The Salvation of the Cosmos: Benedict XVI's Eschatology and its Relevance for the Current Ecological Crisis

Jeremiah Vallery

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THE SALVATION OF THE COSMOS:
BENEDICT XVI’S ESCHATOLOGY AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR THE CURRENT ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

A Dissertation
Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By
Jeremiah Vallery

December 2017
THE SALVATION OF THE COSMOS:
BENEDICT XVI’S ESCHATOLOGY AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR THE CURRENT ECOLOGICAL CRISIS

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ABSTRACT

THE SALVATION OF THE COSMOS:

BENEDICT XVI’S ESCHATOLOGY AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR THE CURRENT

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By

Jeremiah Vallery

December 2017

Dissertation supervised by Radu Bordeianu, Ph.D.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI has elements of a cosmic eschatology embedded in his theological oeuvre that have not heretofore been extensively systematized. This dissertation fills this gap by contextualizing Benedict’s cosmic eschatology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, examining his Logos theology and his view on the fate of the cosmos, exploring his cosmic liturgy, and evaluating his concept of human ecology and pneumatology. Benedict insufficiently links his cosmic eschatology to his papal teachings on the environment; however, his cosmic eschatology can be developed in fruitful ways. After providing a thorough articulation of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology, I offer my own ideas on how it might develop. I suggest modifying the exitus-reditus schema to accommodate the uniqueness of individuals and, building on the foundation of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology, I lay the groundwork for a pneumatological cosmic eschatology using the insights of various eastern theologians.
DEDICATION

To the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit.
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Introduction

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI (Joseph Ratzinger) is one of the most influential theologians of his generation and his works are widely available in the English language. Not many realize, however, that Benedict has a cosmic eschatology in his oeuvre, although he has not treated the subject at length in any one work and it has yet to be fully explicated. Up to this point, the descriptions of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology have been insufficient. For instance, in *Resurrection Realism: Ratzinger the Augustinian*, a recent work by Peter J. Fletcher, there is a brief section on “The Salvation of the World,” but Fletcher does not explore this topic in depth. While *Resurrection Realism* is a fine work by Fletcher that clearly and impressively delineates the similarities between the trajectories in St. Augustine and Benedict XVI’s eschatological thought, there is one glaring lacuna, i.e. the lack of attention to Benedict’s *Einführung in den Geist der Liturgie* (*The Spirit of the Liturgy*), which is essential to Benedict’s understanding of the salvation of the cosmos. A year before *Resurrection Realism* was published, I outlined the

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1 Throughout the dissertation, I use the name Benedict rather than Ratzinger, unless I refer to biographical details or quote a passage that mentions the name Ratzinger. Occasionally, I use both names in the same sentence to emphasize a distinction between Ratzinger’s doctrine as it existed before he was elected pope and the same doctrine (or another doctrine) after he had taken the name Benedict.

2 In a recent anthology, marked by its vast ecumenical scope since it includes Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox theologians, Benedict is listed as one of the most important theologians of the modern era. See Staale Johannes Kristiansen and Svein Rise, eds., *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013).


5 This lack of attention is made evident by the conspicuous absence of a bibliographic entry for this work. See Fletcher, *Resurrection Realism*, 266–67.
pillars of Benedict’s cosmic soteriology (which for the later Benedict is obviously connected to the liturgy) with references to *Spirit of the Liturgy*, but there is much that I left unexplored.⁶

Because of space requirements, I did not place Benedict’s thought in the context of other theologians’ eschatologies. In this work, I intend to offer the most in-depth analysis of Benedict XVI’s cosmic eschatology to date.

My introduction consists of an overture in which I describe several different eschatological models predicted by some contemporary cosmologists and compare these views to a Christian eschatological perspective. The overture sets the stage for the rest of the dissertation. Benedict XVI enters the stage in the subsequent section, which is a brief biography of the former pontiff. I then state the purpose of my dissertation and my methodology. Finally, I provide an outline of the four chapters in the dissertation.

**Overture**

Apocalyptic visions, whether inspired by religious or scientific sources, continue to have a profound influence on humanity in the twenty-first century. For the past several decades, scientists have been warning the world about rising average global temperatures and the negative effects of human-caused climate change. This prospect has led theologians to reevaluate the relationship between Christianity and the environment. While there is a general consensus among scientists and theologians alike that human-caused climate change is endangering the sustainability of life on Earth, theologians do not simply appeal to humanistic values, for they perceive the problem from a perspective that is informed by a transcendent horizon. This is

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imperative since modern science has presented humanity with a narrative that indicates that the universe is destined to destruction in one of several possible scenarios. In the face of the destruction of not only life on Earth but of the entire universe itself, it is essential that theologians develop a cosmic eschatology/soteriology that explains how the universe itself can be saved from destruction. A closer look at the narratives of the destruction of the universe that modern cosmologists have described demonstrates how hopeless the situation is without an openness to transcendence.

Nearly two-hundred thousand years ago, a remarkable event took place: homo sapiens emerged on the Earth. The dramatic entrance of human beings in the universe happened late in the history of the cosmos, which is estimated to be around 13.7 billion years old. After they had developed and mastered the skills they needed to survive, human beings’ insatiable thirst for knowledge speeded them on to remarkable advancements over the millennia. Technology and civilization grew in proportion to our ancestors’ ability to express ideas in mathematical and spoken languages. The scientific revolution impelled humanity on a path of exponential technological growth, and the human race is now at the point that it can destroy itself through nuclear weapons and human-caused climate change. With these possible disasters hanging over the world like the sword of Damocles, some have proposed fleeing the planet to avoid these possible catastrophes. Some people believe that human beings will eventually be able to accomplish interstellar space flight and propose the terraforming of planets (the most obvious example being Mars) to make them inhabitable.

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The problem with terraforming within the solar system as a means of perpetuating the human race is that the sun is a limited source of fuel and energy. Within approximately five billion years, the sun will die out. In fact, its size will likely expand to such an extent that its surface will extend past the orbit of the Earth, which means that it will be engulfed in flames. If human beings do not find a way to do interstellar travel, the human race as it exists will be snuffed out.

Even if human beings were to venture beyond the solar system and find an abode in a foreign solar system, there is no guarantee that the human race will live on. Conventional scientific cosmology holds that the fate of the universe can be divided into two possible scenarios: (1) perpetual expansion or (2) a “Big Crunch”. Perpetual expansion would spell the death of humanity since the overall temperature of the universe would asymptotically approach absolute zero, the theoretical temperature at which molecular motion ceases. The “Big Crunch” would likewise mean the end of the human race since all matter would presumably contract into a singularity. In both of these scenarios, whatever human beings may do, humanity will come to an end.

Apart from mainstream cosmological hypotheses, there are three other theories which would permit the human race to survive, but the possibility is dubious in these scenarios. The first of these theories, developed by cosmologists and theoretical physicists Paul Steinhardt and Neil Turok, is the hypothesis of a cyclic universe. In their model, the universe undergoes an infinite number of Big Bangs and Big Crunches, and the Big Bang that occurred around 13.7
billion years ago was merely one of many “collision[s] between worlds” that “collide at regular intervals of about a trillion years.”

Steinhardt and Turok note that their cyclic model revived an ancient cosmological debate about whether time is linear or cyclical. They limn the approaches of the ancient Greeks’ ekpyrotic cyclical model of the universe, the ancient Hindu cosmology in which one day in the life of Brahma corresponds to one complete cosmological cycle, and modern precursors of the cyclic model including the proposals of Edgar Allen Poe and Friedrich Nietzsche, and note that with the rise of Christianity, the cyclical model of time was essentially eclipsed by the linear model since this is the model that is promoted in the Bible. This cosmological model holds little hope except for the high probability, if not certainty, that a materially identical individual would arise in a universe that has an infinite number of cycles. This, however, in no way guarantees that an individual’s consciousness will be rebooted, so to speak, in his or her materially identical “clone.” Although this model of the universe would perpetuate life, it would also perpetuate death, essentially confirming the Hindu intuition regarding the primacy of death represented by Shiva, the destroyer.

In the second unconventional cosmological model, there exists a multiverse in which multiple universes exist simultaneously. If inter-universal travel were to become possible, humanity would be able to escape extinction, at least for some time. The outlook of survival in this scenario, however, is rather bleak since there is no guarantee that the laws of physics in other universes would be sustainable for human life.

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9 Ibid., 168–73.
The third unconventional cosmological theory is Frank J. Tipler’s theory of the Omega Point.\textsuperscript{10} Tipler, a cosmologist and mathematical physicist, begins with a reductionistic approach to the human being, which he claims is necessary for his theory of the resurrection in which a human being is considered “a purely physical object, a biochemical machine completely and exhaustively described by the known laws of physics,” which means that for Tipler, “[t]here are no mysterious ‘vital’ forces.”\textsuperscript{11} Connected with this anthropological reductionistic approach is his reductionistic approach to theology itself, which he believes will inevitably be subsumed by physics.\textsuperscript{12} For Tipler, the Christian idea of the resurrection will become fulfilled when simulations of every human experience are reproduced so that human beings are perpetuated in a kind of virtual reality. In Tipler’s words, “we shall be emulated in the computers of the far future.”\textsuperscript{13} Thus, while the species will inevitably die out, human civilization will not become extinct, and human beings will be able to be resurrected in a cyber-world, thereby circumventing the inevitable destruction of the physical universe.\textsuperscript{14} According to this theory, although the universe will self-destruct, eternal life is granted to human beings through their own ingenuity, and the ancient Biblical prophecies of immortality will be fulfilled.

Tipler’s model has received criticism for conflating religion and science and overlooking the necessary role of mystery in religion, seeking instead to rationalize every aspect of reality.

\textsuperscript{10} For Tipler’s discussion of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, see Frank J. Tipler, \textit{The Physics of Immortality: Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead} (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 110–117. Tipler distinguishes between his theory of Omega Point and Teilhard’s theory of Omega Point. While Tipler adopts the name of his theory from Teilhard’s work and accepts Teilhard’s list of the four properties the Omega Point must have, he says that the real inspiration for Tipler’s theory came from “Time Without End: Physics and Biology in an Open Universe,” a paper written by Freeman Dyson in 1979 (Tipler, 116).

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 1; italics Tipler’s.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 3.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 220; italics Tipler’s.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 219.
Tipler’s model suffers from the same problem as the cyclic model of the universe in which individuals are materially resurrected, so to speak, but in which there is no necessary connection between the consciousnesses of materially identical individuals. It is highly questionable whether a cyber-version of an individual can be considered a resurrected form of that individual in any meaningful way.

In all five models mentioned above, there seems to be no hope of continued existence for the human race. The above existential reflection of the mortality of the human species, though saturnine, is not some exercise of the imagination that has no bearing on the present moment. John R. Polkinghorne, an Anglican priest and scientist, insists that it is imperative for theologians to face the question of the inevitability of the destruction of the universe head on. In his words, “This gloomy prediction is one that theologians have to take seriously.”\textsuperscript{15} Just as the way to proceed in life is not to ignore death but to acknowledge it as a reality, so too must it be acknowledged that the universe will fade away. This is the same line of reasoning Polkinghorne uses when he reflects,

That insight [i.e. the possible fates of the universe according to cosmologists], in fact, does not seem to present theology with a challenge all that different from that raised by the even more certain knowledge of our own individual apparent futility on a time scale of tens of years. Death, whether it is the death of the universe or the death of a person, places a question mark over the Creator’s intentions for the fulfillment of creation . . . Christian hope believes that the foretaste and guarantee of that divine faithfulness has already been given us in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The empty tomb, with its message that the Lord’s risen body is the transmuted and glorified form of his dead body, speaks of a destiny in Christ for matter as well as humanity.\textsuperscript{16}

In the Christian worldview, the prospect of a perishing universe is not without hope. Science does not know what is beyond death and in fact can say nothing about the nature of being itself.


\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 39–41.
This is where philosophy and religion come into play. The Christian hope is that God, the creator of all, will not abandon his creatures, and that he will create a new heaven and a new earth.

There are two kinds of cosmic eschatology, scientific and theological, which sometimes appear to conflict with each other. The first of these, which I have briefly described above, explores the fate of the universe from the perspective of contemporary cosmology. Although the human race will no longer be a part of this universe as we know it, there will forever be a kind of watermark on the universe itself constituted by the impact of human beings, since history and the universe are in certain ways inextricable. This poses the question: What is the meaning of our existence in such a universe destined to an entropic death, whether that death takes the form of a cold death or heat death? This is where the second kind of cosmic eschatology enters the scene.

Cosmic eschatology, from the perspective of theology, throws in a number of additional factors into the mix, including the idea that death is not the final answer, but is rather something that characterizes the universe in its fallen state. According to Scripture, sin is the cause of death.\(^\text{17}\) The ultimate fate of the universe depends not on death and entropy, but on a promise based on divine revelation: “I will create a new heavens and a new earth”; “Behold, I make all things new.”\(^\text{18}\) The biblical view of redemption enshrined in the New Testament is characterized by eternal life such that death does not have the last word, but it is also characterized by salvation from sin, the cause of death, which can only be brought about by repentance. If repentance is the first stage to acquiring eternal life and healing the fractured relationship between human beings and the earth (Gen. 3:17-19), then reconciliation, which is brought about by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, also reconciles the cosmos to God (Col. 1:19-20). For

\(^{17}\) “[God said,] ‘From that tree you shall not eat; when you eat from it you shall die’” (Gen. 2:17, NAB); “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23, NAB).

\(^{18}\) Rev. 21:1; Rev. 21:5, RSV.
human beings, the human participation in this cosmic movement of reconciliation is experienced as eternal life, which begins in this life and is consummated in the next through the resurrection of the body.

St. Paul describes the difference between this life and the next in terms that show continuity and discontinuity.

What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain . . . So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. 19

Paul emphasizes the death of the seed for plants to grow, which shows a new phase of being. Although his biology was incorrect, this does not lessen the value of his theological insight, which recognizes a profound difference between this life and the next. Yet the fact that wheat grains produce wheat stalks highlights the continuous aspect of Paul’s analogy. If the universe follows Paul’s analogy, it will have to die before it enters into a new phase of existence. 20

In many ways, the two kinds of cosmic eschatology are inseparable, despite the friction that sometimes exists between them. Cosmology and theology have always had a close relationship. Every civilization’s view of the cosmos is inevitably connected to that civilization’s outlook on the gods, and the same is true of modern western civilization. With the exponentially increasing deposit of scientific knowledge, humanity is confronted with two competing propositions: (1) God does not exist because science can explain all things, and (2) God exists and is an incredible designer. Despite the antithetical nature of these alternative views of God in light of science, modern scientific discoveries, such as evolution, the Big Bang, and the

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19 1 Cor. 15:36-37, 42-44, RSV.

20 This suggests that the perfection of the universe cannot be the result of an interior process akin to evolution.
sequencing of the human genome, have led to deeper theological reflections on humanity’s role in the universe. There is a sense that modern cosmic eschatology (of the theological variety) differs from pre-modern cosmic eschatology in part because the latter had a severely limited understanding of the universe from which it could draw inspiration. At the same time, humanity’s increased mastery over technology and nature has served as a catalyst for hubris and has led many to question the existence of God. It is important for Christians to recognize that in principle, scientific eschatology and theological cosmic eschatology are not two mutually exclusive conceptions of reality.

A Concise Biography of Benedict XVI

Joseph Ratzinger (1927 – ) was born in Marktl, a town in Bavaria, to a devout Catholic family that was staunchly opposed to the Nazis. When he was a child, he was deeply impressed by the annual cycle of the liturgy and joyfully received a missal for children.\(^{21}\) He writes that even as a child, “It was becoming more and more clear to me that here [in the liturgy] I was encountering a reality that no one had simply thought up, a reality that no official authority or great individual had created.”\(^ {22}\) His later theological stance on the divine origin of the liturgy is an extension of his childhood impression of the sacredness, mysteriousness, and givenness of the liturgy.\(^ {23}\)


\(^{22}\) Ibid., 20.

\(^{23}\) Cf. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 21–22. As far as I know, Benedict never uses the phenomenological term *givenness*. This is my interpretation of his experience of liturgy as a boy. For him, liturgy is a thing received by people and given by God, not something created by human beings.
Ratzinger entered the minor seminary in 1939. The main academic interests of Ratzinger at this time were mathematics, classical and modern literature (especially the works of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe), and liturgical texts.\textsuperscript{24} As a young man in Nazi Germany, Ratzinger was drafted into an anti-aircraft corps in 1943. He was briefly held by American soldiers as a prisoner of war, but was released shortly after the war ended in 1945.\textsuperscript{25} Both Joseph and his brother, Georg, entered the major seminary later that year.

The seminarians at Freising were hungry for knowledge, having just been freed from the Nazi regime. According to Ratzinger, they were interested in literature, science, and theology. They read novels in abundance, including those of Fyodor Dostoevsky, Paul Claudel, Georges Bernanos, and François Mauriac.\textsuperscript{26} In the sciences, they followed with intense curiosity the breakthroughs of Max Planck, Werner Heisenberg, and Albert Einstein. As for theologians and philosophers, they were inspired by Romano Guardini, Josef Pieper, Theodor Häcker, and Peter Wust. Theodor Steinbüchel’s two volumes on moral theology’s philosophical foundations provided Ratzinger with a high-quality introduction to the thought of Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Klages, and Henri Bergson.\textsuperscript{27} Ratzinger also mentions that he read in Steinbüchel’s \textit{Der Umbruch des Denkens} (\textit{The Revolution of Thought}) that “in philosophy we could detect a return to metaphysics, which had become inaccessible since Kant.”\textsuperscript{28} Ratzinger’s basic stance on metaphysics and the accessibility of truth can be traced to at

\textsuperscript{24} Ratzinger, Milestones, 29.

\textsuperscript{25} Even during his time as a prisoner of war, Ratzinger was still interested in academics and spent some time attempting to write Greek hexameters (ibid., 37).

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 42.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 42–43.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 44.
least his seminary years, although it is most likely a feature of his childhood as well. Finally, Ratzinger writes that he enthusiastically read the philosophy of personalism in the writings of Martin Buber, which he associated with the writings of St. Augustine, and that by contrast, he “had difficulties in penetrating the thought of Thomas Aquinas.”

Ratzinger did not enjoy scholasticism and found it unimaginative. After a lengthy lecture on the *summum bonum*, he remarked to Alfred Läpple, his seminary prefect, that “a *summum bonum* doesn’t need a mother.” Ratzinger’s theological and philosophical predilections began to manifest themselves in his seminary years through a variety of interests that foreshadowed his theological development in his later theological career.

In 1947, Ratzinger went to the University of Munich to study theology. The two largest influences on Ratzinger during this time were two of his professors, Michael Schmaus and Gottlieb Söhngen. He was also influenced by the biblical scholar Friedrich Wilhelm Maier. Commenting on the significance of Maier, Ratzinger states that he “listened to and assimilated all of Maier’s lectures with the greatest attention” and that “[e]xegesis has always remained for me the center of my theological work.”

Ratzinger’s experiences in Munich further honed his theological acumen and introduced him to novel theological theories and debates. Ratzinger was ordained a priest in 1951.

Ratzinger’s dissertation, defended in 1953, was on St. Augustine’s ecclesiology and his habilitation, completed in 1957 under the direction of Söhngen, was on St. Bonaventure’s

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29 Ibid.


theology of history. Ratzinger began his academic career at the University of Bonn in 1959. After his stint in Bonn, Ratzinger went to the University of Münster in 1963. At this time, he attended the Second Vatican Council, serving as a peritus to Cardinal Frings, the archbishop of Cologne. At the Council, there was a great debate among the Neo-Scholastics and theologians of a new stripe under the banner of what Fr. Reginald Garrigou Lagrange called nouvelle théologie. Ratzinger, who was drawn to personalism, had a distaste for Neo-Scholasticism, and was open to new perspectives informed by the modern and contemporary philosophical scene, aligned himself with nouvelle théologie. Although Ratzinger was quite young, he had a remarkable impact on the conciliar documents through his discussions, critiques, and reformulations of the different schemata that were proposed.

Shortly after the Council in 1966, Ratzinger accepted an appointment as a professor of dogmatic theology at the University of Tübingen. In 1969, he moved to the University of Regensburg. He worked with Hans Urs von Balthasar and Henri de Lubac to co-found Communio, a theological periodical. In 1977 Ratzinger’s academic career took an ecclesiastical turn when he was appointed Archbishop of Munich and Freising and was made a cardinal. From 1981 to 2005 he was the Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF). During his time as head of the CDF, Cardinal Ratzinger acquired the reputation of being a ruthless enforcer of tradition. He rejected women’s ordination, castigated some of the liberation theologians who were working in South America, and suspended several theologians while censuring others. His defense of traditional Catholic doctrine, together with the lengthy pontificate of Pope St. John Paul II, ensured that Catholic doctrine would not change any time soon. The rationale behind Ratzinger’s traditional position is that the sensus fidelium has a

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32 For a detailed account of the drama surrounding Ratzinger’s habilitation, see ibid., 106–12.
diachronic nature, i.e. it is not bound to a particular moment in time but is applicable to all times. Truth cannot simply be determined by a popular vote since it is possible for a large percentage of Christians to go astray; Ratzinger cites the prominence of the Arians in the early church as an example.\textsuperscript{33} Hoping to retire, Ratzinger wanted to resign as head of the CDF in 1997 and become a librarian in the Vatican Library, but John Paul II refused. Instead, Ratzinger continued in his role as head of the CDF until his election to the papacy in 2005.

When he was elected pope, Ratzinger chose the name of Benedict XVI. Several features mark Benedict’s papacy: its theological output, its conservative tone, its emphasis on the environment, and its end via resignation. Benedict’s papacy was theologically prolific. He produced three volumes on Jesus of Nazareth, wrote three encyclicals, and penned numerous papal documents. While Benedict adopted a more conciliatory tone as pope than he did as head of the CDF, his positions on traditional Catholic doctrine did not change. Although as a cardinal Ratzinger had written sporadically about the environment here and there, in his papacy he became known for his active interest in protecting the environment and his writings emphasize the need to respect the environment. Pope Benedict XVI’s papacy ended when he resigned in 2013; he was the first pope to resign since Gregory XII in 1415, and the first to resign freely since Celestine V in 1294.

**Purpose and Method**

Benedict XVI’s contribution to the realm of cosmic eschatology has not received sufficient attention. The purpose of this dissertation is to synthesize Benedict XVI’s cosmic

eschatology and to see how it is related to the environmental crisis, which, although not as horrific on the surface as a nuclear holocaust, is perhaps more pernicious because it is easy for many people to ignore. My contention is that although Benedict does not systematically and consistently apply his cosmic eschatology to the ecological crisis, his cosmic eschatology can be fruitfully applied to this crisis, especially when his theology receives some modifications to its account of the one and the many and to its pneumatology.

I intend to synthesize rather than to formalize Benedict’s thought by connecting his ideas into a coherent unit. One challenge to this project is to be aware of the ways Benedict’s views have changed over time. For this reason, I will remain attentive to the way the trajectory of Benedict’s thought has progressed over the years.

Aware that no theologian can ever be the epitome of theology, I do not consider Benedict exempt from respectful theological critique and attempt to show where his considerations are incomplete or perhaps erroneous. I also consider the critiques that have been leveled at his thought by others as well. Toward the end of the dissertation I will offer considerations for advancing Benedict’s cosmic eschatology.

The environmental component of the dissertation is not scientific. My approach is entirely theological, although I recognize the importance of understanding the science behind human caused climate change. I take for granted that the reader has at least a rudimentary understanding of the contemporary ecological crisis and is aware of the need to address this issue, a need that Popes St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis have emphasized.34

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Dissertation Outline

The structure of my analysis of Benedict XVI’s cosmic eschatology is based on the conviction that to understand the thought of a theologian, it is imperative to understand his or her theological context. The first chapter is devoted to situating Benedict’s cosmic eschatology within the framework of twentieth-century eschatologies. First, I chronicle the metamorphosis of the eschatological landscape during the early twentieth century. I begin with an analysis of the contributions of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, who both noticed that Jesus’ preaching has a decidedly eschatological flavor. In the aftermath of Weiss and Schweitzer, in part thanks to Karl Barth, eschatology became a theological lightning rod. After briefly describing the development of eschatology in the early twentieth century, beginning with Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a pioneer in cosmic Christology, I describe how the contours of eschatological thought took a different direction before Vatican II and how Jürgen Moltmann and John Haught developed their own eschatologies in the wake of the Council. I chose Teilhard, Moltmann, and Haught for several reasons. Teilhard influenced Ratzinger in his early theological career. Moltmann was a colleague of Ratzinger’s at the University of Tübingen. Haught, following in the tradition of Teilhard, proposes a novel understanding of the relationship between science and theology that can be juxtaposed neatly with Benedict’s cosmic eschatology since it deals with many of the issues important to Benedict. Chapter one sets the stage for the other chapters, which set forth in detail the cosmic eschatology of Benedict XVI.

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environment, see his encyclical letter, *Laudato Si*. These three pontiffs, i.e. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, helped change the landscape of official Catholic teaching on the environment. Pontifex means “bridge-builder” in Latin. It connotes the building of a bridge between the church and God as well as between opposing factions, but in another sense all popes are bridge-builders: each pope functions as a bridge between his predecessor and successor and his doctrine serves as a bridge between the doctrine that preceded his pontificate and the doctrine that follows (or will follow) it. In this sense, the teaching of Benedict XVI serves as a bridge between the doctrines of John Paul II and Francis.
In the first section of chapter two, which explores Logos and cosmos in Benedict’s eschatology, I present a brief overview of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology. Since words and beings in the universe are symbolic, I examine Benedict’s sacramental theology in the next section of the chapter. I then proceed to analyze in depth Benedict’s description of how the Logos is related to creation by briefly sketching the relationship between the Logos and the created logoi in Benedict’s thought. This is related in part to St. Maximus the Confessor’s understanding of the logoi and his vision of the cosmic Christ. I also briefly consider Benedict’s biblical hermeneutics, which strives to properly interpret biblical passages in light of the church’s tradition, reception history, and the entire canon of Scripture. I contend that because of the dialogic nature of creation, i.e. that it is created through and is patterned on the Logos, Benedict recognizes an imperative to act toward created things in a rational, logical manner that is in accordance with the Logos made sarx, through whom all things were created. The logoi constitute the creaturely participation in the Logos and is the primary reason for their potential glorification through cosmic apotheosis.35

In the final section of chapter two, I analyze Benedict’s view of the destiny of the universe. For Benedict, matter is never purely material, but is always related to spirit. His approach to Scripture and creation are parallel insofar as they both assume a kind of theological immanence in which the divine element becomes immanent in the created. In other words, Benedict applies Chalcedonian Christology, which Dei verbum applies to Scripture by asserting that it is simultaneously human and divine, to the realm of creation since according to Benedict, matter itself is destined to be completely united to spirit without losing its quality of being a

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35 I use the terms apotheosis or cosmic apotheosis to denote the transformation of the cosmos and the term theosis to describe the spiritual transformation of human beings through asceticism and mysticism; in my view, apotheosis and theosis are two sides of the same coin.
created reality. In his words, “To spiritualize means to incarnate in a Christian way, but to incarnate means to spiritualize, to bring the things of the world to the coming Christ, to prepare them for their future form and thus to prepare God’s future in the world.” Human beings are empowered by God to become cooperators with him in the bringing about of the eschatological form of things to come. Following Teilhard, Benedict initially thinks that there is an immanent fulfillment in creation; however, he later rejects this view and opts instead for the view that the perfection of the universe requires a divine intervention. After the dismantling of the Teilhardian façade, what remains is Benedict’s cosmic liturgy, a consistent feature of his theology and the subject of the third chapter.

In the first part of the third chapter, I look at Benedict’s liturgical theology. In the liturgy, the Word of God impacts human beings, who are capable of receiving and being transformed by the Word, and are thereby called to bring the whole of creation to Christ. The liturgy is what connects human beings most deeply to the universe, according to Benedict, and it is here that not only our redemption but the redemption of the world takes place. For Benedict, “Christian worship is surely a cosmic liturgy, which embraces heaven and earth,” and the universe itself is “praying with us [and] waiting for redemption.” This is connected to the profound statement in Sacrosanctum Concilium, which declares that through the liturgy, “the work of our redemption is accomplished.” The Paschal Mystery is represented through the liturgy and the graces that

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Christ won, graces that are promises and anticipations of future glory and that are transmitted through liturgical actions in the present moment of the liturgical celebration.

In the second part of chapter three, I examine the critical evaluations of Benedict’s theology in general and his liturgical theology in particular. I conclude that Benedict’s vision of time, based as it is on Pseudo-Dionysius’s model of time called exitus-reditus and the application of this model of time to individuals and cultures, misrepresents the relationship between the one and the many. I contend that his vision of time can be enhanced by synthesizing the Pseudo-Dionysian conception of time with what can be called a Serrian conception of time that is based on the insights of French philosopher Michel Serres.

Finally, in the fourth chapter, I analyze Benedict’s account of human ecology and his pneumatology. I first examine his human ecology by describing its secular and ecclesiastical origins, after which I evaluate Benedict’s idea of human ecology by comparing it to the environmental doctrines of Philip Sherrard and Patriarch Bartholomew I. Sherrard’s theandric anthropology as expressed in Human Image: World Image: The Death and Resurrection of Sacred Cosmology can be related in a fruitful way to Benedict’s cosmic eschatology. Keith Lemna points out that the theologies of these two thinkers have the same genealogy and can be classified as ressourcement. Sherrard identifies the root of the ecological crisis as a crisis of knowledge in which the prevalent non-teleological scientific worldview has negatively impacted humanity’s ability to see God at work in reality. Benedict recognizes the ambivalence of science, seeing it as a kind of double-edged sword that must be handled with great care. Bartholomew’s


attitude toward science seems to be more open than Benedict’s, although the Patriarch also recognizes the need for caution. Furthermore, Bartholomew more naturally integrates cosmic eschatology into his ecological doctrine than does Benedict. This section of my dissertation has an ecumenical dimension since it will show how the topic of cosmic eschatology and soteriology can serve as a theological interface uniting the East and the West so that together they can proclaim the message of the Good News to all of creation: All things will be renewed by God, and humanity has the duty and the privilege of preparing creation for this cosmic apotheosis.

In the second part of the last chapter, I examine Benedict’s pneumatology, which is not nearly as developed as his Christology. I also explore the role of the Holy Spirit vis-à-vis the theology of religions. After examining Benedict’s pneumatology and noting its lacunas (such as its reticence to acknowledge the Holy Spirit’s influence in non-Christian religions and cultures and its tendency to reduce the role of the Holy Spirit to the realm of the church), I seek to develop a pneumatological-eschatological synthesis. Benedict’s cosmic eschatology forms the foundation of this synthesis, and it is on this foundation that I use the insights of various eastern theologians, including Waclaw Hryniewicz, Sergei Bulgakov, Paul Evdokimov, and John Zizioulas, to complete the synthesis. The capstone of this synthesis is the eschatological role of God the Father in whose hands the kingdom will be given at the end of time (1 Cor. 15:24).

Finally, in the conclusion of the dissertation I synthesize the disparate conclusions of the dissertation into a coherent vision – a constellation, as it were – and explain the shape and meaning of this vision. The dissertation begins by examining the overarching context of Benedict’s eschatology and ends by examining this context again in light of the conclusions of my analysis. From this vantage point, it becomes clear that Benedict’s cosmic eschatology belongs to a relatively recent movement in occidental theology that is characterized by an
increasing sensitivity to the current ecological crisis and is gradually becoming more open to assimilating elements of the eastern vision of cosmic apotheosis.
Chapter 1

Modern Cosmic Eschatology

To understand Benedict’s cosmic eschatology properly, one must understand the development of cosmic eschatology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. This chapter will provide the historical and theological context of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology by depicting a panoramic view of cosmic eschatology, although it necessarily leaves out many theologians who contributed to this field. While it is necessarily restricted due to the voluminous subject matter on this theme, it establishes a sufficient background for the more detailed theological work of explicating and analyzing Benedict’s cosmic eschatology. In subsequent chapters, I will explore his eschatology under the microscope, as it were.

**Pre- and Post-Schweitzerian Eschatology**

Christian eschatology is the outgrowth of Jewish eschatologies. I will briefly touch on the relationship between Jewish and Christian eschatologies when I discuss the contributions of Albert Schweitzer and Johannes Weiss to modern Christian eschatology. As a result of the work of Weiss and Schweitzer, which precipitated what is arguably one of the most important breakthroughs in eschatology, one can conveniently divide Christian eschatology into two eras: pre- and post-Schweitzerian eschatologies. Next, I will briefly describe the major differences between the eschatologies of these two eras. For the remainder of the chapter, I will explore the work of three theologians, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jürgen Moltmann, and John Haught, and describe how their cosmic eschatologies compare to the cosmic eschatology of Benedict XVI. The similarities and differences between the cosmic eschatologies of Benedict and these three theologians will help to define more sharply Benedict’s stance toward the relationship between theology and evolution on the one hand and individual and cosmic eschatology on the other.
Pre-Schweitzerian Eschatology

Before the twentieth century, the majority of Catholic theologians typically considered eschatology to be the study of the Last Things, i.e. death, judgment, heaven and hell.¹ According to Peter C. Phan, pre-Vatican II Catholic eschatology (as it was portrayed in the neo-scholastic treatise on eschatology called *De Novissimis*) became an addendum to other theological subjects such as moral theology and sacred doctrine, which is why many theologians at that time considered eschatology to have little bearing on the present world except insofar as one’s decisions determine one’s eternal fate. Phan states that the neo-scholastics interpreted eschatological statements in Scripture as descriptions of what was to come “rather than as a prescription for how, in light of the faith in eternal life, Christians should carry out, of course with God’s grace, the transformation of history and the world, in all their economic, socio-political, and ecological dimensions, into the reign of God.”² In other words, for the neo-scholastics, eschatology was something like a hermetically-sealed theological discipline that was separated from the present world through the barrier of death. It was only with the dawning of Vatican II that this general perspective underwent a dramatic shift in the Catholic Church.

In light of Vatican II, the eschatological views of the neo-scholastics appear one-dimensional; however, there were many preconciliar theologians who were concerned with how

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¹ This has some major implications for cosmic eschatology. For instance, Thomas Aquinas claims that although human beings will participate in the world to come, as well as the heavenly bodies which are to become immobile so as to obtain perfection, plants and animals will have no share in the new heavens and the new earth since their souls are annihilated at death (*Summa Theologiae*, Suppl. IIIae. Q. 74, a. 4 co.; Suppl. IIIae. Q. 91, a. 5). In the twentieth century, some theologians, such as Jürgen Moltmann and Sallie McFague, have revisited this topic and have attempted to incorporate flora and fauna into God’s salvific plan. For a recent analysis of this topic, see Ryan P. McLaughlin’s *Preservation and Protest: Theological Foundations for an Eco-Eschatological Ethics*, Emerging Scholars (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

the end is related to this present life. St. Gregory the Great’s eschatological outlook is a perfect example of a pre-modern theologian who was concerned with how eschatology impacted this life. According to Brian Daley, Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) “found in the plagues, invasions, and political corruption of his own age a call to sober reflection on the brevity of human life and a call to renewed commitment to the church’s mission, while there was still time.” For Gregory, eschatology is not an impotent theological field that has no bearing on how one’s life is lived except for how it affects one’s eternal destiny. Daley concludes his reflections on Gregory by stating that for this great pope-theologian, “reading his own age in apocalyptic terms was a summons to reflection and to ecclesiastical and personal reform, not an excuse for withdrawal.” Throughout the centuries, there have been many theologians who seriously considered the implications of eschatology for how Christians should live their lives; however, the neo-scholastic presentation of eschatology lost much of the vitality of New Testament and patristic eschatology since, according to Phan, “[T]he main focus of this eschatology is the eternal fate of the individual, while the collective destiny of humanity as a whole and of the cosmos itself and the roles of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in the shaping of this destiny recedes into the background.”

The shift that occurred in eschatology between the pre- and post-Vatican II eras was not the result of an epiphany that eschatology is not an archaic and impractical theological discipline, but actually has much to contribute to the present realm; rather, eschatology itself moved from the peripheries to the limelight of the theological stage of twentieth-century theology. One of the

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4 Ibid.

5 Phan, “Roman Catholic Theology,” 216.
possible reasons for this movement is that eschatology is the last theological frontier not merely because it pertains to the last things (eschaton), but also because chronologically, it is one of the last branches of theology that theologians systematically debated. In the first several centuries of the church, eschatology was an imminent expectation, but theologically, the church was more concerned with hammering out Trinitarian and Christological doctrines against the heresies that were threatening the church from within than it was with developing eschatological doctrine. Another possible reason for the modern eschatological revival is the growth in appreciation for and understanding of the Jewish culture in antiquity that resulted from historical, archaeological, and textual studies. Whatever the reasons for the revival, the origins of this dramatic shift in eschatology can be traced to the work of Weiss and Schweitzer, which showed that Jesus’ entire preaching had an eschatological bent.

Weiss and Schweitzer

Before describing the views of Weiss and Schweitzer, I will briefly describe the quest of the historical Jesus, which Schweitzer critiques. For much of the nineteenth century, theologians, philosophers, philologists, and historians were enamored of the quest to describe with perfect historical accuracy the life of Jesus. The combination of an explosion in archaeological discoveries and the advancement of historical-critical methods of biblical scholarship led some theologians to conclude that it would eventually become possible to reconstruct the life of Jesus of Nazareth exactly as it was. It was David Friedrich Strauss (1808 – 1874) who first had the seminal insight that the quest of the theologians of the early nineteenth century to write a historically accurate account of the life of Christ was a fool’s errand. According to James Livingston,
Strauss . . . did not deny that many of the [Gospel] sources had an historical core but emphasized instead that these traditions are fundamentally mythical-religious ideas couched in poetic imagery. Peel away the mythical material, and there is some history, here and there, but exceedingly little—certainly not enough to reconstruct a life of the man Jesus so that he might become accessible as a human personality.⁶

Because of Strauss’s critique of the historicity of the Gospels, which caused a bifurcation in much of the German theological consciousness between the Jesus of the Gospels and the Jesus of the church, there came in Strauss’s wake a number of fanciful lives of Christ; however, theologians for the most part still sought to describe the life of Jesus with perfect historical accuracy. It was only with Albert Schweitzer’s monumental The Quest of the Historical Jesus that the futility of the project of producing a historical account of Christ became apparent. Now that I have described the zeitgeist of the era immediately preceding Weiss and Schweitzer, it will become easier to see how Weiss and Schweitzer helped shape twentieth-century eschatological thought.

Johannes Weiss (1863-1914) and Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) insist that Jesus could only be understood properly by placing him in his own time and by not superimposing on him one’s own biases and assumptions. Weiss writes in Jesus’ Proclamation of the Kingdom of God (1892) that the preaching of Jesus was saturated with first-century Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. The implication of Weiss’s teaching is that eschatology is key to a proper understanding of Jesus’ identity and message.⁷ At the end of his essay, Weiss states, “Jesus’ activity is governed by the strong and unwavering feelings that the messianic time is imminent.”⁸

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Jesus expected an imminent end; this was the view that so sharply contrasted with the view of Weiss’s contemporaries.9 If one takes a look at Jesus’ prophecies, it becomes apparent that he often speaks of monumental upheavals within the lifetime of his contemporaries’ generation. The destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. was the end of the Jewish world as they knew it, and this fact has led biblical scholars to debate whether this means that the prophecies of the destruction of the Temple in the Gospels were written before or after the fact. Leaving this discussion aside, the important thing to note here is that Weiss emphasizes Jesus’ expectation of an imminent end of the world.

In The Quest for the Historical Jesus (1906), Schweitzer criticizes the popular biographies of Jesus written by many contemporary liberal theologians. In this work, Schweitzer tolls the death knell of biographers of Jesus who, by sweeping away all the supernatural components of Scripture, attempted to be historically precise. According to Schweitzer, the theologians who had attempted to express who Jesus was by appealing to unbiased history ended up recreating Jesus in their own image.10 This analysis is found in Schweitzer’s following assessment of the hermeneutics typical of the nineteenth century: “It is nothing less than a disaster for modern theology that it mixes history with everything and ends up being proud of the skill with which it finds its own thoughts again in the past.”11 As a result of Schweitzer’s work, theologians clearly saw the impossibility of reconstructing a historically accurate representation of Jesus, and eventually abandoned this project. Instead, they began to accept that Jesus wholeheartedly believed in a contemporary Jewish apocalyptic perspective that colored his entire

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9 Phan, “Roman Catholic Theology,” 221.
10 Livingston et al., Modern Christian Thought, 12.
preaching. This, in turn, has implications for how the believer relates to Jesus’ message and the significance of eschatology.

What is needed, Schweitzer proposes, is not a critical examination of the past that is injected with one’s own biases and perspectives, but a mystical personal encounter with Jesus based on the union of wills between oneself and Jesus, such that one can say, “Thy Kingdom Come.” History itself is incapable of transporting an individual to the past to meet Jesus, which is why fellowship occurs when one is united with others in the past and present in the common aspiration of “putting the kingdom of God above all else.” This, in turn, has ramifications for the significance of the Kingdom of God and what this dedication to God’s kingdom implies about one’s present situation. Eschatology had become radically transformed.

At the beginning of *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, Benedict describes the transformation of eschatology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as follows: “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 . . . Hans Urs von Balthasar called it the ‘storm-zone’ of contemporary theology.” What kind of changes took place in the wake of Weiss and Schweitzer’s remarkable insight that Jesus’ preaching as portrayed in the Gospels reveals that he expected an imminent end to the world? To the untrained eye, it might seem odd that an idea about a perspective one individual had so long ago should cause such contentious theological debates; however, a deeper analysis reveals that the reason for these debates is that Weiss and Schweitzer’s insights led to a kind of theological vacuum.

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12 Ibid., 486.

Many Christians contemporary with Weiss and Schweitzer presupposed that their church knew exactly what it was supposed to know about eschatology which, as previously noted, had de facto been given second place to dogmatics and moral theology. Now, quite suddenly, it seemed as though the liberal Protestant theologians of the church before the discoveries of Weiss and Schweitzer had misunderstood Jesus. How could such a misunderstanding have come about? And if Jesus was so convinced of the importance of eschatology, does this imply that Christians should likewise be concerned with eschatology? What relevance does eschatology have for Christians today and what relationship does it have to the future? These are the kinds of questions theologians at the beginning of the twentieth century raised.

The work of Weiss and Schweitzer paved the way for theologians in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in their quest to understand eschatology from the new perspective that emerged. For the sake of brevity, I will not to describe the development of eschatology in the early twentieth century; instead, I have opted to recount the revival of cosmic eschatology beginning with the work of Teilhard de Chardin. I have chosen to include Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jürgen Moltmann, and John Haught in the next section because of their significance to the development of cosmic eschatology and their importance for understanding Benedict’s cosmic eschatology. Benedict’s cosmic eschatology partially relies on the work of Teilhard, even though Benedict does not accept all the implications of Teilhard’s system. Moltmann’s carefully designed cosmic eschatology functions as a contrast to Benedict’s cosmic eschatology, and is therefore of great value. Finally, John Haught’s work is important due to the resonances and dissonances between his cosmic eschatology and that of Benedict XVI. All of this will become clearer throughout the rest of the chapter. After describing the thought of each of these three
thinkers, I will assess the relationship between their cosmic eschatologies and that of Benedict XVI.

**The Revival of Cosmic Eschatology**

The revival of cosmic eschatology in the twentieth century was supported by the monumental astronomical and cosmological discoveries of that era. Einstein’s theory of special relativity, which was made public in 1905, caused a paradigm shift in physics and spelled the end of the previously uncontested Newtonian physics. The Big Bang model was proposed by Georges Lemaître, a Belgian priest, in 1927. Shortly thereafter in 1929, Edwin Hubble discovered that there was a red shift, which indicated that the universe was expanding, thereby corroborating the essence of Lemaître’s hypothesis. From here, cosmology and physics developed in such a way that scientists would make remarkable discoveries in the decades to come in cosmology and quantum mechanics. It makes sense that the revival of theological cosmic eschatology should have occurred in the golden age of cosmology since the new insights into the nature of the universe inevitably led to new considerations in theology. It was in this context that twentieth- and twenty-first-century theologians pondered the cosmic scope of eschatology from a theological perspective, and that cosmic eschatology experienced a revival.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

The work of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), a French Jesuit priest who was a paleontologist, geologist, philosopher, theologian and cosmologist, had profound repercussions in the Catholic Church and in scientific circles. He sought to synthesize evolutionary theory with Christianity in an age when the Catholic Church looked upon the theory of evolution with suspicion. His approach to science and theology is essentially based on St. Thomas Aquinas’s
insight that whatever is true according to the light of natural reason (which includes the natural sciences) cannot contradict what is true in theology since God is the author of all truth. This attitude, which led to much tension between scientists and the Catholic Church in the past (Galileo, for instance, was placed under house arrest by the Catholic Church because of his tenacious endorsement of Copernicus’s heliocentric model), also caused some friction between Teilhard and the Catholic Church. His superiors ordered him to cease teaching in 1926 and the Catholic Church censored him for his views on original sin that derive from his cosmology. Despite the censorship of Teilhard’s works during his lifetime, many of his posthumously published works became extremely influential immediately before and during Vatican II. Benedict XVI admired aspects of Teilhard’s thought and quoted him in several of his works that were published before he became pope; even as pope, he quoted Teilhard at least on one occasion. Teilhard’s influence has been revolutionary.

14 Thomas Aquinas, On the Truth of the Catholic Faith: Summa Contra Gentiles, trans. Anton C. Pegis, vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Image/Doubleday, 1955), 74 (I.7.1): “Now, although the truth of the Christian faith which we have discussed surpasses the capacity of the reason, nevertheless that truth that the human reason is naturally endowed to know cannot be opposed to the truth of the Christian faith.”

15 Teilhard grapples with geocentrism, but of a different kind than the geocentrism of Galileo’s day; Galileo was concerned with combating a literal understanding that the Earth was the center of the known universe. The version of geocentrism Teilhard struggles against is the view that the Earth is the locus of the drama of the fall and redemption of the universe. Teilhard expresses it as follows: “A believer . . . must [either] completely redraw the historical representations of original sin . . . [o]r he must restrict the theological Fall and Redemption to a small portion of the universe that has reached such boundless dimensions.” Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Christianity and Evolution, trans. René Hague (New York: Harcourt, 1971), 38. Teilhard seeks to reconcile evolution with the doctrine of original sin. After exploring two options (ibid., 48-51), Teilhard proposes his own view according to which “the drama of Eden would be the very drama of the whole of human history concentrated in a symbol profoundly expressive of reality” (ibid., 51) since “original sin . . . personifies . . . the perennial and universal law of imperfection which operates in mankind in virtue of its being ‘in fieri’ [‘in the process of becoming’]” (ibid., 50; italics Teilhard’s). It is not difficult to see how this view on evolution, which was penned before the Easter of 1922, would have caused concern among the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. A footnote explains, “It was doubtless because of this note, intended for a study confined to theologians, but sent to the Superior General of the Jesuits in Rome, that Père Teilhard was obliged to give up teaching science at the Institut Catholique and take up geological work in China” (ibid., 55n6).

Teilhard’s Vision of the Evolving Cosmos

Teilhard was fascinated with science from a young age and was convinced that a vision of an evolving cosmos was compatible with faith in God. This conviction inspired him to study various sciences and spurred him on to conduct many studies in China, where he was a member of the team that excavated Peking Man. In addition to his scientific interests, he was fascinated by philosophy and theology and the relationship between the religious and empirical realms, which he attempted to synthesize in *The Phenomenon of Man*. In this cosmological work, Teilhard sought to describe from a scientific perspective the advent of human beings and the fate of the universe in light of a philosophical reflection on the role of evolution. He advocated the idea that the universe is evolving in such a way that it is impelled by a divine force to reach a point of supreme self-consciousness.

Teilhard’s synthesis is a grand, sweeping attempt to describe the cosmic processes of ascent from matter to mind. In the first part of *The Phenomenon of Man*, Teilhard describes how organisms emerged during the early formation of the Earth and paints an evolutionary picture in which simpler organisms give way to more and more complex organisms. He is responsible for coining the term *complexification* to describe the tendency of entities to evolve into more and more complex organisms, beginning from the nonorganic, proceeding to the organic, advancing toward the mind, and culminating in the hyper-personal. In Teilhard’s system, the geosphere is the basis of the biosphere, which through evolution develops to such a sophisticated level that human beings make their entrance. Human beings, though at the cutting edge of evolution, so to speak, are not the end of the evolutionary movement. Through humanity, there exists a

“Benedict XVI: A Ressourcement Theologian?,” in Ressourcement: A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology, ed. Gabriel Flynn and Paul D. Murray (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 423. Teilhard was good friends with Henri de Lubac, a fellow Jesuit, who was one of the founders of *ressourcement*.
noosphere in which creation has acquired self-consciousness and has taken monumental steps in understanding its own surroundings. From here, Teilhard postulates that the noosphere will evolve toward the Omega Point.

The nexus and telos of Teilhard’s system is the Omega Point (i.e. Christ), who draws the universe to its end, which is characterized by the transformation of matter and the universe’s attainment of a supreme state of consciousness. In the words of Teilhard,

Because it contains and engenders consciousness, spacetime is necessarily of a convergent nature. Accordingly its enormous layers, followed in the right direction, must somewhere ahead become involuted to a point which we might call Omega, which fuses and consumes them integrally in itself . . . . it would be mistaken to represent Omega to ourselves simply as a centre born of the fusion of elements which it collects, or annihilating them in itself. By its structure Omega, in its ultimate principle, can only be a distinct Centre radiating at the core of a system of centres; a grouping in which personalisation of the All and personalisations of the elements reach their maximum, simultaneously and without merging, under the influence of a supremely autonomous focus of union.17

For Teilhard, every entity that exists has a “center” that is modeled on the true center of the universe, i.e. Omega. The radii of all spheres of existence are rooted in Omega, which is simultaneously “the last term of its series” and “is also outside all series;” and is therefore transcendent.18 All entities are, therefore, related to the Omega Point internally in their beings and externally by being drawn toward the Omega Point, who spurs on the evolving cosmos to its ultimate destiny through evolutionary processes.

The theological basis of Teilhard’s system is the incarnation of Christ, in which matter was assumed by the divine. For Teilhard, all of matter, in a sense, has become incarnate. In a


18 Ibid., 270; italics Teilhard’s.
beautiful passage that echoes St. Gregory of Nazianzen, Teilhard describes the waters of baptism, the “symbol of the forces of the earth,” as being sanctified by Christ through his immersion. It is not without reason that the incarnation has been described as the “fulcrum of Teilhard’s theology.” The incarnation allows matter to be pulled in an upward direction, so to speak, toward God.

Teilhard insists that, instead of becoming recreated, creation will undergo a transformation. For Teilhard, God is simultaneously transcendent and immanent through the resurrected body of Christ, which has become universalized. In his view of redemption, the salvation of the elect occurs through the hyper-personalizing process of the universe in which those who are saved will be intimately united to Christ in a way that is material in one sense, but in another sense is not like the matter with which human beings are familiar. I will explain this in more detail in the next two paragraphs.

Teilhard postulates that matter will be reconfigured so that the resurrection of the body can take place. “The fact is that something that is material must reappear in order to share in the final life of Spirit,” states Teilhard. In Teilhard’s system, matter itself will be restructured.

Suppose now that God, in realizing [disembodied souls’] need to unite, according to the fabric proper to each one of them, reconstitutes in one and the same Cosmos this dust-cloud of floating monads. When they have coalesced, they will be able to know the joy of having truly re-found a body and a World. Having so coalesced according to the very law

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19 Gregory Nazianzen, Oratio 39.15.


of their earthly origin and existence, they will in fact have regained *their* body and *their* Universe.\textsuperscript{23}

This passage seems to indicate that there will be some kind of matter at the end of the universe because of the resurrection of the body. Yet, according to Teilhard, matter becomes sublimated into spirit which is why he asserts, “When everything else, after concentrating or being dissipated, has passed away, spirit will remain.”\textsuperscript{24} In another passage, he claims that the universe “goes on building itself above our heads in the inverse direction of matter which vanishes.”\textsuperscript{25} These statements seem to indicate that Teilhard views matter as a moment in the history of the cosmos, which is on its way to becoming transformed into spirit, and that in the end, matter will no longer remain. On the one hand, Teilhard seems to imply that matter remains; on the other hand, he suggests that matter is destined to disappear. As a result, his view of matter and spirit is marked by ambiguity. Yet the concept of glorified bodies is also ambiguous since glorified bodies are spiritual and are still called bodies. Perhaps Teilhard has something like glorified bodies in mind when he claims that matter will be spiritualized. Be that as it may, Teilhard seems to emphasize spirit above matter, since whereas matter dissipates, spirit remains.

Despite his emphasis on spirit, Teilhard sees matter and spirit as inextricable. He adopts the axioms that matter is “the matrix of Spirit” and that “Spirit is the higher state of Matter.”\textsuperscript{26} In a poetic passage, he describes how he pictures matter being caught up in spirit: “Crimson gleams of Matter, gliding imperceptibly into the gold of Spirit, ultimately to become transformed into the incandescence of a Universe that is Person – and through all this there blows, animating it

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 237; italics Teilhard’s.

\textsuperscript{24} Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, 113.

\textsuperscript{25} Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, 272.

\textsuperscript{26} Teilhard de Chardin, *Heart of Matter*, 35.
and spreading over it a fragrant balm, a zephyr of Union.”  

While he emphasizes spirit, Teilhard also appeals to the integral role matter plays in the evolution of the cosmos. Although marked by ambiguity, Teilhard’s stance toward matter and spirit is not lopsided; it maintains a state of equilibrium between matter and spirit. This point is further underscored by Teilhard’s “The Mass on the World.” Lacking bread and wine to celebrate the Mass in the steppes of Asia, Teilhard offers a beautiful reflection on the relationship between creation and the liturgy in the form of a prayer and declares that on his paten he will “place . . . the harvest to be won by this renewal of labour” and on his chalice he will “pour all the sap which is to be pressed out this day from the earth’s fruits”; as it turns out however, Teilhard’s paten and chalice are spiritual, for they are “the depths of a soul laid widely open to all the forces which in a moment will rise up from every corner of the earth and converge upon the Spirit.”  

Comparing the universe to a host, he prays, “Receive, O Lord, this all-embracing host which your whole creation, moved by your magnetism, offers you at this dawn of a new day.”  

At the end of his reflection, Teilhard describes the universe touched by God as the fullest extension of the Body of Christ. For Teilhard, matter and spirit are inseparable.  

In Teilhard’s vision of an evolving cosmos, the universe’s transformation via the vehicle of evolution is a Christocentric process that will lead to the glorification of the cosmos. This universe and the future world are intertwined in such a way that in Teilhard’s view, the universe is not perfected or recreated through a special intervention of God; instead, this transformation

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27 Ibid., 16.


29 Ibid., 146.

30 Ibid., 158; compare this to the CEST Formula that I expound upon in chapter 4 on p. 282ff. of this dissertation.
occurs because of processes that God has embedded within the fabric of the universe, and thus no special intervention is necessary. In this way, all of creation participates in glorification in Teilhard’s eschatology, thereby participating in redemption, even if matter itself vanishes because it is sublimated into spirit. In the next subsection, I will juxtapose Teilhard’s vision of the cosmos with Benedict’s thought and will describe where their views converge and diverge.

_Teilhard and Benedict_

In the English-speaking world, the literature on Benedict’s reception of Teilhard de Chardin is scarce, which is unfortunate since much of Teilhard’s thought inspired some of Benedict’s theological reflections. While Benedict does not adopt Teilhard’s cosmological stance _tout court_ and rejects several of its implications, especially insofar as they impinge upon technology and politics, he has a deep appreciation for Teilhard. In a series of lectures Benedict gave in 1967 for the students at the University of Tübingen that were collected in a book entitled _Introduction to Christianity_, he occasionally paraphrases Teilhard at length. At the beginning of one such expatiation, Benedict writes,

> It must be regarded as an important service of Teilhard de Chardin’s that he rethought these ideas [i.e. the relationship between humanity and Christ, the Last Man, as revealed in Scripture] from the angle of the modern view of the world and . . . nevertheless on the whole grasped them correctly and in any case made them accessible once again.

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31 To my knowledge, the only systematic work on Benedict’s reception of Teilhard is Christian Modemann, “Vollendung in Zeit und Ewigkeit – Teilhard-Rezeption bei J. Ratzinger” in _Omegapunkt : christologische Eschatologie bei Teilhard de Chardin und ihre Rezeption durch F. Capra, J. Ratzinger und F. Tipler_, 75-84 (Münster: Lit., 2004).

32 For the political implications of Teilhard’s thought, see Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, _Church, Ecumenism, and Politics: New Endeavors in Ecclesiology_, trans. Michael J. Miller et al. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), 235-238.


After paraphrasing and quoting Teilhard for two full pages, Benedict writes that in the thought of Teilhard “the tendency of Pauline Christology is in essentials correctly grasped from the modern angle and rendered comprehensible again.” Like bookends, these two passages enclose Benedict’s exposition of Teilhard’s thought. The passage as a whole, which is a superb distillation of some of the main ideas of Teilhard, demonstrates how well Benedict knows his thought, and likewise partially demonstrates to what extent Teilhard’s work stimulated Benedict’s creativity.

In *Introduction to Christianity*, Benedict takes an approach to the question of the resurrection of the body that is similar to Teilhard’s. Benedict, who at least in his earlier theology does not believe that the resurrection of one’s physical body is scripturally founded, uses Teilhard’s thought to explain his own particular view on the matter. After maintaining that John and Paul did not believe in a resurrection of physical bodies “but of persons,” Benedict explains,

> If the cosmos is history and if matter represents a moment in the history of spirit, then there is no such thing as an eternal, neutral combination of matter and spirit; rather, there is a final “complexity” in which the world finds its omega and unity. In that case there is a final connection between matter and spirit in which the destiny of man and of the world is consummated, even if it is impossible for us today to define the nature of this connection. In that case there is such a thing as a “Last Day”, on which the destiny of the individual man becomes full because the destiny of mankind is fulfilled.

Tacitly accepting Teilhard’s explanation of the sublimation of matter into spirit, Benedict does not quite go so far as to say that there will be no matter at the end. This theme of matter and spirit is taken up again in Benedict’s work on eschatology in which he states that a perennial

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35 Ibid., 239.

36 Ibid., 357–58.

37 Ibid., 358.
division between matter and spirit in which the realms of spirituality and materiality are unrelated – essentially the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter – stands against creation and the scriptures. For this reason, Benedict declares that “one must reject [the] statement that ‘Matter as such . . . cannot be perfected.’” The implication of this is clear: matter itself can and will be perfected. I will explore this topic more fully in the next chapter.

Despite his appreciation of some facets of Teilhard’s thought, Benedict believes that the naive adoption of Teilhardian thought can potentially lead to the eradication of the barrier that separates technological progress from Christian progress. During the Second Vatican Council, Teilhard’s thought influenced many of the council fathers since his books had recently been published. Benedict, who was a peritus at the Council as a young priest, reacted to what he perceived to be a great danger: the possibility of technology superseding the salvation Christ offers to human beings. In a commentary on a late schema on the church’s relation to the world, which eventually became Gaudium et Spes, Benedict juxtaposes an overly optimistic secular soteriological perspective with an overly pessimistic one.

Individuals are not lacking who hope that a true and full redemption of the human race will arise from human achievements themselves. They think that a future human kingdom will bring fulfillment of the promises that faith looks to be fulfilled in God’s kingdom. But others despair of there being any meaning in human efforts and so they praise the courage of those who bear with life lacking all meaning. They creatively project a way of life according to the meaning they can themselves construct.

After this, Benedict conveys what he believes to be the Catholic Church’s reply to the existential questions that bombard humanity.

But the Church places its hope in the kingdom of that man who is at the same time true God and in whom the kingdom of God and the human kingdom coincide. In him, as well, she learns the true expanse of the human calling, which extends to participating in God

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38 Ratzinger, Eschatology, 192, quoting Gisbert Greshake, Auferstehung der Toten (Essen 1969), 386.

himself . . . Human beings, whose calling infinitely transcends their own essence, can find no equilibrium in themselves, because their desires are always greater than finite realities and are never fulfilled by them . . . . Thus the Church believes that the definitive answer to the pressing questions of the human race is found in Christ, true God and true man.40

In his recollections on the proceedings of Vatican II, Benedict describes his opposition to certain passages in Schema 13 of what eventually became *Gaudium et Spes*, in particular those that contained an optimistic tone vis-à-vis technology and its ability to ameliorate the sufferings of human beings, as though it were a substitute for salvation. He explains that the schema contained passages which were essentially Teilhardian insofar as they adopted the view that the technological advancement of the world was identical with the “completion of christogenesis.”41 The danger, according to Benedict, is that “technological utopia and Christian hope in the kingdom merge into one.”42 This is unacceptable for him since the redemption God offers and the quasi-redemption technology promises lie on two different planes.

Benedict poses the question, “What is the relationship between technological progress and Christian hope?”43 In his assessment of the schema, the document gave a “sacred aura” to technology and failed to develop the specifically Christological dimension of salvation that lies “on the very different plane of the passion of human life and human love.”44 According to Benedict, “Teilhard’s slogan ‘Christianity means more progress, more technology’ became a stimulus in which the council fathers from rich and poor countries alike found a concrete

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40 Ibid., 283.


42 Ibid.

43 Ibid., 227.

44 Ibid., 228.
hope.”

Although Benedict recognizes that technology can bring about great good, he cautions that there is a plane that is impossible for technology to redeem since “the world is not redeemed by machinery but by love.”

This section of Theological Highlights is somewhat unclear since it does not specify what Benedict considers to be the analogue to the plane of human love. If one assumes that it is a strictly material plane that is juxtaposed with the human plane of love, then the two would have to intersect because human beings are body-soul composites; thus, technological advances in medicine have a profound impact on the human plane. Benedict’s point in underscoring the human plane, however, is that the kinds of redemption offered by technology on the one hand and Jesus Christ on the other, are distinct, even though they are related. For Benedict, technology is not intrinsically Christian, contra Teilhard, but is a double-edged sword.

