THE HUMAN PERSON AS *RELATIO* IN JOSEPH RATZINGER'S *LOGOS-DIALOGOS* THEOLOGY

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Introduction

The quest towards understanding the human person has always been a primal endeavor of a humanity that seeks. Disciplines of any kind, ranging from philosophy to psychology, even to biology and other scientific schools, grapple with this quest. The quest speaks of the desire for the truth. The human person wants to understand and dig deeper into the reality of his/her humanity. Theology, for its part, centers this anthropological inquiry not into the object of philosophy and the rest of the sciences. Any endeavor to understand the human person from theology's vantage point does not rest on the reality of the human being alone, whether as a unique individual or as a species full of potentials, but a comprehension intertwined with the understanding of the person of the One revealed in space and time, the One revealed in history, Jesus Christ.

What theology provides to this kind of quest is beyond the grasp of philosophy and the sciences. The latter only deals, collectively taken, with the empirical. It is worth noting that this study has a distinctive character from the outset, defining the path it is taking. The question of the human person, with reference to the Person revealed in history as a way of God's communication of himself, is the primary element of the study. The subsequent point, rooted in this, is the reality of relations, a quality of the human person that the sciences cannot fully

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capture and that philosophy can only attempt to explicate. This is the other aspect that concerns us.

In the aforementioned context, this theological inquiry into the human person falls into two theological areas: Christology and Anthropology. In this theological undertaking, we cannot fail to mention the implications of this inquiry into the reality of the Christian today. Relations among believers spring from a better understanding of who a human person is. With this conviction, the human person as a *being with others* is better understood. In the process, the community of these human persons, the Church, will be able to understand herself as well. This encounter is the basic point of *relatio*. No relationship is born without an encounter. The incarnation of the Son of God, his revelation in flesh, concretizes this quality of relations: God never hesitated to be with people, to stay with people, to live with people, to put himself in space, if only to express his love for us. No other person in history could serve as our reference point to this *relatio* than Jesus Christ himself.

Joseph Ratzinger's Understanding of the Human Person

In a homily delivered before the conclave that elected him to the papacy, Joseph Ratzinger devotes a paragraph to a scathing personal critique of relativism. One line still reverberates until now: "We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and the ultimate goal consists solely of one's ego and desires."[1] He decried the crisis faced by the Church in the new millennium. Ultimately, the crisis is about truth, which becomes an existential problem. Ratzinger grew up in a Europe that was experiencing the

1 Joseph Ratzinger, *Mass Pro-Eligendo Romano Pontifice,* Homilies, 18 April 2005, https://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_20050418_en.html.

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decline of faith, and as described by Peter Seewald, Ratzinger has seen the "insanity of a world without God, creating a 'new man.'"[2] Ratzinger's anthropology is one that goes back to the original concept of a human being as *person* against the relativistic tide that has crept into the West. Relativism is a threat to this precious conception, and it is something Ratzinger has fought against throughout. His theology grounds his critique.

The Concept *Person* in Christian Theology

Augustine's Concept of *Person*

Augustine is perhaps the most popular theologian across centuries. To date, his theology is celebrated. We know that Augustine's influence is not only within the realm of the academe. His influence extends to the simplest of lives because of his conversion experience. It is very personal and existential. Is his understanding of a *person* rooted in his own experience as well? Paul Collins writes that "it is generally accepted that Augustine is the original protagonist of such a concept of personhood."[3] The articulation in the early Councils on the relationship between the *hypostaseis* of the Trinity, to use the terminology of the Cappadocian fathers (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory Nazianzen), does not provide any definition of *person* even in the most general sense. Person, as a theological term, is born when the early Church struggles to explain the Trinitarian doctrine of *one God in three persons*. Augustine, O'Donnell writes, "had to face the problem of how to translate the Greek phrase, one *ousia*, three *hypostaseis,* into Latin."[4]

2 Benedict XVI, *The Last Testament,* with Peter Seewald, trans. Jacob Phillips (New York: Bloomsbury, 2016), x-xi.

3 Paul Collins, *Trinitarian Theology: West and East* (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2005), 118-119.

4 John O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God* (London: Sheed & Ward Ltd, 1998), 101.

Hypostasis, according to O'Donnell, would have been translated as *substantia* in Latin, and Augustine may have feared the possible implications of the use of the term.[5] Using the term 'persons' would confuse the faithful. Yet, with the desire to say something about God's nature, he ends up using *person*, "not to say what the three in God are but rather to avoid being silent altogether."[6] So, how does Augustine understand *person*?

We begin with Augustine's understanding of the human being. Some scholars have a negative reception of Augustine's take on the human being. Take this interpretation of Peter Burnell: "For Augustine, the divine beauty in us has been largely (of course not completely) lost, and Christ has restored it to us on the Cross by giving up his innate beauty in order to take upon himself our lack of beauty *(Sermon 27.6)*... [and] we are so extensively damaged that the similarity is not restored as long as we are in this world *(De Trinitate, 4.2.4)*."[7] The tone of it really comes from Augustine's experience. And how he interprets God's love transforming him becomes the ground of his conviction. If this is his understanding of the human being, how does this affect his definition of human nature?

For Augustine, the *imago Dei* is in the soul.[8] This is an important point to bring up, for with this supposition, he contextualizes human nature. His understanding of human nature is even based on a literal interpretation of Genesis arguing that "in paradise, man was endowed with all sorts of privileges: he was virtually immortal; he never experienced the revolt

5 O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God,* 101.

6 O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God,* 101.

7 Peter Burnell, *The Augustinian Person* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 174.

8 Henri Rondet, *Original Sin: The Patristic and Theological Background,* trans. Cajetan Finegan (Shannon, Ireland: Ecclessia Press, 1972), 115.

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of the senses; he possessed wonderful knowledge and enjoyed greater freedom" but that human being's pride destroyed everything so that sin was a consequence of it and the "children of Adam come into the world in a state of sin."[9] This negative understanding of human nature is contrasted with the nature of God. With all the positive superlatives attributed to God on the one hand, the negative notion of human nature calls for redemption on the other. If human nature is taken that badly, how could Augustine define a human person? Is the definition on human person to be presented negatively as well? Interestingly, Augustine did not start by defining a person from the human perspective. If he did, the configuration may have swiftly changed. We have said that Augustine's *imago Dei* is in the soul. This *being an image of God* is directly referred to *person*. And this person, for the doctor of grace, is one who is constitutive of substance. A person can therefore be denoted as both human and divine.

