

FLUIDITY: MAN, THE TRIUNE GOD, AND THE EUCHARISTIC CHRIST

ANGELA FRANKS

“Our fluidity is meant to be an imitation of the triune self-gift that subsists.”



After quoting the famous “signs of the times” passage in *Gaudium et spes* (4), the International Theological Commission [= ITC] tells us that theologians have the obligation to engage the questions of their age, but with caution.¹ The ITC document con-

1. We must discern the “needs and aspirations of humanity” within our own time (International Theological Commission, “Theology Today: Perspectives, Principles and Criteria” [Vatican City, 29 November 2011], 54, http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_doc_20111129_teologia-oggi_en.html). “In all cases, discernment must carefully distinguish between elements compatible with the Gospel and those contrary to it, between positive contributions and ideological aspects” (55). This whole section is entitled “Listening to the World” (51–58). Regarding gender fluidity, the recent document by the Congregation on Catholic Education engaged in just that project of distinction (“Male and Female He Created Them”: Towards a Path of Dialogue on the Question of Gender Theory in Education [Vatican City, 2 February 2019], http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_20190202_maschio-e-femmina_en.pdf).

tinues by making an astonishing claim: “The more acute understanding of the world that results [from this discernment] cannot fail to *prompt a more penetrating appreciation of Christ the Lord and of the Gospel* since Christ is the Saviour of the world.”² In knowing the outlines of the world better, we can detect more insightfully the contours of the One who comes to save it.

In this essay, I will argue that the distinctively contemporary emphasis on fluidity—seen particularly in “gender fluidity”—inchoately senses what I will call the vector-dimension of the human person, but badly misreads this dimension. Rather than see these vectors as the reality of man, who consists of a coming-from and going-toward a transcendent origin and goal, gender ideology loads all of this fluidity onto the body and human nature. Just as previous eras arguably erred on the side of excessive rigidity in social and human structures, so our age errs on the side of excessive fluidity. Both stability and fluidity are marks of the human person; they must, however, be properly understood.

In the following essay, I will summarize the situation of modern “liquid” bodies, before addressing the deeper anthropological question of “man in motion.” The third, most substantial section will exegete the reality of Jesus as the one who “remains” paradoxically “in motion,” especially in his eucharistic presence. The remaining sections will more briefly explore the trinitarian basis for this substantial motion and elucidate how the Christian is caught up into the eucharistic reality of “loving fluidity.”

These sections will present the deep structures of the mission field, a term I use to mean not primarily a conglomeration of data-points, analyzable through sociology. Instead, the mission field is ultimately a theological reality, dependent upon the economic action of the trinitarian Persons whose processions are extended into the world as missions. This theological reality will be analyzed on three levels: anthropological, christological, and trinitarian. First, however, I will summarize the contemporary situation regarding fluidity.

2. ITC, “Theology Today,” 55, citing *Gaudium et spes*, 44 (emphasis added).

1. LIQUID BODIES

Let us begin by situating “gender fluidity” in its larger context. Zygmunt Bauman, a Polish sociologist, assists us in this task. Rather than divide historical epochs into modernity and postmodernity, Bauman argues that modernity is characterized by “solid” and “liquid” versions.

Solid modernity privileged size, stability, institutions, comprehensiveness (the *Encyclopedia* of Diderot and company), and clarity. Everyone knew who was in charge of France during the reign of Louis XIV. Versailles is a quintessential example of solid modernity; so is Bauman’s favorite example, the Ford automobile factory founded over 200 years later. Solid modernity was interested in conquering space, initiating the age of exploration and colonization.

Liquid modernity, on the other hand, prizes speed, flexibility, and choice. Bauman saw this change happening somewhat definitively by the post–World War II era and fully reigning by the time he wrote *Liquid Modernity* in the year 2000. If solid modernity wanted to conquer space, liquid modernity desires to conquer time: more speed and efficiency, longer battery life.

Why is this “liquidity”? Bauman explains through an extended quote from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*’s entry on “fluidity.” Fluids undergo

a continuous change in shape when subjected to such a stress. This continuous and irrecoverable change of position of one part of the material relative to another part when under shear stress constitutes flow, a characteristic property of fluids. In contrast, the shearing forces within a solid, held in a twisted or flexed position, are maintained; the solid undergoes no flow and can spring back to its original shape.³

A solid can spring back to its original shape, or it can break. Think of that quintessential solid, “the institution of the family.” If someone takes a jackhammer to a solid, it twists or breaks. Part of the appeal of liquidity in our age is the apparent strength in

3. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2008), 1.

its flexibility. If you take a jackhammer to a fluid, it flows away, to reassemble somewhere else, or to remain dispersed. So, for instance, rather than the solidity of the family, people choose the liquidity of cohabitation, of weak ties rather than strong bonds, of maybes rather than yeses or noes. Post-structuralist philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari put it succinctly: “Flows, who doesn’t desire flows, and relationships between flows, and breaks in flows?”⁴

Bauman grants the appeal of liquidity but mostly bemoans what is lost. In particular, he highlights liquidity’s impact on the question of identity. Bauman calls out the narcissistic turn in liquid modernity, in which, for instance, politics is reduced to “life-politics.” In the colonization of the public sphere by the private, even political concerns cannot be processed—cannot be heard—without modulating them into the key of the individual qua individual.⁵ Causes and civic issues are treated with indifference unless they appear to impact private life.⁶ Along these lines, Bauman quotes a Woody Allen routine that imagined how one would have to formulate adult-education courses in the narcissistic age. Allen proposed that, for example, a course on ethics would have to include “the categorical imperative, and six ways to make it work for you.”⁷

In liquid modernity, the social scripts that hung around in solid modernity have become widely liquified. In Louis XIV’s France, everyone knew who he was. In liquid modernity, one cannot consult social roles; increasingly, one may not even consult one’s lineage, as any artificially conceived donor-baby can

4. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, vol. 1 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Penguin, 1977), 229.

5. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 37. For example, the private lives of politicians have more purchase on the imagination than their positions. “Politics with a capital P, the activity charged with the task of translating private problems into public issues” has slowly dissolved, to be replaced with the “private problems of public figures” (70).

6. E.g., Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Touchstone Books, 2001).

7. As quoted in Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 36.

tell you.⁸ The corollary of this newfound liquid freedom is a deep anxiety.

In such a world, where the true and the good seem to be too oppressively solid, desire is unleashed as a loose cannon.⁹ Bauman observes that consumerism is tailor-made for a liquid world.

It has been said that the *spiritus movens* of consumer activity is no longer the measurable set of articulated needs, but *desire*—a much more volatile and ephemeral, evasive and capricious, and essentially non-referential entity than “needs,” a self-begotten and self-propelled motive that needs no other justification or “cause.” Despite its successive and always short-lived reifications, desire has itself for its constant object, and for that reason is bound to remain insatiable however high the pile of other (physical or psychical) objects marking its past course may rise.¹⁰

Coming from a very different perspective, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari summarized this situation some two decades before Bauman. Deleuze and Guattari valorized the liquid flow of desire.

Through the impasses and the triangles a schizophrenic flow moves, irresistibly; sperm, river, drainage, inflamed genital mucus, or a stream of words that do not let themselves be coded, a libido that is too fluid, too viscous: a violence against syntax, a concerted destruction of the signifier, non-sense erected as a flow, polyvocality that returns to haunt all relations.¹¹

In language echoing Bauman’s description of consumerist desire, Deleuze and Guattari describe this desire as “rhizomatic,” a word

8. On the identity-destabilizing effects of the sexual revolution, see Mary Eberstadt, *Primal Screams: How the Sexual Revolution Created Identity Politics* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2019); cf. Angela Franks, “Eberstadt on Eberstadt: Identity Politics’ Roots in Secularization,” *The Public Discourse*, October 15, 2019, <https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2019/10/57410/>.

9. See Angela Franks, “End-less and Self-Referential Desire: Toward an Understanding of Contemporary Sexuality,” *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (Winter 2018): 629–46.

10. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, 74–75.

11. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 133.

denoting the way bulbs and grass spread. Rhizomes spread in unpredictable and nonlinear ways. There is no ordered *telos* directing rhizomatic desire, which flows like a liquid. “Desire causes the current to flow, itself flows in turn, and breaks the flow.”¹²

Deleuze and Guattari’s theory and Bauman’s observations take concrete form today in someone like Andrea Long Chu, a male writer who has undergone surgery and takes hormones to appear like a woman. In Chu’s recent book, *Females*, he depicts the YouTube trans-star Gigi Gorgeous as an incarnation of liquidity. Before transitioning, Gigi Gorgeous was named Gregory Lazzarato, a diving champion as an adolescent. Chu comments on an old photo of Lazzarato on the diving platform: “He is bracing himself for the angry kiss of chlorine, the plunge into the deep end, the way the water will suck him in, swallow him whole.”¹³

As a female, Gregory-become-Gigi has a liquid strength that Bauman and the writers of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* would recognize. Chu first saw a photo of Gigi resting delicately on the surface of a swimming pool.¹⁴ Indeed, as Gigi, Lazzarato is perfectly fluid, flowing this and that way to accommodate all demands of desire. “To achieve this, Gorgeous has sanded her personality down to the bare essentials. She laughs at what is funny, she cries at what is sad, and she is miraculously free of serious opinions. She has become, in the most technical sense of this phrase, a dumb blonde.”¹⁵ Chu, who is nothing like a dumb blonde, says, “I envy her tremendously.”¹⁶ Rather than being Gregory, about to be absorbed by the water, Gigi has become the water.

