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Graduate Thesis Submission

*Loving in the Present:
The Theological and Pastoral Influences of St. Bonaventure's Critical Retrieval
of Joachim of Fiore on Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI.*

Submitted by:
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Introduction

The influences of St. Bonaventure on Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI¹ have been noted in studies by Fr. Aidan Nichols O.P., Tracey Rowland, Fr. Maximilian Heinrich Heim, and others.² A dedicated overview of Bonaventurian thought within the writings of the current Holy Father, however, is necessary to more fully appreciate the roots of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's theology and its imprint on (and implications for) Catholic theology, anthropology, and pastoral practices. The present work intends to demonstrate that Joseph Ratzinger's 1957 thesis on St. Bonaventure's critical retrieval of Joachim of Fiore did not simply light a candle to illuminate Ratzinger's later theological explorations, but rather uncovered a Trinitarian supernova—one of dynamic relationship and love. This would forever influence how Ratzinger/Benedict XVI perceives humanity's history as well as its engagement with the very essence of revelation. Specifically, I suggest that the current Successor of Peter has benefited considerably from St. Bonaventure's pastoral response to thirteenth-century Franciscan "Spiritualists" and their acceptance of an imminent or realized eschatology. This response included a corrective theology of history that, along with Bonaventure's dialectical engagement with new ways of thought (specifically, Joachim's), provides vital understandings of what Christianity offers a fallen world. The present work will examine how these Bonaventurian influences allow Ratzinger to develop from core Christian theological proclamations—particularly the Cross and that God, as Trinity, is relationship and love—a particular emphasis on Christian charity. This emphasis, which will be shown to permeate his works, is the observation that the Franciscan Master General, like Augustine, "knew" that for Christianity to remain authentic, it must maintain its continuing kenosis—that is, its communal obligation (and the implications thereof) for members of the Body of Christ to sacrificially "love in the present."³

¹ The naming convention used in the present work will refer to "Ratzinger" for particular statements or texts related to Joseph Ratzinger before his election to the papacy. "Benedict XVI" will be used for those statements/texts after his ascension to the Chair of Peter. Otherwise, "Ratzinger/Benedict XVI" will be used for overarching statements that refer to the man in his entirety.

² Aidan Nichols devotes a chapter to Ratzinger's study of Bonaventure's theology of history and metaphysics in *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 51-65. Tracey Rowland makes similar observations, and carries them into Ratzinger's pontificate in *Ratzinger's Faith, The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI* (Oxford: University Press, 2008). Maximilian Heinrich Heim focuses on Ratzinger's role and subsequent criticisms of the Second Vatican Council. Heim suggests that Ratzinger's studies of St. Bonaventure "had key importance for Ratzinger in the later debate about the eschatological aspects of the Constitution on the Church and about the different ways in which it was received in ecumenical circles as well as by proponents of Latin American liberation theology." *Joseph Ratzinger: Life in the Church and Living Theology*, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 160. Fr. Heim notes that more can be said about Bonaventure's influence on Ratzinger, but that this was beyond the scope of his work (163). See also Thomas P. Rauch, SJ, *Pope Benedict XVI, An Introduction to His Theological Vision* (New York: Paulist Press, 2009).

³ Joseph Ratzinger, *Theology of History in St. Bonaventure*, trans. Zachary Hayes O.F.M. (Chicago: Franciscan Herald Press, 1971), 163.

To accomplish this, the present work will trace how Ratzinger's encounters with the Nazi regime and, later, theologians such as Augustine and Henri de Lubac prepared him for his reading of the Seraphic Doctor. This reading provided Ratzinger with a view of God's revelation and saving activity as historical—that is, as taking place in collective and individual moments of both reflection and radical charity. The emphasis on the Christian obligation to “love in the present” is threatened by what Ratzinger/Benedict XVI considers to be temptations to “escape” history and its suffering. In general, such escape has to do with either (i) a retreat into a privatized form of religious individualism or sectarianism that minimizes or excludes charity toward other humans and the world generally; or (ii) a godless eschatology rooted in the hope that human suffering can be eliminated through rational politics and technological power. Joachim's New Age theology will be shown to be both an important resource and liability for Christian tradition. Indeed, Bonaventure, the young Ratzinger, and the mature Benedict XVI maintain that Joachim has something to offer regarding the interplay of history, revelation, and salvation. Given this shared appreciation of (and warnings about) Joachim, the present work will identify and explore Bonaventurian themes within Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's writings and activities. A central place will be given to Ratzinger's original study of Bonaventure and his principal works on revelation and eschatology. As appropriate, attention will be called to his appreciation and critiques of the Second Vatican Council, as well as significant theological trends that he would (and continues to) engage. Pontifical texts examined will primarily include Benedict XVI's three encyclicals, although selected homilies and letters will also be cited. Throughout his corpus, Ratzinger/Benedict XVI will be found exhorting individual Christians to maintain a primacy of cruciform love so that the Church can faithfully propose to the world what will be described herein as a unique sacramental view of social doctrine.

Expanding the understanding of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's encounter with Bonaventure

Nichols in particular finds it significant that Ratzinger concludes his work on Bonaventure with the centrality of Pauline love (cf. 1 Cor 13)⁴. Nichols, as with Rowland and Heim, counts as a watershed moment for Ratzinger his 1957 *Habilitationsschrift* on St. Bonaventure's interrelated views on revelation and human

⁴ Nichols, *Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, 44.

history. Indeed, when published for the general public more than a decade later, Ratzinger noted in his foreword that the “bitter controversies of the 1260s and 1270s” were “similar to the post-Conciliar mood which we are experiencing” in the late 1960s.⁵ As for methodology, Ratzinger finds Bonaventure evenhandedly discoursing with unruly elements under his care in an effort “to preserve the unity of the Order.”⁶ For Ratzinger, Bonaventure becomes a model for the pastoral use of sound theology to successfully—that is, with charity—resolve threats from unorthodox members of his community.

To understand Bonaventure’s impact on Ratzinger, one must know the thirteenth-century landscape in which Bonaventure found himself. This includes especially the Franciscan General’s attempts to re-direct the exuberance of those in his Order mesmerized with the writings of a twelfth-century mystic, Joachim of Fiore. These writings were later construed to prove that St. Francis had ushered in a new Age of the Spirit, an interpretation that would find itself at odds with orthodox Catholic understandings of the Trinity and the place of the Cross.⁷ How Bonaventure handled these Franciscan Spiritualists led to two strands of thought about Christianity’s understanding of history. These strands are interrelated and form a dominate genetic code that has shaped Ratzinger/Benedict XVI as both theologian and priest.

The first element of our subject’s Bonaventurian ancestry came from the Franciscan General’s view of *scripture having a “historical character.”* While Ratzinger affirms that “scripture is closed” for Bonaventure, he adds that “its meaning is advancing in a steady growth through history; and this growth is not yet closed.”⁸ For Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, revelation’s interaction with humanity’s history of love is the driving force that, at the end of time, will make known the fullness of Truth, and, importantly, make possible the salvation of souls. Consequently, this interplay of history and scripture is more than a theological nuance; it implies dramatic pastoral realities for Christian unity, charitable structures, and interpersonal relationships. While Ratzinger may not agree with every detail of Bonaventure’s correction of unorthodox elements under his care, the pastoral and theological methodology employed by the Franciscan General helped shape Ratzinger’s understanding of eschatology, ecclesiology, and the commandment to sacrificially love God and one’s

⁵ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, xiii.

⁶ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, xiv.

⁷ George H. Tavard, *The Contemplative Church; Joachim and His Adversaries* (Marquette University Press: Milwaukee, 2005), 13-15, 35.

⁸ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 9.

neighbor here, now and radically.⁹ As will be seen, these Bonaventurian themes will have significant ramifications for our understanding of social doctrine and its place in Christian life.

The second strand involves human history itself, which, given its interplay with revelation, must be viewed as more than a progression of isolated events to be studied scientifically or solely within historical-critical (or scholastic) methodologies. For Ratzinger (and, in his own age and way, for Bonaventure), doing so would deny the unchanging nature of the human person. Indeed, a proper anthropology must remain independent of the social or technological advances of the ages upon ages. And so Ratzinger/Benedict XVI will maintain the human person's intrinsic capacity and desire to be in relation with others—to love and receive love, divine and human, no matter what the obstacles or temptations to do otherwise. Thus, *history must be viewed hermeneutically* as the telling of an organic, unified drama (indeed, a love story) about a community in time that finds full meaning only in recognizing its movement toward a Christological completion—that is, an ideal state that gives meaning to the present but remains always beyond the grasp of any individual or group.¹⁰ As we will see, for the Franciscan Spiritualists, this ideal state was already realized and in their midst. For them, the Ages of the Father and the Son had come and gone. With the coming of Francis, the Age of the Spirit was at hand. If so, there was no longer a need to pick up one's cross and follow Christ. The Gospels—with their tensions between God and man, man and neighbor, death and life, as well as their recognition that to *love in the present* means sacrifice—were now artifacts of a former age. Bonaventure saw

⁹ It will be shown that Bonaventure and Ratzinger/Benedict XVI stress the centrality of Christ and His Cross in human history, but this is not meant to subordinate the Holy Spirit. Ratzinger's appreciation of the Holy Spirit is made very clear in his 2006 homily delivered on the Vigil of Pentecost. Within it can be found a number of themes that have been and will be examined herein, including the primacy of love; the role of the human response to God's grace within, and shaping, human history; the relational aspect of the individual to the community, to the Church and, ultimately, to God. "If we look at history, we see that creation prospered around monasteries, just as with the reawakening of God's Spirit in human hearts the brightness of the Creator Spirit has also been restored to the earth—a splendor that has been clouded and at times even extinguished by the barbarity of the human mania for power. Moreover, the same thing happened once again around Francis of Assisi—it has happened everywhere as God's Spirit penetrates souls, this Spirit whom our hymn describes as light, love, and strength. Thus, we have discovered an initial answer to the question as to what the Holy Spirit is, what he does, and how we can recognize him. He comes to meet us through creation and its beauty. However, in the course of human history, a thick layer of dirt has covered God's good creation, which makes it difficult if not impossible to perceive in it the Creator's reflection, although the knowledge of the Creator's existence is reawakened within us ever anew, as it were, spontaneously, at the sight of a sunset over the sea, on an excursion to the mountains or before a flower that has just bloomed. But the Creator Spirit comes to our aid. He has entered history and speaks to us in a new way. In Jesus Christ, God himself was made man and allowed us, so to speak, to cast a glance at the intimacy of God himself. And there we see something totally unexpected: in God, an 'I' and a 'You' exist. The mysterious God is not infinite loneliness, he is an event of love. If by gazing at creation we think we can glimpse the Creator Spirit, God himself, rather like creative mathematics, like a force that shapes the laws of the world and their order, but then, even, also like beauty - now we come to realize: the Creator Spirit has a heart. He is Love." Meeting with the Ecclesial Movements and New Communities, Homily of His Holiness Benedict XVI, Saturday, June 3, 2006. From "http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/homilies/2006/documents/hf_ben-xvi_hom_20060603_veglia-pentecoste_en.html," accessed January 29, 2011.

¹⁰ As will be seen further along, this will be important for Ratzinger's critiques of modern political thought, such as Marxism.

where such errors would lead, especially the denial of the Cross. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI will see these same errors and their consequences; to do so he need only consider the various forms of politicized hope he has directly encountered—such as Nazism, Communism, or Liberation Theology’s aggressive form of Christianity.

The abbot that set history in motion

Ratzinger’s 1957 *Habilitationsschrift* was in large part an analysis of how the thirteenth-century Franciscan General managed the fallout from the writings of Joachim of Fiore—a twelfth-century Italian mystic who began his religious life as a Cistercian monk, although eventually struck out on his own, in part due to the unpleasantness of monastic duties. While Joachim’s writings created excitement and controversy during his life, it was decades after his death—when a young friar (whom we will meet in more detail later on) reinterpreted them—that Joachim’s texts divided the budding Franciscan Order.¹¹ The mystic’s Franciscan followers clashed with fellow members of their Order (and many others throughout the Church) over their belief that St. Francis had ushered in a post-New-Testament Age of the Holy Spirit. This divide grew hostile, but Bonaventure did much to heal it with his pastoral response to the Joachimites, one that articulated a particular place for history within theology.

Little is known of Joachim’s life (c. 1135-1202). Established information comes primarily from two available documents, *Virtutum Beati Joachimi synopsis*, written by Joachim’s monastic secretary, and the anonymous *Vita beati Joachimi Abbati*. Other sources include various autobiographical notations within Joachim’s texts as well as much later biographies, although the latter often appear to blend fact and legend.¹² For contemporary writers, such as Marjorie Reeves, George Tavad, S.J., Delno C. West, and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, what is reliably known about Joachim provides vital context to appreciating his understanding of history, and its impact on Christian theology and politics—ecclesial and secular—during his own time and throughout the centuries. Born in Italy’s Calabrian region in Sicily, in the diocese of Cosenza,

¹¹ Tavad, *The Contemplative Church*, 13-15, 29-33.

¹² Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: A Study in Spiritual Perception in History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), 1. Also, Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London: SPCK, 1976), 1-5, and *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1969; University of Notre Dame Press: Notre Dame, 1993), 1-15.

to the son of an official in the court of Roger II, Joachim lived among Latins, Lombards, Greeks, and Normans (the area was a Norman holding), as well as Muslims, Jews, and Greek Christians. Growing up in such diversity and in a family working for civil authorities, Joachim became quite familiar with inter-faith, political, and bureaucratic realities.¹³ It is no surprise, then, that in his adult life Joachim displayed an uncanny ability to find favor with pontiffs and kings—as well as to blend Christian theology with events of the past and present. Tavard especially notes Joachim’s interactions with Popes Lucius III (1181-1185), Urban III (1185-1187), and Clement III (1187-1191)¹⁴. In secular realms, the abbot “knew the ways of the world . . . [and showed] an unexpected political wisdom in relations with imperial and royal powers.”¹⁵ Even in his later life, when he sought to live as a hermit, his meetings with figures such as Richard the Lion-Hearted show that Joachim “kept his figure on the pulse of the broader society, and ... [remained] skilled in political maneuvers.”¹⁶ Such worldly interactions appear to have influenced Joachim’s theology—and the reverse is also most certainly the case. Reeves notes that Joachim is often found

in the midst of the European political scene, the sought after prophet caught up in one of its major preoccupations—the menace of the Saracen and the crusade of the faithful against the infidel. ... [These] happenings form part of the material on which Joachim’s mind fed. His meditations upon the inner concords of the two Testaments were not concerned with a dead history but with a continuing drama *usque ad presens*. Contemporary events illuminated the concords of Scripture; the study of the Testaments gave the clue to the vast events on the threshold of which Joachim believed he stood.¹⁷

Elsewhere, Reeves and M. Bloomfield sketch the movement of Joachim’s thought throughout Europe in the early thirteenth century—well before the crisis within the Franciscan Order.¹⁸ The dissemination of Joachim’s

¹³ West, Zimdars-Swartz *Joachim*, 1-2.

¹⁴ In the twentieth century, John Paul II would seem to defend Joachim’s honor in a 1989 General Audience. “During the Middle Ages there were some who, under the influence of the apocalyptic speculations of the pious Calabrian monk Joachim of Fiore (d. 1202), dreamed and predicted the coming of a ‘third kingdom’ in which the universal renewal in preparation for the end of the world, foretold by Jesus, would be verified (cf. Mt 14:4). But St. Thomas further notes that ‘from the very beginning of the Gospel preaching Christ had stated: ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand’ (Mt 4:17). Hence it is very stupid to say that Christ’s Gospel is not the Gospel of the kingdom’ (Summa Theol., I, II, q. 106, a. 4, ad 4). It is one of the very few cases in which the holy Doctor used harsh words in judging an erroneous opinion, because in the thirteenth century the controversy engendered by the ravings of the ‘spirituals’ was very much alive. They distorted Joachim’s teaching, and St. Thomas saw the danger of the claims of independence and innovation founded on the presumption of charisms.” John Paul II, “The Presence of Christ’s Kingdom in Human History,” November 22, 1989, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/audiences/alpha/data/aud19891122en.html, accessed February 1, 2011.

¹⁵ Tavard, *The Contemplative Church*, 13.

¹⁶ Tavard, *The Contemplative Church*, 13-14. In *Prophetic Future*, Reeves provides an analysis of documents either about or purported to be by Joachim; she also discusses debates about the meeting with Richard the Lion-Hearted in 1190/1 and others. See 6-15.

¹⁷ Reeves *Prophetic Future*, 10. Later Reeves finds it telling that “*usque ad presens*” appears in Joachim’s *Exposito in Apocalypsim* (Venice, 1527), f. 9^v, “more than once,” n2. By this Reeves sees Joachim ever aware of the interplay of past and current events.

¹⁸ Morton W. Bloomfield and Marjorie E. Reeves, “The Penetration of Joachim into Northern Europe,” *Speculum*, vol. 29 no. 4 (Oct., 1954), 776. Reeves covers this early dissemination, as well as later Joachimist influences throughout the Middle Ages and

writings and thought to England, for instance, came substantially from chronicles of his meeting with Richard the Lion-Hearted, who, not surprisingly, shared an interest in Joachim's "conception of the crisis of history." There is evidence of Joachim's ideas in France, again in the early thirteenth century, most likely resulting from the crusaders' steady stream of intellectual commerce between Italy and England; by the middle of the thirteenth century, Joachimite themes leapt across the Alps to Germany.¹⁹ This tracing of Joachim's thought, and the rapidity with which it spread, provides important perspective to understand events that would occur within the Franciscan Order and, to a far lesser extent, the Dominican Order.²⁰ With this comprehensive view of Joachimist thought throughout Europe, it becomes clear that Bonaventure's encounter with those of his own flock loyal to Joachimist thought was part of a wider sociological and theological phenomenon. Joachim's writings and speculative theologies were realities that the Franciscan General could not contain or ever eradicate, which, as we will see, he did not wish to do so completely.

And so we must ask: What was the foundation of this wider phenomenon? What visions detonated within Joachim's mind that, once recorded on vellum, advanced across Europe and throughout the centuries? While a detailed analysis of Joachim's writings is beyond the scope of the present work,²¹ Jerome Sanderson provides a helpful treatment of overarching themes within Joachim's three main works, *The Exposition of the Apocalypse*, the *Book of the Concordance*, and *The Ten Stringed Psaltery*. In particular, Sanderson notes that

the key which unlocked the secrets of scripture and history for [Joachim] was his realization of the trinitarian nature of God. Joachim believed that the Trinity permeated time and its inner workings were expressed therein. So he divided history into three overlapping status, or states, which corresponded to the three Persons of the Trinity. ... [Also] of great significance in Joachim's scriptural exegesis was his theory of concordia, in

beyond in *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*. She will also examine Joachimist influences in the Renaissance and within Protestantism in *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, also noted above.

¹⁹ Bloomfield, Reeves, "The Penetration of Joachimism into Northern Europe," 773. Reeves will stress that Joachim was at play in many communities outside of the Franciscan Order repeatedly in her Joachimite corpus. Bloomfield/Reeves note "Joachim's reputation and ideas were under discussion north of the Alps in the two generations after 1200, well before the dynamite of Franciscan Joachimism exploded in Paris in 1256" (793).

²⁰ In *The Influence of Prophecy*, Reeves devotes a chapter to the Joachimist influence within the Dominicans (161-74); Tavad reviews the matter as well, noting that a strong and early denouncement by Thomas against Joachim, as well as other factors, kept any fervor for Joachim's ideas well in control among the Order of Preachers (Tavad, *The Contemplative Church*, 80). For more on the Scholastic reaction to Joachim (especially Thomas and Bonaventure) see Bernard McGinn, "The abbot and the doctors: scholastic reactions to the radical eschatology of Joachim of Fiore" in *Joachim of Fiore in Christian Thought* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1975), 453-471. Bernard notes "Aquinas denies Joachim's method of scriptural interpretation by types and concordances, he rejects his Trinitarian views, and destroys his concept of the three ages of history. His argument is consistent and seems to have been based on some knowledge of Joachim's text, as well as on the condemnation of the radical Joachite *Introducorius* at [the 1255 condemnation at] Anagni. *Christ's centrality is stressed in the Thomistic view of the history of salvation* in a way that is just that much clearer than the earlier tradition insofar as it has had to meet the challenge of the Joachite system" (40). [Emphasis added.]

²¹ For more on this subject, see the works of Reeves, as well as West and Zimdars-Swartz.

which he revealed similarities between the Old and the New Testaments. In the two Testaments, Joachim saw expressed the relationship of the Father and the Son. Just as the Son proceeds from the Father and the origins of His work lie in the Father's sphere, so too did the New Testament proceed from the Old and in some way completed it. Joachim beheld the world and its history as an intricate mathematical formula. To every action there is a reciprocal action, to every event an opposite event. The law of cause and effect that expresses in the ebb and flow, the diastole and systole of creation, is equally evident in the circumstances of history. Thus, there is a *concordia*, a mirroring of one time in another time.²²

Joachim would use this *mirroring* to extrapolate—some would say “prophesize”—imminent and future events, such as the coming of a time of the Holy Spirit and the Second Coming, for which he calculated the year 1260. Other predictions included persecutions of the Church that would precede the new age. In particular, these speculations were of interest to soldiers, kings, and churchmen mired in very real battles against Muslim forces in and around Europe. Of course, Joachim had his detractors. During and after his life, Joachim's writings would be denounced by a variety of theologians, most especially the scholastics (whom Joachim disdained) and Thomas Aquinas himself (cf. n20 and 31). Thirteen years after his death, the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 formally condemned his writings.²³ Later, Joachim's popularity waned considerably when 1260 came and went and the world of human suffering continued. Still, his works persisted, in part because at least some of his predictions appeared to have come true. One in particular would have major importance to the socio-ecclesial politics of the thirteenth century. Sanderson notes that Joachim “did predict that two religious orders would come forth to battle the Antichrist. One of these orders would be an order of preachers in the spirit of Elijah. The other would come in the spirit of Moses and be an order of hermits.”²⁴ The similarity between this prediction and the mendicant orders startled many. For some, most especially many Franciscans, Joachim provided the ground on which to build what Sanderson refers to as a “monastic utopia.”²⁵ Likewise, Reeves argues that Joachim's writings found fertile ground with pre-existing Franciscan Spiritualist communities that were already expecting a new plane of history.²⁶ Reeves identifies three characteristics of radical Franciscanism brought about from the blending of Joachimist writings with nascent

²² Jerome Sanderson, “Joachim of Fiore,” *Epiphany*, vol. 4 no. 2 (December, 1983), 47, 48.

²³ See Jürgen Moltmann, “Christian Hope: Messianic or Transcendent? A Theological Discussion with Joachim of Fiore and Thomas Aquinas,” (trans. and ed. by M. Douglas Meeks), *Horizons*, vol 12, no. 2 (1985), 328-348. Here Moltmann critiques portions of Thomas's rejection of Joachimist thought.

²⁴ Sanderson, “Joachim of Fiore,” 49.

²⁵ Sanderson, “Joachim of Fiore,” 49.

²⁶ Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, 173.

Franciscan Spiritualism. They are “a sense that the extreme crisis of history is about to break upon the world; a belief in the supreme mission of the Order to match this moment; [and] an attitude towards the papacy and the ecclesial hierarchy in which obedience strives with the conviction that the Order holds the key to the future, which cannot be wrested from it.”²⁷ But in time, a dichotomy developed between Franciscan Spiritualists and how most everyone else read the mystic. Bloomfield and Reeves propose why this division occurred by examining structures within Joachim’s writings. For instance, many political and ecclesial students of Joachim (that is, those involved in the warfare of the age) focused on an element of the mystic’s historical worldview that envisioned time as a cyclical concordance of the Old and New Testament’s ages; herein, Joachim insisted that the current age of the New Testament was on the verge of giving way to the entrance of the Antichrist into world affairs.²⁸ For those such as Richard the Lion-Hearted, what was important was not so much the nature of a final age, but how and when the current one would end. In Joachimist terms, “what men fastened on first was the more familiar conception of two parallel dispensations rather than the doctrine of the three *status*, with its vision of a culminating blessedness after Antichrist but before the Second Advent.”²⁹ But whereas politicians and warriors were fascinated by this two-age schema, Franciscan Spiritualists would be attracted to Joachim’s “trinitarian” three-*status* outlook, with its placement of a blessed third age, or “*status*,” being heralded by the Sixth Angel of John’s Apocalypse.³⁰ For them, the idea that such an Age of the Holy Spirit would occur *within human history*—as did the Age of God the Father and the Age of the Son—resonated with their own conviction of a renewal brought to the Church, in history, by Francis. But an *eschaton* within time was at odds with long-existing understandings of history’s place in theology and ecclesiology. As detailed by West and Zimdars-Swartz, St. Augustine’s chronology (and the

²⁷ Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, 175.

²⁸ Bloomfield, Reeves, “The Penetration of Joachimism,” 776. “The aspect of Joachim’s thought which first appears to have attracted men ... [was] his claim to penetrate the meaning of history by means of Biblical exegesis. It was the sense of crisis, of impending doom in history, that turned men’s thoughts towards the Calabrian abbot” (785-6). In *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, Reeves notes the preoccupation with many in the early thirteenth century of Joachim’s discussions “on the burning topics of Antichrist and the fate of Jerusalem” (41).

²⁹ Bloomfield, Reeves, “The Penetration of Joachimism,” 780.

³⁰ Reeves writes in *Joachim of Fiore*, 5-7, that this formula is the “common statement” about Joachim’s notion of history, but that his “conception is more subtle than that of a straight progressive sequence.” Reeves adds, “Joachim never uses the word *etas* or *tempus* when he is thinking in terms of the pattern of threes; for this he always uses *status*. Thus, ‘third age’ is really incorrect.” Also, Reeves (*Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, 2) and Ratzinger (*Theology of History*, 96) both note that others before Joachim employed a three-status, Trinitarian schema, most especially the early twelfth-century Dominican abbot Rupert of Deutz. Unlike Joachim, Duetz appears to have lacked an interest in, or did not have the savvy for, the political connections necessary to propel his work into the mainstream.

exegetical methodology behind it) had held sway in the West for centuries.³¹ This Augustinian seven-age schema held five ages before Christ, a sixth after Christ (the age of the Church militant that would last until His return), with the seventh being the age of God's eternal rest ushered in after Christ's Second Coming. Like Augustine, Joachim used a similar seven-age approach, but repeated it by mirroring seven ages of the Old Testament with seven in the New Testament. In other writings, this double-seven schema would be followed by a third *status*—that final age of rest, one in which the Holy Spirit would complete revelation directly and, as such, would have no need for a third written testament. At this point, Joachim blends both his appreciation of monastic life with his prophecy that there would be no written form of revelation in the third age. This blending allows him to predict that new religious orders would be granted the requisite capability for final and complete understanding. Decades later, some in the Franciscan Order found within this view an incentive to abandon the prevalent Augustinian single seven-age time schema—with its final salvation outside of history. They eagerly adopted and re-emphasized Joachim's particular Trinitarian view of time, with its need for enlightened religious orders within history, ones which would help the cosmos's transition from one age to the next. The implications of all this are profound.

To St. Augustine, the historical trend was one of deterioration. His vision was that of a more perfect age in the past and of another yet to come. He was living in an age sure to decline until the end of the world order immediately preceding the Second Advent. He focused on the Kingdom as a then-present reality on earth that had begun with the First Advent. Joachim's addition to this vision was a fresh focus on a new world order, one to be ushered in with a New Age of guidance by the Holy Spirit acting through a new order of meditative men who truly contemplated God. This age would be followed by the Second Advent and a

³¹ For more on Augustine and Joachim, see Marjorie Reeves, "How original was Joachim of Fiore's theology of history," in *Storia e messaggio in Gioacchino de Fiore*, ed. Antonio Crocci (Centro Internazionale di Studi Gioachimiti, 1980), 25-41. Ratzinger's own examination of Thomas's response to Joachim provides a critique of those, such as Ernst Benz, who saw in this response a "victory of the juridical thought over the original eschatological attitude of Christianity ... and with it the Church's capitulation to the spirit of the anti-Christ." This "betrayal is supposed to have been carried out in the course of the ecclesial rejection of the Franciscan reformation." Ratzinger rejects this critique primarily on the grounds that Joachim was not representative of the Christian eschatological attitude; one can reject Joachim without rejecting the Church's eschatological worldview. Moreover, while Bonaventure is a critic of Joachim, at the same time he helps guide Joachimism back into Church tradition. An important difference between the treatments of Joachim by Thomas and Bonaventure is in how both men saw the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. Aquinas is particularly troubled by any notion of parallelism between the testaments. He cites Augustine, who rejected the plagues of Egypt being equated with any tribulations of the Church. "This is, in fact, a rejection of that form of exegesis which is basic to the entire Joachimite theology of history." For Thomas, the Old Testament culminated only in Christ. It is not a prophecy of the life of the Church. But Bonaventure will adopt this Joachimist exegetical parallelism. Here Ratzinger says that this is one of a number of places where "Thomas is more an Augustinian than is Bonaventure." Where Bonaventure parts ways with Joachim, and aligns himself with Thomas, is in the axial centrality of Christ in history. Ratzinger writes that "If Joachim was above all concerned with bringing out the movement of the second age to the third, Bonaventure's purpose is to show, on the basis of the parallel between the two ages, that Christ is the true center and the turning point of history. Christ is the center of all. This is the basic concept of Bonaventure's historical schema, and it involves a decisive rejection of Joachim. In the final analysis, he is closer to Thomas than to Joachim." Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 115-118.

period of peace and tranquility. ... St. Augustine viewed the Apocalypse of St. John as instructional instead of prophetic. Joachim of Fiore turned this moral view to an historical view with the tradition of the primitive church, which had expected a thousand-year period of bliss as the culmination of history and time.³²

A significant consequence of Joachim's work lay in how he envisioned the Holy Spirit, which differed from the view of "the church fathers . . . as the force which developed and spread the teachings of Christ." Rather, for the Calabrian mystic "the Holy Spirit would *complete* the teachings of Christ and unlock God's last revelation *before the end of time*."³³

Reeves both defends the mystic and examines where he went wrong. She notes that "the common statement on Joachim's doctrine of history is that he saw it in three successive stages ... but in fact his conception is more subtle than that of a straight progressive sequence. ... [N]onetheless, although Joachim certainly believed in the equality of the [Trinity's] persons, he did see the work of the Third Person as the culmination of history."³⁴ West and Zimdars-Swartz note that Joachim's treatment of the Holy Spirit encouraged an unorthodox Trinitarian schema that diminishes Christ's Incarnation, Passion, Death, and Resurrection—which moves His loving, salvific activity to an intermediate stage of human history.³⁵ Elsewhere, it appears that Joachim exhibited dualistic and subordinate tendencies. He taught that "Christ assumed human nature so that he would be despised, not that he would be glorified. On the level of his human nature, Christ remains less than the Holy Spirit."³⁶ West and Zimdars-Swartz note that Joachim's intention with such teachings was a comparison of the qualities of humility (in the Incarnation) to the greater

³² West, Zimdars-Swartz *Joachim*, 12.

