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## ***THEOLOGY OF WOMAN IN JOSEPH RATZINGER – BENEDICT XVI***

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Introduction

In the writings of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger the theology of woman is deeply rooted in the Christian anthropology; for him a question about woman is inseparable from a question about man; it is a question about human being as the image of God. Benedict XVI is interested in woman as 'person', hence in a being in living relation with the personal God and with other human persons, particularly with men. He lays out the history of her role in the reality of the Old and the New Testaments, depicting differences as well as its continuity in the world before and after Jesus' earthly life. For the Cardinal, woman stands at the centre of God's plan for the salvation of humankind. The Creator's intention for the relation between woman and man is that it reflects the life of the Most Holy Trinity, and it is specifically woman, the 'helper', who is

instrumental in a continuing realisation of the redemptive process of healing the God-man's and man-woman's relations. Joseph Ratzinger contrasts God's intention, with the fallen state of these relations, recognising the defects of the latter which accompany human history right from the 'beginning' of Genesis. He shows that God chose the 'Woman' to be the symbol of the Church, and that the Church is the symbol of a woman as she was intended to be.<sup>375</sup> He compares the Holy Mother of God and her spouse Joseph to the Church and the Bishop, which is perhaps the most inspiring conception of the relation between both sexes in Catholicism.

exist at If we are serious about healing the many problems the Church and society face today, then we need to learn more thoroughly about Joseph Ratzinger's recognition of the value of femininity in God's plan in His creation.

### Anthropological background

God created His image as man and woman, each as a person facing and relating to the personal God and other human persons. The phenomenon of relativity as the nature of the human person is brought about by the Scriptures. Joseph Ratzinger points to the Johannine theology, where 'the Son cannot do anything of himself' (Jn 5:19) and, at the same time the Son 'and the Father are one' (Jn 10:30).<sup>376</sup> Hence Jesus exists completely within a total relativity toward his Father; he has nothing solely of himself. He even constitutes this relativity toward the Father and this 'does not delimit a precinct of what is merely and properly its own – precisely because of this they are one'.<sup>377</sup> The Pope teaches that here the transition to anthropology takes place because Jesus says to his disciples, 'without me you can do nothing' (Jn 15:5), and he also prays, 'that they may be one as we are one (Jn 17:11). Therefore, human being is not to pursue what is just his own or to form an exclusive substance of the self, but rather he or she is to enter into a pure relationality which always requires the 'other' and especially the 'Other'. This is because man or woman comes to his or her fullness in a proper sense of his or her humanity only by entering into unity with the one with whom he or she is in relativity. This relatedness is what constitutes the image of the Most Holy Trinity. The Pope argues that it is here that the profound illumination of the mystery of God and of man emerges; the 'person' is not a substance but the 'phenomenon of complete relativity' which is realised fully only in God as the 'Other', although it marks relationality with all personal beings. Thus, as Joseph Ratzinger convinces us, although it is important to remember that the doctrine of the personal and Triune God transitions into

<sup>375</sup> Joseph Ratzinger writes about the ancient exegetical tradition which saw in Mary at Cana the "*figura Synagogae*" and the "*inchoatio Ecclesiae*". Cf. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Angelo Amato, Titular Archbishop of Sila, *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World*, reference to 10.

<[http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc\\_con\\_cfaith\\_doc\\_20040731\\_collaboration\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20040731_collaboration_en.html)> [Accessed 25 May 2016].

<sup>376</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, *Joseph Ratzinger in Communio, Anthropology and Culture*, ed. By David L. Schindler and Nicholas J. Healy, v. 2 (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company Grand Rapids, 2013), p. 109.

<sup>377</sup> Benedict XVI, *Anthropology*, p. 109.

Christology, it is also of paramount importance to the understanding of the theme of this paper. We must appreciate that the doctrine of the personal and Triune God transitions not only into Christology but also into anthropology. Although it is true that the human being's 'I' is most his own, it is at the same time what he or she has least of him- or herself. In other words our 'I' is most of all not our own at all because it is received from the 'You', so that our 'I' can all; it is a gift. To be human, therefore, is to be in the constant dependence on the 'You' but also in relations with the 'you'.<sup>378</sup>

Thus, in Benedict XVI the concept of person implies pure relatedness which is based on the doctrine of three persons in One God. This leads the concept of the person toward the human spirit and lays the ground for understanding the reason why God created human being not in one but in two genders. The spirit is fully fulfilled in the other and it becomes what it really is completely in proportion with being with the 'Other'. Joseph Ratzinger rightly thinks that this is what Saint Augustine of Hippo omitted in his doctrine of the human mind as the image of the Holy Trinity. In contrast with Saint Augustine who depicts human mind as the 'enigmatic' image in terms of its internality only, as if the Divine Persons were related exclusively to the thoughts of men and women in the psychological sense, the Pope sees the wholeness of person as corresponding to the divine substance of the Persons.

