

## JOSEPH RATZINGER'S UNDERSTANDING OF FREEDOM

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The desire for freedom has been constant throughout human history. From the cries to God of the Hebrews in Egypt to the cries against the Gaddafis, Mubaraks, and Assads in the “Arab Spring,” this desire has never waned in human hearts. The fact that it has never waned, that it has always been a great, yet never permanently or completely attained, goal prompts one to ask whether or not it is a chimera, a mirage which constantly taunts us with its apparent reality, yet proves in the end to be nothing but sand, dust, and ashes. With this question in mind, it should come as no surprise that the nature of freedom has been a recurrent question in the theology of Joseph Ratzinger/Pope Benedict XVI, a theologian whose *modus operandi* has been to focus on the particular questions which face us in a post-rational world, which is just the kind of world to propose that freedom is nothing more than a will-o'-the-wisp. Yet it does come as something of a surprise, since the terms “Ratzinger” and “freedom” would be held by some to be mutually exclusive. As it turns out, “freedom” proves to be one of the “cardinal points” of Ratzinger’s theology, a concept he uses to orientate his thinking.

In this essay we shall try to delineate the overall shape of Ratzinger’s understanding of freedom. Beginning with what he considers to be some false understandings of freedom and the contemporary “loss of faith” in freedom, we

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shall examine his critique of how the idea of freedom is presented in *Gaudium et Spes*. Following this, we shall attempt to demonstrate that Ratzinger has developed a theology of the freedom of God, as well as an anthropology of human freedom, that find their consummation in a Christology of the freedom of Jesus. We are called to participate in this freedom, and this participation constitutes our divinisation. The climax of our participation in this freedom comes about through our communion with Christ in the Eucharist.

### **SOME FALSE IDEAS OF FREEDOM ACCORDING TO RATZINGER**

In his commentary on the section of *Gaudium et Spes*, which addresses the nature of human freedom, Ratzinger maintains that the intention of the text was to affirm the value of freedom on the basis of faith. The particular aspect of freedom that it addressed is psychological, rather than social or political. It sought to find a firm basis for human freedom that is subject neither to external coercion nor to the compulsion of instinct. It also sought to oppose the idea that freedom is simply the absence of commitment. Ratzinger saw the negation of freedom through coercion and instinct, or the identification of freedom with license, as a potential means for the social manipulation of the human person through control of the intellectual and economic markets. Finally, he thought that the text wished to uphold the reality of human moral responsibility in opposition to any kind of determinism. Regarding this last point, Ratzinger saw a contemporary paradox—on the one hand, the demand for freedom without responsibility, and on the other, a materialistic belief that human behaviour is biologically determined. In opposition to this, Ratzinger saw the text as professing human moral freedom, over and against determinism, be it biological or theological. As he states:

However much the New Testament ... may speak of the decadence and impotence of man, it nevertheless always expressly affirms the moral responsibility of *all* men; despite the important aspects calling for consideration which it

expresses, Luther's "servum arbitrium" cannot be maintained on New Testament grounds.<sup>1</sup>

In Ratzinger's analysis we can discern the false "freedom" of licence, which can so often become chimeric through propaganda, and which leads to the enslavement of the will in sin, as well as both the materialist and theological denials of freedom. In *Feast of Faith* he identifies another denial of freedom that springs from a rationalistic, but not materialistic, worldview shaped by the science and technology. He states that:

[A] rationally constructed world is determined by rationally perceived causality. The notion of personal intervention [by God] is both mythical and repugnant. But if this approach is adopted, it must be followed consistently, for what applies to God applies equally to man. If there is only *one* kind of causality, man too as a person is excluded and reduced to an element in mechanical causality, in the realm of necessity; freedom too, in this case, is a mythical idea. In this sense it can be said that the personalities of God and of man cannot be separated. If personality is not a possibility, i.e., not present, with the "ground" of reality, it is not possible at all. Either freedom is a possibility inherent in the ground of reality, or it does not exist.<sup>2</sup>

In *A New Song for the Lord*, Ratzinger identifies a false notion of freedom which can be found in liberation theology. While recognising the contemporary appeal of Christ the liberator for our times, he thinks that liberation theology tends to read salvation history the wrong way. Instead of moving from Moses to Christ, and from Christ to the kingdom of God, it goes in the opposite direction: through the application of political criteria to Christ. This leads to a political interpretation of the Exodus rather than a Christological one. What Ratzinger

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, "The Church and Man's Calling—Introductory Article and Chapter One—The Dignity of the Human Person—Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World," in Herbert Vorgrimler (ed), *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, trans. J. W. O'Hara (London: Burns & Oates, 1969), V, 115-163, at 139-140.

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith: Approaches to a Theology of the Liturgy*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 20.

wishes to do is "make comprehensible the new dimension of the concepts of exodus, freedom, and liberation that came into the world through Christ."<sup>3</sup>

### THE CONTEMPORARY DILEMMA OF HUMAN FREEDOM

Ratzinger's most comprehensive analyses of false notions of freedom are to be found in an essay entitled "Freiheit und Wahrheit," and, as Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Spe Salvi*.<sup>4</sup> In the first he maintains that the fundamental difficulty with the contemporary concept of freedom is that it has been separated from that of truth. The general notion of freedom is that expressed by Karl Marx, when he says that in the future Communist society one will be able "to do one thing today and another tomorrow; to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, breed cattle in the evening and criticize after dinner, just as I please ..."<sup>5</sup> This concept of freedom as the ability to do or to have anything which we desire, to have one's own will as the sole norm of our action, presupposes that one's will is truly free. Yet, Ratzinger asks, if the will is irrational, can it be truly free? Can it be truly good? He proposes the need for a definition of freedom which says that it is "the capacity to will and to do what we will in the context of reason."<sup>6</sup> Such an interplay between reason and will shall enable us to find that common reason shared by all people, and thus ground the compatibilities of personal liberties.

Ratzinger points out that both Marxism and Liberalism have failed to deliver the freedom that they have promised. Although Marxism claimed to have discovered a scientifically guaranteed way to freedom, it instituted a gigantic system of slavery. Despite the promises of the liberal system of politics and economics, many people in democratic societies are excluded from freedom by

<sup>3</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, trans. Martha M. Matesich (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 6.

<sup>4</sup> Published in English as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, "Truth and Freedom," trans. Adrian Walker, *Communio* 23 (1996): 16-35. See also, Pope Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, nos. 16-23.

<sup>5</sup> Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, *Werke*, 389 vols. (Berlin, 1961-71), 3:33. Cited in Ratzinger, "Truth and Freedom," 17. It is ironic that Marx's concept of freedom is so bourgeois.

<sup>6</sup> Ratzinger, "Truth and Freedom," 17.

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unemployment and material poverty, and are also “haunted by the spectre of meaninglessness.”<sup>7</sup> Ratzinger cites the Polish philosopher Andrej Sziztpiorski’s reaction to the fall of communism in Eastern Europe and the apparent triumph of Western liberal democracy, which is that this triumph has raised the possibility that there is no way to human liberation. If neither East nor West can give an answer to the human desire for freedom, perhaps there is no answer.<sup>8</sup> So, for Ratzinger, there are actually two questions which need to be answered, not just “what is truth?” but also “what is freedom?”

Ratzinger sees the idea of freedom as the defining theme of post-mediaeval European society. The issue which Luther raised was that of the most intimate of all human freedoms: the freedom of conscience, vis-à-vis the authority of the Church. The concept of freedom came to be individualised. Rather than something found in the Church, it meant “liberation from the yoke of a supra-individual order.”<sup>9</sup> Yet this liberation was confined to the “religious” sphere. In the political sphere the contrary happened—liberation was curtailed by a growing secular authority that, more and more, attempted to subjugate the Church.

In *Spe Salvi*, Benedict XVI gives a complementary account of this individualisation of freedom through showing its connection with the individualisation of salvation. According to him, this reduction of redemption to the “salvation of the soul” arose from the development of the “scientific method.” The new correlation of experiment and method introduced the possibility of what Francis Bacon called “the triumph of art over nature.”<sup>10</sup> The potential to achieve dominion over creation, occasioned by the new correlation between science and praxis, leads to an attempt to rebuild the Tower of Babel, returning to Paradise via science rather than faith. This displaced faith onto another level, that of the private and other-worldly, which proves to be irrelevant to the world. Publically, faith in Christ is replaced by “faith in progress.” The kingdom of God

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 19. Ratzinger cites Szizypiorski from a manuscript provided during the Salzburg University Weeks of 1995.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>10</sup> Francis Bacon, *Novum Organum* I, 117. Cited in Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n. 16.

now becomes the “kingdom of man.” According to Benedict XVI, the two categories which become increasingly central to this idea of progress are reason and freedom. It is reason which drives progress towards the perfect realisation of freedom. Since this realisation of perfect freedom comes about through the establishment of a “kingdom of man,” which could also be called a “kingdom of reason,” both of these concepts of reason and freedom are politicised. These concepts were interpreted as being in conflict with both the faith and the Church and the reigning political structures.<sup>11</sup>

Initially, this faith in reason is naïf. The French Revolution seemed to promise the establishment of the rule of reason and freedom as a political reality. Only later did some begin to doubt this new-found faith. Benedict XVI illustrates this point through appealing to two essays in which Kant reflects upon the Revolution. In his 1792 *Der Sieg des guten Prinzips über das böse und die Gründung eines Reiches Gottes auf Erden* (“The Victory of the Good over the Evil Principle and the Founding of a Kingdom of God on Earth”), Kant claims that: “The gradual transition of ecclesiastical faith to the exclusive sovereignty of pure religious faith is the coming of the Kingdom of God.”<sup>12</sup> Yet three years later, in *Das Ende aller Dinge* (“The End of All Things”), he is wondering if the transition from an “ecclesiastical faith” could also lead to an “irrational” faith. As Benedict XVI puts it: “Now Kant considers the possibility that as well as the natural end of all things there may be another that is unnatural, a perverse end.”<sup>13</sup>

The Enlightenment challenged not just religious but also political authority by proposing the emancipation of the human will through reason, a reason to which even political authority must bow. Only that which is reasonable is valid. Paradoxically, this led to two antithetical social philosophies with their attendant political programs. The first, “Anglo-Saxon” current emphasised natural rights and constitutional democracy as the only realistic way to freedom. For this way

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<sup>11</sup> Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 18.

