

On the Fourfold Sense of Scripture in *Jesus of Nazareth*, Volume 1

JOSEPH W. KOTERSKI, S.J.
Fordham University
New York, NY

IN THE FOREWORD to the first volume of his *Jesus of Nazareth*,¹ Pope Benedict XVI explains certain crucial differences between the historical-critical method, with its tendencies to consider individual books of the Bible in light of their historical contexts and sources, and what he calls the method of “canonical exegesis,” with its tendency to read individual scriptural books in the context of the Bible as a whole. Besides varying significantly in their philosophical presuppositions, these methods also differ on the need for a faith commitment by the interpreter. The method of canonical exegesis requires an act of religious faith not necessary for one employing the historical-critical method. It is not that proponents of the historical-critical method in principle refuse to make such an act of faith (often they do have such a commitment), but no such act is required for the sake of methodology. In fact, for the scholarly purposes associated with historical-criticism, the interpreter may feel a need temporarily to bracket faith lest it interfere with the objectivity and critical analysis that the method is designed to promote.

By presupposing a prior act of faith in the Holy Spirit as inspiring the various authors of the Bible, canonical exegesis becomes a

¹ Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2007) [originally *Jesus von Nazareth*, vol. 1, *Von der Taufe im Jordan bis zur Verklärung* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder, 2007)]. The work will be cited in text parenthetically by page number and abbreviated “JN” in text and notes.

specifically Christological hermeneutic. It thereby allows us to see just how deeply the Old and the New Testaments belong together; this approach sees Christ as “the key to the whole” and permits us “to understand the Bible as a unity” (xix). Canonical exegesis, Benedict explains, means reading biblical books within the context of the whole. Doing so does not contravene the historical-critical approach or ignore the insights that this method can bring. In fact, success with canonical exegesis depends upon using the “indispensable tool” of historical-criticism, which understands a text so that “theology in the proper sense” may be undertaken (xix).

While historical-criticism puts the focus on ascertaining, so far as possible, the precise meanings that the words of a text were supposed to signify at the time and place of their original use, a proper use of canonical exegesis appreciates the text as something genuinely inspired by God:

The author is not simply speaking for himself on his own authority. . . . 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. (xx)

The Four Senses

As an elaboration of the faith perspective crucial to this form of exegesis, Benedict explicitly calls attention to the ancient tradition: “There are dimensions of the word that the old doctrine of the fourfold sense of Scripture pinpointed with remarkable accuracy. The four senses of Scripture are not individual meanings arrayed side by side, but dimensions of the one word that reaches beyond the moment” (ibid.). The canonical exegesis that characterizes his approach is by no means limited to the four senses, but we can regularly see the operation of these senses in other places in Benedict’s work where he implicitly adverts to them.²

² Benedict refers to the fourfold sense in Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein, ed. Aidan Nichols, O.P. (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1988) [originally *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben*, ed. Alphonse Auer and Joseph Ratzinger, *Kleine Katholische Dogmatik* 9 (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1977)], 43–45, which discusses the need to interpret Old Testament types as anticipations of the Christ who recapitulates them.

In the scholarly foreword to JN that precedes its reflections on select moments of the Lord's public life, the Pope takes note of certain distortions in the picture of Jesus that can afflict those who uncritically make some of the philosophical presuppositions of modern historical-criticism (xvi).³ An unwillingness, for instance, to accept that the Bible is God's word, and not just the product of individuals or trends within the community, can imperil recognizing that the Scriptures can give us the true face of Christ. This search for Christ's face, Benedict explains, is his motivation for writing JN. The closeness of Jesus to His Father is the center around which he constructs his argument: "It sees Jesus in light of his communion with the Father, which is the true source of his personality; without it, we cannot understand him at all, and it is from this center that he makes himself present to us still today" (xiv).