Let us draw our attention for a moment to the Christological pattern for the human person. Benedict XVI argues that it is a mistake to treat the earthly life of Jesus as an ontological exemption. Rather, we need to see it as a correction of our understanding of what it means to be a human person. That is to say, we must see Jesus exactly as human person should be and according to the intention of God for Adam. In Jesus, being with the 'Other' is realized radically; there are two natures and one person in Christ; the person of *Logos, ratio*, or the Son, as wholly integrated divinity with the humanity. His relativity, or his total being with the Other, did not eliminate his 'I', but fulfilled it. Joseph Ratzinger teaches that in Jesus the human is so completely at one with the divine that it enlarges man's possibility of transcending into the absolute integrating the relativity between human and divine. And this is what re-defines the concept of the human person. The 'new Adam' shows the direction which needs to be taken for the renewed humanity in order to fulfil its capacity as it is manifested in Jesus; although, as long as the history takes place in time the goal is never fully achieved, the person as the relativity toward the absolute is precisely the 'being on the way' to the Father, activating this direction in the living relation with God and other persons.<sup>379</sup>

This is not exactly an innovative thought in the Christian theology; Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Hans Urs von Balthasar and others also point to the enlargement of human possibilities through imitation of Christ. However, what is new here is that Joseph Ratzinger's implication of such understanding of relativity has bearing on the dialogical principle in Christian conception of human being. He contributes a unique observation, namely that on both sides of the Christian relativity there is no pure 'I', nor

<sup>378</sup> Benedict XVI, *Anthropology*, p. 111.

<sup>379</sup> CF. Benedict XVI, *Anthropology*, p. 116.

even pure ‘you’, but ‘on both sides the “I” is integrated into the greater “we”’.<sup>380</sup> Benedict XVI poignantly observes that not even in God is there pure and singular ‘I’ toward which human person is to tend. This defines the fundamental aspect of the human person according to the Revelation because it demands that his or her concept of God has the same dignity to plurality as to unity. Christian faith, then, considers multiplicity within unity, giving both the same value and dignity. The Trinitarian ‘we’ belongs to the ‘we’ of One God. This paves way to the orientation of human person’s relation to God which exists not merely in the plane of ‘I– Thou’, but rather it belongs to the space of integration of ‘I’, ‘we’ and ‘Thou’, just as the liturgical prayer sounds: ‘through Christ in the Holy Spirit to the Father’.<sup>381</sup> Thus, each one of us is gathered into Jesus as our common ‘we’ through love, that is through the Holy Spirit Who, bounding us together, directs us toward the multiple ‘You’ of the One Father.

But, what does it mean for our discourse about the theology of woman in Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger? The answer lies in the fact that it gives us the most solid ground for his understanding of the human being, man and woman, as the persons made in the image of the One and Triune God. In one gender alone, in man without woman, the relatedness of the image would lack the horizontal, hence inter-human orientation: man would not be given an opportunity to realise himself fully as a person in relation to his ‘helper’ who, although is also made in God’s image as an individual and free human being, is made for the realisation of this possibility of relating in humanity, through love, of one to the other. Only then can the image activate God’s intention of creating His reflection as the living relatedness of the three Persons of One God. It is this inter-personal condition that Saint Augustine omitted in his doctrine of the human mind as the image of the Holy Trinity, and what Joseph Ratzinger rightly pointed out. This observation allows us to establish that human being as a person cannot come fully to him- or herself on his or her own. One needs the ‘Other’ and the ‘other’, one needs to accept and love the other than ‘self’, if one is to fulfil his or her ‘personal’ sense of being truly human.

The Pope teaches that man comes to himself in the most profound meaning of his personhood most of all through his waiting and acceptance, rather than through his action. It is only through love, which he cannot produce or make, and which can only be received always as a gift, that he fulfils his true calling from God. Thus, for Benedict XVI, no one, man or woman, can ever become wholly him- or herself in any other way than by being loved by the other, by accepting this love and by responding through giving it back. In other words, love enables man’s highest possibility because through receiving he enters into a path of salvation; without this acceptance he subsequently destroys himself, as his humanity cannot be achieved solely by his own

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<sup>380</sup> Benedict XVI, *Anthropology*, p. 117.

<sup>381</sup> Benedict XVI, *Anthropology*, p. 117.

efforts; it would contradict his being as the Triune God's image.<sup>382</sup> Thus, only in the waiting for and a free acceptance of the arrival of the 'other' man opens up inwardly and realises his human personhood.