<sup>12</sup> Immanuel Kant, *Werke* IV, ed. W. Weischedel (1956), 777. Cited in *Spe Salvi*, n. 19.

<sup>13</sup> Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n. 19. See Immanuel Kant, *Das Ende aller Dinge*, in *Werke* VI, Weischedel (1964), 190.

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of thinking, “Freedom is not bestowed on man from without. He is a bearer of rights because he is created free.”<sup>14</sup> Thus we can see that this idea has a Christian origin. It is a principle which can be found in Romans 2:14. It is based on a theology of creation. And yet, in the Enlightenment recasting of this idea the individual is set in opposition to the community. Human rights must be protected from the community—“the institution seems to be the polar opposite of freedom, whereas the individual appears as the bearer of freedom, whose goal is seen as his full emancipation.”<sup>15</sup>

The second current, exemplified by Rousseau, also begins with the idea of nature. Yet this “nature” is anti-rational. For Rousseau, “everything which owes its origin to reason and will is contrary to nature, and corrupts and contradicts us.”<sup>16</sup> His concept of nature is anti-metaphysical. “Nature” is a state of total, unregimented freedom. This anarchic concept of freedom eventually comes to dominate the French Revolution, and resurfaces in Nietzsche and National Socialism. Although it is inimical to the Enlightenment appeal to reason, it is nonetheless the Enlightenment cry for freedom in its most radically intensified form.

Ratzinger sees Marxism as a continuation of this radical line, in that it gives precedence to the community rather than the individual. For Marxism, freedom is indivisible. Unless there is equality, freedom for all, there is freedom for none. Individual liberties must therefore give way to solidarity with those struggling for freedom. Yet, the endpoint of this struggle is the unbounded freedom of the individual. The precedence of the community only stands until the freedom of equality is achieved.<sup>17</sup>

As Ratzinger sees it, the problem for Marxism is simply that it cannot work—it is contradictory in essence. It claims to be the rational means of bringing about a

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<sup>14</sup> Ratzinger, “Truth and Freedom,” 21.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* Although Ratzinger does not explicitly make a link, perhaps we could see Rousseau’s position as a fulfilment of Kant’s fear of an anti-rational “faith.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 23. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n. 20.

change in the very structure of society, yet those who are to bring about the change are unable to attain the altruism necessary for such a change. Consequently, Marxists took refuge in a “mythology”—the new structure would bring forth a new, altruistic man. Yet this “new man” is the necessary prerequisite for the achievement of the new structure. This “lie” at the heart of Marxism reveals that there can be no freedom without truth. The “lie” neutralises even those elements of truth that do exist in Marxism.<sup>18</sup>

Turning to that element of truth, Ratzinger confronts the “democratic” concept of freedom. The Marxist critique of democracy has some validity. How “free” are elections when they can be manipulated by propaganda in the guise of advertising, underwritten by “capital”? How much does an “enlightened” oligarchy rule through control of the media? How representative is representative democracy, with its rule by what is often a narrow majority? How much power do “interest groups” exercise compared to the “unorganised” individual? How often do the wills of individuals prevail over the freedom of the whole? The freedom of total autonomy, of doing what one pleases, is impossible for all. Ultimately, it means an imposition of the will of the strong upon the weak. The inability of democratically ordered freedom to give freedom to all increases the anarchic calls for freedom.

As Benedict XVI, he also reflects upon the twentieth century’s critique of the nineteenth century’s faith in progress. Referring specifically to Theodor Adorno’s observation that “progress” means progress from the sling to the atom bomb, he states what should be obvious to any thoughtful person: because of the human potential for either good or evil, we can only speak of true progress in the sense of technical progress. Without a corresponding moral progress this technical progress is in fact a regression, and potentially annihilation.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 23-24. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n. 21, where he points out that Marx’s deepest error was that he forgot the reality of human nature. Since Marx was a materialist, he assumed that human evil was a product of economic conditions. “He forgot that freedom always remains also freedom for evil.”

<sup>19</sup> Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n. 22.

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Ratzinger maintains that grand promises of modernity to establish freedom for all flow from a failure to penetrate to the foundations of what man is and how he can live rightly, both individually and collectively. Modernity separated the philosophical, and hence political, concept of freedom from the religious concept. This has ultimately led to the most radical philosophy of freedom, that of Sartre. Ratzinger's account of this nadir of freedom deserves to be quoted at length.

Sartre regards man as condemned to freedom. In contrast to the animal, man has no "nature." The animal lives out its existence according to laws it is simply born with; it does not need to deliberate what to do with its life. But man's essence is undetermined. It is an open question. I must decide myself what I understand by "humanity," what I want to do with it, and how I want to fashion it. Man has no nature, but is sheer freedom. His life must take some direction or other, but in the end comes to nothing. This absurd freedom is man's hell. What is unsettling about this approach is that it is a way through the separation of freedom and truth to its most radical conclusion: there is no truth at all. Freedom has no direction and no measure. But this complete absence of truth, this complete absence of any moral and metaphysical bond, this absolutely anarchic freedom—which is understood as an essential quality of man—reveals itself to one who tries to live it not as the supreme enhancement of existence, but as the frustration of life, the absolute void, the definition of damnation. The isolation of a radical concept of freedom, which for Sartre was a lived experience, shows with all desirable clarity that liberation from the truth does not produce pure freedom, but abolishes it. Anarchic freedom, taken radically, does not redeem, but makes man a miscarried creature, a pointless being.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ratzinger, "Truth and Freedom," 25-26.

### THE INADEQUATE ANSWER OF *GAUDIUM ET SPES*

In his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*, Ratzinger criticised the section which dealt with freedom.<sup>21</sup> An analysis of his criticisms can help us to grasp his understanding of human freedom. His first criticism is that its exposition of the nature of human spirituality in terms of intellect (the human capacity for truth), conscience (the human capacity for good), and freedom excluded the inter-subjectivity of the human person, our essential ordination to love. The concept of "person" does not ground the document's presentation of freedom.<sup>22</sup> His second criticism is that the document excluded the New Testament doctrine of freedom. It linked the idea of freedom with the doctrine of man as being in the image and likeness of God, but without any reference to Christ. In Ratzinger's estimation the document should have set out the New Testament teaching on the gift of freedom that is conferred in Christ. Instead, even in its use of biblical texts, it grounded the meaning of freedom in natural theology rather than faith. It developed something which Ratzinger calls "a *theologia naturalis*, or, even more, an *ethica naturalis*."<sup>23</sup> Rather than simply follow the ethical optimism of late Jewish wisdom theology, it should have grounded the meaning of freedom in the light of the critical wisdom theology of Ecclesiastes and, especially, Job. It should have attended to the Jewish ethical doctrine of the two ways that is grounded on the theology of the Covenant. When one looks at the actual

<sup>21</sup> Ratzinger, "The Dignity of the Human Person," 136-140. The biblical texts referred to are Eccles 15:14 and 2 Cor 5:10). However, we should note that at the 1985 Synod Ratzinger affirmed the importance of article 22 of *Gaudium et Spes* as the hermeneutical lens for the rest of the document. This being the case, the point of the document is to affirm the contemporary longing for human freedom and self-fulfilment that can only be realised through union with Christ. See Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 32-33 and 38.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-131. On this point, Rowland comments that: "Regrettably for Ratzinger ... the young Karol Wojtyła's personalism did not carry through to articles 15-17 of *Gaudium et spes*. ... Neither the concept of person nor the idea of love was mentioned here. The philosophy of interpersonal love, the whole set of I-Thou questions, are practically absent for the treatment of spirituality within this section of the document, and Ratzinger was quite appalled that anyone could attempt to speak of spirituality without thinking that Christian love might have something to do with it." See *Ratzinger's Faith*, 41.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

history of the Covenant, one encounters the inability of Israel to fulfil it. Ultimately, the way of life came not from a freedom that could fulfil the Law but Christ's fulfilment of the law through his death on the Cross.<sup>24</sup>

Essentially, Ratzinger's dissatisfaction with the account of freedom given in *Gaudium et Spes* is that it is inadequate on both theological and philosophical levels. Its theological understanding of freedom is historically faithful neither to the biblical witness nor to actual human history. It neglects to address the "slavery" to sin so dramatically described in Romans 7:13-25. Ratzinger goes so far as to say:

It even falls into downright Pelagian terminology when it speaks of man "sese ab omni passionum captivitate liberans finem suum persequitur et apta subsidia... procurat." That is not balanced by the following sentence, which logically is scarcely linked with it and which speaks of a wound inflicted by sin but regards grace only as a help to make the will once more "plene actuosam." The extent of the human dilemma, which is not constituted by the modest difference between "plene actuosus" and "actuosus," but calls man in question to his very depths and makes him unfree, is not taken even roughly into account here. Fundamentally, the formula "plene actuosus" means that an at all events semi-Pelagian representational pattern has been retained.<sup>25</sup>