The picture of the analogue of the plane of human love comes into focus in another section of Theological Highlights that is devoted to the final draft of Gaudium et Spes. Here, Benedict describes these planes as perspectives. Central to the text of Gaudium et Spes is that the scientific and industrial revolutions have fundamentally altered the outlook of human beings. Humanity now approaches the world more from a functional standpoint rather than from one of contemplation. As a result of this shift in perspective, “religious mystery largely vanishes from things because this mystery cannot be methodologically examined.” At the same time, religious mystery cannot vanish entirely since the scientific explanation of the world is incomplete. In

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46 Ratzinger, Theological Highlights, 229.

47 Ibid., 232.

48 Ibid.
Benedict’s words, “To decipher the physical structure of things is not the same thing as to decode the meaning of existence itself. Rather, it introduces us to the enigmatic character of existence in its full mystery and thus shows us the riddle of our own existence.”49 Here, Benedict brings up the fundamental distinction between being and having based on a quote from Gabriel Marcel, which clearly shows that the kind of redemption technology affords relates to having whereas the salvation of Christ pertains to one’s being. Benedict quotes the text as it appears in Gaudium et Spes: “‘Man is more important in what he is than what he has’ (n. 35).”50 In other words, a person’s identity is more significant than his or her possessions. Here, Benedict distinguishes between the salvation that comes from Christ and the amelioration of suffering due to technology, for while technology is something that human beings can possess and utilize for their own purposes, he finds crude Teilhardianism, i.e. the conflation of Christological progress and technological progress, unacceptable.51 After appealing to the significance of the New Testament’s portrayal of Jesus’ victory over death through his love as he was executed on the cross, which sharply contrasts with technological victory, Benedict explains,

Christianity cannot mean a sacral transfiguration of the technological. Rather, it reveals a realm which the technological cannot redeem. It remains true in the end that the world is not redeemed by machinery but love . . . Technological service becomes Christian when it is motivated by a service which seeks to humanize men – that is, when it serves love . . . only then is it really progress.52

For Benedict, only love – the love that comes from God the Father and is revealed through Jesus Christ – is capable of saving human beings at the essential level of their very existence. This is

49 Ibid., 234.
50 Ibid., 235.
51 Ibid., 228.
52 Ibid., 228–29.
related to Benedict’s position regarding the Kingdom of God and politics. A political utopia that offers a human-made salvation does not necessarily have any bearing on the ontological well-being of individuals, maintains Benedict; instead, what is needed is a conversion of the heart, which Benedict insists is a divine grace.

While Benedict acknowledges that the world is redeemed by the love of God and not through machinery, that the technological cannot be baptized as a whole, and technology should be put in the service of humanity, he sharply delineates the realm that is affected by technology, i.e. the physical realm, from the realm that is saved by God in Christ Jesus, i.e. the very beings of persons. Perhaps Benedict distinguishes too sharply between the good fruit technology can bring about and the fruits of salvation wrought by God through Jesus Christ. The promulgation of the Gospel over the radio and television, for instance, is an example of a way that technology can participate in the transmission of a salvific message to people. Granted, it is not technology qua technology that saves human beings when they hear and respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ that is transmitted through various media; however, technology can play a significant soteriological role in addition to alleviating human suffering.

Yet, in my view, Benedict’s main point, i.e. that salvation should not be conflated with technological improvements, is true. Benedict’s concern about the interpretation of technology as a soteriological instrument is that it encourages people to adopt a Baconian stance toward technology, which, in his view, is characterized by the attempt to establish a new world order. There is a striking similarity between the stances of Francis Bacon and Teilhard; they are both extremely optimistic about technology, albeit in different ways; whereas Bacon sees technology as necessary for the amelioration of the human condition, Teilhard views it as a necessary effect of the evolution of the human race whose negative components will eventually be eclipsed by its
benefits. Unsurprisingly, Benedict criticizes Bacon for his stance on technology in the following passage from his encyclical, *Spe Salvi*:

Anyone who reads and reflects on [Bacon’s writings] attentively will recognize that a disturbing step has been taken: up to that time, the recovery of what man had lost through the expulsion from Paradise was expected from faith in Jesus Christ: herein lay “redemption”. Now, this “redemption”, the restoration of the lost “Paradise” is no longer expected from faith, but from the newly discovered link between science and praxis. It is not that faith is simply denied; rather it is displaced onto another level—that of purely private and other-worldly affairs—and at the same time it becomes somehow irrelevant for the world. This programmatic vision has determined the trajectory of modern times and it also shapes the present-day crisis of faith which is essentially a crisis of Christian hope. Thus hope too, in Bacon, acquires a new form. Now it is called: *faith in progress*. For Bacon, it is clear that the recent spate of discoveries and inventions is just the beginning; through the interplay of science and praxis, totally new discoveries will follow, a totally new world will emerge, the kingdom of man.53

This reading of Bacon, while generally accurate, overlooks Bacon’s attempt to demonstrate the compatibility of science and religion, not the superiority of the former over the latter.

In *The Great Instauration*, Bacon includes this prayer to God the Father: “Humbly we pray that this mind may be steadfast in us, and that through these our hands, and the hands of others to whom thou shalt give the same spirit, thou wilt vouchsafe to endow the human family with new mercies.”54 Bacon acknowledges that God is the source of the new mercies even though they are brought about by the hands of human beings. This means that in Bacon’s mind, Christian redemption and the “new mercies” that science affords the human race are not mutually exclusive and competing realities, despite the implication that the “new mercies” are in some sense superior to the “old mercies,” which Bacon refrains from describing. One could, therefore, make the argument that Bacon and Benedict are of the same mind when they distinguish the fruit


of religion from the fruit of science. Where they differ is to what extent technology is a divine gift. Despite ignoring Bacon’s laudable intention, Benedict nevertheless is correct to maintain that redemption and technology should not be joined together in such a way that technological progress is equated with Christian progress and redemption. What remains open to debate is to what extent technology is a gift from God and the nature of its compatibility with the redemption of people at the fundamental level of their beings.

Assessment of Teilhard

One must be careful to distinguish crude Teilhardianism from the view of Teilhard. Technological progress is undoubtedly a good thing in the eyes of Teilhard, even though he recognizes that the progress of technology “does not mean . . . that the liberating process will not be accompanied by a certain amount of suffering, set-backs and even apparent wastage: the whole problem of Evil is re-stated . . . in this vision of a Universe in evolution.”55 In other words, Teilhard does not naively believe that technology is a cure-all that has no negative ramifications for humanity; instead, he views the significance of technology from an evolutionary vantage point, which he believes will ultimately vindicate and purify technological progress. Crude Teilhardianism, by way of contrast, tends to view all progress in technology as a great thing for humanity without thoughtfully considering its potentially deleterious elements.

In the end, Teilhard makes a great attempt to combine matter and spirit in a harmonious marriage. His thought is so influential that he could rightly be said to be the father of modern cosmic eschatology and soteriology, in its western forms. Yet there are thinkers that have expressed caution regarding Teilhard’s thought, including Benedict, who maintains that adopting

a technocratic stance toward politics and eschatology simply based on the presupposition that technological development may be seen as Christian development collapses the distinction between well-being in this world and the world to come, thereby cheapening the promises of salvation God makes in Scripture. In the section on John Haught, I will bring up another argument against Teilhard, i.e. Philip Sherrard’s contention that theologians should not treat the theory of evolution as a dogma around which they should mold their theologies. Before presenting these ideas, however, I will present Jürgen Moltmann’s cosmic eschatology. Teilhard de Chardin, whose innovative doctrine has become both a loadstone for his admirers and a lightning rod for his critics, is still worth studying today.

Jürgen Moltmann

In the Reformed tradition, Jürgen Moltmann (1926 – ) is a theological giant. He grew up in Hamburg, Germany and was enamored with the thought of Albert Einstein as a young man. Although he initially desired to study mathematics, during World War II he experienced a religious conversion that ultimately inspired him to pursue theology.

Moltmann’s Cosmic Eschatology

Idar Kjølsvik describes Moltmann’s The Coming of God as “sum[ming] up 40 years of theological work.” According to Moltmann, the focus of his book is “the cosmic Shekinah of God,” a doctrine that holds that God will dwell in the universe. Like Phan, Moltmann is cognizant of the marginalization of cosmic eschatology that has existed since the Middle Ages


up to the modern period, and goes on to critique this way of thinking about eschatology since it places Christian hope outside the sphere of this life, which does little to foster Christian hope in the here-and-now.\textsuperscript{58}

The Widening of Personal Eschatology

Moltmann’s reflections on space and time are integral to his cosmic eschatology since they prepare the way for his analysis of the cosmic Shekinah. Before getting to the climax of his theological monograph however, Moltmann first analyzes personal eschatology. In Moltmann’s vision, human beings have immortal souls that only live one earthly life. He confronts the problem of a violent death by hoping that those who have experienced grave injustices during this life, including untimely deaths, are able to experience fulfillment in the life to come. “I would think that the Spirit of eternal life is first of all a further space for living, in which life that has been cut short . . . will be able to develop freely,” Moltmann muses.\textsuperscript{59} He also describes the effect of death on individuals as an opening of the individual toward the universe.

Through death, the human person is transformed from restricted life to immortal life, and from restricted existence to non-restricted existence. Death de-restricts the human being’s spirit in both time and space. The dead are no longer there as temporally limited and spatially restricted ‘contact persons’, but we sense their presence whenever we become aware that we are living ‘before God’; and wherever we sense their presence, we feel the divine ‘wide space’ which binds us together.\textsuperscript{60}

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, xiv-xv. Benedict also recognizes this marginalization. Cf. Ratzinger in Wicks, “Six Texts Ratzinger,” 259 quoting “Kardinal Frings über das Konzil und die Gedankenwelt” in Herder-Korrespondenz 16 (1961/62) 172-173: “Nineteenth century Christianity went too far in concentrating on individual salvation in eternity, while neglecting Christianity’s universal hope for the whole of creation destined for salvation, since Christ is Lord of all things. ‘Christianity has the task of thinking this through anew and meeting modern people’s ardor for the earth with a fresh interpretation of the world as creation giving witness to the glory of God and as a whole destined for salvation in Christ. He is not only head of his church, but Lord as well of creation (Eph 1:22; Col 2:10; Phil 2:9f).’"

\textsuperscript{59} Moltmann, Coming of God, 118; italics Moltmann’s.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 77.
This concept of de-restriction reappears in another form in Moltmann’s consideration of cosmic eschatology.

One place where Moltmann differs from mainstream Catholic theology regarding personal eschatology is the question of universal salvation. He questions whether the concept of people being able to “damn themselves” is “theologically conceivable” since this would seem to imply that the will of human beings would be the basis for divine action and that God would be “the auxiliary who executes the wishes of people who decide their fate for themselves.”

According to Moltmann, “It is a source of endlessly consoling joy to know, not just that the murderers will finally fail to triumph over their victims, but that they cannot in eternity even remain the murderers of their victims.” Furthermore, Moltmann claims that the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians indicate that the demons themselves will be saved. In this sense, Moltmann is an Origenist even more so than Origen since Origen was merely putting forth as a hypothesis the possibility of universal salvation or apokatastasis.

Moltmann also considers the question of the resurrection of the dead, which he contrasts with immortality in the following terms: “The immortality of the soul is an opinion – the resurrection of the dead is a hope.” Citing Romans, he accepts the resurrection of the dead as a physical event “touching the whole person.” For Moltmann, the corollary to the resurrection of

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61 Ibid., 109.
62 Ibid., 255.
63 Ibid., 240, citing Eph. 1:10 and Col. 1:20.
64 Ratzinger, Eschatology, 215.
65 Moltmann, Coming of God, 65.
66 Ibid., 69; he cites the following text: “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.” (Rom. 8:11, RSV).
body is the “annihilation of death . . . [which] describes the cosmic side of that event.” It is clear that in Moltmann’s eschatology, the resurrection of the dead through the power of God is the point of transition in eschatology from the personal to the universal. According to Moltmann,

Eternal life consequently embraces this person, and this person wholly, body and soul; and, beyond this person, it applies to all the living, so that in that future world the creation ‘groans’ under transience (Rom. 8.19-21) will also be delivered, because there will be no more death. Hope for the resurrection of the dead is therefore only the beginning of the hope for a cosmic new creation of all things and conditions. It is not exhausted by personal eschatology. On the contrary, every personal eschatology that begins with this hope is constrained to press forward in ever-widening circles to cosmic eschatology.

In Moltmann’s theology, the resurrection of the dead is not an event restricted to the human sphere but is a consequence of a fundamental change in the structure of the universe itself, i.e. the destruction of death. He suggests that animals will also be resurrected since the original creedal formulation is that Christians believe in the resurrection of the flesh. For Moltmann, the resurrection is something that the whole of creation participates in. This is an appropriate segue into the discussion of the cosmic dimensions of Moltmann’s eschatology and soteriology.

Moltmann seeks to widen the soteriological circle to the rest of the universe and insists that this is necessary if human beings are going to have a salvific effect on the world. Citing Dumitru Staniloae, Moltmann insists that the new creation will lead to “the deification of the cosmos.” After decrying the contemporary bifurcation between the human person and nature, which he attributes to Friedrich Schleiermacher, Moltmann comments that the soteriology of the

67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 70; italics Moltmann’s.
69 Ibid.
70 Ibid., 92, quoting D. Staniloae, Orthodoxe Dogmatik I (Gütersloh, 1985), 291ff.
church fathers is “more comprehensive in its cosmic dimensions,” thereby implying that their outlook is more holistic than modern anthropological views.\textsuperscript{71}

In order for soteriology to be updated, Moltmann insists, the doctrine of salvation “must be transformed into an ecological doctrine” so as to put it “in a position to redeem the modern world from its deadly limitations and conflicts.”\textsuperscript{72} For Moltmann, therefore, soteriology must be placed in the service of humanity by including ecology in its purview; in other words, ecology ought to be an important facet of cosmic soteriology. Furthermore, it means that in Moltmann’s view, the healing of the environment must be seen as inextricably connected to God’s plan of salvation for the cosmos. Although Moltmann emphasizes human agency, he does not emphasize it above divine agency and God’s relation to time and space.

Time, Space, and the Cosmic Shekinah

According to Moltmann, created time will cease, but not because it is annihilated. Instead, created time will be transformed into eternal time. Moltmann explains, “In the eternal creation all the times which in God’s creative resolve were fanned out will also be gathered together. The unfurled times of history will be rolled up like a scroll, as Revelation 5 intimates.”\textsuperscript{73} Created time transitions into eternity by becoming concentrated into an eternal focal point, so to speak. Moltmann’s view of the destiny of time can be likened to the process of the recomposition of white light, i.e. the opposite of the diffraction of white light into light of

\textsuperscript{71} Moltmann, \textit{Coming of God}, 92. Moltmann attributes the division between person and nature to Schleiermacher. In a similar claim, David Toolan states that Descartes was responsible for the modern division of mind and matter. See David Toolan, \textit{At Home in the Cosmos} (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2001), 49.

\textsuperscript{72} Moltmann, \textit{Coming of God}, 92.

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 294–95.
different colors through a prism; the times of creation (analogous to the colored light) are to be
gathered together into eternity (analogous to the white light).

Like time, space as we know it also comes to an end in Moltmann’s cosmic eschatology,
but it also does not disappear; it is transformed. Moltmann’s theological idea of space is
predicated on the Lurianic kabbalistic understanding of the divine self-restriction of God that is
known as zimzum. According to this doctrine, at the beginning of time God restricted his light,
fitting it on himself rather than outwardly, so that there could be space that could be occupied
by God’s creation.74 Moltmann’s view diverges from the kabbalistic understanding of space
since he rejects the implication of zimzum that when God restricted his presence, he left behind a
vacuum.75 In Moltmann’s view, by restricting his presence God does not cease to be present in
his creation. Moltmann explains that it is precisely God’s self-restriction that enables him to be
present in the universe in a different mode of being other than the unmediated mode of his
glorious essence. In Moltmann’s words, space “is qualified and structured through the God who
receives his creation. The Creator becomes the God who can be inhabited.”76 In this view, the
presence of God in its restricted mode is the ontological framework in which creation exists. The
end of space for Moltmann is the end of God’s self-restriction when God will entirely fill his
creation in the fullest way possible. To explain this, Moltmann employs the Jewish concept of
Shekinah.

God’s omnipresence was axiomatic for the Jews, yet at the same time Scripture describes
God as dwelling in certain locations. This raises many theological questions that perplexed the

74 Ibid., 297.
75 Ibid., 298–99.
76 Ibid., 299; italics Moltmann’s.
rabbis who dealt with this problem by describing God’s presence in terms of the Shekinah, or his presence on Earth. Through his own accord, God dwells in a special way in a particular physical space, most notably in his Temple. Moltmann notes that there are many parallels between the doctrine of the incarnation and that of the Shekinah and comments that the former presupposes the latter. The Shekinah is important for Moltmann because it is related to what he calls the cosmic Shekinah.

The most important thing about the new Jerusalem and the new peoples of God is God’s new presence, which consists of the indwelling of his unmediated and direct glory. The indwelling presence makes heaven and earth new, and is also the really new thing in the new Jerusalem. God will ‘dwell’ among them. That is the cosmic Shekinah . . . God’s immediate presence interpenetrates everything.

Appealing to the medieval notion of communicatio idiomatum, or the mutual sharing of attributes, Moltmann contends that the new creation will participate in God’s eternity and omnipresence. This is an immediate result of the derestriction of God’s presence, which signifies the end of space, and the recomposition of time, as it were. At that time, creation will be the dwelling place of God since he will dwell among his people. For Moltmann, “The holiness and the glory of the eternal indwelling of God is the eschatological goal of creation.” In this vision, the immediate presence of God in the universe is the apex of creation.

Moltmann and Benedict

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77 Ibid., 302. In Spirit of the Liturgy, Benedict relates the Shekinah to the Eucharist, stating that church tabernacles with consecrated species are the fulfillment of the significance of the Ark of the Covenant (Ratzinger, Spirit of the Liturgy, 89).

78 Moltmann, Coming of God, 317; italics Moltmann’s.

79 Ibid., 307.

80 Ibid., 318.
Moltmann was a professor at the University of Tübingen from 1967 to 1994. In the late 1960s, before Ratzinger went to the University of Regensburg in 1969, Moltmann and Ratzinger were faculty members at Tübingen, although it is unclear what kind of contact they had. They were both present in a meeting in Ahaus, Germany in 1998 for the occasion of Johann Baptist Metz’s seventieth birthday.\textsuperscript{81}

While Benedict does not accept the whole of Moltmann’s theological work, he respects and admires it. After he describes Moltmann’s eschatology in \textit{Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life}, Benedict comments, “Moltmann’s theological model is so rich and complex that it would be inappropriate to try and weigh it up in terms of those consequences—and even more so to dismiss it hook, line and sinker by the same token.”\textsuperscript{82} While Moltmann and Benedict’s eschatologies share much in common, they diverge in two main areas: the eternity of hell and the relationship between politics and eschatology.

Moltmann rejects hell, which sharply diverges from the eschatology of Benedict since Benedict believes that hell remains a possibility. In his theology, Moltmann wages on God’s goodness, stressing that it is important not to think that God cannot bring about the reconciliation of the universe, even to the point of rescuing sinners and demons alike from the pains of hell. Moltmann has some very reasonable arguments, and it is impossible to deny the aesthetic quality and appeal of his claims. While it is true that the traditional doctrine of hell has its difficulties, as

\textsuperscript{81} The papers of the festschrift were published as a collection of essays in Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger et al., \textit{The End of Time? The Provocation of Talking about God}, ed. Tiemo Tainier Peters and Claus Urban, trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Paulist Press, 2004).

\textsuperscript{82} Ratzinger, \textit{Eschatology}, 58.
Moltmann points out, Catholic tradition has based its conclusions on particular scriptural passages that indicate that hell exists eternally.83

From the standpoint of Catholic tradition, therefore, the most problematic aspect of Moltmann’s eschatology is his doctrine of universal salvation. His Origenist stance cannot be considered a theological certitude. In Catholic circles, the issue of universal salvation has been discussed, but only as a possibility so as to respect the tradition.84 Benedict emphasizes the radical nature of freedom by stating, “Heaven reposes upon freedom, and so leads to the damned the right to will their own damnation.”85 This is exactly what Moltmann rejects, since in his view, this abuse of freedom would contravene the benevolent will of an omnipotent being. In short, Benedict and Moltmann differ sharply on the eternity of hell.

Benedict and Moltmann also differ on the relationship between human and divine agency. Moltmann holds the opinion that human beings can radically impact the present state of affairs in this world so as to usher in the reign of God. The following passage from his Theology of Hope exemplifies his perspective:

The expectation of the promised future of the kingdom of God which is coming to man and the world to set them right and create life, makes us ready to expend ourselves unrestrainedly and unreservedly in love and in the work of the reconciliation of the world with God and his future. The social institutions, roles and functions are means on the way to this self-expending. They have therefore to be shaped creatively by love, in order that


85 Ratzinger, Eschatology, 216.
men may live together in them more justly, more humanely, more peacefully, and in mutual recognition of their human dignity and freedom.\textsuperscript{86}

Moltmann emphasizes human agency with respect to the coming Kingdom of God, indicating that Christians ought to shape social institutions so as to elicit the shape of the coming kingdom.\textsuperscript{87} In contrast to Moltmann, Benedict frames his position on eschatology and human agency within a discussion of chiliasm, explaining that the reason why the early church rejected chiliasm is that it “repudiated the idea of a definitive intra-historical fulfillment, in inner, intrinsic perfectibility of history. The Christian hope knows no idea of an inner fulfillment of history.”\textsuperscript{88} Benedict suggests that for this reason, modern liberation theologies can be seen as coming from the same stock as the theology of Joachim of Fiore, which is immanentist, since Benedict is convinced that the goal of liberation theology is a this-worldly liberation rather than the ultimate freedom of the children of God enjoyed in eternal life in the eschaton. In Benedict’s assessment, a fabricated salvation “would be the salvation proper to a concentration camp and so the end of humanity.”\textsuperscript{89} This quote highlights the insidious nature of political ideologies that purport to bring about a utopia, such as Nazi Germany or Stalinist Russia. Benedict insists that the salvation of the entire human person must be a free gift from God and not the result of human effort.

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\textsuperscript{87} The following passage indicates the significance of human agency in Moltmann’s view for the shaping of history: “The Christian Church has not to serve mankind in order that this world may remain what it is, or may be preserved in the state in which it is, but in order that it may transform itself and become what it is promised to be” (ibid., 327).
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\textsuperscript{88} Ratzinger, \textit{Eschatology}, 213.
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\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.
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Evaluation

Before evaluating Moltmann, I would like to briefly comment on Benedict’s view of liberation theology. Benedict’s adamant stance towards liberation theology makes one wonder why he has such a vehement opposition to it. His youth in Nazi Germany, encounter with fascist ideologies, and experience with the student revolt of 1968 left Benedict with a bitter taste in his mouth, and his experiences partially explain why he is so opposed to the idea of salvation as coming from human beings. It became apparent to him that human beings cannot achieve a utopia in this world through the reformation of institutions. In this sense, Benedict’s position is based on realism. At the same time, one may legitimately question whether Benedict’s depiction of liberation theology oversimplifies the matter. The way he lumps liberation theologians together into one category and dismisses them so cavalierly is unconvincing. Nevertheless, Benedict’s stance contains an important implication, i.e. that any kind of human salvation that is offered in this life cannot lead to a utopian state, and that the Kingdom of God is not something that can be inaugurated on this Earth by human effort apart from grace. Benedict also does not seem to fully appreciate that salvation is always mediated through human beings since salvation ultimately comes from Christ, who is true God and true man; however, this does not preclude God using other human beings, especially members of the Body of Christ, as instruments of salvation and grace. Therefore, while certain political ideologies and utopias may legitimately be described as demonic (e.g. the ideology of racial purity in Nazi Germany), human effort to alleviate suffering as such must not be demonized.

Moltmann’s eschatology is like a beautifully crafted gem: it contains remarkable symmetry and beauty. This is apparent when one considers the balance between the individual and cosmic, the immanent and transcendent, and the physical and spiritual dimensions in his
eschatology. Through his account of the resurrection of the dead, Moltmann demonstrates how the fates of human beings and of the cosmos are intertwined. Human beings participate in a cosmic process in which death, which has already been definitively overcome by Christ, is manifestly destroyed. The universe will continue to exist, although in a different way than we know it, through the de-restricting of God’s space and time so that the universe will be deified through the glory of God. Simply put, deification is the process whereby someone or something participates in God to the fullest extent possible without becoming subsumed into God in such a way that he/she/it would forfeit his/her/its unique identity.

Moltmann recognizes God’s transcendent status but also holds that God must be somehow immanent within his creation since creation would not exist in a space where God is not. This is evident since Moltmann simultaneously holds that God restricts his presence, yet also cannot entirely restrict his presence since “the space of creation is at once outside God and within him.”90 The theory of divine self-restriction, which Moltmann borrows from the rabbis and uses to describe the relationship between God’s immanence and transcendence, is a compelling theological theory, even in its appropriation of the *communicatio idiomatum*, or the exchange of properties between the human and divine natures of Jesus. Moltmann applies this concept to the deified universe, describing it as participating in God’s eternity and omnipresence just as God participated in time and space through the incarnation.91

Moltmann’s view of personal eschatology indicates that he is not a materialist. It also indicates that he does not see matter as intrinsically evil. According to Moltmann, “Hope for ‘the resurrection of the body’ permits no disdain and debasement of bodily life and sensory

90 Moltmann, *Coming of God*, 299.

91 Ibid., 307.
experiences; it affirms them profoundly, and gives greatest honour to ‘the flesh’, which people have made something to be despised.”

For Moltmann then, the dead are raised to life once again, but this life is something more than the life that was experienced in this lifetime. For Moltmann, eternal life is the glorification of one’s history through reconciliation with God by which the person is made whole.

Yet just like a gem that has been cut and polished, Moltmann’s eschatology perhaps does not reflect what occurs in this world naturally but is rather an idealized image of eschatology. With regard to hell, Moltmann claims that if human beings were able to damn themselves, it would follow that God would be the executor of the wills of human beings, but if this were the case, it would follow that everyone would be saved regardless of one’s actions, which would mean that no one has the freedom to ultimately turn away from God and that one’s freedom would be limited. His position takes away from the meaningfulness of grace as freely received, replacing it instead with a view of grace that is imposed on human beings against their wills.

Furthermore, Moltmann’s universalism effectively renders conversion, faith, and human action as ultimately meaningless when perceived from the standpoint of eternity since the eschatological outcome for all, saints and serial killers alike, would be the same. By rejecting the radical possibility of hell, Moltmann seems to take away the seriousness and urgency of Christ’s call to sinners to convert and implies that God performs a sort of violence to the human will by forcing everyone to be with him even if one does not want to be near him. Nigel G. Wright, a Baptist theologian, comments, “But if in the end all human beings are to be saved the decision of

\[\text{\footnotesize 92 Ibid., 66.}\]
\[\text{\footnotesize 93 Ibid., 109.}\]
faith becomes superfluous and its finality dissipated.”94 Wright correctly points out that, taken to its logical conclusion, Moltmann’s view takes away both the seriousness and accountability of human actions; at the same time, Moltmann’s position is more consistent with cosmic eschatology since it is difficult to explain how the universe is redeemed if there are some entities in the universe who are not saved.

My own position is Balthasarian since I believe that while there are scriptural passages suggesting that hell exists, charity dares us to hope that, in some way unknown to us, God will save everyone along with the cosmos, even though this hope cannot be interpreted as a theological fact because of the witness of Scripture. This is somewhat different from Wright’s view since he believes that although it is legitimate to have a universal hope for the salvation of every human being, it is only a hope for the “the universal possibility of salvation not its actuality and this is where the strands of biblical witness may properly be integrated.”95 For this hope to be true hope, I believe that this hope needs to be open to the possibility of everyone actually receiving salvation. Human beings should act as though hell were a real possibility, lest they diminish moral imperatives and the seriousness of developing their spiritual lives and their relationship with God.

Moltmann’s emphasis on the resurrection of non-human animals is an intriguing theological opinion that fits nicely into his eschatology. If animals were to somehow participate in cosmic redemption, and especially in a bodily resurrection, it would further highlight the cosmic scope of God’s redemption. Yet in my view, it is possible to have a cosmic eschatology without explicitly adopting the view that animals will physically participate in the resurrection.

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95 Ibid.
this were not the case, then it would imply that Paul does not have a cosmic eschatology even though there are passages in his letters that are essential for cosmic eschatology.\textsuperscript{96}

Despite its idealistic nature, in my estimation, Moltmann’s cosmic eschatology is invaluable for its aesthetic appeal and clarity. It also serves as a useful contrast to Benedict XVI’s cosmic eschatology, and casts a light on one of the main problematic facets of Benedict’s eschatology, i.e. his unqualified opposition to liberation theology. Moltmann’s eschatology remains a vastly significant and relevant theological project.

John Haught

John Haught, an expert on the relationship between science and theology, is convinced that science and Catholic theology need to cross-fertilize so that theology will become capable of nourishing the spiritual lives of Catholics in the twenty-first century.\textsuperscript{97} More specifically, he believes that Catholics ought to simultaneously embrace the Big Bang theory and the theory of evolution on the one hand and faith on the other, and that in order to facilitate this rapprochement, theologians ought to accept and incorporate scientific findings into their research. After I describe Haught’s cosmic eschatology, I will explain the ways it is similar to and different from the positions of Benedict XVI.

\textsuperscript{96} There are four texts that form the basis for cosmic eschatology in Paul’s epistles: Rom. 8:18-23, Eph. 1:3-10, Eph. 1:18-23, and Col. 1:15-20. The passage from Romans indicates that creation is awaiting the redemption of the sons and daughters of God and is groaning until they obtain their redemption, thereby highlighting the solidarity that exists between human beings and the rest of creation. The first passage from Ephesians describes God’s plan of salvation centered in Christ, through whose blood believers have their sins forgiven; the key component of this passage comes at the end where it states that all things will be united (\textit{anakephalaiosis}) in Christ. The second passage from Ephesians states that Christ has been placed as head over all things and that the church is his body, which in itself seems to imply that the church has something of a universal scope; I will address this theme later in the dissertation. Finally, the letter to the Colossians states that all things are reconciled to God through the blood of the cross of Christ, thereby indicating that salvation has a universal scope.

\textsuperscript{97} Although Haught addresses Catholics specifically, he also addresses all Christians.
Haught’s Cosmic Eschatology

In *Resting on the Future*, Haught advocates a vision of the cosmos that takes into consideration modern scientific discoveries. Haught contends that a restructuring of metaphysics is necessary so as to promote a positive interaction between science and theology. This section on Haught has four main foci: Haught’s proposal to restructure metaphysics, the universe as a cosmic drama, the soul as a cosmic phenomenon, and the rethinking of the cause-and-effect relationship of original sin and suffering.

The Restructuring of Metaphysics

Haught uses three broad categories to distinguish between various kinds of metaphysics, each of which pertain to the past, present, or future: the archaeological vision (metaphysics of the past), the analogical vision (metaphysics of the eternal present), and the anticipatory vision (metaphysics of the future).98 The archaeological vision assumes that the scientific method is the only valid means of acquiring knowledge, and therefore analyzes the past in its quest to understand the present and future. This is the philosophical view that is most prevalent among contemporary scientists including Carl Sagan, Stephen Hawking, and Stephen Jay Gould, as well as the new atheists such as Sam Harris, Christopher Hitchens, and Richard Dawkins. According to this view, the universe can be explained as various bits of matter that interact according to precise laws. In contrast, the analogical vision interprets the eternal realm as what is really real. It emphasizes the idea of the eternal presence of God, sharply divides this life and the world to come, and has a tendency to downplay the significance of this life in favor of eternity. Proponents of this view include Plato, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and the vast majority of pre-

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Vatican II Catholic theologians. Finally, the anticipatory vision interprets the universe as a narrative that has a meaning that will only become clear in the future and is therefore full of promise. Haught puts forth this view as something new that can be found in nascent form in the work of Teilhard.

According to Haught, Thomistic metaphysics is incapable of supporting Catholic theology in a world that is currently dominated by the sciences. He maintains that the kind of metaphysics that is traditional in the Catholic Church views God in a static way, which is why he succinctly describes it as “the metaphysics of the eternal present.” Haught contends that this metaphysics needs to be significantly modified by proposing “not that Catholic theology abandon its sacramental theology of nature but that the sacramental outlook be layered over with the anticipatory metaphysics . . . [associated] with cosmic hope.” Although he does not ultimately describe Thomistic metaphysics as dead weight that needs to be jettisoned (in fact, he explicitly states that his proposal “requires not the forsaking but the transforming of traditional Catholic sacramentality and medieval metaphysics in the direction of an anticipatory spiritual vision”), Haught seems to suggest that it must be salvaged: “Again, there is something of timeless religious value to be rescued from a metaphysics of eternal present . . . our legitimate longing for transcendence, perfection, and ultimate fulfillment.” He proposes “as a conceptual setting for Catholic theology in the age of science . . . a deliberate shift from a still implicitly Platonic and medieval metaphysics of participation to a more biblically inspired and

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99 Ibid., 25; italics Haught’s.
100 Ibid., 154.
101 Ibid., 16.
102 Ibid., 25; italics mine.
scientifically up-to-date metaphysics of anticipation,”¹⁰³ and describes this metaphysics of anticipation by appealing to Teilhard who came to the realization that that “the world leans on the future as its true foundation.”¹⁰⁴ The word “foundation” is something of a misnomer since foundations are laid before the structure itself is built. What Haught means when he claims that the future is the foundation of the world is that the future draws the world to its state of fulfillment. Echoing Teilhard and Rahner, Haught insists that the fundamental reality in the universe is God as absolute future, who is drawing reality to its full potential. Gloria L. Schaab describes Haught’s vision of the future as foundation as stemming from the view of Teilhard that evolution can only be explained by “Omega, ab ante, up ahead, drawing the evolving cosmos toward its absolute future.”¹⁰⁵ Haught, like Teilhard, views the absolute future as foundational for the world since the goal for which the universe is striving is present therein.

Haught’s vision of the primacy of the future has ramifications for human activity. People must strive to realize the foundation for the universe that God intends for it. In Haught’s view, the future is the impetus for developing the world to its full potential, and this view works better to promote the vision of those council fathers at the Second Vatican Council who believed that an inordinate preoccupation with the eternal realm puts Christians in danger of diverting their attention from their responsibility to build the world for Christ.¹⁰⁶ This social responsibility, in Haught’s view, may be facilitated and supported by a new vision of the cosmos that highlights its dramatic character.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 16.
¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 27; italics Haught’s.
The Universe as a Drama

A Christian image of creation that has endured for centuries is that the universe is the product of God’s ingenuity. This, however, is only one way of looking at creation. According to Ted Peters, “Like Russian dolls, Earth’s history fits within the larger cosmic history stretching from the Big Bang to the present . . . Like a story being told, the end of this cosmic history still lies in our future.”¹⁰⁷ The universe as a story or drama is precisely the vision of the cosmos that Haught proposes. His emphasis on understanding the development of the universe not as though it were something that were designed by an engineer but rather as a story or a cosmic drama is an important feature of Haught’s proposal for the renewal of Catholic theology. He explains that while evolutionary materialists attribute no meaning to the universe since machines or lumps of matter do not carry inherent meanings, people who view the universe as a drama are capable of hoping for a meaning to unfold since dramas carry a meaning. Furthermore, just as the meaning of the play is only understood toward the end of the play, the meaning of the universe may not be able to be fully comprehended until the last act of the cosmic drama, which is one of the reasons why Haught describes his new metaphysics as anticipatory.¹⁰⁸

In addition to providing Christians with hope for this world and encouraging them to build up this world for the glory of God, the appeal of Haught’s vision of the cosmos is that it interprets the future of the universe as inherently more wonderful than the universe’s state in the past. This vision is capable of fostering a sense of optimism in the face of what cosmologists nearly unanimously describe as the inevitable heat death of the universe, a view that Haught refers to as cosmic pessimism. According to Haught, an anticipatory metaphysics is far better


¹⁰⁸ Haught, Resting on the Future, 36.
suited to viewing the end of the universe with optimism rather than pessimism. Although he does not pretend to know what the future of the universe is going to be like, he attempts to capture something of the future of the cosmos in the following passage:

If any of us had been present in the earliest stages of cosmic history, could we ever have predicted back then that the primordial plasma held the promise of eventually becoming stars, supernovae, carbon, life, mind, art, morality, and persons who have the capacity to make and keep promises? . . . Today, theologians and scientists together need to ask what might lie up ahead in the continuing cosmic journey, now that, in the recent appearance of human beings, the universe has at last become conscious of itself? \(^{109}\)

In other words, just as no one could have predicted the wonderful possibilities that were latently present in a nascent stage in the universe, no one now can predict what unimaginable possibilities lie in store for the universe. As far as the physical fate of the universe is concerned, Haught is not discouraged by the prospect of the possibility that the universe may undergo a heat death, but instead triumphantly declares that even if all physical things were to die, so to speak, the history of the cosmos would be permanently etched into the memory of God, and therefore would remain pregnant with meaning. \(^{110}\) Haught’s vision of the future as something more wonderful than human beings can imagine is a beautiful, hope-filled account that facilitates hope and trust in God’s plan for the future.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., 50.

\(^{110}\) Ibid., 52. While Benedict does not comment on contemporary cosmological views on the fate of the cosmos, his view is similar to Haught’s since he emphasizes the significance of the function of God’s memory vis-à-vis human beings. Benedict states that human beings “are alive because [they] are inscribed into God’s memory.” He further elaborates, “Remaining in God’s memory means [they] are alive, in a full sense of life.” Joseph Ratzinger, “Forward to This Edition,” in Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life, trans. Michael Waldstein (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2007), xx. It is not difficult to connect the dots from Benedict’s description of the life-giving function of God’s memory with respect to human beings to Haught’s idea of the conserving function of God’s memory with respect to the entire cosmos when one takes into account that human beings do not exist in a vacuum, but are constituted by their relationship to the cosmos.
Rethinking Original Sin and Suffering

Part of Haught’s proposal for a renewed Catholic theology that considers all the implications of the theory of evolution is that the doctrine of suffering as expiation needs to be significantly revised, if not done away with. There are two reasons for this: (1) the incommensurability between a literalistic interpretation of the first creation account and the theory of evolution and (2) the lack of explanatory power of the interpretation of suffering as expiation in light of all the suffering that has taken place in nature over the course of the millions of years that life has been evolving on Earth.

One of the implications of evolution is that the biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and the first sin cannot be interpreted as literal, which means that Jesus’ death cannot have occurred in atonement for the sin of Adam and Eve; this accounts for why biblical fundamentalists are so vehemently opposed to the theory of evolution. Original sin, understood in a literalistic fashion, is therefore no longer tenable. While Haught recognizes that Catholic theologians have renounced scriptural literalism, he laments that “Catholic religious instruction generally reflects a prescientific understanding of cosmic and human origins.” He even finds fault with the Catechism of the Catholic Church for containing this literalism. In short, even though most educated Catholics have put aside literalism vis-à-vis Adam and Eve’s fall in Scripture, this has not necessarily trickled down to the majority of Catholics; instead, the Catechism of the Catholic Church seems to reinforce this literalistic view. Haught remarks that although this may not seem to be a cause for concern at first, it is problematic because it

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111 Haught, Resting on the Future, 90–91.
112 Ibid., 85.
113 Ibid. See Catechism of the Catholic Church, 396-421.
creates a chasm between Catholics’ intellectual lives and their spiritual lives. This is also
connected to the second reason why Haught proposes to modify the doctrine of expiation,
namely, the anthropocentrism that undergirds the pre-evolutionary theological interpretation of
suffering as something caused by human beings.

If the theory of evolution is an essentially accurate depiction of life on Earth (which most
theologians, including Benedict XVI, accept), all of the non-human suffering that has occurred
since the dawn of sentient life seems not to have happened on account of some original
imperfection in the first human beings since the origin of suffering cannot be traced to Adam and
Eve; as a result, the suffering that permeates natural history and human history seems
meaningless.\textsuperscript{114} This is a scandal to many atheists because it seems to them as though if God
exists, he would be cruel for making so many creatures suffer in such an imperfect world;
instead, they believe that God should have created the world perfect to begin with. For many of
them, “[T]he excessive and absurd suffering of sentient life vindicates the ancient tragic
interpretation of existence.”\textsuperscript{115} Haught believes that this suggests that theologians need to
reinterpret suffering as something other than expiatory. In his words,

Since there is suffering in all of life, and not just among sinful humans, Catholic theology
now needs to bring the prehuman epochs of innocent suffering, death, predation, disease,

\textsuperscript{114} Teilhard suggests that evolution could be conceived as Adam and Eve being like angels and that,
through the Fall, there was an “involution” through which they became more material and their consciousnesses
more fragmented (Teilhard de Chardin, \textit{Christianity and Evolution}, 50–51). One might suggest (this is not
Teilhard’s suggestion but mine) that if one accepts this model, the original sin of Adam and Eve could have a
retroactive effect just as the redemption brought about by the sacrifice of Christ had a retroactive effect and saved
the righteous who came before him. This, in fact, is the rationale for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.
Ultimately, Teilhard does not opt for this way of conceiving original sin; instead, he maintains that the doctrine of
original sin should be interpreted as expressing “the perennial and universal law of imperfection which operates in
mankind \textit{in virtue of} its being \textit{in fieri} [‘in process of becoming’]” (ibid., 51; italics Teilhard’s).

\textsuperscript{115} Haught, \textit{Resting on the Future}, 92.
and extinction formally into its reflections on the problem of evil and its understanding of the meaning and scope of redemption.\textsuperscript{116}

Instead of describing suffering as a byproduct of a primordial human fault, Haught recasts it as a necessary feature of an imperfect developing universe.\textsuperscript{117} This has implications for expiation and redemption.

Haught reinterprets redemption as the “healing not only of the evil caused by human guilt but also the cosmic fault coexistent with the reality of an unfinished universe.”\textsuperscript{118} Haught therefore properly describes salvation as experienced by human beings as being contextualized in the cosmos since the cosmos itself is also a recipient of redemption and salvation. It is apparent that his view of salvation is balanced in the following respect: the cosmos and human beings are saved. Haught affirms, “A metaphysics of the future allows us to hope that our personal stories, along with that of the unfinished universe to which we belong, abide imperishably in God’s everlasting love and remembrance where even the hairs of our head are numbered (Lk. 12:7).”\textsuperscript{119} This is not to say that it is merely an imperfect universe that is saved; for Haught, the universe is on the way to being made perfect, along with human beings. In his words, “Cosmic hope . . . stays with the world process, waiting patiently across many generations, across billions of cosmic years . . . for the dramatic flow of events to carry the entire creation, and not just our personal lives, toward fulfillment in God.”\textsuperscript{120} Moreover, Haught emphasizes that this view is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 91.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 97.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 92; italics Haught’s.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 125.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Ibid., 122.
\end{itemize}
compatible with the Catholic hope for the bodily resurrection.\textsuperscript{121} Human redemption, therefore, occurs in the context of the salvation of the cosmos.

One important feature of Haught’s anticipatory metaphysics is his claim that the soul cannot exist apart from the universe. Instead, in his view, “each human soul \textit{is} the universe (or multiverse) in an exceptionally intense state of anticipating its ongoing creation and fulfillment in God.”\textsuperscript{122} Haught does not mean that the soul and the universe are one, but that the soul is the universe insofar as it is the high point of the cosmos. This ties in to Haught’s view on immanence and transcendence. Since the soul cannot exist apart from the universe, it is only in the universe that the soul finds fulfillment, but not necessarily in this life. Cosmic hope, explains Haught, is opposed to the ontology of death, which separates the destiny of the soul from the destiny of the physical universe.\textsuperscript{123} In other words, humanity’s transcendent fulfillment is immanent since both lie in the absolute future.

Haught refrains from using the terms \textit{physical} and \textit{spiritual}, thereby avoiding the juxtaposition of these two realms. Instead, he prefers to speak of the human mind as well as the divine mind. He also writes of the human soul, as mentioned above, claiming that it is the universe in a high state of intensity. Highlighting the interconnectedness of the physical and the spiritual by describing the soul as the universe, Haught is convinced that his view of cosmic hope does not contravene the traditional hope for the resurrection of the body, claiming that the salvation of subjective identities “\textit{along with} the cosmic drama by the Spirit of God in

\textsuperscript{121} Ibid., 126.

\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 112; italics Haught’s.

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid., 126.
communion with the risen Christ”¹²⁴ is a fulfillment of the hope for the resurrection. In his view, the universe will be transformed into something that human beings cannot begin to fathom. Haught, therefore, does not overemphasize the spiritual or the physical, but instead eschews these categories by opting for the qualified identity of soul and cosmos, the primacy of the future, and the non-competitive nature of cosmic hope and the hope of the bodily resurrection.

_Haught and Benedict_

There are some points of consonance and other points of dissonance between Haught’s and Benedict’s theological outlooks. The themes of consonance between the two thinkers are their views of original sin, cosmic redemption, and the preparation of the universe for its future, while the themes of dissonance are their views of evolution and providence and their convictions on the significance of analogical metaphysics. It will become evident that Haught and Benedict have views on suffering as expiation that are similar in certain respects and are different in others. Despite the differences in the thought of these thinkers, there is a lot of common ground between Haught and Benedict’s theologies.

**Original Sin, Expiation, and Cosmic Redemption**

Benedict anticipates Haught’s suggestion that original sin must be modified when he reinterprets the meaning of original sin as “the antihuman element in all traditions.”¹²⁵ Benedict maintains that

the doctrine of original sin says basically only this: that man’s history is the history of an alienation that is contrary to his nature, so that he can only become himself only by faith, which marks him as a “sojourner” in relation to current history, and can come into

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ratzinger, _Principles of Catholic Theology_, 93.
contact with even this essential part of his self only by way of the tension between his political existence and his existence as a “sojourner”\textsuperscript{126}

In this view, original sin is transmitted culturally rather than biologically.

Abandoning the literalistic interpretation of the existence of a primordial sin that led to the fall of the human race, Benedict makes a similar move regarding the Anselmian doctrine of satisfaction, which emphasizes in juridical fashion the balance of humanity’s infinite offense against an infinitely good God with the expiatory sacrifice of Christ that has an infinite worth, thereby emphasizing God’s justice over his mercy\textsuperscript{127}.

In \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, Benedict writes that many Christians view St. Anselm’s theology of atonement as the

expression of an attitude that insists on a precise balance between debit and credit; at the same time one gets the feeling that this balance is based, nevertheless, on a fiction. One gives first secretly with the left hand what one takes back with the right. The “infinite expiation” on which God seems to insist thus moves into a doubly sinister light\textsuperscript{128}.

It is no wonder that Benedict concludes that Anselm’s expiatory view of Jesus’ death is unsatisfactory\textsuperscript{129}.

While there is some overlap between Benedict and Haught’s views regarding original sin and suffering as expiation, one important difference is that for Haught, all suffering must be reinterpreted, whereas for Benedict it is the juridical quality of Anselm’s theory of expiation that needs to be modified. It is not as though Benedict does not see suffering as having any expiatory power; Benedict describes how human suffering can be transformed into “the Yes of obedience”

\begin{footnotes}
\item[126] Ibid., 161.
\item[128] Ratzinger, \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, 281.
\item[129] Ibid., 282.
\end{footnotes}
so as to become an offering to God.\textsuperscript{130} Jesus’ sacrifice was expiatory, in Benedict’s view, but not in an Anselmian way. Christ’s sacrifice was not meant as personal expiation without regard to the rest of creation; instead, Benedict describes the time of Jesus’ death as the “cosmic day of reconciliation.”\textsuperscript{131} Benedict has essentially described in theological terms what Haught has recently suggested, namely that redemption is not merely limited to human beings but must include the entire universe in its purview if Christianity is going to make sense in the modern world.

Evolution vs. Providence

Although Benedict accepts the theory of evolution, Haught finds fault with his view of divine providence and raises the question of whether his theology offers a sufficient theodicy in response to naturalists’ claims that God is cruel. The passage that Haught finds fault with is from \textit{Spe Salvi}: “It is not the elemental spirits of the universe, the laws of matter, which ultimately govern the world and mankind, but a personal God governs the stars, that is, the universe; it is not the laws of matter and of evolution that have the final say, but reason, will, love—a Person.”\textsuperscript{132} In Haught’s view, the former pontiff’s remarks are unconvincing. He claims that Benedict has unwittingly made science and theology competitors. Additionally, Haught critiques him for failing to provide a theodicy that is convincing to educated people since it leaves the question of how divine governance trumps the laws of evolution unanswered.\textsuperscript{133} Haught asks,

\textsuperscript{130} Ratzinger, \textit{Spirit of the Liturgy}, 56.

\textsuperscript{131} Ratzinger, \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, 287.


\textsuperscript{133} Ibid.
“Are ‘governed’ and ‘guided’ the most appropriate terms in which to speak of how providence relates to the meandering, experimental, and ungainly, not to say cruel, ways of evolution?”  

For many, remarks Haught, “the excessive and absurd suffering of sentient life vindicates the ancient tragic interpretation of existence and decisively refutes Pope Benedict’s providential theology.”  

Haught also faults the International Theological Commission’s (ITC) 2004 document, *Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God*, for assuming that Thomistic metaphysics is capable of explaining the excessive suffering that occurs in the natural world as a result of evolution, observing that Cardinal Ratzinger was the head of the ITC at the time.  

In contrast to the views of Benedict and the ITC, Haught proposes the “possibility that Darwin’s science requires a much more sweeping overhaul of theological understanding than a prescientific metaphysics allows.”  

Haught presents his anticipatory metaphysics as the version of metaphysics that Catholic theology ought to adopt since he believes that it adequately addresses the challenges with which the theory of evolution confronts Christianity. Benedict, however, insists on the significance of what Haught calls an analogical metaphysics, even as Benedict recognizes the significance of the future. As a result, Benedict has one foot planted on the ground of participatory metaphysics and the other in the stream of the theory of evolution.

\[134\] Ibid., 88.

\[135\] Ibid., 92.


Metaphysics

As a young theologian, Benedict was on the cutting edge of theology and sought to synthesize the insights of Teilhard into his own vision. There are passages in Benedict’s oeuvre that emphasize the importance of futurity vis-à-vis the Paschal Mystery, human action, and eschatology, often coupled with paraphrases of Teilhard’s thought. In one such passage, Benedict writes that “the Resurrection has both a cosmic and a future-oriented character and . . . the corresponding Christian faith is a faith of hope in the fullness of a promise that encompasses the whole cosmos.”¹³⁸ Haught emphasizes the Abrahamic trust in the fulfillment of God’s promises; this same attitude, as well as an openness to the significance of the future for Christian hope, is discernable in Benedict’s thought as the above quote illustrates. Benedict’s theology, grounded as it is in what Haught calls a participatory metaphysics, is not paralyzed by an unhealthy focus on the presence of the eternal in history. Benedict states that the Christian “can and must cheerfully and intrepidly do the work of history.”¹³⁹ Perhaps most significantly, he describes Teilhard’s account of the emergence of mind in the cosmic process and his view that a super personality will be the next evolutionary leap in the universe, culminating in what Teilhard calls the Omega Point, as a modern expression of Pauline Christology.¹⁴⁰ Benedict contributes to this vision by suggesting that one can view Teilhard’s vision as being in accord with Johannine theology.

“And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (Jn 12:32). . . . The event of the crucifixion appears [in the Gospel of John] as a process of opening, in which the scattered man-monads are drawn into the embrace of Jesus Christ, into the

¹³⁸ Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 187.
¹³⁹ Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 358.
¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 239.
wide span of his outstretched arms, in order to arrive, in this union, at their goal, the goal of humanity.\textsuperscript{141}

The cross, however, somehow simultaneously stands in the past as well as the future. The monads Benedict refers to are human beings who are scattered throughout all of history; the cross of Christ draws them all together at the end. This is why Benedict writes, “The future of man hangs on the Cross—the redemption of man is the Cross.”\textsuperscript{142}

Benedict anticipates Haught’s proposal for a metaphysics of the future by adopting a perspective from Teilhard who, as it has already been noted, had a profound impact on Haught’s theology, when he states that

Christian faith is not just a look back at what has happened in the past, an anchorage in an origin that lies behind us in time; thinking along those lines would finally end in mere romanticism and reaction. Nor is it just an outlook on the eternal; that would be Platonism and metaphysics. It is also above all things a looking forward, a reaching-out of hope. . . . he who is to come [is the one] in whom God and world will touch each other, and, thus, God in world, world in God will truly be the Omega of history.\textsuperscript{143}

Using Teilhardian nomenclature, Benedict makes the case that neither an inordinate preoccupation with the past nor a hyperopic concern for metaphysics is sufficient for capturing the significance of Christianity; instead, it needs a future orientation in which God is at the end of history drawing all things to himself.

These passages suggest that although Benedict does not adopt what Haught describes as an anticipatory metaphysics, he does anticipate many of its elements. The contours between the two thinkers’ views share much in common. Both thinkers are cognizant of the limitations of a metaphysics that is not sensitive to the importance of the future, and both advocate a schema in

\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 239–40.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid., 241.
\textsuperscript{143} Ibid., 242.
which metaphysics is complemented with the forward vision of faith. Haught’s proposal and
Benedict’s cosmic eschatology are both related, among other reasons, because of their mutual
affinity for some of the revolutionary insights of Teilhard.

Preparing the Cosmos for the Future

Both Haught and Benedict imply in their theologies that human beings ought to prepare
the cosmos for its future, an idea that has profound implications for Christians’ responsibility
toward creation in light of the ecological crisis that confronts humanity. According to Haught,
“the present cosmos will continue to remain deeply implicated in the world’s eventual
eschatological fulfillment.” He elaborates, “Without a hope that nature has such a future, our
present ecological commitments might indeed have entirely too flimsy a footing.”

Human actions in the present, therefore, have profound ramifications for the transfigured universe in
Haught’s theology, for if this were not the case, God would be like a parent who always picked
up after his or her children; God’s children would be irresponsible toward creation since they
would be convinced that God is going to clean up the mess they have made. If the actions of
human beings in the present can have such a profound impact on the transfigured cosmos, this
implies that human agency is significant vis-à-vis the transfigured universe, which is something
that seems as though Benedict would reject because of his insistence that human beings cannot
save themselves.

144 John Haught, “Ecology and Eschatology,” in “And God Saw That It Was Good”: Catholic Theology and
the Environment, ed. Drew Christiansen and Walter Grazer (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference,
1996), 54.
Yet Benedict does not simply reject human agency, but rather suggests that human beings are able to have an impact on the universe through what he calls “spiritualization”. Benedict explains,

Christian spiritualization is simultaneously an incarnation… To spiritualize means to incarnate in a Christian way, but to incarnate means to spiritualize, to bring the things of the world to the coming of Christ, to prepare them for their future form and thus to prepare God’s future in the world. In St. Irenaeus’s work we find the lovely thought that the meaning of the incarnation was for the Spirit—the Holy Spirit—to get used to the flesh, as it were, in Jesus. Turning this around we could say: The meaning of ongoing incarnation can only be the reverse, to get the flesh used to the Spirit, to God, to make it *capax spiritus* and in this way to prepare its future.145

In this passage, Benedict suggests that human beings should prepare the things in this world “for their future form,” indicating that there is a strong correlation between human agency in this world and the form of the world to come. Although the concrete application of this statement is unclear, it implies that the actions of human beings with respect to ecology and the environment impact the future status of the world, which is remarkably similar to Haught’s view.

*Evaluation*

Haught’s proposal to update participatory metaphysics with an anticipatory metaphysics initially appears quite desirable: it is as though he were describing traditional metaphysics as an old Cessna that is no longer capable of staying in the air, and is instead proposing a supersonic jet that is capable of transporting humanity safely to the future. Despite the appeal of Haught’s proposal, there is reason for caution. There is no ready-made supersonic jet that people can simply board; instead, theologians must construct this jet (i.e. anticipatory metaphysics) from the ground up. Just as aeronautical engineers must use the same principles of flight no matter if they are designing a Cessna or a jet, so too theologians must use philosophical principles in

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145 Ratzinger, *New Song*, 92; italics Ratzinger’s.
constructing a new kind of metaphysics. Furthermore, reconstructing metaphysics so that it can accommodate the theory of evolution runs the risk of giving too much import to the theory of evolution. Some of the individual points of Haught’s proposal, e.g. the suggestion that the future impels entities toward their fulfillment, that the universe is in a state of change toward perfection, and that the universe should be thought of as a drama as opposed to something constructed by a craftsman, look compelling enough; it is only when one steps back from the details of the proposal to assess its underlying assumptions that problems begin to emerge.

Perhaps the most crucial issue with regard to Haught’s thought is whether theologians ought to unquestioningly accept the theory of evolution as it is presented by scientists. Put another way, should theologians place evolution or faith in a position of primacy? If they give the place of primacy to the former, all other theological doctrines must be subject to the theory of evolution whereas if they give the place of primacy to the latter, faith will be able to make decisions about the validity of a scientific theory, which the case of Galileo has shown to be a dubious practice. Most Catholic theologians view themselves as following in the footsteps of Thomas Aquinas, who advocated the compatibility between faith and reason, when they describe the compatibility between evolution and faith. There are, however, some thinkers who reject the compatibility between the two. For instance, Philip Sherrard, the renowned Greek Orthodox theologian, translator, and poet who wrote extensively on the environmental crisis, laments that for Teilhard de Chardin, “the theory of evolution is a categorical imperative to which all thought, scientific or religious, must adjust itself as a condition of its viability and truth” and that evolution has become a “dogma, a light that must be applied to all facts.” The opening sentences of Haught’s introduction to Resting on the Future indicates that, like Teilhard, Haught

has adopted the assumption that theology should be reconsidered in light of evolution: “Science has now demonstrated beyond all doubt that our universe is unfinished . . . If we take seriously the fact that the universe is still unfolding, we may think new thoughts about God and other perennial themes of theology, and we may do so without losing any of the tradition’s great treasures.”¹⁴⁷ Although Haught does not explicitly claim that evolution takes precedence to theology, in almost the same breath, he seems to indicate that the theory of evolution (if this is what Haught means by the statement that the universe is unfinished), is true and that theologians may come up with new insights in light of the theory.

Benedict’s view on the matter is closer to Sherrard’s than it is to Haught’s since he believes that evolution must not be a criterion of theology, but rather that theology must maintain its autonomy vis-à-vis the theory of evolution. Acknowledging that evolution is a phenomenon for which there is evidence, he nevertheless maintains that scientists still have to work out the finer points of evolution. In a passage from Salt of the World, a book-length interview with Peter Seewald, Benedict states, “I think that in great measure the theory of evolution has not gotten beyond hypotheses and is often mixed with almost mythical philosophies that have yet to be critically discussed.”¹⁴⁸ By not accepting the theory of evolution as a perfect scientific theory and by describing it as a system of hypotheses that need further analysis, Benedict, like Sherrard, intends to safeguard the autonomy of theology vis-à-vis evolution and not place evolution in a position of primacy.

¹⁴⁷ Haught, Resting on the Future, 1; italics added.

The following excerpt from *God and the World* lends further support to the conclusion that Benedict wishes to protect the independence of theology: “The Christian picture of the world is this, that the world in its details is the product of a long process of evolution but that at the most profound level it comes from the Logos.”¹⁴⁹ For Benedict, what this means concretely is that “the idea of the world” is prior to the world, so that the world is “the physical embodiment of the idea, of the original thought [of] God.”¹⁵⁰ This means that in Benedict’s view, the Logos is prior to evolution and that one can legitimately interpret evolution as a vehicle that God uses to bring the universe to its fulfillment. Benedict critiques Teilhard for “a not entirely unobjectionable tendency toward the biological approach,”¹⁵¹ thereby distancing his own theology from an evolutionary foundation. Benedict founds his theology on the Logos, not evolution. Over and against the philosophical presuppositions that often accompany adherence to the theory of evolution, Benedict maintains that the description of the Logos in the Gospel of John indicates that reason is the basis of being itself, which means that reason does not randomly spring out of a primordial cosmic stew of irrationality.¹⁵² The Eternal Word, therefore, takes precedence to the evolving cosmos.

In my view, Benedict effectively keeps evolution from usurping theology’s prerogative to interpret all other facts in light of itself, thereby simultaneously accepting the relatively nascent theory of evolution and the position of theology as the queen of the sciences. This implies that Christians can and ought to accept both evolution and theology, but that Christian faith in God is
different than the kind of faith with which one believes in the theory of evolution. Christians believe in God, who is the basis of everything, including evolution, which is why evolution should not be the basis for restructuring theology. At the same time, Haught is correct that evolution can potentially lead to new insights about how God works in the universe, and that theologians should research how the theory of evolution can enhance humanity’s understanding of God.

**Conclusion**

This overview of cosmic eschatology in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries provides an aerial view, as it were, of some of the features of the eschatological landscape, including a serious consideration of the relationship between modern science and theology and a reevaluation of certain traditional Christian teachings, such as the resurrection of the body, immortality, heaven and hell, and the biblical description of salvation. Weiss and Schweitzer usher in a new way of thinking about eschatology with its emphasis on Jesus’ expectation of an imminent apocalypse and what his focus on eschatology implies for Christians in the present moment.

Teilhard de Chardin endeavors to devise a grand synthesis between science and Catholicism that he bases on his scientific, philosophical, and theological reflections. The Omega stands at the beginning and the end of the cosmos; it stands at the beginning since the Omega constitutes the radius of every being and at the end since Omega draws all things toward their fulfillment, i.e. a universal super-conscious state centered on God. In this path toward perfection, however, wars, technological disasters, and human suffering are necessary concomitants to an elevated state of being. Benedict maintains that by equating technological progress with
Christian progress, crude Teilhardianism jeopardizes the uniqueness of the kind of salvation that human beings can experience at the spiritual level of their beings.