In this attempt to synthesize Augustine's understanding of *person,* which can now be applied to both God and man, our starting point is Genesis 1:26: the human being as *imago Dei*. While *imago Dei* itself does not define *person*, it projects relations. The debate that the Cappadocians do not fully resolve is given a new dimension: relation. The *mia ousia, treis hypostaseis* to describe the Trinity, did not put to rest the clamor to define *person*. Augustine has contributed much to the conversation because his starting point in understanding the person is *relatio*. This relation is not only seen in the Triune God but also in God in relation to the human being, the creature. And so, Collins would interpret Augustine as using Aristotle's *relatio* category as a basis in understanding personhood and [another interpreter] would even go further to contend that

9 Rondet, *Original Sin,* 120-121.

the theologian "elevates the category of relation to the level of substance."[10]

Boethius' *Person*: A Development from Augustine

While the theologian has contributed much to the definition of *person*, the focus of the definition is still on the Trinity. Decades after Augustine's death, Anicius Severinus Manlius Boethius (c. 475-526) came into the picture.[11] It is the figure of Boethius that caught sight of the concept *person* and made possible its development into the philosophical conversation.[12] Boethius develops the concept by giving his own definition. What the Cappadocians greatly miss and what Augustine lacks, Boethius tries to fill in.

Boethius' attempt to define a person fits the medieval understanding of a human being. Boethius, though, seems to depart from any of the sources and focuses on the *individual* itself. Collins shares an observation: the definition given by Boethius is "the expression of both an individualistic and a substantialist understanding of personhood."[13] In his *Treatise Against Eutyches and Nestorius,* Boethius admits that he has difficulty in defining *person*.[14] He considers *nature* to be a part of the definition, and that person is to be understood within

10 Collins, *Trinitarian Theology,* 119.

11 John Marenbon, "Anicius Severinus Manlius Boethius," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* Winter 2021 Edition, ed. Edward Zalta, accessed March 2, 2025, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2021//entries/boethius/.

12 O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God,* 101.

13 Collins, *Trinitarian Theology,* 120.

14 Anicius Severinus Manlius Boethius, *A Treatise Against Eutyches and Nestorius,* trans. H.F. Stewart and E.K. Rand, Logos Library, http://www.logoslibrary.org/boethius/eutyches/2.html (accessed March 3, 2025).

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the context of substance.[15] Boethius' problem lies in the nature of substance itself. Understandably, substance can be anything, like bodily or not, sensitive or not, rational or irrational, but what he is convinced of is that *person* does not apply to anything that has no life and living things that lack sense, and on living beings that do not use mind or reason.[16] What he directly affirms is the *person* of a human being, of an angel, and of God, and he contends that it can only be applied to an individual.[17] Boethius thus writes, "Wherefore if *person* belongs to substances alone, and these are rational, and if every nature is a substance, existing not in universals but in individuals, we have found the definition of *person*: 'The individual substance of a rational creature.'"[18]

Boethius' *person* is defined by the individuality of a rational creature, and *that* individuality is itself *substance*. This rendering sets the human being apart from other creatures because the latter's nature is *irrational,* and with that irrationality, their substance is not to be called *person*. Applied to the persons in the Trinity, the correct term to employ would be *rational nature* because God is not categorized as a creature. What is the implication of this understanding for their issue with the persons in the Trinity? When *person* is taken as an individual substance, the three persons in the Trinity would therefore be understood as *three substances*, matching the *tres hypostaseis* of the Greeks. Boethius is fully aware that the Church forbids this.[19] He leaves it to the Church to decide which to employ.[20] All he wishes to

15 Boethius, *A Treatise,* Chapter 2.

16 Boethius, *A Treatise,* Chapter 2.

17 Boethius, *A Treatise,* Chapter 2.

18 Boethius, *A Treatise,* Chapter 3.

19 Boethius, *A Treatise,* Chapter 3.

20 Boethius, *A Treatise,* Chapter 4.

arrive at is the distinction between nature and person, wherein nature is the "specific property of any substance" and person is the "individual substance of a rational nature."[21] While Boethius has provided the Church and the medieval academe with an official ontological definition of *person*, questions have not ceased surfacing. His definition does not appeal to the theologians following him. Centuries later, the understanding of *person* becomes more refined, thanks to a theologian deeply engaged in spiritual mysticism and the Augustinian tradition, Richard of St. Victor.

Richard of St. Victor: Refining Augustine's *Person*

Richard of St. Victor is a native of Scotland and a monk (d.1173).[22] He is called "of St. Victor" after the School of St. Victor in Paris.[23] Richard is a twelfth-century theologian, centuries apart from Augustine and Boethius. We purposely take into account Richard's theological view because of his contribution to refining the definition of person. Richard's milieu attests to the popularity of the subject of *human love* not only in theology but also in the arts.[24] He, like any theologian of the time, considers love as God's revelation, that God is found and is able to be understood in the human language of love.[25] This may mean a renaissance of Augustine's theology. Richard and his contemporaries, albeit Augustinian in orientation,

21 Boethius, *A Treatise,* Chapter 4.

22 Alfred Sharpe, "Richard of St Victor," *The Catholic Encyclopedia,* Vol. 13 (New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1912), https://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13045c.htm (accessed March 4, 2025).

23 Sharpe, "Richard of St. Victor."

24 Richard of St. Victor, *On the Trinity,* trans. with intro. Aage Rydstrom-Poulsen (Belgium: Brepols Publisher, 2021), accessed March 5, 2025, DOI10.1484/M.BLCS-EB.5.123003, 11. This is the Introduction of Aage Rydstrom-Poulsen.