Joseph Ratzinger warns against attempts of disembodied Christianity, by seeing it purely in the 'mind' or abstract theories, even though they may seem satisfying. He constantly reminds us about the meaningful differences between man and woman, about their equal, and yet distinctive, roles in realizing God's plan for humanity. And, according to him, it is woman who is instrumental in bringing the personal aspect of man. This is because relativity, as God's and man's attribute, is inseparable from love which is a gift, or more precisely, grace based on faith. The most perfect image of a believing man is of course the perfect woman, Mary, the true daughter of Zion. She represents mankind in expectation, waiting for the acceptance of the 'Other'. But earlier it is also the woman of Genesis, man's 'helper', who is put by Adam's side for his relationality to be manifested right from the beginning.

#### The history of the role of woman in the reality of the Old Testament

In the Old Testament humanity is articulated in the male-female relation of sexually differentiated beings as God's image. Both the first and the second accounts of creation speak about the importance of sexual difference (Gen 1:26,27; 2:4-25). Adam, who was lonely, was given a helpmate; another 'I', equal but not the same as Adam. Pope Benedict explains that the term 'helpmate' refers to a vital helper, not someone inferior. Woman was created in order that man does not 'sink into a sterile and, in the end, baneful encounter with himself'; he is to enter into relationship with a being on his own level, and only a woman of the same bone and flesh, and yet different, 'and cloaked in the same mystery, can give a future to the life of man'.<sup>383</sup> Joseph Ratzinger diverts our attention to the ontological quality of man-woman differentiation as God's creation:

It is therefore above all on the ontological level that this takes place, in the sense that God's creation of woman characterizes humanity as a relational reality. In this encounter, the man speaks words for the first time, expressive of his wonderment: "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" (*Gn* 2:23).<sup>384</sup>

Through another 'I' as woman in the common humanity with man, in the unity of two, the loneliness of man is overcome. She is to be his companion to whom he can unite himself within marriage (cf. Gen 2:24). Their differentiation is meant to serve this communion. Benedict XVI repeats after Saint John Paul II that even their masculinity and femininity tell about the 'capacity of expressing love, that love in which the person becomes a gift and - by means of this gift - fulfils the meaning of his being and his

<sup>382</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Communion Books, Ignatius Press) pp. 266-268.

<sup>383</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 6.

<sup>384</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 6.

existence'.<sup>385</sup> This is because the body expresses the spirit of man and woman who are called to existence for the communion of persons and thus for a reflection of the life of the Most Holy Trinity.<sup>386</sup>

Throughout the Genesis narrative it is understood that woman's deepest being exists 'for' the other. This, the Pope shows, testifies to the similarity of the spousal reality to the mystery of the Triune God. The unity of the two is called to exist one for the other, and marriage, as described in the book of Genesis, is the principle dimension of this call (Gen 2:18-25). This is exactly what was regrettably denied by Saint Augustine of Hippo in his doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as mentioned earlier. However, Joseph Ratzinger teaches that in the universal dimension it is the integration of what is feminine and what is masculine, without diminishing or repressing either of them, that is the heart of what God wills for the human being, both man and woman, and what, despite being distorted by sin, can never be abrogated. The 'Fall' consists of the distortion which not only puts a mark on the God-man's relation, but also on the relation between man and woman. The harmony of mutual love is replaced with competition, self-seeking and self-love: 'your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you' (Gen 3:16); 'through painful toil you will eat food from it [the ground] all the days of your life [...] By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return' (Gen 3:17-19). Consequently, the 'fallen' relation kills the God willed reason for the differentiation of the sexes in human being; it is deprived of the truly human quality and is based on competition, fear and on domination. Such relating subsists in nothing else than concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes and the sinful pride (Cf. 1 John 2:16). There is no place for a true respect or a dignified affection, the qualities without which God's intended plan for marriage is impossible to realise.<sup>387</sup> Perhaps here lies the focal point of the trend and attempts to diminish the natural differences between sexes in today's culture.

Such disharmony introduces a wounded kind of a vision woman has of man and man of woman. Joseph Ratzinger recalls John Paul II and says that their sexuality, which cannot be reduced to a purely biological differences because it is a fundamental mode of one's being, feeling and expression, is interlinked with its theological dimension.<sup>388</sup> This is because human being, as a unity of body and soul, is created 'for' the 'other - beyond - the self', and if this relation is wounded, man or woman cannot attain his or her proper humanity. Therefore healing is needed. But no real and sustainable healing is possible from the point of the 'fall' because even the logic of a fallen man and woman is 'fallen'. In order to have a clarity of understanding he or she needs to come outside the state debilitated by sin. This is why God, almost immediately after measuring the

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<sup>385</sup> John Paul II, *General Audience* of January 16, 1980, reprinted in *The Theology of the Body*, (Boston: Pauline Books Media, 1997), p. 63. Cf. Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Angelo Amato, Titular Archbishop of Sila, , *Letter to the Bishops*, 6.

