

INTRODUCING COMMUNIO THEOLOGY

TRACEY ROWLAND



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Word on Fire Catholic Ministries
PO Box 97330, Washington, DC 20090–7330
or email contact@wordonfire.org.

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For Anna Maria Magdalena MacKinnon

God watches over His children at night. He is the great watchman of all nights, nights of the flesh, of the intelligence, of the heart, nights of evil where shadows descend at all hours upon suffering humanity. Who can say with what love He watches over us in this Night? This love has a name and a quality. It is infinite love.

Prince (and Blessed) Vladimir Ghika

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Preface

The expression ‘Communio theology’ refers to the style and substance of the theology one finds in the journal carrying the name of *Communio*. The journal was founded in the early 1970s by Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Joseph Ratzinger, and others in their friendship circle. From its inception, *Communio* was designed to have an international flavor because the Church herself is universal, transcending all national distinctions. Nonetheless, it was recognized that in different regions of the world, there are different pastoral concerns and different national histories affecting the life of the Church. For this reason, it was decided to establish a federal network of national journals all operating under an international editorial board. Some articles of international interest would be published in multiple editions, while others of more limited interest would only be published in one edition. Today, there are a dozen editions of the journal associated with different national and linguistic groups.

Communio theology does not represent a ‘school’ such as Thomism or Scotism. Like the predominantly British and Anglican Radical Orthodoxy movement that shares many affinities with Communio theology, Communio theology is more of a theological sensibility built on an agreement around the building blocks of fundamental theology. For example, a typical Communio sensibility is that it is important that the critical couplets of fundamental theology, such as nature and grace, Scripture and Tradition, faith and reason, work in tandem, rather than being separated into dualistic options on an intellectual smorgasbord. Given the shared sensibilities, it began as a network of friends and has developed over the decades into an international network of friends. Like all friendship circles, there are shades of

difference in perceptions and even the occasional crossing of intellectual swords.

Since this book is an introduction, not a doctoral-level analysis of all the publications that have appeared over a dozen different language editions of the journal running for five decades, it is not possible to address all the shades of difference between the various editions. Such a project would require several volumes of intellectual history with different volumes devoted to different countries and then a synthetic volume making some bird's-eye observations. What is offered here is limited to what could be managed in an introductory work for Anglophone students. Many of the scholars named are associated with what is called the 'North American' edition of *Communio*, though this edition also includes on its editorial board scholars from across the British Commonwealth, including myself from Australia. Peer reviewers of the first draft of the manuscript made marginal comments such as "This expression is common to British English but not known in the United States." To ameliorate this issue for American readers, I have been careful to explain British metaphors, phrases, and concepts in the footnotes. My hope is that the book will be read by people across the entire Anglosphere, including the US, the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

When writing a book, it is always the case that one has a particular audience in mind. In this case, my target audience has not been those who are already well versed in the theology of Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, and Joseph Ratzinger—among the many others who have published under the *Communio* banner. Rather, my objective was to try to synthesize typically *Communio* contributions on a variety of 'hot button' subjects for the benefit of the younger generations of Catholics.

The younger generations today, much like the generation of 1968 half a century earlier, have shown their distrust of established institutions and authority figures. This is as much evident

in the ecclesial context as it is in the arena of civic life. Tweeters and ‘influencers’ often garner the trust and respect of the younger generations more than popes, bishops, and lay leaders of Church agencies. The reasons are obvious. The ‘influencers’ speak as people who are not part of the system and are therefore at liberty to say whatever they wish without fear of recriminations and especially without the fear of losing their livelihood. Their judgments are free of the self-interested bias that may come with being on the Church’s payroll.

Secondly, some civil and ecclesial leaders of the past half-century have been far from inspirational. If a culture is somehow pathological—be it an ecclesial culture of a religious congregation or diocese, or the wider culture of a national group—this will affect the kinds of people promoted. Bad or mediocre leaders tend to promote people who will not upstage them—in other words, more of the bad and the mediocre. Such is the drift of the joke, attributed to the late and great Fr. Paul Mankowski, SJ, that every archbishop appoints as his auxiliary someone who is shorter and less intelligent than himself. Whatever the merit of this observation, in the late twentieth century the era of ‘prince bishops’ gave way to an era of bishops chosen for their administrative skills, with reputations for not making waves or otherwise getting one or other theological faction offside. Instead of being heroes of the faith, they became mere ‘company men.’ When faced with crises of a pastoral nature, they reacted as the professional bureaucrats they were. They set up committees of ‘experts’ to deal with the problem. Such ‘experts’ were often lay accountants and lawyers who completely overlooked the spiritual and pastoral dimensions of the problem and acted rather to protect the assets of the Church. Those caught and wounded by such processes often lost their faith, and younger generations began to look elsewhere for spiritual leadership.

Today, young Catholics watch movies set in the 1950s, and

the Church of the 1950s appears to have been far more functional and attractive than anything they have experienced. This often leads to the mentality that the solution to the Church's various crises is to reboot the whole system to 1958, to a time before the announcement of the Second Vatican Council. This mentality, in turn, can lead to a kind of Catholic 'cancel culture' whereby every initiative, including theological research, undertaken after the Second Vatican Council is *a priori* rejected or simply ignored.

Therefore, this collection of essays is written in the desire to help the younger generations to separate the wheat from the chaff of postconciliar theology. In particular, it is an effort to tell the history of the best Catholic theological research published by *Communio: International Catholic Review* in the past five decades, and by other scholars in the penumbra of the *Communio* circles. This group included some heroic bishops and cardinals as well as their lay collaborators and two scholar popes. Not all Catholic scholars of this era 'lost the plot'! Not all bishops of this era were company men in beige cardigans or hippie types who wanted to charm the world with rock music or bureaucratic types who delegated their responsibilities to committees of lawyers and accountants! This era also produced its confessors of the faith, including lay theologians, both male and female, who put their intellects at the service of the truth.

A number of the essays are substantial redactions of material already published in journals such as *Communio: International Catholic Review*, *Catholic World Report*, *Reviews in Religion and Theology*, and Word on Fire's *Evangelization & Culture*. Each essay is accompanied by a list of suggested readings for those who wish to delve more deeply into the topic areas.

