of Scripture this was not obvious. For Greeks, knowledge had to point towards the identity and existence of something. An object must be much more than a moral summons, to which I respond with a "yes" or "no." Through obedience we acknowledge that someone truly exists, so for Makarius there was an ontological aspect to this knowledge.⁴⁵

In the final analysis, there are no contradictions between Zizioulas presentation and Ratzinger's relational vision of Christian freedom, but again, from the etiological perspective, the promotion of the affective benefits from being set within the broader context of the

⁴⁵ John Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, ed. Douglas H. Knight (London: T & T Clark, 2008), 23. It is of note here that both Ratzinger and Zizioulas consider Maximus the Confessor as the one responsible for a significant epistemological move in christology through the promotion of the eternally loving relationship that exists between the Father and the Son. Maximus came to the conclusion that the Christ is the Logos of God. Through the Logos we come to know God. Consequently, we have all have our *logoi* and reason within the one Logos and Word of God. This replaced the earlier idea that the mind is the sole conduit of knowledge. It is the eternal love of the Son for the Father that makes God known. It is personal relationship, not the knowledge of objects that reveals true knowledge: "No true knowledge of God comes through the mind or the heart, by either intellectual or spiritual exercises. . . . All knowledge that is truly ours must relate in some way to our experience. . . . A person is identifiable only within a relationship with another person. There is no person outside relationship with other persons, so one person is no person at all" (24-25).

Christian tradition.⁴⁶ Indeed, Zizioulas himself believes there is a case to be made in theology, from an epistemological perspective, that the affective is not an irrational faculty incapable of being trusted. On the contrary, to his mind, the history of theology shows that the human person is brought to knowledge of God through *the unity of mind and heart*:

The mind cannot acquire knowledge on its own, without the whole person, so the heart and mind were understood as a unity. The heart knows, and the mind loves, and because it loves it is able to know. This meeting of heart and mind was referred to as the “descent of the mind in to the heart.”⁴⁷

Indeed, in the search for the most appropriate place in which to discuss the person of Mary in Ratzinger’s study of the Church, the case can be made that Mary has the ability to express and, in a positive sense, accentuate the affectivity that is integral to creaturehood. The content of Mary’s “yes” in particular, and the human “yes” in general, as discussed in the previous subdivision, receive greater clarification through the opening up of affective ecclesiology. In Mary, Ratzinger believes one finds “creaturely cooperation in the work of the Redeemer.”⁴⁸ Although Ratzinger doesn’t exploit this aspect of mariology sufficiently, nevertheless, he seems to be aware that the affective aspect of creatureliness makes a key contribution to the ecclesial discussion of human freedom, particularly in light of “today’s intellectual climate [where] only the masculine principle counts.”⁴⁹ He points out that Mary’s presence as the “confluence of the streams of Israel” and her place as the “soil for the Word” means that the soil “must allow itself to be absorbed by the seed, to be assimilated by the seed, to surrender itself for the sake of transforming the seed into life.”⁵⁰ One can conclude that Mary represents a pre-eminent example of Ratzinger’s portrayal of the Christian

⁴⁶ See this dissertation § 9.1.2.

⁴⁷ Zizioulas, *Lectures in Christian Dogmatics*, 24.

⁴⁸ Ratzinger, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 55.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 16. See also *Daughter Zion*, 23.

⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 15. This is where Ratzinger’s typological approach to mariology has some remarkably beautiful illustrations. In particular, he points to the typological identification of Mary with Zion in the Bible. He says this forms the scriptural basis for calling humanity to rejoice at the personification of Israel in Daughter Zion (cf. Zeph 3:14; Joel 2:21; Zech 9:9; Lam 4:21). See *Daughter Zion*, 79-61; *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 65-75. This mirrors Jesus’s identification with Yahweh and hence, retroactively, so to speak, she is enabled to become God’s indwelling – “the place of God’s inhabitation” (cf. Zeph 3:14). See *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 88.

synthesis of freedom through willing to be absorbed by the Logos whom she has a deepening knowledge of, and who purifies her heart for the other.⁵¹ In this context, Ratzinger believes that Mary stands between *believing affectivity* and *theological rationality*:

Marianische Frömmigkeit wird immer in der Spannung von theologischer Rationalität und gläubiger Affektivität stehen. Das liegt in ihrem Wesen, und es geht in ihr gerade darum, keines der beiden verkümmern zu lassen, im Affekt das nüchterne Maß der Ratio nicht zu vergessen, aber auch in der Nüchternheit eines verstehenden Glaubens das Herz nicht zu erdrücken, das oft mehr sieht als der bloße Verstand. Nicht umsonst haben die Väter Matt 5:8 als Mitte ihrer theologischen Erkenntnislehre gefaßt: “Selig sind, die ein reines Herz haben; denn sie werden Gott anschauen” – das Organ, Gott zu sehen, ist das gereinigte Herz. Marianischer Frömmigkeit könnte es zukommen, Erweckung des Herzen und seine Reinigung in den Glauben hinein zu wirken. Wenn es das Elend des heutigen Menschen ist, immer mehr in bloßen Bios und bloße Rationalität auseinanderzufallen, so könnte sie solcher “Dekomposition” des Humanen entgegenwirken und helfen, die Einheit in der Mitte, vom Herzen her, wiederzufinden.⁵²

On the other hand, her “heart” does not unilaterally supersede her will or her knowledge of the Logos. This is consistent with an authentic human freedom. She was able to “keep” the words and actions of the Son in her heart (cf. Luke 2:19; 2:51; cf. 1:29). Hence, Mary becomes the one capable of internalising and preserving the whole meaning and nature of God’s will for creation:

Maria sieht in den Ereignissen “Worte,” ein Geschehen, das von Sinn erfüllt ist, weil es aus Gottes sinnstiftendem Willen kommt. Sie übersetzt die Ereignisse in Worte und dringt in die Worte ein, indem sie sie in das “Herz” hineinnimmt – in jenen inneren Raum des Verstehens, in dem Sinn und Geist, Verstand und Gefühl, äußeres und inneres Anschauen ineinandertreten und so über das einzelne hinaus die Ganzheit sichtbar und ihre Botschaft verständlich wird.⁵³

⁵¹ See Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 14-15.

⁵² Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Maria: Kirche im Ursprung*, 29-30 (“Marian piety will always stand within the tension between theological rationality and believing affectivity. This is part of its essence, and its task is not to allow either to atrophy. Affectivity must not lead it to forget the sober measure of *ratio*, nor must the sobriety of a reasonable faith allow it to suffocate the heart, which often sees more than naked reason. It was not for nothing that the Fathers understood Matthew 5:8 as the centre of their theological epistemology: ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ The organ for seeing God is the purified heart. It may just be the task of Marian piety to awaken the heart and purify it in faith. If the misery of contemporary man is his increasing disintegration into *mere bios* and *mere rationality*, Marian piety could work against this ‘decomposition’ and help man to rediscover unity in the centre, from the heart” [Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 35-36]).

⁵³ Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Maria: Kirche im Ursprung*, 62 (“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. She is thus able to

This interpretation of Mary’s affectivity enables Ratzinger to speak of a “dialogical reciprocity,”⁵⁴ a “lived penetration into the Word . . . an existence in the realm of the Holy Spirit,”⁵⁵ an “embodied existence”⁵⁶ and an “abiding exchange of creaturely existence with the Creator.”⁵⁷ Such language is entirely consistent with the language of dialogical posture that shapes the ground of his discussion on growth in authentic human freedom. From the ecclesiological perspective, the figure of Mary provides the important linchpin for the promotion of the affective aspect of the Christian synthesis. While it still remains arguable as to whether or not Ratzinger has fully exploited this fact, certainly he opens up the reader to its possibility.

Therefore, with regard to the affective aspect of Ratzinger’s ecclesiology, what is significant is his advocacy for the acknowledgement of “feeling” or “emotion” as part of the Christian synthesis of freedom.⁵⁸ His concentration on the fundamental pattern of human

see the totality without getting lost in individual details and to understand the points of the whole” [Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 70-71]). See also *Maria: Kirche im Ursprung*, 28.

⁵⁴ Ratzinger and Balthasar, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 26.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 75.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁵⁸ Modern sensibility theory puts forward the idea that there can be no ethical model complete without an adequate theory of emotions. Martha Nussbaum of the University of Chicago is a major advocate of a “modified version of the ancient Stoic view, according to which emotions are forms of evaluative judgement that ascribe to certain things and persons outside a person’s control great importance for the person’s own flourishing.” She consequently believes that emotions are, “in effect, acknowledgements of neediness and lack of self-sufficiency” (*Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001], 22). Her view is that human emotions should be understood as highly discriminating responses to what is of value and importance while simultaneously realising that emotions are not immune from rational criticism because they may be no more reliable than any other set of entrenched beliefs. Philosophical and theological theory has been slow to countenance affective forms of discourse because of their highly subjective nature which can lock people into their own individual moral universe. Nussbaum sketches the difficulty which lies behind the classical sciences’ reticence to engage with the affective nature of human thought processes: “their urgency and heat; their tendency to take over the personality and to move it to action with overwhelming force; their connection with important attachments, in terms of which a person defines her life; the person’s sense of passivity before them; their apparently adversarial relation to ‘relationality’ in the sense of cool calculation or cost-benefit analysis; their close connection with one another, as hope alternates with fear, as a single event transforms hope into grief, as grief, looking about for a cause, expresses itself as anger, as all of these can be the vehicles of an underlying love” (*ibid.*). The work of scholars like Nussbaum, and David Konstan in *The Emotions of the Ancient Greeks: Studies in Aristotle and Classical Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), can help alleviate some of the reticence that is felt and, thereby, help expand the merits of affective theory into a worthwhile anthropological discussion. For example, Konstan says emotions for the ancient Greeks were significantly different from the contemporary understanding. Consequently, the ancients have

freedom leads him to call for an endorsement of “feeling” alongside the intellect and will.⁵⁹ It is very interesting to note that Church documents relating to the specific issue of religious freedom during the course of the last century reveal a negligible recognition of the affective dimension of the “heart” on the part of the human subject.⁶⁰ The basic tenor of the Church’s teaching is typified in *Dignitatis humanae* which points out that “the right to religious freedom has its foundation not in the subjective attitude of the person, but in its very nature.”⁶¹ The evidence from surveying a range of these documents is that they seek to harmonise the human intellect and will, but the notion of a synthesis which includes affectivity in the act of freedom is absent. Certainly, the documents speak eloquently about

something to tell us about our own views on particular emotions and on the category of emotion itself. Konstan says “[w]e cannot take it for granted that the Greek words map neatly onto our own emotional vocabulary” (x). See also Juha Sihvola & Troels Engberg-Pedersen, eds., *The Emotions in Hellenistic Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998); Richard Sorabji, *Emotion and Peace of Mind: From Stoic Agitation to Christian Temptation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); William Harris, *Restraining Rage: The Ideology of Anger Control in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Susanna Braund & Glenn W. Most, *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Robert Kaster, *Emotion, Restraint, and Community in Ancient Rome* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); *Stoicism and Emotion* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 2007). When it comes to the Christian perspective on the theme of authentic freedom, the caution exhibited by Konstan and others regarding the dichotomy between the original and contemporary meaning of the emotions may be very useful for removing theology’s reticence to engage with theories of affectivity. A very novel contribution to this debate, from an epistemological perspective, is Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski’s *Epistemic Authority: A Theory of Trust, Authority and Autonomy in Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Zagzebski traces the possibility of coming to trust an external authority and the possibility of coming to accept, on trust, the knowledge that a trustworthy authority exhibits. Her work is most certainly not an ecclesiological study and yet it offers an insight into the possible future direction for ecclesiology in this area. In simple terms, she points to the importance of building up and maintaining trust between people and societal institutions.

