



Logos to Son in the Christology of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI

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In his preface to the new edition of *Introduction to Christianity*, Joseph Ratzinger writes that “*logos*” spans two areas of theology: “the term *logos*—the Word in the beginning, creative reason and love—is decisive for the Christian image of God,” and “the concept of *logos* simultaneously forms the core of Christology, of faith in Christ.”¹ The Christian image of God and faith in Christ intersect in the Prologue of the fourth Gospel in which the Evangelist declares that the same God who is *logos* became incarnate. For Ratzinger, understanding God as *logos* is necessary for understanding God as Trinity,² which, in turn, is the foundation for the incarnation of the Son of God. Because of this Ratzinger states that “the same Logos, the creative rationality from which the world has sprung, is personally present in this man Jesus. The same power that made the world is itself entering into the world and talking with us.”³

Ratzinger offers a definition of “the concept of logos” in the preface to *Introduction to Christianity* that paves the way for his subsequent analysis. While John’s Prologue places the concept of *logos* “at the very center of our Christian faith,” prior to its adoption by John, “[l]ogos signifies reason, meaning, or even ‘word’—a meaning, therefore, that is Word, that is relationship, that is creative.”⁴ But before God as *logos* can be understood as relationship and creative, “the concept of *logos*” as it pertains to God must begin with rationality:

The God who is *logos* guarantees the intelligibility of the world, the intelligibility of our existence, the aptitude of reason to know God and even the reasonableness of God . . . The world comes from reason, and this reason is a Person, is Love—this is what our biblical faith tells us about God.⁵

¹ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J.R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), p. 28. Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI is the author of all the works below unless otherwise noted.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 160–161.

³ *God and the World*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), p. 206.

⁴ *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 26.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

Ratzinger's task, then, is to explain how God can be *logos*, and how this *logos*—this reason—is a Person who is also Love, a Love that creates and wills a relationship with another, including with humanity through the incarnation of the Son.

I. God as *Logos*

Ratzinger grounds his examination of *logos* in the Old Testament's concept of God as conveyed in Exodus 3:14. He argues that the scholars who translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek under the influence of Hellenistic philosophy "built the bridge, so to speak, from the biblical concept of God over to Greek thought if they translated the 'I AM WHO I AM' of verse 14 by 'I am he that is.'"⁶ In this philosophical interpretation of the Hebrew text "belief is wedded to ontology" since "[t]he biblical concept for God is here identified with the philosophical concept of God."⁷ But "he that is"—he who exists eternally—also tells Moses that he is the "God of your fathers," meaning that, unlike the pagan deities who exercised their dominion over a particular locale, "He is not the god of a place but the god of men . . . He is therefore not bound to one spot but is present and powerful wherever man is."⁸ God's transcendence prompted the Israelites to conceive their relationship with him in a manner different from their contemporaries: they met God personally "on the plane of I and you, not on the plane of the spatial" because he, not subject to limits of time and space, has initiated a personal relationship with them.⁹

In addition to coming to see their God as eternal and personal, the Israelites also came to understand his other dimensions: first, he is the most powerful God and force in the world; second, he is the God of the Promise, of the future, rather than as a force of nature; and third, he transcends the bonds of singular and plural, thus preparing the way for the New Testament experience of God as Trinity.¹⁰ Combining these early images with the words of the prophets, particularly Deutero-Isaiah, Ratzinger returns to his initial observation about the burning bush:

What is the relationship between the God of biblical faith and the Platonic idea of God? Is the God who names himself and has a name,

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119. In the Regensburg Address, Benedict XVI calls the Septuagint more than a "simple translation of the Hebrew text: it is an independent textual witness and a distinct and important step in the history of Revelation." The text is in Tracey Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 169.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 124–125.

the God who helps and is always there, radically different from the *esse subsistens*, the absolute Being, that is discovered in the lonely silence of philosophical speculation, or what?¹¹

Ratzinger argues that the God who names himself as being itself is one and the same, for in calling himself “I am”

the God of Israel confronts the gods and identifies himself as the one who *is* . . . The brief, enigmatic phrase “I am” thus becomes the axis of the prophet’s proclamation, expressing his struggle against the gods, his struggle against Israel’s despair, and his message of hope and certainty.¹²

Thus two “components” of the Old Testament’s image of God are revealed: he is personal and proximate, and at the same time he is transcendent, absolute being, with power over space and time.¹³ As a result “Israel insisted that it had no god of its own but only the God of all people and of the whole universe; it was convinced that precisely for this reason it alone worshipped the real God.”¹⁴