<sup>386</sup> John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body*, p. 63.

<sup>387</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 7.

<sup>388</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 8.

punishment for the first sin, provides a promise of a Saviour who is to be born of the ‘Woman’; and she will also have spiritual ‘offspring’ – her Son’s followers (Cf. Gen 3:15). Although God’s promise is made right after the uttering of God’s words of punishment, the time allotted to man’s living under the yoke of his sinfulness as subsequence, is rather long. It is the time of a preparation for its full realisation; the whole of Old Testament is marked by the waiting time for the liberation, renewal and healing of human relation with God and the relation between man and woman; the relations from which spring the renewed way of all people’s relations. The Pope reminds us that the metaphors of bridegroom and bride, as well as the covenant, signify a spousal language which, even though they refer to a more expansive relation, point to the analogy of the mutual attitude of man and woman. Similarly, the statements of Isaiah about the conditions of redemption associate masculine and feminine roles, orienting the believer toward the male figure of the suffering Servant and to the female figure of Zion. Isaiah expressions culminate at the mystical vision of Jerusalem giving birth to a renewed humanity (Cf. Is 48:6-8, 66:7-14).<sup>389</sup> But, it is only in the New Testament that these prefigurations are fulfilled. In the daughter of Zion, with her most perfect femininity, the transfiguration of the defected condition of the Bride takes place. Just as the masculinity of the Redeemer shows the assuming of symbolism of the Old Testament represented by the metaphor of the Bridegroom and the Bride as God’s love for his people, so the femininity of his Mother shows the transformation of the Image in relation to its Creator. This, Joseph Ratzinger points out, not only links the Old with the New Testament, but it also exceeds the comprehensibility of the Old one; it introduces ‘all newness’, or, as Thomas Aquinas put it, the new creation.<sup>390</sup>

*The history of the role of woman in the reality of the New Testament*

For Pope Benedict XVI the Redemption has a nuptial significance. He sees the wedding in Cana as the symbol of the ‘messianic wedding’ with the ‘new wine’ of the marriage of God with humankind. The ‘wine of the new covenant’ is the blood of Christ on the cross, where the ‘messianic wedding’ is accomplished (cf. John 19:25-27, 34).<sup>391</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, in line with the Catholic faith, reinforces the centrality of ‘the Woman’ in these redemptive events. He then links them with John the Baptist’s identification with the ‘friend of the bridegroom’ and later with Saint Paul’s comparison of the believers with a chaste virgin betrothed to her husband (John 3:29-30; 2 Cor 11:2). He shows that in the New Testament the beloved is the Church symbolised by the feminine characteristics of a perfect Christian, any holy woman or a man with the properly understood feminine qualities. The Pope emphasises Saint John Paul II’s words:

This bride, of whom the Letter to the Ephesians speaks, is present in each of the baptized and is like one who presents herself before her Bridegroom: ‘Christ loved the Church and gave himself

<sup>389</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 9.

<sup>390</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 10.

<sup>391</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 10.

up for her..., that he might present the Church to himself in splendour, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish' (Eph 5:25-27)".<sup>392</sup>

For the Cardinal the love of the nuptial union between a Christian man and a Christian woman is a sacrament of the love of marriage between Christ and His Church, where they witness to the mystery from which the 'New Eve' emerges and starts her pilgrimage toward the perfect, eternal wedding in God's Kingdom. It is through the redemptive love of Christ, with the help of Mary, that the spousal relation is healed and where the 'fallen' inclinations of concupiscence, rivalry and pride described earlier are replaced with the attributes of the Bridegroom in the renewed Image of God.

The distinctions between the sexes are reaffirmed here; the 'new heaven and earth' has a feminine character of Jerusalem – the bride prepared for her husband (Rev 21:1-2). Indeed, the Pope continues, the book of Revelation culminates in the final word of the bride: 'Come, Lord Jesus!' reinforcing the Church's womanly disposition (Rev 22:20).<sup>393</sup> Of course, Christian marriage exists in the earthly realm of limitations, where its sexuality is transient and associated with procreation. Nevertheless, both sexes belong ontologically to God's creation which is to be transfigured in eternity, and this is why man-woman nuptial union indicates the 'love that never ends' (1 Cor 13:8). Their differences are no longer the source of tension of the fallen humanity, but rather they fulfil their original meaning of cultivating mutual adoration, respect, wonder and collaboration. This is the point from which the dignity of women can be properly evaluated and where her real role has a chance to be activated in human history more fully.