Moltmann’s cosmic eschatology is characterized by its universalism since he maintains that all beings, including the demons, will be saved. In his view, God’s goodness trumps the selfishness of human beings. Furthermore, he widens his circle of redemption to include fauna and flora, and insists that human beings need to relate soteriology to ecology so as to be more environmentally responsible. At the end of time, all time will be refocused into eternity and God will inhabit the universe, a concept that Moltmann refers to as the cosmic Shekinah. Moltmann also insists on the ability of human beings to have an impact on this world so as to hasten God’s coming, thereby attributing great significance to human agency with respect to the Kingdom of God.

One of the most recent developments in cosmic eschatology is Haught’ proposal of supplementing participatory metaphysics with an anticipatory metaphysics that significantly acknowledges the advancements of modern science. The universe is fundamentally dynamic, not static, in Haught’s view, and this has significant repercussions for theology. The universe is not so much something that God creates as it is a story that God composes, a vast drama that has an ending that, while impossible for human beings to predict, is full of meaning and promise. This, in Haught’s view, is the basis for Christian optimism not only for human beings but also for the entire universe.

From this perspective, it is possible to see more clearly the place of Benedict XVI’s cosmic eschatology in the contemporary theological milieu. When Benedict’s thought is considered in relation to the theological models of Teilhard de Chardin, Moltmann, and Haught, four themes begin to emerge in his cosmic eschatology: (1) since salvation is ultimately a gift
from God, it cannot be fabricated by humanity, (2) matter will participate in salvation, (3) salvation, which is cosmic in scope, is founded on the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and (4) metaphysics is indispensable to Catholic theology. The first of these themes is concerned with the agency of cosmic perfection and salvation, and is therefore related to liberation theology. The second indicates that for Benedict, the entire universe is saved, matter and spirit. The significance of the third theme is that for Benedict, the salvation of the universe is Christocentric and is also related to the liturgy. The last of these themes highlights that in Benedict’s view, metaphysics cannot be disregarded since he believes that Christianity has fused elements of Greek metaphysics with Hebrew theology. The basis of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology is the Logos, who permeates the cosmos. Through the omnipresent Logos, God mediates salvation to the world.
Chapter 2

Logos and Cosmos

In the last chapter, I limned eschatology’s dramatic transformation through the work of Weiss and Schweitzer, the cosmic eschatologies of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jürgen Moltmann, and John Haught, and the ways these three thinkers’ cosmic eschatologies compare to that of Benedict XVI. While these comparisons enabled me to describe some of the elements of Benedict’s thought, I did not give a systematic in-depth account of his cosmic eschatology. In this chapter, I will outline some of the major features of his cosmic eschatology.

My goal in this chapter is both descriptive and persuasive. I endeavor to provide a detailed description of the groundwork and some of the facets of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology, namely his sacramental theology, Logos theology, and his view on the fate of the cosmos as it relates to the resurrection. In the persuasive part of the chapter, I contend that Benedict’s view of cosmic eschatology as it pertains to the physical cosmos has changed over the years from a view that was inspired by what Patrick Fletcher calls a “Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema” that depends on an evolutionary outlook to a view that is based on the liturgy. This is not to say that the liturgical vision of Benedict XVI supplanted his earlier evolution-inspired vision – his emphasis on cosmic liturgy is an omnipresent feature in his oeuvre – but that when the Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema receded into the background, his emphasis on liturgical theology became the prominent feature of his cosmic eschatology.

Logos and cosmos in Benedict’s cosmic eschatology are the overarching themes of this chapter. The following is a summary of this chapter’s itinerary: (1) an overview of Benedict’s

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1 Except when I solely refer to the Eternal Word, I keep “logos” uncapitalized.

2 Fletcher, *Resurrection Realism*, 120.
cosmic eschatology, (2) his sacramental vision of the cosmos, (3) his Logos theology, (4) his vision of the fate of the cosmos in light of the resurrection, and (5) conclusion.

In the first part of the chapter, I will provide a brief overview of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology and soteriology. The overview serves two purposes. First, it gives a concentrated account of Benedict’s eschatology that can be compared with the other cosmic eschatologies that I described in the last chapter. It also serves as an introduction to the content that is in the rest of the dissertation.

Benedict’s Cosmic Eschatology/Soteriology: An Overview

Early in his theological career, when he was working as Cardinal Frings’s theological adviser in preparation for the Second Vatican Council while he was a professor at Bonn, Ratzinger began to outline the rudiments of a cosmic soteriology. The young theologian wrote what would become a programmatic speech for Cardinal Frings comparing the state of the world during the First Vatican Council and the state of the world at the dawn of the Second Vatican Council. He brings up the topic of cosmic soteriology in the following passage from the speech:

Perhaps the Christianity of the last century had actually restricted itself a little too much on [the issue of] the spiritual salvation of the individual found in the afterlife, and had not proclaimed loudly enough the salvation of the world, the universal hope of Christianity. Thus, it has acquired the task of thinking through these thoughts anew, and of simultaneously juxtaposing the fervor for the earth felt by modern people with a new, positive interpretation of the world as creation bearing witness to God’s glory and, as a whole, destined for salvation in Christ, who is not only head of his Church, but is also the Lord of creation (Eph. 1:22; Col. 2:10; Phil. 2:9f.).

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3 Cardinal Frings gave this speech at the dawn of the Second Vatican Council on November 20, 1961 in Genoa. Ignorant of the true author, when John XXIII read the text, he thanked Cardinal Frings for it and said that it reflected his own sentiments (Wicks, “Six Texts by Ratzinger,” 235).

4 “Frings über das Konzil,” 172–73; translation and italics mine.
While Benedict does not explain what he means by the phrase, “Heil der Welt” (“salvation of the world”), one gets the sense that for Benedict, at least early in his theological career, it is important to conceive of the salvation of human beings as somehow connected to the salvation of the whole world – indeed, of the whole universe – and that only such a soteriology does justice to the Pauline scriptural passages he cites.

Benedict’s openness to the thought of Teilhard and Rahner has changed over the years. Although the work of Teilhard and Rahner served as a catalyst for Benedict’s early thought on cosmic eschatology, there is a discernable shift in his thought on these theologians. Benedict begins citing Teilhard shortly after Vatican II, thereby signaling that he approves of the rudiments of his cosmic eschatology. Along with Teilhard’s thought, Benedict bases his theology of resurrection on Karl Rahner’s idea of the pancosmicity of the soul. Patrick Fletcher refers to this hybrid view as a “Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema.” In Fletcher’s assessment, this view characterizes Benedict’s early thought. What can be observed when comparing Benedict’s eschatology in the early and late stages of his theological development is that his advocacy of the Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema eventually recedes into the background.

The following is a brief description of Benedict’s Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema. Benedict attempts to explain the resurrection of the dead and its relationship to matter by utilizing the thought of both Rahner and Teilhard. First, he explicitly links Rahner’s concept of the pancosmicity of the soul after death to the Thomistic understanding of the function of the soul vis-à-vis the body.

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5 Fletcher, *Resurrection Realism*, 120.

6 Fletcher maintains that 1977 is the last time Benedict used this concept in his work (ibid., 132), noting that Benedict’s tone in the forward to the sixth edition of *Eschatology* was apologetic. This indicates that he does not necessarily (and perhaps probably) hold the same view today (Fletcher, 132-133n97).
One of Rahner’s most original and influential ideas is the “pancosmicity of the soul.” He posits that when a person dies, instead of being cut off from the world, he or she enters into a more intimate relationship with the rest of the world than before. The first part of Rahner’s argument for this idea is the observation that the soul is related to the material universe “since the soul is united to the body . . . [and has] some relationship to that whole of which the body is a part.”

From here, Rahner states that the question may be raised as to whether the soul has a continued relationship with the universe after death. His answer to this question is that the soul has a relationship with the material universe after death, a relationship that may be called pancosmic. The basis of the pancosmicity of the soul is that after death the soul is no longer bound by space and time in the same way as it was when it was informing the body. The significance of Rahner’s conjecture is that it becomes manifest that the individual person is inextricably connected to the universe after death. Rahner indefinitely prolongs this relationship, claiming that in no way is it severed by death.

For Thomas, the soul is responsible for the ordination of the body’s matter to the soul. Rahner’s anthropology looks not so much at the ordination of the matter to the soul but of the soul to the matter. According to Benedict’s interpretation of Rahner’s insight, the soul’s “essential ordination to the material world remains, not in the mode of giving form to an organism as its entelechy, but in that of an ordering to this world as such and as a whole.”

Benedict then links this idea with Teilhard’s vision of the complexification of the universe, a process in which more and more complex unities emerge until the unities themselves are all

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8 Ibid., 19.
united in a perfectly open exchange in which “matter belongs to spirit in a wholly new and different way, and spirit is utterly one with matter.” In Benedict’s view, this can happen “only from the outside, through the entry onto the scene of something qualitatively new and different”; in other words, it must be the result of a divine act. Only when such a unity is realized, insists Benedict, will God be all in all.

Benedict, at around the time of his appointment as archbishop and cardinal, chose to take a different approach to cosmic eschatology. While Benedict’s Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema receded into the background, what appeared in the foreground is an eschatology Benedict developed along liturgical lines. In other words, Benedict essentially refocused his eschatological sight, which was previously set on his Rahnerian-Teilhardian pan-cosmic schema, on a Maximian/Thomistic liturgical vision.

In this new vision, the liturgy becomes the means by which salvation is mediated to human beings and to the cosmos. Benedict emphasizes the universal range of the impact of the Paschal Mystery, the effect of liturgical worship on the cosmos, and the eschatological unification of the cosmos in Christ. These three moments correlate with past, present, and future respectively. Benedict makes this clear in Spirit of the Liturgy:

In the first stage the eternal is embodied in what is once-for-all [i.e., the Pasch of Jesus]. The second stage is the entry of the eternal into our present moment in the liturgical action. And the third stage is the desire of the eternal to take hold of the worshipper’s life and ultimately of all historical reality. The immediate event—the liturgy—makes sense

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10 Ibid., 192.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid.; cf. 1 Cor. 15:28.
and has a meaning for our lives only because it contains the other two dimensions. Past, present, and future interpenetrate and touch upon eternity.\textsuperscript{14}

The remarkable thing about this theological vision is not so much that it unites past, present and future, but that it takes the initial insight of Weiss and Schweitzer, i.e. that Jesus’ preaching was thoroughly imbued with eschatology, and points to Jesus’ person as the catalyst, so to speak, of the eschatological action that takes place within history.

For Benedict, the liturgy is not a mere ritual that recalls the death and resurrection of the Lord, but is an eschatological event in which human beings can participate. At the same time, liturgy is a participation in the Pasch of Christ, and is therefore a participation in an event in the past that has eternal significance. For Benedict, the three dimensions of time are folded into the liturgy, a concept that he borrows from Thomas Aquinas.\textsuperscript{15} The Christian who participates in the liturgy is simultaneously linked to the person of Jesus, to the event of his death and resurrection in the past, and to the future coming of Christ in glory at the end of the world.

To appreciate this vision, it is necessary to analyze the three moments, i.e. Paschal Mystery, liturgy, and cosmic transfiguration. First, Benedict pinpoints a particular event in history, namely the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus, as the moment when the universe was redeemed: “His Cross and the exaltation is the Day of Atonement for the world, in which the whole of world history—in the face of all human sin and its destructive consequences—finds its meaning and is aligned with its true purpose and destiny.”\textsuperscript{16} This means that in addition to

\textsuperscript{14} Ratzinger, \textit{Spirit of the Liturgy}, 60.

\textsuperscript{15} Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae}, III. Q. 60, a. 3, resp.

\textsuperscript{16} Pope Benedict XVI, \textit{Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two, Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection} (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 79. Benedict is aware that “the conviction . . . that makes one individual the center of history and of the whole” is “a scandal to men of all periods,” yet is convinced that this is theorematically necessary since “it is not just some force or other that finally ends up victorious; what stands at the end is a countenance . . . a ‘you’, a person, an individual” (Ratzinger, \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, 322).
obtaining redemption for human beings, Jesus obtained salvation for the cosmos, even though
the cosmos has not fully experienced it yet just as the redeemed in this life have not experienced
the fullness of salvation. Scripture proclaims that Jesus is the savior of all, but if this is so, there
must be some sort of means whereby his saving grace is able to be distributed to human beings
who exist in space and time. In Benedict’s vision, liturgy is that vehicle.

The second moment in Benedict’s cosmic eschatology is the liturgy. “Christian worship
is surely a cosmic liturgy, which embraces heaven and earth,” states Benedict. Through the
liturgy, God intends to “transform us and the world.” This has remarkable implications for the
relationship between human beings and non-human creation. It also calls for a reconsideration of
the liturgy, which in the past had been considered primarily as an anthropological (and
angelological) phenomenon. The time has come, in Benedict’s estimation, to consider the

17 This view is biblical and is based on Pauline Christology. The letter to the Colossians states, “For in him
all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in
heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col. 1:19-20, RSV).
18 Ratzinger, Spirit of the Liturgy, 53.
19 Ibid., 175.
20 Scripture depicts angels participating in the liturgy: “Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a
gold censer. He was given a great quantity of incense to offer, along with the prayers of all the holy ones, on the
gold altar that was before the throne. The smoke of the incense along with the prayers of the holy ones went up
before God from the hand of the angel” (Rev. 8:3-4, NAB); “[Y]ou have approached Mount Zion and the city of the
living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and countless angels in festal gathering, and the assembly of the firstborn
enrolled in heaven” (Heb. 12:22-24, NAB). The great liturgical texts of the western and eastern churches mention
angels participating in the liturgy. For instance, in the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom the priest prays the following
Entrance Prayer: “Master, Lord our God, Who has established the orders and hosts of angels and archangels in
heaven to minister to Your glory, grant that holy angels may enter with us, that together we may celebrate and
glorify Your goodness” (“The Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom,” Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America,
Eucharistic Prayer I of the Roman Canon, the priest prays, “Almighty God, we pray that your angel may take this
sacrifice to your altar in heaven” (“Liturgy of the Eucharist,” The Catholic Liturgical Library,
August 4, 2017). Furthermore, the Sanctus is patterned on the prayers of the seraphim in the book of Isaiah. In the
Preface of the Roman Rite, the priest prays, “Countless hosts of angels stand before you to do your will; they look
upon your splendor and praise you, night and day. United with them, and in the name of every creature under
heaven, we too praise your glory as we say,” at which point the congregation joins the priest in praying, “Holy, holy,
holy Lord, God of [hosts], heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.” “Eucharistic Prayer I (Roman Canon),” The Catholic Liturgical
liturgy as an action that is cosmic and that has an impact on all creation. This is good news for God’s creation and shows the gratuitousness of God, for God did not confine salvation to the realm of humanity but was pleased to extend it to the whole universe.

The final stage of the eschatological process is the definitive unification of the cosmos in Christ at the end of time. The liturgy has always been oriented toward eschatology, which is why early Christians always celebrated their liturgies facing the east, the place where they expected Jesus to return in glory. In Benedict’s eschatological vision, the transformation of the bread and wine in the Eucharist prefigures the transfiguration of the cosmos.\textsuperscript{21} The universe will be saved, insists Benedict, and the salvation of the individual will only be complete when this cosmic salvation has occurred.\textsuperscript{22}

The three moments of cosmic salvation are so united together that they cannot be separated. Past, present, and future are fused together so that in the moment of Christian worship in the context of the liturgy, the Christian is at once united to Christ’s salvific action in the past and is spiritually joined to the world to come by way of anticipation. In this sense, Christians experience salvation during their earthly life and are called to extend the grace they receive from this encounter to others and to all creation. Having given a brief overview of Benedict’s liturgical vision, I will explore why the Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema lost currency in Benedict’s theology.

\textsuperscript{21} Ratzinger, \textit{Spirit of the Liturgy}, 173.

\textsuperscript{22} Ratzinger, \textit{Eschatology}, 238.
It is unclear whether Benedict rejected the Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema or merely made the decision not to develop this line of thought. There are a number of possible reasons why Benedict opted to center his cosmic eschatology on the Paschal Mystery rather than staying the course with his Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema. Fletcher points out some possible reasons as to why Benedict changed his approach. First, it is possible that when he moved to Rome in 1981, he began to consider different ways of advancing his theology. Another possible reason why he changed his earlier position is that as a result of his activity in his role as head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith he started to embrace more traditional formulas in the line of St. Augustine. Whatever the case may be, he did not continue to develop his cosmic eschatology along Teilhardian and Rahnerian lines of thought.

I believe that the key to understanding why Benedict gave up the pursuit of his Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema lies in Jesus of Nazareth: Holy Week. There are two parts to the answer. The first part is that the person of Jesus becomes the most important reality in eschatology, thereby relativizing the cosmic context of eschatology. In a commentary on the eschatological discourse in the Gospel of Mark (Mark 13:24-27), after noting the passage’s reliance on the book of Daniel Benedict claims,

The old apocalyptic text is given a personalist dimension: at its heart we now find the person of Jesus himself, who combines into one the lived present and the mysterious future. The real “event” is the person in whom, despite the passage of time, the present truly remains. In this person the future is already here. When all is said and done, the

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23 Fletcher, Resurrection Realism, 250.

24 Benedict states that the passage from Mark relies on the following text from Daniel: “I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.” (Dan. 7:13-14, RSV).
future will not place us in any other situation than the one to which our encounter with Jesus has already brought us.25

Not only does Benedict interpret Jesus as the key to eschatology, but he also comments that this refocusing on the person relativizes the importance of the cosmic context, citing Mark 13:3126 to justify his claim. Benedict comments, “The cosmic elements pass away; the word of Jesus is the true ‘firmament’ beneath which we can stand and remain.”27 Benedict turns to the Paschal Mystery and the liturgy; this is essentially a turning to the person of Jesus Christ and to his words as the key to eschatology. The Logos, therefore, in the double sense that Jesus is the Logos of the Father and that the words of Jesus as transmitted through Scripture are messages of the Logos, is essential to Benedict’s eschatology. Before I describe Benedict’s theology of the word, however, I will describe his sacramental theology.

The Sacramental Vision of Benedict XVI

For Benedict, the sacraments unite word with matter, but this union is itself based on another union, i.e. the hypostatic union. In Benedict’s words,

The sacrament, as the fundamental form of the Christian liturgy, embraces both matter and word, that is, it gives religion both a cosmic and historical dimension and points to cosmos and history as the place of our encounter with God . . . The sacrament’s double structure of word and matter . . . receives its ultimate deepening and grounding in Christology, in the Word made flesh, in the Redeemer, who is, at the same time, the Mediator of creation.28

Because sacraments unite word and matter, I will describe Benedict’s account of sacramentality before I unpack his Logos theology.

25 Benedict XVI, Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two, 50.
26 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away” (RSV).
27 Benedict XVI, Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two, 51.
28 Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 30.
Benedict’s sacramental theology is significant for his cosmic eschatology in three ways. First, it is significant because for Benedict, as for St. Thomas Aquinas, the basis of sacramental theology is the Logos, the primordial symbol who by becoming united to matter in the incarnation has become the pattern for the sacraments\(^{29}\); it follows that just as the Logos has become glorified, creation is destined to undergo glorification or apotheosis. The second way sacramental theology is important for Benedict’s cosmic eschatology and soteriology is the way the particular sacraments impinge on the salvation of the cosmos, in particular the Eucharist. For Benedict, Jesus of Nazareth is the historical and spiritual basis of the sacraments and, as such, is central to the semiotic nature of the sacraments. The threefold semiotic valence of the sacraments that corresponds to past, present, and future is indispensable to Benedict’s sacramental and liturgical theology. For Benedict, therefore, the sacraments bear a promise of salvation to the cosmos and help to effect said salvation through the sacraments.

Sacramental theology has a third implication for Benedict’s eschatology. Recently, Jonathan Martin Ciraulo has described Benedict’s eschatology as “sacramentally regulated.”\(^{30}\) Ciraulo writes that in Benedict’s theology,

> Sacramental theology . . . regulates, or at least confirms, what Benedict considers to be an eschatology in concord with Scripture and tradition. The Eucharist, as the eschatological banquet, then prohibits a utopianism that awaits fulfillment in a political future because it

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\(^{29}\) The following is Aquinas’s view: “[T]he sacraments have a certain conformity . . . [to the Word incarnate] . . . in that the word is joined to the sensible sign, just as in the mystery of the Incarnation the Word of God is united to sensible flesh.” Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, vol. 4 (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1948), III. Q. 60, a. 6. Benedict makes a similar observation: “The sacrament’s double structure of word and matter . . . receives its ultimate deepening and grounding in Christology, in the Word made flesh, in the Redeemer, who is, at the same time, the Mediator of creation” (Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology*, 30).

allows for an abiding in what has already been given. It equally negates a purely existentialist reading because the sacraments are, despite their mediation, veils.\textsuperscript{31}

Ciraulo’s description of a “sacramentally regulated eschatology” describes in a specific way how the semiotic valences of the sacraments regulate Benedict’s eschatological conclusions: the sacraments anticipate the fulfillment of the universe and contain a deeper meaning than what can be acquired through the senses since they are veils. In sum, the sacraments in Benedict’s eschatology (1) conform to the Logos, who in the glorification of the Incarnate Word through the resurrection anticipates the divinization of the universe, (2) facilitate the sanctification of the cosmos by sanctifying human beings who in turn sanctify the cosmos, and (3) regulate Benedict’s eschatological ideas.

Before getting into the details of sacramentality, it is important to establish the meaning of “sacramentality” and “sacrament”. I have divided this sacramental part of the chapter into the four following sections: (1) the definitions of “sacramentality” and “sacrament”, (2) Benedict’s account of the different levels of sacramentality, (3) the cosmos as sacrament or church, and (4) the ecological implications of cosmos as sacrament/church. I will describe the particulars of Benedict’s sacramental theology in the next chapter where I explore his liturgical theology.

“Sacramentality” and “Sacrament”

Although conceptually a sacrament is related to semiotics since it deals with signs, the original meaning of the word “sacrament” comes from a Roman soldier’s oath to the emperor; however, when Christians adopted the term, it came to mean a sensible sign that confers on the recipient the grace and promise of God.\textsuperscript{32} The Christian adaptation of the word “sacrament”

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 230.

\textsuperscript{32} Toolan, \textit{At Home in the Cosmos}, 33–34.
changed it so that whereas previously it meant a promise that issues from the lower and is directed to the higher (i.e. from soldier to emperor), in the Christian tradition it acquired the additional meaning of a promise that proceeds from the higher and is given to the lower (i.e. from God to the recipient). Christian sacramentality is therefore bound to the notion of promise, specifically to the promise of God to human beings to aid them with grace.33

In addition to the anthropological dimension of sacramental promise, there is also a cosmic dimension of sacramental promise. According to David Toolan, the natural world can be considered sacramental. In his view, the sacramentality of the natural world means that it bears God’s promise that it will be transformed.34 While Benedict does not explicitly use the phrases “world as sacrament” or “cosmos as sacrament,” he recognizes in the Bible (Rev. 21:21) God’s promise to renew the world.35 In Benedict’s theology, therefore, the world bears a promise of renewal just as in the story of Noah’s ark the rainbow was a sign of God’s promise not to destroy the world by water.

Nature, however, also conveys a meaning to human beings. It proclaims the glory of God through its beauty and mediates God’s presence. The sacramental quality of nature in Toolan’s view, is not static but dynamic. In his words,

> If the sun is hazy or blocked by smog, if the water is unclean, the air poisonous, the wind full of dust and smoke, the soil eroded or desiccated, and biological diversity consumed

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33 This does not abrogate human beings’ responsibility toward God. Benedict points out that Tertullian used the word “sacramentum” to denote the promises of baptism that the recipient makes to God. Johann Auer and Joseph Ratzinger, *Dogmatic Theology*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis and Hugh M. Riley, vol. 6, A General Doctrine of the Sacraments and The Mystery of the Eucharist (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1995), 10–11. A complete theory of the sacraments would, at the very least, recognize that the promises flow both ways, i.e. from human beings to God and from God to human beings. I refer to this as the anthropological dimension of sacramental promise.

34 Toolan, *At Home in the Cosmos*, 38.

35 Benedict states that “by announcing a new heaven and a new earth, the Bible makes it clear that the whole of creation is destined to become the vessel of God’s Glory” (*Ratzinger, Eschatology*, 237).
by the fires burning up the rain forests, the sacramental “light” of nature grows dim. To degrade the earth is to interfere with the message of its Creator.\textsuperscript{36}

Human beings, therefore, have a responsibility to safeguard the Earth so that it can continue to proclaim the glory of God.

Like Toolan, Benedict believes that creation has a symbolic function. He explains that “the early Christian concept of sacrament included an interpretation of the world, of man, and of God that is convinced of the fact that things are not just things and material for our labor; rather, they are at the same time signs pointing beyond themselves.”\textsuperscript{37} In the example that Benedict gives to describe how “things can be more than things,” he points out that water is more than H\textsubscript{2}O; water holds a multiplicity of meanings such as the “mystery of refreshment that creates new life” for one who is parched and “the glory of creative love” to one who sees the sun reflected on the ocean surface.\textsuperscript{38} In these examples of the many meanings that water can transmit, Benedict is essentially describing the same kind of sacramentality that Toolan affirms, i.e. the kind that is inherent in creation.

There is another sense in which the sacramental quality of creation is different from the sacramentality Toolan describes. In a meditation on the Holy Spirit, Benedict XVI compares the Holy Spirit to air.

What air is for biological life, the Holy Spirit is for spiritual life; and just as an atmospheric pollution exists that poisons the environment and living beings, thus a pollution of heart and spirit exists that mortifies and poisons spiritual life. In the same way that one must not become inured to the poisons in the air and for this reason

\textsuperscript{36} Toolan, \textit{At Home in the Cosmos}, 37.


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
ecological commitment is a priority today; likewise one must not become inured to what corrupts the mind.39

Although similar to Toolan’s description of the sacramentality of creation, Benedict ascribes to creation another dimension of meaning. Whereas Toolan generically describes creation as bearing the glory of God, thereby pointing from creation to God, Benedict describes how creation can convey something not only about God but also about humanity’s relationship to God, thereby pointing from creation to human beings. It follows that creation can convey both the glory of God and human life as well.

In addition to its promissory character, sacramentality also has a symbolic character. The ability to interpret the world through symbols is essential to living a meaningful and fully human life. Human beings communicate through signs and symbols everyday through words, conventional signs, body language, computer code, etc. There is a consensus among semiologists that human beings are “symbolic animals.”40 While there is no question as to the intrinsic importance of symbols to human beings, there are widely diverging views as to whether the universe and the multitude of things therein can function symbolically. While materialists undoubtedly are cognizant of the role of symbolism in human interaction, their worldview more often than not evacuates the non-sentient world of symbolic value. This makes it even more difficult for human beings today to make sense of the sacraments.

Benedict describes the inability of people in the modern world to comprehend the meaning of the sacraments as a “crisis of sacramentality.”41 He elaborates, “In a time when we


have grown accustomed to seeing in the substance of things nothing but the material for human labor . . . there is no room left for that symbolic transparency of reality toward the eternal on which the sacramental principle is based.\textsuperscript{42} What has replaced the sacramental worldview, according to Benedict, is a functionalist view of the world.\textsuperscript{43} Here, Benedict is borrowing from the thought of Martin Heidegger who, according to Benedict, explains that materialism does not consist of the interpretation of everything as matter, but rather of the idea that all matter is merely for the purpose of labor and fabrication.\textsuperscript{44} In \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, Benedict describes a distinction made by Heidegger between calculating and reflective thought, explaining that calculating thought “is concerned with ‘makability’” in comparison with reflective thought, which “is concerned with meaning.”\textsuperscript{45} In their preoccupation with functionality and calculating thought, modern human beings tend to find it difficult to engage in philosophical introspection and meaningful reflective thought.

In addition to these reflections, Benedict’s encyclical letter, \textit{Spe Salvi}, sheds light on his view of the origins of the modern consciousness and its consequences. Like Toolan, Benedict faults the beginnings of modernity for bringing about the current crisis that human beings experience, but rather than describing it as an ecological crisis, he characterizes it as a diminishing of the scope of salvation. According to Benedict, what was formerly a holistic view of salvation, in which salvation was conceived as a communal affair, salvation becomes viewed as a personal affair that entails “a flight from responsibility for the whole.”\textsuperscript{46} In Benedict’s view,

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 11:153–54.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 11:154.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 11:166.

\textsuperscript{45} Ratzinger, \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, 71.

\textsuperscript{46} Benedict XVI, \textit{Spe Salvi}, 16.
the major soteriological shift from the religious to the secular can be traced to Francis Bacon, whose “correlation of experiment and method that enables man to arrive at an interpretation of nature in conformity with its laws” leads many to conclude that “the dominion over creation—given to man by God and lost through original sin—would be reestablished.” 47 Whereas previously the recovery of Paradise was expected to be restored through Jesus Christ, now redemption has become recast so that the restoration of humanity’s ascendancy over nature is now brought about by science. 48 Although Benedict does not explicitly link Bacon and ecological degradation in Spe Salvi, it is not difficult to connect the dots from Bacon’s recasting of redemption to technological dominance and the abuse of the environment.

The sacramental crisis of which Benedict speaks, along with his view of the new relationship between humanity and nature envisioned by Francis Bacon, complements Toolan’s view that the ecological crisis is a result of the scientific consciousness that coincided with the advent of the modern scientific revolution. Toolan claims that “Lynn White had it mostly wrong” and that “real environmental problems start not with Abraham and Moses but with the new scientific consciousness of the seventeenth century” which essentially replaced the prevalent sacramental vision of the cosmos that had flourished in human cultures for thousands of years. 49 Both Toolan and Benedict begin with a sacramental worldview and end up with more or less the same diagnosis: the scientific consciousness that accompanied the modern scientific revolution—

47 Ibid., 16.

48 Ibid., 17.

49 Toolan, At Home in the Cosmos, 42; Toolan misconstrues White’s argument since White’s main contention is that Christianity is responsible for the ecological crisis, not Abraham and Moses. See Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” Science 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203–7. White never mentions Abraham or Moses in his article and although he mentions Judaism in passing, he squarely pins the blame for the ecological crisis on Christianity: “Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen” (ibid., 1205).
which Benedict associates with the exchanging of the view that Jesus Christ is the source of redemption for the view that humanity’s mastery over technology constitutes its redemption—is responsible for the current ecological crisis. The conclusions of Benedict and Toolan imply that if human beings are going to foster the ecological healing of nature and the reformation of humanity’s relationship with the Earth, it is imperative for people to recover a sacramental vision of the world. Yet people cannot merely recover a one-size-fits-all view of sacramentality since there is no such thing. Sacramentality is not a monolithic reality; there are gradations, which I will describe in the next section.

Levels of Sacramentality

There are several levels of sacramentality in Benedict’s theology. This may be seen more clearly in his explanation of why the inaugural volume of his collected works is about the liturgy: “The essential purpose of the work was . . . to place the liturgy in its larger context, which I tried to present in three concentric circles that are present in all the particular topics.” 50 The three circles to which he is referring are (1) the relationship between the Old and New Testaments, (2) the relationship between Christian liturgy and the religions of the world, and (3) the cosmic context of the Christian liturgy. Elaborating on the third concentric circle, Benedict notes that “the liturgy is celebrated in the expanse of the cosmos, encompassing creation and history at the same time.” 51 The three concentric circles widen from the smallest circle, i.e. the interrelationship between Old and New Testaments, to the largest circle, i.e. the cosmic context,
which contains the others. After describing these concentric circles, Benedict remarks that “the liturgy also always contains a love for creation and the responsibility for it.” He clearly sees a profound connection between the liturgy and ecological stewardship.

The image of the concentric circles, while aptly describing the purpose of the work, does not fully elucidate the broader anthropological setting of sacramentality, a setting that must be regarded as the basis for the Christian notion of sacramentality. Benedict fills this gap when he explains that the roots of sacramentality are the biological functions of human beings and the major events in their lives, such as birth, eating, conjugal relations, and death. As such, sacramentality exists in the context of communion with other human beings during the course of their lives. Sacramentality, in its broader sense, is therefore something that is not exclusively Christian, but is something that can be experienced by people of diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Lizette Larson-Miller concurs: “From the broadest perspective, it is important to say that Christianity itself does not have a monopoly on sacramentality, nor are Christians the only ones to use the term.” Benedict summarizes this common experience of sacramentality as follows:

> The sacrament in its universal form in the history of religion is therefore at first simply the expression of the experience that God encounters man in a human way: in the signs of common humanity and in the change of the merely biological into the human, which when accomplished in the context of religion undergoes a transformation into a third dimension—the authentication of the divine in the human.

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52 Ibid.


54 Ibid., 11:157.


Out of the most common human experiences, sacramentality is derived. It is based on the structure of human existence in which the biological is experienced as a “transparent” dimension through which human beings “can glimpse the spiritual and the eternal.”

The distinctive element in Christian sacraments, in comparison with non-Christian sacraments, is that it inserts people “into the history that originates in Christ,” and therefore introduces a “historical dimension,” a new feature that “gives to the natural symbolism its binding force and its concrete claim, cleanses it of all ambiguity and makes it into a more certain guarantee for the nearness of the one true God.” While Benedict is cognizant of the universal scope of sacramentality, he believes that sacramentality is perfected in the Christian sacraments. That the distinctive element of Christian sacraments is insertion into the history of Christ and that this history should be “the decisive factor in human history” should not be so difficult for modern people to grasp, Benedict maintains, because human beings are historically determined. 

The significance of historicity and the insertion into the history of Christ, Benedict notes, leads him to the particular dogmatic definition of the Christian sacraments, which includes the institution by Christ, the outward sign, and the interior grace. In this way, Benedict begins with a general description of sacramentality and arrives at the more specific definition of Christian sacraments. In the next section, I will examine if it is possible to apply the concept of sacrament to the cosmos as a whole.

57 Ibid.
58 Ibid., 11:162.
59 Ibid., 11:162–63.
60 Ibid., 11:164.
I have already mentioned that nature has a sacramental character in Benedict’s theology. Things are not always what they seem since they often contain several layers of meaning, a position exemplified by Benedict’s analysis of the symbolism of water and air.61 I also showed that Benedict recognizes the promissory character of God’s eschatological promise to renew the cosmos, which is connected to sacramentality. The universe is a bearer of God’s promise of renewal just as a baptized person receives God’s promise of grace and deliverance. While the cosmos can be viewed as a kind of sacrament since it portrays a hidden reality, i.e. the glory of God, it can also be compared to the bearer of a sacrament since it is destined to be redeemed and is a bearer of a divine promise.62 Since the universe is redeemed, it raises the following questions: How is the universe related to the church? Is the church the community of the redeemed? If so, it seems as though the cosmos can be considered as church.

The cosmos as church is an idea that seems to be more ensconced in eastern Christianity than western Christianity since theosis (deification) is such an important theme for the former. For instance, Ion Croitoru, an Orthodox, wrote an article entitled “The Cosmos (the World) as Church in the Making” in which he describes how the cosmos participates in deification, especially through the liturgy.63 Dumitru Staniloae also believes that the church impacts the cosmos. Radu Bordeianu, a commentator on Staniloae’s thought, states that for Staniloae, “The

61 A potentially fruitful subject for further research is a comparison of the way Benedict interprets symbolism in nature with his biblical hermeneutics. There is an obvious analogy between the scientific conception of things, i.e. their chemical compositions and physical characteristics, and historical-criticism. Benedict maintains that while both are important, they cannot convey the truth of things or of the sacred words of Scripture.

62 In the ecclesiology of Dumitru Staniloae, the church is a sacrament. Commenting on Staniloae’s thought, Radu Bordeianu states that the church “[acts] as the sacrament of the Trinity in the world.” Radu Bordeianu, Dumitru Staniloae: An Ecumenical Ecclesiology, Reprint edition (New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 216.

liturgical life of the Church encompasses all creation, which was made to praise God in a cosmic liturgy.”\textsuperscript{64} Bordeianu continues, stating that the Holy Spirit “empowers creation to become fully Church.”\textsuperscript{65} For Staniloae, not only does the church embrace the whole creation, but it also is transfigured into the church. The concept of the cosmos as church is connatural with eastern theology and is most notably present in Maximus the Confessor’s \textit{Mystagogy}.

While there is undoubtedly an eastern affinity for relating the church to the universe, the idea of cosmos as church can be found in western theologians as well. Jürgen Moltmann, for instance, suggests that the church is more expansive than a community of people. In his words, “Limiting the church merely to the world of human beings was a dangerous modern constriction.”\textsuperscript{66} Moltmann seems to imply that the church is comprised not only of human beings but the entire creation, although he does not explicitly state this. He does, however, state that the presence of Word and Spirit in the church is “the initial manifestation of the presence of the Word and Spirit of God in the renewed creation of all things,” and that the church is “cosmically oriented.”\textsuperscript{67} Immediately after making this suggestion, Moltmann ties it to ecology by stating that if the church is more expansive than humanity but is “oriented towards the cosmos,” then the modern ecological crisis “is also the crisis of the church itself” since “it will be destroyed if the earth is destroyed.”\textsuperscript{68}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item Bordeianu, Dumitru Staniloae, 215.
\item Ibid., 216.
\item Ibid.
\item Ibid.
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Benedict’s position is similar to Moltmann’s and Staniloae’s. In a book on the sacraments that he co-wrote with Johann Auer, Benedict states, “The church not only encompasses humankind but, as Body of the cosmic Christ, it also encompasses the human world and the cosmos itself.” The phrasing is different from Moltmann’s and contains a different nuance, since something can encompass something else without being identical to it. Benedict seems to carefully choose his words so as not to indicate that non-human creatures are explicitly a part of the church in the same way that human beings are, whereas Moltmann insists that the modern anthropological limits of the church must be overcome, thereby implying that non-human creatures are in the church, although he seems to qualify this when he speaks of the church as having a cosmic orientation.

Whether non-human creatures can be considered as “members” of the church depends on one’s definition of the church. If one defines the church as the collective whole of rational entities that are joined in Christ’s mystical body, it follows that non-rational entities, e.g. minerals and microorganisms, plants and animals, stars and galaxies, nebulas and supernovas, cannot be considered as members of the church, even if they are oriented toward the church; however, if one defines church as the collective recipient of redemption, since the cosmos is to be redeemed through Christ (Col. 1:19-20), it follows that the universe itself ought to be considered as church. If one defines the church in this way, it becomes evident that the church must, in some way, transcend the anthropological institution and be connected to all of creation even if this connection is not quite clearly defined. Although Benedict never explicitly defines church in this way, he holds the position that through the perfection of the “Lord’s body” (i.e. the

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69 Auer and Ratzinger, *Dogmatic Theology*, 6:133; Cf. Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 237–38, italics added: “[T]he presence of Christ, so far only inaugurated among us, will reach its fulness and *encompass* all those who are to be saved and the whole cosmos with them.”

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Body of Christ, the church), the cosmos itself will be perfected, and that “the individual’s salvation is whole and entire only when the salvation of the cosmos and all the elect has come to full fruition.” This suggests that for Benedict, church and cosmos are not antithetical but that the cosmos and the church are inextricably related in such a way that the perfection of the latter brings about the perfection of the former. Benedict points out that Scripture indicates that “the whole of creation is destined to become the vessel of God’s Glory” and that “Christ is the temple of the final age; he is heaven, the new Jerusalem; he is the cultic space of God.” Juxtaposing these two statements together, one can invent a logical chain that indicates that the redeemed cosmos is the Body of Christ, the church. Since redeemed creation is the vessel of God (i.e. temple) and Christ is the space of God (i.e. temple), it follows that redeemed creation is the Body of Christ (i.e. temple).

The doctrine of the cosmic scope of the church should be analyzed in light of two doctrines: (1) the doctrine of the omnipresence of the Holy Spirit and (2) Augustine’s interpretation of Noah’s ark. If the Holy Spirit is present in all things that exist and it animates the church, it seems to follow that the church is coextensive with the cosmos. One might legitimately object that the mode of the presence of the Holy Spirit in the church and in creation are different. According to this manner of thinking, the Holy Spirit as creator is present in all things but as sanctifier is only present in Christians in the state of grace. Be that as it may, it cannot be contravened that the Holy Spirit exists in all things.

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71 Ibid., 237, 234.

72 Scripture seems to corroborate this conclusion since the book of Revelation states that there was no temple in heaven since the God and the Lamb are the temple (Rev. 21:22), but it also indicates that the dwelling place of the people of God, i.e. the New Jerusalem, is itself a temple or sanctuary since the shape of the New Jerusalem, a perfect cube (Rev. 21:15-16), is patterned on the shape of the Holy of Holies (1 Kings 6:20).
Augustine’s interpretation of Noah’s ark (Gen. 6:14-22) offers an intriguing insight. Augustine compares Noah’s ark to the church, indicating that the former is a type of the latter. He goes on to explain that the ark has the same proportions of a man lying down and that the door in the side of the ark foreshadows the wound in the side of Christ. If the ark is a symbol of the church, it implies that the animals are included in the church just as they were in the ark. One might protest that the animals were not a part of the ark, but were encompassed in it, just as Staniloae and Benedict suggest that the church encompasses creation without being identical to it. While this is true, the animals were in no different situation in the ark than Noah and his family; both humans and non-humans alike were encompassed by the ark during the flood. While this observation is insightful, it also highlights the ambiguity of the issue since through the interpretation of this passage alone, it is not possible to come up with a definitive conclusion regarding the extent of the church. My own stance is that in addition to encompassing human beings, the church encompasses non-human creation. Despite the ambiguity of the concept of cosmos as church, it has some important ecological implications.

Cosmos as Sacrament/Church and Ecology

The ideas of cosmos as sacrament and cosmos as church have significant ecological ramifications: (1) *cosmos as sacrament* – as the elevation of earthly elements to the realm of the divine, the liturgy, which is the context of the celebration of the sacraments, is necessary for (a) a renewal of the sacramental vision of the cosmos, which in turn promotes environmental

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73 See *The City of God*, XV.26: “[Noah’s ark] is certainly a figure of the city of God sojourning in this world; that is to say, of the church, which is rescued by the wood on which hung the Mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: The Modern Library, 1993), 516.

74 In chapter four, I will attempt to articulate a theory that explains more fully how non-human creation can be considered as part of the church by extending the *subsistit* formula to the cosmos.
responsibility and (b) the actual fulfillment of the purpose of creation, which is divinization and
(2) *cosmos as church* – the doctrine of the ordination of all creation to the church, or in other
words, that the church encompasses all of creation, helps foster just attitudes and actions toward
the environment by emphasizing the importance of human solidarity with non-human creation
and designates the blatant degradation of nature as blasphemous since creation is destined to be
the dwelling of God.

*Cosmos as Sacrament*

The cosmos is fundamentally good and sacramental. In the liturgy, which is inspired by
this view, earthly signs are elevated for the purpose of transforming human beings and the
cosmos. Liturgical rituals are necessary for the relating of human realities to divine realities, and
as such are indispensable for the renewal of a sacramental vision of the cosmos. Without the
liturgy, there may be some understanding of spirituality, but it would be rather nebulous and
non-empirical. By conditioning human beings to see that God makes use of his creation to
sanctify human beings and the rest of creation, the liturgy affirms the dignity of creation. As a
result, it could be said that the liturgy has a positive subjective effect: liturgy changes the
perspective of human beings and orients their minds toward the good of the cosmos. Liturgy also
has a positive objective effect by bringing about the fulfillment of creation through divinization.

**Subjective Effect: Renewal of Sacramental Vision**

The recovery of a sacramental vision of the cosmos is indispensable for promoting
environmental responsibility. In Toolan’s view, the scientific consciousness that arose as a result
of the modern scientific revolution is responsible for the current ecological crisis.\(^{75}\) His

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\(^{75}\) Toolan, *At Home in the Cosmos*, 42.
assessment is generally accurate since the scientific method conditioned scientists and others to think empirically and mechanistically about the world. Toolan goes so far as to claim that the sign that the classical Newtonian cosmology conveys is death, in comparison with the sacramental view of the world that is found in the Hebrew scriptures.\textsuperscript{76} The Hebrew Scriptures, in turn, are rebelling against the theology that undergirds the \textit{Enuma Elish}, the Babylonian creation account, in which the god Marduk creates heaven and earth from the corpse of his mother, Tiamat, whom he has slain. After committing this shocking matricide, Marduk creates human beings out of the blood of one of the slain gods.\textsuperscript{77} The sign present in the Babylonian cosmos, like the sign of the Newtonian cosmos, is the sign of death, since everywhere human beings look in this worldview, there is evidence of death. Rather than being created in the image and likeness of God, human beings are formed out of the blood of a dead god in the \textit{Enuma Elish}. Commenting on the \textit{Enuma Elish}, Benedict remarks, “At the very origin of the world lurks something sinister, and in the deepest part of humankind there lies something rebellious, demonic, and evil.”\textsuperscript{78} In a subtler way than in the \textit{Enuma Elish}, the Newtonian vision of the cosmos is a sign of death since it offers no hope to human beings and strips nature of promise.\textsuperscript{79} The creation account in the book of Genesis and the liturgy both highlight the goodness of the world and God’s providence.

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 54. Yet Toolan is also aware that Newton was a religious man who saw his scientific and mathematical endeavors as uncovering God’s design of the universe (ibid., 52).


\textsuperscript{79} Toolan, \textit{At Home in the Cosmos}, 54.
Objective Effect: Cosmic Apotheosis

While Benedict does not directly relate liturgical theology to environmentalism per se, he does relate the liturgy to the apotheosis of the cosmos, which can be related to environmentalism. In Benedict’s theology, the cosmos and God’s covenant with human beings are closely connected. The covenant is the goal of creation, which means that creation is “a space for worship.”\(^8^0\) As the soul of covenant, worship “not only saves mankind but is also meant to draw the whole of reality into communion with God.”\(^8^1\) The purpose of creation is, therefore, the same as the purpose of humanity: divinization.\(^8^2\)

*Cosmos as Church*

There is a consensus among Benedict, Staniloae, and Moltmann (who happen to be members of the three great traditions in Christianity, i.e. Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism) that creation should not be entirely equated with church in the present world, but that it should instead be recognized as “encompass[ing]”\(^8^3\) creation, to use Staniloae and Benedict’s term, or, to use Moltmann’s phrase, that creation is “oriented towards the cosmos.”\(^8^4\) In my view, the ordination of the cosmos to the church is a potency that will only be fully realized in the eschaton, but human beings are capable of initiating this process through the liturgy and through responsible stewardship and environmental practices. This position aligns with Benedict’s concept of spiritualization, which he describes as the opposite of incarnation.

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\(^8^1\) Ibid., 27.

\(^8^2\) Ibid., 28.

\(^8^3\) Bordeianu, *Dumitru Staniloae*, 215; Auer and Ratzinger, *Dogmatic Theology*, 6:133.

\(^8^4\) Moltmann, “Scope of Renewal,” 35.
The incarnation . . . becomes final, so to speak, at the moment the movement is reversed. The flesh becomes “logicized,” but precisely this process of the flesh becoming word produces a new unity of all reality, which was obviously so important to God that he let it cost him his Son on the cross. . . . It is not only the incarnation of the Word, but at the same time the spiritualization of the flesh. ⁸⁵

If the flesh, not simply the flesh of human beings, but the flesh of reality, i.e. matter itself, becomes Word, ⁸⁶ it implies that the cosmos itself will be divinized and will be redeemed. This redemption can be anticipated by a renewed concern for the Earth, destined as it is to share in this redemption.

One might legitimately wonder why it is necessary to care for creation if it is destined to be redeemed. The rationale behind environmental stewardship according to Haught is that human actions have eternal consequences. Haught explains, “In transfigured status, then, the present cosmos will continue to remain deeply implicated in the world’s eventual eschatological fulfillment. Without a hope that nature has such a future, our present ecological commitments might indeed have entirely too flimsy a footing.” ⁸⁷ In other words, a relationship exists between nature in its current state and in its divinized state such that humanity’s stewardship somehow defines the cosmos’s future status, in a way that is not dissimilar from how a person’s actions effect his or her state in the afterlife.

Moltmann maintains that the broadening of the limits of the church would have a positive effect on the struggle to combat the ecological crisis, stating that “if the church is indeed oriented towards the cosmos, the ‘ecological crisis’ of the earthly creation is also the crisis of the church.

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⁸⁶ Benedict explains what he means by “flesh” in the following passage: “The incarnation is only the first part of the movement. It becomes meaningful and definitive only in the cross and the resurrection. From the cross the Lord draws everything to himself and carries the flesh—that is, humanity and the entire created world—into God’s eternity” (ibid., 121).

itself, for as ‘flesh of its flesh and bones of its bones’ it will be destroyed if the earth is 
destroyed.” Moltmann is essentially correct, even more so if one takes into 
account the genetic closeness of the human race with other animals as the theory of evolution 
and gene theory has made clear. Moreover, plants, animals, and human beings are made of the 
heavy atoms that were forged in the heart of a star that was most likely dispersed by a super 
nova, which highlights the affinity between living things and the rest of the cosmos. For 
Moltmann, the church should reflect in its attitude what is true at the physical level; simply put, 
the church needs to be in solidarity with the rest of creation. For Moltmann, there is another 
reason why the church should be concerned about the environment: “Not only our ‘human 
environment’ suffers, but also creation which is ordained to be ‘God’s environment’: every 
assault on creation that cannot be made good is a sacrilege.” Moltmann echoes St. Paul who 
states that an assault on Christian communities is an assault on God because the church is the 
temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16-17), but extends the domain of God’s temple to include 
the universe.

Creation is destined to be the dwelling place of God in both Moltmann’s theology as 
well as in Benedict’s, but whereas Moltmann explicitly connects this idea to 
environmentalism, Benedict does not. Instead of relating the destiny of creation to become God’s 
dwelling to environmental issues, Benedict focuses on the relationship between creation and

88 Moltmann, “Scope of Renewal,” 35.

89 Ibid.

90 “The holiness and glory of the eternal indwelling of God is the eschatological goal of creation as a whole and of all individual created beings” (Moltmann, Coming of God, 318).

91 “[T]he Bible makes it clear that the whole of creation is destined to become the vessel of God’s Glory” (Ratzinger, Eschatology, 237).
worship by rejecting Gisbert Greshake’s claim that “[m]atter . . . cannot be perfected” and insisting that matter as such can be redeemed and even divinized.92 Moreover, he does not write anything comparable to Moltmann’s equating the destruction of nature with blasphemy. Nevertheless, the fact that Benedict strongly indicates that the cosmos will be the dwelling place of God suggests that his views regarding the gravity of the destruction of nature is not that dissimilar from Moltmann’s.

In sum, Benedict’s account of sacramentality helps to frame and govern his cosmic eschatology and his theology of the word. The sacraments are patterned after the incarnation, since they are essentially the union of matter and form, and in this way mirror the hypostatic union, point to the semiotic character of creation, hint at matter’s perfectibility and even “divinizibility,” and regulate Benedict’s eschatology. Maintaining that there are different levels of sacramentality, Benedict describes the cosmic context of sacramentality, sacramentality’s interreligious connections, the narrower field of sacramentality stemming from the Old Testament, and finally the most focused, concentrated, and perfected form of the sacraments, i.e. those that exist in the church. For Benedict, the cosmos can be seen as sacrament and as church. Both of these concepts have ecological implications. Cosmos as sacrament has two implications: a subjective effect (the renewal of the sacramental vision) and an objective implication (cosmic apotheosis). Cosmos as church implies that it is imperative for human beings to foster solidarity with non-human creation and that to attack nature is to attack the house of God. I will unpack Benedict’s Logos theology in the next section before demonstrating how his cosmic eschatology vis-à-vis the resurrection morphed over the years.

Logos: Benedict’s Theology of the Word

In Benedict’s view, worship must be in accordance with the Logos, which is one of the reasons why it is important to describe Benedict’s Logos theology before delving into his liturgical theology in the next chapter. According to Benedict, the Jews in Alexandria came into contact with the idea of *logikē latreia*, which he describes as “worship and sacrifice with spirit and mind.” The Greek aspiration was to achieve “a mystical union with the Logos, the very meaning of all things.” Yet because the Hellenistic Logos-mysticism still enabled the body to be reduced to insignificance, it had Gnostic tendencies and this kind of mysticism did not arrive at full maturity until the incarnation enabled the ultimate sacrifice of the Word.

It is essential to understand Benedict’s Logos theology to appreciate the significance of his liturgical theology. According to Christopher Collins, in Benedict’s theology “there is always present what might be called a dialogical principle in which the Eternal Word is continually being spoken in history, in human words.” In fact, Collins claims that this dialogic structure is present in Benedict’s theology of creation, Christology, ecclesiology, liturgy, and eschatology. For Benedict, *logos* is a multifaceted reality that undergirds the whole of his theology.

The different levels of the *logos* that Benedict considers are based on the roles of speakers and listeners. For Benedict, *logos* at its deepest level is primarily the second person of the Trinity, the Logos of the Father. In Jesus, the Father has spoken his perfect word and in the incarnation, the Father has revealed himself most perfectly to human beings. Secondarily, the

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94 Ibid., 47.
96 Ibid., 19.
words in Scripture are the Word of God addressed to human beings. In a third sense, there are other words, *logoi*, that serve as the patterns of created beings, which God spoke into being. I will address these three themes sequentially.

The Eternal Word

The first component of Benedict’s theology of the Word is his account of the Eternal Word (i.e. the Pre-incarnate Word) of the Father. For Benedict, the person of the Eternal Word, who has become incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, is the center of cosmic eschatology and the key to apocalyptic texts, as I pointed out in the overview of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology. In addition to being essential to eschatology, the Eternal Word also has a relational and soteriological significance in Benedict’s theology. According to Benedict, “man is able to participate in the dialogue within God himself, because God has first shared in human speech and has thus brought the two into communication with one another.” Human beings are capable of entering into a relationship with God because God is inherently relational. This, in Benedict’s view, is the basis of prayer and the ability of human beings to commune with God. For Benedict, therefore, the Eternal Word is essential for eschatology and soteriology since the Word, through which all things were made, existed before creation, is the key to uncovering the meaning of eschatological texts and is the foundation for communication between God and human beings through whom salvation is transmitted. Although much more could be written about the role of the Eternal Word in Benedict’s Logos theology, I will restrict my comments to these few

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remarks. Now that I have described the role of the Eternal Word in Benedict’s theology\(^\text{99}\), I will give a synopsis of his Biblical theology and hermeneutics.

The Written Word of God

The Eternal Word is the basis for God’s communication with human beings. As Benedict explains, “[T]he Incarnation of the Logos means” that “he who is speech, Word, Logos, in God and to God, participates in human speech.”\(^\text{100}\) The eternal one steps into time so that human beings, who exist in time, can enter into a relationship with God. Yet God also communicates through Scripture, which can also be considered to be incarnate inasmuch as human words are united to the truth of God. For Benedict, all of creation is capable of participating in salvation, but in what sense can Benedict’s cosmic soteriology be justified on a biblical basis?

Scripture says little by way of cosmic soteriology, although there are some passages that hint at the salvation of creation. One of the most pertinent passages on cosmic soteriology is from the following excerpt from the letter to the Colossians:

He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything he might be pre-eminent. For in him all the fulness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.\(^\text{101}\)

\(^{99}\) While emphasizing the role of the Eternal Word in cosmic soteriology/eschatology, Benedict also recognizes that there is a pneumatological dimension to eschatology. See Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, ed. Stephan Otto Horn and Vinzenz Pfünér, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), 50. The Holy Spirit, as love and as communion, is a signpost for salvation since it is ultimately love that is constitutive of salvation. For the sake of brevity, I will describe Benedict’s account of the tension that exists between the Christological and pneumatological aspects of the church in the last chapter.

\(^{100}\) Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith*, 26.

\(^{101}\) Col. 1:15-20, RSV.
This passage ties the salvation offered by Christ to the event of his crucifixion, and explicitly states that all things are reconciled in the person of Jesus Christ. At the same time, there are other passages that seem to hint at the destruction of the universe. For instance, 2 Peter insists that heaven and earth will pass away.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire! But according to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.¹⁰²

There are other passages that are simply ambiguous as to whether creation will be redeemed. The book of Revelation, for instance, describes God making a new heavens and a new earth, but if God will make a new earth, it seems to imply that the old one has been completely done away with, much in the same way as the author of 2 Peter implies. At the same time, there is also in Paul’s epistles the notion that those who are baptized have become a new creation. This is not to say that there is no ontological connection between a person before his or her conversion and after his or her conversion; it simply means that the old person, so to speak, has been replaced by a new one capable of being filled with God. Benedict does not explicitly address these passages; their function here is merely to highlight the difficulties of interpreting different Scripture passages relating to cosmic eschatology.¹⁰³

How does Benedict approach Scripture? To answer this question, it is first necessary to describe one of Benedict’s theological epiphanies. In the course of his research for his

¹⁰² 2 Pet. 3:10-13, RSV.

¹⁰³ In chapter four, I will attempt to reconcile those parts of Scripture that imply that the universe will be destroyed with those that insist that it will be redeemed by pointing out that the two propositions are not mutually exclusive.
habilitation on St. Bonaventure’s theology of history, Benedict discovered that for medieval theologians, revelation was first and foremost an event of divine self-disclosure.\textsuperscript{104} He states that “both in the Middle Ages and at Trent it would have been impossible to refer to Scripture simply as ‘revelation’, as is the normal linguistic usage today . . . revelation is something alive, something greater and more.”\textsuperscript{105} Consequently, Benedict’s approach is not simply to smooth out the tensions inherent in different biblical passages since truth is not confined to Scripture alone. Furthermore, this is germane to the subject of biblical exegesis since “if [revelation] transcends Scripture, then [the historical-critical method] cannot be the last word concerning revelation.”\textsuperscript{106}

Since revelation and Scripture are not coextensive realities and the former is more expansive than the latter, the phenomenon of revelation lies outside the scope of historical-critical methods.

Benedict critiques historical-criticism in \textit{Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life} by explaining one of its limitations, namely that it has nothing to say concerning the “issue of appropriation . . . of the past into the present.”\textsuperscript{107} Historical methods are only concerned with historical and textual facts and cannot make value judgments. What happened in the past is set in stone and, to an extent, can be recovered using historical methods, but the question of what significance that has for those who are living in the present cannot be answered using these methods. As Benedict explains, “The historian seeks the correct interpretation of texts but the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{104} In his habilitation, Benedict describes the Bonaventurian conception of revelation as a “mystical contact” between God and the individual. Joseph Ratzinger, \textit{The Theology of History in St. Bonaventure}, trans. Zachary Hayes (Chicago: Franciscan Herald, 1971) 91.
  \item \textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{107} Ratzinger, \textit{Eschatology}, 20.
\end{itemize}
leap to truth itself lies quite beyond his method.” Benedict expresses this point positively in *Feast of Faith* by explaining what is required for such a “leap to truth”: “We cannot reach Christ through historical reconstruction. It may be helpful, but it is not sufficient and, on its own, becomes mere necrophilia. We encounter him as a living Person only in the foretaste of his presence which is called ‘Church.’” In Benedict’s view, historical-criticism is insufficient insofar as it is incapable of explaining to the contemporary world what the biblical texts mean for today. Historical-criticism on its own cannot lead to a personal encounter with Christ – for this, the church is necessary.

Benedict’s critique of historical-criticism in *Feast of Faith* is somewhat overstated. It not only “may be helpful,” but is certainly helpful. Elsewhere, he describes historical-criticism is an “indispensable tool” and a “fundamental dimension of exegesis” that helps Christians understand the literal meaning of Scriptures. Theologians should have a balanced view of historical-criticism that upholds its merits while recognizing its limits.

For Benedict, Scripture has a remarkable dynamism. The word of Scripture “was not frozen at the moment it was written down,” Benedict remarks; instead, it had a long oral history prior to being written down, and once it was written, it “entered into new processes of interpretation—‘relectures’—that further develop its hidden potential.” In *Jesus of Nazareth*, Benedict explains that it is because of the text’s relation to history that it is able to carry multiple meanings. According to the former pontiff,

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108 Ibid., 21.


111 Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith* 32.
When a word transcends the moment in which it is spoken, it carries within itself a “deeper value.” This “deeper value” pertains most of all to words that have matured in the course of faith-history. For in this case the author is not simply speaking for himself on his own authority. He is speaking from the perspective of a common history that sustains him and that already implicitly contains the possibilities of its future, of the further stages of its journey. The process of continually rereading and drawing out new meanings from words would not have been possible unless the words themselves were already open to it from within.

At this point we get a glimmer, even on the historical level, of what inspiration means: The author does not speak as a private, self-contained subject. He speaks in a living community, that is to say, in a living historical movement not created by him, nor even by the collective, but which is led forward by a greater power that is at work.¹¹²

In Benedict’s view, the polysemy of the words of Scripture is not primarily the result of the many ways that an individual is able to interpret Scripture based on his or her personal experiences; the real basis for the numerous potentialities of the meaning of Scripture is its living on in the future-oriented tradition of the church, a tradition that continuously bears Scripture throughout history and makes it come alive to people of every generation. In other words, the reception of the word of God in and by the church is able to disclose the multifaceted dimensions of the words and to push beyond the mere authorial intention of those who put words onto papyri eons ago.

One of the major implications of Benedict’s insistence on the multivalent quality of scriptural passages that are able to be unfolded within the community of the church is that the passages that pertain to cosmic soteriology need not be interpreted in terms of what the scriptural authors originally intended, but rather can be interpreted in a way that goes beyond the intention or imagination of the sacred authors. This, in short, is the justification for Benedict’s interpretation that the universe will be redeemed even though there are ambiguous passages in Scripture as to whether the universe will be destroyed. Now that I have described Benedict’s

¹¹² Benedict XVI, “Forward [to Jesus of Nazareth],” xx. For a lengthy analysis on the relationship between Scripture and the church, see Ratzinger, Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith, 32–34.
theology of the word as it pertains to the Eternal Word and to the scriptures, I will address the image of the Word in creation.

