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Editorial

As we continue our tribute to Pope Benedict XVI, we remain dedicated to honoring the profound theological legacy of one of the Church's greatest thinkers. This year marks not only the 60th anniversary of the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council but also the Jubilee Year of Hope and the Year of the Word of God in the Malankara Catholic Church. This presents a meaningful opportunity to celebrate the enduring influence of Benedict XVI, whose writings, speeches, and pastoral care highlighted the significance of hope, fidelity to Scripture, and a hermeneutic of continuity that harmonizes the richness of tradition with the evolving needs of the faithful.

This issue builds upon the foundations established in our previous volume (June 2025) by discussing the key themes that characterized Benedict XVI's theological contributions. We are pleased to present five scholarly articles that offer rich insights into various aspects of his teachings. The first article, by Rev. Dr. Dominic Muriyankavunkal, explores Pope Benedict XVI's interpretation of the Second Vatican Council. It emphasizes his hermeneutic of reform in continuity, which rejects both rupture and simplistic traditionalism. The article critically examines key themes such as the hierarchy of conciliar texts, the authentic reception of *Gaudium et Spes*, and the theological concept of the Church as the People of God, addressing misunderstandings and challenges in their application. By contrasting the true Council with the distorted

narratives of the “Council of the media,” the article highlights Benedict XVI’s call for a Spirit-led and faithful implementation of Vatican II for the Church’s renewal.

In the following article, Rev. Dr. Gigi Philip Charivupurayidathil examines the continuity between *Gaudium et Spes* and *Spe Salvi*, focusing on Pope Benedict XVI’s hermeneutic of reform that connects secular hopes with Christian hope. The article highlights Benedict’s critique of modernity, the relationship between reason and faith, and the transformative power of eschatological hope as articulated in *Spe Salvi*. By addressing the challenges to Christian hope, the article underscores the ongoing relevance of Vatican II’s vision in today’s world.

Rev. Dr. Antony Tharekadavil’s article sheds light on Pope Benedict XVI’s significant contributions to biblical studies. It emphasizes his insistence on integrating faith and tradition with modern exegetical methods, exploring Benedict’s critique of purely secular approaches to Scripture and his role in shaping *Dei Verbum*. By presenting Scripture as both a historical and theological text, Benedict XVI affirmed its centrality as a living encounter with Christ, the Word made flesh.

Rev. Dr. Arun Kalamattathil’s article examines the role of *memoria ecclesiae* in Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI’s theology, emphasizing its importance in understanding ecclesiology, Christology, and tradition. The article explores Ratzinger’s vision of memory as a transcendent reality that connects the Church, as a collective person, to God’s eternal truth, and it highlights memory’s role in shaping Catholic doctrine and pastoral practice.

The final article, by Rev. Dr. Joseph Maruthukunnel, focuses on the profound connection between the Church and the Eucharist in the theology of Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict

XVI. It highlights his “Eucharistic ecclesiology,” which emphasizes the Eucharist as both the source and summit of the Church, forming a worshipping community united in Christ’s sacrifice. The article explores how this Eucharistic vision shapes the Church’s identity and mission.

These articles not only celebrate the intellectual depth of Pope Benedict XVI but also invite readers to engage critically with his teachings, ensuring that his insights continue to influence theological discourse in our times. His episcopal motto, *Cooperators of the Truth*, reflects his lifelong commitment to harmonizing doctrinal integrity with pastoral care—a mission that remains relevant today.

In this Jubilee Year of Hope, may Benedict XVI’s legacy guide us toward embracing hope rooted in our faith in Christ. May this issue of *Aikyasamiksha* inspire readers to deepen their understanding of the faith and its implications for the Church and the world today.

Pope Benedict XVI and the True Spirit of Vatican II¹

Dominic Muriyankavunkal

When we speak about Joseph Ratzinger and the true spirit of Vatican II, we should be aware of the multifaceted nature of his personality: theologian by profession, he was the personal advisor of Cardinal Josef Frings of Cologne at Vatican II and was named official *peritus* of the Council towards the end of the first session. Later on we know him as a leader of the Church: first as the archbishop of Munich (München-Freising), then as the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and finally as the head of the Universal Church in the Petrine office. The multiplicity and complexity of his responsibilities and the innumerable publications he has to his credit render our task of analysing his hermeneutics of Vatican II all the more difficult.

What is the position of Joseph Ratzinger with regard to Vatican II in general? In his interview with Vittorio Messori in 1985 that was later published in English entitled *The Ratzinger Report*, he said: “It is impossible for a Catholic to take position for Vatican II but against Trent or Vatican I. Whoever accepts Vatican II accepts at the same time the whole binding tradition of the Catholic Church, particularly also the two previous

¹ Paper presented at the International Colloquium on *The Theological Legacy of Pope Benedict XVI*, held at St Mary's Malankara Major Seminary Trivandrum on 25-26 January 2024.

councils- Vatican I and Trent...It is likewise impossible to decide in favour of Trent and Vatican I, but against Vatican II. Whoever denied Vatican II denies the authority that upholds the other two councils and thereby detaches them from their foundation...Every partisan choice destroys the whole which can exist only as an indivisible unity"². Ratzinger was reiterating the essential nature of the Church as continuity and not as rupture.

According to Ratzinger, the manifold interpretations of the documents of Vatican II have led to many abuses in the post-conciliar period. Of the two papal speeches on the hermeneutics of Vatican II, which I qualify as the 'inclusio' of his Petrine office, the first one was given on December 22 in 2005, in the first year of his papacy, on the occasion of offering his Christmas greetings to the Roman Curia and the second in an address to the Clergy and prelates of Rome on 14 February 2013, three days after the declaration of his desire to resign from the Petrine Office.

As a divine-human joint venture, all ecclesial Councils need proper interpretation in order to understand the divine elements at play through human beings, expressed in human language. If the interpretation is wrong or erroneous, then the application becomes impossible. This is what happened in the case of Vatican II, diagnosed Pope Benedict XVI in the first mentioned address.

In this article, I will present the different hermeneutics (interpretations) of Vatican II as identified by Pope Benedict XVI and the points to be borne in mind, in his opinion, while

² Cf. V. Messori, *The Ratzinger Report*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1985, p. 28-29.

interpreting the true spirit of the Council and the conciliar documents. We will also consider the notion of the hierarchy of the texts of Vatican II according to Ratzinger and his critical appraisal of the pastoral constitution *Gaudium et spes* and a quick perusal of the widely acclaimed theological conception of the Church as the 'People of God'.

What are the different types of interpretations of the Second Vatican Council according to Pope Benedict XVI?

1. The Hermeneutic of Discontinuity and Rupture

This interpretation got the sympathy of the mass media and a number of theologians, says the late pope. The hermeneutic of discontinuity risks ending in a split between the pre-conciliar Church and the post-conciliar Church. It asserts that the texts of the Council as such do not yet express the true spirit of the Council. In other words, the letter and spirit of the Council are two different things. This perspective claims that the conciliar texts are the result of compromises in which, to reach unanimity, it was found necessary to keep and reconfirm many old things that are now pointless. However, the true spirit of the Council is not to be found in these compromises but instead in the impulses toward the new contained in the texts, argue the advocates of this interpretation.

These innovations alone were supposed to represent the true spirit of the Council, and starting from and in conformity with them, it would be possible to move ahead. Precisely because the texts would only imperfectly reflect the true spirit of the Council and its newness, it would be necessary to go courageously beyond the texts and make room for the newness in which the Council's deepest intention would be expressed, even if it were still vague.

In other words, it would be necessary not to follow the texts of the Council but its spirit. In this way, a vast margin was left open for the question on how this spirit should subsequently be defined, and room was consequently made for every imagination.

Reading the letter of the documents can make us rediscover their true spirit. Ratzinger counterargues against those who overemphasise the 'spirit' of the Council against its letter³. To be faithful to the Council consists in allowing us to be guided by what the Council truly said and not by what we wished it would have said.

According to Ratzinger, he who argues for the *spirit* of the Council in opposition to its *letter*, in reality, speaks about the anti-spirit of the Council. "It is the anti-spirit according to which the history of the Church would first begin with Vatican II viewed as a kind of point zero."⁴

2. The Hermeneutic of Reform in Continuity

Instead of a rupture with the true Tradition, Ratzinger has always affirmed the continuity of the Church. We cannot speak about a pre-conciliar and a post-conciliar Church in the sense of two different Churches. In sharp contrast to theologians like Karl Rahner and some traditionalists, Ratzinger wants to avoid any pre- and post-Conciliar dichotomy⁵. He has stated that 'there are no leaps in this history, there are no fractures, and there is no break with continuity'⁶.

³ V. Messori, *The Ratzinger Report*, 40.

⁴ *ibid.*, 35.

⁵ Cf. T. Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2008, p. 30.

⁶ V. Messori, *The Ratzinger Report*, 35.

The hermeneutic of discontinuity, for Pope Benedict, is countered by the hermeneutic of reform, a renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us. She is a subject which increases in time and develops, yet always remains the same, the one subject of the journeying people of God. Citing Pope John XXIII who convened Vatican II, Pope Benedict argues that the duty of the Council is “to transmit the doctrine, pure and integral, without any dilution or distortion”. Our duty is not to guard this precious treasure as a museum-piece, but to dedicate ourselves to diligent effort so that the teachings of the Church be presented in “faithful and perfect conformity to the authentic doctrine, which, however, should be studied and expounded through the methods of research and the literary forms of modern thought. The substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another...”⁷, retaining the same meaning and message.

Ratzinger says that Vatican II did not wish to debate the deposit of faith (*depositum fidei*), nor did it want to change the Tradition. The Council wanted to present the faith newly and effectively. Viewed in this sense, the rejection of the preparatory schemas of Vatican II did never mean the rejection of the doctrine by the Council Fathers. Instead, it was a critique “against the insufficiencies of its presentation”.

It is clear that this commitment to expressing a specific truth in a new way demands new thinking on this truth and a new and vital relationship with it; it is also clear that new words can only develop if they come from an informed understanding

⁷ *The Documents of Vatican II*, W. M. Abbott S.J., p. 715.

of the truth expressed, and on the other hand, that a reflection on faith also requires that this faith be lived.

For Ratzinger, the apparent discontinuity of the conciliar theology contains elements of continuity in itself. "Indeed, a discontinuity had been revealed but in which, after the various distinctions between concrete historical situations and their requirements had been made, the continuity of principles proved not to have been abandoned. It is easy to miss this fact at first glance."⁸

According to Pope Benedict XVI, wherever the hermeneutic of continuity "guided the implementation of the Council, new life developed and new fruit ripened". For him, this seed though grows slowly, will definitely bear fruit in the long run.

3. Hierarchy of Texts

Ratzinger has always maintained that for a proper hermeneutics of Vatican II, one must respect the hierarchy of its documents. This implies that there is a gradation in the value of the conciliar texts, depending on their content or subject matter. He raises the question: 'Are we to read the dogmatic constitutions (DV and LG) as the guiding principle of the pastoral constitution (GS), or have even the dogmatic pronouncements been turned in another direction?'

He reiterates: "We must interpret Vatican II as a whole and our interpretation must be oriented toward the central theological texts... The Constitution on the Church (LG) is not to be evaluated in terms of the Pastoral Constitution(GS), and

⁸ Benedict XVI, Address to the Roman Curia, 22 December 2005, Consultable at <https://bitly/2tNIP9E>

certainly not in terms of an isolated reading of the intention expressed in the prefatory paragraphs, but vice versa: only the whole in its proper orientation is truly the spirit of the Council⁹.

According to Ratzinger, 'an interpretation of the Council that understands its dogmatic texts as mere preludes to a still unattained conciliar spirit, that regards the whole as just a preparation for *Gaudium et spes* and that looks upon the latter text as the token of progress- such an interpretation is not only contrary to what the Council Fathers intended and meant, it has been reduced to *ad absurdum* by the later course of events'¹⁰.

Ratzinger insists on the importance of the true reception of the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*. He wrote in 1975: "The lack of clarity that persists even today about the real meaning of Vatican II is closely associated with this document. Are we to interpret the whole Council as a progressive movement that led step by step from a beginning that, in the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church was only just emerging from traditionalism to the Pastoral Constitution and its complementary texts on religious liberty (*Dignitatis Humanae*) and openness to other religions (*Nostra Aetate*)?". "Or are we to regard the Council texts as a whole in which the documents of the last phase, which are directed to the Church's relationships *ad extra*, are, nevertheless, oriented toward the true centre of faith that is expressed in the dogmatic constitutions on the Church and on divine revelation?"¹¹ For Ratzinger, the latter is the only legitimate position. Otherwise, one would fall into the dynamics of progress, which was not intended by the Council.

⁹ *ibid.*, 391.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 399.

¹¹ *ibid.*, 378.

When the spirit of the Council is set in opposition to the letter of the Council and is vaguely regarded as a distillation from the development that evolved from the Pastoral Constitution, this spirit becomes a ghost and leads to meaninglessness¹².

4. The Claimed Novelties of Vatican II and the Hermeneutic of Discontinuity

In order to prove the unprecedented novelties of Vatican II, many theologians emphasise certain theological highlights of the Council that gained much popularity later viz., the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, episcopal collegiality, religious freedom, communion, Church as people of God...But Ratzinger vehemently rejects separating those theological elements and viewing them in isolation. Analysing the historical background of those concepts and considering the documents as part of a whole, Ratzinger challenges the pertinence of conciliar slogans and even points to some of the dangers involved therein. Here we are dealing with only two of them as examples.

a. *Gaudium et spes*

According to Ratzinger, *Gaudium et spes* was somehow read mistakenly. The feeling that, in reality, there were no longer any walls between the Church and the world, that every “dualism”: body-soul, Church-World, grace-nature and in the last analysis, even God-world was evil- this feeling became more and more a force that gave direction to the whole¹³.

¹² J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 390;

¹³ *ibid.*, 383.

According to Joseph Ratzinger, the time that immediately followed the Council is marked by a radical modernity that threatens the very essence of Christian faith. The conflict of interpretation of Vatican II, for Ratzinger, starts from the Council itself, especially from the discussion concerning the Schema XIII, which later became the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, on the relation between the Church and the world. Already in 1963, Ratzinger warned about a too positive opening of the Church to the modern world. According to him, some Council Fathers totally forgot the reality of sin in the world. Ratzinger identifies the cause of this wrong conception with the over-emphasis on the mystery of the Incarnation, forgetting the mystery of the Cross. He says: "God became flesh in the world cannot make us forget that the world did not receive him."¹⁴ For Ratzinger, the give and The dialogue with the world is not fruitful if the world does not purify itself, precisely with the dialogue with Christian faith. What we need today, according to Ratzinger, is not a foolish openness to the world but a wholehearted openness to the truth that will, most of the times, be mocked at "In the world you will have trouble, but be brave: I have conquered the world" (Jn 16, 33). That is true today, too¹⁵.

What has to happen is the true reception of the Council. "The task is not to suppress the Council but to discover the real Council and to deepen its true intention"¹⁶.

¹⁴ J. Ratzinger, "Angesichts der Welt von heute", in *Wort und Wahrheit* 20, 1965, 503. As cited by L. Boeve, « La vraie réception de Vatican II n'a pas encore commencé », in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 85/4, 2009, 325.