Joseph Ratzinger emphasises the fundamental role woman obtained from the Creator, describing her capacity 'for the other', 'deep intuition' and protective qualities so natural for her.<sup>394</sup> He is, however, weary of many distortions in understanding of woman's uniqueness; he refutes any attempts to see her only in the perspective of physicality, pointing toward virginity as providing spiritual dimension of motherhood.<sup>395</sup> He also quotes John Paul II's 'genius of women' as irreplaceable in family and social relations.<sup>396</sup> What is perhaps the strongest argument of her indispensability in humanising people, is the Cardinal's argument about human values as precisely feminine. In his own words:

It is appropriate however to recall that the feminine values [...] are above all human values: the human condition of man and woman created in the image of God is one and indivisible. It is only because women are more immediately attuned to these values that they are the reminder and the privileged sign of such values. But, in the final analysis, every human being, man or woman, is destined to be "for the other". In this perspective, that which is called "femininity" is more than

<sup>392</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 10. Cf. <sup>16</sup>John Paul II, *Letter to Families* (February 2, 1994), 19: AAS 86 (1994), 911; Cf. Apostolic Letter *Mulieris dignitatem* (August 15, 1988), 23- 25: AAS 80 (1988), 1708-1715.

<sup>393</sup> Cf. Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 12.

<sup>394</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 13.

<sup>395</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Familiaris consortio* (November 22, 1981), 41: AAS 74 (1982), 132-133. Also *Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Instruction Donum vitae* (February 22, 1987), II, 8: AAS 80 (1988), 96-97.

<sup>396</sup> Cf. John Paul II, *Letter to women* (June 29, 1995), 9-10: AAS 87 (1995), 809-810.

simply an attribute of the female sex. The word designates indeed the fundamental human capacity to live for the other and because of the other.<sup>397</sup>

Hence, the properly understood human capacity of the Image is the capacity of feminine dimension in a sense of psychological ability of openness and making space ‘for the other’. Joseph Ratzinger, just as John Paul II, is convinced that both in society and in family God chose exactly woman to inspire man for this openness, readiness to accept, willingness to notice, and simply to have a loving attitude toward ‘the other’. Therefore, we are back at the introductory point, which is also the central point of our discussion, namely, that in order to be properly human, man is to be relational, he must be open to the ‘Other’ and the ‘other’, and that God created woman for this very reason of helping man to overcome his loneliness and solipsism, and instead be dialogical and fully relational, so that his life does truly manifest the inter-personal Holy Trinity, thereunto fulfilling the capacity of the Image of the pure relationality of the ego-absent God.

This is why Joseph Ratzinger, together with John Paul II, considers promotion of women in society as the way to its properly understood humanization. He recognises truly human attributes, which, as he says, are discovered ‘thanks to women’; he also warns against any outlook of conflict between men and women, because, as he puts it, it leads to a misconception of man’s freedom, let alone his de-humanization.

The Cardinal shows that in the New Testament woman is a symbol, or a sign, of the Redemption; that she is indeed the central identity of the Church, the mystical Bride.<sup>398</sup> The figure of the perfect woman, Mary, signifies metaphorically a mirror in which the Church seeks Her own adequate dispositions, attitude and feelings; the posture of listening and praise, patient receiving of the Word, a total reliance on the promise of the Almighty, humble and loving obedience, are all expected by the Groom from His Bride (Cf. Luke 1:38, John 2:5). Thus, the Mother of God continually inspires the Christian appreciation of the power of God’s love which is revealed perfectly in Jesus Christ (Cf. Luke 1:49, 51-52). However, the femininity the Cardinal has in mind is far from its outdated conception. But, he does not defend its proper understanding through the negation of such qualities as ‘passivity’ or ‘vulnerability’. Instead, and what is perhaps the most important aspect of his analysis of these values, he teaches that the world needs to learn from Christ to replace its order of domination, with the order of exactly feminine characteristics, where violence, pride, rivalry and self-glorification are replaced by a typical of a holy woman’s compassion, care, humility and tenderness. He points to the ‘royal power’ of these values which alone can vanquish the fallen state of mankind. Thus, in Joseph Ratzinger, the ‘passivity’ has a resonance of the redemptive ‘passion’, rather than a static inaction. It is an attitude which has a force of re-creating mankind from within. And, although it is primarily from Jesus’ Mother from whom Christians are to learn the secrets of such victoriously loving qualities of

<sup>397</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 14.

