

The Experience of Salvific Energy

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## ABSTRACT

### The Experience of Salvific Energy

Karen Courtland Kelly

The focus of this thesis is the re-emergence of eschatology, one that speaks to modernity, specifically with the notion of salvific energy. Chapters One and Two unpack *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, a book published in English in 1988 and originally written in German in 1977 by Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI. Chapter Three examines the two key themes of death and eternal life explicitly expressed within Benedict's book. The remainder of Chapter Three explores the notion of salvific energy, as that notion seems to express itself as an experience and a three-fold carrier of meaning. Benedict alludes to the notion of salvific energy as an experience and uses the dynamics of shelter, support and communication.

This thesis draws heavily upon the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to better understand Benedict's theological position. The goal is to highlight the valuable field of eschatology and why it continues to be important in people's lives. Eschatology fully encapsulates the dynamic human condition and this thesis hopes to communicate the urgent need for eschatology's re-emergence combined with the emergence of salvific energy. Benedict's experience can renew the field of eschatology with his knowledge of salvific energy. His insights stress the important dynamism in the field of eschatology for modernity and its practical and functional use within the complex dynamic of everyday life.

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## **Dedication**

I am grateful for the grace granted to:

Bernard J. F. Lonergan, SJ

St. Anthony of Padua

St. Michael the Archangel

St. Bernard of Clairvaux

Blessed Pope John Paul II

and

Pope Benedict XVI

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## Introduction

How does one arrive in the theological field of eschatology? That is precisely the question I have been asking myself on a regular basis. Looking back, it seems that this thesis started in 1998 with the death of my Mother. The dynamic surrounding her death made me question everything. Can a person feel another's peace or pain after crossing over the threshold? I wondered who discusses this topic or even questions it? Now I found myself asking many theological questions far before I cared about or took a theology class. Then the unexpected actually happened. It was necessary for me to enroll in a theology class to finish my BA. If it were up to me at that point, I would have elected anything but theology. Surprisingly the writings of theologian Bernard Lonergan spoke to me as he urges one to ask questions. So I felt unblocked to pose the really pertinent questions that seemed necessary. Half a decade passed and Lonergan's work was still riveting my mind. I continued using Lonergan's work in diverse fields outside of academia and the practical application of his writings continued to intrigue me. The questioning side of Lonergan combined with the grace of St. Anthony of Padua became catalysts for me to consider studying theology at Concordia University. I never planned on becoming a theologian, but it seems that I had many unanswered theological questions.

My thesis research started by studying the Doctor's of the Church. The research expanded into exploring the theology of angels, and then it returned me to Lonergan's book, *Method in Theology*. Lonergan's focus in that book is on interdependence and unity, community of feeling, fellow feeling, psychic contagion, and realms of meaning, especially incarnate meaning. These concepts became critical in understanding the base



of eschatology. Unbeknownst to me at the time, eschatology would become the main theological field that I would unpack in this thesis.

Two other books by Lonergan became critical to the research process: *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* and *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*. They were beneficial because of their engagement with a complex dynamic of internal and external forces within God's grace and human freedom. The pattern of research that seemed constantly emerging was something that surrounded the concept of tensions, that is, the tensions that occur externally and internally in one's life: the tension between life and death, good and evil, Heaven and Hell, liberation and affliction. At first, I could understand tension solely from a physical occurrence, as the tension that exists within a restriction of movement, for example, a limited hamstring. A limited hamstring can cause great tension and pain in the body and thereby restrict the movement of the whole body. I have found when there is great flexibility and plasticity in one's hamstring; there is ultimately freedom within it.

While contemplating the physical tension, I enrolled in a graduate course named *Assessing the Theology of Joseph Ratzinger*. During the course readings I was drawn to numerous concepts in Ratzinger's theology. I kept returning to Ratzinger's<sup>1</sup> writings on eschatology. At that time, I had no idea that the theological category of eschatology addressed the dynamic tensions that surround the life altering states of the human condition. In reading Ratzinger's book, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, I encountered the notion of a shelter, combined with the words "salvific energy".

In that book, Benedict explores the notion of salvific energy and he points to

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ratzinger for the purpose of this thesis will be called Benedict throughout this theological work.

eschatology's value when investigating the human dynamic that occurs within each person, family and culture. For Benedict, the Christian message answers humanity's dilemma of death with new life. "This is possible, precisely because the individual has found shelter in a history filled with salvific energy..."<sup>2</sup> This statement was the impetus in the development of this thesis.

After finishing the course and gaining advice from my supervisor, it was pertinent to research Benedict's entire book on eschatology. It was necessary to gain insights into his notion of shelter and salvific energy. Benedict exposes in his book on eschatology all the dynamic tensions that were reoccurring in my research. During my next two courses there were significant breakthroughs in researching the dynamic of tensions in Benedict's book. They occurred by studying Lonergan's article "*The Human Good as Object: Its Invariant Structure*" in *Topics in Education*<sup>3</sup> and researching (in another course titled) *Twelfth Century Theologians*, St. Bernard of Clairvaux's<sup>4</sup> treatise *Liber de diligendo Deo* (Treatise on the Duty to Love God). St. Bernard's explanation of the resurrection of the body and regenerating grace became significant within my understanding of salvific energy. These texts and others continued to build my theological research on eschatology and salvific energy. All these resources enhanced my understanding of Benedict's book and the field of eschatology. Lonergan's invariant structure presented in his article and in *Method in Theology* solidified for me the patterns pertaining to good and evil. St. Bernard's treatise provided insights into the human condition and returned me to the

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, 2nd ed., trans. Michael Waldstein (Washington: CUA Press, 1988), 12.

<sup>3</sup> Bernard Lonergan, "The Human Good as Object: Its Invariant Structure" in *Topics in Education, Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan, Volume 10* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, Scholarly Publishing Division, 1988), 26.

<sup>4</sup> St. Bernard of Clairvaux for the remainder of this thesis is referred to as St. Bernard and not to be confused with Jesuit theologian Bernard Lonergan also referenced in this thesis.

theology of angels, Lonergan's *Grace and Freedom*, and *Method in Theology*. After consultation with my supervisor, we found it necessary to research the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to better understand Benedict's theological base. Thus, this thesis is written from a Roman Catholic perspective, as that viewpoint is pertinent to Benedict's position.

All of these juxtaposed dynamics propelled me straight into the field of eschatology, where I continued to raise and study the difficult questions that humanity contemplates and where I found invaluable guidance. Before studying eschatology, I never understood that theology, studied from a practical and useful perspective, would be helpful in everyday life. It is my contention that this perspective can change life for the better.

The focus of this thesis is the re-emergence of eschatology and how that re-emergence speaks to modernity, specifically with the notion of salvific energy. Chapters One and Two unpack Benedict's book *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*. Chapter Three examines the two key themes of death and eternal life explicitly expressed within this book. The remainder of Chapter Three explores the notion of salvific energy, as that notion seems to express itself as an experience and a three-fold carrier of meaning.<sup>5</sup> Benedict alludes to the notion of salvific energy as an experience and uses the dynamics of shelter, support and communication. This thesis draws heavily upon the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

The goal of this thesis is to highlight the valuable field of eschatology and why it continues to be important in people's lives. Eschatology fully encapsulates the dynamic

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<sup>5</sup> Bernard Lonergan speaks about "carriers of meaning" in Chapter Three of *Method in Theology*. For example, he identified intersubjective meaning, artistic meaning, symbolic meaning, linguistic meaning, and incarnate meaning.

human condition and this thesis hopes to communicate the urgent need for eschatology's re-emergence combined with the emergence of salvific energy. Benedict's experience can renew the field of eschatology with his knowledge of salvific energy. His insights tend to stress the important dynamism in the field of eschatology for modernity and its practical and functional use within the complex dynamic of everyday life.

What is salvific energy? Salvific energy is a manifestation of God's grace that enables the human capacity to live. The source of salvific energy is exterior to human capacity, but humanity is given the grace to participate with God's essence.

...there is only one thing that is good by its essence, and that is God. Everything else is good by participation; just as there is only one thing that exists by its essence, and everything else by its participation.<sup>6</sup>

Salvific energy is predicated on the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ aids in understanding that the base of salvific energy's existence is through, with and in the resurrection. Benedict constantly reminds us that "the supreme evil here is death itself, the final foe and gaunt presence behind all other enemies, from whom one must flee for protection to the Lord surrounded by his saints."<sup>7</sup> There, and only there, one finds "shelter in a history filled with salvific energy."<sup>8</sup> The shelter filled with salvific energy enables the human capacity to live. Benedict reiterates throughout his entire book on eschatology the necessity of perseverance in Christian hope with prayer, sacraments, and almsgiving.

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<sup>6</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, (University of Toronto Press, 1993), 31.

<sup>7</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.

## Chapter 1: Summary of *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*

### Introduction

Chapters One and Two provide an overview of Benedict's<sup>9</sup> book on *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* focusing on the salient points as they relate to this thesis' theme eschatology for modernity. Within Benedict's book there is an introduction and three main parts (the third part is undertaken in Chapter Two). Chapter One expounds *The Eschatological Problem as a Question about the Very Essence of Christianity, Death and Immortality - The Individual Dimension of Eschatology*. In this thesis there is an overview to each of these parts and a preview of each part called an "Eschatological Map" or a brief synthesis. It is called an *Eschatological Map* because it is a guide into eschatology.

In Benedict's *Introduction: The State of the Question*, he explains eschatology's past with its present resurgence. "For centuries eschatology was content to lead a quiet life as the final chapter of theology where it was dubbed 'the doctrine of the last things.' But in our own time, with the historical process in crisis, eschatology has moved into the very center of the theological stage."<sup>10</sup> The resurgence of eschatology has occurred through modern scholarship's reawakening "that Jesus' preaching was soaked through with eschatology."<sup>11</sup>

Benedict wrote *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* originally in German as a textbook for his students in Regensburg, published in 1977.

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Ratzinger for the purpose of this thesis will be called Benedict throughout this theological work.

<sup>10</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 1.

Next to ecclesiology, eschatology is the dogmatic treatise I have taught most often. This emboldens me to make it the first I shall offer in unified form to the public.<sup>12</sup>

Benedict wrote his book in connection with the Roman Catholic Church's position on theology. Theology, in the Roman Catholic Church, is situated at or in a specific perspective with Catholic principles and it is aligned in the Church by the following criteria:

...theology is Catholic, and therefore fundamentally one, if it arises from an attentive listening to the Word of God; if it situates itself consciously and faithfully in the communion of the Church; and if it is orientated to the service of God in the world, offering divine truth to the men and women of today in an intelligible form.<sup>13</sup>

*Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* seemed to have been written from this assumed perspective in 1977 and is now in its second edition. Benedict wrote a new foreword for the edition in 2006 and he clarifies an important point.

When the book was written, two profound upheavals were under way in the general realm of a theology of hope. Hope was reconceived as an active virtue, a deed that could change the world, from which a new humanity, the so-called better world would emerge. Hope became political, and man himself appeared to be charged with its execution. The kingdom of God, upon which all depends in Christendom, became man's kingdom, the "better world" of tomorrow. God is no longer considered to be "above" but rather "right in front of us".<sup>14</sup>

Thus according to Benedict, one should be aware of two profound upheavals in the general realm of a theology of hope. The first is the subtle action of reconceived hope

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<sup>12</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, XXV.

<sup>13</sup> International Theological Commission, *Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria*, (Vatican, 2011) introduction section #3

[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_doc\\_20111129\\_teologia-oggi\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_doc_20111129_teologia-oggi_en.html) (accessed 14 Oct. 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, xviii.

originating from man through man usurping hope in God. Benedict explains that as a theological virtue, hope's orientation was grounded from a person's recognition of God that was once always considered beyond oneself. Therefore, since the source of hope is recognized as beyond one's capabilities, one can place hope in God alone. Hope was therefore manifested from an interior position given in recognition to God. Hope originated from a belief in God and matured into a relationship with God that one could rely on and trust in. Hope was therefore rooted from the vantage point of a gift given to humanity from divine capacities. The gift of hope appears to intertwine the necessity of action because one may actively recognize the source of hope as divine. Benedict explains the action of choice originating from hope where we either collaborate with God or choose to feel like a God. It is a burden of choice to either hope in the self or have hope in God. It is my contention, that this burden of choice reveals the delicate balance within the theological equilibrium of eschatology.

Hope is one of the three theological virtues. Benedict seems to direct one to hope in God and how this hope can manifest the yearning for eternal life. Whereas with reconceived hope, man first feels empowered from his deeds and through his actions but in the end comes face to face with human limitation. The subtle action of reconceived hope seems to be from an orientation of secularization towards a political utopia thus usurping the hope for the salvation or transformation of the world through God's liberation, His act of redemption. The theological virtue of hope leads one to seek God's face, "the face of the God of Jacob,"<sup>15</sup> as St. Bernard of Clairvaux expresses it.

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<sup>15</sup> St. Bernard of Clairvaux, *On Loving God* at [http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bernard/loving\\_god.pdf](http://www.ccel.org/ccel/bernard/loving_god.pdf), 9. (accessed 30 Jan. 2012).

For Benedict, the subtle and deceptive distortion of reconceived hope comes from negating, on the horizontal plane, the actual sacrifice of Christ. If the sacrifice is negated then humanity can feel like a god and place hope in themselves. The sacrifice of Christ occurred in the horizontal plane for humanity to witness, but the resurrection appears to forever transcend the temporal act of judgment into hope, manifested from the vertical plane of redemption through the resurrection. Benedict teaches that hope becomes personalized for humanity, not from humanity, born from the resurrected Christ. Now humanity can have hope for and can be in a personal relationship with God. Benedict stresses that it is being in relationship with Christ on which one can rely and in which one can trust. He teaches that an everlasting hope is given to humanity through, with and in the resurrection of Christ. According to Benedict, the resurrection manifests humanity's liberation for all people through all times. It is the action of liberation delivered to humanity through Christ; "the Lord of judgment is himself addressed as the liberator who has the power to transform the act of judgment into an act of redemption."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 11.



## 1.1: *The Eschatological Problem as a Question About the Very Essence of Christianity*

### 1.1.1: *Eschatological Map of Chapter*

Benedict immediately lays out the main directions or directives to follow and warns of the tensions that arise on the difficult road of eschatology. He encourages an inquiring spirit for the duration of the venture and teaches us to recognize that “the measuring of the human spirit, however, differs from the quantification of the physical world.”<sup>17</sup> The measuring of the human spirit is one of a living history and so it seems to be with eschatology. Eschatology encompasses the measuring of the human spirit and living dynamic of humanity, encapsulating body and soul. On the eschatological byway one should be attentive because eschatology resides beyond the human construct. The mysterious path can be succinctly surmised with the duality of the Kingdom of God and Christology, but Benedict warns, “...there is no linear development.”<sup>18</sup> According to Benedict, one should not and cannot expect linear development when dealing with the human spirit because “the experiences of man with the word, and with time, run on no straight course.”<sup>19</sup> For Benedict, the human condition lives in the world between tensions, and eschatology studies this dynamic condition.

Benedict teaches the necessity for humanity to return to modesty and humility, and these traits are suppressed in modernity. The suppression of modesty and humility seems to directly link Benedict’s preliminary conclusions of the rampant attitudes of entitlement (that humans have as part of their human condition): the affliction of expectation. Expectation resides apart from the good because grace is always unexpected

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<sup>17</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 23.

<sup>18</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 37.

<sup>19</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 44.

and undeserved.<sup>20</sup> Grace resides outside of the human construct, temporal expectations and historical times. Grace appears to transform life through the unwavering invitation to participate in the good.

### **1.1.2: *Unpacking the Eschatological Problem***

Benedict rapidly unpacks the heart of the eschatological problem in part one of *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*. He points to the data needed for interpretation, with directions on appropriate and inappropriate methodologies, within the different functional specialties that are engaged in theological scholarly discourse. How? Benedict believes that “only by listening to the whole history of interpretation can the present be purified by criticism and so brought into a position of genuine encounter with the text concerned.”<sup>21</sup> He further explains how the eschatological problem directly relates to the “question about the very essence of Christianity.”<sup>22</sup>

How does Benedict disclose the difficulties in the theological debate that shroud both eschatology and the question about the very essence of Christianity? First, he directs us to the constant historical dilemmas of meaning, within the eschatological question from the New Testament. As the historical dilemma seems to be a recurring constant, another dilemma emerges from the past to the present meaning of eschatology. The present meaning of eschatology and how to correctly appropriate it for use today becomes Benedict’s focus. He points to eschatology, as always coming from a dynamic that is past and, at the same time, is always current. According to Benedict, eschatology

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<sup>20</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 24.

<sup>22</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, title page.

lies between these constant dynamic tensions. The eschatological question becomes an issue that impacts directly upon the human condition, but becomes especially meaningful for those living in the present and questioning faith, life, death, resurrection, immortality, Heaven and Hell.

...the question as to the meaning of these data from the past for the person who believes, or is searching for faith today, belongs to a quite different plane. The issue of appropriation, of the transposition of the past into the present should be carefully distinguished from that of research into historical data. In no way can it be answered by historical methods. It requires quite different methodological tools, corresponding to a different modality of the enquiring spirit.<sup>23</sup>

How does the issue of appropriation, of the transposition of the past into the present, become carefully distinguished from that of research into historical data? What methodological tools “correspond to a different modality of the enquiring spirit?”<sup>24</sup> What is Benedict implying? He unveils the human scholarly limitations of the historical critical method, dogmatics and exegesis (when addressing the issue of appropriation, of the transposition of the past into the present). In his view, theological functional specialties and scientific discoveries are necessary, but “should give us a rather more concrete grasp of the methodological limitations of pure scholarship.”<sup>25</sup> Benedict explains that, with all human discoveries, pre-conditions occur, but one needs to recognize that “the measuring of the human spirit, however, differs from the quantification of the physical world.”<sup>26</sup> Benedict specifically differentiates between a pre-history “as something that is over and done with”<sup>27</sup> and a living history. He slowly

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<sup>23</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 20.

<sup>24</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 20.

<sup>25</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 21.

<sup>26</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 23.

<sup>27</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 23.

addresses the eschatological problem as a question about the very essence of Christianity, through its foundational biblical text taking into consideration “the whole history of interpretation.”<sup>28</sup>

It is in the multivalent message of the entire history, and its overall critical evaluation, that truth is disclosed and with it the possibility of fresh knowledge. Something analogous to this is true of such a foundational text as the Bible. Here, too, and especially where the heart of the scriptural message is concerned, there is no such thing as a definitive acquisition of scholarship: no interpretation is completely old hat if in its time it turned to the text in true openness.<sup>29</sup>

Benedict directs us to the words “Kingdom of God.”<sup>30</sup> He instructs that the “phrase has a fundamental importance in the tradition stemming from Jesus”<sup>31</sup> because Jesus repeatedly addressed its significance by restating it 90 times. Benedict explains how the church preaches the pre-Easter message of the Kingdom of God and the post-Easter message of Christology<sup>32</sup> and that both messages may be “a self-identical theme...preserved under different conditions.”<sup>33</sup> How can the Kingdom of God and Christology be a self-identical theme...preserved under different conditions? He believes that the Kingdom of God and Christology occur by the grace of complete *concordia* granted through Jesus.

Jesus is the Kingdom, not simply by virtue of his physical presence but through the Holy Spirit’s radiant power flowing forth from him.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 24.

<sup>29</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 24.

<sup>30</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 24.

<sup>31</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 25.

<sup>32</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 25.

<sup>33</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 25.

<sup>34</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 34 & 35.

According to Benedict, it is through Jesus that the Holy Spirit's radiant power flowing forth from Him heals "by unexpected and undeserved grace."<sup>35</sup> Jesus' realm is one of "grace and repentance"<sup>36</sup> and cannot be attained through one's own "volition"<sup>37</sup> because grace comes through repentance. "...repentance is itself grace: firstly, as offered, and secondly as accepted."<sup>38</sup> In Benedict's view, humanity's limited concept of time becomes meaningless within the realm of grace and repentance. One can be a creative collaborator with God and move towards the Kingdom of God with ethical behavior because "grace and ethics"<sup>39</sup> are inexplicitly linked throughout the pre-Easter message of the Kingdom of God and the post-Easter message of Christology.

Benedict utilizes scholars' different viewpoints of the expectation of an imminent end in the Gospels and based on these scholars' discoveries, he states that "one basic fact emerges."<sup>40</sup> He concludes: "Where the expectation of an imminent end is concerned, there is no linear development."<sup>41</sup> This is a critical point in his theological investigation of eschatology. He believes that reading the Gospel from "a linear chronology of de-eschatologizing or re-eschatologizing"<sup>42</sup> creates a disservice because "the experiences of man with the word, and with time, run on no straight course."<sup>43</sup> The eschatological debate seems to constantly shift between the current reality and the past, flowing from the timeless realities of the Gospel parables.

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<sup>35</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 29.

<sup>36</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 31.

<sup>38</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 30.

<sup>39</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 31.

<sup>40</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 37.

<sup>41</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 37.

<sup>42</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 44.

<sup>43</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 44.

...the tension between reality on the one hand and the literary schemata used by the word on the other as the necessary form of eschatological discourse.<sup>44</sup>

Benedict teaches that it is the responsibility of the Church to unify reality with the Word. The Church has the responsibility to keep cohesion between the two. Even though not an easy task for her, the Church must diligently work from the position of integrity. He believes that without the Church as a stabilizing force; contemporary reality can easily rupture the Word with its trendy landscapes of reality that are fleeting within historical constructs. The Church needs to assimilate the vast interpretations of the Word throughout its history. For the Church and the Word are united and give humanity a unifying stability against the extreme ebbs and flows of contemporary culture.

If the communal life of the Church, which vouches for the permanence and thus the future of the word, is no longer recognized then all interpretations are simply predictions without validating authority.<sup>45</sup>

In Benedict's "Panorama of Solutions" he investigates Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultman, Oscar Cullmann, C. H. Dodd, the theology of hope and political theology. His critique operates from integrity and responsibility with 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, ..."<sup>46</sup>

We may think that this statement is abrasive, but he does not intend this reaction.

Benedict situates theological scholarship with a substantial insight into the very essence of Christianity.

The obverse of this courage should be the modesty of not claiming to have just discovered what Christianity is really about by dint of one's own

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<sup>44</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 46.

<sup>45</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 47.

<sup>46</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 60.

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.<sup>47</sup>

Benedict’s preliminary conclusions expose the entitled attitudes that humans have as part of their human condition. He explains the concept of human expectation in “Panorama of Solutions.”<sup>48</sup> He states, “All political propaganda lives off such attitudes of expectation.”<sup>49</sup> According to Benedict, political propaganda embedded with the attitudes of expectation lead humanity down a path away from God. The message of Jesus shatters human temporal expectations and historical times. It transforms life by not being politically focused on humanity’s actual physical living conditions.

Man can become 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.<sup>50</sup>

Benedict teaches that the freedom that Christ manifests is not a political freedom of expectation to consume more material goods. “...the Kingdom of God is not a product, but a gift.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 60.

<sup>48</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 47.

<sup>49</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 61.

<sup>50</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 64 & 65.

<sup>51</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 66.

## **1.2: *Death and Immortality***

### 1.2.1: *Eschatological Map*

The first eschatological map shows how Benedict lays out the main directions or directives to follow and warns of the tensions that arise on the challenging road of eschatology. An inquiring spirit is again needed to learn about the individual dimension of eschatology. This eschatological map cuts deep into the heart of the matter, that is, the greatest affliction to man: death. Benedict wants us to question secular society's viewpoint towards dying, living and the relationship between the two. The individual dimension of eschatology lives at the crossroads of life's most difficult questions. This seems to be where the greatest tensions arise. We tend to ignore the question of death because we do not have to inquire about the most daunting questions facing the human condition. According to Benedict, if one takes the topic of death more seriously, then problems arise for humanity and the individual, as denying death is simpler than facing it because:

Death becomes the key to the question: What really *is* man? The mounting callousness towards human life which we are experiencing today is intimately bound up with the refusal to confront the question of dying.<sup>52</sup>

Death afflicts all. So where do Benedict's directions take humanity on this overwhelming subject of death? Benedict teaches that, "you can't get away from the totality of death: it devours you, leaving nothing behind."<sup>53</sup> He believes that the totality of death brings us face to face with humanity's ultimate questions and places man in a crisis condition. This crisis condition occurs because death lives outside humanity's

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<sup>52</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 72.