³³ West, Zimdars-Swartz *Joachim*, 12. Emphasis added.

³⁴ Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*, 6.

³⁵ In "The Abbot and the Doctors," McGinn notes "Joachim saw the terrors of the time of the Antichrist as presaging an age of completion within history and not outside it." In "From Prophecy to Mysticism: Bonaventure's Eschatology in Light of Joachim of Fiore," (*Traditio*, vol. 52, 1997-01-01, 153-177), Ilia Delio, OFM, confirms that the necessary union with Christ found in Bonaventure is lacking in Joachim. By finding another answer to the problem of suffering, i.e., the tribulations of the Antichrist, Joachim again minimizes Christ's Passion in favor of an age without a need for it. Delio notes that "for the soul to make its mystical ascent, Bonaventure indicates, it must transcend the knowledge of God and enter into the mystery of Christ by way of love. Thus in the soul's journey there is a progression from knowledge to love. ... On the mountain of La Verna, he realized in a flash of insight that true peace is not attained unless the soul 'passes over ... through ecstatic elevations of Christian wisdom,' that is, through the Crucified. ... Bonaventure identifies peace with the 'burning love of the Crucified,' an identification not found in Joachim." (162-4).

³⁶ West, Zimdars-Swartz *Joachim*, 87. Within this discussion, Joachim also notes that Christ wished the Holy Spirit to be preferred over him; 86. But Joachim also maintains the divinity of all Persons of the Trinity in their spiritual realms; hence Christ in his humanity is only then lesser to the Spirit; West and Zimdars-Swartz here find Joachim sharing a particular Augustinian piety related to Christ's humanity that was prevalent in the twelfth century. "Christ accomplishes salvation by humbling himself in the form of a servant and the Holy Spirit brings this salvation to the elect. But what the Spirit brings and teaches in the Church is by the authority of the ascended Christ, and here Joachim asserts that the work of Christ in sending the Holy Spirit is preferred to the work of the Spirit in teaching the truths of Christ" (94).

quality of love (which can be infused in human hearts only from the Holy Spirit). Joachim did in fact state that both humility and love are needed within the Church, but such orthodox messages were easily lost in the intricacies of his ideas.³⁷

In time, ecclesial authorities grew wary of the implications of many of Joachim's views. This led to the 1215 condemnation of his writings. Available evidence shows that the official cause for condemnation was Joachim's rejection of Peter Lombard's doctrine of the Trinity.³⁸ Nevertheless, Joachim's reputation as a devout abbot³⁹—as well as Europe's longstanding interest in his prophecies—ensured that his influence would remain long after he died and was condemned. Indeed, because of Joachim, eschatological expectations ran high as the year 1260 approached. It is in this tense environment that we meet a young Sicilian Franciscan, Gherardo da Borgo San Donnino, who, in 1254, published a reinterpretation of Joachim's works, the *Liber Introductorius ad Evangelium Aeternum*. In this text, which would become something of a manifesto for the Spiritualists, Gherardo connected Joachim's third age of the Church with the coming of St. Francis (d. 1226). The 144,000 elect of the Apocalypse, then, are the Franciscans, who had become nothing less than Joachim's predicted enlightened religious. Moreover, Gherardo saw in St. Francis's early rule an intermediary form of his so-called *Evangelium Aeternum*, one which would come to fruition (and supplant the Old and New Testaments) at Joachim's foretold time of the eschaton.⁴⁰ Tavad characterizes the effect of Gherardo's *Liber Introductorius* as "more affective than intellectual," which made it difficult to combat. Reeves goes further: The Franciscans who adopted a "Joachimist view of history produced a mood somewhat akin to that of an early Marxist, a mood of certainty and urgency."⁴¹ Indeed, the *Liber Introductorius* caused much uproar, especially in Paris. The deceased Joachim and the firebrand Gherardo became a cause of growing division within the Franciscan Order and a *cause célèbre* for diocesan clergy seeking to cast aspersions on their

³⁷ West, Zimdars-Swartz *Joachim*, 98.

³⁸ West, Zimdars-Swartz *Joachim*, 6.

³⁹ The 1215 condemnation was less severe than it might have been in part because of his relations with pontiffs and ecclesial authorities and especially because of his written instructions that after his death his order was to present to authorities all his works "to be approved or corrected according to the judgment of the apostolic see," Tavad, *The Contemplative Church*, 31.

⁴⁰ Tavad, *The Contemplative Church*, 33. Reeves notes that some within the Franciscan Order gave to Francis a position approaching that of Christ. "Again, the extravagance of the language used in making this claim can only be understood in a Joachimist context, for it was Joachim's Trinitarian pattern of threes which made it possible to extend the well-known concords of twos between the Testaments into the future, by making claims for St. Francis that were otherwise blasphemous. St. Francis stood on the threshold of the third status as Christ on that of the second, and the parallels which Joachim had found between the first and the second status must now be sought between the second and the third." *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, 177.

⁴¹ Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, 175.

mendicant competition. In response, the Spiritualists increasingly saw in Joachim and Gherardo the means to buttress the reputation of the Franciscan movement. By accident or design, they soon accepted a dawning eschatological age with a deformed view of the Trinity and no need of the Cross. Church authorities summoned Gherardo to examine his works and to (again) examine Joachim's. In 1255, ecclesial authorities condemned Gherardo's writings, but not those of the Calabrian abbot. While Gherardo spent the remainder of his life in prison, Joachim's writings—although condemned decades earlier—were effectively free to continue their journeys throughout Europe as a posthumous reward for the abbot's ecclesial humility and his political *savoir-faire*.⁴² The Franciscan Order was split by those who supported (or were fearful of) Gherardo's fate and those who remained faithful to Joachim's spiritual influence. Enmity strained the now divided order. Its head, John of Parma, a Joachimite sympathizer, was too ineffective a leader and too close to Gherardo's *Evangelium Aeternum* to keep the Order of St. Francis in one piece, or to prevent suspicion from those outside. John left office in 1257. Whether this departure was voluntary or forced remains debated. Either way, the order elected Bonaventure of Bagnoregio—who had been happily teaching at Paris—to replace John. As General, Bonaventure would be tasked with steering his flock to orthodoxy. As a pastor, he would seek to do so sensitive to the range of expressions and beliefs within the order. As a leader entrusted to protect the work of his beloved Francis, he would deftly negotiate ecclesial suspicions and Spiritualist fervor by discarding what had been condemned and retaining elements of Joachim (but not Gherardo) that had value. As Joseph Ratzinger will later demonstrate, Bonaventure found much in Joachim worth salvaging.⁴³

Ratzinger's preparation for Bonaventure

Seven hundred years after Bonaventure succeeded John of Parma, a young Joseph Ratzinger selected the Seraphic Doctor for the topic of his *Habilitationsschrift*. Ratzinger did so when an advisor, Gottlieb Söhngen, suggested that having first researched Augustine for his doctorate, Ratzinger should turn to the Middle Ages. In light of ongoing Catholic-Protestant discussions over the relation of salvation history and

⁴² West, Zimdars-Swartz *Joachim*, 101.

⁴³ For instance, "the seraphic doctor's interest in appropriating the force of the Joachimite vision in the service of the Franciscan order without falling into the errors of the radical Joachimites first appears in unmistakable fashion in his identification of Francis with the 'Angel of the Sixth Seal' of Apocalypse 7, 2 in the life of Francis known as the *Legenda Maior* (1261)," McGinn, "The Abbot and the Doctor," 42.

metaphysics, Ratzinger eventually sought to “discover whether in Bonaventure there was anything corresponding to the concept of salvation history, and whether this motif—should it exist—had any relationship with the idea of revelation.”⁴⁴ In proposing his *Habilitationschrift*, Ratzinger called attention to Bonaventure’s view of scripture as having a “historical character.”⁴⁵ While this particular topic was dramatically rejected by Ratzinger’s second faculty advisor, Michael Schmaus, for its “dangerous modernism,”⁴⁶ it is one that would resonate deeply within the future pontiff. Indeed, even within the final version of the *Habilitationschrift*, Ratzinger could not help but to interject Bonaventure’s own views of revelation as related to an unfolding history.

Here it will be helpful to understand how Ratzinger’s life and prior theological training oriented him to a specific reading and appreciation of Bonaventure. While a full review of Ratzinger’s biography and theological development is beyond the scope of this work, three specific elements must be noted, for they are foundational in his study of Bonaventure. These are (i) Ratzinger’s upbringing in the Nazi regime, (ii) his introduction to de Lubac, and (iii) his appreciation of Augustine.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones, Memoirs: 1927-1977*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1998), 104. Nicolas provides an overview of why this topic was of interest to both Ratzinger and his advisors. See his *Thought of Benedict XVI*, 34-35. In a talk he had given to scholars prior to his election to the papacy, Cardinal Ratzinger gave the following overview of his work on Augustine and Bonaventure: "My doctoral dissertation was about the notion of the people of God in St. Augustine ... (who) was in dialogue with Roman ideology, especially after the occupation of Rome by the Goths in 410, and so it was very fascinating for me to see how in these different dialogues and cultures he defines the essence of the Christian religion. He saw Christian faith, not in continuity with earlier religions, but rather in continuity with philosophy as a victory of reason over superstition. ... My post-doctoral work [allowed the discovery] of an aspect of Bonaventure's theology not found in the previous literature, namely, his relation with the new idea of history conceived by Joachim of Fiore in the 12th century. Joachim saw history as progression from the period of the Father (a difficult time for human beings under the law), to a second period of history, that of the Son (with more freedom, more openness, more brotherhood), to a third period of history, the definitive period of history, the time of the Holy Spirit. According to Joachim, this was to be a time of universal reconciliation, reconciliation between east and west, between Christians and Jews, a time without the law (in the Pauline sense), a time of real brotherhood in the world. The interesting idea which I discovered was that a significant current among the Franciscans was convinced that St. Francis of Assisi and the Franciscan Order marked the beginning of this third period of history, and it was their ambition to actualize it; Bonaventure was in critical dialogue with this current." Robert Moynihan, *Benedict and Bonaventure: The Pope's Trip to the Saint's Birthplace Is More Significant Than It Seems*, Zenit News, August 24, 2009 <http://www.zenit.org/article-26671?l=english>, accessed February 13, 2011. Moynihan reports Ratzinger saying that “to me ... liberation theology ... was a ‘modern form’ of Joachimism—a desire to see within history a new ordering of human society.”

⁴⁵ “Bonaventure arrives at a new theory of scriptural exegesis which emphasizes the historical character of the scriptural statements in contrast to the exegesis of the Fathers and the Scholastics which had been more clearly directed to the unchangeable and the enduring.” Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 7.

⁴⁶ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 109.

⁴⁷ A general review of Ratzinger’s influences is found in Rausch’s *Pope Benedict XVI*. Also see Rowland, who will note that Ratzinger/Benedict XVI “needs to be understood with reference to a variety of motifs in Augustine, Bonaventure, Newman, von Balthasar, Romano Guardini, Henri de Lubac, and Josef Pieper, to name only the most prominent scholars to have influenced him,” *Ratzinger’s Faith*, 14. Elsewhere, Rowland will note that Ratzinger’s theology of history as expressed in his *Habilitationschrift* is also influenced by and in conversation with Christopher Dawson and Pieper, “who has been one of the seminal influences on the thought of Ratzinger,” 107. Pieper, however, does not appear in the notes of Ratzinger’s *Theology of St. Bonaventure*. Moreover, it may be argued that Ratzinger’s quest for truth, which opens him to the entire array of theological, philosophical, scientific, and artistic constellations

First, as a young man, Ratzinger would watch nationalist zealotry—with its hunger for an imminent political glory—attempt to sweep aside his own Catholic Christianity along with other institutions, faiths, and peoples. In doing so, Hitler’s National Socialism would view itself in religious—indeed, eschatological—overtones. Ratzinger would witness the brutality of, and be forced to participate in, the armies of the Third Reich. National pride would swell when Hitler’s armies invaded Poland, The Netherlands, and France, when “even people who were opposed to National Socialism experienced a kind of patriotic satisfaction.” For others such as Ratzinger’s father, the march of the Third Reich were victories “of the Antichrist that would surely usher in apocalyptic times.”⁴⁸ Ratzinger tells a small but telling example of the madness that his nation was undergoing: as a soldier he was forced to take part in a “cult of the spade,” a drill-like performance that he describes as a “pseudo-liturgy” meant to celebrate the redemptive power of a soldier’s work. Later, when Nazi military losses grew, the spades were used only for digging protective trenches: “[T]his fall of the spade from cultic object to banal tool for everyday use allowed us to perceive the deeper collapse taking place ... a full-scale liturgy and the world behind it were being unmasked as a lie.”⁴⁹ In contrast with this lie was Ratzinger’s growing relationship with a lasting truth. In recalling how as a boy he would be taught the mysteries of the Church’s liturgies, Ratzinger tells us something of how he sees the relation between the Church and history. He recalls that, as a boy learning of his faith,

it was becoming more and more clear to me that here I was encountering a reality that no official authority or great individual had created. This mysterious fabric of texts and actions had grown from the faith of the Church over the centuries. It bore the whole weight of history within itself, and yet, at the same time, it was much more than the product of human history. Every century had left its mark upon it ... [but] not everything was logical. Things sometimes got complicated, and it was not always easy to find one’s way. But precisely this is what made the whole edifice wonderful, like one’s own home.⁵⁰

Ratzinger’s post-war return home would occur in June 1945, when American forces released him from a prisoner-of-war camp. He made quickly for Traunstein, finding his family village at sunset filled with the hymns from its church—hymns sung in honor of the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.⁵¹

from all seasons, has a specific array of early influences, of which he stresses in *Milestones*. From this, the selected three and their influence on his work with Bonaventure appear most critical to understanding Ratzinger/Benedict XVI the pastor and the theologian.

⁴⁸ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 27.

⁴⁹ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 34.

⁵⁰ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 20.

⁵¹ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 39.

Soon he would begin his theological and priestly studies, and, in 1949, be introduced by Alfred Läßle to the second element to be stressed in Ratzinger's intellectual and personal development: Henri de Lubac, and his book *Catholicism; Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*. Ratzinger notes that

this book was for me a key reading event. It gave me not only a new and deeper connection with the thought of the Fathers but also a new way of looking at theology and faith as such. Faith had here become an interior contemplation and, precisely by thinking with the Fathers, a present reality. In this book one could detect a quiet debate going on with liberalism and Marxism, the dramatic struggle of French Catholicism for a new penetration of the faith and into the freedom of an essentially social faith, conceived and lived as a *we*—a faith that, precisely as such and according to its nature, was also hope, affecting history as a whole, and not only the promise of a private blissfulness to individuals.⁵²

In *Catholicism*, Ratzinger would experience a thirst-quenching expression of the Eucharistic nature of the Church—a mystical body of real people living in authentic, gritty history.⁵³ De Lubac's forays into matters such as the "Role of Time" and "Doctrines of Evasion" (that is, evasions from the sufferings of this world) will provide fertile ground for Ratzinger's eventual reading of Bonaventure's response to the Joachimists. While de Lubac would eventually write about Joachim and his impact on eschatological "evasions," this will be much later than Ratzinger's work on Bonaventure.⁵⁴ Still, de Lubac would be a bridge connecting the twentieth century with the world of the Fathers—especially Augustine and Origen—and his eschatological worldview kept the faithful very much in, as Ratzinger put it above, the *present reality* and the *we* of the Church. De Lubac writes that "the Christian's watchword can no longer be 'escape' but 'collaboration'. He must cooperate with God and men in God's work in the world and among humanity. There is but one end: and it is on condition that he aims at it together with all men that he will be allowed a share of the final triumph."⁵⁵ Ratzinger will read such statements by de Lubac and watch Platonic circular concepts of history, per Augustine, "explode" so that "forthwith something new is wrought—birth, real growth; the whole universe grows to maturity. ... [T]he world has a purpose and consequently a meaning, that is to say, both direction and

⁵² Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 98.

⁵³ "Contemplation of heaven will not distract the attention that must be given to the divine work which goes forward on earth, carried out with earthly materials, but not for earthly purposes; a work that is accomplished in the Church wherein is prepared, and is already being realized in secret, the glory of him who humbled himself. And if the Master seems to have left his own for ever, yet we know that we must await, must hasten on, the time of his return," Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism; Christ and the Common Destiny of Man*, trans. Lancelot C. Sheppard and Sister Elizabeth Englund, OCD (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), 147.

⁵⁴ See especially de Lubac's *La postérité spirituelle de Joachim de Flore*, Paris, Lethielleux, 1978 (vol. I: de Joachim à Schelling) and 1980 (vol. II: de Saint-Simon à nos jours).

⁵⁵ De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 240.

significance.”⁵⁶ Ratzinger would turn also to de Lubac’s *Corpus Mysticum*, which, in Ratzinger’s words, would provide “a new understanding of the unity of the Church and Eucharist opened up to me beyond the insights I had already received ... [and so] I could now enter into the required dialogue with Augustine.”⁵⁷

This “dialogue with Augustine” is a third influence that informed Ratzinger’s reading of Bonaventure. One can glimpse the importance of Augustine to Ratzinger in his autobiographical recollection of the appreciation with which he read Martin Buber’s philosophy of personalism.⁵⁸ Ratzinger notes that Buber roused in him the same “essential mark” as had the Bishop of Hippo, “especially since I spontaneously associated such personalism with the thought of St. Augustine, who in his *Confessions* had struck me with the power of all his human passion and depth.”⁵⁹ This stands in contrast to Ratzinger’s “difficulties” with Thomas Aquinas, “whose crystal-clear logic seemed to me to be too closed in on itself, too impersonal and ready-made.”⁶⁰

Of particular use to understand Augustine’s influence on Ratzinger/Benedict XVI is Nichols,⁶¹ who puts Ratzinger’s affinity for St. Augustine in relation with Romano Guardini’s sense that “the twentieth century was proving, theologically, [to be] the ‘century of the Church’, when the idea of the Church was re-awakening in all its breadth and depth.”⁶² Ratzinger’s own contribution to this ecclesial stirring was his examination of Augustine’s notion that “the Church is at once the ‘people and the house of God’.”⁶³ Nichols seeks the genesis of Ratzinger’s thesis by exploring contemporary German-language thought on Augustine.

⁵⁶ De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 142.

⁵⁷ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 98. For more on Augustine’s influence on Ratzinger, see Rausch, *Pope Benedict XVI*, esp. 47-52.

⁵⁸ Rowland will explore another Augustinian-Bonaventurian link, which has an impact on Ratzinger, related to the faculties of the soul—i.e., memory, intellect, and will. *Ratzinger’s Faith*, 60.

⁵⁹ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 44.

⁶⁰ Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 44. See n30. Also, in *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1969), Ratzinger will call forth Bonaventure in contrasting the nature of belief—especially belief as seen as relationship—with the West’s dominant positivistic view of knowledge. Building off M. Heidegger’s duality of calculating and reflective thought, Ratzinger writes that “by thinking only of the predictable, of what can be made, he is in danger of forgetting to reflect on himself and on the meaning of his existence. Of course, this temptation is present in every age. Thus in the thirteenth century the great Franciscan theologian Bonaventure felt obliged to reproach his colleagues of the theological faculty at Paris with having learned how to measure the world but having forgotten how to measure themselves” (41).

⁶¹ See especially the chapter “Augustine and the Church” in Aidan Nichols, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, 17-33.

⁶² Nichols, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, 18.

⁶³ Nichols, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, 18, citing Ratzinger’s 1954 thesis *Volk und Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche*. Also, Joanne McWilliam, ed., with Timothy Barnes, Michael Fahey, and Peter Slater, in *Augustine: From Rhetor to Theologian*, note “Ratzinger focused his analysis of Augustine’s ecclesiology around two biblical concepts: ‘People of God’ and ‘House of God,’ which, although themselves not the central categories for Augustine’s exposition, are nonetheless useful focal points for unifying what he had to say about the Church as the Body of Christ. Ratzinger continues the work of [Fritz] Hofmann and further stressed the unity of the two orders or, more precisely, the unity of the two levels of reality: *sensibilis* and *intelligibilis*, *homo exterior*, and *homo interior*” (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, April 1992), 175.

He finds that Erich Przywara, SJ, in particular had examined two strands in early Augustine that had become “the Johannine movement of faith through understanding into vision,” and “the Pauline movement of pastorally motivated love.”⁶⁴ Nichols demonstrates how, likewise, Ratzinger will later find faith as central for Augustine’s notion of the people of God, as love will be central for the house of God.⁶⁵ Nichols further notes that in developing his thesis, Ratzinger builds on a Tertullian-Augustinian⁶⁶ link toward an ecclesiology “that is the union in the Church of ‘inner’ and ‘outer,’ holiness and visible—even governmental—structure, the key to which union is the Eucharist.”⁶⁷ In this union are living, dialectical relationships between what the world may find as opposing entities. For Augustine (and Ratzinger, who had already been influenced by de Lubac) such an incarnational tension is seen as a strength of the Church—indeed, it defines it. Ratzinger will stress the practicality of this primarily Roman view of the Church when, as Nichols notes, he claims that “the historical theologian, and notably the student of the Latin fathers, is well equipped to enter into debate about the relationship between Church and State, politics and the Gospel,”⁶⁸ and, as such, both the eternal and the present. This (Western) Christian propensity and ability to dialogue with the world in which it resides is for Ratzinger discovered most notably in the Bishop of Hippo’s interlocution with horrified pagans as they watched their empire fall to Germanic invaders. Here Augustine attempts to insert the centrality of Christian love into a falling state. Nichols expresses the Augustinian view of love as “that power of movement by which man is propelled towards blessedness; yet blessedness is only possible through self-surrender to God.”⁶⁹ Ratzinger writes that the Bishop of Hippo can “oppose to the ancient Roman city of gods and their *cultus* the City of God now revealed in the Church as the site of lawful and saving worship. The fundamental constitution which forms it from within is love.”⁷⁰ Here we find a youthful Ratzinger expressing that Christian love, acting within history, is the antidote for all that disfigures the world. Indeed, as Ratzinger knew all too well from the Nazi regime and their own inner lies about worldly domination, pagan Rome could only

⁶⁴ Nichols, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, 18.

⁶⁵ Nichols, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, 21.

⁶⁶ Nichols will also speak of the importance of two other North African theologians, Cyprian and Optatus of Milevis, 25-6.

⁶⁷ Nichols, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, 24.

⁶⁸ Nichols, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, 30.

⁶⁹ Nichols, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, 30.

⁷⁰ Nichols, *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, 30, quoting *Volk and Haus*, 190-1. Nichols also directly quotes *Volk and Haus* that “the unity of the Church, and more, is the real, sober, working love of the Christian heart. And that means that every act of genuine Christian love, every work of mercy is in a real and authentic sense sacrifice, a celebration of the one and the only *sacrificium christianorum*,” 213.

suffer from rejecting revelation and, thus, communion with the God who is love. Ratzinger appreciated Augustine's written correction to this refusal, *The City of God*—a text that would become a foundational work of Western civilization—in large part because it highlighted the kenotic entrance of the Word into world affairs and maintained a primacy of *caritas*.⁷¹

While it is with these three principal influences that Ratzinger enters into dialogue with the medieval world—particularly Bonaventure's battle with Franciscan Spiritualists—one must also note some commonalities between the Franciscan General and Ratzinger/Benedict XVI. For instance, as Ratzinger was called from academia to the management of parishes, diocese, arch-dioceses, and, eventually, the universal Church, Bonaventure was called from a beloved university teaching position to one of complex leadership. For both men, their Christian family was and is strained from within and greatly criticized from without. Both would see the consequences of an anthropology blinded by the promise of worldly and imminent perfection. For Ratzinger, then, studying the record of Bonaventure's response to the Joachimist crisis—the *Collationes in Hexaemeron* (On the Six Days/Stories of Creation)⁷²—offered both pastoral as well as theological lessons. While both categories of these lessons are to be examined, they cannot be done in isolation. What follows is an overview of Ratzinger's *Habilitationsschrift* on Bonaventure's theology of history, which will, where appropriate, highlight any theological or pastoral influences or, often, the fusion of both.

Ratzinger's *Habilitationsschrift*

Ratzinger's study of Bonaventure's *Hexaemeron* appears to have particularly interacted with three related elements found in his former theological studies. First, Ratzinger is able to build off de Lubac's cruciform exhortation that “the Christian's watchword can no longer be ‘escape’ but ‘collaboration’, he must cooperate with God and men in God's work in the world and among humanity,”⁷³ that is, that with Christianity “something new is wrought—birth, real growth; the whole universe grows to maturity ... the

⁷¹ As Nichols notes, this Augustinian centrality of Christian charity has important eschatological implications. Nichols writes that “In charity Augustine saw, beyond all the ‘urgencies of action’, what Przywara terms ‘the free festivity of love’,” *The Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*, 33, noting E. Przywara, *Augustin, Passions et destin de l'Occident* op. cit., 14.

⁷² The *Hexaemeron* exists as a series of manuscripts that are the notes of Bonaventure's students, who attended Bonaventure's lectures on this matter.

⁷³ cf. n55.

world has a purpose and consequently a meaning, that is to say, both direction and significance.”⁷⁴ Secondly, through Bonaventure, Ratzinger will expand his Augustinian ecclesiology that is both an interior “Johannine movement of faith through understanding into vision,” and, thirdly, an exterior “Pauline movement of pastorally motivated love.”⁷⁵ In part, what Bonaventure adds to this three-dimensional structure is a deeper appreciation of time. Ratzinger finds in Bonaventure’s response to Joachimist idealism (and exegesis) the notion that the very continuity and growth within all human history must be viewed as a living conversation between God and men, one that only God can initiate and conclude. Likewise, the centrality of Christ and his Cross will take on a critical role for Bonaventure’s (and Ratzinger’s) understanding of the ebb and flow—the *egressus* and *regressus*—of Christian time. As will be seen below, Bonaventure’s theology of history—one influenced but not dictated by Joachim—“presents a struggle to arrive at a proper understanding of eschatology (and) is thus anchored in the central issue of the New Testament question itself.”⁷⁶

⁷⁴ cf. n56.

⁷⁵ cf. n64.