Centuries later, the early Christians, surrounded by challenges from rival pagan cults that resembled those faced by exilic and postexilic Israel, also had to make the conscious choice for the biblical image of God as expressed in both the Old and New Testaments.¹⁵ In doing so they decided “for the God of the philosophers and against the gods of the various religions The choice thus made meant opting for the *logos* as against any kind of myth; it meant the definitive demythologization of the world and of religion.”¹⁶ The early Christians took the revelation at the burning bush a step further when they rejected underlying pagan theologies and instead interpreted the biblical God of absolute being as the *logos* of the philosophers. Therefore, when they spoke of God they “mean only Being itself, what the philosophers have expounded as the ground of all being, as the God above all powers.”¹⁷ Moreover, by seeing God as Being itself, they chose truth as the foundation of their faith rather than the customs and religious practices of the pagans.¹⁸

But this God of the philosophers, if he is the biblical God, must also appear “to the eye of faith as the God of men, who is not

¹¹ Ibid., p. 130.

¹² Ibid., p. 130. Emphasis in original.

¹³ Ibid., pp. 135–136.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 136.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 137. Ratzinger adds that this choice “has to be made afresh in every spiritual situation.”

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 137–138. Emphasis in original.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 138.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 141. Ratzinger cites Tertullian, in “one of the really great assertions of patristic theology,” as the exemplar of this choice: “Christ called himself truth, not custom.” See *De virginibus velandis I, I*, in *Corpus Christianorum seu nova Patrum collectio* (CChr) 2:1209.

only thought of all thoughts, the eternal mathematics of the universe, but also *agape*, the power of creative love.”¹⁹ The Christian faith’s radical transformation of the philosophers’ God from isolated and pure being to an anthropomorphic and emotionally concerned God is found in “any passage in the Bible that speaks of God.”²⁰ Yet in order for this transformation to be made plausible, two “prejudices” of “purely philosophical thinking” must be transcended:

[First] [t]he philosophical God is essentially self-centered, thought simply contemplating itself. The God of faith is basically defined by the category of relationship. He is creative fullness encompassing the whole. Thereby a completely new picture of the world, a completely new world order is established: the highest possibility of Being no longer seems to be the detachment of him who exists in himself and needs only himself. On the contrary, the highest mode of Being includes the element of relationship . . . [T]he supreme Being no longer appears as absolute, enclosed autarchy but turns out to be at the same time involvement, creative power, which creates and bears and loves other things.²¹

The absolute and aloof God of the philosophers is able to be recast as essentially relational and creative on philosophical grounds: “The boundless spirit who bears in himself the totality of Being reaches beyond the ‘greatest’, so that to him it is small, and he reaches into the smallest, because to him nothing is too small. Precisely this overstepping of the greatest and reaching down to the smallest is the true nature of absolute spirit.”²² Since absolute Being, by its very nature, reaches ever outward, nothing, not even the life of a human being, is too small or too insignificant to it. Therefore, the supreme Being is a creative power insofar as it extends beyond itself to create relationships outside of it.

The second prejudice to be transcended is the exclusion of love from being. “*The philosophical God is pure thought*: he is based on the notion that thought and thought alone is divine. The God of faith, as thought, is also love. His image is based on the conviction that to love is divine.”²³ To elevate pure thought over love is an assumption of philosophers, Ratzinger argues. In contrast, “the Gospel, and the Christian picture of God contained in it, corrects philosophy and lets us know that love is higher than mere thought. Absolute thought is a kind of love; it is not unfeeling idea, but creative, because it is love.”²⁴ By elevating love over thought, Ratzinger has merged the

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 147–148. Emphasis in original.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 146.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 148. Emphasis in original.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

God of the philosophers with the God of faith through the concept of a creative and loving *logos*:

The *logos* of the whole world, the creative original thought, is at the same time love; in fact this thought is creative because, as thought, it is love, and as love, it is thought. *It becomes apparent that truth and love are originally identical*; that where they are completely realized they are not two parallel or even opposing realities but one, the one and only absolute.²⁵

Herein lies the foundation for Ratzinger's understanding of the *logos*—the creative original thought that is identically truth and love—which he utilizes and develops in other works, including his famous address at Regensburg as Pope Benedict XVI.²⁶ This loving and creative *logos* is also the starting point for understanding the Trinity,²⁷ to which this inquiry now turns.