The name 'Ratzinger' is used to refer to material written by Joseph Ratzinger before his election to the papacy, as well as non-magisterial material written during the papacy. The name 'Benedict XVI' is used when referring to magisterial documents

of the Ratzinger papacy. Where ‘Ratzinger/Benedict’ is used, it means that the point was made by Ratzinger both in his capacity as a theologian and as pope.

While the collection has been put together with a view to helping younger students of theology, it is hoped that the material will be of interest to Catholics of all generations, including those old enough to remember the era of the Second Vatican Council and the John Paul II and Benedict XVI papacies. It is dedicated to Anna Maria Magdalena MacKinnon. Her family is a fusion of the best of old Catholic Europe with the best of new world American Catholicism. No doubt she will in time make her own contribution to the body of *Communio* theology and will form her own international network of friends dedicated to building what John Paul II called a culture of life and a civilization of love.

Tracey Rowland
Feast of Blessed William Harcourt, SJ
June 20, 2024

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My mother, Pauline, my husband, Stuart, and our four-pawed feline companion, Sophie, all contributed in their own immeasurable ways.

Communio as a Gift of the Holy Spirit

THEOLOGICAL LIFE AFTER THE BRUSSELS CONGRESS

The journal now known internationally as *Communio*—with the English language version titled *Communio: International Catholic Review*—was launched in 1972. Its seeds were sown in conversations between Hans Urs von Balthasar, Henri de Lubac, Joseph Ratzinger, Louis Bouyer, Jorge Medina, and Marie-Joseph Le Guillou when the International Theological Commission held its first session in 1969.¹ This group was concerned about the direction of postconciliar theology—not only the positions taken by professional theologians but by the tendentiously popularized interpretations of the council found in Catholic and even non-Catholic publications around the world. Three years after these conversations, *Communio* was born.²

A related impetus was the fallout from the occasion of the *Concilium* Congress in Brussels in 1970. The *Concilium* journal

1. Joseph Ratzinger, “*Communio: A Program*,” trans. Peter Casarella, *Communio* 19, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 436–49, at 437. Unless otherwise indicated, all citations of *Communio* refer to the English edition.

2. Other international affiliate *Communio* journals currently in circulation are: Argentina: *Revista católica internacional Communio*; Belgium-Netherlands: *Internationaal katholiek Tijdschrift Communio*; Brazil: *Communio: Revista Internacional de Teologia, Ciência e Cultura*; Croatia: *Međunarodni katolički časopis Communio*; Czech Republic: *Mezinárodní katolická revue Communio*; France: *Revue catholique internationale Communio*; Germany: *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift: Communio*; Hungary: *Communio. Nemzetközi katolikus folyóirat*; Poland: *Międzynarodowy przegląd teologiczny Communio*; Portugal: *Revista internacional católica Communio*; and Slovenia: *Mednarodna katoliška revija Communio*.

had been founded to continue the theological discussions started at the Second Vatican Council. More than two hundred theologians from thirty-two countries, two hundred journalists, and some seven hundred observers and guests attended the congress from September 12–18. Its theme was “The Future of the Church.”³ Cornelius Ernst, OP, one of the participants, described it in the following terms:

The Congress, it became clear by the first morning, had been conceived of as an exercise in ecclesiastical politics, planned as an Event, to put pressure on Church authorities. There was the matter of the Resolutions. As far as I could make out, none of those invited to the Congress had been warned that the main purpose of the Congress was to discuss and corporately proclaim resolutions which had been prepared in advance by the organizers. As the participants gradually became aware of this design, resistance built up and became vocal; charges of manipulation and even dishonesty were made at the plenary session that evening. At various times some of the chief organizers of the Congress made replies to these charges, replies of extraordinary naivety. There can be no doubt that the affair of the resolutions poisoned the Congress from the start; there was a feeling of resentment at having travelled often considerable distances to a theological congress to find, only after getting there, that casting a vote was supposed to be one’s chief contribution.⁴

Central to the spirit of the congress was an approach to the discipline of theology itself. As Ernst explained,

3. Jan J. van Capelleveen, “Brussels Conference: ‘While Theologians Talked,’” *Christianity Today*, October 9, 1970.

4. Cornelius Ernst, “The *Concilium* World Congress: Impressions and Reflections,” *New Blackfriars* 51, no. 607 (December 1970): 555–60, at 556.

There was a theory behind the design of the organizers, a theory which shows itself fairly inconspicuously in the final resolutions. It is a theory about the practical character of theology, that it has an essential function as a critique of society, including the society of the Church.⁵

A report on the congress in the *New York Times* claimed that participants “asserted that the reform of church structures must be extended well beyond the changes prescribed by the Ecumenical Council Vatican II.”⁶ Edward Schillebeeckx, OP, was quoted as saying, “It’s no longer simply a question of democratizing procedures or internationalizing the curia”; rather, “the church needs a fundamental restructuring.”⁷ A follow-up article a day later in the same paper carried the headline “Theologians Urge Democracy in Choice of Popes and Pastors.”⁸

Nonetheless, while the focus of the congress was on ecclesial structures, with many participants proposing quite radical ideas, there was nothing like a unified vision of a way forward. The differences between the theologians who had been leading advisors at the Second Vatican Council became manifest. This included a split between Karl Rahner and Hans Küng over Küng’s book *Infallible?* In the second volume of his *Memoirs*, titled *Disputed Truth*, Küng complained that Karl Rahner did not support his ideas contained in the book and that he was informed of this at the congress by Walter Kasper. Rahner later published a critique of *Infallible?* in the journal *Stimmen der Zeit*.⁹ Rahner was also a

5. Ernst, 557.

6. Edward B. Fiske, “Priests at Parley Ask More Reform,” *New York Times*, September 17, 1970.

7. Fiske, “Priests at Parley.”

8. Edward B. Fiske, “Theologians Urge Democracy in Choice of Popes and Pastors,” *New York Times*, September 18, 1970.

9. Hans Küng, *Disputed Truth: Memoirs Volume II*, trans. John Bowden (Bloomsbury, 2014), 158. See also Karl Rahner, “Kritik an Hans Küng,” *Stimmen der Zeit* 186 (1970): 361–77.

defender of the discipline of priestly celibacy while many of his *Concilium* colleagues were not.

