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Reclaiming Balthasar's Theodramatic Eschatology: Revisions from Jacques Maritain, Joseph Ratzinger, and Bernard Lonergan

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Reclaiming Balthasar's Theodramatic Eschatology: Revisions from Jacques Maritain, Joseph Ratzinger, and Bernard Lonergan

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This dissertation takes up the problem of Hans Urs von Balthasar's purported resolution to the aporia between God's infinite love and the reality of eternal damnation, namely, his trinitarian theodramatic eschatology. Instead of being preoccupied with interpretive questions, I examine the logical rigor and precision of Balthasar's arguments, principally in his *Theodramatik*, in comparison to that found in Maritain, Ratzinger, Lonergan, and other Thomists. I also evaluate the arguments of some who have already criticized his work from one angle or another. Thorough analysis of Balthasar's fundamental claims yields the conclusion that his theological anthropology, in particular, his understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic, is lacking and detrimentally affects his eschatology. His eschatological position that all men may in fact be saved is a result, primarily, of the simplistic view of grace and freedom that he unwittingly assumes. His

theology of the descent, while at points rhetorically excessive, represents a legitimate development and does not necessarily entail universalism. Furthermore, while his trinitarian theory at times borders on the mythological (thanks to Adrienne von Speyr), his understanding of divine suffering may be appropriated in dialogue with Jacques Maritain and Joseph Ratzinger, with whom he is closely allied on many fronts. But in order to reclaim Balthasar's theodramatic approach from its tendency toward universalism (following Karl Barth), attention must be given to the twentieth century developments in the Catholic theology of grace, attention which he did not wish to pay to such purportedly "neo-scholastic" debates.

The growing consensus that has been emerging, at least among Thomists, concerning the question of the divine permission of moral evil, fills a lacuna in Balthasar's project, derailing it from the path of universalism and setting it on track toward a more robust theological anthropology. A critique of his monumental work along these lines yields a more balanced approach to the task of reconciling God's infinite mercy with the persistent reality of moral evil. The unbounded power of God's grace is not undermined by recognizing the possibility of created freedom to refuse His glory definitively; rather, the natural integrity of human freedom is slighted by an over-emphatic anti-Pelagian view of grace as either inherently irresistible or predetermined to be impotent. The intrinsic efficacy of

divine grace and the natural integrity of human freedom together must be affirmed. The eschatological consequence of such a moderate view is precisely a more modest proposal for how in the end God may be “omnia in omnibus” (1 Cor 15:28).

This dissertation by Joshua R. Brotherton fulfills the dissertation requirement for the doctoral degree in Systematic Theology approved by Michael Root, Ph.D., as Director, and by Chad Pecknold, Ph.D., and Thomas Joseph White, D.Phil., as Readers.

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Prologue

Hans Urs von Balthasar is recognized by almost every (systematic) theologian as one of the – if not the – most erudite, insightful, and proliferous Catholic theologians in the twentieth century, a century brim full of great thinkers. The work of Hans Urs von Balthasar has been increasingly engaged by Catholic scholars during the past thirty to forty years, particularly, since Pope St. John Paul the Great elevated him to the rank of Cardinal (an honor he did not live to receive formally) and the then Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger professed great theological affinity for him, with whom he and Henri de Lubac helped cofound the academic international journal of theology, *Communio*. His thought did not gain much of a hearing until after the Second Vatican Council, which he was not invited to attend. Although he did not rise to prominence until the 80's, he is often classed among the *nouvelle theogiens* and, indeed, he has much in common with those more directly associated with the foundation of the movement (e.g., Danielou, Lubac, Congar). But in the last few years formidable critiques have begun to emerge.

There is no doubt that much of his work is of inestimable value. It will certainly take time for the Church to digest all that he has proposed in his voluminous writings, but already a few of his more controversial theses have been questioned even by some who deeply appreciate his theological achievements. Indeed, there are lacunae in his thought, or worse perhaps, errors – dare one argue – in some of his more controversial writings. *Dare We Hope?* is commonly read

in America today,[1] but to encounter his more sophisticated and extended argument for the theodramatic eschatology that underlies this popular work, one needs to turn to his *Trilogy*, particularly, his *Theodramatik*.[2] It takes considerable stamina and vigor to plow one's way through this monumental work, which reaches a head in the eschatological conclusions subtly proffered in the ultimate volume of the second part, *Theodramatik: Das Endspiel*.[3] What has not

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[1] *Dare We Hope 'That All Men be Saved'? with A Short Discourse on Hell*, trans. David Kipp and Lothar Krauth (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988). The German versions for the texts comprising this English version are the following: *Was dürfen wir hoffen?* (Reprint, Einsieldeln: Johannes Verlag, 1989), and *Kleiner Diskurs über die Hölle, Apokatastasis* (Reprint, Freiburg: Johannes Verlag, 2013). *Kleiner Diskurs über die Hölle* (or *A Short Discourse on Hell*) was written in response to criticism of his *Was dürfen wir hoffen* (changed in English to *Dare We Hope*), and a subsequent response concerning *apokatastasis*, originally published in *Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift* 97 (1988): 169-182, appears as the final part of *Dare We Hope 'That All Men be Saved'? with A Short Discourse on Hell* and *Kleiner Diskurs über die Hölle, Apokatastasis*. When referencing this and his other major works, I will cite the page numbers in the English version followed by the corresponding pages in the German version referenced in the first citation of the work, appearing within brackets after the letter 'G' with no mention of the respective volume. In general, when there is an English translation available for any foreign text referenced, I will cite the English version followed by brackets containing the page numbers of the corresponding text in the original language after a capitalized letter that indicates the name of the foreign language in English (e.g., French originals will be cross-referenced in the form: [F ##]).

[2] Edward T. Oakes, one of the foremost Balthasarian scholars, agrees: "I regard the last three volumes of the Theodramatics as the culmination and capstone of his work, where all the themes of his theology converge and are fused into a synthesis of remarkable creativity and originality, and achievement that makes him one of the great theological mind [*sic*] of the twentieth century. Here, more than anywhere, is where his work should be judged" (*Pattern of Redemption: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* [New York, Continuum Publishing Co.: 1997], 230). Ben Quash agrees concerning the centrality of the *theodramatik* in the trilogy and in Balthasar's entire corpus, comparing it to St. Ignatius' *Spiritual Exercises*: "*Theo-Drama* is the most elaborated and mature staging, as it were, of Balthasar's dogmatics, and the most rewarding locus for an examination of what animates his theological work . . . In *Theo-Drama*, where Balthasar's legacy is at its richest . . ." ("The *theo-drama*" in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, eds. Edward T. Oakes and David Moss [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004], 156). Regarding the centrality of the *Theodramatik*, see Balthasar, "Noch ein Jahrzehnt" in *Mein Werk – Durchblicke* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1990), 77.

[3] *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 5, *The Final Act*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1998); *Theodramtik*, Band IV: *Das Endspiel* [Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1983]).

been noticed by many is the role that his theological anthropology plays in the development of what one might call his "subjunctive universalism."[4]

I will focus in this dissertation on some of his most controversial speculations, identifying elements that are acceptable to sound theological reason (in the estimation of this author) and those that deserve some push back. Therefore, any criticisms proffered in the course of the present analyses remain subject to the judgment of the community of scholars and the community of faith, and yet I strongly believe that I have identified the achille's heal of Balthasar's theodramatic eschatology, namely, his theology of grace.

The problem at the center of Balthasar's project is the reconciliation of infinite and finite freedom, of the infinity of divine love and the existence of incredible moral evil, of the immense power of grace and the terrifying reality of eternal condemnation. Working toward a resolution of this fundamental aporia, a number of themes come together in his *Das Endspiel*. He develops there a "trinitarian eschatology," which constitutes his response to the aporia that so plagues him, namely, the compatibility of God's universal salvific will, the infinite power of divine grace, and the real possibility of definitive self-exclusion from glory. His covert solution to the problem is artfully termed "subjunctive universalism." Central to this eschatology are: (1) a theology of Christ's descent into hell, which is at the heart of his trinitarian reflections, and (2) a less obvious (and simplistic) theology of the grace-freedom relationship. While Balthasar's "descent" theology has drawn much attention, the grace-freedom relationship in his theology has gone

[4] For this term and its contrast with "indicative universalism," see Michael Root, "The Hope of Eternal Life," *Ecumenical Trends* 41 (2012), 100. Many have noticed the evident universalist tendency in Balthasar's later writings, but Geoffrey Wainwright points out his fascination with universalism from the beginning of his career: "It is important to note Balthasar's long-standing fascination – beginning well before his acquaintance with Adrienne von Speyr and seemingly amounting to an elective affinity – with theologians suspected or accused of universalism: Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor, Karl Barth, on all of whom he wrote significant and path-breaking monographs" ("Eschatology" in *Cambridge Companion*, 123).

largely unexamined. The chief point of criticism in this dissertation concerns Balthasar's emphatic anti-Pelagian approach to the finite-infinite freedom relation, conceptualized in terms of competitive powers.[5] Discussion of Balthasar's problematic universalism has not explored the difficulties involved in his inattention to twentieth-century Thomist conversations on the grace-freedom dynamic (rooted in the early modern *de auxiliis* controversy), which may prove to be a pivotal weakness in his eschatology.

The twentieth century conversations concerning the grace-freedom relationship represent an emerging consensus, at least, with respect to the question of the divine permission of moral evil, against the neo-Bañezian school. But Balthasar seems to have ignored the debate as irresolvable and thus of little import to his project. Balthasar's eschatology would have benefitted much from attention to recent developments in the theology of grace (from a Catholic perspective). His controversial universalism derives less from his descent theology as such than from his weak understanding of the relationship between grace and freedom. In other words, the central problem with Balthasar's universalist eschatology is not his descent theology as such, but his treatment of the relationship between grace and freedom in terms of power, as if moral evil does not have its ultimate origin in the exercise of (finite) freedom rather than in the lack of

[5] Ben Quash states Balthasar's evident intention to the contrary: "Balthasar asserts that the world's drama has divine as well as creaturely aspects to it and that the two aspects need not be in competition with one another. He insists that the tension between finitude and transcendence will be disclosed as unreal for human 'actors' when their actions are transfigured by Christian obedience. The finitude of creaturely freedom need not be obliterated in the face of God's transcendent freedom; on the contrary, it can find its place in relationship with it, and so take on its own non-arbitrary significance whilst still remaining finite. In Balthasar's visions, 'infinite freedom *accompanies* man … in God's plan for the world' . . . [the loving freedom of the Trinity] gives [creatures] their own freedom, which can be sacramental of God's freedom. The perfectly abundant divine life . . . will not negate but can (in a way one cannot fully get the measure of) 'contain' and even enhance their freedom. Creaturely freedom will best respond to this by making itself available for a God-given mission, thereby acting in a way that is appropriately orientated to that greatest horizon of meaning, the eschatological" ("The *theo-drama*" in *Cambridge Companion*, 149).

grace. I will argue that Balthasar failed in fulfilling the task of maintaining the integrity of created freedom in the drama of salvation history, conceived eschatologically.

His universalism is further exacerbated by his Lubacian position on the natural desire to see God. Relevant resources for a richer understanding of grace and freedom that might solve problems in Balthasar's eschatology can be found in the work of Jacques Maritain, Joseph Ratzinger, and Bernard Lonergan. Ratzinger exhibits greater respect for the real possibility of human beings definitively refusing divine grace and a more cautious approach to the relationship between the suffering of Christ and the trinitarian identity of the divine being. Maritain offers a philosophically rigorous understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic with respect to the problem of moral evil and, consequently, an eschatological proposal that is more compelling than Balthasar's. Lonergan's theology of grace develops the implications of the "theorem of the supernatural" both with respect to the natural integrity of human freedom and the natural desire to see God. All of these contributions are necessary to reclaim or revise Balthasar's theodramatic project, thus salvaging his eschatology from the perils of universalism.

This dissertation will test the hypothesis that controversial aspects of Balthasar's eschatology, including its distinctive account of Christ's descent into hell, can be reclaimed by a more adequate understanding of the relationship between grace and freedom, as proposed in recent discussions.[6] It seeks to answer the following two questions: (1) what most determinatively leads Balthasar toward universalism, and (2) what can be done to reclaim his theodramatic eschatology from such a conclusion? It will, consequently, seek to purify his descent theology of his subjunctive universalism, dissolving the connection between the two

[6] Therefore, while there will be parenthetical historical judgments (e.g., regarding the influence of other thinkers upon Balthasar's theology), this dissertation is almost exclusively speculative and systematic in nature.

controversial positions by replacing the pivotal theology of grace that operates in the background. Therefore, aspects of his theodramatic project will be maintained, but a different solution will be proposed to the aporias that plague him.

The central theses of Balthasar's theodramatic eschatology will be treated in the following order. In the Introduction, three fundamental suppositions preceding his quasi-universalist conclusions are briefly presented: the divine universal salvific will, Lubac's position on the nature-grace relation, and his theology of the grace-freedom dynamic. In the first chapter, a particular interpretation or appropriation of his descent theology, the explicit foundation for his eschatology, is presented and defended. In the second chapter, the most determinative presupposition of his theodramatic eschatology, his implicit theology of grace, is exposed as deficient (excessively anti-Pelagian or "hyper-Augustinian"),[7] particularly with respect to explaining the existence of moral evil.

Next, revisions are proposed for reclaiming his theodramatic project. In chapter three, Balthasar and Maritain are contrasted on God's relation to moral evil in terms of the debate on divine impassibility, according to the theology of grace and freedom that underlies each. In chapter four, Balthasar's treatment of damnation is contrasted with Ratzinger's, particularly insofar as the latter approaches the trinitarian processions in terms of relational ontology instead of Christ's hellish suffering. In chapter five, the contributions of Maritain to the *de auxiliis*

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[7] I first encountered the latter term in an article of Thomas Joseph White, which inspired this dissertation, "Von Balthasar and Journet on the Universal Possibility of Salvation and the Twofold Will of God," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4, no. 3 (2006): 633-666: "It is because of his 'hyper-Augustinianism' inherited from Barth that Balthasar refuses the idea of such a permissive will in God as a 'dimension' of his antecedent will for the salvation of all" (650). 'Hyper-Augustinian' here indicates an emphasis on (or exaggeration of) statements in Augustine's later writings in reaction to Pelagianism on the efficacy of divine grace and the infallibility of the divine will (with respect to the inevitable resistance of human freedom). I will attempt to stay away from polemics regarding proper interpretation of Augustine.

debate are defended against neo-Bañezian critique, utilizing William Most as principal support.[8] In chapter six, Lonergan's critique of Bañezianism is presented as a unique posture (congruent with the preceding Thomism) between extremes on the topic of grace, in its relationship both to finite freedom and to the natural order in general. In the final chapter, Balthasar's universalist hope is evaluated in terms of the probable 'how' of universal conversion, and Maritain's eschatological proposal is argued as superior to Balthasar's in many respects. In the Epilogue, other evaluations of Balthasar's grand project are assessed according to the analyses of this dissertation, but the themes are treated in a slightly different order – thus the questions are examined in more detail and in diverse manners.

The most appreciative chapter with regard to Balthasar's contributions is chapter one, which presents and defends a certain construal of Balthasar's proposal with regard to the descent of Christ into hell for the sake of universal salvation. The second chapter is the most critical of Balthasar because it sets the stage for the major contribution in this dissertation toward reclaiming his theodramatic eschatology by exposing the deficiencies in Balthasar's own treatment of grace and free will, which is thoroughly underdeveloped. The third chapter is appreciatively critical of Balthasar by utilizing an author on whom he relies for his reflections concerning divine impassibility, Jacques Maritain, to point out where the two thought patterns diverge with respect to God's relationship to a world rife with evil, given that Maritain possesses a distinctive understanding of God's permission of human resistance to His grace. While some of Balthasar's trinitarian reflections are taken up in the previous chapter and made to fit with a more adequate theology of grace and freedom, the fourth chapter traces the developments in Balthasar's thought in comparison to those of Ratzinger, privileging the latter as more precise

[8] See William Most, *Grace, Predestination, and the Salvific Will of God* (Front Royal: Christendom Press, 1997).

and nuanced. Chapters five and six represent the chief purpose of this dissertation to present a twentieth-century thomistic theology of grace that is set to replace the lacuna in Balthasar's own theodramatic thought. Given the developments in contemporary theology of grace, both with respect to freedom and to nature in general (or the *desiderium naturale*), the seventh chapter confronts the eschatological dimension of the question by examining Balthasar's own "argument from hope" and comparing his conclusions with Maritain's alternative eschatological proposal, based upon the latter's theory of divine permission and creaturely nihilation.[9] Finally, the Epilogue seeks to tie together more neatly the apparently disparate themes successively treated in the preceding chapters by further engaging the relevant secondary literature. In the end, therefore, it should be clear that not only are many of Balthasar's reflections welcomed, but also that previous critiques of his work are equally subject to criticism, and that the revisions proposed here are intended to reclaim his project in a distinctive way.

Unlike any previous study, this dissertation attempts to purge Balthasar's theodramatic theology of its excesses and defects, principally on the basis of a twentieth-century thomistic theology of grace. Even though his universalist tendency is combatted and relevant speculations questioned (as extravagant), the principal task is to amend his theodramatic (and trinitarian) eschatology with the help of Maritain, Ratzinger, and Lonergan, while preserving a nuanced version of his descent theology.

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[9] Although I focus in this dissertation on Jacques Maritain's presentation of the theory, I acknowledge his indebtedness to his Francisco Marin-Sola; see Michael Torre, "Francisco Marin-Sola, OP, and the Origin of Jacque Maritain's Doctrine on God's Permission of Evil," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4, no. 1 (2006): 55-94.

Introduction: The Fundamental Problem with Balthasar's Subjunctive Universalism

Balthasar's Three Fundamental Options

Hans Urs von Balthasar's *Was dürfen wir hoffen?* ignited controversy in the Catholic theological world that still has not died, but perhaps few who have read it have also read his more elaborate, albeit in some respects less direct, treatment of the problem of the question of universal salvation in his *Theodramatik: Das Endspiel*. I propose that the two together provide an insight into three key presuppositions of which he is more or less aware and which logically determine his conclusion that hell might very well be empty of human beings. The three point to long-standing areas of dispute in theology in which one must make fundamental options, and if the reader of these works understands this background, he is in a much better position to judge the validity of his conclusions. With these disputed questions in mind and the positions presupposed in Balthasar's treatment of the question of damnation, I will propose the much lesser known speculative opinion of the philosopher, Jacques Maritain, as a better way to approach the definitive reality of human freedom in relation to God's infinite love.

The problem of universal salvation versus actual damnation (in the case of human beings) is simply put thus: if God desires all men to be saved (1 Timothy 2:15), either God attains the end for which He strives, rendering the prophecies of hell (e.g., Matthew 25) mere warnings, or His will is somehow frustrated and the prophecies are, in fact, revelatory of the eternal condemnation of some men. Many exegetical and historical questions may arise at this point, but I will limit myself to the speculative concerns. Balthasar evidently thinks that revelation is

clearer about God's desire to save all than it is about the factual damnation of some,[1] but he concedes the necessity of the scriptural warnings about man's real capacity to reject God's love definitively. The entirety of his argument indicates that he thinks revelation intimates a universal consummation that would seem incompatible with the damnation of any human being and that it obliges men to hope for the conversion of every soul, which itself is evidence of a concealed promise that the infinite sagacious power of God's grace may choose to persuade from within every finite freedom (at or before the existential 'moment' of death) of His unyielding love, which is personified in the crucified Christ who descends to the depths of hell and therein comes face-to-face with all sinfulness in purifying judgment. The most coherent construal of the Balthasarian texts would argue that because of the relative structure of temporality and its soteriological relationship to eternity in Christ, the moment of death presents an opportunity for the guilty to encounter the crucified Christ in a manner that may lead the soul out of the clutches of evil into a purifying judgment, but he refrained from such explicit speculation on the possible 'how' of universal human salvation.

Leaving aside the 'mechanics' of a universal conversion, about which revelation says nothing, Balthasar feels free to clear away a space for such speculative avenues because while revelation is clear about the consummation of all things (1 Cor 15:28) and even God's desire to convert each person,[2] it does not link the two together and, rather, contains an apparently contradictory strand of texts in which the actual condemnation of some men seems to be asserted (which he dubs "pre-Easter" texts).[3] Hence, he does not claim that there is a clear revelation of

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[1] "[W]e must frankly admit that a great number of passages really do speak of universal salvation . . ." (*TD* V, 269 [G 244]).
[2] See Ez 18:23 and Lk 15:7.
[3] "[A]ll the Lord's words that refer to the possibility of eternal perdition are pre-Easter words . . ." (*TD* V, 279 [G 253]).

the future salvation of all men to which we must respond with faith, as indicative universalists claim, but he seems at points to tend toward the position that there is a concealed promise of such to which we must respond with the theological virtue of (supernatural) hope. In the least, he says there is the promise that God desires universal salvation and that God's will is always fulfilled, that is, if He truly wants it to be (and He clearly does, according to Balthasar);[4] in this way, the theologian is left to draw his own conclusions, as it were.

It is because of his positions on three prior questions that Balthasar concludes we must hope for all men to be saved, implying that the consummation of all things ought, logically, to involve the fulfillment of such a will.[5] First, the obvious one: does God really desire that all men

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[4] Rom 9:19; Esth 13: 9, 11; Is 55:11; and Prov 21:1 are commonly cited as declaring that God's will is always fulfilled. If God desires the salvation of all (1 Tim 2:4; Mt 18:14; 2 Pet 3:9; Ez 18:23, 32; Wis 13:1), then how could any be condemned? Balthasar wants to say that if God truly desires all to be saved, then we can at least hope that His will is accomplished. But it is forgotten that, perhaps, even though God can be said genuinely to desire the conversion and salvation of each human being, His will may also contain other desires, such as that this salvation be accepted by creatures capable of nihilating the movements of His grace (that is, on the condition that such free creatures do not will to refuse His love). This dissertation should shed some light on the latter scenario.

[5] Some would argue, instead, that Balthasar merely wished to oppose claims to certainty like the Origenist *apokatastasis* 'system' and the Augustinian opinion that revelation clearly indicates the condemnation of many. See, for example, Jan Ambaum, "An empty hell? The restoration of all things?: Balthasar's concept of hope for salvation," *Communio* 18, no. 1 (Spring 1991): 35-52. See also Joseph Ratzinger, "Christlicher Universalismus: Zum Aufsatzwerk Hans Urs v. Balthasars," *Hochland* 54 (1961): 68-76, at 74-75, which preceded publication of Balthasar's most universalist works. Even Ambaum concedes that "Hope in the effective power of God's grace, however, may even imply some doubt whether hell still makes sense" (36). While this point of contention will not be taken up explicitly here, it will become clear from the quotations of *Theodramatik: Das Endspiel* that Balthasar leans heavily toward the universalist position, even if he resists systematization in favor of mere 'hopefulness.' He is not merely raising the question of a possible hope for all in opposition to Augustine's (in)famous restrictive view of election. I concur with Roch Kereszty when he says, "I do agree with Balthasar that, since the Church prays for the salvation of all, we should all join in that prayer. And since the Church prays for all, we should hope for the salvation of all. My reservation regarding his position comes from the suspicion that the logic of his thought leads not just to hope, but to a (consciously denied but logically inescapable) certainty for the salvation of all" ("Response to Professor Scola," *Communio* 18, no. 2 [Summer 1991]: 227-236, at 229-230). It is evident that

be saved (à la 1 Timothy 2:15) or is there some other way to interpret the meaning of such a saying? Some argue for a restrictive view of God's election precisely in order to be consistent with the other truth of metaphysics and revelation that God's will is effectual (i.e., nothing created can obstruct the infinite power of God).[6] Intangled with this tradition is the distinction between the antecedent and consequent wills of God. Some theologians say the latter is distinct from the former in its consideration of creation having been willed, some say in its consideration of man's fall, some say in its consideration of human sins altogether, and the sub-schools of thought abound. Balthasar is very critical of setting up such a distinction of wills in God.[7] Hence, his answer to this question is that God does really will that all men be saved. But it is not that simple. Augustine had not formulated the distinction, and so he had to interpret the text of 1 Timothy to mean that God desires men of all sorts and nations to be saved, not literally every man.[8] Traditional Thomists, however, will say that God really desires with His antecedent will

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Kereszty understands a point I will clarify in chapter seven, namely, that some things for which we pray may pertain to hope that is merely human (or not strictly theological), which is neglected by Balthasar's approach especially in *Dare We Hope*. It is true that Balthasar frequently affirms in the penultimate volume of the *Theodramatik* the possibility of final refusal, but it becomes apparent in the final volume that such 'real possibility' functions as a mere 'moment' in the theodrama of the finite-infinite freedom interplay. Keretszty makes the following note to his own text cited above: "In Balthasar's works I found the most credible ground for the uncertainty of hope in the assertion that, in some cases, a greater love provokes a greater hatred in the sinner (*Theologik, I: Wahrheit der Welt* [Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1985], xxi). Yet even this uncertainty about the salvation of all seems to evaporate if one draws the implications from what Balthasar asserts about Jesus' descent to hell. The escalation of hatred finds its unlimited limit ('endloses Ende') in hell. But precisely for this reason is the Cross planted in hell itself (*Theodramatik* III [Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1980], 314-315)" ("Response to Professor Scola," 230n7). This interpretation is corroborated also by the final pages of his *Epilogue*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004) [*Epilog* (Einsiedeln: Johannes, 1987)] to the *Trilogy*.

[6] See, for example, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination: The Meaning of Predestination in Scripture and the Church* (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, 1998), 206ff.