¹⁵ J. Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 391.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, 391.

b. Church as 'People of God'

For many contemporary theologians, if there is one pillar on which the whole edifice stands, it is the notion of the Church as the 'People of God'. Of course, it has very clear advantages. Some of them are explained in detail by Joseph Ratzinger:

The phrase "People of God" conveyed the historical nature of the Church, described the unity of God's history with man, the internal unity of God's people that also goes beyond the frontiers of sacramental states of life. It conveys the eschatological dynamic, the provisional and fragmentary nature of the Church ever in need of renewal; and finally, it expresses the ecumenical dimension, that is, the variety of ways in which communion and ordering to the Church can and do exist, even beyond the boundaries of the Catholic Church.¹⁷

However, more often, the term "people" in the expression "People of God" ends up in a general political interpretation, notes Ratzinger. Some theologians, like the proponents of liberation theology, took the term "people" in the Marxist sense—in opposition to ruling classes; others took it to mean popular sovereignty in the Church. This latter interpretation led to lengthy debates on Church structures. It was also seen as synonymous with "democratisation" or sometimes was taken in the sense of "People's Republics". But all these perversions wither away if one tries to understand the scriptural sense of the expression. The expression "People of God" describes the relationship with God, the link between God and those designated as the People of God. What is emphasised is the 'vertical relationship' and not the horizontal ones. It cannot

¹⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, "The Ecclesiology of Vatican II", *L'Osservatore Romano*, English, 23 Jan 2002, 5.

be used in contrast to the hierarchical ministries in the Church. Ratzinger adds: "The crisis of the Church reflected in the expression "People of God" is a "crisis of God". It derives from our abandoning the essential. All that remains is a struggle for power."

This has to be reckoned with while we popularise the expression "People of God" to the detriment of the other rich images of the Church, viz., "Body of Christ".

5. Council of the Media and Council of the Fathers

There was the Council of the Fathers – the real Council – but there was also the Council of the media, identified Pope Benedict XVI in his 2013 address to the clergy of Rome¹⁸. It was almost a Council apart, and the world perceived the Council through the latter, through the media. Thus, the Council that reached the people with immediate effect was that of the media, not that of the Fathers, said the Pope. And while the Council of the Fathers was conducted within the faith as *fides quaerens intellectum*, faith seeking understanding, the Council of the journalists, was not conducted within the faith, but within the categories of today's media, namely apart from faith, with a different hermeneutic. He identifies it as a political hermeneutic: for the media, the Council was a political struggle, a power struggle between different trends in the Church. Obviously, the media would take the side of those who seemed to them more closely allied with their world. There were those who sought the decentralisation of the Church, power for the bishops and then, through the expression "People of God",

¹⁸ Benedict XVI, Address to the Parish Priests and the Clergy of Rome, 14 February 2013, Consultable at <https://bitly/3r3dsVQ>.

power for the people, the laity. There was this threefold question: the power of the Pope, which was then transferred to the power of the bishops and the power of all – popular sovereignty. Naturally, for them, this was the part to be approved, to be promulgated, to be favoured. So too with the liturgy: there was no interest in liturgy as an act of faith, but as something where comprehensible things are done, a matter of community activity, something profane. And we know that there was a tendency, not without a certain historical basis, to say: sacrality is a pagan thing, perhaps also a thing of the Old Testament. In the New Testament it matters only that Christ died outside: that is, outside the gates, in the profane world. Sacrality must therefore be abolished, and profanity now spreads to worship: worship is no longer worship but a community act, with communal participation: participation understood as activity. These trivialisations, says the Pope, of the idea of the Council were virulent in the process of putting the liturgical reform into practice; they were born from a vision of the Council detached from its proper key, that of faith. And the same applies to the question of Scripture: Scripture is a book, it is historical, to be treated historically and only historically, and so on.

This Council of the media was accessible to everyone, says the then Pope. Therefore, this was the dominant one, the more effective one, and it created so many disasters, so many problems, so much suffering: seminaries closed, convents closed, banal liturgy ... and the real Council had difficulty establishing itself and taking shape; the virtual Council was stronger than the real Council. But the optimism of the Pope helps him go forward. He says: The real force of the Council was still present and, slowly but surely, established itself more

and more and became the true force which is also the true reform, the true renewal of the Church. It seems to me, says Pope Benedict XVI in 2013, that, 50 years after the Council, we see that this virtual Council is broken, is lost, and there now appears the true Council with all its spiritual force. And it is our task to work so that the true Council, with its power of the Holy Spirit, be accomplished and the Church be truly renewed¹⁹.

Conclusion

“Today we can look with gratitude at the Second Vatican Council: if we interpret and implement it guided by a right hermeneutic, the hermeneutic of reform within the continuity, it can be and can become increasingly powerful for the ever-necessary renewal of the Church”²⁰.

Pope Benedict once again reminds us of the universal call to holiness. “Every council, in order really to yield fruit, must be followed by a way of holiness... Whether Vatican II and its results will be considered as a luminous period of Church history will depend upon all the Catholics who are called to give it life... The Church of today does not need any new reformers. The Church needs new saints”²¹.

In conclusion, the Church is essentially not mine, not yours, but his – of Jesus. Let us place our trust in Him and, with our eyes fixed on Him, try to walk over the stormy seas. In moments of frustration, He will be with us, offering corrective reassurance with His timeless words – He who is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow: “Why are you afraid, you of

¹⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ V. Messori, *The Ratzinger Report*, 42-43.

little faith?" (Mt 8, 26). Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life (Jn 6, 68)...Let us approach Him with the prayer of his apostles on our lips: Lord, increase our faith (Lk 17, 5).

About the author: Rev. Dr. Dominic Muriyankavunkal is a priest of the Archdiocese of Changanassery. He completed his Licentiate and Doctorate in Systematic Theology from the Catholic University of Paris. Dr. Muriyankavunkal currently serves as a resident faculty member at PaurasthyaVidyapitham, where he teaches various theological subjects. He is also a visiting faculty member at several other seminaries and theological institutes. Rev. Dr. Muriyankavunkal has authored numerous articles in the fields of Systematic Theology and Catholic doctrine.

Hermeneutic of Continuity: ***Gaudium et Spes* to *Spe Salvi***

Fr. Gigi Philip Charivupurayidathil

The term hermeneutic is derived from the Greek word *hermeneuein*, which means to interpret or translate or explain. The 'hermeneutic of continuity' is a comprehensive model of interpretation used in theological and philosophical discussions to maintain consistence and connection. In a broad sense, hermeneutic is applied to various fields, including philosophy, theology, literature, law, and cultural studies.

Understanding Reform and Continuity

In philosophy, hermeneutic is akin to the dialectical process of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, where new ideas emerge through a dynamic interaction with existing ones. Thus, it leads to continuity of thoughts and ideas. In the history of philosophy, many scholars and philosophers adopt a hermeneutic approach: Hans-Georg Gadamer, a German philosopher, is known for his work on hermeneutic and philosophical interpretation. He emphasized the importance of tradition and historical continuity in understanding texts and ideas. Paul Ricoeur, a French philosopher, made significant contributions to hermeneutic and phenomenology. His work often explores the interpretation of texts and the continuity of meaning over time. Alasdair MacIntyre, a contemporary philosopher, is known for his contributions to virtue ethics and his critiques of modern moral philosophy. His work often involves a historical and contextual understanding of philosophical traditions.

In theology, hermeneutic is essential for a full understanding of the truth revealed by God. Protestantism, historically rooted in the Reformation, emphasizes the principle of 'Scripture alone' (*sola scriptura*), underscoring the centrality of the Bible in theological interpretation. However, many Protestant theologians acknowledge the value of engaging with the early Church fathers and other theological traditions as resources for understanding Scripture within its historical and cultural context. The Church is tasked to transmit the message of the Gospel to an ever-changing world until the end of the time (cf. Mt 28:20; Mk 13:31), as well as to maintain intact its doctrines of faith while correcting the errors that occur in the course of history. The magisterium of the Church crystallizes the faith of the Church in the concrete everyday situations in continuity with the Gospel and the tradition of the Church.

Reform is an essential challenge to the Church as she accomplishes her mission of transmitting the Gospel in many new situations she encounters.

- a. In the early centuries, the Church faced persecutions from outside and heretical attacks from inside.
- b. In the medieval ages, she confronted the struggles between the Church and the state as well as the havoc caused by the Protestant Reformation; and
- c. In modern times, she encountered the threats of modernity, as well as totalitarianism, secularism, and relativism.

When it comes to the Catholic theology, one of the most notable recent proponents is Pope Benedict XVI. His writings already show the reflections of reform of faith in continuity. A few of them are the following:

1. "Introduction to Christianity" (1968): It contains ideas and themes that contribute to Ratzinger's overall theological framework.
2. "Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology" (1982): It provides insights into Ratzinger's theological perspective, which laid the groundwork for his later discussions on continuity.
3. "The Spirit of the Liturgy" (2000): This theology of liturgy touches upon the idea of continuity in the Church's worship and practices.
4. "Jesus of Nazareth" (2007-2012): He authored a trilogy on the life and teachings of Jesus, covering his public ministry, passion, and resurrection.
5. "Light of the World: The Pope, the Church, and the Signs of the Times" (2010): Pope Benedict XVI engages in a series of interviews with German journalist Peter Seewald, covering various topics, including the challenges facing the Church and reflections on continuity.

Shortly after he was elected in 2005, Benedict XVI spoke to the College of Cardinals about his future service as pope, he said: "As I prepare myself for the service that is proper to the Successor of Peter, I also wish to confirm my determination to continue to put the Second Vatican Council into practice, following in the footsteps of my Predecessors and in faithful continuity with the 2,000-year tradition of the Church."¹

In his first Christmas message to the Roman Curia, Benedict XVI delivered a discourse on the continuity of the

¹ Benedict XVI, *First Message to the College of Cardinals* 3.

teaching of the Second Vatican Council. In it, he explained the difficulties involved in the implementation of the Council. He suggested, “on one hand, there is an interpretation that I would call “a hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture.” On the other, there is the “hermeneutic of reform”, of renewal in the continuity of the one subject-Church which the Lord has given to us”.²

It identifies two directions of interpretation: the hermeneutic of discontinuity and rupture and the hermeneutic of reform. The former claims a break in the thinking before and after the renewal of the Church while ignoring the fact that Church is a single-historical subject and the latter claims continuity while affirming the historicity of the Church.

In modern age, we find a shift from faith in God to faith in progress. In order to study this topic, we consider to discuss one of the major subjects in faith, the theological virtue of hope in the framework of the continuity and reform of the Church. For that, we will explore the theme of hope in *Spe Salvi*, the second encyclical of Benedict XVI, and its continuity with *Gaudium et Spes*, a document on hope of the Second Vatican Council forty-two years earlier.

***Gaudium et Spes*: Christian Hope as Guiding Theme**

In this Pastoral Constitution, Vatican II responds to the modernity and secularism. Modernity believed that science and technology could set the destiny of man; and secularism denied the reality of the spiritual and the supernatural orders and believed only in the secular and mundane realities. It wanted to see reason free from faith. The dilemma of modern man is

² Benedict XVI, *Address to the Roman Curia*, ix.

a tension between the promises made by materialism and the promise of eternal life. It creates a new crisis for humanity. The Council fathers noted, "Technical progress is of less value than advances towards greater justice, wider brotherhood, and a more humane social environment" (GS 35a).

Thomas Aquinas, in his *Summa Theologica*, writes of perfect love and imperfect love. According to him, secular hopes in the absence of eschatological hope lead to imperfection. They are despair and presumption. Despair is an attitude that diminishes the possibility of focusing on God. It stands against the mercy and forgiveness of God. Hope keeps us away from sin and helps us to seek good; and its absence leads us to sin and keeps us away from good.³ It separates oneself from God and makes one look to oneself. Presumption is an attitude of over-confidence, an immoderate hope that either relies on oneself alone or takes God's mercy for granted. The former, the presumption of vainglory, is an absence of eschatological hope. The latter, the presumption of cheap grace, leaves all to God without striving for grace to attain salvation as God intends. It springs directly from pride by which one expects eternal life without having merited it, and pardon without repentance. It gives up our God-given responsibility to pursue the good that leads to God as the end.

Thomas calls despair an anticipated failure and presumption an anticipated fulfilment of hope. Once eschatological hope is removed, then secular hope loses its coherence of purpose. On the contrary, secular hopes in the presence of eschatological hope lead to perfection.

³ Cf. *STh*, II-II, 20, 3.

Spe Salvi: Hermeneutic of Reform

In *Spe Salvi*, Benedict XVI set its frame with the thoughts of Francis Bacon, the Lord Chancellor of England, a vision of the future of human achievements, called 'faith in progress'.⁴ He claims that in the past, there have been many human efforts to establish happiness: periods of great civilization, powers, and peoples; but all these have been swept away and extinguished. But in modern age with human discovery and knowledge, hope acquires a new form; faith in God is shifted to material progress and redemption is understood as a selfish search for salvation.

This faith in progress begun by the Enlightenment and developed through the reflections of Immanuel Kant, a German enlightenment thinker claimed that the ecclesiological faith of the Kingdom of God has shifted to the imminent expectation of a religious faith. The French Revolution (1789-1799) was a period of far-reaching social and political upheaval in France and Europe which accelerated this shift to a simple rational faith.

The technical development and industrialization of the nineteenth century called for faith in progress as the new form of human hope. It highlighted reason and freedom as their guiding stars. Gradually, progress no longer came from mere science, but from the scientifically conceived politics which pointed towards revolution. Optimism is the fundamental act of faith in modern ideologies. Ideological optimism can be considered as a secularization of Christian hope. It is a

⁴ Cf. *The Cambridge Dictionary of Philosophy*, ed., 2.

transition from the transcendent God to a material world. The immediate aim of optimism is “the success of our ability to do things.”⁵

Finally, relativism is a concept that rejects any absolute truth and, in contrast, claims all points of view as equally valid. It denies that there are certain kinds of universal truths. Truth then is relative to the individual.⁶ Before his election as pope, Ratzinger branded the ever-changing modern trend as “a dictatorship of relativism,”⁷ and explained that, by its nature, relativism does not recognize anything as certain and that its goal is the satisfaction of individual’s desires. It is the concentration of one’s own ego and desires.

Spe Salvi* in continuity with *Gaudium et Spes

We observe that although *Spe Salvi* contains no direct reference to *Gaudium et Spes* or to any document of the Council, it is in perfect continuity with *Gaudium et Spes*. The hermeneutic of reform in *Spe Salvi* discloses that the contrast between these documents is the key to affirming its continuity. Appraising the hermeneutic of reform between *Gaudium et Spes* and *Spe Salvi*, we will see a remarkable discontinuity between them in view of affirming the continuity of the teaching of the Church on hope. We will see how discontinuity grounds itself in continuity, how the difference between the secular hopes and Christian hope grounds their unity, and what is unique and distinctive about this perspective.

⁵ Ratzinger, *The Yes of Jesus Christ*, 47.