On the philosophical level Ratzinger asserts that the document presents what he calls "a colourless philosophical doctrine of freedom" that takes no account of the contemporary awareness that human freedom is constrained by numerous psychological and sociological factors. According to Ratzinger, it could even have been improved by taking into account the Marxist perception of "the extent of human alienation and decadence."<sup>26</sup>

As Ratzinger sees it, *Gaudium et Spes* did not really deal with the problems of human freedom. It only dealt with "freedom of choice." As he states:

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 137-138.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

The actual ontological content of the idea of freedom, the capacity to accept one's own nature and to become identified with it, is just as little realized as the dialogue character of human freedom, which is only brought to the full possibilities of its realization by that appeal of love which can never be forced upon it. But only on this basis would it have been possible to show that God's summons, under which man stands, is not in opposition to his freedom but makes it truly possible; that human freedom does not consist in abstract selection between different possibilities of behaviour, but by its very nature love in the presence of God and can only be really understood in relation to this vis-à-vis. Only on this basis would it also be possible to explain the perfect fulfilment of Christian freedom in the "freedom of the children of God."<sup>27</sup>

### THE THEOLOGY OF FREEDOM

The purpose of Ratzinger's focus upon the prayer of Jesus in the Garden is to establish the outcome of that prayer for Jesus and for us. He maintains that: "Wherever the I gives itself to the Thou, there is freedom because this involves the reception of the 'form of God'," and that "the Son transforms the anguish of a man into filial obedience, the speech of the servant into the Word which is the Son."<sup>28</sup> Consequently:

[We] come to grasp the manner of our liberation, our participation in the Son's freedom. As a result of the unity of wills ... the greatest possible change has taken place in man, the only change which meets his desire: he has become divine. We can therefore describe the prayer which enters into the praying of Jesus and becomes the prayer of Jesus in the Body of Christ as freedom's laboratory.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 138-139.

<sup>28</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 41.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 42.

If we are to understand what Ratzinger means by our participation in the Son's freedom, we must discover two things: what he means by "freedom" and how he understands it to be exercised by the Son.

In Ratzinger's earlier Christology, we come across a paradoxical reference to "freedom": "God's disguise as man in history 'must' be—with the necessity of freedom."<sup>30</sup> However, if we are to understand this paradox we must go back to its foundation in Ratzinger's understanding of God. We begin with what he calls the "primacy of the *logos*." This *logos* he identifies as "the idea," "freedom," and "love." It is "the originating and encompassing power of all being."<sup>31</sup> All being is derived from thought; indeed, the innermost structure of being is thought. All being is "being-thought." What we find present in all things is "objective mind," which is the product of "subjective mind." All of our thinking about being is actually a "rethinking" of what has already been thought. This "being-thought-ness" of things is discoverable by philosophers, that is to say, they can discover the God of the philosophers. Ratzinger sums up thus: "The world is objective mind; it meets us in an intellectual structure, that is, it offers itself to our mind as something that can be reflected upon and understood."<sup>32</sup> From this follows the conviction in the existence of "God," since "being-thought" is not possible without thinking.

In arriving at this conclusion, Ratzinger rejects the materialist solution to the question of being and accepts the idealist solution: "All being is ultimately being-thought and can be traced back to mind as the original reality."<sup>33</sup> Ratzinger defines "matter" as "being that does not itself comprehend being," and "mind" as "being that understands itself, as being that is present to itself," and consequently: "The idealist solution to the problem of being accordingly signifies the idea that all being is the being-thought by one single consciousness. The unity of being

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<sup>30</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster, with a New Preface trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 269.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

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consists in the identity of the one consciousness, whose impulses constitute the many things that are.”<sup>34</sup>

From the God of the philosophers, Ratzinger moves to the God of Jesus Christ. This God is not completely identical with the idealist's God as outlined above. The Christian God is “being” which is “being-thought,” but does not remain thought alone, only giving rise to the ‘appearance’ of an independent existence in things. Rather:

Christian belief in God means that things are the being-thought of a creative consciousness, of a creative freedom, and that the creative consciousness that bears up all things has released what has been thought into the freedom of its own, independent existence. In this it goes beyond any mere idealism. While the latter ... explains everything real as the content of a single consciousness, in the Christian view what supports it all is a creative freedom that sets what had been thought in the freedom of its own being, so that, on the one hand, it is the being-thought of a consciousness and yet, on the other hand, is true being itself.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, for Ratzinger, God is being, not just as consciousness, but as “creative freedom” that creates further freedoms. Hence:

To this extent one could very well describe Christianity as a philosophy of freedom. For Christianity, the explanation of reality as a whole is not an all-embracing consciousness or one single materiality; on the contrary, at the summit stands a freedom that thinks and, by thinking, creates freedoms, thus making freedom the structural form of all being.<sup>36</sup>

We should note that, thus far, Ratzinger has been speaking in terms of being as such, not personal being. All being, both uncreated and created, participates in freedom. “To be” is “to be free.”

According to Ratzinger, the Christian belief in the primacy of the *logos* leads to a belief in the personal nature of original being. Such being, as original

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 157.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 158.

thought, expressed as “being-thought” in the world, means that this original being “is not an anonymous, neutral consciousness but rather freedom, creative love, a person.”<sup>37</sup> For Ratzinger, the acceptance of the *logos* as personal and creative means the acceptance of the primacy of the particular over the universal. The difference between the “personal” and the “individual” is that the latter is understood as arising out of, and secondary to, the universal, whereas the personal means it is the particular being which is the primary reality.<sup>38</sup> To accept the primacy of the person means to accept the primacy of freedom, rather than that of cosmic necessity. It is this primacy of freedom which marks the division between idealism and Christian belief.<sup>39</sup>

At this point Ratzinger moves from an economic view of freedom as expressed in creation back to an immanent view of freedom in God, and how that freedom issues forth in establishing economic freedom. Since the creative thinking that is the precondition and ground of all being is conscious thinking, it must know not only itself, but also its whole thought. Consequently:

It means further that this thinking not only knows but loves; that is it is creative because it is love; and that, because it can love as well as think, it has given its thought the freedom of its own existence, objectivized it, released it into distinct being, loves it and, loving, upholds it.<sup>40</sup>

Ratzinger identifies the *logos* of all being as “consciousness,” “freedom,” and “love.” The world is not grounded on cosmic necessity, but on freedom. Freedom is the “necessary structure” of the world. Yet this very fact renders the world “incomprehensible.” If the world is upheld by a freedom which wills, knows, and loves the world *as freedom*, then incalculability becomes an essential part of the world. This freedom creates the possibility of the rejection of freedom. The world is willed and created on the “risk” of freedom and love. “As the arena of love it is also the playground of freedom and also incurs the risk of

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 158-159.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 159.

evil. It accepts the mystery of darkness for the sake of the greater light constituted by freedom and love."<sup>41</sup>

Ratzinger made his paradoxical statement about the necessity of freedom in the context of a section of *Introduction to Christianity* called: "The primacy of acceptance and Christian positivity."<sup>42</sup> There he writes of "the primacy of acceptance over action, over one's own achievement, when it is a question of

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 160. In *Principles of Catholic Theology*, Ratzinger is critical of Rahner's concept of freedom because, he argues, it leaves no room for the "incomprehensible" and "incalculable." According to Ratzinger, in his attempt to reconcile history and ontology, Rahner has attempted to do too much. The "particular" is reduced to the "universal." Initially, this looks like liberation. The Christian "is freed from the burden of Christian particularity, led into the freedom of universal philosophy and its rationalism" (167). But Christianity becomes a "burden." All that is needed is "self-acceptance," just being human. But for Ratzinger, this is "damnation" rather than "salvation." We do not want to merely accept our own humanity, but transcend it. What is needed is a spirituality of "conversion," of "self-transcendence," which is one of Rahner's basic concepts, but one that, according to Ratzinger, is lost sight of in his synthesis. Ratzinger thinks that Rahner went astray in attempting to provide "a philosophical and theological world formula on the basis of which the whole of reality can be deduced cohesively from necessary causes" (169). Such a solution is contrary to the "mystery" of freedom. Hegel's conviction that there is a "spiritual world formula" is wrong. According to Ratzinger, Rahner adopted the concept of freedom that is proper to idealistic philosophy—a concept which can only be applied to God. Rahner defines freedom as "the ultimate self-responsibility of the person ... as self-action" (*Grundkurs des Glaubens. Einführung in den Begriff des Christentums* [Freiburg: Herder, 1976], 47). Freedom is the ability to be oneself [*Grundkurs*, 49]. According to Ratzinger, for Rahner, human freedom seems to have been absorbed into divine freedom, having an efficacy which belongs to God alone. Moreover, in calling human freedom an "always already accomplished freedom" (*Grundkurs*, 138), "freedom seems to be assimilated by predestination. Ultimately, Ratzinger sees Rahner as the advocate of a different kind of identification of freedom with necessity. Thus, "the attempt to depict cohesively with a logical necessity the unity and totality of the real leads unquestionably to an identification of freedom and necessity. ... Ultimately, then, a synthesis that combines being and history in a single compelling logic of the understanding becomes, by the universality of its claim, a philosophy of necessity, even though this necessity is then explained as a process of freedom" (170). For Ratzinger's complete analysis of Rahner's position on the nature of freedom in the context of the relationship between ontology and history, see Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Sister Mary Frances McCarthy, S. N. D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 153-190, especially 161-171.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 266-269.