Avoiding Eisegesis

Unless one reads with the eyes of faith, guided by the Church's tradition of interpretation, the danger arises of seeing in biblical texts only what one wants to see. Commenting on the interpretations of the Scriptures that have increasingly tried to distinguish between "the historical Jesus" and "the Christ of faith," the Pope observes: "If you read a number of these reconstructions one after the other, you see at once that far from uncovering an icon that has become obscured over time, they are much more like photographs of their authors and the ideals they hold" (xii).

For the proper interpretation of the Scriptures, we need to bear in mind both their historical reference and revealed character: "It is of the very essence of biblical faith to be about real historical events. It does not tell stories symbolizing suprahistorical truths, but is based on history, history that took place here on this earth" (xv). Precisely for this reason, he notes, the 1943 encyclical *Divino Afflante Spiritu* and the Second Vatican Council's Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation, *Dei Verbum*, together with a number of more recent Church documents, have insisted that we be attentive to the historical dimension and, thus, make a proper use of its method.⁴ And yet,

³ See *Eschatology*, 19–21, for further comments on methodology, and 43, for the fundamental mistake of limiting an interpretation of a text merely to its earliest level.

⁴ Pope Pius XII, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* (1943) [*Acta Apostolicae Sedis* 35 (1943): 297–325].

Benedict reminds us, this method “does not exhaust the interpretive task for someone who sees the biblical writings as a single corpus of Holy Scripture inspired by God” (xvi).⁵

The “canonical exegesis” employed by the Pontiff is admittedly broader than the doctrine of the fourfold sense of Scripture, but for the purposes of this paper, I will concentrate on only this approach. The section that follows will review this doctrine, and then Benedict’s use of it will be examined.

Ecclesial Hermeneutic

Because of its centrality to the Church’s way of reading the Bible, an ecclesial hermeneutic lies in the heart of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*’s treatment of Scriptural interpretation in §§101–41.⁶ The four senses can be a helpful antidote to an excessively fundamentalist interpretation, as well as to approaches that de-emphasize the literal sense in favor of some accommodationist hermeneutic. It is often typical of a fundamentalist reading to emphasize the need to read all of Scripture literally, despite the difficulties of being consistent when confronted with passages that do not readily conform to some preferred view of ecclesial polity or the sacraments. The key question is precisely what is meant by the literal sense, what types of humanly intended meaning it includes. This question is especially pressing when we define the literal sense as whatever is intended by the human author under divine inspiration and, thus, see its meaning as including not only historical statements but also stories, figures of speech, and the like.

Accommodationist readings can easily disregard the literal sense in favor of whatever meaning the interpreter wishes to give the text. The general tendency here is not to deny that there is a literal sense so much as to emphasize the interpreter’s interests. We see something of this approach, for instance, in those more eager to construct a cultural critique or a social gospel with a biblical resonance than to discern in revealed texts the social teaching that they may contain. The point here is not that such efforts are in principle illegitimate (specific exegeses would need studying); the point is more that, as an effort to read the Bible, accommodationism is vulnerable to eisegesis. This can be curbed by insisting on the need to discern what

⁵ On “the single Gospel” as heard rightly only in “the quartet” of the four Gospels, see *Eschatology*, 40.

⁶ *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994). The *Catechism* will be cited as “CCC” in text and notes.

the revealing God has transmitted in the various levels of scriptural meaning.

We find in §§101–41 of the *Catechism* a brief account of a sophisticated hermeneutic that has been the standard guide to biblical interpretation for much of the Church's history. Unfortunately, this approach has often been forgotten or de-emphasized in the period since the Reformation and the Counter-reformation. The trend has increased to give attention predominantly, or even exclusively, to the literal level, as part of the debate over the claim of *sola scriptura* as the proper source for doctrine. Nonetheless, the use of the four senses as crucial to the proper understanding of the Scriptures extends back to the Church's beginning.⁷ In fact, the use of the four senses is present within the Bible itself (e.g., Gal 4:21–31 on the “allegory” of Sarah and Hagar), and it was the mainstay of writers in the apostolic and patristic periods.⁸ For medieval writers, it was so revered that Dante even proposes it to Can Grande della Scalla as the key to understanding his *Divine Comedy*.⁹ The mystics of all ages have never been able to do without it, but nominalist theologians generally tended to jettison it as part of the Scholastic humanism that they wanted to replace by semantic analyses. In understanding the Scripture in the categories of grammar and logic, the nominalists seem increasingly forgetful that the Holy Spirit often teaches by image, symbol, and story, not just by logically correlated propositions.¹⁰