Gender fluidity is the extreme edge of the spectrum of liquid modernity. The liquid narcissism saturating the developed world means that a person is expected to flow from one identity to another, with only consumerist desire as the guide.

12. *Ibid.*, 5.

13. Andrea Long Chu, *Females* (New York: Verso, 2019), 29.

14. *Ibid.*, 28–29.

15. *Ibid.*, 30.

16. *Ibid.*, 29.

2. THE DEEP STRUCTURE OF THE MISSION FIELD: MAN IN MOTION

The combined testimony of Bauman, Deleuze, Guattari, and Chu underscores the deeply negative aspects of liquid modernity. In such a framework, human nature, if it exists at all, can only be a too-solid enemy that blocks the easy flow of desire.¹⁷

And yet, in the spirit of the ITC document, we can ask what might be the good inchoately desired in liquidity. Why, for example, do children find that it feels good to run downhill? To quote Deleuze again, “Flows, who doesn’t desire flows?”¹⁸ I think that an answer can be found in meditating on the human being as a being in motion. The balance that must be struck is expressed in the phrase “man in motion.” The human person is an individual substance with a determinate nature; he is “man.” And yet he is also in motion, inserted in history, coming from an origin and heading toward a goal.

Previous ages have emphasized, to a fault, substances, with their concomitant stability and cohesion, at the expense of the flexibility and historicity of man. In such cultures, one often finds, for instance, a strongly class-based society (the “solidity” of which Bauman speaks). In contrast, our age glorifies flow and change, to the detriment of stability. Ours is a strongly anti-institutional epoch, whether the derided institution is the family or the human subject itself. Both stability and fluidity, however, are markers of man.¹⁹

17. For a summary of the *animus* (especially in feminism and gender ideology) against the category of *natura*, as well as a response, see Michele M. Schumacher, “The Nature of Nature in Feminism, Old and New: From Dualism to Complementary Unity,” in *Women in Christ: Toward a New Feminism*, ed. Michele M. Schumacher (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 17–51; and her “Gender Ideology and the ‘Artistic’ Fabrication of Human Sex: Nature as Norm or the Remaking of the Human?” *The Thomist* 80, no. 3 (July 2016): 363–423.

18. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 229.

19. This point has been addressed in a particular form in the debate of the last four or so decades concerning the status of substance and relation in man. This essay cannot address specific proposals; for a summary of the philosophical positions, see Mark K. Spencer’s misleadingly titled “Created Persons are Subsistent Relations: A Scholastic-Phenomenological Synthesis,” *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association* 89 (2015): 225–43. One recent philosophical attempt to prioritize relation over substance (and to rehabilitate

First, motion marks our nature. We come from God, and we return to God. This reality, in fact, marks our stability as creatures: we are the kind of reality that is ontologically dependent upon God. As Adrian J. Walker puts it, “The very act of substance . . . structurally contains an *exitus* and *reditus* from and to God that can be called motion in an analogous sense.”²⁰ Our nature is something we receive; we arrive on the scene as the kind of thing we are, prior to our own projects and planning. Philosopher Fabrice Hadjadj emphasizes that our very bodies testify to this. In our navel, we see evidence that we are from another (the first arrow). In our genitals, we see that we are oriented for others and for the perpetuating of life that will outlast us (the second arrow).²¹ We come from, and we go toward.²²

The first of these vectors is expressed in the givenness of our nature. The word “nature” derives from the Latin *natus*,

Boethius as a proto-relationalist) is Adrian Pabst, *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy (Interventions)*, ed. Conor Cunningham and Peter Candler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012). For an older but still thorough summary of theological positions, see John S. Grabowski, “Person: Substance and Relation,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1995): 139–63. For theological developments after Grabowski’s essay, see the debate in *Communio* between David L. Schindler and Michael Waldstein, in, e.g., Michael Maria Waldstein, “‘Constitutive Relations’: A Response to David L. Schindler,” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 37, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 496–517; David L. Schindler, “Being, Gift, Self-Gift: A Reply to Waldstein on Relationality and John Paul II’s Theology of the Body (Part One),” *Communio: International Catholic Review* 42, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 221–51; and Adrian J. Walker, “‘Constitutive Relations’: Toward a Spiritual Reading of *Physis*,” in *Being Holy in the World: Theology and Culture in the Thought of David L. Schindler*, ed. Nicholas J. Healy, Jr. and D.C. Schindler (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 123–61.

20. Walker, “‘Constitutive Relations,’” 143.

21. Fabrice Hadjadj, *Qu’est-ce qu’une famille? Suivi de la transcendance en culottes et autres propos ultra-sexistes* (Paris: Salvator, 2014), 51–60; see also Timothy Fortin, “To Be from Another: Nature, Sexual Difference, and the Gift of Existence,” *Forum Supplement to Acta Philosophica* 3 (2017): 251–72.

22. Of course, this vector-reality marks all creation, not only man. “Things are more than things. They are not known exhaustively when one has understood their chemical and physical properties, because then another whole dimension of their reality still eludes one: their transparency toward the creative power of the God from which they come and toward which they try to lead” (Joseph Ratzinger, “The Sacramental Foundation of Christian Existence” [1965], in *Theology of the Liturgy*, vol. 11 of *Joseph Ratzinger: Collected Works*, ed. Michael J. Miller, trans. John Saward et al. [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014], 153–68, at 161–62).

to be born. We are born as male or female human beings, a fact that is prior to all our performative action. Such givenness seems like an attack on freedom, as it limits the field of options available to liquid choice. But such a stance misunderstands the reality of both nature and freedom. Rather than being an obstacle to our freedom, our nature gives us the very possibility of it. Out of the freedom of our nature, we have great latitude to form ourselves through our action. Nevertheless, this freedom is not simply unlimited, for we are not unlimited, as our navel and our genitals testify. Our freedom must flow through the channels carved out by our nature.²³

Accordingly, Joseph Ratzinger emphasizes the unborn child's dependency on the mother (symbolized by the navel in Hadjadj), with the simultaneous orientation of the mother (and father) toward the child (shown by the genitals in Hadjadj). Man is "the derived being, demanding someone be there for it." The unborn child reveals that we exist in being-with, being-from, and being-for others.²⁴ The person "can exist only with the other person and from him."²⁵

In this regard, Ratzinger emphasizes the priority of the first arrow (of our receptivity of our being—coming—from another), which is more endangered today. The second arrow, of movement going-toward the other, has been captured and secularized in, for example, Marxism and other forms of purely immanentized ethics. But, as Ratzinger's writings as a public theologian continually stress, rationalistic humanism has no true moral compass. It is not capable of making a judgment concerning what is truly good for man, because it has rejected the idea of a stable human nature. Hence, humanistic moralism degrades into tyrannical injustice. Only the first arrow—the fact that creation comes from God—can provide the orientation in the truth needed for genuine service to others.

23. See Angela Franks, "A Wojtylian Reading of Performativity and the Self in Judith Butler," *Christian Bioethics*, forthcoming. The original treatment is in Karol Wojtyła, *The Acting Person*, trans. Andrzej Potocki, Analecta Husserliana (1969; Boston: D. Reidel, 1979), 76–79.

24. Joseph Ratzinger, "Truth—Tolerance—Freedom," in *Truth and Tolerance*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 246.

25. *Ibid.*, 247.

In contrast to this basic human reality, Enlightenment freedom

wishes to be neither “coming from” nor “going toward,” wishes to exist neither from nor for another, but just to be completely free. That is to say, it regards the real basic shape of human existence itself as an attack on freedom that is prior to every individual life and activity; it would like to be freedom from its own human nature and existence itself to become a “new man”: in the new society, these dependencies that restrict the self and this obligation to give of oneself should not be allowed to exist.²⁶

This creates an identity crisis, as Bauman also recognized, because man now bears the burden of self-creation.

In fact, this identity crisis was the inevitable result of secularization.²⁷ Because of the intrinsically vector-nature of man, he is a being constituted and surrounded by flow, which decomposes into arbitrary chaos when not oriented to its transcendent origin and goal. Like consumerist or “rhizomatic” desire, man cannot order himself. He needs a good surpassing himself to bring his vectors into alignment. Hence, when the natural vector-structure of man meets the unnatural removal of transcendence within secularism, the inevitable result is an identity crisis.

Accepting the dual arrows of human nature, as coming-from and going-toward, opens us up to accepting a transcendent,

26. *Ibid.*, 247.