[7] See *Dare We Hope*, 23-24 [G 19-20], 184-186 [G 31-33]

[8] See *Enchiridion de Fide, Spe, et Charitate: Liber Unus* (*PL* 40), 27, 103.

that all men be saved, but for any number of possible reasons He ultimately wills (before any foreknowledge of sin) that only some men be saved (i.e., His "consequent will" is restrictive).[9]

This leads me to the next question: does one understand predestination (and therefore the influence of grace upon freedom) in terms of co-ordinate causality or sub-ordinate causality? What I mean to indicate with this is the following: Thomas (and Augustine) understood created causes as secondary causes participating in the prime causation of God, whereas Molina (in)famously thought it necessary to introduce the notion of "two men dragging a boat" (as a metaphor) in order to preserve human freedom.[10] If one accepts God as *ipsum esse subsistens* and that His universal causality therefore permeates all finite causes, whether free or necessary, then all free good acts performed by men are caused by God precisely as such (i.e., finite freedom is radically contingent upon the power of the supreme necessary being). If one thinks that God and man contribute different parts, even if unequal, of the free good act, where there is an ever so miniscule aspect of the act that only the man can contribute for the act to be truly his own, then he posits something coming from the creature that does not come to him from the Creator and the two freedoms are thereby, to some degree, placed alongside one another. Balthasar appears very much on the side of the Augustinians and Thomists in this debate, and rightly so.[11] But when one does not accept the distinction between antecedent and consequent

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[9] See Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *The One God: A Commentary on the First Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa*, trans. Bede Rose (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1954), 530-538.

[10] See Luis de Molina, S.J., *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione ad nonnullos primae partis divi Thomae articulos* II d. 26 §15.

[11] See, for example, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 3, *The Dramatis Personae: The Person in Christ*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 35 [*Theodramatik*, Band II: *Die Personen des Spiels*, Teil II: *Die Personen in Christus* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1978), 32]; *Epilogue*, 73-74 [G 56]; *Dare We Hope*, 209-210 [G

wills in God, ensuing universalism is almost inevitable.[12] I will argue, further, that beneath his subjunctive universalism lurks a less than nuanced understanding of the grace-freedom dyanamic, which if analyzed leads to significant revisions of his eschatology.

The third question pertains to the now hotly contested nature-grace debate. Insofar as it is relevant to the purpose of this dissertation, the question goes as follows: what is the relationship between the natural desire to see God and the theological virtue of supernatural hope in an intellectual being created with one graced nature destined for communion with God? Balthasar fundamentally accepts Henri de Lubac's thesis that God's infinite love cannot help but freely imprint upon the very nature of the intellectual creature a desire for the beatific vision that is innate and unconditional.[13] Although one may discern differences in their respective

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57-58]; Gerard O'Hanlon, *The Immutability of God in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 160-161.

[12] See White, "Von Balthasar and Journet," esp. 646; Richard Schenk, O.P., "The Epoche of Factical Damnation?: On the Costs of Bracketing Out the Likelihood of Final Loss," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 1, no. 3 (Fall 1997): 122-154, at 132-133.

[13] See especially, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 2, *The Dramatis Personae: Man in God*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990), 312ff. [*Theodramatik*, Band II: *Die Personen des Spiels*, Teil I: *Der Mensch in Gott* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1976), 284ff.]. See also his *The Theology of Henri de Lubac* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), trans. Joseph Fessio, S.J., and Michael M. Waldstein [*Henri de Lubac: Sein Organisches Lebenswerk* (Freiburg: Johannes Verlag, 1976)]. At certain points, he appears to sympathize very much with Karl Rahner's peculiar thesis of *supernatural existentiale*, integrating it with Lubac's thesis (see *TD* IV, 138, 165-166 [G 126, 151-152]). He seems to hold both that man is naturally open to the supernatural and that God instills in nature an orientation that is properly supernatural. At the same time, he says "it is possible . . . to relativize the difference between these two perspectives [namely, Rahner's and Lubac's]" (*TD* IV, 283 [G 261-262]). Hinting at the infinite freedom of divine self-giving as the most fitting way to approach the problem, he supportively quotes from Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Faith* concerning the *desiderium naturale in visionem*: "it makes no difference . . . to what extent and in what sense this ontological orientation [*desiderium*] toward immediacy to God belongs to man's 'nature' in the abstract or to his historical nature as elevated in grace by the supernatural *existential*[*e*]," identifying the latter view as Rahner's preference, built upon neo-Thomism, and the former as Lubac's, rooted in the Augustinian doctrine of *imago Dei* (*TD* IV, 283n53 [G 262n53]). However, later in his *Theo-Logic*, he explicitly sides completely with Lubac's thesis and replaces Rahner's supernatural existential with Guardini's "supernatural illumination" (see

treatments of the details of such natural desire, they agree that man in fact would be deprived of something concomitant to his spiritual being if he were not fundamentally oriented toward such vision.[14] The point in this domain on which I would like to focus is the relationship between natural human desires and the theological virtue of hope as a supernatural reality. It is also worth noting that if one holds to the innate and absolute desire for the beatific vision, then hell represents not only a loss of supernatural bliss, but also the destruction or unravelling of the nature itself that is created by God. Such a position renders the possibility of hell all the more grievous (or problematic?) since the non-attainment of the beatific vision would entail frustration of both the supernatural dimension of a man's existence and his very nature insofar as it is

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TL II, 96 [G 88-90]). The influence of Karl Barth is also palpable, although he states that "By denying the fact that created freedom necessarily involves a decision in favor of God and of itself, Barth contradicts the basic thesis of de Lubac's *Surnaturel* (1946)" (*TD* V, 207 [G 186]). See Balthasar's *The Theology of Karl Barth*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992). Regarding the similarities and differences between Barth and Balthasar on the nature-grace problematic, see also Ben Quash, "Von Balthasar and the Dialogue with Karl Barth," *New Blackfriars* 79, no. 923 (1998): 45-55, and David Stuart Yeago, *The drama of nature and grace: A study in the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, Ph.D. Dissertation (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1992). Regarding the differences between Rahner and Balthasar in this arena, see Marc Oullet, "Paradox and/or supernatural existential," *Communio* 18 (Summer 1991): 259-280.

[14] Even if it would be hardly acknowledged by Balthasar, I discern a significant difference between his and Lubac's approach to the relationship between philosophy and theology, which perhaps should have been translated into diverse positions on the nature-grace relationship in general. Compare Henri de Lubac's "Retrieving the Tradition on Christian Philosophy" in *Communio* 19, no. 3 (Fall 1992): 478-506 with H.U. von Balthasar's "On the Tasks of Catholic philosophy in our time" in *Communio* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 147-187. The latter seems more in accord with Jacques Maritain's *An Essay on Christian Philosophy*, trans. Edward H. Flannery (New York: Philosophical Library Inc., 1955), although certainly not identical, and the former with Etienne Gilson's *Christian Philosophy: An Introduction*, trans. Armand Maurer (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1993), c. 1. For Balthasar's Christocentric approach to the nature-grace relationship and its implications with regard to the autonomy of philosophy within Christian wisdom, see Angelo Scola, "Nature and grace in Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Communio* 18, no. 2 (Summer 1991): 207-226; Scola's article coheres well with Ratzinger's "Christlicher Universalismus." John Milbank also discerns a difference between Lubac and Balthasar on the grace-nature issue, but he practically reduces Balthasar's thought on the subject to Barth's; see *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), 66-67.

intrinsically tied up with that dimension. On the contrary, if one maintains the *possibility* of an everlasting state that is inferior to supernatural vision and proportionate to human nature as such (i.e., natural felicity *ad aeternum*), then the integrity of nature remains intact even in the case of definitive exclusion from the order of glory (or eternal condemnation).[15]

I will leave aside all the particular concerns involved in this complex question in order to focus primarily on the second presupposition, only treating briefly this third presupposition (in the latter half of chapter six and the beginning of chapter seven) before presenting Maritain's eschatological proposal as a more coherent resolution to the problems inherent in the fundamental options embraced (implicitly or explicitly) by Balthasar.[16] The central task of this dissertation, therefore, will be to dissolve the aporia inherent to Balthasar's fundamental options, which cause his tendency toward universalism, and replace the lacuna in his thinking with a robust perspective in the theology of grace (or theological anthropology).

An Introduction to the Central Argument

Now that I have briefly presented the three key presuppositions of Balthasar's subjunctive universalism, I will initiate a lengthy argument for a particular way in which to salvage, in some respects, the trinitarian eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar without succumbing to its universalist tendencies.[17] In order to complete this task I will first defend a

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[15] The potential concomitance of condemnation and natural happiness will be explained in the final chapter when Maritain's eschatological proposal (in place of *apokatastasis*) is discussed.

[16] Conspicuously missing, one might think, is Balthasar's doctrine of the descent. I do not treat it as a presupposition of his subjunctive universalism both because I do not think it necessitates such a view and because it is an explicit point utilized throughout his work, not a presupposition that needs to be explicated. Nonetheless, his descent theology will be treated at sufficient length.

[17] Even though Balthasar sometimes tries to distance himself from Karl Barth's universalism (*apokatastasis*), he states the following in his *Mein Werk*, in the chapter entitled "Rechenschaft": "Karl Barth – whose universalist doctrine of predestination confirmed what I had long been

particular version of Balthasar's doctrine on the descent, which will serve as a necessary background for understanding his eschatology.[18] I will then expose the over-emphatic anti-Pelagian[19] tendency at work in his understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic before exploring the compensatory approach to divine impassibility that is consequent to such (and central to the thematic of *Das Endspiel*), contrasted with how Maritain's understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic leads to a more modest (albeit still somewhat innovative) formulation of divine impassibility. I will then clarify how Ratzinger improves upon Balthasar's treatment of the relationship between the problem of damnation and the immutable identity of the trinitarian God.

Having set forth this foundational way of appropriating the soteriological element of his eschatology and curbing its potential excesses, I will summarize the emerging consensus within twentieth-century Thomism on the grace-freedom dynamic (with particular attention to the problem of evil), primarily by defending the position of Jacques Maritain (against neo-Bañezian critique) with considerable aid from William G. Most. This apparent detour into the theology of

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looking for . . ." (English translation by Kenneth Batinovich and Brian McNeil, see *My Work in Retrospect* [San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993], 50).

[18] Still, I am not primarily concerned here with matters of interpretation or exegesis, but of coherence and logical rigor.

[19] By this phrase I mean to indicate, historically, agreement with Augustine's later excesses in reaction to Pelagius, and theoretically, oversight of the legitimate power of created freedom either to reject or not the superior freedom of divine grace (in Augustinian terminology), that is, the failure to complement Augustine's "Multo quippe liberius erit arbitrium quod omnino non poterit servire peccato" (*Enchiridion* 105 [*PL* 40, 281], cited in *TD* III, 200n61 [G 183n20]) with the recognition that, whatever the reason, God created finite freedom with the autonomy, no doubt in the end to His greater glory, to choose evil and thus inherit destruction or not. The view that the latter choice itself is the result either of grace or the lack thereof will be confronted in detail. Although good can only come from God, such does not mean man cannot resist any evil without the power of supernatural grace. This problematic will be further developed throughout this dissertation, especially in chapters 2, 5, and 6. But for now, notice the difference between two other quotes provided in *TD* III, 200n61 [G 183n20], which he tacitly equates: "Nec libertas nec pars libertatis est potestas peccandi" (Anselm, *De liberatate arbitrii* I [Schmitt I, 208, 11]); and "Unde maior libertas est in angelis qui peccare non possunt quam in nobis qui peccare possumus" (Thomas, *ST* I, q. 62, a. 8, ad 3).

grace and freedom will appear as the central element necessary for purification of Balthasar's quasi-universalist eschatology. I will then transition to Lonergan's contribution to the debate by considering his treatment of both the second and third presuppositions of Balthasar's universalism mentioned above, where he counters the Augustinian tradition (as it develops in Baroque Thomism) on two fronts; his defense of the integrity of human nature in the grace-freedom dynamic is particularly consonant with his approach to the natural desire for the vision of God. Finally, I will contrast Balthasar's theological hope for universal conversion with the more plausible eschatological theory proposed by Maritain in logical connection with his understanding of God's permission of moral evil (i.e., the emerging consensus on the *de auxiliis* debate). The positions here adopted in the theology of grace, together with the subtle revisions of Balthasar's theology present in Ratzinger's work, provide what is needed for a revised appropriation of Balthasar's trinitarian theodramatic eschatology, purged of its universalist implications, precisely by dissolving the unnecessary aporias that determine the trajectory of his treatment of universal hope and by offering a better resolution to the authentic problem of how God's perfect will for His creatures may be fulfilled.

The central thesis around which much of the following analyses revolve is that Balthasar's eschatology unnecessarily tends towards universalism because of his implicit over-emphatic anti-Pelagian (or "hyper-Augustinian") theology of grace. His *Theodramatik: Das Endspiel* will be the most pivotal text engaged, but the following excerpt from his *Epilog* to the entire Trilogy most clearly exhibits the hidden foundation for the hope of universal salvation, for

which he most explicitly argues in his inflammatory, *Was dürfen wir hoffen?* Peculiarly combining insights of Augustine and Origen,[20] Balthasar states:

> [T]he biblical idea of vicarious representation . . . welling up out of this common ground that supports all individual freedoms. This is an idea that will be fulfilled in Christ's Cross, which 'takes away the sin of the world', for it will accomplish its mission from within this 'hidden background' of all those freedoms that are closed up within themselves. . . . Objective salvation must be subjectively accepted. Nonetheless, looked at from the point of view of the hidden background where all freedoms are grounded, we find an unshackling taking place: those who are fettered and are no longer able to free themselves by their own power have been set free. . . . an image of greater freedom (to choose the good) is presented to the rejecter (it is at this juncture that the discussion about influence, ultimately about the 'in-pouring of divine virtue', gets its meaning). In contrast to the idea of God conquering man, which would be unworthy of him, Irenaeus develops the image of *suasio*, which in its ultimate implication already points to the Augustinian *voluptas trahens*. As Augustine explains in his classical discussion of this in his book *De spiritu et littera*, this *voluptas trahens* is neither compulsion nor allurement from the outside; rather, it is the exposure of the heart's innermost freedom, a freedom that consists precisely in love for God and neighbor. The image presented to us by the term *suasio* is one that implies our capacity for exercising the freedom that is most appropriate to ourselves, one that has been graciously revealed to the human heart by God's ground of love (the Holy Spirit). . . . So it is 'God's work' and a 'concurrence [*Beistimmen*] in God's own freedom' (34, 60) whenever a way has been made straight for the Lord and whenever someone walks along that way, affirming the good. . . . The external *pre*scription [the OT law] now becomes the *in*scription of human freedom itself ['law written on your heart…' (Jer 31:33)]. But we must recall here that this transition can take place only when we sink into the depth of death on the Cross. Only this willingness to die makes possible the ascent of the highest freedom of the other in the very descent of self-surrender.[21]

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[20] One can discern in the following passage the influence of an Origenist understanding of evil, impugned by Ratzinger as immature and quasi-Hegelian. See *Eschatology*: *Death and Eternal Life*, trans. Michael Waldstein (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 215-217 [*Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben* in *Joseph Ratzinger: Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 10, *Auferstehung Und Ewiges Leben* (Reprint, Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 2012): 31-276].

[21] *Epilogue*, 73-74 [G 56]. Bernard Lonergan would detect an Augustinian understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic, predating the "theorem of the supernatural" initiated by Phillip the Chancellor, the further development of which he traces through Thomas' work, outgrowing in stages the limitations of Augustine (as well as Albert the Great). See *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas: Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 1, eds. Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., and Robert M. Doran, S.J. (Reprint, Toronto: University of Toronto, 2000), 18-20, 185-187, 210ff. This point will be addressed further in chapter two.

Notice that his descent theology merely plays the role of instrumental means in the scenario of a hoped-for universal conversion, while the most decisive role is played by an Augustinian theology of grace, which is nevertheless overshadowed by his recurrent slighting of the *de auxiliis* debates as futile and irrelevant to theology.[22]

While Balthasar may not subscribe to any particular Augustinian-Thomistic understanding of efficacious grace (e.g., that of the Bañezians), the fundamental operative understanding of human freedom as super-abundantly fulfilled by the infinite power of divine grace is overtly Augustinian. Although there is certainly room for an understanding of grace itself as intrinsically efficacious, when this understanding is underdeveloped with respect to the natural autonomy of created freedom, the question of the divine permission of moral evil is left unanswered (and becomes a larger problem).[23] Certainly, an exaggerated or unbalanced vision of divine grace may lead one to universalism without a Balthasarian theology of Christ's redemptive work, supposing the universal salvific will of God is taken seriously. Nevertheless, for Balthasar, the infinite suffering of the God-man is integral to the divine salvific will and,

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[22] See *Dare We Hope*, 23-24 [G 19-20], 184-186 [G 31-33], 208-210 [G 56-58]; *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 1, *Prolegomena*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1988), 48 [*Theodramatik*, Band I: *Prolegomena* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1973), 44]; *TD* II, 312 [G 284].

[23] The trinitarian "undergirding" of sin itself (see, e.g., *TD* IV, 325-27, 333-34 [G 302-4, 310-11]) points up the intricate connection that exists between Balthasar's implicit theology of grace and his staked out position on the question of divine impassibility. It also indicates where Balthasar sees the potential resolution of the aporia between God's infinite love and man's final rejection of His glory, namely, in God becoming "sin who knew no sin" (2 Cor 5:21), condemned for our sakes, separating out the good and evil within each person, and incinerating the latter so as to redeem the former. The argument in this dissertation will be that the reality of moral evil in its relationship both to God and man is in part misconceived by Balthasar. For a distinct treatment of the question, compare to Jacob H. Friesenhahn's Ph.D. dissertation on the relationship between the problem of evil and Balthasar's Trinitarian theology, *The Trinitarian Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Theodicy* (Dallas, TX: Southern Methodist University, 2009), recently published as *Trinity and Theodicy: the Trinitarian Theology of von Balthasar and the Problem of Evil* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2011).

therefore, to the economy of grace as a whole. Therefore, before exploring the intricacies of this problem, it is necessary to see whether Balthasar's universalist tendency may be undercut from the beginning by a rejection of his descent theology.

Chapter 1

The Universal Solidarity of Divine Love: Balthasar on the Redemptive Descent[1]

Introduction

Both the high influence and controversy aroused by the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar, particularly in the areas of eschatology, Trinitarian theology, and soteriology, is well known. It will certainly take many decades for Balthasar's thought to be sifted through effectively. While many theologians acknowledge the ingenuity and depth of his theology, the following three of his theses are sometimes designated as dangerously innovative: (1) a so-called *ur-kenosis* constitutes the trinitarian processions, (2) Christ's passion extends to the very depths of damnation itself, and (3) hell may in fact be forever empty of human beings. While I will be concerned in this chapter with the second thesis, it should be pointed out that the first underlies the second and the third for him results from the second (and thus indirectly from the first).[2] Thomas Joseph White, a Dominican scholar who has written a number of articles critical of Balthasar's theses, notes the interconnectedness of these proposals:

> [I]t is necessary to emphasize that Balthasar's goal in *Dare We Hope*, as in *Theo-Drama* V, is to envisage salvation from within the parameters of his own dramatic theology of Trinitarian self-emptying. This portrayal of redemption hinges especially upon Christ's descent into hell on behalf of the salvation of all persons.[3]

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[1] An earlier version of this chapter appears in the theological (and ecumenical) journal, *Pro Ecclesia* 22, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 167-188.

[2] In the next chapter it will become clear that, furthermore, beneath his view that the descent may empty hell is a particular (defective) understanding of the relationship between divine grace and human freedom.

[3] Thomas Joseph White, O.P., "Von Balthasar and Journet," 646. He continues, "Because such a narrative structures his theology, this same narrative consequently conditions his understanding of the role of human freedom and its final 'resolution' in light of the Incarnation and Paschal mystery" (646-647).

Hence, the proper context in which to approach a 'theory of redemption' in Balthasar is his understanding of God's very being as self-surrender, one of the freely chosen goals of which is the effective conversion of all men to His love.[1] Nevertheless, it remains a necessary task to evaluate the precise meaning of the soteriological element of his project.

In the soteriological attempt to articulate God's own solution to the problem of evil, there are generally two antipathetic streams of thought, namely: (1) those who see redemption primarily as satisfaction (à la Anselm) and consequently define the descent merely as a triumphant advent to the dead, and (2) those who define the redemptive work primarily as vicarious substitution and consequently envision the descent in terms of damnation. Since Balthasar adopts damnation language in regard to the sufferings of Christ, his interpretation of the meaning of Christ's kenotic love for sinful mankind is often accused of not being continuous with Catholic tradition. The typical 'Catholic' position, at least since the time of the Catechism of Trent, has been to define Christ's descent into hell as simply the triumphal rescue of the dead awaiting the Messiah's advent, resulting in an enumeration of different hells, where the 'hell of the damned' is that designated for those without faith in Christ (as either coming or having come).[2] On the opposite side of the

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[1] Balthasar quotes the powerful testimony of St. Benedicta of the Cross: "All-merciful love can thus descend to everyone. We believe that it does so. And now, can we assume that there are souls that remain perpetually closed to such love? As a possibility in principle, this cannot be rejected. *In reality,* it can become infinitely improbable—precisely through what preparatory grace is capable of effecting in the soul" (*Dare We Hope*, 219 [G 67-68]).

[2] Edward Oakes blames Augustine for initiating this development and points to some passages in which Thomas Aquinas elaborates the same type of doctrine in "'He descended into hell': The Depths of God's Self-Emptying Love on Holy Saturday in the Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 218-245, at 227-229. He says: "[T]o Augustine we owe the great boon of distinguishing – and he was really the first to do so – between Hades and Hell, between, that is, the underworld where *all* the dead dwelt and that realm of eternal perdition strictly for the non-elect . . . By virtue of Augustine's reply [to Evodius' letter] we know that it must have been a common interpretation that Christ had preached to all the disobedient souls and that Hades had thereby been completely emptied in the wake of Christ's presence there. Augustine

spectrum are those who, basing themselves upon Reformation exegesis, insist that the culminating point of the redemptive work was the damnation Christ was destined to suffer in place of the sinner.[3] I think, however, it is a mistake to relegate Balthasar's position to either side of the

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replied that . . . Christ's preaching among the dead [in 1 Peter 3:19] refers only to the metaphorically dead . . . [the positing of Limbo] also mitigated the doctrine of the full extent of Christ's descent into hell, so much so that manuals of theology in the nineteenth century explicitly confined Christ's preaching in Hades to this *limbus patrum*" (227-229). The latter were drawing off Thomas' *ST* III, q. 52, aa. 2, 6, 7, which rely heavily on Augustine's letter to Evodius (see Oakes, "He descended into hell," 229n21). At the same time, he quotes Brian Daley's *The Hope of the Early Church* noting that for Augustine "hell is not a permanent state . . . until the common passage of all creatures from time into eternity" (Oakes 228n15). In another article, he notes the apparently contradictory point that "Augustine, who certainly believed in a populated hell, nonetheless holds to a full descent of Christ into the hell of those languishing in their sins, however puzzled he is by the doctrine, and however much it might threaten his views on predestination . . ." ("*Descensus* and Development: A Response to Recent Rejoinders," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13, no. 1 [January 2011]: 3-24, at 9); he then quotes Augustine's letter to Evodius: "because this clear testimony [of holy Scripture] mentions both hell and its sorrows [in regard to Christ's death], I can think of no reason for believing that the Savior went there except to save souls from its sorrows. I am still uncertain whether He saved all those whom He found there or certain ones whom He deemed worthy of that boon. I do not doubt, however, that He was in hell, and that He granted this favor to those entangled in its sorrows" (see Oakes, "*Descensus* and Development," 10). Finally, in the same article, he seems to contradict the above on two accounts, the origin of the development and Augustine's position: "Pitstick refers above to Christ going down to *an* abode of the dead, rather than *the* abode of the dead. This might fit (ironically) with Origen's view, who distinguished Hades (to which Christ did descend) from Gehenna (to which he did not); but this is not Augustine's view, or Ratzinger's, or for that matter Aquinas's" ("*Descensus* and Development," 16n28).

[3] See, for example, Martin Luther's 1535 commentary on Galatians 3:13: *Luther's Works*, vol. 26, *Lectures on Galatians 1535: Chapters 1–4*, eds. Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hansen (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 277ff.; Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* II, c. 16, sects. 10-12, available on the Christian Classics Ethereal Library at http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.iv.xvii.html (accessed on 11/4/2014). Despite the common "substitution" model here, Oakes notes a difference between the two Reformers, aligning Balthasar more with Luther than with Calvin; I will take a different line of interpretation in some respects. "Martin Luther begins the arc near its apogee by taking the rather spare and ambiguous assertion of the Apostles' Creed . . . and openly avers a very concrete hell of God-abandonment that Jesus experienced: 'He descended into the deepest of *all* depths,' says Luther, 'under the law, under the devil, death, sin and *hell*; and that, I think, is verily the last and lowest depth.' Then John Calvin begins the mitigating process by attributing to Christ these experiences of godforsakenness only *as death approached* – on earth, that is, and not in any locatable, post-mortem 'hell.' Even so, at least the Geneva theologian insists that the descent into hell does refer to Christ's spiritual sufferings in his relation to God his Father, sufferings that go far beyond those of bodily death, for

spectrum.[4] Rather, in a peculiarly successful manner, he manages to combine the more traditional understanding of redemptive satisfaction with the more modern substitutionary approach to the redemption,[5] which seems to be demanded at least by a few of the great patristic authors (such as

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in approaching death Jesus had to 'grapple hand to hand with the armies of hell and the dread of everlasting death.' Nonetheless, these were for Calvin clearly sufferings that Jesus underwent *in the course of* his passion and death, not after death . . ." (Oakes, "He descended into hell," 221-222). Pitstick has a different account of the genesis of the modern theories: "Note the shifts in location, time and character [concerning a descent to hell as a realm]: from the abode of holy souls (the traditional doctrine) to hell proper (Nicholas [of Cusa]) to either hell proper or this world (Luther); from after Christ's death (the traditional doctrine and Nicholas) to before it (Luther); from no pain (the traditional doctrine) to the *poena sensus* (Nicholas) to more spiritual agonies (Luther). This trajectory is fixed in Calvin, who rejects any idea of descent to a realm after death and strengthens the notion of Christ's suffering the pains of damnation. . . . while returning the descent to the time after Christ's death, Balthasar goes beyond Luther and Calvin in the other respects to hold that the Son experiences God-abandonment in his divine relation to the Father" ("Development of Doctrine, or Denial? Balthasar's Holy Saturday and Newman's *Essay*," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11 (2009): 131-145, at 140). See also Balthasar's brief comparisons of Calvin and Luther in *TD* IV, 292 [G 270-271] and *MP*, 169-170. I will not enter into the historical developments in the various doctrines on the descent of Christ, but I will argue that there is at least a basis in Balthasar's later writings for understanding Holy Saturday as a metaphorical day that extends liturgically the sufferings historically undergone before and in the event of death on Friday, a position apparently adopted by Ratzinger (see chapter four below).

