



EDITORIAL

Biblia Benedicti. Hermeneutical and Exegetical Legacy of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI

ADAM KUBIŚ 

The John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, adamkubis@kul.pl

Benedict XVI, in his address at the opening of the 12th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (October 6, 2008), said:

exegesis, the true reading of Holy Scripture, is not only a literary phenomenon, not only reading a text. It is the movement of my existence. It is moving towards the Word of God in the human words. Only by conforming ourselves to the mystery of God, to the Lord who is the Word, can we enter within the Word, can we truly find the Word of God in human words. Let us pray to the Lord that he may help us search the word, not only with our intellect but also with our entire existence. (Benedict XVI 2008)

A direct fruit of the synod was the apostolic exhortation *Verbum Domini*, where the Pope mentions the serious risk of a dualistic approach to sacred Scripture, distinguishing two levels of approach to the Bible: scientific exegesis vs. theology, *ratio* vs. *fides*, historical-critical analysis vs. *lectio divina*. Considering the first level, the Bible is seen as a pure historiography, a human history with no divine element. The other level of approach tends towards the spiritualization of the meaning of the Bible, with no respect for the historical character of revelation. The Pope exhorts to abandon this dualistic approach to sacred Scripture. A positivistic and secularized hermeneutic ultimately based on the conviction that the divine cannot enter and be present within human history must be replaced by a hermeneutic of faith (VD 35). In fact, the two levels of approach exist only in reciprocity. Eventually, the Pope postulates:

In applying methods of historical analysis, no criteria should be adopted which would rule out in advance God's self-disclosure in human history. The unity of the two levels at work in the interpretation of sacred Scripture presupposes, in a word, *the harmony of faith and reason*. On the one hand, it calls for a faith which, by maintaining a proper relationship with right reason, never degenerates into fideism, which in the case of Scripture would

end up in fundamentalism. On the other hand, it calls for a reason which, in its investigation of the historical elements present in the Bible, is marked by openness and does not reject *a priori* anything beyond its own terms of reference. (VD 36)

This is only one of the late Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's hermeneutic and exegetical insights and ideas. His prolific and rich biblical legacy was the subject of reflection during an online symposium organized by the Department of the Exegesis of the Gospels and Apostolic Writings at the Institute of Biblical Studies, John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), in particular by Prof. Krzysztof Mielcarek, Head of the Department, Rev. Prof. Stefan Szymik, MSF, and Rev. Prof. Adam Kubiś, held on 25 and 26 October 2023.

The symposium was divided into three sessions. The morning session of 25 October, chaired by Rev. Prof. Dariusz Dziadosz (KUL) and Rev. Dr. Marcin Zieliński (KUL), consisted of four papers: “«La Parola di Dio è il fondamento di tutto». Crocevia dell'esegesi contemporanea secondo Joseph Ratzinger/Benedetto XVI” by Rev. Ezio Prato, Professor of Fundamental Theology at the Theological Faculty of Northern Italy in Milan and Major Seminary in Como, Italy; “*Deus caritas est*, ossia il centro della fede cristiana. La prima enciclica di Benedetto XVI e il suo fondamento giovanneo” by Rev. Isacco Pagani, Professor of Sacred Scripture at the Theological Faculty of Northern Italy in Milan, Italy; “Presupposti ermeneutici ed esegetici nell'opera *Gesù di Nazaret* di Joseph Ratzinger/Benedetto XVI” by Rev. Matteo Crimella, Professor of Sacred Scripture at the Theological Faculty of Northern Italy in Milan, and “*Sola Scriptura numquam sola*. The Biblical Hermeneutical Question between Catholics and Lutherans. A Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's Proposal” by Pablo Blanco Sarto, Professor of Fundamental Theology at the University of Navarra in Pamplona, Spain. All four papers have been published in elaborated and enlarged forms in this special issue of *Verbum Vitae* (cf. Prato 2024; Pagani 2024; Crimella 2024; Blanco-Sarto 2024).

The evening session of 25 October, chaired by Rev. Prof. Adam Kubiś (KUL) and Rev. Prof. Henryk Drawnel, SDB (KUL), included five talks. Prof. Scott Hahn from the University of Steubenville, Ohio, USA, presented a paper entitled “The Symphony of Scripture. The Unity of the Old and the New Testaments in Pope Benedict XVI's Writings.” In turn, Prof. Anthony Giambrone, OP, from the École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem (Israel) delivered a talk “«The Ratzinger Paradigm» and *La méthode historique*.” Prof. Gary Anderson from the University of Notre Dame (USA) discussed the problem of “Priesthood and Church in the Old Testament and the Church.” The next discourse entitled “Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's Christological-Pneumatological Exegesis” was given by Prof. Nina-Sophie Heereman, Professor of Sacred Scripture at St. Patrick's Seminary and University (USA). Finally, Prof. Ludger Schwienhorst-Schönberger from the University of Vienna (Austria) reflected on Ratzinger's legacy in this talk “The Mystical Contact of

the Hagiographers with God (JRGS 2,518). Joseph Ratzinger's Spiritual Interpretation of Scripture." Two of the lecturers offered their papers for publication in the present volume (cf. Hahn 2024; Heereman 2024).