Speaking of the congress in his epilogue to *Principles of Catholic Theology*, Ratzinger wrote,

The meeting was obviously intended as an antithesis to the congress of theologians initiated by the Pope and supported by the innumerable cardinals, archbishops and bishops that was held in Rome in 1966 and by means of which Rome had attempted to keep the newly awakened power of theology in consonance with the hierarchy; but also evident was a certain unmistakable antithesis to the International Pontifical Commission of Theologians founded in 1969. *Concilium* sought to establish itself, on the model of the ancient rights of the Sorbonne, as the true center of teaching and teachers in the Church, to become the real rallying-place for theologians from all over the world. But Brussels became, in fact, a turning point after which the authority of that union for progress began to crack. The great scholars associated with *Concilium*—Rahner, Congar, Schillebeeckx and Küng—were not as united as they had thought. Participants were often offended by the manner in which they were obliged to associate themselves with statements in the preparation of which they had had no share. They could no longer remain oblivious of a fact of which many of them had previously been unaware that “progress” no longer represented a unified concept and that, in many particulars, it was perilously close to dissociating itself from the core of Christian tradition.¹⁰

It was against such a background of disunity, radical experimentation, and the crude popularization of the theology

10. Joseph Ratzinger, *Principles of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Mary Frances McCarthy (Ignatius, 1987), 388.

contained in the conciliar documents that the journal *Communio* came into being. The theologians who were the founding fathers of *Communio* did not share the *Concilium* understanding of the mission of theology as a critical theory applied to the Church herself, where ‘critical’ means unmasking putatively unjust power structures behind alleged appeals to rationality. They did not want to partner Catholic theology with the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School of Social Research or with other social theories with a Marxist provenance.¹¹ Moreover, they believed that the Church’s essential structure was something divinely ordained, and as such, not a matter for debate. In the words of Joseph Ratzinger, “The Church of Christ is not a party, not an association, not a club. Her deep and permanent structure is not democratic but sacramental, consequently hierarchical.”¹² In *Images of Hope*, in a reflection on the altar of St. Peter’s in Rome, he added,

The Church cannot conceptualize for herself how she wants to be ordered. She can only try to understand ever more clearly the inner call of faith, and to live from faith. She does not need the majority principle, which always has something atrocious about it: the subordinated part must bend to the decision of the majority for the sake of peace even when the decision is perhaps misguided or even destructive. In human arrangements, there is perhaps no alternative. But in the Church the binding to faith protects all of us: each is bound to faith, and in this respect the sacramental order guarantees more freedom than could be given by those who would subject the Church to the majority principle.¹³

11. For introductions to critical theory, see Fred Rush, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Critical Theory* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); Thomas Huhn, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Adorno* (Cambridge University Press, 2004); and Raymond Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory: Habermas and the Frankfurt School* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

12. Joseph Ratzinger with Vittorio Messori, *The Ratzinger Report*, trans. Salvator Attanasio and Graham Harrison (Ignatius, 1985), 49.

13. Joseph Ratzinger, *Images of Hope: Meditations on Major Feasts*, trans. John Rock and Graham Harrison (Ignatius, 2006), 33–34.

This position was the complete antithesis of those whom Hans Urs von Balthasar described as “progressivists whose only Church Fathers had the names Marx, Freud, and especially Nietzsche.”¹⁴ Nonetheless, the founders of *Communio* did not see themselves as simply negatively *reacting* to the *Concilium* style of theology so much as positively *proposing* something completely different and in so doing building up communities of scholars based on a shared faith and sacramental life.

THE FOUNDING VISION OF COMMUNIO THEOLOGY

In 1974, in the English language edition of *Communio*, its editor, James Hitchcock, wrote,

There is a serious tension, polarization, division even—call it what you will—in the Catholic Church at present. The laity are confused. Many priests and bishops are confused. Thousands of priests and religious are abandoning a commitment that was made with the intention of being life-long. . . . The root of this polarization, we think, is the growing confusion among Catholics over the ultimate questions concerning God, man and the world. As a result we are divided. . . . The motive force behind the “communio movement” is unity and communion among Catholics; it is our conviction, however, that religious-social community must be based on and flow from a unity of faith—both as lived and as professed.¹⁵

Hitchcock went on to say that the *Communio* journal was interested in the “whole truth” and so would carry articles on philosophy, theology, history, and the social sciences with a “basic fidelity to the magisterium.” This latter principle did not however mean

14. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Henri de Lubac*, trans. Joseph Fessio and Michael M. Waldstein (Ignatius, 1991), 19.

15. James Hitchcock, “Why *Communio*?” *Communio* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 216–17.

there would be a uniformity of approach, a system, or a prescribed theological dialect. Rather, what was desired was “engaged scholarship,” delivering articles that sought to deal with the crisis areas from a variety of perspectives, all of which, regardless of discipline or theological family, would be faithful to the apostolic tradition.

The idea of including articles from a mix of disciplines, not just theology, followed the practice of *Hochland*, a publication founded by the Catholic journalist Carl Muth in Munich in 1903.¹⁶ Some of Joseph Ratzinger’s earliest articles were published in *Hochland*. Speaking of the interdisciplinary character of *Communio*, Ratzinger remarked,

It was our conviction that this publication was not to be exclusively theological. Since the crisis in theology had emerged out of a crisis in culture and, indeed, out of a cultural revolution, the journal had to address the cultural domain, too, and had to be edited in collaboration with lay persons of high cultural competence.¹⁷

In another essay on the ideals of *Communio*, Antonio Sicari, OCD, defined the Communio concept as “an active principle of unity given to us by God in Christ: a principle, therefore, which is antecedently given and founded, which escapes our capacity of disposition or control, which is not based on energies proper to us, but is poured out by the triune God (through the redemptive Incarnation of the Son, his eucharistic distribution and the action of his Spirit).”¹⁸ This accent on the work of the Holy Trinity is one of the hallmarks of Communio theology. The work of the

16. For a biographical account of Muth and the founding of *Hochland*, see Tracey Rowland, *Beyond Kant and Nietzsche: The Munich Defence of Christian Humanism* (Bloombsbury, 2021), 19–35.

17. Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927–1977*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (Ignatius, 1998), 144.