⁷⁶ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, xiii. Ratzinger notes that for Bonaventure, “wisdom is unthinkable and unintelligible without reference to the historical situation in which it has its place. Consequently, the development of the ideal of wisdom naturally grows into a treatment of the theology of history” (6). Moreover, in *Introduction to Christianity*, Ratzinger’s discussion of Christological issues and his observation that “the New Testament rightly depicts this resurrection as the eschatological happening” includes a primer on what he sees as a critical understanding of Christian time. “We said just now that the cosmos was not just an outward framework of human history, not a static mold—a kind of container holding all kinds of living creatures which could just as well be poured into a different container. This means, on the positive side, that the cosmos is movement; this it is not just a case of history existing in it, that the cosmos itself is history. It does not merely form the scene of human history; before human history began and later with it, it is itself ‘history.’ Finally, there is only one single all-embracing world-history, which for all the ups and downs, all the forwards and backwards that it exhibits, nevertheless has a general direction and goes ‘forward.’ Of course, to him who only sees a section of it, this piece, even though it may be relatively big, looks like a circling in the same spot. No direction is perceptible. It is only observed by him who begins to see the whole. But in this cosmic movement, as we have already seen, spirit is not just some chance by-product of development, of no importance to the whole; on the contrary, we were able to establish that, in this movement or process, matter and its evolution form the pre-history of spirit and mind” (245). In 2010, Benedict XVI will reflect on St. Bonaventure, devoting a sizable segment of a General Audience to Joachim, and the resulting influences on Christianity’s understanding of time. “As I have already said, among St. Bonaventure’s various merits was the ability to interpret authentically and faithfully St. Francis of Assisi, whom he venerated and studied with deep love. In a special way, in St. Bonaventure’s day a trend among the Friars Minor known as the ‘Spirituals’ held that St. Francis had ushered in a totally new phase in history and that the ‘eternal Gospel,’ of which Revelation speaks, had come to replace the New Testament. This group declared that the Church had now fulfilled her role in history. They said that she had been replaced by a charismatic community of free men guided from within by the Spirit, namely the ‘Spiritual Franciscans.’ This group’s ideas were based on the writings of a Cistercian Abbot, Joachim of Fiore, who died in 1202. In his works he affirmed a Trinitarian rhythm in history. He considered the Old Testament as the age of the Father, followed by the time of the Son, the time of the Church. The third age was to be awaited, that of the Holy Spirit. The whole of history was thus interpreted as a history of progress: from the severity of the Old Testament to the relative freedom of the time of the Son, in the Church, to the full freedom of the Sons of God in the period of the Holy Spirit. This, finally, was also to be the period of peace among mankind, of the reconciliation of peoples and of religions. Joachim of Fiore had awakened the hope that the new age would stem from a new form of monasticism. Thus it is understandable that a group of Franciscans might have thought it recognized St. Francis of Assisi as the initiator of the new epoch and his Order as the community of the new period the community of the Age of the Holy Spirit that left behind the hierarchical Church in order to begin the new Church of the Spirit, no longer linked to the old structures. Hence they ran the risk of very seriously misunderstanding St. Francis’ message, of his humble fidelity to the Gospel and to the Church. This error entailed an erroneous vision of Christianity as a whole. St. Bonaventure, who became Minister General of the Franciscan Order in 1257, had to confront grave tension in his Order precisely because of those who supported the above-mentioned trend of the ‘Franciscan Spirituals’ who followed Joachim of Fiore. To respond to this group and to restore unity to the Order, St Bonaventure

Ratzinger makes an equally pivotal (and related) discovery in Bonaventure about revelation. By showing, for example, how in *Hexaëmeron* Bonaventure presupposes “an historical, step-wise growth in knowledge” by placing six levels of knowledge in line with the six days of creation, as well as the six days of creation with six periods of salvation history, “Bonaventure arrives at a new theory of scriptural exegesis which emphasizes the historical character of the scriptural statements in contrast to the exegesis of the Fathers and the Scholastics which had been more clearly directed to the unchangeable and the enduring.”⁷⁷ In other words, while God’s Word does not change from age to age, for Bonaventure, our individual and communal reaction to, and appreciation of, revelation is in many ways an organic process of growth. To underscore this point, Bonaventure demonstrates that in scripture there are three levels of meaning: (i) “the allegorical, tropological, or anagogical” that rises out of the literal meaning; (ii), the *figurae sacramentales*, or how all books speak of Christ; and (Bonaventure’s major contribution) (iii) the *multiformes theoriae*, or the multiple, unknowable number of meanings that keep scriptural exegesis an open-ended event.⁷⁸ Against the Joachimist tendencies to see a conclusion in the unfolding of salvation history in the person of Francis, Bonaventure, in adding this third level of exegetical purpose to scripture, keeps the future open-ended, allowing for what de Lubac identified as “birth, real growth.” Appropriate to this view, Ratzinger finds “no clear definition” in Bonaventure’s work of what he means by such ongoing scriptural *theoriae*. Ratzinger theorizes that in Bonaventure there is a sort of hermeneutical relationship between all historical events that, since they have not all unfolded, cannot be fully understood at present. However, through revelation, one can better

painstakingly studied the authentic writings of Joachim of Fiore, as well as those attributed to him and, bearing in mind the need to present the figure and message of his beloved St. Francis correctly, he wanted to set down a correct view of the theology of history. St. Bonaventure actually tackled the problem in his last work, a collection of conferences for the monks of the *studium* in Paris. He did not complete it and it has come down to us through the transcriptions of those who heard him. It is entitled *Hexaëmeron*, in other words an allegorical explanation of the six days of the Creation. The Fathers of the Church considered the six or seven days of the Creation narrative as a prophecy of the history of the world, of humanity. For them, the seven days represented seven periods of history, later also interpreted as seven millennia. With Christ we should have entered the last, that is, the sixth period of history that was to be followed by the great sabbath of God. St. Bonaventure hypothesizes this historical interpretation of the account of the days of the Creation, but in a very free and innovative way. To his mind two phenomena of his time required a new interpretation of the course of history. The first: the figure of St. Francis, the man totally united with Christ even to communion with the stigmata, almost an alter Christus, and, with St. Francis, the new community he created, different from the monasticism known until then. This phenomenon called for a new interpretation, as an innovation of God which appeared at that moment. The second: the position of Joachim of Fiore who announced a new monasticism and a totally new period of history, going beyond the revelation of the New Testament, demanded a response. As Minister General of the Franciscan Order, St. Bonaventure had immediately realized that with the spiritualistic conception inspired by Joachim of Fiore, the Order would become ungovernable and logically move towards anarchy.” Benedict XVI, General Audience, March 10, 2010 in http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20100310_en.html, accessed February 1, 2011.

⁷⁷ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 7.

⁷⁸ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 7.

comprehend historical events—that is, the meaning of the present and how scripture speaks of the future. Here Bonaventure incorporates Joachim’s “three-fold explanation of the work of creation”⁷⁹ that defined the current age as the Age of the Spirit. Ratzinger shows that while Joachim and Bonaventure drew different conclusions about what this age means, both will link revelation, history, and metaphysics. For instance, in Bonaventure’s tripartite levels of scripture, the *multiformes theoriae* correspond to the day in which God creates “the fruits and trees that carry seeds within themselves.”⁸⁰ These true seeds correspond to the seeds of meaning within scripture, which germinate in their own time and bear a new fruit that is fitting for that age and that age only—including ages that have yet to dawn. Further in the work, Ratzinger affirms this:

a) Scripture has grown in an historical way. ... History is a structural element of Scripture’s intelligible form. ... b) Scripture, however, is not simply a product of a past history, but is simultaneously a statement about and a prediction of the future. Since the Scriptures were written, part of the future has already become past, while part of it still remains future. This means that the total meaning of Scripture is not yet clear. Rather the final ‘revelation,’ i.e., the time of a full understanding of revelation, is yet to come.⁸¹

And so for Bonaventure, “the exegesis of Scripture becomes a theology of history.”⁸² But it is a theology that in part breaks from long-accepted concepts of history.

Ratzinger calls attention to this break by placing Bonaventure’s *Hexaemeron* alongside Augustine’s *City of God*, noting that they both “make the present and the future of the Church understandable from its past.”⁸³ But the Augustinian intermingling of the *civitas terrena* and the *civitas dei*—of “the presentation of world-events in terms of the conflict between the *corpus Christi* and the *corpus Diabolus*”—is not what Bonaventure would emphasize in his theology of history.⁸⁴ While this Augustinian duality is an essential construct to examine human history, for Bonaventure this tension is more akin to his *figurae sacramentales*—that is, the symbols within scripture that point to both Christ and the Anti-Christ. When Bonaventure wishes to understand the historical period as a means to envision the future, he does so through the exegetical lens of his wider *multiformes theoriae*. Ratzinger notes that in Bonaventure, “Augustine is deliberately excluded from the real

⁷⁹ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 8.

⁸⁰ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 9.

⁸¹ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 83-4.

⁸² Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 9.

⁸³ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 9. As will be discussed below, Augustine held a seven-age schema, placing most of human history in the “before Christ” era (which account for the first five ages) and only one age (the sixth) accounting for the present “already/not yet” age between the resurrection and the *eschaton*. The seventh would be the promised eternal Sabbath rest.

⁸⁴ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 9.

theology of history right from the start.”⁸⁵ Indeed, Ratzinger finds it important that, as was noted earlier, Bonaventure uses no historico-theological divisions (for example, Augustine’s single seven-age schema) available to him from existing Christian thought.

[Bonaventure] rejects the view that with Christ the highest degree of inner-historical fulfillment is already realized so that there is nothing left but an eschatological hope for that which lies beyond all history. Bonaventure believes in a new salvation in history, within the limits of this time. This is a very significant shift in the understanding of history, and must be seen as the central historico-theological problem of the *Hexaemeron*.⁸⁶

Like the Calabrian abbot, Bonaventure’s world-history division is not simply that of seven ages, as it was with Augustine (and so much of the Western world), but of a *pair* of seven ages. What is critical for the present work is that “for the Augustinian schema, Christ is the end of the ages; for the Bonaventurian schema, Christ is the Center of the ages.”⁸⁷ The implications of the centrality of Christ and the Cross will be discussed below, but first it must be noted that Bonaventure’s answer to the Joachimist movement was not an outright denial of its founder. Rather, we find the Franciscan General accepting certain Joachimist elements as worthy for acceptance, even at the expense of long-held understandings of salvation history, ones that had been held

⁸⁵ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 10.

⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 13-4. From here, Ratzinger examines two categories of historico-theological classifications, the (a) “School-theology” histories, and (b) Joachim’s schema. As for the School-theology categories that had held sway since the days of the Fathers, Bonaventure notes three: (i) the doctrine of the seven ages from Adam to Christ, as presented in *City of God*; (ii) world history divided into five stages (from Mt. 20:1-16 and from a homily of Gregory the Great), resulting in a Middle Age doctrine of history designated by the five-fold ages of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Christ; and (iii) the division of history into three ages—the law of nature, Scripture, and Grace. Bonaventure’s appropriation of Joachim’s schema maintains a mirroring relationship between the Old and New Testament, an idea that Augustine had rejected. For Joachim and Bonaventure, the Old and New Testament are related to each other “as tree to tree; as letter to letter; as seed to seed. And as a tree comes from a tree, a seed from a seed, and a letter from a letter, so one Testament comes from the other Testament.” Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 12. Important here is the tri-fold consequences of this relationship: (i) the organic relation of one Testament flowing out of the other; (ii) the parallel relation of one standing next to the other; and (iii) the Pauline relation of the letter and the spirit. Ratzinger reminds us that Bonaventure’s *theoriae*—those multiple keys to the future of the Church—do not require a single interpretation to hold sway. Ratzinger shows how Bonaventure demonstrates the worth of these various historical divisions, using assorted numerical bases, such as three, four, and five. But such schemas are provisional. “Each one emphasized only particular aspects, all of which are brought together in [its] own proper schema, which is built on the numbers six and seven.” It is when we come to the sixth and seventh day that Ratzinger finds the important “central form of the Bonaventurian Theology of History: the 2 x 7 Time-Schema.” Ratzinger notes the Judaic roots of historical divisions based on the days of Creation and Rest. But the “Christian transgression and destruction of the Judaic notions about the Sabbath” presumably formed “a new notion of the *eighth day* of the Resurrection as distinct from the Sabbath (*italics added*).” With this schema, Bonaventure sees the history of the heavenly Church Triumphant and the earthly Church Militant as comingling and running in parallel. Ratzinger writes, “the glory of the seventh day is real, though its concurrence with the perilous and painful sixth day is hidden. The eternal eighth day follows these two inter-connected days, and it will be introduced by the resurrection and judgment. We might well say that in this solution, the problem of ecclesial eschatology is masterfully handled: on the one hand, it remains clear that this heavenly condition is not the final state, but that it is still a part of world-history; it also stands in expectation of that which is to come. Consequently, the mystery of hope remains for Christianity; a concrete hope for a transformation of the world.” Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 15-6. This last line appears to be a direct ancestor of *Spe Salvi*.

⁸⁷ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 17. In “From Prophecy to Mysticism,” Delio examines as well the influence on Bonaventure’s Augustinian understanding of history. Delio writes that “the foundation of Bonaventure’s theology of history rests on two principal figures in the Middle Ages: Augustine and Joachim of Fiore,” noting earlier that “Bonaventure makes a definitive break with Augustinian interpretation of history and develops a new theology of the development of time that finds its closest affinity with Joachim’s [contributions]” 159.

from the age of the Fathers. Certainly such acceptance was due in large part to Bonaventure's genuine appreciation for Joachim's view of time. But it should not go unstated that in accepting portions of Joachim's worldview, the Franciscan General exhibits a pastoral sensitivity that allows the Spiritualists a road home.

Ratzinger attenuates this analysis by noting that the Joachimite/Bonaventurian double-seven schema is not a total repudiation of Augustine's historical worldview. "The sixth period of the continuous Augustinian structure embraces the seven ecclesial ages of the bipartite Bonaventurian structure. ... The Augustinian tradition remains as the broad framework; but for the actual interpretation of history, it is superseded by new ideas."⁸⁸ The implications of Bonaventure's expansion of Augustinian thought will be discussed further below, but here it is important to note that Bonaventure's addition of a third layer of Scriptural identity (his *multiformes theoriae*) allows him to embrace worldly futures and maintain a numerical symmetry that he finds important. This symmetry (seven ages within each of the Old *and* the New Covenants, as compared to Augustine's single seven-age schema) speaks to innate "inner relations" that are a part of God's created order.⁸⁹ Moreover, since "Bonaventure's view of history is related to the future," there arises a future-orientation to the present—that is, current events hold eschatological meaning. Here it is telling to note that in Benedict XVI's 2010 General Audience noted earlier (cf. n76), the Holy Father draws attention to Bonaventure's orthodox view of the Trinity, and the fullness of revelation in Christ; but he will also stress what Bonaventure contributed that is new. In noting that "there is no loftier Gospel, there is no other Church to await," the pontiff adds that

this does not mean that the Church is stationary, fixed in the past, or that there can be no newness within her. *'Opera Christi non deficiunt, sed proficiunt'*: Christ's works do not go backwards, they do not fail but progress, the Saint said in his letter *De Tribus Quaestionibus*. Thus St. Bonaventure explicitly formulates the idea of progress and this is an innovation in comparison with the Fathers of the Church and the majority of his contemporaries. For St. Bonaventure Christ was no longer the end of history, as he was for the Fathers of the Church, but rather its centre; history does not end with Christ but begins a new period. The following is another consequence: until that moment the idea that the Fathers of the Church were the absolute summit of theology predominated, all successive generations could only be their disciples. St. Bonaventure also recognized the Fathers as teachers for ever, but the phenomenon of St. Francis assured him that the riches of Christ's word are inexhaustible

⁸⁸ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 17-8.

⁸⁹ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 19.

and that new light could also appear to the new generations. The oneness of Christ also guarantees newness and renewal in all the periods of history.⁹⁰

While Ratzinger had made a similar observation in his *Habilitationschrift* (cf. n86), he will question if in ushering in this new theology of history Bonaventure may have gone too far. He notes that the Franciscan General allows for a “central point of interest [that] lies in that small section of the sixth age which is yet to be realized, that is, in that mysterious border-line area which separates the perilous present time from the age of the Sabbath Rest which is yet to come within the framework of this world.”⁹¹ By this Bonaventure does foresee a sort of calm before the eschatological storm, but he stops short of Joachimist error. Bonaventure’s peace is one that grows “in the likeness of the Church triumphant in as far as this is possible in her pilgrim state.”⁹² It is (i) a state of affairs that will exist within this world, (ii) “a state of salvation” that remains “pre-eschatological,” and so one that remains (iii) firmly at odds with the Joachimists expectation of an imminent glory within human history.⁹³ While Joachimists (especially the young Gherardo) tended to suppress the place of the Cross in current events, this remains unacceptable for Bonaventure, even with his new theology of history. Instead, the Franciscan General seeks to maintain the centrality and relevance of the Cross, and he will do so by calling on Francis, who himself has shown the sign of the stigmata. Ratzinger witnesses this Bonaventurian centrality of the Cross as well in an exegetical insight of the Seraphic Doctor: “By means of a typological explanation, the Passion of Jesus is extended from the ‘Head’ to the ‘Body’ (and so) in the case of Jesus’ own suffering, there was first light, then darkness, then light. Similarly, the Mystical Body must go this way of suffering.”⁹⁴

Ratzinger will delve into this observation of Bonaventure in some detail, noting that “this much is certain: [Bonaventure] thought not only of two periods of light, but also of two periods of darkness for the

⁹⁰ Benedict XVI, General Audience, March 10, 2010, §3.

⁹¹ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 22.

⁹² Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 22, referencing the *Hexameron*, XVI, 30, p. 408b. Delorme V III c IV, III 30, p. 193.

⁹³ Bonaventure’s exegesis does prevent any prophecy of an actual inner-worldly event (such as the rise of a person). His reading of the Apocalypse finds an inner harmony in how its series of sevens each has a sixth element that “offers new insight” into the seventh, which (when such a series is seen as ages of the Church) means that these sixth elements have inner meanings about the future of the Church. “And thus it is apparent by what method the Scriptures describe a succession of temporalities: they are not by chance or happenstance but rather there is a marvelous light in them and much spiritual information.” Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 28. Latin translated by Fr. Richard A. Bucci.

⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 28.

Church before the final appearance of the glory of the seventh age.”⁹⁵ With scant Scriptural text to support his exegesis,⁹⁶ Bonaventure seems intent to demonstrate how such ordered cosmic symmetries are playing out in real time. And so, he examines the history available to him—that of Israel and Christendom. Here Charlemagne ushers in one age of the world order as a type of the Old Testament figures of Ezechias or Ozias; Henry IV and Frederick I usher in tribulations, as did Manasses. Bonaventure also seeks a second Charlemagne to correspond to Josias, and he seeks a subsequent time of tribulation, from which will emerge “the new *ordo futurus*; people of God of the final age.” Finally, we come to Francis, who is seen by the Franciscan General as a new Elias/John the Baptist, as the “angel ascending from the dawn of the sun.”⁹⁷ And so we arrive at the critical question: Is the Franciscan Order—those real people serving under Bonaventure—Joachim’s prophesized Order of the final age? While the Spiritualists were pleased to answer in the affirmative, Ratzinger notes that Bonaventure was more realistic in his assessment.

Bonaventure recognized that Francis’ own eschatological form of life could not exist as an institution in this world; it could be realized only as a break-through of grace in the individual until such time as the God-given hour would arrive at which the world would be transformed into its final form of existence. Everything else is naively visionary. Bonaventure was able to give the Order a form that could be realized in this world because he recognized this fact and had the courage to accept it. His first concern in doing this was to preserve whatever could be preserved of that radically eschatological character.⁹⁸

This character, Bonaventure realized, was the “perfect poverty” of Francis, which is not merely a sign of the final age, but its source. Indeed, The Franciscan General concluded that one should not flee this poverty, for it alone allows “a time of contemplation, a time of the Holy Spirit who leads us into the fullness of the truth of Jesus Christ.”⁹⁹ Thus, Bonaventure’s brilliance comes in how he both keeps the mendicant orders rooted

⁹⁵ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 28.

⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 28. Importantly, Ratzinger notes that Bonaventure did not rely greatly on the words of Christ, as “the simple and powerful eschatological message of Jesus offered practically no material for the speculation with which Bonaventure was concerned ... [and that] the scriptural material may have seemed an obstacle, especially since it seemed to allow no room for the idea of the great peace of the seventh day.” Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 29.

⁹⁷ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 23-33. Latin trans. by Fr. R. Bucci. Ratzinger explains the scriptural and theological foundations for Bonaventure’s use of these scriptural icons as a means to understand Francis. Two elements of this applied iconography are Francis’ use of the *tau*-sign as a signature and the stigmata. Real-world events in the life of Francis mingle with divine prophesies. This mingling allows consideration that there may be other minglings, such as the meaning and purpose of the 144,000 elect, the seal of which is borne by that angel ascending from the rising sun. Here Bonaventure sees Francis establishing “the community of the final age ... [and] this new and final ‘Order’ which is to arise out of the tribulation of the final days will be a Franciscan Order.” 38.

⁹⁸ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 51. Ratzinger will note that the Order will be an Order of Francis, but he makes a distinction between Francis and Franciscanism, 50.

⁹⁹ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 55. “This final People of God is a community of contemplative men; in this community the form of life realized in Francis will become the general form of life. It will be the lot of this People to enjoy already in this world the peace of the seventh day which is to precede the Parousia of the Lord.” 55.

in “a form that could be realized in this world”—a world that has not escaped the shadow of the Cross—and how this reality is, nevertheless, open to the transcendence of revelation’s interaction with history. Here, Ratzinger calls attention to Bonaventure’s interchangeable use of the terms for *revelation* and *inspiration* and notes that “since Scripture is born from a mystical contact of the hagiographers with God, it can be understood ultimately only on a level which must be called ‘mystical.’”¹⁰⁰ None of this is meant to open scripture to free-wheeling, subjective exegesis. Rather, the core tenets of the mysteries of Scripture have already been divined by Church tradition—by credal statements, the Fathers, and councils. Indeed, they are closed. And yet,

the true understanding of revelation demands of each individual reader an attitude which goes beyond the merely “objective” recognition of what is written. In the deepest sense, this understanding can be called mystical to distinguish it from all nature knowledge. In other words, such an understanding demands the attitude of faith by which man gains entrance into the living understanding of Scripture in the Church. It is in this way that man truly receives “revelation.”¹⁰¹

But such revelation must reflect some order, those “inner relations” of the cosmic order that Bonaventure was so eager to maintain, for “*revelatio* must always be understood as a *gratia gratis data*, and thus the working of God on the individual.”¹⁰² Here Ratzinger makes two points about Bonaventure’s teachings: First, personal revelation cannot stand apart from communion with the Church, “to an exclusive I-Thou relation;”¹⁰³ there is an ecclesial and hierarchical arrangement and order to wisdom and revelation that must maintain unity of the body and the people. Second, *revelatio* must follow an Augustinian blending of faith and reason—for Bonaventure this means that Aristotle, for example, must not be cast out of the human conversation on faith.¹⁰⁴ God reveals to all—even pre-Christian pagans. Ratzinger notes that for the

¹⁰⁰ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 65. Here Ratzinger compares Bonaventure’s tripartite structure of revelation as being in general agreement with Rupert and Augustine.

¹⁰¹ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 68.

¹⁰² Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 71.

¹⁰³ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 72.

¹⁰⁴ Nichols says that for Ratzinger, “Bonaventure remained his whole life long within the Neo-Platonising Aristotelianism developed by his Franciscan masters,” and that “one should not oppose the teaching of Bonaventure to that of Thomas Aquinas as though these were competing systems, the one Augustinian, the other Aristotelian.” *The Thought of Benedict XVI*, 41-2. Ratzinger will spend a good deal of his *Habilitationschrift* recounting Bonaventure’s complex consideration of the place of Aristotelianism. Ratzinger concludes with three findings. First, while holding Aristotle in high regard, Bonaventure objects to Aristotle’s notion of eternal time. Second, Bonaventure’s displeasure with Averroism raises his objections “not primarily against the historical Aristotle but against the contemporary form of Aristotelianism ... [seen as] a self-sufficient philosophy standing over against the faith.” Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 160. Moreover, with the rise of Averroism in 1267, “Bonaventure saw an eschatological phenomenon in Aristotle, or in heretical Aristotelianism.” As Bonaventure saw the equation of philosophy and religion spread, he grew in his uneasiness with

Franciscan General, the notion that *God reveals to the pagans, too*, differs slightly from others of his day. “The tendency of early Scholasticism (was) to look backwards,” Ratzinger observes. But Joachim’s tendency was to look “forward to the future”¹⁰⁵ in ways that were not available to the Fathers’ body of evidence, limited as it was to the first few centuries after Christ. Bonaventure (and the Church of the thirteenth century) had more historical data from which to observe revelation at work.

Bonaventure’s adoption of Joachim’s forward-looking view was not, however, a crowning of the abbot as king of a new theology of history; that honor was given to Francis, who made Scripture an eschatological reality in the *now* of the present by living out the fullness of the Sermon on the Mount. “All tradition is of no avail against the immediate word of the Lord; this is the bold wisdom of the word with which Bonaventure discovered the break-through to the immediate encounter with Scripture, following the footsteps of his master, Francis.”¹⁰⁶ Indeed, Francis’ activity could be said to have awoken a sleeping Church. In history he lived the words of Scripture, bringing them to a life that went far beyond him. In this way, Bonaventure saw a static understanding of Scripture and history become dynamic—becoming both present and future-oriented.¹⁰⁷

Ratzinger continues to expound on this point by highlighting two aspects of Bonaventure’s “belief in the progressive, historical development of Scripture”: (a) Scripture’s growth in an historical way, and (b) Scripture’s historical hermeneutic as being “simultaneously a statement about and a prediction of the future ... [which] means that the total meaning of Scripture is not yet clear.”¹⁰⁸ Furthermore, this historico-theological nature of scripture allows for a “striking parallel between the revelation of Scripture and that of

philosophy when seen as a pure path to the divine. “He who is concerned only with knowledge eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,” says Bonaventure, with the University of Paris in mind. Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 151-152. n49 (“Hex XVII 27, p.413b”). Bonaventure does not mean to cast out philosophy—it is after all a fruit of the tree of knowledge created by God. Rather he seeks to keep it within its natural, created limits. These limits are “the orderly structure of Christian wisdom.” Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 154. Lastly, there is an “anti-philosophical attitude which here becomes a prophetic anti-Scholasticism in which Franciscan, Joachimite and Dionysian themes merge. For the final age which is to come he predicts a theology based only on authority.” Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 160. Ratzinger sees in this review of Bonaventure’s evolving reactions against fallen human philosophies an example of history (in this case, the history of human thought) being incorporated into his theology of history. That is, such philosophies have their place in the unfolding history of human interaction with scripture, but they are provisional. What is to come is that which is lasting.

¹⁰⁵ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 77.

¹⁰⁶ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 81.

¹⁰⁷ It is reasonable to conclude that Ratzinger here heard echoes of de Lubac and Augustine when he encountered Bonaventure’s particular view of time as activity given the evidence provided from the life of Francis and his impact on human history.

¹⁰⁸ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 84-5.

creation.”¹⁰⁹ Indeed, Bonaventure has a strong conviction “of the sign-character of the entire creation (which) is the root of (his) symbolism of creation.”¹¹⁰ While Ratzinger does not say so directly, might not the *symbolism of creation* be thought of as the symbolism of a freely given love? After all, if one is to be consistent with Christian epistemological statements that God was, is, and ever shall be the perfection of loving relationship, then the Triune God did not have to create an order “outside” of itself. The notion of creation-seen-as-gift-of-love would shed light on Ratzinger’s subsequent study of the influences on Bonaventure of Dionysius the Areopagite. In tracing such thought from Dionysius, Augustine, and others, Ratzinger finds a mysticism that is “in fact, the original and precise point of origin for the concept of a love which creates knowledge in the darkness of the intellect.”¹¹¹

Ratzinger weaves together history, revelation, the Cross, and love by calling attention to four aspects of Bonaventure’s “decisive” theology of revelation and history. First, there is a “historical ascent which takes place in the course of the time of salvation,” which is in accord with the heavenly hierarchy.¹¹² Second, this unfolding of wisdom in history will not abolish the revelation of Christ nor (be) a transcendence of the New Testament”; rather history will come to that final age which “involves the entrance into that form of knowledge which the Apostles had.” Third, that Christ appeared to Francis as a Seraph has meaning, for the level of the Seraphim is “the highest level of love.” And lastly, the hierarchy of heaven, made incomplete with the fall of the rebellious angels, will become complete with the saints, who will “fill up the gaps” of the heavenly order. At the apex of this repopulation of heaven is Francis, who ushers in a new age in taking the place of the leader of the fallen angels. In doing so, Francis is the herald of a restored peace between heaven and earth.¹¹³

What must be remembered is that Bonaventure’s ability to make such theological contributions came from “the idea of seeing Christ as the axis of world history (that) was prepared for by Rupert, Honorius and Anselm. But it appears clearly for the first time in Joachim ...[c]onsequently, Joachim became the path-finder within the church for a new understanding of history which to us today appears to be so self-evident that it

¹⁰⁹ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 85.

¹¹⁰ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 85.

¹¹¹ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 91.

¹¹² Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 92.

¹¹³ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 93.

seems to be the Christian understanding.”¹¹⁴ This new *Christ-as-center* understanding of time moves Christian thought from a rather static holding pattern that awaits the Second Coming and re-envisioning it as a dynamic interplay of human growth and revelation. As noted elsewhere (pgs. 22-24 and n83), while Augustine’s seven-age schema weighed most of human history in the “before Christ” era (that is, the first five ages), only one age (the sixth) accounted for the present “already/not yet” period between the resurrection and the *eschaton*. What Joachim and Bonaventure brought forth, then, was a new, larger expanse for humanity’s historical unfolding—that is, breathing room for “real growth” that could account for what by the thirteenth century was an obvious ongoing history prior to the Second Coming. Thus, “the church and redemption are rendered historical in an entirely new way which cannot be a matter of indifference for the history of dogma nor for systematic theology.”¹¹⁵ While Joachim and most especially his followers may have been too eager to move beyond the center into a realized, Cross-less Age of the Spirit, it is nonetheless apparent that this new historico-theological view allowed the Calabrian abbot his “hopeful joy and his confident expectation, and this is the significant thing ... it is really possible to look toward that future with the joyful hope that once sounded in the *Maranatha* of the first Christians who awaited the fullness of salvation with the return of the Lord.”¹¹⁶ While Bonaventure salvages Joachim’s contribution, he reminds his flock that—per Augustine (and St. Paul)—the People of God are not to idly hope for what is to come. Ratzinger makes clear that while there are differences in how Bonaventure and Augustine employed a seven-age schema to express Christ’s relation to history, what is more important is their common certainty that Christ and his salvific activity remains the nexus of all history—that the Messiah reaches out on his Cross to both the beginning and the end of human history, his blood baptizing all time. And so, while it is true that for now “the breath of a new age is blowing, an age in which the desire for the glory of the other world is shaped by a deep love of this earth on which we live,” what remains vital for both Augustine and Bonaventure (and de Lubac and Ratzinger) is the pastoral

¹¹⁴ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 107.

¹¹⁵ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 107.