II. From *Logos* to Son

Having identified God, the Father who creates from love, with the *logos*, the creative, original thought, Ratzinger examines the *logos* from the perspective of faith:

Christian faith in God means first the decision in favor of the *logos* as against mere matter. Saying “I believe that God exists” also implies opting for the view that the *logos*—that is, the idea, freedom, love—stands not merely at the end but also at the beginning, that it is the originating and encompassing power of all being. In other words, faith means deciding for the view that . . . all being is a product of thought and, indeed, in its innermost structure is itself thought.

To that extent faith means in a specific sense deciding for the truth, since, to faith, being itself is truth, comprehensibility, meaning.²⁸

Since the God of faith is the same God of the philosophers, that is, since the God of Abraham is “being itself,” belief in God means “deciding for the truth,” because God, as Being itself, “is truth, comprehensibility, meaning.” Faith is rational, then, when it “is oriented beyond the symbolism of the religions toward an answer meant for all, an answer which also appeals to the common reason of mankind.”²⁹ Faith in God, as the “answer meant for all,” makes an ontological claim that extends beyond faith to human reason itself, a fact reflected

²⁵ Ibid., p. 148. Emphasis added.

²⁶ Cf. “[T]he truly divine God is the God who has revealed himself as *logos* and, as *logos*, has acted and continues to act lovingly on our behalf.” In Rowland, p. 170.

²⁷ *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 148.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 151–152.

²⁹ *The Nature and Mission of Theology*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), p. 25. Cf. *Introduction to Christianity*, pp. 156–158.

by the prophets and wisdom literature in their critiques of the pagan gods.³⁰ On account of this John's Gospel cannot be reduced to either a Hebraic or Hellenistic distortion; it must be accepted "in the classical sapiential tradition" that conveys "the inner movement of biblical faith in God and biblical Christology toward philosophical inquiry."³¹

But, as mentioned, if the God who is absolute being, who is *logos*, is also a personal God, then the *logos* also has a personal nature that "is not an anonymous, neutral consciousness but rather freedom, creative love, a person."³² Accepting the *logos* in this manner, as the Christian does, also means accepting the particular over the universal, and freedom over necessity.³³ First, because of its overflowing reach as creative thought, the *logos* spills over to elevate the particular over the universal: even what is great is small in comparison to Being itself.³⁴ Thus the *logos*, in its creative reaching, chooses what is small and exalts it; in doing so it chooses "man as the irreducible, infinity-oriented being."³⁵ Second, because the *logos* creates out of love, it operates freely and is not forced into action by necessity, mathematics, or chance.³⁶ Understanding the *logos* as personal, particular, and free definitively impacts the believer's comprehension of the cosmos and man's place in it:

In a world that in the last analysis is not mathematics but love, the minimum is a maximum; the smallest thing that can love is one of the biggest things; the particular is more than the universal; the person, the unique and unrepeatable, is at the same time the ultimate and highest thing.³⁷

In this world man is not a mere individual, as he is understood in Greek philosophy; he is a person, a being who exists for relationships, a notion unique to Christianity on account of reflection on the Trinity.³⁸ Through relationships the person exercises love, the most exalted of actions that consequently makes the person "the ultimate and highest thing." The importance of relationships implies that "oneness is not the unique and final thing; plurality, too, has

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25. Cf. *God Is Near Us*, eds. Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfnür, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), pp. 20–21.

³² *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 158. Here Ratzinger begins to recast his aforementioned understanding of the philosophers' God as personal in order to show that the same can be said of the *logos*. The reformulation is vital to Logos Christology.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 158. Cf. note 22, above.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 158–160.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 160. Ratzinger defines "person" while discussing the Trinity. See *Ibid.*, pp. 181–184.

its own definitive right.”³⁹ This points further to belief in the triune God, since God, as person, must be relational.

Ultimately, however, Ratzinger states that knowing God as Trinity emerges from reflection upon revelation, not from purely philosophical speculation. Although God is one being, throughout the Bible “God seems to converse with himself” in such a manner that “there are an ‘I’ and a ‘You’ in him.”⁴⁰ Thus in Scripture there is an “experience of the God who conducts a dialogue, of the God who is not only *logos* but also *dia-logos*, not only idea and meaning but speech and word in the reciprocal exchanges of partners in conversation.”⁴¹ Within the one God, the dialogue that occurs is a “reciprocal exchange of word and love” between the three Persons, who are not individual substances but “the relatedness whose pure actuality does not impair the unity of the highest being but fills it out.”⁴² Relation, then, constitutes the essence of being, which is to say that in his essence God is relation.