27. By “secularization” and “secularism,” I mean the following: the default attitude is the plausibility that there is no transcendent reality. This definition harmonizes with many other approaches to secularism theory; cf. Eberstadt, *Primal Screams*, and also *How the West Really Lost God: A New Theory of Secularization* (West Conshohocken, PA: Templeton Press, 2014); and Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007). For the purposes of my argument here, it is not necessary to establish exactly when and why secularization resulted. For such genealogies, see the above books, as well as Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2015); Rémi Brague, *The Kingdom of Man: Genesis and Failure of the Modern Project*, Catholic Ideas for a Secular World (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018); and many others.

and not merely inner-worldly, constitutive good.²⁸ Inner-worldly goods, as self-chosen rather than received, tend toward the merely private. A transcendent good furthers true community, which is oriented to a common good that transcends one's narrow preferences. "It is openness to the whole, to the infinite, that makes man complete. Man is man by reaching out infinitely beyond himself, and he is consequently more of man the less enclosed he is in himself, the less 'limited' he is."²⁹

Thus, Ratzinger can insist, "I am by no means just I; I am not mine at all; my I is that of another." Even further,

The most individual element in us—the only thing that belongs to us in the last analysis—our own "I," is at the same time the least individual element of all, for it is precisely our "I" that we have neither from ourselves nor for ourselves. The "I" is simultaneously what I have completely and what least of all belongs to me.³⁰

In short, contemporary liquidity inchoately grasps a truth about human nature: we come from and return to the Father. The vectors of *exitus* and *reditus* mark our nature. I call this vector-nature the "deep structure of the contemporary mission field," in that human beings are constituted by this vector-nature and yet today tend to misunderstand it profoundly by reducing the vectors to purely secular realities. The secular qua worldly is good in itself, but it is limited. It cannot find its meaning purely inside itself but only in the transcendent vectors that mark its existence. The contemporary mission field of the developed world is stamped by the attempt to make sense of the fluidity intrinsic to the human condition.

28. For a discussion on the importance of a "constitutive good" to provide a framework for understanding oneself and how to live, see Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), esp. 91–107. For a sustained argument in favor of such a constitutive good being transcendent rather than inner-worldly, see Taylor, *A Secular Age*.

29. Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 2nd ed., trans. J. R. Foster and Michael J. Miller (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), 235.

30. *Ibid.*, 190.

3. THE DEEPER STRUCTURE OF THE MISSION FIELD: CHRIST IN MOTION

Theology can say still more about contemporary liquidity by turning to the mystery of the Son of God sent by the Father into the world. The Incarnation reveals that the vector-nature of man is *natura* that is perfected through *gratia*. Jesus himself exists within these vectors of *exitus* and *reditus*. Man's natural motion graciously participates in the deeper motion of the incarnate Son, a motion that is the even deeper structure of the mission field. In other words, there is a mission field at all because the Incarnate Son was sent (*missio*) from the Father (Mt 10:40; Jn 3:17, 34; 5:36, 38; 6:57). As Hans Urs von Balthasar says, Christ's "whole being is in motion" from and toward the Father.³¹ Similarly, Benedict XVI describes Christ's mission in terms of a long descent (all the way to hell) that is in the Johannine writings simultaneous with his "exaltation" (Jn 3:14) to his heavenly throne that is an altar of sacrifice (Rev 5:6).³²

These theologians base their claims upon the biblical language used to describe Jesus' earthly ministry and his relation to the Father. Three sets of verbs in particular will be significant for our discussion: verbs describing Jesus' motion, especially (*ex*) *érchomai* and *metabainó*; the verb referring to the handing-over of Jesus, *paradidōmi*; and the verb describing Jesus' "remaining" or "abiding," *ménō*. Further, we will see that Jesus' disciples are specifically called to share in all three realities described by these verbs.

Both Balthasar and Ratzinger emphasize that Jesus' being is marked by movement. According to Benedict XVI, Phil 2:5–11 reveals that "he 'emptied' himself and, surrendering existence for himself, entered into the pure movement of the 'for.'"³³ Ratzinger's early theology likewise emphasized the exodus nature of Jesus' being:

31. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Dramatis Personae: The Person in Christ*, vol. 3 of *Theo-drama*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 153 (hereafter this volume will be cited as *TD3*).

32. Pope Benedict XVI, *From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, vol. 1 of *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), 73 (hereafter this volume will be cited as *JN1*).

33. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 221.

The *being* of Christ . . . is *actualitas*, stepping beyond oneself, the exodus of going out from self; it is, not a being that rests in itself, but the act of being sent, of being son, of serving. Conversely, this “doing” is not just “doing” but “being”; it reaches down into the depths of being and coincides with it. This being is exodus, transformation.³⁴

This exodus movement is a descent and an ascent. The descent is expressed symbolically in Jesus’ baptism, in which he enters into the place of sinners and suffers the death meant for them, “omitting nothing on the downward path into identity with the fallen.”³⁵ Following the iconographical tradition, Ratzinger reads the baptism as a foreshadowing of Jesus’ descent to hell. “Jesus’ descent into this watery tomb, into this inferno that envelops him from every side, is thus an anticipation of his act of descending into the underworld.”³⁶ Accordingly, Christ’s public ministry is marked by descents. After praying and choosing the Twelve, he “descends” (*katabàs*) into the plain to give his great sermon (Lk 6:17).

Jesus’ life is also marked by ascents. He goes up to the temple mount with the other devout Jews; this ascent is also, Luke emphasizes, the goal of his whole ministry (Lk 19:28). Ratzinger notes that this outward ascent accomplishes his “inner ascent,” which is his journey back to the Father, “the presence of God” (Heb 9:24), by way of “his self-offering on the Cross.”³⁷ Hence, the descent to the point farthest from the Father (all the way to the underworld) coincides with the Son’s ascending return to him: “The ascent to God occurs precisely in the descent of humble service, in the descent of love, for love is God’s essence.”³⁸

34. *Ibid.*, 230.

35. *JN1*, 20.

36. *Ibid.*, 19.

37. Pope Benedict XVI, *Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, vol. 2 of *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. Vatican Secretariat of State (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 1–2 (hereafter this volume will be cited as *JN2*).

38. “In Jesus Christ, God has revealed himself in his descending (Phil 2:6–9)” (*JN1*, 95).

The movement becomes more pronounced as he approaches the moment of what Ratzinger calls his great “act of the ‘exodus,’” the Cross.³⁹ Ratzinger emphasizes the movement verbs in Jn 13:1: “Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew [*eidōs*] that his hour had come [*ēlthen*, from *érchomai*] to depart out [*metabē*] of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”

Ratzinger might have had Augustine’s commentary in mind. Augustine finds significance in the meaning of the Hebrew word *Pascha*, which he notes does not mean “suffering” as it would in Greek (*paschein*), but rather “passing over”: “This name, then, of *pascha*, which, as I have said, is in Latin called *transitus* [pass over], is interpreted, as it were, for us by the blessed Evangelist when he says, ‘Before the feast of *pascha*, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should pass out of this world to the Father.’ Here you see we have both *pascha* and Passover.”⁴⁰

Jn 13:1 shows us that Jesus’ going-out (*metábasis*) or *reditus* to the Father is simultaneously the coming (*ēlthen*) of his hour to him. The means of Jesus’ return to the Father is the Father’s sending Jesus’ hour to him. We see a further hint of these vectors as the complex statement beginning in John 13 continues: “Jesus, knowing [*eidōs*] that the Father had given all things [*panta edōken*] into his hands, and that he had come [*exēlthen*] from God and was going to God” (Jn 13:3). This anticipates what will happen on the Cross, when Jesus will fulfill all things and hand over his spirit to the Father. He truly is “the one coming [*ho erchómenos*] in the name of the Lord” (Mk 11:9; cf. Ps 118:26), as the crowds cry out on Palm Sunday. Benedict XVI notes that the incorporation of the “Hosanna!” cry into the liturgy from very early on shows that the Church recognized this coming as made continually present in the Eucharist, a point that will require more treatment shortly.⁴¹

39. *JN1*, 73. See also *JN2*, 54–55.

40. Augustine, *Tractates on the Gospel of John* 55.1, as quoted in Joel C. Elowsky, ed., *John 11–21*, vol. 4b of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 82–83.

41. “Just as the Lord entered the Holy City that day on a donkey, so too the Church saw him coming again and again in the humble form of bread and wine” (*JN2*, 10).

The Gospel accounts of the Paschal Mystery show that Jesus' exodus occurs by means of a handing-over, indicated by the Greek word *paradidōmi*. *Paradidōmi* is rendered by the Vulgate as *trado*. In the latter form, the word's connection to "tradition" (*traditio*, or *parádosis* in Greek) becomes clear, as does its inherent ambiguity, expressed well in 1 Cor 11:23. There Paul explains that he "handed over" (*paredōka*) to the Corinthians what Jesus himself did and said before the latter "was being handed over" (*paredideto*)—namely, before Jesus was betrayed by Judas. Paul's tradition is anticipated by the *traditio* of betrayal.