Logoi in Creation

The Word is at the heart of Benedict’s theology since his thought is centered on the Word of God not only in its dimension as Scripture, but also in its role as the foundation of the world. One can see both emphases at work together in his homilies on creation. Commenting on the first creation account’s portrayal of God, Benedict writes, “This is the living God, and this same power (which created the earth and the stars and which bears the whole universe) is the very one whom we meet in the Word of Holy Scripture. In this Word we come into contact with the real primordial force of the world and with the power that is above all powers.”\(^{113}\) In this excerpt, Benedict makes it clear that there is a fundamental relationship between the Word in Scripture and the Word that creates all things. In his theology, the God who addresses humanity through the Word of Scripture also created the world.

In addition to this general understanding of the relationship between God’s Word in Scripture and God’s role as creator of the universe, Benedict advocates a Johannine and Pauline Logos Christology. The Christological relationship between Scripture and creation is that the written Word of God reveals that all things are created through the Word of God (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15-23).\(^{114}\) While Scripture highlights this relationship in these passages, it does not adopt a particular metaphysics. The doctrine of *logoi*, which in the West took the form of the doctrine of divine ideas, developed after these writings. Some of the exemplary theologians who

\(^{113}\) Benedict XVI, *In the Beginning…*, 6.

\(^{114}\) Ibid., 30.
developed this doctrine include St. Maximus the Confessor, St. Augustine of Hippo, and St. Thomas Aquinas. In the next section, I will briefly describe the doctrine of *logoi* in the theology of Maximus. After I describe his doctrine, I will describe Benedict’s Logos theology in more detail, occasionally comparing it to Maximus’s view.

**Logoi in the Theology of St. Maximus the Confessor**

St. Maximus the Confessor’s doctrine of the *logoi* is based on the scriptures, in particular the Gospel of John. 115 His starting point is the biblical concept that the Logos, the Eternal Word of the Father who is the second person of the Trinity, is the Word through whom all things were made. 116 Just as the Word is the Word of the Father conceived in the mind of God, so too are created things words created in the mind of God, though they are different from the Word since they are not eternal or divine. According to Maximus, “a *logos* preceded everything that receives its becoming from God.” 117 In his view of the cosmos, God “completed the primary principles (*λόγοι*) of creatures and the universal essences of beings once for all,” yet keeps all things in existence and brings to actuality what is potential in created things. 118 This means that while God created everything once and for all at the beginning of time, he also actively preserves everything in being and helps them to develop to their full stature.

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115 While Maximus was certainly influenced by neo-platonic philosophy, there are significant differences. For example, Maximus utterly rejects the neo-platonic and gnostic view that all things were one in the Pleroma before the fall, something that Origen of Alexandria believed in. See Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, trans. Paul M. Blowers and Robert Louis Wilken (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2003), 45–46, 46n2.

116 “All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be” (John 1:3, NAB); “For in him were created all things in heaven and on earth, the visible and the invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things were created through him and for him” (Col. 1:16, NAB).

117 Maximus the Confessor, *On the Cosmic Mystery of Jesus Christ*, 55.

118 Ibid., 99–100.
Maximus’s doctrine of the *logoi* may be considered as a form of the divine ideas.\(^\text{119}\) The doctrine of divine ideas, also known as exemplarism, holds that everything that exists and that has ever existed must exist in the mind of God, and that these divine ideas are the exemplars of creatures existing in time and space. I will demonstrate how this is similar to Benedict’s idealism.

*Logos and Logoi in Benedict’s Theology*

In his discussion of *logos* in *Introduction to Christianity*, Benedict begins with a metaphysical consideration of the structure of reality. For Benedict, Christian faith entails the option for three different primacies: idealism, the particular, and freedom.\(^\text{120}\) The first feature of Christian faith is that it is a response to the ancient philosophical question of whether all being can be reduced to matter or mind (i.e. materialism or idealism).\(^\text{121}\) Benedict explains that Christianity opts for the position that reality at its core is not matter but is thought: “Christian faith in God means first the decision in favor of the primacy of the *logos* as against mere matter.”\(^\text{122}\) Christian faith recognizes the fundamental rationality of being and posits that it is rational only because there is a higher mind that has created everything, which is why for Benedict, “all our thinking is, indeed, only a rethinking of what in reality has already been thought out beforehand.”\(^\text{123}\) Appealing to one of the most famous scientists of the last century to


\(^{120}\) Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 158–59.

\(^{121}\) Ibid., 156.

\(^{122}\) Ibid., 151.

\(^{123}\) Ibid., 153; cf. ibid., 59: “[H]uman thinking is the rethinking of being itself, rethinking of the thought that is being itself. Man can rethink the *logos*, the meaning of being, because his own *logos*, his own reason, is *logos* of the one *logos*, thought of the original thought, of the creative spirit that permeates and governs his being.”
support his point, Benedict quotes Einstein to demonstrate how modern science gives humanity insight into the rationality of creation: “Einstein said once that in the laws of nature ‘an intelligence so superior is revealed that in comparison all the significance of human thinking and human arrangements is a completely worthless reflection.’” The rational structure of reality, therefore, is something that is not merely a philosophical predilection, but is something that can be evidenced by scientific inquiry.

Although he does not cite St. Maximus the Confessor, Benedict agrees with certain elements of his doctrine of the *logoi*. Both Maximus and Benedict take for granted the Gospel of John’s theological assertion that all things were created through the Logos, and both take the position that all things are thought by God. If one accepts Tollefsen’s theological assessment that St. Maximus’s doctrine of the *logoi* constitutes “a kind of doctrine of Ideas,” then it becomes clear that for both Maximus and Benedict, all things that exist are constructed by the divine mind, since Benedict affirms that “all being is a product of thought and, indeed, in its innermost structure is itself thought.”

Despite these similarities, Benedict rarely uses the term *logoi* in his theological oeuvre whereas this term plays a prime role in the theology of Maximus. Benedict does, however, describe the being of man as *logos* when he states, “Man can rethink the *logos*, the meaning of being, because his own *logos*, his own reason, is *logos* of the one *logos*, thought of the original thought.” In addition to applying the term *logos* to human beings, Benedict also acknowledges the role of the *logoi* in non-human creatures as well. In a reply to a book written by Piergiorgio

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125 Tollefsen, *Christocentric Cosmology of Maximus*, 21; Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 152.

Odifreddi, an Italian mathematician and atheist, entitled, *Dear Pope, I am Writing to You*,

Benedict states,

Lastly, I cannot follow you at all, if from the start you do not write Logos with a capital ‘L’ but rather the mathematical logos in lower case . . . The Logos that stands at the beginning of all things is a Logos above all logoi.

Of course, the transition from the logoi to the Logos made by the Christian faith together with the great Greek philosophers is a leap that cannot be simply demonstrated: It leads from empiricism to metaphysics and with this to another level of thought and reality. But this leap is at least as logical as your dispute against it. I also think that whoever cannot make this leap should yet regard it as a serious question.127

Although Benedict rarely writes about the *logoi*, he recognizes that everything that exists essentially plays the same role as the divine *logoi* in the doctrine of St. Maximus the Confessor.

The second facet of Christian faith is the fundamental option of the primacy of the particular, which is inextricably linked with the primacy of the *logos* over and against the metaphysical hypothesis that all that exists is simply matter in motion. According to Benedict, “if the Christian option for the *logos* means an option for a personal, creative meaning, then it is at the same time an option for the primacy of the particular as against the universal.”128 This becomes especially clear in Benedict’s consideration of divine revelation, which he describes as a kind of stumbling block on account of its positivistic nature.129 Revelation is necessarily particular. God reveals himself to a particular people in a particular point in time. The incarnation also manifests the primacy of particularism since the Word of God became united to a particular man. The Omega of the world, being identical to the creative Logos, is a person,


128 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 158.

129 Ibid., 322.
which further underscores the significance of the particular in Benedict’s eschatology. The primacy of the *logos* ultimately indicates that the Logos, the source of all creation, “is not an anonymous, neutral consciousness but rather freedom, creative love, a person.” It follows that the idea of Christianity or the idea of God can never be prior to the significance of the individual. In Benedict’s words, “Man, the person, always takes precedence over the mere idea.” The importance of the particular, therefore, is something that is central to Christianity and follows upon the heels of the option for the Logos and idealism against materialism. It indicates that the Logos is personal and has a benevolent interest in people.

To acknowledge the primacy of the particular is to give a nod of assent to the proposition that, contra Aristotle, God is not self-thinking thought engrossed on himself since he is the only thing that is worthy of being contemplated. In Benedict’s words,

> It means nothing else than that the creative thinking we found to be the precondition and ground of all being is truly conscious thinking and that it knows not only itself but also its whole thought. It means further that this thinking not only knows but loves; that it is creative because it is love; and that, because it can love as well as think, it has given its thought the freedom of its own existence, objectivized it, released it into distinct being. So the whole thing means that this thinking knows its thought in its distinct being, loves it and, loving, upholds it.

It is possible to discern in this description of the primacy of the particular the Maximian emphasis on the relationship between the Logos of God and the *logoi* of creatures. Benedict recognizes that God sustains all things in existence and highlights that the reason why he does so is love.

130 Ibid., 158.
131 Ibid., 322.
132 Ibid., 159.
The third facet of Christian faith is the primacy of freedom. In creating the world freely and sustaining all things in existence, God has stamped the mark of his freedom upon the universe. As such, “the supreme factor in the world is not cosmic necessity but freedom.” At this point, Benedict elaborates on some of the implications of the primacy of freedom. One of the implications is that the world can only be properly understood as incomprehensible. While this might seem oxymoronic at first glance, Benedict explains that what he means by this is that since freedom is the underlying structure of the universe both in the role of God’s freedom in creation and his bestowal of freedom on human beings, this means that the world is essentially incalculable.

According to Benedict, incalculability means that “the world can never . . . be completely reduced to mathematical logic.” This also means that the Newtonian mechanistic worldview and the Cartesian anthropology according to which human beings are machines with minds oversimplifies reality by ignoring the issues of freedom and love. In other words, everything cannot simply be reduced to material causes; existing, living, growing, and thinking all have the primordial Logos as their source. Since freedom and love fundamentally structure the world, the world cannot be reduced to mathematics or to material causes.

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133 Ibid.
134 Ibid., 160.
135 Ibid. Tracey Rowland points out that Benedict’s insistence that mathematics does not have the final word in the destiny of the cosmos is based on the Augustinian emphasis on the role of the will and of the two cities that Augustine writes about in The City of God that are founded on the love of God and the love of the world. Tracey Rowland, Ratzinger’s Faith: The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 64.

136 Benedict does not believe that interpreting the world according to mathematics is problematic; instead, what is problematic in his view is interpreting the world only in accordance with mathematics. As pope, he made the following statement: “[I]t really seems to me that mathematics—in which as such God cannot appear—shows us the intelligent structure of the universe. Now, there are also theories of chaos, but they are limited because if chaos had the upper hand, all technology would become impossible. Only because our mathematics is reliable, is technology reliable” (Benedict XVI, The Garden of God: Toward a Human Ecology, 92). While Benedict appreciates mathematics, his view of chaos theory is dubious, depending on what he means by “[having] the upper hand.”
The primacy of the *logos* does not in and of itself differentiate Christianity from idealism for Benedict; the second and third primacies of the particular and of freedom separate Christianity from philosophical idealism, which is something that is crucial for Christianity, especially in its consideration of the anthropological terminology it developed in its attempt to understand the doctrine of the Trinity. The development of the word “person” arose in such a context, according to Benedict; for the Greeks, people were merely individuals, copies of an idea that were instantiated in matter, which implied that fundamentally the one and the universal is the prime reality. In contrast, the Christian anthropological view identifies the human being as a person, not an individual who does not matter in the grand scheme of things but an element of reality that contains in him- or herself the significance of the divine drama of the incarnation.

The primacy of the *logos*, along with the primacies of the particular and of freedom, constitute a Logos theology that may be described as personal insofar as Benedict’s theology of creation is predicated on the Creator who can be known and loved, and who in knowing and loving people upholds them in being. Yet the Logos theology of Benedict pertains to more than human beings. Like Maximus the Confessor, Benedict acknowledges that other creatures are also created through the Logos. As he mentions in *Spirit of the Liturgy*, “The Logos, through whom all things were made, who bears within himself, so to speak, the archetypes of all existing things, is the guardian of creation.”¹³⁷ For Benedict, the universe is a creation of God who desires to be known and loved and to enter into a relationship with his creatures.

Ecological Implications

Benedict’s Logos theology ties in with the general thrust of the thought of some eco-
theologians, in particular Phillip Sherrard and David Toolan, with regard to science and
mathematics. In Sherrard’s view, the harmonious integrated worldview of people in the Middle
Ages fell apart with the rise of the modern scientific revolution.138 According to Sherrard, the
scientists and mathematicians of that era, including Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, and Newton,
“identified their God with the great cosmic mathematician.”139 One implication of this view is
that nature essentially has a mathematical structure and is governed by mechanical operations;
the universe is like a clock, which means that it is material, not spiritual.140 The interpretation of
the universe as essentially mathematical in structure, according to Sherrard, has led to what could
be called a despiritualization of nature. In his view, a mathematical conception of nature is
inextricably associated with the idea that the universe functions mechanistically, which implies
that necessity governs the universe.141 If necessity governs the universe, it follows that there is
no hope for human beings and that human beings are subject to cosmic necessity, something
more akin to fate than providence. Although Sherrard is concerned with the environment, he
does not specifically describe how the rise of modern science has led to environmental
degradation. Toolan fulfills this task when he states, “Scientists have been sorcerer’s apprentices,
aides and accomplices in the Promethean efforts of industry . . . to tear up the earth, to remake it

139 Ibid., 35.
140 Ibid., 36–41.
141 Ibid., 41.
in our own doubtful image and for our own often narrow interests.”142 The modern scientific worldview interprets nature as raw matter to be manipulated at will, often with little or no regard for the morality of such actions.

Benedict’s view is similar to the views of Sherrard and Toolan. He emphasizes that the universe should not be viewed as simply mathematical since such a view ultimately ignores the benevolence of God and the significance of love. The universe cannot be reduced to mathematics because there is more to it than matter. Benedict interprets the universe more as a stage than as being mathematically structured. The universe itself is history and vice versa.143 The interchangeability between universe and history implies that the universe is the stage on which the ultimate destiny of human beings and of the cosmos is determined.144 In this sense, Benedict’s view of the universe is more closely aligned with John Haught’s vision of a dramatic cosmos145 than with a view that interprets the universe like a clock, i.e. a mechanized universe that obeys precise mathematical laws. This, in turn, has implications for the identity of God, as Sherrard correctly points out. If God is like a clock-maker, it strips the divine of any personality since it implies that God can abandon the universe to its own devices instead of necessarily maintaining a relationship with creation by preserving it in being. If, rather, the universe is like a drama, then it protects the personality of God, makes him accessible to human beings, and highlights the importance of divine benevolence and love, thereby opening up the path of hope. Benedict, like Sherrard and Toolan, insists that human beings need to recognize the spiritual

142 Toolan, *At Home in the Cosmos*, 46.

143 Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 320.

144 At the same time, he believes that the universe cannot be reduced to a drama. In his words, the cosmos “does not merely form the scene of human history; before human history began and later with it, cosmos is itself ‘history’” (ibid.).

within the created realm. The implications of the need to interpret the universe as not only structured by the Logos but also as loved by the Logos are profound. For Benedict, it means that human beings should love others as they have been loved by God and that they should act with such virtues as solidarity, sustainability, and responsibility.

What follows is a brief recapitulation of Benedict’s Logos theology, which has three different facets: (1) the Eternal Word, (2) Scripture, and (3) logos in creation. Each of these facets impact Benedict’s cosmic eschatology/soteriology. The Eternal Word is both the basis for the human capacity to commune with God and the key to eschatology. Scripture passages concerning cosmic eschatology can be interpreted in a way that maintains hope for creation since revelation is more expansive than Scripture and the multiple levels of the written Word require an interpretive community, i.e. the church, to uncover their meanings. Finally, the logos are related to freedom and love and the particularity of the incarnation, which means that mathematics is not the basis of creation and that, instead, love is the foundation and goal of creation. Now that I have adumbrated Benedict’s Logos theology, I will expound on how his view of the resurrection and of the fate of the universe have changed over the years.

Cosmos: Resurrection and the Destiny of the Universe

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has cosmic implications in Benedict’s theology. Like a pebble that creates ripple effects that impact the surface of water in all directions, the resurrection impacts all creation. It not only is a promise of and a precursor to human resurrection, but it also holds a promise for the universe. As such, the resurrection of Christ could be said to have two spheres of influence: the human and the cosmic. Benedict insists that the resurrection is tied to the future of the world when he states that the new life offered by the resurrection “is ordered to the transformation of all life, to a future wholeness for man and for the
Indeed, Benedict goes so far as to describe the resurrection as “a pledge to the future of man and the cosmos, and in this sense a pledge to space, time and matter.” For Benedict, the resurrection clearly does not merely exist on the anthropological plane but instead is related to the entire cosmos. The question that remains is: What kind of impact does the resurrection have on the universe?

Benedict approaches this question differently in different stages of his theological career. In the first stage, which is exemplified by Introduction to Christianity (1968), he appeals to the idea that the cosmos is history and to the Teilhardian concept of complexification. The middle stage, represented by Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life (1977), continues to appeal to the Teilhardian idea of complexification but describes more explicitly Benedict’s idea of the salvation of matter and makes use of Rahner’s idea of the pancosmicity of the soul. Finally, in his more mature writings, such as his 1998 speech entitled “The End of Time” and Spirit of the Liturgy (2000), Benedict noticeably relativizes the Teilhardian idea of complexification and the significance of the cosmic process; rather than placing Teilhard’s vision at the center of his eschatology, Benedict demotes it to one possible way among others of conceiving the vast movement of the universe. In this section, I will go through these three stages in succession, describing Benedict’s view of resurrection with respect to the salvation of matter and of the cosmos and how it changed over time.

In the early stage of Benedict’s theological career, which could be said to have culminated in Introduction to Christianity, he displays excitement about Teilhard’s cosmological

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146 Ratzinger, Eschatology, 119.

147 Ibid., 116.

vision, perhaps since Teilhard’s works had recently been published since Teilhard was censured during his life\(^\text{149}\) and, as a result, there was a general fervor for Teilhard’s work in Germany during the sixties.\\(^\text{150}\) Benedict’s early writings are peppered with positive references to Teilhard, whereas his later writings make fewer references to him and the times that he does mention him, his approbation is often mitigated and his tone more critical.

Early Stage

According to Fletcher, Benedict’s earliest works on resurrection indicate that he had a somewhat physicalist approach to the topic.\\(^\text{151}\) Benedict changes his position, however, in *Introduction to Christianity*, where his resurrection theology is characterized by a view of the resurrection that emphatically rejects the resurrection of physical bodies. Commenting on 1 Corinthians,\\(^\text{152}\) he claims that Paul does not teach “the resurrection of physical bodies, but the resurrection of persons.”\\(^\text{153}\) This view could be described as anti-physicalist.

\(^\text{149}\) Teilhard died in 1955 and many of his works were published only posthumously.

\(^\text{150}\) Modemann, *Omegapunkt*, 75.


\(^\text{152}\) “I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable” (1 Cor. 15:50, RSV).

\(^\text{153}\) Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 357–58. It is surprising that Benedict makes this claim since in 1 Cor. 15:51-53, Paul emphasizes that some people “shall be changed” (presumably those who will be alive during Jesus’ return) and that the “perishable nature must put on the imperishable,” thereby implying that physical bodies and glorified bodies are not entirely discontinuous.
Almost immediately after declaring that Paul does not believe in the resurrection of physical bodies, Benedict raises the following question: “Has, then, the resurrection no relation at all to matter?”  

Benedict opines,

If cosmos is history and matter represents a moment in the history of spirit, then there is no such thing as an eternal, neutral combination of matter and spirit; rather, there is a final “complexity” in which the world finds its omega and unity. In that case there is a final connection between matter and spirit in which the destiny of man and of the world is consummated, even if it is impossible for us today to define the nature of this connection.

To describe the relationship between resurrection and matter, Benedict makes use of three ideas: the idea that the cosmos can be conceived as history and Teilhard’s concepts of complexification and Omega. Benedict emphasizes that history ought not to be considered as something that could occur in another universe, as though the universe were a container that could hold a different history. History does not simply exist in the cosmos as a beverage is held in a glass. Although he does not use this analogy, history in Benedict’s mind is like an infant in a mother’s womb; history’s identity is contingent on the cosmos being itself and nothing else. In a sense, “the cosmos itself is history” since the cosmos is in motion, and could be considered to be motion. This raises the issue of human history and its relation to the cosmos.

Benedict situates human history in the context of natural history and contends that before human history, the cosmos is history, which means that “there is only one single all-embracing world history.” The nature of history is not a neutral process that arbitrarily brings about random

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154 Ibid., 358.
155 Ibid.
156 For Teilhard’s ideas of complexification and Omega, see the section on Teilhard in the previous chapter.
157 Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 320; italics Ratzinger’s. Benedict repeats this view in Spirit of the Liturgy: “The cosmos is not a kind of closed building, a stationary container in which history may by chance take place. It is itself movement, from its one beginning to its one end. In a sense, creation is history” (Ratzinger, Spirit of the Liturgy, 28; italics Ratzinger’s).
entities; instead, pre-human natural history forms “the prehistory of spirit or mind.”

Borrowing heavily from Teilhard, Benedict maintains that the arrival of mind or spirit in history was an evolutionary leap—a process that Teilhard describes as complexification—which prefigures another evolutionary leap, the arrival of an Omega Point whose significance points to the truth of idealism over and against materialism. Complexification is related to history from the beginning. For instance, carbon atoms, which are necessary for life, were forged in the hearts of fiery stars. Cosmic history is necessary for evolutionary history, and evolutionary history in turn is necessary for human history. Following Teilhard, Benedict asserts that the end of this history, i.e. Omega, is personal: “the omega of the world is a ‘you’, a person, an individual.”

This personal center is Jesus, who is also the axis around which the liturgical action of the church revolves. The second coming can be understood not only as salvation but also as judgment since the development of the final phase of complexification “is based on spirit and freedom,” which implies responsibility.

In Benedict’s early analysis, the complexification that is a part of evolutionary history implies that “there is a final connection between matter and spirit in which the destiny of man and of the world is consummated, even if it is impossible for us today to define the nature of this connection,” which means that the resurrection does have an effect on matter by introducing a new relationship between matter and spirit, which he explains with the following analogy:

In reality’s susceptibility to manipulation, the boundaries between nature and technology are already beginning to disappear; we can no longer clearly distinguish one from the

158 Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 320.
159 Ibid., 320–21.
160 Ibid., 322.
161 Ibid., 322–23.
162 Ibid., 358.
other. To be sure, this analogy must be regarded as questionable in more than one respect. Yet such processes hint at a kind of world in which spirit and nature do not simply stand alongside each other but in which spirit, in a new “complexification”, draws what apparently is merely natural into itself, thereby creating a new world that at the same time necessarily means the end of the old one. Now the “end of the world” in which the Christian believes is certainly something quite different from the total victory of technology. But the welding together of nature and spirit that occurs in it enables us to grasp in a new way how the reality of belief in the return of Christ is to be conceived: as faith in the final unification of reality by spirit or mind.  

Benedict believes, at least in this stage of his career, that the way technological innovation refashions matter hints at how the current state of the world can be imagined as undergoing a process in which the universe is capable of becoming more than what it currently is in and of itself.  

Benedict was deeply influenced by Teilhard when he was a young theologian. Although he does not yet appeal to Rahner’s idea of the pancosmicity of the soul, it is evident that he is already moving toward a view of the resurrection that is interpreted “not as an unexpected, sudden event but as the completion of a process which corresponds to the inner tendency of all cosmic being toward greater spiritualization and unity,” a vision that Benedict depicts during the middle stage of his theological career.  

Middle Stage  

In the middle stage of his career, Benedict considers the resurrection of the body in light of the question of the resurrection in death, an idea formulated by Gisbert Greshake. He also considers the relationship between resurrection and matter, this time explicitly asserting that matter can be saved. An essential piece of Benedict’s vision of the destiny of the cosmos during

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163 Ibid., 321.  
164 Fletcher, Resurrection Realism, 121; italics Fletcher’s.
this stage is Rahner’s idea of the pancosmicity of the soul. I will go over each of these themes in some detail. While Benedict incorporates some new elements into his thought, his vision of cosmic eschatology is quite similar to his account of resurrection and cosmic eschatology that he gives in *Introduction to Christianity*.

*Resurrection in Death?*

In the 1970s and 1980s, a theological debate erupted in Germany between Gisbert Greshake and Gerhard Lohfink on the one hand and Benedict on the other, concerning the question of whether resurrection occurs in death. According to Benedict, a new kind of anthropology became commonplace in modern theology, one that holds an essential identification between human beings and their bodies. He insists that neglecting the place of the soul renders the resurrection of the body meaningless. In Greshake’s view the time of waiting between one’s death and the resurrection of the body is in fact only temporal from the perspective of human beings; it actually occurs immediately, so much so that according Benedict’s reading of his view, “every death is an entering into the new heaven and the new earth, the Parousia and the resurrection”; Benedict caricatures this when he writes, “Resurrection is now being claimed for the person still lying on his deathbed or on the funeral journey to his grave.” This explanation strikes Benedict as unsatisfactory, although to be fair, the polemical tone of some of his remarks directed against Greshake is rather harsh and dismissive, as Fletcher points out.

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166 Ibid., 108.

167 Fletcher, *Resurrection Realism*, 85–86.
One of the reasons why “resurrection in death” is problematic for Benedict is because it assumes that time is inextricably related to corporeality.\(^{168}\) While it is true that people in this world experience time, Benedict questions the presupposition that they only experience time because their souls are embodied. Following Augustine, Benedict appeals to the mystery of memory as an explanatory key that is capable of making sense of how human beings can experience both time and eternal life in this life. He comments on Book X of Augustine’s *Confessions,*

[This analysis] tells us that man, insofar as he is body, shares in physical time measured as that is in terms of the velocity of moving bodies by parameters which are themselves in motion and thus also relative. Man, however, is not only a body. He is also spirit. Because these two aspects inhere inseparably in man, his belonging to the bodily world affects the manner of his spiritual activity.\(^{169}\)

Benedict posits that there are two kinds of time: physical and anthropological. The former is measured by heavenly bodies whereas the latter is measured by the mind. He elaborates, “Man’s participation in the world of bodies shapes the time of his conscious awareness, yet in his spiritual activities he is temporal in a different, and deeper, way than that of physical bodies.”\(^{170}\) Human beings, then, experience time on the biological level and at the anthropological level. Dubbing anthropological time “memoria-time,” Benedict uses this concept to explain how for the individual who has died, memoria-time and physical time separate.\(^{171}\)

If memoria-time and physical time are separable after death, this means that human beings are capable of waiting for the end of history and for the fulfillment of the destiny of the

\(^{168}\) Ibid., 150.

\(^{169}\) Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 183.

\(^{170}\) Ibid., 183.

\(^{171}\) Ibid., 184.
human race after they have died. Benedict insists that people who have died do not lose their connection to history; their relation to history can only be completed when the whole of history is completed and the destiny of each particular individual has been fulfilled. One of the reasons for this is the “interdependence of all men and all creation”: human beings are inextricably related to such an extent that it can be said that “everyone exists simultaneously in other people.” Since human beings cannot lose their connection to history after death, human beings must wait between the period of time from their death to the resurrection of the dead and cannot experience resurrection immediately after death. For Benedict, the resurrection of the body cannot simply be reduced to resurrection in death.

*The Salvation of Matter*

Benedict formulates his ideas on the salvation of matter directly in response to Gisbert Greshake’s claim that “[m]atter as such (as atom, molecule, organ . . . ) cannot be perfected.” With this claim, Greshake throws down the gauntlet, insisting that salvation can only be experienced by disembodied human beings through the choices they have made during this life. Benedict picks up the gauntlet and, despite his polemics, retorts with an impressive systematic exposition of biblical and theological data throughout history.

Starting with Thomistic anthropology, Benedict explains that if the soul is the form of the body, the presence of the soul within a person is precisely what makes him or her a person. The salvation that God bestows on men and women is not a salvation of the spirit, but a salvation

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172 Ibid., 190; 238.
173 Ibid., 190.
175 Ibid., 149.
of the person. “What is saved,” Benedict maintains, “is the one creature, man, in the wholeness and unity of his personhood as that appears in embodied life.”  

At the very least, then, matter, insofar as it is related to embodied, resurrected, and glorified human beings, can be perfected. Although the body continues to waste away, “it is the whole man in his unity who moves towards eternity.”  

I believe that this has implications for the destiny of the universe. Human beings are remarkably complex entities. The redeemed and glorified human being is ontologically dependent on a tremendous number of factors, contingencies, and experiences. One’s life contains not only one’s own history, as it were, written on the psyche, including a myriad of interactions with creatures in this world as we know it, but it also contains a genealogical and evolutionary history that extends far into the past. In addition to this, one’s biological makeup is comprised of elements that have been forged in the heart of stars. Insofar as the redeemed human being, complete with a glorified body, is a microcosm and has this world written into his or her very being, this world will be redeemed, even if it physically passes away. In short, even if the universe as we know it ceases to exist, it will leave everlasting impressions on human beings, who are destined to live forever.

Benedict observes that Thomas’s anthropology points to the perfection of matter by relating the universe to human activity. In Thomas’s theological vision, creation moves toward God through human beings. In Benedict’s words,

The anima, as we have seen, belongs completely to the material world, yet also goes beyond this world in going beyond itself. It is in that movement that the material world, indeed, comes into its own, by stretching forth towards God in man. In man’s turning to

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176 Ibid., 158.
177 Ibid., 159.
178 The following reflections are mine, not Benedict’s.
God “all the tributaries of finite being in all its variety of level and value, return to their Source.”

This does not imply that all things are explicitly retained in existence since Thomas himself was opposed to the view that plants and animals not endowed with intellect can experience salvation in the same sense as human beings and angels, but it does indicate that for Thomas, creation is brought to its perfection through human beings. This is directly related to Benedict’s idea of the role of human beings in the cosmic liturgy, which I will describe in more detail in the next chapter.

According to Benedict, matter can be perfected, contra Greshake, because it is destined to be so united to spirit that it will be one with spirit in a way that human beings are incapable of imagining in this life. The certainty of the fulfillment of this process in relation to the resurrection is, in Benedict’s view, “the concrete content of the confession of the resurrection of the flesh . . . especially today.” At the end of Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life, Benedict reaffirms his view of the participation of matter in God’s salvific action.

The perfecting of the Lord’s body in the pleroma of the “whole Christ” brings heaven to its true cosmic completion. Let us say it once more before we end: the individual’s salvation is whole and entire only when the salvation of the cosmos and all the elect has come to full fruition. For the redeemed are not simply adjacent to each other in heaven. Rather, in their being together as the one Christ, they are heaven. In that moment, the whole creation will become song. It will be a single act in which, forgetful of self, the

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180 See Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Suppl. IIIae. Q. 91, a. 5, resp.

181 This view is very similar to the Orthodox view of the role of humanity in relation to the environment; cf. John D. Zizioulas, “Proprietors or Priests of Creation?,” Baltic Sea Symposium on Religion, Science and the Environment, Gdynia, Poland (2003), http://www.rsesymposia.org/themedia/File/1151679350-Pergamon.pdf, accessed August 16, 2015. See especially Zizioulas, 6: “This role of the human being, as the priest of creation, is absolutely necessary for creation itself, because without this reference of creation to God the whole created universe will die. It will die because it is a finite universe, as most scientists accept today . . . [it] will ‘naturally’ have an end and come into non-being one day. Therefore, the only way to protect the world from its finite which is inherent in its nature, is to bring it into relation with God. This is because God is the only infinite, immortal being, and it is only by relating to him that the world can overcome its natural finitude and its natural mortality.”

182 Ratzinger, Eschatology, 194.
individual will break through the limits of being into the whole, and the whole take up its
dwelling in the individual. It will be joy in which all questioning is resolved and
satisfied.¹⁸³

This grand vision is predicated on a new way of envisioning the relationship between human
beings and the cosmos. Benedict here adopts Rahner’s idea of the pancosmicity of the soul,
which enables him to maintain that everything will exist in everything else at the end of time.

**Pancosmicity of the Soul**

Benedict describes Rahner’s idea of the pancosmicity of the soul (which Rahner actually
abandoned because he thought that the idea of resurrection in death was a better explanation of
the intermediate stage between death and resurrection)¹⁸⁴ in *Eschatology*: “Rahner . . . noted that
in death the soul becomes not acosmic but all-cosmic. This means that its essential ordination to
the material world remains, not in the mode of giving form to an organism as its entelechy, but in
that of an ordering to this world as such and as a whole.”¹⁸⁵ Immediately after describing
Rahner’s idea, Benedict links it to complexification since he states that the relation of the soul to
the cosmos after death “is necessarily also relation to the temporality of the universe,” which “is
a process of becoming.”¹⁸⁶ At this point, Benedict recites the stages of complexification,
concluding with the following claim: “The ‘Last Day,’ the ‘end of the world,’ the ‘resurrection
of the flesh,’ would then be figures for the completion of this process.”¹⁸⁷ Benedict links the
resurrection to a cosmic process in this passage. At the same time, he insists, like Rahner, that

¹⁸³ Ibid., 238.

¹⁸⁴ Fletcher, *Resurrection Realism*, 121, citing Karl Rahner, “Über den ’Zwischenzustand,’” in vol. 12 of


¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.
the resurrection is not merely involved in an interior process but that the end is brought about through an exterior influence, i.e. God.\textsuperscript{188} In Benedict’s words, the completion of the cosmic process “can happen only from the outside, through the entry onto the scene of something qualitatively new and different, yet a completion which corresponds to the innermost ‘drift’ of cosmic being.”\textsuperscript{189} Benedict extends the pancosmicity of the soul to everything that is in the cosmos so that the universe will reach a point of unification of “all in all,” where every entity exists in every other entity so that the identity of each thing is to be in the other and spirit and matter are completely unified; in this way, “God becomes all in all.”\textsuperscript{190} It is possible to see here just how important the idea of pancosmicity is in Benedict’s middle eschatology: it provides him with a schema for describing the relationship between spirit and matter, the openness of the relationships that exist between all things, and ultimately the indwelling of God in his creation, at the end of time.

Despite the grandness of Benedict’s vision, there are some notable difficulties. As Fletcher points out, Benedict does not answer the question, “[W]hat sort of embodiment is an all-cosmic existence?”\textsuperscript{191} It may also be asked, Is Benedict’s application of the idea of pancosmicity to all things acceptable? After all, the soul is a spiritual reality, which in Rahner’s initial

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item For Rahner’s view on the action of God with respect to the perfection of the cosmos, see Karl Rahner, \textit{On the Theology of Death}, trans. C. H. Henkey (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), 28–29: “The total, created reality of the world grows in and through incarnate spiritual persons and the world is, in a certain sense, the body of those persons. Their death slowly brings the universe to its own final stage. The imminent maturing of the world toward its consummation, like that of the individual human being, is, at the same time, in a mysterious dialectical unity, a rupture, an ending from without, through an unpredictable intervention of God through his coming in judgment, no one knows the day.”

\item Ratzinger, \textit{Eschatology}, 191–92. Although it is not entirely clear from this passage that Benedict is referring to God or Christ as the exterior agent of the end, it is clear from the following passage: “Of course, faith does not see in Christ something simply external, but the proper origin of all created being, which therefore, while coming ‘from without’ can fulfil what in the cosmos is most deeply ‘within’” (ibid., 193).

\item Ratzinger, \textit{Eschatology}, 192.

\item Fletcher, \textit{Resurrection Realism}, 122; italics Fletcher’s.
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reasoning enabled the soul to have an open relationship with the cosmos after death. While Benedict does not address these problematic issues of the middle stage of his theology, he does change his approach in his later theology.

Mature Stage

In his later writings, Benedict distances himself from Teilhard to some extent, and infrequently cites Rahner. While he is still appreciative of Teilhard’s theology, he no longer makes his former Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema the basis of his theological position apropos cosmic eschatology. Two remarks by Benedict highlight this point, one from “End of Time” and the other from *Spirit of the Liturgy*.

There was an exchange between Joseph Pieper and Teilhard de Chardin that illustrates their disagreement on evolution. Teilhard criticized Pieper for claiming in a 1951 lecture that time would simply cease, to which Pieper replied that from an evolutionary standpoint, martyrdom is senseless. As a result, Benedict chose to reformulate his understanding of the relationship between time and eternity: “Something greater than time ripens within time, so that time’s end becomes at the same time its fulfillment.”

Perfection comes about not as a result of a natural process, which means that complexification as a natural phenomenon cannot be the primary agent of cosmic perfection; this can only come about through a divine action from within history.

The other passage that indicates that Benedict no longer esteems Teilhard’s thought as he once did can be found in *Spirit of the Liturgy*. When describing how creation can be understood

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193 Ibid., 24.
to be history, Benedict mentions two different models that shed light on the idea. The first model is Teilhard’s idea of complexification, whereas the second model is the more ancient model of exitus-reditus. It is possible that Benedict uses such phrases as “Teilhard de Chardin depicted,” “Teilhard looks on Christ,” and “Teilhard went on to give” to emphasize that the views are Teilhard’s rather than his own. Clearly, Benedict is no longer enamored of Teilhard’s doctrine as he was in Introduction to Christianity and Eschatology; Teilhard’s vision is no longer the lynchpin of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology since he has effectively unmoored his eschatology from the idea of a cosmic process constituted in part by evolution that would bring about the perfection of the cosmos. Fletcher points out that Benedict abandons the Rahnerian-Teilhardian account. In Fletcher’s words, Benedict’s “appetite” for this schema has “diminished significantly” over the years.

In his later years, Benedict continues to develop his cosmic eschatology/soteriology but does so along liturgical lines rather than along a Rahnerian-Teilhardian trajectory. This can be seen, in a concentrated form, in the following statement from one of his homilies on creation:

Operi Dei nihil praeponatur: Nothing ought to be preferred to the work of God, nothing ought to be placed ahead of the service of God. This phrase represents the correct attitude with respect to the preservation of creation as opposed to the false worship of progress, the worship of changes that crush humankind, and the calumny against the human species that destroys the earth and creation and keeps it from its goal. The Creator alone is

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194 Ratzinger, Spirit of the Liturgy, 28–29.

195 Cf. Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 236: “It must be regarded as an important service of Teilhard de Chardin’s that he rethought these ideas from the angle of the modern view of the world and . . . grasped them correctly and . . . made them accessible once again.”

196 Fletcher, Resurrection Realism, 188. It is also significant that Benedict disconnects the resurrection from the universal process, instead preferring to emphasize the discontinuity between the resurrection and the present life in his later writings (Fletcher, Resurrection Realism, 193, citing Benedict XVI, Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two, 274). Nevertheless, despite his shifting views with regard to Teilhard, Benedict still appreciates his views. In fact, Benedict’s juxtaposition of Teilhard’s idea of complexification next to the model of exitus and reditus could be interpreted as a compliment.
humanity’s true savior, and only if we trust the Creator shall we find ourselves on the way to saving the world of human beings and of things.197

According to this new view, the salvation of the cosmos depends not on a process but on faithful service to God through liturgical worship. Although it could be said that Benedict abandons his former view in favor of a view that underscores the role of liturgy in the salvation of the cosmos, it is more accurate to acknowledge that while both strains of thought are present in his early work, the Rahnerian-Teilhardian vision declined over time. Since the theme of cosmic liturgy has remained a persistent theme in Benedict’s theology, it has emerged as the key concept supporting his cosmic soteriology and eschatology from the beginning of his theological career to the present; this will become clearer in the next chapter where I will elaborate on Benedict’s view of cosmic liturgy and flesh out the ecological implications of his views that matter can be perfected and that the cosmos will be saved.

Conclusion

In the first part of the chapter, I provided an overview of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology and presented my thesis that while Fletcher correctly posits that Benedict’s cosmic eschatology became less dependent on his Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema over time, it is also true that Benedict became more concerned with the role of the liturgy in cosmic eschatology in the wake of his receding interest in Teilhard. Benedict’s liturgical theology developed rapidly after he was appointed a cardinal. In Benedict’s mature liturgical vision, the liturgy, not a cosmic process, is the catalyst for the divinization of the cosmos.

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197 Benedict XVI, In the Beginning..., 38–39; italics Benedict’s.
I then described Benedict’s sacramental vision in the second part of the chapter. After outlining his understanding of sacramentality, I went on to enumerate the various levels of sacramentality, emphasizing that for Benedict, creation is sacramental. This suggested the idea that the cosmos could be conceived of as a grand sacrament, as it were. Finally, I considered whether the cosmos can be considered as church in Benedict’s theology. After comparing his idea of cosmos as church with Staniloae and Moltmann’s corresponding ideas, I briefly recounted Moltmann’s position that this view carries with it a positive message for the environment and explained how Benedict’s position, though not directly referencing the environment, is not opposed to Moltmann’s view.

In the third part of the chapter, I gave a rather detailed account of Benedict’s Logos theology. The three kinds of *logos* in Benedict’s theology are *logoi* in creation, the written Word of God, and the Eternal Word of God who became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Benedict’s recognition of *logoi* in creation indicates that he is cognizant of the logical and mathematical structure of reality, but he believes that what distinguishes Christian idealism from non-Christian idealism is the emphasis on the primacy of the particular and of freedom. Essentially, it is love that governs the universe. Benedict’s hermeneutics suggest that Scripture should be interpreted in communion with the church, and that the church is capable of unfolding the multi-layered meanings of Scripture, including scriptural passages concerning the redemption of the cosmos. The Eternal Word is central to Benedict’s cosmic eschatology and soteriology, but this Christological emphasis hints at a pneumatological lacuna in his thought that I will address in the last chapter.

In the fourth part of the chapter, I delineated the changes in Benedict’s attitude toward Teilhard’s understanding of complexification in which the universe is headed toward a cosmic
perfection. At first, Benedict enthusiastically welcomed this idea of Teilhard, but as the years progressed, he tempered his language and developed his thought independently from Teilhard and Rahner. This account of Benedict’s vision of sacramentality, his Logos theology, and the shift in his theology from a Teilhardian vision toward a liturgical vision sets the stage for the next chapter, which will focus on Benedict’s cosmic liturgy.
Chapter 3
Cosmic Liturgy

In the theological vision of Benedict XVI, liturgy is cosmic and eschatological. “One recognizes right liturgy in that it has a cosmic . . . character,” states Benedict; “It sings with the angels. It is silent with the expectant depths of the universe. And that is how it redeems the earth.” Consequently, even when Benedict is not specifically referring to the cosmic dimension of the liturgy, he views liturgy as a cosmic liturgy. Following this logic, I use the predicate “cosmic” not only to describe a dimension of Benedict’s liturgy, but also to describe his entire liturgical theology. In addition to being cosmic, Benedict’s liturgy is also intertwined with eschatology. In his view, “The Parousia is the highest intensification and fulfillment of the Liturgy,” presumably because the liturgy has always anticipated the return of Christ. Conversely, “the Liturgy is Parousia, a Parousia-like event taking place in our midst.” The liturgy and eschatology, specifically Parousia, the second coming of Christ, are inextricably interwoven. The liturgy prepares the way for Parousia and Parousia completes the liturgy and makes the earthly liturgy obsolete. This intimate link between liturgy and eschatology justifies a close analysis of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy.

This chapter has two parts. In the first part, I present Benedict’s cosmic liturgy and defend the thesis that I established in the last chapter, namely that though Benedict has abandoned the eschatological view that the perfection of the universe is the result of a cosmic process in the vein of Teilhard, Benedict’s idea of cosmic liturgy has become the prevalent feature of his cosmic eschatology. The first part of this chapter is primarily expository, although

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1 Ratzinger, *New Song*, 127.
I also defend the above thesis, i.e. that cosmic liturgy is now the most prominent characteristic of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology. In this expository part, I demarcate the origins and features of cosmic liturgy in Benedict’s theology. After describing the origins and sources of Benedict’s vision of cosmic liturgy, I depict the major features of his liturgical theology, namely the cosmos as context of worship, the God-given character of liturgy, the roles of representation and anticipation in liturgy, and the Paschal Mystery as the foundation of liturgy with a focus at the end on cosmic apotheosis.

In the second part of the chapter, I give a positive and critical assessment of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy. I contend that, while Benedict’s cosmic liturgy is necessary for renewing humanity’s relationship with creation in the hopes of combatting the ills of the current ecological crisis, it is also insufficient. It is necessary because it affirms a sacramental vision of the cosmos, it links the activity of human beings in this world to the state of the world to come, and it affirms that through cosmic liturgy the cosmos will be redeemed. Yet Benedict’s liturgical vision is also inadequate since his theology, which is characterized by a Platonic top-down approach, does not have the attentiveness to social gradations (and the diversity of methods these gradations imply) that is required to tackle social justice issues, including the environment. To remedy this, I propose at the end of the chapter a renewed openness on the part of the Catholic Church’s hierarchy to the theological idea of *kairos* and a new theological paradigm of time that I superimpose onto the ancient *exitus-reditus* model of time.

**Origins and Features**

In the natural sciences, both the origins and features of a subject of study aid the scientist in investigating the object of his or her investigation. For instance, knowing about the origins of the sun and understanding its features, such as the process of nuclear fusion in its core, the
sunspots on its surface, and the solar radiation it emits, helps the heliologist to have a more complete understanding of the sun than if he or she were to simply study its features. Similarly, I seek to uncover the origins of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy as well as its features.

Origins

When one writes of origins, one must take into consideration that events, ideas, and things generally have more than one cause. In the context of the humanities, the word “origin” is ambiguous in that it can be interpreted as the source that inspired an author or the beginning of an idea in an author’s work. For lack of a better term, I call the former origin an “exterior origin” and the latter origin an “interior origin.” The interior origin of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy stretches all the way back to the 1960s, but his cosmic liturgy is indebted to another theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar, who first analyzed the concept of “cosmic liturgy” in the writings of St. Maximus the Confessor. In addition to this exterior origin, there is another more obvious but often forgotten one: Scripture. My account of the origins of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy is chronological since I begin with Scripture, move on to Maximus the Confessor via von Balthasar, and finally describe the interior origin of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy.

Exterior Origins: Scriptural Roots and Sources

In Benedict’s view, far from being a modern innovation, cosmic liturgy is an ancient concept. Referring to Philippians 2:6-11, he declares, “Christian liturgy is a cosmic liturgy, as Saint Paul tells us in the Letter to the Philippians,” thereby insisting that the idea that liturgy is cosmic has scriptural roots. In another passage he states, “The cosmos is praying with us. It, too,

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3 Ratzinger, Feast of Faith, 75; The Scripture passage is as follows: “[T]hough he was in the form of God, [Jesus] did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness; and found human in appearance, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Because of this, God greatly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every
is waiting for redemption . . . Christian liturgy . . . is always a cosmic liturgy.” In this passage, Benedict alludes to a pair of Pauline passages: Romans 8:18-25 and Colossians 1:19-20. In Romans, Paul writes about Christians (and creation) waiting for redemption; in Colossians, he writes that all things are redeemed through the blood of Jesus’ cross. Benedict incorporates this Pauline vision of the cosmic significance of the passion and death of Jesus into his own theology when he describes Jesus’ death as a “cosmic and liturgical event,” an event that elicits a response from Christians, and indeed from everything in the universe, since in the letter to the Philippians, Paul writes that every knee shall bend at the name of Jesus. Benedict takes this as proof that Christian liturgy is cosmic, but it is cosmic precisely because of the momentous event of the Paschal Mystery; by bending the knee, the church “enter[s] into the cosmic gesture.” One could describe Benedict’s cosmic liturgy as a ressourcement project insofar as he is attempting to return to the source of Scripture. At the same time, Benedict’s cosmic liturgy is in line with ressourcement in another way: it also aligns with the church fathers, especially St. Maximus the Confessor.

Benedict’s vision of cosmic liturgy was inspired by the theology of Maximus the Confessor via Hans Urs von Balthasar’s *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*. He describes von Balthasar’s role in reviving contemporary interest in the name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:6-11, NAB).

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4 Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, 70.

5 Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two*, 224.

6 Phil. 2:6-11.

7 Ratzinger, *Feast of Faith*, 74.

8 Ratzinger explicitly cites von Balthasar in one of his references to cosmic liturgy (ibid., 115n33).
theology of Maximus the Confessor as follows: “The theology of Maximus the Confessor (ca 580-662) has proven increasingly to be indispensable for a proper understanding of faith in Christ as defined by the major councils. It was primarily Hans Urs von Balthasar who reintroduced Maximus’s work into the theological debate.”⁹⁹ In a recent work on the church fathers and medieval theologians, Benedict attributes the expression “Kosmische Liturgie” ("cosmic liturgy") to von Balthasar, a phrase that he freely uses in his own writings.¹⁰

Although there is no evidence to suggest that Benedict used a particular text of von Balthasar’s work on Maximus, it is likely that Benedict was inspired by the following passage in which von Balthasar elucidates Maximus’s powerful and captivating vision of cosmic liturgy:

Maximus presents the Church, and the sign that she imprints on the world, in the largest and most open terms possible. The Church lies in the midst of the natural and supernatural cosmos like a source of light that sets all things revolving around itself; in that she represents everything symbolically, she also is an effective guarantee of the transformation of the whole universe. The liturgy is, for Maximus, more than a mere symbol; it is, in modern terms, an opus operatum, an effective transformation of the world into transfigured, divinized existence. For that reason, in Maximus’ view . . . the liturgy is ultimately always “cosmic liturgy”: a way of drawing the entire world into the hypostatic union because both world and liturgy share a christological foundation. This is something new and original and must be regarded as Maximus’ own achievement.¹¹

In von Balthasar’s interpretation of Maximus’s theology, the function of liturgy is the deification of the universe, and the way it does this is through the world’s participation in the hypostatic union of Christ. In the words of Maximus, “[Christ] unites created nature to uncreated nature in love . . . and reveals that both, through the relationship of grace, are now but one single reality.

⁹ Ratzinger, New Song, 8.
¹⁰ Pope Benedict XVI, Great Christian Thinkers: From the Early Church through the Middle Ages (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 156.
The whole world . . . becomes everything that God is, except for the identity of his nature.”

Maximus simultaneously maintains that the world inheres in God in such a way that the world is God by participation and that the world and God are distinct, thus avoiding pantheism. The cosmos is not divine of its very nature; rather, the cosmos is being deified in a process that depends on a prior unifying action by which Christ, the “cosmic Adam,” draws the entire universe to himself. In this sense, the perfection of the universe could be described as a process according to Maximus; however, for Maximus, at least in von Balthasar’s interpretation, liturgy itself brings about immediately the “transfigured, divinized existence” whereas for Benedict, the liturgy is an efficient cause of this cosmic transformation, which is in the process of being fulfilled.

In my view, the tension between Maximus and Benedict’s view is analogous to the tension between a person’s experience of salvation in this life and his or her experience of salvation in the life to come. The latent salvation experienced in this life corresponds to Maximus’s view of an immediately transfigured world whereas Benedict’s emphasis on a journeying towards cosmic apotheosis corresponds to the fullness of salvation experienced after death. While the tension remains, the views of Maximus and Benedict are non-competing.

**Interior Origin and Perennial Nature**

Cosmic liturgy is a perennial feature of Benedict’s theology. While Benedict has used the phrase “cosmic liturgy” in many of his works, especially those that deal primarily with liturgical theology, as far as I can tell, the first time he used it was in 1968 in his *Introduction to*
Christianity.\textsuperscript{14} Von Balthasar’s \textit{Kosmische Liturgie} was originally published in 1941, which means that Benedict would have had ample time to stumble upon this work before he became recognized as a first-rate theologian. In the table below, I have selected and organized some quotes of Benedict on cosmic liturgy that pertain to the early, middle, and mature stages of his theological career (as distinguished in the last chapter) to demonstrate how this theme perdures in his work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage/Work\textsuperscript{15}</th>
<th>Cosmic Liturgy</th>
</tr>
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| **Early**

\textit{Introduction to Christianity} (1968)  

The Lord before whom the universe bows is the slaughtered Lamb, the symbol of existence that is pure act, pure “for”. The cosmic liturgy, the adoring homage of the universe, centers round this Lamb (Rev 5).\textsuperscript{16}  

[Jesus’] death . . . was in reality the one and only liturgy of the world, a cosmic liturgy, in which Jesus stepped, not in the limited arena of the liturgical performance, the Temple, but publicly, before the eyes of the world, through the curtain of death into the real temple, that is, before the face of God himself, in order to offer, not things, the blood of animals, or anything like that, but himself (Heb 9:11ff.).\textsuperscript{17}  

| **Middle**

\textit{Feast of Faith} (1981)  

Christian liturgy is cosmic liturgy, as Saint Paul tells us in the Letter to the Philippians. It must never renounce this dignity, however attractive it may seem to work with small groups and construct homemade liturgies. What is exciting about Christian liturgy is that it lifts us up out of our narrow sphere and lets us share in the truth. The aim of all liturgical renewal must be to bring to light this liberating greatness.\textsuperscript{18}  

We also need to be reminded that liturgy involves the cosmos—that Christian liturgy is cosmic liturgy. In it we pray and sing in concert with everything “in heaven and earth and under the earth” (Phil 2:10), we join in with the praise rendered by the sun and the stars.\textsuperscript{19}  

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\textsuperscript{14} The following is a list (not intended to be exhaustive) of instances in which Benedict explicitly uses the phrase “cosmic liturgy”: \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, 221, 286; \textit{Feast of Faith}, 74-75, 115, 143; \textit{New Song}, 140, 175, \textit{Spirit of the Liturgy}, 53, 70, 151, 193; \textit{Jesus of Nazareth}, 254; \textit{Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two}, 223.

\textsuperscript{15} The dates are the original publication dates in German or Latin.

\textsuperscript{16} Ratzinger, \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, 221.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 286.

\textsuperscript{18} Ratzinger, \textit{Feast of Faith}, 75.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 143.
Every liturgy is cosmic liturgy, a stepping out of our pathetic little groups into the towering communion that embraces heaven and earth. This gives it its reach and vitality.\textsuperscript{20}

The cosmos is praying with us. It, too, is waiting for redemption. It is precisely this cosmic dimension that is essential to Christian liturgy. It is never performed solely in the self-made world of man. It is always a cosmic liturgy.\textsuperscript{21}

Jesus has accomplished the act of consecration—the priestly handing-over of himself and the world to God—right to the end (cf. Jn 17:19). So in this final word, the great mystery of the Cross shines forth. The new cosmic liturgy is accomplished.\textsuperscript{22}

This table demonstrates that cosmic liturgy is a perennial feature of Benedict’s theology since it shows that he refers to it time and again throughout his long career; however, it should be noted that the usefulness of this table is limited since it does not indicate whether Benedict’s view on cosmic liturgy has shifted over the decades and if it has, how. Though this is a potentially fruitful avenue for further theological research, it would needlessly prolong this study.

Benedict’s cosmic liturgy has become the prominent feature of his theology. This can be seen to a certain extent by juxtaposing some quotes about cosmic liturgy and Teilhard that are found in both \textit{Introduction of the Liturgy} and \textit{Spirit of the Liturgy}. In the last chapter, I related how Benedict’s views of Teilhard developed over the years. In \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, Benedict enthusiastically quotes Teilhard at length whereas in \textit{Spirit of the Liturgy}, he describes Teilhard’s vision of the perfection of the cosmos as one way of conceiving the perfection of the cosmos.\textsuperscript{23} Yet when one considers Benedict’s views on cosmic liturgy in both works, it becomes

\begin{table}[h]
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\hline
\textbf{Mature} & \textit{A New Song for the Lord} (1995) \\
\hline
Every liturgy is cosmic liturgy, a stepping out of our pathetic little groups into the towering communion that embraces heaven and earth. This gives it its reach and vitality.\textsuperscript{20} & \\
\hline
\textbf{Spirit of the Liturgy} & (2000) \\
\hline
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\textsuperscript{20} Ratzinger, \textit{New Song}, 175.

\textsuperscript{21} Ratzinger, \textit{Spirit of the Liturgy}, 70.

\textsuperscript{22} Benedict XVI, \textit{Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two}, 223.

apparent that his vision of cosmic liturgy is at least as prominent in *Spirit of the Liturgy* as it was in *Introduction to Christianity*. These considerations evince a relativizing of Teilhard’s thought in Benedict’s view, while his vision of cosmic liturgy becomes more fully articulated over the years. Whereas Benedict essentially abandons his Rahnerian-Teilhardian schema, the prominence of cosmic liturgy in his thought has remained unshaken. Now that I have described the origins of Benedict’s idea of cosmic liturgy, I will examine its features.

**Features**

Benedict’s account of cosmic liturgy has four prominent features: (1) the cosmos as the context for worship, (2) the liturgy as a reality that is given by God rather than fabricated by human beings, (3) liturgical representation and anticipation, and (4) the Paschal Mystery as the foundation of the liturgy.

*Cosmos as Context of Worship (and as a Church)*

For Benedict, liturgy is cosmic not only because it influences the cosmos, but also because the cosmos is the overarching context of the liturgy. In a prolonged section in *Spirit of the Liturgy*, Benedict expounds upon the rabbinic idea that God created the universe for the sake of the covenant.\(^{24}\) Although he does not use the phrase “cosmic liturgy” in this context, this is an important section for understanding his view of the relationship between cosmos and liturgy. Following a rabbinic tradition, Benedict explains that without the covenant “the created cosmos would be an empty shell.”\(^{25}\) Worship, which in a certain sense is the ratification of the covenant,


\(^{25}\) Ibid.
restores the cosmos to its original dignity. All of this can be summarized in Benedict’s statement that “the true location and the true context of the Eucharistic celebration is the whole cosmos.”

There is an intriguing observation that follows from the above consideration of the relationship between cosmos and covenant that is related to the Mystagogia of Maximus the Confessor. In this work, Maximus likens the physical portion of the universe to the nave of a church and likens the spiritual realm to a church’s sanctuary. This comparison suggests that God created the universe not only for the sake of the covenant, but also created it as a place of worship. One could even say that just as the human being is a microcosm, the universe is a macroecclesia, i.e. the church writ large. Maximus compares the cosmos, which God created for the purpose of inaugurating the relationship with human beings, to a church. Even in its structure, therefore, the universe is oriented toward worship.

Benedict’s thought is quite similar to Maximus’s description of the cosmos as a church building. While Benedict does not describe the cosmos as a church building, he indicates that the crucifixion was a cosmic liturgy in which Jesus played the role of high priest: Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Word, gathered the world to himself and offered himself on the cross for its salvation. The cosmic elements themselves became involved in this liturgical rite: the sun became darkened and the earth quaked at the death of the Son of God. In Benedict’s view, by accomplishing this worship, Jesus precipitated the deification of creation. Furthermore, this process of deification is extended in time through the liturgical actions of the church, the Body of

26 Ratzinger, Feast of Faith, 140.

27 Maximus the Confessor, The Church, the Liturgy and the Soul of Man, trans. Dom J. Stead (Still River, MA: Saint Bede’s, 1982), 68–69.

28 Benedict XVI, Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two, 238; cf. chapter two of this dissertation where I describe the views of Staniloae, Moltmann, and Benedict on the idea of cosmos as church.

Christ, which would not be possible if the Paschal Mystery were not somehow present in the liturgical celebrations of the church and if the liturgical celebrations were not somehow related to the world to come. For this reason, representation and anticipation are essential characteristics of the liturgy. Moreover, human liturgy would not be cosmic if it were not instituted by God and were simply a fabrication of human ingenuity. I expound upon these characteristics of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy in the next sections.

Liturgy as Given by God

In Benedict’s view, true liturgy is inextricably connected to divine revelation. Religious ritual was a ubiquitous feature of pre-modern societies. In Benedict’s estimation, however, rituals do not have an equal value. In other words, rituals are not to be evaluated pluralistically. The criterion of judgment is whether a ritual is of human or divine origin.\(^{30}\) According to Benedict, liturgy is something that human beings do not create, but receive. God must perform an act of self-revelation for men and women to worship correctly.\(^{31}\) If God does not lift the veil, human beings are simply grasping in the air. Benedict uses the story of the Hebrews and the golden calf to show that liturgy that finds its source in people is insufficient.\(^{32}\) He comments, “Worship is no longer going up to God, but drawing God down into one’s own world.”\(^{33}\) Just as Moses was instructed to follow everything that God showed him on Mt. Sinai, so too Christians ought to worship according to the liturgy that has developed as an outgrowth of worship that has

\(^{30}\) This raises another problem: how can one tell whether a religious ritual is of human or divine origin? Although one can approach this problem through historical theological research and may discover some convincing reasons to view certain rituals as coming from God, in the end, such a view can only be espoused through an act of faith.


\(^{32}\) Ibid.

\(^{33}\) Ibid., 22.
been passed down by the apostles. Liturgy is not significant because it is like an artifact, i.e.
something that is interesting for its historical value; rather, liturgy is significant because it is the
matrix through which the sacraments – and therefore salvation – are distributed to the People of
God. ³⁴ For Benedict, the liturgy that has been passed on through the church is the proper way of
worshipping God.

Benedict’s emphasis on the divine origin of the liturgy helps to explain his two liturgical
preferences: Latin and literalness. He has always favored Latin over the vernacular since he
thinks that the former is more appropriate than the latter. ³⁵ Furthermore, he is convinced that it is
of the utmost importance to translate as literally as possible the Latin into the vernacular. This
theory, known as “formal equivalence” since it seeks to conserve the form of the words in which
the liturgical message is conveyed, is the reason behind Benedict’s reform of the English
translation of the Missal that went into effect in Advent 2011, which is more literal than the
former version. ³⁶ This change was intended to correct the “dynamic equivalence” of the earlier
translation. “Dynamic equivalence” is the theory that liturgical texts ought to be translated so
that the texts make sense to modern people rather than slavishly translating the text word for
word. By implementing the reform, Benedict intended to ward off subjective interpretations; his
main concern was fidelity to divine revelation. I will assess this vision later in the chapter.

³⁴ According to St. Thomas Aquinas, the sacrament of baptism is necessary for salvation (Summa
Theologiae, III. Q. 66, a. 2, resp., alluding to Mark 16:16). This does not preclude the salvation of individuals who
have not been baptized; Aquinas was aware of the predicament of people who have not been exposed to the Gospel
through no fault of their own. He postulated that such individuals were saved by what has come to be known as
“baptism of desire” (Summa Theologiae, III. Q. 66, a. 11). Even so, without the sacrament of baptism on which the
“baptism of desire” is based, it would have no effect, and so it follows that the sacraments are necessary for
salvation even if a non-Christian who has been saved has never received a sacrament in his or her life.