Relation is also at the heart of the Gospel passages in which Jesus Christ speaks repeatedly of himself as “Son” and God as “Father.”⁴³ The words “Father” and “Son” inherently express a relationship: the Father is Father insofar as he exists for the Son, and the Son can only be understood in relation to the Father.⁴⁴ Thus “Jesus is called ‘Son’ and is thereby made ‘relative’ to the Father, and in that Christology is ratified as a statement of relation, the automatic result is the total reference of Christ back to the Father.”⁴⁵ For this reason St. John the Evangelist insists that the Son “does not proceed in any way from himself and so is completely one with the Father.”⁴⁶ This oneness of Father and Son, who have existed as one from all eternity, enables the Evangelist to define the essence of the latter:

To John, “Son” means being from another; thus, with this word he defines the being of this man as being from another and for others, as a being that is completely open on both sides, knows no reserved area of the mere “I”. When it thus becomes clear that the being of Jesus as Christ is a completely open being, a being “from” and “toward”, which nowhere clings to itself and nowhere stands on its own, then it is also clear at the same time that this being is pure relation (not substantiality) and, as pure relation, pure unity.⁴⁷

³⁹ Ibid., p. 161.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 182.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 183.

⁴² Ibid., p. 183.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 185.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 183–185. Cf. *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 343.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 185.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 186.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 186.

Ratzinger's analysis illuminates the relationship expressed in such passages as "I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me" (John 5:30). Since the Son is consubstantial with God the Father, the Son's essence is pure relation, pure unity. Therefore, the Son is the true ambassador of the Father since the Son "really loses his own identity" on account of being "one with him who sends him."⁴⁸ Thus the Son is a being "'from' and 'for'" the Father "as relatedness and hence as unity."⁴⁹

With the unity and identity of the Father and the Son established, Ratzinger turns to John's Prologue to examine "the concept of *logos*" in light of the Son:

When John characterizes the Lord as *Logos* he is employing a term widely current in both Greek and Jewish thought and taking over with it a series of ideas implicit in it that are in this way transferred to Christ. But perhaps one can say that the new element that John has added to the *logos* concept lies not least in the fact that, to him, *logos* does not mean simply the idea of eternal rationality of being, as it did essentially in Greek thought. By its application to Jesus of Nazareth, the concept of *logos* acquires a new dimension. *It no longer denotes simply the permeation of all being by meaning; it characterizes this man: he who is here is "Word". The concept of logos, which to the Greeks meant "meaning" (ratio), changes here really into "word" (verbum). He who is here is Word; he is consequently "spoken" and, hence, the pure relation between the speaker and the spoken to. Thus logos Christology, as "word" theology, is once again the opening up of being to the idea of relationship. For again it is true that "word" comes essentially "from someone else" and "to someone else"; word is an existence that is entirely way and openness.*⁵⁰

Through the mystery of the incarnation, the God who is *logos*, creative reason, is no longer seen as "simply the permeation of all being by meaning." Now the concept of *logos*, applied to Jesus of Nazareth, is transformed from "meaning" as seen in light of the cosmos to "Word." This "Word" is the "from and for" in the *dia-logos* that is the essence of God. The Son is both "from and for" the Father in their unity; but when the Son who is the Word of God takes on flesh in the person of Jesus Christ, he is "from someone else" (the Father) and "to someone else" (mankind) as metaphysics and history converge.⁵¹

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188. Cf. *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 265–266; 348–349.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 189. Emphasis added.

⁵¹ *Truth and Tolerance*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004) pp. 172–173. Cf. *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 225.