The forms of handing-over in 1 Cor 11:23 are also anticipated by Jesus' continual handing-over of his will and self to the Father in obedience.⁴² But even this is not the ultimate term of biblical *traditio*. Brian Peterson argues that "handing over" is the prerogative of the Father, such that even Judas's betrayal (which could have been rendered more precisely as *prodidōmi*) is usually expressed with *paradidōmi* to underscore the Father's agency that turns even Judas's betrayal into an instrument. Thus, the primordial agent of the handing-over remains the Father. Beginning in the Old Testament, handing-over is a divine right; in the Septuagint, God is the subject of *paradidōmi* more than two-thirds of the time.⁴³

The Father's *traditio* of the Son into the world is distorted by sin into betrayal—being "handed over." While he remains fully in command of his destiny, Christ at the end of his earthly life nevertheless looks more and more like a ball passed from hand to hand.⁴⁴ After Jesus "comes forth" (*exēlthen*, Jn 18:1) to the garden of Gethsemane (an act memorialized in the litur-

42. Jesus' "I" "is an 'I' that hears and obeys" (*JNI*, 117).

43. Brian K. Peterson, "What Happened on 'The Night'? Judas, God, and the Importance of Liturgical Ambiguity," *Pro Ecclesia* 20, no. 4 (Fall 2011): 363–83, at 368.

44. As Frank J. Matera puts it, exegeting Matthew's use of variants of *paradidōmi*: "Paradox of paradoxes, the Son of God is no longer in charge of his own life! The betrayer (*paradidous*) has handed him over to the chief priests and elders. The elders and the chief priests have handed him over (*paredōkan*) to Pilate. And Pilate will hand him over (*paredōken*) to be crucified. And so, after his terse reply to Pilate, 'You have said so,' Jesus maintains his silence until the great cry of dereliction (27:46)" ("Matthew 27:11–54," *Interpretation* 38, no. 1 [January 1984]: 55–59, at 56).

gy by the transfer of the Eucharist out of the Church on Holy Thursday), he appears ever more passive, as the movement of *paradidōmi/traditio* moves into the foreground (as he predicted, Mt 20:18–19). Judas hands him over to the temple guards. The guards hand him over to the Sanhedrin, which shuttles him over to Annas and then Herod, before finally handing him over to Pilate. The procurator attempts to palm him off onto the crowds, but they reject him, so he hands over Barabbas instead (as Ratzinger observes, “Bar-abbas,” the counterfeit son of the Father, is the “alter ego of Jesus”).⁴⁵ After washing his own hands of the matter, Pilate hands Jesus over to the soldiers. After torturing him, the soldiers then hand Jesus his Cross.

In accepting his Cross, he has reached the end point of his *traditio*. He will still be tossed back and forth between the soldiers, like the die they will cast for his clothes, but his final *egressus* has now begun. The “all things” of the Father, which he has handed over to the Son, are summarized in the handing-over of the Cross from the hands of the Father to the Son, a Cross that contains the totality of Jesus’ sacrificial mission “to the end” (Jn 13:1, 3). John underscores this finality by noting that Jesus, “bearing his own cross [*heautō ton stauron*], went out [*exēlthen*] to the Skull Place” (Jn 19:17; cf. Jn 13:3). Many Church Fathers compared Jesus with Isaac, who went up bearing the wood of his own sacrifice (Gn 22:15–19).⁴⁶ Here too the active passivity of Jesus, even in the fourth gospel, is underscored.⁴⁷

The *telos*, the end to which his love is oriented, is reached when, “knowing [*eidōs*] that all things had been fulfilled [*tetélestai*],” he hands over his spirit to the Father (Jn 19:30, *paredōken*

45. *JN1*, 41.

46. John Cavadini, “Exegetical Transformations: The Sacrifice of Isaac in Philo, Origin, and Ambrose,” in *Dominico Eloquentio*, ed. Paul Blowers et al. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 35–49.

47. Pace Raymond Brown, who overemphasizes the autonomous self-direction of Jesus in the Passion account of John and in the fourth gospel more generally, partly because he misses the centrality of the Son’s obedience to the Father, in, e.g., “The Passion According to John: Chapters 18 and 19,” *Worship* 49, no. 3 (March 1975): 126–34. Cf. Hans Urs von Balthasar: “This passivity itself is an expression of his supremely active will to obey to the very end” (“Finite Time Within Eternal Time: On the Christian Vision of Man” [1984], in *Man Is Created*, vol. 5 of *Explorations in Theology*, trans. Adrian J. Walker [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014], 47–65, at 58).

or *tradidit* in the Vulgate).⁴⁸ In handing over his spirit to the Father, he seals the fulfillment of the Father's work that he was sent to do (Jn 4:34; 5:36; 17:4).⁴⁹

The *egressus* is completed in the blood and water that "came out" [*exēlthen*] from Jesus' pierced side (Jn 19:34).⁵⁰ The theme of water saturates the fourth gospel. While John 6 presents Jesus as the living bread, who fulfills in a surpassing way the Passover bread, John in chapters 7–9 shows Jesus to be the living water who completes and transcends the water celebrated in the feast of Tabernacles.⁵¹ That water was given in the desert to the Israelites, but they thirsted again, like the woman at the Samaritan well (Jn 4:13–14). Jesus, on the other hand, is the living water, as he cries out "on the last day of the feast [of Tabernacles], the great day": "Jesus stood up and proclaimed, 'If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'" (Jn 7:37–38; cf. Jn 4:14). As Cyril of Alexandria stated, "Our Lord Jesus Christ was compared to a brook in whom we shall find all delight and enjoyment in hope."⁵² Ratzinger sees

48. R. Alan Culpepper points out that the other two times that John uses *eidōs* in reference to Jesus also have eschatological overtones: Jn 13:1, concerning Jesus' knowledge of his hour; and Jn 18:4, in the Garden, concerning Jesus' knowledge of "all that was to befall him." See Culpepper, "The Theology of the Johannine Passion Narrative: John 19:16b–30," *Neotestamentica* 13, no. 1 (1997): 21–37, at 31. Culpepper neglects Jn 13:3.

49. Jn 19:28–30 contains a triple use of words deriving from *telos*: Jesus' fulfillment of "all things," the fulfillment of Scripture (Jn 19:28), and his last cry, "It is finished [fulfilled]" (19:30). See Culpepper, "Theology of the Johannine Passion Narrative," and David Allan Hubbard, "John 19:17–31," *Interpretation* 43, no. 4 (October 1989): 397–401.

50. See Herbert Alphonso, SJ, "Active Availability to the Word of God: The Mystery of Mary in the Mystery of Jesus Christ and the Mystery of the Church," *Gregorianum* 93, no. 2 (2012): 369–85. "St. John saw in the piercing of the side of the Saviour the whole mystery of Jesus Christ. . . . A double movement: from the Father, to the Father; this is the divine person of the Word" (373).

51. Frederick C. Klawiter, "'Living Water' and Sanguinary Witness: John 19:34 and Martyrs of the Second and Early-Third Century," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 66, no. 2 (October 2015): 553–73.

52. Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* 5.1, as quoted in Joel C. Elowsky and Thomas C. Oden, ed., *John 1–10*, vol. 4a of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 265.

the fluidity of the being of the Son expressed at this moment: “The fully opened Christ, who completes the transformation of being into reception and transmission, is thus visible as what at the deepest level he always was: as ‘Son.’”⁵³

Christ’s vector-nature, however, is not seen only in his humiliation, as though it were simply a concession to history, to be replaced by the glorious immobility appropriate to a king. At the terminus of his long descent, down into the underworld, a return movement begins. Or rather, since his descent to death and his ascent to the Father are seen by John to be one movement of glorification, the ascending nature of his descent is revealed. The first ascent is the Resurrection, which is frequently described as a movement: Christ “was raised up” (Acts 2:24).

With the Resurrection, Jesus’ followers are pulled significantly into the field of his movement, so much so that their locomotion comes into the foreground in the Gospel post-Resurrection accounts. Before the Paschal Mystery, Jesus’ movement is most pronounced, while the disciples follow in his wake.⁵⁴ After the Resurrection, Jesus’ motion takes on a different quality, as he is no longer in the world. The disciples, however, remain in the world (Jn 17:11) and replace Jesus as the visible protagonists who are always on the move, while the post-Resurrection Jesus is often nowhere to be seen.

This dynamic begins with the discovery of the empty tomb, when the angel commissions the women at the tomb to “go quickly” to the disciples and tell them that Jesus “goes before” them and that they must follow (Mt 28:7). In the meantime, Peter and John run to and from the tomb (Jn 20:3–10). Two disciples peel off and walk to Emmaus (Lk 24:13–35). Finally, the Twelve are sent away from Jerusalem back to Galilee (Mt 28:10). It is as if they are being trained in Jesus’ earthly *transitus*. As Ratzinger puts it, “The *metábasis*” of Jn 13:1, Jesus’

53. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 241.