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man's final end."<sup>43</sup> Essentially, the human person only becomes wholly human through the free reception of the gift of love. This love "represents simultaneously both man's highest possibility and his deepest need," and "this most necessary thing is at the same time the freest and most unenforceable means ... for his 'salvation'."<sup>44</sup> Attempting 'self-salvation,' self-liberation, destroys one's humanity. This is the attempt to be like God which misunderstands the true nature of God, thinks of him as an independent, autonomous, self-sufficient being. This is "loneliness," but God is "fellowship." Freedom is not "independence," but a freely willed exchange, the freedom of self-giving communion.<sup>45</sup>

### THE ANTHROPOLOGY OF FREEDOM

In "Freiheit und Wahrheit," Ratzinger develops the anthropological understanding of freedom at further length. Taking the example of a woman who aborts her child in response to a false notion of freedom which sees it as the right to autonomy, to self-determination, which in turn annuls the right of another to freedom, Ratzinger points to the interdependent nature of being human. The mother-child relationship is a particularly vivid example of the true nature of human freedom. As Ratzinger explains:

The being of another person is so closely interwoven with the being of this person, the mother, that for the present if can survive only by physically being with the other, in a physical unity with her. Such unity, however, does not eliminate the otherness of this being or authorize us to dispute its distinct selfhood. However, to be oneself in this

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 267. Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, "Loi de l'Eglise et liberté du chrétien, Service culturel de l'Ambassade de France près la Saint-Siège," 24.11.83., where he states: "In the Church, the debate (about freedom) concerns liberty in its deepest sense, as openness to the divine Being in order to become a sharer in its life". This is from an unpublished paper, and is cited by Aidan Nichols in "Walter Kasper and his theological programme," *New Blackfriars* 67 (787) (1986): 16-24, at 22.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 267-268.

way is to be radically from and through another. Conversely, this being-with compels the being of the other—that is, the mother—to become a being-for, which contradicts her own desire to be an independent self and is thus experienced as the antithesis of her own freedom.<sup>46</sup>

For Ratzinger, this “being-from,” “being-with,” and “being-for” is the essence of “being-human.” We must all accept the limitation of our freedom, meaning that we must live out our freedom in communion rather than competition. The temptation which faces us is to accept the being-for of others in relation to ourselves, but reject the reality of “being-from” and the responsibility of “being-for” others. According to Ratzinger, the radical demand for freedom which springs from the Enlightenment regards what is actually the fundamental reality of human existence as an attack on freedom. Thus, “[the] radical cry for freedom demands man’s liberation for his very essence as man, so that he may become the ‘new man.’”<sup>47</sup>

Ratzinger sees this attempt to achieve a freedom of radical autonomy as a kind of false attempt at *theosis*—“the implicit goal of all of modernity’s struggles for freedom is to be at last like a god who depends on nothing and no one, and whose own freedom is not restricted by that of another.”<sup>48</sup> This is a false attempt at divinisation, because behind it lies a false image of God, an idol, a conception of divinity as pure egoism. It is a demonic antithesis of the real God, who is “by his very nature entirely being-for (Father), being-from (Son), and being-with (Holy Spirit). Man, for his part, is God’s image precisely insofar as the ‘from,’ ‘with,’ and ‘for’ constitute the fundamental anthropological pattern.”<sup>49</sup> Any attempt to free ourselves from this pattern leads not to divinisation, but dehumanisation. We destroy our being through a destruction of the truth about our being. The Enlightenment ideal of freedom leads, in the end, to Sartre’s “hell of other people” from which there is “no exit.”

<sup>46</sup> Ratzinger, “Truth and Freedom,” 26.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

What is Ratzinger's antidote for this freedom which poisons itself?

[Human freedom] can consist only in the ordered coexistence of liberties, this means that order–right–is not the conceptual antithesis of freedom, but rather its condition, indeed, a constitutive element of freedom itself. Right is not an obstacle to freedom, but constitutes it. The absence of right is the absence of freedom.<sup>50</sup>

This raises the question of how one identifies the “right” that accords with freedom. Right must be in accord with truth, and thus with freedom. The truth of our being includes its moral truth. Ratzinger seeks to answer this question inductively, rather than deductively, by beginning with how a small community discovers “which order best serves the shared life of all the members, so that a common form of freedom emerges from their joint existence.”<sup>51</sup> He then observes that no small community is self-contained. The same is true of nation states. Yet, the common good of a particular community, even if it be a nation state, cannot be true, genuinely human freedom. The whole of humanity, both today's and tomorrow's, must be kept in mind. Citing Augustine, Ratzinger says that “a state which measures itself only by its common interests and not by justice itself, by true justice, is not structurally different from a well-organized robber band.”<sup>52</sup>

The true right that accords with freedom Ratzinger calls the good of the whole, the good itself. For him, the central concept in ethics is “responsibility.” Ratzinger defines responsibility as “the anchoring of freedom in the truth of the good, of man and of the world.”<sup>53</sup> Rather than consisting in an ever-growing expansion of individual rights in isolation from the whole, freedom can only increase if there is an increase in a responsibility, which includes the claims of a

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<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 29. The translator of this essay points out that here the term “right” renders the German “Recht.” This term can mean “right” in the sense of “human rights,” but may also mean “law,” with the more or less explicit connotation of “just order,” “order embodying what is right.” It is in this latter sense that Ratzinger uses “Recht” here and in what follows.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

shared human existence and of true human nature. Such a responsibility must include a religious understanding, for philosophy by itself is unable to obtain a comprehensive view of the common good, including the good of the future.<sup>54</sup> The two alternatives to this are a consequentialism which overreaches itself, since we are unable to see all the future consequences of our actions, or an elitist “consensus” of those who deem themselves capable of rational argument, who will engage in “advocacy” on behalf of lesser mortals.

For Ratzinger, one cannot understand freedom as long as one only sees the human person in his or her individuality, without reference to the other person and to the whole of mankind. There is a single humanity, present in every human person, that we call human “nature.” From faith in creation comes the conviction that “there is one divine idea, “man,” to which it is our task to answer. In this idea, freedom and community, order and concern for the future, are a single whole.” Therefore, “[responsibility] would thus mean to live our being as an answer—as a response to what we are in truth.”<sup>55</sup> We can find this truth in the Decalogue, which is the self-presentation and self-exhibition of both God and man. It is the mirror of God’s essence. In living the Decalogue we bring our being into correspondence with the truth and thus do good. The definition of freedom is to live our divinity, which comes through the union of our being with that of God.

Ratzinger’s concern for history breaks through in his analysis of freedom because, for him, there is a history of freedom. There is a history of liberation, an “ongoing purification for the sake of the truth. The true history of freedom consists in the purification of individuals and of institutions through this truth [of responsibility].”<sup>56</sup> Returning to his notion that there is always an excess in the

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid. On this point, Ratzinger refers the reader to Josef Pieper, *Schriften zum Philosophiebegriff* III, B. Wald (ed), (Hamburg, 1995), 300-323, as well as 15-70, esp. 59ff. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n. 28: “Love of God leads to participation in the justice and generosity of God towards others. Love of God requires an interior freedom from all possessions and all material goods: the love of God is revealed in responsibility for others.”

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 30. Cf. Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, nos. 24-25.

meaning of human words of which the speaker is unconscious, but that comes to the surface over time, Ratzinger states that this must, *a fortiori*, be true of the Word which comes out of the depths of God. Hence, the Decalogue, though it has received its definitive and authoritative exegesis in the words, life, passion, and resurrection of Christ, continues to reveal unexpected depths. Consequently, “man’s listening to the message of faith is not the passive registering of otherwise unknown information, but the resuscitation of our choked memory and the opening of the powers of understanding which await the light of the truth in us.”<sup>57</sup> Therefore, our reason is on a quest for responsibility. There is a real “history of freedom.”

### THE BIBLICAL MEANING OF FREEDOM

Ratzinger has also sought to establish the meaning of “freedom” on a secure biblical basis. In a 1981 essay entitled “Freedom and Constraint in the Church,” he identified two biblical terms which express the concept of freedom—*ἐλευθερία* (freedom) and *παρρησία* (frankness, candor).<sup>58</sup> The first term does not refer to freedom of choice, but the fullness of membership and possession of rights in a family or society. The free person is the one who “belongs,” who fully participates. In the allegory of Sarah and Hagar on the nature of Christian freedom, to be free one must truly belong to the household (cf. Gal 4:21-31). It does not consist in having different privileges from the slave, but in having a different status: that of an heir and an owner (cf. Gal 4:1). In short, to be free means to be a son (cf. Gal 4:5). For the Christian, an ontological difference leads to a difference in behaviour. Because one has put on Christ (cf. Gal 3:27), one participates in his way of acting. Hence, one does not use one’s freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but, like Christ, through love becomes a servant of the

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>58</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, “Freedom and Constraint in the Church,” in *Church, Ecumenism, and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology*, trans. Michael J. Miller et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 175-192, at 186.

other (cf. Gal 5:13). One fulfils the law of Christ (cf. Gal 6:2). As Ratzinger explains:

This is a consequence of their ontological status, that is, of the fact that through the Spirit of Christ they participate in the ontological status of Jesus Christ himself. They are "spiritual" (6:1). To live the law of Christ means, therefore, to live according to the ontological status of the spiritual man, in the way of the Spirit. This includes crucifying the flesh "with its passions and desires" (5:24).<sup>59</sup>

From a biblical perspective, freedom is not indeterminacy, nor is it participation in a given social structure; it is participation in being itself. From this perspective, God is freedom in person, since he is in possession of being in its totality. To be free means to participate in the gift of love and the reception of love that takes place in God. To be free is to be divinised, to participate in the life of the Trinitarian God. To be free means to be like Christ crucified.<sup>60</sup>

The "frankness" or "candor" of this freedom is based on a term that, in its original context of Greek political vocabulary, meant the right to say everything publically. It springs from the responsibility of the free individual as an heir and owner. The right of freedom flows from the responsibility of freedom. According to Ratzinger, in the First Letter to the Thessalonians St. Paul develops a Christian rhetoric of freedom that "interprets a characteristic basic right of freedom in a Christian and ecclesial way."<sup>61</sup> Ratzinger's reading of St. Paul attributes to him an understanding of the rhetoric of antiquity as characterised by flattery, covetousness, and glory-seeking. It sought self-promotion, material gain, and the good opinion of others. The last feature in particular is contrary to truth. "Seeming suppresses being. The appearance becomes the universal standard. Man lives for appearance, and so his life becomes a semblance of life. In this the Bible rightly sees the essence of slavery, of the lack of freedom."<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 190.