III. The Word Became Flesh

For Ratzinger, “faith in the *logos*, the meaningfulness of being, corresponds perfectly with a tendency in human nature;” yet Christianity goes further to proclaim “the absolutely staggering alliance of *logos* and *sarx*, of meaning and a single historical figure.”⁵² Alongside the union of the God of faith and the God of the philosophers, “a second, no less decisive alliance appears” in the Creed with the convergence of the *logos* and *sarx*, the word and flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ: “The historical man Jesus is the Son of God, and the Son of God is the man Jesus.”⁵³ How is the “staggering alliance” that occurs in the incarnation possible? How is it that “the same Logos, the creative rationality from which the world has sprung, is personally present in this man Jesus?”⁵⁴

Ratzinger locates the scriptural origin of the incarnation in the inner dialogue between Father and Son.⁵⁵ “On the basis of the Psalms, the Letter to the Hebrews interpreted the process of incarnation as an actual dialogue within the Divinity: ‘A body have you prepared for me’, says the Son to the Father (Heb 10:5).”⁵⁶

In saying this, [the Son] transforms a citation from the Psalms that reads: “My ears hast thou opened” (Ps 40:6). In the context of the Psalm, this means that what brings life is obedience, saying Yes to God’s Word, not holocausts and sin offerings. Now the one who is himself the Word takes on a body, he comes from God as a man, and draws the whole of man’s being to himself, bearing it into the Word of God, making it “ears” for God and thus “obedience,” reconciliation between God and man (2 Cor 5:18–20).⁵⁷

The incarnation visibly manifests the *logos* as the choice of the personal, the particular, and the free over the impersonal, the universal, and the necessary; for in it the Logos, the eternal Word of God, freely assumed the particular, human flesh, so that the particular may share in the universal, life with God. In this way the Word, the Son who “comes from God and he is God,”⁵⁸ “takes on a body” in order to bring about “reconciliation between God and man.” Reconciliation requires obedience, so the Word, by becoming man himself, “draws the whole of man’s being to himself” so that through his obedience

⁵² *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 193.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵⁴ *God and the World*, p. 206. See note 3, above.

⁵⁵ *God Is Near Us*, eds. Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfnür, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), p. 14. Cf. *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 334.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁵⁷ *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 334.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 334.

all may be reconciled with God.⁵⁹ Moreover, the body prepared for the Son was received through the willing obedience of Mary; her “yes” “opens for him the place where he can pitch his tent.”⁶⁰ Jesus “is the Word that comes from God, from a living vision of him, from unity with him.”⁶¹

While John’s Prologue is the source for understanding Jesus as the Word, the transformation of *logos* to Word in the incarnation also depends upon the cross.⁶² On the cross Pilate proclaimed to the world that Jesus was king, and thus Messiah, *Christus*; Jesus’ cross is his crown.⁶³ In his surrender to the cross word, mission, and existence all converge, so that “[f]rom the cross faith understands in increasing measure that this Jesus did not just do and say *something*; that in him message and person are identical, that he is all along what he says.”⁶⁴ This is the Christological basis of John’s Gospel: “[T]his Jesus is ‘word’; but a person who not only *has* words but *is* his word and his work, who is the *logos* (‘the Word’, meaning, mind) itself; that person has always existed and will always exist; he is the ground on which the world stands.”⁶⁵ Jesus “as a totality is Son, Word, and mission; his activity reaches right down to the ground of being and is one with it.”⁶⁶ In other words, the complete vision of God’s self-disclosure is found in the cross.

The cross also proclaims God’s radical love for man.⁶⁷ “Because [Jesus] is wholly given over to obedience and love, loving to the end (cf. Jn 13:10), he himself becomes the true ‘offering.’”⁶⁸ As he offers himself to the Father “[h]e takes up into himself our sufferings and hopes, all the yearning of creation, and bears it to God In Jesus’ self-surrender on the cross, the Word is united with the entire reality of human life and suffering.”⁶⁹ In fact, Jesus’ “*being* itself is service. And precisely because this being, as a totality, is nothing but service, it is sonship.”⁷⁰ The Cross manifests the oneness of Jesus as Son, as God, as Word: just as within the Godhead the Son exists “from and for” the Father, the Father sends the Son (“from”) to become

⁵⁹ Cf. Rom 5:19.

⁶⁰ *God Is Near Us*, p. 24. “Pitched his tent” is Ratzinger’s preferred translation of “*eskenōsen*” in John 1:14; see *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁶¹ *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 266.

⁶² *Introduction to Christianity*, pp. 205–207; 225–228.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 226.

⁶⁷ *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 12.

⁶⁸ *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 334.

⁶⁹ *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), p. 47.

⁷⁰ *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 226. Emphasis in original.

man so that through the Son's self-emptying on the cross ("for") he, as mediator, reconciles God and man. Thus *logos*, in addition to being creative reason, is also love, as mentioned above: "The primacy of the Logos and the primacy of love proved to be identical. The Logos was seen to be, not merely mathematical reason at the basis of things, but a creative love taken to the point of becoming sympathy, suffering with the creature."⁷¹ With confidence, Benedict XVI echoes the Evangelist: *Deus caritas est*.