[4] For Balthasar's relationship to the Reformers, see Rodney A. Howsare, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and Protestantism: The Ecumenical Implications of His Theological Style* (New York: T&T Clarke International, 2005).

[5] Karen Kilby, in her *Balthasar: a (very) critical introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), alludes to this point and a few others made here concerning his soteriology on 102. Although the overall thrust of her critique of Balthasar is very much valid and welcome, shortcomings will be noted later on. For Balthasar's defense of Anselm's theory, see especially *TD* III, 240ff [G 220ff]. As Andrew Louth notes, in *Cordula oder der Erstfall* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1966), Balthasar criticizes Karl Rahner in the same breath both for not understanding the redemption in substitutionary terms and for harping on the legalistic dimension of Anselm's satisfaction theory (see Louth, "The Place of *Heart of the World* in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar" in *The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. John Riches [Edinburgh: T&T Clarke Ltd., 1986]). Despite his well known esteem for the redemption as *Stellvertretung*, he wishes to go beyond it (ergo, including aspects of other theories of redemption): "Bearing in mind what we said in *Theo-Drama* IV, 284ff., we must ask whether the notion of mere 'substitution' is adequate, or whether this concept, when applied to Christ, does not automatically include an element – a trinitarian element – that lifts it above the mere physical or legal plane. This implies that the Bearer of the world's sin does not simply suffer 'hell' in our place: something unique is going on here that cannot be comprehended by the notion of mere exchange of places" (*TD* V, 272 [G 246]]). His comments hint at the distinction between

Origen, Athanasius, and Cyprian).[6] I think, in attempting to balance out the hard leaning of the post-Tridentine Church to one side of the spectrum, his doctrine of the descent yields a highly developed understanding of the atonement not typically found in Catholic and Protestant thinkers alike.[7] I will, therefore, take issue with a couple Catholic thinkers who have placed Balthasar in the so-called Calvinistic camp, acknowledging that sometimes Balthasar's language may include rhetorical excess (erring on the side of art or existential feeling in contradistinction to sapiential science) but emphasizing the potential for legitimate ecumenical advantage in a more balanced approach to the question. With a little careful exegesis of certain Balthasarian texts and a more

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inclusive versus exclusive representation. For the latter, see Albrecht Ritschl, *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine*, trans. H. R. Mackintosh, ed. A. B. Macaulay, 546ff. (Clifton, NJ: Reference Book Publishers, 1966); German original in 1874. For a more recent discussion of these categories, see Wolfhart Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, vol. 2, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 429ff.

[6] In his "historical outline" of soteriology, Balthasar wants to give credit to a few Catholic thinkers who have extended the ancient theme of solidarity toward the dimension of substitution: "The idea that Jesus, in being forsaken by God, experienced the *poena damni*, at least analogously, is also found in Catholic thinkers such as Blondel, Danielou, and Martelet. However we view the idea of 'punishment' when applied to the Cross, we must agree with J. Galot when he says that the idea of solidarity is insufficient, without that of representative ('vicarious') suffering, to express the force of the biblical affirmation. 'There is solidarity, it is true, but it extends as far as substitution: Christ's solidarity with us goes as far as taking our place and allowing the whole weight of human guilt to fall upon him'" (*TD* IV, 297 [G 275-276]).

[7] He both defends Anselm against popular critiques (see, e.g., *TD* IV, 255ff. [G 235ff.]) and treats Luther's innovative approach very sympathetically (see *TD* IV, 284ff. [G 263ff.]), even though he critiques aspects of both as well. Ben Quash notes: "Balthasar's introduction to his main discussion of soteriology in volume iv deliberately eschews any facile reduction of Christ's saving work to one explanatory theory or metaphoric image. Here, in this pursuit of the meaning of the Cross into the dark space of Holy Saturday, we see him articulating a doctrine of salvation that has both substitutionary (or representative), and participatory aspects" ("The *theo-drama*" in *Cambridge Companion*, 154). Gerard O'Hanlon says, "For Balthasar's discriminating acceptance of the original theological contribution by Luther to this issue [of the Pauline *pro nobis*], see *TD*, III, 221-5, 295f. . . . Balthasar's concern is to bring the notions of solidarity and substitution together – see *TD*, III, 245-6. For one-sided treatments of solidarity, see *TD*, III, 247-62, and of substitution, *ibid.*, 263-91" (*The Immutability of God*, 185nn73-76). Balthasar explicitly links solidarity and representation in *TD* III, 239n35 [G 220n12].

rigorous analysis of the reflections therein, the coherence of his doctrine on the descent becomes evident and its continuity with Christian tradition becomes less questionable.

Balthasar's approach to the Holy Saturday doctrine is more nuanced than many would like to admit. The first step is to undermine the 'traditional' division of hell into distinct spheres, noting, for example, that before Christ "Sheol is more and more equated with Gehenna, the preliminary place of punishment."[8] The next and more significant step is to emphasize that the sufferings of Christ must in fact exceed (in some sense) all the pains associated with the judgment of justice and the pain of loss.[9] Joseph Ratzinger supports such innovation on both accounts, identifying the Judeo-Christian concept of hell primarily with death and the land of the dead (Sheol or Hades), and teaching that the descent of Christ into such a 'state of being' must involve tremendous suffering.[10] It is perhaps less clear in Balthasar's case where the continuity lies

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[8] *TD* V, 354 [G 323]. Nevertheless, he says in *TD* IV that with the issuing in of the New Covenant, "we now find that the 'eternal fire' of Gehenna has opened up below Sheol (Mt 5:22, 29f.; 10:28; 18:9; 23:33; 25:41), balancing, as it were, the heaven that is now open to all" (178 [G 164]). Again, "in the era after Christ 'Gehenna' is sometimes given a purifying function" (*TD* V, 361-362 [G 330]); he then elaborates on the purificatory dimension of judgment. His identification of the Old Testament *Sheol* with *Gehenna* allows him to affirm that although Christ cannot be said to have suffered the New Testament hell proper, his hell encompasses the eschatological "No" and the deepest possible suffering; see *MP*, 172-173 [G 246-247] and *TD* V, 199 and 354. Therefore, it seems he wants to indicate simply that everyone was consigned to the same realm of perdition before Christ and that everyone is destined for hell antecedent to Christ's redemptive descent. Hence, he also states: "both 'paradise' and 'Gehenna' remain polyvalent, and receive their theological unequivocalness only through the event of Holy Saturday" (*The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 7, *Theology: The New Covenant*, trans. Brian McNeil, ed. John Riches [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989], 229n3.

[9] See *TD* V, 256 [G 231].

[10] See Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 300-301; *Einfuhrung in das Christentum* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch, 1971), 220-221. In the context of the Kierkegaardian concept of *angst* and Sartre's development of it, Ratzinger notes that the scholarly consensus that *Sheol* referred both to death and hell only furthers the argument that the hell preceding redemption is precisely the utter loneliness Christ came to transform by descending into its depths, which nevertheless is consequently distinguished from the hell of those who finally reject such redemption. Edward Oakes also cites Ratzinger's preface to a book of meditations on Holy Week accompanied by the artwork of William Congdon, commenting: "I do

between a kenotic approach to the descent and the trajectory of early Christian teaching.[11] It may help to ask: if, according to St. Paul, Christ assumed in His own flesh the very sinfulness of mankind,[12] would not the 'hell' into which He descended in His passion encompass even the hell consequent to unbelief? In this case, God became a vicarious victim not merely of the past but perhaps, most of all, of the future rejection of His own messianic message. I will leave aside the eschatological implications of an eminently kenotic understanding of the descent in order to approach the most common problem theologians have with Balthasar on the descent, namely, how it may be possible for Christ to suffer the hell of those who finally reject divine *caritas*.[13] One

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not need to rely on Balthasar but rather on Ratzinger, who insists that the whole point of the descent is to transform an undifferentiated pre-Christian underworld into the 'chambers' now familiar in Christian teaching: purgatory and hell. One of his more explicit statements of this position comes . . . as a commentary on a modern artist's depictions of the mystery of the Easter Triduum . . . Therefore, I hold that one cannot claim, with Pitstick, that there is any such thing as a pre-Christian purgatory" ("*Descensus* and Development," 20-21); see Joseph Ratzinger and William Congdon, *The Sabbath of History* (Washington, DC: The William G. Congdon Foundation, 2000), 21-22. It is odd that Oakes does not notice in the comments of Ratzinger not only greater clarity regarding the distinction of abodes after Christ's death, but also the, at least implicit, allocation of Christ's hellish sufferings, historically, to the experience of death on Friday, even though Saturday constitutes a distinct liturgical reality focusing on the significance of his being-dead.

[11] Jacques Servais, in a postscript to translated conferences of Balthasar, says: "In an extreme position justified by none of the scriptural witnesses, Luther went so far as to declare Christ 'damned'. Careful not to cross such a line himself, von Balthasar nevertheless tries to transcend the extrinsicism of the traditional Thomist solution, in which the offense and reparation for the offense remain exterior to each other . . . demanding that [Christ] freely assume the inner condition of the sinner. In order to join the latter in his own freedom, the undertaking in his favor must in fact take place, according to [Balthasar], there in the very place where the refusal and curse took place" (*To the Heart of the Mystery of Redemption*, trans. Anne Englund Nash [San Francisco: Ignatius, 2010], 100-101). Referring to these conferences, Gerard O'Hanlon says, "This is a simple précis of what appears in greater depth and detail in Balthasar's main soteriological work. [sic] *TD* III [*TD* IV in English]. . ." (*The Immutability of God*, 29); the text was originally published, *Au Coeur du Mystére Redempteur* (Paris, 1980).

[12] See, for example, Romans 8:3, 2 Corinthians 5:21, and Galatians 3:13.

[13] I do not mean here to imply that Christ becomes damned (that is, literally suffers "the second death"), which will be further clarified in chapter four below when Balthasar and Ratzinger are contrasted on the matter of hell and God's relationship to it. In fact, the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church* explicitly condemns such a view, which logically involves a form of universalism (see *CCC*, no. 633). Margaret Turek defends Balthasar's position on the descent as orthodox with

aspect of the problem is precisely how divine grace can be said to remain in a soul (or better, a person) that plumbs the depths of condemnation, and another aspect of the same problem is precisely how the sufferings celebrated on Good Friday and Holy Saturday, respectively, are to be related to one another in the redemptive work of Christ as a whole.

Brief Exposition of Balthasar's Position

It is important, though, to begin with how Balthasar conceives the divine motive necessitating such a profound 'descent' into the sufferings of sinful man. He takes from Barth (against Moltmann) the notion that all the suffering attributed to God is not in the end caused by any creature but ultimately derives from God's own infinite freedom.[14] But he offers a corrective to Barth (as he understands him) in saying that the condemnation assumed by Christ is not simply a vicarious substitution for the sinner – rather, it is a reflection of the infinite love that is God Himself and it in fact goes beyond any pain that is due sin.[15] Thus, the root and ground for the

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the following "clarification" of current Church teaching: "when the new *Catechism* echoes the Council of Rome in teaching that Christ, by his descent into Sheol, frees 'the just who had gone before him' (CCC, #633; see DS 587), it must be kept in mind that 'the just' have been rendered so precisely by virtue of the grace issuing from the Son's death, descent, and resurrection, which grace is extended to every human being of every time and place (see *CCC*, 634). What is ruled out, however, is conceiving that Christ descended into Sheol 'to deliver the damned, or to destroy the hell of damnation' (*CCC*, #633) – which means . . . that we cannot interpret the redemptive effects of Christ's descent as extending to the 'fallen' angels, nor (concerning *human* freedom to which the grace of the redemption *does* extend) as making it impossible for human beings to refuse to correspond to God's saving love unto their own perdition, nor as providing the possibility of conversion after death" ("Dare We Hope 'That All Men Be Saved' (1 Tim 2:4)?: On von Balthasar's Trinitarian Grounds for Christian Hope," *Logos* 1 (1997): 92-121," 121n69). I am merely arguing here that the 'hell' Christ suffers is worse than the hell suffered by any creature, even though he did not historically suffer the "second death" for which those who definitively refuse salvation are destined, because the endurance of His soul in divine grace (by virtue of the hypostatic union) does not mitigate but intensifies His suffering.

[14] See *TD* V, 237 [G 214].

[15] See *TD* V, 277 [G 251]. Still, Balthasar does not always clearly distance himself from crude expressions of penal substitution. Hence, Thomas G. Weinandy says: "Jesus' experience of the wrath of God should not then be interpreted in what is commonly, though unfairly, understood as

redemptive descent is the *ur-kenosis* constituting the trinitarian processions themselves; the love of God is conceived by Balthasar as trinitarian because of the nature of self-surrender, and the descent is a reflection of such love. Distinguishing between the economic and immanent dimensions of the Trinity, Balthasar asserts (also against Moltmann): "the sinner's alienation from God was taken into the Godhead, into the 'economic' distance between Father and Son."[16] Steffen Lösel notes that Balthasar "adopts Adrienne von Speyr's term 'pre-sacrifice' (*Voropfer*) to describe the mutual self-giving relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."[17] Pointing to Balthasar's claim to go beyond Barth, White quotes the following passage:

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the classic Reformation (Lutheran) view, that is, that God took out his wrath on Jesus rather than on us. . . . I am thus not comfortable when von Balthasar states that 'God unloaded his wrath upon the Man' (*Theo-Drama IV: The Action*, p. 345). Nonetheless, I would agree with von Balthasar when he argues for Jesus' 'Holy Saturday' experience, which forms a major theme within his own Christology. 'Jesus does not only accept the (to be sure, accursed) mortal destiny of Adam. He also, quite expressly, carries the sin of the human race and, with those sins, the 'second death' of God-abandonment.' *Mysterium Paschale*, p. 90. . . . Pope John Paul II states: 'Together with this horrible weight, *encompassing* the 'entire' evil *of the turning away from God* which is contained in sin, Christ, through the divine depth of his filial union with the Father, perceives in a humanly inexpressible way *this suffering which is the separation*, the rejection *by the Father*, the estrangement from God. *Salvifici Doloris*, n. 18" (*Does God Suffer?* [Edinburgh: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000], 219n8). It should be clarified, though, that John Paul did not accept the view that, temporally speaking, Christ's soul suffered after the moment of death (see his General Audience, "He Descended into Hell," January 11, 1989, in *A Catechesis on the Creed*, vol. 2: *Jesus: Son and Savior* (Reprint, Boston: Pauline Books & Media, 1996), 483-488). John Yocum also notes that "In John Paul's description [of Christ's suffering in *Salvifici Doloris*, no. 17], the suffering of the Son fills up the space between God and humanity, while for Balthasar the crucial 'space' is that between Father and Son. One might also ask how much Balthasar's theology is determined by a spatial imagination that is inadequate for speaking of the Triune being" ("A Cry of Dereliction? Reconsidering a Recent Theological Commonplace," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 7, no. 1 [2005]: 72-80," 74n12).

[16] *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 4, *The Action*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), 381 [*Theodramatik*, Band III: *Die Handlung* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1980), 355]; see also Antoine Birot, "'God in Christ, Reconciled the World to Himself': Redemption in Balthasar," *Communio* 24, no. 2 (1997): 259-285, at 285.

[17] Steffen Lösel, "A Plain Account of Christian Salvation? Balthasar on Sacrifice, Solidarity, and Substitution," *Pro Ecclesia* 13, no. 2 (2004): 141-171, at 163. Lösel speaks in another place of this concept in Balthasar: "Although the Son suffers indeed at a particular point in history, his suffering is in fact 'atemporal,' 'transtemporal and pretemporal.' And yet, the cross as the ultimate

> In fact we can go a step further than Barth; for he conceives ("double") predestination in such a way that Christ is the One chosen to be solely condemned on behalf of all the condemned. This comprehensive formula is too close, however, to the view that the sufferings of the Cross were a punishment….The Crucified Son does not simply suffer the hell deserved by sinners; he suffers something below and beyond this, namely, being forsaken by God in the pure obedience of love. Only he, as Son, is capable of this, and it is qualitatively deeper than any possible hell. This signifies an even more radical abandonment.[18]

Thus, his theology reaches for the "heart" of God as revealed in and expressed by the incarnation of the Word, culminating in the "consuming fire" (Heb.12:29) of the cross.[19]

While the influence of Hegelian logic is discerned by some in Balthasar's dialectic,[20] even though he explicitly repudiates the former (in conjunction with Moltmann's radical "death of God"

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sign of the Son's eternal 'pre-sacrifice' does add a new dimension into the divine life. Balthasar daringly formulates with Adrienne von Speyr, that the mutual abandonment of Father and Son, which is expressed at the cross, 'lets the Father experience the measure of his love for the Son'" ("Murder in the Cathedral: Hans Urs von Balthasar's New Dramatization of the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Pro Ecclesia* 5, no. 4 [1996]: 427-439, at 435).

[18] White, "Von Balthasar and Journet," 656n56, citing *TD* V, 277. Regarding differentiation of Barth from Balthasar on the topic, John Yocum points to a book by Alan Lewis (presumably, *Between Cross and Resurrection: A Theology of Holy Saturday* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2001]): "Barth is sometimes placed in this category [of theologians who speak of the 'cry of dereliction' in terms of the Son's separation from the Father], but as a recent work by Alan Lewis rightly claims, his approach is more nuanced than most. In particular, Barth avoids the notion that the judgment that falls on the Son in his death is the judgment of the Father, reserving the association of judgment with the Father's vindication of the Son" ("A Cry of Dereliction?," 73n2).

[19] See, for example, *TD* V, 215 [G 193]. See also *TD* IV, 174 [G 159-160]

[20] Some use the term 'dialogical' to distinguish Balthasar's methodology from that of Hegelian dialectical logic (e.g., see Aidan Nichols, *Say it is Pentecost: A Guide through Balthasar's Logic* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001], 71-72), but 'dialectical' need not have Hegelian overtones or implications. In the context of defending Balthasar's conviction that Christ's kenosis must reveal something about the immanent trinity, even while the immanent-economic distinction must be maintained, Vincent Holzer attempts to distance Balthasar's "analogical dialectic" from Hegel's „dialectic of identity" (see "La Kénose Christologique Dans La Pensée De Hans Urs Von Balthasar: Une kénose christologique étendue à l'être de Dieu," *Theophilyon* 9, no. 1 (2004): 207-236, at 210-211, 233ff.). Ben Quash and Bruce Marshall have explored the Hegelian aspects of Balthasar's thought; see Quash, "Between the Brutely Given, and the Brutally, Banally Free: Von Balthasar's Theology of Drama in Dialogue with Hegel," *Modern Theology* 13, no. 3 (1997): 293-318, and Marshall, "The Absolute and the Trinity," *Pro Ecclesia* 23, no. 2 (Spring 2014): 147-164. Primarily concerned with the unity of the Trinity and pointing to Balthasar as one example of the

problem, Marshall begins his argument: "Trinitarian theology has generally assumed it could avoid the theologically unhappy consequences they had in Hegel's own hands. But the confidence of theologians that they could embrace Hegel's novel Trinitarian claims while avoiding his radical revision of central Christian teachings has been, I will suggest, misplaced" (148). In other words, he deems it naïve to suppose that parts of Hegel's thought, at least with respect to the divine, may be appropriated without assuming the logical consequences drawn out by Hegel himself. It would be a worthy endeavor for another study to take up the complex question of just how much Balthasar attempts to appropriate from Hegel and the degree of success with which he does so. The fundamental argument made is that adoption of Hegelian dialectic in regard to the Trinity inevitably involves restraint of the divine freedom to create. While I agree that a conflation of immanent and economic trinity does succumb to Hegel's denial of divine transcendence, Balthasar makes valiant efforts to preserve the distinction, even if he resists the Augustinian-Thomistic mode of reflection on the immanent Trinity in favor of the salvation-historical view, which sees the immanent Trinity only through the prism of the salvation economy. Leaving aside the question of "Trinitarian enrichment" for now, Marshall makes the following poignant remark (pertinent to the present focus upon the question of evil): "Creation and reconciliation are free and generous acts of the Triune God, and as such are wholly contingent. They spring from God's will, not his nature. As a result, creation, while good, is not divine; its nature is in no sense God's own. Sin, evil, and death, which damage God's good creation, are not only contingent and entirely nondivine; they are in no sense acts of God. God's infinite goodness rules out any suggestion of this kind and requires that sin and death be seen as creation's opposition to God, creation's own self-inflicted wound. Christian theology has sharply resisted, moreover, Hegel's impersonal understanding of alienation and reconciliation, which has seemed at best inadequate to Christian faith in reconciliation as the work of the Triune God" (152). Marshall notes a common criticism of Hegel that has also been launched toward Balthasar on occasion: "the urge to subject the Christian revelation, like everything else, to the mastery of his dialectical scheme of spirit's logic and history, has seemed equally unappealing to Christian theologians. These overarching features of the way Hegel understands Christianity affect, naturally, his treatment of those central doctrinal topics, such as the Trinity and the incarnation, to which he devotes extended attention" (147-148). Ben Quash makes a similar criticism of Balthasar from the perspective of literary theory (see "Balthasar's Theology of Drama," 297). Most incisively, he also hints at a dimension of the problem that will be addressed in later chapters (namely, his assumed perspective on the divine permission of evil): "[Balthasar] is simply not consistent in his attempts to safeguard the vital unfinalizability (the *major dissimilutudo*) of the super-form. He betrays himself. His harmonizing readings of Shakespeare are far from being isolated instances with no serious theological corollaries. He can, for instance, take the suffering of Job, in all its unimaginable proportions, and talk of it as a 'step' in the power of the Spirit (presumably from a vision where there is no redemption towards a vision where there is). Job's suffering is situated by von Balthasar as part of some kind of progression (though not necessarily a continuous one), along with the later suffering of Isaiah's Servant which helps to make sense of it. In other words, the suffering of Job is relativized, and in terms which are far from free of a Hegelian undertow. A theologian writing in the second half of the twentieth century might with good reason have been expected to refrain from taking the role of one of Job's comforters in this way, and instead might have emulated their awed silence. He might have reflected that the suffering of Job is not something that can or should be relativized *at all*. Not so for von Balthasar. The pull towards seeing an integrity in the whole is

theology),[21] he actually intends to base his descent-centered understanding of the Passion upon a more literal interpretation of Galatians 3: 13-14, Philippians 2: 6-8, and 2 Corinthians 5: 21 than is customary.[22] Balthasar insists, "It is not possible to dismiss the Pauline texts quoted, or other similar passages, as witnesses of a *later* New Testament soteriology, one that could consequently be relativized."[23] He is thinking of passages such as Romans 8:3: "Sending his own Son in the

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too strong…" (307-308, see also 303). Many of these points will be further discussed in chapter three.

[21] See, for example, *TD* V, 243 [G 219]. He also implicitly resists accusations of Hegelian influence when he states late in his career (without much further clarification), "the term dialectic has a unique, theological sense that must not be confused with any of the many meanings that philosophy has given it" (*TL* II, 238 [G 216]), adding: "Among these we can mention the Plantonic art of conversation, Kant's 'dialectical appearance', and Hegel's dialectical logic, in which thought and reality share a common, unity movement" (238n44 [G 216n44]). Even while still utilizing Hegelian terminology (especially in the *Theo-Logic*), he overtly attacks Hegel's dialectic in theology: "From the theological, and especially the Johannine, point of view, dialectic can occur only in the form of the denial of the one and only truth – that God is love, as he proves in giving ups his Son – and so in the form of sin. Sin has no place in a 'dialectic' (such as Hegel's) that claims philosophical neutrality. Yet this dialectic is only a late form of a theological dialectic that imagined it could or had to sublate the principle of noncontradiction by declaring that man simultaneously yea-says and gainsays, believes and disbelieves, loves and hates, is *Justus et peccator* [righteous and sinner]" (*TL* II, 317 [G 289]). Balthasar also criticizes Hegelian logic applied to the Trinity and Its relationship to creation, arguing that Hegel and Buddhism are ignorant of both sin and the Holy Spirit (see *TL* II, 336n32 [G 306n5]). At the same time, it is undeniable that when it comes to the Cross, borrowing from Luther, he indulges in a dialectic that cannot simply be attributed to St. John in place of any philosopher: "In the suffering Lord there exists an unconquerable dialectic between the infinite suffering by means of which he [Christ] exhibits the effect of sin on God and the equally infinite suffering that, having been 'made sin' (2 Cor 5:21) on account of his unity with all sinners who offend God's love, he causes in God" (*TL* II, 325 [G 296], see also 326 [G 297]).

[22] Some of his other favorite passages follow: "…I have the keys of death and hell" (Rev. 1:18); "If I ascend to heaven, you are there. If I make my bed in hell, you are there" (Ps. 139:8); "[A] hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in, and so Israel will be saved…For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all" (Rom. 11:25-26, 32). He also makes much of Ephesians 4: 1-10; Ben Quash comments: "it is a dramatic presentation of just the 'oneness' referred to . . . The one God from whom nothing is ultimately alien or separable is the same God who, fully present in Christ, can ascend and descend to the furthest reaches of the created order. Nothing is outside his reach; nothing is 'beyond' him" ("The *theo-drama*" in *Cambridge Companion*, 153).

[23] *Mystery of Redemption*, 28 (emphasis original).

likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, [God] condemned sin in the flesh." Therefore, from Scripture he derives his emphasis on the condemnation of sin in the very flesh assumed by the Word.

