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# A Reason Open to God

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**Pope Benedict XVI**, *A Reason Open to God: On Universities, Education, and Culture* ([ed. J. Steven Brown] Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013).

Pope Benedict XVI characterizes the challenge we face as a great “educational emergency.” But what is at the root of this “emergency” and how are we to respond? The problem cannot be resolved by means of technocratic solutions. Rather, it is related to our inability to communicate certainty and meaning at a time of a profound theological and anthropological crisis—we simply do not know who we are without God.

As editor of a collection of addresses by Pope Benedict XVI on education, universities, and culture, I chose as its title *A Reason Open to God: On Universities, Education, and Culture* to suggest what I believe is at the root of much of this “emergency” as Benedict understands it: a reduced use of reason, cut off, that is, from transcendence, mystery, and the question of God. These days, it is as though the only sure things in life were those that can be touched, manipulated, demonstrated, and empirically registered. Anything not “understood” by these methods is taken to be fundamentally irrelevant to human existence. Naturally a “reduced reason” has no small effect on the question of God and its relevance for human life. But are these methods the only ones for knowing?

Benedict’s answer to this question is clear in his insistence to *broaden reason* through a greater dialogue between faith and reason. In his own words, “A purely positivistic culture that tried to drive the question concerning God into the subjective realm, as being unscientific, would be the capitulation of reason, the renunciation of its highest possibilities, and hence a disaster for humanity, with very grave consequences” (235-36).

In *A Reason Open to God* Benedict XVI provides the keys to solving the “educational emergency.” He invites us into the “service (*diakonia*) of truth,” beginning with “broadening our concept of reason and its application.” (17-18). As I wrote in the preface,

The Pope’s contribution presents 2000 years of lived tradition with a striking newness that is able to respond to our contemporary problems. It is my hope that, once these texts have been studied, the reader will also see, as I do, that the contribution made by Pope Benedict XVI to this crucial and significant issue will have an enduring, historical impact. (viii)

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