John's Gospel particularly unites the love and sacrifice of the incarnate Word through the symbol of bread.⁷² In John 6 "the theology of the Incarnation and the theology of the Cross come together; the two cannot be separated."⁷³ The motif of bread links the two:

God becomes "bread" for us first of all in the Incarnation of the Logos: The Word takes on flesh. The Logos becomes one of us and so comes down to our level, comes into the sphere of what is accessible to us. Yet a further step is still needed beyond even the Incarnation of the Word. Jesus names this step in the concluding words of his discourse: His flesh is life "for" the world (John 6:51). Beyond the act of the Incarnation, this points to its intrinsic goal and ultimate realization: Jesus' act of giving himself up to death and the mystery of the Cross.⁷⁴

Ratzinger's emphasis on Jesus' flesh given "for" the world in this passage is significant: it recalls the essence of the Son as one with the Father, since the Son does not exist for himself but is "from and for" the Father, as discussed above. In the same way, having come "from" God the Son gives himself up to death "for" man. In a similar passage in *God Is Near Us*, Ratzinger presents John 6:51 with a slightly different emphasis: "The bread that I give (that is, the Logos that is the true nourishment of man) is my flesh for the life of the world."⁷⁵ The identification of Jesus the Logos as bread recalls the earlier discussion of the "greatest" reaching down to the "smallest," a reality recognized in the patristic age:

[W]e are reminded of the saying of the Fathers that the Logos has contracted, has become small. This is true in two senses: the infinite Logos has become small, become a child. But also: the immeasurable Word, the entire fullness of Holy Scripture, has contracted itself within the compass of this one sentence ["A body you have prepared

⁷¹ *Truth and Tolerance*, p. 182. This passage is quoted by Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith*, p. 64. In the accompanying footnote she adds, "For the same idea expressed in different words see *Deus Caritas Est*, art. 10." Cf. *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 208. See also note 19, above.

⁷² *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 263–272.

⁷³ *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 269.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 268–269. Cf. *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 13; *God Is Near Us*, p. 21.

⁷⁵ *God Is Near Us*, p. 21.

for me" (Heb 10:5; Ps 40)], which gathers together the law and the prophets.⁷⁶

Moreover, "[t]his saying about Christ's flesh expresses at the same time his self-giving sacrifice, the mystery of the Cross and the mystery of the paschal sacrament that derives from it."⁷⁷ The Eucharist, then, is properly understood in light of the Incarnation and the Cross: "For the goal of the Word's becoming flesh spoken of by the prologue [of John's Gospel] is precisely the offering of his body on the Cross, which the sacrament makes accessible to us."⁷⁸ Thus the bread of life discourse contains a twofold movement: while God incarnate gives himself to man so that man may be nourished by the "bread of heaven," at the same time the Eucharist elevates man to "an anticipation of the new life in God and with God."⁷⁹ A complete understanding of the paschal mystery emphasizes the incarnation: "Only through the Cross and through the transformation that it effects does this flesh become accessible to us, drawing us up into the process of transformation."⁸⁰

Since the Word becomes food for man, "[t]he Eucharist draws us into Jesus' act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate Word, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving."⁸¹ Because the Eucharist is "the Feast of the Resurrection, *Mysterium Paschae*," it "is ordered to eschatology, and hence it is at the heart of the theology of the Cross."⁸² In the eucharistic sacrifice, which "itself comes from the incarnate love of God," man receives the "God who *gives himself*, taking man up into his action and enabling him to be both gift and recipient."⁸³ The self-offering of the Son in the Eucharist, therefore, "expresses at once both the origin and the fulfillment of the new and definitive worship of God, the *logiké latreía*"⁸⁴ expressed by St. Paul in Romans 12:1. Ratzinger sees the concept of "*logiké latreía*," which he defines as "worship characterized by logos,"⁸⁵ that is, "worship and sacrifice with spirit and mind,"⁸⁶ as the convergence of religious history since it fulfills the Jewish Temple sacrifice and unites it with the Hellenistic

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷⁸ *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 269.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁸¹ *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 13.

⁸² *The Feast of Faith*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p. 65.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 94. Emphasis in original.

⁸⁴ *Sacramentum Caritatis*, no. 70.