<sup>53</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 74.



construct. According to Benedict, death greatly afflicts every man and the crisis condition occurs because man cannot liberate himself from the consumption of death. The temporal plane resides within the dual tension of death: the anticipation of death and the experience of death itself. Therefore another dimension is needed to shatter the temporal construct that limits humanity. This seems to be where the eschatological dimension is urgently needed for humanity to fully understand the encapsulating unity of man's body and soul. Benedict directs us away from the consumption of death to the resurrection of new life, a construct beyond human capability but accessible to humanity. He keeps pointing humanity to the path, one of unity, where the threat of personal death is shattered, not by one's own fruition, but through the undeserved and unexpected grace of salvation given to humanity. Grace seems to transform life through the unwavering invitation to participate with the good. The decision to participate with the good is where the cross meets, shatters death, reconciles and unites the mortal human with the immortality of the divine. "Only eternal life corresponds to the question raised by human living and dying on this earth."<sup>54</sup>

### ***1.2.2: Unpacking Death and Immortality***

In the previous section, Benedict is quoted as saying that "the Kingdom of God is not a product but a gift."<sup>55</sup> He now links his carefully chosen word "product" with death separating humanity's unity apart from the Kingdom of God.

By becoming a product, death is supposed to vanish as a question mark about the nature of being human, a more-than-technological enquiry.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 103.

<sup>55</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 66.

Benedict wants us to question secular society's viewpoint towards dying, living and the relationship between the two. Could these challenging life questions have a deeper relationship? Could they be veiled as "a self-identical theme...preserved under different conditions?"<sup>57</sup> For Benedict, the entire human condition seems to revolve around one's relationship to God and the questions that should be addressed surrounding one's mortality. Benedict wants us to face our unchangeable human condition without being intimidated to confront the tough questions. According to Benedict, the topic of death directly links one's relationship with God and the possibility of eternity. He believes that the path to immortality is through Christ. Benedict teaches that the path to immortality percolates through human death, the question of dying and wondering: "What really is man?"<sup>58</sup>

Benedict clearly views the limitations of technology to answer the issues that encompass the complex dynamic of human "birth and living, in sickness and dying."<sup>59</sup> In the human construct, these dynamic situations can cause crisis conditions; there emerges a need to work through the lens of confusion. Benedict believes, "there is a set of questions-the really human questions-where other approaches towards an answer must be brought in. In this respect, the experience comprised in the wisdom of the tradition remains of central importance."<sup>60</sup> He addresses the confusion caused by the Greek perspective of Plato within the constraint of life, death and the body. This philosophical perspective overly promotes the spirit by negating the body because of its matter. It splits

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<sup>56</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 71.

<sup>57</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 25.

<sup>58</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 72.

<sup>59</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 70.

<sup>60</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 72.

the unity of the body and soul. According to Benedict, this prevailing view, with its split personality of body and soul, has implanted itself from the past into mainstream thinking. This prevailing view seems to be promoted fervently. Benedict connects a critical concept that is lost in secular society and in my view most Roman Catholic parishes today:

In biblical thought, by contrast, man is seen in his undivided wholeness and unity as God's creature and cannot be sliced down the middle into body and soul. This is why the biblical authors do not submit death to an idealistic transfiguration in their descriptions of it, but present it, rather, in its full, unvarnished reality as the destroying enemy of life. Only Jesus' resurrection brings new hope. However this hope in no way softens the stark reality of death in which not the body alone but the entire human being dies. Language itself indicates this truth, for we say 'I will die,' not 'My body will die'. You can't get away from the totality of death: it devours you, leaving nothing behind. True, the risen Christ gives us the hope that, by God's grace, the entire person will be raised again into the newness of life. This biblical hope, expressed only in the term 'resurrection,' presupposes the finality of death. The immortality of the soul must be firmly rejected as an idea which goes against the grain of biblical thought.<sup>61</sup>

Benedict explains that crisis conditions occur when one comes face to face with "man's ultimate questions."<sup>62</sup> He directs us to realize that all cultures are constantly in a shifting state of transformation. Man's identity was situated within his culture that believed "...that nowhere is death conceived as being absolutely the end. Everywhere that some kind of subsequent existence is assumed."<sup>63</sup> Benedict addresses how man's recent identity has become one of individualism and thus the existential concept of nothingness has emerged. This emergence seems to be from an intertwined political and spiritual crisis existing simultaneously just as:

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<sup>61</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 74.

<sup>62</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 75.

<sup>63</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 76.

...the fifth and sixth [sic] centuries before Christ was also the political crisis of ancient Hellas. It was to this crisis, at once political and spiritual, that Plato and Aristotle tried to respond: not turning back the wheel of history and putting together again the broken pieces of the world of myth but in a way that might lead to a new future.<sup>64</sup>

Benedict points to the gauntlet of death and its link to the destruction of life. The destruction of life becomes, not only the obliteration of a person in their entirety, but a deep separation of the individual, not just from one's self, but from one's "*polis* as community."<sup>65</sup> He believes that Plato's thought of unifying, not dividing the individual, politics and community emerged out of a political and spiritual crisis. Something great emerged that can be misunderstood in the existential times in which we live. Plato's thought emerged out of a crisis condition and found the ground of justice to situate humanity in community and "wherein the individual finds his place in the whole."<sup>66</sup>

There is indeed a profound divergence between Plato and Christianity. Yet this should not blind us to the possibilities of a philosophical unfolding of the Christian faith which Platonism offers. These possibilities are rooted in a deep affinity on the level of fundamental formative intention.<sup>67</sup>

Benedict situates humanity and community with the very essence of Christianity. He analyzes the recurrence of a crisis condition, the level of fundamental formative intention and the ground of justice. According to Benedict, the Hebrew Scriptures are critical in the evaluation of the eschatological question and the very essence of Christianity. The Israelite's consciousness evolved gradually into a lasting relationship with Yahweh. Their traditions are grounded in praise and thanksgiving to Yahweh. The Israelite's

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<sup>64</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 77.

<sup>65</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 78.

<sup>66</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 78.

<sup>67</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 79.

concept of “death was synonymous with noncommunication between the Israelite and Israel’s God.”<sup>68</sup> Benedict teaches an important insight from the wisdom gained in the

Hebrew Scriptures with:

...the real point lies deeper, in the experience that communion with God means a life stronger than death. A parallel suggests itself here between an insight gained on the basis of faith-experience and the experience of a Socrates dying for justice’s sake, as recounted by Plato. Here we hit upon the real connecting link between biblical thought and Platonic philosophy, the factor which made possible the meeting of these two traditions.<sup>69</sup>

He believes that the meeting of these two traditions occurs from a crisis that causes a question. Will one facing persecution, martyrdom or death place one’s faith, hope and righteousness in oneself or in God? According to Benedict, Socrates died for justice’s sake; a justice that was outside himself but he knew that his life and “*polis* as community”<sup>70</sup> were not possible without justice and therefore life ultimately becomes a death. Socrates died for a love of justice not for a love of himself.

How does the New Testament address the crisis conditions in life where one comes face to face with “man’s ultimate questions?”<sup>71</sup> Benedict starts by “surveying the dramatic struggle of the Old Testament in its entire development, the unity of the two Testaments stands out in clear relief.”<sup>72</sup> Throughout his book on eschatology, he stresses unity: the unity within one’s body and soul, and the unity within humanity’s development to be in relationship with God. He strongly believes in the necessity of unity. Is there a relationship to man’s ultimate questions and the necessity of unity that Benedict stresses?

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<sup>68</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 83.

<sup>69</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 91.

<sup>70</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 78.

<sup>71</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 75.

<sup>72</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 92.

What is man's main crisis condition in life? Is it "...the threat of personal death...?"<sup>73</sup>

"The eschatological question becomes the question of my own dying?"<sup>74</sup> Benedict stresses that Christianity needs to be understood in its unity and the New Testament offers humanity the answer to the eschatological question because:

It gives to our thirst for being the dramatic significance of a thirst for God himself, and sees therein the fullness of our salvation. 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.<sup>75</sup>

Benedict asks, "How can we describe that moment in which we experience what life truly is?"<sup>76</sup> It seems that true life breaks through in a moment of transcendence when one becomes grateful for life. According to Benedict, the first and greatest gift from God is life. Life is forever altered in the moment of recognition; the recognition that the grace of life originates from the love of God. God's capacity to love is beyond human comprehension. Love originates from God not from humanity. Life and love are given from the source of all grace and that unlimited love from God unifies humanity through life which is a gift ultimately from God.

It is the moment of love, a moment which is simultaneously the moment of truth when life is discovered for what it is. The desire for immortality does not arise from the fundamentally unsatisfying enclosed existence of the isolated self, but from the experience of love, of communion, of the Thou. It issues from that call which the Thou makes upon the I, and which the I returns.<sup>77</sup>

If life is being in relationship with Christ, then what is death?

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<sup>73</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 11.

<sup>74</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 11 & 12.

<sup>75</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 93 & 12.

<sup>76</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 94.

<sup>77</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 94.

The phenomenon of death makes itself known in three very different dimensions. Firstly, death is present as the nothingness of an empty existence which ends up in a mere semblance of living. Secondly, death is present as the physical process of disintegration which accompanies life. It is felt in sickness, and reaches its terminal point in physical dying. Thirdly, death is met with in the daring of the love which leaves self behind, giving itself to the other. It is likewise encountered in the abandonment of one's own advantage for the sake of justice and truth.<sup>78</sup>

Benedict goes on to explain that the three dimensions of death are interrelated and connected to the death of Jesus. According to him, the phenomenon of death and its connection to the death of Christ and to each person dives to the very heart of eschatology and the very essence of Christianity. If Benedict can accomplish this connection in his book, we should authentically become a willing participant to go along for the journey. He begins this inquiry with the second dimension, one's physical disintegration in three dimensions, and the death of one's physical, emotional and spiritual existence. "However, they can also smash down complacency and spiritual lethargy and lead one to find oneself for the first time."<sup>79</sup> Does Benedict's explanation clarify death as man's crisis condition in life? Does the heart of the matter become urgently present in our face? According to Benedict, the actuality of personal death, the eschatological question, now lives as the question of one's own dying.

Here man is forced to face the fact that existence is not at his disposal, nor is his life his own property. Man may snap back defiantly that he will make it so. But in so doing, he makes a desperate anger his basic attitude to life. There is a second possibility: man can respond by seeking to trust this strange power to whom he is subject. He can allow himself to be led, unafraid, by the hand, without *Angst*-ridden concern for his situation. And in this second case, the human attitude towards pain, towards the presence of death within living, merges with the attitude we call love.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 95.

<sup>79</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 95.

<sup>80</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 96.

Benedict stresses that Christianity needs to be understood in its unity; the unity of Christ's life, death and resurrection and its relation to humanity seem to breathe within a pattern. He believes that the merging of that unity is critical for understanding Christianity, eschatology and an individual's authentic relationship with Christ. Benedict stresses that our life is a grace and that grace is fulfilled when we accept our unity to God. When one is faced with one's own demise, "the confrontation with physical death is actually a confrontation with the basic constitution of human existence. It places before us a choice: to accept either the pattern of love, or the pattern of power."<sup>81</sup> How does this choice become relevant in one's life? At some point death confronts all and according to Benedict, it confronts us with the basic constitution of coming face to face with a human's limited existence. Within this crisis condition emerges the choice between love or power and the answer comes through an internal response from "the attitude of trust"<sup>82</sup> in "the Power which has so determined us will not deceive us."<sup>83</sup>

Man's enemy, death, that would waylay him to steal his life, is conquered at the point where one meets the thievery of death with the attitude of trusting love, and so transforms the theft into increase of life. The sting of death is extinguished in Christ in whom the victory was gained through the plenary power of love unlimited. Death is vanquished where people die with Christ and into him.<sup>84</sup>

Benedict teaches that the transformation of death into life became manifested through the resurrection of Christ. The resurrection of Christ becomes the hope of our resurrection with Him. It is the reality of Christ's resurrection that in Him our resurrection becomes possible to live in eternal life.

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<sup>81</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 96.

<sup>82</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 97.

<sup>83</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 96.

<sup>84</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 97.



Benedict asks, “How is it that human beings can communicate?” He answers his question with, “It is because above them, common to them all yet proper to each of them, is a third factor: righteousness and truth.”<sup>85</sup> Righteousness and truth seems to have a value beyond oneself. One should recognize that the value of righteousness and truth does not originate from one’s capability, but as a gift similar to Socrates dying for justice. Justice for Socrates had a value beyond himself. According to Benedict, righteousness and truth granted from God is the source that makes justice possible for humanity. The concept of the grace of God’s righteousness and truth given to humanity from God is hard to recognize, as it does not originate in oneself. This point is subtle and is often a confusing issue: the concept of justification through baptismal faith or seeking justification through one’s own works. Benedict teaches that humanity is only granted the possibility of justification from God. He succinctly clarifies the confusion of justification by faith and justification by works with:

The doctrinal assertion that justification is by faith and not by works means that justification happens through sharing in the death of Christ, that is, by walking in the way of martyrdom, the daily drama by which we prefer what is right and true to the claims of sheer existence, through the spirit of love which faith makes possible. Conversely, to seek justification by works isolated concentration on the principle that finds the inevitable fruits of one’s actions in one’s destiny. As worked out in detail in particular cases, this attempt can take very subtle forms, but the basic pattern is the same. Justification by works means that man wants to construct a little immortality of his own. He wants to make of his life a self-sufficient totality. Such an enterprise is sheer illusion.<sup>86</sup>

Let us return to the eschatological question: “The eschatological question becomes the question of my own dying?”<sup>87</sup> Benedict inverts truth for one moment onto

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<sup>85</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 98.

<sup>86</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 99.

<sup>87</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 11 & 12.

man with: “For man’s own truth is that he passes away, having no abiding existence in his own right.”<sup>88</sup> The truth about man’s mortality is clear, the final phase being the death of man. According to Benedict, man’s only hope to be liberated from the never-ending affliction of death is to believe in the One Who is Righteousness and Truth. For man’s resurrection is only possible through, with and in Christ. Benedict states that, “I may declare that the heart of Christianity is the Paschal mystery of death and resurrection.”<sup>89</sup> The Paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ is the hope for the individual and for the world.

Where does all this information leave Christian eschatology today? Benedict directs us to how mankind without justice loses its gift of dignity. Therefore, he eloquently expresses the origination point for Christian eschatology and the anchors for one’s life with:

The starting point of Christian eschatology is precisely commitment to the common justice guaranteed in the One who sacrificed his life for the justice of mankind at large and brought it justification. Moreover, eschatology encourages us, nay, challenges us in a most compelling fashion, to dare to realize in our lives that justice and truth whose claims upon us – along with those of love – are eschatology’s very own content.<sup>90</sup>

It appears that for Benedict all life is a gift granted by God. Therefore all life should be embraced and cherished even when it is difficult. Difficult periods in one’s life can result in new insights. New insights can enhance life and create a path towards new meaning. “Christian faith favors life.”<sup>91</sup> Life, death and suffering are perplexing topics.

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<sup>88</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 99.

<sup>89</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 100.

<sup>90</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 100 & 101.

<sup>91</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 101.

The meaning of suffering in Christian terms can be greatly misunderstood. Benedict simplifies this daunting topic by claiming that:

While faith does not deliberately seek out suffering, it knows that without the Passion life does not discover its own wholeness, but closes the door on its own potential plenitude. If life at its highest demands the Passion, then faith must reject *apatheia*, the attempt to avoid suffering, as contrary to human nature.”<sup>92</sup> Any claim contrary to the truth of man, that is: “For man’s own truth is that he passes away, ...”<sup>93</sup>

Benedict reminds us that man himself can never be divine, only God is divine.

He believes that modern technology and education becoming the path of man’s redemption is flawed by its negation of God. Modern technology and education promote the distorted view of human independence over an unnecessary God. According to Benedict, technology and education need to be understood in their unity for humanity. When our life experiences become intertwined with life, death and suffering, then our perspective can shift anew. “Here man is forced to face the fact that existence is not at his disposal, nor is his life his own property. Man may snap back defiantly that he will make it so. But in so doing, he makes a desperate anger his basic attitude to life.”<sup>94</sup> Benedict teaches that in not recognizing our dependence on God, we can become angry that we are not God. “The person who does not confront life refuses his life. Flight from suffering is flight from life.”<sup>95</sup> So, he seems to say that suffering is a part of life and that life only becomes bearable when one carries the cross of suffering with Christ.

Benedict believes that the Christian faith is fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The hope for the world is also fulfilled in the same death and

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<sup>92</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 101.

<sup>93</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 99.

<sup>94</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 96.

<sup>95</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 103.

resurrection of Jesus Christ. “Only eternal life corresponds to the question raised by human living and dying on this earth.”<sup>96</sup>

### **1.3: *Immortality of the Soul and the Resurrection of the Dead***

#### *1.3.1: Eschatological Map*

The first and second eschatological maps explain the main directions or directives to follow and Benedict warns of the tensions that arise on the road of eschatology. Now we arrive at the apex of those tensions. This eschatological map continues with the subject matter of man’s death and Benedict clarifies:

The only truly biblical doctrine is that which holds that when man dies ‘he perishes, body and soul.’ Only in this fashion can one preserve the idea of death as a judgment, of which Scripture speaks in such unmistakable accents. The proper Christian thing, therefore, is to speak, not of the soul’s immortality, but of the resurrection of the complete human being and of that alone.<sup>97</sup>

Benedict addresses the dimension of eschatology at the crossroads of life’s most difficult questions. How can he state in this modern time that, “The proper Christian thing, therefore, is to speak, not of the soul’s immortality, but of the resurrection of the complete human being and of that alone”<sup>98</sup> Benedict broaches the subjects that cause great tensions to arise on the road of eschatology. Humanity can primarily be blocked by secular society to question death and secondly be blocked to recognize or to hope in the resurrection for oneself and for the world. It seems that with the subject of the resurrection; humanity meets eschatology at a major crossroad. According to Benedict,

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<sup>96</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 103.

<sup>97</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 105.

<sup>98</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 105.

humanity faces a new road: the point of the eschatological juxtaposition, a two-fold resurrection, the resurrection of Christ and the hope of one's own complete resurrection with Christ. Herein abides the power for man to be liberated from perishing body and soul in death.

Benedict believes that liberation from the affliction of death occurs at the cross through the resurrection of Christ. He stresses that because of Christ's resurrection, one's own resurrection is possible but exists outside of humanity's own construct. Again, Benedict reminds us that the crisis condition of death greatly afflicts every man because he cannot liberate himself from the consumption of it. The temporal plane exists with the tension of death, thus another dimension is needed to shatter the temporal construct that limits humanity. Here Benedict explains that the eschatological dimension is urgently needed for humanity to fully understand the unity of man's body and soul and the underlying unity of all of humanity with God. Benedict directs us away from the consumption of death towards the resurrection of new life, a construct beyond human capability but accessible to humanity. He believes that the resurrection of new life is opened through dialogue (that is, communication with God), the path of relationship. He keeps pointing humanity to the path, one of unity, where the threat of personal death is shattered, not by one's own fruition, but through the undeserved and unexpected grace of salvation given to humanity. Benedict unifies how the paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ is the hope for the individual and for the world.

The presence of the risen Christ transforms faith into a realized claim on the future, filling it with the certitude of the believer's own resurrection.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 129 & 130.

### 1.3.2: A Major Clarification

It seems that the first two pages in this section of eschatology should be mandatory for every Catholic worldwide. Why? Benedict clarifies one of the biggest misunderstandings impacting Christianity today: the rapid dissemination of errant information of which the New Testament teaches the immortality of the soul. He cites three sources Carl Stange (1870-1959), Adolf Schlatter (1852-1938), and Paul Althaus. We return to Benedict's clarification that,

the only truly biblical doctrine is that which holds that when man dies 'he perishes, body and soul.' Only in this fashion can one preserve the idea of death as a judgment, of which Scripture speaks in such unmistakable accents. The proper Christian thing, therefore, is to speak, not of the soul's immortality, but of the resurrection of the complete human being and of that alone.<sup>100</sup>

It is fascinating to find this central Christian concept clearly expressed by Benedict and previously echoed in the twelfth century writings of St. Bernard of Clairvaux's treatise *On Loving God (Liber de diligendo Deo)*. Chapter XI in St. Bernard's of Clairvaux's treatise can clarify Benedict's statement (that is critical to restate here), "The proper Christian thing, therefore, is to speak, not of the soul's immortality, but of the resurrection of the complete human being and of that alone."<sup>101</sup> St. Bernard reveals the depths of Christianity in this treatise and makes 'the resurrection of the complete human being and of that alone accessible, albeit a difficult subject in any time and for any man initiated or not. St. Bernard proposes a profound question, one that is not often brought to light. "What of the souls already released from their bodies?"<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 105.

<sup>101</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 105.

<sup>102</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 24.

St. Bernard focuses on the mysterious dynamics in the afterlife: the concept and actuality of immortality with God. His goal is to direct man's life to be reconciled and united in body and soul with God on earth and in Heaven. These concepts weigh heavily on man, as we prefer to ignore it rather than raise the complex question. St. Bernard states the question and then helps man to understand this topic with profound ease in explanation.

...the spirit would not yearn for reunion with the flesh if without the flesh it could be consummated.<sup>103</sup>

It seems that both St. Bernard and Benedict believe that the resurrection of Christ from the dead objectifies the mystery of how the impossibility of one's soul becomes reunited with one's body; thus making the impossible possible. Man's body and soul live as one on earth, perfectly uniting the human and divine on the horizontal plane. From the moment of birth until death, living in the temporal reality manifests this unification. The body and soul of a man realizes a perfect symbiosis that mirrors the vertical plane, the living spiritual reality of God.

The body is a help to the soul that loves God, even when it is ill, even when it is dead, and all the more when it is raised again from the dead: for illness is an aid to penitence; death is the gate; and the resurrection will bring consummation.

Before death, while we are still in mortal flesh, we eat the labors of our hands, we swallow with an effort the food so gained; but after death, we shall begin eagerly to drink in the spiritual life and finally, reunited to our bodies, and rejoicing in fullness of delight, we shall be refreshed with immortality.<sup>104</sup>

St. Bernard uses allegories to address the topic of the resurrection of the complete human being: the reuniting of body and soul where immortality is fulfilled even historically

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<sup>103</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 24.

<sup>104</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 24 & 25.

situated in medieval France. For St. Bernard and Benedict, God is the final reward and the greatest profit one can achieve for all eternity. Eternal consummation occurs in a state of eternal love re-united to God in body and soul consumed in everlasting grace.

Are St. Bernard's explanations of the resurrection of the complete human being helpful or out of date due to its historically written perspective of approximately 900 years ago? We could question, is Benedict out of touch with modernity? Or is he exposing a recent rupture that centrally links the Christian faith to its past? Is the central Catholic belief in the resurrection of the complete human being currently diminished because it is seen as impossible in today's scientific landscape? Benedict searches for the heart of the matter. He starts with the question, "How was it possible to overthrow so quickly a tradition firmly rooted since the age of the early Church and always considered central?"<sup>105</sup> Is our western cultural conditioning creating a blockage towards understanding this central belief in the Church? He questions the notion with:

...but who, on the basis of the current tenets of the natural sciences, could imagine a resurrection of the body? The resurrection would presuppose a completely different kind of matter, a fundamentally transformed cosmos which lies completely outside of what we can conceive.<sup>106</sup>

Benedict consciously keeps returning to both tradition and scripture by emphasizing their unity. He believes that humanity can conceive the message of the resurrection of Christ through the gift of faith manifested in the Church's tradition and expressed in the New Testament. He stresses that the resurrection of Christ fundamentally transforms human life by uniting it to the cosmos of God's eternal life. This reunification reconciles and unites the human and the divine for humanity's benefit. The reunification to God for

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<sup>105</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 105.

<sup>106</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 106.



humanity is the grace of eternal life bestowed from having a relationship with Christ. St. Bernard's treatise (written in the 12<sup>th</sup> century) echoes this reunification that Benedict emphasizes.

