Introduction

"The only sadness today," Léon Bloy once wrote, "is not being saints."[1] Modernity is plagued by a sadness that emerges in the absence of lives of sanctity and love. Decades after Bloy, Alexander Schmemann argued that modern secularism is the fruit of a problem at the heart of theology, underscoring that "the ultimate problem of theology is that of knowledge, and more precisely, of the possibility and nature of knowledge of God."[2]

While at first blush, it would seem that Bloy and Schmemann identify two different issues troubling the modern world, Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) sees them as two sides of the same coin. The problem of the knowledge of God that haunts modern theology and contemporary culture *is* the loss of the saints that Bloy laments. The following essay is devoted to parsing out this relationship between theological epistemology and the saints, and presenting Balthasar's own solution to the metaphysical and spiritual malaise plaguing modernity.

Balthasar was convinced that the loss of the saints that Bloy describes has caused a shattering of truth, what Balthasar defines as the "living exposition of theory in practice and of knowledge carried into action."[3] The consequence of this shattering is the impoverish-

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1. *La femme pauvre* (Ebooks libres et gratuits, 2010), 260: "Il n'y a qu'une tristesse . . . c'est de n'être pas des saints."
2. Alexander Schemann, *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 140.

ment of truth itself. The loss of the saints introduces a crisis in theology, and, attendant upon that, crises in epistemology and metaphysics. Balthasar's saints are something more than pious figures of Catholic kitsch. They are instead agents of theological and metaphysical truth, images of divine love in the world, and, as such, living exegetes of Being. Such is admittedly a lofty claim, but it will be the principle burden of the following essay to justify it.

There are two main agendas at work in the current project. The first is to exposit and interpret Balthasar as a thinker whose intellectual ecosystem is shaped by an Ignatian theological vision. This side of the project is explored through a close reading of Balthasar's theology of truth in his *Theo-Logic* and what he calls a "theology of the saints." Through this analysis, I develop what we might call Balthasar's sacramental epistemology—the relationship between Christ as the truth (John 14:6) and the truth of the created world (what Balthasar calls "creaturely truth"). Balthasar's exploration of this draws on his metaphysics, aesthetics, and Trinitarian theology most especially. But as we shall see, this relationship cannot adequately be explored without recourse to what is commonly called "spirituality." Balthasar's account of truth is developed in an Ignatian register as the interplay of knowledge and love for understanding truth.

I identify Balthasar's attempt to overcome this divorce between theology and spirituality by arguing that the "truth of Being" is most fundamentally the love revealed by Jesus Christ, and is therefore best known through participation and dialogue—or, by being what Balthasar calls a saint.[4] More specifically, I show how Balthasar's attempted re-integration of speculative theology and spirituality through his theology of the saints serves as his critical response to the metaphysics of German Idealism that elevated thought over love. Such a philosophy loses the mystery and giftedness of Being and turns humans into "masters and possessors" of the world—as titanic strivers

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3. Balthasar, "Theology and Sanctity," in *Explorations in Theology*, vol. 1: The Word Made Flesh, trans. A.V. Littledale with Alexander Dru (New York: Herder and Herder, 1964), 181.

4. Balthasar's particular understanding of the saints as representative and customary is explored below.

after "absolute knowing" and absolute control. Balthasar constructively responds to this problem by re-appropriating the ancient and medieval spiritual tradition of the saints, as interpreted through his own theological master, Ignatius of Loyola. He develops a Trinitarian and christological ontology and a corresponding pneumatological epistemology that is performed most truthfully by the saints at prayer.

Enmeshed within this scholarly project, however, is a more decidedly theological one. Through the study of Balthasar, this book revisits the relationship between theology and philosophy, but with an expanded form of theology: one that includes the spiritual practices of prayer and contemplation. Balthasar's scandalous claim that *saints* are the truest philosophers extends the relationship between theology and philosophy beyond the typical rationalistic terms in which the relationship is usually framed. By focusing on the question of truth, Balthasar helps reinterpret theology and philosophy from two intellectual or academic disciplines to the relationship between living "words about God" and the "love of wisdom."