25 Richard of St. Victor, *On the Trinity,* 11-12.

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developed a more dynamic understanding of the Trinity since the Augustinian doctrine "had a rather static image" of divine nature.[26] Augustine's *relatio* is not fully developed. While he writes on love *vis-à-vis* his understanding of the persons in the Trinity, this love is predicated on the unity of divine nature.[27] Richard takes a different direction. He finds an answer to the question of relations among the persons in the Trinity in *plurality*. Aage Rydstrom-Poulsen differentiates Richard's understanding of charity as "the love that requires a plurality of persons" from Augustine's "unity of nature."[28]

In Book Three of the Trinity, Richard writes that "where there is fullness of all goodness, true and supreme charity cannot be lacking" because "nothing is better than charity; nothing is more perfect than charity."[29] God alone possesses what he calls *supreme charity*. Interestingly, Richard makes his stance unambiguous when he writes in all directness that no one can claim that s/he loves when the object and loving is just her/himself because for love to be *charity,* then it has to be other-oriented.[30] He thus contends that when plurality is lacking, "charity cannot exist."[31] This is what he calls *condilectio,* the greatest form of loving the other.[32] Richard develops Augustine's *relatio* while accommodating Boethius' notion. God is therefore understood, in Richard's thinking, as the supreme charity, and that this supreme charity necessarily contains

26 Richard of St. Victor, *On the Trinity,* 14.

27 Richard of St. Victor, *On the Trinity,* 15.

28 Richard of St. Victor, *On the Trinity,* 15.

29 Richard of St. Victor, *The Twelve Patriarchs, The Mystical Ark, Book Three of the Trinity,* trans. Grover A. Zinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), book iii, chapter 2, 374.

30 Richard of St.Victor, *Book Three of the Trinity,* 374.

31 Richard of St.Victor, *Book Three of the Trinity,* 374.

32 Richard of St. Victor, *On the Trinity,* 41.

relation, without which it cannot be called charity. In describing the "character of love," Richard feels convinced that "love is always confessing love" (chapter xii).[33] It can only be *confessing* when the object, an *other,* exists; otherwise, it remains a self-contained love.

While Augustine's understanding of the Trinity is psychological, Richard's is interpersonal.[34] While Boethius speaks more of *person* as an individual substance that possesses rationality, Richard places his focus more on love and the necessity of the other. This is the highest form of love which, when applied to the Trinity, is understood as the "mutual love between two persons," a love that births out another.[35] His *condilectio* is valid for both God and human beings. With this interpersonal character of loving, the human experience of love reflects the love found in the Trinity.[36] What, in other words, constitutes *personhood* is *condilectio*, a *relatio* that is not mere connection and unification in nature but the expression of the loving that finds its fulfillment in the persons of the Trinity. Richard's definition of person as "an incommunicable existence of an intellectual nature"[37] means that it is *incommunicable* because it is individually unique, and that this *existence* of the person "has its being in itself and not in another."[38] What is its relation with condilectio? The individuality is incommunicable, but it can only find its meaning in its relation with the *other* in *caritas.* The *relatio* in the Trinity extends to the human experience. It is

33 Richard of St. Victor, *Contemplation*, 90.

34 Richard of St. Victor, *On the Trinity,* 15.

35 Richard of St. Victor, *On the Trinity,* 42.

36 Richard of St. Victor, *On the Trinity,* 43.

37 O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God,* 101.

38 O'Donnell, *The Mystery of the Triune God,* 101.

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this *relatio* that does not stop at Boethius' rational nature but necessarily expands to mean *condilectio.*

Ratzinger's *Person* as *Relatio*

The turn of the century following scholasticism has witnessed a newfound understanding of person. As we traced the Augustinian tradition that influenced Ratzinger, we have established that the question of the concept of *person* is originally a Church-question arising from the difficulties in comprehending the essence of God. For many centuries after the early councils, the concept has developed and its definition refined. The dawn of the period of post-scholasticism transformed the concept, together with the rise of scientific inquiry. The question on *person* has never ceased to be raised, but new problems have also arisen, problems that the Church of this particular period in history had to face. Both modern and contemporary thoughts grapple with understanding the concept. These thoughts are contradictory, depending on their respective emphasis, but most of them, if not all, are uniform in a single aspect: the concept is no longer attached to the question of God. From this fact about the face of history lies Ratzinger's frustration. The crusader for the truth decries society's behavior of turning away from God. This turning away from God necessarily results in turning away from the truth.

Ratzinger's *person* can help us deepen our understanding of this concept. Ratzinger's understanding aligns with the Augustinian tradition. Alluding to the persons in the Trinity, he writes: "Person is the pure relation of being related, nothing else."[39] The concept of person in God is thus incomprehensi-

39 Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* trans. J. R. Foster and Michael J. Miller, 3rd ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 183.

ble without *relatio*. Echoing Augustine, *relatio* becomes God's substance as "relation is discovered as an equally valid primordial mode of reality."[40] As a primordial mode of reality, *relatio* itself is constitutive to God's being. Without it, the concept of God may not be comprehensible. Without it, the cosmos would never have taken shape. Without it, revelation would be impossible because the human being, its recipient, would never have existed. *Relatio* thus plays a very significant role in history.

The *imago Dei* creature encounters God in the most personal way. While philosophy can reduce the human being to an *individual*, our theological understanding is not content with it. Christianity, Ratzinger believes, transforms this philosophical understanding, for it considers the human being not as a mere individual but as a *person*.[41] In a more defined manner, Ratzinger makes it clear that there are two significant points of transition in the understanding of *person* in theology. As the scholar Bogumil Gacka summarizes, these transitions are formed out of the passage from substance to subsistence and from subsistence to relations.[42] We have said that the theologians of the medieval ages understood *person* within the definition of a substance. The problem lies in the strict Aristotelian separation between substance and accidents. *Relatio* is an accident of the substance. Ratzinger, though, considers theology not as something that develops within the confines of Aristotelian philosophy and logic. When we think of substance alone, we are in the world of ideas. There has to be an existential element that is not only accidental but constitutive of a definition. Person as subsistence is born.

40 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 184.

41 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 160.

42 Gacka, "Relational Personalism," 38.

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This concept of subsistence derives from the belief that the human being, as God's creature is an *imago Dei*. What is even more interesting in Ratzinger's understanding is that "God only comes to a human being through other human beings."[43] The concept *relatio* is expanded. The *relatio* innate in the human being is the *relatio* that connects him/her to others and, through others, connects him/her to God. The *relatio* Augustine talks about in the Trinitarian doctrine is the same *relatio* that interweaves all the rational beings concerned: God, each individual, and others. Ratzinger is not only preserving the faith in the Trinity; he is defending the truth of our beings as *persons*. The reality is simply bare: we are human *persons*.