The Church teaches that the four senses of Scripture are: (1) the literal level, within which can be found three spiritual levels: (2) the typological sense (often called the allegorical); (3) the moral sense (sometimes named the tropological); and (4) the anagogical sense. The literal sense is not simply historical, but includes everything that the human author under the influence of the Holy Spirit intends, whatever the genre. The three spiritual levels are called “spiritual” because their meaning is derived from the Holy Spirit's inspiration

⁷ For a view of this subject and a collection of Church teachings, see *The Scripture Documents: An Anthology of Official Catholic Teachings*, ed. Dean P. Béchar, S.J. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002).

⁸ See Henri de Lubac, S.J., *Medieval Exegesis: The Four Senses of Scripture*, trans. Mark Sebanc and E. M. Macierowski, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998–2000 [French original, 1959]).

⁹ See *Dantis Aligherii epistolae: The Letters of Dante*, ed. and trans. Paget Jackson Toynbee, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967 [originally 1920]).

¹⁰ See R. W. Southern, *Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe*, 2 vols. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), esp. 2:14–18.

of the human author, whether the human author was fully conscious of it or not.¹¹

The literal sense is literal because it is located in the letters and words of the human author. But it is important to note that this term does not mean what some fundamentalist approaches suppose it to mean—as if every line of Scripture were the equivalent of, say, a newspaper report or a history book. The literal level certainly includes historical accounts, such as those found within the Gospels or Old Testament books like Judges or Kings, but it also includes the figures of speech that a human author uses (e.g., “The Lord is my rock” in Ps 18:2), together with a wide variety of literary genres (e.g., the creation stories, the narratives of the patriarchs, laws, moral tales, prophecies, jeremiads, visions, and laments).

The literal level requires careful scholarship to establish the authentic wording of a text (e.g., in determining the proper reading from the manuscript tradition and in establishing a critical edition of the text). It is precisely these concerns that remain vital in the enduring usefulness of the historical-critical method. The *Catechism* teaches, for instance:

In order to discover the sacred authors’ intention, the reader must take into account the conditions of their time and culture, the literary genres in use at that time, and the modes of feeling, speaking, and narrating then current. “For the fact is that truth is differently presented and expressed in the various types of historical writing, in prophetic and poetical texts, and in other forms of literary expression.” (CCC, §110, quoting *Dei Verbum* §12)

This concern, for instance, drove St. Jerome to collate the texts that he used to produce the Vulgate. More recently, it drove the new edition of the Vulgate.¹² It has also led to countless scholarly editions and biblical commentaries.

¹¹ CCC, §109: “In Sacred Scripture, God speaks to man in a human way. To interpret Scripture correctly, the reader must be attentive to what the human authors truly wanted to affirm and to what God wanted to reveal to us by their words” (footnote to *Dei Verbum* §12).

¹² *Nova Vulgata Bibliorum Sacrorum Editio: Editio Typica Altera* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1979).

But in addition to what the human author has written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we need to attend to the spiritual levels of meaning that can be found within the texts.¹³ The *Catechism* makes this point directly: “Since Sacred Scripture is inspired, there is another and no less important principle of correct interpretation, without which Scripture would remain a dead letter. ‘Sacred Scripture must be read and interpreted in the light of the same Spirit by whom it was written’” (CCC, §111, again quoting *Dei Verbum* §12). For this reason, the Church insists on several important criteria so that interpretation accords with the Spirit: (1) attending to the “unity” of the entire Bible as flowing from the divine authorship of all the Scriptures (CCC, §112), as Benedict emphasizes in his account of canonical exegesis; (2) respecting that the Scriptures are part of the “living tradition of the whole Church” (CCC, §113);¹⁴ and (3) honoring the “analogy of faith,” which entails “the coherence of the truths of faith among themselves and within the whole plan of Revelation” (CCC, §114). By observing these criteria, interpreters can be faithful to the teachings of the Church and open to discovering the three spiritual levels of meaning given by the Holy Spirit.