Balthasar, though, is sometimes charged with neglecting the Church Fathers when he reflects upon the soteriological implications of such passages.[24] He frequently quotes Origen, but support is also found, for example, in Athanasius, who says: "Here, then, is the second reason why the Word dwelt among us, namely that…He might offer the sacrifice on behalf of all, surrendering His own temple to death *in place of all*."[25] With respect to the satisfaction theory of Anselm, Balthasar says, "We can avoid the medieval side of his theory, that is, the reparation of God's injured honor, but we must substitute for it the idea of a divine love scorned by sin."[26] Ultimately drawing his inspiration from Paul, he distinguishes his own interpretation from that typically

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[24] Attempting to balance the various dimensions of redemption theory, he does make the following generic reference to the aspect of substitution in patristic times: "the Fathers stressed that it was through the 'exchange of places' (2) that man was initiated into 'divinization' (4); in this context, it was quite possible to see man's liberation from the 'powers' as a work of God's love (5)" (*TD* IV, 317 [G 295]). He also briefly addresses early patristic thoughts on the *admirabile comercium* in conjunction with later patristic "limitations" imposed upon the theme (see *TD* IV, 246ff. [G 226ff.]), which he then traces further through Anselm and Thomas until Luther returns to an emphasis upon (and exaggeration of) the former. Brian Daley complains throughout his essay on Balthasar's patristic exegesis that Balthasar sacrifices detailed analysis to the service of his own elaborate project, often digressing toward discussion of the German idealists he so carefully studied previous to entering the Jesuits. Concerning his work on one Church Father, Daley states: "For all its abundant attempts to drop anchor in the text of Gregory of Nyssa, Balthasar's monograph tends to float away from its subject, and suffers from the conceptual structure – an uneasy mixture of Hegel and neo-Thomism – in which he examines Gregory's work" ("Balthasar's reading of the Church Fathers" in *Cambridge Companion*, 197)

[25] *On the Incarnation*, c. 4, n. 20 (emphasis added).

[26] *Mystery of Redemption*, 35. He says elsewhere regarding Anselm's understanding of redemption: "Although Anselm's thought is by no means as 'medieval' as his opponents today assume. . . . The word 'representation', which many Catholics prefer to avoid, is used without hesitation by Protestants. This indispensable concept introduces into theology something that Anselm had pondered deeply but had formulated in a rather narrow way . . ." (*TD* III, 117-120n50 [G 106-109n1]). David Edward Lauber wrote a dissertation on the "modified Anselmian understanding of the atonement" in Balthasar (and Barth)'s soteriology (see Lauber, "Towards a Theology of Holy Saturday: Karl Barth and Hans Urs von Balthasar on the *descensus ad inferna*," Ph.D. Dissertation [Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary, 1999], 4).

attributed to Luther and Calvin, saying "it is not a question of the punishment of an innocent in place of the guilty; that notion does not appear anywhere [in Scripture] . . . It is much rather the idea of substitution (I am dropping the adjective 'penal') that is at the center, the apostolic *pro nobis*, with all that it contains of the mysterious."[27] Balthasar certainly holds that judgment upon sin is assumed in Christ's flesh, and he emphasizes the consequent separation of sin from sinner:[28]

> Now the Cross of Christ is judgment [Jn.12:31, 16:10-11].…This inexorable judgment falls on the anti-divine reality of the world, on sin, but it is Christ who, according to Paul, 'was made sin'.…The experience of abandonment by God is undoubtedly situated at the center of the event of the Cross. This experience is that of sin given over to the hands of divine justice, to the fire of God's holiness.[29]

Taking the latter aspect as the goal of the former, it is easy to see how the former is always understood as an expression of the kenotic love of God. Thus, he says:

> In God, wrath is not a passion; it is the total reprobation of sin, which contradicts the divine goodness; and it can be said that God, in loving sinful man, hates the sin and condemns it. But that detested sin is found precisely in the beloved man: it is he who has committed it. *It was thus necessary to be able to find a method* to separate the sin from the sinner – and it is of this that the Pauline texts speak to us…it is a question of a gathering together, a concentration of universal sin in Christ.[30]

Therefore, his 'theory' of redemption is a synthesis of Anselmic and Reformed notions of satisfaction, leaving out the feudalist mentality that may have given rise to the former and the penal

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[27] *Mystery of Redemption*, 34. Dropping the adjective "penal" may suffice to meet the common objection mentioned in passing by Celia Deane-Drummond that "the concept of penal substitution [is] highly problematic as a model of the atonement" ("The Breadth of Glory: A Trinitarian Eschatology for the Earth through Critical Engagement with Hans Urs von Balthasar," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12, no. 1 [2010]: 46-64, at 50).

[28] Thus, Jacques Servais also says: "a human-divine love that impels him to allow universal sin to be concentrated in his person so that the separation between sin and sinner might be effected in it and, through it, in us, in conformity with the mysterious assertion of Saint Paul: 'For our sake he made him to be sin [not sinner!] who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the [salvific] righteousness of God' (2 Cor. 5:21). For sin, the object of divine wrath (1 Thess. 2:16), came to dwell in the beloved man, and in order to extirpate it from his heart, Christ accomplished a gesture of substitution that is much more than a purely juridical transfer" (*Mystery of Redemption*, 119).

[29] *Mystery of Redemption*, 34-35.

[30] *Mystery of Redemption*, 24 (emphasis added).

or juridical aspect of the latter.[31] White notes the most distinctive feature of his theory: "Most notably, Balthasar claims that the biblical concept of 'hell' takes on a new definition *in light of* Christ's separation from God on the Cross: All finite separations of sinful human beings must now be understood as encompassed by the 'ever-greater' separation of Christ from the Father in his descent into hell."[32]

The cross for Balthasar goes beyond mere solidarity with sinners to the point of separating sin itself from each person in whom it may reside (at any point in time),[33] and his passion is therefore beyond any other, as *the* manifestation of Trinitarian love. It is true, "he achieves redemption for humanity by making the sinner's death of godlessness his own and by taking up God's wrath against the sinner into the disarming inner-divine communion of love where that wrath is transformed into love."[34] But since it is above all a work of the Trinity, an economic reflection of His immanent self-surrender, He is bound to suffer an eminently unique hell, in some ways incomparable to any other.[35] Lösel notes the following:

> [Balthasar] maintains that the dead must enter the *infernum* only as *if* it were their eternal place of damnation. Because of Christ's descent, however, sheol has only a conditional character for the dead. To account for this soteriological paradox, Balthasar speaks of the 'paradoxical and self-annulling concept of a "provisional *poena damni*."' If the *poena*

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[31] "With the intention of better expressing the intrinsic character of the exchange between the Innocent one and sinners, von Balthasar proposes the notion of substitution (*Stellvertretung*), which to him signifies a true exchange of place (*Platztausch*), in accordance with the thought of Saint Paul: "Christ…though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). The term suggests the gesture of someone who takes something upon himself in order to be able to remove it from the other" (Jacques Servais, in *Mystery of Redemption*, 127-128).
[32] White, "Von Balthasar and Journet," 656 (emphasis original).
[33] "He is the dead 'sin-bearer' of all sins. As such, he passes through what, looked at objectively, is his victory, the sin separated from man on the Cross, which God eternally damns as the second – man-created – chaos" (*Theo-Logic*, vol. 2, *Truth of God*, trans. Adrian J. Walker [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004], 348; *Theologik*, Band II, *Wahrheit Gottes* [Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1985], 317).
[34] Lösel, "A Plain Account," 166-167.
[35] See, for example, *TD* V, 256 [G 231].

> *damni* of those awaiting redemption in sheol is only limited and conditional, Jesus alone experiences hell to the fullest extreme. In fact, for Balthasar, hell is an exclusive experience of the divine Savior. Jesus' solidarity with the dead in sheol thus turns into Jesus' substitution for the dead in hell.[36]

In this way, sin itself becomes 'severed' from mankind[37] and suffering itself is redeemed.[38] Birot says, "[T]he concept [of substitution] as applied to Christ contains a moment of the trinitarian order which raises it beyond a simply physical or juridical representation. He who bears the sin of the world, Balthasar will say, does not simply suffer 'hell' in our place, but much more: something unique, something that transcends the notion of a simple changing of place."[39] Birot also notes that Balthasar recalls Bulgakov's theology of the 'lamb slain before the foundation of the world,' according to which Christ suffers "something incomparable with and even contrary to the suffering of sinners," and yet it does encompass in its own way the torments of hell.[40] The hell that Christ

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[36] "A Plain Account," 151.

[37] See, for example, *Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter*, trans. Aidan Nichols (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990), 173; "Mysterium Paschale" in *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, Band III: *Das Christusereignis*, Teil 2, edited by Johannes Feiner and Magnus Lohrer (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1969): 133-326, at 246-247. See also Lösel, "A Plain Account," 151, citing *Theologik* II, 317.

[38] Balthasar says: "I think that the proclamation of the Cross can help men accept sufferings that often seem intolerable, to accept them, not because a God suffers in solidarity with them – how would that relieve them? – but because a divine suffering encompasses all these sufferings in order to transform them into prayer, into a dialogue in the midst of abandonment, thereby conferring on all human tragedies a meaning they would not have in themselves, a meaning that is in the end redemptive for the salvation of the world . . ." (*Mystery of Redemption*, 39).

[39] "Redemption in Balthasar," 275. Also, "when the Son becomes incarnate and penetrates into the darkness of the world, he is able to 'take the place' of darkness and 'substitute' (*Stell-vertretung*) himself for it by virtue of his very position in the Trinity" (Birot, "Redemption in Balthasar," 282).

[40] See Birot, "Redemption in Balthasar," 279-280, citing *TD* IV, 313ff. Indeed, it appears that Balthasar has borrowed much from this Russian Orthodox theologian's trinitarian theory of redemption: "*Sergei Bulgakov* tries to grasp the kenosis of the Cross as the last of God's self-utterances. It begins within the Trinity, with God the Father's self-dispossession in favor of the Son, and proceeds via the kenosis involved in creation. Christ will bear the world's sin: this is the rationale underlying all creation. It remains a mystery how Christ bears sin, but it takes place because, ontologically, the New Adam bears within him the totality of human nature – in this, Bulgakov is following the Greek Fathers – and because Christ's humanity, as a result of the

suffers is that of God's infinite wrath towards sin itself, for Balthasar, because of God's 'zeal' for His covenant, as revealed in the Old and New Testaments.[41] The radicality and uniqueness of Balthasar's take on the descent is evident perhaps above all in the following outline of its a-temporality:

> Jesus does experience the darkness of the sinful state, not in the same way as the (God-hating) sinner experiences it (unless the sinner is spared such experience), but nonetheless in a deeper and darker experience. This is because it takes place in the profound depths of the relations between the divine Hypostases – which are inaccessible to any creature. Thus it is just as possible to maintain that Jesus' being forsaken by God was the opposite of hell as to say that it *was* hell (Luther, Calvin) or even the ultimate heightening of hell (Quenstedt). . . . his experience of being abandoned on the Cross is timeless. Here too it is analogous to hell. This is why its actuality persists through all ages of the world. Jesus' agony lasts until the end of the world (Pascal); in fact, it goes back to the world's beginning. His mortal wounds are eternally open (Berulle). This timelessness is confirmed, in some

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Hypostatic Union with the whole of humanity (through kenosis), is empowered 'in a supra-empirical manner' to appropriate all the sins of the world . . . [Christ] allows himself to be placed under God's anger against sin. Thus he 'drinks the chalice' and is 'forsaken by God'. Through this experience of sin he 'destroys' the 'reality' of sin that men have created. His suffering is hypostatic and, as such, its intensity is supra-temporal (*surtemporal . . . entendu au passé et a l'avenir*) and, in that sense, 'eternal' (*l'eternal est qualite, et non quantite*). Although this suffering is the endurance of something utterly alien, something that is simply 'accepted' and hence '*quelque chose d'incomparable et meme de contraire aux souffrances des pecheurs*' (the damned), in its own way it is '*l'equivalent de ce qui eut ete proper a l'humanite, c.a.d. les tourments de l'enfer*'. By this concept of 'intensive equivalence', Bulgakov expresses the identity and difference between Christ's suffering and that due to sinners. He strongly emphasizes that the Cross is an event involving the whole Trinity . . ." (*TD* IV, 313-314 [G 291-292]).

[41] See Balthasar, *TD* IV, 338ff. [G 315ff.] He cites the following Old Testament passages for the notion of divine wrath: Is. 51:17, 22; Jer. 13:13; 25:15-17, 27ff.; 48:26; 49:12; 51:7; Ezek. 23:32-34; Hab. 2:15-16; Obad. 16; Zech. 12:2; Ps. 79:9; Lam. 4:21; Is. 53:1-6; Rev. 19:15; Gen. 49:9-12; Jer. 25:30; Is. 63:1-6; Joel 4:13. Birot says, "any interpretation which views the suffering of the Cross as a *punishment* must be rejected: the Crucified one does not (simply) suffer the hell merited by sinners, he suffers something much more profound: an abandonment by God (Mk.15:34), such as he alone is able to know it, a separation from his Father that surpasses all of the distances which separate God from sinners; in short, a suffering that no creature will ever be able to measure, and which alone is capable, *through a miracle of love*, of a qualitative 'undergirding' (*Unterfassung*) of the sin of the world, in order to transform its alienation. Moreover, the suffering endured by Christ must be defined, also following scripture, as the experience of *the wrath of God* (338ff.), the cup of which Jesus accepted at Gethsemani [sic]. The Old and New Testaments attest to the reality of this wrath so forcefully (as much as love and mercy) that it is impossible to dismiss. Wrath consists (in the prophets) in God's 'zeal' for his covenant…" ("Redemption in Balthasar," 283 [emphasis original]).

> precision, by those Christian mystics who are privileged to experience something of the dark night of the Cross.[42]

The Timelessness of Christ's Descent

Although I contend that his theology of the descent, which flows from his trinitarian theology of *ur-kenosis*, is not directly determinative of his subjunctive universalism, it is, nonetheless, true that the passion-death-descent of Christ plays a central role in his understanding of God's universal salvific will, both with respect to how it is worked out in history and how it is incorporated into the drama of each finite freedom.

The cry of dereliction or abandonment, which comes to represent the depths of suffering into which the God-man descends in that timeless event celebrated on Holy Saturday, plays the most pivotal role in salvation history for Balthasar.[43] The descent of Christ into the hell that is His

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[42] *TD* IV, 336-337 [G 313] (emphasis original). See also his peculiar treatment of time and 'super-time' with respect to Jesus' death and resurrection in *TD* V, 29-32 [G 24-26]. In *Das Ganze im Fragment*, a much earlier work, he states: "True, the Son no longer hangs bleeding on the cross. But since the three hours of agony between heaven and earth were already the breakthrough of time into the eternal, as of eternity into the temporal – hours which cannot be measured by any chronological time, by any psychological feeling of time ('Jesus is in agony until the end of the world' – Pascal) – so the divine-human suffering is the most precious relic that the resurrected Christ, now free of pain, takes with him from his earthly pilgrimage into his heavenly glory. . . . It is true that Christ in heaven no longer suffers, but it is also true that the phenomena of his suffering are real, and not fictitious, expressions of his heavenly being. This being is not a quantitative intensification of the joy he knew on earth with all the sufferings excluded. It is not related to his earthly life at all in this partial and antithetical manner – with the same proportions of joy and suffering – but, rather, in the form of a total transfiguration and making eternal" (*A Theological Anthropology*, trans. Benziger Verlag [New York: Sheed and Ward, 1967], 247-248; *Das Ganze im Fragment* (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1963), 272-273]).

[43] In his earlier work Balthasar seems to draw a sharper distinction between the events of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, but he seems to transition more and more in his later works, perhaps under the influence of Joseph Ratzinger, toward the view that the article of the descent is fulfilled by Christ's *kenosis* on the Cross, culminating in His death. For example, compare *Explorations in Theology*, vol. 4, *Spirit and Institution*, trans. Edward T. Oakes (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995), 406 [*Pneuma und Institution: Skizzen der Theologie*, Band IV (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1974), 392], to *MP*, 164 [G 240]. Ratzinger throughout his writings collapses the suffering aspect

death (Sheol and Gehenna are understood to be the same)[44] is the most perfect reflection of the self-surrender that constitutes the infinite love of the Trinity itself. In fact, the Cross is the revelation of the Trinity:

> 'The Son has been offering his sacrifice to the Father from the very beginning.' There is a certain quality of 'renunciation' in the eternal Trinitarian life: it is seen in the very fact that 'the Father, renouncing his uniqueness, generates the Son out of his own substance', which can be designated a 'pre-sacrifice'. Once sin emerges, this 'pre-sacrifice' turns into 'actual renunciation', 'just as, as on the basis of the 'pre-sacrifice' of the Son's eternal generation, God will unfold the Son's redemptive experience of forsakenness on the Cross.' The Cross, and the Incarnation that envisages it, remain present reality within time 'because they themselves are not the first thing: they are grounded in an eternal, heavenly will on the part of the Son to surrender and sacrifice himself, inseparably linked to the love of the triune God. The meaning of the Cross is only complete in God; it is in God that the Son's eternal self-surrender, which integrates his sacrificial death in time. . . . in eternity the Son's will to give himself goes to these extreme lengths. . . . it keeps this fulfillment [of the Cross] alive until the end of time and for all eternity.' Thus there is nothing hypothetical about the 'pre-sacrifice' of the Son (and hence of the Trinity): it is something utterly real, which includes the absolute and total exhaustion of the Cross. 'All this is implicit from all eternity in the Son's decision, even if it is only completed historically on the Cross. . . . sacrifice, suffering, the Cross and death are only the reflection of tremendous realities in the Father, in heaven, in eternal life'; indeed, 'they are nothing other than manifestations of what heaven is, namely, the love of God that goes to the ultimate. . . .'[45]

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of the descent event into Christ's passion and death on Friday, even though the descent proper is celebrated on Holy Saturday; this will be elaborated upon in chapter four below.

[44] According to Balthasar, the Jewish tradition leading up to the time of Christ saw "Sheol [as] more and more equated with Gehenna, the preliminary place of punishment leading to ultimate damnation" (*TD* V, 354 [G 323]), which would indicate that everyone was consigned to the same realm of perdition before Christ – this position seems to function as an interpretation of the texts as constitutive of a mythological signification of the fact that everyone is destined to hell prior to Christ's redemptive descent. It is, nevertheless, thanks to His transformative passion that, perhaps, His timeless love encounters the freedom of every man in the mysterious 'moment' of his death (which is thus understood personalistically as an existential event). Again, "in the era after Christ 'Gehenna' is sometimes given a purifying function" (*TD* V, 361-362 [G 330]); thereafter he elaborates upon the judgment as purifying.

[45] *TD* V, 510-511 [G 466-467]. ". . . the infinite distinction of Persons within the one Being. In virtue of this distinction, which entails relations within the Trinity and hence facilitates that 'laying up' of which we have spoken, the *Cross* can become 'the revelation of the innermost being of God'. It reveals both the distinction of the Persons (clearest in the dereliction) and the unity of their Being, which becomes visible in the unity of the plan of redemption. Only a God-man, through his distinction-in-relation vis-à-vis the Father, can expiate and banish that alienation from God that characterizes the world's sin, both in totality for all and in totality for each individual" (*TD* V, 259-260 [G 234-235]).

His heavy dependence here on Adrienne von Speyr's mystical visions lends itself to the ready critique of a need for a de-mythologization of the inherited language in order to distinguish adequately between the economic and immanent orders, which Balthasar attempts at times but with only partial success.[46]

It is with Adrienne's help that Balthasar conceives of time and eternity as mutually interpenetrating, thanks to the incarnation: "'. . . The Father is in eternal life, and the time of his heaven is eternal time; in seeking this eternal time we are joining the Son in seeking the kingdom in the super-time of eternal life' . . . If, in Jesus Christ, eternal life has genuinely penetrated the world's temporal sphere, this temporal sphere does not unfold 'outside' eternity but within it."[47] Therefore, even His suffering takes on a timeless dimension – again he quotes von Speyr: "His mission is not temporal . . . there is a moment in history in which he suffers. But it is preceded by the timelessness in the bosom of God . . . What is timeless is the real; the temporal is only a shadow

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[46] For example, he says: "Such distance [namely, alienation from God] is possible, however, only within the economic Trinity, which transposes the absolute distinction of the person in the Godhead from one another into the dimensions of salvation history, involving man's sinful distance from God and its atonement. We have to show, therefore, that the God-forsakenness of the Son during his Passion was just as much a mode of his profound bond with the Father in the Holy Spirit as his death was a mode of his life and his suffering a mode of his bliss" (*TD* V, 257 [G 232]). Moreover, concerning divine immutability and impassibility, he says: "such forms of the eternal divine life as mercy, patience, and so on, can be understood on the analogy of human emotions, but this must not involve attributing 'mutability' to God. Nor is it correct . . . to restrict God's immutability to his attitude of covenant faithfulness . . ." (*TD* V, 222 [G 200]). Compare this to his footnoted quotations of Speyr without comment in *TL* II: "'The theologians make of the three Persons fixed points that are supposed to remain always in the same distance and proximity to one another' (ibid., 216). 'When the Son cries out for the Father in his abandonment, then something has to happen in the Father, too. Love is a much deeper mystery than this supposed perpetual self-identity' (ibid., 323). God's 'absolute immutability' is 'at once true and absurd'. 'In the heart of immutability, mutability has, in a way we cannot grasp, a place . . . One would have to say: over against every mutability in creation there is from the beginning a super-mutability in God' (ibid., 232)" (352n131 [G 321n57]. A more detailed discussion of divine impassibility is reserved for chapter four.

[47] *TD* V, 250 [G 226].

of it."[48] Thus, just as "we can inscribe the temporal upon the eternal,"[49] so the temporal is in a sense eternalized. But the timelessness of heaven is different from the timelessness of hell. Heaven's time is a super-temporality, whereas hell is akin to being frozen in time. Christ embraced both realities, plumbing the depths of nonbeing first in order to bridge the chasm between it and *ipsum amor*.[50] Hence, Balthasar says:

> [H]e can only punish men out of love, and in doing so he can take everything from them, timelessly, and return it to them, also timelessly. For the latter to be true, we must consider a third form of timelessness that coincides neither with the first (the bliss of God and of those in God) nor with the second (hell)…it is the condition of timelessness undergone by the Son on the Cross…We have already said that it is possible for the Son to take upon himself the sinners' forfeiture of God only on the basis of a communion [*Unterfassung*] that renders the Son's state even more timeless than the timelessness of hell, since he alone, by taking into himself the sinners' God-forsakenness, can fully know what the loss of the Father means. Those Christians who are found worthy to experience something of the dark night of Christ's Cross have a faint idea of what this forsakenness is.[51]

Finally, although in his *Theo-Logic*, Balthasar sometimes seems reticent to elaborate on the precise meaning of Adrienne's own statements, which he nevertheless quotes profusely without

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[48] *TD* V, 251-252 [G 227].
[49] *TD* V, 264 [G 239].
[50] Drawing again on von Speyr, he seems to say the descent transforms hell into purgatory: "Properly speaking, therefore, purgatory comes into existence on Holy Saturday, when the Son walks through 'hell', introducing the element of mercy into the condition of those who are justly lost. Purgatory 'has its origin in the Cross. The Father makes use of the fruit of the Cross in order to temper divine justice, which held the sinners captive, with new mercifulness. From the Cross, hope is brought down to the netherworld; from the Cross, a fire is unleashed in which justice and mercifulness are intermixed. Through the Lord's arrival there, the powers of the netherworld, of death and of evil are driven, as it were, into the backmost recesses of hell, and the devil's chain is made shorter. Purgatory arises as if under the Lord's striding feet; he brings comfort to this place of hopelessness, fire to this place of iciness'" (*TD* V, 363 [G 331]).
[51] *TD* V, 307-308 [G 280-281]. He seems to contradict the point about the timelessness of Christ's Cross a couple pages later, quoting von Speyr: "On the Cross he will feel lonesome unto death, unto a limitless, eternal death in which every temporal moment and viewpoint will completely disappear. What will be a short while for mankind [Jn 14:19] will be an eternal while to him…the timelessness of his suffering, the timelessness of the redemption…*the timelessness of the Cross is not the mere negation of time that characterizes hell, but a 'super-time'*" (*TD* V, 310 [G 282], emphasis added).

criticism,[52] there we find his latest account of the relationship between temporality and hell. He states:

> 'Hell is timeless': von Speyr hammers home this principle over and over again in many variations. The Cross itself was atemporal, because all the sins of past and future were gathered in the Son who had been 'made sin'. Hell is atemporal in another way, because it is definitive and affords no prospect of escape on any siade. Thus, 'hell is the extreme opposite to heaven, where all time is fulfilled in God's eternity.' The absolute solitude of hell also makes this apparent. Since its 'substance' is the sin of the world, become (or becoming) anonymous, there is no community in hell; one simply goes 'missing' there without a trace. Everything that looks like love is now deposited; nor is there any hope. Consequently, one can at most guess at the footsteps of the Lord who has passed through hell, but because there is no path in hell, there is no following him, either, and his footsteps cannot really be located. There is only the purely objective stock-taking of the abomination that is the sin of the world.[53]

Then, in a footnote to this text, he quotes more of Speyr on the atemporality of "the Cross":

> 'On the Cross a total destruction of time occurs . . . ; now the hour in the true sense has come, but it has no direction . . .' 'The atemporality on the Cross is wholly relative to the suffering Lord. In hell, on the other hand, it is a property of the place' (ibid [*Kreuze und Hölle*], 240, 260). On the Cross 'the whole of eternal time leads into the eternity of the Cross', because the Cross has always already been decided upon and must bear fruit for every past and coming eternity (ibid., 284). But this 'totally destroys time' (ibid., 285). 'The experience of agony that is had here stretches over the totality of time' (ibid., 362). In hell, however, time as such is 'lost'; the attempt 'to express it presupposes that one lives under the law of time and not in the timelessness that is neither eternity nor past time; it is not even the moment . . .'[54]

There appears to be a contrast here between the timelessness of the Cross and the timelessness of hell proper,[55] but whether one extrapolates from such mystical reflections that the timelessness of

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[52] On the intended union of heart and mind between the two, see Johann Roten, S.M., "The Two Halves of the Moon: Marian Anthropological Dimensions in the Common Mission of Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar" in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Works*, ed. David Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011). See also the recent book on Speyr by Matthew Lewis Sutton, *Heaven Opens: The Trinitarian Mysticism of Adrienne von Speyr* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014).
[53] *TL* II, 348-350 [G 318-319].
[54] *TL* II, 349n100 [G 318n26].
[55] On the other hand, Balthasar also reports Speyr stating: "'Cross and hell are inseparable, like a single coin with two sides' (ibid., 232). This gives rise to 'the question whether hell, which is the eternal night of sin, is so included in the mystery of the Trinity that the sin vanquished on the Cross

Christ's sufferings are to be allocated to 'Friday' or extended also into 'Saturday,' one thing is clear – that His hellish sufferings, although endured in time, transcend the ordinary time of earth not only in efficacy, but also psychologically (i.e., not merley objectively, but subjectively as well). Without claiming definitively that Balthasar limits, at one point in his career or another, the atemporality of Christ's sufferings to Friday, that is, his time on the Cross, I would like to defend the more modest form of this 'un-traditional' approach to the descent, which appears in Joseph Ratzinger.[56]

Chief Criticisms of Balthasar on the Descent

White contests Balthasar's interpretation of the descent in his article, "Jesus' Cry on the Cross and His Beatific Vision," on the grounds of a Thomistic interpretation of the Catholic doctrine of Christ's *visio immediata Dei*.[57] While White concedes with Thomas that Christ's beatific vision must have increased the acuity with which He suffered the sinfulness of man,[58] he argues against Balthasar that Christ's consciousness could not have suffered anything akin to

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is ultimately used to solidify what (at the Cross) still remains of the world's shaken structure' (KH 1, 207-8)" (*TL* II, 346n79 [G 316n5])

[56] To better understand this point, it may be instructive to consult Ratzinger's understanding of purgatorial time in terms of the 'existential moment' (*memoria* time); see *Eschatology*, 230ff. [G 230ff.] Although this chapter will conclude with a few texts of Ratzinger on the matter, a more detailed comparison of Ratzinger and Balthasar will occur in chapter four.