18. Antonio Sicari, “A Reflection on the Ideals of *Communio*,” trans. Michael Waldstein, *Communio* 16, no. 4 (Winter 1989): 495–98, at 495. Sicari, who is a Discalced Carmelite based in Venice, was for many years the editor of the Italian edition of *Communio*. His field of expertise

Holy Spirit as a unifier is, accordingly, central to the concept of Communion. A spiritual and sacramental unity precedes the unity fostered by intellectual work.

Sicari also endorsed the statement of Luigi Sartori that “the value of communion and communication among the greatest possible number of reflective believers, as if all were simultaneously in the circle, co-present today to form the gathering and assembly of today, stands at the foundation of this new conception of theology and of its method.”¹⁹ This means that Communion scholars approach theological issues with reference to the entire treasury of the Catholic intellectual tradition and are not confined to work within a system based on the framework of one particular Church Doctor. It also means that the friendships forged in Communion circles are a very important component of the Communion ‘style.’ Instead of scholars working in ‘silos,’ the Communion ambit promotes a cross-fertilization of ideas from a range of disciplines and spiritual traditions. Communion scholarship could thus be described as a concrete example of the processes described by John Paul II in his encyclical *Fides et Ratio* (1998), where in §32 he declared,

In believing, we entrust ourselves to the knowledge acquired by other people. This suggests an important tension. On the one hand, the knowledge acquired through belief can seem an imperfect form of knowledge, to be perfected gradually through personal accumulation of evidence; on the other hand, belief is often humanly richer than mere evidence, because it involves an interpersonal relationship and brings into play not only a person’s capacity to know but also the deeper

is Carmelite spirituality, including the spirituality of St. Thérèse of Lisieux, St. Teresa of Avila, and St. Elizabeth of the Trinity.

19. Luigi Sartori, introduction to *Meditazioni sulla Chiesa*, by Henri de Lubac (Jaca, 1978), xiii–xiv.

capacity to entrust oneself to others, to enter into a relationship with them which is intimate and enduring.

It should be stressed that the truths sought in this interpersonal relationship are not primarily empirical or philosophical. Rather, what is sought is *the truth of the person*—what the person is and what the person reveals from deep within. Human perfection, then, consists not simply in acquiring an abstract knowledge of the truth, but in a dynamic relationship of faithful self-giving with others. It is in this faithful self-giving that a person finds a fullness of certainty and security. At the same time, however, knowledge through belief, grounded as it is on trust between persons, is linked to truth: in the act of believing, men and women entrust themselves to the truth which the other declares to them.²⁰

Even more succinctly, in *Fides et Ratio* §33, John Paul II concluded,

It must not be forgotten that reason too needs to be sustained in all its searching by trusting dialogue and sincere friendship. A climate of suspicion and distrust, which can beset speculative research, ignores the teaching of the ancient philosophers who proposed friendship as one of the most appropriate contexts for sound philosophical enquiry.²¹

COMMUNIO FRIENDSHIPS

A whole book could be written on the subject of Communion friendships, beginning with Henri de Lubac's friendships with Hans Urs von Balthasar and Karol Wojtyła; and Balthasar's friendships with Rudolf Allers in Vienna, Erich Przywara in Munich, Henri de Lubac in Lyon, Adrienne von Speyr in Basel,

20. John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio* §32, encyclical letter, September 14, 1998, vatican.va.

21. *Fides et Ratio* §33.

Gustav Siewerth in the Rhineland, as well as Balthasar's influence on the young Angelo Scola from Milan.²² Then, there is Ratzinger's friendship with de Lubac, Balthasar, Josef Pieper, and Ida Friederike Görres;²³ the influence of Maxime Charles on Jean Duchesne, Jean-Luc Marion, Corinne Nicolas, Jean-Robert Armogathe, and other early contributors to the French edition of *Communio*; the influence of Joseph Fessio, Edward T. Oakes, Stratford Caldecott, Aidan Nichols, Larry S. Chapp, Rodney Howsare, Adrian Walker, Nicholas J. Healy Jr., David L. Schindler, and D.C. Schindler, among others, on the Anglophone *Communio* circles; and the influence of the Hungarian Cistercians Roch Kereszty and Denis Farkasfalvy, who published in both the English and Hungarian editions of *Communio*. Today the Hungarian edition of *Communio* is edited by Tibor Görföl, who is not only translating the Collected Works of Joseph Ratzinger into Hungarian but also building relationships with the Anglophone *Communio* scholars and translating their works into Hungarian. Meanwhile, in nearby Romania, Alin Tat, located at the Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, has similarly reached out to scholars in the Anglophone *Communio* circles and is translating their works into Romanian. Further to the west, in Spain, there is the circle of scholars around Don Javier Prades López in Madrid and an international network of scholars brought together by Don Javier Martínez Fernández, the retired archbishop of Granada.²⁴ In Australia and the United States, there

22. Balthasar described Przywara as the "greatest spirit whom I have been permitted to meet." See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *My Work: In Retrospect*, trans. Brian McNeil (Ignatius, 1993), 10. He also described the two most important people to influence his thought as Przywara and Speyr. See *My Work in Retrospect*, 19.

23. For details of Ratzinger's friendship with Ida Friederike Görres, see the article by Hanna-Barbara Gerl-Falkovitz in the forthcoming *Ratzinger Lexicon* to be published by Ignatius Press. For details of the Balthasar and Ratzinger relationship, see Manfred Lochbrunner, "Wir haben uns einfach sehr gut verstanden, vom ersten Augenblick an: Ein Blick auf die Beziehung zwischen Hans Urs von Balthasar und Joseph Ratzinger," in *Mitteilungen Benedikt XVI: Institut Papst Benedikt XVI* 13 (2020): 154–68.

24. For an example of the publications of this group of friends, see Mátyás Szalay, ed., *Beyond Secular Faith: Philosophy, Economics, Politics, and Literature* (Pickwick, 2023).

are the alumni of the John Paul II Institutes, who are well versed in Communion theology, and a whole generation of young priests, religious, and lay scholars in the circles formed around the late Cardinal Francis George of Chicago and Bishop Robert Barron.²⁵ Barron himself was a student of Michel Corbin, and Corbin was a student of Henri de Lubac.