¹¹⁶ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 108. Ratzinger notes “in the meantime this joy had long been disturbed by the fear of the terrible day of judgment which was to precede the dissolution of the world. No such fear lay between the present time and the coming salvation. Now again a true expectation of the end was possible; an expectation which was penetrated entirely with the spirit of hope” 108.

exhortation that Christians must attend to the needs of the here and now—“that the Church which hopes for peace in the future is, nonetheless, obliged to love in the present.”¹¹⁷

Earlier it was put forth that Ratzinger/Benedict XVI could be understood as having a theological and pastoral genetic code that was a pairing of the Franciscan General’s view of *revelation as having a “historical character”* and, relatedly, that *history must be viewed hermeneutically as the telling of an organic, unified drama (indeed, a love story) about a community in time that finds full meaning only in recognizing its movement towards a Christological completion*. It was also proposed that for Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, out of *the related Christian proclamations of (i) a God that, as Trinity, is relationship and love, and (ii) this love is manifested through the Cross, comes Ratzinger’s observation that the Franciscan General, like Augustine, “knew” that for Christianity to remain authentic it must maintain its continuing kenosis—i.e., its communal obligation (and the implications thereof) for members of the Body of Christ to sacrificially “love in the present.*” In reviewing Ratzinger’s *Habilitationschrift*, it was demonstrated how Bonaventure’s desire to maintain an orthodox understanding of the Trinity and the centrality of the Cross would—in light of Joachim’s view of history’s activity—portray revelation and human history not as a static pool, but as a river of Christ’s living water surging through successive generations. Next, it remains to be explored whether Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s own views on revelation and world and salvation history are similarly defined by the Trinity and the Cross, and how these views lead to the unique Christian challenge of a *primacy of cruciform love* that, communally, results in *sacramentally oriented social doctrine*. To demonstrate this, I will first examine Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s principal contributions on revelation and then on eschatology. The former will be examined through Ratzinger’s 1967 commentary on *Dei Verbum*,¹¹⁸ his 2007 *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*,¹¹⁹ and his 2010 Apostolic Exhortation “*Verbum Domini*.” The principal text on eschatology will be his 1977 *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*. A review of his three encyclicals will form the skeleton and musculature of the discussion on Benedict XVI, the pastor of the Church who lives now within a post-Christian world.

¹¹⁷ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 162-3. As will be seen below, a detailed discussion the role of sacrificial love in the thought of Bonaventure is found in Ilia Delio, OFM, “The role of the crucified in Bonaventure’s doctrine of mystical union,” *Studia Mystica*, Vol. 19, January, 1998, 8-20.

¹¹⁸ Herbert Vorgrimler, ed., *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, trans. William Glen-Doepel, et. al. (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969).

¹¹⁹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. by Adrian Walker (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

The Dialogue of God's Word and the Human Response

Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's commentary on *Dei Verbum* will demonstrate for the present work much of his thought on revelation and its interaction with the human person. The commentary provides an overview of the conciliar document's origin, its preface, and Chapters I, II, and VI. In all, Ratzinger reviews key aspects of the text, as well as recounts the development of critical portions of *Dei Verbum*. From this limited selection comes a substantial overview of *Dei Verbum*'s contributions and, for Ratzinger, the proper hermeneutical keys to appreciate them. He begins with the historical context in which such a monumental undertaking occurred,¹²⁰ as well as three “motifs” that shaped *Dei Verbum*'s development. Of interest herein is Ratzinger's attention to the matter of tradition and dogma—topics at the center of the discussions that led to *Dei Verbum*. Ratzinger points to stirrings in the nineteenth century that brought a “new view” of tradition out of the Romantic age. In addition, that century saw the decree on the Immaculate Conception, which was “made possible” not by biblical citation but by tradition. Thus revelation could “no longer be understood as the simple passing of something that had been handed down once and for all, but had to be understood in terms of the categories of growth, progress and the knowledge of faith that Romanticism had developed.”¹²¹ Ratzinger traces an even greater arc of ecclesial debate on the place of scripture and tradition—from Trent to the debates of Vatican II. At stake was nothing less than “the material completeness of Scripture.”¹²² A second motif of the discussions that led to *Dei Verbum* was the place of the historical-critical method, a question that Ratzinger notes was not fully settled.¹²³ Ratzinger also re-presents a series of side discussions

¹²⁰ Of note, Ratzinger notes that the development of *Dei Verbum* occurred in an environment of “restless theological ferment and sometimes almost risked being overwhelmed by it.” Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 155.

¹²¹ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 155-6. Here Ratzinger will point to Newman and “his idea of development.”

¹²² Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 157.

¹²³ As will be seen further along, Ratzinger will pick up this theme and dialogue with the historical-critical method in his 2007 work, *Jesus of Nazareth*. Elsewhere, Rowland (*Ratzinger's Faith*, 48-52) provides a concise comparative overview of the relation of Trent (which in large part was responding to the Protestant critique of tradition) and Vatican I (and its response to heresies derived from rationalism and naturalism) to the needs of Vatican II, which sought to respond to the realities of its own age, such as the prevalence of the historical critical method. Nichols (*Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*) adds that, nonetheless, “the great triumph of this debate, in Ratzinger's eyes, was the refusal to let the whole issue be defined by the need to combat Modernism. What he meant was plain: every orthodox attempt to confront heresy leads to a certain imbalance, as the illumination of one necessary truth places others in shadow. Having the serenity to see the Modernist crisis as an episode of the past held out the hope of adopting a more holistic vision of revelation ... Ratzinger's own terms were ‘pastoral’ and ‘ecumenical’, which did not, he insisted, mean ‘muddled’ and ‘ambiguous’! Dogmatic formulations must retain their value as objective truth, the bearing of which can be gauged unambiguously from their history. ‘Pastoral’ does not mean wishy-washy, *substanzlos*. Rather should it signify a concern for modern people who ‘want to hear what the faith has positively to teach them’. This will mean freeing preaching and confession from the language of the Schools, a language which has its won legitimacy, even necessity ... but which should elsewhere give way to that of Scripture, the Fathers and contemporary culture” (56).

that—as with Bonaventure critiquing Joachim—show his appreciation of arguments made for and against particular positions. Within debates on the historical-critical method, for instance, came a helpful discussion on “the new formulations of the theological categories of inspiration and inerrancy.”¹²⁴ Ratzinger will see proponents of both concepts offering truths that may benefit the Church’s mission, although, tellingly, he will show his cards in support of Bonaventure’s understanding of revelation as relation. Where the modernists would stress the

human factor in Scripture, [which] was theologically legitimate on the basis of the Christian conception of God, which has been shaped by the idea of the incarnation, and which is centered precisely on the idea of the historical and human mediation of the eternal in the revelation of Christ . . . the traditionalists insisted on an idea of inspiration that was conceived entirely in terms of the divine author, which involved an untenable view of the negligible human contribution in the transmission of revelation, but the positive value of which should be recognized, namely the strong sense of the sacredness of Scripture.¹²⁵

As the commentary unfolds, one cannot help but note a pastoral, Solomon-like approach (that is, a Bonaventurian one) to Ratzinger’s recollections of such discussions. Ratzinger easily extracts from debated positions that which is helpful, especially if it proves itself worthy for saving human souls. Ratzinger seeks to maintain the absolute primacy of God’s activity in His self-revealing, while also acknowledging the “other” who receives revelation—without which there would be no “*re-vel-ation*”¹²⁶—that is, the human person and the Church. All this echoes his 1957 words noting that, thanks to Joachim, “Bonaventure arrives at a new theory of scriptural exegesis which emphasizes the historical character of the scriptural statements in contrast to the exegesis of the Fathers and the Scholastics which had been more clearly directed to the unchangeable and the enduring.”¹²⁷ The theme of revelation as a transformative dialogue—that is, a sacramental, divinely initiated encounter with human activity that can continually elevate and illuminate the nature of any particular historical period—becomes the hermeneutical lens through which Ratzinger looks back on the council. He will use this understanding of revelation to balance the past and the present in a way that is open to the

¹²⁴ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 158.

¹²⁵ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 158.

¹²⁶ “Where there is no one to perceive ‘revelation’, no *re-vel-ation* has occurred, because no veil has been removed. By definition, revelation requires a someone who apprehends it. These insights, gained through my reading of Bonaventure, were later on very important for me at the time of the conciliar discussion on revelation, Scripture, and tradition. Because if Bonaventure is right, then revelation precedes Scripture and becomes deposited in Scripture but is not identical with it. This in turn means that revelation is always something greater than what is merely written down.” Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 108-109.

¹²⁷ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 7.

mysteries of the future. For instance, Ratzinger calls attention to a point when there seemed no end to conciliar debates on the matter of inspiration versus inerrancy. Eventually, Paul VI demanded that the fathers clarify the issues of tradition, inerrancy, and historicity. What resulted was, as Ratzinger puts it (with emphasis added), a text that “*does not entirely abandon* the position of Trent and Vatican I, but neither does it mummify what was held to be true at those Councils, because it realizes that fidelity in the sphere of the Spirit can be realized only through a *constantly renewed appropriation*.”¹²⁸ Indeed, Ratzinger places Vatican II in continuity with Trent and Vatican I, “a continuity that is not a rigid external identification with what had gone before, but a preservation of the old, established in the midst of progress.”¹²⁹

Thus far in Ratzinger’s introductory comments and his overview of *Dei Verbum*’s preface, we see Ratzinger working out (as did Bonaventure with Joachim) the placement of new and evolving perspectives and experiences within existing, fixed structures and realities. With regards to understanding scripture, such “working out” is of note when remembering that in his *Habilitationsschrift*, Ratzinger initially includes in his thesis (at the risk of further alienating an advisor¹³⁰) the Joachim-influenced, Bonaventurian “belief in the progressive, historical development of Scripture.” Specifically, this means that both the form and content of scripture itself has grown and been canonized in an historical way; it also implies that, when viewed with an historical hermeneutic, scripture becomes “simultaneously a statement about and a prediction of the future ... (and) this means that the total meaning of Scripture is not yet clear.”¹³¹ That is, clarity will increase as the ages march onward and God continues His dialogue through successive encounters of scripture with future men and women.

How this increase in clarity is to be measured, and in fact what it means, is a topic Ratzinger next explores in his commentary on Chapter I, which he entitles *Revelation Itself*. Here he writes of a struggle within early conciliar discussions on “the nature of ‘double source of revelation’”—scripture and tradition—which

¹²⁸ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 164. (Emphasis added.)

¹²⁹ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 168.

¹³⁰ Ratzinger recounts the “drama” of his *Habilitationsschrift*, noting that Michael Schmaus rejected this reading of Bonaventure because, in Ratzinger’s words, it was evidence of “a dangerous modernism that had to lead to the subjectivization of the concept of revelation.” *Milestones*, 109.

¹³¹ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 84-5. In his commentary on Vatican II, Ratzinger will note that “we said before that Christ was the end of God’s speaking, but this end is nothing but man’s being constantly addressed by God, it is the constant relating of man to the one man who is the Word of God himself.” Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 175.

became more of a “restricting,” or a relegating, of revelation into “a teaching that one acquires in the garment of ecclesiastical traditionalism.” Ratzinger praises the council fathers for “the liberation from this narrow view” (i.e., a static view of revelation) “and the return to what actually happens in positive sources, before it was crystallized into doctrine, when God ‘reveals’ himself, and thus a re-appraisal of the whole nature and basis of Christian existence.”¹³² Noting the positive influences of Karl Barth, Ratzinger calls attention to the historical development of the Church’s self-awareness of what revelation (and, so, the Church’s own identity) means by his comparing expressions of revelation between Vatican I and II. The former begins from “the natural knowledge of God and considers ‘supernatural’ revelation only in close connection with this idea.” By the 1960s, the Church spoke in a way that placed the natural knowledge of God subsequent to “God himself, the person of God, from whom revelation proceeds and to whom it returns.”¹³³ This shift of focus has vital anthropological and pastoral implications. With the theological priority of God revealing Himself to His creatures, “revelation necessarily reaches—also with the person who receives it—into the personal centre of man.”¹³⁴

For Ratzinger, an even more important evolution had occurred between the two councils: the shift from revelation as being “largely the issuing of divine decrees” to a “sacramental view, which sees law and grace, word and deed, message and sign, the person and his utterance within the one comprehensive mystery” of revelation.¹³⁵ Here Ratzinger adds the sense of mystery as offered in Ephesians (cf. 1:10). This epistle implies a universality within revelation that is “the unity of mankind in the one Christ, the cosmic dimension of what is Christian, the relation of revelation to history, and finally its Christological centre. For the mystery of God is nothing other than Christ himself.”¹³⁶ Here Ratzinger finds it necessary to defend the council fathers from any charge that their Christological centrality implies a subordination of the pneumatological. While Ratzinger does not state who would make this accusation, he defends *Dei Verbum’s* “markedly

¹³² Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 170.

¹³³ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 171.

¹³⁴ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 171.

¹³⁵ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 171.

¹³⁶ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 171. Later, Ratzinger will show that in *Dei Verbum* “we can see again here how little intellectualism and doctrinarism are able to comprehend the nature of revelation, which is not concerned with talking *about* something that is quite external to the person, but with the realization of the existence of man, with the relation of the human ‘I’ to the divine ‘thou’, so that the purpose of this dialogue is ultimately not information, but unity and transformation.” 175.

Trinitarian conception: the movement of revelation proceeds from God (the Father), comes to us through Christ, and admits us to the fellowship of God in the Holy Spirit.”¹³⁷ It is with this Trinitarian conceptualization—which calls to mind that the Christian God is ontologically pure relationship—that allows Ratzinger to offer a further insight into *Dei Verbum*: “[I]t offers a new view of the relation between the word and the event in the structure of revelation.” Such a relational and dynamic understanding of revelation arguably derives from the outward-moving Trinitarian supernova that Bonaventure had introduced to a young Joseph Ratzinger. With this, Ratzinger observes a surprising distinction between the original intent of many council fathers and the final Council proclamations themselves when he notes that

the fathers were merely concerned with overcoming neo-scholastic intellectualism, for which revelation chiefly meant a store of mysterious supernatural teachings, which automatically reduces faith very much to an acceptance of these supernatural insights.¹³⁸ As opposed to this, the Council desired to express again the character of revelation as a totality, in which word and event make up one whole, a true dialogue which touches man in his totality, not only challenging his reason, but, as dialogue, addressing him as a partner, indeed, giving him his true nature for the first time.¹³⁹

As noted earlier (pg. 27), this “character of revelation” was also expressed in his *Habilitationschrift* such that

the true understanding of revelation demands of each individual reader an attitude which goes beyond the merely “objective” recognition of what is written. In the deepest sense, this understanding can be called mystical to distinguish it from all natural knowledge. In other words, such an understanding demands the attitude of faith by which man gains entrance into the living understanding of Scripture in the Church. It is in this way that man truly receives “revelation.”¹⁴⁰

This “attitude of faith” spoken of in the 1950s becomes for Ratzinger, a decade later, a more fleshed-out relation between the revealer and the subject to whom revelation is offered. We will continue to see this

¹³⁷ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 172. Furthermore, “the pneumatological dimension is not overlooked here, this emerging naturally from a Christology of the resurrection as a correction to a one-sided Christology of the incarnation, and at the same time the theocentric position is given appropriate emphasis, towards which the Christocentric view, properly understood, is necessarily oriented.” 172. Further along, Ratzinger will compare *Dei Verbum* to Vatican I in how the former “speaks of a constant perfecting of faith through the gifts of the Holy Spirit and sees the effect of these as an ever deeper insight into revelation. This ... shows surprisingly clearly how automatically, despite all the stimulus that they received from Protestant theologians, the authors moved within the tradition of Catholic theological thought. For it would have been very difficult for Protestant theologians to use an expression such as the ‘perfecting’ of faith. For them faith is a decision between ‘yes’ and ‘no’, which is made either entirely or not at all, but which cannot be conceived of in terms of different degrees.” 178. This discussion is also critical to the overarching question of the place of tradition in revelation, for within *Dei Verbum* grows a view of tradition that “takes place essentially as the growing insight, mediated by the Holy Spirit, into revelation that has been given once and for all; it is the *perfectio* of faith which the Spirit brings about in the Church. This is the crux of the difference between Catholic and Protestant theology in the question of tradition” (179).

¹³⁸ In n8 of Ratzinger’s text, he notes that “one cannot deny that there is a tendency in this direction in Vatican I, even if counter-tendencies are not entirely absent. Cf. on this esp. H. Fries, “Kirche und Offenbarung Gottes,” in Hampe, *Die Autorität*,” I, 155-69, esp. 158 ff.”

¹³⁹ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 172.

¹⁴⁰ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 68.

emphasis on the positive aspects of *revelation as a dialogue* in later works—both specifically on revelation and on other topics. But first it must also be noted that Ratzinger will not countenance an “overly optimistic” understanding of what it means to “dialogue” with God’s revealed truths. To teach only that salvation derives from our conversation with God does not clarify what sort of conversation this is, or why God would initiate it, or what is revealed. If left to itself, and so without theological (or anthropological) bounds, the concept of revelation as a dialogue may provide a too mystical, too spiritual hermeneutic of revelation—one that could steer individuals or ecclesial groups into a false sense of otherworldliness, as had occurred among the Franciscan Spiritualists. Here we find one of Ratzinger’s central criticisms of *Dei Verbum*: the minimization of the Cross.¹⁴¹ Ratzinger can

scarcely suppress the question as to whether the Council did not start from an over-optimistic view in its account of revelation and salvation history, losing sight of the fact that divine salvation comes essentially as a justification of the *sinner*; that grace is given through the judgment of the cross and thus itself always retains the character of judgment; that therefore the one word of God appears in the double guise of Law and Gospel.¹⁴²

Ratzinger particularly cites *Dei Verbum*’s reference to Romans 2 as a statement opening the doors to universal salvation; to this, Ratzinger directs one’s attention to the remainder of Romans 1:17–3:20, in which the Apostle refuses to ignore the sinful nature of the fallen human race; for “all fall short of the glory of God” (cf. 3:23). Ratzinger can thus ask, what of the anger of God? “The pastoral optimism of an age that is concerned with understanding and reconciliation seems to have somewhat blinded the Council to a not immaterial section of the testimony of Scripture.”¹⁴³

We find another disappointment for Ratzinger in *Dei Verbum*’s handling of “The Transmission of Divine Revelation.” Here, the topic of tradition again finds itself on center stage. Ratzinger expounds the

¹⁴¹ In *Introduction to Christianity*, Ratzinger writes “the cross is revelation”; further along, “the cross does not only reveal man; it also reveals God. God is such that he identifies himself with man right into this abyss and that he judges him by saving him. In the abyss of human denial is revealed the still more inexhaustible abyss of the divine love. The cross is thus truly the center of revelation, a revelation that does not reveal any previously unknown principles but reveals us to ourselves, by revealing us before God and God in our midst,” (222-3).

¹⁴² Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 173-4.

¹⁴³ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 174. Nichols will note this criticism as well (*Thought of Benedict XVI*, 57-58), but he seems to downplay its importance, nor does he place this within the context of the lessons learned by Ratzinger in his study of Bonaventure’s critical retrieval of Joachim and conflict with his order’s Spiritualists. Rowland notes a related disappointment with another conciliar document, *Gaudium et Spes*. Here, the development of that document, particularly articles 15-17, expounded “human spirituality under three aspects: intellect, conscience and freedom. Neither the concept of the person nor the idea of love was mentioned here ... Ratzinger was quite appalled that anyone could attempt to speak of spirituality without thinking that Christian love might have something to do with it”; Rowland will see in *Deus Caritas Est* a “long-awaited remedy to what he saw as a lopsided intellectualism of the treatment of the spirituality of *Gaudium et Spes*,” (41).

process by which the council was able to redefine exactly what “tradition” means, in that at Trent, the use of the word was in the plural and for Vatican II we find the singular, *traditio*. “Vatican II starts from an abstract concept, whereas Trent was concerned with the concrete phenomenon, the actually existing traditions, by which it meant the form of the Church’s life as it was actually practised.”¹⁴⁴ Ratzinger notes that Vatican II did not provide enough (or any) direction on what the Church should mean in the term *tradition*—an absence that, as does an overly optimistic reading of scripture, has significant pastoral ramifications¹⁴⁵. What little has been provided allows him to consider “the dynamic character of tradition.”¹⁴⁶ Here Ratzinger again shows a Bonaventurian appreciation of revelation as growth.

[*Dei Verbum*] states that tradition, which stems from the Apostles, develops under the assistance of the Holy Spirit in the Church, i.e., that there is a growing understanding of the words and realities that have been handed down to us. Again, three factors of this growth are listed: contemplation and study on the part of believers; inner understanding, which comes from spiritual experience; and the proclamation by the teaching office. The final point is made that the Church and its understanding of revelation is moving forward towards the fullness of the divine word in the Church in the *eschaton*. It is important that the progress of the word in the time of the Church is not seen simply as a function of the hierarchy, but is anchored in the whole life of the Church; through it, we hear in what is said that which is unsaid. The whole spiritual experience of the Church, its believing, praying and loving intercourse with the Lord and his word, causes our understanding of the original truth to grow and in the today of faith extracts anew from the yesterday of its historical origin what was meant for all time and yet can be understood only in the changing ages and in the particular way of each. In the process of understanding, which is the concrete way in which tradition proceeds in the Church, the work of the teaching office is one component (and, because of its nature, a critical one, not a productive one), but it is not the whole.¹⁴⁷

In making these point(s), Ratzinger will eventually invoke the Fathers, whose contributions to the faith “can no longer be seen, as in the static conception, as the bearers of individual apostolic traditions . . . their importance is to be revealed in the light of the dynamic understanding of tradition. Their writings testify to the living presence of tradition and are, as it were, a living expression of the perpetuation of the mystery of Christ in the life of the Church.”¹⁴⁸ Ratzinger will continue by placing the hermeneutic of dynamic

¹⁴⁴ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 182.

¹⁴⁵ Ratzinger notes that while “an attempt had been made to make a distinction among traditions, unsatisfactory though it was, inasmuch as criticism of reception by the Church was scarcely possible. On this point, Vatican II has unfortunately not made any progress, but has more or less ignored the whole question of the criticism of tradition ... [which has] missed an important opportunity for ecumenical dialogue.” Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 185-6.

¹⁴⁶ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 186.

¹⁴⁷ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 186.

¹⁴⁸ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 189.

revelation—that is, the “dialogue of salvation”¹⁴⁹—into particular discussions, such as the role of the historical critical method, ecumenism, the relationship of scripture and tradition,¹⁵⁰ and more. Important here is his intent to synthesize a variety of views while maintaining the nature of authentic Catholic thought and teachings.¹⁵¹ This synthesization leads Ratzinger to (once again) warn of the dangerous implications of both modernism and traditionalism.¹⁵²

Here it might be asked, are Ratzinger’s views on revelation, such as “growth” and “dialogue,” consistent throughout his career? For a partial answer, we leap forward two decades. Here we find Ratzinger in a more public and pastoral setting continuing to reveal to just what revelation is—and, importantly, how it has changed individual lives and world history. He does so in his examination of scripture’s dialogue with modern natural sciences. Given that these new ways of human understanding have spoken loudly to the human race, they require a response. This response must be catechetical for the faithful and apologetic for anyone who seeks to dismiss scripture. And so Ratzinger—like Bonaventure’s corrections and syntheses of Joachim’s new ways of thinking—provides a means to read scripture in light of the historical unfolding of natural knowledge. *“In the Beginning:” A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall* is based on a series of homilies on Genesis. In it, Ratzinger uses the homiletic opportunity to provide to a new audience an explanation of how scripture was formed and how it is to be read, especially in light of the Torah’s creation accounts.¹⁵³ True to his Barthian appreciation of the primacy of God as revealer, Ratzinger opens the work

¹⁴⁹ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 198.

¹⁵⁰ “It is important to note that only Scripture is defined in terms of what it *is*: it is stated that Scripture *is* the word of God consigned to writing. Tradition, however, is described only functionally, in terms of what it *does*: it hands on the word of God, but *is* not the word of God.” Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 196. Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ, will use this distinction to note that “there is rather general agreement, also, that the Bible, rather than tradition, is the fundamental embodiment of the word of God” in “Scripture: Recent Catholic and Protestant Views,” *Theology Today*, 37 no 1, April 1980, 7-26.

¹⁵¹ Writing about objections by Oscar Cullman and J. K. S. Reid regarding *Dei Verbum*’s relationship of scripture and tradition, and the resulting breakdown in ecumenical agreement, Ratzinger notes that “the first thing to be noted is that such an end to a dramatic attempt at ecumenical encounter is not of course simply unhappy mischance or the result of misunderstandings. Rather, it indicates the factual divergence of the starting-points on both sides, which is the origin of the schism in the Church—a schism which can by no means be simply regarded as the result of misunderstanding.” Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 192. As for the place of exegetes in Catholic and Protestant traditions, “when Cullman tells us to put our faith in the exegetes, i.e., in their being led by the Holy Spirit, then we must say that fear and the terrifying possibilities of the teaching office can equally be dispelled only through confidence in the Spirit that guides the Church. This is, however, in no way intended to devalue or remove the place of vigilance.” Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 194.

¹⁵² Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 197.

¹⁵³ It is reasonable to assume that much of Ratzinger’s interest in providing catechesis on the creation accounts partially stems from his work on Bonaventure, especially in how the Franciscan General’s historico-theological view of scripture allows for a “striking parallel between the revelation of Scripture and that of creation.” Indeed, Bonaventure has a strong conviction “of the sign-character of the entire creation (which) is the root of Bonaventurian symbolism of creation.” (Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 85). Ratzinger here

with “God the Creator,” quoting what has been revealed to us in Genesis 1. He then readily delves into the heart of the matter: “These words rise to a certain conflict.”¹⁵⁴ After all, what meaning can be found in Genesis if science has shown this account to be a primitive story? To begin answering this question, one which has significant pastoral overtones for the faithful, Ratzinger inserts a section on “The Difference between Form and Content in the Creation Narrative.” Here he provides the account of how, in time, Genesis, astrophysics, and evolutionary biology were harmonized—that is, how the meaning of Genesis deepened in time from a mostly literal account of creation to an analogical, theological, anthropological, and teleological myth. But this leads to another question, one that could be asked by those within and outside of the Church: Is not such a change in how mankind understands scripture’s meaning a reason for scandal?

If theologians or even the church can shift the boundaries here between image and intention, between what lies in the past and what is of enduring value, why can they not do so elsewhere—as, for instance, with respect to Jesus’ miracles? And if not there, why not also with respect to what is absolutely central—the cross and the resurrection of the Lord?¹⁵⁵

Depending on how one answers such questions, one may then readily ask: What does the Church have to offer? Ratzinger provides his answers in an explanatory preamble—one that many faithful may find comforting—“The Unity of the Bible as a Criterion for Its Interpretation.” Without using the term *historical-critical*, he tells the stories of the historical development of Genesis, of its importance during the Babylonian exile, of its meaning to us today that the truth within Genesis can still defeat pagan gods—that it can still supplant any concept of the pre-existence of evil with its telling of the one God who, in time, revealed himself to be love. And without using the word *hermeneutics*, Ratzinger explains how “every individual part derives its meaning from the whole, and the whole derives its meaning from its end—Christ.”¹⁵⁶ Ratzinger goes further:

Thus we can see how the Bible itself constantly readapts its images to a continually developing way of thinking, how it changes time and again in order to bear witness, time and again, to the *one* thing that has come to it, in truth, from God’s Word. ... In the Bible itself the images are free and they correct themselves ongoingly. In this way the show, by means

refers us to Etienne Gilson’s 1924 *The Philosophy of St. Bonaventure*, republished in English in 1965, trans. by Dom Iltyd Trethowan and Frank J. Sneed (Paterson, N.J.: St. Anthony Guild Press).

¹⁵⁴ Ratzinger, “*In the Beginning*,” 3.

¹⁵⁵ Ratzinger, “*In the Beginning*,” 7.

¹⁵⁶ Ratzinger, “*In the Beginning*,” 9.

of a gradual and interactive process, that they are only images, which reveal something deeper and greater.¹⁵⁷

Ratzinger will continue to use this brief forum to express “The Enduring Significance of the Symbolic Elements in the Text” and “The Suppression of Faith in Creation in Modern Thought.” In the end of this small book, Ratzinger has taught the reader much that the ordinary Christian should know about the Christian proclamations of creation, the fall, and salvation through Christ, and also about the hermeneutics of a dynamic revelation (and of hermeneutics itself). Throughout this text, Bonaventure can be found standing approvingly in the background.

Advancing another two decades, Benedict XVI will do something similar, although in a more complicated text, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*. Here again he will include a discussion dedicated to revelation as dialogue. In its entirety, the book appears very much a critical retrieval of the historical-critical method.¹⁵⁸ Critics of the work characterize Benedict XVI’s engagement with this method as (to be kind) less than convincing; one review epitomizes the charge in saying that the pontiff’s intent of engaging the historical quest for Jesus “means in effect ignoring it altogether.”¹⁵⁹ Perhaps such lively

¹⁵⁷ Ratzinger, “*In the Beginning*,” 15.

¹⁵⁸ In his 1969 commentary on *Dei Verbum*, Ratzinger noted that “even now, after the Council, it is not possible to say that the question of the relation between critical and Church exegesis, historical research and dogmatic tradition has been settled. All that is certain is that from now on it will be impossible to ignore the critical historical method and that, precisely as such, it is in accordance with the aims of theology itself.” Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 158. Clearly, given his discussions on exegesis in both *Jesus of Nazareth* and “*In the Beginning*,” this relation between *critical and Church exegesis* is one that Ratzinger/Benedict XVI has given great importance, and one to which he returns again and again. See also Rowland, *Ratzinger’s Faith*, 56-58.