At the heart of the “typological” sense is the notion that the life of Christ provides the preferred way to understand the entirety of the Bible. Everything before Christ leads up to him, and only he was able to open the minds of the apostles and those following them to understand divine revelation (see Luke 22:44–45). Accordingly, the Church has always held that the Old Testament contains, besides its literal sense, mysteries that have been “hidden of ages in God”

¹³ For a defense of the ongoing importance of historical-critical method in biblical interpretation, see Pontifical Biblical Commission, *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* (Washington, DC: United States Catholic Conference, 1993). But note also the observation of Avery Dulles, S.J., in “Vatican II: The Myth and the Reality,” *America* 188, no. 6 (February 24, 2003), about the need to correct a possible misunderstanding. The Biblical Commission’s work fails to quote the entirety of *Dei Verbum* §11, which emphasizes the Holy Spirit’s inspiration in everything that the human authors write.

¹⁴ See CCC, §113: “According to a saying of the Fathers, Sacred Scripture is written principally in the Church’s heart rather than in documents and records, for the Church carries in her Tradition the living memorial of God’s Word, and it is the Holy Spirit who gives her the spiritual interpretation of the Scripture (‘according to the spiritual meaning which the Spirit grants to the Church’).” The quotation within this text is to Origen, *Hom. in Lev.* 5.5, in *Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca*, ed. J. P. Migne (Paris: Garnier and J. P. Migne, 1857–1866), 12:454D.

that are “now revealed” (see Eph 3:5, 9). The reason for calling this sense typological is the pairing of an Old Testament type with Christ as the antitype who completes what is incomplete, perfects what is imperfect, and sanctifies what is sinful. In the single lifetime of Christ, as recounted in the Gospels, he recapitulates the preparatory typology found in the whole life of Israel. Articulating the full range of this recapitulation would require a complete monograph, but one can easily see an example of the Bible’s own use of typology when it calls Jesus “the new Adam” (1 Cor 15:45).¹⁵ In JN, Benedict exhibits a frequent appreciation for the typological reading. We see this, for instance, in his repeated discussions of Jesus as the new Moses, the new Adam,¹⁶ the new Isaac, the new Jacob, and the new David.¹⁷

In turn, each Christian is expected to learn how to live and grow in Christ. Understanding how he recapitulates the life of Israel shows us how we should recapitulate his life at every stage in our own.¹⁸ Seeing the indispensable role of the Lord’s recapitulation of Israel, together with our need to recapitulate his life, step by step, stage by stage, makes this level a reliable aid for pastoral care and a source for pastoral theology. Citing the letter to the Hebrews, Benedict alludes to the legacy in history of Adam’s sin in noting that Jesus “must go through [history], suffer through the whole of it, in order to transform it” (26). This comment underscores that the typological sense is not some sort of allegory that later interpreters are imposing eisegetically on the text, but something deeply rooted within revelation as we receive it. By taking the life of Christ as the controlling principle, we can discover an order to the stages of his life that illumines the significance of human life in general. These sanctify what

¹⁵ The most careful instance of this project to date is Paul M. Quay, S.J., *The Mystery Hidden for Ages in God* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995).

¹⁶ See JN, 192, for a discussion of Phil 2:6–11 as presenting Christ as the antitype of the First Adam: “While the latter high-handedly grasped at likeness to God, Christ does not count equality with God, which is his by nature, ‘a thing to be grasped,’ but humbles himself unto death, even death on the Cross.”