[57] See *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 5, no. 3 (2007), 555-582.

[58] Drawing upon Matthew Levering's reading of Thomas (see *Sacrifice and Community* [Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005], 80), White says: "The immediate vision in the soul of Christ, then, gave him a profound spiritual and psychological awareness of his confrontation with moral evil, and of his rejection by sinners. The conclusion I wish to draw here is that this knowledge necessarily *augmented* desire for our salvation *even as it simultaneously augmented his agony*. The two are inseparable, and both result from the presence in the soul of Christ of the beatific vision" ("Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 579, emphasis original); cf. 575; see Thomas, *ST* III, q. 46, a. 6.

damnation.[59] He cites the authority of Thomas on the ability of Christ both to suffer 'in the entirety of His soul' and to be consoled by "the Father's presence in the 'entirety of his soul' . . . In this way, the happiness of being united in will with the Father could co-exist with extreme agony in Christ, such that the two experiences were objectively distinct but subjectively (and therefore experientially) inseparable."[60] He also recalls the following:

> Following Damascene (*De Fide Orth.*, bk.III, ch.19), Aquinas insists that the divine will suspended some of the experiences of consolation in the soul of Christ which would

[59] In fact, although he blames "his attachment to Anselm" for "[preventing him from taking account of the patristic theme of the 'exchange of places'" (*TD* IV, 263), Balthasar seems to indicate that Thomas' insistence upon Christ's beatific vision hinders his ability to develop further conclusions regarding the immensity of Christ's suffering: "when Thomas comes to speak of Christ's sufferings – which, in contrast to Anselm, he does regard as having a value as *satisfactio* (49, 1-5) – his portrayal is strangely flat, almost moralizing in tone, in spite of all the superlatives he employs. He goes through the Passion narratives (46, 5) and gives why Christ has endured 'all human sufferings' (if not *secundum species*, then *secundum genus*); he suggests why his pains were greater than any that can be experienced in this life (explicitly excluding hell: 46, 6, cf. obj. 3); but all the time he is careful to insist that, during the Passion, Christ could not lose the blessed vision of God: 'God was never a cause of grief to his soul': 46, 7. . . . Finally, it is strange that Thomas, who had given a thorough account of the sufferings of Christ's soul, should later prefer to describe the Passion as a bodily event in a way that almost recalls Athanasius. There is no emphasis whatsoever on Christ's abandonment by God as the center of the Passion" (*TD* IV, 263-264 [G 243-244]) – this, despite the fact that Thomas, he says, holds that Jesus "possessed *similitudinem peccati in carne*" and mentions Christ's abandonment "once, in order to show that the Father did not hinder the Son from suffering" (*TD* IV, 263 and 264n12).

[60] "Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 575; cf. 574. Thomas says, "It is evident that Christ's whole soul suffered…Christ's 'higher reason' did not suffer thereby *on the part of its object*, which is God, who was the cause, not of grief, but rather of delight and joy, to the soul of Christ. Nevertheless, all the powers of Christ's soul did suffer according as any faculty is said to be affected *as regarded its subject*, because all the faculties of Christ's soul were rooted in its *essence, to which suffering extended* while the body, whose act it is, suffered" (*ST* III, q. 46, a. 7, emphasis added by White in n.54). This position is not subject to Balthasar's criticism in *Theo-Logic*: "One can only regret here that Johannes Stohr . . . rehashes the old Thomistic theses on this point, relying above all on the incorrigible school Thomist B. de Margerie, S.J. The claim that on the Cross Jesus experiences the beatific vision in the 'apex of the soul', whereas the 'lower parts of his soul' experience Godforsakenness, is especially incredible today and cannot be rescued with the arguments these authors have advanced" (*TL* II, 287n9 [G 261n9]). This note corresponds to the following interesting text: "von Speyr maintains almost always that on earth the Son possessed the vision of the Father. It is rare that she speaks of Christ's faith. But we also find her saying that Jesus' obedience existed despite this vision or that as *comprehensor* [comprehender] he had vision and as *viator* [wayfarer] faith or that vision could veil itself into obedience" (*TL* II, 286-287 [G 261]).

> normally be present even in the suffering of a virtuous man. The point of such unique suffering is to manifest more profoundly the gravity of human sin as well as the unique love of Christ for human beings.[61]

But he proceeds to draw the conclusion that this concomitant joy excludes the possibility of Christ enduring those pains most fundamental to damnation, namely, definitive privation of grace and a personal aversion to the will of God.[62]

The reason White gives for Christ's inability to empty Himself to the point of suffering 'damnation' is that despair, hatred of God, and the habitual state of sin characterizing the damned are not congruent with the blessedness of a soul hypostatically united to the Word. White certainly has a point in cautioning against 'damnation language' as incongruent with the persistent *caritas* of Christ's soul.[63] Perhaps neglecting 2 Corinthians 5: 21 and Galatians 3: 13, he emphasizes satisfaction in a non-substitutionary manner, pointing to St. Thomas:

> Aquinas, meanwhile, holds that Christ did subject himself to our fallen state for our sake and, in this sense, took our punishments upon himself for our redemption. But he also notes that it is impossible for an innocent man to submit to a penal substitution for the guilt due to another, as if he were to assume the sins of the other (*ST* I-II, q.87, aa.7-8). Instead, Christ 'substitutes' his obedience for our disobedience so as to repair in our human nature the injustice done to God's loving wisdom by human sin.[64]

Apparently identifying any substitutionary approach as penal, he adds the following:

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[61] "Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 576n57; see Thomas, *ST* III, q. 46, a. 3; q. 46, a. 6, co. and ad 2.
[62] See "Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 559.
[63] White argues, "Because of this radical difference of causalities [love and its refusal], the two states that derive from them can rightfully be said to be essentially dissimilar. If this is the case, then they cannot be compared 'analogically' and the attribution of a 'state of damnation' to the sufferings of Christ implies a pure equivocation" ("Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 562n23). Balthasar defends his use of the word 'hell' to describe Christ's sufferings thus: "The 'God-hostile flesh' (Rom 8:7), insofar as it is anti-divine, is incompatible with God; it is cast out of the cosmos that belongs to him 'into the outer darkness'. This darkness is, not death, but that which we can only term 'hell'. . . . The experience he undergoes is without analogies and stands apart from all other experiences" (*TL* II, 326 [G 297]). These comments, however, are surrounded by rhetorical (or rather, mystical) excess, bordering on the mythological; similar texts will be engaged in chapter four when we compare his thought to Ratzinger's.
[64] "Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 564n29.

> In discussing Paul's claim that 'For our sake [God] made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God' (2 Cor.5:21), Aquinas (*In II Cor.* V, lec.5, no.201 [Marietti]) purposefully excludes any idea of a penal substitution (in which Christ would be himself representative of the sinner and suffer a vicarious punishment for guilt on our behalf). Instead, he refers this verse to Christ's assumption out of love for us of a human nature capable of death and suffering (states that are consequences of sin).[65]

Finding substitution and satisfaction competitive, White therefore comments with regard to the pains proper to hell:

> Calvin suggests that the 'pains of hell' experienced by Christ consist *principally* in his dread, sorrow, and fear of being forsaken by God as well as his experience of the wrath of God against human sin. Here what defines the state at essence is the judgment and wrath of God. I am suggesting, by contrast, that the pains of damnation stem, instead, from the voluntary refusal to embrace God's loving will, and the deprivation of the vision of God that results.[66]

[65] "Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 576n58.
[66] "Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 564 (emphasis original).

Although he admits the presence of hope in the human soul of Christ,[67] he cannot acknowledge the possibility of the co-existence of hope and a profound experience of separation (akin to the dark feelings of hellish despair experienced even by the mystics).[68]

Having similar concerns, Alyssa Pitstick transmutes her concern over deficiencies in Balthasar's trinitarian theology into an indictment of Balthasar's apparent allocation of the deepest sufferings of Christ to Holy Saturday instead of Good Friday, a move impugned as Calvinistic and heretical.[69] It is certainly a valid question whether for Balthasar the key moment of redemption ought to be located in the Passion or the descent.[70] Although it usually appears that Balthasar's

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[67] White seems to assert under the authority of Thomas that Christ had theological hope (although Thomas is notorious for denying theological faith to Christ) in the following: "Yet, hope is a complex virtue, according to Aquinas, precisely because within it expectation/desire can and do co-exist with the non-possession of that which is hoped for. This means that in hope, desire and sadness, deprivation, and agony can and often do co-exist. Pushing the question one step further we can ask if this desire *was itself* the 'cause' of an increased suffering and agony? If so, then this inner tension of desire (as both hope and suffering) is a possible explanation for the inner meaning of the death cry of the crucified Christ" ("Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 565). Again, he says: "As Justin Martyr first noted, therefore, it suggests on Christ's part the *purposeful* invocation of a psalm, denoting an act of prayer and implying a claim to prophetic fulfillment. This line of reasoning raises the question of whether the invocation of the psalm by the historical Jesus implies that he was expressing a messianic hope even during his crucifixion…In this case, the hope of vindication by God (such as that which occurs at the end of the psalm) could well be intended even in citing its opening line" (560-561). He proceeds to argue there that in such a case there could not have been an "experience of radical disillusionment, despair, or accusation underlying Christ's last words."

[68] See "Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 564-565. Balthasar not only admits the co-presence of hope and an experience of total despair (on behalf of the lost), but he also seems to argue at points for a co-existence of beatific vision and theological faith in Christ. For example, after stating that Adrienne von Speyr attributes the vision of the Father to Christ as *comprehensor* and faith to Christ as *viator* exercising obedience to the Father (*TL* II, 286-287 [G 261]), Balthasar argues that because "in his human nature he must experience how man comes to terms with God," "we can speak of a depositing, a dimming, a non-use of his divine vision; his prayer must spring from his having become man" (288 [G 262-263]).

[69] See Alyssa L. Pitstick, *Light in Darkness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007).

[70] It will become clear that Balthasar often subsumes both descent and passion under the keyword "Cross," which apparently for him serves to indicate the entirety of the passion, which culminates in the descent; the question is how precisely to understand the latter (in relation to His death).

view of Holy Saturday is atemporal, there are some texts that suggest he does hold the error ascribed to him by Pitstick. For example, in his *Explorations in Theology*, he says: "…the descent into hell between Christ's death and resurrection is a necessary expression of the event of the redemption – not, indeed (as on Good Friday), within the history actually in progress, but (on Holy Saturday) in the history already accomplished of the old aeon, in the sheol of the Old Testament."[71] More clearly, he says in another work: "And here we encounter the well-known view of Luther, and above all of Calvin, according to which Jesus experienced on the Cross Hell's tortures in place of sinners, thus rendering superfluous a similar experience of Hell on Holy Saturday."[72] From these texts, it could be concluded that he is in error on this point and inconsistent with the existential approach to time and suffering.[73]

Response to Critics

While most scholars agree that for Balthasar there was always some consciousness in Jesus of His divine identity and yet real ignorance assumed (miraculously) for the sake of solidarity with sinners in His missionary descent into the dark depths of the human condition,[74] I have already

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[71] *Explorations in Theology*, vol. I, *The Word Made Flesh*, trans. A.V. Littledale and Alexandre Dru (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1989), 263 [*Verbum Caro: Skizzen zur theologie*, Band I (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1960), 286].
[72] *MP*, 169 [G 244].
[73] It may be worth noting, however, that Pitstick does not quote such necessary proof-texts.
[74] Lösel incorrectly asserts that for Balthasar, "Jesus does not know about his own divine identity" because of His absolute solidarity with sinners (see "A Plain Account," 144n15). Ben Quash correctly states: "Balthasar believes that in his incarnate state Jesus knows (though initially only in a latent way) of his identity as the Son of God, but holds that he does not know the details of what the Father through the Spirit will set before him from moment to moment for the fulfillment of his mission. Jesus is aware of the formal scope of his mission, but uncertain of its content. Instead, he utterly abandons himself to the Father who guides him by the Spirit and in whom he has complete trust. He acts in a certain 'economic ignorance'. [he cites *TD* IV, 234] . . . For just this reason we can ascribe obedience and faith to him, and the perfection of his obedience (dependent as it is to some extent upon 'not-knowing') is, paradoxically, one of the best demonstrations of his divine character as the 'One Sent'" ("The *theo-drama*" in *Cambridge*

quoted Balthasar to the effect that there is a greater separation between Christ on the cross and the Father than there ever could be between damned souls and God. Critics are right to ask how this may be possible if Christ never lost the virtue of charity in His soul and damned souls (if there be any) are condemned precisely in their lack of *caritas*. The answer can be found, among other places, in the final volume of the *Theo-Drama*.[75] The 'separation' between God and Christ crucified is only phenomenal – it is a profound subjective experience, a psychological separation, not a metaphysical one (i.e., not the objective separation that exists where *caritas* does not). But this subjective psychological experience of phenomenal rupture reflects, manifests, expresses, and reveals the 'infinite distance' between the divine persons as self-subsisting relations of

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Companion, 150-151). Jacques Servais argues that Balthasar merely intended to reject Thomas' doctrine of *fruitio beata* in the experience of Calvary, not going so far as to oppose the condemnation of the Holy Office in June 5, 1918 of the following proposition: "It is not certain that there was in the soul of Christ, while he was living among men, the knowledge possessed by the blessed or those who have the beatific vision" (*DH* 3645). He cites M.-J. Nicolas saying, "It is one thing to say that the vision of the divine essence remained during the most profound throes of the Cross; it is something else to say that it was entirely beatific. It did not in fact affect the lower powers that Jesus fully abandoned to their natural objects and to all the causes of suffering. But…Saint Thomas clarifies that the soul itself, being by its essence the form of the body, was the subject of the Passion while it was also the subject of beatitude. It is the same being that at once suffers and enjoys." Likewise, he quotes J. Guillet: "If the person of Jesus is to be the Son of God, he must be so, from his birth, as soon as he exists, otherwise he would never be so. [Moreover] he must be so, and he must know it, for no one can teach that to him….No human word, even the finest and most precise, can bring that lived experience which is that of being God" (*Jésus devant sa vie et sa mort* [Paris, 1971], 56). See *Mystery of Redemption*, 102ff. Problematic passages, however, include *TD* III, 166 and 200 [G 152 and 183].

[75] In the previous volume, there is the distinction between the godlessness of this world and divine godlessness or the godlessness of love (see *TD* IV, 323-324 [G 300-302]). He also says in reference to Christ's experience of abandonment on the cross, "this is where Christ 'represents' us, takes our place: what is 'experienced' is the opposite of what the facts indicate" (*TD* IV, 335-336 [G 312]); there follows a footnote in which he quotes V. Taylor stating, "[J]esus felt the horror of sin so deeply that for a time the closeness of his communion with the Father was obscured. Glover writes: 'I have sometimes thought there never was an utterance that reveals more amazingly the distaince between feeling and fact'" (*TD* IV, 336n8 [G 312n8]).

opposition.[76] Condemned souls exist in objective separation from the love of God, but what they suffer is a subjective experience of separation or 'condemnation' – in assuming the cursedness of sin itself (via His descent into the being-dead of man) God suffers such *subjective* separation, and consequently the Son Himself encompasses the separation from God endured by the sinful subject.[77] If God is to empty Himself in becoming man, it seems fitting for His self-emptying to

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[76] Balthasar distinguishes between the "infinite distance" that is constituted by the self-subsisting mutual *relations of opposition* in the immanent Trinity, on the one hand, and the apparent separation between Father and Son in the economic Trinity manifest in the cross, on the other hand. Thus he quotes von Speyr saying, "'what seems to us to be the sign of separation . . . the separation that is perceptible to us . . .'" (*TD* V, 262 [G 237]). Karen Kilby comes close to drawing from the Balthasarian texts the distinction I have made between the objective and subjective dimensions of His redemptive suffering (see 102n26), but her attempt to understand Balthasar's "infinite distance" language (see 107ff.) is severely lacking. She enumerates "two routes by which he arrives at this point" and only considers the second, which itself is not formulated very well. The first route is, in fact, the fundamental one, and it is the notion (which she confesses to not understanding on 109-110) that the divine persons as distinct hypostases are utterly other than one another. In other words, the divine hypostases are who they are precisely insofar as their identities must be irreducibly distinct from one another (i.e., the divine persons possess in an exemplary fashion the irreducible difference that distinguishes one human person from another, precisely as subjects); the Thomistic trinitarian language of 'mutual relations of opposition' help express this point, and she never has recourse to such a key expression. Since the "second route" (the Cross as revelation of Trinitarian relations) is really founded upon the first route, as the economic Trinity reflects but does not exhaust the immanent Trinity (for Balthasar), a point on which she also is not keen, her comments about deriving a trinitarian theory from questionable exegesis of the "cry of dereliction" (on 107-108) are misguided. Hence, Gerard O'Hanlon says: "We saw how realistically Balthasar described this death – *to the point of Christ's experience of the 'second death' of the sinner in hell.* It is Balthasar's argument that the Trinitarian personal distinctions, *based on the opposition of relations*, are indeed sufficiently real and infinite to embrace, without loss of unity, the kind of opposition between Father and Son which is involved in their common plan to overcome sin. This is so because divine love has the power freely to unfold its richness in such different modalities that the Son's experience of opposition in a hostile sense remains always a function and an aspect of his loving relationship to the Father in the Holy Spirit" (*The Immutability of God*, 119 [emphasis added]). But Balthasar does also utilize a quasi-Hegelian approach to the trinitarian distinctions. For example, "The hypostatic modes of being constitute the greatest imaginable opposition one to another (and thus no one of them can overtake any other), in order that they can mutually interpenetrate in the most intimate manner conceivable" (*TD* II, 258 [G 234]).

[77] See, e.g., *TD* V, 257 [G 232], 260 [G 235]), 264 [G 238]. The "separation from the Father" of which he speaks is a psychological, not a metaphysical, separation (see, e.g., *TD* V, 263-264 [G 238) – that is why he talks about Christ assuming human ignorance for our sake. It "begins in the

result in a more abysmal experience in Christ than can engulf a mere human being in relation to God, regardless of whether one accepts this abyss between the human consciousness of Christ and the bliss of the triune life as a reflection or revelation of an *ur-kenosis* in the Trinity itself.[78] Hence, drawing upon Adrienne von Speyr, Balthasar reflects: "his experience of the abyss is at the same time entirely within him (inasmuch as he assumes in himself the full measure of the mortal sinners' estrangement with respect to God) and also entirely outside himself, for this experience is for him (insofar as eternal Son of the Father) something entirely foreign: he is on Holy Saturday in perfect alienation to himself."[79]

Incarnation and is completed on the Cross" "experienced not only in the body and the senses but also spiritually" even though "'the Father does not leave the Son for a moment'" (*TD* V, 263 [G 237-238]). Sin itself is subsumed by His human nature, that it may be condemned, resulting in the separation of sin from sinner (see *TD* V, 266-267 [G 241-242]).

[78] While Nicholas Healy seems only to see in Balthasar an *ur-kenosis* attributed to the Father's act of begetting the Son, other Balthasarians, such as Gerard O'Hanlon (see *Immutability of God*, 14 and 20) and John Riches refer to the "inner-trinitarian 'kenosis' of the processions," (Riches, "Afterword" in *The Analogy of Beauty*, 193) for which there is much basis in the *Theodrama*. Ben Quash says, "Balthasar has taken a theological model with a long pedigree – a kenotic interpretation of the second Person of the Trinity in the economy of salvation – and has extended it to apply to all three Persons of the Trinity in the differentiated unity of their immanent life. The total 'kenosis' of each and the thankful ('eucharistic') return to each of himself by the others becomes the ground of Trinitarian unity, being, and love" ("The theo-drama" in *Cambridge Companion*, 151). For Balthasar's trinitarian *ur-kenosis*, see, e.g., *TD* III, 188 [G 172]; *TD* IV, 323-331 [G 300-308]; *TD* V, 243-246 [G 219-222]. Concerning the "kenosis" of the Holy Spirit, see *TD* II, 261 [G 237]; *TD* III, 188 [G 172]; *A Theological Anthropology*, 73 [G 94]; see also Jeffrey A. Vogel, "The Unselfing Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 10, no. 4: 16-34. Steffen Lösel, however, correctly notes: "Although Balthasar refers at times to the Spirit's experience of suffering, he emphasizes that the Spirit only reflects the passion of the Son. He emphasizes that 'we cannot state a *kenosis* of the Spirit's freedom' (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theologik*, vol. III, *Der Geist der Wahrheit* [Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1987], 218). Cf. also *idem*, *Theologik* III, 188; idem, *Pneuma und Institution. Skizzen zur Theologie* IV (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1974), 264f" (Lösel, "Murder in the Cathedral," 438n64).

[79] Balthasar, "Descente aux enfers" in *Axes* (1970), 8; cf. *Explorations* IV, 411 [G 397]. He sees the Spirit as the unity that is always there (see, e.g., *TD* V, 262 [G 237]; *Epilogue*, 85-86 [G 66]).

The following text of White's article, I think, is a key to responding to his own conventional objections to Balthasar's understanding of Christ's *kenosis*:

> according to Aquinas, the 'economic mode' or 'dispensation' of Christ's vision during his earthly life is understood to be very different from that of his vision in the exalted state of glory. In the latter state, his body and emotional psychology participate each in their own way directly in the glory of his resurrected life. . . . In the former state, however, this vision is not the source of any such experience. It does assure his soul of a continual knowledge of his own divine identity and will as the Son of God, but it *in no way* alleviates his 'ordinary' states of human consciousness and sensation.[80]

Can we not conclude from this that the divine will could at least suspend experience of the joy ordinarily consequent to immediate vision of God's essence? The question of the nature of Christ's knowledge has to do with the doctrine of the descent insofar as ignorance is said to be assumed for the sake of our salvation and as a necessary condition for the possibility of Christ experiencing something akin to the 'pain of loss' (which is the most significant *poena damni*).[81] The question

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[80] "Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 573-574. In a footnote at the end of this text, White says: "*ST* III, q.14, a.1, ad 2: 'From the natural relationship which is between the soul and the body, glory flows into the body from the soul's glory. Yet this natural relationship in Christ was subject to the will of his Godhead, and thereby it came to pass that the beatitude remained in the soul and did not flow into the body; but the flesh suffered what belongs to a passible nature.' *ST* III, q.15, aa.4-6, make clear that Aquinas understands 'the body' or 'the flesh' of Christ to include the passions and human psychology of the man Jesus" (574n52). For an alternative evaluation of Thomas' argumentation, see Jean-Pierre Torrell, "S. Thomas d'Aquin et la science du Christ" in *Saint Thomas au XXe siecle*, ed. S. Bonino (Paris: Editions St. Paul, 1994), 394-409; White notes that Torrell ultimately parts from Thomas on the question (see "Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 574n50).