Balthasar emphasizes that truth is known through *dialogue*, which for him is the rhythm of expression and response, donation and receptivity, kenosis and obedience. The dialogical emphasis of Balthasar's project opens the door to consider the way that theology and, more surprisingly, prayer—dialogue *par excellence*—bears on metaphysics. As such, this essay is an exercise in theological method, but in a Balthasarian key. Despite Jeffrey Stout's claim that preoccupation with methodology is akin to throat-clearing, and thus, devoid of any substantial content, to speak of method with Balthasar is to speak of Christ, the *methodos,* the way (John 14:6), of all Christian thought.[5]

This is not, of course, a book of constructive theology. Whatever constructive claims are made about theology and philosophy are necessarily tentative and heuristic. This is a project about Balthasar and his thought. Yet, any project about Balthasar, if it is to honor the

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5. Balthasar, *TL* 2, 363. Cf: Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics After Babel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 163.

spirit of its subject matter, cannot be content with exegesis alone. As Charles Péguy once described St. Thomas Aquinas, Balthasar himself is "A great and estimable doctor, renowned, authoritative . . . and very much dead and buried."[6] We must approach Balthasar afresh with the questions of our own day, and allow him to speak to today's church, to our contemporary context, to the questions that challenge us in the present moment. And so we will, by interrogating Balthasar on *his* terms, thereby allowing him to interrogate *us* in *ours*. Such a method fits well with the spirit of this important, controversial, and challenging figure.

Terms

Balthasar's language is often specialized and cumbersome with its reliance on metaphysical jargon. While I have done my best to render Balthasar's idiom into more accessible language throughout this study, it may be useful to clarify upfront the Balthasarian flavor of certain terms.

Truth

For Balthasar, "truth" is shorthand for the "truth of Being." It is therefore a theological and metaphysical term. Throughout this study, we will sometimes distinguish between "creaturely" and "divine" truth, the former having created Being as its primary referent, while the latter is primarily concerned with the truth of God.

Metaphysics

Balthasarian metaphysics has to do with the study of Being *qua* Being, though this is inseparable from theological claims about Being. We will see the way that Balthasar makes theology a constitutive element of metaphysics, but we must understand from the outset that Balthasar

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6. See the quote in Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa,* trans. Marc Sebanc (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 10. Henceforth identified as *PT*.

does not conceive of metaphysics as bearing absolute disciplinary autonomy.

Epistemology

This is perhaps one of the slipperiest of philosophical concepts in Balthasar's writing. He is concerned about epistemology, especially as it emerges in post-Kantian thought, but he is less interested in developing a "science of knowledge" as some critics have suggested.[7] Balthasar, by and large, is a metaphysical realist—and thus, an epistemological optimist—in the Thomistic sense, but his own work is devoted to developing a performative rather than an intellectualist or exclusively noetic account of knowledge.

There is an important Heideggerean distinction at work in Balthasar's epistemology. Like Heidegger, Balthasar operates according to the distinction between "knowledge" (*Wissen*) and "understanding" (*Verstehen*). The former is propositional knowledge while the latter is more akin to an intuitive or inarticulate understanding of the whole.[8] These two are not polar opposites for Balthasar, but he does insist that truth is something that transcends mere *Wissen*. There must be a form of knowing that corresponds to, rather than eradicates, the mystery of Being.