⁵⁹ It is of note that Aquinas said that faith in Christ is principally constituted by the Holy Spirit in people’s hearts. The “new law” of the Gospel, so to speak, is in the service of this inner transformation. See *ST I, IIae*, q. 106, a. 1. This is not to denigrate the visible constitution of the Church but underlines an inner conversion consistent with the contours of affective ecclesiology.

⁶⁰ Leo XIII, Encyclical on the Church in Bavaria, *Officio Sanctissimo* (22 December 1887), 8-9: ASS 20 (1887): 262-65; Pius XI, Encyclical on the Church and the German Reich to the Venerable Brethren the Archbishops and Bishops of Germany and other Ordinaries in Peace and Communion with the Apostolic See, *Mit Brennender Sorge* (14 March 1937), 27-29: AAS 29 (1937), 157-59; *DH*, 2. By the time the *CDF* issues the first of its two documents on freedom in 1984, *Libertatis nuntius*, there is mention of heart and will and the need for internal conversion (*LN*, I, 3; XI, 8) but still no explicit acknowledgment that the heart is capable of assisting the intellect in reaching the fullest dimensions of freedom in the subject. In its 1986 document *Libertatis conscientia*, there are sections on will, nature and reason (*LC*, 25-26, 35), alongside an extensive section on love as it is operative in the world (*LC*, 55-58), and how the Church is motivated by love (*LC*, 63). For is also an acknowledgement of the fact that freedom and love are mutually inclusive and grounded in each other. The document says that “the freedom of man is a shared freedom. His capacity for self-reliance is in no way suppressed by his dependence on God” (*LC*, 29). Once love is included in the freedom debate, it inevitably points in a social, ecclesial direction with all the potential this contains for communicating a doctrine of the Church which has relevance in the lives of people today.

⁶¹ *DH*, 2.

the nature of Christian love and its social responsibility on the part of Christians but there is no explicit connection akin to Ratzinger's idea that the heart cooperates with the intellect and will in bringing human freedom into proper perspective. Undoubtedly, the magisterial emphasis is correct, albeit incomplete. This is where Ratzinger helps to open up the idea that the affective dimension cannot be excluded from the discussion of authentic freedom.

Matthew Lamb, Professor of Theology at Ave Maria University, says the affective approach to faith remains a major task to be assimilated by contemporary catholic theology:

One of the greatest challenges the Catholic theologian faces is the need to acquire a combination of linguistic skills, along with scholarly, philosophical, and theological habits of mind and heart, in order to appreciate and appropriate the truth and wisdom of the two millennial tradition of Catholic teaching.⁶²

However, I have found two statements from recent Church documents which leave open the possibility of developing the affective in catholic ecclesiology. Firstly, in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* there is a seminal acknowledgement of the need for a broader synthesis that incorporates affectivity into the expression of Christian life. Set in the context of the desire for God, the Catechism leaves the discussion on freedom open for further development in the direction that Ratzinger proposes. It points towards the "heart" in the making of a decision with regard to God: "The spiritual tradition of the Church also emphasizes the *heart*, in the biblical sense of the depths of one's being, where the person decides for or against God."⁶³ It is this element of "feeling" or heart alongside intellect and

⁶² Matthew Lamb, "The Challenges of Reform and Renewal within Catholic Tradition," in Matthew Lamb and Matthew Levering, eds., *Vatican II: Renewal within Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 440.

⁶³ CCC, 368. See also CCC, 30: "Let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice' (Ps 105:3). Although man can forget God or reject him, He never ceases to call every man to seek him, so as to find life and happiness. But this search for God demands of man every effort of intellect, a sound will, 'an upright heart,' as well as the witness of others who teach him to seek God: 'You are great, O Lord, and greatly to be praised: great is your power and your wisdom is without measure. And man, so small a part of your creation, wants to praise you: this man, though clothed with mortality and bearing the evidence of sin and the proof that you withstand the proud. Despite everything, man, though but a small a part of your creation, wants to praise you. You yourself encourage him to delight in your praise, for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you'" (*Conf. I, I, I: PL 32, 659-661*). Cf. CCC, 26, 89, 1431-32, 1764, 2517-19. In CCC, 176-184, the effective and the affective aspects of faith are brought together. Here, faith is emphasised as requiring "a personal adherence of the whole man to God who reveals himself. It involves an assent of the intellect and will to the self-revelation God has made through his deeds and words" (176). See also CCC, 143, 154-55.

will which has allowed Ratzinger to extend his ecclesiology into the martyrological profile of the Church. In the present-day environment, a formal acknowledgement of “feeling” in ecclesiology may be very beneficial, having the potential to shape the Church’s contribution to the future well-being of the human race.

The second instance is in Benedict XVI’s encyclical letter, *Deus caritas est*. The conclusion to the first half of the letter contains a subtle but nonetheless explicit call for a heightened theological awareness of the affective capacity on the part of the human subject. He opens the encyclical by saying the fundamental decision of the Christian “is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction.”⁶⁴ He is striving here to illustrate the holistic nature of Christian affectivity through the category of “event.” He says that when the human person is fully integrated at the existential level, he or she is “an arena for the exercise of freedom.”⁶⁵ In contrast to an indeterminate, insecure form of searching for love, he says an experience which involves a real discovery of the other reveals that love is fundamentally sacrificial. To his mind, rather than being “self-seeking [and] a sinking into the intoxication of happiness . . . [love] seeks the good of the beloved; it becomes renunciation and it is ready, and even willing, for sacrifice.”⁶⁶

⁶⁴ *DCE*, 1.

⁶⁵ *DCE*, 5.

⁶⁶ *DCE*, 6. The German-born Jewish psychologist and social theorist, Erich Fromm (1900-80), who has worked on theories of affectivity from a social and political perspective, points to the challenge of what can be involved: “love is not a sentiment which can be easily indulged in by anyone, regardless of the level of maturity reached by him. . . . [A]ll attempts for love are bound to fail, unless [one] tries most actively to develop [one’s] total personality, so as to achieve a productive orientation; that satisfaction in individual love cannot be attained without the capacity to love one’s neighbour, without true humility, courage, faith and discipline. In a culture in which these qualities are rare, the attainment of the capacity to love must remain a rare achievement. Or – anyone can ask himself how many truly loving persons he has known (*The Art of Loving* [London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1976], 5). Freedom is an issue which Fromm has dealt with in several of his writings. He emigrated from Germany in 1934 to the United States. His writings on freedom are, like Ratzinger, focused on the human person’s well-being, both personally and socially. They are also marked by the turbulence which engulfed his homeland in the first half of the twentieth century. See for example, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Holt, 1941); *The Fear of Freedom* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1942); *Man for Himself: An Enquiry into the Psychology of Ethics* (New York: Holy, Rinehart and Winston, 1947); *The Heart of Man: Its Genius for Good and Evil* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964); *On Disobedience: Why Freedom means saying “No” to Power*, repr. (New York: Harper, 2010).

This form of self-dispossession is immediately recognisable as a key Ratzingerian category. However, it is what is found in *DCE* 16-18 that demonstrates the Magisterium's increasing awareness of affectivity. In the first instance, the Pope points out that love cannot be commanded: "it is a feeling that is either there or not, nor can it be produced by the will."⁶⁷ From the biblical perspective, it is God who loved first (1John 4:10). As a consequence of this, Benedict XVI says, God does not demand of us a feeling which we ourselves are incapable of producing; but rather, he makes us capable of loving. Secondly, he says that while love is a sentiment – which in itself is a "marvellous first spark" –sentiment alone cannot reach the fullness of mature love. In other words, love as a "feeling" or "emotion" doesn't engage the whole of a person's potentialities. The "yes" of the human person is an event that also involves the will and intellect:

Contact with the visible manifestations of God's love can awaken within us a feeling of joy born of the experience of being loved. But this encounter also engages our will and intellect. Acknowledgement of the living God is one path towards love, the "yes" of our will to his will unites our intellect, will and sentiments in the all-embracing act of love.⁶⁸

In love's maturation process, which the Pope says is always open-ended, and therefore never "finished," love grows through love. This means that by definition, love is social. As such, love of God and love of neighbour are inseparable. Returning to the initial basis of event and encounter in Christianity, the Pope says the love of a neighbour whom I may or may not like can take place "only on the basis of an intimate encounter with God, an encounter which has become a communion of will, even affecting my feelings. Then I learn to look on this other person not simply with my eyes and my feelings, but from the perspective of Jesus Christ."⁶⁹ The depth of such love means that "I can give to others much more than their outward necessities; I can give them the look of love which they crave."⁷⁰ For

⁶⁷ *DCE*, 16.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 18.

Benedict, the ecclesiological significance of this – of the view that “[l]ove is ‘divine,’ because it comes from God and unites us to God” – is that “through this unifying process it makes us a ‘we’ which transcends our divisions and makes us one.”⁷¹ From his remarks, it can be discerned that the Church is the sphere where the affective appropriation of God’s will meets, so to speak, the effective means of salvation:

[The Lord] encounters us ever anew, in the men and women who reflect his presence, in his word, in the sacraments and especially in the Eucharist. In the Church’s Liturgy, in her prayer, in the living community of believers, we experience the love of God, we perceive his presence and thus learn to recognise that presence in our daily lives.⁷²

9.1.5. Theology of Relation: Orienting Grace and Freedom

A particular sphere of contact between the effective and affective aspects of faith is found in the correspondence between grace and freedom. The correspondence arises from the datum that both the human person’s independence and provenance from God are simultaneously given, but are logically prior to the fact becoming the object of our reflection. Karl Rahner captures the issue at hand, namely: “how to maintain that man is really free in his salutary acts and could therefore refuse the grace offered for such an act, and that at the same time he necessarily requires interior divine grace for this salutary action.”⁷³

In the first instance, Ratzinger attempts to move away from a type of theological language which confines the issue of freedom to a narrowly defined discussion of nature and grace. This has been a growing phenomenon among theologians in the twentieth-century,

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 17. At the heart of what Benedict XVI says about encounter and event is conversion to Christ. Gerard Collins and Mario Farrugia highlight this same approach as an imperative for the Church in the third millennium: “we share the dream . . . that more and more Catholics and others will let themselves be drawn into a deep, life-transforming experience of Jesus. That kind of experience of him in prayer and community will give vigour to their faith, which will then radically reshape their behaviour” (*Catholicism: The Story of Catholic Christianity* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2003], 384). The form of ecclesiology being expressed in Benedict XVI’s encyclical tries to accommodate effective and affective elements. It is what Benedict XVI refers to as “sacramental ‘mysticism’” (*DCE*, 13-14), whereby God’s condescension towards us operates so as to lift us up to beyond anything that any human elevation alone could achieve.