One could in fact write multiple social histories on the network of friendships that lay behind each of the different language editions of the *Communio* journal. In every case, there are stories to be told of spiritual and intellectual treasures shared among scholars who see themselves as brothers and sisters in Christ bearing a common mission to be ‘co-workers of the truth,’ handing down elements of the *memoria ecclesiae* from one generation to the next. As Nicholas J. Healy Jr. noted, “The purpose of the journal, as the founders intended it, was to serve God’s gift of universal communion, not just by writing about it, but by cultivating and being a network of theological friendship held together by this commitment to catholicity.”²⁶ Thus, “*Communio* the review was meant to be an instrument of *communio* the theological reality.”²⁷

Indeed, Joseph Fessio has suggested that an analogy may be drawn between the three most important *Communio* founders (de Lubac, Balthasar, and Ratzinger) and the Cappadocian Fathers (St. Basil the Great, his brother St. Gregory of Nyssa, and their friend St. Gregory of Nazianzus). Both the fourth and twentieth centuries were times of great theological turmoil, and, in

25. Manfred Lochbrunner has published a trilogy on Balthasar’s correspondence with his philosophical friends, his literary friends, and his theological friends: *Hans Urs von Balthasar und seine Philosophenfreunde: Fünf Doppelporträts* (Echter, 2005); *Hans Urs von Balthasar und seine Literatenfreunde: Neun Korrespondenzen* (Echter, 2007); and *Hans Urs von Balthasar und seine Theologenkollegen: Sechs Beziehungsgeschichten* (Echter, 2009). A work that treats the subject of friendship in the life and theology of Balthasar is John S. Bonnici, *Person to Person: Friendship and Love in the Life and Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Alba House, 1999). For an account of the relationship between Balthasar and Romano Guardini, see Tracey Rowland, “Hans Urs von Balthasar and Romano Guardini,” in *Oxford Handbook on Balthasar*, ed. Anthony C. Scigliano and Mark J. McInroy (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

26. Nicholas J. Healy Jr., “*Communio*: A Theological Journey,” *Communio* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 117–30, at 118–19.

27. Healy, 126–27.

each case, a trio of friends cleared a path for the resolution of the crisis. Fessio describes the Cappadocian trio as “illuminators of the dark fourth century of the Arians.” He suggests,

If God doesn’t close this show down in a few years and we have another couple more centuries, that they’ll look back on the 20th century, and they’ll see this constellation of three modern fathers of the Church, doctors of the Church: de Lubac born in 1896, von Balthasar born in 1905, Ratzinger born in 1927. They all knew each other. They were friends. They corresponded. They supported each other. I believe that here are three great men of the Church who will be remembered for a long, long time.²⁸

Two of the trio of Cappadocian Fathers are honored as Doctors of the Church and many expect that Ratzinger/Benedict XVI will one day hold that title, perhaps alongside John Paul II and John Henry Newman.²⁹ The cause for the beatification of Hans Urs von Balthasar was opened by the Diocese of Chur in 2018 and the cause for the beatification of Henri de Lubac was opened by the French bishops in 2023. I will provide an overview of the thought of *Communio*’s founding trio in the next chapter.

VARIATIONS IN NATIONAL CULTURES

The friendship circle that included de Lubac, Balthasar, and Ratzinger represented a confluence of French, Swiss, and German neo-patristic-style theology. A general agreement about the principles of fundamental theology transcended any national differences or tensions. Given the history of the relationship

28. Kevin J. Jones, “Father Fessio on ‘Professor Ratzinger,’ the Future Benedict XVI,” *Catholic World Report*, January 4, 2023.

29. See Tracey Rowland, “Joseph Ratzinger as Doctor of Incarnate Beauty,” *Church, Communication and Culture* 5, no. 2 (2020): 235–47.

between France and Germany in the twentieth century, this was quite an achievement. Balthasar's student days were in a number of different countries—Switzerland, Austria, Germany, and France—and these experiences of different cultural milieux, along with his experience in the publishing industry, liaising with writers from different countries and learning that what is of interest to readers in one country may not garner the same degree of attention in another country, gave him an appreciation of the importance of cultural distinctions. Notwithstanding their common Greco-Roman heritage, France is not Germany, and both are different from Italy. Spain is not Portugal, and further afield, there are the countries of the British Commonwealth and of Latin America and Africa with their own histories and cultural sensitivities. In an essay written two decades after the founding of *Communio*, Ratzinger explained that for this reason, the practice arose of having some articles published across all the different language editions of *Communio*, and some articles published in only one or two editions. As Ratzinger wrote, “The situation's burning question for one culture remains completely foreign to another.”³⁰

As already mentioned in the preface, a work that seeks to introduce *Communio* theology cannot possibly cover all the different language editions of the journal and do justice to their unique qualities or “burning questions.” However, it is often remarked that there is quite an obvious difference between the Anglophone and French editions. Whereas the Anglophone journal frequently publishes articles on metaphysics, the French edition has been quite reserved about metaphysics. This is in part due to the influence of Jean-Luc Marion, who was an editor-in-chief of the French edition for its first ten years.³¹

30. Ratzinger, “*Communio*: A Program,” 440.

31. Jean-Luc Marion (1946–) is a highly esteemed French philosopher and member of the Académie Française. His awards include the Prix Charles Lambert de l'Académie des sciences morales et politiques (1977), Grand Prix de philosophie de l'Académie française (1992), the Karl Jaspers Prize (2008), and the Ratzinger Prize (2020).

Marion's most famous works are *God Without Being*, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, and *Givenness and Revelation* (Gifford Lectures).³² Marion is an important figure in the chain of the French reception of Martin Heidegger, as is Jacques Derrida, under whom Marion studied. Anyone attuned to the place of Heidegger in the history of philosophy tends to be highly sensitive about the relationship between philosophy and theology. It is thus not surprising that "much ink has been spilled on exactly where the boundary line between philosophy and theology lies" in Marion's work.³³ The book *Heidegger in France* contains a useful interview with Marion about where he stands in relation to Heidegger, and it also serves as a guide to the general orientation of Marion's work, though the interview is now some two decades old.³⁴ There is also a book-length interview with Marion published in 2012 that focuses on his early intellectual influences, especially his Catholic mentors, including de Lubac, Balthasar, Bouyer, Jean Daniélou, and Jean-Marie Lustiger, who was to become the cardinal archbishop of Paris.³⁵ Keith Lemna has built on this 2012 interview in his essay "Jean-Luc Marion and the Theological 'School' of Montmartre."³⁶ He describes Marion's *oeuvre* as a form of "Montmartrian phenomenology." Lemna remarked, "On the basis of his discussion in *Rigueur* [the interview book], one might well wonder if Marion's spiritual formation was as decisive for him as his involvement in post-Heideggerian French

32. Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (University of Chicago Press, 1991); *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Fordham University Press, 2001); and *Givenness and Revelation* (Gifford Lectures), trans. Stephen E. Lewis (Oxford University Press, 2016).