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7. Victoria S. Harrison, "Putnam's Internal Realism and Von Balthasar's Religious Epistemology" in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, vol. 44 (1998), 89. Harrison is largely critical of Balthasar's saintly epistemology. She accuses it as being underdeveloped and in need of a robust *philosophical* completion, which, she argues, can be offered by Putnam's realism. Harrison's essay is a decidedly nontheological and nonspiritual reading of Balthasar's use of the saints, and therefore, sees the lack of a rigorous, systematic epistemological theory as a significant failure. While there are deficiencies in Balthasar's theology of the saints, the lack of a systematic epistemological theory is not one of them. The saints represent a distinctly *theological way* of knowing *truth* through their *lives*. The only methodology appropriate for them is a christological one. Saints know by following the method of the one who is "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Balthasar acknowledges that his Christological account of truth may be accused of being methodologically sloppy. But he embraces this accusation, claiming that there is no other way that a genuine account of truth could be.

8. Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York, Harper & Row, 1962), 182–85.

Love

Balthasar interprets love as a "mode of being" or a "form of life" rather than as an affective state. The description of love that Balthasar commonly adopts is "being-for-another." Love is an ecstatic form of life, or what the classical tradition called *caritas* or charity. But Balthasar does not neglect the erotic dimension of love. Love is the fruitful interplay of desire and grace, *eros* and *agape.* Both dimensions of love are necessary for it to be a truly ecstatic form of life.

Saints

Perhaps no term is more important to this study, and yet, ripe with more potential for confusion, than Balthasar's use of the title "saint." He nowhere gives a clear-cut definition of sainthood, offering, at best, intimations of what or who a saint is: a lover of God who, marked by holiness, is commissioned by God for specific tasks in the world.

For Balthasar, there are two types of saint. There is what he calls "customary" sanctity, or the holiness of ordinary life. This is the vocation of every Christian, to "fulfill his vocation through the normal, unspectacular round of the Church's life."[9] Every Christian can and should be a saint in this sense, and this will be the image of the saint that we develop in the following pages. In addition to this, however, there is "representative" sanctity "by which God singles out some individual for the good of the Church and the community as a model of sanctity."[10] The difference between the customary and the representative saint lies neither in the quality of their holiness nor in their ecclesial importance. It lies only in the type of mission to which they are called. Sanctity is determined by the extent to which one

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9. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Two Sisters in the Spirit: Thérèse of Lisieux and Elizabeth of the Trinity*, trans. Donald Nichols, Anne Elizabeth Englund, and Dennis Martin (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 22.
10. Ibid. On Balthasar's emphasis on the customary saint, see Jacques Servais, "The Lay Vocation in the World According to Hans Urs von Balthasar" in *Communio*, vol. 23, no. 4 (1996), 656–76. Balthasar's insistence on the importance of lay sanctity lead him to leave the Jesuits in 1950 in order to found, with Adrienne von Speyr, the Community of St. John, for laypersons interested in adopting a ruled life in the midst of their "secular" vocations.

hands oneself over to one's missional vocation. This understanding of the saints is chiefly derived from Balthasar's Jesuit training; it is the figure of Ignatius of Loyola who fundamentally determines the shape and character of Balthasar's theology of the saints.

Plotting Balthasar's Theology of the Saints

At this point, Balthasar's precise meaning of a "theology of the saints" may be unclear. He is not referring to the specific theologies, the particular intellectual representations, of any given saint. Balthasar's theology of the saints is concerned with the theology that the saints' lives *are* rather than the particular theologies that the saints may hold.

Balthasar's theology of the saints has both an objective and a subjective form. In the former, the saints act as an object of theological reflection. Their lives present to the world a sensible image of an authentic theological existence. Subjectively, the theology of the saints is concerned with the *manner in which* the saints carry out the theological task. It is concerned with the style of saintly knowing, theologizing, and philosophizing.

What little scholarship has been done on Balthasar's account of the saints has generally focused on their objective purpose. While this objective dimension is an essential aspect of Balthasar's theology of the saints, the current project focuses on the relatively unexplored subjective form of saintly knowing.[11] Before turning to the central task of this project, let us briefly explore the objective form of the saints; we shall situate our subsequent subjective account of the saints within this larger context of their objective mission in the world.