<sup>398</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 15.

inter-relations, the Pope points to women generally as instrumental in the process of God's re-creation. This is because

[...] women in fact live them with particular intensity and naturalness. In this way, women play a role of maximum importance in the Church's life by recalling these dispositions to all the baptized and contributing in a unique way to showing the true face of the Church, spouse of Christ and mother of believers.<sup>399</sup>

Indeed, they are 'called to be unique examples and witnesses for all Christians of how the Bride is to respond in love to the love of the Bridegroom.'<sup>400</sup> However, Joseph Ratzinger does not limit the scope of the appreciation of woman to the behaviour of individual Christians. He also unearths the reasons for the contemporary problems within the Church and he locates them in the lack of balance in Her two areas, as follows.

First is the distortion of the relation between the 'masculine, activistic-sociological *populus Dei* (people of God)' and the feminine *ecclesia*.<sup>401</sup> The Pope argues that the Church is more than just 'people', structure, or action; She is the mystery of maternity and bridal love. There cannot be a genuine ecclesial piety without this mystery, he continues. If the Church is perceived as only masculine and if She is governed in a theoretical way at large, then the ecclesial dimension is ignored; She becomes merely an institution with human planning, innovations, projects and groups of activities. In other words, She is no longer the Bride in a proper sense of the word.

Second area, which Benedict XVI distinguishes as lacking the proper balance, belongs to the difference in specification, *differencia specifica*, within the masculine-feminine ratio; between the New Testament Church as the 'Body of Christ', and the Old Testament 'pilgrim people of God'.<sup>402</sup> He poignantly observes that the Church is not an organization, but rather She is a living organism - she is the Bride. The Body of Christ can only be rightly understood in the context of the original intention God always had for man and woman, namely that 'the two shall become one flesh' (Gen. 2:24, Cf 1 Cor 6:17). Thus, the Church is the flesh of Her Saviour in parallel to Adam and Eve's dynamism of nuptial unity with its consummation and dialogical reciprocity, the Pope concludes. Hence, the Body of Christ includes in itself the mystery of the Woman, Mary, and this is why She possess all the feminine characteristics, including listening, waiting, adoration, maternity, and devotion. Indeed, ecclesiology is what the patristic period conceived as *virgo ecclesia* – virgin Church, the *mater ecclesia* – Mother Church, the *ecclesia immaculate* – immaculate Church, the *ecclesia assumpta* – assumed Church.<sup>403</sup> In other words, ecclesiology always has the content of Mariology. However, although it cannot be separated from Christology, ecclesiology points to the Church as to a 'relative subsistence' *vis-à-vis* Jesus, because She as the spouse, despite

<sup>399</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 16.

<sup>400</sup> Ratzinger, *Letter to the Bishops*, 16.

<sup>401</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Mary, The Church at the Source*, trans. By Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), p. 25.

<sup>402</sup> Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, Hans Urs Von Balthasar, *Mary, The Church at the Source*, trans. by Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), p. 26.

<sup>403</sup> Ratzinger, *The Church at the Source*, p. 28.

being one flesh with him, still remains also as the ‘other’ before him. Therefore, one cannot dissolve Mariology in Christology and ecclesiology, because Mariology has an integrity of its own, which first emerged with Bernard of Clairvaux’ theology. Rather, one must appreciate that it maximises the *nexus mysteriorum*, the ‘intrinsic interwovenness of the mysteries in their irreducible mutual otherness’, and yet still within their unity.<sup>404</sup> It is only this feminine character of the Church that allows us to properly perceive that Mariology exceeds the framework of ecclesiology even though they do correlate generally.

Furthermore, as Joseph Ratzinger notes, the femininity of the Church is so radical that it cannot be understood that the pious woman is ‘only’ its image. This is because Mary’s physical maternity has theological significance; it is not merely a biological fact, the Cardinal points out. Hence, we are faced with another correlation: that of Christ and his Mother in one theological reality of the Church’s intimate life of spousal faith. The Redemption brought about by the Holy Trinity as the centre of human history is Christ and the Church – together and not divided, where the Church is understood as the womanly creature’s fusion with the masculine Saviour in the nuptial love, and where Christian divinization progresses through the grace of faith.<sup>405</sup> The locus of the ultimate personal concretization of Church lies precisely in theological significance of Mary’s motherhood. The moment of her *Fiat* is the moment where she is Israel in person; indeed, as the Joseph Ratzinger puts it, ‘she is the Church in person and as a person’.<sup>406</sup> Her ‘Yes’ makes her biological motherhood a theological reality, because it actualises the spiritual deposit of the Covenant between God and Israel.<sup>407</sup> Thus, here *factum* and *mysterium* are related as the fact and the meaning that lends this fact the theological significance. Therefore, we could say that the femininity of the Church stands within the wholeness of the reality of Christ-Church and it expresses its internal coherence.<sup>408</sup> Taking this angle of perception allows enlargement of our scope of understanding Christology too; Christ is both Head and the Body, we cannot separate one from the other. It becomes clear that the doctrine of grace includes in itself the free ‘yes’ of the creature, granting it recognition of the ontological independence and thus strengthening the importance of man’s response to God’s calling. Mary is the believing ‘other’ *vis-à-vis* God without losing her integrity. Rather, exactly through abandoning her selfishness or preoccupation with ‘me’, ‘self’ or ‘mine’, she reaches her wholeness and fulfilment in the ‘Other’. She is the pattern for a liberated human being. The Cardinal holds that she pioneers the saved humanity ‘precisely as a woman, that is, in the bodily determinateness that is inseparable from man: “Male and female he created them”’ (Gen