¹⁵⁹ Dennis Campbell in *Homiletic*, 32 no. 2, Winter 2007, 35-37. Campbell about sums up the criticism of the Holy Father in noting that, despite reassurance to the contrary, it soon becomes clear that “serious engagement with history has been given up for the sake of a ‘properly theological interpretation’.” Benedict’s concept of ‘going beyond’ the historical-critical method means in effect ignoring it altogether. To describe the historical-critical method as indispensable and then to pay it scant attention is a blatant exercise of the papal privilege of having one’s cake and eating it. Again and again Benedict feels free to side-step the literary and historical problems that are present on every page of the gospels in order to persist with his presuppositions about the unity of the Bible and the historical basis of the Church’s theology. For example, we are told that the Sermon on the Mount is the new Torah. But we are not told how much such an interpretation depends on Matthew’s theological agenda. Benedict is quite eager to present us with a harmonisation of the four gospels in order to reveal to us a single face of Jesus. But the evidence of the gospels does not encourage harmonisation. In fact what we have is four different faces of our Lord. There is ample evidence that Matthew and Luke wrote their gospels in order to replace that of Mark. It is highly likely that John’s radically different Jesus was regarded by its author as the final word on God’s Living Word after which the other gospels were redundant. The nature of the relationship between the four evangelists is deliberately ignored in Benedict’s amalgamation of their witness. He seems reluctant to admit that Mark was used as a source by Matthew and Luke. Indeed we must wait until page 325 to find an admission that Matthew’s gospel relies on Mark’s. Moreover, the sayings source ‘Q’ is never mentioned, surely a serious omission. After two hundred years of the historical-critical methods such a cavalier approach to Gospel interpretation simply will not do. Does Benedict not know that when a harmonisation of the four gospels was produced by Tatian in the mid second century, it was rejected by the church in favour of four separate witnesses? It would seem that Benedict cannot cope with the possibility of the voices of the New Testament being in any kind of conflict with one another.” Similarly, Richard B. Hays (*First Things* no. 175, Ag-S 2007, 49-53) writes that “because of Benedict’s pervasive tendency to treat the texts as transparent to the historical facts about Jesus, he also fails to be sufficiently attentive to the individual narrative shape and content of the four distinct witnesses of the canonical evangelists. Time and again he dutifully notes these differences but then brushes them aside as inconsequential.” Luke Timothy Johnson (*Modern Theology*, 24 no. 2 April 2008, 318-320) attempts a charitable overview, but

criticism stems from Benedict XVI's view that modern critical approaches to reading the texts of scripture, while having significant value, come with risks should faith be left out of the equation. As the Joachimist view of scripture tended toward an overoptimistic spirituality that took the reader outside of the current age, historical-critical methods threaten us with the opposing extreme: to strip mystery from revelation by dividing the Bible into books, the books into literary themes, and then into worldly intentions that are frozen in a particular historical age and so have no voice for the modern reader. Benedict XVI counters such tendencies with a discussion on the role of the biblical author: "He is speaking from the perspective of a common history that sustains him and that already implicitly contains the possibilities of its future, of the future stages of its journey. The process of continually rereading and drawing out new meanings from words would not have been possible unless the words themselves were already open to it from within."¹⁶⁰ Benedict XVI reminds the reader that scripture must be understood as a work of divine inspiration. "The author does not speak as a private, self-contained subject. He speaks in a living community, that is to say, in a living historical movement not created by him, nor even by the collective, but which is led forward by a greater power that is at work."¹⁶¹ Benedict XVI then appears to draw on Augustine—specifically from his doctoral thesis *Volk and Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche*—by linking scripture's historical development with its always existing subsistence within the Church. In stating that scripture is not "simply a piece of literature," he affirms what it, in fact, *is* by underscoring how it developed. As his commentary on *Dei Verbum* placed revelation within the entire community of the Church, lay and magisterial, Benedict XVI here notes that "Scripture emerged from within the heart of a living subject—the pilgrim people of God—and lives within this same subject."¹⁶² In other words, he notes, "the books of Scripture involve three interacting subjects." These are the authors themselves, the "collective subject, the 'People of God,' from within whose heart and to whom

cannot sustain it: "This book will undoubtedly find appreciative readers among those who welcome any pronouncement by a pope as well as by those who are relieved to find a book by a pope that is not filled with pronouncements. Certainly, the book does no harm to its subject and may attract those not otherwise so inclined to a serious consideration of Christianity's founder. Other readers will find the book disappointing. It invites consideration as a work of scholarship yet does not meet the measure of serious contemporary scholarship on Jesus. It invites appreciation as personal testimony to a pope's faith, yet manages to reveal nothing personal about the pope himself. Indeed, one of the most surprising things about the book is that the leader of the religion based in the figure of Jesus can speak at such length on the subject while betraying so little sense of excitement or urgency. It is, in short, a book that falls between the worlds of scholarship and devotion, contributing little of substance to either and noteworthy primarily because of the office held by its author."

¹⁶⁰ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xx.

¹⁶¹ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xx.

¹⁶² Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xx.

they speak,” and, finally “God himself, who—through men and their humanity—is at the deepest level of the one speaking”; moreover, “it is in the Church that the words of the Bible are always in the present.”¹⁶³ But Benedict XVI does not let the matter lie there. In a rather Thomistic, *Summa*-like approach, he presents the questions and objections that may arise when one employs historical-critical methods without also accepting that they can co-exist with the rule of faith. For instance, in noting the historical gap between Christ’s execution and the likely composition of Philippians 2:6-11, Benedict XVI asks “what happened during those twenty years after Jesus’ Crucifixion? Where did this Christology come from?”¹⁶⁴ In asking such questions, Benedict XVI is certainly using an historical-critical approach, but as a man of faith he does not view the answer as completely open-ended. The answers must have something to do with the certainty of the resurrection among the followers of Christ. This ending becomes a fixed point for use in an iterative understanding of “what happened?” Certainly, the pontiff notes, no historical method could “prove” the divinity of Christ or His resurrection—such would be beyond a historical analysis, as the resurrection itself would have been both an historical and a-historical happening.¹⁶⁵ The response, however, was certainly a real event, even if historical-critical methods might propose to the “what happened” question scenarios other than the resurrection of the Son of God. Moreover, while admitting the many diverse approaches and literary structures within the Gospels, they nonetheless exhibit “a deep harmony despite all their differences.” In other words, if one is to use any particular method of exegetical or literary archeology, one must be open to wherever an unbiased use of that method may lead. That is, if a scholar presupposes that Christ was/is not God, he or she will read the Gospels differently than one who assumes an inner harmony because each of the recording communities witnessed the same miraculous events. But is not only one of these readings based on “what really happened?” Here the pontiff affirms that he is not refuting the usefulness of contemporary exegetical tools. Indeed, he is grateful for them. He has “merely tried to go beyond purely historical-critical exegesis so as to apply new methodological insights that allow us to offer a properly theological interpretation of the Bible. To be sure, this requires faith, but the aim unequivocally is not, nor should be, to give up serious

¹⁶³ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xx.

¹⁶⁴ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xx.ii.

¹⁶⁵ Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s latest expression of this point can be found in *Jesus of Nazareth, Part Two, Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, trans. by Tarcisio Bertone, Vatican Secretary of State (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 273.

engagement with history.”¹⁶⁶ Given our understanding of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s, one should read these words and imagine similar ones spoken by Bonaventure about the usefulness and the place of the radical, new view of scripture’s interaction with human history as expressed a decades earlier by Joachim of Fiore.

Finally, we can see that the Holy Father has not lost any of his appreciation for *revelation as dialogue within history* when he wrote his 2010 post-synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini*.¹⁶⁷ Unlike *Jesus of Nazareth*, here he writes unequivocally as the Successor of Peter. This document offers a sweeping overview of the relationship between revelation and the Church—among all of its members—and it testifies to the historical character of scripture’s interaction with and growth-in-understanding among the People of God. We are told that the purpose of the document is to take us from *Dei Verbum* to the current day.¹⁶⁸ Benedict XVI states “that the intervening years have also witnessed a growing awareness of the ‘trinitarian and salvation-historical horizon of revelation’ against which Jesus Christ is to be acknowledged as ‘mediator and fullness of all revelation.’ To each generation the Church unceasingly proclaims that Christ ‘completed and perfected revelation.’”¹⁶⁹ And so *Verbum Domini* becomes not just part of the historical interaction with revelation, but it is also a sort of ecclesial self-examination.¹⁷⁰ The Holy Father’s personal intention of communicating the work of the Synod to the Church and the world is to ensure that these discussions within the Vatican’s walls “have a real effect on the life of the Church: on our personal relationship with the sacred Scriptures, on their interpretation in the liturgy and catechesis, and in scientific research, so that the Bible may not be simply a word from the past, but a living and timely word.”¹⁷¹ Toward that end, *Verbum Domini* uses

¹⁶⁶ Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, xxiii.

¹⁶⁷ Benedict XVI, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation, Verbum Domini, to the Bishops, Clergy, Consecrated Persons and the Lay Faithful on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini_en.html, accessed January 8, 2011. pg. 7.

¹⁶⁸ In so doing, the document cites the following documents as “noteworthy” PAUL VI, Apostolic Letter *Summi Dei Verbum* (4 November 1963): AAS 55 (1963), 979-995; *Motu Proprio Sedula Cura* (27 June 1971): AAS 63 (1971), 665-669; JOHN PAUL II, General Audience (1 May 1985): L’Osservatore Romano, 2-3 May 1985, p.6; Address on the Interpretation of the Bible in the Church (23 April 1993): AAS 86 (1994), 232-243; BENEDICT XVI, Address to the International Congress held on the Fortieth Anniversary of “*Dei Verbum*” (16 September 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 957; Angelus (6 November 2005): *Insegnamenti* I (2005), 759-760. *De Sacra Scriptura et Christologia* (1984): *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 9, Nos. 1208-1339; Unity and Diversity in the Church (11 April 1988): *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 11, Nos. 544-643; The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church (15 April 1993): *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 13, Nos. 2846-3150; The Jewish People and their Sacred Scriptures in the Christian Bible (24 May 2001): *Enchiridion Vaticanum* 20, Nos. 733-1150; The Bible and Morality. Biblical Roots of Christian Conduct (11 May 2008): Vatican City, 2008.

¹⁶⁹ *Verbum Domini*, 7.

¹⁷⁰ “The Church, conscious of her continuing journey under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, felt called to further reflection on the theme of God’s word, in order to review the implementation of the Council’s directives, and to confront the new challenges which the present time sets before Christian believers.” *Verbum Domini*, 8.

¹⁷¹ *Verbum Domini*, 10.

the Prologue of John as a scriptural hermeneutic.¹⁷² Characteristic of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's appreciation of the dynamic nature of revelation, in *Verbum Domini* we also find a review of the historical unfolding of revelation from the moment of creation throughout the canonization of the biblical texts. But again, the texts are not an ending in themselves.

While in the Church we greatly venerate the sacred Scriptures, the Christian faith is not a “religion of the book”: Christianity is the “religion of the word of God,” not of “a written and mute word, but of the incarnate and living Word”. Consequently the Scripture is to be proclaimed, heard, read, received and experienced as the word of God, in the stream of the apostolic Tradition from which it is inseparable.¹⁷³

This complements what Ratzinger wrote in his *Habilitationsschrift* about Bonaventure's belief that there was “a gradual, historical, progressive development in the understanding of Scripture which was in no way closed.”¹⁷⁴

While a detailed explication of *Verbum Domini* is beyond the scope of the present work, an overview of its structure will meet our needs in demonstrating continuity within Ratzinger/Benedict XVI. For instance, it was noted earlier that in his commentary on *Dei Verbum*, Ratzinger writes “it is God himself, the person of God, from whom revelation proceeds and to whom it returns.”¹⁷⁵ This schema is reflected precisely in the subject titles of *Verbum Domini*'s opening section, “The God Who Speaks.” Listed as they occur, its subsections are: *God in dialogue*, *The analogy of the word of God*, *The cosmic dimension of the word*, *The creation of man*, *The realism of the word*, *Christology of the word*, *The eschatological dimension of the word of God*, *The word of God and the Holy Spirit*, *Tradition and Scripture*, *Sacred Scripture, inspiration and truth*, *God the Father, source and origin of the word*. Following the opening section of “The God Who Speaks” is “Our Response to the God Who Speaks,” and “The Interpretation of Sacred Scripture in the Church.” Throughout, we see that the structure of *Verbum Domini*'s whole and its parts precisely echo Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's long-held Bonaventurian view that revelation is a living encounter that begins with a call—a call that, if answered, initiates a process of profound transformation within individuals, cultures, nations, and the entire human race. For Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, such was, is, and will be the nature of revelation until the *eschaton*, which brings us to the second examination of how the Franciscan General has influenced the first pontiff elected in the twenty-first century.

¹⁷² The link between John and Genesis is one that Benedict XVI calls to our attention and shows an inner logic in Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's views on creation and revelation, as explored also in his work on Bonaventure.

¹⁷³ *Verbum Domini*, 18.

¹⁷⁴ Ratzinger, *Theology of History*, 75.

¹⁷⁵ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 171.

Ratzinger's eschatology

Having examined Ratzinger's Bonaventurian view of *scripture as having a "historical character,"* we proceed to demonstrate Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's understanding of *history as being viewed hermeneutically, as the telling of an organic, unified drama (indeed, a love story) about a community in time that finds full meaning only in recognizing its movement toward a Christological completion.* As one may expect, these statements about scripture and history are related—there is dialogue between the theological, anthropological and, thus, pastoral implications of both. But these relations are not merely complementary in a positive sense. As true partners in dialogue, they provide the other a means for caution and critical correction. For instance, Ratzinger's view of revelation—which is initiated by divine speech and is then received or rejected by the human race—implies that there is a discourse occurring within the movement of history. If so, the question arises: Is this movement strictly a progressive one? For Christians, the answer must be no. The Christian cannot view worldly activity as the initiated means by which our final ends will be met—especially if by “activity” we mean human-induced progress.

A decade after his commentary on *Dei Verbum*, Joseph Ratzinger would make clear in his definitive work on eschatology that “the idea of a definitive intra-historical fulfillment fails to take into account the permanent openness of history and of human freedom, for which failure is always a possibility.”¹⁷⁶ He notes that “God's dialogue with us takes on flesh in Christ,” and that our eschatological hope is—and only is—our union “with the flesh of the resurrected one.”¹⁷⁷ These statements come early in *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*; indeed, within the work's introduction we meet Marx and Joachim of Fiore. And with the tone thus set,

¹⁷⁶ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 213. In *Ratzinger's Faith*, Rowland puts it this way: “Ratzinger thus rejects all philosophies of history which would find in the historical process some dynamic outside the theo-drama of God's offer of grace and the human response to this offer. He describes secular theories of historical progress, especially Marxist and liberal accounts, as examples of ideological optimism and a secularization of Christian hope.” 108. For a straightforward overview of *Eschatology*, see Nichols *Thought of Pope Benedict XVI*, 111-133.

¹⁷⁷ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, xxi. Ratzinger's approach in *Eschatology* has its supporters and detractors. Providing a balance of the two is Bradford E. Hinze, who writes that the work's “logic is forceful; it coheres with [Ratzinger's] dialogical anthropology, and it rightly affirms the continuous mediation of the Church's eschatological message through tradition and sacraments. It has weaknesses as well. History is portrayed as the occasion for a transcendent encounter through sacraments; that we also find in history anticipatory signs of the kingdom in work for social transformation and emancipation tends to be discounted. [Ratzinger] fails to account adequately for the political concerns that animate some prophetic and apocalyptic traditions, the political dimensions of Jesus' execution, and the positive moral and political functions served by the Utopian imagination and the memory of those who have suffered and died. [Ratzinger's] attempt to develop the classical heritage of eschatology through a dialogical anthropology is a positive contribution. But this work will neither quell questions about the possible dualistic and other-worldly *tendencies* supported by the received position, nor will it forestall further revisionist attempts.” From *Theological Studies*, 50 no 3 S 1989, 583-585.

Eschatology will again and again sound an alarm over the same dangers that Bonaventure had sought to correct seven centuries earlier. Ratzinger finds it meaningful that Joachimist thought prospered from the uncertainties and warfare of the thirteenth century, just as contemporary versions of these eschatological errors grew out of bloody decades of European warfare, genocide, and totalitarianism, as well as the giddy fervor of socialist thought. Ratzinger suggests that influences such as Marxism mirror the “primordial potency of Old Testament messianism, now gone anti-theistic.”¹⁷⁸ He is also disturbed by what he sees as the desire to escape from the elements of Christian proclamation related to judgment and damnation by retreating into Christianity’s promises of mercy and wondrous salvation. Ratzinger examines this tension especially around a contemporary desire to eject the Medieval, fearful understanding of *Dies Irae* (Day of wrath) and the nascent Christianity’s “hopeful” *maranatha* (Come, Lord).¹⁷⁹ Ratzinger’s observation of a desire for *escape* certainly resonates with his early encounter with de Lubac. Moreover, such a desire to flee the agonies of the present can be traced to the Calabrian abbot as well as the Franciscans who resuscitated and recreated his works. “The hope aroused by Joachim’s teaching was first taken up by a segment of the Franciscan Order, but subsequently underwent increasing secularization until eventually it was turned into political utopia.”¹⁸⁰

It remains to be shown how (especially within his eschatological thought) Ratzinger—both the theologian and priest—portrays and engages the evolution of Joachimism into the political theologies and mythologies of his own age, and the implications thereof. While a dedicated examination of Benedict XVI’s pastoral concerns will conclude this work, they are nonetheless so deeply intertwined within his eschatological thought that they must be noted as needed in this discussion. For instance, one finds that in *Eschatology*’s introductory statements, Ratzinger will—against a prevailing cultural mood at the time of his writing—reject an overly optimistic view of the early Christian expectation of an imminent second coming that is free from

¹⁷⁸ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 3.

¹⁷⁹ Ratzinger has this discussion as well in his *Introduction to Christianity*, 250.

¹⁸⁰ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 13. Further along, Ratzinger will observe that “the secularization of Christian eschatological thought has clearly sucked the sap out of faith awareness. People still have hopes for the historical process, but these impulses, now strangers to faith, have been transformed into a secular faith in progress,” 13. This observation is in agreement with one, noted earlier, that Reeves will make in comparing Joachimism and Marxism in her 1969 *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages*, 175. In a chapter on “Eschatology and Utopia” in *Ecumenism, & Politics; New Endeavors in Ecclesiology* (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1987), Ratzinger introduces the reader to Joachim, “who made the fateful connection between monastic utopia and chiliasm. Originally they had nothing to do with each other. Joachim reversed the pattern found in Irenaeus of Lyons and made the trinitarian God himself the principal of progress in history. ... Medieval and monkish as Joachim’s statements are when taken individually, structurally they open the way to Hegel and Marx: history is a forward-thrusting process, in which man actively works his salvation, which cannot be known through the bare logic of the present but is guaranteed by the logic of history,” 235.

the notion of judgment. One will also find a hefty amount of Pauline exhortations to the faithful (and the world) about the relationship between the Parousia and one's present existence. Moreover, Ratzinger will not discount (or fully affirm) what the Middle Ages added to the historical understanding of revelation regarding the Parousia. In a move reminiscent of Bonaventure's sifting of ideological and theological debris for nuggets of gold—ones that will keep the human person, willingly or not, within the cruciform realities of the Church Militant—Ratzinger notes:

[T]he question of the meaning of one's own death cannot be suppressed. To attempt to obliterate or to shelve the progressive deepening of that question in Christian reflection would be not a return to the source but a barbarization that would quickly recoil on its perpetrators. We have only to look at the complete impotence of Marxist thought when it comes to the topic of death to see how little chance there is of sidestepping that particular question. Thus, it is by an inner logic that the (medieval) doctrine of the "last things" grew up within the framework of eschatology. That doctrine remains indispensable for eschatology today. But the negative aspect of what happened is the real danger of reducing Christianity to individualism and otherworldliness. Both of these rob the Christian faith of its vital power. Here, in fact, lies the task of contemporary eschatology: to *marry perspectives*, so that *person and community, present and future, are seen in their unity*.¹⁸¹

Such criticisms of *individualism and otherworldliness* and the methodology of *marrying perspectives* are well-known from Ratzinger's explorations of Bonaventurian and Joachimist thought. But because this familiarity is too important for the reader of *Eschatology* to leave it unstated, Ratzinger briefly tells the abbot's story. In doing so he may then deconstruct contemporary eschatological understandings in light of Joachimist tendencies. The benefits of this become clear when, for instance, he warns the modern world that, as in ages past, the Christian message has again become too closely associated with a simple, spiritualist desire for the "salvation of the soul." He writes that "'well-being' had once meant a totality: the well-being of the world through which I too am happy. But now the soul's salvation is a fragment, and happiness another, and soon these two parts will be seen as natural enemies. The future salvation of my soul is the adversary of my present happiness."¹⁸² And so, for Ratzinger, theology has the pastoral responsibility to maintain the dialectical relationship between the hopes of what is to come and the often brutal realities of the here and now. This implies an eschatological understanding that maintains an appreciation of the theological infrastructure that has brought humanity to its present age, without dismissing new perspectives; indeed, Ratzinger's view of revelation, noted earlier, as

¹⁸¹ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12. Emphasis added.

¹⁸² Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 14.

having an historical dimension would preclude any such frozen devotion to the past. Rather, “we need to integrate the opposing elements in the light of the Christian center, to strike a fair balance and come to understand the real promise of faith more deeply.”¹⁸³ Thus we find Ratzinger again and again taking pains to explore the development of eschatological dogma not as a mere academic exercise, but to underscore their anthropological implications for the faithful, and for the world.

This approach is consistent with his theological pedigree. For instance, it may be argued that in his *Volk and Haus Gottes in Augustins Lehre von der Kirche* we find an early commitment to an eschatology that joins together all humanity; likewise, Ratzinger would again encounter within his readings of Bonaventure such themes of unity and the cruciform love of Christ.¹⁸⁴ And as did Bonaventure, Ratzinger will not tolerate eschatological tendencies that encourage an individualistic soul-searching, or a notion of salvation that excludes the sacrificial love that’s needed in the present. “The Christian idea of immortality is fellowship with other human beings. Man is not engaged in a solitary dialogue with God. He does not enter an eternity with God which belongs to him alone. The Christian dialogue with God is mediated by other human beings in a history where God speaks with men. ... [I]t takes place, therefore, within the ‘body of Christ.’”¹⁸⁵ And so, what could be called Ratzinger’s *primacy of cruciform love*—that is, an anthropology that participates in, derives from, and finds salvation only within Trinitarian *relationship*—is expressed by the future pope with urgency.

One can take part in this dialogue only by becoming a son with the Son, and this must mean in turn by becoming one with all those others who seek the Father. Only in that reconciliation whose name is Christ is the tongue of man loosened and the dialogue which is our life’s true spring initiated. In christology, then, theology and anthropology converge as two strains in a conversation, two forms of the search for love. In all human love there is an implicit appeal to eternity, even though love between two human beings can never satisfy that appeal. In Christ, God enters our search for love and its ultimate meaning, and does so in a human way. God’s dialogue with us becomes truly human, since God conducts his part as man. Conversely, the dialogue of human beings with each other now becomes a vehicle for the life everlasting, since in the communion of saints it is drawn up into the dialogue of

¹⁸³ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 15.

¹⁸⁴ Noted earlier, I. Delio, OFM, wrote about the role of the Crucified One in Bonaventure, and makes clear that “while Bonaventure links the image of the human person with the mystery of the Trinity and Christ, he does not fail to emphasize that to be conformed to Christ is a work of love. To be restored in the image of God for the Seraphic Doctor is to be restored in the image of the Crucified who is not only the perfect image of the Father but exemplar of the divine love of the Trinity. Love is the very essence of our relation to God because it is that which shapes us to the likeness of the Son. In the Trinity, love is expressed in the humble self-giving of the Father to the Son and the Spirit. In humanity, Bonaventure states that love is a union that results from the soul’s going out of itself to unite itself with another object. The Seraphic Doctor is convinced that a transformation takes place in every love and he sees the fundamental reason for this transformation in the fact of union. As he states: ‘Love transforms because love unites.’” Delio, “The role of the crucified,” pg. 13. Here Delio quotes Bonaventure’s *Lignum vitae* (*Lig. vit.*) 2, 7.

¹⁸⁵ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 159.

the Trinity itself. ... Eternal life does not isolate a person, but leads him out of isolation into true unity with his brothers and sisters and the whole of God's creation.¹⁸⁶

Such unity will also be the basis for Ratzinger to connect cruciform love to the Christian virtue of hope. In so doing, such sacrificial, outward-reaching love becomes the gravitational force that draws humanity to its proper end—collectively, in Christ. “Hope exists only where there is love. Since, in the crucified Christ, love prevailed and death fled vanquished, human hope can truly ‘spring eternal.’”¹⁸⁷ What is so telling about this characteristic statement by Ratzinger/Benedict XVI is where it occurs in *Eschatology*. It concludes what for other schools of thought might be a rather dry chapter on the “Word and Reality in Contemporary Appreciation.” Indeed, that such a pastoral, fully Augustinian and Bonaventurian conclusion showcases Ratzinger’s approach is made even more telling when one considers the material from which he had been building: an analysis and synthesization of the eschatological theses of German-speaking theologians such as Oscar Cullmann, Rudolf Bultmann, Jürgen Moltmann, and Johann Baptist Metz. As had been Bonaventure’s approach, Ratzinger undertakes what he sees as an objective overview of what these writers offer that has value versus what is, or may lead to, a danger for human souls. Of significant concern for Ratzinger are the interrelations between historical appropriations of revelation into an eschatological promise of a political end. Here, cruciform love is the counter-balance that keeps modern theologies from straying too close to a precipice from which Marx, and so many others, fell like lightning. Of particular importance here is

¹⁸⁶ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 159-60. Ratzinger is of course also concerned with matters of eschatological anthropologies having to do with issues such as the soul’s relation to body, which is of significance when teaching on dogmatic issues such as the resurrection of the body. Ratzinger’s handling of this particular issue also presents us with insights into his dialectical relationship with Thomas. It was noted earlier that in his memoirs, Ratzinger expressed his youthful discomfort with Thomas, “whose crystal-clear logic seemed to me to be too closed in on itself, too impersonal and ready-made,” Ratzinger, *Milestones*, 44. See n27. And yet in *Eschatology*, Ratzinger seeks to use concepts brought forth by Thomas, even if they had met resistance from the magisterium. In tracing *The Debate About the Risen Body in the History of Theology*, Ratzinger criticizes an Origenist view of a soul/body anthropology that distorted the question of the risen body into “the mathematical conundrum of the ideal form of the body, identified as the sphere.” Ratzinger notes that the Church rejected such a view because “the humanity of man had its identity erased in such a mathematically construed ideal world.” And yet, in that age, the Church had no vocabulary (or experiences) to defend “a human resurrection over against a mathematical one.” Ratzinger notes that “something rather similar happened in the early Middle Ages during the controversy about the presence of Christ in the Eucharistic species.” It was not until Thomas, and his “decisive step” of transforming Aristotelian thought for Christian use, that a solution to the Eucharistic questions could begin to find answers. Ratzinger will provide much detail on the matter, especially in how even Thomas was wary of his anthropology, one which (like Ratzinger’s proposed *Habilitationsschrift* topic of revelation) met with ecclesial displeasure, even if it has something to offer that was worthy of investigation. Of note to understanding Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, his conclusion of this discussion on Thomas’s solution is telling: “The synthesis which Thomas formulated with such brilliance in the conditions of his century must be re-created in the present, in such a way that the authentic concern of the great doctor are preserved. Thomas does not offer a recipe which can just be copied out time and again without further ado; nevertheless, his central idea remains as a signpost for us to follow. That idea consists of the notion of the unity of body and soul, a unity founded on the creative act and implying at once the abiding ordination of the soul to matter and the derivation of the identity of the body not from matter but from the person, the soul.” *Eschatology* 177-181.

¹⁸⁷ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 66.

Cullmann's view of history's progress, one that has many similarities with Joachim and Bonaventure (although in *Eschatology*, Ratzinger does not draw attention to this common ground). While Ratzinger will critique portions of Cullmann's work and conclusions, he nonetheless finds important concepts within the Lutheran's theology of history. First, against the Greek cyclical notion of time is Cullmann's Christian portrayal of linear, progressive time. "Because it is a line of ascent, it offers space in which the fulfillment of a divine plan may take place. In other words, salvation occurs within time, and the two are reciprocally related."¹⁸⁸ Moreover, Cullmann's view of Christian time places Christ at the very center, which both Bonaventure (with Joachim) and Ratzinger underscore as an absolute necessity. In Cullmann, "the midpoint of time lies no longer in the future, but in the past, in the presence of Jesus and his apostles."¹⁸⁹ Christ's entry into world/salvation history thus

[separated] "midpoint and end" and so allows for the Gospel proclamation "of the 'already' and 'not yet' the already realized midpoint and the still future end. This vital distinction was part and parcel of Jesus' own message. Compared to this central perception, by which Jesus shaped a new understanding of history and eschatology, the question of how long the intermediate age will last is very secondary. The problem of the expectation of an imminent end ceases, therefore, to be a pressing one."¹⁹⁰

For Ratzinger, Cullmann's perspective can be seen dousing the fires of imminent or realized eschatological worldviews that had swept through Europe in Joachimism—fires that still smolder in theo-political hotspots. Ratzinger notes happily that in Cullmann, "the 'existential' categories of faith, hope and love are brought into relation with salvation history's own constitutive dimensions. ... Salvation history is, therefore, not merely the past. It is also the present and the future, as we continue on our pilgrimage till the Lord's return."¹⁹¹

Over and against Cullmann's positive contributions to the theology of salvation history are what Ratzinger sees as the more dominate players in German language theology, such as Moltmann and Metz. Ratzinger will trace the evolution of thought within this family tree, beginning with Bultmann's "formalistic

¹⁸⁸ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 52. See also Josef Pieper, *The End of Time: A Meditation on the Philosophy of History*, trans. by Michael Bullock (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1980).

¹⁸⁹ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 53. Ratzinger notes that Cullmann uses the metaphor of D-Day and Victory Day to show that the decisive element of ongoing spiritual warfare has already taken place, with a mopping-up operation—although a seriously critical one—now underway.

¹⁹⁰ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 53.