Thus, there can be no freedom where there is no truth. Because St. Paul speaks the truth to a world ruled by appearances, he faces “great opposition” (1 Thess 2:2). This expression of freedom presupposes a freedom from oneself, a detachment from oneself. Here again, Ratzinger locates freedom in being, which then takes concrete forms “in active freedoms, in rights to do things.”<sup>63</sup> If to be free means to be like Christ crucified, then by implication Christ exercises his true freedom in saying “yes” to the Father’s will that he drink of the cup of death.

### THE FREEDOM OF JESUS IN HIS PASSION AND DEATH

How does Jesus’ exercise of human freedom in his Passion save us and lead to our deification? When we compare Ratzinger’s treatment of the Passion and death of Jesus in *Introduction to Christianity* and *The God of Jesus Christ* with that found in *Jesus of Nazareth* we can see that although there are some elements in common, there are also some differences in emphasis. Some things that are given great prominence in the earlier works receive much less attention in the later, wherein one finds new emphases as well as some development of earlier points.

In his earlier works Ratzinger finds the key to the Passion in what he calls the ‘brokenness’ of Jesus, a brokenness that is worship. In this worship there is a twofold movement from God to man and from man to God. Christian sacrifice is a receiving, a “becoming totally receptive and letting ourselves be completely taken over by him.”<sup>64</sup> It is also the gift of the Son to the Father. The Cross is the sacrifice that Jesus offers the Father in obedience. It is “man’s unqualified Yes to God” that alone is “true worship.”<sup>65</sup> We have been “lent the freedom to say Yes or No, the freedom to love or to reject; love’s free Yes is the only thing for which God must wait—the only worship of ‘sacrifice’ that can have any meaning.”<sup>66</sup> Though Ratzinger does not state it here, his understanding of freedom implies

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 283.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 285.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 285-286.

that sin has destroyed true human freedom. Only the man who is truly free can offer this sacrifice. Jesus is the one true priest, and the worship he offers is "the one and only liturgy of the world, a cosmic liturgy."<sup>67</sup> What Jesus sacrifices is his own "I," his own self. It is love "to the end" (Jn 13:1).

What is the nature of this love? It is God's own love become human love. Again, this implies that the freedom of God, the one who is freedom itself, becomes the freedom of the human love of Jesus. According to Ratzinger it is a new form of representation. Jesus stands in our place not in a legal sense, but in an ontological one. In order to participate in this sacrifice we must let ourselves be taken over by him, allow ourselves to be united with this gift of love from Jesus to the Father, "and thus become worshippers with him and in him."<sup>68</sup> For Ratzinger, Jesus' worship of the Father in the Cross "has smelted the body of humanity into the Yes of worship. It is completely "anthropocentric," entirely related to man, because it was radical theocentricity, delivery of the "I" and therefore the creature man to God."<sup>69</sup>

At this point, Ratzinger comes to the heart of his understanding of sacrifice. It is "the form that love takes in a world characterized by death and self-seeking."<sup>70</sup> The love of Jesus for the Father becomes "the ec-stacy of man outside himself, in which he is stretched out infinitely beyond himself, torn apart, as it were, far beyond his apparent capacity for being stretched."<sup>71</sup> In a sinful world worship must be sacrificial, it must be the Cross, it must be the pain of being torn apart. This pain of the Cross is necessary, not because the Father wills it, but because love can take no other form in the face of sin and death. Although the fundamental principle of sacrifice is love, in the face of evil, love is crucified.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 288.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 289.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

However, this love is active, not passive. Jesus freely drinks from the cup. So Ratzinger can say that this love “breaks down, opens up, crucifies, tears.”<sup>73</sup>

It is in looking at the article of the Creed that says that Jesus “descended into Hell” that Ratzinger attempts to lay bare the meaning of Jesus being torn asunder. Quoting Jean Daniélou, he portrays the death agony of Christ as a sharing in: “[Our] feeling of being torn asunder, which is a cross to us, this inability of our heart to carry within itself simultaneously the love of the most holy Trinity and love of the world alienated from the Trinity.”<sup>74</sup> Ratzinger presents us with the paradox of the crucified Christ, in the words “My God, why have you forsaken me?” being “simultaneously immersed in God and in the depths of the God-forsaken creature.”<sup>75</sup> This is the “crucifixion” of Jesus, the realisation of love.

In *The God of Jesus Christ*, Ratzinger reflects further on this paradox. He states that, for Jesus, “the destruction of the bodily instrument of communication interrupts his dialogue with the Father. When the bodily instrument is crushed, the intellectual act that is based on this instrument disappears for a time.”<sup>76</sup> Since the whole existence of Jesus “is in the shared dimension of his dialogue with the Father, the absolute solitude wrought by death is incomprehensible.”<sup>77</sup> In true Marcelian fashion, Ratzinger does not attempt to “solve” this apparent problem, only to “clarify” the mystery.<sup>78</sup> The “silence” of God, as well as the “speech,” is a part of Christian revelation—“God is not only the comprehensible word that comes to us; he is also the silent, inaccessible, uncomprehended, and incomprehensible ground that eludes us.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 290; quoting Jean Daniélou, *Essai sur le mystère de l'histoire*, no page number given.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ratzinger, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 83.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> See Gabriel Marcel, *The Mystery of Being* (London: Harvill, 1950), 211-212.

<sup>79</sup> Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 296.

For Ratzinger, Jesus' descent into Hell begins on the Mount of Olives. Here the innermost heart of his Passion is revealed not as "physical pain but radical loneliness, complete abandonment."<sup>80</sup> Ratzinger believes that this loneliness is nothing other than the human condition. We dwell in an "abyss of loneliness"—we are "alone in [our] innermost being."<sup>81</sup> Created by God for communion, we are unable to exist alone. Paradoxically, though, we are alone. We experience the fear of loneliness, which is not a rational fear of some identifiable threat, but a fear of a state that is a contradiction of our very nature. For Ratzinger, this is a "hellish" state.

If there were such a thing as a loneliness which could no longer be penetrated by the word of another; if a state of abandonment were to arise that was so deep that no "You" could reach into it any more, then we should have real, total loneliness and dreadfulness, what theology calls "hell."<sup>82</sup>

By Ratzinger's account, the fact that the Old Testament has one word for hell and death, *sheol*, reveals a profound insight. Death is hell. It is absolute loneliness, the place that no love can reach—or rather, it was such a place, for now Jesus has descended into this hell. It is no longer the place that no love can reach. Life has gone down into hell. Love now dwells there.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>83</sup> One can see both similarities and differences between Ratzinger's and von Balthasar's portrayal of the descent into hell. Although Ratzinger shares von Balthasar's focus on the loneliness of Jesus and his solidarity with us, unlike von Balthasar he has not been accused of universalism. Moreover, he identifies the descent into hell with the whole of the Passion, not just Holy Saturday. We could even say that, for him, the descent into hell begins with Jesus' baptism in the Jordan. Ratzinger speaks of the descent into the waters of baptism as an anticipation of the descent of Holy Saturday, saying that in the ultimate descent Jesus does not descend in the role of a spectator, as is presented in Dante's *Inferno*. Thus he agrees with von Balthasar that the descent is not a triumphal one, but rather a suffering-with-others one. See Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 19-20. Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1990), 148-188. Von Balthasar's thesis is contemporary with that of Ratzinger, since it was first mooted in *Theologie der Drei Tage*, published in 1970.

When we come to the crucifixion and death of Jesus in *Jesus of Nazareth*, we find, as we have said, some elements in common with Ratzinger's earlier Christology, as well as some different emphases. Overall, the later work does not reach the intellectual depths of the earlier writing, although it covers a broader expanse and is more biblically based. So, although Ratzinger covers much the same ground in looking at the Cross as an act of worship, he does so with a much more explicitly biblical flavour.<sup>84</sup> His approach might be termed more 'pastoral' in intent. It is concerned not just with the actions of Jesus but also the reactions to him from the onlookers.

One aspect which is more developed is the ecclesial significance of Psalm 22. Attention is focused not just on one verse in the Psalm, but upon the whole Psalm.<sup>85</sup> When Ratzinger does look at Jesus' cry of abandonment from the Cross, he moves beyond the attention that he gave earlier to exclusively concentrating upon "the mystery of his person in his final agony."<sup>86</sup> While not denying the validity of this approach, he characterises it as too narrowly individualistic. Now he emphasises the intercessory aspect of this cry, and the reality of "corporate personality."<sup>87</sup> There is also a greater emphasis upon the priesthood and kingship of Jesus.<sup>88</sup>

There are also new elements. In the cry "I thirst" (Jn 19:28), the lament of God over the failure of his people to requite his love is made present in Jesus.<sup>89</sup> Ratzinger also points out that one aspect of "corporate personality" is that we can be purified by participating in the suffering of Jesus, by gazing upon the

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<sup>84</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, trans. Philip J. Whitmore (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 229-239.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 204-205.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 214-215.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 213-216.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 209-212, 216-217, and 223.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 217-219.

pierced one (Jn 19:37; Zech 12:10), while another is that the Church and its sacraments are born from this same pierced side.<sup>90</sup>

### THE CONSUMMATION OF JESUS' FREEDOM IN HIS RESURRECTION

Like goodness, truth, and beauty, for Ratzinger love and freedom are convertible. They are conterminous—love is freedom, freedom is love. In our fallen world, in the face of sin, this love/freedom must take the form of obedient sacrificial worship. This worship transforms the un-freedom/loneliness of sin, and its consummation, death, into true freedom, the freedom/love of God.