[81] Matthew Levering treats the problem in Balthasar with the respect to the question of whether hopelessness is possible in Christ. He compares what John Paul II says in *Novo Millennio Ineunte* (nos. 26-27) to what Balthasar says in *TD* IV and *TL* II. He points out that although Balthasar affirms a lack of hope on the level of "conscious not-knowing," he does not attribute "a perversion of will" to Christ and he maintains that Christ remains at least conscious of His divine identity and mission ("Balthasar on Christ's Consciousness on the Cross," *The Thomist* 65 [2001]: 567-581, at 578). In other words, "there resides an implicit 'hope'" where the ecstatic distance between Father and Son is merely intellectual, not volitional. John Paul, on the contrary, "drawing upon Catherine of Siena and Therese of Lisieux, insists upon 'the paradoxical blending of bliss and pain,' without suggesting that the bliss is no longer experienced (no. 27)" (578n41). John Paul also says: "Precisely because of the knowledge and experience of the Father which he alone has, even at this moment of darkness he sees clearly the gravity of sin and suffers because of it. He alone, who sees the Father and rejoices fully in him, can understand completely what it means to resist the Father's

of what kind of ignorance is proper to Christ's human consciousness need not be determined prior to asserting that it may be fitting that He not experience the joy of being conscious (on a human operative level) of the immediate vision necessitated by the hypostatic union.[82] If Christ's *kenosis* does not involve divesting enjoyment of being humanly conscious (at least in an immediate manner) of the divine essence, then one must accept the triumphalist interpretation of the descent as merely *parousia* to the just who preceded Christ, awaiting His revelation in 'Abraham's bosom.' If, on the contrary, the descent is understood in terms of *kenosis*, and if the biblical attestations of ignorance in Christ are taken seriously (not in a merely metaphorical or rhetorical sense), then

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love by sin. More than an experience of physical pain, his passion is an agonizing suffering of the soul. Theological tradition has not failed to ask how Jesus could possibly experience at one and the same time his profound unity with the Father, by its very nature a source of joy and happiness, and an agony that goes all the way to his final cry of abandonment. The simultaneous presence of these two seemingly irreconcilable aspects is rooted in the fathomless depths of the hypostatic union (No. 26)" (cited on 567). Returning to Balthasar, Levering notes that "[t]he question of how Christ's human knowledge corresponds with his divine knowledge is thus placed to the side. Rephrasing the question in terms of consciousness, rather than of knowledge" (576n32). He adds, quoting *TD* V: "Balthasar's insistence that Jesus must enjoy the immediate vision of the Father is likewise qualified. He emphasizes that 'in the Lord's Passion his sight is veiled, whereas his obedience remains intact.' This veiling holds for Jesus' entire life, if not to the same degree as the ultimate not-knowing Jesus experiences on the Cross: his mission 'presupposes (right from the Incarnation) a certain veiling of his sight of the Father: he must leave it in abeyance, refrain from using it; this is possible because of the distance between Father and Son in the Trinity'" (577). Balthasar also says that there is an "absolute overtaxing of knowledge" involved in the descent, wherein, "because he is dead, he cannot know [his victory, the sin separated from man on the Cross] as what he has made it to be. He can only 'take cognizance' of it as the fearsome agglomeration of all sins that no longer has the slightest connection with the Father who is the good Creator" (*TL* II, 348 [G 317-318]).

[82] I am here accepting the traditional position that the hypostatic union necessitates the presence of beatific vision in the soul hypostatically united to the divine essence. But I would argue that 'immediate vision of God' may have been present in the human soul of Christ without Him being conscious on an operative/functional level of such an objective vision (present in a higher state of consciousness suspended *in actu* by the divine will). For the descent doctrine here espoused it is only necessary to admit divine suspension of the *fruitio* ordinarily consequent to beatific *visio*, but contemporary Christology would like also to come to terms with the biblical passages concerning ignorance in Christ and one may argue that suspension of such *fruitio* makes sense only if there is a precedent suspension of human consciousness (of some kind) of the immediate vision derivative of the divine essence hypostatically one with the human nature of Christ.

there is work to be done in squaring the 'immediate vision of God' attributed to Christ and the depths of spiritual agony evidently present in the Passion.[83]

Both White and Thomas grant the point that the *visio immediata* would have augmented the intensity and sensitivity with which Christ suffered psychologically from human sinfulness, but neither considers the possibility that the divine knowledge of Christ and the experience of absolute 'alienation' may not be incompossible in the descent. In other words, certainly Christ did not suffer actual loss of the state of grace or succumb to the sins of despair or hatred of God,[84] but

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[83] Jacques Maritain offers some interesting reflections on distinct planes of consciousness in Christ's humanity (see *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, Trans. Joseph W. Evans [New York: Herder & Herder, 1969], 48ff.). On this basis he says concerning the passion: "In one sense, – in the sense that He had the Vision of the divine essence, – He was indeed blessed (III, 9, 2 ad 2), and even during His Passion (46, 8), in that which St. Thomas calls the higher part of the soul and which we call the divinized supraconscious of the latter. But, St. Thomas teaches, there was no *derivation* or *redundantia*, there was no repercussion of the higher part on the lower part, this is why the Beatific Vision has not at all prevented the suffering of Christ, in His Passion, from being greater than all the sufferings (46, 6). – *Dum Christus erat viator, non fiebat redundantia gloriae a superiori parte (animae) in inferiorem, ne ab anima in corpus* (46, 8). In this assertion of St. Thomas one finds an indication, quite inchoative no doubt and merely sketched, but valuable, of the notion of 'partition,' in the soul of Christ, between the world of the Beatific Vision and that of the conscious faculties, which I introduce here, and to which I attach a particular importance" (60n15). He goes further, even anticipating Balthasar in other respects too: "Through His infused prayer He experienced this world; He entered wih His consciousness, in order to experience it in an ineffable manner, into this world where He was alone with His Father and the Trinity. It was, so to speak, the nest in which He took refuge, but He brought there also the suffering coming from here on earth, His compassion for the sufferings of men, His anguish over their moral misery and the offenses to His Father that are their sins; and He contemplated there the redemptive work and the sacrifice for which He had come. And at the moment of the Agony and of the Passion He can no longer enter there, He is barred from it by uncrossable barriers, this is why He feels himself abandoned. That has been the supreme exemplar of the night of the spirit of the mystics, the absolutely complete night. The whole world of the Vision and of the divinized supraconscious was there, but He no longer experienced it at all through His infused contemplation. And likewise the radiance and the influx of this world on the entire soul were more powerful than ever, but were no longer seized at all by the consciousness, nor experienced. Jesus was more than ever united with the Father, but in the terror and the sweat of blood, and in the experience of dereliction" (61).

[84] Thomas Weinandy, after acknowledging his agreement with Balthasar's Holy Saturday doctrine and quoting John Paul II's *Salvifici Doloris*, states unequivocally: "It should be noted that while the Son, as man, experienced the full weight of our condemnation, he did not have the mind of a condemned sinner. The damned find God to be utterly loathsome and detestable, for he embodies

does the infinite knowledge of His divine nature actually preclude the possibility of a divine suspension of the fruition which would ordinarily be consequent to the hypostatic union? Balthasar need only deny the *fruitio beata*:[85] "the Trinity does not hover 'unmoved' above the events of the Cross (the view that Christ is somehow 'above' his abandonment by God and continues to *enjoy* the beatific vision), nor does it get entangled in sin as in a process theology à la Moltmann or Hegel, becoming part of a mythology or cosmic tragedy."[86]

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all that is abhorrent to the condemned sinner – goodness, holiness and love. Jesus, in the midst of his abandonment, maintained a firm love of his Father and trusted that his Father would restore his loving presence. While Jesus, through Psalm 22, gave voice to this abandonment, yet this same psalm expressed his trust and confidence in God's merciful power to rescue him. Though his experience was that of one of [sic] being abandoned, yet, in faith and trust, he was assured, despite all appearances, of his Father's unimpaired love. His '*Abba*' prayer in Gethsemane . . . also manifested this trust in his loving Father (*Abba*), despite the seeming evidence and real emotions to the contrary. This too is the same point made in the Letter to the Hebrews [5:7]" (*Does God Suffer?*, 219n8).

[85] Nevertheless, it appears that at least in the third volume (in German, II/2) he asserts that it is not necessary to conclude from the hypostatic union to a perfection vision of God's essence in Christ's human mind, which is traditionally thought to involved knowledge of all things as caused by God: "we can say that Jesus is aware of an element of the divine in his innermost, indivisible self-consciousness; it is intuitive insofar as it is inseparable from the intuition of his mission-consciousness, but it is defined and limited by this same mission-consciousness. It is of this, and of this alone, that he has a *visio immediata,* and we have no reason to suggest this *visio* of the divine is supplemented by another, as it were, purely theoretical content, over and above his mission. Of course, the particular shape of the mission (which draws its universality from its identity with the self-consciousness of *this particular* 'I') can contain a wealth of content, successively revealed, but its source and measure remain the mission itself. . . . *since Jesus does not see the Father in a 'visio beatifica'* but is presented with the Father's commission by the Holy Spirit, that is, his awareness of his mission is only indirect, it is possible for him to be tempted" (*TD* III, 166, 200 [G 152, 183], emphasis added). He further explains his position on 172-173 [G 158].

[86] *TD* IV, 333 [G 310] (emphasis added). In *TD* V, Balthasar obliquely expresses essential agreement with Moltmann and distances him from "pure Hegelianism or a radical process theology," but he seems hesitant to accept the full thrust of Moltmann's trinitarian theory, most likely due to the latter's lack of nuance regarding the economic-immanent identity (see *TD* V, 172-173 [G 152-153]). At the same time, it is evident that he wants to go beyond both Moltmann and Rahner, incorporating their insights into his theory of trinitarian *ur-kenosis* (see, e.g., *TD* IV, 322-323 [G 300]); in the process of such synthesis, though, he seems to appropriate too much of Bulgakov (see especially *TD* IV, 323-324 [G 300-301]).

Notwithstanding White's intention to defend the beatific vision in Christ and his attempt to interpret the cry of dereliction in that vein,[87] God's impotence to suspend at least the joy

[87] He utilizes the exegesis of R. Brown, C.K. Barrett, and R. Schnackenburg to contexualize the cry historically and indirectly slight its profundity, reducing it to a mere recitation of Psalm 22 (see White, "Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 571-572, 575). In order to avoid attributing any godforsaken experience to Christ, Bruce Marshall takes up Augustine's approach: "Whether the logic of ecumenical Christological dogma further allows divine rejection and Godforsakenness to be attributed to the Person of the incarnate Son is another matter. If so, it could only be in something like the sense in which sin is attributable to him, and not the sense in which suffering and death are attributable to him. So Augustine, for example, draws on the distinction between what is true of Christ *in propria persona* and what is true of him *in persona nostra* to understand his utterance from the cross of the opening words of Ps 22. Here it is crucial, Augustine suggests, to distinguish what Christ says on our behalf (*ex persona sui corporis*) from what he says about himself as an individual, what he says in the voice of the church from what he says in his own voice" (Marshall, "The Absolute and the Trinity," 154). But this undue separation of Christ's "own person" (*persona propria*) from the "our person," the "person of his body" (*persona nostra, persona sui corporis*), is unbefitting and reflects a mistaken view either of sin or of the "Godforsakenness" in question – the latter experience of utter sinfulness does not mandate personal sin! While I totally agree with Marshall's insistence that we keep in mind the distinction *secundum quod homo* and *secundum quod Deus*, the conclusion he draws does not follow: "a subject of the divine nature could not actually undergo divine abandonment. In virtue of his humanity a subject of this nature could suffer and die, but even in virtue of his humanity he could not undergo divine abandonment because he could not cease to be divine" (156). I believe there are some missing premises here. In fact, Paul D. Molnar, citing the same passage, makes the following critical inquiry: "Let us suppose that forsakenness or abandonment should be understood in the restricted sense that he experiences our guilt and death in which we as sinners are abandoned by God who restores our humanity in Christ to proper union with God. Then we may reasonably ask: why must it be the case that if Jesus undergoes divine abandonment (assuming that this is what forsakenness means), he must 'cease to be divine'?" ("A Response: Beyond Hegel with Karl Barth and T.F. Torrance," *Pro Ecclesia* 23, no. 2: 165-173). John Yocum argues against the now popular interpretation of Jesus' words, "Father, why have you abandoned me?", as a cry of dereliction, struggling to make an exegetical argument against the notion: "All the details of suffering described in the first half of the psalm relate to treatment by others, and the apparent refusal of God to intervene. These elements of the psalm: the mocking (vv. 7-8), the thirst (15), the piercing (16), the dividing of the garments (17), all show up in both Mark and Matthew. So, unless we tear the cry from its context even within the description of suffering in the first half of the lament, the first verse seems to relate primarily to the vexing and agonizing circumstances in which the sufferer finds himself. This makes sense as well of the parallelism: the abandonment is parallel to the failure of God to intervene. The cry is the prayer of one who laments the non-intervention of God in the face of the raging fury and scorn of other human beings. The sufferer's agony is an eminently human torment: physical pain, social ostracism, loneliness" ("A Cry of Dereliction?," 76-77). While it may be true that Balthasar, among others, extrapolates too much regarding the trinitarian relations from this enigmatic text, I would not go so far as to say that he makes too much of the cry because not only does he utilize

consequent to such vision (or human consciousness of any of its content) cannot be demonstrated.[88] The question is whether it is fitting or proper to the kenotic love of God to assume pains ordinarily consequent to human sinfulness. White is right to insist that the God-man cannot fall into despair or hatred of God. But let there not be a lacuna in making distinctions – must Christ succumb to the sin of despair in order to experience what it is like to be abandoned by God? Is it incongruent with the Incarnate Word to suffer all the consequences due to sin in His own flesh or was that precisely the purpose for which God became man? One option is a straight-forward reading of the

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many Pauline and Johannine texts in interpreting it, but it is also true that what he says regarding the profundity of Christ's spiritual agony (begun in the Garden of Gethsemane) does not contradict any of the contingent factors Yocum enumerates as contributing to his human experience of abandonment. Balthasar states in *Das Ganze im Fragment*: "Each one of the seven last words from the cross is a kind of totality of the gospel . . ." (*A Theological Anthropology*, 280 [G 303]). When one approaches contingent events from the divine perspective of predestination, it is easier to see how Balthasar may jump from all these earthly circumstances to more of a God's eye view of the events as experienced by the incarnate Son, an approach that is indeed criticized by Karen Kilby.

[88] If it is demonstrative to say that whenever an infinite good is known, it must be loved and that both knowing and loving the infinite good bears the joy of such knowledge and love, then one would have to have recourse to a different view of Christ's vision. I am not convinced that it is intrinsically impossible for the joy naturally consequent upon such knowledge and love to be suspended, even though I do think it is demonstratively true to say perfect knowledge of an infinite good necessarily results in perfect love of said good. But Balthasar did not explicitly engage such argumentation and, perhaps, that is why at points he seems content merely to indicate that Jesus was always aware of His divine mission and therefore His own identity (without necessarily knowing all that would naturally be known of created things for the mind that is given understanding of the divine essence via the *lumen gloriae*). Guy Mansini offers the most cogent possible argumentation for the existence of Christ's beatific vision in "Understanding St. Thomas on Christ's Immediate Knowledge of God," *Thomist* 59 (1995): 91-124, but it is admittedly (following Thomas) an argument of fittingness rather than necessity. The Holy Office's (or CDF's) official teaching on the matter seems to have been revised under the guise of the *International Theological Commission* in 1989, which seems to have been anticipated by Balthasar's reticence in the *Theodramatik* to go beyond merely affirming Christ's perpetual knowledge of His divine mission and identity, which is not to say he denied the earlier formulation in 1918, invoked by Jacques Servais, just that he would have had to maintain a very nuanced interpretation of it. But his willingness to admit ignorance in Christ's human mind does not derive from any rational attempt to square his vision of God with his experience of abandonment, but to take certain scriptural texts seriously, and thus Christ's kenosis is said to involve not merely suffering but a "depositing" of what would naturally belong to Him as Son into the Father's hands.

New Testament texts frequently invoked by Balthasar, yielding the latter result. The other option is the odd formulation that 'Christ suffers in the entirety of His soul, but His higher spiritual faculties are immune to deprivation because of the divine consolation also present in the entirety of His soul,' apparently driven by a particular understanding of hylomorphic theory as it applies to Christ's human nature.

Certainly, permanent objective separation from God is the consequence for irrevocably refusing God's love, but nothing precludes God from causing a grace-filled soul to experience solidarity with the hopeless. Just as God can become a creature without losing His divinity, nothing prohibits Him from freely subjecting Himself to the deepest darkness of divine wrath and judgment upon sin. If, as White says, "[John and Mark] attribute to Christ…the expectation of salvation from God and the actual non-possession of that salvation (accompanied by actual suffering),"[89] then why cannot we say with Paul that God suffered the cursedness of sin itself in His own body and soul? If, as Thomas says, "to atone for the sins of all men, Christ accepted sadness, the greatest in absolute quantity,"[90] why can we not speak of such suffering as a 'hell' unique to the Son's destiny to which the Father condemned Him (prefigured by the sacrifice of Isaac)? White's response is to set up an opposition between the substitutionary and satisfactory aspects of redemption by implying an equivalence between any theory of substitution and the 'penal substitution' derived from the writings of Luther and Calvin, even using the word 'substitutes' reluctantly and effectively reducing its meaning to that of satisfaction in Thomas. His neglect of the substitutionary dimension of redemption clearly results in complacency with the

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[89] "Jesus' Cry on the Cross," 570.

[90] *ST* III, q. 46, a. 6, co. It is telling and paradoxical that the very next phrase is the following qualifying subordinate clause (inspired by St. John Damascene): "yet not exceeding the rule of reason."

satisfactory dimension. Balthasar, on the contrary, while shying away from the language of punishment, nonetheless affirms:

> It is essential to maintain, however, that the Crucified does not bear the burden as something external: he in no way distances himself from those who by rights should have to bear it. (Indeed, he is *in* them eucharistically!) Subjectively, therefore, he can experience it as 'punishment', although objectively speaking, in his case, it cannot be such.[91]

Perhaps most central, though, to Balthasar's understanding of the descent is its a-temporality, the implications of which seem lost on Pitstick.[92] Conceding apparent inconsistencies in Balthasar, I would argue that one should appeal to the *Theo-Drama* for his definitive (or more developed) statement on the matter.[93] On the a-temporality of Christ's suffering, he says:

> On the Cross he will feel lonesome unto death, unto a limitless, eternal death in which every temporal moment and viewpoint will completely disappear. What will be a short while for mankind [Jn 14:19] will be an eternal while to him…We see in this the timelessness of his suffering, the timelessness of the redemption…Nonetheless the timelessness of the Cross is not the mere negation of time that characterizes hell, but a 'super-time'.[94]

Pitstick rather pictures the suffering of His 'descent' as a temporal event occurring after death and before resurrection, whereas it should be seen as an experience of His soul in the abandonment of His passion. In fact, at the same time He suffered the crucifixion on Friday, His soul also suffered the hell signified by Holy Saturday; in the Passion, His soul entered another dimension of time in

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[91] *TD* IV, 337-338 [G 314] (emphasis original).
[92] Karen Kilby briefly mentions the "timeless" dimension of Christ's hellish experience (ascribed to Holy Saturday), according to Balthasar, and simply adds that it "raises some questions about whether one can describe the event of the Cross as historical" (108n39). The simple answer to this critical query would be that the event of Christ's suffering is both historical and trans-historical, the latter being primarily represented by his being-dead on Saturday. She also references Pitstick's book several times both sympathetically and ambivalently (see especially 11n18, 121n68).
[93] In fact, in *TL* 345n75 [G 315n1], Balthasar asks scholars to look no more to *Mysterium Paschale* for his theology since it was "a quickly written work" that did not fully appropriate the mystical insights of Adrienne von Speyr. See Steffen Lösel, "A Plain Account," 150n54.
[94] *TD* V, 310 [G 282-283].

which the threshold between death and new life was met by the divine Person of the Son in the flesh of the One who suffered no longer after death on Friday. The 'descent' and the cross are one reality for Balthasar, His passion being the 'time' in which He entered the world of the dead (Sheol) in the most profound sense. He suffered the pains of 'being dead' while still alive in the 'god-forsakenness' of His passion, with the 'descent' of His soul begun in His obedience on Mount Gethsemane and culminating in the 'cry of dereliction.' Pitstick unwittingly quotes the following passage from the final volume of the *Theo-Drama* illustrating the a-temporal union of His passion on Friday and the suffering of the descent signified by Holy Saturday:[95] "The condition of timelessness undergone by the Son on the Cross . . . must have sufficient 'space' for the (infernal) experience of sinners abandoned by God, in two aspects: the intensity of the Son's forsakenness on the Cross and its worldwide extension."[96]

Pitstick knows full well that Balthasar does not accept the idea that Sheol is a place where souls were imprisoned after purgatory[97] until the 'day' on which Christ 'descended' so much as a spiritual condition suffered by those who died before Him.[98] Regarding the descent's transformation of the netherworld into the purgatorial fire, Balthasar asserts:

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[95] See Pitstick, *Light in Darkness*, 111.
[96] *TD* V, 308 [G 281]; cited in *Light in Darkness*, 111.
[97] See Pitstick, *Light in Darkness*, 47-51, for example, for the argument that it is traditional (that is, in accord with the biblical exegesis of Church Doctors) to hold that there were some before Christ who entered Abraham's bosom without need of purgation, others who remained in purgatory until His descent to Abraham's bosom, and others already consigned to Gehenna (the hell of the damned, upon whom the descent could have no positive effect). She invokes earlier (on 18) the authority of St. Thomas for this position, citing *ST* III, q. 52, a. 2.
[98] Just as the word 'descent' connotes change of location to a lower region but in proper theology does not denote such a physical meaning, the 'day' of Holy Saturday is not so much a temporal phase for Christ, but it rather signifies an existential reality that is liturgically commemorated between Passion and Resurrection and that indicates the purgatorial function of judgment for those who die in communion with God (hence the fires of purgation are not time-measured but experienced in subjective 'moments' of existential import).

> Properly speaking, therefore, purgatory comes into existence on Holy Saturday, when the Son walks through 'hell', introducing the element of mercy into the condition of those who are justly lost. Purgatory 'has its origin in the Cross. The Father makes use of the fruit of the Cross in order to temper divine justice, which held the sinners captive, with new mercifulness. From the Cross, hope is brought down to the netherworld; from the Cross, a fire is unleashed in which justice and mercifulness are intermixed. Through the Lord's arrival there, the powers of the netherworld, of death and of evil are driven, as it were, into the backmost recesses of hell, and the devil's chain is made shorter. Purgatory arises as if under the Lord's striding feet; he brings comfort to this place of hopelessness, fire to this place of iciness.'[99]

Gehenna (identical to Sheol, as the common place of suffering for all who die before Christ) was not visited by the soul of Christ on earth's 'Saturday' while His body rested in the tomb. Any word for the dark place in which the dead reign takes on a new meaning in the New Covenant, namely, the spiritual condition of abandonment assumed by Christ (and those in profoundest communion with Him) in solidarity with sinners.

Conclusions

Not only does Balthasar not affirm that His soul suffered the pains of Sheol while His body lay in the tomb, but also, to a more popular point of contention, nowhere does he state outright that the '*visio mortis*' involves a loss of the beatific vision. In fact, in a footnote to Christ's descent as a "state of perdition" (not a place), Balthasar says: "Of course, this does not mean approval of Calvin's doctrine, for the reason that the continuous *visio immediata Dei in anima Christi* makes his experience of hell wholly incommensurate with any other, gives it an 'exemplary', soteriological and trinitarian significance."[100] In other words, the immediate vision of God in Christ (whether it be located in His human consciousness at all times or not) is precisely what

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[99] *TD* V, 363 [G 331].

[100] *Explorations* I, 264n20 [G 285-286n6]. However, one might argue that his position later evolved into one in which the hermeneutic of *kenosis* takes absolute priority.

permits Him to suffer so incomparably with the sinners for whom He descends into the deepest regions of the earth. He experienced complete abandonment without actually losing the grace/charity connatural to His beatified soul, even if His psychological awareness of His own blessed state of grace was temporally suspended in becoming the object of the infinity of His Father's righteous anger. In this way it was possible for Christ to suffer the worst hell possible, experiencing in His soul at the culminating point of His passion (i.e., death) what it means to be condemned as sin-in-itself, the solitary object of the Father's wrath.[101]

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[101] According to Pitstick's radical interpretation of Balthasar, the *kenosis* of Christ is such that God literally becomes sin itself, even to the point that His divinity is cut off from His humanity in His death/descent (see, e.g., Pitstick, *Light in Darkness*, 97, and "Development of Doctrine or Denial," 133). Oakes argues that since 'what has not been assumed has not been redeemed,' "when he died he took all earthly truths with him into hell, so that they could be raised with him into the presence of his Father" (Oakes, "*Envoi*: the future of Balthasarian theology" in *Cambridge Companion*, 273). So, if Christ descended into the hell of the damned literally to "become sin," would not hell and sin themselves be redeemed? Given that the trinitarian *ek-stasis* "undergirds" everything (see *TD* V, 395 [G 361]), even the sin against the Holy Spirit, that is, godlessness itself (see *TD* IV, 323-324 [G 301]), contra the testimony of Christ (as everything He says is relativized by the kenotic heuristic), the effigies of all sinners are incinerated in the amorphous sin-entity that Christ somehow "assumes" in hell (see *Theo-Logik* II, 324, translated in Stefen Lösel's "Murder in the Cathedral," 434, much more adequately than Adrian J. Walker in *Theo-Logic* II, 355-356). Taking a more modest tack than Pitstick, regarding the manner in which Christ "assumes" the amorphous truth-being of sin itself, Matthew Levering interprets Balthasar thus: "Sin is the 'refuse' or 'chaff' that is consigned by Jesus to hell. It follows that the incarnate Son can truly bear all sin--in its hypostasized form, stripped of its association with particular disobedient persons--without perverting his own will" ("Balthasar on the Consciousness of Christ," 579). Contra Pitstick's interpretation, see *TD* IV, 337-38 [G 314], cited by Guy Mansini, "Balthasar and the Theodramatic Enrichment," 508: "Balthasar himself, when pressed, confines the Son's 'becoming sin' to taking on the effects of sin." Also, *TL* II itself contains a statement of Speyr's that is contrary to Pitstick's interpretation of the same section, "Hell and Trinity": "'The horror is in sin and in the sinner and is borne by the Lord *without his being it himself*'" (350-351 [G 320], emphasis added). His controversial (and perhaps easily misinterpreted) comments in the second volume of the *Theo-logic* are anticipated already in the section on "Hell" in *GL* VII. Although he speaks of the "absolute passivity of being dead" (*GL* VII, 230) and it sounds like he might be saying that Christ's divinity is separated from his humanity in the descent (see *GL* VII, 231), for all his rhetorical (or mystical) excess, it is clear in other passages that he does not mean to imply that Christ's *kenosis* involves an actual divesting of His divinity and metaphysical identification with sin itself in the descent (see *GL* VII, 211 and 233). It is rather a metaphorical divesting of His divinity in order to take on "the state of existence of this sin," incinerating the sin He assumes in the flesh by His

In support of all the aforementioned dimensions of locating the descent of Christ in the Passion (the cross), a close collaborator of Balthasar's now known as Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI opines:

> The true Boddhisattva [sic], Christ, *descends into Hell and suffers it in all its emptiness*…It is a seriousness which takes on tangible form in the Cross of Christ…God overcomes evil…*on a Good Friday*…He himself entered into the distinctive freedom of sinners but went beyond it in that freedom of his own love which *descended willingly into the Abyss*…The answer lies hidden in Jesus' *descent into Sheol, in the night of the soul which he suffered*, a night which no one can observe except by entering this darkness in suffering faith. Thus, in the history of holiness…in John of the Cross, in Carmelite piety in general, and in that of Therese of Lisieux in particular, 'Hell' has taken on a completely new meaning and form. For the saints, *'Hell' is*…a challenge to suffer in the dark night of faith, *to experience communion with Christ in solidarity with his descent into the Night.* One draws near to the Lord's radiance by sharing his darkness. One serves the salvation of the world by leaving one's own salvation behind for the sake of others. In such piety, nothing of the dreadful reality of Hell is denied. Hell is so real that it reaches into the existence of the saints. *Hope can take it on, only if one shares in the suffering of Hell's night* by the side of the One who came to transform our night by his suffering. Here hope…derives from the surrender of all claims to innocence and to reality's perduringness, a surrender *which takes place by the Cross of the Redeemer*.[102]

Unlike Ratzinger, Pitstick refuses to consider the depths of Christ's suffering in light of the quasi-a-temporal 'dark night' suffered by many great saints, let alone their self-described experiences of (subjective) condemnation. In a conference called *L'inferno e' solitudine: ecco l'abisso del uomo*, Ratzinger re-affirms his own references in *Eschatology* to Christ as the fulfillment of the myth of Bodhisattva.[103] While certainly avoiding the errors attributed to Balthasar by theologians like Pitstick, he proceeds to offer existentialistic reflections on the anthropological meaning of death and the descent, linking Christ's experience to the 'dark night' of the mystics. Thus, following the train of thought he establishes in both *Eschatology* and *Introduction to Christianity*, he specifies

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infinite self-surrender. The timelessness of such an endeavor is also a theme of this volume (see *GL* VII, 225 and 232), although he seems to emphasize more the historicity of the descent on Saturday in his earlier work (see, e.g., *GL* VII, 230-232).