33. Christina M. Gschwandtner, *Marion and Theology* (Bloomsbury, 2016), 1.

34. Dominique Janicaud, *Heidegger in France*, trans. François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (Indiana University Press, 2015). For an account of the influence of Heidegger on French intellectual life between the 1930s and 1960s, see Ethan Kleinberg, *Generation Existential: Heidegger's Philosophy in France, 1927–1961* (Cornell University Press, 2005).

35. Jean-Luc Marion, *La rigueur des choses: Entretiens avec Dan Arbib* (Flammarion, 2012).

36. Keith Lemna, "Jean-Luc Marion and the Theological 'School' of Montmartre," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 81, no. 3 (August 2016): 246–66. Montmartre is a reference to the hill of martyrs in Paris on which stands the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, where Marion and other Catholic scholars gathered for spiritual formation and academic discussions in their youth.

phenomenology in shaping his anthropology.³⁷ Nonetheless, Lemna does an excellent job at correlating themes in the theology of the *Communio* founders with motifs in Marion's phenomenology. His essay is a good first port of call for those trying to navigate their way through the marshes of Montmartrian phenomenology and its key concepts 'saturated phenomena,' 'the idol,' and the 'icon,' the 'gift,' and the 'gaze.'

Both Marion and D.C. Schindler (one of the editors of the North American edition of *Communio*) were influenced by Balthasar; however, they arrive at different positions in their approach to philosophy. Schindler follows Balthasar's interest in the metaphysics of Przywara, Siewerth, and Ferdinand Ulrich and argues that Przywara was right to insist that God is both "in and beyond the horizon of being."³⁸ A presentation of their different positions appeared in the Spring 2013 volume of the English language edition of *Communio*, while a presentation of the differences between Balthasar and Jean-Luc Marion can be found in Cyril O'Regan's essay "Balthasar and the Unwelcoming of Heidegger."³⁹ A doctoral dissertation is begging to be written on the different receptions of Heidegger and the treatment of metaphysics in contemporary Catholic thought, including within the circles of scholars who publish in *Communio*. More recently, a contrast has arisen between Marion and Michael Hanby (a frequent contributor to the North American *Communio* edition) over the issue of whether the Church is in a state of crisis. Marion is of the view that there is no crisis, while Hanby argues that there is indeed a

37. Lemna, 250.

38. D.C. Schindler, *God and the City: An Essay in Political Metaphysics* (St. Augustine's, 2023).

39. Jean-Luc Marion, "The Universality of the University," trans. Michael J. Miller, *Communio* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 64–75; D.C. Schindler, "On the Universality of the University: A Response to Jean-Luc Marion," *Communio* 40, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 77–99; Cyril O'Regan, "Balthasar and the Unwelcoming of Heidegger," in *The Grandeur of Reason: Religion, Tradition and Universalism*, ed. Peter M. Candler and Conor Cunningham (SCM, 2010), 264–98. See also Tamsin Jones, "Dionysius in Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jean-Luc Marion," *Modern Theology* 24, no. 4 (October 2008): 743–54.

crisis, both within the Church, characterized by widespread disagreement over the principles of fundamental theology, and within society at large, characterized by the abandonment of the search for truth.⁴⁰

Notwithstanding Balthasar's observations about there being quite significant differences between national groups, especially between the French and the Germans, one *Communio* author who has managed to bridge the national divisions very well is Rémi Brague, who has served on the editorial boards of both the French and German editions of the journal as well as being widely published in English. Brague is renowned for the breadth of his intellectual history, especially the history of philosophy. He is also an interesting *Communio* figure insofar as his work has been influenced by the Jewish philosopher Leo Strauss (1899–1973). Strauss was a professor at the University of Chicago from 1949–68. One of his central interests was the relationship between faith and reason, symbolized by the cities of Jerusalem and Athens. Strauss had a significant influence on the development of American conservatism, though his students disagree about where Strauss actually stood in relation to the issues raised in his scholarship. There are, for example, east coast Straussians and west coast Straussians, first-generation Straussians and second-generation Straussians, and perhaps other categories as well. The divisions are primarily over the issue of how to understand the relationship between faith and reason. Brague enters the field as a Catholic who has taken up the Straussian theme of the difference between Jerusalem and Athens and has developed it with reference to the contributions of the third great ancient city, Rome.⁴¹

40. See Jean-Luc Marion, *A Brief Apology for a Catholic Moment*, trans. Stephen E. Lewis (University of Chicago Press, 2021) and Michael Hanby, "Beyond Integralism and Progressivism," *First Things*, July 13, 2021. See also Michael Hanby, "Synodality, Sociologism, and the Judgement of History," *Communio* 48, no. 4 (Winter 2021): 686–726.

41. See, for example, Geoffrey M. Vaughan, ed. *Leo Strauss and His Catholic Readers* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2018).

A CATHOLIC *WELTANSCHAUUNG*

A final point that Ratzinger notes in his paper on *Communio* as a program is that the journal's contributors need to address the ethical and social dimensions of human life. There is, in other words, a need to engage with contemporary social issues. This often requires a very multidisciplinary approach, combining, for example, economics, psychology, the health sciences, theology, and philosophy. An entire Catholic *Weltanschauung* (worldview) needs to be brought to bear upon the consideration of some issues. Here, it is important to note that *Communio* scholars do regard theology as the queen of the sciences. Theology is the 'glue' that holds the disciplines together and saves them from being disjointed 'silos.' The works of Thomas V. Gourlay and David L. Schindler have addressed this issue of the internal relationships within the disciplines governed by what is called a "relational ontology."⁴²