This new consummation takes place first in Jesus, in his resurrection from the dead and his ascension to the Father's right hand. In order to grasp Ratzinger's understanding of this consummation, we must again address his understanding of that love which is freedom. The love which Ratzinger focuses upon is that spoken of in the *Song of Songs*. It is the love that is as strong as death (cf. Song 8:6). This love is not *agape*, but *eros*. This love Ratzinger typifies as making boundless demands that give expression to the basic problem of human existence, the demand of human love for infinity and indestructibility, a demand that must remain unsatisfied in a world of sin and death, a world of loneliness and destruction.

Why does Ratzinger focus upon *eros* rather than *agape*? He himself admits that the term *eros* is used only twice in the Septuagint and not at all in the New Testament.<sup>91</sup> To begin with, he sees *eros* as having been subjected to a false divinisation in the ancient world. Rather than being a true ascent in "ecstasy" to the divine, it was warped and degraded. It needs to be disciplined and purified so that it can give "a certain foretaste of the pinnacle of our existence, of that beatitude for which our whole being yearns."<sup>92</sup> Ratzinger focuses upon *eros* rather

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 219-222, and 225-226.

<sup>91</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 3.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., no. 4.

than *agape* because the human person is not pure spirit, but body and soul. It is this “unified creature composed of body and soul, who loves.”<sup>93</sup> *Eros* is meant to ascend to the divine. We are meant to rise in ecstasy above ourselves, in a love which is meant to realise both a human and divine promise.<sup>94</sup>

In the *Song of Songs* love moves from an insecure, indeterminate, and searching love to a love which really discovers the other and seeks the good of the beloved.<sup>95</sup> *Eros* is transformed in a twofold sense—it becomes exclusive and eternal. It becomes ecstasy, not in terms of intoxication, “but rather as a journey, an ongoing exodus out of the closed inward-looking self towards liberation through self-giving, and thus towards authentic self-discovery and indeed the discovery of God.”<sup>96</sup> This path is travelled first by Jesus, through the Cross and Resurrection. Thus Ratzinger states: “Starting from the depths of his own sacrifice and of the love that reaches fulfilment therein, he ... portrays ... the essence of love and indeed of human life itself.”<sup>97</sup>

In looking at *agape* and *eros*, which are often contrasted as “descending” love and “ascending” love, Ratzinger rejects a distinction that would classify the first as Christian and the second as non-Christian. Rather, the two can never be completely separated. When the two are united, the true nature of love is revealed. *Agape* enters into *eros*, which consequently seeks the good of the other more and more. Human love cannot be pure *agape*, since, as a creature, the human person must receive love as well as give it. One must receive the descending *agape* of God in order to pass on an *agaped eros* to both God and other human beings.<sup>98</sup> For Ratzinger, the love of God for man is simultaneously

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid., no. 5.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., no. 6.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., nos. 7-8. It would be interesting to compare Ratzinger’s understanding of the relationship between *eros* and *agape* with that portrayed by C. S. Lewis in *The Four Loves* (Glasgow: Collins, 1977).

*eros* and *agape*. He not only “gives,” “creates”—he also “desires,” “elects,” “chooses.” God’s *eros* is *agape* because it is gratuitous and it forgives.<sup>99</sup>

We have said that for Ratzinger the path by which *eros* is transformed into *agape* is firstly the Cross and Resurrection. In the Resurrection this love is shown to be greater than the power of death. Indeed, the Resurrection “is the greater strength of love in the face of death.”<sup>100</sup> Now the human paradox is that man is not by nature immortal.<sup>101</sup> Heaven is a grace added over and above our human nature.<sup>102</sup> The striving for autonomy that has fallen to our lot, owing to original sin, must end in death, since autonomy is impossible for us.<sup>103</sup>

How can love be stronger than death? According to Ratzinger, it is only when someone is ready to put life second to love. In the Resurrection of Jesus, the power of love has risen to be superior to the power of mere biological life. In him, *bios* has been encompassed by, and incorporated in, the power of love. This love of Jesus for us has become the love that actually keeps us alive. In this “evolutionary leap,” *bios* has become *zoe*, definitive life. This “leap” is achieved “by the spirit, by freedom, by love. It would no longer be evolution but decision and gift in one.”<sup>104</sup>

From the human perspective, immortality is only possible through living in another, and it is only the “other” who, through taking us up into its own being, can make immortality possible for us. Ratzinger sees these two perspectives mirrored in the two New Testament descriptions of the Resurrection of Jesus—that he has risen, and that the Father has raised him up. Thus he writes that:

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., nos. 9-10.

<sup>100</sup> Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 302.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 313.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 302. The positions that we are by nature mortal and have lost immortality through original sin are not contradictory. The rebellion of our first parents precluded our reception of eternal life. We should remember that there were two special trees in Eden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life. Had we not eaten from the first we would have been free of the fruit of the second (cf. Gen 3:22).

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 305.

The two formulas meet in the fact that Jesus' total love for men, which leads him to the Cross, is perfected in totally passing beyond to the Father and therein becomes stronger than death, because it is at the same time total "being held" by him.<sup>105</sup>

From this, Ratzinger draws the point that love and immortality are intrinsically linked. Indeed, the specific character of love is to establish immortality. The reverse of this principle is that immortality always proceeds from love. It cannot proceed from an autarchy that is sufficient to itself. This principle even applies to God. Because God is the relation of three Persons to each other in the "one for another" of love, because he lives only "in relation to," he is absolute permanence. The absolute is "absolute relatedness."<sup>106</sup>

Returning to the Resurrection, Ratzinger argues that it is on the basis of love as the foundation of immortality that the Resurrection of Jesus *is* our life.<sup>107</sup> For him, this is the reasoning that lies behind St. Paul's argument that if the dead are not raised neither is Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15: 12-19). Only if Christ has risen can love be stronger than death. In Jesus, it is love *for us* that is stronger than death.<sup>108</sup>

What conclusion can we draw from all of this concerning the freedom of Jesus? We have seen how Ratzinger regards love and freedom in God as identical. We can now add to this that he sees the life of God as identical with his love and freedom. In the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus, *bios* has been transformed into *zoe* through the transformation of human *eros* into divine *agape*, human freedom into the freedom of God. This new state of affairs Ratzinger attributes also to "the spirit."

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 305-306.

<sup>107</sup> Ratzinger refers to "the biblical statement that *his* Resurrection is *our* life" in *Introduction to Christianity*, 306. He seems to be referring to the statement of Jesus in *John* 11:25—"I am the Resurrection and the Life."

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

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**FREEDOM AND THE *ESCHATON***

In *Introduction to Christianity* there is a deliberate contrast made between the descent of Jesus into Hell and his ascension into Heaven. According to Ratzinger, these two states form the two poles of the total range of possible human existence. These two poles are existential rather than cosmic. It is possible for any human person to move to the "hellish" pole through the definite rejection of "being for" the other.<sup>109</sup> At the opposite pole the Ascension opens up the possibility for communion with human others through communion with divine love. As Hell can only be self-inflicted, Heaven by nature can only be received as a gift. This heaven only comes into existence through the "ascension" of Christ. To say that he "ascended into heaven" is simply to say that he brought about the communion "of the being 'man' with the being 'God.'"<sup>110</sup> Since Jesus is the "last Adam," his "creation" of heaven is for the corporate human race, not simply private individuals.

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 311-312. At this point, Ratzinger makes the following remark: "We know today better than ever before that everyone's existence touches these depths; and since in the last analysis mankind is 'one man,' these depths affect not only the individual but also the one body of the whole human race, which must therefore bear the burden of them as a corporate whole. From this angle it can be understood once again how Christ, the 'new Adam,' undertook to bear the burden of these depths with us and did not wish to remain sublimely unaffected by them; conversely, of course, total rejection in all its unfathomability has only now become possible" (312). Unfortunately, Ratzinger does not expound upon this "analysis" or the corporate personality of the human race, although, in his commentary on *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22, he does write, "[in this section the] idea of the 'assumptio hominis' is touched upon in its full ontological depth. The human nature of all men is one; Christ's taking to himself the one human nature of man is an event which affects every human being; consequently human nature in every human being is henceforth Christologically characterised. This idea is then extended to the real plane of actual concrete human existence. Human action, thought, willing and loving have become the instrument of the Logos; what is first present on the plane of being also gives new significance to the plane of action, to the actual accomplishment of human personal life." See Ratzinger, "The Dignity of the Human Person," 160. We should note how Ratzinger grounds the "creation" of hell for human persons on Christ's taking upon himself the burden of the "corporate man." Hell becomes possible for us only after Christ has "descended into hell." One immediately recalls the account of Christ going to preach "to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey" (1 Pet 3:19-20).

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 313.

Since the communion of God and man in the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ has broken down the frontier of *bios* and transformed it into *zoe*, the “end of the world” has already begun. The *eschaton* has already begun. Ratzinger identifies the Resurrection as *the* eschatological event.<sup>111</sup> In Christ the temporal has been taken up into the eternal. The barrier between “being” and “becoming” has been breached. Time has been drawn into God. For Ratzinger our prayers are effective because we are in Christ.