⁷³ Karl Rahner, “Grace and Freedom,” in *SM*, 2:426.

who have tried to cut through the complexities of the western doctrine of grace.⁷⁴ In similar fashion, Ratzinger doesn't overly concern himself with making traditional pedagogic distinctions between efficacious and sufficient grace; nor do we observe him seeking out explanations for the concepts of prevenient, habitual and actual grace. That is not to say that Ratzinger rejects the value of these distinctions nor does it mean that the Church doesn't use them anymore in a formal way.⁷⁵ Rather, his attention is upon expanding the horizon, so to speak, of Christian freedom, moving it towards a broader relational and pastoral perspective. He attempts to engage the present-day context in a fresh way, entering into constructive

⁷⁴ The traditional western teachings on grace are lucidly set out in Charles Journet, *Entretiens sur la Grâce* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1959) and in Cornelius Ernst, *The Theology of Grace* (Notre Dame: Fides, 1974). For a comprehensive history of the concept of grace in western theology with an emphasis on the attempt to assert the primacy of the notion of uncreated grace (i.e. the Holy Spirit itself) over the various classifications of created grace (the effects of the Spirit's operation), see Stephen Duffy, *The Dynamics of Grace: Perspectives in Theological Anthropology* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2007). Karl Rahner also outlines a traditional western understanding of the tract on grace in "Grace and Freedom," in *SM*, 2:415-422. Like Duffy, he outlines the traditional doctrine while attempting to broaden it out into the context of the free relation of the Absolute communicating itself: "The customary post-Tridentine division of the treatise into actual grace and habitual grace will not do, because it makes questionable assumptions. The starting-point must be a theological statement about man in the unity of his whole nature. This must be the source from which the distinction between nature and grace and possible distinctions within the concept of grace itself are drawn, and which will themselves serve as principles on which a treatise of this kind can be composed. In this sense we are starting from the theological proposition (of dogmatic anthropology) that the human being who is a Christian believer must understand himself to be called in history to God's own most intimate life, by the effective word of God's free and absolute self-disclosure; and that he is so called in his character as creature, and despite it, and despite his recognition of himself as a sinner by his very origin" (415). See also Karl Rahner, *Gnade als Freiheit: Kleine theologische Beiträge* (Freiburg: Herder, 1968); "Theologie der Freiheit," in *Schriften zur Theologie*, VI (Einsiedeln: Benziger & Co., 1965), 215-37; and a collection of Rahner's essays gathered in *Meditations on Freedom and the Spirit* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1978). See also Karl Lehmann & Albert Raffelt, eds., *Rechenschaft des Glaubens. Karl Rahner – Lesebuch* (Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1979), 400-403; Carmichael C. Peters, *A Gadamerian Reading of Karl Rahner's Theology of Grace and Freedom* (New York: Catholic Scholars Press, 2000). Throughout the twentieth-century, other theologians have also approached the grace and freedom debate from the perspective of God's self-communication to, and in the world. See Romano Guardini, *Freiheit, Gnade, Schicksal* (München: Kosel-Verlag, 1961); Edward Schillebeeckx, *God and Man*, trans. Edward Fitzgerald and Peter Tomlinson (London: Sheed and Ward, 1969); Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1971); Alexander Schmemmann, *Church, World, Mission* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979); Neil Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption* (New York: Orbis, 2007).

⁷⁵ The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* uses this traditional language, albeit within a broader, personalist context. See *CCC*, 1987-2029, 2670. We can note also that the International Theological Commission, in its 2012 message for the *Year of Faith*, quoted from its 2011 document, *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria*. The Commission spoke of prevenient grace, which is the divine grace that precedes human decision-making. It is the gratuitous gift of God and it entirely unmerited: "[. . .] there exists a profound unity between the act by which we believe and the content to which we give our assent. The theologian highlights the great human significance of that act, investigating how God's prevenient grace draws out from the very heart of human freedom the 'yes' of faith, and showing how faith is the 'foundation of the entire spiritual edifice,' in that it informs all the various dimensions of Christian life, personal, familial and communitarian." See http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_doc_20111129_teologia-oggi_en.html (accessed 12 October 2012). The traditional teaching on prevenient grace was set out at the Sixth session of the Council of Trent in the context of the debate on justification.

dialogue with the contemporary landscape.⁷⁶

Recent comments made by Ratzinger confirm his stance. He says there are two extremes in the grace-freedom debate, neither of which fully attests to the Christian Creed: on the one hand, there is the idea of the absolutely exclusive action of God whereby everything is dependent upon predestination and, on the other hand, there is the moralising position according to which everything is decided through the good will of the human person. Ratzinger realises that both effective and affective considerations inevitably form part of the divine-human encounter at the heart of scriptural testimony:

Gnade und Freiheit durchdringen sich, und ihr Ineinander können wir nicht in klare Formeln auflösen. Es bleibt wahr, dass wir nicht lieben könnten, wenn wir nicht zuerst von Gott geliebt wären. Gottes Gnade geht uns immer voraus, sie umfängt und trägt uns. Aber es bleibt auch wahr, dass der Mensch zum Mitlieben gerufen ist, dass er nicht willenloses Werkzeug von Gottes Allmacht bleibt, sondern mitlieben oder sich auch der Liebe Gottes verweigern kann.⁷⁷

If anything, Ratzinger believes theology has been too much inclined to instrumentalise grace.⁷⁸ For him, rather, a starting point must be found which seeks to avoid the “truncated Thomism that rightly became the object of polemical attack by Reformation thought.”⁷⁹ His approach is to look towards a specifically christological anthropology that is

⁷⁶ Consistent with the relationality at the core of his writings, Ratzinger presents a dialogical orientation as the linchpin, so to speak, between activism and pure grace, law and gospel. Rahner and Ratzinger seem to share in this approach. As we know from this dissertation, Ratzinger defines authentic freedom as the human person’s orientation with regard to God through a posture of worship and prayer. In similar fashion, Rahner says the following: “In order really to ‘understand’ the problem grace-freedom, to let it have its proper weight and to accept it, it is necessary to return to the frame of mind of a person at prayer. He receives himself, is, and gives himself back to God, by accepting the acceptance as an element in the gift itself. If one assumes that attitude of prayer (and by so doing in fact accepts the ‘solution’ of the problem), there is no begging of the question, nor flight from it” (Rahner, “Grace and Freedom” in *SM*, 2:427).

⁷⁷ Ratzinger, *Jesus von Nazareth. Prolog: Die Kindheitsgeschichten*, 84-85 (“Grace and freedom are thoroughly interwoven, and we cannot unravel their interrelatedness into clear formulae. It remains true that we could not love if we were not first loved by God. God’s grace always precedes us, embraces us and carries us. But it also remains true that man is called to love in return, he does not remain an unwilling tool of God’s omnipotence: he can love in return or he can refuse God’s love” [Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, 76]).

⁷⁸ See Ratzinger, *Mary: The Church at the Source*, 67; *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 117-18; cf. 62-63.

⁷⁹ Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching*, 143. This quotation comes from a preface which Ratzinger wrote in 1973 for an article he originally composed in 1962. It was published under the title “*Gratia praesupponit naturam*” in Joseph Ratzinger and Heinrich Fries, ed., *Einsicht und Glaube, Festschrift für G. Söhngen* (Freiburg: Herder, 1962), 134-49. The article sees Ratzinger at his most analytical in an attempt to uncover the enduring contribution of scholastic theology. To his mind, the issue of grace and nature is falsely predicated upon two extreme positions. On the one hand there are people who expound a “supernaturalism” that rests upon the theological denial of nature, whereby an eschatology is logically required which is premised on liberating a

necessarily ecclesial – that is ordered to communion with Christ and with one another. An ecclesiology that pays no attention to the affective nature of humanity excludes the very possibility of communion because it discounts the nature of love as something which must be assented to in freedom. Dirscherl concurs with this interpretation of Ratzinger, and endorses both its freshness and its efficacy from an ecclesiological perspective. He says that Ratzinger’s desire to focus on the key category of relationality, which he grounds in the scriptures and in neo-chalcedonian theology, allows him to express a divine-human *communio* in terms of a unity in diversity mediated *in* and *through* Christ:

Here is born community and thus the Church is created. Participation in the obedience of the Son is the true transformation of people and, for Ratzinger, is the only effective and powerful act for the renewal and transformation of society and the world in general. It is clear, therefore, that God-talk, anthropology and ecclesiology come together with Christology as a focal point. Christology is the ultimate reference point, and because of that Ratzinger develops his relational theology; and understanding it as relationship between God and man, the decisions of Chalcedon and Constantinople III are indispensable. Only in differentiation can difference in unity ultimately happen.⁸⁰

From the perspective of liberation ecclesiology, the stress on relationality is Ratzinger’s attempt to interpret the balance to be struck between God’s grace and human freedom. This leads him into a discussion of worship and prayer which are, to his mind, a life-style choice as opposed to an act of piety. This attempt to orient the human posture with regard to God is Ratzinger’s way of proposing the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom.

9.1.6. Multifaceted Nature of the Ecclesial Landscape

The findings of this dissertation demonstrate the consciousness which Ratzinger’s ecclesiology exhibits of the multifaceted nature of the ecclesial landscape. Section III makes

disastrous world. On the other hand, there is the error of “naturalism” which counts all distinctions between nature and grace as meaningless. Only the “real” – that which is perceptible, in a narrow sense, is trustworthy, while talk of the supernatural is deemed ideologically incoherent. For Ratzinger, both naturalism and supernaturalism are precarious intellectual positions: “In the end the naturalism that melts grace down into nature leads to the same result as the supernaturalism that disputes the existence of nature and, by denying creation, makes grace meaningless as well. The fanaticism of those homilists who mock nature, presumably for the sake of grace, is always frighteningly close to the cynicism of the atheists who mock God for the sake of his creation” (*Dogma and Preaching*, 144).