Benedict raises the questions of resurrection and immortality from a biblical perspective. Is the meaning of the resurrection from the dead the same now as then (when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead and when Jesus rose from the dead)? Yes, for if this really happened, it changes everything for everyone in all times. Benedict starts his exploration before the resurrection and believes that Jesus announced the Easter proclamation of the resurrection. "In this context, the crucial text is Jesus' discussion with the Sadducees about the resurrection as given in the gospel according to Mark."<sup>107</sup> Benedict teaches that it is Jesus who moves the confession of the resurrection "into a central position in the expression of faith. It is no longer one tenet of faith among many others, but rather is identified with the concept of God itself. Resurrection faith is contained in faith in God."<sup>108</sup> He uses this chapter to highlight "some characteristic texts in which the further development of the doctrine of the resurrection is already indicated."<sup>109</sup> He focuses on Pauline texts Romans 6, 1-14, First Corinthians 15, Second Timothy 2,18, John 6 and John 11. "The story of Lazarus in John 11 leads up to the affirmation, "I am the resurrection and the life."<sup>110</sup> Benedict asserts that the resurrection of Christ is the source of hope and communion with God for the individual and for the world now and forever.

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<sup>107</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 113.

<sup>108</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 114.

<sup>109</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 114.

<sup>110</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 117.

Benedict starts with the immortality of the soul, constructed in the middle ages, and how Luther found it unacceptable. Then he explores today's theology and how it "...rules out an intermediate state."<sup>111</sup> He believes this takes us back to Luther. So Benedict must probe early Judaism as a lens into Jesus' historical time and traditional link to Judaism. He begins with the Book of Enoch's twenty-second chapter because of its "account of the abode of the spirits or souls of the departed. Here the ancient idea of Sheol, earlier taken as the realm of shadow-life, receives more articulated and differentiated description."<sup>112</sup> He refers to Judaism to find meaning, a starting point to discourse the difficult spiritual realm of the intermediate state. He finds a pattern of expression and prayer afforded to the spiritual realm expressed in " 'early Jewish' notions lived on in unbroken fashion in the early Church."<sup>113</sup> The idea of Sheol is alive and well today. Benedict believes that no one can escape the tensions that exist within the human condition between life and death. He acknowledges that humanity has an imperfect knowledge of Heaven, Hell, and the intermediate state, but it is still better to address the difficult topic than to ignore it. At some point, each person will contemplate the possibility of Heaven, Hell and the intermediate state because the human condition cannot escape the tension that "the eschatological question becomes the question of my own dying?"<sup>114</sup> Since we learned from Benedict that "For man's own truth is that he passes away, having no abiding existence in his own right"<sup>115</sup> then the fascination with Heaven, Hell and the intermediate state may never pass away for humanity.

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<sup>111</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 120.

<sup>112</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 120.

<sup>113</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 121.

<sup>114</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 11 & 12.

<sup>115</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 99.

In the Book of Enoch, Benedict explains that the “space”<sup>116</sup> of the intermediate state has an expression and location, that is “no longer located simply in the earth’s interior, but, more specifically, in the West, the land of the setting sun, in a mountain where it occupies four different regions (pictured as caves).”<sup>117</sup> It is at this moment that the link of tradition returns us to the present and to justice. Why? Christian eschatology is unified with the heart of the matter both personally and for mankind. Mankind without justice loses its gift of dignity. Therefore, we return to how Benedict encourages us to recognize the origination point for Christian eschatology – justice. He anchors human life “guaranteed in the One who sacrificed his life for the justice of mankind at large and brought it justification... and to realize in our lives that justice and truth whose claims upon us – along with those of love – are eschatology’s very own content.”<sup>118</sup> It is here that Benedict gives new meaning to eschatology for those living in modernity; he unifies the concept of the intermediate state and links it to the concept of justice.

The just and unjust are now separated. The unjust await the judgment in darkness whereas the just, among whom the martyrs occupy a special position, dwell in light, being assembled around a life giving spring of water.<sup>119</sup>

Dwelling in the light and around a life-giving spring of water does have deep symbolic, sacramental, and incarnate meaning throughout the life, death and resurrection of Christ. Benedict points to a similar pattern that seems to echo from the time of the apostles through today.

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<sup>116</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 120.

<sup>117</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 120 & 121.

<sup>118</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 100 & 101.

<sup>119</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 121.

The memento of the departed in the Roman Canon (now the ‘First Eucharistic Prayer’) prays that God may grant to those who have died marked with the sign of faith and now ‘sleep the sleep of peace’ a place of light, ‘fresh water’ (*refrigerium*) and repose. The prayer thus identifies the three conditions which inhabitants of the Mediterranean world consider the proper expression of all good living. Patently, the idea coincides in all respects with the destiny of the just as described in *Enoch*.<sup>120</sup>

Benedict believes that a transformation of the Jewish faith occurs with Christ and is significantly demonstrated in the Gospel of Luke. He teaches that Jesus is the fulfillment of the law not a rupture. With Jesus, a new center becomes known to humanity. Benedict draws our attention to “two sayings of Jesus on the topic of the ‘Intermediate state’. These are Luke 16, 19-31 and Luke 23, 43...”<sup>121</sup> It is in these two parables, which humanity may grasp the necessity of relationship with God. The resurrection of Lazarus is made manifest through the words of Jesus. The world is forever changed for Lazarus and for humanity by Christ’s word.

Another dramatic alteration occurs with “the dialogue of the Crucified with the good thief.”<sup>122</sup> Jesus was in the centre and two criminals were being crucified: one on his right and another on his left. The one on his right repented to Jesus and He replied, “that today you will be with me in paradise (Luke 23:43).” Jewish tradition and Benedict’s message converge at the point where life begins when one is in relationship with God. Benedict addresses that the profound alteration in this parable is that the criminal’s life begins anew because he will now be ‘with’ Jesus in paradise. The good thief opened a dialogue of repentance with Jesus. The dialogue opened wide the step towards reconciliation with God. He believes that life begins anew for the thief because the word of Jesus lives with

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<sup>120</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 121.

<sup>121</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 124.

<sup>122</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 124.

the transformative power of relationship with God. The relationship forever alters and renews life. Benedict explains how the concept of relationship and renewal embody and unify the Christian message united with its Jewish heritage. He believes that the Gospel of John succinctly summarizes this message in the expression “I am the resurrection and the life.”<sup>123</sup>

Benedict’s clarification is formative and we return to his message that, “the only truly biblical doctrine is that which holds that when man dies ‘he perishes, body and soul.’ Only in this fashion can one preserve the idea of death as a judgment, of which Scripture speaks in such unmistakable accents. The proper Christian thing, therefore, is to speak, not of the soul’s immortality, but of the resurrection of the complete human being and of that alone.”<sup>124</sup> Does the resurrection of Lazarus mirror the resurrection for each and every one of us made possible through Jesus? Does the good thief mirror the resurrection of life renewed through the dialogue of repentance, becoming one of communion with Jesus fulfilled ‘with’ Him in paradise?

If the truth about man’s mortality, the final phase being the death of man, is clear then does the resurrection of the Lord impact man’s final phase? If man’s only hope to be liberated from the affliction of death is to believe in the One Who is Righteousness, Truth, then the resurrection of the Lord must impact man’s final phase, since man cannot accomplish his resurrection alone.

Benedict cites that the

...new element which permitted Christianity to emerge from Judaism was faith in the risen Lord and in the present actuality of his life. The presence

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<sup>123</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 129.

<sup>124</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 105.

of the risen Christ transforms faith into a realized claim on the future, filling it with the certitude of the believer's own resurrection.<sup>125</sup>

For Benedict, the risen Lord directly links us to the eschatological question: "The eschatological question becomes the question of my own dying?" The Paschal mystery of the death and resurrection of Christ is the hope for the individual and for the world.

Through faith in the risen Lord, the intermediate state and the resurrection are linked to each other in a more thoroughgoing way than could have been the case before. Nevertheless, they remain distinct.<sup>126</sup>

The early Church was embodied with tradition and the belief in the resurrection of the body. For the early Church, Christ's resurrection was the focus and fulfillment of the message to spread the Christian faith. The story of Lazarus was the "central star in the firmament of Christian confession: belief in the resurrection of the body."<sup>127</sup> To believe in the resurrection of, not only Christ but of one's own body, was understood within the tradition and depths of the faith. This belief is central to the Christian confession and was expressed succinctly in the late fifth century and again at the Council of Toledo of 675:

The true resurrection of all the departed will take place after the example of our Head. Not in an ethereal or in any other widely different flesh, as some assert in their foolishness, will we rise again, but, as our faith teaches, in this self-same flesh in which we live, exist and move.<sup>128</sup>

During their lifetime, the apostles underwent a profound conversion with Christ. It seems that the conversion of the apostles took different amounts of time for each but was fulfilled at Pentecost with the coming of the Paraclete and the ascension of the Lord into Heaven. For Benedict, each of the events in Christ's life is significant for the

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<sup>125</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 129 & 130.

<sup>126</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 130.

<sup>127</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 134.

<sup>128</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 135.

apostles and slowly added insights to the faith. These insights slowly bore fruit into a deeper understanding of the mystery of faith. The ascension of Christ is critical in this dynamic development for it

signifies that now, after Christ, there is no longer a closed heaven. Christ is in heaven: that is God has opened himself to man, and man, when he passes through the gate of death as one justified, as someone who belongs to Christ and has been received by him, enters into the openness of God.<sup>129</sup>

Benedict believes that the apostle's faith in God from Judaism grounded their lives. Slowly, over time, they became Christian through conversion, one of relationship with Jesus. This became the fulfillment of their faith, one being in relationship with God. This was a difficult process, as the Holy Spirit gave their conversion the strength it needed at Pentecost. The apostles slowly became Christian. Their faith life evolved; it took time to absorb the ramifications of fresh knowledge. It seems that an individual's process of evolving in relationship with God and coming to know Him could be similar to the process of the Church's Magisterium.

The ideas inherited from Judaism could not, however, remain permanently self-enclosed and self-sufficient. They were subject to a process of christianization, of being drawn into the sphere of christology, along a trajectory whose basic direction was already visible in the patristic age but whose journey was far from completed then.<sup>130</sup>

Benedict believes that the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus calls humanity to new life. We can be graced by the liberation from affliction and sin. This new life brings humanity a Christology, a new way of seeing God, one of being in relationship. It seems we can slowly or suddenly undergo a conversion and be in relationship with God. Benedict believes that this conversion is usually an inward

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<sup>129</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 138.

<sup>130</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 138.

process that can have an external effect. One's purification can occur before and/or after death. To be in relationship with God one can undergo a continuous conversion and, with conversion, purification can unfold. Purgatory is an intermediate state where one can be purified to be in relationship with God. To be purified by God, one can move with God's sanctifying grace towards the resurrection of the body. What if someone does not want to be purified or in relationship with God? "According to this scheme, hell's portals are now open for the sinner, just as heaven's gate is for the just."<sup>131</sup>

Is Christianity nothing more than a Greek cult? Benedict points to a dynamic unfolding that is part of the human condition within man and, externally, within the heritage of antiquity. He does not shy away from addressing "the real significance of Greek influence on Christianity, and so to describe justly the development which Christianity underwent, we must carry out some reflection of our own on the attitudes of the Greeks to the body and the soul."<sup>132</sup> All of the apostles were of Jewish heritage, as was (is) Jesus. The multiple Greek gods during Plato's life conflicted with the Judaic Hebrew Scriptures. Greek culture evolved in thought from Homer to Plato. Benedict argues that it was the Orphic mystery religion (he also quantifies that by origin, it was far from Greek) that Plato borrowed and re-established the political agenda of justice.

So that what gives truth to the things known and the power to know to the knower is the form of the good. And though it is the cause of knowledge and truth, it is also an object of knowledge. Both knowledge and truth are beautiful things, but the good is other and more beautiful than they.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 139.

<sup>132</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 141.

<sup>133</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1992), 182.



According to Benedict, Plato was very observant of the human condition, seeing a threefold dynamic “at work in man.”<sup>134</sup> Plato’s doctrine crossed the boundaries from religion to philosophy and arose from a political crisis condition. Plato slowly realized that the soul hungered for unity and “consciously acknowledged the element of mystery in all of this.”<sup>135</sup> Benedict stresses that Plato’s “goal is, rather, the inner unity of man, the gathering together and purification of all our powers in ‘justice.’”<sup>136</sup> Plato recognized the soul as dynamic, and his doctrine promoted that our souls are immortal.

In Plato, the doctrine of immortality belongs to a religious context that is at the same time a departure point for a philosophy of justice, itself, in the perspective of his political thought, his principal concern.<sup>137</sup>

Benedict reminds us that Antiquity had its ebbs and flows of ideas. Aristotle regarded the “mind”<sup>138</sup> as the spiritual engine. The Stoics believed that there was “no future beyond death”<sup>139</sup> for man. The third century A.D. had a renaissance of Platonist philosophy with Plotinus. This renaissance resurrected Plato’s dynamics of the human condition where he expressed a threefold dynamic “at work in man.”<sup>140</sup> Like Plato, Plotinus continued a spiritual unfolding towards internal unity. Plotinus’ three substances, animating man’s internal movement, mirrored Plato’s internal dynamic by both stressing unity. It seems that both Plato and Plotinus were attentive to their internal dynamism and were given the grace of insight into the human dynamic.

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<sup>134</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 142.

<sup>135</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 142.

<sup>136</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 142.

<sup>137</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 143.

<sup>138</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 144.

<sup>139</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 144.

<sup>140</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 142.

Benedict links Greek antiquity's despair with that of the fundamental mood of antiquity at the time when Christianity was spreading.<sup>141</sup> Despair was prevalent for the pagans because the concept of hope was foreign; they only knew the finality of death. In comparison, the Jewish people wanted to live in relationship with God; only then is life found. For the apostles, conversion occurred and their Judaic faith was fulfilled in relationship with Christ. They believed that Christ was the Son of God from what they witnessed and lived. Benedict seems to stress that this conversion was no easy task, as they understood faith from the Judaic Hebrew Scriptures. The raising of Lazarus, the resurrection, and ascension of Christ, combined with Pentecost, and the coming of the Holy Spirit converted the apostles. This conversion ignited their faith for they were Jews who met Christ and became Christians. Benedict believes that the apostles were not looking for a conversion experience; they already believed in God and of living in relationship. They were converted by events that altered their interior dynamism. For the events that they witnessed, they could not deny, for it would have gone against their faith. They found life, one of living relationship with Christ, who rose from the dead. According to Benedict, the apostles' conversion occurred from a christological transformation, one that only God could have procured.

Benedict teaches that when Jesus rose from the dead, the seed of life arose for humanity to become anew. Renewed through, with and in Christ, a new man can emerge.

Clearly, then, what the Church had to maintain was, on the one hand, the central certainty of a life with Christ that not even death can destroy, and, on the other hand, the incompleteness of that life in the time before the definitive "resurrection of the flesh."<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 145.

<sup>142</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 147.

If a new man can emerge from Christ's resurrection, where does this leave the concept of the soul? Is it because of Jesus' resurrection and ascension that Benedict and the Catholic faith teach, that man is, in his unified totality, the creature of God, conceived and willed by him?<sup>143</sup> We return to Benedict's major clarification "the proper Christian thing, therefore, is to speak, not of the soul's immortality, but of the resurrection of the complete human being and of that alone."<sup>144</sup>

Benedict reminds us that, "The view of the afterlife, the span of time between death and resurrection which developed in the early Church, is based on Jewish traditions of the life of the dead in Sheol, traditions transmitted and given christological focus by the New Testament."<sup>145</sup>

When, where and how does a new concept of the soul emerge? According to Benedict, the concept of the soul germinated from before the time of Plato and Aristotle until the lifetime of St. Thomas Aquinas and still resonates today. Benedict believes that Aquinas, through God's grace, formulated the new concept of the soul. It gives humanity "a really tremendous idea: the human spirit is so utterly one with the body that the term 'form' can be used of the body and retain its proper meaning. Conversely, the form of the body is spirit, and this is what makes the human being a person."<sup>146</sup> Remember for Benedict, the

idea of the soul as found in Catholic liturgy and theology up to the Second Vatican Council has as little to do with antiquity as has the idea of the resurrection. It is a strictly Christian idea, and could only be

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<sup>143</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 147 & 148.

<sup>144</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 105.

<sup>145</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 146.

<sup>146</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 149.

formulated on the basis of Christian faith whose vision of God, the world and human nature it expresses in the realm of anthropology.<sup>147</sup>

Does the good thief's end of life experience reveal what Benedict calls the dialogical character of immortality? The good thief's life is changed through a dynamic dialogue with Jesus on the cross. This moment seems to express the birth of conversion when life (with its crosses to bear) is lived at its most difficult. With difficulty, a conversion can occur and can return one to the humble ground that one has come from God and with Christ the possibility of immortality exists. For Benedict, the possibility of immortality is only possible through, with and in Christ. In choosing to partake in the dynamic dialogical character of immortality, one can be transformed by coming into relationship with Christ. Benedict believes that the story of St. Peter walking on the water with an outstretched hand explains how humanity can stand on solid ground, but only with God. The truly stable factor in one's life, whether on water or land, is the dialogical character of communication with Christ. The dialogical character of immortality becomes dynamic through our participation with Christ. The possibility of immortality is not a human accomplishment but is a gift from God to humanity. When we acknowledge and return to God, the relationship becomes dynamic; this dynamic offers us true life. True life occurs when we come into dialogue with God. According to Benedict, when we try to live without God, the world shows us how everything else is unstable, but God's stability never changes.

For Benedict, dialogue means "man is defined by his intercourse with God."<sup>148</sup> He believes that Jesus opens the gate to dialogue with God and the dialogue releases the

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<sup>147</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 150.

<sup>148</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 152.

possibility of a relationship with God that can open the path to immortality. In its most extreme, the Gospel scenario of the good thief's intercourse with Jesus at the crucifixion is best understood through the christological event that the good thief reached out to dialogue with Christ. This christological event is reiterated through Benedict's explanation of the dialogical character of immortality. The dialogical character of immortality becomes a path that one can use.

The 'purification' of the heart which comes about in our daily lives, through the patience which faith and its offspring, love, engender, that purification finds its mainstay in the Lord who makes the paradoxical walking on the waters a possibility and so gives meaning to an otherwise absurd existence.<sup>149</sup>

Is there an inherent connection between immortality and creation? Remember Benedict clarifies for humanity the Christian belief of "the resurrection of the complete human being and of that alone."<sup>150</sup> He queries: "...how far can faith make an impression on the rationality which all men share, and so on philosophical reflection?"<sup>151</sup> He believes that "the answer to these questions is already indicated in what we have covered."<sup>152</sup> Benedict directly links humanity's created being with immortality. Just as life is given to man, immortality is given, but "man depends for it on Another."<sup>153</sup> Conversion can occur for man when he realizes that he is a created being. When man recognizes that he is a created being, then man can look to God. Man is meant to contemplate God, his creator.

When man is understood in terms of the formula *anima forma corporis*, that relationship to God can be seen to express the core of his very

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<sup>149</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 152 & 153.

<sup>150</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 105.

<sup>151</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 154.

<sup>152</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 154.

<sup>153</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 155.

essence. As a created being he is made for a relationship which entails indestructability.<sup>154</sup>

Why is it difficult for humanity to accept dependence and inherent relationship to God? Can Benedict divulge new insights into this human dilemma? He reminds us that humanity's denial of its relationship to God is the main theme that "biblical thought spirals constantly around..."<sup>155</sup>

Man as we know him wants to generate his own immortality. He would like to fabricate it out of his own stuff: *non omnis moriar*, not everything about me will perish. The *monumentum aere perennius*, the achievements I bequeath, these will immortalize a part of me.<sup>156</sup>

According to Benedict, humanity's denial of its inherent relationship with God directly denies the source of its life and the source of all its grace. This human denial inverts the source of the gifts to have originated in self and not originating in God, so an internal and external perversion occurs. One becomes perverted through an inversion of pride. Therefore we can internally and externally feel like a God. A distortion of self emerges; the insidious desire to be equal to God severs the relationship that makes man a Son.

The story of the battle of the angels in the Book of Revelation 12:7-9 can be used as a mirror to see how the pattern of feeling like a God echoes through the story of man with Adam and Eve. Why is this story helpful? "Of all God's creatures, human beings are nearest to the angels, and angelology thus promises to illuminate anthropology."<sup>157</sup>

Then war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels battled against the dragon. The dragon and its angels fought back, but they did not prevail and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The huge dragon,

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<sup>154</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 154.

<sup>155</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 156.

<sup>156</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 156.

<sup>157</sup> David Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 16.

the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth, and its angels were thrown down with it. (Book of Revelations 12:7-9)

St. Bonaventure “affirms that pride (*superbia*) was the original sin of Satan and his followers. They desired to be equal to God.”<sup>158</sup> A power relationship with similarities seems to exist between the fall of man and the fall of the angels. The same pattern seems to occur; both fallen creatures aspired to be equal to God. According to St. Bonaventure, this distorted aspiration binds us to sin and death whether created as an angel or a man. Benedict boldly expresses something similar with:

The result of his sin is not pure nothingness. Like every other creature, man can only move within the ambit of creation. Just as he cannot bring forth being of himself, so neither can he hurl it back into sheer nothingness. What he can achieve in this regard is not the annulment of being, but lived self-contradiction, a self-negating possibility, namely “Sheol.” The natural ordination towards truth, towards God, which of itself excludes nothingness, still endures, even when it is denied or forgotten.<sup>159</sup>

Self-contradiction and self-negating patterns become an *insidias diaboli*, because one can become a distortion of oneself. This can symbolically be understood with the fallen angel Lucifer, whose name means light-bearer, but now forever lives a distorted existence. Lucifer embodies a life lived in self-contradiction. His original created existence by God became perverted by the sin of pride (*superbia*) and now he lives the self-negation of the light. Lucifer can never annul the light because God created him out of His goodness and love. God gave him many gifts; Lucifer’s sin perverted his gifts. God decided that Lucifer and his followers were cast out of heaven. God never took their gifts away; their gifts became gravely perverted by their sin. Lucifer and his followers

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<sup>158</sup> Keck, *Angels and Angelology in the Middle Ages*, 24.

<sup>159</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 156.

are no longer allowed to be in relationship with God and that is why they live the binding Sheol-existence. “There is no repentance for the angels after their fall, just as there is no repentance for men after death.”<sup>160</sup>

It seems that unlike the angels who can never be redeemed, man can repent and regain his lost relationship with God. Benedict stresses that the gift of redemption is not man’s achievement but God’s. Just as man cannot bring forth himself, he cannot bring about his own salvation. Salvation for man is God-achieved. Man can participate in his redemption just like he can be in relationship with God, although it is never forced upon him.

Benedict expresses God’s act of salvation as a dynamic gift for humanity thus:

And this is where the affirmations of Christology come into their own. What happened in Christ was that God overcame this self-contradiction from within ---- as distinct from destroying human freedom by an arbitrary act from without. The living and dying of Christ tell us that God himself descends into the pit of Sheol, that in the land of absolute loneliness he makes relationship possible, healing the blind and so giving life in the midst of death. The Christian teaching on eternal life takes on, once again, a thoroughly practical character at this point. Immortality is not something we achieve. Though it is a gift inherent in creation it is not something which just happens to occur in nature. Were it so, it would be merely a *fata morgana*. Immortality rests upon relationship in which we are given a share, but by which, in sharing it, we are claimed in turn. It points to a praxis of receiving, to that model for living which is the self-emptying of Jesus, as opposed to the vain promise of salvation contained in the words ‘Ye shall be as gods,’ the sham of total emancipation. If human capacity for truth and for love is the place where eternal life can break forth, then eternal life can be consciously experienced in the present.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., (Citta del Vaticano: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1997), 99 section 393.

<sup>161</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 156 & 157.



Benedict surmises, "...the Christian understanding of immortality is the concept of God, and from this it draws its dialogical character."<sup>162</sup> Benedict's explanation can be further grasped from the Gospel of John, "And the Word became flesh, and he lived among us, and we saw his glory, glory like that of an only-begotten son from the Father, full of grace and truth." (*Jn* 1:14)<sup>163</sup> How can the Christian understanding of immortality be the concept of God, and how can its dialogical character become useful within daily life? Can life itself become one of continuous conversion? If so, does the experience of continuous conversion find its life centre from God? Does this new life become a blessing with the realization that each human is related to God? Benedict teaches that it is because of God that all human beings are related as brothers and sisters in Christ. It is directly because of man's relation to God that He opened for man a path of return. The path of return brings us to dialogue and dialogue brings the resurrection to a life, a life lived in relationship with God. A good example of this dialogue is the communication between the good thief and Christ at the crucifixion.