We must remember that this understanding is only possible because we never lose our spirituality. In this context, Richard of St. Victor comes close to us. His mystical writings on love help him arrive at a refined definition of *person*. This relationship between faith and reason, therefore, produces a spirituality that is not estranged from reality. Ratzinger therefore claims that if our faith is denigrated to "a spirituality that has no connection with reality, we first strip faith itself of its reality, but then we also rob human fellowship of its most precious dimension."[44] His understanding of *person,* therefore, is from faith understood by reason, informed by reality, thus a faith that embraces what is actual and real. Truth is unveiled. The *new man* envisioned by relativism is a false god. Without any ounce of fear from the bashing of the relativistic current in the contemporary world, Ratzinger can exclaim: "In reality, such a mistaken quest of an imagined divinization leads to self-destruction, for even God himself... does not exist in isolated self-sufficiency" and that the human beings can be like God

43 Joseph Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching,* trans. Matthew O'Connell (Chicago, Illinois: Franciscan Herald Press, 1985), 26.

44 Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching,* 26.

"when they stop trying to create themselves and, instead, allow God to create them."[45] It is God's love that reveals itself and is thus experienced by the human being as *relatio* with one another. We can be in a *relatio* with others because, first of all, we experience it as God reveals himself as love. Ratzinger appreciates Richard's refined definition because it does not "lie on the level of essence but rather on the level of existence."[46] The existentialist theology that interests him begins with the understanding of person. Without this clear grasp of the definition, a theology of existence would not be developed.

Considering Ratzinger from an Augustinian perspective helps us see the thought patterns prevalent in his theology. But the actual reading of Ratzinger's writing helps us understand his ground: love of faith. The only ground for him is nothing more than his love of the faith. He is standing as a Christian. He defends the truth as a Christian. He dialogues with culture as a Christian. This is the Ratzinger influenced by Augustine. Faith is Ratzinger's base. Without the Christian faith, *person* is understood very differently. It is faith that leads Augustine to a more profound understanding of *person*. It is faith that develops the notion, which, up until now, remains decisively convincing in the world of the academe. Ratzinger does not allow modern currents to go unchecked and unchallenged. This disposition gives him the courage to dialogue with his contemporary milieu. Ratzinger's theology is an existential one. Substance alone cannot define existence. Aristotle's substance would have to come down from above to be able to contribute to an existential theology. Aquinas writes something about subsistence in his *Summa*. He defines subsistence as something that

45 Ratzinger, *Dogma and Preaching,* 25.

46 Vincent Anyama, *The Primacy of Christ: The Patristic Patrimony in Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's Analogy in Theology* (Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2021), 156.

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exists in itself and not in others (q29, art2).[47] That if something does not exist in itself, it is not a subsistent being. This agrees with Boethius' individuality, but his emphasis is just on substance. Ratzinger wants to add the concept of subsistence to the definition. This is why he appreciates Richard's definition. When the concept of subsistence is present, existence becomes defined. When existence is present, the nature of the human being is easily understood.

We can now express with conviction that since the persons in the Trinity are in a *relatio* and *relatio* is itself God's substance, the human *person* as a subsistent being, a subsistence that comes from God, is also a being in *relatio*. By this, the understanding of the Trinity becomes even more developed. Others may think that the doctrine of the Trinity is in the world of ideas alone because when we speak of the persons in the Godhead, we can only speak of the one substance (*una substantia*). We must not forget that the Second Person of the Trinity concretizes the thought in the mind. Here, the truth Ratzinger is concerned about finds its real meaning. The incarnation is a turning point both in salvation history and in the understanding of God. The Trinity does not remain a doctrine we can debate endlessly. The *Logos* changes the configuration of history.

Person as *Relatio* in Ratzinger's *Logos-Dialogos* Theology

The truth of the human being, not only as an individual but as a *person,* is our object of inquiry. The primary question of existence has led us to realize that the human *person* only becomes truly itself when it is in *relatio*. It comes from the Trinitarian understanding of *person* and becomes constitutive

47 New Advent, "Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae:* Question 29, Article 2," https://www.newadvent.org/summa/1029.htm#art2 (accessed 4 May 2025).

in the human being. The postmodernist relativistic tide criticized by Ratzinger wants to make a *new man* out of its own understanding. The theologian proposes a different perspective: the human *person* does not have to create a *new man* but only to return to the *Logos*, the incarnate one.

A. *Logos* in Ratzinger's Theology

Logos, as both word and thought (reason), is synthesized in a person, in history, and in faith. Ratzinger's theology is not only focused on the *Logos* but is grounded in it and always returns to it. The Christian faith is centered on the *Logos* and is understood by the *logos* (reasoned thought). We wish to examine Ratzinger's theology under three categories: the *Logos* as Person, the *Logos* in history, and the *Logos* of faith.

The *Logos* as Person

The *Logos, made flesh,* is a *person,* and this person is Jesus Christ. Existence is at the heart of this theological statement. We recall Ratzinger's understanding of *person*. Following Augustine and his disciples, this understanding primarily affirms the reality of existence. Existence is not an idea, a useless universal among others. Without existence, *person* is nowhere to be found as a reality. The tricky part of the *logos-en-sarx* theology as a whole is its being a mystery. It is not only difficult to assert; it is, first of all, difficult to comprehend. The incarnation becomes the central mystery of Christianity through the lens of intellectual inquiry. The scientific and the philosophical minds cannot comprehend the *Word* that exists from eternity that has now become subjected to space and time. Yet, the mystery that boggles the mind is what actually gives meaning. That existence itself defines meaning. As Ratzinger himself writes, "the meaning that sustains all being has become flesh; that is, it has entered history and become

one individual in it."[48] It is precisely this encounter of the *logos* and *sarx* that both disturbs and gives meaning to existence. Without this encounter, God remains someone beyond the blue sky, far from the human being, and out of touch with the reality of humanity. By this encounter, the *sarx* finds its meaning. The meaning is found because the first "work" of the *Logos* is the "giving of himself."[49] Ratzinger contends that this Jesus Christ is the "one in whom person and work are identical."[50] It is his person that gives.

The *person* of the *Logos* who *was made flesh* is witnessed to by many people. We can know him through these witnesses. The written accounts, the scriptures, are our guide. More profoundly, the scriptures do not only record the witness of individuals or groups of people; they also reveal the *person* of the *Logos*. For Ratzinger, "the teachings and deeds of the historical Jesus are not as such important but that the mere fact of his having existed is sufficient — so long as one realizes that this 'fact' implies the whole reality of the person who as such is his own teaching, who as such coincides with his deeds and thereby possesses his unparalleled individuality and uniqueness."[51] The *Logos* that became a person is therefore to be encountered in the most personal way. We can here see the spirituality present in Ratzinger's theology. He is not only explicating the *Logos*; he wants us to encounter the *Logos*. That encounter is only possible with the language of receiving — "the acceptance of this person who is his word; of the word as person and of the person as word."[52]

48 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 195.