54. For example, after Bartimaeus’s sight is restored, he is told by Jesus to “go,” but Bartimaeus’s movement is simply to follow Jesus on his way (Mk 10:52). The most significant exception is when the disciples are sent out on their first missionary journey, but here too the movement is explicitly an imitation of Christ. As Jesus instructs them for their missionary work, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master; it is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master” (Mt 10:24–25).

departure to the Father, “applies to all.”⁵⁵ This participation in Jesus’ going-out will be lived out even more fully in the grace of martyrdom (Jn 13:33, 36; cf. 7:34–36; 8:21–22).⁵⁶

Yet the movement of the disciples is not always a participation in Jesus’ *transitus*. Judas too “goes out” (*exēlthen*), but, unlike the other disciples, he goes into the night after receiving the morsel from Jesus at the Last Supper (Jn 13:30).⁵⁷ The fourth gospel takes particular care to describe the movements of Pilate, who shuttles between Jesus and the chief priests throughout the trial. To speak to the chief priests, he must leave Jesus and “go out” (*exēlthen*, Jn 18:29, 38; 19:4), while he “comes in” (*eisēlthen*) in order to discourse with Jesus (Jn 18:33, 19:9). But Pilate does not “remain in” Jesus, while the chief priests refuse outright to “come in” (*ouk eisēlthon*) to where Jesus is (Jn 18:8). This scene emphasizes that the going-out can only be fruitful if it is founded upon the prior coming-into and remaining-in Jesus.

This key difference between the believer and the unbeliever is expressed especially in the Johannine literature with the verb of “abiding” or “remaining” (*méno*). But lest we think this theme is idiosyncratically Johannine, let us first turn to two Synoptic renditions of the same idea.⁵⁸ In Matthew, we see a transposition of the remaining theme into that of “Emmanuel,” or “God with us,” introduced as the high point of the opening chapter (1:23).⁵⁹ Jesus’ name is given by the angel

55. JN2, 56.

56. Cf. JN2, 70–71; Klawiter, “Living Water,” 556–60.

57. Cf. JN2, 69.

58. A further exploration of this question would entail looking at Jesus’ experience of time. Ratzinger reads the apocalyptic “Son of Man” passages in the Gospel as speaking to the unique temporal experience of Jesus, which enables him to remain present to us: “he has his own ‘time’; he ‘remains’” (JN2, 50). See also Hans Urs von Balthasar on the question of Christ’s time in *Theology of History*, Communio Books (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), and “Finite Time Within Eternal Time”; see Angela Franks, “The Mission and Person of Christ and the Christian in Hans Urs von Balthasar,” in *The Lord Jesus* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, forthcoming).

59. Benedict Viviano argues that the Johannine author is often in conversation with Matthew, and he finds John alluding to the Matthean Emmanuel theme in 3:10, when Nicodemus states, “For no one can do the signs which you do, unless God is with him” (“John’s Use of Matthew: Beyond Tweaking,” *Revue Biblique* 111, no. 2 [April 2004]: 209–37, at 214).

as the fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14 (cf. Is 8:8–10). In Jesus, God is definitively “with” his people. This opening chord is played again in the very last verses of the gospel (Mt 28:20), where Jesus promises to be with his disciples as they are sent out in mission. We will return to this point.⁶⁰ It echoes in the middle, at Mt 18:20, “where Jesus identifies himself as the divine name, presence, and law. In a sense, this Emmanuel theme contains the whole Gospel in a nutshell: God is present and strong to save, in Jesus, in the Kingdom.”⁶¹

Luke also picks up this theme, in particular in the post-Resurrection narrative of the disciples on the way to Emmaus (Lk 24:13–33; cf. Mk 16:12–13).⁶² These discouraged disciples are on the move in a centrifugal motion that pulls them away from the core of the Church that will gather in the Upper Room. When Jesus appears and asks them of what they were speaking “while walking” (*peripatoūntes*, Lk 24:17), they cut off their self-propulsion and “stand still” (*estáthēsan*) to respond to him, before continuing to journey with Jesus (Lk 24:28). As they approach the village, they beg Jesus, “Remain with us” (*Meñnon meth’ hēmōn*). “And he entered in to remain with them” (*Kai eisēlthen toū meñnai syn autois*, Lk 24:29). When Jesus disappears after the

60. Or, to use another musical analogy, “The promise of the presence of God with his people is a motif that pervades the whole of the Bible; . . . it is a *cantus firmus* sounding throughout the Bible” (Ulrich Luz, “Intertexts in the Gospel of Matthew,” *Harvard Theological Review* 97, no. 2 [April 2004]: 119–37, at 129).

61. Benedict Viviano, “God in the Gospel According to Matthew,” *Interpretation* 64, no. 4 (October 2010): 341–54, at 350. Viviano notes that the “God-with-us” theme is not limited to proto-Isaiah but is rather an expression of the entire covenantal theology of the Old Testament. Viviano relies on David D. Kupp, *Matthew’s Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God’s People in the First Gospel*, SNTS MS 90 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Kupp sees Matthew’s presence-Christology as the key to the Gospel. I cannot treat here the possible relevance of *parousia* in Matthew and elsewhere to our theme; some readers argue that it refers most directly to Jesus’ realized presence (as opposed to or at least alongside) a future second coming. E.g., N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992), 462–63. See the argument and literature summarized in Mark Harris, “The Comings and Goings of the Son of Man: Is Matthew’s Risen Jesus ‘Present’ or ‘Absent’? A Narrative-Critical Response,” *Biblical Interpretation* 22, no. 1 (2014): 51–70.

62. See also the eucharistic meditation on this scene in *Mane nobiscum Domine*.

breaking of the bread, they hurry back to Jerusalem, to enter and remain in the heart of the Church (Lk 24:33).

This whole account mirrors and sometimes reverses the initial encounter with Jesus portrayed in John. In John 1:35–39, Jesus is the one walking by (Jn 1:35). Andrew and the unnamed disciple are the first to perform the essential action of the disciple, that of following Jesus (Jn 1:37). When he asks them what they want, they respond by sounding the *méno* theme: “Where do you stay?” (*Poū méneis*, Jn 1:38). Jesus invites them to see where he “stays” (*ménei*, in the present tense), which is also where the disciples choose to remain (*emeinan*, Jn 1:39). The reader has already been told that the Son is in the bosom of God (Jn 1:18), so the reader knows that the bosom of the Father is “where” Jesus remains.

John 1:18 ties together the themes of movement and remaining. Balthasar sees Jesus’ filial existence, his remaining “in the bosom of God,” as an eternal “movement” toward God (*eis tòn kólpon* in Jn 1:18, an accusative).⁶³ John presents the eternal “movement” of Jesus as one that is economically expressed in Jesus’ remaining-while-in-motion. “Since this movement serves the fulfillment of the Father’s will, every step the Son takes away from him is also a step toward him. Indeed, every stage of the journey is a continual abiding in the Father’s presence.”⁶⁴ Thus, Jesus’ remaining in the Father (Jn 15:1–12) has an economic correlate in Jesus’ remaining with the disciples, he the vine, they the branches. His eternal being-in-motion is now permanently linked to the temporal Church. “In the Son, [God] himself has become the vine; he has forever identified himself, his very being, with the vine.”⁶⁵

In the Synoptics, the motif of remaining becomes more significant as the time of Jesus’ departure approaches. At the moment of the Ascension, when it might seem that the promise of God’s presence will be broken, Matthew emphasizes Jesus’ remaining. Jesus ascends a mountain one last time in order to

63. Balthasar, “Finite Time Within Eternal Time,” 58, 63–65.

64. *Ibid.*, 57.

65. *JN1*, 259; see also the entire section of 248–63, which also explicates the eucharistic sense of Jesus’ remaining-as-blood.

give his disciples the new commandment of mission: they are to go out to disciple, to baptize, and to teach (Mt 28:19–20).⁶⁶ Because this going-out, this mission, participates in his universal mission (he “goes before” them to Galilee, Mt 28:7),⁶⁷ he will “be with them” (Mt 28:20). Here the apostles are caught up in Jesus’ going-and-remaining. “As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (Jn 20:21).

The Ascension is no mere symbolic movement but an actual removal of his body into the joy of union with his Father in heaven. But, in so doing, he leaves behind his body sacramentally in the hands of his apostles on earth.⁶⁸ “The Eucharist is a mystery of presence, the perfect fulfilment of Jesus’ promise to remain with us until the end of the world.”⁶⁹ After the Ascension, the sacramental nature of Jesus’ presence comes to the forefront.

This presence, however, is specifically delineated, as we have seen: the Eucharist makes present Jesus’ *transitus*, as a mode of presence-in-motion or motion-as-presence.⁷⁰ For what is made present is the whole Paschal Mystery, with all of the handing-over and pouring-out that marks it.⁷¹ In particular, the Eucharist

66. The literature on the “Great Commission” is extensive. For a summary of it, see Francisco Pérez Herrero, “Mission Following the Missionary Mandate of the Risen Christ,” *International Review of Mission* 95, no. 378–379 (July–October 2006): 306–19.

67. Jesus’ status as the one who “is before” is highlighted by John the Baptist in the fourth gospel: “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me’” (Jn 1:15; cf. 1:30). In the economy, this “is” of the triune processions translates into the “going” of the incarnate Son, as the next section will unfold.