³⁶ Ibid., 198.
**Liturgy Representation and Anticipation**

In this section, I examine liturgical representation in Benedict’s thought by giving an account of his understanding of the relationship between time and the liturgy. After this, I describe how for Benedict the Eucharist is the catalyst for the transformation of the cosmos.

**Time and the Liturgy: Representation**

Understanding Benedict’s notion of time is critical for understanding how the liturgy functions as a representation. According to Benedict, “Present and eternity are not, like present and future, located side by side and separated; rather, they are interwoven.”\(^{37}\) As interpenetrating realities, eternity can be present in time. Benedict elaborates, “In its participation in the paschal mystery of Christ, liturgy transcends the boundaries of places and times in order to gather all into the hour of Christ that is anticipated in the liturgy and hence opens history to its goal.”\(^{38}\) Liturgy, therefore, is not only capable of representing the Paschal Mystery, but it is also instrumental in the anticipation of cosmic apotheosis, a theme that I will unpack later.

In *Spirit of the Liturgy*, Benedict sets forth his overarching view of the Christian liturgy as it relates to time and to the life of Jesus. The following passage merits to be quoted at length because of how well it explains this vision:

> The foundation of the liturgy, its source and support, is the historical Pasch of Jesus—his Cross and Resurrection. This once-for-all event has become the ever-abiding form of the liturgy. In the first stage the eternal is embodied in what is once-for-all. The second stage is the entry of the eternal into our present moment in the liturgical action. And the third stage is the desire of the eternal to take hold of the worshiper’s life and ultimately of all historical reality. The immediate event—the liturgy—makes sense and has a meaning for

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\(^{38}\) Ratzinger, *New Song*, 135.
our lives only because it contains the other two dimensions. Past, present, and future interpenetrate and touch upon eternity.\textsuperscript{39}

Benedict’s logic in \textit{Spirit of the Liturgy} follows upon Thomas Aquinas’s description of how the sacraments are related to past, present, and future.\textsuperscript{40}

Both Benedict and Thomas indicate that the passion of Christ is the foundation stone of Christian liturgy. Like Scripture, liturgical symbolism is not univocal but instead is polysemant; that is, it contains a plurality of meanings. Not only do the sacraments point to the past, but they are also a prognosis of the future. In this way, sacraments point to the past, present, and future simultaneously, yet in different ways. The liturgy and the sacraments point back in time to the deeds wrought by God through Jesus, seek to impact the Christian’s life in the present, and are oriented to the perfection of the world to come.

Eucharist: Anticipation of the World’s Transformation

In and of itself, liturgy is eschatological in Benedict’s theology. As he expresses it, “In the celebration of the liturgy the church moves toward the Lord; liturgy is virtually this act of approaching his coming. In the liturgy, the Lord is already anticipating his promised coming. Liturgy is anticipated Parousia, the ‘already’ entering our ‘not yet’.”\textsuperscript{41} Liturgy, however, is also

\textsuperscript{39} Ratzinger, \textit{Spirit of the Liturgy}, 60.

\textsuperscript{40} The following is Aquinas’s account of the same topic: “As has been stated, the term sacrament is properly applied to that which is designed to signify our sanctification. In this three factors can be taken into consideration: namely the actual cause of our sanctification, which is the Passion of Christ, the form of our sanctification, which consists in grace and the virtues, and the ultimate end which our sanctification is designed to achieve, which is eternal life. Now as signs the sacraments stand for all of these. Hence as a sign a sacrament has a threefold function. It is at once commemorative of that which has gone before, namely the Passion of Christ, and demonstrative of that which is brought about in us through the Passion of Christ, namely grace, and prognostic, i.e. a foretelling of future glory.” Thomas Aquinas, \textit{Summa Theologiae}, trans. David Bourke, vol. 56 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 11, 13 (III. Q. 60, a. 3, resp.). Despite Benedict’s preference for Augustine’s theology, a strong case could be made that Benedict’s liturgiology is essentially Thomistic.

\textsuperscript{41} Ratzinger, \textit{New Song}, 129.
eschatological insofar as it is related to the Eucharist, which in Benedict’s view anticipates the transfiguration of the world.

Benedict essentially accepts the doctrine of transubstantiation, the teaching formulated in the Middle Ages that states that the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ during the words of consecration, leaving behind only the accidents (i.e. physical characteristics) of the bread and wine.\textsuperscript{42} The most salient implication of Benedict’s acceptance of transubstantiation is that in his view, Christ is made present at each Mass. Jesus Christ, priest and victim, becomes physically present to the congregation in a veiled theophany, as it were, under the appearances of bread and wine. For Benedict, the liturgy is not merely a liturgical reenactment of the event of the Paschal Mystery; it is the re-presentation of the Paschal Mystery, not merely in the symbolic sense of representation, but also in the more profound spatiotemporal sense of making present once again. He explains,

Whenever we hold it [i.e., the Eucharist], we should be filled with reverence in the face of this mystery, with awe in the face of this mysterious death that becomes a present reality in our midst. Certainly, the overcoming of this death in the Resurrection is present at the same time, and we can therefore celebrate this death as the feast of life, as the transformation of the world.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{42} See the following works listed in chronological order for critiques of transubstantiation: Philip Sherrard, “The Sacrament,” in Angelos James Philippou, ed., The Orthodox Ethos: Essays in Honour of the Centenary of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of North and South America, Volume 1 (Oxford: Holywell Press, 1964), 133-139; Edward Schillebeeckx, “Transubstantiation, Transfinalization, Transfiguration,” Worship, 40 no. 6 (June – July 1966): 324-338; Peter J. Leithart, “What’s Wrong With Transubstantiation: An Evaluation of Theological Models,” The Westminster Theological Journal, 53 no. 2 (Fall 1991): 295-324; Jean-Luc Marion, God Without Being, trans. Thomas A. Carlson, 2nd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012 [first published in 1991]), 162ff.; Fergus Kerr, “Transubstantiation after Wittgenstein,” Modern Theology, 15 no. 2 (April 1999): 115-130; Joseph Kahiga Kiruki, “Change and the Church: An Interrogation of the Concept of Transubstantiation,” AFER, 58 no. 3-4 (Sept. – Dec. 2016): 234-243. The main point in many of these works and articles, which I agree with, is that transubstantiation cannot entirely explain the phenomenon of the making present of the body and blood of Christ to the congregation since it is a mystery. Marion points out that insofar as transubstantiation leads people into thinking that they can control God, it is idolatrous. Nevertheless, I think that transubstantiation is the best metaphysical explanation of what occurs, even though it is an incomplete picture since incompleteness is an inherent quality of a mystery.

\textsuperscript{43} Benedict XVI, God Is Near Us, 44.
The representation of the Paschal Mystery bears profound eschatological implications; after all, if the past can somehow be made mysteriously present, so can the future. This seems to be what Benedict implies when he states that “Liturgy is Parousia, a Parousia-like event taking place in our midst.”

The substance of bread and wine, this cosmic matter, becomes divinized. In a passage in which he approvingly cites Teilhard, Benedict maintains that this transformation is an anticipation of the transformation of the entire cosmos. In this vision, the Eucharist is the impetus for the renewal of the universe. The complete divinization of the eucharistic bread manifests the eschatological destiny of the rest of the cosmos. Teilhard de Chardin clearly sees the logical implication of correlating the transubstantiation of bread and wine to the eschatological reconstitution of the universe; in his view, the universe can be considered as a vast cosmic host that is undergoing a consecration. In one of his homilies, Pope Benedict elaborates:

We ourselves, with our whole being, must be adoration and sacrifice, and by transforming our world, give it back to God. The role of the priesthood is to consecrate the world so that it may become a living host, a liturgy: so that the liturgy may not be something alongside the reality of the world, but that the world itself shall become a living host, a liturgy. This is also the great vision of Teilhard de Chardin: in the end we shall achieve a true cosmic liturgy, where the cosmos becomes a living host. And let us pray the Lord to help us become priests in this sense, to aid in the transformation of the world, in adoration of God, beginning with ourselves. That our lives may speak of God, that our lives may be a true liturgy, an announcement of God, a door through which the distant God may become the present God, and a true giving of ourselves to God.

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The first important thing to note about this passage is that human beings are called to transform the world; in other words, God chooses to rely on the cooperation of human beings to bring about the deification of the cosmos. The second thing to note is that Benedict emphasizes that this profound cosmic change must begin with Christians. The reconfiguration of the cosmos depends on and begins with the moral reconfiguration of oneself. The human being, therefore, is the channel through which God’s redemptive energy and grace reach the rest of the universe.

In the next section, I analyze the role of the Paschal Mystery in Benedict’s cosmic liturgy. The next section not only functions as a means of explicating the role of the Paschal Mystery in Benedict’s cosmic liturgy, but it also sets the stage for the critique of his cosmic liturgy arising from other theologians. Once I have presented Benedict’s cosmic liturgy in full and described the criticisms of Benedict’s theological vision, I will offer my own assessment of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy, evaluate the arguments of his critics, and present my own idea for modifying the exitus-reditus paradigm of time, which I contend helps to ameliorate some of the criticisms that Benedict’s interlocutors level against him.

Paschal Mystery: Foundation of Cosmic Liturgy and Catalyst of Apotheosis

Benedict is cognizant of the semiotic quality of the liturgy, which constitutes the key to its structure. In his words, “the theology of the liturgy is in a special way ‘symbolic theology’, a theology of symbols, which connects us to what is present.”48 For a symbol to have meaning, it must have a referent, something that it points to and represents. Benedict holds that this referent is in fact the death and resurrection of Jesus: “The foundation of the liturgy, its source and

48 Ratzinger, Spirit of the Liturgy, 60.
support, is the historical Pasch of Jesus.”

According to Benedict, Christian liturgy would crumble into a heap of nonsensical gestures without this foundation. As signs, the sacraments point to a historical event, which is the foundation of all liturgical action. This historical foundation is not only significant in itself but is significant for the role it plays as the referent of the sacraments that have been transmitted throughout the ages by acts of representation, and for the significance it has on the transformation of the universe.

In each of the sections below, which deal with the incarnation, the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, I will sketch how these events are foundational for the liturgy and how they are related to the transformation of the universe. After describing what role the Paschal Mystery plays in Benedict’s liturgical theology, I will explore in more detail his understanding of cosmic apotheosis.

Incarnation

The Paschal Mystery, which consists of the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus, can only be understood in relation to the incarnation since the incarnation is chronologically and logically prior to the Paschal Mystery. Benedict points out that the incarnation does not stand alone since “[i]t becomes meaningful and definitive only in the cross and resurrection.”

Salvation hinges upon the divinity of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Benedict explains that in the ancient world the concept of logikē latreia (thusia) gained currency with the Jews in Alexandria and that this notion of spiritual worship, or the sacrifice of the word, became

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49 Ibid.

50 Ibid., 55: “Without the Cross and Resurrection, Christian worship is null and void, and a theology of liturgy that omitted any reference to them would really just be talking about an empty game.”

51 Ratzinger, New Song, 121.
embedded in Christian thought (cf. Rom. 12:1), a theme that I touched on in the last chapter.\textsuperscript{52}

This concept was taken up by the church fathers, who described the Eucharist as the “sacrifice of the word”; yet the Eucharist goes beyond the pagan Greek “idea of a mystical union with the Logos, the very meaning of all things” since “[t]he Word alone is not enough.”\textsuperscript{53} If worship were merely a matter of raising the mind God, it would fall into the Gnostic temptation to leave the body by the wayside. Only in the Word made flesh, in Benedict’s view, does all flesh acquire the potential to become glorified.\textsuperscript{54}

Benedict points out that the incarnation makes God present to us and that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Hebrew concept of Shekinah. Commenting on the use of the Greek word \textit{skene} to designate the Word’s dwelling with human beings in John 1:14, Benedict states,

> But in the Greek word for tent—\textit{skene}—we hear overtones of the Hebrew word \textit{shekinah}, that is to say, the term used in early Judaism to refer to the sacred cloud, which then . . . proclaimed ‘the gracious presence of God at the prayer and the study of the law whenever Jews were gathered together’. Jesus is the true \textit{shekinah}, through whom God is present among us whenever we are gathered together in his name.\textsuperscript{55}

Through the incarnation, God has become present to human beings. Yet God did not choose to become incarnate simply to become present in a new mode; instead, as Benedict explains, “The dynamic of sacrifice is comprehended in the Incarnation.”\textsuperscript{56} The incarnation is a kenotic, self-sacrificial act that is ordered toward the sacrifice of the Word so that God’s people can be saved.

\textsuperscript{52} Ratzinger, \textit{Spirit of the Liturgy}, 45.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 46.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 47.

\textsuperscript{55} Benedict XVI, \textit{God Is Near Us}, 22. Cf. Pope Benedict XVI, \textit{Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives} (New York: Image, 2012), 11: “The man Jesus is the dwelling-place of the Word, the eternal divine Word, in this world. Jesus’ ‘flesh,’ is human existence, is the ‘dwelling’ or ‘tent’ of the Word: the reference to the sacred tent of Israel in the wilderness is unmistakable. Jesus is, so to speak, the tent of meeting—he is the reality for which the tent and the later Temple could only serve as signs.”

\textsuperscript{56} Benedict XVI, \textit{God Is Near Us}, 21.
In this sense, the incarnation is the foundation of the Paschal Mystery, which in turn is the foundation of the liturgy. In Benedict’s view, liturgy is a vehicle that unites the salvific action of Christ in the past to the present moment and to the world to come. As such, it is important to explore how the incarnation is related to apotheosis.

Benedict insinuates in *Principles of Catholic Theology* that the incarnation is the first stage of cosmic apotheosis since by “taking on our flesh,” God “has drawn to his heart . . . the burden and the hope of the cosmos.” The incarnation ultimately leads to the divinization of the universe. Because God took up this flesh, this piece of earth, as it were, the entire cosmological context of the Incarnate Word will be sanctified and transformed. The incarnation does not end with the union of the Word with the particular human nature of Jesus of Nazareth, but precipitates the union of the Word with all of matter. In the words of Benedict, “God’s incarnation was his entry into matter, the beginning of a momentous movement in which all matter is to become a vessel for the Word.” The incarnation is a prerequisite for the preparation of creation to become the dwelling place of God. Yet the incarnation cannot affect the transformation of the cosmos on its own. Benedict makes it clear that the whole raison d’être of the incarnation was for the Son of God to offer up himself on the cross out of love for humanity and creation.

Cross and Eucharist

The Paschal Mystery is the Pasch of Jesus, i.e. the crossing of Jesus from death to resurrected life. It began during the Jewish feast of Passover, the celebration commemorating the

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passing of the Hebrews from Egypt to the Promised Land as well as the passing of the angel of
death over the houses of the Hebrews who had applied the blood of the paschal lamb on their
door frames. In Introduction to Christianity, Benedict describes the import of the historical event
of the death of Jesus. This liturgy, i.e., Jesus’ offering of himself on the cross, is the “only liturgy
of the world, a cosmic liturgy.”59 Jesus acts as both priest and victim and essentially replaces the
Jewish sacrificial system, whose locus was the Temple, with his own sacrifice. The locus of this
new system of worship is the Temple of Jesus’ body. Jesus brings about a powerful series of
changes that Benedict diligentlyunpacks.

Beginning with the Last Supper, Benedict envisages cosmic transformation as the
culmination of a series of transformations. According to Benedict, there are five transformations
that are causally connected in relation to the Eucharist, which he calls the “Sacrament of
Transformation.”60 The first transformation occurred at the Last Supper when Jesus offers bread
and wine to the Father, blesses it, and distributes it to the disciples saying that they are his body
and blood that will be given up for them. This change occurs precisely because it is an act of
self-giving.61 When Jesus states that the cup he is holding contains his blood which will be shed
for his disciples, he irrevocably links the Eucharist to his suffering and death; in turn, Jesus’
suffering and death serve as the next catalysts in this series of transformations.

The second transformation is the changing of unspeakable acts of violence into love.
Jesus endures the agony in the garden, the scourging at the pillar, the crowning of thorns, the
carrying of the cross, and the crucifixion out of love for humanity. Suffering and death are

59 Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 286.
60 Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, On the Way to Jesus Christ, trans. Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius
Press, 2005), 124.
61 Ibid., 125.
defeated and violence has no more power over the children of God. This transformation alters death itself and makes possible the passage of death to life, of crucifixion to resurrection.62

The third change is the transformation of the gifts of bread and wine into Jesus’ body and blood at the Mass. Jesus, who orders his disciples to continue to perform the eucharistic liturgy in his memory, is made present once again, along with the event of his death and resurrection. I elaborated on this point when I expounded on the function of liturgical representation and anticipation in Benedict’s liturgical theology.

The fourth change is the transformation of the communicants that occurs as a result of partaking in the body and blood of Christ.63 For Benedict, the primary effect of the Eucharist for those who receive it is unification with God and with others; it is a breaking down of barriers that separate human beings from God and from each other. “Communion means the fusion of existences . . . my ‘I’ is ‘assimilated’ to that of Jesus,” states Benedict, describing the “vertical” unification of the communicant with God. The “vertical” unification is the foundation of the “horizontal” unity since, as Benedict explains, “[A]ll who communicate . . . are assimilated to this ‘bread’ and thus are made one among themselves—one body.”64 One could describe this as the anthropological eucharistic transformation. The purpose of this anthropological transformation is to set the world on fire by first transforming the communicants so that they can bear witness to the love of Christ to the ends of the world. In Benedict’s words, “His dynamic enters into us and then seeks to spread outward to others until it fills the world, so that his love

62 Ibid., 126. Some thinkers who have pursued the theological implications of violence and suffering include Simone Weil and René Girard. For a comparison of their thought, see Marie Cabaud Meaney, “Simone Weil and René Girard: Violence and the Sacred,” American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly, 84, no. 3 (2010): 565-587.

63 Ibid., 127–28.

can truly become the dominant measure of the world.”\textsuperscript{65} The anthropological transformation does not end in the realm of humanity, but is orientated toward the divinization of the cosmos.

The fifth transformation is a cosmological transformation: “All of creation must become a ‘new city’, a new paradise, the living dwelling place of God: ‘that God may be everything to every one’ (1 Cor 15:28)—so Paul describes the goal of creation, which is supposed to come about starting with the Eucharist.”\textsuperscript{66} Here, Benedict uses the language of indwelling, which expresses figuratively what he describes elsewhere as the reconfiguration of the relationship between matter and spirit; just as matter will belong to spirit in such a way that they are one, so too will the Earth become the dwelling place of God in such a way that it will be divinized. In addition to the dynamic of death and sacrifice in the liturgy, there is also the dynamic of resurrection, which can be applied not only to Christ but also to human beings as well as the cosmos.

\textbf{Resurrection and Cosmic Apotheosis}

Resurrection has several dimensions in Benedict’s theology. The following passage makes clear the different dimensions present in this reality:

The third day after Jesus’ death is the first day of the week, the day of creation on which God said: “Let there be light!” Where belief in the resurrection keeps its New Testament wholeness and concreteness, Sunday and the meaning of Sunday can never be locked into mere history, into the history of the Christian community and its paschal celebration. Matter is involved here; creation is involved; the first day is involved, which Christians also call the eighth day: the restoration of all things.\textsuperscript{67}


\textsuperscript{66} Ratzinger, \textit{On the Way}, 128.

\textsuperscript{67} Ratzinger, \textit{New Song}, 65.
There are three levels of resurrection that are at least implied in this passage: the resurrection of Jesus, the resurrection of the dead, and the connection between the resurrection and the cosmos. This could be further simplified into two realms: the anthropological and the cosmic. The resurrection of Jesus is the resurrection on which all other resurrections are based. This gives hope to human beings because it resolves the issue of death and enables them to have joy.\textsuperscript{68} At the same time, for Benedict the resurrection is also related to the universe: “the Resurrection has both a cosmic and a future-oriented character and . . . Christian faith is a faith of hope in the fullness of promise that encompasses the whole cosmos.”\textsuperscript{69} The resurrection is connected to the cosmos in Benedict’s theology since the resurrection of Christ links protology to eschatology and creation to restoration. Citing Colossians, Benedict points out that Christ is both the “firstborn of all creation (1:15) as well as the first-born from the dead (1:18), through whom God wanted to reconcile all things to himself.”\textsuperscript{70} Yet the mission of gathering the cosmos into one and offering it to God is not simply an act of the historical figure Jesus of Nazareth; instead, it is a mission that has been passed down to the entire Christ, that is, the church together with Jesus.\textsuperscript{71} Deification comes about through proper worship, which occurs in the liturgy: “worship is the beginning of true transformation, of the true renewal of the world.”\textsuperscript{72} Through the liturgy and the sacraments, the hypostatic union is extended, as it were, to the rest of creation.

For Benedict, sacramental theology is predicated on the capacity of matter to be spiritually transformed by words and saved. This way of thinking about matter is foreign to the

\textsuperscript{68} Ratzinger, \textit{Feast of Faith}, 65, 130; Benedict XVI, \textit{God Is Near Us}, 44.
\textsuperscript{69} Ratzinger, \textit{Principles of Catholic Theology}, 187.
\textsuperscript{70} Ratzinger, \textit{New Song}, 66–67.
\textsuperscript{71} Benedict XVI, \textit{Great Christian Thinkers}, 156.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 157.
modern mind because of the influence of René Descartes, who saw reality as fundamentally bifurcated into that which has physical extension and the mind, which has no physical extension. According to Benedict, Cartesian dualism is responsible for the desire of modern human beings to place matter under the aegis of science and technology and to allocate the spirit and mind to God. In contrast to this Cartesian view, Benedict maintains that the sacraments unite cosmic matter and words, thereby offering a more holistic view of reality. Matter cannot be separated from the divine.

Despite the inherent difficulties of imagining the world to come, Benedict insists that the relationship between matter and spirit will be reconstituted. In his words,

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. Benedict puts forth a liturgiology that embraces the salvation of the cosmos and implies a reconstitution of matter itself.

In sum, the Paschal Mystery is the foundation of the liturgy in Benedict’s theology. Jesus, the Incarnate Word of God, has taken on flesh and has offered himself as a sacrifice not only for human beings but for the entire universe and has thereby set in motion a series of transformations that leads to the apotheosis of the cosmos. Next, I will assess this grand vision in light of the current ecological crisis.

Assessment

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73 Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 29.

74 Ratzinger, Eschatology, 194 Although it is possible to detect in this passage overtones implying that the end of the universe as a result of a cosmic process, as I contended in the last chapter, Benedict essentially moves away from this view. See Ratzinger “End of Time,” 23-24 and Spirit of the Liturgy, 29-30.
Does Benedict’s cosmic liturgy facilitate care for the environment or does it undermine it? On the one hand, Benedict is firmly convinced that the liturgy should inspire Christians to become leaven in the world. Christians are to participate in the transforming power of God through the sacraments and extend it to the world. Commenting on the transformative power of the Eucharist, Benedict states that the Eucharist is a process of transformations in which we become involved, God’s power to transform hatred and violence, God’s power to transform the world. Therefore we pray that the Lord will help us to celebrate the Eucharist in this way and to live it. Therefore we pray that he will transform us, and the world together with us, into the new Jerusalem.  

Liturgy is therefore not a spiritual navel-gazing for Benedict, but is instead oriented toward action. On the other hand, he describes such transformation in very general terms and avoids applying such language of transformation to social situations because of his conviction that it is impossible to establish the Kingdom of God as a political reality. In this section, I describe how Benedict’s cosmic liturgy positively impacts the goal of conserving God’s creation and fostering environmental stewardship, relate and assess the arguments from theologians critical of Benedict’s liturgical theology (or brands of theology similar to Benedict’s), and offer my own constructive criticism.

Positive Elements

Earlier, I stated that Benedict’s cosmic liturgy is necessary but insufficient for fostering an appropriate response to the current ecological crisis. In this section, I will point out some of the positive elements in his cosmic eschatology. I identify three necessary components to a cosmic eschatology that fosters environmentally sustainable attitudes and practices: revitalizing a

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sacramental consciousness, reaffirming the connection between our actions and the world to come, and broadening the circle of salvation to include the entire universe.

First, Benedict’s cosmic liturgy upholds the significance of sacramentality. At first glance, it might not seem evident why this is important. In the last chapter, I described David Toolan’s depiction of the transition from a sacramental worldview to the modern scientific worldview and the ecologically disastrous consequences that followed.76 This implies that sacramentality is essential for an adequate ecological ethic, but it lacks an explicit proof. John Haught provides this articulation when, contra Lynn White, Jr., he links the ecological crisis not to religion but to the disintegration of religion.77 According to Haught, since sacramentality in general depends on nature and religion depends on sacramentality in order not to slip into escapism, secularism, and iconoclasm, sacramentality is essential to fostering attitudes that preserve life on Earth.78 Benedict’s cosmic liturgy exhibits the kind of sacramental consciousness that is indispensable for rehabilitating humanity’s relationship with creation.

Second, Benedict’s more recent account of the transformation of matter emphasizes that human beings have an integral role in helping to bring about cosmic apotheosis. In other words, for Benedict it is not as though this world has no connection with the heavenly Jerusalem; our actions in this world have implications that carry over to the hereafter by way of causality. Using

76 Toolan, At Home in the Cosmos, 41–42.

77 John Haught, The Promise of Nature: Ecology and Cosmic Purpose (New York: Paulist Press, 1993), 71. This disintegration comes about when one of the four essential characteristics of religion – sacramental, mystical, silent, and active – is cut off from the others or where one of them is obviously “lopsided” (ibid., 77). Each of these elements can devolve into an undesirable ideology if they are separated from the others. Sacramentalism tends toward naturalism if it is not grounded in mystery, the mystical veers toward escapism if it ignores the sacramental goodness of creation, the silent element of religion that stands in awe of the ineffable mystery devolves into iconoclasm when it is separated from the other features of religion, and the active feature of religion becomes synonymous with secular progress when divorced from the divine (ibid., 86).

78 Ibid., 85–86.
incarnational language, he explains that the impact of human beings on creatures ideally prepares them for the next world. According to Benedict,

To spiritualize means to incarnate in a Christian way, but to incarnate means to spiritualize, to bring the things of the world to the coming Christ, to prepare them for their future form and thus to prepare God’s future in the world. In St. Irenaeus’s work we find the lovely thought that the meaning of the incarnation was for the Spirit—the Holy Spirit—to get used to the flesh, as it were, in Jesus. Turning this around we could say: The meaning of the ongoing incarnation can only be the reverse, to get the flesh used to the Spirit, to God, to make it capax spiritus and in this way to prepare its future.  

This means that not only is the universe destined to be transformed through the agency of God, but also through the agency of human beings. Yet the agency which Benedict writes about is not an agency that depends on the human race’s ability to manipulate and control nature; instead, it is an explicitly spiritual agency in which human beings are called to incarnate matter. For this reason, Benedict’s acknowledgment of the role of human beings in bringing about a future reality is entirely different from Marxism, which works for a secular end through human agency according to the rules of the dialectics of history. Benedict’s vision therefore militates against Cartesian dualism and political Marxism.

One is able to discern in the blockquote above overtones of Haught who writes, “In transfigured status, then, the present cosmos will continue to remain deeply implicated in the world’s eventual eschatological fulfillment. Without a hope that nature has such a future, our present ecological commitments might indeed have entirely too flimsy a footing.” Haught seeks to highlight the connection between this world and the world to come. After all, if the universe is merely going to be destroyed and recreated with no connection to the previous world (in other words, there is a radical discontinuity between this world and the next), it would strip

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79 Ratzinger, *New Song*, 92; italics mine.

away one of the motivating factors for working together in an ecologically responsible manner. There is nothing to prevent human beings from adopting the attitude expressed in King Louis XV’s alleged quip, “Après moi, le déluge” (After me comes the flood). The aforementioned blockquote shows that, in a way that is similar to Haught, he adopts a vision of cosmic eschatological continuity, a view that fosters ecologically responsible attitudes.\(^{81}\)

At the same time, the continuity that exists between this world and the next does not mean that they are ontologically the same. Benedict also upholds discontinuity in that the resurrected existence of Jesus exists on another ontological plane; however, it is the same Christ.\(^{82}\) If Benedict’s cosmic eschatology is patterned on his Christology, the same would hold between the relationship between the present world and the New Jerusalem. Rather than dichotomizing the end of the universe as either continuous or discontinuous, Benedict holds that there is continuity in discontinuity. Benedict suggests that the continuity between this world and the next does not imply ontological uniformity in a comment on the shared fate of Christians and Christ: “But something else becomes clear as well: to be fitted into the new house as a living stone means to undergo the fate of the passion. The fate of the cornerstone reveals the plan of the entire building.”\(^{83}\) As already mentioned, Benedict has described the church as encompassing the universe and sees the cosmos as the context of liturgical worship.\(^{84}\) Consequently, it is not much

\(^{81}\) Although there is a similarity between Benedict and Haught’s assertions on the necessity to see our actions as being connected to the future state of the universe, Haught, at least in his earlier work, proposes process theology as the means of uniting scientists and Christians in their quest for a mutually grounded “myth” that is capable of supporting their joint endeavor to conserve the planet (see Haught, Promise of Nature, 31–38 for Haught’s advocacy of process theology as a viable “myth” that is capable of fostering an ecological ethic), whereas Benedict presumably rejects process theology and its correlative, pantheism.

\(^{82}\) Benedict XVI, Jesus of Nazareth: Part Two, 274.

\(^{83}\) Ratzinger, New Song, 84.

\(^{84}\) Auer and Ratzinger, Dogmatic Theology, 6:133; Ratzinger, Spirit of the Liturgy, 26–27.
a stretch to claim that the universe itself can be interpreted as the entire building that ultimately must undergo the same fate as Jesus Christ by dying and rising again in glory. If this is the case, it further implies that the ontological difference between this world and the next is precisely the kind of ontological distinction that exists between the pre-Easter Jesus of Nazareth and the risen Lord. In both cases, i.e. in the case of Jesus’ status before and after his glorification and the universe’s status before and after it is recreated, there is both continuity and discontinuity: there is continuity insofar as the subjects are the same, but there is discontinuity insofar as both undergo a glorification that elevates their ontological statuses.

Third, Benedict in his own way implicitly broadens the circle of moral concerns to the rest of creation by claiming that the entire universe is destined to be redeemed by God through Jesus Christ, which he explicitly ties to the liturgy. Benedict’s soteriology is, at least in principle, all-encompassing, which is different from Aquinas’s account as expressed in the Summa Theologiae. In my view, this broadening of salvation and of moral concerns to include the entire cosmos is a necessary component of a cosmic eschatology that is capable of cultivating a genuine care for creation since without it, there is the temptation to see non-human creatures as ephemeral, provisionary, and dispensable, thereby justifying the exploitation of the Earth.

One might object that Aquinas’s own view on the matter is that the diversity of creatures, including plants and animals, manifest the goodness of God and that this is sufficient reason to respect creatures and seek their conservation. By the same token, however, the total extinction of fauna and flora at the end of time according to Aquinas, in my mind, would seem to diminish

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85 Benedict XVI, “Homily, July 24, 2009.”
86 Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologiae, Suppl. IIIae. Q. 74, a. 4 co.; Suppl. IIIae. Q. 91, a. 5
87 Ibid., I. Q. 47, a. 1, resp.
the capacity of the new creation to manifest God’s goodness whereas Scripture indicates that the
divine benevolence will be made even more manifest at the end of time by renewing all things.  
At the very least, I believe that the door must remain open to an all-embracing salvation wrought
by God through Jesus Christ that is somehow capable of including plants, animals, and every
kind of life in the universe.

Benedict’s cosmic liturgy, as a result of its emphasis on a sacramental vision of creation,
its linking of human actions with the state of the future world, and its broadening of moral
concerns by extending the realm of redemption to the entire cosmos, manifests some of the key
sine qua non features of an ecologically responsible cosmic eschatology. Eco-theologians
everywhere should appreciate these key features of Benedict’s thought. Despite these features,
some theologians are critical. In the next section, I will describe the arguments of some of
Benedict’s critics.

Critical Voices

While Benedict’s cosmic liturgy is a grand vision of the way God mediates salvation
through human beings, nevertheless his vision has insufficiencies. Benedict’s critics, although
not focusing specifically on the insufficiency of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy with regard to the
ecological crisis, describe limitations in his liturgiology that imply further limitations when they
are considered from a social or ecological perspective.

Benedict’s Theology in General

88 “And he who sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new’” (Rev. 21:5, RSV).
Mariuz Biliniewicz broadly describes three main influences on Benedict’s theology, namely Plato, Augustine, and Bonaventure. In this section, I will describe the Platonic, Augustinian, and Bonaventurian qualities of Benedict’s theology.

Benedict’s Platonism

Walter Kasper, Thomas Rausch, James Corkery, and Aidan Nichols have all noted that there is a Platonic strain in Benedict’s thought. Platonic thought is characterized by a kind of duality between this world and an ideal world, of which this world is merely a shadow. This is seen most aptly in Plato’s famous cave analogy. Biliniewicz finds evidence of Platonism in Benedict’s ecclesiology, anthropology, and liturgiology. For the sake of brevity, however, I will focus on Benedict’s Platonism insofar as it manifests itself in his liturgical theology.

Benedict acknowledges that he is “[t]o a certain extent . . . a Platonist.” In Biliniewicz’s reading of Benedict, this Platonism manifests itself in Benedict’s theology of the liturgy in two areas. The first is the tendency to view “the earthly liturgy [as] a reflection of the heavenly

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89 Biliniewicz, Liturgical Vision of Benedict, 217. Biliniewicz also brings up James Corkery’s observation that Benedict’s childhood had a part to play in forming his views on ecclesiology. Ibid., 225, citing James Corkery, Joseph Ratzinger’s Theological Ideas: Wise Cautions and Legitimate Hopes (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 22-23. Yet Biliniewicz also points out that Thomas Rausch juxtaposes the formation of Benedict and Metz and finds that while their backgrounds are extremely similar, their theologies are virtually polar opposites of each other with Metz emphasizing the social role of the church and Benedict denying that the church’s primary function on Earth is to improve society. Ibid., 280-281, citing Thomas Rausch, Pope Benedict XVI: An Introduction to His Theological Vision (New York: Paulist Press, 2009), 14. In my view, Rausch’s observation somewhat relativizes theories that view Benedict’s theology as a product of his childhood. I agree with Biliniewicz’s conclusion that “one needs to be careful with applying [a] psychoanalysis-like schema to explain theologians’ opinions by referring to their personal background. It naturally may be the case that certain strong and emotional experiences influence to a certain extent one’s theology, but it needs to be remembered that it is also often the case that it is one’s theology which influences the perception of reality” (ibid., 281).


92 Ratzinger, Salt of the Earth, 33, 41.
liturgy,” which implies that the earthly liturgy “should be freed from all kinds of arbitrariness.”\footnote{Biliniewicz, Liturgical Vision of Benedict, 221.} The second is Benedict’s “top-down” approach to liturgical development. Biliniewicz points out that these views “make scholars of Kasper’s (more Aristotelian) orientation uneasy” since, in their views, these presuppositions can lead to a theology that is too rigid since all it needs to do is pattern itself on a heavenly paradigm.\footnote{Ibid.} Nevertheless, Benedict does not appeal to Plato to defend his view that the liturgy is first and foremost a heavenly reality that human beings cannot simply create; instead, he appeals to the Hebrew Scriptures, specifically the Pentateuch, to prove his point.\footnote{Ratzinger, Spirit of the Liturgy, 22–23; Eamon Duffy criticizes Benedict’s use of the golden calf narrative to justify his position that the liturgy ought not to be changed in the way that it has been by some liturgists since Vatican II, calling the passage “rather savage.” Eamon Duffy, “Benedict XVI and the Eucharist,” New Blackfriars 88, no. 1014 (March 2007): 201.} At the same time, liturgy is not something that falls out of the sky; instead, it is the result of traditions that have been inaugurated and changed by human beings.\footnote{See Biliniewicz, Liturgical Vision of Benedict, 247–49 for a panoply of scholarly views from John Baldovin, Pierre-Marie Gy, Rembert Weakland, Keith F. Pecklers, and Nathan Mitchell who voice their concerns about Benedict’s idea of organic development in the liturgy.} This is an idea that is perhaps not as prevalent in the West as it is in the East since the western rite is called the Roman Rite, thereby tying the rite to a location, whereas eastern rites are frequently named after individuals such as St. John Chrysostom or St. Basil. The naming of liturgies in the East after specific people highlights that liturgy is more of an incarnational reality than it is a strictly divine reality. Yet the venerability of ancient liturgies suggests that there should be organic growth instead of arbitrary liturgical innovations that have nothing to do with the past or with ecclesiastically recognized theological developments.
Despite the limitations inherent in Benedict’s Platonic top-down approach and viewing reality as a drama between heaven and earth, some accounts of the problematic nature of Benedict’s Platonism are unjustified. For instance, the image that Biliniewicz uses to depict Benedict’s Platonism, namely that of a man with a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other trying to figure out how to make the ideal a reality in the real world, is an overly simplistic caricature since it seems to imply that people should not read Bibles and newspapers at the same time or that they should compartmentalize their spiritual lives and their participation in the public square. Should a Christian simply carry around a Bible with no concern for current events or, on the other extreme, only pay attention to current events and leave his or her Bible on the shelf to collect dust? A socially engaged Christian is one who keeps up with the news and knows the Word of God.

There is no doubt that there are many elements of Benedict’s theology that have been influenced by Platonism. It is also true that Platonism in theology can have the effect of fostering passive attitudes about ecclesiology and liturgy, such as accepting the liturgy as a heavenly reality and the view that local churches ought to conform themselves to a particular image of the universal church. At the same time, Platonism itself is not necessarily a negative feature of theology just as Aristotelianism is not an undesirable feature of theology. As John Paul II points out in *Fides et Ratio*, the Catholic Church does not officially adopt any philosophy as its own. In my view, Aristotelianism and Platonism need to exist side-by-side so that the upward focus of theologians who have more of a Platonic bent and the downward fixation of theologians with an affinity for Aristotle can both be counterbalanced. The import of Benedict’s Platonism for

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97 Ibid., 220.

cosmic liturgy will become clearer when I analyze his *exitus-reditus* paradigm which, while not an idea that explicitly arises from Plato, is associated with neo-Platonic thought. Next, I explore the influence of Augustine on Benedict’s theology.

Benedict’s Augustinianism

Benedict describes himself as “a decided Augustinian.” Augustinianism is frequently juxtaposed to Thomism in theological circles with the former being characterized by a duality between the City of Man and the City of God and the latter expressing a greater openness to the world. Biliniewicz lists other distinctions that can be found in Augustine’s thought, namely “invisible/visible, light/darkness, spirit/matter, sacred/profane, etc.” These dualistic tendencies in Augustine, some scholars note, are inherent in Benedict’s theology, exhibiting themselves especially in his anthropology and ecclesiology. For the sake of brevity, I have decided to gloss over the Augustinian influence on Benedict’s ecclesiology.

In his anthropology, Benedict stresses the brokenness of the nature of human beings and the need of grace to heal nature, not perfect it. James Corkery elaborates,

Ratzinger's anthropological writings embody a distinctive position, a definite 'take', on the relationship between nature and grace. This position emphasises discontinuity over continuity; it indicates that the way of grace is the way of the cross; it puts the stress on grace *healing* and *transforming* nature (*gratia sanans*) more than on grace *elevating* and *perfecting* nature (*gratia elevans*). In itself, this is unsurprising, given Ratzinger's preference for Augustine and Bonaventure over Aquinas.
In other words, without the grace that comes from the cross, human nature limps; Benedict focuses on the fallen nature of human beings rather than the goodness inherent in them. As Biliniewicz indicates, this has ramifications for Benedict’s liturgiology, such as his emphasis on liturgy as a received reality, not something that is made, and his vision of active participation that embodies being, not doing, and is thereby more passive than active.\(^\text{104}\)

This negative attitude is unfortunate, according to John Mahoney, since Benedict misses an opportunity to “‘recover the patristic theology of God’s Word sown and burgeoning throughout creation’ and suggests that ‘a genuinely incarnational missionary activity should ever seek to disclose and reveal the God who is love as already tugging at men’s hearts and minds (...) and should aim to bring these intimations to fuller voice and expression’.”\(^\text{105}\) In other words, Benedict ought to be open to seeing elements of God’s Word that are active in different cultures and religions, and not confine the sphere of activity of the Word to the church. In addition to Mahoney’s stance, Biliniewicz also suggests that Benedict’s theology would benefit from an openness to not only passive roles but also to more active roles such as “contributing, developing and improving,” which “would not have to be understood in a Pelagian way,” but rather “as the work of grace.”\(^\text{106}\) In principle, I agree with Mahoney and Biliniewicz, but I believe that there also needs to be caution.\(^\text{107}\)

University of Munich, who “sought to do justice to Karl Barth’s critique of a superficially-held optimism about nature that liked to base itself on Thomas Aquinas’s positive concept of nature” (ibid., 45).

\(^\text{104}\) Biliniewicz, Liturgical Vision of Benedict, 223.


\(^\text{106}\) Biliniewicz, Liturgical Vision of Benedict, 224.

\(^\text{107}\) Biliniewicz recognizes the need for caution as well when he notes that “Ratzinger is not wrong in warning against a ‘scandalous optimism’ which does not see the need for any discernment and is simply naïve in its unlimited trust towards the world” (ibid., 226; italics Biliniewicz’s).
Another critique of Benedict’s anthropology, which comes from Corkery, is that Benedict tends to overlook the goodness of people who heroically go through life and the particular narratives of individual human beings. Corkery eschews the starkness of Benedict’s vision of humanity. After citing John Henry Newman who states that “each good man has his own distinguishing grace, apart from the rest, his own particular hue and fragrance and fashion, as a flower may have,” Corkery goes on to state that he finds such a perspective missing in Benedict’s anthropology. Human beings, after all, are not made in a mold; each of them has a unique perspective and narrative in this world. Diversity is just as much a feature of human beings as a shared humanity. Corkery would like to see Benedict engage with contemporary anthropologists and makes the trenchant paradoxical point that “Augustine, with his own oh so particular story, could be the perfect person with whom to set out on such a contemporary anthropological road.” Not only can Benedict’s anthropology benefit from a renewed focus on particularity, but the whole of his theology as well, including his theology of time and history, a theme that I explore at the end of the chapter.

Complementing criticisms of Benedict’s anthropology are criticisms of his liturgical predilections for Latin and literal translations of the Latin into the vernacular. Benedict’s efforts to revise the translation of the Liturgy into English met with resistance. Biliniewicz explains that since the previous English edition was translated and edited in such a way that it made the liturgy more intelligible to contemporary people, various theologians interpreted the updated translation

108 Corkery, Ratzinger’s Theological Ideas, 50. At the same time, Corkery humbly acknowledges that his view “may reflect a failure in spiritual insight on my part, not least about the seriousness of human sinfulness and the depth of our need for repentance” (ibid.).


110 Corkery, Ratzinger’s Theological Ideas, 51; italics Corkery’s.
as a step backwards.\textsuperscript{111} The supporters of “dynamic equivalence” believe that this theory is the fulfillment of the Second Vatican Council’s call for liturgical simplicity and accessibility.\textsuperscript{112} In short, they want to creatively convey the message whereas Benedict, following the principle that liturgy is given by God, is suspicious of creativity in regard to translating liturgical texts, and instead adopts a posture of receptivity; however, receptivity need not preclude creativity.

In the first chapter of \textit{Spirit of the Liturgy}, Benedict appeals to events in the book of Exodus, especially the construction of the golden calf, to support his view that liturgy does not come from human beings but from God. Yet in Exodus, God commanded Moses to have Bezalel, a master craftsman, to construct the Ark of the Covenant (Exod. 31:1-11). Surely, Bezalel used his creativity (his “ability and intelligence . . . knowledge and all craftsmanship”\textsuperscript{113}) to construct the Ark of the Covenant, although he had to work within very specific parameters (Exod. 25:10-22). While some specifications had no room for creative interpretation, e.g. the specific measurements and the material to be used, others permitted a creative interpretation, e.g. the design of the cherubic faces and forms, with the exception of their orientation and wings. This suggests that wordsmiths ought to be allowed a certain amount of creativity within specific parameters for the good of the people. This position can be thought of as a “restrictive dynamic equivalence” or as a “loose formal equivalence.” I believe that this theory does the most justice

\textsuperscript{111} Biliniewicz, \textit{Liturgical Vision of Benedict}, 197–98.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 312; cf. \textit{Sacrosanctum Concilium}, 34. Yet “dynamic equivalence” also has some difficulties as well: “Because ‘dynamic equivalence’ presupposes interpretation of the text and requires such a contextualization of this interpretation as will be suitable for contemporary receivers, it raises questions: (1) according to what criteria should the translator decide which sense of the text should be chosen as the principal one in cases when the text has more than one obvious sense, and, more importantly, (2) according to what criteria should he/she decide who the contemporary receiver is and what kind of language is suitable for him/her? The risk of a certain (even unwitting) arbitrariness occurs here in the 1973 translations prove that this risk is real and not without consequences for Catholics’ faith and spirituality” (ibid., 313).

\textsuperscript{113} Exod. 31:3, RSV.
to the particularities of different languages and peoples, although it may be necessary to adapt
cultural elements within liturgical settings to foster a psychological continuity between a specific
people’s former beliefs and the Faith.

Benedict’s Bonaventurianism

The third characteristic of Benedict’s theology that Biliniewicz faults him for is his
Bonaventurianism, in particular what Biliniewicz describes as Bonaventure’s “anti-
intellectualist” tendencies.\textsuperscript{114} Although Benedict does not describe himself as a Bonaventurian,
Benedict prefers Bonaventure to Thomas Aquinas. Benedict comments in his \textit{Memoirs} that he
“had difficulties in penetrating the thought of Thomas Aquinas, whose crystal-clear logic seemed
to me to be too closed in on itself, too impersonal and ready-made,” but remarks that this could
have been because his philosophy professor “presented us with a rigid, neoscholastic Thomism
that was simply too far afield from my own questions.”\textsuperscript{115} Since Benedict had a great love for
Augustine, he saw it as natural to write his habilitation on Bonaventure, specifically on his
teology of history and his conception of revelation.\textsuperscript{116}

Bonaventure was concerned about the new tendency in theology to split philosophy and
theology, which granted autonomy to secular learning. Because of this, Bonaventure advocated a
view of theology that could be described as holistic in that for Bonaventure, theologizing as an
intellectual exercise in and of itself cannot bring a theologian closer to God if he or she is not

\textsuperscript{114} Biliniewicz, \textit{Liturgical Vision of Benedict}, 227f.

\textsuperscript{115} Ratzinger, \textit{Milestones}, 44.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 104; See Ratzinger, \textit{History in Bonaventure} for his habilitation.
properly disposed. In other words, for Bonaventure, theology “was also a way of life.”

Consequently, Bonaventure’s theology has been called anti-intellectualist, although he was not against knowledge as such. An example of the anti-intellectualism of Bonaventure can be found in a passage from *Itineraris mentis in Deum* that emphasizes that if one wants to have a mystical knowledge of God, one must not rely solely on reason. In the last part of this work, Bonaventure quotes Pseudo-Dionysius, thereby firmly rooting himself in the apophatic theological tradition.

After quoting Pseudo-Dionysius, he comments,

> But if you wish to know how these things come about, ask grace not instruction, desire not understanding, the groaning of prayer not diligent reading, the Spouse not the teacher, God not man, darkness not clarity, not light but the fire that totally inflames and carries us into God by ecstatic unctions and burning affections. This fire is God, and *his furnace is in Jerusalem*; and Christ enkindles it in the heat of his burning passion.

Insofar as Bonaventure follows Pseudo-Dionysius, his anti-intellectualism is not something that he is making up, but is rather a part of a long theological tradition that stems all the way to the East.

It is unfortunate that Biliniewicz uses the term *anti-intellectualist* since the term is somewhat of a misnomer; after all, Bonaventure was a theology professor at the University of Paris. Furthermore, Bonaventure begins his quote with the words “if you wish to know,” thereby preserving the intellectual aspect of union with God. In the apophatic tradition, it is not as though union with God is anti-intellectualist, but rather that it is supra-rational in the sense that it

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119 Ibid., 115; italics Cousins’s.

120 Ibid.; italics mine.
is above natural human capacity apart from grace since it cannot be achieved by human reason and effort alone. In this sense, it could be said that Bonaventure has an anti-intellectualist tendency since he does not believe that the intellect alone is capable of uniting oneself to God.

Some scholars detect in the writings of Benedict a similar anti-intellectualist attitude. Biliniewicz, for instance, brings up Benedict’s concluding remarks in his *Theological Highlights* as an example of Benedict’s anti-intellectualism, yet when one reads the text, one does not find so much a critique of intellectualism as an extolling of the faith of those who are simple.¹²¹ For Benedict, “The faith of those who are simple of heart is the most precious treasure of the Church.”¹²² Like Biliniewicz, Corkery critiques Benedict’s handling of theological dissent and asks, “Is extolling the simple faithful not a justification for ignoring the un-simple faithful: educated men and women who are also members of the church but who wish to contribute reflection based on their genuine competencies – theology included?”¹²³ Though Corkery’s frustration is well-founded, especially in light of the irony that although Benedict forbade theologians who had dissenting opinions from expressing them to the media when he was head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, he had a number of book-length interviews with Peter Seewald, Benedict’s concern to protect the little ones is also legitimate, especially in light of texts such as Matthew 18:6, which states that it would be better for someone to have a millstone be tied around his neck and cast into the sea than to lead one of the little ones astray.

¹²¹ Ratzinger, *Theological Highlights*, 262–63, cited in Biliniewicz, *Liturgical Vision of Benedict*, 228 (Biliniewicz identifies the pagination of this passage as 263-4). It must be granted that it is possible to discern an anti-intellectualist allusion in this passage. In Benedict’s words, “Israel lived [with simple faith] even in the times when Pharisaic legalism and Sadducean liberalism defaced the countenance of the chosen people” (ibid., 262). It is not difficult to detect here a jibe aimed at some modern theologians by implicitly comparing them to Pharisees and Sadducees.


¹²³ Corkery, *Ratzinger’s Theological Ideas*, 85. Biliniewicz’s view is also the view of Corkery, who was Biliniewicz’s thesis supervisor (Biliniewicz, *Liturgical Vision of Benedict*, vii).
This is why Benedict forbade leaking dissenting opinions to the press. Yet Corkery seems to agree with Richard McCormick that it is impossible for theologians to “disagree with the magisterium in a manner that avoids all public disclosure of the disagreement”; “In any case,” notes Corkery, “theology is a public enterprise, seeking . . . to mediate between a culture and a religion.”124 While Corkery points out the public nature of theology, doing theology also requires caution and mutual respect between the magisterium and the theologian.125

Another feature to note about the Bonaventurian anti-intellectualist strain in Benedict’s theology is that it shares something in common with postmodernity, namely the view that the

124 Ibid., 87.
125 It is impossible to cover all of the material relating to the issue of the relationship between theologians and the magisterium. For a sampling of works covering this topic, see Richard R. Gaillardetz, By What Authority?: Primer on Scripture, the Magisterium, and the Sense of the Faithful (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003), Bradford E. Hinze, Prophetic Obedience: Ecclesiology for a Dialogical Church (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2016), and Avery Cardinal Dulles, “The Freedom of Theology,” First Things, no. 183 (May 2008), https://www.firstthings.com/article/2008/05/001-the-freedom-of-theology, accessed August 26, 2017. According to Hinze, communion ecclesiology eclipsed the people of God ecclesiology that emphasizes the prophetic role of the laity during the pontificates of John Paul II and Benedict XVI; however, Hinze notes that the period of the eclipse is ending with the pontificate of Francis (Prophetic Ecclesiology, 37). At the same time, Hinze does not portray communion ecclesiology as the culprit, maintaining instead that the “vision of the church as communion is both beautifully simple and richly complex” (ibid.). What he does take issue with is the exclusive emphasis on this kind of ecclesiology to the detriment of the ecclesiology of the people of God. Gaillardetz similarly critiques the view that theologians are obliged to conform to the hierarchical magisterium of the Catholic Church in By What Authority? Aver Dulles, whom Pope John Paul II raised to the cardinalate in 2001, acknowledges that theologians sometimes “disagree with the magisterium on some point or other or . . . to nuance its declarations,” although he also maintains that “the first instinct of the theologian should be to accept and build on what is officially taught in the Church” (Avery Cardinal Dulles, “The Freedom of Theology”). There is a wide spectrum of views on the issue of the magisterium, but I believe that Dulles’s centralistic stance best conceives the relationship between the hierarchical magisterium and the teachings of theologians. An intriguing take on the magisterium debate is the retrieval of St. Thomas Aquinas’s position that there is not merely one magisterium, but rather two magisteria, “a pastoral magisterium and a teaching magisterium.” Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, “Systematic Theology: Task and Methods,” in Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives, ed. Francis S. Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, vol. I (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 26. According to Patrick Carey, Dulles “argued for a qualitative difference between the ‘authentic magisterium of the hierarchy and the doctrinal magisterium of the scholar.’” Patrick W. Carey, Avery Cardinal Dulles, SJ: A Model Theologian, 1918-2008 (New York: Paulist Press, 2010), 337, citing Avery Dulles, “The Magisterium and Authority in the Church,” in Theology in Revolution, ed. George Devine (Staten Island, NY: Alba House, 1970), 29-45, at 41. It should be noted, however, that Dulles took this position in 1970. For his most mature stance on the magisterium, see “The Freedom of Theology,” which was published the year of his death. I am not opposed to the proposal of two magisteria, so long as the two are not cast in such a way as being necessarily antithetical.
human mind is incapable of comprehending the entire truth. Benedict’s view with respect to knowledge is simply a recognition that there is a realm of mystery that cannot be fathomed at the rational level, but can only be experienced. This is related to his view that participation in the liturgy need not be all about activity, but can also take the form of the lifting up of hearts since there is something ineffable about the divine mysteries.

The general pattern of the critiques against Benedict’s theology is that he takes a top-down approach and uses an essentially Platonic lens that has also been influenced by Augustine and Bonaventure. I contend that Platonist and Aristotelian tendencies are neither good nor bad and that they ought to be permitted to exist in different theologians so that the temptations to over-universalize and the drive to fixate on the particulars will mutually check each other. Having gone over critiques of Benedict’s theology in general, in the next section I will relate some of the criticisms of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy.

**Benedict’s Cosmic Liturgy**

Although there are a fair number of scholars who have critiqued Benedict’s liturgiology, there are few who have sufficiently described Benedict’s cosmic liturgy, much less critiqued it. At the same time, Benedict’s theology shares much in common with other theologies, specifically the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar. As it so happens, by critiquing von Balthasar’s theology of history, which is related to cosmic liturgy, Steffen Lösel, a Lutheran theologian, in a circuitous manner critiques the heart of Benedict’s theology of history, which plays no small role in his cosmic liturgy since the sacraments are related to past, present, and

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future in various ways and are ensconced in an *exitus-reditus* model of time. In addition to the critique of Lösel, I will also consider the criticism of Donal Dorr and Jürgen Moltmann.

Lösel contends that Hans Urs von Balthasar’s view that the *egressus* and *regressus* (or *exitus-reditus*) model is the key to understanding the relationship between God and history reinforces the social *status quo* by denying the ability of God to break in to other moments of history other than the crucifixion. In Lösel’s analysis, von Balthasar’s emphasis on the Paschal Mystery as the turning point from *egressus* to *regressus* and as providing both the pre- and post-Christian histories with meaning detracts from God’s significance for history. Lösel explains, “For Balthasar, history is merely the stage for the one-time epiphany of God’s eternity onto the earth which happens on the cross of Golgotha. The course of history is at best a preparation for or a consequence of the eternal theo-drama’s epiphany in time.” If this analysis is true, it would effectively mean that the significance of God in history for human beings, except insofar as it prepares for the cross or is affected by it, is evacuated.

As Lösel acknowledges however, it is not as though human beings are incapable of experiencing God for von Balthasar, but rather that their encounter with the Holy Spirit, who enables them to have simultaneity with the Paschal Mystery, requires them to be oriented backwards in time rather than oriented toward the future coming of Christ. Lösel concludes that von Balthasar’s eschatology is “unapocalyptic” since it diminishes the importance of salvation history for Israel, fails to take seriously the New Testament’s prophecies of the second

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129 Ibid., 211, 217.

130 Ibid., 217.

131 Ibid.
coming of Christ and of an actual end of history, and downplays the “social dimension of the Christian concept of salvation and in so doing cements the status quo of a yet unredeemed world.”

Is Benedict guilty by association and complicit with the unsavory implications of von Balthasar’s theology of history? Lösel’s critique of von Balthasar’s theology of history impacts Benedict’s since, like von Balthasar, he too appeals to an exitus-reditus schema of history, although it is not initially apparent to what extent Lösel’s critique affects the openness of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy to social justice issues, including the current ecological crisis.

In response to the first question, namely, whether Benedict’s appeal to the exitus-reditus scheme reinforces social apathy, one should first note that Benedict’s theology of history is not nearly as developed as von Balthasar’s and that although their views of liturgy, history, and time are closely related, they are not identical. It follows that, if one were to grant the validity of Lösel’s critique of von Balthasar’s eschatology, Lösel’s allegations need not all equally apply to Benedict’s eschatology. For instance, Lösel critiques von Balthasar for diminishing the significance of history by making it into “no more than a stage on which the epiphany of the theo-drama can occur in a once-and-for-all-fashion.” Von Balthasar’s idea of theo-drama implies that history is like a play on a stage, which implies that the stage (the world) could potentially have a different play on it than the one it does. Benedict describes history somewhat

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132 Ibid., 218.

133 Cf. Ratzinger, Spirit of the Liturgy, 32–33. One significant difference between von Balthasar and Benedict’s views of exitus and reitus is that whereas von Balthasar, in a way similar to the Gnostic understanding of exitus, associates it with the Fall (Lösel, “Unapocalyptic Theology,” 203), Benedict associates it with creation itself (Ratzinger, Spirit of the Liturgy, 32).

differently. He states that the cosmos “does not merely form the scene of human history.”135 As I mentioned in the last chapter, Benedict maintains that the cosmos is not like a vessel that can hold a different kind of history; instead, “cosmos is itself ‘history’” since movement is intrinsic to the modern conception of the cosmos.136 The contention that the cosmos can be conceived as history is based on the philosophical position that natural history and human history are constitutive of the cosmos rather than accidental features. While Benedict would agree with von Balthasar that the Christ-event is the most important event of history, his exposition of history is more impervious to Lösel’s critique of von Balthasar than von Balthasar’s view of history.

The second thing to note is that other views can offer a more objective insight into von Balthasar and Benedict’s theologies. Jonathan Martin Ciraulo has a different reading of von Balthasar than Lösel; it is positive, or at least expository, in comparison with Lösel’s polemical tone. Ciraulo contends that eschatology in von Balthasar and Benedict XVI’s eschatologies is regulated by the sacramental economy.137 Ciraulo’s exposition clarifies von Balthasar’s vision of time and eternity and gives perspective to Lösel’s critique.

While Ciraulo recognizes that for von Balthasar eschatology is concerned “firstly with God and then with an extended analysis of the problematic of the relation between God and the world,” he does not see this as a deficiency.138 Instead, Ciraulo points out that for von Balthasar the conversation between the persons of the Trinity is a “prototype of all prayer,” which means

135 Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 320.
136 Ibid.
138 Ibid., 222.
that human liturgy is patterned after “an ‘eternal, reciprocal worship’ within the Trinity.” Von Balthasar therefore rightly relates liturgical worship with eschatology. Within the liturgy, the Eucharist takes the preeminent place. Ciraulo observes, “the Eucharist . . . should be read as the center of his eschatology.” What does this imply about von Balthasar’s theology of time? Jesus said, “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day.” According to Ciraulo’s analysis of von Balthasar, “Eternal life does not belong to ‘after’ this life, because it does not belong to chronological time (χρόνος) but is always perpendicular to it and accessible in a veiled form.” It also implies that for von Balthasar, eternity and time, as well as heaven and earth, are not phenomena that are entirely closed off from each other; instead, they are “permeable and mutually indwell one another, primarily because of the sacraments.” More dramatically, according to von Balthasar “the drama of the Passion, to which the Eucharist belongs, embraces all past and future points in time.” Is Lösel correct to suggest that von Balthasar’s theology of history relativizes all time and as a result fosters an apathetic attitude with regard to the social status quo?

I believe that Lösel is not correct for two reasons. First, von Balthasar envisions the Passion of Christ as the hub of all times not to relativize other times but to imbue them with the potential of sanctifying grace. Secondly, von Balthasar writes about social justice, which Lösel


140 Ibid., 225; italics Ciraulo’s.

141 John 6:54, NAB.


143 Ibid., 224–25; cf. Benedict XVI, God Is Near Us, 141: “Present and eternity are not, like present and future, located side by side and separated; rather, they are interwoven.”

does not mention in his article on von Balthasar’s vision of time. “We have a strict Christian duty to fight for social justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed,” von Balthasar affirms, but “such fighting can only be one element within a more all-embracing struggle, namely, the battle of the Logos.”

Social justice, in von Balthasar’s mind, ought to be contextualized within the overarching framework of God’s grand design. For von Balthasar,

All the intermediate zones [of liberation theology], in spite of their urgency, must be seen to be relative, at least where they have political and economic liberation in the foreground. Other liberation movements merit theological credentials only if they are carried on within the horizon of that ultimate liberation won by Christ and for him.

Von Balthasar recognizes the necessity of social justice, but correctly puts it in perspective vis-à-vis the entire movement of theo-dramatic salvation history. After all, when Jesus was asked which is the greatest commandment, he said it is to love God with all one’s being; only then did he say that the second commandment is to love one’s neighbor as oneself (Mark 12:28-31).

Although the two commandments are inextricable, by contextualizing social justice in the broader horizon of God’s action for human beings, and human beings’ response to God, von Balthasar is implicitly acknowledging the ordering of the two greatest commandments.