According to Benedict, the possibility of human immortality comes from human's "relatedness"<sup>164</sup> to God. Dialogue opens the path to find one's true relationship to God. Daily life can become one of true life living in dialogue with God. When one dialogues with God, one is in dialogue and living in relationship with the One who "is immortality, being that actuality of relationship which is Trinitarian love. God is not 'atomic': he is relationship, since he is love."<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>162</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 157.

<sup>163</sup> The Sacred Bible: The Gospel of John., [http://www.sacredbible.org/catholic/NT-04\\_John.htm](http://www.sacredbible.org/catholic/NT-04_John.htm) (accessed on January 5, 2013)

<sup>164</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 158.

<sup>165</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 158.

Benedict believes that when one can recognize the hand of God in creation, then life becomes anew, embodied with hope. This new life manifests the hope of communion with God, the hope of the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. “It is in the life of the body that God’s creature grows in maturity in expectation of seeing God’s face.”<sup>166</sup>

Life everlasting becomes a transfiguration of the entire human being, enveloped in unending unity with God and surrounded by those in dialogue with Him throughout the ages. Dialogue is a critical component towards achieving immortality (as experienced by the good thief). “...the Christian idea of immortality is fellowship with other human beings.”<sup>167</sup> According to Benedict, the dialogue spoken to the Son on the cross reconciled the good thief with the Father and humanity. The Son is the path that reconciled life and so humanity can be reunited to the Father. God, through the Son, graces humanity with an invitation to reconcile and unite the human and divine. Jesus accomplishes this reconciliation. Benedict teaches that the invitation is accessible to all but not forced upon any. It seems we must act upon the invitation with an open and contrite heart to reconcile with each other and in turn with God.

The Christian dialogue with God is mediated by other human beings where God speaks with men. It is expressed in the ‘We’ form proper to the children of God. It takes place, therefore, within the ‘body of Christ,’ in that communion with the Son which makes it possible for us to call God ‘Father.’ 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.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 159.

<sup>167</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 159.

<sup>168</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 159.

Where can one find those who throughout the ages sought the Father? Benedict directs us to the communion of saints. He teaches that within the communion of saints all the ages become one with all those who sought the Father. The saints are in everlasting communion with each other and the Trinity. They each became a son with the Son; an achievement one can hope for by asking for their constant intercession. The communion of everlasting life blesses the saints with each other and life everlasting with the Trinity. According to Benedict, the communion of everlasting life with the Trinity fulfills love beyond all human concept and expectation. A shattering of the human concepts of love and time occurs when one is living in communion with God. Eternity becomes apparent; a resurrection of one's life and time is transfigured through, with and in the light of the risen Christ even when living today. "The bond with Jesus is, even now, resurrection. Where there is communion with him, the boundary of death is overshot here and now."<sup>169</sup>

Dialogue seems to be inherent in the essence of the Trinity. Bernard Lonergan can succinctly give us an insight into this dynamic. At the beginning of this thesis, we learn from Lonergan, "that the only thing good by its essence is God; everything else is made good by its participation with God."<sup>170</sup> We may now understand that the saints were made good by participation with God and that they in turn can direct us towards the only thing good by its essence. Benedict believes that the saints have come to know God in dialogue and in life with Him. He stresses that God loves His creation and wants humanity to love and dialogue with Him.

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

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<sup>169</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 117.

<sup>170</sup> Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 31.

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 the Trinity itself. This is why the communion of saints is the locus where eternity becomes accessible for us. 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.<sup>171</sup>

Benedict's book raises the intense eschatological subjects. He reminds us that there are always unanswered questions. The deposit of the faith directs one to achieve a deeper understanding and we can rely on the saints to assist us in the correct direction. We will utilize the deposit of the faith to understand Benedict's succinct "Summary: The Principal Features of the Christian Faith in Eternal Life." We find his English translation title of St. Bernard of Clairvaux's treatise *Liber de diligendo Deo – Treatise on the Duty to love God*, from his General Audience in St. Peter's Square,<sup>172</sup> helpful.

Why? By focusing on the Latin word *diligendo* (the gerund form of the verb *diligere*) and the English word 'duty', we can be unblocked from the English language to understand a deeper connection regarding our duty to love God. St. Bernard deliberately chose the Latin word *diligendo* and not *amando* (the gerund form of the verb *amare*) for the title of his treatise *Liber de diligendo Deo*. Western cultural conditioning understands love from the perspective of *amare* in Latin, to love, to love oneself, to be in love. *Diligere* means to esteem, highly value, prize, to choose out – twice above all others, and also to love.<sup>173</sup> The *diligere* prefix is from the *Greek di* meaning two, twice, double plus *lego* to choose. St. Bernard could have chosen the Latin verb *amare* but instead he deliberately chose *diligere*. Western cultural conditioning can impede us with a

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<sup>171</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 159-160.

<sup>172</sup> Benedict XVI, "Two Theological Models in Comparison: Bernard and Abelard" *General Audience*, St. Peter's Square, Wed. 4 Nov. 2009, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/audiences/2009/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_aud\\_20091104\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/audiences/2009/documents/hf_ben-xvi_aud_20091104_en.html) (accessed 12 May, 2013)

<sup>173</sup> Gaffiot, F. *Dictionnaire Latin Français*. France, 1934. <http://www.lexilogos.com/latin/gaffiot.php> (accessed: 17 Mar. 2012).

significant misunderstanding in language translation. The meaning of *diligere* is lost in translation and creates a barrier that limits our understanding when reading the most common translations of the title, such as *On Loving God*.<sup>174</sup>

Diligence may give us an insight from “a sense evolved from ‘love’ through ‘attentiveness’ to ‘carefulness’ to ‘steady effort.’”<sup>175</sup> The treatise and its title should be analyzed with the concept of diligently esteeming God. Once one cherishes something, then one can accept the duty to care for the object of recognized value. The new perspective of *esteeming God* can shift our Western cultural conditioning towards understanding the profound meaning in the treatise and the living dynamic of eschatology.

St. Bernard and Benedict want us to accept the invitation to esteem God and then to choose to be reconciled and united to Him. Both teach that to love God is, above all, reasonable and profitable. This is a difficult concept at any time, but we should admit it is enticing: “...let us consider what profit we shall have from loving God.”<sup>176</sup> Benedict’s summary connects St. Bernard’s message with the ultimate profit of God, being one of eternal life with Him and His saints: immortality. This message is difficult for any age, since western cultural conditioning does not usually place God together with reasonable or profitable. St. Bernard’s message is current. His message shatters temporal time and it directs us to God. Benedict’s book and St. Bernard’s treatise equally disrupt the western prevailing concepts that generally consider worth as: profit, the perception of a person’s profession, and the wealth one accumulates. The Christian eschatological

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<sup>174</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 24.

<sup>175</sup> diligence. Dictionary.com. *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper, Historian. <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/diligence> (accessed: 17 Mar. 2012).

<sup>176</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 15.

message inverts temporal profit with the ultimate profit of God. St. Bernard has a sense of humour when he states, "...now let us consider what profit we shall have from loving God. Even though our knowledge of this is imperfect ...still better than to ignore it."<sup>177</sup>

According to Benedict, it is our duty to love God solely because God gives life. He reminds us that life is not something self-achieved. We can learn more from St. Bernard about this complex dynamic in life with his statement:

In the first creation He gave me myself; but in His new creation He gave me Himself, and by that gift restored to me the self that I had lost. Created first and then restored, I owe Him myself twice over in return for myself.<sup>178</sup>

St. Bernard succinctly explains the dynamics of how "I owe Him myself twice over in return for myself."<sup>179</sup> We need to recall that we are created first by God and then restored by Him. Being created and then restored is not something attainable through our own volition. According to St. Bernard and echoed by Benedict, we are twice indebted to God whether or not we realize the gravity of the debt occurred and justified through God's Son on the Cross. God is life. Our lives and redemption are made possible through Him and because of humanity's relationship to Him. The same is true for immortality; immortality is not something we can achieve through our own power. Immortality is a gift given (as is life) to humanity from God.

God too possesses immortality, or more correctly, he *is* immortality, being that actuality of relationship which is Trinitarian love.<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 15.

<sup>178</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 13.

<sup>179</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 13.

<sup>180</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 158.

## Chapter 2: Summary of *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* continued

### Introduction

Chapter Two continues with an overview of Benedict's book on *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life* focusing on both the salient points as it relates to this thesis' theme eschatology for modernity and *The Future Life* which includes *Hell, Purgatory and Heaven*. There is an overview to each part called an *Eschatological Map*, a brief synthesis, and a guide into eschatology.

### 2.1: *The Future Life*

#### 2.1.1: *Eschatological Map*

Benedict gives important last minute instructions to those reading the final chapters of his book.

The tradition of the faith is not given to us for the satisfying of idle curiosity. Where it exceeds the proper limits of human experience, its aim is to direct us, not to divert, that is, to entertain us. This is why it opens up what lies beyond only to the extent that this will be a helpful signpost for those in the here and now. We must bear this in mind as we turn now to the final theme of eschatology.<sup>181</sup>

This eschatological map returns to the beginning by re-examining Benedict's main directions or directives and the tensions that arise in eschatology. Benedict constantly raises pertinent questions and opens the reader to the relevant eschatological content of the *Future Life* by being humbly inquisitive. We learn from Benedict that the human condition lives in the world between tensions and that, where the measuring of the human spirit meets the eschatological dimension (a major crossroad), there is no linear

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<sup>181</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 161.

development because “the experiences of man with the word, and with time, run on no straight course.”<sup>182</sup> Humanity’s limited concept of time becomes meaningless within the realm of “grace and repentance.”<sup>183</sup> Grace and repentance coexist within the *Future Life* and Benedict stresses the necessity of returning to modesty and humility to correctly approach eschatology. Benedict implores us to be cautious and modest in dealing with *Tradition and the Future Life*. “In the case of immortality, what the New Testament offers to reflection is a beginning, not an end.”<sup>184</sup>

### **2.1.2: Unpacking the Future Life**

Benedict opens this chapter with this pertinent question. “What Does ‘The Resurrection of the Dead’ Mean?”<sup>185</sup> In the last chapter, Benedict examined the christological dimensions within the Christian concepts of resurrection and immortality. Benedict points out that 20<sup>th</sup> century “theological developments lay in an abrupt rejection of ‘immortality,’ combined with a passionate plea for ‘resurrection.’”<sup>186</sup> He strongly refocuses us on the Christian concepts from the deposit of the faith. Benedict poses many questions including, “What is the resurrection?”<sup>187</sup> ... Is there such a thing as the end of time?”<sup>188</sup> He reiterates “‘being with Christ which awaits the believer after death, should one posit something more?’”<sup>189</sup> He also questions history, matter, the risen state, a truly

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<sup>182</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 44.

<sup>183</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 30.

<sup>184</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 171.

<sup>185</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 165.

<sup>186</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 165.

<sup>187</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 165.

<sup>188</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 166.

<sup>189</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 166.



last day, and faith's expectation of matter. Benedict refutes A. Vögtle's scholarship by disagreeing "that the New Testament teaches nothing about the future of the cosmos."<sup>190</sup>

#### A. Vögtle's claims that the New Testament

...cannot be demonstrated that so much as one of the texts relevant in this context means to offer a prediction of a didactic kind about the future destiny of the universe. It cannot even be shown to be probable. Nor can it be argued that Jesus himself, or the bearers of the primitive Christian proclamation, believed that the Christ-event would effect change in the future state of the universe...The new Testament makes no claim to offer a didactic statement about the cosmological dimension in the proper sense of the phrase.

Benedict asserts that A. Vögtle's "...enquiry rests on the superimposition of historical and systematic categories whose own methodological foundation is distinctly murky."<sup>191</sup> Benedict directs the reader to A. Vögtle scholarship and explains that the "...New Testament images should not be interpreted in a naively direct fashion as objective statements. Between the linguistic schema and the objective intention there is a difference---..."<sup>192</sup> He reminds his readers that neither A. Vögtle nor anyone for that matter should negate or add cosmological statements that exceed "the limits which a sound methodology would properly set."<sup>193</sup>

At the closing of the last chapter, Benedict succinctly reveals that the New Testament exposes a living dynamic, a dialogue towards a relationship with God; God who *is* immortality. Since immortality is incomprehensible within one's own capability, the tradition of faith can humbly guide one towards God. Scholars can exert that their knowledge exceeds or negates past knowledge. Benedict explains this pattern earlier

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<sup>190</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 166.

<sup>191</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 167.

<sup>192</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 167.

<sup>193</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 167.

The obverse of this courage should be the modesty of not claiming to have just discovered what Christianity is really about by dint of one's 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.<sup>194</sup>

Benedict begins with, "What, then, has tradition to say on this issue?"<sup>195</sup> He is determined to err on the side of simplicity and to be modest in dealing with tradition and the future life. Benedict reminds us of his previous teaching, on the New Testament's relationship to the Hebrew Scriptures and how Jesus fulfills the Hebrew Scriptures, by liberating humanity from the affliction of sin and death. This liberation from Jesus can occur in the present, after death from purgation, and in Heaven "as a continuation of life with Christ."<sup>196</sup> Benedict questions if

this intermediate state is itself the resurrection? Or, by way of contrast is the resurrection distinguished from that state as a further stage, as yet unrealized and so the proper object of fresh expectation? We must also ask whether there exist explicit statements about bodiliness in the risen state, statements which are not simply linguistic devices lingering on from traditional eschatological discourse, but are consciously formulated in a novel way on the basis of the Christian reality.<sup>197</sup>

Benedict draws attention to First Corinthians 15, 35-53 where Paul is challenged by "an opponent who had attempted a *reduction ad absurdum* of resurrection faith by asking, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"<sup>198</sup> These questions are timeless. Benedict teaches that the dilemma to understand the resurrection of the body and the life of the world to come is something that is beyond human comprehension without the direction of tradition. The only experience that humanity can

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<sup>194</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 60.

<sup>195</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 168.

<sup>196</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 168.

<sup>197</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 168-169.

<sup>198</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 169.

rely on is to seek Christ's face and to hope for one's resurrection through, with and in Christ. The resurrection is not something attainable through one's own capabilities. According to Benedict, it is a power beyond, yet attainable through man's relationship to Christ. The power of the resurrection comes from God and that alone shatters humanity's limited concept of time, space and matter. The resurrection is a force from on high and seems to become attainable when one reaches towards Christ.

Benedict explains the view of Paul within the tradition of faith with: "[the] body exists not only in the Adamic mode of the ensouled body but also in the christological mode pre-figured in the resurrection of Jesus, a corporeality stemming from the Holy Spirit."<sup>199</sup> A corporeality stems from the Holy Spirit, the Lord the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, with the Father and Son is worshipped and glorified, is the breath, the animator of life in the world. "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh is of no avail. It is within this tension that the novel and distinct realism of the risen Lord becomes apparent beyond all naturalism and spiritualism alike."<sup>200</sup> Benedict is mindful of the explicit tension that exists between the worlds of naturalism and spiritualism. The resurrection of Christ shatters human capacities and manifests, for humanity, the challenging reality of God.

Benedict highlights two New Testament passages, the first: "I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. And the second is the passage: "my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I

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<sup>199</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 169-170.

<sup>200</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 170.

in him.”<sup>201</sup> Benedict raises the difficult question, “Will the New Testament yield any further, and more concrete, kind of enlightenment about the nature of the risen body?”<sup>202</sup> He directs one to: Second Corinthians 5, I, Ephesians 2,6, Colossians 3, I-3 and returns to First Corinthians 15, stating that

...these texts are not clear enough to offer any certainty in advancing additional statements over and above what is contained in First Corinthians 15. They underscore the newness of the risen life which comes from above, not from below. They stress the Christological character of that life. But they offer no theory about the relation between Christ’s body and the risen bodies of believers.<sup>203</sup>

Benedict succinctly expresses that “one must be very cautious when using biblical data in systematic theology.”<sup>204</sup> He directs us to recognize the bias’ we have when asking questions regarding biblical data and how this bias affects our answers caused from another bias in “the way we have decided in their favor.”<sup>205</sup> This exposes how one’s biased opinion creates a complicating factor “in the theological appropriation of scripture... something demanded by the structure of the Bible’s own affirmations.”<sup>206</sup> This is the reason that Benedict teaches that one must be cautious and modest in dealing with tradition and the future life. “In the case of immortality, what the New Testament offers to reflection is a beginning, not an end.”<sup>207</sup> He further states, “The Bible itself forbids Biblicism.”<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 169-170.

<sup>202</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 170.

<sup>203</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 171.

<sup>204</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 171.

<sup>205</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 171.

<sup>206</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 171.

<sup>207</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 171.

<sup>208</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 171.

Benedict returns to the topic of the resurrection. According to him, one must humbly await and have hope in the resurrection of Christ for oneself and the world. Reflection on the resurrection can open a new path for one to live in relationship with God. One must remain with God and in relationship with Him, and then one can humbly acknowledge that the possibility of one's own resurrection remains solely in the open and loving capacities of God. Benedict believes that the resurrection of Christ was made manifest from the love between the Holy Trinity that gives life to the world. One can seek the face of the resurrected Christ and it is through the grace of God that one's life becomes resurrected; an altered self emerges. When one crosses over the threshold from this life to the future life, an altered self re-emerges as one humbly seeks an eternal relationship, one of being with God. An eternal relationship with God shatters all human constraints of time, space and matter. God is the Alpha and Omega. Benedict has claimed that God *is* immortality. He acknowledges, "That the resurrection state is quite different from our present conditions of life is resoundingly affirmed."<sup>209</sup>

What does the early history of the resurrection formula in the Western Creed teach? The Creed does not speak of the "resurrection of the dead," but of the "resurrection of the flesh."<sup>210</sup> Benedict reminds us of the Creed's historical Judaic roots. "Thanks to its Jewish roots, this phrase indicates the salvation of the human creature, or of creation, in its entirety."<sup>211</sup> We should recognize that the Creed's teaching does not assume the resurrection of bodiliness.<sup>212</sup> Benedict clearly addresses this dilemma with "there could at this stage be no direct answer to the question of whether the resurrection

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<sup>209</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 172.

<sup>210</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 172.

<sup>211</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 172.

<sup>212</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 172.

of the human creature necessarily extended to bodiliness.”<sup>213</sup> The resurrection formula in the Western Creed directly connects Benedict’s difficult point that: “The proper Christian thing, therefore, is to speak, not of the soul’s immortality, but of the resurrection of the complete human being and of that alone.”<sup>214</sup> Benedict does not hide the controversies that the early Church endured. He recognizes its struggle and directs one to stay the course with him while he clarifies an underlying unity within the dynamic difficulties. The main controversy he unveils (in this section) is intertwined with the Christian belief in “the resurrection of the flesh” and Paul’s statement that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”<sup>215</sup> On the surface these statements seem to teach a conflicting point of view. How will Benedict decipher this conundrum that he expresses strongly as “a wrestling match between Pauline and Johannine terminology, an altercation over the concrete content of Christian realism.”<sup>216?</sup>

First, Benedict directs one to the Valentinian gospel of Philip, he states that “the text does not deny the resurrection of the flesh, yet interprets it in such a way that its scandal disappears.”<sup>217</sup> The text negates the resurrection of one’s own flesh and states that, “he no longer bears his own flesh, but the flesh of Christ.”<sup>218</sup> Benedict explains how “the resurrection of Christ is already our own resurrection.”<sup>219</sup> The gospel of Philip’s compromise negates “the resurrection of the complete human being and of that alone.”<sup>220</sup> Therefore the early Church did not accept the compromise in the gospel of Philip because

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<sup>213</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 172.

<sup>214</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 105.

<sup>215</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 173.

<sup>216</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 173.

<sup>217</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 173.

<sup>218</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 173.

<sup>219</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 173.

<sup>220</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 105.

the resurrection of the flesh would have been reduced. “The Church’s rejection of Valentinus resulted from her conviction that God is faithful to his *whole* creation.”<sup>221</sup>

Benedict starts to unify the seeming disorder in the early Church by utilizing the writings of Justin Martyr, who wrote about

First Corinthians 15, 50, placing that controversial text in a completely new context: Paul wished to say that whatever corresponds to the flesh is death. The flesh has nothing else to hope for: least of all, the Kingdom of God. For in this process of inheritance, God’s Kingdom is always a subject, never an object. The kingdom of God is life, and this life also inherits the body, the flesh.<sup>222</sup>

Benedict succinctly clarifies the knowledge that the Church gained from clarifying the resurrection formula in the Western Creed with:

At the end of the subapostolic period it had become clear that “‘the resurrection of the flesh’ can mean that resurrection of the creature only if it also means the resurrection of the body.”<sup>223</sup>

Benedict then addresses the misappropriation of utilizing the incorrect method of exegesis with “the apparent biblicism of Valentinus turned out to be the narrowing down of faith to a handful of Pauline passages ...”<sup>224</sup> He unifies his explanation by stating: “The real content of Paul’s teaching had to be defended on the basis of John and the Synoptics.”<sup>225</sup>

Benedict unifies the resurrection of the flesh and the resurrection of the body. At the same time, he shows the interdependence and unity within the writings of Paul and John as a cohesive whole when read with in the context of the New Testament. Benedict

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<sup>221</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 175.

<sup>222</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 174-175.

<sup>223</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 175.

<sup>224</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 175.

<sup>225</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 175.

believes that this cohesion exists solely because of their unified relationship to Christ and His Church.

Benedict does not withdraw from addressing the difficult subjects. He summarizes each daunting topic and then he leads one into his next difficult question.

Benedict now broaches the debate about the risen body in the history of Theology.

After people had reached a modicum of clarity on the point that the resurrection of the flesh must include that of the body in some form as yet undetermined, the next question they naturally asked was, What is a risen body?<sup>226</sup>

In approximately five pages, Benedict answers his posed question. He begins with Origen and the Origenist School that attempted to secure an answer to the question. He believes that the Origenist School negated the humanity of man by inverting “the risen body into a mathematical conundrum of the ideal form of the body, identified as that of the sphere.”<sup>227</sup> Benedict succinctly explains how “the magisterium had to protect a human resurrection over against a mathematical one.”<sup>228</sup> The Bible explains this mystery of faith with the raising of Lazarus. He teaches that the raising of Lazarus creates a mirror for humanity to understand the risen body is a mystery of faith and a human conundrum to achieve without the power of God. Christ raises Lazarus’ body and therefore one learns that one’s own body becomes capable of rising from being in relationship with Christ. It seems that the two themes of the resurrection of Lazarus and Christ are inexplicably interwoven and become more intelligible together when asking, “What is a risen body?”<sup>229</sup> The mystery of faith is embedded with Christ’s resurrection

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<sup>226</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 176.

<sup>227</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 177.

<sup>228</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 177.

<sup>229</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 176.



and “Eucharistic realism.”<sup>230</sup> Benedict believes that the resurrection of Christ and Eucharistic realism<sup>231</sup> are two daunting topics that are incomprehensible without faith and tradition as a guide. Both exist outside the realm of human capability without being in relationship with God. It seems that through the gift of faith, a grace given by the Holy Spirit, one can believe in Christ and the sacrament of communion. St. Thomas Aquinas eloquently expresses human limitation with:

That in this sacrament are the true Body of Christ and his true Blood is something that ‘cannot be apprehended by the senses’, says St. Thomas, ‘but *only by faith*, which relies on divine authority.’<sup>232</sup>

The Church teaches that,

in the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist “the body and blood together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, *the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained.*”<sup>233</sup>

Benedict now directs us to the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, a doctor of the Church, who unifies the difficult topics of the body soul relationship. Aquinas, through God’s grace, achieves an explanation that unifies Christ’s body, soul and divinity with man’s human condition of body and soul. The reality of man’s existence is due to God’s capacity and his capability to create and re-open the path for man to be in relationship with Him. Aquinas explains the unity of the human and divine with his

interpretation of the formula *anima forma corporis*, both soul and body are realities only thanks to each other and as orientated towards each other. Though they are not identical, they are nevertheless one; and as one, they constitute the single human being. As both expression and being expressed they make up a dual unity of a quite special kind.<sup>234</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 178.

<sup>231</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 178.

<sup>232</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2nd ed., 348 section 1381.

<sup>233</sup> *Catechism*, 346 section 1374

<sup>234</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 178-179.