[102] Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 216-218 [G 219-220] (emphasis added).

[103] See *Perche' siamo ancora nella chiesa* (Collana: Rizzoli, 2008).

that Christ suffered the hell or abandonment proper to the pains of death itself, the hell that precedes redemption, not the hell yet to exist that cannot be penetrated by the 'word of love.'[104] In the latter mentioned work, he explains:

> If there were such a thing as a loneliness that could no longer be penetrated and transformed by the word of another; if a state of abandonment were to arise that was so deep that no 'You' could reach into it any more, then we should have real, total loneliness and dreadfulness, what theology calls 'hell.' We can now define exactly what this word means: it denotes a loneliness that the word love can no longer penetrate and that therefore indicates the exposed nature of existence in itself….In truth – one thing is certain: there exists a night into whose solitude no voice reaches; there is a door through which we can only walk alone – the door of death. In the last analysis all the fear in the world is fear of this loneliness. From this point of view, it is possible to understand why the Old Testament has only one word for hell *and* death, the word *sheol*; it regards them as ultimately identical. Death is absolute loneliness. But the loneliness into which love can no longer advance is – hell….This article [of the Creed] thus asserts that Christ strode through the gate of our final loneliness, that in his Passion he went down into the abyss of our abandonment. Where no voice can reach us any longer, there is he. Hell is thereby overcome, or, to be more accurate, death, which was previously hell, is hell no longer. Neither is the same any longer because there is life in the midst of death, because love dwells in it. Now only deliberate self-enclosure is hell or, as the Bible calls it, the second death (Rev 20:14, for example). But death is no longer the path into icy solitude; the gates of *sheol* have been opened.[105]

It seems only logical to say Christ suffered infinitely more than those saintly mystics who clearly participated in the pains of hell without losing the life of grace, and that such hell did not necessitate the objective loss of the beatific vision consequent upon the hypostatic union.[106] In

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[104] Pitstick criticizes as untraditional Balthasar's position that the hell of the damned did not exist until after Christ, arguing that before Christ some were condemned, some were destined to the limbo of children, some suffered purgatory before entering "Abraham's bosom," and everyone justified by grace waited in the "limbo of the Fathers" until the coming of Christ (*Light in Darkness*, 18, 47, 334). Ratzinger, then, would fall under this same indictment (for disagreeing with Thomas on this point, or at least Pitstick's interpretation thereof).

[105] Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 300-301 [G 220-221] (emphasis original).

[106] Pitstick uses texts of Balthasar suggesting that Christ's "*visio immediata Dei"* was not beatific as warrant to dismiss anthropological reflections on death as the darkest human suffering with reference to the descent. She also supposes without argumentation that it is impossible for Christ to have the beatific vision and suffer a worse hell than any of the mystic-saints. Making note of deficiencies in Balthasar's trinitarian theology, she refuses to consider the depths of Christ's

other words, He subjectively experienced complete and timeless abandonment, and because He still objectively possessed the beatific vision, His suffering was intensified in proportion to His perfect unity with the infinite love of the Trinity. This is no more contradictory than is the incarnation itself – it is the very essence of the incarnation. Those who claim Balthasar's notion of the descent is incongruous with tradition ought to remember and reflect upon the early patristic image of Christ as the fish on the hook swallowed up by the devil.[107]

Finally, while some may claim tradition dictates that Christ only descended to the limbo of the Fathers in glorious triumph, they cannot explain why throughout history the Holy Saturday liturgy has maintained an element of sorrow, that is, why it does not simply celebrate the glory of Christ releasing the just souls into full beatitude. Nor can they claim a monopoly on Tradition and assert this opinion as dogmatic – the Church in fact notes the following precaution (most relevant for disputed questions): "The Tradition here in question comes from the apostles and hands on

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suffering in light of the 'dark night' of many great saints, let alone the subjective experiences of damnation found, for example, in St. Theresa of Avila. In fact, the descent presents a paradox similar to that involved in the reality of Christ lacking human awareness of His own divinity until a certain age, that is, the time when a human being normally becomes aware of His own identity as a person. According to a certain Thomist perspective at least, His human intellect must have possessed beatific and infused knowledge and yet, in accord with the psychical domain of acquired knowledge, He would not have been 'experimentally' conscious of such knowledge until His human brain reached the development necessary for such.

[107] See, e.g., Gregory of Nyssa's *Catechetical Orations*, c. 24. In addition to the comments of Augustine exposed by Oakes, Turek invokes aspects of medieval reflection that Balthasar and Ratzinger develop: "von Balthasar suggests that we consider the very source of redemptive grace as entailing Christ's descent into Hades/Sheol in representative assumption of the situation of all humankind who, under judgment as the progeny of the 'First Adam,' is tending (in absence of the Christ event) toward the realm of death in deprivation of the vision of God. Since, moreover, Christ's mission recapitulates the *concrete entirety* of human history (including whatever resistance to Christological grace I exhibit in my life), we may also consider St. Thomas' argument that the necessity for Christ's descent into Hades 'lies in the fact that Christ has assumed all the *defectus* of sinners' (*In Libros Sententiarum* III, d 22, q. 2, a. 1, qla. 3). In the view of von Balthasar and Ratzinger, Christ's assumption of all the *defectus* of sinners as an act of supreme love involves his sharing (in an analogous manner) the alienation from the divine Father to which sin inevitably leads (*CCC* #603)" ("Dare We Hope," 120-121n69).

what they received from Jesus' teaching…Tradition is to be distinguished from the various theological, disciplinary, liturgical or devotional traditions…In the light of Tradition, these traditions can be retained, modified, or even abandoned under the guidance of the Church's magisterium."[108] Balthasar merely attempts to return to the apostolic tradition made known in Paul's epistles (and preserved, albeit in minority, among the Fathers) that the human nature of Christ was engulfed by the fire of God's jealous love for the sinner.[109] Balthasar evidently realized that many of St. Paul's very clear comments about Christ's redemptive suffering for sinners were not taken seriously by this 'traditional' doctrine of the descent; hence, the latter cannot be considered a part of Tradition as conduit of divine revelation, and the diversity of opinions among the Fathers allows for legitimate developments of doctrine to be proposed on this matter.[110] It is

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[108] *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2000), no. 83.

[109] Balthasar leaves some clues to his own understanding of tradition in *Razing the Bastions*, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 36-37. He clearly does not conceive of tradition as one of the "sources" of revelation, comprised by the "consensus of the Fathers," a medieval conceptualization of the phenomenon. Rather, he understands tradition in terms of the Spirit exploiting in time the riches that lie inchoate in Christ Himself, whose revealing deeds and words were nevertheless publicly witnessed in full by the time of John's death. Displaying an even more liberal understanding of tradition, Balthasar says the following in his monograph on Gregory of Nyssa: "Being faithful to tradition most definitely does not consist . . . [in] a literal repetition and transmission of the philosophical and theological theses that one imagines lie hidden in time and in the contingencies of history. Rather, being faithful to tradition consists much more in imitating our Fathers in the faith with respect to their attitude of intimate reflection and their effort of audacious creation, which are the necessary preludes to true spiritual fidelity [*PT*, 12]" (cited by Brian Daley, "Balthasar's Reading of the Church Fathers" in *Cambridge Companion*, 189).

[110] For a more detailed account of the kind of theology of tradition at work here, see Joshua R. Brotherton, "Revisiting the *Sola Scriptura* Debate: Yves Congar and Joseph Ratzinger on Tradition," *Pro Ecclesia* (forthcoming: Spring 2015). See also Larry Chapp, "Revelation" in *Cambridge Companion*, 11-23. Concerning the opinions of the Fathers, Jared Wicks, S.J., in "Christ's Saving Descent to the Dead: Early Witnesses from Ignatius of Antioch to Origen," *Pro Ecclesia* 17, no. 3 (2008): 281-309, states that "[i]n the discussion [between Pitstick and Oakes in *First Things*], however, the 'voice of the Fathers' was not heard" (281). He concludes: "Regarding the debate over Hans Urs von Balthasar's theology of redemption, these early testimonies give strong support to his critics. They offer no indication at all of the descent being Christ's extreme experience of Godforsakenness in the netherworld. Christ does not go there because of human sin

not clear how this majority tradition could have derived from a complete reading of Scripture or whether it can withstand the theological scrutiny necessary for the Church to demand adherence to such a position.[111] In fact, Balthasar shows that the Jews traditionally understood Sheol in a much darker light than do the 'traditional' theologians, and thus the descent was directed towards this dark abode of death, not to some state of natural happiness after a pre-Christian purgatory (a creative invention). Without returning to the biblical texts already cited in favor of Balthasar's position, it suffices to point to the suffering prophet Job as perhaps his favorite Old Testament figure of Christ. Unfortunately, the much esteemed Avery Cardinal Dulles appears to side with

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for expiatory suffering in a phase beyond his earthly Passion. He is not passive and suffering in going to the dead, but active soteriologically to bring light, release, and passage to heaven" (308). The catena of texts from the early second century to the year 300 (some of which are quasi-gnostic), nevertheless, neither exhausts the Catholic tradition nor excludes the possibility of the developments explicated by Balthasar and Ratzinger, among others, who treat the question in terms of diverse strands of tradition that are organically related in the course of time – hence, the argument has been made here that the descent is an extension of the mysterious depths of Christ's salvific suffering as *Stellvertretung*. It may, in fact, be true that most (if not all) of the Fathers saw the descent primarily (if not exclusively) in terms of victory, but they do not (and certainly not unanimously) repudiate the idea that the descent also involved suffering. I have argued for the view that the descent-suffering actually occurred during the historical passion (on Friday), but I am not persuaded that the other view (i.e., that it continued on Saturday) is necessarily *contra fide*.

[111] Paul Griffiths does an excellent job of detailing how Pitstick overshoots the mark when she claims the 'traditional doctrine' on the descent as binding magisterial teaching, without entering into questions of exegesis or the merits of each theory; see "Is There a Doctrine of the Descent into Hell?," *Pro Ecclesia* 17, no. 3 (2008): 257-268. Augustine himself seems to hold a view more similar to Balthasar's in his letter to Bishop Evodius (Augustine, *Letters*, 163, in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers o f the Christian Church*, vol. 1, *The Confessions and Letters of St. Augustine*, ed. Philip Schaff [Reprint, Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988]). Even Kevin Flannery, S.J., notes: "Surprisingly, Augustine held that Christ descended not to the limbo of the just but to the lowest regions of hell: *De Genesi ad litteram libri XII*, 33, 63 (see also *De civ. Dei* 17.11). Whom did he save from there? 'Whom he willed,' he says at *Ep.* 164.5.14. I argue against this notion . . ." ("How to Think about Hell," *New Blackfriars* 72, no. 854 [1991]: 469-481, at 481n21). Augustine's view on the intrinsic efficacy of grace coheres well with his approach to the descent; the difference from Balthasar consists in his restriction of election to 'the few.' For further development of this 'minor' tradition on the descent, see David Lauber, "Towards a Theology of Holy Saturday."

Pitstick in this debate,[112] to which Oakes' only necessary response is to quote yet another Scriptural text on the side of Balthasar: "In saying 'He ascended,' what does [Scripture] mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions of the earth? He who descended is he who also ascended far above all the heavens in order that he might fill all things" (Eph. 4: 9-10). The Jewish understanding of the 'lower regions of the earth' certainly involved the notion of suffering, but as if that were not enough, Oakes also calls to mind the image of Jonah's three days in the belly of a whale as a prefiguration of His suffering in the descent.[113]

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[112] See Dulles, "Responses to Balthasar, Hell, and Heresy," *First Things* (March 2007), which includes Oakes' response and a reply to Oakes from Pitstick.

[113] See Edward T. Oakes and Alyssa L. Pitstick, "Balthasar, Hell, and Heresy: An Exchange," *First Things* (December 2006); Edward T. Oakes and Alyssa L. Pitstick, "More on Balthasar, Hell, and Heresy," *First Things* (January 2007). In another place, however, Oakes quotes this passage from Pitstick's dissertation ("*Lux in Tenebris*: The Traditional Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell and the Theological Opinion of Hans Urs von Balthasar" [Rome: Angelicum University Dissertation, 2005], 84-85), omitted from the later Eerdmans edition: "In a certain sense, one might say His soul was in heaven immediately after death as it deserved to be, insofar as the joy of heaven's beatitude which He always had filled His entire soul after the end of the sorrows of the Passion," and he comments: "This invocation of Christ's beatific vision to avoid the implications of an expiatory Holy Saturday is deeply problematic, for it would also have to imply that Christ never left heaven in the first place (since according to Aquinas he enjoyed the beatific vision from the moment of his conception). . . . there is absolutely *nothing* in the beatific vision that implies it serves as a kind of celestial anesthetic inuring the human soul of Jesus from pain" ("*Descensus* and Development," 16). While I agree with the last statement and with his rebuttal to Pitstick's conclusion, the reason he cites for opposing the latter is confused. Why cannot Jesus' human soul simultaneously enjoy the beatific vision and be present in the depths of hell through some other modality besides that of consciousness (i.e., his salvific action)? Whether or not Christ could have both enjoyed the beatific vision and suffered the torments of the damned at once, the crux of the matter is precisely whether the *fruitio beata* began on Saturday or Sunday, that is, whether the descent-suffering took place historically on Friday in the midst of His passion and death or on Saturday proper. Although Balthasar is ambivalent and imprecise on the question, Ratzinger more clearly (even if not so explicitly) limits Christ's sufferings temporally to Friday, allocating the sufferings celebrated on Holy Saturday to the historical time culminating in the 'moment' of His death. It seems more sensible for Christ to endure the pains of hell while still alive, being deprived of the *fruitio beata* even while possessing by His divinity the *visio beata*, rather than to undergoe a real split of consciousness in which he both enjoys the vision and suffers its absence (which is not the position advocated by Oakes but the only other alternative to it and the position defended here). Balthasar's latest statement relevant to the question seems to be the following: "passing through this place [where the Father is not], he is at once who he is (the sinless son of the Father)

The 'descent into hell' signifies both the triumphal application of redemption to the souls who preceded Christ and the culmination of His glorious suffering in death itself,[114] containing all possible spiritual and moral pain (qualitatively speaking), temporally suffered while He hung upon the tree. The moment of His (and consequently everyone's) death cannot be entirely limited to a quantitative segment of time because it is an 'existential moment' in which time and eternity come together in the soul suffering departure from its own body. Thus, Holy Saturday is not a mini-Easter, according to which the soul of Christ is triumphing over the wickedness of the dead – rather, it signifies the *hidden* power of His passion and future resurrection. As Christmas is the celebration of both Nativity and Incarnation (as His incarnation was made fully manifest to men in the Nativity), Holy Saturday represents liturgically the threshold between His suffering and His glorious triumph (not the latter alone nor the former alone),[115] as well as the day of Mary's suffering (that is, Christ within her!) and the mysterious 'day' in which the Church now lives ("completing what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ"). Holy Saturday is both a sorrowful and

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and who he is not, insofar as he is the bearer of all the sins of the world. Fundamentally, he goes in two opposite directions: (with the thief on his right) toward paradise and (with the one on his left, in order to fetch him) into deep hell. The contradiction, then, is that he is at once the farthest from hell and, as sin-bearer, the closest to it; that, being this dead man, he has lost his Word-character (hence the silence) and yet, at the same time, is also the Father's loudest and clearest message to the world" (*TL* II, 351-352 [G 320-321]). While Ratzinger appears to be silent on when Jesus enjoyed the beatific vision, John Paul II supports the notion that Jesus enjoyed His communion with the Father immediately upon death (see "He Descended into Hell," *A Catechesis on the Creed* II, 483-488). At one point Balthasar seems to place the descent into hell after Christ's return to the Father in spirit, relying on Adrienne von Speyr: "After his death, into which he is flung as into the abyss, but before he goes through hell, there is indeed something like a pause, in which he deposits the Good Thief in the promised paradise. But this signals the beginning of an indescribable paradox. He is the dead 'sin-bearer' of all sins" (*TL* II, 348 [G 317]).

[114] Even in his earlier writing, Balthasar does not see Holy Saturday as exclusively kenotic or pre-victorious: "The mystery of Holy Saturday is two things simultaneously: the utmost extremity of the *exinanitio* [self-emptying] and the beginning of the *Gloria* even before the resurrection" (*Explorations* I, 264 [G 286]).

[115] "[T]he silence of the Church on Holy Saturday . . . ought to bear within itself an inkling of what tremendous, ineffable things are happening between heaven and hell" (*TL* II, 359 [G 327]).

a happy occasion because it was through the descent into the utter abandonment of the Cross that the prisoner souls who temporarily preceded Him were redeemed (in that symbolic moment), allowing Him to enter the Father's glory at death, having endured with impenetrable hope the judgment of wrath upon sin itself. All for the glory of the kenotic love of the Triune God![116]

[116] It is not yet clear how God's love may be called 'kenotic.' In a later chapter I will take issue with Balthasar's ur-kenotic theory of the processions, but that is not to deny the divine identity of the One who suffered as Son of Man (and the communion of life between the divine persons).

Chapter 2

The Possibility of Refusal: Grace and Freedom in Balthasar[1]

In the previous chapter, I defended a Balthasarian approach to Christ's passion and death against Thomistic attempts to undermine the hellishness of sufferings. While Balthasar could have been more precise at points regarding the nature of such suffering, it is clear that Christ's sufferings, while different from the damned in that He was never deprived of grace or charity, were in some sense more intense and profound than those of the damned. It is the atemporality of the God-man's descent experience that allows Him to plumb the depths of "eternal" condemnation without actually being condemned in the same sense that are those who finally reject divine grace. In other words, He wills to endure in a "moment," from the perspective of historical time, what constitutes the timelessness of hell as the place of God's absence, for the sake of our salvation and without actually losing communion with the Father and the Spirit.

In the growing scholarship on Balthasar attention has primarily been focused on his treatment of the soteriological problem of Christ's descent into hell, a theme that certainly plays a pivotal role in his "trinitarian eschatology." But the role played by his assumed theology of grace, which can only be glimpsed in a few places scattered throughout his work, is necessarily even more significant, as salvation, even through divine suffering, may come only by means of the grace bestowed (and received) in such salvific acts. It is thanks alone to the efficacy of divine grace itself that any man seize upon any opportunity to turn toward the infinite mercy of God in ultimate trust. While Balthasar's theology of the descent serves to point up the ineluctable means through

[1] Publication of a version of this chapter is forthcoming in the journal *Josephinum*.

which divine grace becomes efficacious for all the redeemed, the intrinsic power of grace itself is the motor that drives Balthasar's hope for the possibility of such an economy.[1] Therefore, the most pivotal question in Balthasar's essentially eschatological project stands out: what precisely is Balthasar's view of the dynamic relationship between divine grace and human freedom?

In this chapter I will *expose* the almost covert theology of grace, which underpins Balthasar's eschatological project, as inadequate and simplistic, given the conceptual framework that came about in the wake of the Protestant challenge to what Bernard J. F. Lonergan, S.J., calls the "theorem of the supernatural."[2] Balthasar's (Barthian) approach to the relationship between grace and freedom is deficient insofar as it represents a lack of engagement with contemporary thomistic thought on the matter.[3] It will become apparent that Balthasar's intentional neglect of

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[1] Hence, quoting Speyr, Balthasar relates: "'. . . Hell, then, is transformed by the Cross: grace penetrates to the point where damnation was. Redemption penetrates to the point where there was definitive judgment.' The most immediate consequence of this is that Holy Saturday creates the possibility of an exit from Sheol: purgatory." *Theo-Logic*, vol. 2, *Truth of God*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), p. 355; *Theologik*, Band II, *Wahrheit Gottes* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1985), p. 324.

[2] See *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas: Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 1, eds. Frederick E. Crowe, S.J., and Robert M. Doran, S.J. (Reprint, Toronto: University of Toronto, 2000), pp. 18-20, 185-187, 210ff. This is the latest version of Bernard Lonergan's dissertation work concerning g*ratia operans*, containing both its original publication in the form of four 1941 articles in *Theological Studies* as well as the later revision, *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. J. Patout Burns (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971).

[3] In addition to Lonergan's *Grace and Freedom*, see, for example, Francisco Marín-Sola, "El sistema tomista sobre la moción divina," *Ciencia Tomista* 32 (1925): 5-52; "Respuesta a algunas objeciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina," *Ciencia Tomista* 33 (1926): 5-74; "Nuevas observaciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina," *Ciencia Tomista* 33 (1926): 321-397; Jacques Maritain, *Dieu et la permission du mal* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1963), in English, *God and the Permission of Evil* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966); *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil* (Milwaukee: The Aquinas Lectures, 1942), published originally in English; *Court traite de l'existence et de l'existant* (Paris: Paul Hartmann, 1947), c. 4, in English, *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948); William Most, *Grace, Predestination, and the Salvific Will of God* (Front Royal: Christendom Press, 1997), originally Guilielmo G. Most, *Novum tentamen ad solutionem de Gratia et Praedestinatione* (Rome: Editones Paulinae, 1963); Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Grace*, trans. A. V. Littledale

this debate as 'too scholastic'[4] causes his theology of the grace-freedom dynamic to be not merely historically underdeveloped, but consequently conceptually inadequate as well.[5] It may be argued that the entire *Theodrama* sets out to provide an alternative to "neo-scholastic" speculations that he thinks have bogged down the history of theology, but in fact his attempt to avoid "distinction making" can only lead to unsustainable metaphorical discourse, an ersatz for disciplined theological precision.[6] I will therefore begin by pointing to evidence that Balthasar's theology of

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(New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1960) and *The Meaning of Evil*, trans. Michael Barry (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1963). See also Michael Torre, *Do Not Resist the Spirit's Call: Francisco Marin-Sola on Sufficient Grace* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013) and *God's Permission of Sin: Negative or Conditioned Decree? A Defense of The Doctrine Of Francisco Marin-Sola, O.P. Based On The Principles Of Thomas Aquinas* (Fribourg: Academic, 2009).

[4] See especially *Dare We Hope*, pp. 23-24 [G 19-20], 184-186 [G 31-33], 208-210 [G 56-58]; and *TD* I, p. 48 [G 44].

[5] He does, however, obliquely concede the importance of a theology of grace for eschatology when he adds concerning the interaction of *sola gratia*, wherein "God cannot function as a mere Spectator" but "acts *as* created freedom" and a human freedom "that has *not* been eradicated by sin" and does not "lie passive and anaesthetized on the operating table while the cancer of his sin is cut out": "This is the climax and the turning point of the theo-drama, and as such it already contains and anticipates the final act, the 'eschatology.'" *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, vol. 4, *The Action*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1994), p. 318; *Theodramatik*, Band III: *Die Handlung* (Einsiedeln: Johannesverlag, 1980), p. 296, emphasis original.