68. Contrary to Calvin’s teaching of the removal of Jesus’ bodily presence with the Ascension, see Joseph Ratzinger, “The Problem of Transubstantiation and the Question About the Meaning of the Eucharist” [1964], in *Joseph Ratzinger: Collected Works*, vol. 11, 218–42.

69. *Mane nobiscum Domine*, 16; cf. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 1.

70. Cf. Jn 6:57, in which the Eucharist is connected to the Father’s sending Jesus.

71. “Is there a more abiding personal presence possible of Christ to the Church in its state of pilgrimage (*in via*) than in the sacramental form of his perfect, final oblation to the Father on the cross (Eph 5:2; Heb 9:14)?” (Reinhard Hüter, *Aquinas on Transubstantiation: The Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist* [Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2019], 61).

evokes the blood and water spilling (they “came out” [*exēlthen*, Jn 19:34]) from the pierced side of Christ. “For John,” Ratzinger argues, “the picture of the pierced side forms the climax not only of the crucifixion scene but of the whole story of Jesus.” This is because, “after the piercing with a spear that ends his earthly life, his existence is completely open; now he is entirely ‘for’; now he is truly no longer a single individual but ‘Adam,’ from whose side Eve, a new mankind, is formed.”⁷² Or, as Balthasar puts it, Jesus is given “as one whose life has become a liquid stream overflowing the narrow bed of his temporal existence.”⁷³ Thus, Balthasar argues that the Eucharist is the “liquefaction” of Christ.⁷⁴

Christians participate in this liquefying motion.⁷⁵ The Eucharist operates as an eschatological gift in its recipients, catching us up in Jesus’ motion: “The Eucharist is a straining towards the goal.”⁷⁶ For this reason, Ratzinger ties the theology of Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist to Jesus’ post-Easter existence, in which he enters into a new mode of existence: one of omnipresent self-gift.⁷⁷

His eucharistic presence is thus the post-Easter simultaneity of the real presence of his humanity and divinity in substantial motion. As the one who is coming-from and going-to the Father, both economically and (as the next section will argue)

72. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 240–41.

73. Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Tradition” [1970], in *Man Is Created*, vol. 5 of *Explorations in Theology*, 356–73, at 364.

74. In *Theo-drama*, vol. 3, Balthasar argues that the Eucharist “enables him to give himself away so prodigally that by the power of the Holy Spirit, he is ‘liquified’ and rendered accessible to all times and places, without forfeiting his uniqueness” (38–39). See also Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Spirit and Institution,” in *Spirit and Institution*, vol. 4 of *Explorations in Theology*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), 209–44, esp. 228–29.

75. “The Church greets the Lord in the Holy Eucharist as the one who is coming now, the one who has entered into her midst;” but more, “At the same time, she greets him as the one who continues to come, the one who leads us toward his coming” (*JN2*, 11).

76. *Ecclesia de Eucharistia*, 18.

77. “By virtue of the Ascension, Christ is not the One Absent from the world; rather, he is the One Present in it in a new way” (Joseph Ratzinger, “Himmelfahrt Christi,” in *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, vol. 5, 2nd ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder-Verlag, 1957), 361, as quoted in Ratzinger, “The Problem of Transubstantiation,” 241).

eternally, the Son is made present to his followers sacramentally, precisely as the one-in-motion. The two species of the Eucharist symbolize this tension between substance and motion: the bread that remains, the wine that is poured. As Walker puts it, “The eucharistic presence reveals him as the subsisting Passover, ‘I am who am’ in the mode of exodus to the Father.”⁷⁸ To understand this better, let us look more closely at a passage from the fourth gospel that anticipates Jesus’ post-Resurrection existence in the Church.

“And if I go [*poreuthō*] and prepare a place for you, I will come [*érchomai*] again and will take you to myself, so that where I am [*hopou eimi egō*], there you may be also. And you know the way [*hodōn*] where I am going [*hopou egō lupágō*].” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way [*hodōn*]?” Jesus said to him, “I am the Way [*Egō eimi hē hodōs*], and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes [*érchetai*] to the Father except through me.” (Jn 14:3–6)

This passage recapitulates all the elements we have been examining thus far. First, Jesus’ going-and-coming is recapitulated in the title “the Way” [*hē hodōs*]. Second, he remains precisely in his motion.

First, Jesus is the Way in two related senses, expressed in verses 4 and 6 respectively. He is the going-out to the Father personified: he is the very way where he is going (Jn 14:4), a point he has to clarify in his response to Thomas—“I am the Way” (Jn 14:6). Further, because he is the going-to the Father personified, he can also be the Way to the Father for others to follow (Jn 14:6). This Way that others can follow will be clarified through the gift of the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:15–26), who comes as Jesus goes (more on this in the next section).

Secondly, this following-in-going is at the same time a remaining-with Jesus, so that the follower can remain where Jesus is: “so that where I am [*hopou eimi egō*], there you may be also” (Jn 14:3). This is the “place” Jesus prepares, where the follower remains in Jesus. He will not leave his disciples orphans:

78. Adrian J. Walker, *Apperceptions* (New York: Angelico Press, forthcoming).

he will remain with them, because he “is coming” (*érchomai*) to them (Jn 14:18). This is surely a prediction of his second coming, but it is also a statement of a present reality: Jesus, as the one who exists purely as the vectors of going and coming, is always presently coming. His remaining is in the mode of his simultaneous coming and going.

As we have seen, the Apostles are incorporated into Jesus’ bodily going-out and remaining. John 14, with its setting at the Last Supper, indicates that the Eucharist is the primary way in which the Church, the mystical body of Christ, is incorporated into Jesus’ bodily self-gift. “The Eucharist draws us into Jesus’ act of self-oblation. More than just statically receiving the incarnate *Logos*, we enter into the very dynamic of his self-giving.”⁷⁹ This incorporation into Jesus’ going-and-remaining happens primarily in the Eucharist⁸⁰ and continues in the agapic action of the disciples sent into the world on the basis of Jesus’ own motion to the Father (“greater works than these will he do because I go to the Father [*pròs tòn Patera poreúomai*],” Jn 14:12).⁸¹

In short, the vector-nature of Christ, as the one who comes-from and goes-to the Father, is expressed in various ways in the New Testament, but particularly by the variations of *exérchomai* and *paradidōmi*. But equally primordial is the “remaining” of Jesus (*méno/menein*). We have seen that, even in the Synoptics, Jesus’ motion is simultaneous with his remaining—a state that he then enables and commissions his disciples to imitate. Jesus remains most profoundly in the Eucharist, as the one who is poured-forth, the earthly translation of his coming-from and going-to the Father.

79. *Deus caritas est*, 13; this sentence is quoted in *Sacramentum caritatis* [= *SC*], 11.

80. “Being incorporated into his body, being pervaded by his presence is what matters” (*JN2*, 60).

81. Ratzinger calls this motion of being-drawn-into Christ’s action “the inner” and “essential dynamic of gift, through which he now acts in us and our action becomes one with his” (*JN2*, 62). The action follows upon being: “The newness can come only from the gift of being-*with* and being-*in* Christ” (*JN2*, 64, emphasis original). Here again we see echoes of the theme of movement or action while remaining.

4. THE EVER-DEEPER STRUCTURE OF THE MISSION FIELD: GOD'S SUPER-MOTION

We have addressed the deep structure of the mission field, namely, the reality that man is in motion, coming from and returning to the Creator. We have further seen that this vector-nature of man is elevated and fulfilled in the Incarnation, in which Jesus' very person is constituted by this coming and going. Jesus' motion is, however, also a "remaining," such that he remains as the one coming and the one going. This incarnational reality is the deeper structure of the mission field. In this section, I will sketch briefly the even deeper—in fact, the ever-deeper—structure that underlies these two structures, namely the analogous, eternal "going" and "coming" of the triune God.⁸² This reflection will center around the truth that the divine Persons exist analogously as subsisting relations.

In the second section of this essay, in which the human person was seen to be a substance that also exists in an *exitus-reditus* pattern, the realities of substance and motion were introduced. The third section explicated that Christ's remaining coincided with his being-in-motion. Let us now connect the two sections more clearly by seeing Jesus' remaining (*méno/menein*) as a supernatural fulfillment of substance. In other words, substance is graciously perfected and fulfilled in Christ's remaining with his Father and with us in the Spirit. In imitation of him, our reality as substances undergirds and is perfected in our remaining-in Christ and the Father by the power of the Spirit. Moreover, Jesus' being-in-motion indicates how our ontological status as creatures in motion from and to God is fulfilled when it is incorporated into his state as the one sent by the Father. By means of these truths, we can find the original goodness inchoately sought in contemporary liquid narcissism.

82. An adequate explication of this trinitarian theme requires a much lengthier treatment than I will be able to give it here. See Margaret M. Tu-rek, *Towards a Theology of God the Father: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theodramatic Approach* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001); Angela Franks, *The Epiphany of Being: Trinitarian Analogia Entis and the Transcendentals in Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 2007); Michele M. Schumacher, *Trinitarian Anthropology: Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar in Dialogue with Thomas Aquinas* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014).