⁶ Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, “Relativism: The Central Problem for Faith Today,” *Origins* 26, no 20 (October 1996): 309.

⁷ Joseph Ratzinger, *Homily on the Mass: Missa pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice 2005* (April 18, 2005).

“Since human nature as He assumed it was not annulled, by that very fact it has been raised up to a divine dignity in our respect too. For by His incarnation the Son of God has united Himself in some fashion with every man. He worked with human hands, He thought with a human mind, acted by human choice and loved with a human heart. Born of the Virgin Mary, He has truly been made one of us, like us in all things except sin” (GS22).

Gaudium et Spes exposes the connection between creation and salvation history, between secular hope and theological hope. What is central to Christian hope is that it unites secular hopes to the eschatological hope, the present life to eternal life. *Spe Salvi* identifies a new correlation between science and praxis; a dominion over creation is to be re-established (Cf. SS16 and 17).” According to the Christian faith, “redemption”—salvation—is not simply a given. Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope, by virtue of which we can face our present: 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” (SS1).

In *Spe Salvi*, Benedict XVI builds a critique of modernity and modern Christianity on the basis of Ephesians 2:12. “Remember that you were at that time without Christ ..., having no hope and without God in the world.” Benedict XVI puts forward five arguments on this negative mode of expression.

1. He wanted to show the futility of a life that is lived without the true God: the Ephesians had gods; but, because of their inability to present them as the true God, the people were in the dark (Cf. SS 2).

2. "To come to know God – the true God – means to receive hope" (SS 3).
3. A human world without God inevitably ends up in disaster, because "reason ... needs faith if it is to be completely itself: reason and faith need one another in order to fulfil their true nature and their mission" (SS 23).
4. Only in relationship with the eternal love that is revealed in Christ can one pass from this finitude to eternal life (Cf. SS 27).
5. Eternal love that grants us grace is the guarantee for us in the Last Judgment (Cf. SS 44).

Benedict XVI finds a solution to this situation of humanity, a challenge between secular hopes and eschatological hope. He starts the encyclical with Romans 8:24 "in hope we were saved," "*Spe Salvi facti sumus.*" Our daily hopes find its fulfilment only in real hope in God. Christian hope supports these hopes in their journey towards a better future.

Christian Hope as Performative

Hope is "a gift that changes the life of the one who receives it, as the experience of so many men and women saints demonstrates."⁸ Since there is a real future, it is worth living the present in its fullness. *Spe Salvi* asserts, "the Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known – it is the one that makes things happen and is life-changing" (SS 15). Man's encounter with God changes his attitude towards

⁸ Benedict XVI, "Angelus Message: On Hope, the Word Needs God – the True God" (December 2, 2007); available from <http://zenit.org/article-21171?l=english>; internet; accessed 8 June 2009.

his present life. Hoping against the daily hopes of the world, martyrs and saints believed that their life would not end up in emptiness.

Christian hope transforms human life from within. No one can fulfil all his hopes in his lifetime; yet he can continue to hope in the certitude of the great hope. The life of a slave girl Josephine Bakhita was a witness to this hope: “she was known and loved and she was awaited. ... Through the knowledge of this hope she was ‘redeemed’, no longer a slave, but a free child of God” (SS 3). Our hope in God grants us a new life even in this world. In *Spe Salvi*, Benedict XVI articulates an ordinary life: “Young people can have the hope of a great and fully satisfying love; the hope of a certain position in their profession or of some success that will prove decisive for the rest of their lives. When these hopes are fulfilled, however, it becomes clear that they were not, in reality, the whole.” (SS 30) Christian hope is the motivating factor for all genuine human activities. It is God himself who can bestow upon us what we cannot attain by ourselves. *Spe Salvi* is suggesting few models of practicing our hope, viz., prayer, action, and suffering (Cf. SS 32-40).

Prayer as an Expression of Christian Hope: Prayer is an exercise of hope. Prayer is our confidence in God’s support in our daily hopes. *Spe Salvi* puts it in simple words: “When I can no longer talk to anyone or call upon anyone, I can always talk to God. In prayer we rely on God who supports us to hope for things beyond human limitations. The Church as the sacrament of Christ believes that, in harmony with the dignity of man and with the secret desires of the human heart, the Church’s faith gives hope even to those who already despair of their higher destiny (cf. GS 21g). In the Holy Mass of the Latin Rite the words are proclaimed: “Lord Jesus Christ ... look

not on our sins, but on the faith of your Church.”⁹ *Spe Salvi* teaches that Christian hope is not merely hope for oneself but always hope for others as well.

Human Activity in View of Great Hope: *Gaudium et Spes* reflects on the unity between human activity and the total vocation of man. A genuine activity of man must harmonize the authentic interests of humanity in accordance with the will and design of God (cf. GS 35). In this sense, science is not against faith, as both derive from the same God (cf. GS 36). But *Spe Salvi* reflects on the contrast between science and redemption. What man can build by his own efforts is only the kingdom of man. Only the great hope can give meaning and importance to our activities and give us courage to work patiently for heaven and for the good of others.

Spe Salvic calls all good activities as hope in action. Any serious and upright human activity can operate two ways: either it opens man and the world to God and allows God to infuse them with truth, love, justice, and what is good; or it closes them from the things that destroy the present and the future. In fact, it is the divine hope that supports and encourages human activities towards a bright future.

Human Suffering a Source of Hope: *Gaudium et Spes* reflects on human situation in relation to Christ’s *assumptio hominis*: “by his incarnation, he, the son of God, has in a certain way united himself with each man” (GS 22b). But *Spe Salvi* shows the paradox of human suffering: Human suffering becomes the source of hope. Jesus himself did not abolish all sufferings; his healings were signs of the coming of the Kingdom of God

⁹ *The Roman Missal: The Sacramentary* (New Jersey: Catholic Book Publishing Corp., 2011), 518.

and of the victory over sin and death by the Cross.¹⁰ The encyclical states that the capacity to suffer for the sake of the truth is the measure of humanity. In this context, we comprehend the patient endurance of Christian martyrs who showed the depth of their hope in their sufferings.

Christian Hope Sustains Secular Hopes

The Second Vatican Council saw freedom as an exceptional sign of the image of God; only in it, can man make a choice for good. While God gave man free will (cf. Sir 15:14) he will be judged according to his own actions. But, there arises the problem of sin: how can human activity overcome sin and evil? To this, *Gaudium et Spes* answers that it is only with the grace of God that man can overcome his sinful situation. *Spe Salvi* reflects on the dilemma of modern moralism: a world without God finds for itself a justice of its own; and that is totally different from the justice of God. The grace of God gives man hope to face Judgment. In *Spe Salvi*, the Pope beautifully blends God's justice and grace within the framework of the Last Judgment. He writes, "God is justice ... in his justice there is also grace. This we know by turning our gaze to the crucified and risen Christ. Both these things—justice and grace—must be seen in their correct inner relationship. Grace does not cancel out justice" (SS 44). True justice is found only in the grace of Christ; therefore, the Last Judgment becomes our consolation and hope.

We come to a dialectical point when *Spe Salvi* emphasizes the contrast between secular hopes and Christian hope, while *Gaudium et Spes* articulates their connection. Here, we see *Spe*

¹⁰ Cf. CCC 1505.

Salvi in continuity with *Gaudium et Spes*. On the one hand, *Spe Salvi*, affirming Paul's reminder to the Ephesians that, before their encounter with Christ, they were "without hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:27), shows the difference between secular hopes and Christian hope. On the other hand, beginning with a Pauline statement, "in hope we were saved" (Rom 8:24), it shows that hope in the redemption of Christ is the guarantee for the unity between the secular hopes and Christian hope. The "secular hopes not only participate in eschatological hope but are its means of realization."¹¹ In fact, the difference is the very condition of the possibility of their relationship. Moreover, God can bestow upon us what we, by ourselves, cannot attain, so eschatological hope supports and sustains secular hopes to achieve their definite goal.

This study explored the contemporary discussion on the reform of the Church and the modern challenges to Christian hope. In fact, this article showed how *Spe Salvi* builds on *Gaudium et Spes* without merely reiterating its texts. Although *Spe Salvi* does not explicitly refer to *Gaudium et Spes* or, indeed, to any document of the Second Vatican Council, it is in continuity with the true spirit of the Council.

About the author: Rev. Dr. Gigi Philip Charivupurayidathil is a priest of the Archdiocese of Tiruvalla. He secured his Licentiate and Doctorate in Systematic Theology from the Pontifical Angelicum University, Rome. Currently, he is serving as the Rector of St. Mary's Malankara Seminary, where he also teaches various theological subjects. He also, serves as the Secretary of the Synodal Commission for Seminary Formation of the Syro-Malankara Catholic Church.

¹¹ Dominic Doyle, "*Spe Salvi* on Eschatological and Secular Hope," 350.

Theologian of the Word: Benedict XVI's Impact on Biblical Studies

Dr Antony Tharekadavil

Introduction

It is said that Pope Benedict XVI is the greatest theologian-pope after Pope Gregory the Great of the sixth century. He is one of the greatest Bible interpreters, professor of Dogmatic theology, and one who played a vital role in preparing the Second Vatican Council documents. Even from his seminary days, he effectively engaged in Bible interpretation, because the deficiencies of modern techniques of interpretation disturbed his mind. He personally could develop a scientific method of interpreting the Bible combining the methodology of the fathers, of medieval interpreters, and of modern exegetes. This is visible in his famous three-volume work, *Jesus of Nazareth*, which is a scholarly and spiritually profound exploration of the life, teachings, and significance of Jesus Christ. Making the evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and St Paul as his models, Top of Form

he tried to interpret the faith of the Church in all possible occasions, looking into the 2000 years of unbroken faith history of the Church. Through meticulous biblical analyses, historical contextualization, and theological reflection, the pope invites the believers to encounter Jesus in a profound and transformative way. His methodology can only be understood on the basis of the history of Bible interpretation.

In the Early Church

The Early Church saw New Testament as the interpretation and fulfillment of the OT (DV 3-4, 7, 16). Accordingly, since OT is the word of God, it should be interpreted on the background of the fulfilled promises in Jesus in the NT, because 'no one had ever seen God, but the Son who had revealed him' (Jn 1:18; DV 2). All the NT books were written on the basis of this basic thought. Notably, during the earthly ministry of Jesus, he did neither write anything nor commanded the disciples to write about him. He sent them to preach the life-giving gospel to all the nations, and prepare the world for his second coming. The disciples went around, preached the gospel to the nations, baptized them, and built new communities on the basis of the teachings of Jesus. They continuously preached the word in those communities and celebrated the breaking of the bread, executing the command of the Lord. They taught them, prayed with them, and shared their experience with the Lord and his teachings with them. All these communities remained united with the apostles in four ways: by following their teaching, having fellowship with them, in the breaking of the bread, and in prayers (Act 2:42). They also administered the sacraments according to the command of the Lord: baptism, confirmation, eucharist, etc.

Fortunately, the apostles and the bishops that followed them could faithfully impart to these communities the teachings of the Lord without losing their original meaning. When the time passed and the Church spread to many countries and places, however, many preachers began to teach in many communities around the world, and there emerged certain opposing interpretations which in turn created doubts about

the fidelity of the message of certain interpreters. In this context, the Church had to define what really the Lord taught and what the apostles really believed. Consequently, certain definitions of faith originated. Such definitions made by the fathers are visible in the creed and the liturgy of the Church.

Canonical Books

At the same time, several books about Jesus and Christian faith were written in these communities taking their inspirations from the faith traditions of these communities. These writings were then read in these communities and often passed to other communities as well. From these, only those books that were in total agreement with the teachings of the apostles were further utilized by these communities for more reflection and interpretation. They were also passed to other communities as well. Those writings that were globally accepted by the important communities around the world would eventually become the canonical books of the Church. It is to be noted that before the first council that gave the complete list of the Catholic Canon of the Bible (Pope Damasus, in 382 A.D.), the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed was fixed (in 381 A.D.). Since the Bible is the book of the Church and it emerged from the living faith of the Church through the work of the Holy Spirit who have been always at work, only those interpretations based on the living faith and living tradition of the Church will be meaningful.

Generally speaking, the fathers interpreted the word seeking its meaning in 3 realms: they compared these levels to the body, soul, and spirit of a man (Origen). First, they tried to find out the literal sense of the word (the bodily/somatic sense, what the word directly says, e.g., "You shall not muzzle an ox

when it is treading out the grain,” Dt 25:4). Second, they sought the soulish or psychic sense: this is the application of this passage to the Christian (see 1Cor 9:9-10: “For it is written in the Law of Moses, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain.’ Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the ploughman should plough in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop”). This meaning deals with the transformative and instructive aspects of Scripture, guiding believers in their moral and spiritual journey by going beyond a mere intellectual understanding of the text, and by seeking to shape the character and conduct of individuals in alignment with Christian virtues and values. Third, they looked for the spiritual meaning of each word: how events and things in the Old Testament prefigured Christ and things in the New Testament. Without doubt, such an interpretation necessitates the help of the Holy Spirit. According to the fathers, for a meaningful interpretation of the word, three elements had to be present: the word (of the Holy Spirit), the magisterium (the custodian of the word), and the tradition (from which the word originates).

Medieval Interpretations and the Aftermath

Theology is defined by St Anselm (1033-1109 A.D.) as ‘faith seeking understanding.’ Following this dictum, when medieval interpreters tried to interpret the Bible reasonably, they dominantly employed the then leading scholastic philosophy. Accordingly, theology had to be totally reasonable; at the same time, in the seminaries, the importance of the study of Dogmas was highlighted and the study of the word from a traditional point of view was discarded. This state of affairs

continued for a considerable period of time. A shift from this way of theologizing happened only when the protestant revolution asserted the importance of the study of the word. Unfortunately, Martin Luther presented his own canon of the Bible with his own way of interpretations. In this context, the Church had to define once again clearly and without doubt, what the Books of the Christian Bible are. This happened in 1546 A.D. in the Council of Trent.

In the context of the renaissance, Martin Luther rejected the importance of the tradition of the Church and presented the notion of *sola scriptura*. Accordingly, the Protestants moved forward with their Bible-study-programme which in its turn inspired the Church as well. On 13 September 1892 Pope Leo XIII established the first Bible school in Jerusalem (*Ecole Biblique*) for Bible research. In the following year, 1893, pope published *Providentissimus Deus* underlining the importance of the study of the word of God, and said that theology should be based on the scripture. The establishment of Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome in 1909 and the next encyclical (*Spiritus Paraclitus*, 1920) encouraged Bible research further. In 1943 Pope Pius XII wrote *Divino afflante Spiritu* which reminded the exegetes of the need of going to the original languages of the Bible in order to get the true meaning, that the original author intended to communicate. Not only the original languages and their features, but also the historical context of the authors, anthropology, and archaeological studies should be seriously considered. Thus, the pope encouraged historical research of the Bible.

Modern Methods of Exegesis

When scientific study of the Bible was thus encouraged, both in the Protestant and in the Catholic Churches exegetes

developed several methods of interpretation. These methods or criticisms may be brought under two main headings: historical criticism, and literary criticism.