49 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 204.

50 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 210.

51 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 205.

52 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 205.

The identity of the person is found in that *word*. But what's in that word? Ratzinger brings us to the "dynamic character of existence, its pure *actualitas*" to be able to comprehend this *word* as person, which in his writings he also calls *son*.[53] For Ratzinger, the *Word* does not "stand on its own" for "it comes from someone" and is therefore "meant for others."[54] This dynamic of existence is only understood within "this totality of 'from' and 'for.'"[55] This is the nature of the *Logos* that became flesh. While the fathers of the Church wrestled to answer the questions raised about Jesus' nature, the simplest form by which the theology of the *logos* as person is expressed is through this dynamic. The first *work* of God that produces the encounter between *logos* and *sarx* is the giving of Godself in this dynamic of *from and for*. From this is born *relatio*. Ratzinger wonderfully describes this work of self-giving in expounding the Christological dogma on *divine man*: "he who does not cling to himself but is pure relatedness coincides in this with the absolute and thus becomes lord," and the "Lord before whom the universe bows is the slaughtered Lamb, the symbol of existence that is pure act, pure 'for.'"[56] We are reminded of scholasticism's *actus purus (pure act)* to describe God. This philosophical, and very impersonal, understanding of God is transformed by Ratzinger into a pure *for*. It is as if Ratzinger were saying that the pure *for* in God is itself his pure act. Only in the incarnation does the pure act take a concrete relational grounding. This pure *for* defines what *relatio* is all about. The *Logos* as person, as pure *for*, becomes the *Logos* that is *relatio*.

53 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 210.

54 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 210.

55 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 210.

56 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 221.

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The *Logos* in History

As we now reflect on the significance of history in Christianity, we are reminded of the traditional teaching on salvation history. The basic supposition is simply this: *there is* a story of how salvation comes about. This, in itself, is true. The Old Testament attests to this. We can think of the many figures in the Old Testament who contribute to the story of Israel's conception of salvation. Various stories individually narrate moments of salvation. Let us recall some of these stories. After the fall, there is the famous story of Noah's ark that saved him and his family from the flood's wrath (Genesis 7:1-12). The figure of Abraham comes after, perhaps, the most celebrated figure among the Israelites, who is called the *father of many nations* (Gen 17:5-6). Isaac, Abraham's son, reminds us of that sacrificial offering story (Gen 22:1-14), like a silent lamb who entrusts himself to his own father. Jacob, Isaac's son, later to be called Israel (Gen 32:29), becomes the father of twelve sons, the roots of the twelve tribes. This is followed by the moving and inspiring story of Joseph, who saved the Israelites from famine (Gen 45:1-15). Their recourse to Egypt became their own suffering as they fell into slavery in the hands of the Egyptians (Exodus 1:8-14). The figure of Moses then emerged as a monumental figure in Israelite history, leading the *exodus* event (Ex 14:1-30). By these selected scenes from scriptures, we are led to reflect on how salvation comes about. Ratzinger makes clear that when we speak of salvation history, we are not putting emphasis on the stories themselves, but we zero in on the fact that "salvation comes through history."[57]

This phrase – *salvation comes through history* – only makes sense within the *logos-en-sarx*, within incarnation theology.

57 Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology,* trans. Sister Mary Frances McCarthy (San Francisco, California: Ignatius Press, 1987), 154.

The stories that narrate salvation in Israelite history are, in the incarnation theology, transformed into a salvific act of God himself within the limits of history. By the salvific act of God, we mean God himself entering into the contingency of history, and by his actual existence, doing the saving. Ratzinger thus understands history as the home of existence for "it gives existence its true character," and since this history is "divinely established," it is in the "historical that that which transcends history – the eternal – becomes present."[58] How is this *Logos* in history understood? How is this saving expressed? We can only explicate this *Logos* in history when we go back to the dynamic of existence we took up above: the dynamics of *from* to *for*. In the *logos-en-sarx*, this dynamic corresponds to the central theme of the relationship between *descent* and *ascent*. We now put the *Logos* in the historical context using this theme.

We can certainly recall the stories and reckon that the entire life of Jesus Christ speaks of this *descent.* An artist's imagined annunciation alone could produce Christ's literal coming down from heaven. The biblical account in Luke's annunciation to Mary talks of the Holy Spirit overshadowing her (1:35). Mary's conception of Jesus itself gives us a literal image of God's descent. The many stories of Jesus that describe his encounter with the Gentiles (Mark 7:24-30, Luke 7:1-10, Matthew 9:18-26) are a descent into the inferiority of the lowly race. His engagements with the tax collectors and sinners (Luke 5:27-32, 7:36-50) are a descent into the experience of the religious outcast. By healing the lepers (Matthew 8:1-4, Luke 17:11-19), he descends into the experience of the separated, into the experience of being set apart and far from a community. These scenes of descent are nothing more than an encounter with what is human. It is through this descent that the

58 Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology,* 154.

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dynamic of existence, that *from* to *for*, becomes concrete. The *Logos* in history is therefore embodying the *relatio*. His descent is nothing but pure *for*, a pure *relatio*. In the gospel narratives, despite the onlookers' blindness and misunderstanding, the *Logos* that became *sarx* has concretely transformed himself: the *logos* as spoken in words of preaching and the *sarx* as deeds of encounter.

These scenes of descent culminate and find their fullest expression on the Cross. For Ratzinger, the Cross is Christianity's point of departure, it is its birthplace.[59] In the Cross, the vulnerability of love descends. The *Logos* that has become the Christ is himself the salvation we have been talking about. We can say that the salvation that comes through history, as Ratzinger claims, takes the form of love. The scenes of descent we have enumerated above are taken for granted by the onlookers. They are expressive of that love already. A "death sentence of history,"[60] which is not supposed to be needed, makes itself necessary if only for love to be concretely encountered in sacrificial dying. Ratzinger describes the crucifixion as Jesus Christ's "coronation," and his kingship as a "surrender" of himself for the sake of the human being, and this act figures his word, his mission, and his existence.[61] Ratzinger surmises that in this self-surrender, "his existence is thus his word" and "he is word because he is love," a *person* "who is his word and his work," a *person* who is the meaning that sustains.[62] This is the salvation that comes through history, not simply a factual story that is merely recounted by witnesses. It is a story that chooses to reveal that salvific act for the other, an act that is pure *for*, an

59 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 205.

60 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 206.