¹⁹¹ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 54. Ratzinger will part ways with Cullmann in the use of Scripture, finding certain claims from Scripture to be "problematic"; Ratzinger will also find that Cullmann does not "pay sufficient attention to the limitations of the message of Scripture which is certainly not concerned with settling the philosophical issues of time and eternity," 55.

eschatology of decision” to Moltmann’s *Theology of Hope* to Metz’s “Political Theology.”¹⁹² Ratzinger particularly examines Moltmann, tracing his thought to a “new manifesto (of putting) Christianity into practice by transforming the world, using the criterion of hope . . . (from which came) Political Theology, the Theology of Revolution, Liberation Theology, Black Theology.”¹⁹³ In his now familiar Bonaventurian approach, Ratzinger will not entirely condemn these theologies; he indeed notes that within them “are here and there gleams of real gold.”¹⁹⁴ Still, Ratzinger finds such twentieth-century theological fads to bend the Christian proclamation of the Kingdom of God toward an unauthentic political, intra-worldly reality that can only “falsify both politics and theology.”¹⁹⁵ Because of the dangers these theologies pose to real people, Ratzinger will illustrate both their political and theological implications.

As for theology, Ratzinger objects that “the transformation of eschatology into political utopianism involves the emasculation of Christian hope.” His warning about the distortion of politics by political theologies resonates with his view of eschatology as having anthropological truth only when it keeps God and man in proper relation. When one appropriates the Kingdom of God to justify worldly political actions,

the mystery of God is invoked in order to justify political irrationalism, and so is reduced to being a pseudo-mystery. The transformation of human nature, and the world with it, is possible only as a miracle of grace. Where it is regarded as being, rather, the building-site where the house of politics is under construction, a rank impossibility is taken as the foundation for all human reality. The upshot can only be the violent self-destruction of nature and humanity alike.¹⁹⁶

Ratzinger does not mean to withhold our yearning for the Kingdom of God. Rather, he seeks to maintain a unique sphere for the state by defending it from overzealous and unorthodox theology. “The Kingdom of God is not a *political* norm of political activity, but it is a *moral* norm of that activity. Political activity stands

¹⁹² Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 57. Ratzinger is particularly troubled with Moltmann, who, like the Joachimists, is seen as placing too much emphasis on a future glory, by “opposing the facts of the present to the hope of the future.” Ratzinger then quotes Moltmann himself: “Doctrinal statements have their truth in a controllable correspondence with the reality which is at hand and can be experienced such. The propositions of hope found in the promise, by contrast, are necessarily in contradiction with the presently experienced reality. They are not the result of experience, but the condition of possibility for new experience. They are not meant to illumine the reality which is here, but that which is to come. . . . Their wish is to carry a torch before reality, not to carry reality’s train after her,” from *Theologie der Hoffnung* (Munich 1964), 12.

¹⁹³ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 58. As Prefect of the Congregation of the Faith, Ratzinger will be responsible for two major works responding to such theologies. They are the August 6, 1984 “Instructions on Certain Aspects of the ‘Theology of Liberation,’” and the March 22, 1986 “Instructions on Christian Freedom and Liberation.” Neither reference Joachim or Bonaventure.

¹⁹⁴ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 58. In a pastoral way reminiscent of Bonaventure, Ratzinger will find and applaud the Christian roots of worthy elements in such theologies in both of his corrective “Instructions.”

¹⁹⁵ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 58.

¹⁹⁶ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 59. The reference to “nature” appears to foreshadow the future pontiff’s ecological concerns.

under moral norms, even if morality as such is not politics nor politics as such morality. In other words, the message of the Kingdom of God is significant for political life not by way of eschatology but by way of political ethics.¹⁹⁷ Given the gruesome threats to the human person that Ratzinger sees (and had witnessed) in contemporary political theologies—which oppose orthodox theologies of history—he is clear that the “setting asunder of eschatology and politics is one of the fundamental tasks of Christian theology.”¹⁹⁸

Ratzinger makes a particularly telling series of comments that have as their center Bonaventure’s theology of history as well as the manner in which the Franciscan General developed it. Ratzinger, as if in discussion with any Joachimists, Marxists, or Liberation Theologians listening in, calls attention to the

importance of courage in evaluating the latest theories of one’s age with greater equanimity, noting in a historically informed way their role in that criticism which historical reason carries out in its own regard, and understanding their place in the movement of history as a whole. The obverse of this courage should be the modesty of not claiming to have just discovered what Christianity is really all about by dint of one’s own ingenuity. Out of such modesty something even more valuable could emerge: the kind of humility that submits to reality, not inventing Christian truth as a newly discovered “find,” but truly finding it in the sacramental community of the faith of all periods.¹⁹⁹

Here, Ratzinger again returns to Cullmann’s (and Bonaventure’s) view of Christ’s first and second coming as *midpoint and end*, which in itself would have been a correction of Joachim’s theology of history. Ratzinger

¹⁹⁷ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 59. Emphasis original. Ratzinger/Benedict XVI repeats this warning in discussing the recent history and current state of Europe in his 2005 collection of essays *Values in a Time of Upheaval*. “The Totalitarian model joined arms with a strictly materialistic and atheistic philosophy of history that understood history deterministically, as a process of progress via religious and liberal phases toward the absolute and definitive society; religion would be superseded as a remnant of the past and the functioning of material conditions would ensure universal human happiness. Its apparently scientific character conceals an intolerant dogmatism: the spirit is a product of matter, and morality is a product of circumstances that is to be defined and practiced in accordance with the goals of society. Everything that serves to bring nearer the happy final state of things is ‘moral.’ This is a complete reversal of those values that had built Europe. Even worse, it is a rupture with the entire moral tradition of mankind. There are no longer any values independent of the goals of progress, and everything can be permissible or even necessary—moral, in the new sense of the term—in a given situation. Even man can become a means to an end. It is not the individual that counts, but only the future, which is made into a cruel divinity with absolute power over everyone and everything.” Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Values in a Time of Upheaval*, trans. Brian McNeil (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company and San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 144. For more on the place of the state and of faith, or, rather, the Church, and the relationship thereof, see 67-70. Benedict XVI has been vocal in expressing such themes not just in writings, but as admonitions to fellow bishops. In his September, 2008 address to French Bishops, Benedict noted that “drawing attention to France’s Christian roots will permit each inhabitant of the country to come to a better understanding of his or her origin and destiny. Consequently, within the current institutional framework and with the utmost respect for the laws that are in force, it is necessary to find a new path, in order to interpret and live from day to day the fundamental values on which the Nation’s identity is built. Your President has intimated that this is possible. The social and political presuppositions of past mistrust or even hostility are gradually disappearing. The Church does not claim the prerogative of the State. She does not wish to take its place. She is a community built on certain convictions; she is aware of her responsibility for the whole and cannot remain closed within herself. She speaks freely, and enters into dialogue with equal freedom, in her desire to build up a shared freedom, so that, with due regard for their legitimate diversity in nature and function, the ethical forces of State and Church can work together to allow the individual to thrive, for the sake of building a harmonious society.” <http://www.zenit.org/article-23621?l=english>, accessed January 27, 2011. This exhortation is very much in contact with his 2005 encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*, which will be examined further along.

¹⁹⁸ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 59.

¹⁹⁹ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 60. It should also be noted that this passage could fit comfortably into Ratzinger’s commentary on *Dei Verbum* or any of his works on revelation. The unfolding of understanding is a process that results from an ever-deepening dialogue in history with what has been revealed.

proposes that because Christ's life, death and resurrection have not drawn the historical process to a close—that because we remain in an intermediate present reality too often replete with suffering—we are confronted by the very *skandalon* that Christ promised. This unexpected, post-Resurrection continuation of human suffering is not merely a mystery; it is a call for cruciform love of neighbor. Human suffering, then, can become a form of the divine invitation. For in being confronted with the duty of love and the reality of the Cross, we encounter Easter's transcending sin and death. Our attention, if authentically in search of truth, sees mystery within both suffering and the response of love—a mystery that unites the entire human family. As such, this embrace of suffering with love presents us with an uncompromising reality that maintains a proper anthropological positioning of mankind to God. For our ways are not God's ways (cf. Is. 55:8), and God's way includes the Incarnation and the Cross. This is consistent with Ratzinger's writings on revelation, in which he sought to maintain the role of sin, redemption, and, thus, the Cross. As he wrote in the *Commentary on Dei Verbum*, “the mystery of God is nothing other than Christ himself.”²⁰⁰

Later we find a further correlation between Ratzinger's comments on revelation and his understanding of eschatology. In writing on *Dei Verbum*, he observes that

the whole spiritual experience of the Church, its believing, praying and loving intercourse with the Lord and his word, causes our understanding of the original truth to grow and in the today of faith extracts anew from the yesterday of its historical origin what was meant for all time and yet can be understood only in the changing ages and in the particular way of each.²⁰¹

This notion of *spiritual* growth in (and because of) history is paralleled in Ratzinger's eschatology by the *inner-worldly* experiences of the Church—that is, the *loving intercourse with neighbor*. Thus, any denial of the spiritual dimensions found in this *already-and-not-yet* period of waiting leads an individual or a community to turn inward, and thus find themselves alienated from the true nature of the cosmos “and between human beings themselves.”²⁰² This infers an anthropology of isolation, which is a contradiction of the Trinitarian image of the living God—in whose image mankind is made.

²⁰⁰ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 171. See also n 134.

²⁰¹ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 186.

²⁰² Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 62. Elsewhere, Ratzinger will observe that “Europe is infected by a strange lack of desire for the future. Children, our future, are perceived as a threat to the present, as if they were taking something from our lives. Children are seen as a liability rather than a source of hope. There is a clear comparison between today's situation and the decline of the Roman Empire. In its final days, Rome still functioned as a great historical framework, but in practice it was already subsisting on models that were

Ratzinger approaches this primacy of cruciform *loving in the present* another way: The Kingdom of God “does not consist in a modification of our earthly circumstances—which, in any case, to judge from general human experience, might not mean much anyway. That Kingdom is found in those persons whom the finger of God has touched and who have allowed themselves to be made God’s sons and daughters.”²⁰³ And indeed, to *allow this making*, Ratzinger notes, is to open oneself to a wider community of fellow sons and daughters, one that grows with new members and in new circumstances as time unfolds. Entering into this community—this People of God—inferes the end of one’s former life, as indeed happens at baptism (cf. Rom. 6:4). It infers abandonment to God’s will. The example of abandonment that God Himself provides is the willing sacrifice of His Son—that is, death as a means to eternal life. Here Ratzinger will connect the promise of the Kingdom to the kenotic hymn of Philippians, “which sums up the whole of biblical theology.”²⁰⁴ Ratzinger provides the Isaian context of the hymn (cf. 45:23), as well as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Christ, to whom “every knee shall bend.” Yes, Christ is victorious. He has won pride of place among all nations. But what is important for Ratzinger—theologically and pastorally—is *the counter-intuitive manner of Christ’s victory*: “The thrilling part is that this triumph of Yahweh, whom all the nations now adore, took place in the utter humiliation of the Cross.”²⁰⁵ Where the Joachimists sought an age characterized by the Spirit—a Person of the Trinity that they appreciated for not stooping to the humiliation of humanity and had not been crucified—Ratzinger, more than Bonaventure could have imagined, has seen firsthand in Nazi and communist revolutionary slaughters where such singular optimism could lead.

In a latter section in *Eschatology*—dealing with the mystery of the *eschaton* and final judgment—Ratzinger returns to Joachim’s theories and theologies. In agreement with Reeves, Ratzinger portrays Joachim as a bridge from “the mingling of rational planning with suprarational goals, already observable in the Old Testament and in Judaism” to “the political history of Europe, where it will take the form of messianism through planning.”²⁰⁶ From this would come “Hegel’s logic of history and Marx’s historical scheme.”²⁰⁷

destined to fail. Its vital energy had been depleted.” Joseph Ratzinger and Marcello Pera, *Without Roots: The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam* (trans. Michael F. Moore, New York: Basic Books, 2006), 66-67.

²⁰³ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 62.

²⁰⁴ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 63.

²⁰⁵ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 64.

²⁰⁶ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 212.

Ratzinger reminds the reader that the patristic Church in its wisdom rejected chiliasm “through an effort to preserve biblical tradition in its proper form.” Similarly, the Church later rejected the Joachimist revival of “a definitive intra-historical fulfillment, an inner, intrinsic perfectibility of history.”²⁰⁸ In explaining the continued value of this rejection, Ratzinger is clear that in terms of human activity, “a planned salvation would be the salvation proper to a concentration camp and so the end of humanity.”²⁰⁹ In other words, the eschatological tensions of salvation history—as seen in Bonaventure’s Christ-as-center observations—become more than a theological nuance; they lead to an authentic Christian anthropology that is founded on a Christology and eschatology that, like revelation, brings new meaning and value to our evolving human history.

The world’s salvation rests on the transcending of the world in its worldly aspects. The risen Christ continues the living certainty that this process of the world’s self-transcendence, without which the world remains absurd, does not lead into the void. The Easter Jesus is our certainty that history can be lived in a positive way, and that our finite and feeble rational activity has a meaning. In this perspective, the “antichrist” is the unconditional enclosure of history within its own logic—the supreme antithesis to the Man with the opened side, of whom the author of the Apocalypse wrote: *Behold, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him* (cf. Rev. 1:7).²¹⁰

Thus, the *entirety of human activity* can be related to eschatology because the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (cf. Jn 1). This link between history and eschatological dogma has already been referred to via de Lubac’s (and Ratzinger’s) view of the final judgment being a communal event. This link is nothing less than the Christological intersection of eschatology with ecclesiology. By this is meant that the final judgment is, as von Balthasar might say, the final act of a drama in which every member of the Body of Christ has had their part to play. Ratzinger puts it this way:

[While] the decisive outcome of each person’s life is settled in death, at the close of their earthly activity . . . everyone is judged and reaches his definitive destiny after death. But his final place in the whole can be determined only when the total organism is complete, when the *passio* and *actio* of history have come to an end. And so the gathering together of the whole will be an act that leaves no person unaffected. Only at that juncture can the definitive general judgment take place, judging each man in terms of the whole and giving him that just place which he can only receive in conjunction with all the rest.²¹¹

²⁰⁷ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 212.

²⁰⁸ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 212-13.

²⁰⁹ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 213.

²¹⁰ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 214.

²¹¹ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 190. In *Introduction to Christianity*, Ratzinger beautifully uses the experience of love to relate judgment and human relation. “True love is excess of justice, excess that goes further than justice, but never destruction of justice, which must be and must remain the basic form of love” (249-50).

Or, as noted earlier as one of the elements that make up Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's genetic code, *history must be viewed hermeneutically as the telling of an organic, unified drama (indeed, a love story) about a community in time that finds full meaning only in recognizing its movement toward a Christological completion.* Given the pastoral implications of such theological statements, it is not surprising that within such dogmatic texts Ratzinger does not merely teach core eschatological dogmas. Rather, he preaches them. He is often at pains to express to the faithful, and to the world, what belief in Christ means for the human person—that is, what it means to be made in the image of that which is pure love and relation.

Man becomes God, not by making himself God, but by allowing himself to be made 'Son.' Here in this gesture of Jesus as the Son, and nowhere else, the Kingdom of God is realized. This is why the first are to be last, and the last first. This is the reason for the Beatitudes about those whose life-style is cruciform and therefore Son-like. This is why little ones are lauded, and called to become as children. In her theology of childhood, Thérèse of Lisieux rediscovered this mystery of the Son. Here is where equality with God happens, for God himself is Son, and as Son he is man. ... But if the answer to the question of the Kingdom is indeed the Son, then manifestly, the message of Jesus cannot make its peace with any eschatology of [merely] changed living conditions. Our departure-point is a person, not a program.²¹²

With Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's hermeneutic of personhood, we can better understand his teachings on eschatology, especially his language of salvation as an offering to the entirety of the human family. In the imagery of scripture, we are all—because of our shared humanity—invited to our own wedding banquet. We are wooed to a union with the One who has created us and has given us the freedom to reject His proposal of love. Thus, salvation is founded not just in relationship, but in the freedom of what relationship truly is. As such, man's freedom makes him an "acting subject" in this drama and we share the stage with God. This anthropology of relation means that man is not "one who would produce the Kingdom of God from his own resources," for in truth, "divinization, 'emancipation' as a sharer in the Kingdom of God, is not a product but a gift. Sheer love can only be so. It is because entry into the kingdom comes about through love that the Kingdom is hope . . . [and] hope exists only where there is love. Since, in the crucified Christ, love prevailed and death fled vanquished, human hope can truly 'spring eternal.'"²¹³

²¹² Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 64-65.

²¹³ Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 66.

Bonaventure, Benedict XVI, and an open-ended dialogue

Thus far, we have seen Bonaventure's innovative theology of history (and the methodology that produced it) take root in Ratzinger's view of revelation and eschatology. In both areas, we have seen our subject sift through various schools to discover thoughts found worthy of consideration or assimilation. This is, of course, precisely the approach taken by the Franciscan General. It has been argued that for both men, this approach is not only a means to seek truth, but is also an approach to encourage unity among the often squabbling children of God. Indeed, truth should unite those open to it. Likewise, for the young Ratzinger and the mature Benedict XVI, unity (that is, relationship) cannot exist without the presence of truth and love, and the cruciform demands thereof. Not surprisingly, these matters make up the title and topic of his third encyclical—with love being the topic of his first and a significant element of the second.²¹⁴ Indeed, as the Successor to Peter, Benedict XVI has amplified the defining statement in his *Habilitationschrift* that “a church that seeks peace in the future is nonetheless obliged to love in the present.”

In this final treatment, it will be demonstrated that the author's body of work—especially as pontiff—must not be read as that of a strict systematic theologian, especially of one any particular school. Rather, one must read him as a believing homilist who is also a theologian, one who seeks to make lasting impressions on souls with the use of targeted theological truths. Thus, his corpus puts forth much that is highly personal and sweeping in scope, even if it can be quite technical in structure. One reads Ratzinger/Benedict XVI best if one is comfortable encountering many open-ended constructs that may become the foundational statements for other commentators or homilists, as his words often invite further reflection. To understand this style, one must keep in mind that as a student Ratzinger's appreciation was not with the “crystal-clear logic” of Thomas Aquinas but with the personalism of the authors such as Buber and Augustine (and others). This provided the young Ratzinger a “spiritual experience that left an essential mark,” one that influenced his reading of Bonaventure, which then influenced his views on matters such as revelation and eschatology. The final questions to be examined then become: How is this “essential mark”

²¹⁴ This observation was also made by Rocco Buttiglione, president of Italy's Christian Democratic UDC party and a scholar in his own right. See “Telling the Truth in Love: Celebrating 5 Years of Pope Benedict XVI,” *The National Catholic Register*, April 26, 2010, <http://www.ncregister.com/daily-news/telling-the-truth-in-love/>, accessed February 1, 2011. Provisionally, this phrase is one echoed by the Ecumenical Patriarch himself in *Speaking the Truth in Love: Theological and Spiritual Exhortations of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew* (Fordham University Press; 2nd edition, January, 2011).

manifested in Benedict XVI's writings? And how can it help those interested in unpacking and analyzing his works? What are the overriding themes in Benedict XVI's developing texts and what are we to do with them? To answer these questions, the Holy Father's three encyclicals will be the subject of study, with other documents, homilies, audiences, and actions studied as needed.

Deus Caritas Est

Benedict XVI astonished the global news media and many Catholics with the topic and content of his first letter to the Church and the world, *Deus Caritas Est*. Preconceived notions of a dour German watchdog for ecclesial and moral orthodoxy collided with the encyclical's proclamation about what God has revealed to the human race about who He is—as well as the theological, anthropological, political, ecclesial, and personal implications of this news.²¹⁵ Angelo Cardinal Scola states upfront that the encyclical “is the very first time that the question of love has been confronted *in recto*—in direct and explicit form—in itself and for itself by an encyclical, by a pontifical document. ... Before this encyclical letter the papal Magisterium had never tackled the subject of love organically and head-on.”²¹⁶ It is fitting then, and also to be expected from its author, that *Deus Caritas Est* maintains the primacy of God's activity—his reaching out into creation—in the form of a proposal that begs a response. The resulting theological-anthropological interplay becomes evident throughout the text because it is made clear at the outset: “These words from the *First Letter of John* express with remarkable clarity the heart of the Christian faith: the Christian image of God and the resulting image of mankind and its destiny. ... Saint John also offers a kind of summary of the Christian life: ‘We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us.’”²¹⁷ As the text continues, one can frame Benedict XVI's first encyclical within early influences—Augustine, de Lubac, and most especially Bonaventure. The

²¹⁵ For one reaction to *Deus Caritas Est*, see Ruth Gledhill's “Passionate prose is a real revelation,” *The Sunday Times*, January 26, 2006, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article720239.ece>, accessed February 1, 2011. The opening itself demonstrates the Bonaventurian benefits of pastorally engaging theological issues with those expecting complete condemnation: “I started reading *Deus Caritas Est* expecting to be disappointed, chastised and generally laid low. An encyclical on love from a right-wing pope could only contain more damning condemnations of our materialistic, westernized society, more evocations of the ‘intrinsic evil’ of contraception, married priests, homosexuality. It would surely continue the Church's grand tradition of contempt for the erotic, a tradition that ensures a guilty hangover in any Roman Catholic who dares to indulge in lovemaking for any reason other than the primary one of reproduction. How wonderful it is to be proven wrong. The first half of the encyclical, the part on eros written by the new Pope himself, is a startling revelation, almost akin to reading one of George's Herbert's poems on love and God, or C.S. Lewis' *The Four Loves*. The language itself verges at times on the erotic.”

²¹⁶ Angelo Cardinal Scola, “The unity of love and the face of man: an invitation to read *Deus Caritas Est*,” *Communio*, 33, Fall 2008, 317.

²¹⁷ *Deus Caritas Est*, 1.

letter embraces historical growth, intimate union, and the love that makes all of this possible. Put simply, this is no neo-scholastic text. “Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction. [...] since God has first loved us (cf. *1 Jn* 4:10), love is now no longer a mere ‘command;’ it is the response to the gift of love with which God draws near to us.”²¹⁸ Of course, our subject’s theology and anthropology of love is not a sentimental one;²¹⁹ Christian love brings with it the Cross. And so in *Deus Caritas Est*, the pastor of the Universal Church follows in the footsteps of Bonaventure in providing a correction for the faithful (and any other interested readers) about what Christian proclamation means by *love*. A significant component of this correction is how the Holy Father contrasts and relates *eros* and *agape*. In doing so, he acknowledges criticism that some within the Church have vilified *eros*, the most common experience of human love.²²⁰ Contrary to that tendency, Benedict XVI roots *eros* “in man’s nature,”²²¹ which has substantial implications. D. C. Schindler puts it this way: “If *eros* is indeed rooted essentially in man’s nature, then to make *eros* fundamentally vicious would be to identify human nature with sin.”²²² The resulting anthropology (and theology) would be a problem, since man was made in God’s image. It is at such moments that we find Benedict XVI in need of a more extensive unpacking and examination than one’s initial reading may have suggested. There is always more to be considered, and such unpacking is what Schindler goes about doing as he attempts to demonstrate what Benedict XVI is up to. “Taking *eros* to be an *essentially* imperfect love would imply that human nature is *essentially* imperfect, that is, imperfect precisely as human nature, which can not be justified within a sound doctrine of creation.”²²³ In speaking of the intrinsic goodness of human nature, Schindler will conclude that

²¹⁸ *Deus Caritas Est*, 1.

²¹⁹ *Deus Caritas Est*, 17.

²²⁰ In *Deus Caritas Est* Benedict notes that “nowadays Christianity of the past is often criticized as having been opposed to the body; and it is quite true that tendencies of this sort have always existed. Yet the contemporary way of exalting the body is deceptive. *Eros*, reduced to pure “sex”, has become a commodity, a mere ‘thing’ to be bought and sold, or rather, man himself becomes a commodity. This is hardly man’s great ‘yes’ to the body ... [moreover] in philosophical and theological debate, [certain] distinctions have often been radicalized to the point of establishing a clear antithesis between them: descending, oblation love—*agape*—would be typically Christian, while on the other hand ascending, possessive or covetous love—*eros*—would be typical of non-Christian, and particularly Greek culture. Were this antithesis to be taken to extremes, the essence of Christianity would be detached from the vital relations fundamental to human existence, and would become a world apart, admirable perhaps, but decisively cut off from the complex fabric of human life,” 5-7.

²²¹ *Deus Caritas Est*, 11.

²²² D. C. Schindler, “The Redemption of *Eros*,” *Communio*, 33, Fall 2006, 381.

²²³ Schindler, “The Redemption of *Eros*,” 381.

one may maintain the “absolute significance of grace” while not insisting “on the imperfection of nature,”²²⁴ or the destruction of it. As will be seen further along, this grace-nature discussion resonates with the Holy Father’s third encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*. For now, it is helpful to consider Benedict XVI’s methodology in what Schindler calls “the redemption of *eros*,” which is the title of his essay. Of note about the pontiff’s methodology is his reliance on God’s inner-historical revelation to the Nation of Israel, which the pontiff uses to ground his discussion on the place of love in divine and human affairs. He uses two unified scriptural foundations to do so—which in itself tells us that the place of *eros* in human affairs has been revealed to us, awaiting (re-)discovery. First, Benedict XVI calls attention to the Old Testament’s “war on a warped and destructive” form of *eros*.²²⁵ Likewise, the Lord God of Israel loves his people “with a personal love. His love, moreover, is an elective love: among all the nations he chooses Israel and loves her—but he does so precisely with a view to healing the whole human race. God loves, and his love may certainly be called *eros*, yet it is also totally *agape*.”²²⁶ If God’s love is in some ways *eros*, then *eros* can not be essentially imperfect. By placing the Old Testament’s erotic sensibilities within the Christian conversation about grace, nature, faith and understanding, it becomes clear why Benedict XVI refuses to “rescue” *agape* from *eros* and abandon the latter to an earlier age of Moralism, with all its negativism, rules, and laws.²²⁷ And yet, in the other extreme—the worldly one—the appreciation of *eros* as mere pleasure leads to a debasement of the human person, “into a hatred of bodiliness”²²⁸ which violates Christian principals of the goodness of nature and, thus, a sound doctrine of creation.

Here we might ask: Is all this talk of love limited to the theological academy, or is there some meaning within this discussion that can be of service to the Church? In answering in the affirmative, a single

²²⁴ Schindler, 382.

²²⁵ *Deus Caritas Est*, 4.

²²⁶ *Deus Caritas Est*, 9.

²²⁷ Rowland writes on this matter: “According to Ratzinger, von Balthasar, and others in the *Communio* school, the practice of the faith in the pre-conciliar era was hampered by Moralism. . . . Ratzinger has also been acutely aware of the problems generated by Jansenism in the realm of sexuality. He has noted that towards the end of the nineteenth century French psychiatrists coined the phrase ‘*maladie catholique*’ to describe a ‘special neurosis that is the product of a warped pedagogy so exclusively concentrated on the Fourth and Sixth Commandments that the resultant complex with regard to authority and purity renders the individual incapable of free self-development.’ . . . Here Ratzinger has been strong in his criticism of the pre-conciliar manulaist tradition for its ‘decided rationalism’ which marginalized sacred Scripture and Christology. It ‘no longer allowed people to see the great message of liberation and freedom given to us in the encounter with Christ’ but rather stressed above all the negative aspect of so many prohibitions, so many ‘no’s’.” *Ratzinger’s Faith*, 67, 69.

²²⁸ *Deus Caritas Est*, 5.

example will be provided to demonstrate how one may find practical pastoral use in the Holy Father's often sweeping style. In *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict XVI reminds his reader that humans were not made to love an "ethical choice or a lofty idea," but rather to love a person. Here the pontiff cautions that in loving another, we fallen creatures cannot give without also receiving.

Man cannot live by oblation, descending love alone. He cannot always give, he must receive. Anyone who wishes to give love must also receive love as a gift. Certainly, as the Lord tells us, one can become a source from which rivers of living water flow (cf. Jn 7:37-38). Yet to become such a source, one must constantly drink anew from the original source, which is Jesus Christ, from whose pierced heart flows the love of God (cf. Jn 19:34).²²⁹

This may seem a simple truth, and it is a necessary one to maintain an anthropology in which the human person is naturally open to receive revelation.²³⁰ In addition, few Christians would argue that love can lead us to the Lord of love. But is this all that is being said? Or do the pontiff's words offer a direction for pastoral applications? They do indeed. In particular, we find a teaching that will be of use to any priest or counselor working with individuals who seek to love another for the sole purpose of "healing" or "fixing" or "saving" the other solely by one's own activity.²³¹ Thus, in offering a corrective theology for the place of *eros* and *agape* (which was the topic of this section of *Deus Caritas Est*) Benedict XVI also provides a place for theology in human lives. Here, his words can counsel couples, parents, spouses, and, indeed, anyone who suffers disappointment (or a deeper pathos) when their expectations of salvation derived from human activities (theirs or others) are not met—when human relationships fail.²³² Clearly, there is a dialogue occurring between what Benedict XVI treats in *Deus Caritas Est* and the present world of everyday people. Sharing the Holy Father's insights directly and simply with the faithful should be the work for many in the years to come.

²²⁹ *Deus Caritas Est*, 7.

²³⁰ *Deus Caritas Est*, 7.

²³¹ A study on such relational tendencies concludes: "Our results suggest that youngsters who grow up in families where there is a lack of clarity about roles and a lack of warm, supportive, and appropriate affective expression and where parents have mental health problems find themselves in a family context which promotes the development of codependency. Problematic family roles may engender a belief in personal powerlessness and the powerfulness of others. Difficulties with affective expression in the family of origin may engender difficulties in the open expression of feelings. Experiences with parents who have mental health problems may socialize children into care-taking roles early in their lives and so lead in adulthood to their excessive attempts to derive a sense of purpose through engaging in personally distressing care taking relationships which involve high levels of denial, rigidity, and attempts to control relationships." James Cullen and Alan Carr, "Codependency: an empirical study from a systemic perspective," *Contemporary Family Therapy*, vol. 21 (4) 1999, 505-526.