We do indeed desire “flows,” because we are made for flowing from and to the triune God.

If these analogous structures are pursued back to their source, we arrive at the analogate for both substance and motion, namely, the triune Persons who are subsisting relations. For man, subsistence and relation are not identical. Relations do not subsist in creation; they do not exist in themselves but in another. As Thomas Aquinas puts it, accidents (including relations) partake of *inesse*, in that accidents do not exist in themselves but in substances.⁸³ Unlike the Son, I do not subsist simply as *the coming-from God*; rather, *I* subsist. I am a substance, a creature who comes from God. My coming-from does not subsist but is an accident that inheres in me. Of course, it is an entirely necessary accident for my very being, as a finite creature caused by God. Even so, its status as nonsubsistent is shared by all accidental existence within the real distinction between *esse* and essence; there is always a hiatus between me and my accidents. But in God, *esse* and essence are identical, such that everything that is in God simply is God.⁸⁴ God has no accidents. Thus, the triune relations *are* the divine Persons, in whom substance and relation coincide.⁸⁵

83. For substance, see Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV.2, as commented upon by Thomas Aquinas, *In IV Met.*, lect. 1, n. 539, quoted in John F. Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought of Thomas Aquinas: From Finite Being to Uncreated Being, Monographs of the Society for Medieval and Renaissance Philosophy* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 80–81 and 199. Because of theological questions, Thomas modifies the definition of substance to that which has “a quiddity to which it belongs to exist not in a subject.” See the texts in Wippel, 229–34. For accident, see especially Thomas Aquinas, *In IV Sent.*, d. 12, q. 1, a. 1, ql. 1, ad 2, discussed in Wippel, *The Metaphysical Thought*, 234–37, and Barry F. Brown, *Accidental Being: A Study in the Metaphysics of St. Thomas Aquinas* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985).

84. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 3; and q. 28, a. 2 (hereafter cited as *ST*): “Now whatever has an accidental existence in creatures, when considered as transferred to God, has a substantial existence; for there is no accident in God; since all in Him is His essence.”

85. The Father “is this movement of self-giving that holds nothing back. . . . The action whereby the Father utters and bestows his whole Godhead, an action he both ‘does’ and ‘is,’ generates the Son” (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Action*, vol. 4 of *Theo-drama*, trans. Graham Harrison [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994], 323–24). I develop more extensively Balthasar’s treatment of the Thomistic theme of the missions as extensions of the processions in time in “The Mission and Person of Christ.” Cf. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 184: “The first Person does not beget

We are here discussing relation, but the phenomenon we were exploring in culture and in Scripture was somewhat distinct: motion, expressed as fluidity. This poses more difficulties than relation, because of course there can be no motion, strictly speaking, in God. Movement implies potency and matter, both of which God lacks, because he is pure actuality.⁸⁶ His divinity exists as pure simplicity that cannot coexist with any composition, including the composition of act and potency.⁸⁷

Traveling this *via negativa* is absolutely necessary for a sound understanding of God. Balthasar does not stop with the negative moment, however, but pushes on to the *via supereminentiae* when he argues that there exists in God something *to which motion is analogous*.⁸⁸ God does not have potency, composition, or movement, but he is the source of all these realities in the world. Balthasar reasons that there must be something analogous to such realities in the divine, without the potency and imperfection of creation.⁸⁹ The analogous source of motion in God is the vector-reality of the triune subsisting relations, in which there is directionality without potency or change.⁹⁰ “Processions” within the Godhead

the Son as if the act of begetting were subsequent to the finished Person; it is the act of begetting, of giving oneself, of streaming forth. It is identical with the act of self-giving. Only as this act is it person, and therefore it is not the giver but the act of giving.”

86. *ST I*, q. 2, a. 3, and q. 3.

87. *ST I*, q. 3.

88. I examine Balthasar’s analogical attribution of creaturely realities to God as their source and exemplar in *The Epiphany of Being* and in “Trinitarian *Analogia Entis* in Hans Urs von Balthasar,” *The Thomist* 62 (1998): 533–59. This analogical project suffuses Balthasar’s corpus but is found particularly clearly in “The World Is From the Trinity,” in *The Last Act*, vol. 5 of *Theodrama*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 61–109 (hereafter this volume will be cited as *TD5*).

89. For Balthasar’s repudiation of process theology, see, *inter alia*, *TD2*, 278–79 and 293; *TD5*, 513; the material in Franks, *The Epiphany of Being*; Schumacher, *Trinitarian Anthropology*; and Gerald E. O’Hanlon, SJ, *The Immutability of God in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

90. As Ratzinger puts it, “‘Son’ means being from another, . . . a being ‘from’ and ‘toward’” (*Introduction to Christianity*, 186–87). Ratzinger underlines this point by observing that the divine Logos is not mere idea but a

imply, as Balthasar says, God's "constant vitality" and serve to link worldly becoming with the divine Creator. He goes on to emphasize that these processions "cannot be described as a becoming," yet are nevertheless "not inert, but 'eternal movement.'"⁹¹ Eternity, for Balthasar, analogously contains and elevates all that is true, good, and beautiful in earthly time and space.⁹² Eternity is marked by the "superevent" of God the Father eternally generating the Son and both spirating the Spirit of love.⁹³ As such, eternity is "an absolute fluidity [*Flüssigkeit*] and, so, an ability to accompany (in its proper mode) the gratuitous flow [*Fluß*] of our existence."⁹⁴ This echoes Thomas Aquinas's "Prologue" to his *Commentary on the Sentences* (an essay that is a sustained application of the river-metaphor in Sirach 24 to the reality and action of the Trinity). As he states there, "It is rightly said of the person of the Son therefore, 'I, wisdom, have poured out rivers.' I take these rivers to be an eternal procession whereby the Son proceeds from the Father and the Holy Spirit from both in an ineffable manner."⁹⁵

word that is spoken. "Word" has an innately dialogical meaning (189). As a rule, Ratzinger stresses relation and maintains a more polemical stance toward substance. Ratzinger's mistrust of substance-ontology is seen most clearly perhaps in "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology" (1973), translated and reprinted in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 17, no. 3 (Fall 1990): 439–54. See also his "The Problem of Transubstantiation," where he sees the eucharistic conversion of the bread and wine to model the losing-oneself in signifying the divine (236–37). This extreme position implies that the loss of substance would be a model for all creatures. As should be clear from the rest of this essay, I consider that this polemicizing against substance misses the truth that substance is the necessary ontological basis for the "remaining" to which we are called.

91. TD5, 77. The last quote cites Adrienne von Speyr, *John*, vol. 1 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 275.

92. See Balthasar, "Finite Time Within Eternal Time," esp. 53.

93. "Both *being* and *becoming* in the Incarnate One express a single *being*, which, while we may not call it *becoming*, is the streaming-forth of eternal life, superevent" (TD3, 159, emphasis original). God "is the eternal happening of his own Divine Being" (Balthasar, "Finite Time Within Eternal Time," 54).

94. Balthasar, "Finite Time Within Eternal Time," 62.

95. Thomas Aquinas, prologue to *Commentary on the Sentences*, in *Thomas Aquinas: Selected Writings*, trans. Ralph McInerney (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), 51.

Eternity is the “ever-renewed mutual gift” of the Father handing over the divine essence to the Son and both handing it over to the Spirit. This recalls our study of Christ’s motion, which revealed that it is motion of a particular kind, marked by the stamp of *traditio*. Scripture points to the original *traditio* that happens eternally in the trinitarian relations: “All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Mt 11:27).⁹⁶ Balthasar calls this “God’s primordial tradition,” the eternal tradition that is transposed into time and space in biblical *traditio*.⁹⁷

Further, the eternal fluidity is a *traditio* absent any sense of betrayal; it is pure handing-over in self-gift to the other. When this *traditio* enters the economy, it becomes the handing-over of the Son by the Father to the world. This paternal *traditio* is made present in the Eucharist, which “perpetually renews the tradition, the handing over, of Christ’s body and blood to men.”⁹⁸

Hence, as Balthasar says, the Eucharist “ultimately means that the Father’s act of self-giving by which, throughout all created space and time, he pours out the Son is the definitive revelation of the trinitarian act itself in which the ‘Persons’ are God’s ‘relations,’ forms of absolute self-giving and loving fluidity.”⁹⁹ The Eucharist can be subsisting movement because the triune Persons are subsisting relations, existing in an analogous “loving fluidity.” As we are formed by the Eucharist, we are caught up in this loving fluidity. “Being a Christian means being like the Son, becoming a son; that is, not standing on one’s own and in

96. Benedict XVI calls Mt 11:25–27/Lk 10:21–22 a synoptic summary of Johannine theology (see *JNI*, 339–45).

97. Balthasar, “Tradition,” 362.

98. *Ibid.*, 365.