Lösel disparages “Balthasar’s specific understanding of the theo-drama as a vertical event between heaven and earth.” In Lösel’s reading of von Balthasar, the way he approaches exitus-reditus is problematic since he seems to emphasize looking backwards to the Christ event rather than keeping one’s eyes on the reditus, i.e. the return of Christ and the restoration of all things.

For Lösel, von Balthasar’s interpretation of the Christ event as the center of history, his view that the horizontal dimension of theo-drama ought to be interpreted in light of its vertical dimension

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145 Ibid., 486.
146 Ibid., 487.
147 Lösel, “Unapocalyptic Theology,” 203.
since the latter is the source of the former, the truncation of Israel’s salvation history and the retrospection caused by an emphasis on the cross and resurrection as opposed to the second coming of Christ produce an eschatology that is “unapocalyptic” and discourages engagement with social justice issues.148

Does the exitus-reeditus schema that is present in von Balthasar’s theology of history, as well as Benedict’s, stunt motivation to seek a more just society? In nascent form, exitus-reeditus can also be found in the writings of St. Paul even if he does not explicitly use this concept. This can be seen, for instance, in the letter to the Colossians in which Paul states that all things were created through Christ (1:16) and that all things are redeemed through the blood of the cross (1:20). For Paul, the entire economy of creation and salvation comes through Christ and, through Christ, is offered back to God the Father. Not only this, but the cross takes the center position of this drama, just as it does in von Balthasar’s theo-drama. Yet Paul encourages people to be socially engaged as well. He asks Christians to pray for the state (1 Tim. 2:1-3). Furthermore, he distributes money to the poor (Rom. 15:25-26) and heals the sick (Acts 14:8-16). In my view, von Balthasar takes a Pauline approach when he simultaneously affirms what could be described as an early version of the exitus-reeditus model and the importance of social justice. The exitus-reeditus schema does not in itself reinforce the status quo. Yet there is also a case to be made that von Balthasar does not fully recognize the need for social engagement and the dire straits of the poor. A more ideal approach would be to affirm von Balthasar’s position of contextualizing social liberation within the traditional economy of salvation while emphasizing more strongly the need for siding with the poor.

148 Ibid., 204–205; 219.
Because Benedict’s view of history is somewhat different than von Balthasar’s, this same line of reasoning does not necessarily apply to Benedict. What is required is a separate analysis of Benedict’s exitus-reditus model to see whether it reinforces the social status quo. Though similar to von Balthasar’s model of time, Benedict’s vision of exitus-reditus has one significant difference in that Benedict discerns “many small circles of the lives of individuals . . . inscribed within the one great circle of history as it moves from exitus to reeditus.”\(^{149}\) The overall pattern, therefore, can be found repeated at smaller levels. Furthermore, the small circles, which describe not only the movements of individuals but also of societies, give the overarching circle “concrete forms that are ever new, and so provide it with the force of its movement.”\(^{150}\) The way Benedict models the individual circles on the great circle is instructive since it essentially mirrors his ecclesiology and, arguably, the way he approaches liberation theology. One might point out that this exitus-reditus model is nothing new since Pseudo-Dionysius implies that there are smaller circles since he states that “the things that have gone forth from [God] return to [God] again.”\(^{151}\) Yet if this is the case, what this implies is that since Benedict’s model is at least related to, if not based on, Pseudo-Dionysius’s model of exitus-reditus, then the somewhat archaic model of Pseudo-Dionysius needs to be revised.\(^{152}\)

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\(^{150}\) Ibid.


\(^{152}\) This is not to say that Pseudo-Dionysius’s exitus-reditus model is no longer relevant, but that to account for social situations, it is important to have a more nuanced account of time. Pseudo-Dionysius wrote *The Divine Names* as a mystical theological treatise, not as a practical theology. I put forth my proposal on how Pseudo-Dionysius’s theological template of exitus-reditus may be revised in light of Michel Serres’s contemporary philosophical theory of time in the section below in which I offer my constructive criticisms of Benedict’s thought regarding cosmic liturgy, time, and social justice.
Although Benedict seeks to affirm in this passage the priority of the individual by specifically noting that the small circles are unique and give the large circle its general thrust, by modeling the smaller circles on the larger circle, Benedict’s model of time nurtures the illusion that a uniform theological method is sufficient for analyzing the smaller levels of the individual and particular communities. Such a view of the relationship between individuals and the church at large is like noting that atoms are similar to solar systems since in both phenomena, there are less massive entities orbiting a more massive entity. Such an observation, though true, does not do justice to the different kinds of approaches that each level requires.

Donal Dorr’s critique of Benedict’s view of liberation theology demonstrates how different approaches are sometimes necessary. After noting that although Benedict does not ever explicitly say so, the overall impression his writings give is that he does not approve of political or economic confrontation, Dorr points out that Benedict offers an alternative approach characterized by opening oneself to God, fostering Christian love in one’s relationships with one’s neighbors, and bringing God’s gratuitousness in the economic and social spheres. Yet Dorr essentially rejects Benedict’s dichotomy of either accepting liberation theology or rejecting it for his alternative approach. Dorr proposes instead that both approaches be affirmed and used as different situations demand. He contends that there are some circumstances that require those in positions of ecclesial authority to respond. As an example of such circumstances, Dorr brings up the 1986 People’s Revolution Movement in the Philippines and the galvanizing actions of Cardinal Jamie Sin that led to the exiling of the corrupt President Marcos.

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154 Ibid., 351–52. Another example is Oscar Romero who spoke out on behalf of the people of El Salvador, only to be shot while he was celebrating Mass.
Benedict’s position that the laity should be the primary political participants should be the default position; I base my opinion on an episode in the Acts of the Apostles of a social crisis; the Greeks were being treated unfairly while the Hebrew widows received special treatment.\textsuperscript{155} The apostles decided to appoint deacons who were practical to sort out this issue so that the apostles could devote themselves to prayer and to preaching the Word of God. When necessary, however, bishops and ecclesial leaders should become involved to care for their flock, to avoid scandal, and to pursue justice. I agree with Dorr’s position that there needs to be different approaches in different circumstances and that Benedict’s approach is not particularly sensitive to the different methods that diverse problems demand.\textsuperscript{156}

In addition to Lösel’s critique of von Balthasar’s exitus-reitus paradigm, which has implications for Benedict’s exitus-reitus paradigm, and the closely related critique of Donal Dorr that Benedict is not open to the possibility that a liberation theological approach may at times be a justifiable response to the injustice of a particular regime, there is another important allegation that needs to be taken into consideration when assessing the relationship between Benedict’s cosmic liturgy and social justice. Jürgen Moltmann takes issue with theologies that, in his view, overemphasize the role of liturgy or that push eschatological fulfillment into the transcendent realm. Cyril O’Regan has pointed out that Moltmann prefers not to use Revelation since Moltmann “discourages an emphasis on the liturgical, which, in Moltmann’s view too

\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{155}} The scriptural passage reads as follows: “At that time, as the number of disciples continued to grow, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. So the Twelve called together the community of the disciples and said, “It is not right for us to neglect the word of God to serve at table. Brothers, select from among you seven reputable men, filled with the Spirit and wisdom, whom we shall appoint to this task, whereas we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word’” (Acts 6:1-4, NAB).

\textsuperscript{\footnotesize{156}} I do not believe, however, that ecclesial leaders should ever condone violence. The People’s Revolution Movement was a nonviolent revolution, which shows that even though Cardinal Sin was politically involved, violent resistance was not the objective.
readily suggests a controllable site for the presence of the kingdom.” Does Benedict’s theology fall under this category and if so, does it thereby imply that in his view the institutional church has a monopoly on grace and that the Holy Spirit cannot blow where it will (John 3:8)?

While it is apparent that Benedict does not seem to afford to social justice issues the same kind of gravitas he gives to liturgical activity, he would not describe the sacraments as a realm that human beings control. Like Moltmann, he also critiques the attempt to control the divine. Commenting on the ancient religious belief of the cycle in which human beings need the blessings of the gods, Benedict remarks, “Of course, distortion and abuse also lurk behind the door: man somehow has power over the gods; in some small way, in his relationship to them, he has the key to reality in his hand.” Yet the question remains, Does Benedict envision the sacraments as enjoying a privileged role as the primary source of grace, thereby relativizing the significance of non-liturgical channels of grace? I believe that he does, but that the significance of social encounters need not be relativized even as liturgy is emphasized, as I make clear in my proposal to adopt a new model of time.

Conclusions

Having gone over the positive implications of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy for the environment and various criticisms of Benedict’s theology in general and his cosmic liturgy in particular, I will put forth two conclusions about Benedict’s cosmic liturgy: (1) Benedict’s cosmic liturgy is oriented toward social action, which is empowered by kenosis, (2) but despite

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this orientation, it would benefit from (a) utilizing the concept of *kairos* and (b) taking into account the historical developments in the liturgical and social spheres, an appreciation that can be gained by applying a Serrian model of time to the *exitus-reditus* paradigm.

*Openness to Social Justice*

On the one hand, there are some theologians who maintain that Benedict does not sufficiently link liturgy and social justice. In a 2005 article at the beginning of Benedict’s papacy, Christopher Ruddy states that Benedict “will . . . need to affirm more explicitly that worship and justice mutually reinforce one another.”¹⁵⁹ Ruddy, looking ahead, does not have the luxury of being able to witness the evolution of Benedict’s papacy and to analyze his papal documents whereas Donal Dorr utilizes this perspective in his 2012 edition of *Option for the Poor and for the Earth: Catholic Social Teaching*.

Assessing Benedict’s position on social justice issues, Dorr, though not explicitly commenting on Benedict’s liturgical theology, maintains, “There can be no serious doubt about Pope Benedict’s commitment to having the church play a major role in the establishment of justice in society.”¹⁶⁰ This becomes more evident when one considers that, following Pope John Paul II, Benedict insists that Europe has Christian roots.¹⁶¹ In his view, the values of freedom, rights, and human dignity are Christian in origin, which implies that the values that inspire social justice in the western world are supported by the church in principle.¹⁶² Despite his vehement


¹⁶⁰ Dorr, *Option for the Poor*, 343.


¹⁶² Ibid., 36. At the same time, there seems to be something Hegelian about Benedict’s championing and reifying the European ethos; According to Hegel, “Europe is absolutely the end of History.” Georg Wilhelm
stance against liberation theology, Benedict is not against social justice; on the contrary, he promotes it and has also written about the connection between liturgy and social justice issues, thereby indicating that his liturgical theology is in principle open to social justice.

Jesus saves the world not merely at the anthropological level but also at the cosmic level. In the liturgy, the renewal of creation is already proclaimed. Benedict comments that “by the message of the angels to the shepherds, we received the good news of man’s salvation and the renewal of the entire universe.” Liturgy reminds participants that God offers salvation to human beings, gives them the opportunity to commune with God, and teaches them the rudiments of a proper anthropology; in these ways, it conditions Christians to go out into the world with a proper perception of human dignity and uniquely equips them to foster nurturing relationships with their family members, friends, acquaintances, other members of society, and their ecological contexts.

Liturgy also heightens their awareness of their need to make responsible decisions for future generations and for the world. It might seem counterintuitive at first, but as Benedict explains, “whereas in the Liturgy the Church appears to be engaged in self-contemplation, in reality she enters into the heart of the world, and works actively for the latter’s liberating transformation.” Liturgy enables Christians to enter the sacrifice of Christ, unites them to God, and gives them grace to have a positive impact on the rest of the world through their union with the divine. It enables them to prepare in the world a dwelling place for God by first preparing

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within themselves a place that is fitting for God to reside, but this can only occur through kenosis, or self-emptying.

By becoming a new creation through kenosis and allowing God to shine through oneself as light shines through a window, one becomes deified and transformed into a channel of God’s goodness that flows to other human beings and the rest of creation. In this way, all of creation is prepared to become a receptacle of the divine, a place that is holy, pure, and clean, both at the physical and ethical levels. The kenosis of Christ is the template of the Christian experience of salvation according to Benedict, since “salvation means becoming ‘the body of Christ’, becoming like Christ himself, receiving ourselves from him every day and giving ourselves back every day, offering our body every day as the place where the Word can dwell.”

This is connected to a passage from the letter to the Hebrews that states that “when Christ came into the world, he said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me.’” For Christians, kenosis entails laying down one’s life, embracing the collective life of the Body of Christ, and receiving one’s life anew, enhanced by this process of kenosis.

According to Benedict, the Christian becomes God by participating in Christ’s address to the Father and offering oneself to be done with as God sees fit, and in doing so, one becomes the dwelling place of God. In Benedict’s words,

In the Son’s obedience, where both wills become one in a single Yes to the will of the Father, communion takes place between human and divine being. The ‘wondrous exchange’, the ‘alchemy of being’, is realized here as a liberating and reconciling communication, which becomes a communion between Creator and creature. It is in the

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167 Heb. 10:5, NRSV.
pain of this exchange, and only here, that the fundamental change takes place in man, the change which alone can redeem him and transform the conditions of the world. . . . The act whereby we participate in the Son’s obedience, which involves man’s genuine transformation, is also the only really effective contribution toward renewing and transforming society and the world as a whole. Only where this act takes place is there a change for good—in the direction of the kingdom of God.\(^{168}\)

In Benedict’s vision, therefore, social justice can only be brought about if one is fully engaged in this process of spiritual transformation through kenosis.\(^{169}\) This kenosis, however, brings about another effect: the preparation for the coming of God.

In the liturgy, people should “prepare for [God] a dwelling place in the world.”\(^{170}\) This also means that the Christian task does not end when a liturgical celebration has ended; rather, it has only begun. After participating in the liturgy, the believer ought not to leave the church after the service as though nothing had changed, but is called to live a new life in Christ and to work toward justice, peace, and love. Christians are called to bear fruit in the public sphere. One could describe the liturgy as a source of energy for Christians to carry out their apostolates and ministries in the world. In the words of Benedict,

The Eucharistic bread imparts its blessing to the daily bread, and each loaf of the latter silently points to him who wished to be the bread of us all. So the liturgy opens out into everyday life, into our earthly life and cares; it goes beyond the church precincts because it actually embraces heaven and earth, present and future. How we need this sign! Liturgy is not the private hobby of a particular group; it is about the bond which holds heaven and earth together, it is about the human race and the entire created world.\(^{171}\)

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\(^{169}\) This is a view that is corroborated by John Haught who writes that when religious activism is separated from the sacramental, mystical, and silent aspects of religion, it devolves into secularism (Haught, *Promise of Nature*, 86).

\(^{170}\) Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 204.

Benedict emphasizes that the liturgy has a universal quality; its purpose is not to make people feel good, but to draw people in to Christ’s work of transforming the cosmos. The consecration of the host, a tiny portion of this cosmos, announces the divinization of the universe. In this way, liturgy bridges the particular and the universal, as well as past, present, and future. The members of the congregation who partake of the eucharistic bread are called to transform the universe, starting with themselves and expanding to ever-widening circles of concern; hence, the moral dimension of the liturgy in its relation to human ecology as well as to natural ecology, is ordered to the eschatological fulfillment of the world.

Liturgy impels Christians to engage with the world and to be responsible stewards of creation. In Benedict’s words,

Engagement with the world, as demanded by God’s word, makes us look with new eyes at the entire created cosmos, which contains traces of that word through whom all things were made (cf. Jn 1:2). As men and women who believe in and proclaim the Gospel, we have a responsibility toward creation. Revelation makes known God’s plan for the cosmos, yet it also leads us to denounce that mistaken attitude which refuses to view all created realities as a reflection of their Creator, but instead as mere raw material, to be exploited without scruple.\footnote{Benedict XVI, The Environment, 146.}

The New Testament witnesses to the concept of creation as being the receptacle of the divine since it describes the new Jerusalem as the dwelling place of God, a state that begins to develop in the midst of present reality through the liturgy.

Benedict is correct to stress that kenosis and a deep spirituality are prerequisites for changing social structures and bringing about change. This can be seen in multiple examples from the social repercussions of the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth in the Mediterranean world in the first several centuries to the non-violent resistance of Mahatma
Gandhi in twentieth-century India. Such spiritual depth has the power to bring about social upheavals that, in their own ways, announce the coming of the Kingdom of God.

Constructive Criticism

Though Benedict’s cosmic liturgy is open to social action, this orientation can be strengthened. There are two areas where it could be improved: the first is the recognition of the function of *kairos* in Benedict’s theology of time and the second is a reconfiguring of his vision of the texture of time itself so that there will be a greater emphasis on individuality and the necessity for particular methodologies that arise from particular sets of circumstances.

Kairos

If one were to scour Benedict’s corpus for the term *kairos*, one would be hard-pressed to find it despite its recent popularity. 173 This is an area where Benedict’s liturgical theology in the dimension of its relationship to social action (including ecological stewardship) can be strengthened. 174 How can one account for this absence? *Kairos* as a modern theological term perhaps first emerged with Paul Tillich and was later used by liberation theologians. 175 Since the nascent stage of liberation theology, *kairos* theology has emerged as a subfield of liberation theology. This background helps to explain why Benedict neither uses the concept of *kairos* in

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174 Ratzinger, “The End of Time”; In this essay, Benedict does not even mention *kairos* once, whereas in a book chapter appearing in the same volume in which Benedict’s essay appears, Moltmann uses the word *kairos* five times. Jürgen Moltmann, “From the Beginning of Time in God’s Presence,” in *The End of Time: The Provocation of Talking about God*, ed. and trans. J. Matthew Ashley (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 55, 61, 63, 64. Benedict also does not mention *kairos* in *Introduction to Christianity*, *Eschatology*, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, or any of his three *Jesus of Nazareth* volumes.

175 Perhaps the most famous instance of *kairos* being used as a call for action in modern times is the 1985 *Kairos Document* in South America. More recently in 2009, Michel Sabbah, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem et al. produced the *Kairos Palestine Document*, which calls for an end to the Israeli occupation of the Middle East.
his books before it became popular nor afterward: he does not use it before since it was not a popular theological term that was used to describe specific moments in the current age (instead, it was primarily restricted to biblical discussions of the use of this word in the New Testament) and he does not use it after, perhaps because he believes that the way certain liberation theologians have used the term is essentially an illicit usurping of this term. Whatever the case may be, kairos is virtually absent from Benedict’s theological lexicon, but not entirely.

Despite the nonexistence of the term kairos in Benedict’s works, Emery de Gaál, a former student of Benedict, provides an insight into what Benedict believes about kairos. According to de Gaál, Benedict “divines in the present age a singular kairos, a privileged moment for a deeper appreciation of faith.”\footnote{Emery de Gaál, The Theology of Pope Benedict XVI: The Christocentric Shift (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 133.} Kairos for Benedict can be an opportune time that occurs in any age; however, de Gaál explicitly identifies the purpose of this particular kairos in Benedict’s thought as an increase in the appreciation of faith, not an opportunity for social action. In a similar passage, de Gaál mentions kairos in describing Benedict’s view on freedom. De Gaál states that according to Benedict, “only confronting the true God and the human being Jesus Christ brings about the unique opportunity, the kairos to become genuinely free.”\footnote{Ibid., 224.} In both of these passages, Benedict maintains that kairos is an initiative of God that helps to deepen one’s relationship with God, whether it is through an increase in faith or freedom.

One harbinger of Benedict’s interpretation of kairos predates the time when the term kairos came in vogue in liberation theology circles. Jean Mouroux uses the word kairos to describe significant points in time such as decisive moments in the life of Christ, sacramental
acts, opportunities for conversion, and the stages of spiritual growth per ascetical and mystical theology.\textsuperscript{178} Like Benedict, Mouroux strongly emphasizes the liturgy.\textsuperscript{179} In Mouroux’s words,

The sacraments involve the whole mystery of Christ. Thus they bring about the full measure of salvation in all its dimensions. For the community and the individual they always represent important \textit{kairos}. Each time the sacramental act is performed, the Lord lays a sovereign hand on the Church and a spiritual event of salvation-history is visibly realized.\textsuperscript{180}

Mouroux therefore closely associates \textit{kairos} with liturgical time, something that Benedict would no doubt agree with.\textsuperscript{181}

The fundamental question about \textit{kairos} that emerges is, Can human beings experience \textit{kairos} in relation to other people, i.e. in situations pertaining to social justice issues? I am convinced that there are \textit{kairos} that can be experienced as experiences of the divine through other human beings. The parable of the sheep and the goats (Matt. 25:31-46), after all, highlights the eschatological and vicarious natures of encounters with those who are in need. To recognize \textit{kairos} in Christians’ relationships with those who suffer is not to pit this kind of \textit{kairos} against the \textit{kairos} that are experienced in the sacraments and the spiritual life; instead, it is to give a nod to the sanctity of engaging in social justice.\textsuperscript{182}


\textsuperscript{179} In addition to Mouroux and Benedict’s liturgical affinities, they also both share a vision of cosmic eschatology. For Mouroux’s cosmic eschatology, see ibid., 163: “Christ is now ‘the Firstfruits’ of a re-created world, the germinal cell of a redeemed universe. . . . Christ also draws all men to Himself in order to fashion His Body — the nucleus of the new world. . . . the Risen Christ draws the entire universe to Himself. It is the body of His Body.”

\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 227.

\textsuperscript{181} The kind of \textit{kairos} that is present in Mouroux’s work differs dramatically from the kind of \textit{kairos} that liberation theologians have emphasized in their writings. To see this, one must characterize the kinds of \textit{kairos} Mouroux writes about. In every case that Mouroux uses the word \textit{kairos} (or \textit{kairois}), there is a direct relating between God and a human being, whether this is done through the sacraments, a conversion experience, or Jesus experiencing a momentous event in his life. The only case of \textit{kairos} in Mouroux’s book in which human beings interact with each other is when people work for the conversion of others (ibid., 260).

\textsuperscript{182} This is perhaps no more evident than in the Carmelite tradition since the Carmelites consider the prophet Elijah as the founder of their ideal and as a model of what a true Carmelite should be. Elijah’s life was not one of
There is nothing in principle preventing Benedict from using the term. In fact, von Balthasar used the term in his writings, despite being wary about the thrust of liberation theology. Regarding von Balthasar’s interpretation of kairos, Aidan Nichols comments, “‘Kairos’ means the possibility of understanding some ‘moment’ in the perspective of the Absolute and thus being able to turn it, even in its fracturedness, towards the Eternal.”

Furthermore, logos and kairos do not exclude each other; both characterize Christian thinking as truth and decision. There does not seem to be any convincing theological reason why Benedict avoids using kairos in his theology other than his aversion for liberation theology.

There is a caveat to using the term kairos for social activism, however: simply declaring a time a kairos does not make it a kairos. Kairos was, after all, originally conceived as an opportune time in relation to the craft of weaving in which “the opening in the warp lasts only a limited time, and the ‘shot’ must be made while it is open.” Furthermore, this was understood in Greek mythology to be directly in connection to the Moirai, or the Fates, who controlled destiny. Those who strive to bring about authentic human liberation need to keep in mind that God exercises control over the course of the universe although it is equally true that he has granted human beings free will. They also need to realize that the individual threads unite to make a tapestry. Those who work for social justice need to keep in mind the entire tapestry as pure contemplation but was also one of social justice (1 Kings 21). Yet Elijah continuously stood in the presence of the Lord (1 Kings 17:1, 18:15), indicating that even in his dealings with others, he was not departing from the presence of the Almighty. For this reason, Carmelites consider it their duty to be actively engaged in social justice causes despite their emphasis on contemplation and mystical union with God.


184 Ibid.

185 Richard Broxton Onians, The Origins of European Thought about the Body, the Mind, the Soul, the World, Time, and Fate: New Interpretations of Greek, Roman and Kindred Evidence Also of Some Basic Jewish and Christian Beliefs, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 346.
well as the individual threads. At the same time, theologians who are more concerned with the overall shape and hues of the tapestry need to remember the significance of the individual threads. In this way, theologians who take a top-down approach will not confine themselves to their ivory towers and theologians who take a bottom-up approach will not miss the forest for the trees. To facilitate this much-needed balance, I propose a new paradigm of exitus-reditus.

A Serrian Theological Model of Exitus-Reditus

French philosopher Michel Serres’s musings about time provide helpful insights into the nature and texture of time. Using the tapestry metaphor from Greek mythology, I believe that Serres’s vision of time reveals something about the texture of the threads and the way they are woven. According to Serres, time is best conceived as a phenomenon that is related to chaos theory; simply put, time has a chaotic nature. In his words, “The usual theory supposes time to be always and everywhere laminar . . . No, time flows in a turbulent and chaotic manner; it percolates.”186 Serres unorthodoxly contends that two periods of time that are quite close in terms of duration can actually be rather disparate whereas other periods of time that are apparently separated by a long time can actually be quite close together. What makes his view possible is what he calls a topological understanding of time. By this, he means that although time can be conceived as linear for the purposes of keeping time, the nature of time itself is not linear. Serres turns to the image of a handkerchief to explain this topological understanding of time.

If you take the handkerchief and spread it out in order to iron in it, you can see in it certain fixed distances and proximities . . . Then take the same handkerchief and crumple it, by putting it in your pocket. Two distant points suddenly are close, even superimposed.

If, further, you tear it in certain places, two points that were close can become very distant . . . [Time] resembles this crumpled version much more than the flat, overly simplified one.

Admittedly, we need the latter for measurements, but why extrapolate from the general theory of time? 

*People usually confuse time and the measurement of time,* which is a metrical reading on a straight line. \(^{187}\)

This topographical model of time allows different times to be superimposed on top of each other.

This theory of time suggests that there is a philosophical justification for holding the position that a reality or situation that occurred in the past can be contemporaneous with the present, thus affirming the Thomistic element in Benedict’s liturgy that maintains the simultaneity of the Paschal Mystery and the sacraments. In a theological vision of time inspired by Serres’s account of the chaotic nature of time, Serres’s image of the handkerchief can be used to describe the relationship that exists between the event of the death and resurrection of Jesus and the liturgical rites that are celebrated at various times throughout history. According to this model, the historical events surrounding the Paschal Mystery are the central event on which are superimposed innumerable sacramental and liturgical actions. Going back to the tapestry metaphor, the Paschal Mystery is the red thread that runs throughout the course of history. Liturgical actions are close together, as it were, because of their topological proximity to the Paschal Mystery; as such, liturgical moments can be interpreted as kairotic moments since they offer an opportune time for salvation. As previously mentioned, this is also the view of Jean Mouroux. I am not suggesting replacing the *exitus-reditus* paradigm, but rather synthesizing the *exitus-reditus* model with a Serrian understanding of time. What emerges is a grand arch whose trajectory on the large scale is clear, but when looked at under the microscope, as it were, is unpredictable since there appear chaotic elements of time.

\(^{187}\) Ibid., 60–61; italics Serres’s.
There are three analogies from science and mathematics that help to flesh out this model: chaos theory, string theory, and the unification theory. According to chaos theory, systems are highly sensitive to initial conditions; slight variations in such conditions can drastically change future events. This has come to be known as the butterfly effect. “Yet chaos is not randomness,” explains Peter Dizikes.\(^{188}\) Despite highlighting the unpredictability of the universe, there are set parameters in which potential events can unfold. What does this have to do with a theological vision of time? On a large scale, the exitus-reditus paradigm looks simply like a monolithic closed arch extending from God and returning back to God; however, I am proposing that upon closer analysis one should be able to detect a kind of texture to time, one that is chaotic in nature, according to the vision of Michel Serres. This implies unpredictability on the one hand, and reason on the other, which I interpret as indicative of divine providence working through events.

Jackson Pollock, an artist who is known for producing drip paintings with highly complex patterns, is said to have produced fractal patterns in his work, thereby making his work the subject of analysis by mathematicians who specialize in chaos theory.\(^{189}\) If one takes the chaotic nature of Pollock’s paintings as representative of the complexity of human social interactions,\(^{190}\) then if one were to zoom in on the exitus-reditus model, in addition to finding repeating patterns with respect to little versions of the exitus-reditus phenomena insofar as every human life constitutes a coming forth from God in its creation and a return to God through death.


(in this sense, Benedict’s version of exitus-reditus is fractal-like since one of the qualities of fractals is that they are self-repeating patterns), one could also describe the interactions of human beings with each other as looking like the intertwining paint strands of a Jackson Pollock painting. Such encounters would be unpredictable but preordained.

The second analogy that aids in filling out this picture of the Serrian theological model is based on string theory. According to string theory, which claims that there are at least ten dimensions to observable reality, particles may be described as vibrating strings. Kairos was originally conceived as being related to strings or threads. Even the strands of paint on Pollock’s canvases look like strings. The drama of humanity is constituted by the vibrations and intersections of people just as a tapestry is composed of individual strings, a Pollock painting looks like it is composed of strings, and particles are made of strings per string theory.

The last analogy is based on Albert Einstein’s quest for a unified theory. Einstein searched for a unified theory that would be able to describe physical phenomena at the microscopic and macroscopic levels and explain in an elegant manner various forces such as gravity and electromagnetism. Einstein struggled with how to fit quantum mechanics into his theory of relativity. Although he had a sophisticated theory of the macroscopic level, he was at a loss when it came to incorporating the microscopic level into his system. Benedict is like Einstein in this regard since like Einstein, Benedict has an overarching theological system but he struggles to fit the microscopic into the macroscopic. I believe that he is under the impression

191 Ratzinger, Spirit of the Liturgy, 29.


193 Ibid.
that there is one overarching theological theory that is capable of sufficiently describing both levels. This Serrian theological model of time suggests that Benedict’s theological version of a unified theological theory fails to describe both the macroscopic and the microscopic levels. The primary ramification that follows is that different methods are required for different levels. The Serrian version holds in tension the top-down or macroscopic paradigm of time as found in the ancient *exitus-reditus* model and the bottom-up or microscopic view of human time as a struggle for liberation, both socio-political and spiritual, thereby uniting the Platonic and Aristotelian approaches. Although I am aware that this model of time needs to be developed more than the space of this dissertation permits, I believe that it is a step towards a rapprochement between the theological tendencies to universalize and particularize to extremes.\footnote{This could, in principle, have some intriguing ecclesiological implications, especially in such issues as church governance, the universality of the scope of the jurisdiction of the successor of St. Peter in relation to the particularity of the authority of autocephalous churches, and the relationship between collegiality and Petrine primacy. If *exitus-reditus* is paradigmatic of the universal church and the textured chaotic interactions in time are representative of the local churches, this would suggest that uniformity is not desirable, although care should be taken to ensure that differences do not threaten unity.}

Such a model of time rebuffs the critiques of Steffen Lösel, Donal Dorr, and Jürgen Moltmann. In the Serrian model of time, there is a delicate tension between the overarching perspective of salvation and redemption offered by God through Jesus Christ in the liturgy and the grassroots, detail-oriented perspective of the kairotic and chaotic nature of time itself, thereby supporting the need for striving for social justice. This scheme sidesteps the critique of Lösel, which argues that one of the problems with von Balthasar’s model of time is that it relativizes every moment since it views them in relation to the cross, by highlighting the uniqueness, unrepeatability, and unpredictability of each moment.

The Serrian model of time also helps to answer Dorr’s critique. According to Dorr, different situations demand different responses and Benedict’s intransigent stance on liberation
theology does not sufficiently differentiate between social situations. The Serrian version of *exitus-reditus* recognizes the textured, unpredictable, and particular characteristics of time, thereby suggesting that different situations demand different approaches.

Finally, the Serrian theological model of time suggests that the liturgy is not a monopolistic aggrandizer of grace, the critique Moltmann levels against certain sacramental systems. Although this model implies that there are liturgical kairotic moments, this model also suggests that there are other *kairoi* that pertain to social justice that occur chaotically. *Kairos* offers to individuals an opportunity to be connected to the past and to make use of one’s present time through a personal decision not only in the liturgy but also directly in relation to God through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in non-liturgical settings, thereby shattering the illusion that liturgical rites have a monopoly on moments of grace. Adopting such a model of time would protect Benedict’s cosmic liturgy from Moltmann’s critique. This makes room for *kairoi* to be experienced as encounters with God through one’s neighbor, thereby sanctifying Christian social activism, including ecological activism, so long as it is united to the mystical, sacramental, liturgical, and apophatic dimensions of Christianity. 195

**Conclusion**

At the beginning of the chapter, I continued the argument that I began in chapter two, namely that with the recession of Benedict’s emphasis on the development of cosmic eschatology as a cosmic process, what remains in the foreground is his vision of cosmic liturgy, which emerges as the perennial feature of his cosmic eschatology. I explained the exterior and

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195 This is based on Haught’s definition of religion as characterized by four elements: sacramentalism, mysticism, silence, and action. According to Haught, for religion to be healthy it must have aspects of all four facets so that religion will not disintegrate. For an extended description of these four aspects of religion according to Haught, see Haught, *Promise of Nature*, 73–87.
interior origins of his cosmic liturgy. The former includes Scripture and Hans Urs von Balthasar’s reception and interpretation of the theology of Maximus the Confessor whereas the latter can be traced to Benedict’s writings in the 1960s. After explaining the origins of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy, I catalogued its main features: the cosmos as the context of worship, liturgy as God-given rather than crafted by human beings, the Thomistic nature of Benedict’s vision of liturgical representation and anticipation with an emphasis on cosmic apotheosis as the culmination of a series of transformations, and the Paschal Mystery as the foundation of cosmic liturgy.

In the second half of the chapter, I assessed Benedict’s cosmic liturgy by presenting and evaluating the arguments of theologians who critique his thought after I described the positive elements of his cosmic liturgy, which are its emphasis on sacramentality, its linking of present actions to the future state of the world, and its emphasis on the cosmic scope of salvation, which is capable of augmenting the scope of moral concern. Having presented the positive aspects of Benedict’s cosmic liturgy, I recounted some of the criticisms of his theology in general before looking at some of the problems with his cosmic liturgy in particular. Following Mariusz Biliniewicz, I traced the Platonic, Augustinian, and Bonaventurian strands in Benedict’s thought. At the same time, I did not accept the validity of all of these criticisms because, to my mind, Platonic and Aristotelian elements should coexist so that they can balance each other.

Due to the lack of sources explicitly critiquing Benedict’s cosmic liturgy, I used Steffen Lösel’s critique of Hans Urs von Balthasar’s theology of time as a vicarious critique of Benedict’s appeal to an exitus-reditus model of time. As it turns out, however, Benedict’s vision of exitus-reditus models smaller circles on the larger exitus-reditus circle, thereby evincing his top-down approach. After noting that this may in part account for his ecclesiological views and
his stance on liberation theology, I brought up Donal Dorr’s point that there are some situations in which the hierarchy needs to react in a courageous manner to unjust regimes; the actions of Cardinal Jaimie Sin in the Philippines during the People’s Power Movement is Dorr’s prime example. I ended this section by bringing up Jürgen Moltmann’s critique (which he does not directly aim at Benedict) that overemphasizing the importance of the sacraments might bring about the impression that people can control God. I noted that Benedict does not view the sacraments as a realm of control, but granted that his emphasis on the liturgy may have the tendency to relativize the significance of non-liturgical channels of grace.

I concluded that although Benedict’s cosmic liturgy is in principle open to and oriented toward social justice (but only when it is primed by kenosis), its connection to social and environmental activism can be strengthened in two ways: (1) by promoting the use of the term *kairos* in social situations that are opportune times for personal and social conversion and reform in the context of social interactions and (2) by modifying the classical *exitus-reditus* paradigm of time by superimposing on it a Serrian view of the chaotic nature of time. The advantages of this model of time are that it gives a prominent place to non-liturgical *kairoi*, shows that different methods are required at different levels of society, and destroys the myth that liturgy has a monopoly on the sources of grace.

In the next chapter, I will explore and evaluate Benedict’s human ecology and pneumatology. Like his cosmic liturgy, Benedict’s views on these topics have their own strengths and deficiencies. One of the main problems in Benedict’s papal teachings on the environment is that he rarely appeals to eschatology as a motivation for conservation and efforts to combat human-caused climate change. In addition to this, he takes a top-down approach, but
in so doing, he does not adequately highlight the need for science and technology for arriving at sustainable solutions to the current ecological crisis.

The second topic I will examine is Benedict’s pneumatology. While Benedict is to be lauded for his attempt to articulate his brand of religious inclusivism, his insistence on the realm of the Holy Spirit seems to conflict with the view of John Paul II, who sees the Holy Spirit at work in all cultures. I propose that a greater recognition of the role of science and a broader recognition of the role of the Holy Spirit, who not only is at work in other cultures, religions, and Christian denominations, but is also the Creator Spiritus who renews the face of the Earth, would strengthen Benedict’s teaching on environmentalism, ecumenism, interreligious dialogue, and pneumatology.
Chapter 4

Human Ecology and Pneumatology

While Earth has undergone numerous climate changes, the current ecological crisis, which has been partially caused by humans, threatens the very existence of human beings and has already led to dire consequences. Species are becoming extinct at an alarming rate, rainforests are being destroyed, and ecosystems are becoming unbalanced.¹ Behind all of this is a moral sickness: human greed and a disregard for justice have contributed to the precarious situation of the planet. Michel Serres writes, “Earth is floating in space like a fetus in amniotic fluid.”² Using this comparison, one could say that the Earth’s situation in the current ecological crisis is like an unborn infant that is in danger of being miscarried. The environment needs healing, and since moral pathologies underlie the sickness, the solution must entail a rejuvenation of morality. There exists an interdependent relationship between anthropology and

¹ The Center for Biological Diversity cites E. Chivian and A Bernstein (eds.), Sustaining Life: How Human Health Depends on Biodiversity, Center for Health and the Global Environment (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), (page number not provided) to support its claim that the current rate of species extinction is 1,000 to 10,000 times the normal background rate of 1 species per year as a result of human activity (Center for Biological Diversity, “The Extinction Crisis,” accessed July 24, 2017, http://www.biologicaldiversity.org/programs/biodiversity/elements_of_biodiversity/extinction_crisis/). For a modern Thomistic account of the importance of the diversity of species, see Daniel P. Scheid, “Thomas Aquinas, the Cosmic Common Good, & Climate Change,” in Confronting the Climate Crisis: Catholic Theological Perspectives (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2011), 125–44. Scheid brings up St. Thomas Aquinas’s point that a multitude of species enriches the universe and references Thomas’s commentary on the Sentences of Peter Lombard, in which he juxtaposes the worth of two universes: one composed only of angels and the other composed of rocks and angels, and remarks that the one with rocks and angels is more excellent since the diversity of species in the universe more fully reflects the glory of God (ibid., 129). Scheid recasts the idea of the common good into a “cosmic common good” in which there is one overarching good for the entire cosmos, which Scheid ultimately identifies as God (ibid., 131). Recently, Scheid has expanded his reflection on the cosmic common good to include a consideration of religious diversity; see Daniel P. Scheid, The Cosmic Common Good: Religious Grounds for Ecological Ethics (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). In my interpretation of this vision, all of the religions, like the various species, reflect God’s glory more than if there were only one religion, just as the universe with rocks and angels is more perfect than the one with merely angels. In Scheid’s own words, “The cosmic common good emerges as a thoroughly Catholic and Christian concept that yields a point of dynamic and fruitful convergence with multiple religious traditions” (ibid., 126).

ecology, a relationship that stands as the foundation of Benedict XVI’s vision of human ecology, which is the topic of the first half of this chapter.

In the second half of the chapter, I will turn my attention to pneumatology. For Benedict, it is important for world religions to counter the ecological crisis in solidarity. He states, “Now . . . when mankind has acquired the ability to destroy itself and its planet, it is clear that the religions share a common responsibility to overcome this temptation.” In addition to recognizing the need for cooperation between different religions, Benedict is also cognizant of the importance of ecumenism in combatting ecological destruction. Ecumenism and interreligious dialogue are crucial for safeguarding creation, but perhaps even more crucial is the recovery of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, or pneumatology, since the Spirit is the “Lord and giver of life,” as the Nicene Creed states. Keeping in mind the goal of engaging with pneumatology, I will explore ecumenism and interreligious dialogue as epiphenomenal activities of the Holy Spirit. I will conclude this chapter by synthesizing Benedict’s thought with insights from eastern theology to explain how his cosmic eschatology may become more pneumatological and thereby obtain a state of equilibrium with his Logos Christology.

**Human Ecology**

In *Caritas in Veritate*, Benedict XVI points out that it is the responsibility of the church to “protect mankind from self-destruction” and appeals to what he calls a “human ecology,

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correctly understood.”

Before describing Benedict’s idea of human ecology, I will provide some background to his idea and describe its most trenchant characteristics. Finally, I will assess Benedict’s human ecology and compare it to the views of Philip Sherrard and Patriarch Bartholomew.

Background

Benedict XVI’s human ecology has both secular and ecclesiastical foundations. The former consists of the work of social scientists in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries whereas the latter primarily consists of the work of Benedict’s predecessor, Pope St. John Paul II, in his 1991 encyclical Centesimus Annus, where the term receives its first theological articulation.

Secular Origins

Human ecology is best understood in the context of the development of ecology as a science in the late nineteenth century. The founder of ecology was Ernst Haeckel (1834-1919), a German biologist who coined the term in 1866. The term Haeckel used was Oecologie, which derives from the Greek word for house, oikos. Haeckel understood ecology as the study of natural organisms within their unique environments, which constitutes their household, as it

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5 Matthew Levering mistakenly claims that Pope John Paul II coined the term human ecology. Matthew Levering, “‘Be Fruitful and Multiply, and Fill the Earth’: Was and Is This a Good Idea?,” in On Earth as It Is in Heaven: Cultivating a Contemporary Theology of Creation, ed. David Vincent Meconi (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2016), 120n87. Human ecology, however, has a far longer history than its ecclesiastical usage; it stretches back to the turn of the early twentieth century.

were. He defined ecology as “the body of knowledge concerning the economy of nature – the investigation of the total relations of the animal both to its inorganic and to its organic environment.” The founding of ecology paved the way for human ecology.

Ellen Swallow Richards (1842-1911), a chemist, is credited with introducing the term human ecology. This field “incorporates humans into nature and adapts to nature’s limits.” In other words, human beings are not different from nature, but a part of nature. This differs from scientific ecology since scientific ecology “separated humans from nature in order to study the environment prior to human influence.” A holistic view of humanity and its environment was beginning to emerge.

The interconnectedness of human beings and of nature is, however, not a recent idea; on the contrary, the ancient and medieval world had a rich understanding of how human beings and nature are connected. It could even be argued that the development of human ecology is merely the recovery of the ancient conception of how interconnected human beings and nature really are, a conception that is capable of counteracting the tendency of human beings to view nature as something to be mastered since the time of Francis Bacon. There are differences, however, between these ancient and modern views. One distinction between the modern concept of human

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8 Once the foundations of ecology had been lain, ecology developed into four main branches. Human ecology was only the earliest form of ecology that emerged. The three other ecologies that followed the founding of human ecology are organismic ecology, economic ecology, and chaotic ecology. Merchant describes the other three kinds of ecology in the following passage: “Organismic ecology views humans as separate from nature, but as followers of its balanced, homeostatic processes; economic ecology asserts humans as scientific managers of a nature that can be controlled for human benefit; finally, chaotic ecology sees nature as having unpredictable characteristics, leaving humans as only partially able to manage its systems” (ibid., 172).

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid., 163.
ecology and the ancient and medieval perspectives of the relationship between human beings and
nature is that those who study human ecology seek to understand human interactions as an
ecology in the same way as biologists seek to understand plants and animals in the context of
their unique ecosystems. To this end, specialists in human ecology have employed a variety of
disciplines, including zoology, natural ecology, anthropology, and psychology, to help them
understand human systems. The secular idea of human ecology has a rich history that forms an
important basis for Benedict’s theological interpretation of human ecology.

_Ecclesiastical Forerunner_

Benedict’s teaching on human ecology has roots not only in its secular forbearer but also
in the history of the social doctrine of the Catholic Church. While the Catholic Church has been
emphasizing social justice issues since Pope Leo XIII, and pontiffs have emphasized the need to
protect creation for decades, it was not until the pontificate of John Paul II that popes began
writing about human ecology.\(^1\)

In _Centesimus Annus_, John Paul II’s 1991 encyclical commemorating the one-hundredth
anniversary of Leo XIII’s _Rerum novarum_, John Paul II writes about human ecology in the
following passage that is worth quoting at length since it is the first instance of a pope writing
explicitly about human ecology:

> In addition to the irrational destruction of the natural environment, we must also mention
> the more serious destruction of the human environment, something which is by no means
> receiving the attention it deserves. Although people are rightly worried — though much
> less than they should be — about preserving the natural habitats of the various animal

\(^{11}\) The newness of ecology as a scientific field is, no doubt, one of the reasons why the Catholic Church has
been slow to write about human ecology. It makes sense that because human ecology is the oldest branch of
scientific ecology, it is the type of ecology that has entered the Catholic Church’s discourse. The relative longevity
of human ecology, in comparison with the other types of ecology, is not the only reason why the Catholic Church
has written about human ecology. Another possible reason may be because the philosophy that underpins human
ecology is in accordance with the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Be that as it may, future popes may very well
write about chaotic ecology and how this would relate to the Catholic Church’s doctrine on the environment.
species threatened with extinction, because they realize that each of these species makes its particular contribution to the balance of nature in general, too little effort is made to safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic “human ecology”. Not only has God given the earth to man, who must use it with respect for the original good purpose for which it was given to him, but man too is God’s gift to man. He must therefore respect the natural and moral structure with which he has been endowed.12

John Paul II paves the way for Benedict’s idea of human ecology, even though he himself borrows the term from social scientists.13

Celia Deane-Drummond interprets John Paul II’s understanding of human ecology as adding an emphasis on “the ontological conditions needed for human flourishing” to the secular understanding of human ecology.14 Deane-Drummond’s statement is somewhat ambiguous since the statement does not specify whether John Paul II adopts secular human ecology in its entirety. Because of the multitude of human ecologists and the variety of methods they use, to interpret John Paul II as merely ornamenting secular human ecology with philosophical language would be a misreading of Deane Drummond’s text and would misinterpret John Paul II’s intention. The same goes for Benedict, who adopts the term human ecology without ascribing to every secular account of human ecology. Deane-Drummond’s assessment is correct since John Paul II highlights the natural law when he writes of “the natural and moral structure with which [humanity] has been endowed.”15 John Paul II contextualizes ecological responsibility within the framework of traditional natural law ethics, something that Benedict takes for granted in his writings on human ecology.


14 Ibid.; italics Deane-Drummond’s.

15 John Paul II, Centesimus Annus, 38.
Benedict’s Human Ecology

There are four themes in Benedict’s human ecology that I will analyze: (1) the evil trinity of poverty, warped anthropology, and ecological degradation, (2) respect for the human person, (3) the significance of truth, and (4) the virtues as an image of human ecology. Benedict proposes a human ecology that simultaneously respects the dignity and beauty of both human nature and the natural environment. To this end, he emphasizes that respect for the human person and respect for the environment go hand in hand. When human dignity is trampled on, it causes three deleterious effects: poverty, a warped anthropology, and an upsetting of the natural environment. While these three ills may seem to be unrelated on the surface, on a deeper level they are like three tectonic plates that touch each other: any motion from one influences the other two.

The first tragic effect caused by a trampling on human dignity is poverty. According to Benedict, “[E]very form of externally imposed poverty has at its root a lack of respect for the transcendent dignity of the human person . . . when the demands of a true ‘human ecology’ . . . are not respected, the cruel forces of poverty are unleashed.”16 One example of how a lack of respect for human dignity has led to poverty is child labor during the industrial revolution. Business magnates exploited children and robbed them of their youth. Pope Leo XIII condemned this deplorable practice in *Rerum novarum*. Although on the surface such a practice would seem to enrich the laissez-faire capitalist who employed children for a pittance, ultimately, the capitalist ended up cutting off the branch on which he sits since he was robbing his community and his country of an educated youth. While the economic effect was a temporary profit, the

overall effect was an impoverishment of children and of the community. This is only one example of how the trampling of human dignity leads to poverty.

Benedict also makes the important observation that poverty is not merely material; there is also a spiritual dimension to poverty.¹⁷ This is not to belittle the plight of those who experience material poverty; it is merely to recognize that a more pervasive form of poverty is a poverty of the soul whereby even those who have all their material needs satisfied are starving for love and fulfillment.

The second effect of not upholding human dignity is that it warps individuals’ sense of judgment regarding their fellow human beings. Instead of having a vision of the world that is informed by a healthy anthropology that respects the human person, those who view human beings as things to be used and human nature as something to be manipulated see the world as something to be dissected and used for the arbitrary whims of those in power. By the same logic, those who hold power would be subject to the machinations of others who acquire more power than themselves. This anthropological view fosters paranoia, a Machiavellian outlook, and an attitude that views nature, including the environment, as raw material to be done with as one wishes, irrespective of whether it ought to be done. In Benedict’s own words, human dignity is “the foundation and goal of the responsibility to protect,” and as such is the basis of human rights; however, these rights in turn “are based on the natural law,” which implies that extracting rights from the context of natural law would jeopardize the objectivity and universality of human rights “in the name of different cultural, political, social, and even religious outlooks.”¹⁸ In such a case, law, which is based on universality and right, is thrown out the window and is exchanged

¹⁷ Ibid., 89.
¹⁸ Ibid., 68.
for the view that those who have the power are the only ones who are capable of deciding what is right, regardless of the nature of human beings and of the nature of reality itself.

The third effect of disrespecting the human person is that humanity’s relationship with nature is injured. According to Benedict, “If we wish to build true peace, how can we separate, or even set at odds, the protection of the environment and the protection of human life, including the life of the unborn? It is in man’s respect for himself that his sense of responsibility for creation is shown.”19 This comes as no surprise since those who disrespect the human person are looking at the world through a lens of selfishness and opportunism. Those who follow this route throw out traditional wisdom with dire consequences, including the upsetting of natural ecosystems.

A clear picture begins to emerge of the malicious tectonic shifting of plates below the surface of human activity guided by a disrespect for human dignity, but what positive effects are there of a human ecology “properly understood”? What does a proper human ecology look like in the first place? For Benedict, a proper human ecology is characterized by respect for the human person from the moment of conception to the moment of death, the protection and transmission of moral values in the present and the future, the transition from anthropocentrism to theocentrism (although Benedict does not use this terminology), the pursuit of truth, and the cultivation of the virtues. Respect for humanity, in Benedict’s view, means that experimentation on human fetuses, abortion, and euthanasia are all unethical acts that upset the relationship between human beings among each other and the relationship between humanity and the natural environment. He also takes for granted that these offenses against human dignity upset humanity’s relationship with God as well as their relationship with nature. A proper human

19 Ibid., 137.
ecology is therefore one that is characterized by a respect for each human being at every stage of life, but this image is incomplete. Ethics that pertains solely to the beginning and end of the human person are not enough for the ideal functioning of human society.

There needs to be stability and cooperation at every level of society from the nuclear family all the way up to the international level. In fact, peace is one of the main objectives of Benedict’s vision of human ecology. To this end, Benedict writes,

Thus there is an urgent need . . . for a commitment to a human ecology that can favor the growth of the “tree of peace.” For this to happen, we must be guided by a vision of the person untainted by ideological and cultural prejudices or by political and economic interests which can instill hatred and violence.20

The peace that Benedict encourages begins in the family.

Peace in the nuclear family, the most basic unit of society, depends on what Benedict calls an “openness to a transcendent patrimony of values.”21 Although he does not spell out exactly what he means by the phrase “transcendent patrimony of values,” in the broadest sense, this could be interpreted as fidelity to religious values in the religion one is brought up in, and in the narrowest sense, it would presumably mean fidelity to Christian moral principles. Either way, it is obvious that Benedict is upholding values that are passed down from one generation to another; in other words, he is emphasizing the importance of tradition. This is related to the following astronomical image that Benedict uses to describe the relationship between technological advancement on the one hand and the link between the human person and tradition on the other:

there arises the question of the kind of spacesuit we should have in order to sustain the cosmic tempo with which we are fleeing faster and faster from the gravitational pull of tradition, and we wonder what ground controls would be necessary to prevent our

20 Ibid., 29; italics Benedict’s.
21 Ibid., 59.
burning out in the vast expanse of the universe, our bursting asunder like a homunculus of technology—questions that cannot be brushed aside today as stubborn obscurantism, for they are being raised most urgently by those who know most about the tempo of our alienation from tradition and who are most keenly aware of the problems associated with man’s historic space flight.22

In this passage, Benedict compares tradition to gravity, which keeps humanity grounded.23 While technology pushes humanity to its innovative limits, tradition is what preserves the humanity of human beings and prevents them from becoming treated as though they were mere machines. Writing about the same topic, Benedict explains that “tradition properly understood is, in effect, the transcendence of today in both directions.”24 Tradition transcends today by rooting one in the past and by making use of the present as a foundation for the future. Rootedness in tradition is what Benedict means by “openness to a transcendent patrimony of values.”25 Without tradition, the human being slowly loses its contact with the Earth and with its own humanity, and ends up doing violence not only to the human person, but to the environment as well.

Benedict’s emphasis on tradition in the phrase “transcendent patrimony of values” is related to the intergenerational and intragenerational solidarity of human beings. Commenting on intergenerational solidarity, Benedict remarks, “A greater sense of intergenerational solidarity is urgently needed. Future generations cannot be saddled with the cost of our use of common environmental resources.”26 Intergenerational solidarity hinges on the nexus between the current generation and the generations that are to come, and in this way, is specifically related to tradition. In other words, new traditions must be founded and new attitudes fostered in order to

22 Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 85.
23 Humus, the Latin word for ground, is the same word from which the word human is derived.
24 Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 87.
25 Benedict XVI, The Environment, 59; italics Benedict’s.
26 Ibid., 126; italics Benedict’s.
bequeath to future generations a clean planet that can sustain healthy lives. Examples of possible areas in which people can develop new attitudes is in water conservation, recycling, and using clean sources of energy such as natural gas and solar energy. If children are taught to conserve their resources and to use them wisely, it will increase the chances of them passing the torch to their children, their children’s children, and so on for generations to come.

In addition to the results of intergenerational solidarity – cultivating better familial ties, ensuring that the best elements of religious traditions are conserved as the patrimony of humanity, and establishing new traditions that emphasize responsible stewardship – intragenerational solidarity is indispensable for the strengthening of human bonds. In contrast to intergenerational solidarity, intragenerational solidarity is the cooperation among people in the present. Benedict especially emphasizes the cooperation between developing countries and first world countries.27 The other features of Benedict’s human ecology are his nuanced articulation of anthropocentrism and advocacy for refocusing humanity’s sight on God, his affirmation of the key role of truth in caring for the environment, and his use of the virtues to explain human ecology.

Benedict’s view of the Catholic Church’s position regarding the environment can be characterized as a mean between two extremes, namely the elevation of non-human nature as an equal to humanity on the one hand (what Denis Edwards calls the “‘leveling’ view”)28 and the domination of nature through technology on the other. Although advocates of the former position purport to be egalitarian, according to Benedict, this view negates the “distinctiveness and superior role of human beings,” which Benedict sees as biblical, whereas the other extreme,

27 Ibid., 127; italics Benedict’s.

28 Denis Edwards, Jesus and the Cosmos (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004), 27.
which is essentially a nod of assent to the Baconian project of the domination of nature, does
grave harm to nature and to human dignity.\textsuperscript{29} Insofar as Benedict intends to defend the place of
human beings so as to protect their uniqueness and dignity, I agree with him. Yet I also agree
with Donal Dorr that the focus should not be on human beings but on the cosmos and its
relationship with God. After critiquing Benedict for basing his papal teaching in \textit{Caritas in
Veritate} on “an older anthropocentric paradigm where ecological issues are treated almost
entirely in terms of present-day human concerns,” Dorr proposes, “What is needed today . . . is a
kind of Copernican revolution leading to a major paradigm shift. We need to locate all our
human concerns—and especially our approach to economics—within the far wider context of an
ecological and cosmic vision.”\textsuperscript{30} It will become clearer later on that this cosmic dimension is
frequently relegated to a secondary role in Benedict’s teaching on the environment.\textsuperscript{31}

The term \textit{anthropocentrism} needs to be defined. According to Radu Bordeianu,
anthropocentrism “implies that humanity is in the centre [of the cosmos] \textit{without} God.”\textsuperscript{32} If one
defines anthropocentrism along this line of thought, Benedict’s position is certainly not
anthropocentric. Dorr defines anthropocentrism differently than Bordeianu. In Dorr’s view, any
positive understanding of the role of human beings as guardians or masters of creation is
anthropocentric.\textsuperscript{33} Yet the injunction that God gave to Adam to care for creation is in St.

\textsuperscript{29} Benedict XVI, \textit{The Environment}, 132.

\textsuperscript{30} Dorr, \textit{Option for the Poor}, 431.

\textsuperscript{31} For a recent account of ecology that considers the significance of the cosmic context of ecological
responsibility, see Scheid, \textit{Cosmic Common Good}. This work contains two parts. The first part is an account of a
Catholic cosmic common good that serves as an overture to part two, which is a rich interreligious account of
ecological ethics that considers elements of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Native American traditions.

\textsuperscript{32} Radu Bordeianu, “Maximus and Ecology: The Relevance of Maximus the Confessor’s Theology of

\textsuperscript{33} Dorr, \textit{Option for the Poor}, 415.
Maximus the Confessor’s view a priestly role in which Adam was obligated not only to care for creation, but to offer everything back to God.\textsuperscript{34} Bordeianu elaborates,

\begin{quote}
We should care for [creation] just as Adam was working in the Garden of Eden before the fall. This is not only an interdiction against abusing nature, but it is also a positive call to contemplate its rationality, to see its uncorrupted \textit{logoi} and to mould the plasticized \textit{logoi} in conformity with God’s eternal intentions, as opposed to our selfish, utilitarian, consumerist, fallen passions. This call to contemplate God in nature and offer it to God was our initial task as priests of creation.\textsuperscript{35}
\end{quote}

For Bordeianu, the recognition of humanity’s unique mediating role is not intrinsically anthropocentric since the ultimate goal of this mediation, which is fulfilled by Christ, is to unite all things to God. As Bordeianu correctly affirms, humanity’s posture toward the cosmos should not be anthropocentric but “theocentric.”\textsuperscript{36}

In contrast, Dorr seems to be opposed to any view that assigns a unique role to human beings that implies that they have mastery over non-human creatures. According to Dorr, the Vatican’s teaching, at least up to the pontificate of Benedict XVI, “is nuanced, because it is balanced by, and strictly limited by, a strong emphasis on the idea that God demands that we humans should respect the order or pattern that is evident in nature and in the whole of creation.”\textsuperscript{37} Nevertheless, in Dorr’s assessment the nuanced anthropocentrism of John Paul II and Benedict XVI “is located within a God-centered vision.”\textsuperscript{38} Even in Dorr’s view, Benedict’s approach can be called theocentric. I am convinced that Benedict’s approach is theocentric just

\textsuperscript{34} Bordeianu, “Maximus and Ecology,” 117.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 103.
\textsuperscript{37} Dorr, \textit{Option for the Poor}, 430.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid.
as Maximus’s vision is theocentric, especially since Benedict’s cosmic eschatology is heavily influenced by Maximus via von Balthasar.

For Benedict XVI, the role of truth vis-à-vis modern humanity is crucial. Truth about human nature ought to inform decisions regarding human development. In his words, “That which is prior to us and constitutes us — subsistent Love and Truth — shows us what goodness is, and in what our true happiness consists. It shows us the road to true development.”

Elaborating on the same point, Benedict states that technology can appear ambivalent . . . Were [globalization to replace ideologies with technology,] we would all know, evaluate and make decisions about our life situations from within a technocratic cultural perspective to which we would belong structurally, without ever being able to discover a meaning that is not of our own making . . . when the sole criterion of truth is efficiency and utility, development is automatically denied . . . The key to development is a mind capable of thinking in technological terms and grasping the fully human meaning of human activities, within the context of the holistic meaning of the individual’s being.

In this passage, Benedict warns of the possibility of human beings becoming disconnected from objective truth altogether on account of technology based on a disjunction between efficiency, which is based on calculating thought, and being itself, which only reflective thought can pierce. Benedict affirms that the issue of truth is extremely important for humanity: “the question upon which the whole destiny of our epoch hinges [is]: Is truth accessible to man at all?” For Benedict, the rejuvenation of the quest for truth is essential to an appropriate response to the ecological devastation that is occurring throughout the world. He juxtaposes the freedom

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39 Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, 52.

40 Ibid., 70.

41 This distinction between calculating and reflective thought, or doing (technology) and being (philosophy) is not a new theme in Benedict’s writings; rather, it appears in Introduction to Christianity. See Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 70–71.

that comes from the truth in and of itself with the freedom to produce; the latter, he comments, has led to environmental destruction whereas the former needs to be revitalized to check the latter and protect authentic freedom.\footnote{Ibid., 37.} Moreover, the quest for truth does not merely imply a quest for intellectual truth, but also implies a quest for moral truth. Human beings are called to become true to their nature (natural law), thereby “contribut[ing] to the world’s becoming true,” for if human beings become true, they become good, and by becoming good, they make their environment good as well.\footnote{Ibid., 39.} For Benedict, living according to one’s nature entails cultivating the virtues.

Benedict takes the concept of human ecology from social scientists and John Paul II and gives it a new twist by turning to a moral analogy to make an original point: “Just as human virtues are interrelated, such that the weakening of one places others at risk, so the ecological system is based on respect for a plan that affects both the health of society and its good relationship with nature.”\footnote{Benedict XVI, \textit{Caritas in Veritate}, 51. Here, Benedict seems to be alluding to Plato, \textit{Protagoras}, 333, Plato, \textit{Laches}, 199, or perhaps Aristotle, \textit{Nichomachean Ethics}, 1144b30-35. In these passages, Plato (via Socrates) and Aristotle are supporting the idea that the virtues are interrelated.} Benedict appeals to the ancient Greek philosophical view of the interconnectedness of all of the virtues and applies it to the functioning of society and nature. The implication of this analogy is that one cannot neglect one facet of nature, i.e. the nature and dignity of human beings, and expect to nurture and heal non-human nature, just as one cannot be a good person and fail to have one of the virtues.