<sup>404</sup> Ratzinger, *The Church at the Source*, p. 29.

<sup>405</sup> Ratzinger, *The Church at the Source*, p. 30.

<sup>406</sup> Ratzinger, *The Church at the Source*, p. 30.

<sup>407</sup> Ratzinger, *The Church at the Source*, p. 30.

<sup>408</sup> Although Joseph Ratzinger describes Mariology stands ‘within the totality of the basic Christ-Church structure’ and is an expression of its ‘inner coherence’, he also shows that it transcends the Church’s historicity, because it is ‘an essential component of a hermeneutics of salvation’. Cf. Ratzinger, *The Church at the Source*, pp. 30-31.

1:27).<sup>409</sup> Here, we may only start to wonder at how truly mysterious is God's Image who reflects the Mystery. Indeed, we know the mysterious God through the history of His sharing with human beings, through His relatedness to men and woman, but especially through His relation with Mary. Joseph Ratzinger holds that if we by-pass the faces of the people who reveal this relation, and if we want to just get to 'God alone', then we find ourselves in an 'arrogant purism' built on an 'idea' of God; an idea made by man, a human invention in place of a true and living God.<sup>410</sup> And, if we do not focus enough on the femininity of God which is manifested through her, he continues, we lose the perception of the 'maternal side' of God, the side revealed in Jesus' Mother. God chose her to be the most perfect pattern for each human person because 'person', as the Cardinal teaches, means 'fit habitation for God', and Mary's 'typological identification is a spiritual reality' - it is life lived out of the spirit of the Scriptures, where grace is understood as a 'relational term'.<sup>411</sup>

## TEOLOGIA KOBIECY U JÓZEFA KARDYNAŁA RATZINGERA – BENEDYKTA XVI

Streszczenie:

U Józefa Ratzingera teologia kobiety jest nierozzerwalnie związana z teologią męczyzny; jest to teologia człowieka jako osoby ludzkiej, a więc jako istoty będącej przede wszystkim w relacji z Osobowym Bogiem, ale także i innymi osobami, a w szczególności w relacji kobiety do mężczyzny. Ta relacyjność właściwie nie stanowi podobieństwo człowieka do Najświętszej Trójcy, a kobieta, według Kardynała, jest kluczową postacią w uzdrawianiu tych relacji. W centrum odkupienia ludzi ze stanu 'upadku' widzi on Maryję. Jest ona symbolem Kościoła, ale także wzorem katechizacji kobiety zgodnej z boską ideą kobiecości. Rozpoznanie elementu kobiecości Kościoła ma pomóc w naprawieniu problemów istniejących w Kościele, rodzinie i w społeczeństwie.

Benedykt XVI tłumaczy, że, tak jak Jezus Chrystus żył na świecie w doskonałej jedności z Ojcem, tak i my mamy żyć w jedności z Bogiem i harmonii z drugim człowiekiem. Jego człowieczeństwo nie powinno być rozumiane jako oderwany przypadek, ale raczej jako wzór dla każdego chrześcijanina i jego relacji z Bogiem oraz dla każdego miłośnika ludzkiego egzystowania. Jego 'ja' było 'my', i tak też u każdego chrześcijanina 'ja' ma być w pełni oddane boskiemu 'Ty' i ludzkiemu 'ty'. Osoba ludzka nie ma być rozumiana jako zamknięta w sobie substancja, ale jako relacja realizująca się w pełni dopiero w Bogu i w drugim człowieku. W odróżnieniu od św. Augustyna, Józef Ratzinger

<sup>409</sup> Ratzinger, *The Church at the Source*, p. 31.

<sup>410</sup> Ratzinger, *The Church at the Source*, p. 63.

<sup>411</sup> Ratzinger, *The Church at the Source*, pp. 66-7.

zauważa, że obraz Boga w człowieku nie ogranicza się do jego niewidzialnego myślenia, ale ma swój wyraz w żywych i konkretnych relacjach, szczególnie w relacji między kobietą a mężczyzną. Ich różnicowanie biologiczne nie jest polem wyczerpującym zrozumienie ich współżycia; psychologia i duchowość męska i żeńska jest nie tylko równa, ale nawet bardziej istotna.