The last session, held on 26 October and chaired by Rev. Prof. Stefan Szymik, MSF and Prof. Krzysztof Mielcarek, offered five papers presented in Polish: "Wprowadzenie do *Opera Omnia* Józefa Ratzingera/Benedykta XIV" [Introduction to Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI's *Opera Omnia*] by Rev. Krzysztof Góźdz (Professor of Dogmatic Theology at KUL and Head of the Editorial Committee of the complete works of Joseph Ratzinger in Polish), "Hermeneutyka wiary w pismach Józefa Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI" [Hermeneutics of Faith in the Writings of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI] by Rev. Janusz Kręcińo, MS (Professor of Sacred Scripture at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, Poland), "*Regula fidei* w świetle pism Józefa Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI" [*Regula fidei* in Light of the Writings of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI] by Sławomir Zatwardnicki (Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Pontifical Faculty of Theology in Wrocław, Poland), "Milczenie Boga a chrystologiczna interpretacja Pisma Świętego" [The Silence of God and the Christological Interpretation of Sacred Scripture] by Rev. Waldemar Linke, CP (Professor of Sacred Scripture at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw)¹ and "Biblijne źródła Tradycji apostoelskiej Kościoła w nauczaniu Józefa Ratzingera/Benedykta XVI" [Biblical Roots of the Church's Apostolic Tradition in the Teaching of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI] by Rev. Stefan Szymik, MSF (Professor of Biblical Hermeneutics at the Institute of Biblical Studies, KUL). Three of the papers are being published in *Verbum Vitae* (cf. Góźdz 2024; Zatwardnicki 2024a; Szymik 2024).

This issue of *Verbum Vitae*, dedicated entirely to the hermeneutical and exegetical legacy of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI, also includes two additional articles, namely "Mutuality of Scripture, Metaphysics and Dogmatics. A Basic Hermeneutical Insight in Pope Benedict XVI's *Jesus of Nazareth*" by Rev. Robert J. Woźniak, Professor of Dogmatic Theology at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow, Poland (cf. Woźniak 2024) and "Benedict XVI's Interpretation of the Psalms" by Rev. Wojciech Węgrzyniak, Professor of Sacred Scripture at the Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow (cf. Węgrzyniak 2024).

The final text published in this issue is a thorough review of *The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture: Testing the Ratzinger Paradigm*, a monograph written by Fr. Aaron Pidel, SJ, Assistant Professor of Theology at Marquette University, USA. The author of the review is Prof. Sławomir Zatwardnicki. Pidel sought to answer two questions: "what it means that the Bible is the word of God (and not just a word about God), and how true the Bible is and to what extent the word of God expressed in human language can be expected to transcend the cultural level of its time." (Zatwardnicki 2024b) The review of Pidel's work is noteworthy

¹ On a similar topic see Linke 2024.

as it was Ratzinger who “laid a groundwork for a comprehensive theory of biblical inspiration and truth.” (Pidel 2023, 8)

I thank all the contributors to this volume of *Verbum Vitae*, especially the conference participants who prepared and submitted their papers for publication. Certainly, the reader will find these texts thought-provoking and inspiring.

Bibliography

- Benedict XVI. 2008. “Address at the Opening of the 12th Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops during the Celebration of the Third Hour (6 October 2008).” https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2008/october/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20081006_sinodo.html.
- Benedict XVI. 2010. Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Verbum Domini* on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church. (= *VD*), https://www.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_ben-xvi_exh_20100930_verbum-domini.html.
- Blanco-Sarto, Pablo. 2024. “Catholics and Lutherans on Scripture. A Proposal by Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI.” *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 47–62. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16754>.
- Crimella, Matteo. 2024. “Hermeneutical and Exegetical Assumptions in the Work *Jesus of Nazareth* by Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI. Some Examples.” *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 125–40. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.17194>.
- Gózdź, Krzysztof. 2024. “Introduction to Joseph Ratzinger’s Opera Omnia.” *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 63–79. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16843>.
- Hahn, Scott. 2024. “Normative and Performative. The Authority of Scripture for Catholic Theology and Worship in the Thought of Pope Benedict XVI.” *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 81–100. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16921>.
- Heereman, Nina Sophie. 2024. “Joseph Ratzinger’s Christological-Pneumatological Exegesis of the Old Testament.” *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 101–24. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.17184>.
- Linke, Waldemar. 2024. “*Verbum abbreviatum* and *silentium Dei* in Benedict XVI’s Writings and the Object and Method of Biblical Exegesis.” *Wrocław Theological Review* 32 (1): 5–64. <https://doi.org/10.52097/wpt.8471>.
- Pagani, Isacco. 2024. “*Deus Caritas Est*. Benedict XVI’s First Encyclical and Its Johannine Foundation in the Exegesis of St. Augustine.” *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 161–76. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.17440>.
- Pidel, Aaron. 2023. *The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture: Testing the Ratzinger Paradigm*. Verbum Domini. Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Prato, Ezio. 2024. “La parola di Dio è il fondamento di tutto. Egesi storico-critica ed ermeneutica teologica secondo Joseph Ratzinger – Benedetto XVI.” *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 141–59. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.17370>.
- Szymik, Stefan. 2024. “Church Tradition and Its Biblical Foundations in the Teaching of Joseph Ratzinger/Benedict XVI. An Outline of Problems.” *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 177–97. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.17648>.

- Węgrzyniak, Wojciech. 2024. "Benedict XVI's Interpretation of the Psalms." *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 217–44. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.17752>.
- Woźniak, Robert J. 2024. "Mutuality of Scripture, Metaphysics and Dogmatics. Basic Hermeneutical Insight in Pope Benedict XVI *Jesus of Nazareth*." *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 199–216. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.17657>.
- Zatwardnicki, Sławomir. 2024a. "Regula Fidei in the Light of Joseph Ratzinger's Writings." *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 7–46. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.16744>.
- Zatwardnicki, Sławomir. 2024b. Review of Aaron Pidel, *The Inspiration and Truth of Scripture: Testing the Ratzinger Paradigm* (Verbum Domini; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2023). *Verbum Vitae* 42 (Special Issue): 245–71. <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.17622>.