¹⁷ See Joseph Ratzinger, *Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000) [originally *Einführung in den Geist der Liturgie* (Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder, 2000)], 140, for a discussion of Christ as the true David in Benedict’s account of the Christian interpretation of the Psalms.

¹⁸ See JN, 56: “The announcement of God’s lordship is, like Jesus’s entire message, founded on the Old Testament. Jesus reads the Old Testament, in its progressive movement from the beginnings with Abraham right down to his own time, as a single whole; precisely when we grasp this movement as a whole, we see that it leads directly to Jesus himself.”

was sinful, thus showing us how to grow into human maturation in conformity with the divinely intended pattern.¹⁹

The second of the spiritual senses, the moral sense, includes not just teachings about morality, like the Ten Commandments recorded in Exodus and Deuteronomy and the “Two Great Commandments” uttered by Jesus, but all that the Scriptures disclose about God’s will for human conduct, including the lists of virtues that Paul describes in detail, the record of human sinfulness recounted in many Old Testament narratives, and the fiery denunciations of idolatry and adultery in the prophets. Benedict regularly adverts to this sense, not only in connection with Jesus as the new Moses, but also in his reflection on what the relations between the Kingdom of God and Christian hope offers us for better understanding the proper relations between Church and state. Accordingly, the Pope steadfastly refuses to allow eschatology to be turned into any form of political theology.²⁰

The anagogical sense is named from the Greek word *anagoge* (“leading”) and refers to the eternal significance of the realities and events recorded in the Scriptures, especially as they lead us toward heaven, “our true homeland” (CCC, §117). This spiritual level of meaning lets us see how the sacraments are symbolic signs instituted by Christ to give the grace that they signify. The water of baptism, for instance, effects the cleansing from sin that washing suggests. But the Church’s understanding of this sacrament also makes use of the anagogical sense to link the physical sign used in it to the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, which gave new life to the people of Israel even as it drowned their pursuers. The Church’s understanding of death to sin and entry into new life is not a mere imposition of meaning by the Church, but a discovery of the spiritual meaning of scriptural texts implanted by the Holy Spirit centuries before the practice of Christian baptism. Throughout JN, Benedict is recurrently alert to the anagogical sense when, for instance, he comments extensively on the dominant images of bread, wine, and water in the Gospel of John.

¹⁹ See JN, 64: “From the start of his Gospel, Matthew claims the Old Testament for Jesus, even when it comes to apparent minutiae. What Luke states as a fundamental principle, without going into detail, in his account of the journey to Emmaus (cf. Luke 24:25ff.)—namely, that all the Scriptures refer to Jesus—Matthew, for his part, tries to demonstrate with respect to all the details of Jesus’ path.”

²⁰ See JN, 34, 36, and 42, where Benedict sounds this theme repeatedly in his chapter on the temptations of Christ.

Let us now allow Benedict's treatment of Christ as the new Moses to serve as an example of the typological sense in his book. We will also take note in passing of representative instances in JN of the other senses.

The Four Senses in JN

The opening gambit in the book's introduction is the Pope's interpretation of Deuteronomy 18:15, which contains the promise of a prophet who would be a new Moses. Benedict here makes use of the typological sense: "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you . . . him shall you heed" (1f). Granting that the text might at first appear to be little more than an indication that God would raise up various prophets in Israel, Benedict proceeds to show that the promise contains something far deeper. The specificity of the promise ("a prophet like me") remains unfulfilled at the end of the period covered by Deuteronomy: "And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut 34:10).

In Benedict's reading of Deuteronomy, the distinctive trait of the original Moses consists not in the ability to do some heroic or miraculous deed, but in speaking with God as with a friend "face to face" (3–4). Unlike ancient soothsayers and diviners, Moses proves to be the true monotheist prophet by revealing the one and only God to his people: "His task is not to report on the events of tomorrow or the next day in order to satisfy human curiosity or the human need for security. He shows us the face of God, and in so doing he shows us the path that we have to take" (4). But, of course, the text in Deuteronomy on which the Pope is commenting does generate in Israel the hope for a new Moses who will appear at the appropriate time, one whose forty days in the desert will recapitulate Israel's own forty years of living there (29). His distinctive trait will be his immediate relation with God, a relationship that will permit him to disclose the divine will in a direct and unmediated fashion. Like Moses but more perfect, the Messiah shall testify to the will of God, for he knows the Father face to face, not merely from his solitude with God in the cloud (5).