In his attempt to define precisely how the saints function objectively in Balthasar's theology, David Moss draws attention to one of Balthasar's tantalizingly dense descriptions. Balthasar argues for "a sort of supernatural phenomenology" of the saints. The purpose of theology, then, is "to discern in the lives of the saints the '*intelligibile in sensibili*', where the *intelligibile* is precisely something supernatural."[12]

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11. For a study that develops a saintly epistemology *in light of* Balthasar, see David L. Schindler, "Sanctity and the Intellectual Life," in *Communio*, vol. 20, no. 4 (1993), 652–72.

That is, the lives of saints are observable forms that manifest by making present a supernatural reality. The saints are *symbols* or *epiphanies* of divine truth. Moss identifies three phenomenological reductions that he finds present in each of Balthasar's treatments of the saints: theological unity, christological obedience, and Marian fruitfulness. As Moss rightly notes, these three dimensions always attend divine love (John 15:12).

Because the saints are defined by a particular mission (*Sendung*), they become models of the unity of the divine life, which Balthasar defines as "being-for-one-another," an otherness-in-unity. Saintly lives reveal the life of God "in its unfathomable dispossession and giftedness" that actually constitutes the unity of God. The saint does not exist for herself alone. She exists for her mission of "self-giving" to the church, as an image of the kenotic life of God. This kenotic act involves participating in the radical obedience of Christ. Obedience here is the "creaturely analogue of the divine being-for-one-another," the act of handing oneself over (*traditio*) to one's calling and mission. It is "an objectifying and deprivatizing obedience."[13]

This "objectifying and de-privatizing obedience" results in Moss' third reduction, fruitfulness. Here, Mary is the central figure whose physical fruitfulness in bearing Christ is bound to her spiritual fruitfulness as the mother of all believers, as the church. Mary makes clear what Balthasar means by obedience. Mary's divine vocation is to exist no longer for herself, but to birth the church.[14] The saints (of whom Mary is the highest) allow their *subjective* calling, through the process of de-privatization, to nourish (perhaps even become a part of) the objective revelation of God. Their obedient fruitfulness is their handing on (*tradere*) of divine truth in the church.

Moss' three characteristics of the saints, their unity with God, the obedient conformity to Christ, and their spiritual fecundity, are

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12. David Moss, "The Saints" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, eds. Edward T. Oakes, SJ and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 85. The saintly *traditio* finds its exemplar in Gethsemane, in Christ's handing his life and will over to the Father.
13. Moss, 88.
14. See, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Razing the Bastions*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1993), 40.

particularly helpful ways of making sense of Balthasar's varied treatment of the saints throughout his work. These three themes will recur throughout the pages that follow.

We should be clear that Balthasar never separates form from content. Indeed, what Balthasar fears being lost in the church is not only the form, but also the content of Christian truth due to the limitation of the saints to the realm of "spirituality." Balthasar believes that the theological form of the saints' lives enriches the objective teaching of the church. The saints function as the form of theology as well as offering specific insight into the content of revelation.[15] Only by being both does the saint illumine truth.[16]

What then is the subjective form of the saints' knowledge? For Balthasar, the saints know as lovers do, that is, by loving. Love is a disposition of receptivity, surrender, and obedience, an ecstatic charity toward something beyond the self. Balthasar, as we shall see, identifies this "something" as Being, which, he will argue, is love. Because Being is co-extensive with love, knowledge of truth—of Being—can come only through love. As Balthasar said, and as I will repeatedly insist throughout this study, "the inner reality of love can be recognized only by love."[17] By loving, the saints are conformed or attuned to truth. Their entire existence is adequated to the truth of Being, and their knowledge arises from this adequation. Love is the logic of the saints.