- 1) Historical Critical Methods try to understand the message of the Bible in the original historical-cultural context of the author. In order to get the original meaning, the biblical text would be diachronically approached, and accordingly, the text would be divided into several small parts and the contexts of these parts would be deeply studied. It will also try to study the original texts and the reasons behind the variant readings in different available manuscripts (here we have textual criticism, source criticism, and redaction criticism at work). It would also see to which genre of literature this original text belonged to as it was circulated as oral tradition before it got written in the present text (i.e., form criticism). When thus the scientific study of the biblical texts moved forward, these units of texts got separated from the liturgical and faith-tradition of the Church and the rest of the Bible itself. As a result, the Bible would be treated as any other secular objects in the world.
- 2) Literary Criticism. The basic notion is that Bible is a literature and it should be studied as any other literature. Unlike historical criticism, in this criticism, a text will not be divided into parts, but it will synchronically be analyzed and the special features of the text as a literature would be investigated.

Unfortunately, as time moved forward, the biblical texts began to be considered not as the life-giving word of the Church inspired by the Holy Spirit, but only as a door to understand the view of the ancient authors and their world.

Moreover, with the arrival of Enlightenment and Modernism of the twentieth century, people began to consider religion and theology simply as personal thoughts of certain humans, and Bible as something that is necessary for the existence of the religion. When biblical texts were thus separated not only from the remaining parts of the Bible but also from the liturgy and living faith tradition of the Church, they would become simple historical objects just like any other article. This would then result in a crisis in Bible interpretation and in its turn affect the preaching and faith of the Church. Vatican II was a reaction to this unhealthy tendency in Bible studies.

Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI

Joseph Ratzinger was ordained priest in 1951, at the age of 24 and became a professor of Dogmatic Theology in 1958. During his time generations of biblical scholarship – while making great scientific advances – had begun to erode the central and sacred role of the Bible in the life of the Church. Advances in archaeology, study of ancient languages, and literary criticism had produced remarkable new understandings of the biblical texts. However, scripture scholarship, had slipped away from theology, and had become something akin to classics, as if the Bible was similar to the Greek epic poetry or Latin rhetoric.

Since the scripture is the word of God, before accepting, Ratzinger, the theologian of the Church, would criticize every methodology of Bible criticism. He accepted all that was good in the new methods, but insisted that if the scriptures were to have any relevance, they have to be read in the light of the faith. It should be read as divine revelation received and lived by the Church. It is through the Word, that God established

the new covenant. Today we find the living Word in the liturgy. Ratzinger knew, believed, and proclaimed the famous slogan of St Jerome that ‘ignorance of the word is ignorance of Christ’ (DV 25). According to him, more than being novel, following the NT authors, every interpretation should go in line with the teachings of the fathers and traditional interpretation of the Church. In his book, *Jesus of Nazareth* (2007, 2011, 2012), one could find his methodology of interpreting the Bible in conformity with the teachings of the fathers and his pastoral anxieties about the Church. Many modern scholars who have separated the Word from the tradition of the Church and from the Holy Spirit, have made us ignorant about the nature and person of Christ. Every Bible interpretation and theology done independently of the faith of the Church will lead only to a rejection of Christ, thought Ratzinger.

Dei Verbum

Dei Verbum, which has 6 chapters and 26 paragraphs, promulgated on November 18, 1965, is a landmark document of the Second Vatican Council, focusing on the Catholic Church’s relationship with divine revelation. Joseph Ratzinger, as *peritus* or theological expert, was the chief architect of *Dei Verbum* which has become the basic guideline for interpretation in the Church. He has also given one of the best commentaries on the document. As the council progressed one could sense Ratzinger’s fears and hopes.¹

This document gives a patristic and liturgical conception of the word of God and speaks about the best way of

¹ After each of the four sessions of Vatican II, he wrote a pamphlet in which he gave an account of the theological highlights of the session, recounting the history of the session, and providing an evaluation of it.

interpreting the Bible. The first five chapters offer a great deal of enduring and valuable teaching for biblical studies and scholarship. It speaks about the interplay between the Scriptures, Tradition, and the Magisterium (DV 9-10), gives teaching on the divine nature of biblical truth (DV 11), make declarations on the indispensable importance of the Old Testament (DV 14-16), and the great possibility of having access to the history of Jesus through the Gospels (DV 19). The final chapter speaks about the way the Scriptures, in general (DV 21-26) and biblical scholarship in particular (DV 23), should guide and nourish the whole life of the Church.

In article 12 (chapter 3) DV describes what the exegetical work is. It proposes at least four major rules as guidelines for exegesis. In the first place, it firmly endorses the methods of historical-critical exegesis which aims to reach conclusions at three levels.

In the first level, the exegete must make research on the actual events that gave rise to the community's proclamation, preaching, and traditions. This is historical exegesis, because it tries to go back to the historical contexts in which our biblical texts were formed and fashioned. This exegesis is *critical*, because it requires professional knowledge and judgment to determine, even to some extent, what Mark, for example, wanted to communicate in his Gospel and what were the sources he drew on.

The second level, exegesis tries to identify the nature and extent of the traditions formed and handed on during the early decades of Christianity, prior to the composition of the particular New Testament texts being studied. What traditions, for example, lie behind and were drawn on by the gospels?

What function did these traditions serve prior to the final composition of the Gospel?

In the third level one has to establish, as far as possible, the meaning and message of the original authors. Using this or that literary form, what did the biblical authors intend to say to the audience they wrote for? In the contexts in which they wrote and using the resources of their culture, what did the sacred writers have in mind? In other words, at this third level, historical-critical exegesis tries to understand the intention of the original author.

After giving some more details on the methods of historical-critical exegesis, the same paragraph of *Dei Verbum* adds, much more briefly, a principle entailing three further rules that should guide the work of exegetes. This principle consists in reading and interpreting the Scriptures with the help of the same Spirit through whom they were written. That involves three rules: 1) attention to the content and unity of the entire Bible; 2) attention to the living tradition of the whole Church; and 3) concern for the analogy of faith (Rom 12:6). “The living Tradition of the whole Church” invites us to interpret the Scriptures in an ecclesial way. *Dei Verbum* encourages a Pneumatological exegesis, an exegesis which would attend to the unity of the Scriptures in Christ, the Church’s living tradition, and the analogy of faith that guides theology. A Pneumatological exegesis will be Christological, ecclesial, and theological. By inspiring the Scriptures and illuminating our understanding of them, the Holy Spirit leads us to Christ, his Church, and a theology based on definitive revelation.

Modern Crisis and Suitable Method of Interpreting the Word

On 27 June 1977, Joseph Ratzinger would be made Cardinal, and in 1981 named the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith. In his famous Erasmus Lecture, "Biblical Interpretation in Crisis," of 1988 (New York), the Prefect, conscious of the seriousness of the guidelines set in *Dei Verbum*, systematically challenged the generally existing state of historical criticism, which worked on simple historical assumptions based on philosophical notions, and thus compelled many exegetes to review their view points. 'In the present situation,' he said: "underneath the existing sources—that is to say, the biblical books themselves—we are supposed to find more original sources, which in turn become the criteria for interpretation. No one should really be surprised that this procedure leads to the sprouting of ever more numerous hypotheses which finally turn into a jungle of contradictions. In the end, one no longer learns what the text says, but what it should have said, and by which component parts, this can be traced back through the text"

Applying the theory of evolution to exegesis, the search of the scholars – like Bultmann, Dibelius, Gunkel, and Bousset – for the original, have led the researches to disastrous conclusions. These researches asserted an imaginary evolutionary priority of the "simple" over the "complex," meaning original texts were simple and then they grew into complex. This may not be rational, because this is equal to say that St Clement (c. 150-211/215 A.D.) is more developed than Epistle to the Romans. This also led to other disastrous consequences. For example, says the Cardinal, "The consequence is simple: what is Hellenistic cannot be Palestinian,

and therefore it cannot be original.” “With these presuppositions, the picture of Jesus is determined in advance. Thus, Jesus has to be conceived in strongly “Judaic” terms. Anything “Hellenistic” has to be removed from him. All apocalyptic, sacramental, mystical elements have to be pruned away. What remains is a strictly ‘eschatological’ prophet, who really proclaims nothing of substance.”

If one looks into the methodology used by these exegetes, one may understand that rather than the historical Jesus himself, some philosophical pre-suppositions and hypotheses have become the basis of their exegesis. Instead of the meaning of the word of God and God’s intervention in history, the supposed history of the development of a hypothetical text gained prominence in exegesis. The truthfulness of the miraculous interventions of God became meaningless myths. Thus, exegesis has become a simple philosophical debate. “Modern exegesis completely relegated God to the incomprehensible, the otherworldly, and the inexpressible in order to be able to treat the biblical text itself as an entirely worldly reality according to natural-scientific methods.” Word becoming flesh has become a myth for the exegetes.

“As a ‘critical science,’ it claims an exactness and certitude similar to natural science. This is a false claim because it is based upon a misunderstanding of the depth and dynamism of the Word.” The Cardinal spelled it out clearly that “the exegete should not approach the text with a ready-made philosophy, nor in accordance with the dictates of a so-called modern or ‘scientific’ worldview, which determines in advance, what may or may not be. He may not exclude *a priori* that (almighty) God could speak in human words in the world. He may not exclude that God himself could enter into, and work in human

history, how improbable such a thing might at first appear.” “He must be ready to accept that the truly original may occur in history, something which cannot be derived from precedents but which opens up out of itself.”

In the lecture, the Cardinal expressed the following hopes: 1) time has arrived for a new and thorough reflection on exegetical methods. Scientific exegesis must recognize the philosophic element present in a great number of its ground rules, and it must then reconsider the results which are based on these rules. 2) Exegesis must recognize itself as a historical discipline; its history belongs to itself. 3) Philological and scientific literary methods are, and will remain critically important for a proper exegesis. But for their actual application to criticism, an understanding of the philosophic implications of the interpretative process is required. 4) What we do need is a critical look at the exegetical landscape we now have, so that we may return to the text, and distinguish between those hypotheses, those that are helpful and those which are not (exegesis shall not be a simple search for *sitz im Leben*). 5) The exegete must realize that he does not stand in some neutral area, above or outside history and the Church. If exegesis wishes to be theology, it must recognize, that the faith of the Church is that form of “sympathia” without which the Bible remains a closed book. It must come to acknowledge this faith as a hermeneutic, the space for understanding, which does not do dogmatic violence to the Bible.

Modern crisis in faith is to a certain extent the result of the so-called ‘modern scientific methods’ of Bible interpretation. It downgrades Jesus. Instead of seeing him as the incarnated Lord and God, he is seen only as a human leader. Quoting

several ancient and modern philosophers, the Cardinal declared that faith is a way to acquire knowledge and a Bible interpretation with faith is far better than many so-called scientific interpretations of today. Jesus is the only way to the truth. If one is to understand the beauty and glory of the word, he has to live with the crucified and risen Christ and interpret the word in his light. The word is at work both in history and in human heart.

In his meditation on Psalm 118 posted on 26 November 2001 (Carmelcutthroat), Card. Ratzinger, following Jesus, gave a concrete example for interpreting the word. Accordingly, “in order to express the harsh trial that he has to overcome and his consequent glorification, Jesus compares himself to a “stone which the builders rejected” that then “has become the cornerstone” (v. 22). Christ will use this biblical image and verse, at the end of the parable of the murderous vinedressers, to announce his passion and glorification (cf. Matt 21:42). By applying the Psalm to himself, Christ opens the way for the Christian interpretation of this hymn of confidence and gratitude to the Lord for his *hesed*, his loving fidelity, that echoes throughout the Psalm (cf. Ps 118:1, 2, 3, 4, 29).”

Card. Joseph Ratzinger was elected pope on 19 April 2005. After three years, addressing the 14th general congregation of the synod of bishops on 14 October 2008 the pope insisted once again about the necessity of interpreting the Word following the guidelines set by *Dei Verbum*. Without doubt, it (§ 12), confirms the necessity of using the historical-critical method. This necessity is the result of the Christian principle formulated in the gospel of Jn 1:14, *word became flesh*. Historical fact is a constituent dimension of the Christian faith. The

history of salvation is not a mythology but rather a true history, and is therefore to be studied alongside serious historical research methods.

This history has another indispensable dimension of divine action. Scripture is to be interpreted in the same Spirit in which it was written. Due to the Pneumatological dimension of the Bible, there are three fundamental methodological elements that are unavoidable when interpreting. One must interpret the text 1) taking into consideration the unity of all of Scripture (a canonical exegesis) because every book in the Bible is the work of the Holy Spirit; What unifies the content of the entire Bible? The Christian answer has always been: Jesus Christ himself (cf. DV 25). 2) One must also consider the living tradition of the entire Church because the word originated from the living tradition of the Church. 3) It is necessary to observe the analogy of faith. That means Scripture should be interpreted according to the mind of the Church, as the gospel, and neither sacred writers nor the fathers should be set in opposition to each other (Rom 12:6-8).

Only where these two methodological levels, both historical-critical and theological, are observed can one speak of a theological exegesis or an exegesis adequate to this Book. In every interpretation both historical and spiritual elements are to be combined. While at the first level, academic exegetical work is currently being done to an extremely high standard and provides us real help, the same cannot be said of the other level. Often the second level, the level consisting of the three theological elements mentioned in *Dei Verbum*, appear almost absent. This has rather grave consequences.'

On 26 October 2009, Pope Benedict addressed the faculty and students of the Pontifical Biblical Institute and asserted

once again the double character of exegesis taught in *Dei Verbum*(§12): 1) Historical criticism must be coupled with theological method in interpretation, because the Scripture is one. The unity of Scripture corresponds to the analogy of faith, by which individual texts are understood in the light of the whole. 2) Scripture must be read from the Church for the Church's faith is the true key to its interpretation. If exegesis is also to be theology, as it should be, then it must take tradition into account; it is the Church that has been entrusted with the task of interpreting the word of God authentically.

Following twelfth Synod of Bishops (in 2008) that discussed 'The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church,' Pope Benedict summarised the observations of the Synod in his 2010 post-synodal exhortation, '*Verbum Domini*,'that made further clarifications on Interpretation.Since the Bible was written by the People of God for the People of God, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (*Verbum Domini*§ 30), authentic biblical hermeneutics can only be had within the faith of the Church (VD § 29). Church is the "home of the Word" (VD § 29).With the Magisterium, the servant of God, one comes to a more comprehensive canonical exegesis, greater unity, and interrelation between the literal sense and the spiritual sense (VD § 37). "As the word of God became flesh by the power of the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary, so sacred scripture is born from the womb of the Church by the power of the same Spirit (VD § 19). Wherever the awareness of the inspiration of the word becomes weak, there is a risk of reading the Scripture as an object of historical curiosity and not as the work of the Holy Spirit in which one can hear the Lord himself speak and recognize his presence in history (VD §19).