61 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 206.

62 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 206.

act that defines *relatio*. In this context, it is this *relatio* that gives more meaning, and it is this *relatio* that sustains.

The *Logos* of Faith

The Church has always affirmed that faith is our response to God's revelation of himself. As the *Logos was made flesh*, the response in faith has been configured. While the Jews may have expected that the Messiah was to come, none from among the chosen race thought that the one who was supposed to save them would come from a lowly place. This reminds us of Nathanael's doubtful question, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Even by this experience, Israel was challenged by the *person* of Jesus Christ. The Christ in their minds was not the Jesus they saw and observed, challenging order and norms. Yet, faith is not about an idea of what should be. Faith, for Ratzinger, is that which "expresses the abandonment of oneself to what we can neither make nor need to make, to the ground of the world as meaning, which first of all discloses to [each one] the freedom to make."[63] This is the faith of their own Nicodemus (John 3:2), of Jairus (Mark 5:22-24), of a centurion (Luke 7: 6-8), to name a few. An invisible God who makes himself visible in the *Logos* has made the response in faith, that abandonment, easier. We acknowledge, though, that the human being is in the continuous journey of finding meaning, and along the way, the challenge in believing could be more heightened. Ratzinger is convinced of that one aspect of belief that should go with that journey: rationality.

We have considered above the *logos* as reason. For a reason to have a real utility, it must be directed to something. Ratzinger refers to this as *truth*. If the *Logos* who made his descent into the poverty of our humanity gives meaning, the *Logos* that

63 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 75.

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we believe in must have that meaning."[64] The meaning we are referring to is the Truth[65] of the *Logos* to which we focus our reflection. Ratzinger centers his understanding of faith in the *Logos.* By this conviction, he writes: "Christian faith is word-oriented."[66] It is *word-oriented* because it is faith in the Word as person and faith in the word as reason. As *person*, "the confession of Jesus Christ as *Logos (Word)* means that in him God himself is revealed, the truth of all things."[67] As reason, the Christian faith is in search for the whole Truth for it "wants to free man from his apathy because it knows that he is a creature of God and an image of him who is the *Logos,* the Truth."[68] This is what Ratzinger is most convinced about: the abandonment in faith is not a "blind surrender to the irrational."[69] If belief becomes a plain abandonment that tolerates superstition and is comfortable with the absence of reason, it is not Christian faith.

Ratzinger proposes a movement in faith. He calls it a "movement toward the *logos*, the *ratio*."[70] We may doubt if reason's role is truly indispensable since faith is full of mystery, something that reason cannot arrive at an answer to. This cannot stand as a factual statement, though, because the use of reason does not endeavor to achieve all answers about any mystery. This particular goal is not the goal of faith that moves toward the *ratio.* Something mysterious does not necessarily constitute irrationality when left unanswered. Reason endeavors to arrive

64 Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology,* 337.

65 Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology,* 337.

66 Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology,* 338.

67 Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology,* 338.

68 Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology,* 340.

69 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 75.

70 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 75.

at the truth even if that truth is mysterious. When it cannot arrive at a complete answer, it does not mean that the quest for understanding is irrational. Ratzinger is right when he calls it a *movement towards the logos*, for a movement is a progressive action that does not promise certainty. It may or may not find the answer at the time being. More importantly, the movement directed towards the *logos,* the *ratio*, is, for Ratzinger, a movement towards the *truth*.[71] This understanding affirms what is human in one who believes, in one who responds in faith. No truthful believer achieves the search for the truth in a blink of an eye. Even if conviction is present already, the search for the truth does not end. This must be the ground of Ratzinger's contention that as faith moves towards *ratio*, it also moves towards meaning[72] because meaning is only found in truth, and ultimately in the Truth. The *Logos* of faith is therefore the Truth. This is the Truth that contradicts the modern demand of a *new man*, the new form of the golden calf.

But the reality of this movement would have to go back to the *Logos* himself. If the human response in faith is moving towards *ratio*, here understood as meaning in Truth, the human being should not forget that the Truth that is supposed to have been found has first found the seeker. Encounter is thus born, an "encounter with the man Jesus, and in this encounter [faith] experiences the meaning of the world as person."[73] This meaning only becomes present because of Jesus' "unconditional devotion to men," a devotion that assures the believer that this "meaning knows me and loves me, that I can entrust myself to it."[74] This encounter has a precedence and

71 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 75.

72 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 75.

73 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 79.

74 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 79-80.

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a definition: *relatio.* It is this *Logos* who has found the believer first and foremost before the believer responds in faith. The desire to be in a *relatio* with the recipient called human being precedes the encounter, and the encounter that is born concretizes *relatio.* In this *relatio,* abandonment of oneself to the *Logos* of faith becomes real.

B. *Dialogos*

When we look for a direct translation of the Greek *dialogos*, the internet's ready answer is *dialogue*. Let us begin, then, with the simplicity of this translation. The term *dialogue* refers to a mode of communication that requires two or more individuals. In speech, an individual speaker who speaks alone, speaks with the self, without the presence of another, is called a monologue. If God were not Trinitarian, he would be in a constant monologue. He speaks, and he hears himself. Is this possible? In our imagination, it is. But not in our faith. The Church's Trinitarian belief confirms the centrality of *dialogos* in our faith. *Dialogos,* therefore, begins with the persons in the Trinity. How can we say this to be so? We have to go back to our basic understanding of God as basic as the translation of the Greek term into the language that we are using. We will not deal with the complexity of God's nature or any impersonal understanding; we turn to the most basic one: the God of love.

Ratzinger's contention on the transformation of the God of the philosophers to the God of faith begins with the Christian faith naming this transition and thus giving it a new meaning: from *thought* to *agape* (love).[75] Both thought and love are the content of *dialogos*. A thought that is not only thought but a thought transformed in love is what defines our faith.

75 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 143.

Ratzinger calls this *creative love.*[76] This is the *dialogos* itself. That creative love only makes so much sense in light of the *Logos* becoming *flesh*. With this, Ratzinger writes, the "transformation of the purely philosophical thinking" becomes clear: the God who is merely thought of before "has emotions as a man does, he rejoices, he seeks, he waits, he goes to meet."[77] God has therefore become personal. Since God becomes personal, his presence is felt, his love is experienced. The *logos* thus becomes *dialogos,* and faith becomes dialogical. The synthesis of the two is found in the Christian faith as faith in the *logos* (thought/*ratio* and love). Ratzinger can say that this *logos* "means nothing else than that creative thinking we found to be the precondition and ground of all being is truly conscious thinking," "that it knows not only itself but also its whole thought" and "that this thinking not only knows but loves; that it is creative because it is love."[78] This is how *dialogos* is understood.