As this book shall argue, a critical component of both knowledge

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15. Moss recognizes this when he writes that "Balthasar will in turn let the dogmatic construal of these two central mysteries [the Trinity and the Incarnation] *stand under* the unique experience of the saints, thereby giving to Church dogma what he claims to be its truly existential depth. For example, in order to indicate how we are to understand Christ's cry of dereliction on the Cross—however feebly and inadequately—Balthasar will direct our attention to the 'dark night' experience of certain saints and mystics" (82). Moss is overstating the case a bit. Balthasar never allows dogma or doctrine to "stand under" or be determined by the experiences of the saints. What he will stay instead is that the saints inhabit the objective mystery, enlarging it and enriching it through their subjectivity. The "ecclesial vocation" of the saints and mystics is the enlargement or the "existential deepening" of the truth of revelation—what Balthasar calls "enlarging the cathedrals."

16. For appreciative criticisms of Balthasar's apologetic use of the saints, see Victoria S. Harrison, *The Apologetic Value of Human Holiness: Von Balthasar's Christocentric Philosophical Anthropology* (Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000); and Mark Van Steenwyk, "Defending von Balthasar's Apology of Holiness," in *Quodlibet Journal*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2005): http://www.quodlibet.net/articles/vansteenwyk-holiness.shtml (accessed March 12, 2013).

17. Balthasar, *Love Alone Is Credible*, trans. D.C. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 75.

and love is dialogue. And so, the form (*Gestalt*) of the saints' loving knowledge is prayer. For the saint, prayer is union with God in Christ who, as the incarnate one, *is* truth, both of God and the God–world relationship. As such, prayer acts as an existential modality of the speculative knowledge of this relation. The dialogue of prayer decodes the truth of the world in its analogical bond to the truth of God by means of its inhabitation in this relationship. In other words, for the saints, Christ is the truth of the world, and prayer is union with Christ. In this union, Christ unveils truth. Those dimensions of the truth of Being, the subject–object relation, the inter-subjectivity of worldly consciousness and knowledge, are all illumined within the participative, dialogical dynamic of the saint at prayer. In short, prayer is metaphysics in act.[18]

The Need for This Project

The present chapter addresses three principle needs. First, the current book bridges the gap between the "two sides" of Balthasar's *oeuvre*: the intellectual, metaphysical project (associated with his 15 volume Trilogy) and the pastoral project (associated with his sermons, devotional writings, and spiritual direction).[19] Rejecting the false dichotomy between these two dimensions of Balthasar's thought, this book offers a more comprehensive vision of Balthasar as a priest whose intellectual project was formed by Ignatius of Loyola's injunction to "find God in all things." This project reclaims Balthasar's intellectual and dogmatic project as an outworking of his Ignatian concerns.[20]

18. ". . . Being and the subject are always richer and deeper in their appearing than that which can appear and that the historicity of the truth and its element of perspective, which are conditioned in this way, and its dialogical essence are ultimately a dialogue that has been going on from the very outset between Creator and creature and that the human act of seeking is enclosed a priori in the state of being safe in God and of having been found by God . . . More and more, everything tends toward the indivisible act of hearing the word [that is the Word, the concrete first Idea of the creating God and thereby the goal of the world] which is at the same time an act of prayer. . ." (*My Work: In Retrospect*, 22, 24–25). Henceforth identified as *MW*.

19. A notable exception to this is Mark A. McIntosh, *Christology from Within: Spirituality and the Incarnation in Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000). McIntosh gives a thorough account of Balthasar's dramatic Christology, highlighting the way that Balthasar sourced the mystical tradition for his insights.

20. Part of this involves Balthasar's Ignatian concern for mission to the prevailing intellectual culture. On Balthasar's relationship with philosophical modernity, Cyril O'Regan has published the

Second, there is a noticeable lacuna in Balthasar scholarship. While commentary abounds on his theological aesthetics and dramatics (the first two of his three-part Trilogy), there is very little English-language scholarship on his final series, the three-volume *Theo-Logic*. What has been published is embedded in summary and exposition of Balthasar's entire systematic Trilogy with very little critical assessment of the *Theo-Logic* itself. Through close reading of each volume of the *Theo-Logic*, this chapter provides a deeper level of analysis of these texts than these summarizing volumes allow.