If the spiritual aspect is absent in interpretation, the Bible would become solely a history book offering only historical information and morality: the Bible would remain in the past, and would speak only of the past. Such an interpretation would replace the hermeneutics taught by *Dei Verbum* with a secularist and positivist hermeneutics, which denies any divine intervention in human history. According to this hermeneutics, when there seems to be a divine element, the source of that impression must be explained, thus reducing everything to the human element. As a result, exegesis (faith seeking understanding) itself would become the ground to deny the historicity of divine elements (word becoming flesh). If exegesis is not theological, Scripture cannot become the soul of theology, and *vice versa* when theology is not essentially Scriptural interpretation within the Church, then this theology no longer has a foundation (VD 35). Therefore, as the pope truly sees, for the life and mission of the Church, for the future of faith, it is absolutely necessary to overcome the dualism between exegesis and theology.

Conclusion

Pope Benedict XVI believed, studied, and scientifically interpreted the Word of God as a faithful Christian. Because of the depth of his knowledge in the Bible, theology, philosophy, and other modern disciplines, on the one hand he could scientifically understand the methods employed in biblical exegesis and adopt everything positive in them, and on the other hand he could prophetically point out to the errors that have brought modern crisis resulting from a secular approach to the Bible. "In the last hundred years, exegesis has had many great achievements, but it has brought forth great errors as well. These latter, moreover, have in some measure grown to

the stature of academic dogmas” he said (Erasmus Lecture). According to him, “Certainly, texts must, first of all, be traced back to their historical origins and interpreted in their proper historical context. But then, in a second exegetical operation, one must look at them also in light of the total movement of history and in light of history’s central event, Jesus Christ. Only the *combination* of *both* these methods will yield understanding of the Bible” (Erasmus Lecture).

The pope not only knew the problems in modern exegesis and their solutions but also tried to solve them by presenting a true methodology through his teachings, his writings, and especially by being the architect of *Dei Verbum* and its timely interpretations. According to him every authentic interpretation of the word should be based on the guidelines set by *Dei Verbum*. That means 1) Every text should be interpreted in the context of the whole Bible. 2) The centre of the Bible is the fact that ‘word became flesh’ and therefore a historical study is of utmost importance. 3) Since the scripture is inseparably united with the Church and its Magisterium, Church is responsible for the authentic understanding and interpretation of the Word; the living tradition helps the interpreter to find the true sense of the scripture. 4) Every Christian theology should be based on the Word who became flesh.

The Word that builds the foundation of the Church is not a simple book of history but a person. As a result, no interpretation should be a simple philosophical treatise. Unfortunately, many modern interpreters set secular philosophies in the place of the living tradition and the Magisterium of the Church. Since Bible is the Word of God, it

contains more message than what the human authors could conceive. As a result, an interpretation simply based on human reasoning cannot be taken as 'Christian faith truly seeking understanding.' One has to meet the word as a living person because God still lives among us.

About the author: Rev. Dr. Antony Tharekadavil is a priest of the Archdiocese of Tellicherry (India), born in 1965. In 2007, he earned his Doctorate in Biblical Sciences and Archaeology (DSSA) from Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem. Since then, he has been serving as a Scripture Professor at the Good Shepherd Institute of Theology, Kunnoth, Kerala, India, and also teaches in several other ecclesiastical institutes, both offline and online. Dr. Tharekadavil was the chief editor of the *Malabar Theological Review* from 2008 to 2020. He has authored more than twenty monographs and numerous scientific articles on Bible Interpretation, both in English and Malayalam. As part of his work on Bible interpretation, he has presented several YouTube videos and conducted numerous seminars on Christian apologetics.

Memoria and Memoria Ecclesiae **In Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI**

Fr Dr Arun Kalamattathil

Introduction

The concept of memory in Ratzinger is like the roots of a large tree, often in-visible, but they are deep and strong enough to enable the tree to stand firm and to become vital for the sustenance of its life. A close inquiry into the depth of influence of memory in Ratzinger's theology can move us to think that an absence of trust in 'memory' would have shaped the theology of Ratzinger differently.

The notion of memory in Joseph Ratzinger is certainly theological. *Memoria ecclesiae* is an ecclesiological application of memory with a closely intertwined Christological relationship. *Memoria ecclesiae* lays solid philosophical and theological foundations for his dogmatic arguments in relation to his ecclesiology and other predominant branches in theology. The concept of memory influences almost all the areas of the theological world of Ratzinger. His ecclesiological arguments on tradition, his understanding of revelation and Scripture, faith, apostolic succession, eucharistic theology, his christological understandings, the anthropological and theological aspects of the person and the idea of a personal God, his ecumenical theology, pastoral and catechetical theology including the different aspects of the transmission of memory are all influenced deeply by the fundamental concept of memory that Ratzinger has.

In this article, I aim to demonstrate how memory emerges as a crucial key in unlocking the understanding of different branches of Catholic doctrine in Ratzinger's theology, supported by a selection of illustrative examples.

The Philosophical Foundation of Ecclesial Memory

After the inspiration of the Second Vatican Council, modern theologians like Congar, Rahner, Metz, Tillard etc., have trusted in the potential of collective memory to speak about Church and tradition.

Meanwhile, Ratzinger has built a strong philosophical foundation for the concept of memory upon the notion of 'time' to give memory its fundamental adjective – 'transcendent' or 'transcendental.' The understanding of memory as transcendental is well founded upon the clear philosophical foundation of 'transcendental time'. The concept of transcendental time traces its roots back to Augustine (and even to Plato). Ratzinger develops his concept of memory from Augustine's time-related concept of memory which Augustine established on the foundation of an anthropological unity of time in human existence.¹ From this inspiration, Ratzinger realizes that there is a unity of time in memory. Memory is a reality that transcendently unites the past, present and future. In memory, past and even future are a present reality. Memory as a transcendental reality can guide us by shedding some light upon the theological concept of the eternity of God and on the anthropological potential of the transcendence of time within time-bounded human life. Thus, the transcendental concept of memory is a powerful connecting link between God and

¹ BENEDICT XVI. *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio: Volume 2: Anthropology and Culture*, 7.

man. Ratzinger uses this potential of memory in the God-man relationship effectively in his ecclesiological discourses. For him, the Church is the ultimate connecting link between man and God. Being a collective person (only a 'person' can remember; we will come to that), the Church can remember! The implication in Ratzinger is that the Church can remember in a 'superior' way because she is not an individual, but a collective person!

A collective person has a collective transcendental memory which is 'superior' to an individual's memory in several aspects. Only this collective memory can contain the revelation and respond to it (which is faith) due to two reasons. First, God as Trinity is a 'collective person' in communion. The revelation of the collective person - Trinity - can be received *as it is* only by another collective person, otherwise the revelation is incompatible with the receiving subject. Second, this collective person who is the subject of revelation is not merely a human reality. A mere human reality is unable to receive revelation (which is ultimately God himself in Christ). Ratzinger emphasizes that the Church is the eucharistically constituted Body of Christ and not merely an association or a sociological entity.² The Church, which is the Body of Christ, has a memory which is collective, divine and human. This 'superior' memory of the Church has the capacity to hold and transmit the reality of revelation that contains the divine mysteries.³

² RATZINGER, *The Ratzinger Report: An Exclusive Interview on the State of the Church*, 47. See also RATZINGER, JOSEPH. *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Endeavours in Ecclesiology*, 13-20.

³ Ref. RATZINGER, *Milestones: Memoirs: 1927-1977*, 108 and RATZINGER, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, 33.

Anthropological Aspects of Memory to Understand a 'Personal God'

The anthropological concept of 'person' and the theological idea of 'personal God' are also an important ecclesiological premise for speaking about the memory of the Church. Memory cannot have an independent existence. Memory is always the memory of 'someone'. Only a person can remember. Philosophically, memory is a fundamental element that can realize the continuity of existence of a person. Absence of memory results in an existential discontinuity. Take for example, the case of a person with Alzheimer's disease. What he actually misses out is his internal continuity with his past. The 'present he' is disconnected from his past self! Memory is the existential connecting link between the past, present and future of a person.

That is why Ratzinger, following Augustine, takes utmost care in emphasizing the significance of memory in addressing the ontological reality of God, the divine person. Ratzinger speaks of God as "memory per se"!⁴ Now Ratzinger understands that God remembers - because He is a person. In other words, God's memory enables us to understand that He is a personal God. God is 'memory per se' for Ratzinger because He is 'person' in its complete sense.

Another important attribute of 'person' - the concept of *love* - is also related to memory. God *is* love and He *is* memory, because God is a person. Now, God remembers human beings

⁴ RATZINGER, "What Constitutes Christian Faith Today?" in *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology* (15-27), 23.

(and therefore human beings have eternal life⁵) because he loves them. Love is the reality that stimulates or even realizes memory. God's love inevitably inspires Him to remember. God, being a relational, Trinitarian, personal God, relates and remembers each other in Trinity in and through the reality of love. God also remembers human beings because he loves them. The Psalmist asks; "what is man that You remember him?" (Ps 8:4). God remembers man only because he is the subject of the love of God. God also wanted the Church to have a 'memory' so that the Church as a collective person can love the trinitarian God and remember Him as He remembers and loves the Church.

The concept of eucharistic memory can also be understood from the same perspective of the God-Church relationship of divine love. The fundamental vision behind the concept of Eucharist is *memory* and God's *love* for human beings. The Old Testament God wanted to establish his covenant upon 'memory' in relation to the Passover. The Israelites *remembered* the *love* of God in the exodus event in every celebration of their Passover feast which is an Old Testament pre-figuration of the Eucharist. The New Testament theology of Eucharist carries the memory of God's love revealed in the incarnation and the passion of Christ.

Memory the Key to Understand Revelation and Scripture

The Scripture realizes itself as a written form of revelation received and remembered by the Church. Ratzinger elaborates

⁵ Ratzinger says; "remaining in God's memory means we are alive, in a full sense of life." (RATZINGER, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, xx.) The full sense of life is, theologically, a life without death which is eternal. Ratzinger understands that whoever is in the memory of God becomes eternal as He himself is eternal.

this idea with a special focus on St John and his Gospel as a representation of the collective memory of the apostles who witnessed the Christ event.⁶ The apostolic-ecclesial memory of the Christ event is remembered and re-presented in the Gospel narrative. The formation of the Gospels is a textual realization of the apostolic memory of the Church transmitted verbally in the ecclesial tradition. Secondly, the real content of the Scripture itself is the memory of God-human communication. This memory realized a textual form through the sacred authors who represented the community that received the communication from God, being active participants in that communication. The Sacred authors are more than mere individual authors. They realize in themselves the community who actively participated in revelation. (Ratzinger, following Bonaventure, strongly believes that the community or people who received revelation is an active participant in the act of Revelation.

Memoria Ecclesiae Transforms History into Tradition

Ratzinger's discourse on tradition outlines an inseparable connection with intellect and memory.

What is intellect for Ratzinger? Intellect is not just the capacity to invent. The ability to invent is rather a biological faculty which is common to both man and animal. What is more important is an anthropological capacity to transform invention into a tradition in history. Invention in itself lacks the capacity of history. History is generated where invention creates tradition. It is only in this context that invention can have

⁶ BENEDICT XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, 231.

meaning. History and tradition are realized by intellect which has memory. Intellect is an anthropological quality of man which is lacking in animals, so that they are unable to generate history and tradition although they can invent. Animals, cannot transfer this invention to the future. It is intellect that transfers invention to the future. "invention acquires meaning only if it can create tradition, for only thus can history be generated"⁷ What Ratzinger wants to state here is that history and tradition are possible for human beings as memory is associated with the human intellect. Therefore, through the capacity of intellect in relation to memory, humanity achieves an inseparable connection with history and tradition.⁸

Ratzinger understands history and intellect as inseparably connected. Ratzinger writes; "the inseparable connection between humanity and history becomes apparent: humanity and historicity, intellect and history, are inextricably related."⁹ For him, the human capacity for history is the result of the intellect which is basically memory. Without intellect, it is not possible to have history and tradition, because it is the intellect as memory that helps human beings to have the unity of time where history and tradition are realized. It is the intellect that is realized by memory connects past and future to the present. Unless the unity of time is achieved, the present has no connection with the past and the future. Hence there can be no tradition for humanity but only broken independent events.

⁷ RATZINGER, "Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Tradition", 87.

⁸ RATZINGER, "Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Tradition", 86-87.

⁹ RATZINGER, "Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Tradition", 87.

If so, humanity will not be able to achieve growth and development.

If so, then what is intellect in its very reality? For Ratzinger, “intellect is basically memory”¹⁰. It is memory that makes intellect. Intellect as memory “fosters unity beyond the limits of the present moment”.¹¹ Thus, memory is a fundamental existential aspect of intellect, without which intellect cannot be intellect at all. Here Ratzinger’s perspective is different from that of Augustine, regarding the nature of the memory-intellect relationship. Augustine’s understanding of the relation between memory and intellect is more epistemological and psychological. He understands memory and intellect as two sources of knowing. In his *Soliloquies*, while answering to an epistemological question on the knowledge of God, he wrote:

For many persons discourse most fluently of things of which they are ignorant, as I, just now in prayer have desired to know many things, which, although I have mentioned them, I would not desire to know if I already knew them. But am I, therefore, the less able to mention them? For I have given utterance, not to things which my intellect comprehends, but which, gathered here and there, and committed to the memory, I have reinforced by all the faith of which I am capable. But to know is another thing.¹²

¹⁰ (*Geist ist grundlegend Gedächtnis* is the original expression) RATZINGER, “Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Tradition”, 87.

¹¹ RATZINGER, “Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Tradition”, 87.

¹² AUGUSTINE, *Soliloquies*, 1.4.9.

Augustine understands memory as a mediator of the knowledge of the world.¹³ “Will” and “Intellect” assist memory to have this knowledge. But for Ratzinger, intellect is a superior anthropological reality to a medium of perception. Emphasizing intellect, Ratzinger comfortably establishes a sound anthropological foundation for his theology of tradition. Thus, he asserts:

We have arrived now at a chain of related concepts, the articulation of which we may describe as follows: it is as memory that intellect proves itself *qua intellect*; memory generates tradition; tradition realizes itself in history; as the already existing context of humanity, history makes humanity possible - for without the necessarily transtemporal relationship of person to person, humanity cannot be awakened to itself, cannot express itself.¹⁴

We can now see here how authentically Ratzinger establishes human memory as an existential element for history and tradition in relation to intellect. This is an intelligently laid solid foundation in anthropology which has a general acceptance among Catholics and non-Catholics. Ratzinger could, therefore, assert his arguments on ecclesial tradition in a wider ecumenical context.

For Ratzinger, as we have seen, it is memory that generates tradition. Tradition has to presuppose a memory to realize

¹³ A specific doctoral study on the concept of memory in the theological anthropology of Augustine has been done in Durham University by Hochschild. He proves that for Augustine, mind meets the world through memory. Memory is also a mediation for knowing intellectual objects. See, HOCHSCHILD, *Memory in the Theological Anthropology of St. Augustine*, 8 and 254-255.

¹⁴ RATZINGER, “Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Tradition”, 87.

itself in history. Tradition becomes a personal tradition if it is generated from personal memories. Human history can be realized only in a sharing of memory. For Ratzinger, it is in communication that the memory is shared and transmitted.¹⁵ Speech is the central means of this sharing.