With all this, we are led towards a definition of the God we believe in. The transition from the philosophers' understanding to the understanding of faith gives us a definitive interpretation that "the God of faith is [thus] basically defined by the category of relationship."[79] *Relatio* is what defines the *logos* that *was made flesh*. Ratzinger thus summarizes his theology: "The highest mode of Being includes the element of relationship... the supreme Being [that] no longer appears as absolute, enclosed autarchy but turns out to be at the same time involvement, creative power, which creates and bears and loves other things."[80] How does this Being show this *relatio?*

76 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 143.

77 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 145.

78 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 159.

79 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 147.

80 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 148.

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Ratzinger quotes Friedrich Hölderlin's preface to his *Hyperion*: "Not to be encompassed by the greatest, but to let oneself be encompassed by the smallest – that is divine."[81] This is the creative love in concrete. This is how *dialogos* has come to be. *Dialogos* as a form of *relatio* and as itself *relatio,* that is *ratio* and *agape,* is embodied by the *Logos*.

C. *Logos-Dialogos* and the Human Person

Christ, the *Exemplary Man*

Ratzinger challenges us to dare exclaim: "Christian faith believes in Jesus of Nazareth as the exemplary man."[82] How are we supposed to interpret this? Ratzinger clarifies that in "overstep[ping] the bounds of humanity," Christ becomes this exemplary man and through it the transformation of humanity can take place, and the example is found in *relatio* "for man is the more himself the more he is with 'the other'."[83] Only in the context of being with the other can the human being find meaning. This is the meaning found also in the *Logos*. With the self-surrender of the *logos-en-sarx,* the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith, what seems non-doable is made doable. The *Person* of the *Logos* is "moving away from himself"[84] to be in a *relatio* with the *other,* and this is what the exemplary man does. The human *person,* free to choose to be fully human, "only comes to himself by moving away from himself" and only "through the other and through being with the other does he come to himself."[85]

81 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 146.

82 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 234.

83 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 234.

84 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 234.

85 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 234.

The *Logos,* that is also *dialogos,* is the person of Jesus Christ. The Jesus Christ that we encounter in faith, in the most personal way in each of our own historical journeys, is the *person* we can become. This is the relationship made concrete in the descent and ascent. Christ is the category. He is the criterion. *Relatio* is not simply the capacity to relate with others; it is the likeness of God in us as *persons*. How is this likeness embodied? Let us go back to Christ: Christ is the *pure for* in existence, the one who descends into the poverty of our humanity, the one who has found us, and surrenders himself for us. *Relatio* in the *logos-dialogos* theology of Ratzinger is, therefore, nothing more than *self-communication*, in thought and in love, in *ratio* and in *agape*.

Christ, the *Last Man*

Ratzinger's Christ as the *last man* highlights the figure of Adam, both the *old Adam* and the *New Adam*. He writes: "If Jesus is the exemplary man, in whom the true figure of man, God's intention for him, comes fully to light, then he cannot be destined to be merely an absolute exception, a curiosity, in which God demonstrates to us what sorts of things are possible. His existence concerns all mankind."[86] The exemplary man is the New Adam. The *logos-en-sarx* in the New Adam, whose dynamics of existence concern everyone, is the figure that can help transform the mere human. What does this imply? "So," he contends, "if Jesus is called 'Adam,' this implies that he is intended to gather the whole creature 'Adam' in himself."[87]

The transformation brought by the incarnation of the *Logos* needs a response. The human *person* is a free person, and it is within this freedom that full human meaning is attained. The *dialogos* (self-communication) of the *Logos* has made possible the

86 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 236.

87 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 236.

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unification of oneself with the divine. In Ratzinger's language, the human person as a creature had a "belonging to a 'super-I' that encompasses him" and could "bring out the form of the future man, in which humanity will achieve complete fulfillment of itself."[88] This is the ultimate goal of the incarnation. This is the ascent we are talking about. The human person as *relatio* in the *likeness* of Christ is headed towards experiencing self-fulfillment by being with the *other.* This kind of response is the response of the *super-I* that is already transformed, an *I* that is free from itself, an *I* that is not absorbed in self-preservation, and an *I* that experiences freedom as it is in itself.

When the human person attains this, faith is able to figure out the human being seen in the person of Jesus Christ.[89] This "Christ as the man to come is not man for himself but essentially man for others," and if this is so, the future human being is only expected from the dynamic of its *being for.*[90] This is "the man in whom perfect unity... and perfect individuality are one," in "whom humanity comes into contact with its future... makes contact with God himself, shares in him, and thus realizes its most intrinsic potential."[91] For Ratzinger, our faith in the *Logos* allows us to see the gathering together of humanity into the "one single Adam."[92] The incarnation of the *Logos,* which is itself *dialogos,* thus remains at the center of history. The Christ who is to come is understood within the Christ who is at the center of history. It is in this same Christ that the *future man* is also envisioned. This is the Christ of the

88 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christainity,* 239.

89 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 239.

90 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 240.

91 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 239.

92 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 239.

eschaton, the *last man*, who takes the center stage of history as the *Logos-Dialogos.*

The *Eschaton* and the Human *Person*

Ratzinger's Christology is not complete without the *eschaton*. We try to look into the eschatological dimension of the human *person*. The *Logos* that communicates himself as love, the *Logos* made love, whom we are called to emulate, also allows us to anticipate that which is to come. We should never forget that even the Christ who gave himself for us has experienced the normal human death. Ratzinger writes that "Christology reaches beyond the Cross, the moment when divine love is tangible, into the death, the silence and the eclipse of God."[93] It is through his death that love becomes even more visible, for it has attained the apex of its expression. It is that love that plunges itself into the abyss of emptiness. The reality of death awaits the human *person*. Death is to be anticipated, and it is something that the human being is certain about. So how does this *Logos-Dialogos* theology help us understand this one last reality of the human *person*?