Finally, and more constructively, there is a growing concern in theological circles to overcome the dichotomy between "academic" and "pastoral" theology. Theologians with this concern often look to Balthasar as an eloquent but enigmatic resource for addressing this problem. This book offers an interpretation of Balthasar's re-integration of speculative, academic knowledge and Christian practices of prayer, assessing both its strengths and weaknesses for the contemporary project of bringing together a "theology at the desk" and a "theology at prayer."

The Pervasive Question

At the heart of Balthasar's theology is the pervasive question of the God–world relationship. This question was especially prevalent for the theologians of modernity.[21] While this question has always been present in Christian theological reflection, it took on a special urgency with the advent of modernity when "cosmos" was replaced by

definitive texts in his two-part *Anatomy of Misremembering: Von Balthasar's Response to Philosophical Modernity* (New York: Herder & Herder, 2014). The first volume focuses on Balthasar's critical engagement with Hegel (a topic we will explore in the following pages). The second volume will address Balthasar and Heidegger. Both volumes take seriously Balthasar as a theologian critically engaged with the philosophical questions of German and modern culture, though O'Regan is not as concerned to address the Ignatian, spiritual, and orantic dimensions of Balthasar's critique of modernity as the present essay is.

21. Cf. *Mapping Modern Theology*, eds. Kelly M. Kapic and Bruce McCormack (Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2012). Other significant theological concerns of the twentieth century, related to this, are the nature–grace relationship as well as a renewed interest in Christo-centric theological anthropologies. Cf. Stephen Duffy, *The Graced Horizon: Nature and Grace in Modern Catholic Thought* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1992) and Fergus Kerr, *Twentieth Century Catholic Theologians* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007).

"nature," metaphysical realism was confronted with nominalism, rationalism, and idealism, and theology was reduced to anthropology.[22]

The urgency of this question becomes acute in twentieth-century theology, especially in the debate between Karl Barth and Erich Przywara over the *analogia entis* and, within Roman Catholicism, in the controversial re-narrating of the nature–grace relationship in Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel* (1946). Balthasar himself was caught up in both of these debates. Similar to Barth and the later Pryzwara,[23] Balthasar sought to address the God-world relationship in a distinctly christological and "dramatic" way.[24] To engage this question with Barth, Pryzwara, and de Lubac, Balthasar takes on the challenge of constructing a theological project with the drama of the God–world relationship at its center. This involves treating the great questions of metaphysics, epistemology, and theology in a distinctly new way.

But Balthasar's new way of addressing the God–world relationship should not be understood as sheer invention. Balthasar is a *ressourcement* thinker, and thus attends to the question of the God–world relationship (and its sub-themes: metaphysical analogy, knowledge of God, the truth of the world, etc.) *via* a retrieval of ancient and medieval theology, especially the Christian mystical tradition.[25] His unique contribution to this question comes in his construction of his theology of the saints, as the union of the speculative and affective, the objective and subjective dimensions of Christian knowledge.

The Procedure of This Book

The task of this book is to illuminate Balthasar's theology of the saints

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22. On this, see Louis Dupré, *Passage to Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 15–64. See also the first two chapters of Balthasar's *LA*, 15–50.

23. Most especially in his later works published after his landmark *Analogia Entis* (1932).

24. D.C. Schindler offers a helpful summary of Balthasar's concept of *Dramatik*: "The term *drama* refers, in the literal sense, to the form of art created in Attic Greece, in distinction from the lyric and epic forms of poetry that are also due to the Greeks. What makes drama unique in relation to these other forms is, in the first place, that it is essentially *dialogical*, involving the interaction of relatively autonomous characters. Second, drama is not merely recited but *performed* and, indeed, performed before an audience." D.C. Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004), 17.