The subject of tradition is to be a collective subject. An individual cannot be the bearer of a tradition of a community which has a common heritage. That will end up in a private memory ("*private Erinnerung*").¹⁶ Ratzinger remembers ancient clans where "all stood for one, one for all; what happened to one happened to all; what was done by one was done by all."¹⁷ It is a binding together as one subject. Ratzinger finds similar elements in linguistic communities and ancient clans. The sharing of the memory of the individuals in a community as a collective subject is to be understood as the collective memory of a community. Collective memory, for Ratzinger, is not just a collection of memories of the individual members. The collective ecclesial memory is not a mere collection of the memories of the faithful ones.

This anthropological background is important for Ratzinger in speaking about the collective "I" of the Church who is the bearer of revelation and tradition. This is because, as God is perfect communion, the recipient of the revelation (of a God who is ontologically in communion) must also be in communion to receive and carry the revelation in its memory. As an individual person cannot be a subject believing and holding the entire memory of the revelation of God, God wanted

¹⁵ RATZINGER, "Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Tradition", 88.

¹⁶ RATZINGER, "Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Tradition", 100.

¹⁷ RATZINGER, "Anthropological Foundations of the Concept of Tradition", 88.

to have a collective subject or a corporate person with collective memory and that is realized in the ecclesial community (which is a single body united in eucharistic communion). As the Church is a collective “I”, she can proclaim her faith as “I believe”. ‘Faith of the Church’ is a collective or communitarian response to the revelation of a God who is in communion. The individual believer can exist as a believer and carrier of this memory only in so far as he is in this collective personality. The memory of this collective subject is the “seat of all faith”¹⁸ for Ratzinger because it is the perfect counterpart of revelation.

Christology is *Memoria Ecclesiae*

The Christology of Ratzinger is inseparable from his ecclesiology due to their mutual foundation in memory. For Ratzinger, true christological knowledge is not attainable from historical enquiries. Historical research can provide only partial knowledge of Jesus. The core truth about Jesus - that he is *Christ* (son of God and *messiah*) - cannot be attained by any historical research. This knowledge is the result of the memory of faith. The real Christ, who is man and God, can be reconstructed only from the *memoria ecclesiae* where the Christ-event is ever present. Therefore, Ratzinger trusts in the power of memory for definitive christological knowledge. For him, **“compatibility with the base memory of the Church is the standard for judging what is to be considered historically and objectively accurate.”**¹⁹

Ratzinger recognizes the Gospels’ witness to Christ to be the primary reliable source of christological knowledge as they

¹⁸ RATZINGER, “What Constitutes Christian Faith Today?”, 23.

¹⁹ RATZINGER, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*, 20.

carry the concrete christological memory of the early Church. Ratzinger writes:

I credit biblical tradition with greater truthfulness than I do the attempts to reconstruct a chemically pure historical Jesus from the test tube of historical reason. I trust the tradition in its entirety. And the more reconstructions I see come and go, the more I feel confirmed in my trust.²⁰

He believes that, compared to any of the most learned reconstructions, one can trust the memory of 'Jesus of the Gospels' as the real Jesus. Gospel narrations are always the first available direct literature about Jesus. The vital power of the ecclesial tradition gives weight to the 'Jesus of the Gospels'. Ratzinger is quite sure about the greater security of the christological knowledge of the Gospels.

It is true that the Gospels as literature can provide a portrait of the person of Jesus. But what makes this portrait alive and superior to historical knowledge is the transcendental presence of the memory present in the faith of the Church. The Gospels are accounts of the post-Resurrection retrospective experience of the Church. The Gospels depict Jesus in the light of the early Church's experience of the Resurrection of Christ rather than from the evangelists' simple 'historical' experience. In other words, the Gospels are the reflections or the accounts of the post-Resurrection memory of the early Church.

The memory of the Church is the real source from which the Gospels are narrated. The disciples' realization that the

²⁰ RATZINGER, *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, 123.

Jesus who walked with them was 'Christ' (in its fuller sense) came only after his resurrection. This realization is the first 'perfect' christological knowledge in history. This realization process happened in the memory of the Church. The Church began to remember the earthly ministry of Jesus in the new light of Resurrection faith. The post-Resurrection memory of the Church, thus, became the first source of the christological knowledge that incorporates both the historical Jesus and the Christ of faith. This post-Resurrection retrospective experience is preserved and handed down to the generations in and through the apostolic tradition without which even the very reality of the New Testament witness cannot be conceived.

Ratzinger approaches this argument by referring to the testimony of John the evangelist. John's claims of his testimony of witness (Jn 19:35) to the passion of Christ²¹ and his direct experience (1Jn 1:1)²² of the mystery of Christ are not understood by Ratzinger as an author's private experience. The question of the direct experience of the author (John the evangelist) is quite insignificant in this context. For Ratzinger, it is a remembering in and with the collective memory of the Church.²³ The evangelist here symbolically represents the collective memory of the Church. This remembrance, by being a post-Resurrection memory, accomplishes an ecclesial value.

²¹ "The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth..." (*New International Version*).

²² "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched-this we proclaim..." (*New International Version*).

²³ BENEDICT XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, 231.

The Holy Spirit is the agent of the unification of the individual memories with an ecclesial memory after the Resurrection of Christ and the institution of the Church. Jesus had promised that “the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (Jn. 14:26). In short, the christological knowledge reflected in the Gospels is to be understood as a narrative extract from the treasury of the christological knowledge of the apostolic Church.

The Church is the starting point, the primary source, and the platform of Ratzinger’s Christology. The final output of his investigations on Christology is that it is an ecclesiological Christology well founded on the cornerstone of memory.

Memoria Ecclesiae and Apostolic Succession

The Catholic understanding of the apostolic succession also originates from the concept of a ministerial service to the memory of the Christ event. The real meaning of succession, for Ratzinger, is the communion with the core ecclesial apostolic memory taught²⁴ in the ecclesial tradition including the Creed. Therefore, “the teaching office of the apostles’ successors does not represent a second authority alongside Scripture but is inwardly a part of it”²⁵ The real authority of the Scripture, Creed and magisterium dwells in the presumption that they carry within themselves a clear impact of the ecclesial memory of faith. The Pope, in his person, represents this memory of the Church embodied in the faithful

²⁴ RATZINGER, *Called to Communion: Understanding the Church Today*, 123.

²⁵ RATZINGER, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, 35.

who became one body in Christ through baptism and Eucharistic communion.

Succession remains as a powerful symbol and channel of the *memoria ecclesiae*. Succession presupposes an unbroken handing over of the memory of the Church received directly from Christ by the apostles up to the present moment. Bishops, by their very ordination, enter into the 'we' of the ministers who carry a collective memory that transcends time. For Ratzinger, "The bishop is bishop, not alone, but solely in the catholic communion of those who were bishops before him, who are bishops with him, and who will be bishops after him."²⁶ Thus, episcopal succession receives a transtemporal unity of the memory of apostolic faith in history.

Apostolic succession is in fact an embodiment of the apostolic teaching which is the memory of the apostles. Thus, the unity of the Church owes itself to the apostolic succession which is in its core the teaching of the apostles. The core and content of the teaching of the apostles is the memory of faith of the Church. What connects the Church of all times to the apostles is the sharing of their teachings, realized and protected by the episcopal college. What makes the Church remain an apostolic Church is ultimately the apostolic memory realized in the teachings of the apostles and handed over to the generations.

Eschatological Foundations of Memory

Now we will consider briefly the role of memory in Ratzinger's eschatology in relation to the concept of God's

²⁶ RATZINGER, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Endeavours in Ecclesiology*, 21. See also RATZINGER, "The Ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council", 246.

memory and human permanence. The concept of God's memory has close relations with the 'personal' aspect of God who has memory. Ratzinger's notion of God's memory is developed upon his own 'relational' vision of God, a personal, trinitarian God who has memory. The notion of the memory of the relational, personal God has an impact on the eschatological discussions of Ratzinger. He builds a convincing foundation for eschatological hope upon the concept of the memory of God. Ratzinger points to the confidence of Jesus in answering the Sadducees on their question raised against eternal life.²⁷ Jesus focused on God's memory to answer them instead of making use of any philosophical or anthropological abstractions. The memory of God, as it is real and eternal, is the trustable abode of human life for an existential permanence.²⁸ The only reliable place of trust for man's perennial desire for permanence is in the memory of God. One of the malefactors hanged with Jesus expressed his ultimate trust in the memory of Christ for eternal life, saying; "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom" (Lk 23:42). What is inscribed in the memory of God cannot be just 'shadows' but is real and eternal as God is eternal. There is another significant eschatological argument of Ratzinger based on the love of the personal God. For him, love, by its very nature, demands permanence. We don't want a relationship of love to be broken. We wish those whom we love to be with us always, but it is not eternally possible for us human beings. Ratzinger logically argues on the following two

²⁷ RATZINGER, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, xx.

²⁸ Ref. RATZINGER, *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, 113 and 257-158.

premises; (1) God is love and his love is eternal and (2) there is no separation between 'will' (desire) and 'actuality' in God. Therefore, if God loves man and that love, by nature, includes a desire for permanence, man must be eternal.²⁹ "His love is what makes us immortal."³⁰

Now, coming to our point of discussion in relation to memory, what is important for us is that both these famous eschatological arguments of Ratzinger on the existential question of human permanence are closely related to his concept of memory. There is a causal relationship in relation to memory. As we have seen above, for Ratzinger, the cause of human immortality is the memory of God and the cause of God's memory is his divine love. In other words, God loves humans and consequently, He remembers them. As the trinitarian God is essentially memory and love for Ratzinger, it is quite reasonable for him to build his eschatological notion of human permanence on this ground.

Transmission of Memory: Catechetical and Pastoral aspects

Transmission of faith in the ecclesial context is, in a way, another expression of the transmission of memory. 'Transmission of faith' is a term closely related to the concept of memory due to two reasons. One is; what is transmitted in the transmission of faith is the collective memory of the Church. The second relationship is with the transcendental similarity of time in both memory and the transmission of faith. In other

²⁹ RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 299-301.

³⁰ Ref. RATZINGER, *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, 360.

words, transmission of faith is not only a space related reality but a time related reality that transcends the present Benedict writes:

The transmission of the faith not only brings light to men and women in every place; it travels through time, passing from one generation to another. Because faith is born of an encounter which takes place in history and lights up our journey through time, it must be passed on in every age. It is through an unbroken chain of witnesses that we come to see the face of Jesus.³¹

Secondly, the transmission of faith becomes the central vital function of the Church because, for Ratzinger, it is fundamentally a service to the truth. The service to the truth is deeply related to the question of memory. The Church's mission of transmission of faith is also related to the very existence of the Church. Jesus wanted his Church to exist in this world by transmitting what she received.

The underlying factor behind the possibility of the continuity of faith in history is the capacity of memory to transfer the faith experience to the future generations. We have the life of Israel in the Old Testament which can point to this truth. The identity of the life of faith of Israel was built upon their exodus memory. Moses commanded the people to "Remember this day on which you came out of Egypt" (Ex 13:3). Israel transmitted this memory to the generations and they always interpreted their present in reference to that memory that they had preserved. They knew that the identity and continuity of the faith of Israel depended on the

³¹ *Lumen Fidei*, 38.

transmission of their exodus memory. The fundamental identity of Israel was that they are the carriers of the memory of the covenant with God. The covenant memory of Israel is indispensable in the present. Memory, for them, was oriented towards an action in the present. The Hebrew term *zkr* means 'to remember' and *zikkârôn* means 'memorial' in which "memory and action are intrinsically connected"³²

Understanding of the concept of transmission of memory is an important area of pastoral theology. The transmission of faith, in fact, is the transmission of memory. The transmission of faith is the primary pastoral function of the Church which is basically missionary in character. The mission of the Church is two-dimensional. For Ratzinger, to hand over the memory of Christ (which is alive in the Church) to the generations within the Church and sharing the Christian memory with the 'non-believers' are the two dimensions of the transmission of memory of faith. Thus, memory gives continuity to the faith in the life of the Church. A proper understanding of the power and potential of memory will help the Church towards a better re-formulation of the catechetical, missiological, and pastoral perspectives of the Church in the modern world.

Memoria Ecclesiae and Liturgy of the Church

Ratzinger understands liturgy as a living organism that functions as an active agent of the transmission of the Christian memory. In the context of the post-Vatican II controversy between the radical reformers and their radical opponents, Ratzinger takes a middle position. For him, the development of

³² LÉON-DUFOUR, *Sharing the Eucharistic Bread: The Witness of the New Testament*, 120.

the liturgy is rooted in both the preservation of its identity and in a controlled organic growth. He opines that “the Church ought to give reverent care to the liturgy through the ages, distinguishing actions that are helpful and healing from those that are violent and destructive.”³³ Here, the Church has to act like a gardener “who cares for a living plant by giving due attention to the power of growth and life within the plant and the rules it obeys.”³⁴ We find Ratzinger applying the same words he spoke about tradition also to the liturgy as something that needs continuity and renewal for its growth. The transmission of liturgy is to be a conscious process in the Church. Ratzinger believes that the Church has to take conscious measures in the faithful transmission of liturgy in which the ecclesial memory of the Christ event is transmitted.

Liturgical memory can only originate from the memory of the Church. One who is away from this real and true memory of the Church becomes unworthy to prune or purify liturgical memory. Ratzinger’s first principle with regard to any liturgical reform is that “liturgy without the Church is a self-contradiction.”³⁵ The real act of Jesus’ founding of the Church and giving the disciples his real liturgical memory of death and Resurrection occurred in the same event of his Last

³³ RATZINGER, Preface to: *The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and Their Relation to the Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council*, 9.

³⁴ RATZINGER, Preface to: *The Organic Development of the Liturgy: The Principles of Liturgical Reform and Their Relation to the Twentieth Century Liturgical Movement Prior to the Second Vatican Council*, 9.

³⁵ BENEDICT XVI, *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio: Volume 1: Unity of the Church*, 32.

³⁶ RATZINGER, *Church, Ecumenism and Politics: New Endeavours in Ecclesiology*, 17.

Supper.³⁶ The liturgy always presupposes the Church. Participation in liturgy is a becoming one with the Church. Thus “the one who truly acts (participates) in the liturgy also disappears with the collective subject ‘Church.’”³⁷ In the liturgy, all private memories disappear in the collective memory of the Church. The liturgical memory originates from the ecclesial memory and identifies with it. Thus, in celebrating the liturgy, the Church transmits her memory to the generations. This demands every symbol and action in the liturgy to be faithful to the ecclesial memory. Ratzinger understands it as a right of the faithful to receive ‘the liturgy of the Church’ rather than the “private creativity”³⁸ of the minister.³⁹ The minister is only a guardian of the liturgical memory of the Church. Ratzinger openly expresses his concern that the various faces of liturgical reform have resulted in creating a false idea of the search for novelty and creativity, forgetting faithfulness to the unchangeable core of liturgical memory.⁴⁰ It is clear in his words that his real concern is not just about certain changes in the celebration of liturgical services, but about an indirect disregard towards the tradition generated by the memory.

Conclusion

St. Augustine could foresee the true power of memory in theology. Thus, he exclaimed; “The power of memory is great,

³⁷ BENEDICT XVI, *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio: Volume 1: Unity of the Church*, 32.

³⁸ RATZINGER, *The Nature and Mission of Theology: Essays to Orient Theology in Today's Debates*, 112.