The *Logos-en-Sarx* hangs on the Cross, and it is this image that not only symbolizes ultimate loving but also the struggle of the human *person*. In that Cross is the immediacy of death. In that Cross, death is imminent. We are convinced that the human *person* is a *relatio,* and it is the *Logos-Dialogos* dynamic of love that perfects this constitutive quality. Yet, the *Logos* that wants to show love on the Cross experiences what is contrary to a *person* in *relatio*. The Christ on the Cross and the Christ that is subsequently laid in the tomb takes for himself the loneliness of humanity. Ratzinger wonderfully describes the "innermost heart of his Passion" in these words: "not physical

93 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 297.

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pain but radical loneliness, complete abandonment."[94] What does this tell us? Ratzinger contends that "what comes to light here is simply the abyss of loneliness of man in general, of man who is alone in his innermost being," and this, for him, is a "fundamental contradiction with the nature of man, who cannot exist alone."[95]

And so, the *Logos* who is in dialogue with the human being, who communicates himself to the human *person*, wills to descend into this final reality of humanity. Doing so forever changes the human understanding of death. Doing so forever alters the negative conception of dying. Doing so forever changes humanity's disposition. It is precisely in this descent that *dialogos* is felt, that *dialogos* proves to have never ceased. What does this mean? This final descent of the *Logos* means that humanity, even in death, is not alone. Christ continuously makes his presence felt within this reality of the human *person*. For Ratzinger, this fear of death is not "overcome by reason but only by the presence of someone who loves him (or her)."[96] He movingly describes Christ's presence in this finality: "Where no voice can reach us any longer, there is he. Hell is thereby overcome, or, to be more accurate, death, which was previously hell, is hell no longer. Neither is the same any longer because there is life in the midst of death, because love dwells in it."[97] The human *person*, even in death, is a recipient of Christ's love. The *Logos* still communicates himself as *Dialogos*. Fear of death is therefore extinguished for the fire of the *Logos*-made-love is what is to be anticipated in hope.

94 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 298.

95 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 298.

96 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 300.

97 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 301.

Finally, where death is imminent, the promise of the resurrection is imminent as well. The mortality of the human *person* is experienced by the *Logos*. It is this descent that completes the self-giving *dialogos*. The love which makes the descent possible is the same love that makes the ascent a reality. This ascent in the mystery of the resurrection speaks of immortality. Ratzinger wants to remind us that love is *that* same foundation of immortality, for "immortality proceeds from love alone."[98] The *Logos-Dialogos* cannot remain in the realm of mortality. The ascent fulfills the entire event, and that fulfillment makes possible the ascent of the human *person* as well. Through the *Logos*' descent, the world of sin and death is overcome. In his ascent, the human *person* is given assurance of a life that is everlasting.

Resurrection simply speaks of the reality of salvation. The *Logos*' descent and ascent is the movement of salvation. This salvation is itself found in the dynamic of the *dialogos* expressed fully in the love that Ratzinger describes as a "total exodus from himself, a going-out-from-himself toward the other."[99] This is also the definition of human existence. With this, Ratzinger gives us a complete picture of salvation: "a liberation from isolation into subjectivity."[100] This *faith in hope* is a "rejection of the individualization of man, the ordering of the 'I' to the 'we.'"[101] What is to be fully anticipated is nothing more than the ultimate *relatio,* a *relatio* that is a fulfillment in the vision of God, where truth is a *Person*, where love is a *Person*, and freedom is fulfilled. Ratzinger argues that "if it is true that at the end stands the triumph of spirit, that is the triumph

98 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 306.

99 Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology,* 189.

100 Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology,* 188.

101 Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology,* 187.

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of truth, freedom, and love, then it is not just some force or other that finally ends up victorious; what stands at the end is a countenance," a countenance that is "the omega of the world," and that omega is a "you,"[102] and, the ultimate Omega, we would like to add, is God's *You*.

Conclusion

Our study always brings us back to the mystery of the incarnation. The *Logos* that existed from the beginning became flesh. With this creed of faith, we readily affirm that the *Logos* is the *Logos*-incarnate, and by the actual incarnation, the *Logos* is a person. By affirming that the *Logos* is a person, we consequently affirm its existence in time and space; therefore, the *Logos* is historical. Affirming both convictions allows us to preach this person in history as the *Logos* of faith. This, I believe, is the gamut of Joseph Ratzinger's theology. The search for the truth and for the Truth as God leads him to the person of Jesus Christ.

The quest to arrive at a comprehensive answer to the anthropological inquiries in theology leads us to the basic premise of reality: human existence. The underlying value of this seeking is found in the one who seeks — the human person. When the conviction of faith does not have a clear grasp of this reality, of personhood, and of humanity, the truth of human existence becomes relativized. This propels us to seek *that* truth of the human being. That truth is found in the constitutive element of this being's humanity: *person*. We have established that this *person* is an *imago Dei,* and it is in being an *imago Deo* that the human person is inherently relational. The human person only becomes a *person* because of his/her being an *imago Dei*. We are then led to the definition of *person* as *relatio*, a definition that is not accidental but, in itself, the substance of a person. The Trinitarian doctrine on *relatio* appears in the definition of the

102 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 322.

human person. This anthropological inquiry is not content with mere definitions. Why? Because of the mystery of the incarnation, the divine person who became flesh embraces the reality of the *anthropos*.

By consistently leading us back to the person of Jesus Christ, the truth of the *anthropos* becomes clearer. The *Logos* who became flesh does not remain within the plane of the *anthropos*. The *Logos*, who became flesh in love, becomes a *Dialogos* himself, the concrete *dialogos*, a *dialogos* that goes beyond speech, a *dialogos* that communicates his person. It is in this person as *relatio* that the being itself of the *Logos* is communicated. The human person's freedom to respond allows him/her to transform his/her being into a *logos-dialogos* patterned after that *Logos* who gives himself. *Dialogos,* therefore, is not simply a dialogue in speech so that communication is effected; it is a dialogue of one's being. The *Logos* as a person becomes the exemplar. To become that *logos-dialogos*, we have to go back to the person of the *Logos* of faith, the person of the *Logos* of history, who encounters us as a human being.

The *Logos-Dialogos* is a person we desire to become. The oneness in that person speaks of the *Logos* of faith and history, which finds fulfillment in the *Logos* as person, the person who was incarnate, who became human, who suffered with humanity, who died with humanity, but who passed over from death to life in the resurrection. The *You* of the *Logos* is the omega point that goes beyond time and space, of systems and structures. It is this *You* who loves and communicates in love, and who accepts the beloved as his own precisely as a beloved. As the theologian so convincingly preaches, "only the love that takes up the beloved in itself, into its own being, could make possible this existence in the other."[103]

103 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity,* 305.

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