25. On the impropriety of the term "mystical tradition," see Andrew Louth, *The Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 200–14.

as it bears on his theology and his Ignatian mission of evangelization of his contemporary German intellectual culture.

The first chapter accomplishes three things. First, it introduces Balthasar, paying special attention to his vocation as a Jesuit and a priest. Second, it explores the role Ignatius plays in Balthasar's theological project. As this section shows, Balthasar's mind was deeply shaped by his Jesuit spirituality. Although Ignatius does not appear regularly in Balthasar's writings, he nevertheless helps bridge what critics have described as the two distinct "realms" of Balthasar's thought: the pastoral and the speculative. Third, this chapter introduces the uniquely Ignatian flavor of Balthasar's interpretation of the saints as models of a subjective form of knowing the metaphysical truth of Being. For Balthasar, the saints are those who best fulfill the Ignatian dictum to "find God in all things," and thus apprehend the truth of God and the world.

The second chapter extends the Ignatian interpretation of Balthasar's work by highlighting Balthasar's missional concerns. These first two chapters ground my assertion that the Balthasarian project is a distinctively Catholic—more specifically, Ignatian—counter to the dominant (and dominating) metaphysical epistemology of German Idealism. Interpreting Balthasar as a missional theologian situates his account of truth in the *Theo-Logic* as his contribution to a distinctively Catholic form of knowledge in response to German Idealism and the perceived muddling of Catholic identity in the wake of the Second Vatican Council.

The third chapter outlines Balthasar's "genealogy of modernity" as it bears on his theology of the saints. This genealogy is the foundation for his constructive, theological re-narration of metaphysics and epistemology. While Balthasar is not unique for developing a genealogy of modernity, the significance of his genealogy lies in the way he identifies modernity's malaise as a spiritual pathology. He interprets the "shattering of Christian truth" as the "loss of the saints" from the intellectual world of the late medieval and early modern periods. This chapter accomplishes three things. First, it traces

Balthasar's account of the disintegration of dogmatic theology, spiritual practices, and metaphysics. Second, it diagnoses Idealist epistemologies as the fruit of a significant shift in late medieval metaphysics that Balthasar attributes to Duns Scotus, William of Occam, and Meister Eckhart. Balthasar sees in them the problematic elevation of knowledge over love as the result of a distorted spirituality. Finally, this chapter gives an overview of the way Balthasar sets out to correct these proto-Idealist trajectories through a creative re-appropriation of the Church's contemplative tradition.

The fourth chapter marks the opening of the second part of the book by shifting the focus from a general view of Balthasar's project to a more focused study of his *Theo-Logic*. In the fourth chapter, I consider the first volume of the *Theo-Logic: The Truth of the World*. This chapter accomplishes three things. First, I interpret Balthasar's understanding of truth as a property of Being (metaphysics) and knowing (epistemology). Truth as a concept belongs to both worlds and cannot be reduced epistemology alone, for which Balthasar criticizes Idealism, nor metaphysics, for which Balthasar criticizes neo-scholasticism. To isolate truth to either one or the other is to mistake the fundamental nature of truth. From this I go on to argue that Balthasar presents truth as a form of love. Since truth is love, Balthasar insists that both Being and knowing must also be understood together as love. I therefore consider Balthasar's account of knowledge as a dialogue of love between subject and object. Finally, I argue that Balthasar's philoso-phical argument in *Theo-Logic* 1 is implicitly and necessarily theological (thus, its inclusion in a "theo-logic"). I highlight the way the theological truth of God is both the beginning and the end (*principium et finis*) of the truth of the world. This helps us reconcile the natural world as always and already graced, and therefore, open to the truth of God. This demonstrates Balthasar's Ignatian desire to find God in all things. Balthasar's phenomenology in the first volume of the *Theo-Logic* paves the way for an explicitly theological understanding of truth because God is implicitly known in every act of knowing.