In Jesus we temporal beings can speak to the temporal one, our contemporary; but in him, who with us is time, we simultaneously make contact with the Eternal One, because with us Jesus is time, and with God he is eternity.<sup>112</sup>

Jesus is “in actual fact ‘the throne of grace’ to which at any time we can ‘with confidence draw near’ (Heb 4:16).”<sup>113</sup>

In *Jesus of Nazareth* Ratzinger develops his understanding of the new presence of Jesus that has been brought about by his Resurrection and Ascension. The “heaven” into which Jesus has ascended is not some inaccessible place, but a sharing in God’s dominion over space as well as time. Jesus’ “going away” is also his “coming” (cf. Jn 14:28). Because Jesus is with the Father he can “see” us. We can only “touch” Jesus because he is now present with the Father. Through Baptism our life is now hidden with God in Christ (cf. Col 3:1-3).<sup>114</sup> However, it must be mentioned that at this point Ratzinger makes no mention of the new presence of Jesus being the result of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We have just seen that, for Ratzinger, the two poles of possible human existence are existential and not cosmic. This position needs to be further defined. For Ratzinger, anthropology and cosmology coincide in Christology. That is to say, in Christ, man and the cosmos have been reconciled. In the

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 318.

<sup>114</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week*, 279-286.

assumption of *eros* into *agape*, *bios* has been taken up into *zoe*.<sup>115</sup> The cosmos was not created as a mere "container" for human history. Rather, "the cosmos is movement ... it is not just a case of history *existing in* it ... cosmos itself *is* history."<sup>116</sup> This history is moving towards its "omega" point, the second coming of Jesus Christ.

In his earlier Christology Ratzinger made much use of Teilhard de Chardin's "complexification" thesis to explain this movement. This movement is driven from above by "mind," not from below by unconscious matter. There is a process taking place by which the material is taken up into a new kind of unity through spirit. The return of Christ will be "the final unification of reality by spirit or mind."<sup>117</sup> This increasing coalescence of spirit and matter, of anthropology and cosmology, implies unification in a person, since there can be no mind which does not subsist as person. For the omega of the world to be "the triumph of spirit; that is, the triumph of truth, freedom, and love," this omega must be a person, since only a person can be truthful, free and loving.<sup>118</sup> If reaching this omega "is based on spirit and freedom," it must include responsibility.<sup>119</sup> For this reason the second coming of the Lord brings judgement as well as salvation. The "final stage of the world is not the result of a natural current but the result of responsibility that is grounded in freedom."<sup>120</sup> At this point Ratzinger introduces what he sees as the paradox of freedom. It will be helpful to here to quote him at length.

There is a freedom that is not cancelled out even by grace and, indeed, is brought by it face to face with itself: man's final fate is not forced upon him regardless of the decisions he had made in his life. ... It is not part of our task to consider in detail how [the assertion that we will be judged according to our works] can coexist with the full weight of

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<sup>115</sup> Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 318-320.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 320.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 321.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 322. Note once more the equation of spirit, freedom, love, and now truth.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

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the doctrine of grace. Perhaps in the last analysis it is impossible to escape a paradox whose logic is completely disclosed only to the experience of a life based on faith. Anyone who entrusts himself to faith becomes aware that both exist: the radical character of grace that frees helpless man and, not less, the abiding seriousness of the responsibility that summons man day after day. Both mean together that the Christian enjoys, on the one hand, the liberating, detached tranquillity of him who lives on that excess of divine justice known as Jesus Christ. There is a tranquillity that knows: in the last analysis, I cannot destroy what *he* has built up. For in himself man lives with the dreadful knowledge that his power to destroy is infinitely greater than his power to build up. But this same man knows that in Christ the power to build up has proved infinitely stronger. This is the source of a profound freedom, a knowledge of God's unrepentant love; he sees through all our errors and remains well disposed to us. It becomes possible to do one's own work fearlessly; it has shed its sinister aspect because it has lost its power to destroy: the issue of the world does not depend on us but is in God's hands. At the same time the Christian knows, however, that he is not free to do whatever he pleases, that his activity is not a game that God allows him and does not take seriously.<sup>121</sup>

The question which arises from this position is the following—can this apparent paradox be dissolved or must it remain insoluble? How can “freedom” be love and at the same time the choice to reject love? Perhaps the term “freedom” is being used in different senses. If freedom is love, then not loving is unfreedom. Rejecting God's grace is not an exercise in freedom, but a rejection of freedom. This is so even though we may say that we are “free” to reject God's grace, his offer of himself. When Ratzinger says that “there is a freedom which is not cancelled out even by grace,” we can say that such a “freedom” is actually unfreedom. This “freedom” is actually a perversion of true freedom, a perversion which ultimately leads to its negation.

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 324-325.

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## OUR PARTICIPATION IN THE FREEDOM OF JESUS

Ratzinger holds that there is indeed a genuine theology of liberation. In *A New Song for the Lord* he explains this theology in the context of the statement of Jesus that he is “the way, the truth and the life” (cf. John 14:6). Regarding the first aspect of this liberation, when Jesus calls himself “the way,” this entails a “theology of liberation.” As the true Moses, Jesus does more than lead us along the way; he *is* the way. This “liberation theology” is shaped by the connection between the Old and New Testaments, which Ratzinger sees as the “two stages of the divine-human history of freedom.”<sup>122</sup> Although a new theology of “exodus” was first developed in countries in which suffering from political and economic oppression is especially prevalent, Ratzinger claims that the desire for the promised land of freedom is just as strong in those nations that enjoy the greatest political, economic, and social freedom.

Ratzinger sees a particular manifestation of the meeting of the two stages of the divine-human history of freedom in the accounts of the Transfiguration. He notes that the one place in the Gospels wherein the word “exodus” appears is in the Lucan account of the Transfiguration. The two men who appear talking with Jesus about his coming “exodus” through his Passover in Jerusalem are Moses and Elijah. That Moses foreshadows this exodus hardly needs to be pointed out. But Ratzinger presents Elijah, too, as a type of exodus. Although in his time the people of Israel lived in the promised land, in their way of life they had returned to Egypt and, ironically, were living under a tyrannical king and experiencing a tyrannical existence even in the promised land. Having thrown off the Covenant, their self-made freedom proved to be a new tyranny. It is for this reason that Elijah must go to Sinai in order to symbolise a new exodus. A true exodus means living according to the Covenant.<sup>123</sup>

Ratzinger sees the mount of the Transfiguration as a new Sinai. In Matthew and Mark it occurs six days after Peter’s profession of faith. Just as, six days after coming to Sinai, Moses, accompanied by the two priests Nadab and Abihu,

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<sup>122</sup> Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 5.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

ascends into the divine presence, where his face is transfigured (cf. Ex 14: 1 & 16), so Jesus, accompanied by Peter, James, and John, ascend the new Sinai, where his whole body is transfigured. Rather than receiving a new Decalogue, the disciples are presented with a new living Torah, the Son, the Beloved of the Father, to whom they must listen. Ratzinger goes on to further identify the Feast of Booths, the feast of thanksgiving for the gift of the land, with the three tents of the Transfiguration. For Ratzinger, the Transfiguration of Jesus signifies that: “The exodus of Israel and the exodus of Jesus touch each other: all the feasts and all the ways of Israel lead to the Passover of Jesus Christ.”<sup>124</sup>

According to Ratzinger, Luke depicts the entire public life of Jesus as an “exodus.” It is a going up to Jerusalem in order to Passover to the Father. It is “the real and definitive exodus in which Christ walks the path into the open and himself becomes the way for humanity into the open, into freedom.”<sup>125</sup> However, this road does not end in Jerusalem, but continues into the Resurrection. Jesus opens “the new and living way for us ... through the curtain (that is, through his flesh” (Heb 10:20). He leads us into the “tent not made by hands,” into the presence of the living God (Heb 9:11).<sup>126</sup> For Ratzinger, this is the freedom that we desire, the freedom that cannot be satisfied by any earthly thing or experience. Rather: “The thirst for freedom is the voice of our being made in the image and likeness of God; it is the thirst ‘to sit at the right hand of God,’ to be ‘like God.’”<sup>127</sup>

How can we participate in the freedom of God? What is the alternative to the serpent’s temptation to “be like God” through a self-made freedom? One way Ratzinger explains it is that this freedom is based on a new “substance.” Referring to the Letter to the Hebrews, as Benedict XVI he points out the definition of faith given there in Hebrews 11:1—“Faith is the *hypostasis* (Vg. *substantia*) of things hoped for; the proof of things not seen.” Following St.