⁸⁰ Dirscherl, “Gott und Mensch als Beziehungswesen,” in *Der Theologe Joseph Ratzinger*, 63 [own translation].

the case for his attempt to present a coherent portrait of the Church as the sphere for growth in authentic freedom. Such an approach to ecclesiology, where no portion of the Church exists in isolation – be it its prayer life, its institutional form, or its missionary activity – is fully consistent with the on-going reception of the Second Vatican Council. Brendan Leahy has highlighted three key categories from the Council which consolidate this. He believes the Council is directing the Church via “three inter-relating motifs in all programming, doing and evaluating of evangelising activities . . . [namely] mystery, communion and mission.” Leahy frames the inter-relation of the three motifs very succinctly when he says “the mystery of God is experienced in a life of communion that, if authentic, is itself missionary.”⁸¹

From the perspective of the Church as sphere of growth in authentic freedom, Leahy’s template is also distinctly discernible in Ratzinger’s presentation. The prayer-life of the Church, by way of cooperating with Christ’s assent to the Father, facilitates and deepens the “yes” humanity makes to God. Because this “yes” can never be issued in isolation, the visible, as well as the diachronic reality of God’s people is safeguarded by the *successio* principle. All of this motivates the Church’s members to fulfil their mission in the world as witnesses to God’s will for creation. As the Council said, “the Church both prays and labours in order that the entire world may become the People of God, the Body of the Lord and the

⁸¹ See Brendan Leahy, “‘Mystery, Communion and Mission’: A Summary Formula for Evangelisation,” in Brendan Leahy & Séamus O’Connell, eds., *Having Life in His Name: Living, Thinking and Communicating the Christian Life of Faith* (Dublin: Veritas, 2011), 272-73. In an attempt to contextualise the Church’s reception of the Council, Leahy refers to the Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, *Christifideles laici*, 8, which states the following: “The Church herself, then, is the vine in the gospel. She is *mystery* because the very life and love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the gift gratuitously offered to all those who are born of water and the Holy Spirit (cf. John 3:5), and called to relive the very *communion* of God and to manifest it and communicate it in history (mission): ‘In that day,’ Jesus says, ‘you will know that I am in my Father and you in me, and I in you’ (John 14:20).” Leahy points out the inter-linking approach to ecclesiology present in this teaching: “Veering too much in the direction of missionary activities, isolated from a vibrant life of communion and immersion in the many sources of God available to us, leads to a hollow and exhausting apostolate of social works. Focusing exclusively on servicing the communion of the Church, neglecting mystery and mission, results in merely horizontal and static group dynamics. Pointing only to mystery while neglecting communion-building and missionary outreach ends up encouraging a vertical, private and individualistic piety. In reflection, planning and activities, remembering the three directions and the fact that they are essentially inter-relating motifs helps maintain the vertical-horizontal tensions in balance. Recalling how these directions are intrinsically linked and mutually clarifying provides a common summary starting point for bringing approaches to mission into conversation” (Leahy, “Mystery, Communion and Mission,” in *Having Life in His Name*, 279-80).

Temple of the Holy Spirit, and that in Christ, the Head of all, all honour and glory may be rendered to the Creator and Father of the Universe.”⁸² Ratzinger develops an ecclesiology consistent with the Council’s view that, by its very nature, the Church is missionary – not in an aimless or egoistical fashion, but by way of self-sacrifice and witness, by way of preaching and assembly of God’s people, by way of word and event, so as “to proclaim Christ to non-Christian fellow countrymen and help them towards a full reception of Christ.”⁸³

Ratzinger’s efforts to orient the Church towards a place where it can fulfil its mission of unity in the changed and changing environment of the twenty-first century is best summarised by the Church’s martyrological profile. While he does not demand a smaller Church *per se*, he says that the prospect of becoming the “leaven” in society is being proposed to believers in a new way today. In more recent years, he has been particularly keen on the idea of creative minorities and of civil religion – both of which are, to his mind, manifestations of the Gospel “leaven” in the civic space.⁸⁴ In a sense these two ideas are the product of his multifaceted ecclesial landscape. The former demands courageous witness, while it is hoped the latter will be enthused by witness. Ulrich Ruh highlights the close connection between both of these ideas in Ratzinger’s attempt to engage with the modern world. On the one hand, creative minorities are “meeting places for the like-minded,” while on the other, civil religion requires that “the believer must enter into the struggle for the presence of reason.”⁸⁵ Furthermore, Ruh points out that what connects these two ideas in

⁸² *LG*, 17; *AG*, 7.

⁸³ *AG*, 15; cf. *ibid.*, 1, 5, 10-18.

⁸⁴ See this dissertation § 8.3.

⁸⁵ Ulrich Ruh, “Joseph Ratzinger – der Kritiker der Moderne” in Meier-Hamidi and Schumacher, eds., *Der Theologe Joseph Ratzinger*, 126. Ruh, an editor at Herder-Korrespondenz who studied theology at Freiburg University, is interested in Ratzinger’s response to modern cultural trends. Ruh comments on the fact that Ratzinger’s cultural and historical analysis is conducted in broad strokes, but that his theology is not satisfied with such analyses only. He says Ratzinger views culture in three phases: firstly, through the lens of the providential synthesis created in the encounter between the Bible and Greek philosophy, then via its severance in the empirical and technocratic rationality of modernity and political upheaval of the French Revolution and, finally, in the need for the Christian community to contribute to the search for a way of bringing faith and reason

Ratzinger's analysis of European culture is a belief in the Church as the instrument of God's will. What Ruh finds fascinating about Ratzinger's contribution to the faith and culture debate is the way he juxtaposes "very far-reaching, sombre verdicts on the ethical, religious and political status quo in Europe (especially in comparison with other cultures) and equally far-reaching hopes for a new causal connection between Christian faith and secular reason, freedom and truth."⁸⁶

In fact, it is a striking feature of Ratzinger's ecclesiology that he assimilates the ideas of creative minorities and civil religion into his viewpoint. These ideas are not dissimilar from the call for base-communities in Latin America. In fact, in his engagement with liberation movements, Ratzinger is more open to their insights than is often presumed to be the case, and more influenced by them than he himself would care to admit.⁸⁷ Liberation theology, in fact, has made a constructive contribution to Ratzinger's own reflections in ecclesiology, and has, arguably, helped refine his own thinking and his engagement with the modern world.

It is true that Ratzinger has never conceded that he has been challenged into re-examining his own perspective in light of the issues raised by liberation theology.

Nevertheless, he has assimilated the impasse which occasioned its inception, by making an

together again so as to counter the negative relativistic and godless features of modernity and give strength to the present. He says Ratzinger's attempt at such a comprehensive analysis is daring but somewhat "ambivalent." Nevertheless, Ruh suggests that it is this ambivalence and the given tensions of Ratzinger's position which deliver food for thought in theology as it attempts to evaluate modernity and its legacy. Ruh's belief is that Ratzinger's work is an important addition to the debate about the appropriate contribution of Churches and individual Christians to this shared future (cf. *ibid.*, 119-28). What grounds the attractiveness of civil religion for Ratzinger is that when it is correlated with creative minorities, the universal call to holiness is clearly delineated in terms of convinced witness. *Gaudium et spes* and *Humane personae dignitatem* were instinctively progressing in this direction. The latter document was issued by the Secretariat for Unbelievers which had been established by Paul VI in 1965 to acknowledge the growing challenge of unbelief and religious indifference. It was united with the Pontifical Council for Culture by John Paul II in 1993.

⁸⁶ Ruh, "Joseph Ratzinger – der Kritiker der Moderne," in Meier-Hamidi and Schumacher, eds., *Der Theologe Joseph Ratzinger*, 128 [own translation].

⁸⁷ As this dissertation has demonstrated, no-one could doubt Ratzinger's distinct unease with liberationist movements. He believes that such movements can change people's expectation of religion, turning it into an instrument merely for advocating freedom, peace and the conservation of creation. See Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 132. What Ratzinger recoils from is anything that resembles "1968 [where] there was a fusion of the Christian impulse with secular and political action and an attempt to baptise Marxism" (Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 6). See his views on liberation theology in this dissertation §§ 1.2. and 3.2.

attempt to incorporate the human desire for freedom into his ecclesiology. What he does say is that freedom can be considered “the common denominator of the modern mind and of our century” and, from a theological perspective, the basic idea of liberation theology “has found an echo on every continent . . . and it must be said, too, that it can be given a very positive expression.”⁸⁸ What he fears are viewpoints that conceive of Christianity as an instrument for refashioning the world politically. In terms of christology and ecclesiology, he would recoil from Frederick Herzog’s contention that “in liberating men, Jesus offers them a fulfilment of life they cannot find in the organisation church, the religious fold.”⁸⁹

Within this context, there are undeniable parallels between Ratzinger’s work on freedom and that of liberation theology. Like many liberation theologians, Ratzinger places great significance upon the Exodus.⁹⁰ Furthermore, both liberation theologians and Ratzinger make extensive use of ecology, even though the ultimate emphasis for the former is at the level of nature in an eco-friendly sense, and the latter, at the level of person in a soteriological sense. However, perhaps the most interesting parallel relates to the concept of ecclesiogenesis. A term in its infancy in some respects, ecclesiogenesis is the call for local base communities who, as it were, live at the coal-face of the Church’s life within society.

⁸⁸ Ratzinger, *Salt of the Earth*, 132.

⁸⁹ Frederick Herzog, *Liberation Theology: Liberation in the Light of the Fourth Gospel* (New York: Seabury Press, 1972), 147. One of the voices cautioning against some of the liberationists in the early days was Brazilian Franciscan, Bonaventure Kloppenburg. In a short monograph, where he outlined eleven temptations facing theologies of liberation, he said – somewhat glibly, “God grant that the theology of liberation may not become . . . a liberation from theology” (*Temptations for the Theology of Liberation* [Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974], 35). See also Kloppenburg’s *The People’s Church: A Defence of MY Church*, trans. Matthew O’Connell (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1978). It is a sharply critical investigation of liberation theology’s advocacy of the “Church of the People.”

⁹⁰ For example, Ratzinger, like so many liberation theologians, places great significance upon the Exodus. See Antonio Pérez Esclarín, *Ateísmo y liberación* (Caracas: Fuentes SRL, 1974); Norman K. Gottwald, “The Exodus as Event and Process: A Test Case in the Biblical grounding of Liberation Theology,” in Marc H. Ellis and Otto Maduro, eds., *The Future of Liberation Theology* (New York: Orbis, 1989), 250-260. It is interesting to note that over the course of this dissertation, Ratzinger’s focus on the Exodus as an explicit part of his narrative christology comes to the fore at around the time that he was reflecting on the emergent liberation theologies of the Americas. By the time he comes to writing the first volume of his Jesus of Nazareth series, the binary of Jesus as the true Moses is a very strong theme. See “Freiheit und Bindung in der Kirche,” *Verein der Freunde der Universität Regensburg* 7 (1981): 5-21; “Freiheit und Befreiung: Die anthropologische Vision der Instruktion ‘Libertatis conscientia’,” *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 5 (1986): 409-24; “Freiheit und Wahrheit,” *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 24 (1995): 526-42. A case for a greater typological reading of the Exodus theme in the Scriptures is made by Richard J. Clifford in “*The Exodus in the Christian Bible: The Case for ‘Figural’ Reading*,” in *Theological Studies* 63 (2002): 345-361.