99. Hans Urs von Balthasar, “The Mystery of the Eucharist,” in *New Elucidations* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 118–19. See the explication in Nicholas J. Healy, Jr., “Christ’s Eucharist and the Nature of Love: The Contribution of Hans Urs von Balthasar,” *St. Anselm Journal* 10, no. 2 (Spring 2015), <http://legacyweb.anselm.edu/Documents/Institute%20for%20Saint%20Anselm%20Studies/Spring%202015/Healy.pdf>.

oneself, but living completely open in the ‘from’ and ‘toward.’”¹⁰⁰ The connection of our liquid lives to God’s eternal super-motion happens in the eucharistic “remaining” in Jesus. This remaining imitates Jesus’ constancy, “turned toward the Father’s bosom” (Jn 1:18).¹⁰¹

The eternal divine fluidity made present in the Eucharist is hypostasized in a particular way by the Holy Spirit.¹⁰² “Water . . . clearly forms the closest metaphor for the qualities of the Spirit, ‘subtle, mobile, penetrating . . . all spirits and streaming through them, more in motion than any motion’ (Wis 7:22–24).”¹⁰³ The Spirit makes possible a “fluid” interpenetration between God and man, in which the Christian is completely moved by the Spirit, provided that he allows the Spirit to remain within him.¹⁰⁴ In this, the Christian with her individual mission going out from and returning to the Church imitates “the flowing eternal life of God.”¹⁰⁵

5. MAN’S EUCHARISTIFICATION

This eternal fluidity undergirds our temporal fluidity, which is not a fall from an original monistic reality (as a neo-Platonic metaphysics would have it). While our fluid nature can be distorted, as I explored in the first part of this essay, fluidity is not intrinsically a negative thing. Our fluidity is meant to be an imitation of the triune self-gift that subsists. All this is possible only because there is something analogously similar to earthly fluidity in the triune God. Thus, the fluidity of man is not meant to operate “as a wave destined to subside into an anonymously flowing

100. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 187.

101. Balthasar, “Finite Time Within Eternal Time,” 58, 63–65.

102. “The Christian is ‘drenched’ with the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:13), a text that points to the relationship of the Spirit both to the water of baptism and to the flowing Blood of the Eucharist” (Hans Urs von Balthasar, “Charis and Charisma,” in *Spouse of the Word*, vol. 2 of *Explorations in Theology*, trans. Brian McNeil, CRV [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991], 301–13, at 301).

103. *Ibid.*, 301, drawing also on Rom 5:5, 1 Cor 6:17, and Jn 3:5.

104. Balthasar, “Charis and Charisma,” 301.

105. *Ibid.*, 308; see also Franks, “The Mission of Christ and the Christian.”

stream, but as a son springing forth moment by moment from the primordial fountain, the source of self-giving love whose eternal tradition it is to hand itself over.”¹⁰⁶ This is a “communion” with “primordial tradition.”¹⁰⁷ Like all communion, it is brought into reality in the Eucharist.

Let us understand this more deeply by looking more closely at the reality of blood. After its exegesis of Genesis 4 and the murder of Abel by Cain, *Evangelium vitae* contains a profound reflection upon Heb 12:22, 24: “You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God . . . to the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.”

Blood speaks, both the spilled blood of Abel and the freely sacrificed blood of Christ. Blood is life, according to common understanding as well as the symbolic imagination of Scripture. Every life speaks through its blood, through that for which it expends itself. As Karol Wojtyła’s poem “Stanisław” puts it, God communicates his love in two ways: Word and blood. “If the word did not convert you, the blood will.”¹⁰⁸ The Word himself, incarnated in Jesus, speaks through his blood and water, which are “the very life of God which is now shared with man . . . through the Sacraments of the Church.”¹⁰⁹ Blood poured out is the liquid word of poverty—total self-gift, relinquished freely, flowing into the eternal life for which it was made.

Poverty is the counsel that enables disponibility, or active readiness. Poverty baptizes liquidity into the ability to flow and move instantly in response to God’s call. Recall liquidity’s appeal: its strength in adaptability. Let us listen to Jean Pierre de Caussade on this point:

106. Balthasar, “Tradition,” 371.

107. *Ibid.*

108. Karol Wojtyła, *Collected Poems*, trans. Jerzy Peterkiewicz (New York: Random House, 1982), 181.

109. *Evangelium vitae*, 51. See also Benedict XVI, Homily on the Occasion of the Opening of the XI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (Vatican City, 2 October, 2005), http://www.vatican.va/news_services/press/sinodo/documents/bollettino_21_xi-ordinaria-2005/02_inglese/b03_02.html.

In the state of abandonment, the only rule is the duty of the present moment. In this the soul is light as a feather, liquid as water, simple as a child, active as a ball in receiving and following all the inspirations of grace. Such souls have no more consistence and rigidity than molten metal. As this takes any form according to the mould into which it is poured, so these souls are pliant and easily receptive of any form that God chooses to give them. In a word, their disposition resembles the atmosphere, which is affected by every breeze; or water, which flows into any shaped vessel exactly filling every crevice.¹¹⁰

This is the goal of evangelical poverty: liquid availability.

Poverty enables the “eucharistification” of man. As Balthasar says, the Son’s “‘having’ a human nature, which is given away without reserve in the Eucharist, is therefore nothing other than the earthly representation of the trinitarian poverty, in which everything is always already given away.”¹¹¹ The Eucharist is the substantial liquid poverty of the Son. In receiving the Eucharist, we are “con-formed” to this self-gift in a process Robert P. Imbelli calls our transformation into “Eucharistic selves.”¹¹²

This divine “liquefaction” might seem to be the victory of death and nihilism (as Nietzsche polemicized), but it is in fact the source of life and the wellspring of mission-identity. In part, this is because the Eucharist does not melt the solidity of man into a liquid collective, but rather maintains man’s substantiality. As the triune Persons remain subsistent relations, and as Jesus remains in his coming-and-going, so too are both the fluidity and substantiality of the human person preserved and elevated in the sacrament.¹¹³

110. Jean Pierre de Caussade, SJ, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, trans. Dom Arnold (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011), 91.

111. *TD5*, 516.

112. Robert P. Imbelli, *Rekindling the Christic Imagination: Theological Meditations for the New Evangelization* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 52–53.

113. As *Evangelium vitae* puts it, “Whoever in the Sacrament of the Eucharist drinks this blood and abides in Jesus (cf. Jn 6:56) is drawn into the dynamism of his love and gift of life, in order to bring to its fullness the original vocation to love which belongs to everyone (cf. Gn 1:27, 2:18–24)” (25). The

Thus, the contemporary mission field reflects the perennial mission field, one constituted by the deep structure of substances that exist as flowing from and to the triune God. The mission field is further undergirded by the deeper structure of the eucharistic Christ and the ever-deeper structure of the processions within the triune God. These structures are all marked by both substance and motion, right down to the ultimate analogate of the divine subsisting relations. The question of identity, which tends historically to gravitate toward either substance or fluidity, is rooted in the very nature of the mission field itself. The answer can only be found in the source and exemplar of both substance and fluidity, who (as Balthasar realized) answers the mission-question with a mission-answer: the Father, who gives a personalizing mission. But that is a topic for another day.¹¹⁴

In the *Theology of the Body*, John Paul II observes, based on Sirach's analysis of concupiscence, that "the man *whose will is occupied with satisfying the senses* does not find rest nor does he find himself, but on the contrary '*consumes himself*.'" ¹¹⁵ The trajectory of liquid modernity toward self-consumption is inevitable, because in a world in which nothing can be received, only self-created, the only reality left is the self that each has crafted. In the story of Narcissus, he is so captivated by seeking out his image that he starves to death.

In the face of this, the purpose of evangelization is to redirect the human person's consumption away from the self to his true food: the eucharistic feast that is the divine Person who enters so thoroughly into our sin-conditioned humanity. As T. S. Eliot puts it, "The dripping blood our only drink / The bloody flesh our only food: / In spite of which we like to think / That we are sound, substantial flesh and blood— / Again, in spite of that, we call this Friday good."¹¹⁶ From the gift of Christ's lique-

last biblical references send the reader to the passages concerning some of the "original experiences" exegeted in John Paul II, *Man and Woman He Created Them: A Theology of the Body*, ed. and trans. Michael Waldstein (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 2006).

114. See Franks, "Mission and Person."

115. John Paul II, *Theology of the Body*, 284.

116. T. S. Eliot, "East Coker," in *Four Quartets* (New York: Harcourt, 1971), 18.

fied body arises each person's true self, which flows into the gift of self to others. "If someone truly drinks from the source, the water he drinks becomes a source in him. The very source, in fact, that 'wells up to eternal life.'"¹¹⁷

The attraction of man to liquidity can thus be explained as a subterranean longing for the divine flow of life pulling him along the current of eternity. As with the other contemporary impulses, this attraction need not be stamped out but, rather, can be redirected in the Church. We are thirsty; here is the living water. We long to flow eternally; here is the eternal life of God given freely in the blood of Jesus Christ.¹¹⁸ □

ANGELA FRANKS is professor of theology at St. John's Seminary in Boston.

117. Balthasar, "Tradition," 372.

118. I am grateful to participants of the "Renewing Formation" conference at St. Patrick's Seminary (Menlo Park, CA) in November 2019 for their comments on an earlier draft of this essay.