Benedict uses a moral analogy to describe human ecology to highlight the importance of the moral component of human relationships, thereby firmly positioning himself in the natural
law and virtue ethics traditions. Had Benedict merely described human ecology as the proper functioning of human society as though it were a well-calibrated machine, he would not have conveyed the objectivity and concreteness of the virtues, but instead would have reinforced the Newtonian view of a mechanistic universe that Toolan blames for inaugurating the current ecological crisis.46 Furthermore, Benedict’s use of this moral analogy helps him to establish common ground between the Catholic Church and the world: natural law.

Yet there is a problem Benedict does not address: How can society and the Catholic Church possibly agree on the sources of morality and on fundamental moral principles? Benedict rightly brings up abortion and euthanasia as moral deficiencies, but abortion is legal in most first world countries, and this is not going to change anytime soon. How can nations begin to foster human ecology when this would obligate them to rescind all legislation that is contradictory to the teachings of the Catholic Church? Furthermore, such legal modifications would not necessarily guarantee a decline in the number of abortions. Although Benedict does not address this thorny issue in Caritas in Veritate, in his dialogue with Jürgen Habermas he suggests that both religion and reason have their own pathologies that the other can correct.47 Benedict invites the world to become familiar with the Catholic Church’s position and to consider the reasons behind them since education alone, while important, cannot bring about the desired change.

46 Toolan, At Home in the Cosmos, 42.

47 Joseph Ratzinger and Jürgen Habermas, The Dialectics of Secularization: On Reason and Religion, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 77–78; Benedict mentions the religious motivation of the terrorism of Osama bin Laden as an example of a religious pathology (ibid., 64). Within Christianity, he also discerns some dangers in need of purification. Benedict states, “Tradition, which is by nature the foundation of man’s humanness, is everywhere mingled with those things that deprive him of his humanity” (Ratzinger, Principles of Catholic Theology, 89). He explains that there is a distinction between Tradition and traditions. In his words, “we must not let ourselves be suffocated by the luxuriant growth of individual traditions but must be assiduous in cutting away what is accidental or temporary, in keeping it within bounds in order to make room for what is really fundamental” (ibid., 90). One example he gives is the accruing of various traditions in a religious order that detracts from the fundamental charism of the order (ibid.).
According to Benedict, suitable education is an inadequate solution to the problem of the ecological crisis; instead, what is needed is a change in “the overall moral tenor of society.” A new way of seeing humanity’s relationship with nature can be forged only after humanity has tackled its own moral problems, such as abortion, euthanasia, and internecine conflicts. As it stands, society in the twenty-first century has become a throw-away culture even with respect to human life, as evidenced by the attitudes inherent in laboratory experiments on human embryos; if this is the way human beings treat human life, it is not all that surprising that there are larger problems in humanity’s attitudes about non-human life and the rest of nature. Since humanity’s “duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others,” society must reassess its moral values and strategize how it can eradicate pernicious ways of thinking that have polluted human consciences.

Assessment

The message of Benedict’s human ecology for combating the ecological crisis is paramount. Standing on the shoulders of giants, he depends on the work of his predecessors, especially John Paul II. He also makes some original contributions, such as highlighting the nature of the human being as a moral agent by crafting an analogy between the virtues and ecology. The general message is important for the world: Human beings cannot respect creation if they do not respect themselves, they cannot properly care for the Earth without recognizing perennially transcendent values, and they must strive to foster intra- and intergenerational

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48 Benedict XVI, Caritas in Veritate, 51; italics Benedict’s.

49 Ibid. Despite the need for such a collective examination of conscience, the technocratic nature of western society makes it increasingly difficult for people to break the mold of thinking that has been set in place by public educational systems, which rightly praise the merits of science but are often rendered mute regarding philosophy and religion.
solidarity. Furthermore, humanity should not forfeit its place in the universe simply because anthropocentrism has caused significant damage; instead, human beings should strive to serve God by caring for creation wisely. Finally, Benedict makes a compelling case for the necessity of fostering virtue and affirming the ability of human beings to grasp the truth as a prerequisite to stymying the evil effects of human-caused climate change. While Benedict’s human ecology has many positive aspects, it has one glaring inconsistency: his contradictory stances on human ecology on the one hand and liberation theology on the other.

In the last chapter, I mentioned that in the Serrian model of exitus-reditus the macroscopic perspective is reconciled with the microscopic. In Benedict’s theology, there does not seem to be this kind of reconciliation. Lisa Sowle Cahill describes Benedict’s relationship with liberation theology and theologies from the third world, remarking that it is ironic that although liberation theologians “appeal to the power of the incarnation, resurrection, and Spirit to promote the kind of structural changes lately of interest to the pope,” Benedict had recently affirmed near the time of the publication of her article his condemnation of liberation theology as found in the (then) 25-year-old “Instruction on Certain Aspects of the Theology of Liberation.” Despite the value of Benedict’s doctrine of human ecology and the emphasis it places on protecting and caring for the world’s poor, there is a significant inconsistency that exists between his stances on human ecology and liberation theology. Benedict tends to overlook the immanent dimension of salvation, which is evinced by his consistent castigation of liberation theologians, which seems to belie his insistence on caring for the poor. Despite the incongruent nature of

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Benedict’s stance on human ecology and liberation theology, his human ecology is an important doctrine.

Benedict condemns social structures that promote the sin of ecocide, especially certain multinational corporations which, while not directly promoting ecocide, are corrupt and fail to respect the rights of their workers, thereby increasing inequality, greed, and the denigration of human beings. In this way, such companies support attitudes and actions that have ecocidal consequences. Yet Benedict does not provide any concrete solution to this systemic problem. In other areas, Benedict advocates for the recognition of food and water as basic human rights and laments that governmental organizations that seek to combat hunger do not allow local communities to be involved in the decision making. Although he upbraids economic and human abuses, Benedict rarely writes about the need to reduce carbon emissions and infrequently mentions global warming. Benedict’s condemnation of social structures that promote ecocide is like iron mixed with clay: he is solid in some areas but is rather weak in others, at least in his teaching. By way of example, Benedict is much stronger. In 2007, the Vatican City became the world’s first carbon-neutral state. Furthermore, he had 2,400 solar panels installed on the Paul VI auditorium that generates 300,000 kilowatt-hours per year. Although Benedict has not written much about carbon emissions, his actions in these cases speak louder than his words and

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52 Ibid., 100.

53 Ibid., 24.


55 Ibid., 9.
serve as models for other nations. Yet it is still surprising that there has been so little written by recent popes on carbon emissions.56

In addition to not addressing some of the systemic issues that have caused the current ecological crisis such as global warming and the increase in greenhouse gases, Benedict’s teaching on human ecology also suffers since it is almost entirely divorced from eschatology. Eschatology and human ecology are two prominent themes in Ratzinger/Benedict XVI’s writings, which is why one might think that he would link the two together by their relation to creation and the environment, but this is not the case. On the one hand, he states that the new world cannot be imagined; on the other, he postulates that matter and spirit will belong to each other in an entirely new way.57 Matter will become spiritualized in a process that mirrors the incarnation, but is upside-down in comparison: instead of spirit coming down, so to speak, to unite itself to matter, matter will be raised up and grasped by spirit in a marriage that inaugurates the divinization of the cosmos.58 Matter, therefore, can be perfected and saved,59 but only through an extra-cosmic impulse that comes from God rather than from the cosmos itself or from human beings.60 Though aesthetically pleasing on account of its symmetry, Ratzinger’s

56 This lacuna has been filled recently by Pope Francis’s *Laudato Si’*: “Humanity is called to recognize the need for changes of lifestyle, production and consumption, in order to combat this warming or at least the human causes which produce or aggravate it. It is true that there are other factors (such as volcanic activity, variations in the earth’s orbit and axis, the solar cycle), yet a number of scientific studies indicate that most global warming in recent decades is due to the great concentration of greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrogen oxides and others) released mainly as a result of human activity. As these gases build up in the atmosphere, they hamper the escape of heat produced by sunlight at the earth’s surface. The problem is aggravated by a model of development based on the intensive use of fossil fuels, which is at the heart of the worldwide energy system.” Francis, *Laudato Si’* (2015), 23, http://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html, accessed September 3, 2017.


60 Ibid., 213–14.
eschatological vision of spiritualization does not seem to impress Benedict enough for him to include this vision in his papal documents. This is not to say that his cosmic eschatology cannot be applied to the current ecological crisis, but what it does mean is that Benedict does not seem to appreciate fully the relevance and the implications of his own eschatological thought for the good of the Earth.

Unlike Moltmann, Benedict has not adequately integrated his eschatology into his analysis of the ecological situation and its possible remedies. If Benedict’s cosmic eschatology is essential to his theology, why does it not appear in his encyclical on hope (or in other writings for that matter)? This is essentially the question Jürgen Moltmann raises in a scathing critique of Spe Salvi. Moltmann takes Benedict to task for overlooking “the salvation of a groaning creation and the hope of a new earth where justice dwells” and “the hope of the all-encompassing promise of God who is coming.” In Benedict’s defense, while Moltmann correctly identifies this lacuna, Benedict’s intention in the encyclical is to focus on the anthropological dimension on faith and hope, which he claims has been essentially immanentized in the views of many people in the wake of the rise of modern technology. Benedict’s agenda in this particular document does not line up with Moltmann’s expectations that the pope would write about the salvation of the cosmos. Furthermore, Moltmann has done much more work on hope and its relation to social justice than Benedict, and his cosmic eschatology is more fully developed than Benedict’s. Moltmann’s familiarity with the topics of hope and cosmic eschatology heighten his awareness of specific deficiencies in Benedict’s account of hope. Another reason why Benedict may have

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62 Benedict XVI, Spe Salvi, 17.
63 In my estimation, Benedict’s cosmic eschatology is like an incomplete masterpiece: despite the loose ends, it is still a compelling vision.
chosen not to bring up cosmic eschatology in *Spe Salvi* is that while he has a cosmic eschatology, he has not fully worked it out and views it as too speculative to include in an encyclical.

Whatever the case may be, Moltmann is correct: Benedict essentially does not reflect on cosmic eschatology and soteriology in *Spe Salvi.*

Deane-Drummond corroborates Moltmann’s critique by lamenting the absence of a cosmic Christology in Benedict XVI’s papal writings. She points out that for Benedict, “the deepest motivation for getting involved in tackling environmental problems” is global solidarity. Yet she correctly observes that solidarity is ultimately grounded in Christology, in particular “the cosmic Christology of Colossians 1.15-20,” and that this dimension is underdeveloped in Benedict’s papal writings. While he has a cosmic Christology, curiously, Benedict does not explicitly transpose his cosmic Christology into much of his papal work. Deane-Drummond is on the mark when she posits that cosmic Christology, which is lacking in many of Benedict’s papal documents, “lends theological weight to ecological issues, for it enters the heart of Christian theology.”

Benedict does not entirely overlook cosmic eschatology, soteriology, and Christology in his papal writings and speeches. In a 2010 message for the celebration of the World Day of

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64 Though Moltmann is correct about the lack of cosmic eschatology/soteriology in *Spe Salvi*, some of his criticisms of Benedict’s encyclical are unfounded. For instance, Moltmann claims that the hope for the resurrection of the body is missing in *Spe Salvi* (Moltmann, “Horizons of Hope,” 31); however, there are passages in the encyclical that plainly emphasize the resurrection of body and that militate against the idea of the salvation of just the soul: “Yes, there is a resurrection of the flesh. There is justice. There is an ‘undoing’ of past suffering, a reparation that sets things aright” (Benedict, *Spe Salvi*, 43). Benedict also laments, “In the modern era . . . Christian faith has been individualized and primarily oriented towards the salvation of the believer’s own soul” (ibid., 42; italics mine). These passages demonstrate that Moltmann’s critique of *Spe Salvi* is dubious in certain points and should be checked against the encyclical.


66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.
Peace entitled “If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation,” Benedict makes the following statement:

Christians . . . contemplate the cosmos and its marvels in light of the creative work of the Father and the redemptive work of Christ, who by his death and resurrection has reconciled with God “all things, whether on earth or in heaven” (Col 1:20). Christ crucified and risen, has bestowed his Spirit of holiness upon mankind, to guide the course of history in anticipation of that day when, with the glorious return of the Savior, there will be “new heavens and a new earth” (2 Pt 3:13), in which justice and peace will dwell forever. Protecting the natural environment in order to build a world of peace is thus a duty incumbent upon each and all.68

From this passage, it is apparent that while Deane-Drummond correctly notes that cosmic Christology does not feature in the vast majority of Benedict’s papal works, it is not entirely absent. Nevertheless, he does not bring his cosmic Christology into his papal writings very frequently, perhaps out of concern that these ideas are too theological or too innovative for his audience. I concur with Deane-Drummond’s conclusion that despite the lack of a robust cosmic Christology in Benedict’s papal documents, the call of Catholic social teaching in his documents for peace and solidarity on a global scale “have the potential to make a global and local impact that is vital in working out an adequate global response, both for present and future generations.”69 While Benedict generally opts to exclude his cosmic Christology and cosmic eschatology from his papal documents, he makes some positive contributions, especially in his account of human ecology. In the next sections, I will compare the views of Philip Sherrard and Patriarch Bartholomew to Benedict’s human ecology.

68 Benedict XVI, The Environment, 133.
69 Deane-Drummond, “Joining the Dance,” 212.
Keith Lemna suggests that Philip Sherrard’s theological anthropology aligns with Benedict’s account of human ecology, with its emphasis on the inextricability of human beings and their environment, because for Sherrard, “the ecological crisis . . . is primarily a crisis about man and not about his environment.” Lemna comments that “Sherrard’s diagnosis of the modern situation . . . stresses that the ecological crisis is rooted in a distorted anthropology.” Sherrard is quite explicit on this point, noting, “As we have dehumanized man, so we have desanctified nature.” This is similar to Benedict’s human ecology insofar as it emphasizes the inextricability of human beings and the environment.

Furthermore, both theologians emphasize that there are different planes of existence: an empirical plane and an ontological plane (or planes) that undergirds the empirical plane. Lemna explains that for Sherrard, “it is these higher ontological planes, and not matter in and of itself, that are the foundational realities of cosmic being.” Benedict states, “To decipher the physical structure of things is not the same thing as to decode the meaning of existence itself,” thereby hinting that there is an ontological plane that is deeper than the empirical plane. While he does not describe the dependence of the physical realm on the ontological in this passage, Benedict affirms this dependence in his support of Christian idealism. Despite their different locations on

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71 Lemna, “Sherrard’s Theandric Anthropology,” 137.


73 Lemna, “Sherrard’s Theandric Anthropology,” 140.

74 Ratzinger, Theological Highlights, 234.

75 Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 157.
the spectrum of appreciation of modern science, both theologians appreciate the fundamental nature of theological ontology vis-à-vis the physical world.

According to Lemna, to begin to heal nature Sherrard prescribes a “cultural recognition of the transcendent source and destiny of [humanity’s] being,” which requires a recovery of liturgy and doctrine.76 This also aligns with Benedict’s emphasis on the preservation of a “transcendent patrimony of values,” although Sherrard is more explicit in his insistence that the recovery of values is a recovery of Christian values.77 I commend Sherrard’s straightforwardness in suggesting that the recovery of explicitly Christian values is the key to ecological healing. I agree with him on this point because if Christianity is the truest reflection of ultimate reality, Christian values, insofar as they are truly in accordance with the Gospel, will most easily facilitate the protection of creation. Yet it is also important to recruit the cooperation of adherents of other religions, which is what Benedict is attempting to do. Ultimately, Sherrard and Benedict agree on the necessity of a cultural revolution that affirms the primacy of religious values, although Benedict’s remedy is more general in comparison with Sherrard’s. In the next section, I will compare Benedict’s thought to the doctrine of the Patriarch of Constantinople, Bartholomew I.

Bartholomew and Benedict

The similarities between the teachings of Patriarch Bartholomew I (“the green patriarch”) and Pope Benedict XVI (“the green pope”) are striking. The main areas in which their thought converges are their stances on the relationship between theology and science and their views on

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77 Benedict XVI, The Environment, 59; italics Benedict’s.
cosmic liturgy and human ecology, but a close inspection reveals that there are some differences as well.

**Science and Theology**

Like Benedict, Bartholomew has a nuanced understanding of the role of science and technology vis-à-vis theology, which is characterized by appreciation, caution, and a recognition of partnership. Bartholomew has a healthy appreciation of science and technology. In his words, “the Church rejoices in the scientific success of humanity” and views it “with a sense of profound awe.” At the same time, he notes that there is need for caution, especially in areas such as genetics and biotechnology. Bartholomew insists that dialogue between the church and the sciences is necessary and that the church and technology both share the same call to alleviate suffering, stating that “the Church shares a common responsibility with the sciences for the healing of a suffering and burdened world.” This stands in sharp contrast with Benedict’s criticism of Bacon and the replacement of faith in Christ with faith in progress. Benedict is reluctant to acknowledge the salvific dimension of technology and has a tendency to view it as more of a threat than an ally of faith. Patriarch Bartholomew shows that, so long as technology does not replace the function of the church, the goals of science and Christianity can overlap.

Yet the positions of Bartholomew and Benedict seem not to contradict each other so much as they complement each other. Bartholomew is optimistic about science whereas Benedict

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79 Ibid.

80 Benedict XVI, *Spe Salvi*, 17.
points out where science and faith may have potential conflict. The following remark conveys Bartholomew’s optimism even as he exercises caution:

Scientific achievements that soothe human pain, promote human health, extend human life, and generally improve the human condition truly constitute divine gifts for the world. However, they are not ends in themselves. Nor are they excuses for an arrogant transcendence that reduces the soteriological perspective of the human person. The role of the Church is not to eliminate scientific progress but to realize human salvation and to promote moral values.  

Benedict also comments on technological achievements in the following passage, but his approach is more pessimistic since he highlights the negative potential of said achievements:

In the millennium just past, and especially in the last centuries, immense progress was made in the areas of technology and science. Today we can dispose of vast material resources. But the men and women in our technological age risk becoming victims of their own intellectual and technical achievements, ending up in spiritual barrenness and emptiness of heart.  

Far from describing technological achievements as divine gifts, Benedict notes that they should not be considered progress if they are separated from ethical progress and reflection. Yet Benedict does recognize that technological development is essential to humanity. Describing technology as the expressing of “the hegemony of spirit over matter,” Benedict notes that technology “enables us to exercise dominion over matter, to reduce risks, to save labour, [and] to improve our conditions of life” and that it is “a response to God’s command to till and to keep the land (cf. Gen 2:15) that he has entrusted to humanity.” It is as though both Benedict and Bartholomew were examining the same sword and Bartholomew were rejoicing in the sword’s sharpness whereas Benedict were soberly observing that even though the sword has been

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83 Ibid., 50.
84 Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 69; italics Benedict’s.
bequeathed to humanity, it has a double-edged blade. This is not to say that Bartholomew is not cautious; he agrees with Benedict that the soteriological dimension of faith cannot be replaced.

Finally, both Bartholomew and Benedict point out that science should be tempered by faith and informed by theology. Bartholomew’s view on the relationship between science and faith is similar to Benedict’s position on the roles of reason and faith. According to Bartholomew, “Science saves faith from fantasy. Faith generates the energy for a new world.” This could be interpreted as the positive corollary of Benedict’s remark to Jürgen Habermas that reason and faith both have their own pathologies that the other can correct. They also have similar understandings of the ideal relationship between science and theology. Bartholomew states, “The analysis of scientific data should be informed by theological understandings if a proper evaluation and appreciation of the ecological crisis is to be reached.” For his part, Benedict maintains that the Church is convinced that scientific activity ultimately benefits from the recognition of man’s spiritual dimension and his quest for ultimate answers that allow for the acknowledgment of a world existing independently from us, which we do not fully understand and which we can only comprehend insofar as we grasp its inherent logic.

Yet Bartholomew is quick to point out that “the opposite holds true as well: theologians are called to cultivate a more comprehensive picture of scientific principles and demands in environmental issues.” As far as I can tell, there is no corresponding statement from Benedict on the necessity of theologians to be familiar with the sciences. In my view, this is one of the

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86 Ratzinger and Habermas, *Dialectics of Secularization*, 77.
weaknesses in Benedict’s doctrine on the environment. While his cosmic liturgy is profound and significant, liturgy alone cannot inform the Christian about specific ways of dealing with particular environmental circumstances; the environmental sciences are required.

*Cosmic Liturgy and Human Ecology*

The natural theological habitat of cosmic liturgy is not the West, but the East. It is not surprising, therefore, that Bartholomew also expresses a cosmic liturgy that, in many ways, parallels Benedict’s, and in another way surpasses it since he integrates it more naturally in his teachings on the environment than does Benedict. I will briefly highlight some of the more significant statements of Bartholomew and Benedict on cosmic liturgy. After this, I will compare their views on human ecology, although Bartholomew does not use the term.90

Bartholomew acknowledges St. Maximus the Confessor’s essential role in describing cosmic liturgy; in his own words, Bartholomew describes Maximus’s cosmic liturgy as “[t]he entire universe celebrat[ing] in a participation of life.”91 For both Bartholomew and Benedict, cosmic liturgy finds its zenith in the Eucharist, which in turn has a unique role in relation to the environment.92 The priest offers the Eucharist “before the altar of the world” and does so “in the

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90 I am interpreting Bartholomew’s understanding of the interrelatedness of all creatures, in particular the fundamental relationship that exists between human beings and the environment, as his version of human ecology, so to speak. While this statement implies that Bartholomew’s “human ecology” is patterned on Benedict’s, this is certainly not the case. Like cosmic liturgy, human ecology as understood in this way can be said to find its natural habitat in the East.


92 Bartholomew describes the role of the Eucharist in the following passage: “In the bread and wine of the Eucharist, as priests standing before the altar of the world, we offer the creation back to the Creator in the context of a mutual relationship to Him and to each other. Indeed, in our liturgical life, we realize by anticipation the final state of the cosmos in the kingdom of heaven. We celebrate the beauty of creation and consecrate the life of the world, returning it to God with thanks. We share the world in joy as a living mystical communion with the Divine. Thus we offer the fullness of creation at the Eucharist, and receive it back as a blessing, as the living presence of God” (ibid., 219). Benedict expresses many of the same ideas in his reflection on the relationship between the eucharistic liturgy and the environment: “Finally, to develop a profound eucharistic spirituality that is also capable of significantly affecting the fabric of society, the Christian people, in giving thanks to God through the Eucharist, should be conscious that they do so in the name of all creation, aspiring to the sanctification of the world and working
name of all creation, aspiring to the sanctification of the world.” Bartholomew contends that cosmic liturgy can be seen “in the symbiosis of life’s rich biological complexities” and states that human beings “are called to recognize this interdependence between our environment and ourselves.” In this statement, Bartholomew links cosmic liturgy with human ecology.

Bartholomew’s most explicit statement on the relationship between human beings and the environment highlights humanity’s place in the cosmos and its relationship to its universal context. According to Bartholomew,

At the heart of the relationship between humanity and environment is the relationship between human beings. As individuals, we live not only in vertical relationships to God, and horizontal relationships to one another, but also in a complex web of relationships that extend throughout our lives, our cultures, and the material world. Human beings and the environment form a seamless garment of existence, a complex fabric that we believe is fashioned by God. This position contains many of the ramifications of Benedict’s human ecology. If human beings and the rest of creation constitute a “seamless garment of existence,” then it is obvious that if one part of the garment is damaged, the entire garment suffers. This is essentially the same message about human ecology that Benedict seeks to convey: “Alongside the ecology of nature, there exists what can be called a ‘human’ ecology . . . disregard for the environment always harms human coexistence, and vice versa.” Bartholomew and Benedict are on the same page when it comes to the interrelatedness of all of God’s creatures.

intensely to that end . . . The Eucharist itself powerfully illuminates human history and the whole cosmos. In this sacramental perspective we learn, day by day, that every ecclesial event is a kind of sign by which God makes himself known and challenges us. The eucharistic form of life can thus help foster a real change in the way we approach history and the world” (Benedict XVI, The Environment, 31–32).

93 Bartholomew I, Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer, 219; Benedict XVI, The Environment, 31–32.

94 Bartholomew I, Cosmic Grace, Humble Prayer, 219.

95 Ibid., 218–19.

96 Benedict XVI, The Environment, 28; italics Benedict’s.
There are some differences between the views of the patriarch and the pope emeritus, however. The main difference, as far as I can tell, is a difference of patrimony. Though not described as “human ecology,” the idea of interrelatedness is more ancient in the East than in the West since in the West it was an idea that had to be recovered in the twentieth century by social scientists whereas in the East, it extends at least as far back as St. Maximus the Confessor.97 Other differences are the ways Benedict and Bartholomew articulate the implications of this interrelatedness. Benedict stresses the relationship between human ecology and intergenerational/intragenerational solidarity, human dignity, and life issues, whereas Bartholomew tends to associate the interrelatedness of all creatures with cosmic liturgy. Their views are complementary and together constitute a strong witness to the world.

Benedict and Bartholomew have collaborated in their defense of the Earth. In a letter to Bartholomew, Benedict states, “I see our common commitment [to the environment] as an example of that collaboration which Orthodox and Catholics must constantly seek, to respond to the call of a common witness.”98 Their common witness finds its most concrete expression in their joint declaration in which they state,

At present, in the face of the great threats to the natural environment, we want to express our concern at the negative consequences for humanity and for the whole of creation which can result from economic and technological progress that does not know its limits. As religious leaders, we consider it one of our duties to encourage and to support all efforts to protect God’s creation, and to bequeath to future generations a world in which they will be able to live.99

97 Before St. Maximus, Pseudo-Dionysius emphasized the tapestry that unites the ecclesiastical and celestial hierarchies into one cosmic whole that is centered on the praise of God. See his Ecclesiastical Hierarchy and Celestial Hierarchy.


99 Ibid., 26–27.
Bartholomew and Benedict’s stances on the environment shows that the Orthodox and Catholic Churches stand together on this issue.

The West’s recovery and theological interpretation of human ecology is a theological development that has some important ecumenical implications. As Bartholomew points out, human ecology is intrinsically related to cosmic liturgy. By way of extension, theosis is also related to human ecology when cosmic liturgy is considered the medium between the two since cosmic liturgy is oriented to the transformation of the cosmos. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches seem to be heading in the same direction on the issue of creation and its divinization after a prolonged period in which the West tended to see creation as separate from the realm of human beings. This new position of the West manifests a new humility in the West with respect to the position of human beings and non-human creation, which will hopefully spill over into Orthodox-Catholic dialogue.

Although there have been great strides made in cosmic eschatology in the West, especially in the recovery of human ecology and cosmic liturgy, occidental pneumatology remains underdeveloped. In the next section, I will analyze Benedict’s pneumatology to determine in what directions his cosmic eschatology might acquire a pneumatological dimension.

**Pneumatology**

“Neglect of the Spirit and of the religious value of the natural world seem to go hand in hand,” remarks Elizabeth Johnson.100 The development of pneumatology is necessary for the advancement of theological thinking about the biosphere. Without a proper pneumatology, theological thought on the environment remains impoverished.

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While Benedict has paid much attention to the environment, his pneumatology is underdeveloped, especially in comparison with other branches of his theology such as his Christology and liturgiology. His pneumatology’s relation to ecclesiology is lacking in that while he recognizes the significance of the *subsistit* formula and the essential role of the Holy Spirit in relation to Christ and the sacraments, he does not relate the *subsistit* formula to its wider cosmic application, an application that I will explain in my endeavor to articulate a pneumatological eschatology. In addition, although his theology of religions maintains an open soteriological stance toward other religions and recognizes that the church does not have a monopoly on truth, nevertheless he binds the Holy Spirit so closely to the sphere of Christ that he seems to conflate the distinct functions of the Holy Spirit and Christ. This is another issue that I will resolve in my attempt to arrive at a pneumatological synthesis that combines eastern and western pneumatologies so as to achieve a holistic elaboration on the Holy Spirit’s constitutional role in cosmic eschatology and soteriology. Yet another issue with Benedict’s pneumatology is that he does not seem to be as open to the presence of the Holy Spirit in other cultures and religions as his predecessor, John Paul II. I will explore the issue of the redemption of culture in my pneumatological synthesis. In short, Benedict’s pneumatology needs to be more fully integrated into the other branches of theology so as to increase the potency and theological flavor of his environmental teaching.

In this pneumatological section, after I describe the Christological and ecclesiological dimensions of Benedict’s pneumatology in his later work compared to his earlier work, I will relate some assessments of Benedict’s pneumatology. After this, I will explore his pneumatology in the context of ecumenism and his theology of religions. Finally, I will present my
pneumatological synthesis of cosmic eschatology, which builds on the foundation that Benedict has established.

Benedict’s Pneumatology vis-à-vis Christology and Ecclesiology

Benedict’s pneumatology is noticeably less robust than his Christology. Excluding the two forwards, The God of Jesus Christ: Meditations on the Triune God has almost exactly 100 pages, only 11 of which are dedicated to the Holy Spirit. This means that whereas the Holy Spirit is one of three persons in the Trinity, Benedict only dedicates about 11 percent of his book on the Trinity to the Holy Spirit. In one sense, this is not surprising since there is notably less material on the Holy Spirit than there is on Jesus. Benedict notes as much when he states that “while we are able to say rather a lot about the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit has largely remained the unknown God.”101 Benedict claims that the Holy Spirit and the Word are associated to such an extent that it can be claimed that the Spirit lives in the Word: “The Word is the location of the Spirit; Jesus is the source of the Spirit.”102 This seems to imply a relationship in which the activity of the Spirit is essentially bound to the sphere of the activity of the Word. This position, however, is different than the pneumatology that Benedict had developed decades earlier in Introduction to Christianity.

Like Benedict’s treatment of the Holy Spirit in God of Jesus Christ, his exposition in Introduction to Christianity of the portion of the Creed that deals with the Holy Spirit is noticeably abbreviated. Adrian Nichols comments that Benedict’s pneumatological reflections in

101 Ratzinger, God of Jesus Christ, 105.
102 Ibid., 108.
Introduction to Christianity are “disproportionately brief.”\textsuperscript{103} Despite the brevity of this section, Benedict’s ideas here are different in comparison with his pneumatology that is found in God of Jesus Christ in two ways. First, Benedict writes that the theology ensconced in the Creed affirms the Holy Spirit not primarily as a person in the Trinity (although it does not preclude nor deny it), but rather “as the power of God in history.”\textsuperscript{104} This created a tension between Christians’ faith in the Holy Spirit and faith in the church. The church “was no longer understood charismatically from the angle of pneumatology, but was seen exclusively from the standpoint of the incarnation as something all too earthbound and finally explained entirely on the basis of the power categories of worldly thinking.”\textsuperscript{105} Benedict remarks that it is unfortunate that later developments overlooked this tension and focused almost exclusively on the church’s relationship to the incarnation rather than to the Holy Spirit, with the unfortunate consequence that the early church’s reflections on the Holy Spirit were confined to speculations on the Trinity as opposed to how the Spirit operates in the world.\textsuperscript{106}

The second way that Benedict’s thought on the Holy Spirit in Introduction to Christianity differs from his later pneumatology is that in his earlier work, he maintains that the Creed understands the church “as the center of the Spirit’s activity in the world.”\textsuperscript{107} The obvious implication here is that although the Spirit is surely at work in the church, it is also at work beyond the church. This view contrasts with Benedict’s later pneumatology where he restricts the activity of the Spirit to the realm of the Word. If one keeps in mind that both the Holy Spirit and

\textsuperscript{103} Nichols, The Thought of Benedict XVI, 92.

\textsuperscript{104} Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity, 333.

\textsuperscript{105} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid., 335.
the Word are omnipresent and uphold all things in existence, there can be no contradiction on this point.

Assessments of Benedict’s Pneumatology

Scholarly assessments of Benedict’s pneumatology are somewhat mixed, ranging from Thomas Rausch’s mildly critical evaluation of Benedict’s pneumatological contributions to Christopher Collins and Maximilian Heim’s positive assessments of Benedict’s attempt to bridge Christology and pneumatology. Between these evaluations lies the opinion of Peter John McGregor, which is that there is a noticeable development of Benedict’s pneumatology, although there is more work to be done.

There is a scholarly consensus that pneumatology is an underdeveloped theme in Benedict’s theology. McGregor states that the pneumatological sections in Introduction to Christianity and God of Jesus Christ are “little more than appendices.” Furthermore, the weakness of Benedict’s pneumatology, in Rausch’s view, continued after he was elected pope. In his words, “It could be argued that pneumatology . . . has not been Pope Benedict’s strong suit.” McGregor’s evaluation of Benedict’s pneumatology is perhaps more nuanced than those of his colleagues since he recognizes that there is a development in Benedict’s pneumatology. Restricting his analysis to pneumatology in Benedict’s spiritual Christology, McGregor hones in on Benedict’s Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to Spiritual Christology. After observing that the Holy Spirit is almost entirely absent in this work, McGregor suggests, “One could

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characterize Benedict’s spiritual Christology as an unfinished symphony . . . [in which] the scoring is incomplete,” and furthermore indicates that over the course of Benedict’s work in Christology, the pneumatological lacuna has diminished.\textsuperscript{111} In particular, in \textit{Jesus of Nazareth} Benedict XVI emphasizes the Holy Spirit more than he does in \textit{Introduction to Christianity} and \textit{God of Jesus Christ}.\textsuperscript{112} By limiting his investigation to Benedict’s spiritual Christology, McGregor more or less elides the theological issue of the relationship between the Holy Spirit and the church in Benedict’s theology.\textsuperscript{113} This issue is essential to cosmic soteriology since Benedict identifies the church as the locus of salvation while simultaneously recognizing that it is possible for non-Christians to be saved. I will address this issue after describing Collins and Heim’s account of Benedict’s attempt to bridge Christology and pneumatology, which turns out to have important ecclesiological implications.

Collins and Heim paint Benedict’s pneumatology in a positive light. According to Collins, appreciating “the tension between the Christological and pneumatological characteristics of the church” and how it unfolds a revitalized understanding of the church “was the aim of the Second Vatican Council, as Ratzinger sees it.”\textsuperscript{114} Collins points out a significant feature of Benedict’s reception and interpretation of Vatican II. Maximillian Heim elaborates: “In a lecture given in 1967, Ratzinger reported that during the Council, through the rediscovery of the Pneumatology of the Eastern Church, some of the inflexibility of western theology, which had

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\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 211.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 205.
\textsuperscript{113} Although McGregor recognizes that Benedict proposes that the Holy Spirit and the church are icons of each other (see ibid., 218), the focus of his research in this article is Benedict’s spiritual Christology, not ecclesiology.
\textsuperscript{114} Collins, \textit{The Word Made Love}, 98.
\end{flushright}
come about by neglecting it in the past, was progressively relaxed."\textsuperscript{115} In Heim’s account of Benedict’s position on the pneumatological and Christological dimension of the church, the western church tends to interpret the phrase “Body of Christ” more along the lines of the incarnation rather than considering its relationship to the resurrection of Christ. The result is a vision of the church that emphasizes the institutional nature of the church and that does not emphasize enough the spiritual nature of the church, i.e. the role of the Holy Spirit as the vivifier of the church.\textsuperscript{116} This is the problem that, in Benedict’s view, the Second Vatican Council sought to fix.

Since these two qualities of the church, i.e. the Christological and the pneumatological, are not obviously antithetical or contradictory at first glance, one might wonder why this relationship is described as a tension. The tension arises when there are different opinions as to the significance of each of these ecclesial characteristics in relation to each other. Benedict describes the tension as follows:

In present-day theology the contrasting of Christological with pneumatological views of the Church is quite noticeably coming to the fore. On that basis it is said that the sacrament lies in the line of Christology and incarnation, and that this necessarily pushes what is in the pneumatological and charismatic line to one side.\textsuperscript{117}

Lamenting the sharp division between the incarnation and the sacramental on the one hand and the Spirit and the charismatic on the other, Benedict posits that there is no such division in God as revealed in Scripture. While acknowledging that the Word and the Spirit are different persons, he explains that Christ can only be present to human beings in history because he now exists in


\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{117} Ratzinger, \textit{Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith}, 183.
the Holy Spirit and shares himself with people in and through the Holy Spirit. In fact, Benedict goes on to explain that the mediating of the presence of Christ through the Spirit is the “necessary presupposition for there being sacraments” in the first place.\footnote{Ibid., 184.} It follows that what at first seems to be a dichotomy between sacraments and charisms is ultimately overcome because of the Holy Spirit’s role as mediating the presence of Christ. Perhaps this is no more apparent than in the term σώμα Χριστοῦ, which Maximillian Heim describes as the bridge that Benedict uses to unite the pneumatological and the Christological elements of the church.

Benedict points out that the tendency to interpret the Body of Christ in a strictly physical way is the result of a modern hermeneutical lens. In his words,

\begin{quote}
[T]he expression σώμα Χριστοῦ, the Body of Christ, as applied to the Church in the New Testament . . . must be interpreted against the background of the Semitic biblical terminology and not according to the presuppositions of our concept of body . . . there is no word for body, as we understand it, that is, for the concept of body as considered separately from the soul.\footnote{Joseph Ratzinger, “Kirche als Tempel des Heiligen Geistes,” Vom Widerauffinden der Mitte: Grundorientierungen: Texte aus vier Jahrzehnten, published by the association of former students, ed. S. O. Horn, V. Pfünér, et al. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1997), 150, quoted in Heim, Joseph Ratzinger, 239.}
\end{quote}

Benedict explains that the meaning the biblical authors had in mind when they used the term σώμα Χριστοῦ is the total Christ, body and soul; in other words, the person of Christ.\footnote{Ibid., 240.} In Benedict’s view, the corporeal and spiritual dimensions of the Body of Christ respectively highlight the Christological and pneumatological dimensions of the church.

Heim summarizes Benedict’s insight about the Body of Christ as being a physical and spiritual reality as follows:

\begin{quote}
The peculiar formula σώμα is πνεύμα is supposed to express the fact that Christ’s body no longer continues to exist in the “form of intra-historical corporeality, which is
enclosure, but rather continues to exist in a new manner, namely, as pure communication, as pure openness, as pure transcendence [Hyper], as pure being-for-others”. Benedict’s insight about the fundamental complementary nature of the Christological and pneumatological facets of the church profoundly impacts soteriology since it opens the door to a broader understanding of what it means to be associated with the church. From now on, the apparently mutually exclusive alternatives of “member or non-member” dissolve and are replaced by the concepts of belonging to the church “in a supportive and productive way [tragend] or belonging in a supported and derivative way [getragen].”122 This new way of conceiving membership is directly associated with the subsistit formula present in Lumen Gentium.

The Subsistit Formula

If the Holy Spirit makes Christ present in history, it follows that in some sense, the Spirit must also constitute the church. This is the case for Benedict, who states that “the Church herself—when she truly exists as Church—is a creation of the Spirit.”123 The ecclesial-pneumatological link is predicated on St. Augustine’s pneumatology, especially insofar as the name he uses for the Holy Spirit is communio.124 The subsistit formula sheds light on the extent of the activity and presence of the Holy Spirit.

121 Ibid., 241 quoting Ratzinger, “Kirche als Tempel,” 152.
124 Benedict states, “From the phrase ‘Holy Spirit,’ Augustine takes the definition of Spirit as communio. This already has a fundamentally ecclesiological meaning for him . . . It opens pneumatology up into ecclesiology . . . Becoming a Christian means becoming communio and thereby entering into the mode of being of the Holy Spirit. But it can also only happen through the Holy Spirit, who is the power of communication, mediating it, making it possible and is himself a Person” (ibid., 327).
The *subsistit* formula, which marks a watershed in ecumenism, has been an important feature of ecumenical dialogue in the decades following the Second Vatican Council. As found in *Lumen Gentium*, the *subsistit* formula may be distilled as follows: “[The] Church . . . subsists in the Catholic Church.”\(^{125}\) Despite the simplicity of the phrasing, there is a lot to unpack. What precisely does “subsists” (*subsistit in*) mean?

In *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, Benedict offers his own interpretation of the text, stating that the term *subsistit* is a term that was used in ancient philosophy and that was shaped by the Scholastics. *Hypostasis*, the Christological term used to designate the unity of the human and divine natures in Christ, is the closest Greek word to *subsistit*.\(^{126}\) Benedict explains that the infinitive *subsistere* is closely connected to *esse* (to be), and that the former term means being “in the form of an independent agent”; the ecclesiological application of this word to the church, Benedict maintains, means that “the Church of Jesus Christ may be encountered in this world as a concrete agent in the Catholic Church.”\(^{127}\) Despite offering his own understanding of the *subsistit* formula, Benedict acknowledges that the formula is not so easily understood since every translation of the sublime Latin text fails to capture its richness.\(^{128}\) It should be noted at this point that the earlier conciliar drafts of what became *Lumen Gentium* 8 proposed using the word *est* (“is”) to describe the relationship between the church and the Catholic Church. This would have produced a strict equation between the church of Jesus Christ and the institutional church, thereby in principle excluding every other institution from participating. Benedict quips, “The


\(^{126}\) Technically, *subsistit* is a verb whereas *hypostasis* is a noun.

\(^{127}\) Ratzinger, *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith*, 147; italics Ratzinger’s.

equation is not mathematical because the Holy Spirit cannot be reduced to a mathematical symbol.”

The openness that the *subsistit* formula allows is the key to its ecumenical significance. Heim states that Benedict’s writings “show a remarkable consistency in his positive assessment of the term *subsistit*, for today.”

In accordance with the ostensible soteriological widening the *subsistit* formula implies, the doctrine of *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* can be found in a mitigated form in *Lumen Gentium* 14, which states,

> In explicit terms [Christ] Himself affirmed the necessity of faith and baptism and thereby affirmed also the necessity of the Church, for through baptism as through a door men enter the Church. Whosoever, therefore, knowing that the Catholic Church was made necessary by Christ, would refuse to enter or to remain in it, could not be saved . . . He is not saved, however, who, though part of the body of the Church, does not persevere in charity.

Matthew Ramage notes that this passage “reformulates the ancient dogma of [*extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*] and recasts it in a positive light, restricting its application to those who *know* the Church is necessary for salvation and still refuse to enter or remain in it,” and observes that conciliar and post-conciliar magisterial texts seem to teach a different version of *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* than had been taught for nearly two millennia. Whereas previously, an explicit membership within the church was interpreted as necessary for salvation (hence the formula

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129 Ibid., 231.

130 This brief account of the *subsistit* formula is merely the tip of the iceberg. For an in-depth analysis of the *subsistit* formula in Benedict’s theology, see Heim, *Joseph Ratzinger*, 310–30.

131 Ibid., 310.


133 Matthew Ramage, “*Extra Ecclesiam Nulla Salus* and the Substance of Catholic Doctrine: Towards a Realization of Benedict XVI’s ‘Hermeneutic of Reform,’” *Nova et Vetera* 14, no. 1 (2016): 307; italics Ramage’s. Ramage notes in ibid., 304 and 304n21 that *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus* was first explicitly articulated in the third century by Origen (*Honiliae in Jesu Nave* 3:5) and St. Cyprian (*Epist.* 4, 4).
extra Ecclesiam nulla salus), in the wake of Vatican II, a new door has opened that has essentially allowed Catholics to explain how non-Christians can be saved without being explicit members of the church. Ramage, however, suggests that this might be a misunderstanding when he points out that Benedict believes that extra Ecclesiam nulla salus “was originally intended to indicate only what happens to a Catholic who leaves the Church.”134 If this is the case, there is a kind of continuity between the pre-conciliar and post-conciliar views of extra Ecclesiam nulla salus, even though it is obvious that the Catholic Church’s attitude towards people of other religions changed from a negative light before the Council to a more positive light after the Council.

The subsistit formula, which likewise views the position of adherents of other Christian denominations and religious creeds in a more positive light than before Vatican II, is closely related to Benedict’s insight on the meaning of σομα Χριστου since both concepts bolster a broader ecumenism and interreligious dialogue than the kinds of dialogue that pre-conciliar Catholic theologians typically espoused. Nevertheless, for Benedict Christianity remains the most logical religion. In a fundamental theology class he taught in his early career as a theology professor, he taught that the Chalcedonian Christological formula represents the greatest opening of God to human beings and of a human being to God, and therefore “states the most monumental truth any religion can possibly define rationally,” which is why in his view “human beings need do nothing else but enter into this divine openness.”135 Benedict has consistently held this view throughout the years. In Truth and Tolerance, written some forty to fifty years


after he made the above remark, he claims that in Christianity, “Reason and mystery had met together; the very fact that the whole had brought together in one person had opened the door for everyone: through the one God, all could become brothers and sisters.”\textsuperscript{136} Christianity remains the quintessential religion in Benedict’s mind. Having gone over some important themes in Benedict’s ecumenism, I will proceed to compare Zizioulas and Benedict on the role of the Holy Spirit in ecclesiology.

\textit{Zizioulas and Benedict}

The pneumatology of John Zizioulas is quite rich and has undergone significant changes. If Zizioulas started out paying little attention to the Spirit (undoubtedly under the influence of his mentor, Georges Florovsky), later on he fully embraced pneumatology and became a champion of its application to ecclesiology. Though he has written extensively on the Holy Spirit,\textsuperscript{137} I will limit myself to his work in \textit{Being as Communion}. The first theological datum I want to highlight is Zizioulas’s account of the function of the Holy Spirit vis-à-vis Christ’s modes of presence during his earthly life and after his resurrection. Zizioulas comments that the Holy Spirit “is the person of the Trinity who actually realizes in history that which we call Christ, this absolutely relational entity, our Savior”; from this, Zizioulas concludes that “Christology is \textit{essentially}

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\item \textsuperscript{137} For instance, see his chapter, “Pneumatology and the Importance of the Person,” in John D. Zizioulas, \textit{Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church}, ed. Paul McPartlan (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 178–205, where he describes the historical background to the development of pneumatological doctrines and gives an impressive account of the \textit{Filioque} controversy. In the end, Zizioulas explains that the \textit{Filioque} debate as a point of contention between East and West is resolvable so long as it is understood in light of the writings of St. Maximus the Confessor; Zizioulas explains that “by professing the \textit{Filioque} our Western brethren do not wish to introduce another \textit{ation} in God’s being except the Father, and a mediating role of the Son in the origination of the Spirit is not to be limited to the divine Economy, but relates also to the divine \textit{ousia}. If East and West can repeat these two points of St Maximus \textit{together} in our time, this would provide sufficient basis for a rapprochement between the two traditions” (ibid., 205; italics Zizioulas’s).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
conditioned by Pneumatology.” He takes the logical step of applying this relationship between Christology and pneumatology to ecclesiology. The implication is that if Christology is conditioned by pneumatology, then the same holds for ecclesiology: ecclesiology must be conditioned by pneumatology. By vivifying both Christ and the church simultaneously, the Holy Spirit is the causative link between Christology and ecclesiology. This link is paramount in Zizioulas’s mind, because it has the potential to deeply affect ecumenism as I will explain shortly. First, I will explain Zizioulas’s understanding of the Orthodox reception of Vatican II’s ecclesiology.

The primary Orthodox criticism of the ecclesiology of Vatican II, according to Zizioulas, is that pneumatology was artificially added after the documents on ecclesiology had a thoroughly Christological basis. While this might seem innocuous at first, he is quick to point out that this means that the Second Vatican Council’s teachings on the sacraments, ministries, and other ecclesial institutions were all deeply influenced by this Christological basis and an impoverished pneumatology. In other words, from the Orthodox perspective the ecclesiology of Vatican II is not constituted by pneumatology; rather, pneumatology appears to be an afterthought.

How could this view be corrected, according to Zizioulas, and what would a corrected view imply? Zizioulas emphatically insists that “Pneumatology must be made constitutive of

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139 According to Zizioulas, “The Holy Spirit, in making real the Christ-event in history, makes real at the same time Christ’s personal existence as a body or community. Christ does not exist first as truth and then as communion; He is both at once. All separation between Christology and ecclesiology vanishes in the Spirit” (Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 111).

140 Ibid., 123.
Christology and ecclesiology, i.e. condition the very being of Christ and the Church.”

Imagining what might be done at a “Vatican III,” Zizioulas suggests that if such a council were to implement Zizioulas’s suggestions, it would “push the notion of communion to its ontological conclusions” by making communion “condition the very being of . . . the Church”; this refashioning would also make pneumatology constitutive of ecclesiology, and avoid making ecclesiology “dependent on Christology.”

As Zizioulas sees it, the main repercussion of a pneumatologically constituted ecclesiology would be a seismic shift of perspective regarding the institution of the church. In his words,

> If the Church is *constituted* through . . . Pneumatology, all *pyramidal* notions disappear in ecclesiology: the “one” and the “many” co-exist as two aspects of the same being . . . the head of the local Church, the bishop, is conditioned by the existence of his community and the rest of the ministries, particularly the *presbyterium*. There is no ministry which does not need the other ministries; no ministry possesses the fullness, the plenitude of grace and power without a relationship with the other ministries.

Zizioulas optimistically notes that such a reformulation may even cast the role of the papacy in a “more positive light.”

Zizioulas’s explication of pneumatology is intriguing and important for Catholics to consider. Zizioulas and Benedict are in substantial agreement on the constitutive role of the Holy Spirit vis-à-vis Christ and the church; however, they have differing views on the sufficiency of the pneumatology of Vatican II’s ecclesiology. Whereas Benedict sees the Council’s

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141 Ibid., 139; italics Zizioulas’s.
142 Ibid.
143 Ibid., 141.
144 Ibid., 139; italics Zizioulas’s.
145 Ibid., 142.
pneumatological ecclesiology as a success, Zizioulas does not think it went far enough. Unfortunately, Zizioulas does not quote any conciliar document to demonstrate Vatican II’s dependency on Christology and the secondary role of pneumatology. Furthermore, Zizioulas states, “We need to make communion condition the very being of the Church, not the well-being but the being of it. On the theological level this would mean assigning a constitutive role to Pneumatology, not one dependent on Christology.” While I agree with Zizioulas’s insistence on an ecclesiology that is constituted by pneumatology, I do not see how ecclesiology cannot depend on Christology. His point that the Holy Spirit constitutes both Christ and the church is correct, and in this sense it could be said that ecclesiology depends on the Holy Spirit and not solely on Christ; however, I am more inclined to emphasize the perichoresis of the Holy Trinity and state that the church is the work of the entire Trinity, depending equally on the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. If Christ is constituted by the Spirit since the Spirit makes him present in history, it is equally true that Christ had a role in the sending of the Spirit without which the church would not have been instituted nor constituted.

In addition to this difference, Zizioulas and Benedict express different opinions on the prospect of ecumenism; the former tends to be more optimistic whereas the latter is more pessimistic. While ecumenism is very important for Benedict, he believes it may not bring about a formal unity between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches. At the end of a lengthy reflection on ecumenism, Benedict remarks,

146 Yves Congar believes that although there was a lack of pneumatology at the Second Vatican Council, there was a true pneumatology in the conciliar texts that “have since then been active in the Catholic Church.” Yves M. J. Congar, I Believe in the Holy Spirit, trans. David Smith, vol. 1 (New York: Seabury, 1983), 167.

147 Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 141; italics mine.

148 Jesus asks the Father to send the Advocate to the apostles (John14:16), breathes the Holy Spirit onto them after his resurrection (John 20:22), and announces the Spirit’s coming just before his ascension (Acts 1:4-5).
Ecumenism is really nothing other than living at present in an eschatological light, in the light of Christ who is coming again. It thus also signifies that we recognize the provisional nature of our activity, which we ourselves cannot finish; that we do not want to do for ourselves what only Christ, when he comes again, can bring about. On our way toward him, we are on our way toward unity.\textsuperscript{149}

Still, Benedict thinks that it is important to work toward unity, which his numerous letters to Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Damaskinos Papandreou of Switzerland and Lutheran Bishop Johannes Hanselmann indicate.\textsuperscript{150} Dialogue and openness are important for Benedict across denominations and religions.

One of the main takeaways from Zizioulas’s account of pneumatology is that this area of theology is extremely important and is frequently underdeveloped to the detriment of theological advancement. While Zizioulas calls for ways of reconceiving the role of the Holy Spirit, his general call for considering the significance of the Holy Spirit for theology is also apropos and should be heeded. In this spirit, at the end of the chapter I will seek to make a modest pneumatological contribution to Benedict’s cosmic eschatology.

\textsuperscript{149} Ratzinger, \textit{Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith}, 269. Cf. Waclaw Hryniewicz, \textit{The Spirit: The Cry of the World} (Washington, DC: Council for Research in Values & Philosophy, 2014), 215, citing \textit{L’orthodoxie doit digérer ce terrible XXe siècle}. Entretien Olivier Clément, “La Croix” 17-18 Novembre 2001: “I am not inclined to believe in the speedily approaching ecumenical Pentecost. In this regard I rather share the opinion of the late French Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément (died 2009). In an interview published 2001 on the occasion of his 80th birthday, he did not hide his disenchantment about the state of ecumenism today: ‘I do not expect anything from an official ecumenism . . . I think that what remains and what shapes the future is in reality friendship, small groups of friends connecting Orthodox, Catholics, sometimes Protestants. That is what counts. It is there that the ecumenism of tomorrow is being worked out. I believe also in changes that are about to occur with the youth of Orthodox countries. (...) I am 80 years old, and I do not think that something important will happen in my lifetime. I think there are many possibilities in people. It is not so, for the moment, on the level of the episcopate.’”

\textsuperscript{150} Ratzinger, \textit{Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith}, 217–52.
Benedict’s Pneumatology in his Theology of Religions

“Christian ecumenism gradually expanded into the dialogue of religions,” states Benedict.\textsuperscript{151} The following passage from \textit{Lumen Gentium} constitutes the prologue, as it were, to Benedict’s theology of religions:

Those also can attain to salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the Gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and moved by grace strive by their deeds to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the helps necessary for salvation to those who, without blame on their part, have not yet arrived at an explicit knowledge of God and with His grace strive to live a good life. Whatever good or truth is found amongst them is looked upon by the Church as a preparation for the Gospel. She knows that it is given by Him who enlightens all men so that they may finally have life.\textsuperscript{152}

\textit{Lumen Gentium} interprets the good elements in other religions as preparations for the Gospel, something that the Catholic Church had never formally declared before.\textsuperscript{153} This statement raises the issue of the relationship between Christianity and other religions and implies that elements in other religions that are already good and holy are related to the truth, which is the subject of the next section.

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\textsuperscript{151} Ratzinger, \textit{Many Religions—One Covenant}, 92.
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\textsuperscript{152} \textit{Lumen Gentium}, 16.
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\textsuperscript{153} This point is elaborated in another passage of \textit{Lumen Gentium}, which states that the result of the church’s activity is that “whatever good is found sown in people’s hearts and minds, or in the rites and customs of peoples, is not only saved from destruction, but is purified, raised up, and perfected for the glory of God, the confusion of the devil, and the happiness of humanity” (\textit{Lumen Gentium}, 17). Ambrose Mong interprets this as meaning that there are “elements of revelation” in other religions and that consequentially, there is some continuity between Christianity and other religions. Ambrose Mong, \textit{Are Non-Christians Saved?: Joseph Ratzinger’s Thoughts on Religious Pluralism} (London: Oneworld, 2015), 28–29. Although there may be elements of revelation in other religions, this does not mean that these religions are not a result of natural theology and philosophical reflection rather than explicit divine revelation.
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The Issue of Truth

*Dominus Iesus* claims that the position that the revelation of Jesus Christ has an imperfect character is against the teachings of the Catholic Church, even if the reason for this position is the claim that “the truth about God cannot be grasped and manifested in its globality and completeness by any historical religion, neither by Christianity nor by Jesus Christ.” In doing so, the document emphasizes that the Christian revelation given by Jesus Christ is absolute. *Dominus Iesus* states that “the full and complete revelation of the salvific mystery of God is given in Jesus Christ.” Although Jesus was a man, this does not mean that the revelation that was passed through him is insufficient. By affirming this position, the authors of the document seek to safeguard the significance of the revelation that was revealed to the apostles and passed down through generations. The reason *Dominus Iesus* gives for affirming the “unicity,” “universality,” and “absoluteness” of the Christian revelation is that it is being faithful to the quality of Christian divine revelation.

The document, however, does not seem to take into consideration that human beings have a limited understanding of the truth. It is not that the revelation itself is incomplete, but rather that the recipient of this revelation, the church, as an historical reality on the way toward perfection, cannot at any one time access the fullness of the truth, which is essentially Benedict’s position and the position of Vatican II. It is understandable that the authors of *Dominus Iesus* would not want to cast doubt on the church’s understanding of revelation for the faithful; yet this document is also intended for theologians as well. If one reads between the lines, one can detect

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155 Ibid.
the possibility of synthesizing a nuanced theological position of truth with what *Dominus Iesus* states. I will seek to articulate a synthesis between Benedict’s understanding of truth with *Dominus Iesus*’s doctrine of truth after I describe Benedict’s open inclusivism and how he sees the truth.

Benedict’s theology of religions seems to coincide with what Paul Griffiths calls “open inclusivism.” Griffiths describes “modalized open inclusivism” as follows: “*It is possible that alien religions teach truths of religious significance to the Church.*” He maintains that the criterion for open inclusivism is that a religion interpret itself as not having a monopoly on truth. “Any religion that thought of itself as already having said all there is to be said religiously speaking,” explains Griffith, “could think of alien truths only as repetitions of what it already says.” In other words, for open inclusivism to be a possibility in the Catholic Church, the church needs to recognize that while it purports to have the fullness of the truth, it does not explicitly know the fullness of the truth in time; truths must be discovered, as it were, through time and theological effort.

Benedict’s claim that God “became finite in order to tear open our finitude and lead us out into the wide spaces of his infinity” does not specify whether this happens in history or in eternity; as such, it contains ambiguity. If, on the one hand, Benedict believes that Christians can be opened at the intellectual level to the infinite in history, it would imply that open inclusivism is not possible (since presumably, they would have this knowledge through the church); however, on the other hand, if he thinks that their minds can be expanded toward the

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157 Ibid., 62.

infinite only in eternity, it would suggest that Benedict believes that open inclusivism is a possibility for the Catholic Church.

In another passage, Benedict suggests that the Catholic Church’s understanding of the truth can be deepened. In an analysis on the Ten Commandments, he writes that new perspectives of the moral law open up over time, and that this phenomenon “is a process of being guided into the whole of truth, into the truth that absolutely cannot be carried within one historical moment alone (see Jn 16:12f).”

Since the Catholic Church claims to have the deposit of truth on the one hand, and yet is led into the fullness of the truth on the other, this implies that there is a deepening of the church’s understanding over time. Benedict recognizes that there is a kind of dynamism or fluidity in the Catholic Church’s understanding of truth; *Dominus Iesus*’s understanding of truth appears to be more static than Benedict’s view. Furthermore, in a book length interview with journalist Peter Seewald, Benedict states, “Our understanding of [revelation], of course—even the understanding of it that the Church enjoys—remains greatly inferior to the magnitude of what God has spoken.”

In other words, the church does not have access to an explicit knowledge of the fullness of the deposit of revelation at any one time since it is limited by its historical nature. In another passage, Benedict suggests that Christians can arrive at truths through dialogue with non-Christians. “What we need,” writes Benedict, “is respect for the beliefs of others and the readiness to look for the truth in what strikes us as

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159 Ibid., 255. In John 16:12-13 (NAB), Jesus tells his disciples, “I have much more to tell you, but you cannot bear it now. But when he comes, the Spirit of truth, he will guide you to all truth. He will not speak on his own, but he will speak what he hears, and will declare to you the things that are coming.”

strange or foreign; for such truth concerns us and can correct us and lead us farther along the path.”\textsuperscript{161} This passage clearly demonstrates Benedict’s open inclusivism.\textsuperscript{162}

The way Benedict and \textit{Dominus Iesus}’s positions on truth can be harmonized is by affirming on the one hand the historical limitations of the human understanding and, on the other hand, by acknowledging that there is nothing that is essentially lacking in the deposit of revelation that has been passed down through the apostles and their successors, at least as far as salvation is concerned. This is also the position of the council fathers at Vatican II. \textit{Dei verbum} states, “For as the centuries succeed one another, the Church constantly moves forward toward the fullness of divine truth until the words of God reach their complete fulfillment in her,”\textsuperscript{163} thereby implying that while the church possesses the fullness of revelation, it actualizes the potential to know it in time. While the church does not need other religions to assist it in plumbing the depths of the truth, engaging in dialogue may help to expedite the process of fully realizing the truth that is in principle contained in the deposit of faith.

What is Benedict’s stance on the presence of the Holy Spirit in extra-ecclesial environments? He cautions, “Clearly anyone who looks for \textit{pneuma} only on the outside, in the always unexpected, is on the wrong path. He or she fails to appreciate the basic activity of the Holy Spirit: unifying love entering into abiding.”\textsuperscript{164} Does this mean that one should not look outside the church for the presence of the Holy Spirit? Benedict recognizes that the Holy Spirit

\begin{footnotes}
\item[161] Ratzinger, \textit{Many Religions—One Covenant}, 110.
\item[162] At the same time, Benedict soberly remarks that such dialogue will not lead to the unification of religions, which “is hardly possible within our historical time, and perhaps . . . is not even desirable” (ibid., 109).
\item[164] Ratzinger, “Holy Spirit as Communio,” 329.
\end{footnotes}
exists beyond the confines of the church when he states that “God works in the world through his Spirit,” yet also insists that the Holy Spirit is “the Spirit of Christ . . . [who] is always at work and ultimately leads man to the center, which is Christ, although in ways that may be more or less evident.” In other words, the Word and the Spirit share one economy, not two competing economies.