⁸⁵ *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, eds. Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfnür, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), p. 115.

⁸⁶ *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p. 45.

understanding of sacrifice as the offering of man's innermost being—his “word,” the *logos* that is within him.⁸⁷ This worship “becomes a full reality only in the *logos incarnatus*, the Word who is made flesh and draws ‘all flesh’ into the glorification of God.”⁸⁸ Yet the full import of this worship is only understood in light of the cross and the Eucharist:

In Jesus' self-surrender on the Cross, the Word is united with the entire reality of human life and suffering. There is no longer a replacement cult. Now the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus takes us up and leads us into that likeness with God, that transformation into love, which is the only true adoration. In virtue of Jesus' Cross and Resurrection, the Eucharist is the meeting point of all the lines that lead from the Old Covenant, indeed from the whole of man's religious history.⁸⁹

Thus the word “Eucharist” “can happily serve as a summary of the idea of *logikē latreia*” because it “points to the universal form of worship that took place in the Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection of Christ.”⁹⁰ Moreover, the worship that is Christ's self-offering reflects back to the inner relationship between the Father and Son because

[t]he new Temple already exists, and so too does the new, definitive sacrifice: the humanity of Christ opened up in his Cross and Resurrection. *The prayer of the man Jesus is now united with the dialogue of eternal love within the Trinity.* Jesus draws men into this prayer through the Eucharist, which is thus the ever-open door of adoration and the true Sacrifice, the Sacrifice of the New Covenant, the “reasonable service of God.”⁹¹

Through the Eucharist man now shares in the inner life of the Triune God, who is *logos* and *dia-logos* in his essence.

Finally, since Jesus “draws men into his prayer through the Eucharist,” his self-giving brings about men's union with each other in addition to union with Christ.⁹² The Eucharist is Communion because “the Logos, who is the Son, makes us sons in the sacramental fellowship in which we are living.”⁹³ Therefore, the Eucharist

draws me out of myself towards him, and thus towards unity with all Christians. We become “one body,” completely joined in a single existence. *Love of God and love of neighbor are now truly united: God incarnate draws all to himself.* We can thus understand how *agape* also

⁸⁷ *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, pp. 115–117; *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, pp. 44–50.

⁸⁸ *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, p. 47.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49. Emphasis added.

⁹² *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 14.

⁹³ *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, p. 117.

became a term for the Eucharist: there God's own *agape* comes to us bodily, in order to continue his work in us and through us.⁹⁴

Only through the self-giving of the incarnate Word on the Cross does the true extent of the *logos* as love and creative power become apparent. Although the "greatest" has become the "smallest," the smallest, Jesus in the Eucharist, unites all men with each other, and in turn, with the greatest, God himself. True *agape* is the creative *logos* as the Word incarnate and poured out so that man may have life in abundance.

IV. Conclusion

Ratzinger-Benedict has never tired of declaring Christianity "the religion of the *logos*."⁹⁵ As he said at Regensburg, "[T]he truly divine God is the God who has revealed himself as *logos* and, as *logos*, has acted and continues to act lovingly on our behalf."⁹⁶ And since God is *logos* who creates and loves through relationships, he has declared through revelation that he is Trinity. The second person of the Trinity, the Son, became man in Jesus Christ; the *logos*, the eternal Word, "became flesh and dwelt among us" so that man could be reconciled with God. For Ratzinger Logos Christology inherently points to God since it presents both the essence and mission of the Son as the Word who is the "from and for" of the Father. Like the Word itself, Logos Christology has a twofold movement: the descent of God to live among man, the complete realization of which is the self-giving of the Son on the cross; and the return of the Son to God after he transformed man, uniting him to himself and to one other through the Eucharist. Thus Jesus is the Word, and the Word is God. Herein lies the unity of the burning bush, the beginning of reflection on the *logos*, and the cross, the fulfillment of the *logos*: as Ratzinger himself explains, "The highest claim of revelation, the 'I am he,' and the Cross of Jesus are inseparably one."⁹⁷

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⁹⁴ *Deus Caritas Est*, no. 14. Emphasis added.

⁹⁵ See, for example, *Introduction to Christianity*, p. 73; and the Subiaco Address, in Rowland, *Ratzinger's Faith*, p. 164. The citation is in the latter.

⁹⁶ "Regensburg Address," in Rowland, p. 170. See note 28, above.

⁹⁷ *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 349.