Ratzinger has decried the overpowering level of bureaucratic machinery in the Church and has expressed his preference for local ecclesial life as the ordinary form of the Church's existence.⁹¹ This echoes Leonardo Boff's observation that modern society has led to an unprecedented uniformity, amounting to a general anonymity of persons lost "in the cogs of the mechanisms of the macro-organisations and bureaucracies."⁹² Boff says local base communities are able to recast their institutional structures so that "they [can] respond to the ever-present needs that communities have – needs for union, universality and bonding with the great witnesses of the apostolic past."⁹³ What perturbs Ratzinger in this would be the inference that the "apostolic past" implies an exclusive bond to the activity of the nascent Christian community without recourse to the Church's development in history. He will invariably reproach horizontalizing tendencies because, to his mind, they are an aberration from the diachronic lifeblood of the Church. For Boff, "[t]o preserve tradition means to do as the first Christians did."⁹⁴ Ratzinger, on the other hand, will never speak about the local situation without reference to the universal Church. To his mind, a solution to excessive uniformity can never be realised by circumventing the unity of the whole. Excessive cultural adaptations of the Church's life at the local level will, if uninhibited by diachronic considerations, lead to disparate, isolated communities unrecognisable to one another. For that reason, Ratzinger believes the way the Church will carry out its mission today will be through faithful, convinced believers who seek dialogue at the frontline between Christian faith and secular reason. In this sense, the creative minority is a base community, while its counterpart – civil religion – as promulgated through believers, can never be authentic without its reference point in, and from the "whole."

⁹¹ See this dissertation § 2.3.1.

⁹² Leonardo Boff, *Ecclesiogenesis: The Base Communities Reinvent the Church*, trans. Robert R. Barr (New York: Orbis, 1986), 1.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

In summary, and taking his entire intellectual journey into account, it can be seen that Ratzinger's experience with liberation theology and the subconscious integration of it into his own ecclesiology is significant. Liberation theology has been a catalyst, so to speak, in assisting him in his ecclesiological deliberations. While he is not someone who innovates in theology for innovation's sake, he displays an aptitude for grappling with controversial issues confronting not merely Christianity, but society in general. Indeed, his writings are capable of conveying a keen and perceptive sense of contemporary issues to the reader, including young idealistic minds surrounded by the many competing voices of the modern intellectual landscape.⁹⁵ For this reason, Ratzinger is a theologian motivated by the objective of representing and articulating the Christian tradition for the upcoming generation. Benedict XVI's letter to Irish Catholics in 2010 demonstrated much of his concern for the questions of a new generation, on the one hand, and his belief that Christ's Church makes available the doorway to the realm of life's most satisfying meaning, on the other:

Your experience of the Church is very different from that of your parents and grandparents. The world has changed greatly since they were your age. Yet all people, in every generation, are called to travel the same path through life, whatever their circumstances may be. We are all scandalized by the sins and failures of some of the Church's members, particularly those who were chosen especially to guide and serve young people. But it is *in the Church* that you will find Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today and for ever (cf. Heb 13:8). He loves you and he has offered himself on the cross for you. Seek a personal relationship with him within the communion of his Church, for he will never betray your trust! He alone can satisfy your deepest longings and give your lives their fullest meaning by directing them to the service of others. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus and his goodness, and shelter the flame of faith in your heart.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Is it interesting to note the comment in Ratzinger's doctoral dissertation where he says the greatest theology often grows out of the polemic against error: "Wie jede große Theologie wuchs auch die Augustins aus der Polemik gegen den Irrtum . . ." (Ratzinger, *Volk und Haus Gottes*, 124).

⁹⁶ Benedict XVI, Pastoral Letter to the Catholics of Ireland (19 March 2010): AAS 102 (2010), 214.

9.2. Potential Avenues of Future Enquiry

This final subdivision outlines three important themes which have emerged from the exploration of Ratzinger's writings. It aims to give an indication of a number of potential avenues of future enquiry which are beyond the scope of this dissertation but which would benefit the field of ecclesiology. These are themes which Ratzinger has touched upon to a degree, but did not develop sufficiently, and so they present a roadmap for future scholarship in the area. They include an examination of the merits of understanding the Church from the perspective of the theological virtues, a rediscovery of the reality of original sin, and an exploration of the Church as the universal sacrament of salvation.

9.2.1. Engaging the Theological Virtues in Ecclesiology

Chapter 5 of this dissertation has shown how the theological virtues of faith, hope and love are an interpretative key to Ratzinger's ecclesiological writings and open up avenues of reflection which respect the integrity of the human person, while also preserving the Church's nature as a gift which humanity receives from outside itself. "Doing" theology, so to speak, from the perspective of faith, hope and love, is at least as old as the pauline corpus, but this is not so for the relatively new genre of ecclesiology, which is now recognised more and more as a discipline in its own right. In his *Aus Christus Schauen: Einübung in Glaube, Hoffnung, Liebe*, Ratzinger attempts to promote an ecclesiology that explicitly engages with the theological virtues. In this book, Ratzinger sketches a new kind of neo-thomistic ecclesiology, liberally – albeit loosely – citing Aquinas to guide his reflections. Given Ratzinger's own views on thomistic thought, as one who has been consistently associated with the move away from the neo-scholasticism of the early twentieth-century, new and interesting possibilities open up here. In Ratzinger's own words, he had "difficulties in penetrating the thought of Thomas Aquinas, whose crystal-clear logic seemed to me to be too closed in on itself, too impersonal and ready-made." However, this admission is not

necessarily licence to view him as anti-scholastic or anti-thomistic. For the most part, his reflections on the virtues are mediated through the work of Josef Pieper and, from the ecclesiological perspective, are a rudimentary first attempt by Ratzinger at such an approach.⁹⁷ By his own admission, Ratzinger worked in this way and, while initially somewhat circumspect, felt that the linking of the philosophical, theological and spiritual aspects of the virtues could be useful in opening up new avenues of scholarship.⁹⁸ Indeed, the fact that he uses the theological virtues as one of his primary theological keys has been put beyond question, given that he reached for them consistently when compiling the papal encyclicals of his pontificate.

Ratzinger is not someone who concerns himself with theological “methods” as such, but nevertheless a prism such as the theological virtues does present ecclesiology with a

⁹⁷ See Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 44. Ratzinger partially attributes his lack of enthusiasm for Thomas to Arnold Wilmsen: “the philosopher who taught us Thomas, presented us with a rigid, neoscholastic Thomism that was simply too far afield from my own questions” (ibid.). At the same time however, there is no doubting Ratzinger’s respect for the contribution of Thomas to western thought. See, for example, Ratzinger’s homily on Aquinas delivered in 1987 at the Angelicum University in Rome: “Consecrate them in the Truth: A Homily for St Thomas’ Day,” *New Blackfriars* 68 (1987):112-24. It is interesting to see how Robert Tilley decries an attempt by Paul Collins to designate Ratzinger as a pessimist and Karl Rahner as an optimist with regard to the modern world because the former is Augustinian and the latter is thomistic (cf. *Benedict XVI and the Search for Truth*, 203-25). Tilley says Ratzinger’s remarks about Thomas’ scholasticism being closed in on itself are unfair to the Dominican but, nevertheless, Ratzinger’s “project can be described as one that aims at making the thomistic *telos* explicitly personal, or at least *more so*” (222). See Paul Collins, *God’s New Man: The Election of Benedict XVI and the Legacy of John Paul II* (London: Continuum, 2005), 54-77. It is Tracey Rowland in particular who says that when Ratzinger did take an interest in Thomism, it was through the work of Josef Pieper, “whose interests untypically extended to the philosophy of history” (*Benedict XVI: Guide for the Perplexed*, 4). Rowland has also conducted a very interesting study which charts a philosophical and theological reading of culture in the latter twentieth-century. She then puts forward the proposal of a contemporary Augustinian Thomism. See Tracey Rowland, *Culture and Thomist Tradition: After Vatican II* (London: Routledge, 2003).

⁹⁸ See Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 133-34. Gerard Mannion is an example of an ecclesiologist attempting such an approach, describing his work as “virtue ecclesiology.” See his *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2007). Dominic Doyle and Richard Lennan have followed him, with a particular focus on the virtue of hope. Their work appears in *Theological Studies* under a subtitle “Hope and the Church: A Trilogy.” See Richard Lennan, “The Church as a Sacrament of Hope,” Dominic Doyle, “Post-Traumatic Ecclesiology and the Restoration of Hope,” and James Gerard McEvoy, “Hope, Modernity, and the Church: A Response to Richard Lennan and Dominic Doyle” in *Theological Studies* 72 (2011): 247-308. See also Dominic F. Doyle, “*Spe salvi* on Eschatological and Secular Hope: A Thomistic Critique of an Augustinian Encyclical,” *Theological Studies* 71 (2010): 350-79; *The Promise of Christian Humanism: Thomas Aquinas on Hope* (New York: Crossroads Publishing Company: 2012). It is interesting to note that in moral theology, invoking the framework of the theological virtues from a scriptural and thomistic perspective is already very much under way through the work of Servais Pinckaers. See *Les Sources de la morale chrétienne: Sa méthode, son contenu, son histoire* (Fribourg: University Press, 1985); *La Morale catholique* (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1991).

framework of possibility that respects the giftedness of the Church to humanity without losing the personal, albeit analogous, nature of that giftedness. A glimpse of the approach may be caught from Aquinas's statement in a commentary on 1 Timothy where he says "faith shows the end, hope moves to the end, charity unites one with the end."⁹⁹ Ratzinger's own equally optimistic view is a template for future scholarship in the endeavour to propose an ecclesial lifestyle that respects the giftedness of the virtues:

Die Hoffnung ist Frucht des Glaubens . . . ; in ihr streckt sich unser Leben nach der Ganzheit alles Wirklichen aus, auf eine grenzenlose Zukunft hin, die uns im Glauben zugänglich wird. Diese erfüllte Ganzheit des Seins, zu der der Glaube den Schlüssel schenkt, ist eine Liebe ohne Vorbehalt – eine Liebe, die ein großes Ja ist zu meiner Existenz und die mir in ihrer Weite und Tiefe die Fülle allen Seins erschließt. . . . Die Liebe, auf die die christliche Hoffnung im Licht des Glaubens zugeht, ist nicht bloß Privates, Individuelles, sie verschließt mich nicht in eine kleine Eigenwelt hinein. Diese Liebe öffnet mir das ganze All, das durch Liebe zum "Paradies" wird.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Aquinas, *In Epistolam I ad Timotheum*, cap.1, lc. 2, in *Expositio in Omnes S. Pauli Epistolas*, in *Opera Omnia*, Parma ed., 25 vols. (New York: Musurgia, 1949), 13:587. Quoted in Dominic Doyle, "Post-Traumatic Ecclesiology and the Restoration of Hope," 279.

¹⁰⁰ Ratzinger, *Auf Christus schauen*, 81 ("Hope is the fruit of faith . . . ; in it our life stretches itself out towards the totality of all that is real, towards a boundless future that becomes accessible to us in faith. This fulfilled totality of being to which faith provides the key is a love without reserve – a love that is an immense affirmation of my existence and that discloses the fullness of all being to me in its breadth and depth. . . . The love that Christian hope approaches in the light of faith is not something purely private and individual: it does not enclose me in a little world of my own. This love opens up to me the whole of everything, which through love becomes 'paradise'" [Ratzinger, *Yes of Jesus Christ*, 69]). Doyle believes that Ratzinger's attempt to move from an integrated, developmental account of the theological virtues to the consequential assertion of their inseparability "suggests a harmonious development from faith to hope. But these pleasing images suggest a continuity that, in fact, overlooks some critical internal tensions with the experience and structure of faith itself that only the advent of hope can resolve" (Doyle, "Post-Traumatic Ecclesiology and the Restoration of Hope," 279). Hence we find here a cautionary note against any simplistic consignment of the theological virtues to the models of Church we may have in mind. Doyle suggests the analogy of being needs to be borne in mind. This is not necessarily negative, he says, because faith's incompleteness can be the beginning of hope. Furthermore, hope can rework the limits, even the contradictions, of faith. In other words, hope springs from faith's imperfections.