Aquinas teaches that the body and soul are not identical, just as man and God are not identical, but become one through relationship. How does Aquinas help to grant insights into the debate about the risen body in the history of theology? Benedict believes that the insights that Aquinas gave to the Church have extraordinary reverberations for contemplating the actuality of the risen body. Although he does qualify that “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 concerns of the great doctor are preserved.”<sup>235</sup> For both Benedict and Aquinas, the central point at the heart of the matter is unity; the unity of the body and the soul uniquely bound to each other in their combined unity express the creation of a unique human being. It is in the unique relationship of body and soul, and their relationship to God, that was expressed in the story of Lazarus. Aquinas’ contribution to the debate, about the risen body and its actual unity expressed through, with and in one’s body-soul relationship, should, upon further inspection, bring one closer to Christ. Benedict concludes with, “Bodiliness is something other than a summation of corpuscles.”<sup>236</sup> He directs one from the historical to “two interrelated questions of systematic theology: the end of time and the ‘materiality’ of the resurrection.”<sup>237</sup> The next question that Benedict raises is nonetheless complicated, “What Is ‘Resurrection on the Last Day’?”<sup>238</sup>

Benedict teaches that, “it goes counter to the logic of both scripture and tradition to locate the resurrection in the moment of the individual’s death.”<sup>239</sup> Man is, in life,

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<sup>235</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 181.

<sup>236</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 181.

<sup>237</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 181.

<sup>238</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 181.

<sup>239</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 181-182.

bound to time and lives in relation to it, but man, is at the same time, bound to God and to other human beings. So life, therefore, is communal as a human being. True life is always one of renewal through seeking a relationship with God and to others. It is because of God that man has an inheritance transcending time. Man encompasses a duality of body and spirit. Benedict believes that St. Augustine gives one an insight into time and eternity. When Augustine peruses his memory in Book X of *Confessions*, “he finds past, present and future gathered into one in a peculiar way which, on the one hand, offers some idea of what God’s eternity might be like, and, on the other, indicates the special manner in which man both is bound to time and transcends time.”<sup>240</sup>

This is a difficult topic to comprehend; what’s the point? Benedict indicates, “Time is not just a physical quality ascribed to man but wholly external to him.”<sup>241</sup> So, can one assume that everything, in the realm of eschatology, death and eternal life, is ascribed to man, but is wholly external to him and resides in another dimension? Does this explain why eschatology is a daunting subject and why it disturbs man’s equilibrium? Eschatology seems to be the realm of theological discourse that humbles man to recognize his limited time, sin, and that he is ultimately ascribed to Him. According to Benedict, man is a created being and God is an uncreated essence who exists wholly externally to him but is consummated by communion. Time is given to man as a gift that allows man to know God, man’s creator, who exists inside and outside the realm of time. God is humanity’s only stabilizing force. He is the only uncreated essence and the eternal fount of love Who can resurrect life and liberates man from the affliction of sin.

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<sup>240</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 182.

<sup>241</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 183.

Benedict believes that after one's death, eternity does not just happen to occur. This is a dimension that is external to man and cannot be attained through one's own power. "When we die, we step beyond history."<sup>242</sup> One's relationship to history never vanishes, because one's life is imprinted forever on others who live and who have lived. Therefore we can never separate our lives from our history, because our lives were lived in community with others and reverberate forever. Benedict addresses how life is connected because one's life is never one's own within the network of humanity. God's dynamism lives through the temporal and the eternal dimensions because He is the indestructible relation<sup>243</sup> between human life, history and eternity. This relation is revealed through, with and in Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension and by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Lord the giver of Life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son.

Whereas guilt is bondage to time, the freedom of love, conversely, is openness for time. The nature of love is always to be 'for' someone. Love cannot, then, close itself against others or be without them so long as time, and with it suffering, is real.<sup>244</sup>

According to Benedict, affliction and suffering are real components that affect human life at its deepest core. We learn that one person's suffering can become communal. Affliction and suffering can be external, but at the same time can be wholly internal when one feels pain or another's pain. Within human history and time, affliction, suffering and sin exist. One can utilize the Apostles' Creed as a mirror into understanding when the theological specialty of eschatology becomes its most valuable and relevant. Its relevance is magnified and repeats in all times of affliction, suffering

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<sup>242</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 184.

<sup>243</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 187.

<sup>244</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 188.

and sin, through one's life-time and human history.

In the Apostles' Creed, Christ suffers under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into Hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

This segment of the Creed is where Christ descends into Hell and liberates humanity through his love from all affliction, suffering and sin that live externally and wholly internally within human history and time. Benedict teaches that by rising, Christ liberates humanity from the bondage of human time and opens the freedom of love that lives wholly external in God's eternal dimension. We cannot enter eternity through our own devices, but only through God's power. St. Bernard of Clairvaux reminds us that God paid a great debt for humanity's salvation. We are twice indebted to God whether or not we realize the gravity of the debt, occurred and justified through God's Son on the Cross. "...I owe Him myself twice over in return for myself."<sup>245</sup> The Catechism succinctly states, "All sinners were the author's of Christ's passion."<sup>246</sup> This statement shows the grave effects of the interdependence and unity that each person has on another. If as a Christian one supposedly knows Christ, as Christians profess, then are Christians held to be more responsible for their actions that cause sin? When a Christian denies Christ by his irresponsible deeds and actions, he willingly denies his redeemer and disappoints Christ as Peter did when he denied Him three times. What relevance does this have in the present world and what does any of this have to do with Benedict's original question, what is "Resurrection on the Last Day?"<sup>247</sup>

In a very interesting description, we can learn from the Catechism that "*Death is a*

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<sup>245</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 13.

<sup>246</sup> *Catechism*, 154 section 598.

<sup>247</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 181.

*consequence of sin.*”<sup>248</sup> If man did not die because of sin, then the crucifixion, death and resurrection of Christ would not have been necessary. According to the Catechism, Benedict and St. Bernard, man was originally born free of death but, through man’s disobedience, original sin binds man to die. Only Jesus, the Son of God and man’s Brother, in obedience to His Father, suffered for man and freed him of his human condition of death, bound by original sin. Jesus “transformed the curse of death into a blessing.”<sup>249</sup> The transformation of the curse of death into a blessing is the profound debt that again St. Bernard of Clairvaux alluded to:

In the first creation He gave me myself; but in His new creation He gave me Himself, and by that gift restored to me the self that I had lost. Created first and then restored, I owe Him myself twice over in return for myself.<sup>250</sup>

The Catechism clarifies this dynamic:

Even though man’s nature is mortal, God had destined him not to die. Death was therefore contrary to the plans of God the Creator and entered the world as a consequence of sin. ‘Bodily death, from which man would have been immune had he not sinned’ is thus ‘the last enemy of man’ left to be conquered.<sup>251</sup>

Benedict reiterates that man’s original and restored gift of immunity over death is solely from the power and immortality of God. The source of the gift of immunity is forever external to man’s human condition, but at the same time intrinsic to him because of his relation to God. Relationship and love are at the heart of the matter when it comes to God and His created humanity. It is the intrinsic relation, God created first and then

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<sup>248</sup> *Catechism*, 263 section 1008.

<sup>249</sup> *Catechism*, 263 section 1009.

<sup>250</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 13.

<sup>251</sup> *Catechism*, 263 section 1008.

restored, that affects each and every person. Benedict eloquently states the underlying unifying relationship of humanity with:

Every human being exists in himself and outside himself: everyone exists simultaneously in other people. What happens in one individual has an effect upon the whole of humanity, and what happens in humanity happens in the individual. ‘The body of Christ means that all human beings are one organism, the destiny of the whole the proper destiny of each.’<sup>252</sup>

If sin is the undercurrent that aborts life and plunges one into death, then what does sin have to do with the “Resurrection on the Last Day?”<sup>253</sup> The dénouement arrives when “all the dead will rise, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.”<sup>254</sup> The word judgment can be disturbing, so it may be simpler to contemplate that God will likely have the final word over his created beings. God is love and wants a relationship with His creation. Even a small dialogue can lead towards reconciliation and ultimately communion with Him.

Benedict now returns to the risen body and acknowledges Thomas Aquinas, but adds: “the fundamental insight to which Thomas broke through was given a new twist by Rahner when he noted that in death the soul becomes not acosmic but all-cosmic.”<sup>255</sup> Benedict cites that according to Rahner, God manifests the soul to have life beyond time and matter at which time the soul becomes all-cosmic.<sup>256</sup> But at the same time, the soul still longs for its reunification when it is reconciled and reunited to its body by the power of God. The dead body can only await its reunification with its soul at the time of the body’s resurrection made manifest by the power of God. God’s power solely produces

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<sup>252</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 190.

<sup>253</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 181.

<sup>254</sup> *Catechism*, 260 section 998.

<sup>255</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 191.

<sup>256</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 191.

the resurrection of the body at some point unknown to man. In the interim, the soul hopefully moves towards God and awaits to be reunited with its resurrected body. St. Bernard of Clairvaux contributes an interesting insight into the complex topic of the soul and body's reunification in his treatise *Liber de diligendo Deo* in Chapter XI. He reveals the depths of Christianity and makes revelation accessible, albeit a difficult subject in any time and for any man. His eschatological question continues this discussion, "What of the souls already released from their bodies?"<sup>257</sup> St. Bernard explores the mysterious dynamics in the afterlife: the concept and actuality of immortality with God. His treatise's ultimate goal is the same as in Benedict's book and that is, to direct man's life to be reconciled and united in body and soul with God on Earth and in Heaven. These concepts weigh heavily on man, as we prefer to ignore them rather than to raise the complex questions. St. Bernard states the question and then helps man to understand this topic with profound ease in explanation. "...the spirit would not yearn for reunion with the flesh if without the flesh it could be consummated."<sup>258</sup>

It seems that the resurrection of Christ from the dead mirrors the mystery of how the impossibility of one's soul can become reunited with one's body, "for nothing will be impossible with God."<sup>259</sup> Man's body and soul live as one on earth, perfectly uniting the human and divine on the horizontal plane. From the moment of birth until death, living in the temporal reality manifests this unification. The body and soul of a man realize a perfect symbiosis that mirrors the vertical plane, the living spiritual reality of God.

The body is a help to the soul that loves God, even when it is ill, even when it is dead, and all the more when it is raised again from the dead: for illness

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<sup>257</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 24.

<sup>258</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 24.

<sup>259</sup> *Catechism*, 72 section 273.



is an aid to penitence; death is the gate; and the resurrection will bring consummation.<sup>260</sup>

God seems to be the final reward and the greatest profit one can achieve for all eternity. St. Bernard considers the resurrection of the flesh to be the eternal consummation state of eternal love, re-united to God in body and soul, consumed in everlasting grace.

Before death, while we are still in mortal flesh, we eat the labors of our hands, we swallow with an effort the food so gained; but after death, we shall begin eagerly to drink in the spiritual life and finally, reunited to our bodies, and rejoicing in fullness of delight, we shall be refreshed with immortality.<sup>261</sup>

It is interesting to consider that St. Bernard wrote his treatise nine hundred years ago and that it is still relevant for eschatology today. The idea of the risen body shatters time for humanity. It is in this timeless phenomenon that God exists and that dynamism abounds, precisely with how Benedict concludes this section. He clearly states:

The new world cannot be imagined. Nothing concrete or imaginable can be said about the relation of man to matter in the new world, or about the 'risen body'. Yet we have the certainty that the dynamism of the cosmos leads towards a goal, a situation in which matter and spirit will belong to each other in a new and definitive fashion. This certainty remains the concrete content of the confession of the resurrection of the flesh even today, and perhaps we should add: especially today.<sup>262</sup>

Benedict now broaches the subject of the return of Christ and the final judgment from the perspective of symbolic and biblical data. There seems to be a pattern that forms between the timelessness of the signs in the Bible and Benedict's main focus point in this section. Benedict directs us to focus on Christ and to remember His critical

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<sup>260</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 24.

<sup>261</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 25.

<sup>262</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 194.

instructions with: “What I say to you, I say to all, Be Watchful!”<sup>263</sup> Is it in man’s watchfulness that he prepares himself for living a life of transcendence, one in relationship with God? Does watchfulness prepare us to see the wholly Other? Is it in man’s watchfulness that he can constantly seek the face of God? Does watchfulness awaken us to focus on the universe of God and not on our relative universe? According to Benedict, when man is with God, he truly lives on Earth as it is in Heaven. When man lives his earthly life in isolated existence, his relative universe (a man-made construct) becomes banal. Man is bound to time, death and the plane where the antichrist “always assumes the lineaments of contemporary history.”<sup>264</sup> The patterns and symbolism in the Bible live as a map to guide and so that if one seeks God, God finds him. “Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be open to you.” (Matt. 7:7-8)

Both St. Bernard and Benedict teach us to seek God’s face and seek deliverance from the snare of the hunter. They instruct us to be watchful because only Christ can deliver man from that which is not of God. The profit of contemplation and living in a state of watchfulness is to take refuge in the shelter of God’s regenerating grace. To seek God’s face is the ultimate reason one contemplates the crucified Christ. Through Christ, suffering becomes inverted and fulfilled by the redemption of the resurrection. This is the source of regenerating grace. To be watchful keeps life refreshed and renewed with a heightened level of awakening to true life. Life forever changes solely because one seeks Jesus, the Christ, who transcends life, time and history. Christ reconciled and united the human and the divine.

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<sup>263</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 195.

<sup>264</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 199.

The divine coming compels man to adopt an attitude of watchful readiness which looks out for the Parousia of Jesus and thus prevents history from falling into a self-enclosure which would condemn human existence to meaninglessness and purposelessness.<sup>265</sup>

Benedict directs us by discussing the allegories and images interwoven throughout the Bible that relate to the return of Christ. The allegories and images have their heritage from the Hebrew Scriptures given to humanity in a timeless language. Christianity believes that “Christ is not the cultic deity of some private religious association, but the true *imperator* of all the world.”<sup>266</sup> According to Benedict, Christ is the true imperator of the entire world. Then it is correct to interpret both the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament as a path that directs one towards God.

Benedict returns to a prominent pattern in this section, one of bridging the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament. The interconnectedness that wholly fulfills the Law in the Hebrew Scriptures is the manifestation of Christ. This interconnectedness is expressed in the words of The Apostles’ Creed with: “I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of Heaven and Earth to I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.”<sup>267</sup> This eschatological dimension is one that breaks through sometimes with a cry<sup>268</sup> and causes an internal and external metamorphosis turning us towards God. The metamorphosis opens the path towards a listening relationship, one of recognition towards the Holy Other. The power in life that one feels is not from oneself or from one’s own property but solely from the Other. The cry is in humble recognition that every breath is a grace from God.

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<sup>265</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 201.

<sup>266</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 202.

<sup>267</sup> *Catechism*, 49.

<sup>268</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 202.

Benedict utilizes the image of the “cry” and the “breaking-in” that must occur towards God. It is a dynamism that is a cycle manifested in different expressions or imaged formats, for example: one of “going and coming,” one of “internal and external”, one of “watchfulness and mission”, one of “word and action”, one of “ascending and descending”, one of “present and future”, and one of “openness to the world and its openness of what is to come”.<sup>269</sup> These images resonate throughout the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. Its ultimate manifestation “will be the definitive revelation and fulfillment of Easter.”<sup>270</sup> According to Benedict, humanity can gradually mature in life by learning to quietly listen and internalize the word and images. One needs to slowly internalize the images embedded in the eternal message of Christ with guidance from within the deposit of the faith.

The theme of watchfulness thus penetrates to the point where it can take on the character of mission: to let the Liturgy be real, until that time when the Lord himself gives to it that final reality which meanwhile can be sought only in image.<sup>271</sup>

Benedict’s section on judgment may liberate Christians from any misunderstandings that arise from the concept of judgment in Christianity. Benedict states, “As with the return of Christ, so the judgment escapes our attempts at conceptualization.”<sup>272</sup> This statement does not mean that judgment is negated. On the contrary, even though our knowledge of this is imperfect, it is better to seek more knowledge than to ignore it. Benedict directs us to the obvious for Christians that “God

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<sup>269</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 203.

<sup>270</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 204.

<sup>271</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 204.

<sup>272</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 204.

himself is called judge. But then so is Christ.”<sup>273</sup> First, Benedict deals with Matthew 19, 28, “the Twelve are told that in the new world they will sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. The same statement appears in more extended form in First Corinthians.”<sup>274</sup> In St. John, Benedict points out the juxtaposition within the pivotal importance of Christ. The critical difference being the condemnation of the world juxtaposed through the saving action of Him who said:

...I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. And: He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day.<sup>275</sup>

Benedict points to another prominent pattern, Christ’s action and His word, and how they unify Christology and the concept of God. He redirects all negative connotations perceived by human ignorance regarding Christ within the topic of judgment with:

Christ inflicts pure perdition on no one. In himself he is sheer salvation. Anyone who is with him has entered the space of deliverance and salvation. Perdition is not imposed by him, but comes to be whenever a person distances himself from Christ.<sup>276</sup>

If Christ is sheer salvation, then why must we be concerned at all with judgment in eschatology? Unfortunately, none of the topics in eschatology are unimportant otherwise it would shift the whole of Christology off its center. What is the christological center? Sheer salvation is encapsulated fully in the truth. “I came into the world for this: to bear witness to the truth.” (John 18:37) Truth is sheer salvation; one cannot exist without the Other. Man’s redemption solely originates from the One Truth, Christ. Only God has the

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<sup>273</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 205.

<sup>274</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 205.

<sup>275</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 205.

<sup>276</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 205.

power and capacity to unify judgment and salvation. He manifests the “redemptive transformation of the idea of judgment,”<sup>277</sup> just as He manifested the redemptive transformation of death with the power of the resurrection. This occurrence grants an insight into St. Bernard’s statement, “Created first and then restored, I owe Him myself twice over in return for myself,”<sup>278</sup> because “the truth which judges man has itself set out to save him.”<sup>279</sup> If this is so, then one would agree with Benedict that, “Christ does not allot damnation. Instead, man sets limits to salvation.”<sup>280</sup> Can this image be witnessed within the human dynamic displayed with Peter and Judas? Peter denied Christ three times and still returned to Him compared to Judas who denied Christ but rejected his own possible return to Him? Did Judas, as a man, set limits to his own salvation?

Now, we come to Benedict’s dominant motive for his text in eschatology. He contemplated the weight of one’s everlasting destiny with one’s unlimited human freedom, but juxtaposed that with all the inherent limitations arising internally and externally within the human condition. Benedict contrasts this with the angelic freedom and final destiny of those fallen Angels in their decision to reject God. But he finds that, even though the Angelic realm may mirror the undoubtedly critical decision that man at some point must make, that is, to be with God or reject Him, man is not an Angel. Thus, a problem arises between Angelic freedoms: freedoms being imposed onto Human freedom by “considering the human condition less than acceptable.”<sup>281</sup> Benedict reminds the reader that there are intrinsic limitations here, but the grappling question does not

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<sup>277</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 206.

<sup>278</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 13.

<sup>279</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 206.

<sup>280</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 207.

<sup>281</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 208.

disappear, because the finality of an “everlasting and irreversible destiny”<sup>282</sup> still stands.

He asks, “Is it not true that, for a judgment which is to hold throughout eternity, a different freedom would be required from that which we exercise elsewhere?”<sup>283</sup>

Benedict returns to truth with: “The truth of a man that judgment renders definitive is that truth which has emerged as the fundamental orientation of his existence in all the pathways of his life.”<sup>284</sup> How does this truth of a man emerge? Could this dynamic emergence possibly originate from the question posed by Christ, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” (Matthew 16:13-17) If one acknowledges, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16-17), does one’s life manifest a fundamental shift to a new orientation within the pathways of one’s true life? Does one’s true life begin when one responsibly decides with full freedom the most important question and decision in one’s life? Does that complete one’s “everlasting and irreversible destiny”<sup>285</sup> Only God fully knows Truth, which is He. Man, with his human limitations, can only be a creative collaborator with the Truth. The greatest hope for man and the world is to live in dialogue and be in relationship to the Truth.

Benedict moves forward with a theological evaluation and poses the question, “Can the Christian hope as described above still be meaningful in the world of today?”<sup>286</sup>

Benedict directs us to a human paradigm shift that has occurred for humanity: man believing in his rational empowerment regarding control of his own history. Man has become his own keeper and, for some, God has become irrational and is to be replaced by

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<sup>282</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 208.

<sup>283</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 208-209.

<sup>284</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 209.

<sup>285</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 208.

<sup>286</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 209.

technological feats. History has a new master, man, “it seems no longer something decreed by God or imposed by fate, but simply the result of our rational planning, through a practical reason which enjoys a manifest power over this earth.”<sup>287</sup> One should be watchful and not misunderstand Benedict’s point; he is not negating man’s responsibility with critical decisions that positively or negatively impact human history. Benedict knows that man is always seeking, but his seeking can become misguided with all the technological distractions in modern times. These advances give the perception of perfect planning and make man feel empowered. With that empowerment, man feels like he does not need God in his life. He is now in control of his life and his world.

Benedict believes that man has been deceived that he is in control of his life. In contrast, the eschatological question becomes the question of one’s own dying.<sup>288</sup> It is true that man is always seeking his own significance apart from God, but what tends to be lacking today is the concept that one’s sole significance is from God. Benedict teaches that all human significance is bestowed on humanity because of God’s love for his created beings. All human dignity originates from beyond itself, but is given to humanity to be graced from within. It is in the recognition of the gift that we become more diligent in its use. This gift is a responsibly given to all as a universal human condition, just as we receive the capability of life. This thesis will not speak further about the capability of life, but it was necessary to point it out as a universal human condition.

Since, the human condition of the eschatological question has not changed, St. Bernard of Clairvaux can give his insights into the human condition. He knows that man constantly seeks. He advises man to only seek for the highest gifts: dignity, wisdom and

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<sup>287</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 209.

<sup>288</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 11 & 12.



virtue.<sup>289</sup> “What hast thou that thou didst not receive?”(I Cor. 4.7)<sup>290</sup> “We must know, then, what we are, and that it is not of ourselves that we are what we are.”<sup>291</sup> One seems to be graced with dignity when he can recognize the gift of his free will. The gift of wisdom acknowledges this dignity and does not credit it to one’s own capabilities. Virtue understands that one is not God but must “seek eagerly for Him who is man’s Source...”<sup>292</sup> St. Bernard clarifies what Benedict is alluding to when he states: “...man does not live from technical planning alone. In his deepest interiority, he lives by a discovery of meaning which issues from a different kind of perceiving...Human power extends so far and no further.”<sup>293</sup>

If human power only extends so far and no further, then one must recognize human limitation. According to Benedict, the displacement of hope arises when we place hope to save the world solely on human affairs of state or on human ingenuity. Therefore, man-placing hope in man, or in some political engine or in history, inverts on humanity and becomes man’s ultimate anthropological perversion.<sup>294</sup> This perversion inflates man’s control that he alone can save the world without God and that the logic of God is illogical. “Faith does not substitute for rationality but rather requires it.”<sup>295</sup> Therefore, our hope in salvation originates externally from man and returns for man out of love. The source of life and love, that man seeks, is beyond human measure and lives beyond history. It is the fulfillment of Christ’s resurrection, by eternally transcending the world

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<sup>289</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 5.

<sup>290</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 4.

<sup>291</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 4.

<sup>292</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 4.

<sup>293</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 210 & 211.

<sup>294</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 213.

<sup>295</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 210.

into one of resurrection, which shatters the tensions of the human realm of the temporal world from its repeating history of suffering and death. Christ's resurrection obliterates all tensions originally imposed eternally on man (one of death) and reopens God's realm (one of life) over the antichrist imprisoning humanity onto itself. Humanity internalizes the external tensions of the antichrist who constantly seeks to distort the open realm of God. Freedom from the antichrist is the reason that the last petition of the *Our Father* states, "but deliver us from Evil."<sup>296</sup>

In this petition evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God. The devil (*dia-bolos*) is the one who throws himself across God's plan and his work of salvation accomplished in Christ.<sup>297</sup>

We learn from Benedict that man cannot liberate himself from the tensions of this distortion alone: man can ask God to liberate him from the affliction of them. In this moment, man may now recognize the 'Other' and resume responsibility for his actions against Him. Man can now replace the action of hope in him and renew his hope in God. Then one can become renewed by God's grace. Man is resurrected by the source of life. The realm of God has resurrected life, one for man to live truly with Him, free from all the tensions and distortions of the world, one of everlasting life.

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<sup>296</sup> *Catechism*, 685 section VII.