*The Economy of the Holy Spirit*

The Spirit and the Word have one and the same economy since there is only one overarching plan of salvation because of the unity of God. Christ, the Incarnate Word of God, and the Holy Spirit are inseparable, according to Scripture and the church fathers. Many modern theologians also hold this view. For instance, Jacques Dupuis states, “The cosmic influence of the Spirit cannot be severed from the universal action of the risen Christ . . . Christocentrism and pneumatology . . . are two inseparable aspects of one and the same economy.” He maintains that a proper Spirit-Christology does not do away with Logos-Christology; instead, the two must be in a state of equilibrium to do justice to the church’s

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166 Ibid., 99.


teachings about Jesus Christ. Dominus Iesus emphasizes that there are no two separate economies of the Word and of the Holy Spirit but that there is one economy of salvation. It points out “the unity of the economy of the Incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit” as one of the truths that some theologians claim to have become “superseded.” The appeal of having different economies is that if they differ, the economy of the Holy Spirit could be said to extend beyond the realm of activity of the Word, and that therefore adherents of other religions can obtain salvation by the work of the Holy Spirit, but not necessarily through the economy of the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

While Dominus Iesus affirms that there is only one economy, the real distinction between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit suggests that while there is only one economy, it is possible for distinctions to exist in the activities of the Spirit and the Incarnate Word. While Dominus Iesus is correct to maintain that there is only one salvific economy, this does not automatically imply that the functions of the Word and of the Holy Spirit are the same. The Holy Spirit seems to have a preparatory function, as can be seen through the role of the Holy Spirit in both the incarnation of the Word and in the epiclesis. The Holy Spirit ultimately leads to Christ, but Jesus Christ is not always identified explicitly by those in other religious traditions who have, nevertheless, been touched by the Holy Spirit. Recalling the doctrine of Zizioulas, pneumatology is constitutive of Christology. Yet the identity of the activities of the Holy Spirit and of the Word does not prevent there being a distinction in functionality.

In a sense, although the Holy Spirit and the Word share in one economy, their realms of activity can be conceived as two concentric circles that are centered on the Paschal Mystery. The

169 Ibid., 198.
170 Dominus Iesus, 4.
difference between the length of the two radii of these circles is not because the realms are actually different and that therefore there are two economies, but because in one realm, the Spirit (and the Word) works without people having an explicit knowledge of the Word whereas in the smaller circle, the Word (and the Spirit) operates in a realm where it is explicitly known in the person of Jesus Christ. The activity of the Holy Spirit, which is centered not only in the church, but more specifically in the epiclesis, extends to people in other religions, but always with the purpose of leading them to Christ.\textsuperscript{171} Benedict’s statement that “[t]he Word is the location of the Spirit” does not exclude distinct functions within one economy.\textsuperscript{172}

To summarize, Benedict’s pneumatology is not nearly as developed as his Christology. He adopts the \textit{subsistit} formula, thereby rejecting the one-to-one correlation between the church as the Body of Christ and the Catholic Church. While this allows Benedict to adopt an open posture toward other religions, he nevertheless maintains that Christianity is the most logical religion. Although he recognizes that the Spirit is responsible for making Christ present in history, he does not emphasize to the same degree the constitutiveness of the Spirit in ecclesiology as does Zizioulas, although Benedict affirms the foundational role of the Spirit in the sacraments. In his theology of religions, Benedict believes that the Catholic Church does not know the fullness of truth in history although it possesses it in principle. This supports his open inclusivism. He also accepts that there is only one economy of salvation, but in identifying the

\textsuperscript{171} This can be understood in two different ways. The first is to maintain that the Holy Spirit leads people to Christianity and that if they do not convert to Christianity before they die, they are lost. The second position holds that union with Christ is the ultimate goal of people, that the Holy Spirit’s role is to orient them toward Christ, and that while some convert to Christianity during this life, others are saved and united with Christ in the eschaton. I hold the latter position. To be even clearer, I believe that while God will raise everyone and that everyone will be in a relationship with God, there are some people who will be lost, but not because of religious affiliation but rather because of infidelity to God that has become ossified by unrepentance.

\textsuperscript{172} Ratzinger, \textit{God of Jesus Christ}, 108.
Holy Spirit with the role of Christ, he does not distinguish sharply enough between their functions. Two different functions can exist in the same economy without contradiction and the real differences between the Persons in the Holy Trinity demand this recognition. Despite containing weaknesses, Benedict’s pneumatology can be strengthened by adding elements from eastern pneumatology.

Synthesis: Towards a Pneumatological Eschatology

Benedict affirms that the Holy Spirit is the “Creator Spiritus, from whom comes everything that is real.”173 This statement has significance for all of creation. Hryniewicz describes the same idea in the following words: “Through his Spirit the Creator is continually present in the deepest structures of matter and in the life of all creatures.”174 Benedict’s pneumatological framework is significant; nevertheless, Benedict’s pneumatology is weak. He restricts the subsistit formula to an anthropological interpretation by not considering the ramifications of his earlier statement that the church encompasses the cosmos, overlooks the implicit sphere of the Holy Spirit in the one economy of salvation, and adopts a pessimistic stance toward non-Christian religions. While a pneumatological dimension is not entirely absent from Benedict’s cosmic eschatology, it is certainly not as prominent as the Christological and liturgical dimensions.

To remedy this, I propose synthesizing Benedict’s thought with the pneumatological insights of primarily eastern theologians, including Waclaw Hryniewicz, Sergei Bulgakov, Paul Evdokimov, John Zizioulas, and Elizabeth Johnson, to complete a new pneumatological-

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173 Benedict XVI, Christianity and the Crisis of Cultures (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 49.

174 Hryniewicz, The Spirit, 229; emphasis Hryniewicz’s (originally in boldface).
eschatological synthesis. This synthesis is characterized by (1) dynamism, (2) the connaturality of the church and the biosphere that anthropogenesis and ecclesiogenesis suggest, (3) the cosmic extension of the _subsistit_ formula, (4) acceptance of the death of humanity and the cosmos, (5) the salvation of creatures and human culture, (6) cosmic apotheosis and the kenosis of the Holy Spirit, and (7) a paterological telos. After explaining in brief Johnson’s dynamic pneumatological paradigm and the Spirit’s role in creation, this synthesis moves from anthropogenesis to the culmination of all things at the end of time when everything is restored to the glory of God the Father.

_A Dynamic Pneumatological Paradigm_

In light of the theory of evolution, the role of the Holy Spirit in creation according to classical theology merits an upgrade, a task that Elizabeth Johnson has taken up. First, Johnson affirms the fundamental insight about the Holy Spirit being present in all of creation when she states, “The Giver of life creates what is physical—stars, planets, soil, water, air, plants, animals, ecological communities—and moves in these every bit as vigorously as in souls, minds, ideas.”

The traditional theological starting point sees God as imposing regularity, order, and intelligibility on creation. Johnson contends that “God’s creative activity brings into being a universe endowed with the innate capacity to evolve by the operation of its own natural powers, making it a free partner in its own creation.” In other words, the Holy Spirit is behind the evolutionary processes that have shaped life in the universe; additionally, the Holy Spirit enables

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175 Johnson, _Ask the Beasts_, 150. Cf. ibid., 129: “Filling the world, the Spirit is the dynamic vitality that gives existence to every single thing, calling it forth and holding it fast.”

176 Ibid., 173.

177 Ibid., 155.
creation to unfold of its own accord without forfeiting its immanence. Johnson elaborates, “the Giver of life not only creates and conserves all things, holding them in existence over the abyss of nothingness, but is also the dynamic ground of their becoming, empowering from within their emergence into new complex forms.”¹⁷⁸ In this new pneumatological paradigm of creation, 

The indwelling Creator Spirit grounds not only life’s regularities but also the novel occurrences that open up the status quo, igniting what is unexpected, interruptive, genuinely uncontrolled, and unimaginably possible. As boundless love at work in the universe, the Spirit embraces the chanciness of random mutations, being the source not only of order but also of the unexpected breaks in order that ensure freshness . . . In the emergent evolutionary universe, we should not be surprised to find the Creator Spirit hovering very closely to turbulence.¹⁷⁹

This paves the way for anthropogenesis since humanity emerged through evolutionary processes under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**Anthropogenesis and Ecclesiogenesis**

Anthropogenesis, according to Benedict, occurred not when primitive hominoids first made fire, but when they first thought of God, since humanity is constituted by the “ability to be immediately in relation to God.”¹⁸⁰ The Holy Spirit cannot have been absent at this moment when our ancestors were first endowed with humanity. This reaching out toward the divine sparked the drama of humanity, which continues to this day.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 156.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 173.

¹⁸⁰ I have reproduced the full quote below: “The clay became man at that moment in which a being for the first time was capable of forming, however dimly, the thought ‘God’. The first Thou that—however stammeringly—was said by human lips to God marks the moment in which spirit arose in the world. Here the Rubicon of anthropogenesis was crossed. For it is not the use of weapons or fire, not new methods of cruelty or of useful activity that constitute man, but rather, his ability to be immediately in relation to God.” Pope Benedict XVI, *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, ed. Michael J. Miller, trans. Michael J. Miller and Matthew J. O’Connell (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 142.
Eliding the vast majority of salvation history, a monumental subject that would require volumes to adequately plumb, I would like to consider the Holy Spirit’s dual role as the “Lord and giver of life” and as the one who vivifies the Body of Christ, the church. While it is not theologically inaccurate to categorize different divine functions within the same divine person, it would be simpler to dovetail the Spirit’s role vis-à-vis the church and the biosphere by considering the Spirit’s activity in living creatures and in the church as one and the same activity, that is, the giving of life, albeit in different qualities. Scripture distinguishes between two forms of life, i.e. biological life and eternal life.\footnote{181 The role of the Spirit is to impart both forms of life, but the situation of the specimen would determine whether the life that is imparted in this world is biological, eternal, both, or neither (e.g. frog, angel, human, and rock, respectively).} The role of the Spirit is to impart both forms of life, but the situation of the specimen would determine whether the life that is imparted in this world is biological, eternal, both, or neither (e.g. frog, angel, human, and rock, respectively).

In addition to the Holy Spirit’s activity of giving life, recall that in chapter two I mentioned that Moltmann, Staniloae, and Benedict all suggest that the church has a cosmic ordination.\footnote{182 The Russian philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev has a very similar intuition.} The Russian philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev has a very similar intuition.

In the Church grows grass and blossom flowers. The Church is a ‘christified’ cosmos. Christ has entered the Church. He was crucified and rose from the dead. As a result all has been changed in cosmos – it has been renewed. The whole cosmos journeys the way of the cross and resurrection.\footnote{183 The entire cosmos is Church in Berdyaev’s vision.}

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\footnote{181 Benedict appeals to the Gospel of John to describe the differences between these two forms of life: “The dividing line between temporal life and eternal life runs right through the midst of our temporal life. John distinguishes bios, as the passing life of this world, from zoē, as contact with the true life that wells up within us wherever we truly encounter God from within. This is what Jesus is saying in John’s Gospel: ‘he who hears my word and believes him who sent me, has eternal life; he . . . has passed from death to life’ (5:24)” (Benedict XVI, \textit{God Is Near Us}, 139–40).}


\footnote{183 N. Berdyaev, \textit{Filosofia svobodnago ducha. Problematika i apologia christianstva}, part II, Paris 1928, p. 195, quoted in Hryniewicz, \textit{The Spirit}, 221.}
One way that the church is like the world is that both exemplify unity in difference. The sapphire sphere that orbits the sun is home to an unimaginably wide diversity of species, with some estimates as high as one-trillion.\textsuperscript{184} This broad spectrum of life present in this single planet is similar to the diversity that exists in the church. The church is like the animal world as well, perhaps more so than was previously thought. In the wake of the theory of evolution proposed by Darwin, humans have been recognized as being closely akin to the animals in such a way that the perceived gap between them has been greatly reduced. In fact, human beings remarkably share at least 97\% of their DNA with chimpanzees. If the ancient dictum that human beings are rational animals is true, it means that the church can be defined as a community of redeemed rational animals. Indeed, if one were to follow the history of the origins of life on the planet, trace the development of the various lifeforms up to modern humans, and connect the dots to first century Palestine, one would find that the church has primordial biological roots as well as a divine origin in the Holy Spirit.\textsuperscript{185} Yet the Holy Spirit is also present outside the church. According to Benedict, “the Church is . . . the center of the Spirit’s activity in the world.”\textsuperscript{186} The Holy Spirit

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\textsuperscript{185} Since the church is a community of animals, it follows that there will be struggles within the church, not dissimilar between the struggle between species. For this reason, perhaps the feuds between the East and the West ought to be viewed as inevitable unfortunate occurrences that highlight the animal nature of the church in an imperfect world. This also, however, provides a basis of hope since there are models in nature in which different species of animals have a symbiotic relationship, which would not occur if the two species were the same. The East and West are not the same, which is good since their respective traditions preserve the richness of the traditions passed down beginning with the most ancient churches in antiquity. If the Catholic Church can modify its understanding of the role of the papacy to accommodate the Orthodox and give them more autonomy, perhaps a healing process can begin. Such a process would have to acknowledge the unique features of the Orthodox and would require a refining of the theology of the papacy as found in \textit{Pastor aeternus}. If the Roman Catholic Church can be careful not to force a monolithic unity that does away with differences, perhaps a rapprochement would be a real possibility. After all, Jesus prayed that his followers “may be one” (John 17:21), not that they “may be the same.” There must exist some difference in unity. Doctrinal unity, full communion, and the mutual breaking of bread, which constitute the ultimate desideratum, would include unity in difference as both the Orthodox and Catholic Churches seek to cooperate and grow in a symbiotic relationship of mutual knowledge and respect.
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\textsuperscript{186} Ratzinger, \textit{Introduction to Christianity}, 335.
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therefore operates within the church and without. In what follows, I will consider the role of the Holy Spirit in the Mass and in the *subsistit* formula; these loosely correspond to the Holy Spirit’s operation in the church and outside the church.

*Cosmic Extension the SubsistitT Formula*

The emphasis that Benedict attributes to the role of the Paschal Mystery in the process of the redemption of the world through a cosmic liturgy in which salvation is mediated through the sacraments includes a rather strong pneumatic dimension. The sacraments and the presence of Christ in Mass presuppose the agency of the Holy Spirit, who enables Christ to be present in the Spirit. Furthermore, the Eucharist is related to the Holy Spirit. According to the doctrine of transubstantiation, the body and blood of Christ present on the altar are identical to the resurrected Christ, the glorified incarnate Logos, who became incarnate through the power of the Holy Spirit. The epiclesis, i.e. the prayer by which the priest and the community calls upon the Holy Spirit to come upon the Eucharistic elements to change them, also shows that the Holy Spirit is central to this sacrament and that “the Eucharist itself is a gift of the Spirit.”

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188 Coleman E. O’Neill, *Sacramental Realism: A General Theory of the Sacraments* (Chicago: Midwest Theological Forum, 1998), 196. The Holy Spirit does not play a prominent role in Eucharistic Prayer I of the Roman Canon. Although the English translation of the pre-consecration epiclesis in this prayer mentions that the gifts are offered “in spirit and truth,” a reference to John 4:24, the text in Latin states, “Quam oblationem tu, Deus, in omnibus, quaesumus, benedictam, adscriptam, ratam, rationabilem, acceptabilemquw [sic] facere digneris: ut nobis Corpus et Sanguis fiat dilectissimi Filii tui, Domini nostri Jesu Christi,” which is normally rendered, “Bless and approve our offering; make it acceptable to you, an offering in spirit and in truth. Let it become for us the body and blood of Jesus Christ, your only Son, our Lord.” The Holy Spirit is not mentioned in the Latin text. It is curious, therefore, that “rationabilem, acceptabilemque” (“reasonable and acceptable”) is typically translated “spirit and truth” in English. Nevertheless, the post-consecration epiclesis alludes to the Holy Spirit when it prays, “ut quotquot ex hac altaris participatione sacrosanctum Filii tui Corpus et Sanguinem sumpserimus, omni benedictione caelesti et gratia repleamur” (“Then, as we receive from this altar the sacred body and blood of your Son, may [we] be filled with all heavenly blessing and grace”). Note the emphasis on the plenitude of grace. This corresponds to Eucharistic Prayer IV of the Roman Canon, which prays, “Et, ut non amplius nobismetipsis viveremus, sed sibi qui pro nobis mortuus est atque surrexit, a te, Pater, misit Spiritum Sanctum primitias credentibus, qui, opus suum in mundo perficiens, omnem sanctificationem completer” (“And that we might live no longer for ourselves but for him, he sent the Holy Spirit from you, Father, as his first gift to those who believe, to complete his work on earth and bring us the fullness of grace”). This prayer is more explicit in highlighting the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing Christians to
remarks that in the new *Catechism*, particular attention is given to the “pneumatological dimension of the liturgy.” The liturgical action of the church, in which Christ becomes present, depends on the Holy Spirit. If the Paschal Mystery is made present in the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit was not only responsible for the incarnation of the Eternal Word of God but also responsible for the representation of the body and blood of Christ on the altar, it follows that the very heart of the Christian mystery cannot be separated from a pneumatic economy and that it is through the Holy Spirit that Christians can participate in these mysteries. Additionally, the Holy Spirit is the common element uniting God-fearing Christians and non-Christians to God, although the Holy Spirit grants privileged access to those celebrating the Eucharist through the action of the Spirit as a response to the epiclesis.

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190 This is only true from an objective standpoint. Subjectively speaking, those of other religious creeds may live their lives closer to God than Christians. Benedict explains this in a class on fundamental theology as follows: “While Christianity always remains objectively the true religion, it may be that a Christian lives less in the true religion than a Buddhist or Moslem... [i]t requires the addition of a subjective moment, in which truth fulfills itself.” De Gaál, “Early Contributions,” 286, citing a scriptum titled *Wesen und Wahrheit der Religion—Grundlinien einer Phänomenologie und Philosophie der Religion. Nach einer Vorlesung aus der Fundamentaltheologie*, course notes written by Josef Mühlbacher, a student of Ratzinger’s, at p. 42 (the bibliographic information is missing).
Hryniewicz elaborates on the theology of epiclesis, noting that with its reintroduction in the Catholic Church, it has inaugurated in the West what may be called “a eucharistic pneumatology.”191 Through the eucharistic gift, the Holy Spirit not only prepares the bread and wine for their consecration, but also “prepares all of us for the coming of Christ at the end of our life and at the end of time.”192 This is very similar to the following passage from one of Benedict’s homilies:

We ourselves, with our whole being, must be adoration and sacrifice, and by transforming our world, give it back to God. The role of the priesthood is to consecrate the world so that it may become a living host, a liturgy: so that the liturgy may not be something alongside the reality of the world, but that the world itself shall become a living host, a liturgy. This is also the great vision of Teilhard de Chardin: in the end we shall achieve a true cosmic liturgy, where the cosmos becomes a living host. And let us pray the Lord to help us become priests in this sense, to aid in the transformation of the world, in adoration of God, beginning with ourselves.193

The main difference between these two accounts is that the Holy Spirit is missing in Benedict’s homily. This is one area where his cosmic liturgy/eschatology can be improved.

The subsistit formula, which states that the Catholic Church is the concrete manifestation of the church founded by Jesus, acknowledges that the institutional church has a semipermeable membrane, as it were, through which those who are outside are welcome to come in, and in some sense, are already related to the church, while those who are inside forfeit their place if they leave. The subsistit formula holds that the church does not have a one-to-one correlation with the Catholic Church, but rather maintains that the Catholic Church is a concrete manifestation of the church.

191 Hryniewicz, The Spirit, 144; emphasis Hryniewicz’s (originally in boldface).
192 Ibid., 145.
193 Benedict XVI, “Homily, July 24, 2009.”
This insight can be extended by the observation that the Holy Spirit’s activity of giving life extends from existence to biological life and ultimately to eternal life. I describe this extension as the Cosmic Extension of the Subsisting Formula (CEST Formula). The subsisting formula can be applied to all of creation such that all life can be considered as falling under the broad umbrella of the universal church in such a way that while all creatures do not have membership in the church in the same way that human beings do, they can be seen as participating in the salvation that comes from Christ. The CEST Formula maintains that the church, i.e. the cosmic community of redeemed creatures that makes up the body of the cosmic Christ and that receives its life from the Holy Spirit, subsists in the Catholic Church.

The Death of Humanity and of the Cosmos

The primary pneumatologically influenced eschatological idea of Benedict XVI comes from Augustine: The Holy Spirit as love will judge human beings.\textsuperscript{194} Love is the determining factor in separating the sheep from the goats at the end of the Gospel of Matthew.\textsuperscript{195} The destiny of individuals will be determined by their openness in this life to the love that is the Holy Spirit; if this love is present in them, it will transfigure them through theosis, a topic that I will elaborate on in the next section.

In addition to personal death, the human race is destined to die. Though human beings have been around for a long time, it very well may be that they will thrive even after the Earth is

\textsuperscript{194} Ratzinger, \textit{Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith}, 50, referring to Augustine, \textit{De Trinitate} XV, 18, 32. This is similar to a saying of St. John of the Cross: “At the evening of our life, we will be judged on love.” “The Sayings of Light and Love,” 60, quoted in Leahy, Brendan, \textit{Believe in Love: The Life, Ministry and Teachings of John Paul II} (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2011), 148; Leahy does not include a citation for the quote from St. John of the Cross.

\textsuperscript{195} Matt. 25:31-46.
They will not, however, outrun the cosmic clock; humanity, like an old man, will pass away, only to be resurrected in the reestablished cosmos of the new heavens and new earth (Rev. 21:1). What of the Parousia? Will Christ come again? This will certainly happen since it is a dogma of faith, but perhaps it will not occur as expected. In my view, Parousia can be likened to the viaticum of dying humanity. Christ will return at the end of time and, at that time, matter and spirit will achieve full unity and the cosmos will complete the process of apotheosis it began on Earth, but only after it dies.

What is the theological proof that the cosmos is destined to die? In the last chapter, I suggested that Benedict’s idea that matter will become spiritualized, and thereby divinized in the next life, implies both continuity and discontinuity between this world and the next since this transformation is similar to the resurrection of Jesus. Tying this vision of the spiritualization of creation together with one of the threads in chapter two, namely that the cosmos itself can be considered as church, implies that for the universe to achieve such a state of union between matter and spirit, it must, like Christ, die. From the doctrine of Christus totus, namely that the Body of Christ consists not only of Jesus Christ, the head, but the head and the body, the church, it follows that the destiny of the body must follow the destiny of the head so that if the head dies

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196 I believe that human beings will inevitably colonize new worlds, though not in the near future. Human ingenuity has always proven extremely resourceful; what human beings set their minds to, they can accomplish. For this reason, I think that the colonization of new worlds is highly likely, although I do not think that such a colonization would necessarily be moral. Consider the speech of Weston, one of the antagonists of C. S. Lewis’s Out of the Silent Planet: “I am prepared without flinching to plant the flag of man on the soil of Malacandra [Mars]: to march on, step by step, superseding where necessary, the lower forms of life that we find, claiming planet after planet, system after system, till our posterity—whatever strange form and yet unguessed mentality they have assumed—dwell in the universe wherever the universe is habitable.” C. S. Lewis, Out of the Silent Planet (New York: Scribner, 2003), 136. Oyarsa, the guardian of Malacandra, tells Weston in reply that human beings cannot continue jumping from planet to planet since all worlds must die (ibid., 138).

and is raised, so too must the body. If, however, the body is not simply the church as the community of believers but is somehow connected to the cosmos in principle, it follows that the universe itself will die, only to be glorified with Christ into a new resurrected state. From the ashes of the dead cosmos, the new heavens and new earth will arise like a phoenix. While precisely what the death of the universe will look like is beyond the ken of human beings, what can be known is that there will be a kind of continuity that exists between this world and the world to come, just as there is continuity between Christ’s pre- and post-resurrection body.  

*The Salvation of Nature and Human Culture*

When interpreting the phrase “resurrection of the flesh” in *Dogma and Preaching*, Benedict initially interprets the resurrection as pertaining solely to human beings. In the following passage from the same work, however, Benedict gives a more nuanced account of the preservation of creation:

> To man belongs not only his fellow-man; to man belongs also the “world”. Hence, if man as such and as a whole is to be brought into salvation, then the delightful mystery of things must also be preserved for him; all the instruments that God has created must join in, as it were, to the symphony of joy if there is to be full harmony . . . [without] the mystery of communion and full of the beautiful splendor of things, of the “world” . . . man cannot be completely human . . . even that element of the totality “man” which is made up of “things” and the “world” will be present in the definitive salvation; part of the definitive salvation will be a profound form of connection to the world as well, so that everything that was delightful and dear in God’s beautiful world will return transformed.  

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199 Benedict XVI, *Dogma and Preaching*, 261.

200 Ibid., 269–70; cf. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts*, 208–9: “I suggest we employ the idea of ‘deep resurrection’ to extend the risen Christ’s affiliation to the whole natural world . . . The reasoning runs like this. This person, Jesus of Nazareth, was composed of star stuff and earth stuff; his life formed a genuine part of the historical and biological community of Earth; his body existed in a network of relationships drawing from and extending to the whole physical universe. If in death this ‘piece of this world, real to the core,’ as Rahner phrases it, surrendered his life in love and is now forever with God in glory, then this signals embryonically the final beginning of redemptive glorification not just for other human beings but for all flesh, all material beings, every creature that passes through
With his stress on the interconnectedness between human beings and the rest of creation and use of the words “will return transformed,” Benedict hints at the resurrection of animals, a doctrine that Jürgen Moltmann and Elizabeth Johnson explicitly affirm.201

The saving of everything that is delightful, as Benedict puts it, raises another question: Is human culture saved? There are certain scriptural passages that affirm that human beings, and presumably their cultures along with them, are fleeting. For instance, the book of Isaiah states the following:

A voice says, “Cry!”
And I said, “What shall I cry?”
All flesh is grass,
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.
The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people is grass.
The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand for ever.202

This perspective of the ephemeral nature of humanity that is found in the Old Testament is also echoed, with a more explicit allusion to culture, in the New Testament: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world . . . is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away . . . but he who does the will of God abides for ever.”203 Isaiah and 1 John seem to agree on the finitude of people and the world, but does this necessarily mean that human culture is doomed to destruction?

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201 See Moltmann, The Coming of God, 70 and the preceding note.
202 Isa. 40:6-8, RSV.
203 1 John 2:15, RSV
Hryniewicz mentions the above passage from 1 John when criticizing a view that Paul Evdokimov terms “hyper-eschatologism,” i.e. a kind of eschatological nihilism that negates the goodness of the world because of its worldly character: “[There are some who, following 1 Jn 2:15,] try to convince us that everything called human culture and creativity will sooner or later be doomed to destruction in everlasting flames of fire.” Like Evdokimov’s critique, Hryniewicz’s critique of hyper-eschatologism is relentless. He contends that this position evacuates value from human activity in history, ends up “disincarnat[ing] history itself,” is contrary to the Gospels, and is “preached by false prophets.” Hryniewicz’s positive interpretation of culture is that there are transcendent elements in cultures that will be preserved – Christians await the consummation of human activity, not its destruction. The eternal seed in culture will, like human beings, rise again. Hryniewicz inquires, “What then is the future of different forms of human culture, creativity, art, science and music?” Following Evdokimov, he answers that “they [will] achieve their final fulfillment in the Kingdom of God . . . [, which] will embrace all permanent values which are the fruit of human genius and the human heart.” In this perspective, not only nature itself but human activity and culture will be saved.

In his attack of hyper-eschatologism, Hryniewicz quotes Evdokimov as claiming that “through history the Holy Spirit is active and in this way prepares the coming of the Kingdom of God.” This quote is very similar to a quote from Redemptoris Missio in which John Paul II affirms that the Holy Spirit is present in other cultures: “The Spirit’s presence and activity affect

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204 Hryniewicz, The Spirit, 258.
205 Ibid., 258–59.
206 Ibid., 259–60.
not only the individuals but also society and history, peoples, cultures and religions." This implies that there is a pneumatological basis for the preservation of the transcendent elements in human culture. Benedict’s view is that the Holy Spirit directs history and while he recognizes that the Spirit works outside the church, he is quick to point out that so does the devil. Whatever truth there may be in this caveat, it puts cultures and other religions in a bad light. Perhaps Benedict underestimates the role of the Holy Spirit at work in other religions. For this reason, John Paul II’s more open pneumatological perspective is more conducive to promoting interreligious dialogue.

Benedict’s emphasis on the inability of human beings to bring about salvation on Earth risks producing a paralyzing effect. After all, why should human beings strive to improve culture if salvation only comes from a divine initiative? It would be better for people to wait on God’s action if this were the case. In conjunction with the pneumatology of John Paul II, Hryniewicz’s stance against hyper-eschatologism can serve as the antidote to such paralysis since it would simultaneously validate the good that can be found in human cultures and reaffirm Benedict’s main contention against liberation theology that salvation cannot be fabricated by human beings.

*Cosmic Apotheosis and the Kenosis of the Holy Spirit*

This vision would not be complete without a consideration of cosmic apotheosis. As I mentioned in chapter three, in Benedict’s vision divinization occurs as the result of the

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210 Ratzinger, *New Outpourings of the Spirit*, 98. There is at least some truth to Benedict’s word of caution. There are some cultures that enshrined human sacrifice and ritualistic cannibalism, in particular Mesoamerican cultures such as the Aztec and Mayan cultures; these aspects are certainly not inspired by the Holy Spirit and it is not surprising that the conquistadors believed that the natives they encountered were devil worshippers.
crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus and is mediated in time through the sacraments, especially the Eucharist. He states that the resurrection of Jesus impacts all of matter and that it sets in motion “the restoration of all things.” In the cosmic liturgy, cosmic apotheosis already begins, to a degree.

Benedict also describes cosmic apotheosis (although he does not use this term) as spiritualization, thereby connecting it to pneumatology.

To spiritualize means to incarnate in a Christian way, but to incarnate means to spiritualize, to bring the things of the world to the coming Christ, to prepare them for their future form and thus to prepare God’s future in the world. In St. Irenaeus’s work we find the lovely thought that the meaning of the incarnation was for the Spirit—the Holy Spirit—to get used to the flesh, as it were, in Jesus. Turning this around we could say: The meaning of the ongoing incarnation can only be the reverse, to get the flesh used to the Spirit, to God, to make it capax spiritus and in this way to prepare its future.

Notice at the end of this passage, Benedict states that things should be prepared to receive the Holy Spirit. This is redolent of Sergei Bulgakov’s idea of the kenosis of the Holy Spirit.

According to Bulgakov,

The kenosis of the Spirit at his descent into the world consists in diminishing his gifts, in the limitedness of his action. The natural world preserves its immutability in existing as creature, in its condition of ambiguousness and non-fulfillment. The fullness of

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211 Ratzinger, New Song, 65. Cf. Hryniewicz, The Spirit, 240; emphasis Hryniewicz’s (originally in boldface): “The liberating activity of Christ is accompanied by a vivifying and renewing power of the Spirit. His energies often referred to in the eastern tradition, are energies of the new creation, manifested already in the resurrection of Christ. They embrace also the entire non-human world. The eschatological goal of creation is inseparably connected with the action of the Holy Spirit . . . This vision is particularly dear to eastern Christianity. Through the Spirit’s active presence all creatures arrive at their fulfillment . . . they receive their perfection – says Basil the Great in his treatise on the Holy Spirit. The energies of the Spirit are present in all creation, immanently acting in the cosmos.” Notice that Benedict’s position is more Christological whereas Hryniewicz’s is more pneumatological.

212 On this point, see Hryniewicz, The Spirit, 228: “In the renewed post-conciliar liturgy of the Catholic Church, the third Eucharistic prayer begins with the words: ‘Father, you are holy indeed, and all creation rightly gives you praise. All life (…) comes from you….’ And the fourth Eucharistic prayer directs our attention to the future of transfigured creation: ‘Then, in your kingdom, free from the corruption of sin and death, we shall sing your glory with every creature through Christ our Lord’ italics mine, (W.H). Such words are not merely expressions of religious poetry, but deep theological and mystical insights which require revalorization in the consciousness of believers, independently of denomination and religion.”

213 Ratzinger, New Song, 92; italics mine.
manifestation and transparence for the Spirit, revelation in glory and glorification are still awaited. The glorious transformation is linked not with the new coming of the Spirit, because he already abides in the world, but with the fullness of his action. This fullness is [the] transfiguration of the world in close relation with the Parousia, in order to make it a new heaven and a new earth, where Christ is coming . . . If Parousia is the second coming of Christ to the world in Glory, it is also a new revelation of the Holy Spirit, of the Divine Glory in Christ and in the world.214

Benedict’s description of making the world capax spiritus dovetails nicely with Bulgakov’s vision of the kenosis of the Holy Spirit.215 Combining the insights of Benedict and Bulgakov, one could say that cosmic apotheosis depends on preparing things for the future but that this will only be complete with the end of the kenosis of the Holy Spirit.

_Paterological Telos_

All things in heaven and earth are ordered toward the glory of God the Father. St. Paul affirms that cosmic eschatology is oriented to Father in the following passage from his letter to the Ephesians:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace which he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us. For he has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of his will, according to his purpose which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.216

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215 Benedict comments that Christ’s kenosis both reveals and conceals, which also resonates with Bulgakov’s vision of the kenosis of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Ratzinger, _Many Religions—One Covenant_, 108). The kenosis of the Holy Spirit as revealing and concealing can also be linked to the pillar of revealing/concealing fire/cloud that accompanied the Hebrews during the Exodus (Exod. 13:21-22).

216 Eph. 1:3-10, RSV; italics mine.
The Revised Standard Version has translated the Greek *anakephalaiosis* as “unite.” Other translations include “sum up”, “reestablish”, and “bring everything together.”\(^{217}\) This reunification, as it were, is initiated by the Father and is ultimately intended for the Father’s glory, for while the Father has put everything in the hands of the Son (John 3:35), at the end, the Son will place the kingdom into the hands of the Father (1 Cor. 15:24).

The above pneumatological reflections on eschatology can be summarized in the following terms. The Holy Spirit does not function as a static ontological framework for creation but is dynamically involved in the process of evolution, which culminates in Christogenesis and ecclesiogenesis. The church, as the center of the Holy Spirit’s activity, can be extended to include all of creation. The cosmos and human culture, insofar as they participate in the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, will be preserved from destruction even though the cosmos and humanity are destined for death. The meaning of ecological responsibility in this perspective is not the absolute preservation of humanity or the perpetual preservation of the Earth, but the maximizing of life, the acknowledgement that life is sacred, and, in accordance with Serres’s image of the Earth floating in space like a fetus,\(^ {218}\) the maturation of the human race as it ministers to the cosmos. The knowledge that something of this world will endure and that humanity has the vocation to “prepare [things] for their future form” should inspire human beings to care for creation and advance human culture.\(^ {219}\) Finally, the cosmos will be transfigured, the glory of the Holy Spirit will be revealed, and all things will be handed back to the Father, who is the first principle of all things.

\(^{217}\) New American Bible, Rheims New Testament, and Jerusalem Bible respectively.

\(^{218}\) Serres, *The Natural Contract*, 123.

\(^{219}\) Ratzinger, *New Song*, 92.
Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined Benedict XVI’s human ecology and pneumatology. I described the secular and ecclesiastical foundations of Benedict’s human ecology, after which I limned the three tectonic plates (poverty, a warped anthropology, and the destruction of the environment) that are the result of the degradation of human dignity, after which I highlighted the positive elements in Benedict’s human ecology, including respect for the human person, the necessity of truth to combat the environmental threat, and the importance of cultivating the virtues. I commended Benedict’s human ecology for tying together respect for human beings and respect for the environment, for reaffirming the role of human beings in creation, and for explaining the importance of the ability of human beings to know the truth; however, I also noted that Moltmann and Deane-Drummond rightly point out that cosmic eschatology is not a prominent feature in his papal teachings, and that there is dissonance between his stance on liberation theology and his concern for the environment. In the last part of the human ecology section, I compared Pope Benedict’s teachings on the environment with those of Philip Sherrard and Patriarch Bartholomew. Sherrard and Benedict have similar anthropologies that undergird their vision of the relationship between human beings and the environment. Bartholomew emphasizes cosmic liturgy in his patriarchal teachings more than Benedict does in his papal teachings. While Benedict has a cosmic liturgy, the theme seems to flow more naturally from the pen of Bartholomew, perhaps because the Orthodox Church never lost sight of cosmic liturgy and apotheosis in its history, whereas these concepts were virtually forgotten in the West.

In the last part of the chapter that dealt with pneumatology, I analyzed Benedict’s pneumatology by considering the role of the Holy Spirit in ecumenism and the theology of religions. After reviewing different assessments of his pneumatology, which agreed that his
pneumatology is underdeveloped, I scrutinized the link between ecclesiology and pneumatology in Benedict’s theology. I also proceeded to compare Zizioulas and Benedict on pneumatology, finding that while both theologians recognize that the Holy Spirit is constitutive of Christ since the Spirit makes Christ present in history, Zizioulas emphasizes more than Benedict the ecclesial implications of the constitutiveness of pneumatology for ecclesiology. I examined Benedict’s pneumatology in his theology of religions, determining that Benedict’s inclusivism is open and that this is confirmed by his stance toward truth since he believes that the Catholic Church cannot access the fullness of the truth in history although he holds the position that the Catholic Church possesses the fullness of truth in the deposit of faith. Next, I assessed Benedict’s stance on the one economy of the Word and the Holy Spirit and determined that while he is correct to affirm the unity of the economy, the Word and the Holy Spirit have distinct functions since the Holy Spirit works incognito outside the boundaries of the church.

Finally, I endeavored to synthesize Benedict’s vision into a pneumatological cosmic eschatology, using his theology as the framework and completing it with the insights of other (primarily eastern) theologians, including Waclaw Hryniewicz, Sergei Bulgakov, Paul Evdokimov, John Zizioulas, and Elizabeth Johnson. The emphasis on the Holy Spirit in the writings of these theologians makes up for the lack of a pneumatological emphasis in Benedict’s cosmic eschatology. Moreover, they serve to correct the imbalance between Benedict’s Logos Christology and his pneumatology. The ultimate takeaway from all of this is that humanity and non-human creation constitute a whole that is saved. Understood as the community of redeemed creatures, the church includes God’s beautiful creatures and the transcendent elements of human culture since they are the work of the Holy Spirit; as a result, Christians should cooperate to edify human society and preserve the goodness of God’s creation so as to prepare it for the full
manifestation of the glory of the Holy Spirit and for the Parousia so that “God may be all in all.”

220 1 Cor. 15:28, NAB.
Conclusion

This conclusion is an *anakephalaiosis* insofar as it sums up and unites the various conclusions and themes of the dissertation into one coherent vision. In the body of the dissertation, I came up with a constellation of conclusions on the cosmic eschatology of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Here, I will endeavor to describe the shape of this constellation and divine its meaning. In no particular order, the following is a catalogue of the twenty-two stars in the aforementioned constellation.

**Catalogue of Conclusions**

(1) The Serrian theological model of time indicates that different levels of theological analysis demand different methods. Comparing the *exitus-reditus* scheme at the cosmic level to the same scheme at the individual level is like comparing solar systems to atoms; while there are similarities, there are significant differences at the macroscopic and microscopic levels. Benedict interprets the lives of people as following the *exitus-reditus* pattern. While human lives follow the general contour of *exitus-reditus* insofar as they come from and return to God, the scheme oversimplifies the matter since the lives of individuals are intertwined and are rather complex. This demands more of a social analysis than Benedict XVI seems willing to admit. Such an analysis is warranted, in my view, so long as theology is not reduced to the social sciences.

(2) Theologians alone cannot sufficiently address social justice issues, including environmental issues, since they also need the expertise of social and environmental scientists. While piety and liturgical worship are necessary components for fostering a healthy sacramental attitude toward creation, in and of themselves they constitute an insufficient response, which is why the environmental sciences are necessary. Yet Benedict does not entirely overlook the
connection between theology and environmental scientists. Recently, Michael Schuck, Nancy C.
Tuchman, and Michael J. Garanzini of Loyola University won a new prize awarded by the
Ratzinger Foundation called “Expanding Reason” for “an online manual of environmental
science, ethics, spirituality and action promoting awareness of environmental problems” called
“Healing Earth.”¹ This suggests that Benedict, or at least his close conferees, are cognizant of the
necessity of the indispensability of the environmental sciences.

(3) Benedict’s critique of liberation theology, especially in his description of theologies
of liberation as the inheritors of Joachim of Fiore, is monolithic and not subtle enough. There are
numerous theologies of liberation, not all of which are steeped in Marxism. Nevertheless,
Benedict’s suspicion of liberation theologies in general, even if overzealous, contains an
important theological caveat: the overarching salvation won by Christ must not be replaced by
socio-political salvation.

(4) Benedict identifies the Holy Spirit with the spirit of Christ so closely that the Holy
Spirit seems to lose its unique role in the one economy of salvation. While it is true that the Holy
Spirit is the spirit of Christ, it is also true that the Holy Spirit blows where it wills² and that it is
impossible to confine the activity of the Holy Spirit to the visible church. The Holy Spirit is
always at work drawing people towards Christ, and can do so through certain elements in other
religions and cultures that have been inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Spirit reaches toward the

¹ Hannah Brockhaus, “Ratzinger Foundation Unveils New Prize, Announces American Winners,” Catholic

² John 3:8.
peripheries, much like spokes on a bicycle wheel, and is responsible for connecting everyone to the center, the one mediator between God and human beings, Jesus Christ.³

(5) The Thomistic element in Benedict’s cosmic liturgy, insofar as it relates the sacraments to the past, present, and future, can be fruitfully related to issues of social justice through the concept of kairos. Some clerics and theologians have recently used the term kairos to describe opportune times for improving situations of social injustice. By using this term, they intend to highlight that there are certain times that elicit a response from human beings and that there is a narrow window of opportunity for action. Yet it is also true that every liturgical action is a kairos as well, opening up the past and the future to the present. The liturgical and the social are not contrary for Christ himself, the center of liturgical celebrations, states that he is present in those who suffer in the world.⁴

(6) Western theology can greatly benefit from cross-fertilization with eastern theology. Ironically, the spatial and theological separation of the eastern and western churches has created a potential for great richness. Perhaps the best analogy to describe the potential between eastern and western theology is the Columbian exchange which, while not altogether positive (the Columbian exchange also brought about an exchange of diseases and peoples through the slave trade), enriched the diets of many people and forged new cultures. An eastern-western theology can combine the best of both traditions into a unified vision. Nevertheless, eastern and western theological traditions should not simply merge; rather, to maintain their unique characteristics, they should continue in their traditions rather than losing their identities in a theological hybrid. For this reason, there should be some theologians who explore how eastern theology might

³ 1 Tim. 2:5.
⁴ Matt. 25:31-46.
strengthen western theology but others who seek to develop theology in western ways so as to preserve the uniqueness of occidental theology.

(7) Orthodoxy challenges Catholicism to think about ecclesiology in new ways and gives it perspective. Catholic theology developed a strong centralistic theology at Vatican I. While recent ecumenical discussions indicate an openness to dialogue and an exchange of ideas, papal primacy remains an impasse. Seeing the church from an Orthodox perspective in an empathetic way, however, may enable Catholic theologians to have a clearer vision of the church in much the same way that two eyes are required for proper depth perception.

(8) The Holy Spirit is present in other cultures and in all living things, and as such is the basis of the preservation of all things beautiful in the world to come. The criteria for salvation is the beauty that arises as the result of the influence of the Holy Spirit. Insofar as the Holy Spirit touches individuals, cultures, and creatures, they already share in salvation and are given a future promise of salvation.

(9) The whole of creation is related to the church and, understood correctly, can be said to be church insofar as the church encompasses the cosmos. Christ came to save not only sinners, but sinners’ relationship with the earth and the entire cosmos. The subject-object distinction too sharply separates human beings from the rest of creation. Not only are human beings not entirely separate from their surroundings, but human beings are themselves parts of the cosmos with an especially intense self-awareness; through human beings, the cosmos is aware of itself.

(10) Benedict’s cosmic eschatology/soteriology is significant, even if it is underdeveloped, since it relates the liturgy to the transformation of the world, thereby supporting ecological efforts and pointing toward the deification of creation. Following St. Maximus the Confessor, Benedict acknowledges that the whole of creation participates in liturgy in praise of
the Creator. Every celebration of the Christian liturgy, therefore, is a cosmic liturgy. Through said liturgy, the universe itself will become deified.

(11) Benedict’s cosmic eschatology is one of several occidental cosmic eschatologies that arose in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Other cosmic eschatologies that I have explored include those of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Jürgen Moltmann, and John Haught. These eschatologies developed in the aftermath of the work of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer, who sounded the death knell of the quest for the historical Jesus and highlighted that Jesus’ preaching is utterly infused with eschatology. The various cosmic eschatologies of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries constitutes the context of Benedict’s cosmic eschatology.

(12) Benedict’s early cosmic eschatology depends on the writings of Teilhard de Chardin, but since the rejection of Teilhard’s emphasis on immanent fulfillment, the conspicuous element that remains in Benedict’s cosmic eschatology is his cosmic liturgy. Enamored of Teilhard’s writings in his earlier theological career, Benedict bought into many of Teilhard’s tenets. Later on, however, Benedict describes Teilhard’s vision as merely one way of viewing the cosmos, thereby relativizing it. Benedict’s shifting view of Teilhard’s interpretation of the cosmos contrasts with the perdurance of cosmic liturgy in Benedict’s theology.

(13) The Holy Spirit as love will judge human beings at the end of time. This is the pneumatological feature of eschatology that Benedict recognizes and is an idea that Benedict borrows from Augustine. Yet, this also underscores the paucity of pneumatology in Benedict’s eschatology, a paucity that can be enriched by adopting eastern ideas of the eschatological role of the Holy Spirit.

(14) For cosmic eschatology to be fruitful, it must be informed by the findings of modern science in addition to being rooted in Scripture and the church fathers. The development of
cosmic eschatology in the west, or rather its rediscovery, coincided with advancements in scientific cosmology and astronomy. It would be irresponsible for theologians to ignore the findings of modern science and fail to incorporate them into their work.

(15) Elizabeth Johnson’s depiction of the role of the Holy Spirit in evolution suggests that time, life, and evolution have a dynamic and unpredictable nature (and can be potentially related to chaos theory). The Holy Spirit spurs living things to develop into more sophisticated systems of life in ways that are not entirely predictable. Furthermore, the movement of the Holy Spirit itself is chaotic-like insofar as Jesus compares it to the wind, which is why human beings cannot know where it goes.

(16) There is a disconnect between Benedict’s cosmic eschatology and his papal teachings on the environment, as Moltmann points out, which in turn indicates that at the upper echelon of the Catholic Church the divide between cosmic eschatology and environmentalism has yet to be fully crossed. It is unclear why Benedict does not frequently link cosmic eschatology to the environment. Nevertheless, Benedict’s reflections on the role of cosmic eschatology are an important development in Catholic theology.

(17) Human beings and the environment constitute a whole and mutually impact each other, an idea that Benedict refers to as human ecology. Without using such terminology,

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5 Great strides have been made recently in this frontier by Pope Francis who, in his encyclical letter *Laudato Si’,* teaches that non-human creatures will be filled with the blessings of God’s presence: “The New Testament does not only tell us of the earthly Jesus and his tangible and loving relationship with the world. It also shows him risen and glorious, present throughout creation by his universal Lordship: ‘For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross’ (Col 1:19-20). This leads us to direct our gaze to the end of time, when the Son will deliver all things to the Father, so that ‘God may be everything to every one’ (1 Cor 15:28). Thus, the creatures of this world no longer appear to us under merely natural guise because the risen One is mysteriously holding them to himself and directing them towards fullness as their end. The very flowers of the field and the birds which his human eyes contemplated and admired are now imbued with his radiant presence” (Francis, *Laudato Si’,* 100). Nevertheless, it is still unclear what being “imbued with his radiant presence” exactly means. Furthermore, Francis’s emphasis on the now (“now imbued”) seems to undermine the role of cosmic apotheosis.
Benedict rejects the subject-object dichotomy of human beings and nature, for human beings are a part of nature and harming nature harms human beings and vice-versa. Accordingly, Benedict laments the trampling of human dignity and the degradation of the environment. In this view, there exists a certain fluidity between social justice issues and environmental justice issues since human beings are constituted by their environment.

(18) The ecological crisis is a problem affecting the entire Earth but the means to combat the crisis are necessarily particular (this is encapsulated by the environmentalist mantra, “Think globally, act locally”). This requires knowledge of human beings’ interactions with local environments and what is ideal for particular ecosystems, which requires some people in local communities to have knowledge of the natural history of specific regions and to be trained in the environmental sciences. The disparateness of the knowledge of local regions and the variety of strategies that people use implies that there needs to be a holistic approach and a principle of unity that guides all. For Benedict, this principle is the objective nature of truth and human nature, which at its fundamental level does not vary from culture to culture but is subject to the natural law.

(19) The Logos should not be conceived primarily as structuring the world mathematically since this is impersonal; instead, the Logos is a person, i.e. the Incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ, who is the basis for the creaturely participation in the Logos. For Benedict, personality and particularity are the main features that distinguish Christian idealism from philosophical idealism. This implies that there is kinship not only between the Word of God and human beings, but between the Word of God and the rest of creation. This kinship, i.e. the relationship between Creator and creature, of Logos and logoi, is in turn the basis for cosmic soteriology.
(20) All religions are in a state of journeying and the church has a semipermeable membrane, as it were, through which the Holy Spirit can function in other religions and cultures. The Holy Spirit cannot be confined to one religious tradition, although the mode of the Holy Spirit’s presence is most intense within the church. This implies that Christians should adopt a stance of open inclusivism, a view that recognizes the possibility of truths in other religions that can enrich Christians’ understanding of the truth.

(21) Despite the differences between the religions, they are united in two ways: (i) they all have a call to voice the moral concerns of humanity in the face of the current ecological crisis and (ii) they are all seeking meaning in a transcendent reality, a reality that strongly suggests that human beings have a duty to care for the Earth. Religions’ acknowledgement of transcendence buttresses their vocation to bear witness to the world. Secular perspectives necessarily end in nihilism, a view that holds that in the end, there will be nothing. This view evacuates meaning from human life and the cosmic drama.

(22) Soteriology should be expanded to include the cosmos, which suggests that living organisms are destined to participate in the salvation that Christ achieved through his death and resurrection. The blood Christ shed on the cross is the key to the reconciliation between God and all things that exist. The interconnectivity of all things also strongly suggests that human beings cannot be viewed over and against nature but that human beings are themselves a part of nature. This implies that if human beings are saved, their overarching context, i.e. the cosmos, will also be saved.

**Synthesis**

Having enumerated the conclusions of my research, I will describe how they form a constellation. Actual constellations appear to human eyes as two-dimensional shapes in the sky;
however, astronomers know that the stars that comprise constellations are scattered in three dimensions. Basing my analysis on this insight, I group the stars (conclusions) of my constellation (synthesis) into what looks like a cruciform shape but is actually more like a three-dimensional shape. Imagine a three-dimensional cross, which is sometimes found on the steeples and domes of churches that have what can be described as x-, y-, and z-axes. The above constellation of conclusions has a vertical component (universal-particular), a horizontal component (East-West), and a perpendicular component (Logos-Pneuma).

Out of all three components, the perpendicular component makes the least intuitive sense because whereas particular objects are ordered below their corresponding universal and East and West are separated horizontally on a map, there appears to be no necessary perpendicular connection between the Incarnate Word and the Holy Spirit. I am basing this direction of perpendicularity on the Holy Spirit’s procession from the Father through the Son, which was represented when Jesus breathed his last once he had commended his spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46), gave the Spirit symbolized by the water flowing from his pierced side (John 19:34; 1 John 5:8), and gave the Holy Spirit to the disciples after his resurrection by breathing on them (John 20:22). The notion of gift is key here since a gift is received from another and is typically passed in a perpendicular direction (as opposed to up/down or left/right) from the giver to the recipient.

I will examine the three components in the following order: vertical, horizontal, and perpendicular. The vertical component is by far the most prevalent since the theme of the universal and the particular (or the one and the many) is universally applicable. I divide

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6 In my view, these Christological instances of the giving of the Holy Spirit culminate in the definitive giving of the Holy Spirit from the Father during Pentecost.
approaches to the one and the many into Platonic and Aristotelian approaches. This section encompasses a discussion of liberation theology and the Serrian theological model of time, as well as other Christological, ecclesiological, and ecological conclusions that can be described from the perspective of the relationship between the one and the many. After this, I examine the horizontal and perpendicular components.

The one and the many is a perennial theme in the history of philosophy. Plato and Aristotle put forth competing claims about the relationship between the one and the many, for whereas Plato taught that all things participate in the Forms, Aristotle taught that the Forms do not exist and that things are constituted hylomorphically, i.e. they are comprised of matter and form. Benedict’s affinity for Plato causes him to point toward the heavens like Plato in Raphael’s *The School of Athens* whereas others, in particular liberation theologians and some ecclesiologists such as Walter Kasper, emphatically point to the ground like Aristotle in the same painting. The problem with Platonism is that it tends to cause theological hyperopia; in other words, Platonism can cause one to focus on the form of theological models and concepts rather than concrete realities. In contrast, liberation theology begins with a concrete reality, namely the poor, and its danger is myopia: while focusing on the concrete, it risks losing sight of the overarching soteriological reality of the redemption of Christ that comes about through the Paschal Mystery.

The Platonic elements in Benedict’s thought manifest themselves in his vision of time, which is based on Pseudo-Dionysius’s vision of *exitus-reditus*. Benedict states that the small circles of human lives and cultures are patterned on the large circle of the universe coming forth from God and returning to God. While the large circle may be clear and relatively predictable,
the smaller circles contain a high degree of unpredictability and cannot be said to be modeled exactly on the larger model just as atoms are not modeled on the solar system.

As I intimated in my explication of the Serrian theological model of time, there needs to be a greater recognition that different theologians have different levels of expertise in different areas (1). Liberation theologians, moral theologians, and theologians who have a background in the social sciences are best suited to deal with problems on the ground, as it were, since they are able to arrive at practical solutions and are able to give hope to people who are crushed by oppression (2). At the same time, some liberation theologians tend to reduce eternal life to a temporal version of salvation. There needs to be a greater cooperation between the hierarchy of the Catholic Church and liberation theologians.⁸

To this end, the Thomistic account of the relationship between time and the liturgy can be enhanced by weaving into it an understanding of kairos so as to promote social justice (5). In the Serrian model of time, I likened the smaller circles to intersecting strands on a Jackson Pollack painting, which in turn suggests the idea of kairos, a term that is virtually missing from Benedict’s theological lexicon. Whereas Thomistic sacramental theology emphasizes the triple chronological ordering of the sacraments to the past, present, and future and centers the efficacy of the sacraments on the Paschal Mystery, kairos moments are unpredictable chaotic moments that occur as a result of God’s divine providence that people can respond to positively or negatively.

⁷ A related point is that theologians who seek ecological justice cannot rely on theology alone; instead, they need to rely on the environmental sciences and humbly recognize that while theology offers a perspective that is essential for humanity, it does not have all of the answers to concrete problems (14).

⁸ This process of cooperation has already begun, as indicated by a recent publication: Gustavo Gutiérrez and Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, *On the Side of the Poor: The Theology of Liberation*, trans. Robert A. Krieg and James B. Nickoloff (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis). Müller was head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith at the time the book was published. Yet I believe there needs to be more cooperation. During the pontificates of Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI, liberation theology was in great disfavor, but the pendulum seems to be swinging in the other direction. Benedict was perhaps not subtle enough in his initial categorization of liberation theologies as being the inheritors of Joachim of Fiore’s immanentism (3).
negatively. Superimposing these moments onto a Thomistic paradigm of liturgical time potentially sanctifies mundane times by recognizing them as opportune moments of responding to God’s grace and dispels the idea that the liturgy has a monopoly on grace.

The other conclusions that relate to the one and the many are Christological (19), ecclesiological (9), and ecological (17) – (18). The Christological conclusion is that though the Word is rational and is the basis of all reality, it is not to be interpreted in a mechanistic or merely mathematical way since the Word of God is ultimately a person who can be known, although the Word surpasses human understanding. Furthermore, all creatures participate in the Logos through the *logoi*, as explained by St. Maximus the Confessor. This implies that human beings were created as relational creatures who are called not only to have a relationship with God, but who are to care for all other creatures since they participate in the Logos who has come to Earth to share in our humanity and raise it up.

The ecclesiological conclusion is that while there is a distinction between the church and non-human creation, there is also so close of an affinity between the church and creation that all of creation can be considered as church. Staniloae, Moltmann, and Benedict suggest that the church encompasses creation or that creation is ordinated toward the church. Applying the *subsistit* formula to the cosmos yields a formula (CEST Formula) that recognizes that the church of God, namely the redeemed community of redeemed creation, subsists, or exists in a particular way, in the Catholic Church. For far too long in the West, theologians have overlooked the participation of non-human creation in the redemption won by Christ (4).

The primary ecological conclusions are that, according to Benedict’s idea of human ecology, humanity and non-human nature constitute a whole, whatever degrades humanity degrades the environment and vice versa, and while the ecological crisis affects the entire Earth,
people need to approach the crisis from their own particular situations and local environments. Regarding Benedict’s human ecology, which had its origins in the work of early ecologists and in the writings of Pope John Paul II, it became clear that although Benedict’s human ecology fosters just attitudes toward the environment, it is not impervious to criticism. As far as I can tell, he does not mention the need to reduce carbon emissions. Nevertheless, his teaching on the environment is subtle. His approach in his papal teachings is often humanistic since he appeals to a shared patrimony of values that all religions enshrine since all religions share in the vocation to foster ecological justice and are united in their focus on the transcendent dimension of reality, yet he also appeals to natural law (21). Finally, as Moltmann points out, Benedict does not adequately integrate cosmic eschatology into his teachings on the environment whereas Patriarch Bartholomew seamlessly weaves cosmic eschatology into his teachings on the environment. 

The next axis is the horizontal component, the one that runs from East to West. There was a dramatic shift in eschatology that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century with the work of Johannes Weiss and Albert Schweitzer and the subsequent cosmic eschatologies of Teilhard de Chardin, Jürgen Moltmann, and John Haught. Though Benedict XVI’s cosmic eschatology/soteriology is one of many occidental varieties, like many of the other western theologians he has inherited a wealth of information from eastern theologians (11). The West has a lot to learn from the East, especially in the realms of soteriology, hierarchy, Trinitarian theology, deification, pneumatology, and mysticism, (6) and Orthodox theologians challenge Catholic theologians to consider new perspectives (7). The East has always considered the cosmos in the purview of salvation whereas this idea had to be recovered in the West (22). Early in his theological career, Benedict followed Teilhard rather closely, but soon distanced himself from the Teilhardian idea of an immanent perfection of the cosmos; when this dissolved, what
remained was Benedict’s cosmic liturgy, which greatly benefited from the theology of St. Maximus the Confessor whom he encountered through Hans Urs von Balthasar (12). Apart from Maximus, the other main source of inspiration for Benedict’s cosmic liturgy is Scripture. By retrieving cosmic liturgy, Benedict has constructed a cosmic eschatology/soteriology that is centered on the liturgy which, while incomplete, encourages ecological responsibility since human beings have a responsibility to prepare created things for their future form in the deified cosmos (10).

The last axis is the perpendicular component, which is based on the relationship between Christology and pneumatology. Benedict inherits a strong Christological cosmic liturgy from Maximus that is centered on Logos Christology. By comparison, his pneumatology is jejune. It is not as though Benedict entirely overlooks pneumatology or does not perceive a pneumatological dimension in eschatology (for Benedict, the primary pneumatological component of eschatology is that the Holy Spirit will come to judge everyone according to his or her deeds at the end of time since everyone will be judged on his or her love [13]), but rather that he seems to align too closely the functioning of the Holy Spirit with the role of Christ (4). Benedict seems to overlook the dynamism of the Spirit’s activity, a dynamism that, as Elizabeth Johnson points out, is related specifically to the function of giving life, as mentioned in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed as well as to Darwin’s theory of evolution (15). The Holy Spirit is present in all things in a dynamic way: the Spirit nourishes all things, upholds them in existence, and leads them toward more complex forms through evolution. In addition to sustaining life in creatures, the Holy Spirit is present in various cultures of society and is therefore not confined to the visible boundaries of the church (8). This also suggests that the Spirit is present in other religions (20). The Spirit will preserve all things beautiful, creatures and cultures alike, as Paul Evdokimov affirms (8). Writing
against what he calls “hyper-eschatologism,” Evdokimov insists that God will preserve the beautiful elements in human culture. Analogously, Benedict holds that the beauty of creation will be preserved. Seen from the perspective of the mutual origination of human beings and other animals from God, these two preservations are united since the beautiful elements in culture can be considered as the flowering forth of the creativity of the Holy Spirit just as a multitude of creatures and species obtain their life through the same Spirit.

In my introduction, I stated that the goal of this dissertation is to present the cosmic eschatology of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI since it had never been examined in great depth. Not only have I described his cosmic eschatology, but I have uncovered numerous conclusions that I have synthesized into a single coherent vision that is based on the relationship between the universal and the particular, the East and the West, and Christology and pneumatology. There is one remaining question: What is the meaning of this three-dimensional cross?

This synthesis indicates that, starting last century, there has been a movement in western theology that has sought to recover cosmic soteriological and eschatological themes from Scripture and from the eastern church fathers as well as from contemporary eastern theologians. This movement is the wave that has carried and shaped the cosmic eschatology of Benedict XVI. This wave has the potential to carry not only Benedict’s message in a bottle to distant coasts, but many other bottles with messages that warn humanity of the dangers of the current ecological crisis. Yet the hope that buoys humanity is the salvation wrought by Christ Jesus, the blessings of which are prophesied in the following passage from the book of Jeremiah:

Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,
proclaim it on distant coasts, and say:
He who scattered Israel, now gathers them together,
he guards them as a shepherd his flock.

The LORD shall ransom Jacob,
he shall redeem him from the hand of his conqueror.

Shouting, they shall mount the heights of Zion, they shall come streaming to the LORD’S blessings:
The grain, the wine, and the oil, the sheep and the oxen; They themselves shall be like watered gardens, never again shall they languish.

Then the virgins shall make merry and dance, and young men and old as well. I will turn their mourning into joy, I will console and gladden them after their sorrows. I will lavish choice portions upon the priests, and my people shall be filled with my blessings, says the LORD . . .

There is hope for your future, says the LORD.9

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9 Jer. 31:10-14, 17, NAB.
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