9.2.2. Rediscovery of the Authentic Reality of Original Sin

Any clear-eyed, realistic view of history cannot but perceive the sense of alienation which has accompanied the human race. The empirical evidence throughout the course of world history confirms an inconsistency at the heart of human nature. In the Christian tradition, this alienation has been explained through the doctrine of original sin. At its core, it is the theological attempt to come to terms with the question of how human persons, who are created as both good and free, have become embroiled in a spiral of malevolence over the course of history. In the more positive idiom of contemporary theological language, it remains a challenge to foster a credible anthropology that assists human civilisation in its self-awareness.

Ratzinger himself has not managed to accomplish a detailed study of the topic, even though it is he avowed aspiration to do so should providence allow him.¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, original sin is a theological issue that corresponds to a very important prerequisite in theology, namely, the coming to terms with the human yearning for, and the existential lack of a sense of personal freedom. It is clear, especially from Chapter 4 of this dissertation, that Ratzinger is convinced that authentic human freedom is dependent upon acknowledging the truth of human nature and, in order for this to happen, we have to acknowledge the true depth of our existential and historical reality, as well as our metaphysical origins.¹⁰² In fact, it seems legitimate to extract a couple of core factors from Ratzinger's treatment of freedom which could contribute to a lengthier treatise on the topic. The two factors of paramount importance from his perspective are the prioritisation of interior conversion, and an anthropology of relation.

Firstly, with regard to interior conversion, human freedom guarantees that personal initiative and subsequent responsibility cannot, ultimately, be usurped by structural or

¹⁰¹ See this dissertation § 1.5.; Ratzinger, *The Ratzinger Report*, 79.

¹⁰² See this dissertation §§ 4.1.3 to 4.1.3.2.

communitarian concerns. The 1984 Vatican Instruction *Libertatis nuntius* makes the point that the primary liberation is liberation from the radical slavery of sin. It also calls for the real meaning of sin to be kept in mind by the Church and theology.¹⁰³ This does not preclude the existence of unjust, sinful structures nor their effect in leading people into sin. Nevertheless, the Church teaches that personal conversion of the human person can never be superseded by forms of materialist anthropology:

The acute need for radical reforms of the structures which conceal poverty and which are themselves forms of violence, should not let us lose sight of the fact that the source of injustice is in the hearts of men. Therefore it is only by making an appeal to the 'moral potential' of the person and to the constant need for interior conversion, that social change will be brought about which will be truly in the service of man. For it will only be in the measure that they collaborate freely in these necessary changes through their own initiative and in solidarity, that people, awakened to a sense of their responsibility, will grow in humanity. The inversion of morality and structures is steeped in a materialist anthropology which is incompatible with the dignity of mankind.¹⁰⁴

As this dissertation has established, particularly in Chapters 4 and 6, it is Ratzinger's view that the truly personal heart of human freedom extends beyond the strictly cultic sphere of the Church's liturgy, so that it is the human person who becomes a living sacrifice of praise in harmony with the truth of the divine will for creation.¹⁰⁵ This can be interpreted as an attempt on Ratzinger's part to bolster the meaning of original sin in the face of materialist anthropologies that prioritise structural change over interior conversion, and downplay the nature of the individual person's responsibility for themselves and their actions:

To demand first of all a radical revolution in social relations and then to criticize the search for personal perfection is to set out on a road which leads to the denial of the meaning of the person and his transcendence, and to destroy ethics and its foundation which is the absolute character of the distinction between good and evil. Moreover, since charity is the principle of authentic perfection, that perfection cannot be conceived without an openness to others and a spirit of service.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ *LN*, Prologue, IV/12, X/7, XI/17. See also *LC*, 22-23, 37-42, 53.

¹⁰⁴ *LN*, XI/8.

¹⁰⁵ See this dissertation §§ 4.1.4. and 6.3.

¹⁰⁶ *LN*, IV/15. Cf. Jer 2:14-26.

This stark *either-or* situation of “personal perfection” over “social relations” may seem to undermine Ratzinger’s argumentation on human freedom, which has been a commendable attempt to balance many seemingly opposing factors in a carefully worked-out equilibrium as in, for example, the case of Father-Son, monotheism-creatureliness, subjective-affective, and personal autonomy-ecclesial institution. However, the point here is that the undermining of the reality of free and responsible persons destabilises the *raison d’être* that stands behind the doctrine of original sin, namely, the coming to terms with the empirical evidence of humanity’s existential nature from its origins. Hence, as a further avenue of enquiry it would be beneficial that we continue to explore the question of the tension between the necessities of interior personal conversion and communal endeavour. This is also the question of whether one starts with the individual in relation to the Creator or with the community which “socialises.” Ultimately, personhood is a relational reality ordered to both individuality *and* community. Therefore the human person can never be reduced to deterministic and impersonal structures or forces.

This is where the second factor – an anthropology of relation – becomes relevant to the discussion. Ratzinger appears to suggest that a chronological reading of human history is not sufficient today for coming to terms with the authentic meaning of original sin. Notably, Ratzinger believes that Mary holds the key to this for she demonstrates the relational existence which he considers to be at the heart of authentic freedom. In fact to his mind, original sin only makes sense in the context of “an anthropology of relation.”¹⁰⁷ Because Mary is “preserved from original sin,” the alienation between God’s “is” and humanity’s “is not” is lacking in Mary and consequently, Ratzinger says, “God’s judgement about her is pure ‘Yes,’ just as she herself stands before him as a pure ‘Yes.’” This correspondence of

¹⁰⁷ Ratzinger, *Die Tochter Zion*, 69.

God's 'Yes' with Mary's being as 'Yes' is the freedom from original sin."¹⁰⁸ He says the attempted isolation of the Adam-New Adam strand of biblical narrative leaves theology in a "muddle" unless one contemplates a transferral of justification that goes beyond chronology. Only this can present theology with an "axiological meaning transcending temporal anticipation."¹⁰⁹ Because Mary's freedom from sin refutes the idea that original sin has something to do with the biological composition of God's creature, Ratzinger says a constructive point of departure is relationality:

Man wird von hier aus sagen müssen, Erbsünde sei nicht eine Aussage über einen naturalen Mangel im oder am Menschen selbst, sondern eine Relationsaussage, die allein im Beziehungszusammenhang Gott-Mensch sinnvoll formulierbar ist. Was Sünde ist, kann aus dem in sich geschlossenen und isolierten Menschen nicht verstanden werden, sondern nur in einer Anthropologie der Relation; für Gnade gilt notwendig und verstärkt dasselbe. Erbsünde könnten wir dann als eine Aussage über die Ästimation des Menschen durch Gott bezeichnen; dabei muß freilich klar sein, daß diese Ästimation dem Menschen nichts Äußerliches ist, sondern erst sein Allerinnerstes aufdeckt. Das Auseinanderfallen dessen, was der Mensch von Gott her ist und dessen, was er in sich selber ist, der Widerspruch zwischen dem Wollen des Schöpfers und dem empirischen Sein des Menschen, das ist die Erbsünde.¹¹⁰

Marian relationality, so to speak, demonstrates that authentic freedom is the human assent to God's definitive yes to his creature. Hence sin is a relational reality, whose solution lies in the "reorientation" which the one who has sinned takes up with respect of divine mercy. This, in turn, requires that theology must reflect on the "how" of human salvation. For all intents and purposes, this means that a contemporary treatise on original sin would involve a study of the entire domain of theological disciplines. Hence, coming to terms with the

¹⁰⁸ Ratzinger, *Daughter Zion*, 70.

¹⁰⁹ See *ibid.*, 66-71, at 69. Ratzinger notes here Karl Rahner's observation that the point at issue with Mary being "preserved from original sin" cannot be a chronological one since she is justified earlier than others (in terms of Paschal Mystery). Therefore the "muddle" of chronology left by the first and the new Adam is given a helpful, interpretive key in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.

¹¹⁰ Ratzinger, *Die Tocher Zion*, 69 ("One can say that original sin is not a statement about a natural deficiency in, or about man *per se*, but a relational statement that is meaningfully formulated only in the context of the God-man relationship. Sin cannot be understood by looking to the self-contained and isolated human being, but only in an anthropology of relation; this is even more so in the case of grace. We can therefore refer to original sin as a statement about God's appraisal of man: an appraisal that is nothing external, but a revealing of man's innermost being. Original sin is the disintegration of what man is, both [in his origin] from God and what he is in himself, the contradiction between the will of the Creator and the empirical results of man's being" [own translation]).

contemporary meaning of original sin may be a vast and daunting task, but it is one that presents the theologian with tremendous opportunity. In the words of Hans Urs von Balthasar, the fundamental affirmation of *peccatum originale*, or the sin of origin, is a socially transmitted deprivation which, on the one hand, must be carefully distinguished from the concept of personal sin or guilt, and which, on the other, must be recognised as the decision against God on the part of one individual which has plunged the whole human family, not into personal sin, but into a lack of grace.¹¹¹ Such a vision of human existence truly places the doctrine of original sin at the heart of a relational understanding of life. It also acknowledges the historical fact that all human attempts to manufacture a redeemed existence have been found wanting. Balthasar sketches the helpful starting point of *beyond the self* for coming to terms with the asymmetrical nature of the divine-human encounter that is based on freedom:

Although we cannot deny that finite freedom has no absolute aspect, it has power over neither its own ground nor its own fulfilment. It does possess itself, yet it is not its own gift to itself: it owes itself to some other origin. Thus it can never catch up with its own ground, nor with its essence; it can only attain fulfilment beyond itself. Moreover if it is to be itself, it must be continually setting forth for that yonder shore, which initially can be described as the pure manifestation of the totality of being, the manifestation of sheer truth and goodness.¹¹²

¹¹¹ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Action* (vol. 1 of *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, trans. Graham Harrison [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994]), 183. Balthasar develops the marian principle of the Church in detail, counting Mary as the recipient of a special grace. Von Balthasar views the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception as central to ecclesiology precisely in relation to the concepts of freedom, grace and original sin. See, for example, *Spouse of the Word* (vol. 2 of *Explorations in Theology* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991]), 161-84. See also Brendan Leahy, *The Marian Profile in the Ecclesiology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: New City Press, 2000). It is conceivable that Ratzinger's ecclesiology might have developed on the basis of his "marian relationality" insights if he had been able to pursue further his reflection on the marian dimension of the Church.

