

The Theology of Human Personhood According to Joseph Ratzinger

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This dissertation aims to draw out the contours of Joseph Ratzinger's christological notion of the human person. In the light cast from the revelation of Jesus Christ and the personal unity of his being and saving action, it examines the human person in his essential structure, as created in and for a unique communication in being with God and others. **Chapter One** locates the most significant touch-points of patristic thought for Ratzinger's own christological anthropology. The early Church's articulation of the distinction of Christ's person and natures, and of the unity of his being and his saving work, are essential for recognizing the intrinsic relationship of Christology and anthropology. **Chapter Two** addresses human nature from its origin in God's creative act: the word that sets man into an ontologically independent, dialogically characterized existence and the foundation for the stability and freedom inherent in human personhood. Man can say "I" because he receives and appropriates his nature in response to the "Thou" who has addressed him. Because this fundamental relationship, engaging each man in spirit and body, is constitutively open to the human community—past, present and future—to which he belongs by nature, **Chapter Three** discusses how man's original rejection of this relationship cuts at the very heart of his personal structure and immediately damages the whole network of human relations. Its effects, however, are parasitic on the given structures of created being, which cannot be nullified: man remains by nature bound in relation to God and others. From this tension emerges the possibility of his salvation in Jesus Christ, and **Chapter Four** develops the intrinsically personal structure of this salvation. Christ's personal 'status,' as Son, is in and from the Father. In allowing his humanity to stand wholly within this relationship and thus for it to be opened to all men, Christ draws each human person

into his own eternal election by the Father, and thus into his incarnate mission to communicate this love to the whole world, bringing the original created personhood of each man to gratuitous fulfillment.