Consistent with the above reflections, one can detect, if one scrolls down the list of *Communio* articles of the past five decades, an emphasis on (1) Trinitarian theology; (2) a theological anthropology that links the human person to the Holy Trinity; (3) a sacramental theology with a focus on the relationship between sacramental mediation and holiness; (4) a moral theology that is Christocentric; (5) an analysis of the phenomenon of secularism that traces the problem back to false steps taken in the late Middle Ages that had a negative effect upon the human person's participation in the life of the Holy Trinity; (6) an analysis of contemporary social issues and fashionable social practices with

42. Thomas V. Gourlay, "On the Theological Basis of Relational Ontology," *Heythrop Journal* 63, no. 2 (March 2022): 210–22; "Healing the Fragmented Intellect: Relational Ontology as a Corrective to the Truncated Rationality of Modernity," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 25, no. 3 (Summer 2022): 83–108; "Grounding Identity and Mission in Catholic Universities: A Relational Approach," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 88, no. 3 (August 2023), 201–98; David L. Schindler, "Faith and the Logic of Intelligence: Secularization and the Academy," in *Catholicism and Secularization in America: Essays on Nature, Grace, and Culture*, ed. David L. Schindler (Our Sunday Visitor, 1990), 170–93. For research on the subject of relational ontology in general, a leading scholar is Giulio Maspero. See, for example, Maspero, *The Cappadocian Reshaping of Metaphysics: Relational Being* (Cambridge University Press, 2023).

reference to Scripture, tradition, philosophy, psychology, and the social sciences; and (7) an analysis of contemporary literature with reference to understanding its underlying theological foundations and presuppositions. When all these elements are combined, one has the foundations of a Catholic *Weltanschauung*.

COMMUNION AS AN “ANTECEDENT GIFT”

The programmatic articles of Hitchcock, Sicari, and Ratzinger all echo themes in Balthasar’s primary document “*Communio: A Program*,” first published in the German edition of *Communio* and later in English in 1972 and again in 2006. The central thesis of Balthasar’s article is that communion can be understood as a “mere object of eschatological hope” as in Marxist theories, or it can be understood as a “real antecedent gift” as in Catholic theology, and he argues that the only way forward for the Church is in a renewal of this appreciation of the “real antecedent gift.”⁴³ In other words, theologies that take their cue from Marxist eschatology are flawed *fundamentally*. Conversely, as David L. Schindler once remarked, “the theological insistence of *Communio* from its origin has been upon the primacy of grace, not in any merely vague sense of transcendence, but in its Trinitarian form as given in and through Christ and his Church.”⁴⁴

In 1985, John Paul II called a synod to reflect on the various interpretations of the council, and following this synod, *Communio* ecclesiology began to receive strong magisterial endorsement. As Pope Benedict XVI, Joseph Ratzinger obliquely referred to this in his final address to the clergy of Rome. Speaking of the concept of communion, he remarked that although, philologically speaking, it was not fully developed at the council, it

43. Hans Urs von Balthasar, “*Communio: A Program*,” trans. W.J. O’Hara, *Communio* 33, no. 1 (Spring 2006): 153–69, at 161.

44. David L. Schindler, “Introduction: Grace and the Form of Nature and Culture,” in *Catholicism and Secularization in America*, 10–30, at 13.

was nonetheless as a result of the council that “the concept of communion came more and more to be the expression of the Church’s essence, communion in its different dimensions: communion with the Trinitarian God—who is himself communion between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—sacramental communion, and concrete communion in the episcopate and in the life of the Church.”⁴⁵

The 1992 *Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion*—promulgated under Ratzinger’s leadership of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith—is a valuable document for understanding how the concept of communion was understood by those who founded the *Communio* journal and those who have been contributors to its editions. In §3, it states:

If the concept of *communion*, which is not a univocal concept, is to serve as a key to ecclesiology, it has to be understood within the teaching of the Bible and the patristic tradition, in which communion always involves a double dimension: the *vertical* (communion with God) and the *horizontal* (communion among men). It is essential to the Christian understanding of *communion* that it be recognized above all as a gift from God, as a fruit of God’s initiative carried out in the paschal mystery. The new relationship between man and God, that has been established in Christ and is communicated through the sacraments, also extends to a new relationship among human beings. As a result, the concept of *communion* should be such as to express both the sacramental nature of the Church while “*we are away from the Lord*,” and also the particular unity which makes the faithful into members of one and the same Body, the Mystical Body of Christ, an organically structured

45. Benedict XVI, “Meeting with the Parish Priests and the Clergy of Rome,” February 14, 2013, vatican.va.

community, “*a people brought into one by the unity of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit*,” and endowed with suitable means for its visible and social union.⁴⁶

Arguably, the most important sentence in the paragraph is this: “It is essential to the Christian understanding of *communion* that it be recognized above all as a gift from God, as a fruit of God’s initiative carried out in the paschal mystery.” Without this gift, it is axiomatic that no authentic ecclesial unity is possible, and no authentic renewal or reform is possible. It was perhaps this conviction, more than any other theological principle, that drew the founders of the *Communio* journal together and set the course for the journal’s contributors.

CONCLUSION

Today, the *Communio* journal is published in some twelve different language editions. Each edition will have its own stable of regular contributors and its own emphases driven by the intellectual and pastoral needs of the people using the language. The English edition is known to be strong on metaphysics, bioethics, the relationship between science and theology, the defense of the sacrament of marriage, and the theology of culture, including critiques of secularism. All the editions continue to draw upon the wisdom of de Lubac, Balthasar, and Ratzinger—the twentieth-century “neo-Cappadocian” trio.

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The Founding Trio

While Fr. Fessio's 'neo-Cappadocian' or 'founding trio' of Balthasar, de Lubac, and Ratzinger were not the *only* significant figures in the history of the *Communio* journal, they are certainly the *most* significant, and thus any work seeking to introduce Communio-style theology needs to at least give an overview of their work and standing in contemporary Catholic theology.

Browsing through their publications, it is easy to find words of appreciation written by one or other member of the trio for the others. In *Milestones: Memoirs 1927–1977*, for example, Ratzinger wrote that meeting Balthasar was for him the beginning of a life-long friendship and that never again did he find anyone with such a comprehensive and humanistic education as Balthasar and de Lubac. He concluded, "I cannot even begin to say how much I owe to my encounter with them."¹

In this chapter, I will address first the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar, then Henri de Lubac, and last, Joseph Ratzinger.