As in all biblical typology, the Old Testament type discussed here is still incomplete and imperfect. The corresponding anti-type, as a stage in the life of Christ, will complete what is incomplete and perfect what is imperfect. Respecting this pattern, the Pope

comments at length on mysterious events in Exodus when Moses requests that God display his glory (Exod 33:18). God refuses (Exod 33:20: “You cannot see my face”) and grants Moses the compensating gift of seeing God’s back from a cleft in a rock (Exod 33:23). The direct relation that Moses has to God has its limits. He may enter the cloud of God’s presence and speak to God as a friend, but he may not behold God’s face. The immediate vision of the divine, together with the ability to speak about God from seeing his face, belongs to Christ alone. He will be the mediator of a covenant greater than the one that Moses brought. The Messiah was expected to bring “a renewed Torah,” but as the new and definitive Moses, Jesus brings forth a new and definitive Torah (99–100).

We have here a use of both the moral and the typological sense. The Torah, Jesus as the new Moses, delivers not just an interpretation of God’s will, but that will itself. The contemporary rabbi Jacob Neusner, whom the Pope takes as a dialogue partner in his chapter on the Sermon on the Mount, finds this claim as undeniable as unacceptable (105, 120).²¹ For Benedict, Jesus’s very posture used for the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew—seated in the chair of Moses teaching with plenary authority—makes clear that he is not only a trained rabbi but also a prophet greater than Moses (66). When discussing how the beatitudes are a portrait of Jesus himself, as well as a summons to every follower to recapitulate him, Benedict notes that Jesus affirms the perennial validity of the Commandments; yet as the new Moses, he paradoxically surpasses them all by his meekness (80).²²

For Benedict, the prologue to the Gospel of John artfully displays the completion of the relation of type and anti-type: “No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearer to the Father’s heart, who has made him known” (John 1:18). As the eternal Word and the Son of God, Jesus lives intimately in the very presence of his Father and thus fully realizes what was only fragmentarily present for Moses. Referring to Jesus’s uniqueness, Benedict probingly posits: “The question that every reader of the New Testament must ask—where Jesus’s teaching came from, how his appearance in history is to be explained—can really be answered only from this

²¹ See Jacob Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 107–08.

²² See JN, 92–96, for Benedict’s moving discussion of Christ’s “purity of heart” (the sixth beatitude) as a recapitulation of Jer 17 and Ps 1. See also JN, 80–84, for an extended consideration of Num 12:3 and Zech 9:9–10.

perspective" (6). The teaching of Jesus does not result from a school of human learning or human genius; it originates in direct vision of the Father. For the pope, this vision explains the many nights when Jesus withdrew "to the mountain" in prayerful union alone with the Father. More broadly, Jesus's uniqueness grounds the Bible's proper Christology: "Jesus is only able to speak about the Father in the way he does because he is the Son, because of his filial communion with the Father" (7).

In his chapter on the baptism of Jesus, Benedict illustrates his respect for the historical-critical method in contemporary scholarship. He gives much attention not only to the plain sense of the text, but also to the research that has combed the manuscripts for textual variants and to the archeology that has improved our historical grasp of the literal sense. Of special importance for our purpose here is Benedict's study of the typological sense of Jesus's genealogy recounted in Matthew. Designed to show him as "the definitive David," it establishes that his person alone consummates the true Kingdom of God, even as the original David founded the kingdom of Israel (10). The Pope also discusses the typological sense of the Lucan genealogy that singles out Jesus as the son of Adam who recapitulates the old Adam.