²³² A study of dating couples in America concluded that "at least part of the association between depression and loneliness appears to be explainable by poor relational quality." Chris Segrin, Heather L. Powell, Michelle Givertz and Anne Brackin, "Symptoms of depression, relational quality, and loneliness in dating relationships," *Personal Relationships*, 10 (2003), 36.

Moving beyond the strictly individual, Benedict XVI extrapolates his examination of love's place among human relations so that he may counsel the state. In so doing, he takes a direction in opposition to Plato's approach of pure rationality, which attempted to understand the nature of a working state so that he could define the human person. This nuance reminds us that for Benedict XVI, a person's place in a community is informed first by the experience of interpersonal relationship—by love. The overall theme of the second section of *Deus Caritas Est* is expressed in this passage:

Love—*caritas*—will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for the service of love. ... This love does not simply offer people material help, but refreshment and care for their souls, something which often is even more necessary than material support.²³³

Here we find the recurring theme of Benedict XVI—his placing of secular human activities into relation, and contrast, with those rooted in, or derived from, cruciform Christian charity. Thus, while the pontiff acknowledges the well-meaning intent and necessity of, say, man-made social charitable structures,²³⁴ he hopes to remind the reader that such efforts cannot erase one of the most unpleasant passages in Christian scripture—a passage spoken by Christ Himself. “The poor you will have with you always” (cf. Jn. 12:8, Mt. 26:11, Mk. 14:7). While Joachim is not noted specifically in this encyclical, part of what Benedict XVI critiques in *Deus Caritas Est* is the very desire that Bonaventure himself critiqued in Joachimist thought: the attempt to remove from our lives the Cross of Christ.²³⁵

Benedict continues to frame his own critique (on the modern understanding of love) with a discussion on the history of Christian service, or *diakonia*. Here we find another demonstration of revelation as an unfolding dialogue in time in the Christian impact on antiquity, with quotations from Tertullian and Ignatius of Antioch.²³⁶ The role of the *diakonia* becomes a model of Christian ethical living reaching out into

²³³ *Deus Caritas Est*, 28(b).

²³⁴ For instance, in § 29.

²³⁵ Noted earlier, I. Delio, OFM, does much the same in “The role of the crucified in Bonaventure’s doctrine of mystical union.” For instance, she notes that “becoming ‘crucified’ in love means willing to risk one’s life for the life of one’s sister or brother. To become crucified with the Crucified, as Bonaventure taught, is to live in the spirit of cruciform love which means to act with a wholehearted commitment of one’s life with a view toward the Other, finding oneself in the Other,” 19-20. Here Delio is exploring Bonaventure in a modern analysis about “feminine mysticism.” Benedict XVI, however, makes no distinction between male and female in his anthropology of love and the centrality of the Cross.

²³⁶ *Deus Caritas Est*, 22.

the world—much as monasticism becomes a model of Christian identity when the faithful must retreat.²³⁷ “For the Church, charity is not a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others, but is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being.”²³⁸ That is, as the Church arises out of the foundational revelation that the Triune God comes to the aid of His beloved—that Christ sacrifices, suffers and dies for His people—so members of the Church must do likewise, always in the now of the present.²³⁹ For Benedict XVI, this summarizes the message-response dialectic of revelation. Thus we find in *Deus Caritas Est* three central players that are often in Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s texts: revelation (God’s initiative and offering), love (or lack thereof, as the human response), and history (the stage on which the resulting drama unfolds).

To demonstrate this drama, Benedict XVI considers real-world matters, such as private and state-run social assistance programs, health care and the like.²⁴⁰ Such real examples are needed because, as Ratzinger noted in his dialogue with Jürgen Habermas, “a renewed ethical consciousness does not come about as the product of academic debates.”²⁴¹ One particular matter raised by Benedict XVI that speaks to the fundamental social and (especially) personal implications of *Deus Caritas Est* is the systems in place that care for the infirmed or dying. A growing concern by many familiar with such public or even private medical or nursing facilities is that human beings can easily be stripped of freedom and human dignity.²⁴² Here again, while Benedict XVI treats the matter in broad strokes, his concern is that “we are dealing with human beings,

²³⁷ Joseph Ratzinger and Marcello Pera., *Without Roots. The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam* (trans. Michael F. Moore, New York: Basic Books, 2006), 55.

²³⁸ *Deus Caritas Est*, 25.

²³⁹ “People of the present are sacrificed to the *moloch* of the future—a future whose effective realization is at best doubtful. One does not make the world more human by refusing to act humanely here and now. We contribute to a better world only by personally doing good now, with full commitment and wherever we have the opportunity,” *Deus Caritas Est*, 31(b).

²⁴⁰ While not discussed within, Benedict XVI spends much time in *Deus Caritas Est* on the roles and relations of the state and the Church. As already examined in the discussion on *Eschatology*, here, too, Benedict XVI keeps them in their separate spheres of history, but in dialogue with one another, in a sort of nature-grace duality. “The just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics,” 28. See also Rowland’s *Ratzinger Faith*, esp. 105-122, and Nichols, *Thought of Benedict XVI*, esp. 184. Rowland will summarize Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s message to the polis that “against all utopian projects, there needs to be an understanding that within human history no absolutely ideal situation will ever exist and a perfected ordering of freedom will never be able to be achieved because it is impossible to eradicate original sin and all of its consequences,” *Ratzinger’s Faith*, 116.

²⁴¹ Jürgen Habermas and Joseph Ratzinger, *The Dialectics of Secularization. On Reason and Religion* (trans. Brian McNeill, C.R.V., Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2005), 56.

²⁴² One study concludes, in part, that “research findings indicate that nursing home residents experienced higher levels of depression, hopelessness, and suicidal ideation than did the elderly living in the community. Research findings show that when placement in a nursing home is carried out, particular attention should be paid to the elderly, and he/she should be closely accompanied in order to prevent the appearance of negative feelings resulting from the social-environmental loss. ... [S]upportive intervention should also be considered for the elderly living in the community, by means of the various care-giving frameworks offered in the community.” Ron, Pnina “Depression, Hopelessness, and Suicidal Ideation Among the Elderly,” *Journal of Gerontological Social Work*, 43: 2 (2004), 97-116.

and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity.”²⁴³ For the Church, this means that it is called always and everywhere to be present incarnationally, so that, no matter what sacrifice one must undertake, one may comfort with love their neighbor in need. Whether as individuals or as parishes or dioceses, members of the Church must not equate rendering unto Caesar and rendering unto God, or to each other. *Deus Caritas Est* notes especially Mother Teresa,²⁴⁴ who shows us that charity by taxation is not the same as rolling up one’s sleeves and changing the soiled bedding of the dying, or simply listening to their fears and regrets. Both the patient and caregiver will be denied true human growth without the cruciform love that unites them. Thus, even when the most robust, well-meaning *eros* seeks social justice it must be perfected by the *agape* of Christ’s Cross. The implications for the Christian are again vast, but Benedict XVI will not, and cannot, fully explore them all; that is the work of others in their own particular historical and personal contexts. And so rather than an exacting to-do list of ethical conduct, we find an appropriate open-endedness, which—given the resulting and ongoing interaction of cruciform love and human history²⁴⁵—roots *Deus Caritas Est* very much in his *Habilitationschrift*.

Spe Salvi

Benedict XVI’s second encyclical, *Spe Salvi*, continues with similar methodologies and deepens many of the themes in *Deus Caritas Est*, while also opening up more terrain for future discovery. Of note is a single expression in *Spe Salvi* that sums up the entirety of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s Bonaventurian critique of modern thought: “It is not science that redeems man: man is redeemed by love.”²⁴⁶ In the second encyclical,

²⁴³ *Deus Caritas Est*, 31(a).

²⁴⁴ *Deus Caritas Est*, 18.

²⁴⁵ “Saint Paul, in his hymn to charity (cf. 1 Cor 13), teaches us that [service] is always more than activity alone: ‘If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but do not have love, I gain nothing’ (v.3). This hymn must be the *Magna Carta* of all ecclesial service; it sums up all the reflections on love which I have offered throughout this Encyclical Letter. ... My deep personal sharing in the needs and sufferings of others becomes a sharing of my very self with them. ... I must be personally present in my gift.” *Deus Caritas Est*, 34.

²⁴⁶ *Spe Salve*, 26. “This applies even in terms of this present world. When someone has the experience of a great love in his life, this is a moment of redemption which gives a new meaning to his life. But soon he will also realize that the love bestowed upon him cannot by itself resolve the question of his life. It is a love that remains fragile. It can be destroyed by death. The human being needs unconditional love. He needs the certainty which makes him say: neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 8:38-39). If this absolute love exists, with its absolute certainty, then—only then—is man redeemed, whatever should happen to him in his particular circumstances. This is what it means to say: Jesus Christ has redeemed us. Through him we have become certain of God, a God who is not a remote first cause of the world, because his only-begotten Son has become man and of him everyone can say: I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).” It is

we find the pontiff warning the contemporary state that it is only Christian hope that “change(s) society from within,” instructs reason in distinguishing between good and evil, and brings into being—into the present—the Kingdom of God.²⁴⁷ And to the modern purveyors of post-Enlightenment Joachimist idealism, he says “certainly we cannot ‘build’ the Kingdom of God by our own efforts—what we build will always be the kingdom of man with all the limitations proper to our human nature.”²⁴⁸ As with *Deus Caritas Est*, those limitations bring with them—and are brought into being by—the mystery of human suffering. “A society unable to accept its suffering members and incapable of helping to share their suffering and to bear it inwardly through ‘com-compassion’ is a cruel and inhuman society.”²⁴⁹

What is particularly telling in *Spe Salvi* is the Bonaventurian manner in which it unfolds. The Holy Father begins with the revealed word, the Pauline statement of hope—“*Spe Salvi facti sumus*” (Rom. 8:24)—and then expresses this hope as an offering. “Redemption is offered to us in the sense that we have been given hope, trustworthy hope.”²⁵⁰ The use of the passive tense amplifies the source of this offer—the transcendent Father. From here, Benedict XVI makes clear that because of this offering, this hope, “we can face our present: the present, even if it is arduous, can be lived and accepted if it leads towards a goal, if we can be sure of this goal, and if this goal is great enough to justify the effort of the journey.”²⁵¹ Thus, we begin with an invitation to which we may assent or decline. If we respond as did Abraham and the Blessed Mother, our journey is promised a goal, and our present, “even if it is arduous,” is promised a meaning. *Spe Salvi* continues with the human person’s questioning response to this proposal—that is, a *dialogue* with the One who has initiated and invited. “Now the question immediately arises: what sort of hope could ever justify the statement that, on the basis of that hope and simply because it exists, we are redeemed? And what sort of certainty is involved here?”²⁵² And so *Spe Salvi* begins in a conversational mode, which Benedict XVI uses to draw his reader to the true source of dialogue—an encounter with revelation. “Before turning our attention

the necessity of relation between faith and reason that will preoccupy much of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s engagement with the world. Of particular note is his address at the University of Regensburg (12 September, 2006). This is a matter explored by Rowland in detail in *Ratzinger’s Faith*, esp. 110.

²⁴⁷ *Spe Salve*, 4, 23, 2.

²⁴⁸ *Spe Salve*, 35.

²⁴⁹ *Spe Salve*, 38.

²⁵⁰ *Spe Salve*, 1.

²⁵¹ *Spe Salve*, 1. The use of the imagery of a journey may be founded on St. Bonaventure’s *Itinerarium*.

²⁵² *Spe Salve*, 1.

to . . . timely questions, we must listen a little more closely to the Bible's testimony on hope."²⁵³ Again, to know the nature of the divine offer, "we must listen." Benedict XVI then introduces *Hebrews*, *First Letter to Peter*, *Ephesians*, and *Thessalonians*—all letters written in dialogue with communities of the converted that struggled in their own particular here and now. In Paul, we see expressed the promise of Biblical hope contrasted with the false expectations of hope in pagan gods. Benedict XVI adopts this contrast as something of a restatement of the defining conclusion of his *Habilitationsschrift*: "Only when the future is certain as a positive reality does it become possible to live the present as well."²⁵⁴ And, as appears to be a trademark catechetical detour, Benedict XVI stresses this unitive tension of past and future by noting how revelation interacts with the human person, and humanity itself, within history. "The Gospel is not merely a communication of things that can be known—it is one that makes things happen and is life-changing. The dark door of time, of the future, has been thrown open. The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life."²⁵⁵

As with *Deus Caritas Est*, Benedict XVI provides an example from history of "what it means to have a real encounter with this God for the first time."²⁵⁶ We are introduced to Josephine Bakhita, a woman of Sudanese birth in the mid-nineteenth century. Like the story of Joseph at the close of the book of Genesis, Josephine was kidnapped by slave traders. This resulted in Josephine meeting

"a 'paron'[i.e., *master*] above all masters, the Lord of all lords, and that this Lord is good, goodness in person. She came to know that this Lord even knew her, that he had created her—that he actually loved her. She too was loved, and by none other than the supreme "Paron", before whom all other masters are themselves no more than lowly servants. She was known and loved and she was awaited. What is more, this master had himself accepted the destiny of being flogged and now he was waiting for her "at the Father's right hand". Now she had "hope" —no longer simply the modest hope of finding masters who would be less cruel, but the great hope: "I am definitively loved and whatever happens to me—I am awaited by this Love. And so my life is good."

And so a real person—one with whom modern Western audiences, especially those involved in issues of social justice, may identify—becomes a means for the Holy Father to communicate the encounter of the suffering human person with the promises of revelation. Thus, in this section alone we see the Holy Father

²⁵³ *Spe Salve*, 2.

²⁵⁴ *Spe Salve*, 2.

²⁵⁵ *Spe Salve*, 2.

²⁵⁶ *Spe Salve*, 3.

open a dialogue with the world by weaving history (that is, the story of a suffering person in a particular historical context), a woman's relations, the Cross, revelation, and love.²⁵⁷ In doing so, Benedict XVI demonstrates the Gospel engaged with unfolding world history and, as is so often the case, he provides a critique of any theological promise of inner-worldly, political liberation. He proposes

that the experience of the African slave-girl Bakhita was also the experience of many in the period of nascent Christianity who were beaten and condemned to slavery. *Christianity did not bring a message of social revolution* like that of the ill-fated Spartacus, whose struggle led to so much bloodshed. *Jesus was not Spartacus, he was not engaged in a fight for political liberation* like Barabbas or Bar-Kochba. Jesus, who himself died on the Cross, brought something totally different: *an encounter with the Lord of all lords, an encounter with the living God* and thus an encounter with a hope stronger than the sufferings of slavery, a hope which therefore transformed life and the world from within.²⁵⁸

The pontiff will associate the sacramental relation of grace and nature with such experiences of encounter-transformation, which we saw in *Deus Caritas Est* and will see in *Caritas in Veritate*. In speaking of the evolving understanding of slaves in pre- and post-Christian antiquity, he notes “by virtue of their Baptism they had been reborn, they had been given to drink of the same Spirit and they received the Body of the Lord together, alongside one another. Even if external structures remained unaltered, this changed society from within.”²⁵⁹

The implications of this “faith-based hope,” as Benedict XVI refers in a section title of *Spe Salvi*, is evidenced throughout history, especially by one particular type of Christian phenomenon—the community that renounces and withdraws. “Above all, it is seen in the great acts of renunciation, from the monks of ancient times to Saint Francis of Assisi and those of our contemporaries who enter modern religious Institutes and movements and leave everything for love of Christ, so as to bring to men and women the faith and love of Christ, and to help those who are suffering in body and spirit.”²⁶⁰ In wide strokes the pastor of the Church offers past modes of ecclesial existence as models for what may come. In borrowing a term from

²⁵⁷ We see this primacy of cruciform love throughout the pastoral writings and talks of Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, as in this 2008 General Audience on St. Paul, in which the Holy Father examines the place of the Cross in human affairs. “We too must enter into this ‘ministry of reconciliation’ that always implies relinquishing one's superiority and opting for the folly of love. St. Paul sacrificed his own life, devoting himself without reserve to the ministry of reconciliation, of the Cross, which is salvation for us all. And we too must be able to do this: may we be able to find our strength precisely in the humility of love and our wisdom in the weakness of renunciation, entering thereby into God's power. We must all model our lives on this true wisdom: we must not live for ourselves but must live in faith in that God of whom we can all say: ‘he loved me and gave himself for me.’” *General Audience, St. Paul: The Importance of Christology: the Theology of the Cross*, 29 October 2008, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2008/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20081029_en.html, accessed February 10, 2011.

²⁵⁸ *Spe Salve*, 4. (Emphasis added.)

²⁵⁹ *Spe Salve*, 4.

²⁶⁰ *Spe Salve*, 8.

Arnold Toynbee, more agile, smaller “creative minorities”²⁶¹ may replace geographically based parishes or dioceses. Such “creative” communities, by their actions and their simple sacramental presence, have and will again baptize cultures. Thus, Benedict XVI here again answers the question, “is Christian hope individualistic?” (cf. 3, 42, 48, 54) with a resounding *nein*. In doing so he introduces de Lubac’s *Catholicism*, in which the Cardinal-theologian rejected a notion of a mere private relationship with Christ. Benedict XVI notes that by “drawing upon the vast range of patristic theology, de Lubac was able to demonstrate that salvation has always been considered a ‘social’ reality.”²⁶² Benedict XVI then refers to St. Augustine’s *Letter to Proba*, from which (and in tandem with Buber) we discern that “real life, towards which we try to reach out again and again, is linked to a lived union with a ‘people’, and for each individual it can only be attained within this ‘we’. It presupposes that we escape from the prison of our ‘I’, because only in the openness of this

²⁶¹ In an interview with Peter Seewald, Ratzinger noted that the Church “will have to form new ways of pilgrim fellowship; communities will have to shape each other more intensely by supporting each other and living in the faith. ... Christians must therefore really support one another. And here there are, in fact, already other forms, “movements” of various kinds, which help to form pilgrim communities. ... In other words, if society in its totality is no longer a Christian environment, just as it was not in the first four or five centuries, the Church herself must form cells in which mutual support and a common journey, and thus the great milieu of the Church in miniature, can be experienced and put into practice. ... It will be scarcely possible to keep up the entire parish system as it now exists, a system that, by the way, is of rather recent date. We will have to learn how to come together, and that will be an enrichment. Just as almost always in history there are also groups that are held together through a specific chrism, through the personality of a founder, through a specific spiritual way. ... Anyone who looks at what is happening can find an astonishing diversity of Christian forms of life today, in which the Church of tomorrow is already very clearly among us.” *Salt of the Earth*, trans. Adrian Walker (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1996), 264-6. Cardinal Ratzinger borrows Arnold Toynbee’s concept of creative minorities in his dialogue with Marcello Pera in which the two discuss the current state and fate of Europe, *Without Roots. The West, Relativism, Christianity, Islam* trans. Michael F. Moore (New York: Basic Books, 2006). In this work, Ratzinger gives credit to Toynbee for noting “that the fate of a society always depends on its creative minorities,” to which he adds, “Christian believers should look upon themselves as just such a creative minority, and help Europe to reclaim what is best in its heritage and to thereby place itself at the service of all humankind,” 80. Toynbee’s creative minorities are found in his work *A Study of History; Abridgement of Volumes I-VI*, by D.C. Somervell (Oxford University Press: New York, 1946, 1974). Toynbee presupposes that “the intelligible units of historical study are not nations or periods but ‘societies,’” 567. Since nations and periods rise and fall, Toynbee’s work examines such phenomena by examining societal motions within human history. He characterizes one such motion as “Withdrawal and Return.” This motion occurs among “creative individuals” (as varied as Plato, St. Paul, St. Benedict, and Machiavelli) and within sub-societies of “creative minorities.” A creative individual will “withdraw for purpose of his personal enlightenment (and) return for the task of enlightening his fellow men” (577). For sub-societal creative minorities, their contribution “to the growth of the societies to which they belong is preceded by a period in which they are markedly withdrawn from the general life of their society,” (577). Toynbee gives as examples of creative minorities “the Athenian withdrawal in the eighth, seventh and sixth centuries B.C. and the Italian withdrawal in the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in the Christian Era” (233). Toynbee writes that in both cases the self-segregating minority devoted its energies to the task of finding some solution for a problem that confronted the whole society. And in both cases the creative minority returned in the fullness of time, when its work of creation was accomplished, to the society that it had temporarily abandoned, and set its impress upon the whole body social (233-4). Ratzinger will make similar comments about the nature and size of the Church, and the place of creative minorities within it and the world, in the following: with Peter Seewald, *God and the World*, trans. Henry Taylor (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2000), 433-4; his interview with Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report*, trans. Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1985), 115-6; *Church, Ecumenism, & Politics; New Endeavors in Ecclesiology*, trans. Michael J. Miller, et. al., (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 1987), 233-4; *New Outpourings of the Spirit*, trans. Michael J. Miller and Henry Taylor, (Ignatius Press: San Francisco, 2006), 41-83. In *Outpourings*, Ratzinger notes that “apostolic movements appear in history in forms that are ever new—necessarily so, because they are the Holy Spirit’s answer to the changing circumstance in which the Church is living” (53).

²⁶² *Spe Salve*, 14.

universal subject does our gaze open out to the source of joy, to love itself—to God.”²⁶³ Such an openness to that which is outside of us is reminiscent of Bonaventure, and indeed the need to maintain community was certainly put in practice by the Franciscan General in his repairing the rifts of his order.

In *Spe Salvi*, this openness to authentic relationship may offer a way out of current, individualistic conceptions of Christianity, whether within Protestant or Catholic circles, East or West. Benedict XVI delves into the matter with a far-reaching discussion of *the transformation of Christian faith-hope in the modern age*. Reminiscent of his work on eschatology (cf. pg 56), he asks (with a reference to de Lubac) “how could the idea have developed that Jesus' message is narrowly individualistic and aimed only at each person singly? How did we arrive at this interpretation of the ‘salvation of the soul’ as a flight from responsibility for the whole, and how did we come to conceive the Christian project as a selfish search for salvation which rejects the idea of serving others?”²⁶⁴ To answer this, the pontiff begins in history, at the foundations of the modern age. Here he deconstructs the development of a new way of thought that has often opposed itself to revelation.

The new correlation of experiment and method . . . enables man to arrive at an interpretation of nature in conformity with its laws and thus finally to achieve “the triumph of art over nature” (*victoria cursus artis super naturam*). The novelty—according to [Francis] Bacon's vision—lies in a new correlation between science and praxis. This is also given a theological application: the new correlation between science and praxis would mean that the dominion over creation—given to man by God and lost through original sin—would be reestablished. Anyone who reads and reflects on these statements attentively will recognize that a disturbing step has been taken: up to that time, the recovery of what man had lost through the expulsion from Paradise was expected from faith in Jesus Christ: herein lay “redemption”. Now, this “redemption”, the restoration of the lost “Paradise” is no longer expected from faith, but from the newly discovered link between science and praxis. It is not that faith is simply denied; rather it is displaced onto another level—that of purely private and other-worldly affairs—and at the same time it becomes somehow irrelevant for the world. This programmatic vision has determined the trajectory of modern times and it also shapes the present-day crisis of faith which is essentially a crisis of Christian hope. Thus hope too, in Bacon, acquires a new form. Now it is called: faith in progress.²⁶⁵

The Holy Father will later note that Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Engels, and Marx are Bacon's successors in seeking the politicization of faith through man's ingenuity. Thus, such thinkers become for Benedict XVI the architects of a certainty in human progress that developed out of a scientifically conceived notion of politics.

²⁶³ Benedict XVI, *Spe Salve*, 14. In *Outpourings*, Ratzinger puts it this way: “We cannot allow an elite Christianity to develop, no matter what the criteria may be for selecting such an elite group,” to which the pastor adds that “the difference between a friend and a brother is this: a friend is someone I have sought; a brother is given to me,” 81-82.

²⁶⁴ *Spe Salve*, 16.

²⁶⁵ *Spe Salve*, 16-7.

They become the Joachimists of the Enlightenment. In response, Benedict XVI notes that missing within their thought, especially in the culminating works of Marx, is “that man always remains man. [Marx] forgot man and he forgot man's freedom. He forgot that freedom always remains also freedom for evil. He thought that once the economy had been put right, everything would automatically be put right.”²⁶⁶ Again, this observation of the denial of Original Sin is meant not purely as judgment. Rather, it is a warning to Western Civilization of the threat that comes when ignoring shared Christian roots.²⁶⁷

Yes indeed, reason is God's great gift to man, and the victory of reason over unreason is also a goal of the Christian life. But when does reason truly triumph? When it is detached from God? When it has become blind to God? Is the reason behind action and capacity for action the whole of reason? If progress, in order to be progress, needs moral growth on the part of humanity, then the reason behind action and capacity for action is likewise urgently in need of integration through reason's openness to the saving forces of faith, to the differentiation between good and evil. Only thus does reason become truly human. ... Reason therefore needs faith if it is to be completely itself: reason and faith need one another in order to fulfill their true nature and their mission.”²⁶⁸

Here *Spe Salvi* offers the ancient Catholic faith-reason relationship as a correction within a larger critical retrieval of hope in the modern world. This correction has two observations. First that “the right state of human affairs, the moral well-being of the world can never be guaranteed simply through structures alone, however good they are,” and, second, “since man always remains free and since his freedom is always fragile, the kingdom of good will never be definitively established in this world.”²⁶⁹

It is here, precisely at the problem, at the crises of an age losing hope, that Benedict XVI provides the Christian solution: *love*. It is here that he notes that love, not science, redeems; it is here that he argues for love by presenting the reader with their own (that is, historical) personal experiences of love. “When someone has the experience of a great love in his life, this is a moment of ‘redemption’ which gives a new meaning to

²⁶⁶ *Spe Salve*, 21.

²⁶⁷ Here the work of Christopher Dawson is in significant accord with Benedict XVI.

²⁶⁸ *Spe Salve*, 23.

²⁶⁹ *Spe Salve*, 24. The full text adds to his meaning. “a) The right state of human affairs, the moral well-being of the world can never be guaranteed simply through structures alone, however good they are. Such structures are not only important, but necessary; yet they cannot and must not marginalize human freedom. Even the best structures function only when the community is animated by convictions capable of motivating people to assent freely to the social order. Freedom requires conviction; conviction does not exist on its own, but must always be gained anew by the community. b) Since man always remains free and since his freedom is always fragile, the kingdom of good will never be definitively established in this world. Anyone who promises the better world that is guaranteed to last for ever is making a false promise; he is overlooking human freedom. Freedom must constantly be won over for the cause of good. Free assent to the good never exists simply by itself. If there were structures which could irrevocably guarantee a determined—good—state of the world, man's freedom would be denied, and hence they would not be good structures at all.”

his life.”²⁷⁰ The pontiff notes, however, that human love never truly satiate the depths of human desire. But such a fulfillment does exist—in the God that is love. Thus, many of the themes of *Deus Caritas Est* reappear: *eros* embraced and fulfilled by *agape*, an anthropology of relation, the reality that hope in the future requires one to love in the present. “Life in its true sense is not something we have exclusively in or from ourselves: it is a relationship. And life in its totality is a relationship with him who is the source of life. If we are in relation with him who does not die, who is Life itself and Love itself, then we are in life. Then we ‘live’.”²⁷¹

These Bonaventurian themes coalesce into two ways of being—two “‘settings’ of learning and practicing hope.” These are prayer and the duality of action and suffering. In describing prayer, Benedict XVI again refers to St. Augustine, who saw a special relation between prayer and hope. The pontiff concludes that “to pray is not to step outside history and withdraw to our own private corner of happiness. When we pray properly, we undergo a process of inner purification which opens us up to God and thus to our fellow human beings as well.”²⁷² In his discussion on action and suffering, Benedict XVI notes that an honest analysis of our personal histories—our own sins—could leave us hopeless. This is why “only the great certitude of hope that my own life and history in general, despite all failures, are held firm by the indestructible power of Love, and that this gives them their meaning and importance, only this kind of hope can then give the courage to act and to persevere”²⁷³—and to love in the present. Noted earlier, all this has eschatological significance.

We cannot—to use the classical expression—“merit” Heaven through our works. Heaven is always more than we could merit, just as being loved is never something “merited”, but always a gift. However, even when we are fully aware that Heaven far exceeds what we can merit, it will always be true that our behaviour is not indifferent before God and therefore is not indifferent for the unfolding of history. We can open ourselves and the world and allow God to enter: we can open ourselves to truth, to love, to what is good.²⁷⁴

Likewise, such eschatological realities affect the present, because they inform us of how Christ’s punctuation of human history leaves the present in a state that is not perfected, but is elevated nonetheless. Hence, we find Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s continual admonition to Christians—as those who must pick up one’s cross—to remain open to the sufferings of the now, in hope.

²⁷⁰ *Spe Salve*, 26.

²⁷¹ *Spe Salve*, 27.

²⁷² *Spe Salve*, 33.

²⁷³ *Spe Salve*, 35.

²⁷⁴ *Spe Salve*, 35.

***Caritas in Veritate*, in words and deed**

With a continuity that seems not at all separated by time or title, Benedict XVI's third encyclical, *Caritas in Veritate*, opens where *Spe Salvi* leaves off: "Charity in truth, to which Jesus Christ bore witness by his earthly life and especially by his death and resurrection, is the principal driving force behind the authentic development of every person and of all humanity."²⁷⁵ What follows is a primer of the major themes within the previous encyclicals, which are now viewed through a related discussion of truth—"the light that gives meaning and value to charity."²⁷⁶ What Benedict XVI means by expressing the subsistence of *caritas* within truth is very much the work of *Caritas in Veritate*. While a full examination of this encyclical exceeds the scope of the present work, two points must be made to demonstrate how this third encyclical grows from and adds to Benedict XVI's Bonaventurian dialogue with his Church and the world.