³⁹ RATZINGER, *Co-workers of the Truth: Meditations for Every Day of the Year*, 285.

⁴⁰ RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance: Christian Belief and World Religions*, 130.

very great, my God. It is a vast and infinite profundity. Who has plumbed its bottom?"⁴¹.

Now, I must also admit that the doctrine of memory in Ratzinger is to be called an 'unfinished' project, although he began to address the concept of memory from the early years of his theological career. He declared in 1973 that it seemed important for him to "work out anew the biblical basis of a Christian doctrine of *memoria*"⁴². Undoubtedly, to a great extent, he did justice to what he had envisioned through his subsequent works and finally, in publishing the *Jesus of Nazareth* series. But, an explicit, detailed, direct and comprehensive approach towards the different aspects of memory that is rooted primarily in his ecclesiology and Christology is incomplete in his writings.

About the author: Rev. Dr. Arun Kalamattathil belongs to the Eparchy of Palghat, Kerala, India. He holds a Licentiate in Systematic Theology from Dharmaram, Bangalore and a Doctorate in Dogmatic Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. Fr. Kalamattathil teaches subjects such as Ecclesiology, Christology, Catechesis, Pneumatology, Scripture, Revelation and Faith, and Moral Theology. Currently, he is teaching Revelation and Faith at Paurasthya Vidyapitham (PVP), Vadavathoor, and Eucharist at St. Mary's Malankara Seminary, Trivandrum. He also serves as the Director of Family Apostolate for the Diocese of Palghat and is also the Director of STARS, a center dedicated to integral formation and academic excellence within the Diocese of Palghat.

⁴¹ AUGUSTINE, *Confessions*, 10.8.15

⁴² RATZINGER, "What Constitutes Christian Faith Today?", 24.

The Church and the Eucharist in the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI

Maruthukunnel Joseph

Introduction

This article is an attempt to explore the eucharistic dimensions of the ecclesiology of Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI. His ecclesiology derives its essence from the faith that Eucharist stands as the source and submit of the Church and the Christian life.¹ In the course of our discussion, we shall contextualize Joseph Ratzinger's Ecclesiology within the vast spectrum of his theological thought, to make clear the organic unity of his theological investigation. He has a comprehensive theological corpus that demonstrates interconnectedness and coherence. Our exploration will then turn towards an analysis of the "communion ecclesiology" put forth by Joseph Ratzinger, delving into the dynamics of how he envisions the Eucharist as the source behind the communion of believers and the submit of the Christian life. As the source of the Church, Eucharist builds or forms the Church. The Eucharistic celebration, as the pinnacle activity of the Church, represents the believers' highest form of worship and sacrifice offered to God.

1. Theological Background

Joseph Ratzinger's theological corpus resembles a vast tree, where every branch intricately connects to the others,

¹ LG 11.

forming a cohesive and interrelated whole. There is an organic unity in his theology. The hermeneutic key is his context in which he developed his theological investigation, that is, his critique of contemporary secular culture. From the very beginning of his theological activity, Ratzinger tried to emphasise the rationality or *logos* of the Christian faith. In his inaugural lecture as a professor at the University of Bonn on 24 June 1959, entitled “The God of Faith and Philosophy – A contribution to Natural Theology” Joseph Ratzinger argued that the “God of faith” and the “God of philosophy” are one and the same. This exposition was presented within a context that promoted the idea that faith in God is irrational and rooted in superstition. The same concern appears in his *Declaratio* of February 10, 2013: “However, in today’s world, subject to so many rapid changes and shaken by questions of deep relevance for the life of faith, in order to govern the barque of Saint Peter and proclaim the Gospel, both strength of mind and body are necessary”.² For Ratzinger, the rationality of faith is a distinguishing feature of Christianity. Moreover, it is the key feature of the theology of Joseph Ratzinger/ Pope Benedict XVI. Peter Seewald writes:

The centrality of the relation between faith and reason is the key to understanding the theology of Pope Benedict/ Joseph Ratzinger. Pope Benedict writes about his theological mission: “I must try above all else to show what faith means in the contemporary world, and further, to highlight the centrality of faith in God, and give people the courage to have faith,

² BENEDICTUS PP. XVI, “*Declaratio* (10 February 2013)” in https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2013/february/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20130211_declaratio.html

courage to live concretely in the world with faith. Faith, reason, these were all things I recognized as central to my mission”.³

Joseph Ratzinger was mainly concerned with proposing the credibility of the Christian faith within the modern context

Joseph Ratzinger, right from the beginning of his theological activity, emphasizes two essential features of faith in God: (1) God is *Logos*. He is the rational and primordial ground of everything; He is “Creative Reason”.”Through this feature he proposes the rationality of Christian faith and a response to secular criticism that Christianity is superstition. The second feature is that God who is *Logos*, “Eternal Reason”, is at the same time *Agape*. Pope Benedict XVI says: “This creative reason is Goodness, it is Love. It has a face”.⁴ According to Joseph Ratzinger, the climax of the biblical concept of God is 1Jn 4:8 – “God is love”. God is not relation-less existence circling around himself. Ratzinger writes:

The *logos* of the whole world, the creative original thought, is at the same time love; in fact, this thought is creative because, as thought, it is love, and, as love, it is thought. It becomes apparent that truth and love are originally identical; that where they are completely realized they are not two parallel or even opposing realities but one, the one and only absolute.⁵

Joseph Ratzinger understands that the God who is *Logos* – the Creator – is at the same time love and therefore communion. He writes:

³ BENEDICTUS PP. XVI– P. SEEWALD, *Last Testament*, 4.

⁴ BENEDICTUS PP. XVI, “Faith, Reason and the University Memories and Reflections “ in https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html

⁵ J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 148.

To him who believes in God as triune, the highest unity is not the unity of inflexible monotony. The model of unity or oneness toward which one should strive is consequently not the indivisibility of the atom, the smallest unity, which cannot be divided up any further; the authentic acme of unity is the unity created by love.⁶

For Joseph Ratzinger, God's oneness is not of an undivided atom, but oneness formed in relation, love and communion. Here, we find a distinctive feature of the Christian faith: Triune God is not like an undivided atomic unity, but communion formed by relationship and love. He understands that reason and relation, truth and love, *logos* and *dialogos* are two sides of the same coin. God as love is relationship, and this is what makes possible our relationship with God. God is relationship – *dialogos* – in His essence. This relational aspect of the Christian faith is best expressed in the word “*communion*”.⁷ The revelation of the Trinity is a revelation of communion. In this perspective, Joseph Ratzinger says that the ground of our being is communion, as the Trinity is communion.

⁶ J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 179.

⁷ “Communion” is a favourite term in Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI. After the Second Vatican Council, Ratzinger together with Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac, Louis Bouyer and Jorge Medina founded a journal called *Communio*, because of their disagreement with the views of another post-conciliar journal *Concilium*. They believed that the term *communio* expresses in a better way the ecclesial vision of the Second Vatican Council than the term “concilium”. Cf. J. RATZINGER, “Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity”, 72-73. Later, while Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger as the prefect, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith published a document entitled: *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion* in 28 May 1992.

For Joseph Ratzinger, “Communion” is seen as the essential nature and dynamism of the Christian faith. The term “communion” is what essentially follows from the dialogical nature of the Triune God who is love and communion. God is *dialogos* because the “Divine Word” is also directed to humanity. It is the dialogical aspect of Divine, that is, *Logos* or Word communicated to humanity in Jesus Christ, which makes our faith possible. God who is communion enters into communion with human beings by becoming incarnate in human nature. Faith is the human response to the Divine Word uttered in Jesus Christ. Hence, the whole dynamism of the Christian faith can be summarized in the term *dialogos* or communion. If God is the embodiment of communion and Christ extends an invitation to partake in communion, then the Church, as the focal point of this divine-human union, must inherently be communion. Hence, the second feature of faith in God, that is, God is Agape and Communion, takes to his vision of the Church. In a nutshell, in Joseph Ratzinger’s theology, the second aspect of faith in God, wherein God embodies Agape and Communion, profoundly influences his envisioned essence of the Church as communion.

2. The Church as “Communion”

For Joseph Ratzinger, the concept of communion expresses the core of the mystery of the Church.⁸ He writes:

The concept of communion lies ‘at the heart of the Church’s self-understanding’, insofar as it is the Mystery of the personal union of each human being with the divine Trinity and with the rest of mankind, initiated with the faith, and, having begun as a reality in the Church on earth, is directed towards its eschatological fulfilment in the heavenly Church.⁹

⁸ J. RATZINGER, *Communio* n°1.

⁹ J. RATZINGER, *Communio* n°3.

To believe in the Trinitarian God is to become communion. What follows the Trinitarian communion is the “we” structure of Christian faith. Joseph Ratzinger writes: “the ‘I’ of the credo-formula is a collective ‘I’, the ‘I’ of the believing Church, to which the individual ‘I’ belongs as long as it believes. In other words, the ‘I’ of the credo embraces the transition from the individual ‘I’ to the ecclesia ‘I’”.¹⁰ Michael Paul Gallagher evaluates that “the we-structure of faith” is a favourite expression of Joseph Ratzinger. Michael Paul Gallagher explains:

Just as the Christian God is revealed as a Trinitarian ‘we’ or communion of persons, so Christian faith is encountered through relationship with the Church. The ‘I believe’ of faith moves from the personal to the ‘we believe’ of the Church’s communal worship of God. Although ‘faith is a supremely personal act’, each person is a receiver rather than a maker, who needs a living tradition: ‘the “we” of the Church is the new communion into which God draws us beyond our narrow selves’.¹¹

Michael Paul Gallagher, drawing on *Introduction to Christianity*, continues: “Ultimately faith cannot be ‘something thought up by me’ but rather ‘a call to community’, the community of the Word”.¹² Joseph Ratzinger identifies the purpose of the Incarnation – the expression of the divine love – as “to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad” (Jn 11:52). Hence,

The ‘we’ of the church is the new communion into which God draws us beyond our narrow selves (cf. Jn 12:32). The church is thus contained in the first movement of the act of

¹⁰ J. RATZINGER, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 23.

¹¹ M.P. GALLAGHER, *Faith Maps*, 136, J. RATZINGER, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 15.

¹² M.P. GALLAGHER, *Faith Maps*, 136; J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 58-59.

faith. The church is not an institution extrinsically added to faith as an organizational framework for the common activities of believers. No, she is integral to the act of faith itself. The 'I believe' is also a 'We believe'. As the Catechism says "'I believe' is also the Church, our mother, responding to God by faith as she teaches us to say both 'I believe and 'We believe'".¹³

Now, Ratzinger discerns the sources of the Church as communion, affirming that its essence is derived from the proclamation, as emphasized in 1 John 1:3, and from the Eucharistic celebration, as underscored in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17.

One of the New Testament texts which explains Church as communion is 1Jn 1:3: "That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you also may have fellowship with us; and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. And we are writing this that our joy may be complete". Here, we find the essentials of the Christian understanding of communion. John explains that the purpose of the apostolic proclamation is communion. The communion that is established among human beings, because of the preaching of the Gospel, is based on communion with the Trinitarian God, who is a communion of Persons. The real communion with God and among us could take place only from God. Actually, a communion with God and our brothers and sisters is possible only through a communion with God who became man. Here, Christ – the Word become man and to whom the Apostles proclaim – remains as the source of our

¹³J. RATZINGER, "On the Meaning of Faith", 213. The expression "narrow self" here can be seen as a point to understand the effects of Christian faith on believers. Faith takes one from a "narrow self" or isolated existence to a fellowship in which all are the sons and daughters of God.

communion. An encounter with Christ primarily creates communion with him and thus obviously with the Father and the Holy Spirit. This Trinitarian communion created through an encounter with Christ is that which makes the unity of human beings with one another.¹⁴ The Incarnate Son is the communion between God and men. Therefore, being a Christian is in reality nothing other than partaking in the mystery of the Incarnate Son.¹⁵ Joseph Ratzinger says: “the very fact that the whole had been brought together in one person had opened the door for everyone: through the one God, all could become brothers and sisters”.¹⁶ Here, it is clear that communion in the Church has two dimensions: (1) invisible and vertical, that is, communion with God; and (2) visible and horizontal, that is, communion among human beings.¹⁷ This idea is well expressed in *Lumen Gentium*: “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*” (LG 1). LG explains: Church is “a people made one with the unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” (LG 4). Hence, for Joseph Ratzinger, the word *communion* is one of the most profound and most characteristic words of Christian tradition.¹⁸ Ecclesial communion, into which each individual is

¹³ J. RATZINGER, “On the Meaning of Faith”, 213. The expression “narrow self” here can be seen as a point to understand the effects of Christian faith on believers. Faith takes one from a “narrow self” or isolated existence to a fellowship in which all are the sons and daughters of God.

¹⁴ J. RATZINGER, “The Ecclesiology of the Constitution on the Church”, 89.

¹⁵ J. RATZINGER, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 61.

¹⁶ J. RATZINGER, *Truth and Tolerance*, 156.

¹⁷ J. RATZINGER, *Communio notio*, 3-4.

¹⁸ J. RATZINGER, “Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity”, 72.

introduced by faith and by Baptism, has its root and centre in the Eucharist¹⁹

3. Eucharist as the Source of Communion

The Eucharistic celebration is portrayed in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 as the source of the Church, which is the body of Christ. St. Paul teaches: “The chalice of blessing, which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is but one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread”. Here, the first distinction that Joseph Ratzinger makes is that the biblical concept of communion is anchored in the sacrament of the Eucharist²⁰. Through the sacrament of the Eucharist, we enter into communion with the blood of Christ, which in the Hebrew perspective means the entire life of Christ. So, there is a commingling of our own life with the life of Jesus. Eating the same bread means receiving the same person.²¹ So through Holy Communion, we all become one in Christ. This means: “we all are in this way taken out of our closed individual persons and placed inside another, greater one. We all are assimilated into Christ and so, through communion with Christ, united among ourselves, rendered the same, one sole thing in him, members of one another”.²² Because of our communion with Christ, this communion becomes a common bond between all who share communion with Christ. Joseph Ratzinger explains: “To communicate with Christ is essentially

¹⁹ J. RATZINGER, *Communio notio*, 5.

²⁰ J. RATZINGER, “Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity”, 74.

²¹ J. RATZINGER, “Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity”, 75.

²² J. RATZINGER, “Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity”, 75-76.

to communicate with one another. We are no longer each alone, each separate from the other; we are now each part of the other; each of those who receive communion is the 'bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh' (Gen 2:23)".²³ It is Christ who makes the communion in the Church. Therefore, the unity of the Church "has a greater depth than that which any other human union could ever achieve".²⁴ Hence, based on this Pauline vision of communion, we can say that it is the Eucharist which makes the Church and communion.²⁵ Joseph Ratzinger writes: "The Eucharist is the creative force and source of *communion* among the members of the Church, precisely because it unites each one of them with Christ himself".²⁶ Cardinal Francis George comments: "The Holy Eucharist is the sacramental Body of Christ. It therefore creates the Body of Christ that is the Church. The Church cannot be understood apart from the Eucharist. The Eucharist unites Christ, the Head of his Body, with all his baptized members"²⁷.