<sup>297</sup> *Catechism*, 685 section 2851.

## **2.2: *Hell, Purgatory, Heaven***

### *2.2.1: Eschatological Map*

Benedict gives important last minute instructions to those reading the final chapters of his book. We return to his explanation that,

The tradition of the faith is not given to us for the satisfying of idle curiosity. Where it exceeds the proper limits of human experience, its aim is to direct us, not to divert, that is, to entertain us. This is why it opens up what lies beyond only to the extent that this will be a helpful signpost for those in the here and now. We must bear this in mind as we turn now to the final theme of eschatology.<sup>298</sup>

This final eschatological map first turns to where the greatest tensions arise on the road of eschatology within the content of Hell and Purgatory. What does humanity need a resurrection from, if Hell and Purgatory do not exist? One may ask in this modern time if these topics matter to the ‘educated elite’? It is here that man needs to remember his limited power within the forces of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. As man is a created being, he created none of these great forces including love and freedom. We learn from Benedict that the forces exist eternally to him, but at the same time wholly affect every man. That is the living dynamic of faith, the conversion from solely loving oneself to loving what is beyond oneself and not a human construct. According to Benedict, the measuring of the human spirit is linked to a living history of interdependence and unity and so it is with eschatology. Eschatology encompasses the measuring of the human spirit and living dynamic of humanity, encapsulating all the tensions that live between the body and soul including Hell and Purgatory. When one is in Heaven, one lives sheltered

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<sup>298</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 161.

by salvific energy<sup>299</sup>, the fulfillment of the resurrection. Therefore, it seems that all tensions are shattered, for there is no tension that abides in the way, the truth and the light.

### **2.2.2: Unpacking Hell, Purgatory, Heaven**

Why are we exploring this contentiously perceived triumvirate of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven? To answer this question, we must return to the beginning of Benedict's book. In his, *Introduction: The State of the Question*, he explains eschatology's past with its present resurgence "for centuries eschatology was content to lead a quiet life as the final chapter of theology where it was dubbed 'the doctrine of the last things.' But in our own time, with the historical process in crisis, eschatology has moved into the very center of the theological stage."<sup>300</sup> The resurgence of eschatology has occurred through modern scholarship's reawakening "that Jesus' preaching was soaked through with eschatology."<sup>301</sup>

Benedict believes that "being a Christian the way Jesus intended is summed up in the central position of the "*Our Father*: 'Thy Kingdom come.'"<sup>302</sup> This is the central position that is taught by Jesus when he proclaims "the imminent end of the world, the breaking-in of the Kingdom of God."<sup>303</sup> Benedict explains that 'Thy Kingdom come' is the central petition in the prayer of the *Our Father* that leads to the 'breaking-in of the Kingdom of God', shattering the old world, causing "the breaking-in of a new reality

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<sup>299</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.

<sup>300</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 1.

<sup>301</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 1.

<sup>302</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 2.

<sup>303</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 2.

which only God can create.”<sup>304</sup> Benedict reprises his introductory eschatology reflections with the insight that “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.”<sup>305</sup>

Regarding Hell, Purgatory and Heaven, will this section integrate the opposing elements in the light of the Christian center, strike a fair balance and come to understand the real promise of faith more deeply? What is Benedict’s point of view on Hell, Purgatory and Heaven in eschatology? Benedict starts with Hell and he integrates a spark of humor when he states:

no quibbling helps here: the idea of eternal damnation, has a firm place in the teaching of Jesus, as well as in the apostolic writings. Dogma takes a stand on solid ground when it speaks of the existence of Hell and of the eternity of its punishments.<sup>306</sup>

Benedict reminds us that Hell is serious business and “the irrevocable takes place, and that includes then irrevocable destruction.”<sup>307</sup> He stresses that man needs to remember his limited power within the forces of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. As man is a created being, he created none of these great forces including love and freedom. These forces exist eternally to him but at the same time wholly affect every man. Benedict insightfully links the dynamics of freedom, love and responsibility within the internal battle of Heaven and Hell with his statement:

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<sup>304</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 2.

<sup>305</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 15.

<sup>306</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 215.

<sup>307</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 217.

Christ descends into Hell and suffers it in all its emptiness; but he does not, for all that, treat man as an immature being deprived in the final analysis of any responsibility for his own destiny. Heaven reposes upon freedom, and so leaves to the damned the right to will their own damnation.<sup>308</sup>

According to Benedict, the lesson of responsibility must be taken seriously because Christ holds one responsible. He unveils the vertical and horizontal planes in the Cross of Christ. Benedict explains that the Cross,

teaches us that God himself suffered and died. Evil is not then, something unreal for him. For the God who is love, hatred is not nothing. He overcomes evil, when He himself entered into the distinctive freedom of sinners but went beyond it in that freedom of his own love which descended willingly into the Abyss.<sup>309</sup>

In today's modern world, one may question if Hell is real and if the saints are real or some contrived political construct? Benedict succinctly answers the question with a powerful statement:

Hell is so real that it reaches right into the existence of the saints. Hope can take it on, only if one shares in the suffering of Hell's night by the side of the One who came to transform our night by his suffering.<sup>310</sup>

No one is granted immunity from the forces of Hell, not even the saints. Benedict ties the central petition of the *Our Father*, 'Thy Kingdom come' with the theological virtue of Christian Hope. One must have hope and must place one's "petition into the hands of its Lord and leave it there."<sup>311</sup>

Benedict continues the eschatological topics with the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory and its problem of the historical data which is directly linked to how the,

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<sup>308</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 216.

<sup>309</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 217.

<sup>310</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 218.

<sup>311</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 218.

New Testament left open the question of the intermediate state between death and the general resurrection on the Last Day. The question remained in an unfinished condition, since it could only be clarified by the gradual unfolding of Christian anthropology and its relation to christology. The doctrine of Purgatory is part of this process of clarification.<sup>312</sup>

According to Benedict, the Catholic doctrine of Purgatory is not without conflict, for it divided the Eastern and Western Church and resolution has not come to fruition from “attempted ecumenical reunions of Lyons [council] in 1274 and Ferrara-Florence in 1439.”<sup>313</sup> What is the current state of the Catholic Church’s teaching on Purgatory? The English translation of the Catechism of the Catholic Church states:

All who die in God’s grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven.

The Church gives the name *Purgatory* to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Council of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire.<sup>314</sup>

So, according to the Catechism, Purgatory exists. Benedict would more than likely stand in agreement with the Catechism that is quoted above since his name is listed on it as:

*Imprimi Protest*

+ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger

Interdicasterial Commission for the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*

Albeit, Benedict may reiterate that there are some gaps that are not within human capability to fill, but with the eyes of faith, human limitation is elevated. He quickly surmises how the Church worked to clarify the complex and highly controversial doctrine

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<sup>312</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 218.

<sup>313</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 219.

<sup>314</sup> *Catechism*, 268 section 1030 & 268-269 section 1031.

of Purgatory. Benedict directs that “the formula adopted by Trent is the most succinct of all.”<sup>315</sup> The formula states, “that there is a purgatory, *purgatorium*<sup>316</sup>, and that the souls detained therein are aided by the suffrages of the faithful and chiefly by the acceptable sacrifice of the altar.”<sup>317</sup> Jacques Le Goff in his book, *The Birth of Purgatory* states:

...Purgatory is an intermediate other world in which the trial to be endured by the dead may be abridged by the intercessory prayers, “the suffrages,” of the living. That the early Christians were persuaded of the efficacy of their prayers for the dead we know from funerary inscriptions, liturgical formulas, and the Passion of Perpetua, which dates from the early third century and is the first in a long line of spatial representations of what would one day be Purgatory. This belief in the efficacy of prayer began a movement of piety that culminated in the creation of Purgatory. It is significant that Augustine, in the *Confessions*, broaches for the first time the line of thought that would lead him toward the idea of Purgatory when he describes his feelings after the death of his mother Monica.

A slowly developing phenomenon such as the belief in Purgatory may lie stagnant for centuries, or slowly ebb and flow, only to burst forth suddenly---or so it seems--- in a kind of tidal wave that does not engulf the original belief but rather testifies to its presence and power.<sup>318</sup>

Benedict explains that, “the roots of the doctrine of Purgatory, like those of the idea of the intermediate state in general, lie deeply embedded in early Judaism.”<sup>319</sup> To surmise, Purgatory is a state of continuing penance “which can and often must continue beyond the gate of death.”<sup>320</sup> Benedict describes profound interdependence and unity within human beings when he states:

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<sup>315</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 220.

<sup>316</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, (University of Chicago Press, 1986), 3. (originally published as *La naissance du Purgatoire*. Editions Gallimard, Paris, 1981) “Until the end of the twelfth century the noun *purgatorium* did not exist: . . . It is a remarkable fact that the first appearance of the word *purgatorium*, expressing a newly acquired awareness of Purgatory as a place and thus the birth of Purgatory per se, has been neglected by historians, and in the first place by historians of theology and spirituality.”

<sup>317</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 220.

<sup>318</sup> Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, II & 3.

<sup>319</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 220.

<sup>320</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 226.



Even when they have crossed over the threshold of the world beyond, human beings can still carry each other and bear each others' burdens. They can still give to each other, suffer for each other, and receive from each other.<sup>321</sup>

Benedict believes that the saints can intercede for those in the here and now because the portal of death was transformed into everlasting life, a life lived in eternity with Christ. Benedict teaches that the path towards Christ begins at the Sacrament of Baptism, but it is through the Sacrament of Penance and the sometimes necessary purification in Purgatory "that the inwardly necessary process of transformation in which a person becomes capable of Christ, capable of God and thus capable of unity with the communion of saints"<sup>322</sup> occurs "through the transforming power of the Lord himself."<sup>323</sup> The words, through the transforming power of the Lord,<sup>324</sup> give a glimpse into the reality that is Purgatory, a place of transformation that "transforms us and conforms us to his glorified body."<sup>325</sup> This purification process has interdependence and unity within a family, and within the entire Church community, encompassing both the past and present. This is why the Church prays for the souls in Purgatory and each person is called on to pray for the other before and after crossing over the threshold. The roots of prayer must be firmly anchored in love.

The possibility of helping and saving does not cease to exist on the death of a Christian. Rather does it stretch out to encompass the entire communion of saints, on both sides of death's portals.<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 227.

<sup>322</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 230.

<sup>323</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 229.

<sup>324</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 229.

<sup>325</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 229.

<sup>326</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 233.

Benedict's explanation of Heaven shifts the concept of "I believe"<sup>327</sup> in something out there to "I believe in Jesus Christ,"<sup>328</sup> Who is with me here and now. Heaven can be attained in both the vertical and horizontal planes exposed in the Cross of Christ.

One is in heaven when, and to the degree, that one is in Christ. It is by being with Christ that we find the true location of our existence as human beings in God.

If heaven depends on being in Christ, then it must involve a co-being with all those who, together, constitute the body of Christ.

Heaven is fulfilled with the "resurrection of the flesh."<sup>329</sup>

What relationship does Heaven have with eschatology? Benedict graces the reader with a profound eschatological insight with, "Heaven is in itself eschatological reality. It is the advent of the finally and wholly Other."<sup>330</sup> How does the eschatological reality of Heaven have a relationship to salvation? It seems as though an individual's salvation has a profound two-fold dynamic. One is of independence, but at the same time, the independence is a gift from the One on whom one is interdependent, for the possibility of salvation. This interdependence and unity echoes throughout the cosmos and it resonates with interdependence and unity within the fulfillment of the eschatological reality that Benedict addresses here. Benedict reiterates "the individual's salvation is whole and entire only when the salvation of the cosmos and all the elect has come to full fruition."<sup>331</sup>

In summary, Benedict makes significant contributions to eschatology and to the understanding of Hell, Purgatory and Heaven. He explains the historical and theological

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<sup>327</sup> *Catechism*, 49.

<sup>328</sup> *Catechism*, 49.

<sup>329</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 234, 235 & 237.

<sup>330</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 237.

<sup>331</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 238.

insights into the unity of each person's relationship to their family, to Christ, the saints, the Church, and each person's individual responsibility to themselves and to their neighbour. It seems that one must take the responsibility of praying, so "the individual will break through the limits of being into the whole, and the whole take up its dwelling in the individual."<sup>332</sup>

As indicated in the introduction to this thesis, Benedict stresses the necessity of perseverance in Christian hope with prayer, the sacraments, and almsgiving. He constantly reminds us to remember "the supreme evil here is death itself, the final foe and gaunt presence behind all other enemies, from whom one must flee for protection to the Lord surrounded by his saints."<sup>333</sup> There, and only there, one finds "shelter in a history filled with salvific energy."<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>332</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 238.

<sup>333</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 9.

<sup>334</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.

## Chapter 3: The Juxtaposition of Death and Eternal Life

### Introduction

Chapter Three has a three-fold purpose of unpacking specific concepts within Benedict's book. This chapter begins with an eschatological map or a brief overview. The first section will examine the two key themes of death and eternal life explicitly expressed within Benedict's book. The second and third purpose will explore the notion of salvific energy.<sup>335</sup> The notion of salvific energy seems to express itself as an experience and a three-fold carrier of meaning. Benedict alludes to the notion of salvific energy as an experience and uses the dynamics of shelter, support and communication. This chapter draws heavily upon the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to better understand Benedict's theological thought. Two concrete questions will be pondered: "How can the topics of death and eternal life be important in addressing the affliction of contemporary society?" and "Why are the topics of death and eternal life crucial for a re-emergence of eschatology and the emergence of salvific energy in society?"

### **3.1: Two Key Themes of Death and Eternal Life from Benedict's book**

#### *3.1.1: Eschatological Map*

It seems from Benedict's book that the human condition inevitably links, for all who are born into this world, a three-fold pattern that unifies humanity on the temporal plane: birth, life and death. For Benedict, death being perceived as the end result is not

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<sup>335</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.

humanity's ultimate destiny. Albeit, as Benedict insists, we are not capable of liberating ourselves from the affliction of death, therefore, the triumvirates of the human condition can never change from within a human capacity. Drawing from Benedict's book, it becomes clear that eschatology lives on the centre stage of humanity's life whether known or not. Eschatology refers to the area of the Christian faith which is concerned about the last things, and the coming of Jesus on the last day: our human destiny, death, judgment, resurrection of the body, Heaven, Purgatory and Hell - all of which are contained in the final articles of the Creed.<sup>336</sup> Because of the foregoing, eschatology may be difficult to confront. But for Benedict eschatology is ultimately about true life in the present and eternal life with God, the source of salvific energy. Eschatology is derived "from the Greek word *eschaton*, meaning 'last.'"<sup>337</sup> About confronting one's mortality, Benedict teaches the juxtaposition that occurs within eschatology, that is, 'last' actually becomes 'eternity'. As we see in Chapter One from unpacking Benedict's book, man cannot escape the topic of his mortality and so the topics of eternity and immortality live in tension with mortality throughout his life. Benedict situates man's life, encapsulating it within the battle of good and evil. Thus, it may be possible that humanity is attracted to eschatology, whether it knows the word or not, based on humanity's invariant structure: its triumvirate three-fold human condition of birth, life and death. For Benedict eschatology answers man's dilemma of death and shows him the path to everlasting life.

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<sup>336</sup> *Catechism*, 877.

<sup>337</sup> *Catechism*, 877.

### **3.1.2: *Unpacking the Juxtaposition of Death and Eternal Life***

In his book, Benedict explicitly expresses two key themes: one of death and the other eternal life. The contention in this section is that eschatology becomes significant when utilized in contrast, especially when unpacking the juxtaposition of death and eternal life. To Benedict the contrast is important, for it juxtaposes the tensions that exist externally and internally throughout the journey in one's temporal life. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* effectively begins our juxtaposition of death and eternal life with the following:

There is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not in part an answer to the question of evil.<sup>338</sup>

If we contend that there is not a single aspect of the Christian message that is not, in part, an answer to the question of evil, then Benedict's analysis demonstrates that evil plays a significant role in our humanity. Benedict reminds us that everyone has suffered because of evil, even Jesus Christ. This is the message that he imparts to humanity, the reality of the cross, the actuality of Jesus's death juxtaposed with the actual living reality of His resurrection. Therefore for Benedict, if Jesus actually died for humanity, then evil is not something to be taken lightly. Benedict directs us to the seriousness of evil and its destructiveness, like a plague ensnaring and afflicting humanity with a power far greater than within human capability. He believes that to be liberated from the affliction of evil and therefore ultimately death, we need to continually return to Christ to be set free and to be protected from the power of evil. One needs to continually return to Christ as evil is enticing; it is a destructive force

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<sup>338</sup> *Catechism*, 81 & 82 section 309.

that operates insidiously on humanity thereby effecting humanity internally and externally with affliction. Evil is the force of all that is “the opposite or absence of good.”<sup>339</sup> Evil divides and the tensions that pull on humanity are great and originate from the source of evil, Satan. It seems that there are many types of afflictions by evil. Benedict’s opinion mirrors the Catechism where it claims that sin opens the door to evil leading to annihilation, one of death. The effect of all these afflictions seems to affect and ripple through all of humanity. This may be due to the interdependence and unity within the triumvirate of the human condition, inevitably linking each and every person. Benedict reinforces that no one is immune to the force of evil and he makes that blatantly clear within his book.

In man evil predominates. This follows his nature. The reason may be seen in comparison of the material and spiritual orders.<sup>340</sup>

Satan or the devil, the Evil One, and the other demons were at first good angels, created naturally good, who became evil by their own doing.<sup>341</sup>

Man, enticed by the Evil One, abused his freedom at the very beginning of history. He succumbed to temptation and did what was evil. He still desires the good, but his nature bears the wound of original sin. He is now inclined to evil and subject to error:

Man is divided in himself. As a result the whole life of men, both individually and socially, shows itself to be a struggle, and a dramatic one, between good and evil, between light and darkness.<sup>342</sup>

Satan binds the human condition with the chains of everlasting affliction and death. Benedict educates humanity to something he calls, “the phenomenon of death” which has “three very different dimensions.”<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> *Catechism*, 878.

<sup>340</sup> Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 351.

<sup>341</sup> *Catechism*, 874.

<sup>342</sup> *Catechism*, 475 section 1707.

Firstly, death is present as the nothingness of an empty existence which ends up in a mere semblance of living. Secondly, death is present as the physical process of disintegration which accompanies life. Thirdly, death is met with in the daring of that love which leaves self behind, giving itself to the other.<sup>344</sup>

Here we will focus on the third dimension (the third type of dying) that Benedict brings to the forefront. First, it seems we must come to recognize our human limitations and then recognize our need and dependency on God. Death comes from separation and the illusion<sup>345</sup> of independence, one of being away from God, contrasted by life, manifested through one of humble gratitude from the recognition of a life-giving dependence,<sup>346</sup> lovingly nurtured through a child-like curiosity that constantly seeks a relationship with Him.

...we can accept this situation of dependence, and keep ourselves trustingly open to the future, in the confidence that the Power which has so determined us will not deceive us.<sup>347</sup>

The entire revelation of God's goodness in Christ is a response to the existence of evil.<sup>348</sup>

For Benedict, death and eternal life are always juxtaposed. Benedict explains how the Christian message is practical and highly useful as it juxtaposes the tensions lived within the dynamics experienced throughout life. Those dynamics are constantly dealt with in everyday life and one does not have to travel far to experience the oscillations that occur within the battle of life and death, good and evil, freedom and oppression, affliction and liberation, Heaven and Hell.

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<sup>343</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 95.

<sup>344</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 95.

<sup>345</sup> Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, translated by J. R. Foster (New York: Continuum, 186), 25.

<sup>346</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 96.

<sup>347</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 96.

<sup>348</sup> *Catechism*, 878.



Benedict teaches that to be liberated from evil, we must be open to be transformed by the good and to constantly seek the “one thing that is good by its essence, and that is God.”<sup>349</sup> The juxtaposed position, the remedy of death according to Benedict is Christ, the Redeemer of the World. For Benedict, it is Christ who frees the divided man and brings him True everlasting freedom from the Evil One. Benedict teaches that the road of relationship crosses the path of liberation from the affliction of evil. The road of relationship is encapsulated from a valued dependency on God. This recognized grateful dependency metamorphoses to allow a decrease of the overinflated self or death of self, resurrecting an increase of life, being sheltered by being in relationship with God. It is Christ’s death and resurrection that shatter both physical and moral evil. Benedict expresses the need to be in a relationship with God through his Son, Jesus Christ, to be sheltered from both types of evil. He juxtaposes two types of patterns both regarding power: one that steals life and the Other, “the plenary power of love unlimited.”<sup>350</sup> The only power capable of sheltering us from evil is the One who is “the Resurrection and the Life.” (John 11:25)

Benedict’s remedy to “man’s enemy death”<sup>351</sup> is the gift of salvation given to humanity by Christ with His death and resurrection in eternal unity with His Church. These concepts can block humanity and Benedict knows that the blockage does not originate from the source of good but from the power of *discordia*. It is the plenary power of love<sup>352</sup> that by Christ’s death and resurrection, He sets humanity free and shatters the power of *discordia*, the source of death and returns to humanity God’s

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<sup>349</sup> Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 31.

<sup>350</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 97.

<sup>351</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 97.

<sup>352</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 97.

ultimate gift, Eternal Life with Him. Benedict wants us to persevere and to trust in Christ. He teaches that Christ is the source of life and believes in the eternal patterns that Christ passed onto His disciples and His Church for all humanity. Benedict refers to prayer, the sacraments, tradition, scripture and all those whom make up the Body of Christ (with all the saints throughout the ages). He directs and re-directs humanity to the plenary power of love<sup>353</sup> unlimited, Christ.

The internal and external battle of the human condition is in itself a dynamic process. For Benedict it is a hopeful and a dynamic process of coming to know God by experiencing patterns and learning through analogous knowledge. The word analogous gives an insight into how this knowledge operates: Latin from Greek *analogos* 'proportionate' + -ous. Bernard Lonergan helps to clarify this internal and external dynamic of man and analogous knowledge within the human construct:

The only knowledge you can have of being or of the good through beings by participation is an analogous knowledge.<sup>354</sup>

Benedict believes that it is through analogous knowledge that we can slowly start to discern how evil always propagates death and how Jesus is “the way, the truth and the life.” (John 14:6) The insights gained through analogous knowledge can occur by contemplating the contrast of how evil always propagates death starkly juxtaposed with the light of the resurrected Christ.

Benedict teaches that only Christ, the source of life, can return humanity to its human destiny, one of eternal life with God. He believes that the Christian message shows, teaches and explains the patterns impeding one’s life. For Benedict, it is the

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<sup>353</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 97.

<sup>354</sup> Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 31.

death and resurrection of Christ that shatters evil and is the source and shelter that gives life, liberates, returns and sustains one now and for all eternity. “Why look among the dead for someone who is alive? He is not here; he has risen.” (Luke 24:5-6)

The quote surmises Benedict’s juxtaposition of death and eternal life within Christian eschatology. It deals with the dynamic tensions that affect humanity at large on this temporal plane, and for all eternity. Benedict imparts that the juxtaposition of death and eternal life within the Christian eschatological dimension brings the essential Christian message alive with its necessity. For him, the essential Christian message is to be liberated from evil and death now, from a death to come, and from an everlasting death.

Benedict asserts that humanity’s destiny is the beatific vision, that of eternal life with God. Bernard Lonergan provides an insight into what Benedict is teaching, surrounding the complex dynamics of the internal and external forces acting upon humanity:

Without the beatific vision, there cannot be absolute impeccability in a creature. A relative impeccability is, however, possible. Graces can do for the soul what special privilege did for Adam’s body before the fall. For Adam’s body was not intrinsically immortal, such as was Adam’s soul. It was rendered immortal by a combination of internal perfections and external protection. In similar fashion man can be made relatively impeccable in this life.<sup>355</sup>

Both Lonergan and Benedict imply that eternal life is immortality, the fulfillment of human destiny created through a duality of internal perfections and external

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<sup>355</sup> Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 351.

protection.<sup>356</sup> He imparts knowledge, insight and wisdom within the dynamic interplay of the field of eschatology and its relationship to life everlasting. This examination of the two key themes of death and eternal life explicitly expressed within Benedict's book returns us to his thought and the impetus for this thesis:

The eschatological question becomes the question of my own dying. Accordingly, the really urgent question becomes that of personal salvation, which thus overlays that of the meaning of history as a whole. But note that this is possible precisely because the individual has found shelter in a history filled with salvific energy and so not in and of itself a dubious quantity.<sup>357</sup>

### ***3.2: Unpacking the Notion of Salvific Energy***

If “the eschatological question becomes the question of my own dying”<sup>358</sup> (which we examined in the last section), why does Benedict declare that “the really urgent question becomes that of personal salvation, which thus overlays that of the meaning of history as a whole.”<sup>359</sup>? How is it “possible precisely because the individual has found shelter in a history filled with salvific energy and so not in and of itself a dubious quantity.”<sup>360</sup>?