¹¹² Balthasar, *The Action*, 139. He subsequently expanded this view from the divine perspective, demonstrating the relational nature of man's situation before God which is resolved in Christ: "From God's point of view, 'original sin' does not cause any interruptions to the offer of grace: it only transforms it. No longer is the form of this grace based on the Son's mediatorship in creation (and the creation of man) but on the redemptive grace of the Cross and on the Son's bearing of the world's sin. It is only on mankind's side, at most, that we can speak of an 'interruption,' since mankind cannot originally have been created in a state of estrangement from God (this is the heart of the doctrine of man's original state), even if grace was required from the very outset if the proper 'selfless' choice was to be made. Now, however, because of its sinful determination to 'be itself,' mankind is turned away from God, and this makes it difficult for it to lay hold of grace (which is the grace of the Cross). To that extent, we can talk only "dialectically" of original sin" (190).

9.2.3. Revisiting a Second Vatican Council Teaching: The Church as Universal Sacrament of Salvation

One of the Second Vatican Council's designations for the Church is "the universal sacrament of salvation." It was the result of, and reason for, a reinvigorated understanding of sacramental theology.¹¹³ While it must be acknowledged that, throughout the course of the twentieth-century, work in this area of theology has yielded a major contribution to broadening out the understanding of the Church in terms of its mystical,¹¹⁴ comparative,¹¹⁵ ecumenical,¹¹⁶ and mariological¹¹⁷ dimensions, nevertheless, from the perspective of an ecclesiology of liberation, this characterisation of the Church remains far from being exploited to its fullest potential. In other words, there has been much energy devoted to a

¹¹³ See *LG*, 1, 9, 48; *GS*, 42, 45; *AG*, 1, 5. See also *SC*, 5, 26. The interpretative key comes in *LG*, 1, stating that "[s]ince the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, [the Council] desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission." Bonaventure Kloppenburg describes this as a definition of the Church which implies two effects. Firstly, there is communion with God, by which the Church is the sign and instrument "given to men by God so that they can unite themselves to His life, glory and blessedness," and secondly, there is communion with others, i.e. the unity of the human race. Kloppenburg concludes by saying: "[s]ince the Church's mission is to unite in one Spirit all men of all nations, races and cultures, she 'stands forth as a sign of that brotherliness which allows honest dialogue and invigorates it' (*GS*, 92). In this way she will be 'a lasting and sure seed of unity, hope, and salvation for the whole human race' (*LG*, 9)" (Kloppenburg, *The Ecclesiology of Vatican II*, trans. Matthew O'Connell [Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1974], 24).

¹¹⁴ For example, see Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism* (London: Burns & Oates, 1950); Otto Semmelroth, *Die Kirche als Ursakrament* (Frankfurt: Knecht, 1953); Edwards Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1963); Karl Rahner, "Membership of the Church," *Theological Investigations 2* (Baltimore: Helicon, 1963), 1-88; "The Church and the Sacraments," *Inquires* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 191-257; Jan Groot, "The Church as Sacrament of the World," *Concilium* 31 (1967): 51-66; Pierre Smulders, "L'Eglise, sacrement du salut," in Guillermo Baraúna, ed., *L'Eglise de Vatican II*, vol. 2 (Paris: Cerf, 1967), 313-38; Yves Congar, *The Church that I Love*, trans. Lucien Delafuente (Denville, N.J.: Dimension Books, 1969), 39-61; Gustave Martelet, "De la sacramentalité propre à l'Eglise," *Nouvelle Revue Théologique* 95 (1973): 25-42; Johann Auer, *Die Kirche: Das allgemeine Heilssakrament* (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet Verlag, 1983); Kevin McNamara, ed., *The Church: A Theological and Pastoral Commentary on the Constitution of the Church* (Dublin: Veritas, 1983), 75-102; Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist makes the Church. Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993); George Kaithholil, *The Sacrament of Christ: Patristic and Modern Theology* (Mumbai: St Paul's, 1997).

¹¹⁵ See Avery Dulles, *Models of the Church*, rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 55-67.

¹¹⁶ See George H. Tavard, *The Church, Community of Salvation: An Ecumenical Ecclesiology* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1992); Paul McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

¹¹⁷ See Oliver Treanor, "Mary as the Sacramental Matrix of Ecclesial Personhood in Christ," in Leahy & O'Connell, *Having Life in His Name*, 91-120; *Mother of the Redeemer, Mother of the Redeemed* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1988).

ressourcement of the predicate without necessarily always fully combining it with the subject, which is “salvation” and the Church’s liberating mission in the world.¹¹⁸

An important avenue of future enquiry for ecclesiology will be to look more closely at the basis for the Church’s presence in, and relationship with the world – in other words, to locate the Church-world binary within their mutually inclusive and exclusive spheres of interest. Particularly in more recent years, as Section III demonstrates, Ratzinger makes an attempt to address this. The issue is one of how ecclesiology can “touch” the world without losing its basis in divine revelation and without devaluing human freedom. When the Second Vatican Council proclaimed “the Church is in Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race,”¹¹⁹ an understanding of the Church as born of the difference between, as well as the inseparability of, “sign” and “instrument” became very necessary. Francis Sullivan points out that

[t]he new aspect of catholicity that is expressed when the church is described as “universal sacrament of salvation” is that all grace of salvation is not only ordered *toward* the church, but in some way comes *from* and *through* the church. As sign and instrument of all salvation, the church is not merely the goal toward which grace is directed, it is the channel or medium through which grace is given.¹²⁰

The Church fully expresses itself as instrument through the personal assent of the individual as respondent.¹²¹ In this way it becomes a sign for others. At the beginning of

¹¹⁸ For example, Neil Ormerod of the Australian Catholic University has pointed out that faith in the Church is both gift and invitation, the latter symbolically captured by *missio Dei* rather than by *communio* – by our sharing in the divine missions of Word and Spirit. For Ormerod, it is through both *communio* and *missio* that we share in the divine life of the Trinity, even though, as he notes, “much *communio* ecclesiology is weak in its examination of the mission of the church. Mission becomes subsumed within communion” (Ormerod, *Creation, Grace, and Redemption*, 134, n. 3).

¹¹⁹ *LG*, 1.

¹²⁰ Francis A Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In: One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 110.

¹²¹ The important issue of respondents other than those who belong to the Church is in the background here. The Church remains the disseminator of grace while all the means of creation cooperate with the sacramental economy of salvation (cf. *GS*, 22). Even the familiar example of the initiation of an adult into the Catholic faith reveals that grace is operative outside the confines of actual Church membership. See Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In*, 121-31, who approaches the question from a sacramental perspective, asking: “Is the Church the only means of salvation?” For a more thorough historical overview of the issue, see his *Salvation Outside the Church? Tracing the History of the Catholic Response* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992). Sullivan’s basic thesis

Advent 2012, Benedict XVI said as much: “[Christ] came into the world, becoming a man like us, to bring to fulfilment [God’s] plan of love. And God asks us, too, to become a sign of His action in the world. Through our faith, our hope, our love, He wants to enter into the world again, to make His light shine again in our night.”¹²²

Part of ecclesiology’s task today is the challenge of combining union with God and the unity of mankind, the mystery of salvation and mankind’s pursuit of liberation, the eschatological and the temporal dimensions of salvation. Consequently, it must avoid what Francis Sullivan describes as “the tendency on the part of some to reduce the mission of the Church to a purely temporal project, as though the salvation of which the Church is the messenger could consist in merely material well-being.”¹²³ The Church as universal sacrament of salvation is uniquely positioned to face the task of moving from a situation of extrinsicism where there is an artificial separation between the “sacred” and the “secular,” to a greater understanding that the whole economy of salvation is “sacramental.” In terms of the worshipping posture of an authentic human freedom, the challenge is to take up an orientation that unites both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of salvation in such a way that one is orientated from “here” to “there,” so to speak – from the secular to the sacred, and from the temporal to the transcendent – while all the time being formed in the ways of faith, hope and love by participating in the economy of salvation that is “sacramental.”¹²⁴ The

is that the negative and potentially misleading axiom *extra ecclesiam nulla salus* is the same truth that receives positive theological expression in the designation of the Church as the *universale salutis sacramentum*.

¹²² Benedict XVI, General Audience, 5 December 2012, <http://www.zenit.org/article-36102?l=english> (accessed 6 December 2012).

¹²³ Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In*, 145. It is particularly significant that *Libertatis conscientia*, for its part, makes a number of attempts to acknowledge and authentically link the mystery of salvation and temporal efforts towards liberation. See especially its fifth chapter. In its conclusion, it states that “[i]t is the truth of the mystery of salvation at work today in order to lead redeemed humanity towards the perfection of the Kingdom which gives true meaning to the necessary efforts for liberation in the economic, social and political orders and which keeps them from falling into new forms of slavery” (*LC*, 99).

¹²⁴ Sullivan puts forward the thesis of the Church as “sacrament of integral salvation,” supplying evidence from numerous magisterial and synod of bishops’ documents which acknowledge a concept of “integral salvation.” See Sullivan, *The Church We Believe In*, 141-51. Bonaventure Kloppenburg, a member of the secretariat for the 1974 synod of bishops, presents a much more turbulent account of the proceedings than does Sullivan. For Sullivan, the 1974 Synod marked not only the first appearance of the term “integral salvation” but also the

former Regensburg professor of Dogma and the History of Dogma, Johann Auer (1910-1989), captures eloquently the centrality of the Church in harmonising the numerous considerations for believers who are seeking out the correct posture with regard to God. What is at issue here is the need to shape a realistic understanding of the Church-world relationship on the one hand, and a correlation of soteriology and ecclesiology on the other:

Nowhere indeed does the Christian faith reach so deeply into the reality of the world as it does in this faith reality of the “Church,” which speaks of the Christian person in his or her common life in the midst of the world. This renders intelligible the tensions that arise not only within the biblical idea of creation, but also, and even more so, in the historical mystery of sin and redemption, and, finally, in the promised judgement and glorification of the entire world: tensions that convey the foundational theme of the divine history of salvation in this world.¹²⁵

moment of widespread unanimity with regard to its meaning. Kloppenburg, on the other hand, says its meaning was not at all clear, particularly with regard to the difference between “salvation” and “liberation.” In *The People’s Church: A Defence of My Church*, 158-71, Kloppenburg goes through the vast array of submissions and speeches which formed part of the synod’s deliberations in order to come to some clarification of the distinction. In an attempt to clarify the relationship between liberation and salvation, Bishop Schmitz, auxiliary bishop in Lima, introduced the distinction of “being more” and “having more” into the debate about the Church’s mission. His point was that the progress of humanity (liberation) goes along with, but is distinct from the salvation of souls (salvation). The bishop said that “having more” can lead to a “developmentalist” attitude that does not necessarily lead to the advancement of man’s dignity as a person. On the other hand, a “liberation” that prioritises “being more” looks to the very core of personal dignity, reaching the highest point of the Christian worldview – the human person as an adopted son or daughter of God. Therefore, human liberation or progress in the direction of “being more” is part of the mission of the Church in the sense that seeking first God’s kingship over you means that “all these things will be given you” also (cf. Matt 6:33). Therefore, the bishop suggested “if ‘human progress’ is understood solely along the lines of ‘having more,’ and ‘Christian salvation’ is understood solely as a plenitude of divine blessing in eternity, then the relation between the two will be purely extrinsic.” From this, Kloppenburg takes up the argument: “If however, ‘human progress’ (or better ‘liberation’) is understood in terms of ‘being more,’ that is, as a process by which man overcomes everything (from the sin that dwells in him to the social effects of sin) that keeps him from being fully a man, then progress or liberation, and salvation are one and the same reality, viewed from different angles. Liberation is an essential part, though not the whole, of Christian salvation and therefore a direct object of evangelisation. Evangelisation is precisely the means which will assure that man’s liberation is not conceived in a purely immanent manner as a merely political, social, and economic liberation, but will include the more profound and radical liberation from sin and will be open to the full transcendent communion with God the Father and the fraternal communion of men as brothers” (171).