Here, Joseph Ratzinger makes clear the indissoluble link between the Church and the Eucharist. This link is classically expressed by Hendri de Lubac: "the Eucharist builds the Church, and the Church makes the Eucharist"²⁸. Joseph Ratzinger would say that the Church celebrates the Eucharists and Eucharist makes or builds the Church.²⁹ The building up of

²³ J.RATZINGER, "Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity", 76.

²⁴ J.RATZINGER, "Eucharist, Communion and Solidarity", 76.

²⁵ IOHANNES PAULUS PP. II, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 26.

²⁶ J.RATZINGER, *Communio notio*, 5.

²⁷ C.G.FRANCIS OMI – JOSEPH, "Preface", 8

²⁸ H.DE LUBAC, *The Splendour of the Church*, 84. Pope John Paul II made use of this expression of Lubac in the last encyclical letter of his pontificate, *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 26, he wrote: "The Eucharist builds the Church and the Church makes the Eucharist"

the Church happens through the celebration of the Eucharist and the unity of the many believers in the one Church comes from the one eucharistic bread – body of Christ – shared by all. Pope Benedict XVI says: “Eucharist is the beating heart which gives life to the Mystical body of the Church” and he continues: “Without the Eucharist the Church quite simply would not exist. Indeed, it is the Eucharist which makes a human community into a mystery of communion that can bring God to the world and the world to God”³⁰. So, Church as body of Christ means: “that the Eucharist, in which the Lord gives us his body and makes us his body, is the everlasting place of origin of the Church, where she herself continually finds it anew”³¹. St John Chrysostom writes in the same vein: “What is the bread? The body of Christ. What do these who receive

²⁹ This is a specific point of the theology of Ratzinger that human meaning, fullness in life, our salvation, eternal life, Church and other essentials of our life are not things that we can make. They are something that we receive. It means, we are primarily receivers and not makers: who we are is much more a gift received than a task achieved. But *making* cannot be prior, Ratzinger says, inviting us to look at how, for what really matters to human beings – affection, love, salvation – we have to depend on *receiving*. According to James Corkery, one of the facial features of the theology of Joseph Ratzinger is “the primacy of receiving over making” J. CORKERY, *Joseph Ratzinger’s Theological Ideas*, 32-34. And this primacy of receiving is just the opposite of the stance of the modern scientific mentality which upholds the primacy of making and controlling. “The primacy of receiving over making “ also follows that view Ratzinger that “ what cannot be seen is more real than what can be seen “ J. RATZINGER, *Introduction to Christianity*, 74. This is the opposite of scientific rationality that holds the primacy of the empirical and visible.

³⁰ BENEDICTUS PP. XVI, “*Angelus* (26 June 2011)” in https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/angelus/2011/documents/hf_ben-xvi_ang_20110626.html.

³¹ J. RATZINGER, *Called to Communion*, 23-24.

become? The body of Christ. Not many bodies but one Body”³², that is the Church. LG7 conveys the same understanding: “Really partaking of the body of the Lord in the breaking of the Eucharistic bread, we are taken up into *communion with Him and with one another*... In this way all of us are made members of His Body”. At its core, the intimate connection between the Church and the Eucharist as the body of Christ is underscored. The Church is the “People of God from the Body of Christ”.³³

A corollary that can be drawn here is about the relevance of the Church as communion today. In a culture that promotes individualism and absolute freedom of the individual, the relational aspect of the human person easily becomes marginalized. Modern secular humanism is not community-oriented. It fosters isolation of individuals from social relationships. In this particular situation, the Ratzingerian understanding of Church as communion is relevant. Communion in the Church – close communion with God and humankind – is not a partisan communion based on some ideologies, but a fellowship based on mutual love grounded on the “body of Christ”. Benedict XVI writes:

The human community that we build by ourselves can never, purely by its own strength, be a fully fraternal community, nor can it overcome every division and become a truly universal community. The unity of the human race, a fraternal communion transcending every barrier, is called into being by the word of God who is Love.³⁴

³² J. CHRYSOSTOMOS, In *First Corinthians Homily* 24.

³³ J. RATZINGER, *Nuovo Popolo di Dio*, 97.

³⁴ BENEDICTUS PP. XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, n° 34.

So, Christian fellowship is not a conventional agreement built upon a relativistic kernel, rather it is ontologically founded in the “Eucharist”. Christian fellowship is a real remedy for individual isolation today as it is ontologically founded in the Eucharist. Joseph Ratzinger holds that “love is the key to Christianity, that love is the angle from which it has to be approached”.³⁵Hence, in an individualistic age, Ratzinger emphasises the Church as communion after the Triune God is important.

In sum, according to Joseph Ratzinger, just as the Holy Trinity is communion, so too must the Church, which serves as the focal point for divine-human reconciliation, be communion. Hence, Ratzinger underscores the inseparable bond between the Church and the Eucharist. This inseparable bond between these two realities takes us to a crucial facet of his Eucharistic ecclesiology: the Church as a worshipping community and the Eucharist as the ultimate sacrifice and worship offered to God. Within this understanding, the Church’s identity as a communion of believers finds its fullest expression in the act of worship through the Eucharist, wherein believers partake in the divine mystery of Christ’s sacrifice and participate in the ongoing reconciliation between humanity and God.

4. The Church as Worshipping Community and Eucharist as the Real Worship

One of the fundamental convictions of Joseph Ratzinger is that the Church is an adoring community of God and the Eucharist is the real adoration. In his work *The Spirit of the*

³⁵ BENEDICTUS PP. XVI– P. SEEWALD, *Light of the World*, 102.

Liturgy, he delves deeply into this relationship by drawing parallels to the formation of the people of Israel.³⁶ Typically, the Exodus event is commonly understood to culminate in the attainment of the Promised Land. But, according to Joseph Ratzinger, there is a primordial goal as evident in God's original command to Pharaoh: "Let my people go, so that they may worship me in the wilderness" (Ex 7:14; 8:1; 9:1; 9:13; 10:3). This repeated instruction is the real goal of the Exodus. This goal becomes more evident in the course of the negotiation with Pharaoh. Pharaoh perceives it as an issue of Israelite's freedom of worship. At first he allows them to worship their Lord within the land of Egypt (Ex 8:25). Moses could not accept this proposal as God's command was that they must go out in the wilderness in order to Worship: "We must go three day's journey into the wilderness and sacrifice to the Lord our God as he will command us" (Ex 8:27). After the plague, Pharaoh extends his permission and he allows them to Worship God in the wilderness with the exception that the women and children, together with the cattle must stay in Egypt. The current religious practice of Egypt was that only men are active participants in divine worship. But, Moses could not compromise with political authority about Divine Worship. It is not a matter of political compromise. Divine worship must take place as it is revealed by God and not as it is commanded by a political ruler. Again, when Pharaoh permits women and children to go to worship, the restriction was that the cattle must remain in Egypt (Ex 10:24). Moses objection is pertinent to the very nature of the divine worship. He insists that all the cattle must go, for "we do not know with what we must worship the Lord

³⁶ J. RATZINGER, *Collected Works: Theology of the Liturgy*, 6-12.

until we arrive there” (Ex 10:16). Joseph Ratzinger explains: “In all this, the issue is not the Promised Land: the 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”.³⁷

The departure of Israel is to worship God. The Promised land becomes meaningful only with reference to Divine Worship. Ratzinger writes:

The land is given to the people to be a place for the worship of the true God. Mere possession of the land, mere national autonomy, would reduce Israel to the level of all the other nations. The pursuit of such a goal would be a misunderstanding of what is distinctive about Israel’s election. The whole history recounted in the books of the Judges and Kings, which is taken up afresh and given a new interpretation in the Chronicles, is intended to show precisely this, that the land, considered just in itself, is an indeterminate good. It becomes a true good, a real gift, a promise fulfilled, only when it is the place where God reigns.³⁸

After wandering three months, not after three days as suggested in the conversation with Pharaoh, on the day they come “into the wilderness of Sinai” (Ex 19:1) God reveals to Israel the kind of worship God wants. On the third day God comes down onto the top of the mountain (Ex 19:16, 20). Now, the Lord speaks to the people. He makes known his will to them in the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1-17) and, through the mediation of Moses, makes a covenant with them (Ex 24). And finally they worship God in a minutely regulated form and the covenant is concretized. Ratzinger writes: “In this way, the purpose of the wandering in the wilderness, as explained to

³⁷ J. RATZINGER, *Collected Works: Theology of the Liturgy*, 7.

³⁸ J. RATZINGER, *Collected Works: Theology of the Liturgy*, 7-8.

Pharaoh, is fulfilled. Israel learns how to worship God in the way he himself desires”.

At the Mount Sinai Israel receives Ten commandments which is their rule of life to worship God in the way he pleases. It is the righteous living which makes them worthy to adore the Lord. When people are righteous they would worship God and then the Promised Land becomes a real gift for them.

Ratzinger explains:

When the reality of Sinai is lost, the Land, too, is inwardly lost, until finally the people are thrust into exile. Whenever Israel falls away from the right worship of God, when she turns away from God to the false gods (the powers and values of this world), her freedom, too, collapses. It is possible for her to live in her own land and yet still be as she was in Egypt. Mere possession of your own land and state does not give you freedom; in fact, it can be the grossest kind of slavery. And when the loss of law becomes total, it ends in the loss even of the land. The “service of God”, the freedom to give right worship to God, appears, in the encounter with Pharaoh, to be the sole purpose of the Exodus, indeed, its very essence.³⁹

The Exodus marks the foundational departure for the Israelites as a people, where their primary purpose is to come together in worship of God. The worship is the true way to relate to God. Joseph Ratzinger writes:

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. In this sense, worship...has the character of anticipation. 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.⁴⁰

³⁹ J. RATZINGER, *Collected Works: Theology of the Liturgy*, 9-10.

⁴⁰ J. RATZINGER, *Collected Works: Theology of the Liturgy*, 10.

Hence, the point is that People of Israel through their right worship has access to Divine “in whom we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

One of the key features of the Divine worship is that we cannot “make worship” in our own terms. Ratzinger writes: “If God does not reveal himself, man is clutching empty space. Moses says to Pharaoh: ‘[W]e do not know with what we must serve the Lord’ (Ex 10:26). These words display a fundamental law of all liturgy...But real liturgy implies that God responds and reveals how we can worship him”.⁴¹ Ratzinger proposes a contrast case to revealed worship of God and it is the narrative of the golden calf. In the golden calf, Ratzinger writes: “There is no obvious turning away from God to the false gods. Outwardly, the people remain completely attached to the same God. They want to glorify the God who led Israel out of Egypt and believe that they may very properly represent his mysterious power in the image of a bull calf”⁴². Joseph Ratzinger perceives the worship of the golden calf as a self-made cult. “Instead of being worship of God, it becomes a circle closed in on itself: eating, drinking, and making merry. The dance around the golden calf is an image of this self-seeking worship. The narrative of the golden calf is a warning about any kind of self-initiated and self-seeking worship”.⁴³ The very nature of divine worship is that it has to be revealed from God (Ex 10:26; Cf. Gen 22:8).

Like the Old Israel, the Church – the New Israel – is an adoring community in which Father is worshiped in spirit and

⁴¹ J.RATZINGER, *Collected Works: Theology of the Liturgy*, 11.

⁴² J.RATZINGER, *Collected Works: Theology of the Liturgy*, 11.

⁴³ J.RATZINGER, *Collected Works: Theology of the Liturgy*, 12.

truth (Jn 4. 23). The true sacrifice that has been revealed to humanity is the sacrifice of the Lamb of God which has taken away the sins of the World (Jn 1:29). The old Israel and its sacrifices are the prefigurations of the Church and her true sacrifice of the Lord. The true sacrifice of the Lord is remembered and perpetuated in the Eucharistic sacrifice which Christ has commanded his disciples: "Do this in memory of me" (Lk 22:19). It is the real meaning of the expression that "the eucharist is the source and submit of Christian life" (LG, 11). The Eucharist – the real sacrifice and worship of God – builds up the Church as an adoring community and the Eucharistic worship is the sublime activity of the Church for it is the only acceptable sacrifice to God which has redeemed us. Hence, for the first Christians "*ecclesia*" and "eucharist" were one and the same. When Paul speaks of the Eucharistic celebration, he uses the word *ecclesia*: "When you *come together (ecclesia)* as a church (*ecclesia*)" (1 Cor 11:18). That is, the very word *ecclesia* is used as synonym of Eucharist. For Paul, the Eucharistic worship is the true coming-together (*ecclesia*). In the New Testament, the *ecclesia* is a gathering for worship; hence it points to the Eucharist and denotes the assembly called together to celebrate the Eucharist. The Church is primarily present where Christians assemble for the Eucharistic celebration, the true worship of God. The Church is the community of those who allow themselves to be called together by Christ in the Eucharistic worship and those who receive the Eucharistic body of Christ and, from the Eucharist, become the body of Christ ever anew.

As the Church and Eucharist are closely intertwined, one of the important corollaries is that the renewal of the Church will not come from programs or movements but through a

deeper encounter with the Eucharistic Lord. If the Church has its origin in the celebration of Eucharist which is the true worship of God, only a deep encounter with the Lord can renew the Church today. Even though many Catholics often fail to understand Eucharist, Jesus Christ in the Eucharist has the power to transform lives, if we invite people to encounter him.⁴⁴ Amidst various challenges that weakens the Church today, the one and only solution for the invigoration of the Church is to experience and live Eucharist which alone forms the Church.

Conclusion

Our exploration of Joseph Ratzinger's Eucharistic Ecclesiology reveals a profound and interconnected theological framework that forms the core of his understanding of the Church. Rooted in his broader theological perspective, Ratzinger emphasizes the rationality of Christian faith, highlighting the unity of reason and love embodied in the concept of *Logos* and *Agape*. The relational nature of God as a communion of Persons becomes a central theme, underscoring the Christian faith as a call to communion. Ratzinger's ecclesiology, often referred to as "Eucharistic ecclesiology" derives its essence from the conviction that the Eucharist stands as the source and submit of the Church. As the source of the Church, Eucharist builds up the Church. The Eucharist, as the sacramental Body of Christ, becomes the creative force and source of communion among the members of the Church and communion with God. It is clearly manifested in 1Cor 10: 16-17. Further, the Holy Eucharist is the submit or the supreme activity of the Church, for it is the true worship given to God. Like the Old Israel, the new Israel – the Church – is a worshipping community at her essence as evident in the exodus event. The

true and sublime worship of God in “spirit and truth” is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ which is celebrated in the Holy Eucharist. Hence, the Church becomes an adoring community in the Eucharistic celebration.

About the author: Rev. Dr. Joseph Maruthukunnel is a priest of the Diocese of Kanjirapally. He obtained Licentiate degrees in Bioethics from the Pontifical Ateneo Regina Apostolorum and in Fundamental Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. He received his Doctorate in Systematic Theology from the Pontifical Gregorian University in 2019. Currently, he is a resident faculty member at the Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Theology, Aluva, where he teaches several theological subjects. He is also a visiting faculty member at St. Mary’s Malankara Seminary, Trivandrum.