In this section, we will analyze the notion of salvific energy<sup>361</sup> as that notion is implicitly hinted at in Benedict's book. The notion of salvific energy seems to express itself as an experience and a three-fold “carrier of meaning”.<sup>362</sup> Benedict alludes to the

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<sup>356</sup> Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 351.

<sup>357</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.

<sup>358</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 11 & 12.

<sup>359</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.

<sup>360</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.

<sup>361</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.

<sup>362</sup> Bernard Lonergan speaks about “carriers of meaning” in Chapter Three of *Method in Theology*. For example, he identified intersubjective meaning, artistic meaning, symbolic meaning, linguistic meaning, and incarnate meaning.

notion of salvific energy as an experience and explicitly uses the dynamics of shelter, support and communication to express its possible three-fold carrier of meaning.

Benedict poses a difficult question, “How did we arrive at that tedious and tedium-laden Christianity which we moderns observe and, indeed know from our experience?”<sup>363</sup> The answer possibly lies in a diminished understanding of the experience of salvific energy. For Bernard Lonergan, it seems that the notion of salvific energy is the living source of the good by its essence.<sup>364</sup> The notion of the good may become known through an experience, one possibly attained through analogous knowledge. In *Augustine through the Ages: an Encyclopedia*, Tarisicius J. van Bavel (in his contribution to the encyclopedia) applies the notion of salvific energy in relation to *Church as Mother and Invitation*. He states: “The salvific energy of Christ flows through his body, the church.”<sup>365</sup> Another explanation is:

The salvific energy of Christ’s cross flows, as it were...much in the way that the power of the builder flows through the saw that he employs...<sup>366</sup>

Now we have some additional analogous knowledge to start anew with Benedict’s writing regarding salvific energy. Benedict believes that each generation grapples with the challenges of being human, within itself, its families and its culture. He reveals the concept of salvific energy and points to eschatology’s value when investigating the human dynamic that occurs within each person, family and culture. He teaches that the Christian message answers humanity’s dilemma of death with new life and that...this is

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<sup>363</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 8.

<sup>364</sup> Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 31.

<sup>365</sup> Allen D. Fitzgerald, ed., *Augustine Through the Ages: An Encyclopedia* (Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1999), 174.

<sup>366</sup> Robert Barron, *The Eucharistic Theology of Thomas Aquinas*, <http://payingattentiontothesky.com/2011/03/25/the-eucharistic-theology-of-thomas-aquinas---fr-robert-barron/> (accessed on May 4, 2013)

possible precisely because the individual has found shelter in a history filled with salvific energy and so not in and of itself a dubious quantity.<sup>367</sup>

Benedict implies the notion of salvific energy as a living dynamic unified from God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It may flow to humanity from Christ's pierced side on the cross. Benedict teaches us about the eternal plenary power of love.<sup>368</sup> Is the eternal plenary power of love the source of salvific energy? He expresses that the experience of salvific energy is a grace that transforms and transcends human life with a new relationship to God. It seems that salvific energy is good energy embodying saving energy. Saving energy may be understood as transformative, life-giving and sustaining. Salvific energy seems to grace humanity with a shift in perspective; the shift grants new eyes to the seeker.

Interpreting Benedict's thought on eschatology, salvific energy seems to combine the entire revelation of humanity's redemption. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explains that humanity's redemption is accomplished through, with and in Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and the coming of "the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified. Who has spoken through the Prophets."<sup>369</sup> The Nicene Creed and the Apostles Creed may give an insight into the dynamic interplay that could be understood as salvific energy.

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<sup>367</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.

<sup>368</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 97.

<sup>369</sup> Credo Chart, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/credo.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/credo.htm) (accessed on May 6, 2013)

Benedict reminds the reader that he can find solid ground in life through a “relationship with Christ’s person and longing for him to come close.”<sup>370</sup> Benedict believes that it is the experience of relationship that has been diminished and needs renewal. This is so life can be fully experienced in a relationship with the Other. However, Benedict reminds us that this understanding is not solely an individual hope, but a hope for the world. He expresses that both are essential in their unity and have been diminished by a current crisis of existentialism. From the Christian perspective, the individual has thus been separated from a relationship with Christ’s person. According to Benedict, this separation is unsettling and the individual cannot find peace. Longing for peace seems to stretch the individual spiritually, mentally and physically and can become a unifying, humbling and transcending ground for oneself, one’s family and one’s community nourished by prayer. Benedict teaches that prayer continuously resurrects, transfigures and builds relationships of community including the family through Christ’s salvific energy. He reminds us that we should constantly call on Christ and his saints to live a life filled with constant conversion and renewal. Benedict asserts that repeated conversion is a dynamic relationship that only Jesus Christ, the source of salvific energy, can fulfill. For Benedict, life becomes resurrected through the experience of salvific energy, and life now lives as a prayer and prayer becomes new life because of God’s grace. He teaches that it is the Trinity that imparts the grace of salvific energy making possible one’s relationship with each other and God.

It is my contention that everyone has a need for salvific energy and understands its necessity, even if only through a vague awareness. New data may emerge for an

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<sup>370</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 8.

individual, family and community through the experience of salvific energy because it reflects what humanity holds in common. The experience of salvific energy creates a path towards dialogue and a renewed unity that speaks to the existential crisis of humanity. Can the notion of salvific energy create a path or an invitation to reconcile and unite the human and divine dimensions carried through, with and in the experience of salvific energy?

For Benedict, the experience of salvific energy provides shelter, support and communication as a place of peace for humanity. The remainder of this chapter will explore the possibility of there being three carriers of salvific energy; they are shelter, support and communication. The insight behind these carriers of salvific energy is taken from Benedict's book.

### ***3.2.1: Salvific Energy as Shelter***

In this section we will unpack the notion of salvific energy as a shelter. Benedict seems to unveil the relationship between shelter and salvific energy with his statement, "But note that this is possible precisely because the individual has found shelter in a history filled with salvific energy and so not in and of itself a dubious quantity."<sup>371</sup> How the individual finds shelter in a history filled with salvific energy is the main issue.

Benedict advises that the shelter of salvific energy can be attained by diligently seeking a relationship through prayer with Christ surrounded by His saints. He expresses this from the Roman Catholic perspective. Benedict's understanding may incite an emotional response, but he attempts to explain how the shelter of salvific energy is not

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<sup>371</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.



limiting to man. He wants man to understand that it is accessible for all. Therefore, the experience of salvific energy appears to become accessible as a carrier of meaning with the dynamics of being a shelter.

Humanity universally understands the necessity of shelter in one form or another. Shelter can be a common language and a unifying ground that humanity knows from a life full of experience. If we are lacking shelter, it becomes an immediate concern. Benedict reminds us that this can happen not only physically, but also spiritually to a person, family and community. The constant need for shelter occurs throughout life's different stages. It appears that we can be without shelter both physically and spiritually at the same time or at differentiated times. We may have shelter physically, but spiritually be suffering, or vice versa. Humanity easily understands shelter in the physical attributes, but the spiritual understanding can be greatly ignored or misunderstood in modern times. Benedict believes that we should be concerned if a lack of shelter is occurring spiritually. Spiritual suffering may cause as much pain in the temporal plane, and Catholicism relies on deposit of the faith to address spiritual suffering beyond the temporal plane. Unfortunately, modern society seems to have little compassion for spiritual pain because "human thought is imprisoned in the temporal."<sup>372</sup>

Benedict first unveils the concept of shelter with:

The first thing to strike us here is that the person who is thus set about by dangers in time and eternity finds a shelter in the communion of the saints. He gathers the redeemed of all the ages around him and finds safety under their mantle. This signifies that the walls separating heaven and earth, and past, present and future, are now as glass. The Christian lives in the presence of the saints as his own proper ambience, and so lives eschatologically.<sup>373</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 47.

<sup>373</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 9.

When the individual has found shelter in a history filled with salvific energy, the experience seems to forever alter life. The concept of shelter in the communion of the saints can be best understood in the Litany of the Saints. Benedict teaches that the prayer of the Litany of the Saints invokes those to whom God has granted grace upon grace. According to him, the saints stand in the shelter of salvific energy and their prayers lend support to those on life's journey. Benedict explains, "...in them [saints] the Christian promise has already proved its worth. They count for something not as the past but as the present of the Lord's power to save."<sup>374</sup>

Benedict directs us to the Lord's present power to save as salvific energy, a saving energy, and a good energy that is alive and manifested solely from God's grace. He believes that salvific energy is a shelter and a refuge accessible through prayer. We can understand from him that the shelter is obtained with those whom are already graced in an eternal relationship with God. Benedict teaches that the saints are graced through, with and in God and that they live surrounded in the shelter of salvific energy. According to Benedict, it is life that the communion of saints continuously experience, the experience of everlasting life, the shelter of salvific energy, and not death, that consumes them.

The supreme evil here is death itself, the final foe and gaunt presence behind all other enemies, from whom one must flee for protection to the Lord surrounded by his saints.<sup>375</sup>

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<sup>374</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 9.

<sup>375</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 9.

The Church prays the Litany of the Saints and invokes the saints for their support and intercession before God. The Church humbly prays for their assistance because the saints live in the shelter of salvific energy.

As the Litany moves on, a further group of invocations summons the great events of salvation history as powers of deliverance to our aid. Through prayer, they are to become a protective shield against the dangers that threaten us.<sup>376</sup>

Benedict implicitly expresses that the protective shield is the shelter of salvific energy that shines forth from those who have experienced abundant grace from God. The saints have fulfilled the ultimate life goal by living in eternal relationship with God. We can ask for prayers from the saints because their prayers are more efficacious than our own. The saints live in the shelter of salvific energy and are graced by the source. Therefore, their prayers become a protective shield, a shared source of grace. We come to know the grace bestowed on the communion of saints. The source of the saints' grace is awarded through God's power. The saints' lives become one of God's where they live through with and in His transcendent being in His shelter of salvific energy. They have experienced salvific energy in life and impart their grace of salvific energy by living the resurrection with Christ for eternity. This grace occurs solely from God. The saints live in eternal relationship and are creative collaborators<sup>377</sup> with God, the living source of their grace.

Benedict points to the dynamics involved within every moment in life, as a continuous experience of life and death on a physical, mental and spiritual plane until our final temporal act occurs in life. This is the cycle of limitation embedded within human

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<sup>376</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 10.

<sup>377</sup> Lonergan, *Method in Theology*, xi.

existence. Our resurrection and the saints' constant intercession, on which we rely for help, are linked and solely made possible through God's power. According to Benedict, within the shelter of salvific energy the ever-renewed act of encounter occurs. The shelter of salvific energy is always present, but one's life can become blocked from relationship with the Other. It is through the insights that flow from experience that we can come to question the meaning of our life and God.

What is authentic for the human person is not found in the things that lie around us and over against us, but in an event of encounter.<sup>378</sup>

Benedict believes that the saints are graced with experience and decision on all the challenging roads in life (physical, mental and spiritual). They have climbed life's difficult mountain. When humbly asked to intercede with prayers, the saints' experience seems to be an invaluable resource for humanity. The saints' grace can impart new knowledge to the seeker that one could not possibly know or accomplish by oneself.

According to Benedict, the saints are illuminated from the experience of salvific energy, the shelter and the event of encounter. They are recipients of unexpected and undeserved grace. God first offered the grace (to the saints), even though undeserved, and they gratefully accepted God's gift. They live human life to the fullest because they have acknowledged, repented and accepted God's undeserved gift of grace. Their lives become part of God's living history, "that history is invoked in the Litany as a generator of hope, and so contains a dynamism directed to the future."<sup>379</sup>

Benedict teaches that the saints live in the shelter of salvific energy, sustained by the breath and timelessness of God. For their illumination is an eternal grace, full of

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<sup>378</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 49.

<sup>379</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 11.

wisdom from the source of light. Their grace can be shared and invoked because they live with the eternal experience of salvific energy illuminated from the light. The saints mature body of knowledge, obtained through their experience of salvific energy, assists humanity with its vast spiritual treasury illuminated by grace. The life of a saint is human, transformed beyond its own capabilities through encounter and acceptance of relationship with God. They are living examples; “The transformation of human nature, and the world with it, is possible only as a miracle of grace.”<sup>380</sup> The saints died in their inauthenticity of self and rose in the authenticity of Christ, therefore forever sheltered by salvific energy.

Our departure-point is a person, not a program. But by the same token it is equally apparent that redemption does not reach us through the satisfaction of our ego, as we may dreamily imagine in the tranquility of our privy chamber. Redemption cannot come through the repletion of the ego but only by a total turnabout in which we march away from egotism in the opposite direction.<sup>381</sup>

The shelter of salvific energy seems to be a common and unifying ground that humanity can understand from life experience. Everyone has the need of shelter throughout life. The Litany of Saints can further the understanding of salvific energy as shelter with a common and unifying prayer. The Litany seems to gather its energy from God’s salvation history, graced with the knowledge of experience and fulfilled by the relationship of encounter. Benedict reminds us that prayer creates the movement towards the shelter of salvific energy for one’s self, family and community.

So being a Christian means breaking through to authenticity in an encounter-event that is true eschatology because it is the means of breaking out from the circle of subject-object relations. In this way, it is

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<sup>380</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 59.

<sup>381</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 65.

escape from the thralldom of time, indeed the end of time, and a radical liberation from the grip of the world.<sup>382</sup>

As we explored at the beginning of Chapter Three, Benedict juxtaposes death and life by seeing salvific energy as a necessary shelter. He explains that we need protection and must flee away from death, to encounter a radical liberation from the grip of the world. Is that why we need the shelter of salvific energy? For those present to contemplate the dynamic invariant structure between death and life, we learn from Benedict that life enters into a crisis condition.<sup>383</sup> According to Benedict, there are many ways we can be afflicted by death even though seemingly alive. He expresses that when we are afflicted by death, we must flee to the Lord surrounded by his saints.<sup>384</sup>

Life means communion, whereas the heart of death is the absence of relationship.<sup>385</sup>

Benedict imparts that affliction is shattered in the shelter of salvific energy; therefore peace lives eternally in relationship with one another and with God. He teaches that to be liberated from affliction, we must humbly pray, ask and believe that Christ will heal us and one another. Even though we may not feel worthy, we are worthy solely because God “first loved us.”<sup>386</sup> Benedict teaches that because of God’s power, it is the grace flowing from salvific energy that makes all things possible including the shelter. That is why he reminds us that we need the Lord surrounded by his saints. We learn from Benedict that the saints are in the presence of God’s grace surrounded by salvific energy, and that grace, continuously flows out upon them. In turn, the saints’ grace can

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<sup>382</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 49.

<sup>383</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 85.

<sup>384</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 9.

<sup>385</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 82.

<sup>386</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 3.

help those who humbly ask for assistance to reconcile, unite and heal their self, their family, and their community by entering into relationship with God. The shelter of salvific energy saves because it is a love beyond measure: the universal shelter that manifests hope for all. According to Benedict, there we can find a welcoming refuge and a shelter filled with salvific energy.

Since he cannot place his hope in himself, he finds shelter with the One who was his *Savoir* and cannot fail to be so everlastingly.<sup>387</sup>

### ***3.2.2: Salvific Energy as Support***

This section will explore the notion of salvific energy as a carrier of meaning, one that graces humanity with the dynamic of being a support structure. In the last section, we explored Benedict's notion of salvific energy as an experience and the description of shelter within that dynamic structure. Now, we will peruse Benedict's seemingly theological directive by revealing the relationship between salvific energy, shelter and support. This section will unpack salvific energy within its dynamic of support and how Benedict teaches that it has an immanent relationship to encounter. This section will draw heavily upon the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

Benedict believes that the shelter of salvific energy becomes one of support for an individual, a family and a community. The shelter and support structure embody life with only good intentions for each person, family and community. All afflictions seem to be shattered in the shelter and one becomes supported through, with and in its dynamic life-giving structure. According to Benedict, life has been altered through the experience

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<sup>387</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 11.

of salvific energy and the encounter. One can become forever grateful for the event and a new language may emerge. The language of gratefulness (support) added to the language of experience (encounter with The One) can grant life a new perspective. At this crossroad, Benedict advises not to take prayer for granted, because one is able to become more open to the acceptance of grace. For Benedict, one's life becomes a grace, and life becomes a prayer. The grace of prayer becomes one of grateful acceptance and acknowledgement of God. The event of encounter becomes one of humble experience (shelter). Benedict believes that salvific energy is a shelter and support structure that we can rely on and be transformed by mentally, physically and spiritually. He suggests that we should constantly ask for help from the saints because they lived life in the temporal plane and now eternally live in the experience of salvific energy, with its shelter and support structure. The saints' experience becomes a support path where one can have hope and ask for prayerful support from those who are graced and experienced in the spiritual realm.

Benedict explains how the saints live in gratitude and self-offering; they are willing to help those in need. They understand our limitations and hope and pray that we become creative collaborators with God and accept God's grace. Benedict knows that man can easily distort his grace from God. Man becomes blinded, a lack of seeing his rightful place and God's power. All man has is a grace, even every breath that he takes. Because of the plentiful bounty bestowed on man from God, man can become to feel like a God.

But man is not God. By making himself unto God he sets himself over against truth, and so the adventure ends in that nothingness where truth is



not. The actual God-man does just the opposite. He is God's Son, his whole being a gesture of gratitude and self-offering.<sup>388</sup>

For Benedict, gratitude and self-offering are critical within the notion of salvific energy. He believes that there is a dynamic interplay that occurs in the shelter and support structure of salvific energy. Our aid originates in humble supplication and continues with grateful acknowledgement for the support obtained in the shelter. One becomes grateful and can feel obligated to share the grace obtained through prayer.

Benedict stresses that we should be humble because the shelter and support of salvific energy is always an unexpected and undeserved grace. Therefore, the shelter and support is not something newly discovered, even though the impact of grace is life-changing for an individual. The support obtained when granted a grace, only lives its true fulfillment when it is something that is shared. The sharing of grace is its own gift because one dies to self and becomes anew. The dying of self and the rising in Christ is solely obtained in the event of encounter with the support of the fully graced sacramental community.

According to Benedict, the saints' grace propagates more grace, because they are sheltered and supported in the presence of salvific energy, love everlasting. This is why they can intercede and pray for us. The saints are the pillars of prayer lending support for individuals, families and communities. They speak the language of experience and the language of gratefulness. They constantly share the unexpected and undeserved grace that is bestowed upon them and will do so for eternity. The saints live in the shelter and support of salvific energy and never claim it as originating from their own power.

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<sup>388</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 64.

Benedict advises that neither should those who come to know the shelter and support structure in the temporal plane. For the shelter is not new. The shelter became fulfilled in the upper room during the Last Supper and supported through, with and in Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost. Benedict believes that the shelter began in the upper room. Afterwards, the community of support was born, illuminated by the Paraclete, the Lord the giver of life, together with the Father and the Son, who is worshipped and glorified. The Holy Spirit, the Lord the Giver of Life, graced the apostles with gifts unifying the upper room for humanity. As then, that shelter and support community still stand together. The Holy Spirit allowed the apostles to extend the shelter beyond the upper room for all humanity. The shelter and support of salvific energy shatter temporal time and all distortions of egoism and pride. We return to Benedict's opinion and how he expresses finding Christian truth unified with support from the sacramental community:

The obverse of this courage should be the modesty of not claiming to have just discovered what Christianity is really about by dint of one's 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.<sup>389</sup>

Benedict explains that in the sacramental community of the faith of all periods, grace is recognized not from self but from Another, as an undeserved gift. To see grace as an undeserved gift, one's inflated self must die and be made wholly new by Another. The new humble and grateful self can now see the source of all grace; its being is not of one's self. Life now takes a new direction. One lives differently. The over-inflated self dies and is undeservedly made new by the one that bestows all grace.

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<sup>389</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 60.

The Kingdom of God 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. Clearly, such a transformation can only take place through death. For this reason, the Kingdom of God, salvation in its fullness, cannot be deprived of its connection with dying.<sup>390</sup>

Benedict knows that for our ego and pride to die, we must be broken in and down by life's afflictions. We must recognize that we are afflicted and become humble enough to ask God for forgiveness for all the bad intentions in our lives. We need to humbly ask to be healed of affliction in our self, our family, and our community. For with affliction there is no peace. In life everyone comes across affliction, and it is a heavy cross to bear. We may believe that we do not need any help and that we certainly do not need God. At this point self-inflation still exists, so the cross gets heavier. Benedict teaches that, overtime and through a lot of anger, pain and questioning, one may come to realize that it is not possible to carry a cross alone. We may not yet understand the humility and unity needed to carry a cross. Unfortunately, carrying a cross is a necessity because it breaks us in to see and hear things differently. We may choose to ask for help through prayer or we can feel the weight of the cross as it becomes heavier and heavier until we feel abandoned by all.

Benedict understands the moment when life brings us to our knees, and all temporal sources have fallen short, he hopes we may turn back to God with the realization that we can only carry the cross with God. It is then that the support of salvific energy is of utmost importance. One becomes new; "what is primary is the praxis of being able to pray, and being called upon to pray."<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>390</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 62.

<sup>391</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 233.

Prayer takes practice and it stretches us physically, mentally and spiritually. It is essential in life even though it has been greatly ignored in all times. We need to ask for prayers for ourselves and to pray for others. This is a constant cycle. One needs to pray not only for one's family but those that they encounter in life with affliction. Some affliction is more easily seen than others. Prayer becomes a shelter, but at the same time it lends support in the dynamic structure of salvific energy.

According to Benedict, there is an interdependence and unity in the dynamic structure within the shelter and support of salvific energy. Interdependence and unity affect humanity in profound ways. Affliction permeates and affects the whole structure of a person's being and propagates through families and society. Everything changes in the moment that one recognizes that he is afflicted, or that he recognizes that someone he loves is afflicted. This becomes a crisis situation. We can be physically, mentally or spiritually afflicted at different times or all at the same time. Benedict advises that affliction sometimes does not end in the temporal plane, as simply recognized, but carries over beyond our perceived human threshold. This occurs due to humanity's interdependence and unity and can shatter our temporal concept of time.

Even when they have crossed over the threshold of the world beyond, human beings can still carry each other and bear each others' burdens. They can still give to each other, suffer for each other, and receive from each other.<sup>392</sup>

Benedict believes that for affliction to be shattered, an inward transformation must occur. An inward transformation is as difficult as an outward transformation. To be transformed, we are called upon to "pray constantly."<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>392</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 227.

<sup>393</sup> *Catechism*, 660 section 2757.

He ‘prays without ceasing’ who unites prayer to works and good works to prayer. Only in this way can we consider as realizable the principle of praying without ceasing.<sup>394</sup>

It is my contention that one must first recognize the necessity to be transformed, ask for help, repent bad intentions and (by accepting God’s grace), become a creative collaborator in being transformed to the likeness and image of God. Transformation towards the light seems to be achieved by one’s humble supplications and through God’s power. We may humbly reach in that direction, but grace always seems to be an undeserved gift from God. It is because of God’s love, not one’s own, that the possibility of transformation can occur. “The saints intercede for their brethren here on earth, and we may call on them for their intercession.”<sup>395</sup>

Benedict points to the saints’ intercessions as a support in the dynamic structure of salvific energy. He reminds us how the Church humbly prays the Litany of the Saints to invoke their prayerful support before God. The saints’ prayerful support helps to transform us, so we can enter into relationship with God. Benedict believes that this support can happen on either side of death’s portals because the saints are filled with grace and faith in the shelter of salvific energy.

What actually saves is the full assent of faith. But in most of us, that basic option is buried under a great deal of wood, hay and straw. Only with difficulty can it peer out from behind the latticework of an egoism we are powerless to pull down with our own hands. Man is the recipient of divine mercy, yet does not exonerate him from the need to be transformed. Encounter with the Lord is the transformation.<sup>396</sup>

Benedict stresses how the saints live in encounter with the Lord and that is why their prayers are capable of supporting those in need. He explains how the saints’ lives

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<sup>394</sup> *Catechism*, 660 section 2745.