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

Thomas, Benedict XVI points out that faith is a *habitus*, a stable disposition of the spirit, “through which eternal life takes root in us and reason is led to consent to what it does not see.”<sup>128</sup> This is to say that the “substance” of the eternal life for which we hope is already present in us through faith. This presence of eternal life creates a certainty that, although it does not yet “appear” in the exterior world, it can still be perceived interiorly. *Pace* Luther, this “substance” is objectively present, not just subjectively present as an expression of an interior attitude. It is not just subjective conviction, but objective *elenchos*, proof. The fact that we have this new “possession” (*hyparxin*—Vg. *substantiam*) enables Christians, in the face of persecution, to give up their normal source of security, their “property” (*hyparchonton*—Vg. *bonorum*).<sup>129</sup> In linking these two kinds of “substance,” Benedict XVI maintains that the *habitus* of faith, based as it is on the possession of eternal life, creates a new freedom, one which transcends the possessions which are the habitual foundation of life. This new freedom is not only revealed in martyrdom, but in all those who renounce their own wills in order to bring the Gospel to others. Touched by the hope of Christ, “hope has arisen for others who [are] living in darkness and without hope.”<sup>130</sup>

Furthermore, in explaining the meaning of this freedom, Ratzinger identifies two sayings of Jesus which refer to being placed on the right hand of God. The first is the promise to those who gave Jesus food when he was hungry, drink when he was thirsty, welcomed him when he was a stranger, and visited him when he was sick or in prison (cf. Matt 25:31-40). The second is in response to the request of the sons of Zebedee, who are told that whomsoever may sit to the right and left of the Father, their call is to drink the cup that Jesus drinks and receive the baptism that he receives (cf. Mark 10:35-40). These two passages are paradigmatic of Ratzinger’s understanding of how we become truly free. They point to more than a mere moral imitation of Christ. The imitation of Jesus is a Christological category. We are not just called to imitate the human Jesus. We are called to imitate him in his divinity. As Ratzinger quotes: “Therefore be

<sup>128</sup> Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, n. 7. Citing St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, q. 4, a. 1.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*, n. 8. Cf. Heb 11:34.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*

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imitators of God” (Eph 5:1).<sup>131</sup> The way that Jesus opens for us “through the curtain” is ontological. By denying oneself and taking up one’s cross, through entering into the Paschal dimension of Jesus’ exodus, we are reborn into a new life. This is a life of conversion, wherein the old self is put to death and the new creature enters into the freedom of God.<sup>132</sup>

Ratzinger briefly touches upon the second aspect of this liberation—Jesus as the truth and the life. As we have seen, for Ratzinger, truth and freedom are inseparable. We are now friends of Jesus, rather than mere servants, because we can *know* everything that Jesus has heard from his Father (cf. John 15:15). As Ratzinger explains:

Ignorance is dependency, slavery: whoever does not know remains a servant. Only when understanding opens up, when we begin to comprehend what is essential, do we begin to be free. Freedom from which truth has been removed is a lie. Christ the truth, this means: God who makes friends out of unknowing servants by letting us become, to some degree, sharers in the knowledge of himself.<sup>133</sup>

The alternative to this kind of freedom is not a self-made freedom, but the negation of freedom. If God is not the author of the world, then the world does not originate in freedom, and any appearance of freedom in it is an illusion. If we cannot know the truth about God, the true God, “then we are not free people in a creation that is open to freedom, but elements in a system of necessities in which, inexplicably, the cry for freedom will not die out.”<sup>134</sup> To Ratzinger, this is another manifestation of the refusal to accept the call to divinisation. It is the heresy of Arius, who refused to abandon the idea of God’s absolute transcendence, and hence our inability to know him. This transcendent God

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<sup>131</sup> Ratzinger, *A New Song for the Lord*, 20-21.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

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cannot be the creator of the world, but must act through an intermediary that is less than divine. We cannot become the “friend” of such a God.<sup>135</sup>

Using the example of iconography, Ratzinger argues that the transcendence of God does not prevent him from being visible in Christ. He accepts as true the words of Jesus: “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (Jn 14:9). “Whoever sees Christ really sees the Father; in that which is visible one sees that which is invisible, the invisible in person.”<sup>136</sup> The human life of Jesus is the love of the Father made visible. The Crucified One is the image of the invisible God (cf. Col 1:15). Those who look upon Christ are taken up into his exodus. If one sees the Father in Christ Crucified, then one sees through the torn curtain of the Temple. The God who is thusly revealed is a Trinity. In becoming a friend of this God one is initiated into the very heart of truth. But this truth is also a way; “it is the fatal, yet precisely through losing oneself life-giving adventure of love which alone is freedom.”<sup>137</sup>

Even more briefly, Ratzinger looks at the third aspect of this liberation, Christ as the life. Of particular interest is his focus upon John 7:37-38, Jesus’ invitation to come and drink from the fountain of living waters. He points out that this reception is not merely passive. If we come and drink, out of our own hearts living waters will flow. Thus: “To drink from the living water of the rock means to consent to the salvific mystery of water and blood. ... It is consenting to love; it is entering the truth. And exactly this is life.”<sup>138</sup>

It is no coincidence that the freedom of this way, truth, and life is addressed in a book on the Liturgy because, for Ratzinger, the Sacred Liturgy is the ultimate *locus* of our participation in freedom. In *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, Ratzinger reiterates much of what he has said about freedom in earlier works,

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<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 32.

although here it is within the context of the connection of the Liturgy to both the cosmos and history.<sup>139</sup>

His first point is that Christian worship is related to both the cosmos and history, to God the Creator as well as God the Saviour. Thus: “Creation moves toward the Sabbath, on the day on which man and the whole created order participates in God’s rest, in his freedom.”<sup>140</sup> For Ratzinger, the Sabbath is a “vision of freedom.” This freedom is not only anthropological—that is to say, freedom from subordination to another and to work. According to Ratzinger, the Sabbath is the sign of the Covenant, and its connection with Creation reveals that Creation exists for Covenant.

[Creation] exists to be a place for the covenant that God wants to make with man. The goal of creation is the covenant, the love story of God and man. The freedom and equality of men, which the Sabbath is meant to bring about, is not a merely anthropological or sociological vision; it can only be understood *theo*-logically. Only when man is in covenant with God does he become free. Only then are the equality and dignity of all men made manifest. If, then, everything is directed to the covenant, it is important to see that the covenant is a relationship: God’s gift of himself to man, but also man’s response to God. Man’s response to the God who is good to him is love, and loving God means worshipping him.<sup>141</sup>

In Ratzinger’s understanding, the completion of the Tabernacle by Moses after seven days mirrors the completion of creation. The glory of the Lord which fills the Tabernacle anticipates the fullness of God dwelling in his creation. As Ratzinger sees it:

Creation and history, creation, history and worship are in a relationship of reciprocity. Creation looks toward the covenant, but the covenant completes creation and does not simply exist along with it. Now if worship, rightly

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<sup>139</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 24-34.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

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understood, is the soul of the covenant, then it not only saves mankind but is also meant to draw the whole of reality into communion with God.<sup>142</sup>

In Ratzinger's estimation, the heart of worship is sacrifice. But true worship does not mean destruction. Rather, it means union through true surrender to God, the union of man and creation with God. Belonging to God does not entail destruction—that is, non-being—but is a way of being. It means moving from a state of separation, or autonomy, to one of finding oneself through losing oneself (cf. Mk 8:35 & Mt 10:39). Ratzinger calls St. Augustine as a witness to this.

[The] true “sacrifice” is the *civitas Dei*, that is, love-transformed mankind, the divinization of creation and the surrender of all things to God: God all in all (cf. 1 Cor 15:28). That is the purpose of the world. That is the essence of sacrifice and worship.<sup>143</sup>

Thus divinization is the goal of both worship and creation. For Ratzinger, a divinized world is a world of freedom and love.

In support of this position, Ratzinger calls upon both modern and ancient witnesses. The “complexification” thesis of Teilhard de Chardin is the former. This thesis gives a new meaning to Christian worship. “[The] transubstantiated Host is the anticipation of the transformation and divinization of matter in the Christological ‘fullness’ ... the Eucharist provides the movement of the cosmos with its direction; it anticipates its goal and at the same time urges it on.”<sup>144</sup>

The ancient witness is the pattern of *exitus* and *reditus*, found in its most impressive form in Plotinus. In Christian thought, this pattern of an *exitus* as a fall from the infinite into finitude, to be redeemed by a *reditus* which liberates from finitude, is recast. The Christian *exitus* is one in which the Creator engages in a free act of creation. Rather than being something negative, non-divine being is the positive fruit of the divine will. Thus Ratzinger states:

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 29.

The act of God's being, which causes created being, is an act of freedom. In this respect, the principle of freedom is present in being itself, from the ground upward. The *exitus*, or rather God's free act of creation, is indeed ordered toward the *reditus*, but that does not now mean the rescinding of created being. ... [Instead, the] creature, existing in its own right, comes home to itself, and this act is an answer in freedom to God's love.<sup>145</sup>

The creature accepts its creation from God as an offer of love and thus enters into a dialogue of love, with the new kind of unity that is the unique creation of love. Rather than being absorbed by the other, in giving itself the creature becomes fully itself. This *reditus*, instead of abolishing creation, results in its full and final perfection.<sup>146</sup>

In spite of this freedom the creature has the freedom to rupture the *reditus* through the rejection of love, which is seen as dependence. This is the autonomy of the attempt at self-divinization. Since we have all in fact suffered this rupture in the Fall, "sacrifice," which "in its essence is simply returning to love and therefore divinization," now takes on a new form.<sup>147</sup> As Ratzinger explains:

[Worship] now has a new aspect: the healing of wounded freedom, atonement, purification, deliverance from estrangement. The essence of worship, of sacrifice—the process of assimilation, of growth in love, and this the way into freedom—remains unchanged. But now it assumes the aspect of healing, the loving transformation of broken freedom, of painful expiation. Worship is directed to the Other in himself, to his all-sufficiency, but now it refers itself to the Other who alone can extricate me from the knot that I myself cannot untie.<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 32-33.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 33. Cf. Joseph Ratzinger, *The End of Time* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004), 20-21. Rowland contrasts Ratzinger's understanding of human participation in the freedom of God with both the extrinsicist separation of nature and grace, and Rahner's alternative of naturalising the supernatural. See *Ratzinger's Faith*, 37.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. Cf. Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith*, 30.

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The sacrifice of the Cross of Christ, “the love that in dying makes a gift of itself,” is an act of new creation, “the restoration of creation to its true identity.”<sup>149</sup> All worship is now a participation in this Passover “from divine to human, from death to life, to the unity of God and man.”<sup>150</sup> In the sacrifice of Jesus and our participation in it through the Sacred Liturgy, the gift of freedom has become the centre not only of divine being, but of created being as well. So now we have come from the freedom of Jesus as expressed in his free “sacrificial” obedience to the Father, to our participation, personally and corporately, in that freedom through our participation in this prayer of Jesus—and this participation is in the freedom of God.

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<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*