¹²⁵ Johann Auer, *The Church: The Universal Sacrament of Salvation*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock, 2005), xviii. In the course of his analysis he makes five assertions. He says “salvation” is always the mean and goal of the sacrament; that the Church’s mission is “universal,” extending to all human beings of all times and places; that as sacrament of unity, the Church points to the final ground of the Church in the Triune God; the nature of the unity of the one Church cannot be simply deduced from the Church’s existential life of the its eucharistic offering; “sacrament” does not refer to a certain pattern of thought in the theology but, rather to a certain reality in creation understood as a history of salvation. To his mind, then, sacramental reality cannot be fully grasped by symbolic thinking but only in the acceptance and celebration of faith. See *ibid.*, 94-100. In this doctoral thesis on Ratzinger’s soteriology, James Corkery demonstrates the connection between salvation and freedom in Ratzinger’s writings, showing the latter as being prerequisite for the former. However, the soteriological aspects of the Church as universal sacrament do not form part of Corkery’s demonstration. Perhaps, this is an indication of Ratzinger’s lack of attention to this important teaching that emanates from the Council. See Corkery, *The Relationship between Human Existence and Christian Salvation*, 37-38.

Auer praises the merits of the conciliar definition because it establishes the correct measure for gauging the vertical and horizontal dimensions in the life of the Church. To his mind, it actually allows us to come to terms with the fact that

[t]he essential thing is that when “sacrament” is chosen as a model or dogmatic concept for describing the Church, more is meant than a “structural-functional” view of the Church. What is intended is a “categorical-ontological” view, and, at the deepest level, a “transcendental-theological” view of the Church (Body of Christ).¹²⁶

Certainly, in Ratzinger’s case, there is unease about giving any impression of a theological imbalance that overstates the horizontal, or the value of earthly or inner-worldly liberations. When he specifically discusses the Church as universal sacrament of salvation, he moves rapidly towards the position of someone such as de Lubac, asking about the origin of the formula from the perspective of sacramental and nuptial *communio*.¹²⁷ However, now that the *communio* perspective is a widely accepted ecclesiological premise, greater attention ought to be given to the liberating horizontal ramifications of the nuptial union of Christ and his Church. And if we incorporate Ratzinger’s perspective, this is a task that can be undertaken without excessive inner-worldly representations of human creatureliness.

The way forward which Ratzinger suggests regarding the Church’s role in the world rests on the premise that humanity’s greatest desolation is found in insecurity, uncertainty, the lack of freedom, and the pain that makes life hateful. The root of this, he believes, is loneliness and the absence of love; it is the consequence of the fact “that my existence is not accepted by a love which makes it necessary, and is strong enough to justify it through the

¹²⁶ Auer, *The Church: The Universal Sacrament of Salvation*, 97.

¹²⁷ See Ratzinger, *Theologische Prinzipienlehre*, 45-57. The focus tends to be on the realisation of how Eucharist and Church can become interchangeable terms: “Kirche ist Eucharistie-Feiern, Eucharistie ist Kirche; beides steht nicht nebeneinander, sondern ist dasselbe; von da strahlt alles andere aus. Die Eucharistie ist das Sacramentum Christi, und weil die Kirche Eucharistia ist, darum ist sie Sacramentum, dem sich alle anderen Sakramente zuordnen” (55). This translates as: “The Church is eucharistic celebration, the Eucharist is the Church; both are not adjacent to one another but are, in fact, the same; from there everything else emanates. The Eucharist is the *Sacramentum Christi*, and because the Church is *Eucharistia*, so she is *Sacramentum*, the sacrament to which all the other sacraments are ordered” ([own translation]). Note the final clause of the first sentence – *von da strahlt alles andere aus* [“from [Eucharist/Church] everything else emanates”] – did not appear in Mary McCarthy’s English translation of Ratzinger’s text. This is an unfortunate dilution of the sacramental argument which Ratzinger is making for it excludes the centrality of the Eucharist in the sacramental economy.

pain and all the other limitations.”¹²⁸ In other words, the limits of belonging are fully tested by belonging to the human race. The challenge for mankind is the reorientation from alienation in original sin to unification in God. This will test the bonds of every temporal collective to which humanity belongs. To Ratzinger’s mind, Christianity is a mystery of union and the Church is sphere of growth in the unity of humanity. Therefore, Christ’s Church is the response to individualistic humanism:

The essence of original sin is the fragmentation in[to] individuality, which knows only itself; the essence of salvation is the assemblage of the shattered image of God, the union of humanity through the one and in the one that stands for all and, in the word of St. Paul (Gal 3:28), in whom all are one: Jesus Christ. . . . Unification is redemption, because it is the realization of our correspondence to God, the three in one; but unity with him is linked with our own unity and occurs through it. . . . Without this christological mediation, the self-designation [of the Church] as the people of God is presumptuous, if not downright blasphemous. Among the crucial tasks in the reception of the conciliar heritage today is the development anew of the sacramental character of the Church in order to open our eyes to the point that is truly at issue: the unification with God, which is the condition of humanity’s unity and freedom.¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Ibid., 54.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 51-57 [own translation]. Here is the original German text: “Das Wesen der Erbsünde ist die Zerrissenheit in die Individualität, die nur sich selber kennt; das Wesen der Erlösung ist die Zusammenfügung des zerschlagenden Gottesbildes, die Vereinigung der Menschheit durch den einen und in dem einen, der für alle steht und in dem nach einem Wort des heiligen Paulus (Gal 3:28) alle ein einziger werden sollen: Jesus Christus. . . . Die Vereinigung ist die Erlösung, denn sie ist die Verwirklichung unserer Entsprechung zu Gott, dem Drei-Einigen; aber die Einheit mit ihm ist danach an unsere eigene Einheit geknüpft und erfolgt durch sie hindurch. . . . Ohne diese christologische Vermittlung ist die Selbstbezeichnung als Volk Gottes Anmaßung, wenn nicht geradewegs blasphemisch. So wird es heute zu den entscheidenden Aufgaben in der Verarbeitung des konziliaren Erbes gehören, den sakramentalen Charakter der Kirche neu zu erschließen und damit wieder den Blick zu öffnen für das, worum es eigentlich geht: um die Vereinigung mit Gott, die die Bedingung für die Einheit und Freiheit der Menschen ist.”

EPILOGUE

Ratzinger's vision of *Haltung*, the holding together of all things – self, others and God – is that of a mystic. His assertion that the Church is *Raum der Freiheit* is designed to point to this great universal vision that seeks to permeate the human person's entire existence. At the same time, his writings are manifestly pastoral, conveying his great desire to communicate and clarify this all-embracing perspective. He is a theologian for whom gift and responsibility mark his overall frame of reference. Accordingly, the Church is the sphere that acts like a mirror held up to the human person. It ought to help one acknowledge the immediate self in the present, and endorse the fact that some more tangible fruition, to which we are ordered, lies ahead.

The context for Ratzinger's treatment of human freedom is the attempt to frame an authentic relationship between the finite creature and God the Creator. While on the one hand, human freedom would be no freedom at all if it were not the freedom to choose even what is wrong. On the other hand, it is that which is other than indeterminacy. As such, human freedom is not self-referential; its source lies beyond the self, and is ordered to that which is beyond the self. The "gentleness" of God does not usurp the inner workings of human freedom and yet, the ground of its possibility lies with him as Creator and Redeemer. Each person is called to accept oneself as "pro-existence" – as existence "for" others. Only in this way, as perfectly exemplified through the synergy of wills in Christ, does one reach that sphere whereby one's existence and one's end achieve a harmonious unity worthy of an *imago dei*.

Ratzinger sees the Church as God's invitation to pilgrimage, as the invitation to ecclesial and social formation in the pilgrim fellowship of faith. The act of faith is the making available of one's own existence as a place for God's work. Faith is not merely one posture

among others but the orientation of one's whole being towards the will of God and thus towards the will of truth and love. The dynamic of call and personal response marks the life of the one who embraces the gift of faith. The Church then realises itself ever anew in the human heart as the sphere where a person is schooled in holiness and formed for a life of witness. The entire Church community is to offer its own life as a "test case," so to speak, demonstrating that the kingdom of God is present and operative in the world today. This is achieved not by belonging to some type of exclusive group which adopts a posture of *odium generis humani*, or hatred for humanity, but rather by belonging to the Church that is constantly renewed through inner conviction and the free consent of individuals. Ratzinger's universal vision envisages an ecclesial social system which functions so well that even non-Christians can be supported by it. Such solidarity makes an impression even upon outsiders. The ultimate source of the Church as sphere of growth in human freedom is fraternal love, and its ultimate location is the eucharistic celebration of the communities who assemble on the Lord's day.

Ratzinger has a passionate desire to engage with the great questions of his generation. His engagement with the pressing issue of freedom attests to this characteristic in the man. He has been absorbed by such questions. Indeed, he has had a lifelong engagement with the complex issues of our time, issues he has debated from his student days to his final days as Pope, from the vigorous energies of the young man to the failing powers of the octogenarian. In one of his final public actions – announcing his intention to resign as bishop of Rome – this concern for the intellectual turmoil of modern times was to the fore of his mind and a motivating factor in his decision. In the papal declaration, he used the expression, "[. . .] in mundo nostri temporis rapidis mutationibus subiecto et quaestionibus magni ponderis pro vita fidei perturbato . . ." ("[. . .] in the world of our day, subject to rapid changes and troubled by

questions of great significance for the life of faith . . .”).¹ He went on to say that engagement with the gravity of the world’s questions requires strength of mind and body which he no longer possesses. These are moving words from one who has spent a lifetime grappling with complex questions to the point of exhaustion, and who now feels unable any longer to engage them with the necessary vigour. Always striving to balance the rightful claims of faith and reason, religious observance and the freedom to believe, he contributed the wealth of his learning to elucidating these questions, in a way that might be said to constitute an admirable attempt at an apologetics of the Christian faith for our time. We have examined here his approach to one of these complex questions: reconciling humanity’s aspiration to be fulfilled and free with God’s own wish that this be indeed so.

¹Benedict XVI, Declaration made on 11 February 2013, see http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2013/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20130211_declaratio_en.html (accessed 21 May 2013).

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