Moreover, deep within this chapter, we see a focus on the anagogical sense in the sacramental vision of Jesus's Baptism. On the one hand, his immersion into the waters, considered as a symbol of death, calls to mind the annihilation brought about by the destructive power of the flood. On the other hand, the new life symbolized by the flowing waters of the River Jordan calls to mind the purification brought by an immersion that washes away the filth of past sins. This scene also implies that the whole human condition is assumed within Jesus's own cleansing; after all, he deliberately blends into the mass of sinners waiting on Jordan's bank (16). Admittedly, neither the moral nor the anagogical sense is as prominent in Benedict's analysis here as the typological, but these other senses emerge periodically. The solidarity that Jesus establishes with sinners by his insistence on being baptized and by his decision to enter the desert after baptism as a way to identify with the perils that trouble humanity becomes a way to understand Scripture's moral implications (26f). At the heart of the first temptation, for example, the Pope finds the template for all temptation: a readiness to push God aside, as if God were something secondary or superfluous in comparison with the idols that fill our lives with such pressing urgency (28–29).

We encounter the anagogical sense in Benedict's seeing the "Eucharistic assembly" as the Christian meaning of the Promised Land. The land promised in the third beatitude is neither some geographical territory of one's own nor a place where there is freedom from the slavery of Egypt to do as we would like. On the contrary, it is the land of Christ's peace, where we can discern the true Promised Land—genuine freedom for true worship. Here the Pontiff highlights for us how the Scriptures direct the faithful to the eternal Jerusalem of heaven (84).

Benedict presents an explicit contrast with those modern interpretations of the baptism that emphasize it as a sort of vocational experience in which Jesus experiences an unexpectedly life-shattering calling out of a normal Galilean adolescence (23–24). In so doing, the Pope skillfully uses the anagogical sense:

Jesus's Baptism anticipated his death on the Cross, and the heavenly voice proclaimed an anticipation of the Resurrection. These anticipations have now become reality. John's baptism with water has received its full meaning through the baptism of Jesus's own life and death. To accept the invitation to be baptized now means to go to the place of Jesus's Baptism. It is to go where he identifies himself with us and to receive there our identification with him. The point where he anticipates death has now become the point where we anticipate rising again with him (18).

Against the possible objection that this interpretation has carried us too far from what the text intends to convey, Benedict uses the theory of recapitulation so important to the four senses: "Jesus's Baptism, then, is understood as a repetition of the whole of history, which both recapitulates the past and anticipates the future" (20).

The Pope also finds an anagogical reference to the saving efficacy of the Cross in the words of John Baptist when he first encounters Jesus: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Benedict credits Joachim Jeremias with the insight that the Hebrew word *talia* means both "lamb" and "servant." Accordingly, the Baptist is alluding to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, who is a lamb led to the slaughter (Isa 53:7). But John is also referring to the Passover lamb, an image of Jesus as one whose crucifixion during the Passover offers a vicarious atonement for the sin of the

world (21–22).²³ Benedict sees in these allusions the wider anagogical significance for Israel. The chosen nation does not exist for itself alone, but rather creates the possibility for universal salvation by remitting everyone's sins.

In sum, this sampling of Benedict's use of the traditional doctrine of the four senses of Scripture as part of his "canonical exegesis" permits a few generalizations. First, some of his analyses emphasize the typological sense alone. In these, the discovery of this level of meaning seems the primary means of nourishing our faith and satisfying our understanding. Second, there are a fair number of cases in which the typologies lead to the moral or anagogical sense. Of course, I see no barrier to exegeses that move directly from the literal to the moral or the anagogical sense. But Benedict's use of the typological sense as the ground of the moral and anagogical senses is distinctively strong. One reason for this could derive from his desire to understand morality not as an autonomous natural science, but as intrinsic to a loving relationship in faith and hope with God and humanity. For Benedict, the authentically virtuous person results only from a recapitulation of, and in, Christ (see ch. 3). N·V

²³ See Joachim Jeremias, "Amnos," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel et al., 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964), 1:338–40.