Dlatego obydwa płcie ludzkości są wzajemnie nieodzowne dla pełnego odzwierciedlenia życia Trzech Osób Trójcy w tej. Bóg nie stworzył kobiety przez przypadek, ale w celu umożliwienia rozwijania się Jego obrazu w życiu ludzi na życie Trynitarne, a więc relacyjne, podobieństwo. Poprzez otwieranie się na Boga i drugiego człowieka, mężczyzna i kobieta, oboje, dostępują odkupienia czegoś procesu wzajemnego miłowania. Najdoskonalszym przykładem człowieka wierzącego jest Matka Najświętsza, która, z charakterystycznym dla siebie wyczekiwaniem, posłuszeństwem, oddaniem, adorowaniem i pokorą, jest wzorem człowieka odkupionego. Kardynał pisze, że każda wierząca kobieta ma więcej naturalnych predyspozycji do naśladowania Maryi. Dlatego też każda kobieta ma niesłychanie ważną rolę do spełnienia w rodzinach, społeczeństwie, a nade wszystko w Kościele. W swoim całym jestestwie żyje ona zawsze 'dla' drugiego, realizując omawiany tutaj właśnie relacyjny przymiot Trynitarny rzeczywistości w sposób jak najbardziej bliski swej własnej naturze.

Dysharmonia występująca w relacjach pomiędzy mężczyzną a kobietą powoduje, że mają oni o sobie wypaczone wyobrażenia. Uzdrowienie tych relacji jest możliwe tylko poprzez wyjście ze stanu niemocy spowodowanej przez grzech pierworodny. Papież postrzega Stary Testament jako przygotowujący i zapowiadający wyzwolenie ludzkości z tego stanu w rzeczywistości realizowanej w Nowym. Widzi on analogie pomiędzy kochającymi się małżonkami a zwiastującym pomiędzy Zbawicielem a Jego Kościołem. Zbawca miłujący Chrystusa do swego Kościoła jest wzorem do odnowienia relacji między kobietą a mężczyzną. Różnice biologiczne, psychiczne i duchowe pomiędzy mężczyzną a kobietą są bardzo istotne i nie mogą być postrzegane jako przypadkowe, ponieważ spełniają one Boski plan dla realizacji Jego Obrazu; pierwotnie wizją wzajemnego urzeczzenia, uwielbienia, szacunku, współpracy, jednoczenia i prokreacji. Warto więc przede wszystkim do osiągnięcia poprawnie rozumianego relacyjnego człowieczeństwa człowieka; Bóg powierzył kobiecie rolę rozwijania u mężczyzny jego otwieranie się na zrozumienie i harmonijne obcowanie z 'Innym' i 'innymi' nie on sam, by jako jednostka żyjąca przez Boga i dla Boga, będąca w relacji z innymi ludźmi, stała się coraz bardziej 'osobą' manifestującą życie Osób Boskich Jedyne Stwórcy swojego.

Benedykt XVI, za Janem Pawłem II, postrzega awans społeczny kobiet jako czynnik sprzyjający humanizacji całego społeczeństwa. Podkreśla on, że w Nowym Testamencie kobieta jest symbolem i zwiastunem zbawienia, w Kościele zaś symbolem tajemnicy miłowania oblubienicy do Ukochanego, dziewictwa oraz macierzyństwa, bez których to cech stałby się on tylko kolejną ludzką instytucją raczej niż Mistycznym Ciałem Chrystusa. Papież podkreśla, że Kościół nie jest organizacją, ale raczej żywym organizmem podążającym drogą jednoczenia człowieka z Bogiem, które to zjednoczenie będzie

osi gni te w pełni dopiero w Królestwie Niebieskim. Lecz, bez indywidualnej rezygnacji z własnego 'ja' na rzecz 'Ty' i 'ty' nie może jednak być mowy o tym, aby Bóg był 'wszystkim we wszystkim', i dlatego jedynie poprzez adresowanie problemu relacyjności osób ludzkich możemy zgłębić, lepiej zrozumieć i rozwijać proces zbawienia. Chrześcijanie mają za wzór Maryję Pannę jako pierwszego człowieka zupełnie otwartego na Boga i innych, 'ogłosiła' z siebie samej na rzecz boskiego 'Ty' i ludzkiego 'ty', a więc człowieka całkowicie odkupionego; od niej mamy uczyć się odkrywania tajemnic zwyczajnej miłości wzajemnej i manifestowania swoim życiem życia w tej Trójcy.

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