First, the entirety of *Caritas in Veritate* presupposes a theology of a dynamic history—what de Lubac portrayed as a world in which "the whole universe grows to maturity . . . the world has a purpose and consequently a meaning, that is to say, both direction and significance."²⁷⁷ This historical perspective makes it possible for *Caritas in Veritate* to be in dialogue not just with revelation, but also with ecclesial and world history. This allows Benedict XVI to explore with greater depth the wider, worldly ramifications of cruciform love that were presented in *Deus Caritas Est* and *Spe Salvi*. In doing so, *Caritas in Veritate* becomes very much a planning and catechetical document—and, once again, a model for future writers—for what might be called *sacramental social doctrine*. This term is not used within the encyclical, but it does describe the interplay of revelation and history, as well as grace and human activity, that *Caritas in Veritate* often suggests. In proposing this term, it is offered that Benedict XVI's exhortations about the primacy, place, and need of cruciform, salvific love—individual and communal—have a particular relation and function within modern social, political, and economic contexts. We can see a model of this function in Paul VI's contribution of the term *integral human development*, which Benedict will use and expand in *Caritas in Veritate*. For Paul VI, this new term was an attempt to restore an authentic human (and communal) anthropology to the modern, nonreligious

²⁷⁵ *Caritas in Veritate*, 1.

²⁷⁶ *Caritas in Veritate*, 3.

²⁷⁷ De Lubac, *Catholicism*, 142.

science of anthropology²⁷⁸—that is, the restoration to world activity of the revealed truths about body and soul, freedom and sin, nature and grace, humanity and love. In picking up his predecessor’s use of the term integral human development, Benedict XVI is able to offer a unique structuring of social doctrines with the help of his earlier writings, as well as with Bonaventurian notions of revelation and history. Moreover, Benedict XVI’s understanding of human development relates to the second aspect of *Caritas in Veritate* to be underscored herein: The encyclical is very much an attempt to heal division within the Church—especially ideological battles along worldly, political, and philosophical boundaries.

As for the first item, the dimension of historical dialogue, *Caritas in Veritate* refers very little to scripture as compared to *Deus Caritas Est* and *Spe Salvi*. Rather, its primary revelatory partner in dialogue is tradition, in the form of Church documents, particularly those issued since the opening of the modern era, and especially from the time of the Second Vatican Council.²⁷⁹ The pontiff synthesizes these documents to allow them to speak anew to the twenty-first century. We are provided with a “fresh rereading” of Paul VI’s 1967 *Populorum Progressio*, one that parallels Benedict XVI’s earlier writings on revelation and eschatology. For instance, Benedict XVI tells us that *Populorum Progressio* must be read within “the *Tradition of the apostolic faith*, a patrimony both ancient and new, outside of which *Populorum Progressio* would be a document without roots—and issues concerning human and social development would be reduced to merely sociological data.”²⁸⁰ This becomes true about all individual social doctrines; they must be placed within the living hermeneutic of revelation and Church teachings to reach their full potential. Benedict XVI writes that “it is one thing to draw attention to the particular characteristics of one Encyclical or another, of the teaching of one Pope or another, but quite another to lose sight of the coherence of the overall doctrinal *corpus*.” For Benedict, such

²⁷⁸ *Caritas in Veritate*, 11.

²⁷⁹ For example, *Caritas in Veritate* is in conversation with: Leo XIII’s *Rerum Novarum* (15 May 1891); John XXIII’s *Pacem in Terris* (11 April 1963); Paul VI’s *Address for the Day of Development* (23 August 1968), *Populorum Progressio* (26 March 1967), *Humanae Vitae* (25 July, 1968), *Octogesima Adveniens* (14 May 1971); John Paul II’s *Laborem Exercens* (14 September 1981), *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (30 December 1987), *Centesimus Annus* (1 May 1991), *Evangelium Vitae* (25 March 1995), *Fides et Ratio* (14 September 1998); Second Vatican Ecumenical Council’s *Gaudium et Spes* (December 7, 1965); Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction on Christian Freedom and Liberation *Libertatis Consuetudo* (22 March 1987), and the Instruction on certain bioethical questions *Dignitas Personae* (8 September 2008); as well as Benedict XVI’s own *Address at the Inauguration of the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America and the Caribbean* (13 May 2007), *Address to the participants at the International Congress promoted by the Pontifical Lateran University on the fortieth anniversary of Paul VI’s Encyclical “Humanae Vitae”* (10 May 2008), *Address to the General Assembly of the United Nations Organization*, (18 April 2008) and, of course, *Deus Caritas Est* and *Spe Salvi*.

²⁸⁰ *Caritas in Veritate*, 10. Emphasis original.

coherence is a way of viewing Church teachings as being graced by, and developing outward from, the sacramental life of the Church. Benedict XVI tells us that

coherence does not mean a closed system: on the contrary, it means dynamic faithfulness to a light received. The Church's social doctrine illuminates with an unchanging light the new problems that are constantly emerging. This safeguards the permanent and historical character of the doctrinal “patrimony” which, with its specific characteristics, is part and parcel of the Church's ever-living Tradition. Social doctrine is built on the foundation handed on by the Apostles to the Fathers of the Church, and then received and further explored by the great Christian doctors.²⁸¹

By maintaining *Populorum Progressio* within Paul VI's (and the Church's) “overall magisterium,” Benedict XVI, like Bonaventure, places this and other documents in dialogue with the contemporary, pressing, and ongoing “danger constituted by utopian and ideological visions.”²⁸²

But, as the Holy Father reminds us, there is an opposing extreme to avoid: the demotion of human activity (especially for good) that can come from the denial of historical developments. As an incarnational faith, Church doctrine must engage the ideas of the world in whatever age it finds itself. A particular example of this—of the Church “adapting to the times”—is the already noted appropriation by Benedict XVI (as well as John Paul II) of Paul VI's *integral human development*. As noted, the formation of this term was meant to sprinkle with holy water the 1960s' sociological and political understandings of progress and human development. In *Caritas in Veritate*, this understanding allows Benedict XVI to offer analyses of human constructs and relations, many of which were introduced briefly in *Deus Caritas Est* and *Spe Salvi*. While these analyses are deepened in the third encyclical, they remain open-ended outlines that can thus be the subjects for their own study or preaching. What is important for the present conversation is the Holy Father's methodology, in which he places revelation (again, tradition more so than scripture) in contact with human history. In doing so, Benedict XVI hopes to shift human thought to a higher orbit by offering biblical theologies and anthropologies. And so he shows us what revelation looks like—and what it can accomplish—when it converses with such matters as globalization, migration, banking, commerce, and workers' rights. The resulting social doctrines become more than mere plans for social stability and equality. Rather, these matters may be said to become enhanced *sacramentally*—that is, as the meeting of human nature and self-revealing

²⁸¹ *Caritas in Veritate*, 12.

²⁸² *Caritas in Veritate*, 18. Emphasis original.

grace. One example will suffice to demonstrate how *Caritas in Veritate* infuses the Triune God of love into the troubled efforts of fallen man. This passage examines a domino effect of sin and isolation within ongoing human activity, and finds solutions by fostering the Christian understanding of charity.

From the social point of view, systems of protection and welfare, already present in many countries in Paul VI's day, are finding it hard and could find it even harder in the future to pursue their goals of true social justice in today's profoundly changed environment. The global market has stimulated first and foremost, on the part of rich countries, a search for areas in which to outsource production at low cost with a view to reducing the prices of many goods, increasing purchasing power and thus accelerating the rate of development in terms of greater availability of consumer goods for the domestic market. Consequently, the market has prompted new forms of competition between States as they seek to attract foreign businesses to set up production centres, by means of a variety of instruments, including favourable fiscal regimes and deregulation of the labour market. These processes have led to a *downsizing of social security systems* as the price to be paid for seeking greater competitive advantage in the global market, with consequent grave danger for the rights of workers, for fundamental human rights and for the solidarity associated with the traditional forms of the social State. Systems of social security can lose the capacity to carry out their task, both in emerging countries and in those that were among the earliest to develop, as well as in poor countries. Here budgetary policies, with cuts in social spending often made under pressure from international financial institutions, can leave citizens powerless in the face of old and new risks; such powerlessness is increased by the lack of effective protection on the part of workers' associations. Through the combination of social and economic change, *trade union organizations* experience greater difficulty in carrying out their task of representing the interests of workers, partly because Governments, for reasons of economic utility, often limit the freedom or the negotiating capacity of labour unions. Hence traditional networks of solidarity have more and more obstacles to overcome. The repeated calls issued within the Church's social doctrine, beginning with *Rerum Novarum*, for the promotion of workers' associations that can defend their rights must therefore be honoured today even more than in the past, as a prompt and far-sighted response to the urgent need for new forms of cooperation at the international level, as well as the local level.²⁸³

In reading “cooperation,” for instance, we might also substitute “relationship” or “*caritas*.” As Benedict XVI wrote in *Deus Caritas Est*, “we are dealing with human beings, and human beings always need something more than technically proper care. They need humanity.”²⁸⁴ Such reminders about human dignity are what the Church must offer to (and thus challenge) the world. Indeed, the Church must not offer purely political solutions that derive from one human philosophy or another. Such problem solving, derived solely from the thought of man, would have no inner power to support it. Rather, what the Church offers is the revealed truth about God and “the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others.”²⁸⁵ For Benedict

²⁸³ *Caritas in Veritate*, 25.

²⁸⁴ *Deus Caritas Est*, 31(a).

²⁸⁵ *Caritas in Veritate*, 51.

XVI, that this truth has within it the very source of renewal makes it a critical dialogue partner. It also places it in a different sphere than the purely political (and necessary) work of society.²⁸⁶ The Church, as a conduit of grace, and the State, as a sphere of human reason and nature, both have their roles. As such, one may be able to discern in Benedict XVI's Catholic social teachings the same sacramental dynamics concerning the relations between nature and grace, just as we saw in Schindler's discussion on *eros* and *agape* in *Deus Caritas Est*. Again, this is what is proposed by the term sacramental social doctrine—that is, those teachings that are offered as graced dialogue partners to the planning developed and implemented by the rational mind of man. While such dynamics have always been in play whenever the Church speaks to the world, one could argue that Benedict XVI's particular understanding of revelation, history, and, most especially, *caritas* offers something new to a sometimes weary Church and the wider post-Christian world.

In the preceding discussion about human dignity, for instance, it must be remembered that the Church possesses an overarching and consistent biblical message about the dignity of all human life—which is made in the image of God. Naturally, then, we will find embedded within *Caritas in Veritate*'s detailed discourse of social and economic issues the core Christian demand of protecting life.

One of the most striking aspects of development in the present day is the important question of respect for life, which cannot in any way be detached from questions concerning the development of peoples. ... [N]ot only does the situation of poverty still provoke high rates of infant mortality in many regions, but some parts of the world still experience practices of demographic control, on the part of governments that often promote contraception and even go so far as to impose abortion.²⁸⁷

The significance of this interplay of social issues (abortion and poverty, etc.) will be discussed in more detail below. But first it must be noted that in themselves, ecclesial decrees on issues such as labor, banking, and human dignity are not original; the Church has been speaking about such issues for a century or more.²⁸⁸ A more telling example of the Church's living interaction of revelation within the human condition would have to be something new—something relevant for the first time in history. And indeed, just such a topic is found. As had John Paul II, Benedict XVI has expanded the Church's pro-life concerns to include the interdependent issue of global ecology.

²⁸⁶ For instance, cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, 28(a).

²⁸⁷ *Caritas in Veritate*, 28.

²⁸⁸ Again, one need refer to *Rerum Novarum*, *Pacem in Terris*, *Octogesima Adveniens*, *Laborem Exercens*, and *Humanae Vitae*.

The book of nature is one and indivisible: it takes in not only the environment but also life, sexuality, marriage, the family, social relations: in a word, integral human development. Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other. Herein lies a grave contradiction in our mentality and practice today: one which demeans the person, disrupts the environment and damages society.²⁸⁹

This interrelation of new historical concerns and existing doctrines shows precisely what Benedict XVI meant earlier by *coherence*. As noted earlier in discussing revelation, a proper theology of history is one in which “the whole spiritual experience of the Church, its believing, praying and loving intercourse with the Lord and his word, causes our understanding of the original truth to grow and in the today of faith extracts anew from the yesterday of its historical origin what was meant for all time and yet can be understood only in the changing ages and in the particular way of each.”²⁹⁰ In other words, when individuals, societies, or the majority of the species seek new ways of sidestepping the reality and mystery of human suffering, or find new ways of bringing it about, the Church’s introduction of revelation can be said to “baptize history”—to elevate the nature of a particular human age and condition with the sacramental presence of the Church, whether in the Sacraments themselves or in Gospel proclamation, or by the introduction of Church tradition. Once again, a sacramental understanding of social doctrine defines the Church’s focus. Because for a believer, such as Benedict XVI, no worldly dilemma is ever without hope or comfort when it is exposed to the eternal word and the grace of God. This view not only helps one understand the limitations of the secular sphere, but also the limits and horizons of the Church’s mission. That is, it is meaningless for the Church to see itself as a provider of social assistance without first seeing itself as the proclaimer of Christ crucified. Benedict XVI writes that in

the present social and cultural context, where there is a widespread tendency to relativize truth, practicing charity in truth helps people to understand that adhering to the values of Christianity is not merely useful but essential for building a good society and for true integral human development. A Christianity of charity without truth would be more or less interchangeable with a pool of good sentiments, helpful for social cohesion, but of little relevance. In other words, there would no longer be any real place for God in the world.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ *Caritas in Veritate*, 51.

²⁹⁰ Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 186.

²⁹¹ *Caritas in Veritate*, 4.

Similarly, in his introductory notes discussing *Progressio*, Benedict XVI counsels his flock that (as was noted by Paul VI) “the causes of underdevelopment are not primarily of the material order. (Paul VI) invited us to search for them in other dimensions of the human person”²⁹²—that is, those many and integrated dimensions of our common nature that are shared by all people, no matter what the historical context. This does not render meaningless the historical realities of the current age. Rather, those “other dimensions of the human person” bring meaning to history by allowing individuals, communities, and all humanity to embrace revelation in a new way, and to accept in a particular fashion the creator’s freely given grace. And so in the case of ecological awareness, God speaks to the human race in a way never before experienced by bringing meaning out of our growing understanding of the interrelated global ecosystem, which is increasingly being torn asunder by sin.²⁹³ As Benedict XVI has and will continue to remind us, it will ultimately be love—not science alone—that will save us from ourselves.

This notion of shared human dimensions brings us to the second point to be made about *Caritas in Veritate*. In many ways this encyclical is a call to unity. This can be seen in the just-quoted text that links issues such as abortion and ecology. Benedict XVI’s definition of “integral human development” as including *the environment, life, sexuality, marriage, the family, and social relations* not only allows him to use ecology as a pastoral entry into secular (and ecumenical and inter-faith) realms,²⁹⁴ but it also links and challenge ideologues on both ends of the human political spectrum, especially those within the Church. That is, while some on the political left might wish to save the seals while ignoring or encouraging abortion, many on the right may readily self-identify themselves as pro-life while diminishing what Benedict states to be the Church’s responsibility

²⁹² *Caritas in Veritate*, 19.

²⁹³ See Benedict XVI’s *Welcoming celebration by the young people, address of His Holiness, Apostolic Journey to Sydney Australia, 23rd Youth Day, July 17, 2008*. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/july/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080717_barangaroo_en.html, accessed April 22, 2011.

²⁹⁴ What is telling for the purposes herein is that the Holy Father is able to connect his many discussions on these legitimate scientific ecological concerns and relate them to life. In doing so he explores other interrelated issues, which once again show the historical nature of God’s Truth within human activity. In speaking to amassed youth of the 2008 World Youth Day, Benedict XVI makes this link decisively: “Perhaps reluctantly we come to acknowledge that there are also scars which mark the surface of our earth: erosion, deforestation, the squandering of the world’s mineral and ocean resources in order to fuel an insatiable consumption. ... [Also] we discover that not only the natural but also the social environment—the habitat we fashion for ourselves—has its scars; wounds indicating that something is amiss. Here too, in our personal lives and in our communities, we can encounter a hostility, something dangerous; a poison which threatens to corrode what is good, reshape who we are, and distort the purpose for which we have been created. Examples abound, as you yourselves know. Among the more prevalent are alcohol and drug abuse, and the exaltation of violence and sexual degradation, often presented through television and the internet as entertainment. I ask myself, could anyone standing face to face with people who actually do suffer violence and sexual exploitation ‘explain’ that these tragedies, portrayed in virtual form, are considered merely ‘entertainment,’” Benedict XVI, *Welcoming celebration*, cf. n293.

toward creation, which is ultimately the life-support system for the human race. Indeed, in calling attention to the indivisibility of natural laws, Benedict XVI is doing nothing less than what Bonaventure did and Christ's appointed shepherds have been doing since Pentecost: seeking unity within the Church. At a time when opposing, worldly ideological passions battle within the Church, in *Caritas in Veritate* Benedict XVI reminds his flock that true Christian charity and truth demands much from us. That is, no matter what worldviews one holds, such views must be recognized as imperfect elements of our fallen human nature, and as such they must be entrusted to grace for perfection.²⁹⁵ While such perfecting may be painful, Benedict XVI's centrality of the Cross maintains that it is ultimately the only way forward. What's more, it is the Cross of love that unites us, as well as orients us toward an authentic future of hope. It is this unity and eschatological orientation that Benedict XVI strives for in *Caritas in Veritate*, and elsewhere.

Given that the quest for unity was so central to St. Bonaventure's engagement with Joachimist elements within his order, and as it had been earlier proposed that learning about the handling of this matter was influential for the young Ratzinger, the question of how Benedict XVI goes about building (or encouraging) unity among his own flock should be addressed, if only briefly, within this discussion of *Caritas in Veritate*. We have already discussed that Benedict XVI will frame his topics (new and ancient) in ways that seek to connect opposing ideologies, while also taking the best from both and building outward from there. This particular pastoral aspect—the careful use of language—was demonstrated in his use of the term integral human development, and its particular definition, within his conversation on ecology. Moreover, within the encyclical, the interactions between faith and reason²⁹⁶ seem to become another way to discuss cruciform love and revealed truth.²⁹⁷ Benedict XVI does not directly insert into *Caritas in Veritate* his previous encyclicals'

²⁹⁵ "Open to the truth, from whichever branch of knowledge it comes, the Church's social doctrine receives it, assembles into a unity the fragments in which it is often found, and mediates it within the constantly changing life-patterns of the society of peoples and nations," *Caritas in Veritate*, 9.

²⁹⁶ "Reason, by itself, is capable of grasping the equality between men and of giving stability to their civic coexistence, but it cannot establish fraternity. This originates in a transcendent vocation from God the Father, who loved us first, teaching us through the Son what fraternal charity is." *Caritas in Veritate*, 19. "The demands of love do not contradict those of reason. Human knowledge is insufficient and the conclusions of science cannot indicate by themselves the path towards integral human development. There is always a need to push further ahead: this is what is required by charity in truth. Going beyond, however, never means prescinding from the conclusions of reason, nor contradicting its results. Intelligence and love are not in separate compartments: *love is rich in intelligence and intelligence is full of love*," 30.

²⁹⁷ "Likewise the truth of ourselves, of our personal conscience, is first of all *given* to us. In every cognitive process, truth is not something that we produce, it is always found, or better, received. Truth, like love, 'is neither planned nor willed, but somehow imposes itself upon human beings,' 34, quoting his *Caritas in Veritate*, 34.

discussions on *eros*, *agape* the Kingdom or the Cross.²⁹⁸ Such words are absent from *Caritas in Veritate*, presumably to more easily dialogue with a secular world that would not appreciate or value their usage. From this, one may discover telling methodological aspects of Benedict XVI that can be of value to the Church, such as how the author seeks to unite disparate elements by using carefully chosen terminology that either draws in, or does not repel away, such elements. As with the ecological example above, in which we need not choose between defending the unborn or polar bears, Benedict XVI finds new terms and fresh ways to engage evolving social issues. And he does so while keeping Church teachings rooted in unchanging theologies and anthropologies—teachings that, when taken together, lift high the love of the Cross.

Thus far, what we have been discussing is the words and texts of Benedict XVI. But what can one say about his actions? Here it must be recognized that the Holy Father's task to foster unity is not specific to his pontificate; it just has its own historical context. From within this context, two particular realities will demonstrate how Benedict XVI actually seeks the unity discussed within *Caritas in Veritate* and elsewhere.

The first is the sexual abuse of minors and the handling of such cases by particular bishops. Benedict XVI's engagement of this matter is a topic for its own study, but it should be briefly noted that, besides discussing the matter bluntly, and often apologizing while preaching, he has made a point of meeting with victims of sexual abuse during major trips; these gatherings are unannounced and not open to the media. In these meetings, the pontiff's words of sorrow become present in human flesh. Certainly, the public words and actions that Benedict XVI chooses to express the Church's sorrow and to console the anger over such abuse (and the handling of it) do not appease every hearer. Nor do non-believers (or some believers) appreciate his placement of such sin and suffering within the context of the Cross. Still, Benedict XVI's approach to this issue—one for which there is little papal precedent—remains consistent with his desire to appeal to shared faith, hope, and love, and to do it all as personally as possible.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁸ “God's love calls us to move beyond the limited and the ephemeral, it gives us the courage to continue seeking and working for the benefit of all, even if this cannot be achieved immediately and if what we are able to achieve, alongside political authorities and those working in the field of economics, is always less than we might wish. God gives us the strength to fight and to suffer for love of the common good, because he is our All, our greatest hope,” 78, referencing *Spe Salvi*, 35. Emphasis original.

²⁹⁹ A segment from the Holy Father's March 2010 letter to the people of Ireland offers a glimpse of his pastoral sensibilities and the new ground he broke in responding to the news of such violence and the inept, often immoral, management of such cases by local bishops: “On several occasions since my election to the See of Peter, I have met with victims of sexual abuse, as indeed I am ready to do in the future. I have sat with them, I have listened to their stories, I have acknowledged their suffering, and I have prayed with

The second pastoral concern derives from recognizing that Benedict XVI is shepherding the Church in the context of the post-Vatican II era. As we saw in his commentary of *Dei Verbum*, the pope is keenly aware that in the Second Vatican Council many saw the coming of a new age of a new Church that fostered an overly optimistic view of salvation history, one that subordinates the Cross.³⁰⁰ At the same time, others claim to be the faithful remnants of what preceded the Second Vatican Council—those liturgies, theologies, and social expectations that had ruled the West since the Council of Trent. Seeking to reach out to and exhort both factions has been a particularly difficult task for Benedict XVI, but he has certainly made it a priority. For instance, while he has encouraged the Tridentine Mass (which some see as a move backward to a pre-Vatican II era) he has also encouraged inter-faith and ecumenical dialogue, like the gatherings at Assisi begun by John Paul II (which deeply troubles traditionalists). Perhaps the most controversial of Benedict XVI's pastoral attempt at unity was the lifting of excommunication of four bishops consecrated in 1988 by Archbishop Lefebvre without a mandate of the Holy See.³⁰¹ To the point at hand, these divisions (which are

them and for them. Earlier in my pontificate, in my concern to address this matter, I asked the bishops of Ireland, 'to establish the truth of what happened in the past, to take whatever steps are necessary to prevent it from occurring again, to ensure that the principles of justice are fully respected, and above all, to bring healing to the victims and to all those affected by these egregious crimes' ([Address to the Bishops of Ireland, 28 October 2006](#)). With this (present) Letter, I wish to exhort all of you, as God's people in Ireland, to reflect on the wounds inflicted on Christ's body, the sometimes painful remedies needed to bind and heal them, and the need for unity, charity and mutual support in the long-term process of restoration and ecclesial renewal. I now turn to you with words that come from my heart, and I wish to speak to each of you individually and to all of you as brothers and sisters in the Lord." This is followed by specific messages to individual groups such as the victims themselves, parents, his fellow bishops, the lay faithful, and others. *Pastoral Letter of the Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI to the Catholics of Ireland*, March 19, 2010, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2010/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20100319_church-ireland_en.html, accessed February 13, 2010.

³⁰⁰ Noted earlier, Ratzinger's commentary on *Dei Verbum* worries that with and as a result from the Council, many may lose sight "of the fact that divine salvation comes essentially as a justification of the *sinner*; that grace is given through the judgment of the cross and thus itself always retains the character of judgment; that therefore the one word of God appears in the double guise of Law and Gospel." Vorgrimler/Ratzinger, *Commentary*, 174-5.

³⁰¹ Subsequent fallout took place when it was (almost immediately) discovered that Bishop Williamson was a Nazi sympathizer and denier of the Holocaust. This prompted a quite unique response to the bishops and members of the Church, and the people of the world. Within it we find the Holy Father at pains to explain his pastoral intentions—indeed, his love. He opens with the questions being asked. "Was this measure needed? Was it really a priority? Aren't other things perhaps more important? Of course there are more important and urgent matters. I believe that I set forth clearly the priorities of my pontificate in the addresses which I gave at its beginning. Everything that I said then continues unchanged as my plan of action. The first priority for the Successor of Peter was laid down by the Lord in the Upper Room in the clearest of terms: 'You... strengthen your brothers' (Lk 22:32). Peter himself formulated this priority anew in his first Letter: 'Always be prepared to make a defence to anyone who calls you to account for the hope that is in you' (1 Pet 3:15). In our days, when in vast areas of the world the faith is in danger of dying out like a flame which no longer has fuel, the overriding priority is to make God present in this world and to show men and women the way to God. Not just any god, but the God who spoke on Sinai; to that God whose face we recognize in a love which presses 'to the end' (cf. Jn 13:1)—in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. The real problem at this moment of our history is that God is disappearing from the human horizon, and, with the dimming of the light which comes from God, humanity is losing its bearings, with increasingly evident destructive effects. Leading men and women to God, to the God who speaks in the Bible: this is the supreme and fundamental priority of the Church and of the Successor of Peter at the present time. A logical consequence of this is that we must have at heart the unity of all believers. Their disunity, their disagreement among themselves, calls into question the credibility of their talk of God. Hence the effort to promote a common witness by Christians to their faith—ecumenism—is part of the supreme priority. Added to this is the need for all those who believe in God to join in seeking peace, to attempt to draw closer to one another, and to journey together, even with their differing images of God, towards the source of Light—this is interreligious dialogue. Whoever proclaims that God is Love 'to the end' has to

admittedly simplified for the purposes of this discussion) provide a situation not unlike what Bonaventure inherited when taking command of the Franciscan Order. And as Bonaventure sought to reconcile division within his order, so Benedict XVI seeks unity within the universal Church—the very Church that cannot seek peace in the future unless its members first love in the present. Indeed, as Bonaventure himself sums up, “love transforms because love unites.”³⁰²

Conclusion:

It has been shown that Ratzinger’s early encounter with (i) a mad, totalitarian state, (ii) his encounter with a refreshing breed of theologians, such as de Lubac, and (iii) his reading of Augustine uniquely prepared him for his work on St. Bonaventure’s engagement and critical retrieval of Joachim of Fiore’s theology of history. Bonaventure’s pastoral response allowed the Franciscan General to find in Joachim, if not the Joachimist school, a new view of God’s revelation and saving activity as historical. From Ratzinger’s work on Bonaventure, words like *dialogue*, *relation*, *communion*, *person*, and *love* become a greater part of his theological lexicon, and so illuminate terms like *revelation*, *Incarnation*, *passion*, *sacrament*, and *crucifixion*. What results is a unique view of the Church’s role in the world. Specifically, it has been shown that Ratzinger took from Bonaventure two unique but related themes: (i) viewing revelation as having a “historical character”; and (ii) that history must be viewed hermeneutically, as the telling of a unified drama about a community finding meaning in its movement toward a Christological completion. Rooting these Bonaventurian themes is the great Christian theological and anthropological proclamations: God is love, relation, and self-giving, and humanity has been made in His image. As such, when members of the Church exhibit humble and cruciform *caritas*—when they love in the present—then the Body of Christ can become a light for the nations and authentically offer its unique, sacramental view of social doctrine. These themes were found throughout Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s major works on revelation and eschatology and in his pastoral communications.

bear witness to love: in loving devotion to the suffering, in the rejection of hatred and enmity—this is the social dimension of the Christian faith, of which I spoke in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*.” *Letter of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI to the bishops of the Catholic Church concerning the remission of the excommunication of the four bishops consecrated by Archbishop Lefebvre*, 10 March 2009, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/letters/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_let_20090310_remissione-scomunica_en.html, accessed February 10, 2011.

³⁰² Delio, “The role of the crucified,” pg. 13. Here Delio quotes Bonaventure’s *Lignum vitae* (*Lig. vit.*) 2, 7.

What the present work has not done is draw final conclusions on the impact of Benedict XVI on Christian thought and praxis. Certainly, the man is still very much alive and well. Moreover, his methodology of open-endedness leaves much to be discovered as future conditions allow and warrant. This is consistent with Ratzinger's first encounter with de Lubac, who demonstrated to the young theologian that it was permissible to see the Church work within the context of an ongoing "birth, real growth." Thus, what is proposed herein is that from Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's scholarly and personal development, most especially his encounter with Bonaventure, has come a corpus that offers a way forward, if not specific answers, for the present and future pastoral needs of Holy Mother Church. Whether the threat is Islamic terrorism, the West's own historical amnesia about its Christian roots, the denial of original sin, the cult of entitlement, faulty catechesis, the abuse of the young, dangerous anthropologies of love and marriage, or the wanton disregard for life, these and many surprises will roar out of the ocean of time and onto the shore of the present. The manner in which the Church might encounter, engage, and baptize these many known and unknown historical realities has been provided to us, albeit often in sketched form, by the record of Benedict XVI's own encounter with the self-revealing God that is love.

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