Chapter five explores Balthasar's Christology and its relationship to

truth. I argue that it is through his Christology that Balthasar most convincingly presents truth as love. My argument falls into two main sections. In the first, I interpret Balthasar's Christology through the category of truth; in the second, I argue that Christ's identity as truth manifests as love. This chapter therefore locates the relationship between truth and love in the incarnate person of Jesus Christ. In the first section, I consider the way Christ fulfills the philosophical description of truth from *Theo-Logic* 1. For Balthasar, Christ's life is the expression of his truth. Here, I argue that Balthasar's Christology takes an especially Ignatian character as he interprets the life of Christ as kenosis, receptivity, and obedience. Through the performance of his truth through his actions of love, Christ overcomes the moral and ontological distance between God and world, re-establishing the right relationship between the truth of God and the truth of the world. I conclude by arguing that for Balthasar, Christ's loving performance of truth transfigures the God–world relation, reuniting heaven and earth, making possible the contemplative knowledge of the truth of Being.

According to Balthasar, truth is most fully known through the participation of the subject in the object known. This participation is accomplished by the Spirit. The sixth chapter explores this claim by expositing what Balthasar means when he refers to the Spirit as the "Spirit of Truth" (*Geist der Warheit*). I first explore Balthasar's account of the Spirit as the expositor of Christ's truth. This section explores the Spirit as the subject of divine knowing, both in the life of the Trinity and in the lives of the saints. The Spirit's perfect knowledge of truth is possible because he explores "even the deep things of God" (1 Cor 2:10) as the Spirit of Love. For Balthasar, the Spirit knows because the Spirit is love. The Spirit is the love that flows within the eternal dialogue of Father and Son. Second, I consider the way the Spirit works as the illumination of Christian understanding. The saints understand the objective truth as revealed in Christ by means of the subjective illumination of the Holy Spirit. This section explores the Spirit's identity as the Spirit of Pentecost, who gathers together the myriad of

truths in the world and enfolds them into the encompassing truth of God.

Chapter seven marks the beginning of the final section of the book. In this chapter, I consider how Balthasar's theological account of truth in the *Theo-Logic* demands a transformed epistemology. Balthasar insists that genuine understanding of the truth can only come through existential encounter with the object of knowledge. Epistemology, in Balthasar's theological account, is participatory. For Balthasar, it is the saint who most faithfully actualizes this form of knowledge. It is the saint whose life is conformed to Christ who apprehends the truth of Being. Her knowledge comes not primarily as an intellectual achievement, but rather, through her contemplative participation in the truth through the Spirit. For Balthasar, understanding theological truth is ultimately the fruit of the contemplative dialogue of prayer. Here, we see Balthasar's final attempt to confront the legacy of Idealism. By arguing that truth is known through the humble receptivity of love and obedience, Balthasar rescues the saints from mere devotion, and contemplation from an Idealist, intellectualist hegemony. Truth is known by being performed, that is, through existential participation in the reality known. This is Balthasar's spiritual epistemology of the saints, a theological re-appropriation of the tradition of Ignatian contemplation that knows and understands all things theologically.

The eighth chapter turns to a concrete examination of a specific figure as concrete example of Balthasar's saintly epistemology. This figure is the controversial mystic and Balthasar's spiritual directee, Adrienne von Speyr. In this chapter, I offer a Balthasarian interpretation of her life and thought, highlighting the connections between the sanctity of her life, the form of her spirituality and prayer, and the theological and metaphysical fecundity of her spiritual understanding.

The concluding chapter summarizes and assesses Balthasar's theology of the saints, looking forward to ways that analysis of Balthasar's work can be extended after the work done in the present

book. By identifying divine love as the truth of all things, Balthasar issues a clarion call for the renewal and revitalization of the discipline of theology through the resurgence of prayer, contemplation, and the saintly form of life.