<sup>395</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 228.

<sup>396</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 231.

become one of resurrection, living through with and in the risen Christ, the source of life. It seems that we must go to the Lord surrounded by the unity of his saints to be liberated from affliction. Benedict believes that affliction ceases in the light with the Lord. Christ is the source of salvific energy, the source of healing, love and peace for all. The saints have interdependence and unity through, with and in the shelter and support structure of salvific energy. According to Benedict, the saints share their grace, so they live as support for others. The saints exist in themselves and outside themselves. This exemplifies the interdependence and unity shared through, with and in the shelter and support structure; it seems that the actual living presence of salvific energy is the Lord surrounded by his saints.

Every human being exists in himself and outside himself: everyone exists simultaneously in other people. What happens in one individual has an effect upon the whole of humanity happens in the individual. "The Body of Christ" means that all human beings are one organism, the destiny of the whole the proper destiny of each.<sup>397</sup>

Benedict directs us to the support within the interdependence and unity of salvific energy and how one can be transformed and become a new man. Man is broken in by affliction and can become capable of seeing differently if his ego is humbled to pray or ask for prayers for himself and others.

Rather it is the inwardly necessary process of transformation in which a person becomes capable of Christ, capable of God and thus capable of unity with the whole communion of saints.<sup>398</sup>

Being humble (with the help of grace) may lead us to pray for others and ourselves with only good intentions. It seems that humbleness may slowly begin the necessary inward process of transformation needed from the affliction of the world. The

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<sup>397</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 190.

<sup>398</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 230.

interplay of good and bad intentions among people is a powerful dynamic that seems to occur daily in life. We learn from Benedict that a man's life does not solely affect his own, but his life greatly affects others due to the interdependence and unity shared within humanity. He teaches that man cannot shatter the inherent interdependence and unity embedded in human existence, for it is not a man-made entity. So it is plausible that one's good intentions or bad intentions have a ripple effect on all humanity. It seems that all humanity carries each other's crosses. Maybe this is the reason why Benedict stresses that it is important to pray, repent and ask for forgiveness and healing to be reformed from affliction for oneself and for others. When we enter the upper room and heartily repent, we can become forgiven sinners.<sup>399</sup> Benedict believes that forgiveness is obtained in the shelter and support structure of salvific energy. It is not easy to address the plaque of affliction and to reform, but with help it is possible.

Yet the being of man is not, in fact, that of a closed monad. It is related to others by love and hate, and, in these ways, has its colonies within them. My own being is present in others as guilt or as grace. We are not just ourselves; or, more correctly, we are ourselves only as being in others, with others and through others. Whether others curse us or bless us, forgive us and turn guilt into love-this is part of our own destiny. The fact that the saints will judge means that encounter with Christ is encounter with his whole body. I come face to face with my own guilt vis-à-vis the suffering members of that body as well as with the forgiving love which the body derives from Christ its Head.<sup>400</sup>

The support structure of salvific energy seems to be the grace of forgiving love, a love that is uniting and shatters all afflictions. Benedict advises that the saints live in the shelter and support of salvific energy and are called upon to pray for us because they are an integral part of God's saving body, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

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<sup>399</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 231.

<sup>400</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 232.

the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. According to Benedict, the saving body, the salvific good energy of Christ “is encounter with his whole body.”<sup>401</sup> This liberates us from afflictions and transforms life in the temporal and for eternity. The resurrection of the body and life everlasting occurs through, with and in Christ. Christ liberates humanity from afflictions and manifests the moment that one’s resurrection of mind, body and soul is possible through, with and in Him.

### ***3.2.3: Salvific Energy as Communication***

This section will consider the notion of salvific energy as a carrier of meaning that graces humanity with the dynamic of being a communication structure. In the last two sections, we explored Benedict’s notion of salvific energy as an experience, possibly embodying a dynamic shelter and support structure. Now, we will explore Benedict’s seemingly theological directive by revealing the relationship between salvific energy, shelter, support and communication. This section will unpack salvific energy within its dynamic of communication and how Benedict seems to believe that it has an immanent relationship to encounter. This section will draw heavily upon the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

If humanity can find new ways to communicate with each other, then it seems possible that humanity will realize that God communicates with it. We learn from Benedict that salvific energy is a dynamic living structure that is a shelter, lends support and gives communication to humanity.

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<sup>401</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 232.



How is it that human beings can communicate? It is because above them, common to them all yet proper to each of them, is a third factor: righteousness and truth. Certainly, trust in truth is only fully possible where there is conviction that truth exists and has spoken to us.<sup>402</sup>

With conviction Benedict believes that truth exists and has spoken to us. This moment seems to transcend life and can forever change our equilibrium. For Benedict, communication is a grace and its source originates from the ultimate communication between man and God. “Why do we complain of not being heard?”<sup>403</sup> We may feel as though we do not know how to pray, “when we praise God or give him thanks for his benefits in general, we are not particularly concerned whether or not our prayer is acceptable to him. On the other hand, we demand to see the results of our petitions.”<sup>404</sup> God gives the beauty of prayer freely to humanity, God “awaits our petition because the dignity of his children lies in their freedom. We must pray, then, with his Spirit of freedom to be able to truly know what he wants.”<sup>405</sup>

It is my contention that when exercising the physical body, we receive communication from it. Benedict knows that prayer needs to be exercised just like one’s body. When we exercise prayer with an undivided heart and humbly petition God for our needs, we will receive communication, as Benedict teaches. It may not always be what we want, but we should not be discouraged, God already knows our needs.

Do not be troubled if you do not immediately receive from God what you ask him; for he desires to do something even greater for you, while you cling to him in prayer.

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<sup>402</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 98.

<sup>403</sup> *Catechism*, 656 subtitle.

<sup>404</sup> *Catechism*, 656 section 2735.

<sup>405</sup> *Catechism*, 656 section 2736.

God wills that our desire should be exercised in prayer, that we may be able to receive what he is prepared to give.<sup>406</sup>

Benedict advises that salvific energy as communication is directly linked to the exercised battle of prayer. Just as it is a constant, but vital, battle to exercise one's body, it is also a constant, but vital, battle to exercise prayer. When we exercise or play sports, we may be temporarily transcended. One may feel something more than oneself. According to Benedict, exercising prayer directly impacts the outpouring grace of communication within the shelter and support structure of salvific energy. With constant supplication in prayer, we can ask God the Father (our Creator), the Son (our Redeemer) and the Holy Spirit (our Guide) for the Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit, the Lord the giver of Life, open the path to receive communication. According to the Catechism, one needs to invoke the Holy Spirit and humbly ask the Holy Spirit to impart to oneself, one's family and one's community the Gift of Wisdom, the Gift of Understanding, the Gift of Counsel, the Gift of Fortitude, the Gift of Knowledge, the Gift of Piety, the Gift of the Fear of the Lord.<sup>407</sup> The Seven Gifts of the Holy Spirit embody salvific energy as good energy, saving energy. Benedict advises that the grace imparted by the Holy Spirit transcends life just as it occurred to the apostles in the upper room on Pentecost. For the apostles were given grace upon grace to communicate to the world the message of Christ. According to the gospel, after the descent of the Holy Spirit, they could speak in tongues they had never spoken. Here Benedict makes the connection that salvific energy embodies communication. The apostles were given the grace of communication and were now able to communicate to

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<sup>406</sup> *Catechism*, 656 section 2737.

<sup>407</sup> *Catechism*, 450 section 1831.

all. According to Benedict, the descending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost opened the path for humanity to more fully communicate with God. The upper room on Pentecost is where the shelter, support and communication structure of salvific energy became fulfilled and lives today, as then, for humanity. This is the reason that Benedict teaches that it is through our fervent prayer, prayer for others and from others that we may ask and possibly obtain from God the grace of the Seven Gifts and the Twelve Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Salvific energy as communication occurs mainly through the conversion of realizing that one's life is not possible through one's own ingenuity, with one's own power, or in one's human capabilities. Benedict teaches that the conversion is born in recognizing God's capabilities not as one's own. This becomes a moment of grace, the grace of insight.

Conversely, we can accept this situation of dependence, and keep ourselves trustingly open to the future, in the confidence that the Power which has so determined us will not deceive us.<sup>408</sup>

Benedict believes that now one can see things differently; one is dependent on God for even life itself. This can change everything as we become grateful for the ultimate gift of life itself. Our equilibrium is altered through recognizing ourselves as dependent on God for all the grace that we are given. It can become a relief to see one's rightful place as a human being who desperately needs God and needs prayers. We can now slowly start to recognize our faults and our need for help. It seems to complete the idea that prayer becomes one of humble and grateful acceptance that we need God to be liberated from our afflictions of sin. According to Benedict that one is now liberated to

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<sup>408</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 96.

pray with an undivided heart because God's power is needed and the situation cannot be remedied through one's own power. Through this grace of insight, we may slowly see the flow of grace obtained by the saints and humbly ask for their prayerful support and helpful communication. It becomes a living dynamic of always needing and wanting to be in the shelter, support and communication structure of salvific energy.

It is Benedict's contention that we need salvific energy to truly live because the source of good energy, saving energy, is not obtained through our own power. It is granted through, with and in the shelter, support and communication structure that is constantly graced by the living presence of God. Benedict teaches that salvific energy is granted to those living in His presence, overflowing with grace upon grace. The saints can intercede, when asked, because they live in constant communication obtained through the ultimate grace from God, one of living communion with Him for eternity. For us striving to live in constant communion, the ultimate grace, we are reminded of the end of The Apostle's Creed:

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic [sic] Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.<sup>409</sup>

It is my contention that without the grace of insight, these succinct words may block humanity. But with grace, we may understand the common and unifying need of salvific energy and the shelter, support and communication structure inherent in life everlasting. The support obtained in the shelter may make us humble and grateful. Benedict directs us to the transcending communication structure of salvific energy and its

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<sup>409</sup> *Catechism*, 50.

life-changing experience. He succinctly summarizes the living dynamic structure of salvific energy embodied with communication.

Only by handing oneself over to truth and rightness does one find that communication which is life.<sup>410</sup>

This thesis closes with the juxtaposition of why the shelter and language of salvific energy are indispensable to humanity. We can learn from Benedict that humanity cannot live in peace without salvific energy, for there only exists the good, by its eternal essence.<sup>411</sup> The transcendence of the good that satiates the human desire for a beautiful life is fulfilled with plenty, plenty for everyone, the plenary power of love<sup>412</sup> that only God can supply to all. Salvific energy is lived eternally in the peace of God and He wants to live with His beloved creatures, the whole of humanity for eternity. Humanity's destiny is to be 'delivered' and "safely sheltered from everything the devil and the world can contrive."<sup>413</sup> So, Benedict reminds us of the prayerful supplications in the Old Roman liturgy that alludes to this dynamic:

Free us Lord, from all evils, past, present and future. By the intercession ... of all the saints, give peace in our day. Come to our aid with your mercy that we may be ever free from sins and protected from confusion.<sup>414</sup>

True peace is "joyful and confident in a world full of affliction, and it delivered them (martyrs) at the core of their being, freeing them for true freedom."<sup>415</sup>

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<sup>410</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 99.

<sup>411</sup> Lonergan, *Topics in Education*, 31.

<sup>412</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 97.

<sup>413</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth 1<sup>st</sup> edition*, trans. Adrian J. Walker. (New York: Doubleday, 2007), 166.

<sup>414</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 167.

<sup>415</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 166.

## Conclusion

In Chapter Three, we explicitly focused on the dynamic tensions within the two key themes of death and eternal life from Benedict's book. We then briefly examined the implicit thread of salvific energy that expresses itself as a shelter, support and communication that is interwoven throughout his book. Combined, these sections impart the intense dynamic of humanity's wounded condition. It is the combination of tensions compounded from sin that impede humanity's freedom; "this results in perverse inclinations which cloud conscience and corrupt the concrete judgment of good and evil. Thus sin tends to reproduce itself and reinforce itself, but it cannot destroy the moral sense at its root."<sup>416</sup> How sin reproduces itself and reinforces itself seems to be a pattern that propagates and enslaves humanity. Benedict unveils the pattern of sin and death and juxtaposes it with the source of liberation for humanity, Christ. He teaches that man needs to be liberated from the affliction of sin and death. For Benedict, man can only re-emerge anew and truly free by the grace of salvific energy originating from Christ's death and resurrection. He believes that man is liberated from the bondage of death and lives truly when he is "safely sheltered from everything the devil and the world can contrive."<sup>417</sup>

We now return to our original questions from the beginning of Chapter Three: "How can the topics of death and eternal life be important in addressing the affliction of contemporary society? and "Why are the topics of death and eternal life crucial for a re-emergence of eschatology and the emergence of salvific energy in society?" The key to

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<sup>416</sup> *Catechism*, 457 section 1865.

<sup>417</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 166.

finding answers to these questions started with the dilemmas imposed by the external forces onto one's life. It is my contention that through the imposition of death within life, a return to life can emerge from the ashes. How? First, we should recognize the painful reality of death and second we can ask for help with re-educating ourselves to the road of life. It seems re-education away from death and towards life is a continuous and necessary process. Throughout this thesis, we have explored Benedict's book, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*. The book explores the dynamic tensions that affect all of humanity in the past and in modernity. The re-emergence of eschatology and the emergence of salvific energy can greatly assist humanity with a new language. We learn from Benedict's book that contemporary society is enslaved within the same dynamic battle without realizing its unified position. Jesus lived, died and rose from the dead so the entire world can live and be freed from evil (the root of humanity's enslavement and unified position). Jesus achieved the possibility for all humanity to be rich with life, to live with universal solidarity; a life lived with peace towards each other and in relationship with God. This possibility is offered to all, but humanity must humbly seek and ask God for the grace of peace that only He can deliver. The teaching of the Catholic Church insists that one must pray for oneself, one's family and all of humanity "to be freed from the corruption of sin and death."<sup>418</sup> This is in line with what St. Bernard of Clairvaux describes when he states: "...it is the glory of the Resurrection, in the new springtime of regenerating grace."<sup>419</sup> The message is that all of humanity needs regenerating grace; regenerating grace is the renewal and resurrection of life. According to Benedict, it is the good energy from the source of salvific energy that appears to

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<sup>418</sup> *Catechism*, 685 section 2852.

<sup>419</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God*, 7.

embody regenerating grace and the entire economy of salvation for all. The force of evil may block contemporary society from recognizing the actuality of sin, but at some point each person must face the actuality of death. According to the Catechism, sin and death are interwoven through debilitating tensions that bind each other within an abusive pattern of proclivity and perversion. They seem to become chained together by the assaults of evil and then a weakened humanity becomes enablers by continually afflicting each other while becoming more consumed by the darkness that forever opposes the light. “The devil (dia-bolos) is the one who ‘throws himself across’ God’s plan and his work of salvation accomplished in Christ.”<sup>420</sup>

Christ liberates humanity from the assaults of evil. Benedict teaches that it is Christ’s death and resurrection that manifest true life, and true peace in the present and in life everlasting. Christ’s resurrection freed humanity so it can live in the light surrounded by solidarity.<sup>421</sup> According to the Catechism and mirrored in his book Benedict explains that it is the light of the resurrection that embodies the all-embracing love and freedom that humanity seeks now and forever because “our interdependence in the drama of sin and death is turned into solidarity in the Body of Christ, ‘the communion of saints.’”<sup>422</sup> Benedict believes that the Lord’s Prayer discloses the eschatological dimension encapsulating the dynamic battle conflicting contemporary society. The end of the prayer unifies humanity with a petition of grave importance for all people in all times, *sed libera nos a malo*.<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> *Catechism*, 685 section 2851.

<sup>421</sup> *Catechism*, 685 section 2850.

<sup>422</sup> *Catechism*, 685 section 2850.

<sup>423</sup> *Evangelium Secundum Mattaeum - nova Vulgata, Novum Testamentum*,

[http://www.vatican.va/archive/bible/nova\\_vulgata/documents/nova-vulgata\\_nt\\_evang-matthaeum\\_lt.html#6](http://www.vatican.va/archive/bible/nova_vulgata/documents/nova-vulgata_nt_evang-matthaeum_lt.html#6) (accessed on June 2, 2013)



In this petition, evil is not an abstraction, but refers to a person, Satan, the Evil One, the angel who opposes God.<sup>424</sup>

The Latin language may give humanity a deeper insight into the final petition of the Lord's Prayer. Benedict teaches that the humble supplication *imploro* (Latin *implorare* - 'invoke with tears') God to free us (*libera nos*) from evil.

According to Benedict, humanity desperately needs the shelter of salvific energy to live in solidarity with each other and God. This is the life that the Son lives, the true life of solidarity with the Father, and the Holy Spirit. Peace can only be with you when you are sheltered from Satan.<sup>425</sup> This may be difficult for modernity to grasp, but Benedict teaches that we need to collaborate<sup>426</sup> with the light to live in solidarity with God and the rest of humanity. What does this mean for humanity living in modernity? Benedict gives humanity a succinct solution. The solution is available to any person who at any moment in his life may question the last petition of the Lord's Prayer. What does the last petition *sed libera nos a malo* really mean to Benedict and why is it important? How does it fill the gap between modernity, eschatology and salvific energy? Benedict states,

We may and should understand this extension of the final petition of the Our Father also as an examination of conscience directed at ourselves—as an appeal to collaborate in breaking the predominance of “evils.” But for all that we must not lose sight of the proper order of goods and of the connection of evils with “evil.” Our petition must not sink into superficiality; even on this interpretation on the Our Father petition, the central point is still “that we be freed from sins,” that we recognize “evil” as the quintessence of “evils,” and that our gaze may never be diverted from the living God.<sup>427</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> *Catechism*, 685 section 2851.

<sup>425</sup> *Catechism*, 685 section 2851.

<sup>426</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 166.

<sup>427</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 168.

Thus, Benedict believes that humanity can either enable evil or “collaborate in breaking the predominance of ‘evils.’”<sup>428</sup> Here the juxtaposition of enabling evil and propagating sin and death occurs at the crossroad. This returns us to the eschatological dimension where Benedict tries to fully disclose humanity’s wounded condition.

Eschatology gives humanity a language that heals, unified in solidarity with another, petitioning God for a better life, sheltered from evil. The decisive moment disclosed in eschatology becomes either the enslavement for man that leads to death, or the road that leads to life. We learn from Benedict, that one cannot break the predominance of evil alone; it can only be accomplished by facing Christ. We need the shelter, support and communication structure of Christ’s salvific energy to responsibly oppose evil and face the good. According to Benedict, humanity is wounded and weak. It needs God to put into action kindness and love, combined with learning, to turn to prayer and forgiveness in modernity. This challenges humanity to live a life of constant renewal. Benedict in *Deus Caritas Est* states, “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.”<sup>429</sup>

We learn from Benedict about the encounter with Christ and how this can return us to God. He expresses how reconciliation becomes rebirth, the resurrection of living life in relationship with Christ. It is my contention that the re-emergence of eschatology with the emergence of salvific energy re-educates and reunites the human and the divine by returning humanity to live a life in solidarity with the living God. Salvific energy

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<sup>428</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 168.

<sup>429</sup> Benedict XVI, *God is Love, Deus Caritas Est, Encyclical Letter*. (Boston, MA: Pauline Books & Media, 2006), 1.

seems to be an outpouring of the power of God.<sup>430</sup> God the Father heals humanity through the Son, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, with regenerating grace<sup>431</sup> now and forever. This returns man to a crossroad, the necessity for the renewal and re-emergence of eschatology in modernity. Benedict's thought is in line with his predecessor, that man can be renewed and truly find himself alive in relationship with God through, with and in all the living dynamics experienced by the temporal and spiritual worlds that influence life.

It is precisely the religious encounter with the world of the purely spiritual beings that becomes valuable as a revelation of his own being not only as body but also as spirit, and of his belonging to a design of salvation that is truly great and efficacious within a community of personal beings who serve the providential design of God for man and with man.<sup>432</sup>

The first is Michael the Archangel (cf. Dan 10:13-20; Rv 12:7; Jude 9). His name is a synthesis that expresses the essential attitude of the good spirits. Mica-El means "Who is like God?" This name expresses the salvific choice thanks to which the angels "see the face of the Father" who is in heaven. The second is Gabriel, a figure bound especially to the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God (cf. Lk 1:19-26). His name means "my power is God" or "power of God," as if to say that at the culmination of creation, the incarnation is the supreme sign of the omnipotent Father. Finally, the third archangel is called Raphael. Rafa-El means "God heals." He is made known to us by the story of Tobias in the Old Testament (cf. Tob 12:15-20 ff.), which is so significant for what it says about entrusting to the angels the little children of God, who are always in need of custody, care and protection.<sup>433</sup>

It is my contention that the experience of salvific energy is the shelter, support and communication structure that forever dispenses the custody, care and protection<sup>434</sup> that humanity needs now and forever. Eschatology, combined with salvific energy, has a

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<sup>430</sup> John Paul II, *Angels Participate in the History of Salvation* (General Audience, August 6, 1986) [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/audiences/alpha/data/aud19860806en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/audiences/alpha/data/aud19860806en.html) (accessed on May 30, 2013).

<sup>431</sup> St. Bernard, *On Loving God.*, 7.

<sup>432</sup> John Paul II, *Angels Participate in the History of Salvation.*

<sup>433</sup> John Paul II, *Angels Participate in the History of Salvation.*

<sup>434</sup> John Paul II, *Angels Participate in the History of Salvation.*

valid message for modernity. The message is enhanced when eschatology crosses its re-emergence with the emergence of salvific energy for modern man. Benedict expresses that it is the language of eschatology that embodies the wounded and redeemed human condition, confounding man with the emergent needed language of salvific energy, everlasting life. The internal and external dynamics are disclosed for humanity by experiencing the challenging crossroads encountered in life full of experiences. The language of eschatology and salvific energy manifests a duality creating a healing juxtaposition of unification for humanity, embodying a “world mediated by meaning.”<sup>435</sup> Eschatology’s re-emergence and the emergence of salvific energy reunites “the spiritual and the corporal, that is, the angelic and the earthly, and then (*deinde*) the human creature, who as it were shares in both orders, being composed of spirit and body.”<sup>436</sup> Eschatology and salvific energy grace humanity with a language of collaboration explained by Benedict with humble continuous petitions, to the Lord surrounded by his saints,<sup>437</sup> for the shelter<sup>438</sup> to free us from sin and evil and for us “to collaborate in breaking the predominance of ‘evils.’”<sup>439</sup> Benedict believes that the eschatological dimension unifies man so that we can find our originating life source. “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.”<sup>440</sup> Eschatology allows humanity the needed solidarity and language to become unified by their original wound. A new understanding can emerge that we can be unified through a renewed compassion for our

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<sup>435</sup> James B. Sauer, *A Commentary on Lonergan’s Method in Theology*, (The Lonergan Web Site, 2001), 100.

<sup>436</sup> *Catechism*, 85 section 327.

<sup>437</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 9.

<sup>438</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 9.

<sup>439</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 168.

<sup>440</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.

fellow man and ourselves. Eschatology redirects our perspective by clarifying the confusion still propagating from the wound and the devil. Eschatology's re-emergence returns man to recognize his wounds and the wounds of others. Now with exposed wounds, man can seek a reversal<sup>441</sup> from the consumption of all the confliction and affliction to find relief, a shelter that is desperately needed. Here, in fact, answers the task of contemporary eschatology<sup>442</sup> and the emergence of our new gaze<sup>443</sup> towards healing with the emergence of salvific energy. Salvific energy embodies a new language of hope and grateful dependency that enables us to humbly implore God to heal and "free (us) at the core of (our) being, freeing (us) for true freedom."<sup>444</sup> Benedict believes that the experience of salvific energy is the light of true peace with Him, "the Resurrection and the Life." (John 11:25)

In closing, the context of shelter, support and communication within the dynamic of salvific energy is a humbling and transcending experience. Salvific energy, with its carriers of meaning, shatters Benedict's dilemma of the tedious and tedium-laden Christianity, which moderns observe and know from experience.<sup>445</sup> The experience of salvific energy changes life; Benedict's entire point is to aid humanity in the direction of everlasting life.

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<sup>441</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, translated by J. R. Foster (New York: Continuum, 186), 25.

<sup>442</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 12.

<sup>443</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 168.

<sup>444</sup> Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 166.

<sup>445</sup> Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 8.

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