BALTHASAR AND THEOLOGY AS *SCIENTIA SECUNDUM PIETATEM*

Henri de Lubac famously described Balthasar as the "most cultivated man of his time," making a point about the breadth

1. Joseph Ratzinger, *Milestones: Memoirs 1927–1977*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (Ignatius, 1998), 143.

of Balthasar's education. De Lubac also observed that Balthasar was not "a man for commissions, discussions, compromise formulae, or collaborative drafts."² In other words, he was not the kind of person to occupy himself sitting on committees that produce lowest-common-denominator (usually boring and ineffectual) documents. Balthasar was, however, someone who made himself available to talk with up-and-coming scholars, like the young Angelo Scola, who genuinely cared about the faith. Raymond Gawronski, SJ, remarked that Balthasar "was an aristocrat, and so a man who loved the peasantry as well, a natural ally in the common faith of millennia; he was not really a man of the urban middle class, and he did not share the contempt for the piety of the common person that has come to dominate modern theology."³

One might say that Balthasar supported an understanding of theology as *scientia secundum pietatem*—a form of knowledge pursued in the dispositions of faith, hope, and love and perfected by the traditional seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, of which piety is one. This approach is not ashamed to admit faith into the precincts of reason. As Larry S. Chapp explained,

Balthasar, like Barth, is responding to the twofold movement that began in the nineteenth-century liberal theology: first to deny the importance of historical contingency as a vehicle for any rational truth that could be considered 'universal,' and then to turn towards religious interiority as the only possible locus of revelation. The 'critical reason' of the Enlightenment,

2. Henri de Lubac, "A Witness of Christ in the Church: Hans Urs von Balthasar," trans. Andr  e Emery, *Communio* 2, no. 3 (Fall 1975): 228–50, at 228.

3. Raymond Gawronski, "The Message in the Bottle: How Hans Urs von Balthasar Changed My Mind," in *How Balthasar Changed My Mind: Fifteen Scholars Reflect on the Meaning of Balthasar for Their Own Work*, ed. Rodney A. Howsare and Larry S. Chapp (Crossroad, 2008), 58–73, at 66. European history offers a number of examples of an alliance between aristocrats and the peasantry and others living in rural communities. The two most famous examples are the Vendean resistance to French Republicanism and the support of the Tyrolese, under the leadership of the innkeeper Andreas Hofer, for the Habsburg monarchy.

therefore, supplants the ‘engraced reason’ of Anselm and the Fathers, leading to the reductive domestication of revelation as a species of human feelings. . . . Liberal theology, says Balthasar, cannot escape from its inherent solipsistic ambiguity and leads, by an inner inexorable logic, to the nihilism that Nietzsche so presciently described as being at the very heart of the liberal, bourgeois project.⁴

The reference here to “historical contingency as a vehicle for any rational truth” is a reference to G.E. Lessing’s (1729–81) “ugly great ditch” argument. Lessing said that historical truths such as events reported in the Bible cannot be used to support metaphysical truths such as the existence of God. He described the relationship of one to the other, of history to metaphysics, as an “ugly great ditch which I cannot cross, however often and however earnestly I have tried to make that leap.”⁵

Both Balthasar and Ratzinger address the issue of the ‘ditch’ in various works.⁶ They both support a notion of reason as ‘participatory’ (in the gifts of the Holy Spirit) rather than ‘autonomous,’ and they both agree that autonomous reason, left to itself without any external assistance, has a tendency to turn in on itself and become irrational. Again, to quote Chapp,

4. Larry S. Chapp, “Revelation,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 11–23, at 12–13. Chapp refers the reader to Balthasar’s *Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 5, *The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age*, trans. Oliver Davies et al. (T&T Clark, 1991), 415–16, 624.

5. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, “On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power,” in *Lessing: Philosophical and Theological Writings*, trans. and ed. H.B. Nisbet (Cambridge University Press, 2005), 83–88, at 87.

6. For Ratzinger’s response to Lessing, see *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J.R. Foster (Ignatius, 2004), 269. See also Aaron Pidel, “Ratzinger on Lessing’s ‘Ugly Broad Ditch’: Augustinian *Ressourcement* and Modern Rationalism,” in *Gift to the Church and World: Fifty Years of Joseph Ratzinger’s “Introduction to Christianity,”* ed. John C. Cavadini and Donald Wallenfäng (Pickwick, 2021), 89–108; and Tracey Rowland, “Ratzinger and Kołakowski: Priest and Jester,” in *Ratzinger in Dialogue with Philosophical Traditions*, vol. 2, ed. Alejandro Sada, Tracey Rowland, and Rudy Albino de Assunção (Bloomsbury, forthcoming). For a Balthasarian response to Lessing, see D.C. Schindler, “‘Ever Ancient, Ever New’: Jesus Christ as the Concrete Analogy of Being,” *Communio* 39, no. 1 (Spring–Summer 2012): 33–48.

The Enlightenment's early flush of excitement after the assertion of reason's autonomy from ecclesiastical stricture and structure finally gives way under the weight of its own skepticism to the instrumentalist paradise of the brave new world, unleashing upon history for the first time the era of the post-human. According to Balthasar, only a moral spiritual decision in favor of entering into the opening created by the Trinitarian-christological event can provide us with an authentic form of 'critical reason,' because only such a decisive act is properly founded in an authentic universal. Faith is the act of human *reason* that responds to this revelation, perceiving the dramatic quality of historical existence and thus seeking the proper hermeneutical horizon for reason within the moral engagement of the self with the free and sovereign address from God.⁷

With reference to Ratzinger's position on the "ugly ditch" issue, Aaron Pidel observed that Ratzinger would never surrender Christianity's history, symbols, sacraments, Scriptures, and hierarchy—all the historical elements, as it were—to be welcomed over to the intellectuals' nonhistorical side of the ditch. Such a price would be too high because "if we could actually succeed in rendering Christianity rationally transparent, we would at that very moment render it existentially superfluous."⁸ Thus, Pidel remarked that "the only logic that can bridge this chasm is the logic of creaturely humility. Only when God approaches us through the rationally indeducible, that is, in an incarnational and sacramental mode, can we perceive him as Other and ourselves as his dependents."⁹

7. Chapp, "Revelation," 22.

8. Pidel, "Ratzinger on Lessing's 'Ugly Broad Ditch,'" 106.

9. Pidel, 106.