[6] In a manner complementary to the explanation here presented for Balthasar's over-emphatic anti-Pelagian approach to the divine permission of moral evil, Ben Quash critiques Balthasar's theodramatic approach to the divine-human freedom relationship as succumbing to the same pitfalls as Hegel, whose literary theory he more or less overtly adopts. For example, he says: "Analogies between human freedom – as seen for example in drama – and divine freedom themselves run certain risks. *Certain kinds* of analogical understanding posit precisely that kind of intermediate middle ground which *interferes* with a full differentiation between Creator and creature, and which denies dramatic (and more particularly, tragic) insights. The mere notion of 'harmony' or 'resolution' can perform this intermediate role. And the notion of drama – if (as is intermittently the case in von Balthasar) it is associated with such patterns of harmonious resolution – can take on the status of a putative 'entity' in which divine/human patterns of encounter find formed, generalized expression. Von Balthasar talks rather too readily of drama's 'unificatory endeavor that sheds light on existence' as mirroring 'the eternal, divine plan', or of 'the indivisible unity of the play's ideal content', or of 'the pleasure of being presented with a "solution"'" ("Balthasar's Theology of Drama," 303 [emphasis original]). Earlier regarding Hegel's influence in this respect, he stated: "Balthasar's theology of mission positions character

grace does not go beyond late-Augustinian thought, then I will survey comments of his most pertinent to the grace-freedom dynamic and most relevant to his eschatological project: the second volume of his *Theodrama*, the fifith volume of the same work, and *Dare We Hope?* This will serve to show that his view of the relationship between grace and freedom, paired as it is with the Catholic conviction that God truly desires salvation for all, is precisely what leads inextricably to his quasi-universalist eschatology. I will not, however, be able (in this chapter) to fill the lacuna with a presentation of the viable thomistic alternative to his implicit theology of the grace-freedom dynamic (i.e., twentieth-century developments regarding the *de auxiliis* controversy).[7]

Balthasar's Inherited Augustinian Framework in the Theology of Grace

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in line with the broader aim or *telos* of action in more or less the same way that Hegel's *Phenomenology* shows Spirit aligning individuals with the movement of rational necessity (each individual event properly finding its goal in teleological relation to the embracing system). The mediating function of the Church in von Balthasar's theology of mission is closely comparable to the notion of mediation (between collections of acting people) which Hegel sees not only in drama, but also (on another level) in the State, right down to the language of sacrifice or extermination (*Vertilgung* and *Aufopferung*) as the means to freedom from the 'extreme of individuality'" (299-300). Again, concerning Balthasar's treatment of Shakespear's *Measure for Measure* (in *TD* I), Quash concludes: "a model of operative Providence is introduced (in the form of the disguised Duke) in order, eventually, to effect a deeply suspect comic ending. And the most disturbing thing about this providential power, which von Balthasar never once mentions, is its manipulative character. It arranges a mechanical 'solution' to the play's problems . . ." (304).

[7] For at least an preliminary attempt at such a project, see chapters five and six below.

While Balthasar unambiguously opposes Augustine's restrictive view of election,[8] he certainly did not disinherit the Augustinian-Thomistic perspective on the efficacy of grace.[9] It is

[8] Outside *Dare We Hope*, he most explicitly rejects Augustine's restrictive view in *Razing the Bastions*, 58. In an article on Balthasar, Nicholas J. Healy broaches the topic of predestination as it relates to the West's inheritance of Augustine's *massa damnata* theory, pointing to a dissertation by Margaret Harper McCarthy: "As evidenced by his exegesis of 1 Tim 2:4, Augustine came to effectively deny the universal salvific will of God. With the official condemnation of Pelagius in 418 and then again at the Second Council of Orange in 529, the Church sided firmly with Augustine in affirming the complete gratuity of salvation. Yet, as Margaret Harper McCarthy notes, the Church '*did not* espouse the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, opting instead to exercise a prudent suspension of judgment.' 'Only twice was the doctrine of predestination an object of the Church's formal teaching, and this at the Councils of Quiercy in 853 and Valence in 855, when, in opposition to the notion of a positive predestination to damnation before the foreknowledge of demerits (*reprobatio positive ante praevisa demerita*), predestination was limited to the elect (a group of which the Church said nothing). . . .'" ("On Hope, Heaven, and Hell," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 1, no. 3 [Fall 1997]: 80-91, at 87-88). He continues to report her conclusions: "In this comprehensive study Dr. McCarthy outlines the renewal in twentieth-century Biblical and theological literature through which 'the doctrine of predestination in St. Paul was drawn away from its Augustinian interpretation and proposed as a positive doctrine, giving cause for joy and hope' (3). She writes, 'The contemporary turn in the doctrine [of] predestination can be summarized by two significant changes. On the one hand there would be a move away from the mutual estrangement of the two predestination[s] (of men and of Christ). . . . In short, by rediscovering the term of Pauline predestination as well as the identity of the predestined, modern exegesis rediscovered Pauline universalism'" ("On Hope, Heaven, and Hell," 91n19). Hence, when Healy says, "Presupposing (1) that God's salvific will is infallibly efficacious and cannot be thwarted by a human will and (2) it appears that most of humanity will end up in hell, Augustine was compelled to limit predestination to a select group chosen out of the *massa perditionis*" (87), it is easy to conclude that Balthasar rejects only the second thesis, not the first (although he might rephrase it to allow more theoretical room for human resistance), and Balthasar's interpretation of the redemptive descent clearly functions as the source of hope overturning Augustine's second "presupposition."

[9] It will be seen that, although he may not simply adopt the Baroque Thomist division of grace into "sufficient" and "efficacious" and he does not engage in the Bañez-Molina debate concerning the "intrinsic efficacy" of grace, he does so emphasize the power of grace that, in traditional Thomistic parlance, one may argue that he adopts the view of "moral premotion" (see below the citation of *Dare We Hope*, 209-210). For the meaning of this term, see for example, Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 263ff. Despite Garrigou's reduction of such a view to Molinism (as he does with every view besides the Bañezian), it merely concerns the medium through which efficacious grace operates, that is, whether the efficacy is explained simply in terms of metaphysical predetermination (*praedeterminatio physica*) or in terms of a psychological framework within which free conversion is ensured (which Garrigou might peg a variation of 'congruism'). In fact, Balthasar at one point agrees with the traditional Augustinian-Thomistic understanding of the grace of consent, without reflecting on its consequences (or the divine

well known that Augustine's solution to the problem of how to square the efficacy of grace and the (apparent) revelation of reprobation is his restrictive view of election. Hence, Balthasar's implicit theology of grace has been termed 'hyper-Augustinian.'[10] Wishing to steer clear of polemics regarding proper interpretation of Augustine, I will designate Balthasar's view of grace as exaggeratedly (or over-emphatically) anti-Pelagian, the precise significance of which will

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permission of evil), stating: "Grace, however, must not only be freely given, it also needs to be freely accepted, *through a certain influence on the recipient by the same grace*" (*TD* III, 35 [G 32], emphasis added). Nevertheless, like Lonergan (whose very clear stance against both Bañez and Molina will be discussed later), Balthasar seems to accept the Molinist perspective on divine foreknowledge when he approvingly quotes Origen's "philosophical reconciliation of eternal and temporal freedom" (*TD* II, 293n10 [G 266-267n10]), which again makes him no more than an Augustinian (see *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum Liber Unus* [*PL* 44], 9.17 – 9.18). But even this is not clear, as Gerard O'Hanlon elucidates Balthasar's view on divine foreknowledge as Augustinian-Thomistic rather than Molinistic (see *The Immutability of God*, 158-162).

[10] See Thomas Joseph White, "Von Balthasar and Journet," 650. It seems at times that Balthasar does not have an accurate knowledge of Augustine's position on predestination, as he assumes the Calvinist extrapolation of 'double-predestination' is correct here, for instance: "If one believes in the twofold predestination advocated by Augustine and adheres, on the basis of that, to the certainty that a number of people will be damned, one might object that love would have to stop at this barrier" (*Dare We Hope*, 77-78 [G 62-63]). The closest Augustine comes to this position is the following extreme anti-Pelagian statement in *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*: "Est ergo in malorum potestate peccare: ut autem peccando hoc vel hoc illa militia faciant, non est in eorum potestate, sed Dei dividentis tenebras et ordinantis eas: ut hinc etiam quod faciunt contra voluntatem Dei, non impleatur nisi voluntas Dei" (*Liber Unus*, *PL* 44). "It is, therefore, in the power of the wicked to sin; but that in sinning they should do this or that by that wickedness is not in their power, but in God's, who divides the darkness and regulates it; so that hence even what they do contrary to God's will is not fulfilled except it be God's will" (16, 33) [NPNF translation]. See also *City of God*, 21, 12 and 24 (*De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos Libri XX* [*PL* 41], 17-18 and 24). It is clear from these passages that Augustine holds what is later called 'negative reprobation,' as opposed to predestination to hell (i.e., 'positive reprobation' *ante merita praevisa*). Augustine affirms repeatedly that the reprobate are merely foreknown, not predestined (see *De Praedestinatione* 9.18 and 10.19 [*PL* 44]). 'Negative reprobation' is a term taken from the commentary tradition that indicates the divine choice not to elect particular men, antecedent to any consideration of merit or demerit, based on no other criterion than His own will (and perhaps the existence of original sin in each); those predestined to glory are therefore granted the "efficacious graces" necessary for obtaining such an end. This topic will be discussed later insofar as the assumed view of divine permission is critiqued.

become clearer in the course of the discussion of the dynamic relationship between grace and freedom, begun in this chapter and continued in chapter five.

In a dissertation on the finite-infinite freedom interplay in Balthasar, Thomas G. Dalzell notes in reference to Balthasar's approach to the grace-freedom dynamic that the "traditional (Augustinian) position on grace and freedom [is] that captive freedom cannot free itself from its chains but can only be released by the intervention of God."[11] Lonergan's dissertation on grace

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[11] Thomas Dalzell, *The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 138. Unfortunately, Dalzell does not elaborate on how this kind of position affects Balthasar's eschatology, which is a principal task of this dissertation. He does, however, state the following elsewhere: "While it is important to Balthasar that God takes created freedom seriously, it could be argued that his idea of Christ's descent into hell to accompany those who have damned themselves makes it doubtful that God could lose the human response forever" ("The Enrichment of God in Balthasar's Trinitarian Eschatology," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 66 (2001): 3-18, at 15n56). There is also an interesting article by Michele M. Schumacher, "The Concept of Representation in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Theological Studies* 60 (1999): 53-71, in which the relationship between Balthasar's soteriology of representation (or *Stellvertretung*) is viewed as problematic from the perspective of human freedom and resolved only through the trinitarian dynamic of free kenosis. Despite making many interesting comments, Schumacher's argument is less than coherent. She does, however, note Balthasar's tendency to undermine finite freedom in order to elevate infinite freedom, which is the central point illustrated in this chapter. After noting Balthasar's intention to maintain the integrity of created freedom (in different words), she makes the following insightful comments, even if not entirely accurate (soteriologically): "[T]he link in his soteriology between the Cross and this conversion [necessary for remission of sins] – which in my view is the final reason for the Cross – remains so obscure that one is left with an arbitrary connection between one's estrangement from God and one's persistence in sin. Since there is little hope for an impasse in the confrontation between an obstinate God and a hardheaded sinner, Balthasar was forced simply to do away with the confrontation through a notion of substitution: 'the dialectical reason (bilateral covenant)' is for him dissolved, as Michel Beaudin sees it, in a 'non-dialectical relation (unilateral covenant founding the first)' rather than being integrated into it. Balthasar insists perhaps too unilaterally on a resolution to the problematic from on high. The Creator-creature dynamic is dissolved into the eternal drama between the Father and the Son with the latter's pre-existing obedience tending to 'substitute itself for the God-man relation rather than integrating it into itself.' Hence it seems that Balthasar must live up to his own demands: the fulfillment of finite freedom requires not only that 'the Infinite take the finite into itself (and absorb it)' but also that the finite 'be capable of taking the Infinite into itself.' Christ's obedient 'yes' to the Father cannot simply take the place of our own; it must be appropriated in such a way that the human creature is anchored in God's freedom both objectively, 'in God's truthfulness,' and subjectively, 'in his own attitude of truth,' which is to say that 'it must commit itself to this truth, which is freely offered to

and freedom, in fact, characterizes this view of the relationship as historically prior to "the theorem of the supernatural," which he describes as a significant development in the history of theology that St. Thomas receives energetically from Phillip the Chancellor.[12] In which case, Balthasar's views are underdeveloped (or "retarded") with respect to the progress of Catholic theology.[13]

The vision of the grace-freedom relationship that is impugned as hyper-Augustinian (whether in its Bañezian, Jansenist, or Calvinist/Lutheran forms) may be illustrated in broad manner with the following example:[14] if Judas did not repent of his betrayal before he died, it is ultimately because he did not receive the grace of repentance (denied him either on the basis of his prior sinfulness or simply because it is not due), meanwhile Peter asked forgiveness for his denials simply because of the quality of grace(s) granted him, not because of anything coming from him

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it.' In so doing, in letting itself be brought into the realm of infinite freedom, there is no danger that the creature will become alienated from itself, for the simple reason that self-surrender is the very law of trinitarian being; the divine nature 'is always both what is possessed and what is given away,' the 'fullness of blessedness' lying simultaneously in 'giving and receiving both the gift and the giver'" ("The Concept of Representation," 63-64). She also cites there the following from Balthasar: "[Christ's] whole human substance is 'made fluid' so that it can enter into human beings; but this takes place in such a way that at the same time he also makes fluid the boulders of sin that have formed in resistance to God's fluidity and dissolves them in that experienced godforsakenness of which they secretly consist" (*New Elucidations*, trans. Sister Mary Theresilde Skerry [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986], 116-117, quoted in "The Concept of Representation," 63n54).

[12] See *Grace and Freedom*, 18-20, 185-187, 210ff.

[13] Hence, this dissertation seeks to compare Balthasar's theology of grace to the conceptual framework that came about in the wake of the Protestant challenge to this "theorem" in the famous intra-Catholic controversy *de auxiliis*.

[14] I do not wish to treat the intricate differences between these forms of the anti-Pelagian excess here mentioned. Although Balthasar rejects the "heretical misinterpretations (by Luther and Jansen)," (*TD* II, 234 [G 212]) he lauds especially the later Augustine's anti-Pelagian work (*TD* II, 222 and 232 [G 200 and 210]). Yet he says just a little further on, without desiring to enter into "the maze of speculations concerning (double) predestination," (250 [G 227]) that "[the doctrine of (double) predestination] has come down to us certainly from the later Augustine on (although it started before him), in an almost unbroken sequence right up to the Reformation and Jansenism; and it also enters into the systems of the Counter-Reformation" (250 [G 226]). The confusion here, certainly borne of a neglect to research such scholastic concerns, is certainly apparent to all who are literate on these questions.

or not coming from him.[15] A more moderate Thomistic way of formulating these two cases follows: Peter confessed his sinfulness because of the grace granted him, but it cooperates with his

[15] This way of approaching grace would explain Balthasar's approach to Judas in the section "*Der Ernst der Unterfassung*," depending largely on von Speyr: "'God's teaching is made available to all . . . each one who has somehow at some time felt yearning for God, comes to the Son…each one who hears God comes to the Son.' That is why it is forbidden to despair of any sinner. This applies to Judas too" (*TD* V, 281 [G 255]). The note to this text reads: "When Jesus prays (Jn 17:12), 'none of them is lost but the son of perdition', this means, 'except for the one whom he cannot now give back to the Father, because he no longer belongs to the flock . . . because Judas is still going to betray him: if he is to be saved, it can only be through the Cross itself. . . . As long as someone wants to sin, he cannot repent . . . on the one hand, the sinner desires the crucifixion and, on the other hand, does not want to be redeemed by it. To that extent the case of Judas is hidden within the Cross and will be settled only on the far side of the Cross, in hell'" (*TD* V, 281-282n17 [G 255n17]). Kereszty opposes this line of thought: "There can hardly be any question that in the view of the evangelists, Judas is definitively lost: 'it would have been better for that man not to be born' (Mt. 26:24, cf. Jn. 17:12). When Jesus mentions the betrayal of Judas (who goes out into the night, the realm of the Satan's darkness), he is deeply shaken: *etarachthe* (Jn. 13:21). Perhaps the cause for the unbearable suffering of Jesus (which Balthasar himself described as '*Das Eigentliche,*' the only true suffering to which no other suffering can be compared) is his intuition that the utmost manifestation of his love on the cross will not save some from eternal damnation. Is there a greater suffering for an infinitely sensitive love than being definitively rejected? And is it not a sign of ultimate respect before the independence of created freedom to allow its final 'no' to stand? If not for human beings, Balthasar must acknowledge that this final 'no' actually did take place in the case of the devil" ("Response to Professor Scola," 229). Elaborating on the latter point, he also says: "Of course, God's allowing the sinner to remain in his refusal leads us to the impenetrable mystery: Is God really powerless over against the creature's free resistance? Can he not, as the Transcendent Cause of the creature's free act, actualize a free acceptance of his grace by any sinner? We should not deny this possibility. However, God showing himself 'weak,' using only the power of inviting love could also reveal something of the nature of God's freely given love. Nevertheless, the Augustinian principle (God reveals his justice by condemning the guilty and reveals his mercy by saving some of the guilty) needs revision. Even in allowing the impenitent to remain in his final hardening of heart, God reveals inseparably both his love and justice" ("Response to Professor Scola," 229n5). I take issue only with Kereszty's apparent certainty that Judas is condemned, according to the evangelists. I do not think we can say with certainty what the evangelists thought. The words he quotes can be interpreted in many different ways; they are by no means definitive evidence that Judas did not, for example, convert right before the moment of his suicidal death (i.e., one can repent for suicide after willing the sin). Even if the evangelists did believe Judas was condemned, the words of Scripture themselves do not necessitate agreement with such an opinion (i.e., the subjective dispositions of the sacred authors are not intrinsic to the meanings intended by the words themselves inspired by the Spirit, even though the latter are brought about through the subordinate agency of the human authors). Hence, one is free to agree with John Paul II's opinion in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* (Reprint, New York: Alfred A. Knopf Inc, 2005) that the words of Scripture do not necessarily reveal that

freedom such that the fruitfulness of the grace granted him is made (by God) conditional upon Peter's lack of resistance, and if Judas did not convert before death, it is not because God did not grant him the necessary grace of conversion, rather his persistence in sin posed sufficient obstacle to the efficacy of the grace offered him. Detailed debates within Thomism regarding how best to explain the theological realities involved here abound, and Balthasar conspicuously does not reference any of them.

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anyone, even Judas, is definitively condemned (see 186). Germain Grisez and Peter F. Ryan report that "Pope John Paul II made a small but important change to the text of a catechesis on hell (Wednesday, 28 July 1999). The original text said: 'Eternal damnation remains a real possibility, but we are not granted, without special divine revelation, the knowledge of whether or which [Italian: *se e quail*] human beings are effectively involved in it' (*L'Osservatore Romano*, 4 . . .). However, the words "se e" appear neither in the text printed in the weekly English, French, Spanish, Portugese, and German editions of *L'Osservatore Romano* on its 1999 CD-ROM. That little change makes it reasonable to conlude that John Paul II, on reflection, judged it wrong to deny that God has revealed that some human beings will end in hell" ("Hell and Hope for Salvation," *Blackfriars* 95 (2014): 606-615, at 609n5). Nevertheless, *Redemptoris Missio* affirms "the real possibility of salvation in Christ for all mankind" (see nos. 9-10). Nicholas Healy and Ralph Martin (à la Charles Morerod) interpret this passage diversely: see Healy, "On Hope, Heaven, and Hell," 89, and Martin, *Will Many Be Saved? What Vatican II Actually Teaches and Its Implications for the New Evangelization* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), 5-6. Concerning Judas, Benedict XVI expressed the same opinion as John Paul also at a Wednesday Audience: "Even though [Judas] went to hang himself (cf. Mt 27: 5), it is not up to us to judge his gesture, substituting ourselves for the infinitely merciful and just God....when we think of the negative role Judas played we must consider it according to the lofty ways in which God leads events. His betrayal led to the death of Jesus, who transformed this tremendous torment into a space of salvific love by consigning himself to the Father (cf. Gal 2: 20; Eph 5: 2, 25). The word 'to betray' is the version of a Greek word that means 'to consign.' Sometimes the subject is even God in person: it was he who for love 'consigned' Jesus for all of us (Rm 8: 32). In his mysterious salvific plan, God assumes Judas' inexcusable gesture as the occasion for the total gift of the Son for the redemption of the world" (Papal Audience on Oct 18, 2006). Contrary to the opinion of John Paul II and Benedict XVI, Ralph Martin writes: "'. . . Many saints and doctors of the Church, including St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas, have taken it as a revealed truth that Judas was reprobated.' Roch Kereszty argues that 'there can hardly be any question that in the view of the evangelists, Judas is definitely lost.' Flannery makes the point that in Revelation 20:10, 'apparently, a human soul – i.e., the false prophet – is spoken of as suffering in hell forever'" (Martin, *Will Many Be Saved?*, 177)

While Balthasar certainly rejects the Augustinian notion that some must be condemned as a manifestation of divine justice, he nevertheless maintains Augustine's emphatic anti-Pelagian trajectory.[16] He takes sin seriously, and he takes grace even more seriously and perhaps rightly so. But, while he wants to uphold the power of finite freedom to reject its own fulfillment, he so emphasizes the rootedness of created freedom in divine freedom that it becomes "infinitely improbable" for the former to definitively reject the latter.[17]

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[16] Gerald O'Hanlon does not note this tendency inherent to later Augustinian thought, but he does think it quite evident that Balthasar accepts the Augustinian-Thomist tradition on divine universal causality and comprehension of created causes, even though he has sought to go beyond it with respect to the problem of time (see *Immutability of God*, 160-161), at one point stating that "The extent of the divine knowledge and the strength of the divine love guarantee the success of the drama . . ." (160). Ben Quash notes that Balthasar, in his *The Theology of Karl Barth*, admits that his own understanding of freedom is Augustinian (see Quash, "Von Balthasar and the dialogue," 49). Quash points out that while Balthasar wants to preserve the integrity of human nature in front of grace, he vulnerable to the same criticism that he directs toward Barth, namely, his tendency toward an epic approach to theology (see 54). Karen Kilby points to a number of emphases in Balthasar's theology that derive from his friend, Karl Barth, and one of these is "God's prevenience and sovereignty, with a concern to defend this against any possible self-assertion on our part" (*Balthasar*, 25), the significance of which is understood by anyone familiar with Barth's Calvinist and universalist conclusions regarding predestination and grace.

[17] This is the phrase Balthasar quotes from St. Benedicta of the Cross in *Dare We Hope?* (218-221, at 219 [G 66-70, at 68]). But Richard Schenk exonerates the saint with the following background information: "Balthasar draws the term 'infinitely improbable possibility' from Edith Stein and makes it what it was not for her: a concluding word on the matter; *cf. Dare* 218-221, citing from the edition by L. Gelber in E. Stein, *Welt und Person. Beitrag zum christlichen Wahrheitsstreben* (*Edith Steins Werke VI*, Louvain/Freiburg 1962) 137-197, here 158 *sq*. Apparently written in Muenster roughly around 1931 shortly before her entry into the Carmel and set in the context of an attempt to understand the vocation to pray for the salvation of each human being (*cf.* especially pg. 168), E. Stein's passing comments in this text on 'Freedom and Grace' (cf. pg. XXX), which she herself never published, while tentatively suggesting the plausibilty of *apocatastasis* and the possible prolongation of the *status viatoris* beyond death (158), contrast sharply with the concern expressed in her brief spiritual testament of June 9, 1939, where the possibility of some final loss appears more real and pressing than one which would seem infinitely improbable; *cf.* Maria Amata Neyer, Edith Stein. *Ihr Leben in Dokumenten und Bildern* (Wuerzburg 1987) 70 *sq.*" (Schenk, "Factical Damnation," 150n35). See also Ralph Martin, *Will Many Be Saved?*, 182-183. When I read her text I see her talking about the potential force of praevenient grace and a consequently *possible* scenario in which said grace becomes so overwhelming as to virtually ensure conversion, whereas Balthasar often seems to be arguing for the inevitability of such a scenario for all, if God is truly omnipotent, omniscient, and

Before discussing how the implicit theology of the grace-freedom dynamic in Balthasar's treatment of the finite-infinite freedom drama in his *Theodramatik*, it may be instructive to turn first to an earlier work, one which many see as one of his most programmatic. Reflecting on fallen human nature and *gratia praeveniens* in terms of freedom, he traces the "irremovable dialectic of religion and ethics" inherent to this state from Augustine's *Civitas Dei* to Barth's commentary on Romans, "via Luther, Jansenius, and Pascal," and proceeds to reflect on the Council of Orange:

> Physical and spiritual power is left to man . . . But man, *because of human power*, refuses to acknowledge his *total impotence* to reestablish his relationship with God outside the free movement of God's grace. The Church expressed this essential element of the truth in the Council of Orange in the spirit and terminology of Augustine: man's freedom and nature have become so impotent through original sin that without God's grace he now only has the 'strength of desire.' Anselm of Canterbury in his doctrine of freedom (*De Libertate Arbitrii, De Casu Diaboli, De Concordia . . . Gratiae Dei cum Libero Arbitrio*) has shown how to reconcile the seriousness of the Augustinian doctrine with the rights of nature. . . . Canon seven of Orange said that it is impossible for human nature by itself to think of or choose whatever pertains to salvation. One needs the light and strength of the Holy Spirit to gain eternal life (Dz 180). . . . This self-revelation [by which alone does man's power rise freely to itself] of the inner life of God is redemptive love; and whatever of *divine power is manifested in his self-revelation* is the power and glory of his love.[18]

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omnibenevolent. Ralph Martin writes: "Schenk points out that these were passing comments in a work that she herself never published, and that in 1939 in her spiritual testament, she significantly modifies. 'The possibility of some final loss appears more real and pressing than one which would seem infinitely improbable.' Hauke, 'Sperare per tutti?' pp. 207-208, makes the same point as well as the additional point that not everything a saint or Doctor wrote is honored when they are recognized as saints or Doctors" (*Will Many Be Saved?*, 281n181).

[18] *A Theological Anthropology*, 206-207 [G 230-231] (emphasis added). On the following page he immediately ties the issue of grace to the problem of hell, having previously stated, "After Augustine and Prosper (who inspired these canons [of Orange]) the Church later emphasized more the universal effect of the redemption of Christ and the offer of his grace for all men of good will, even if outside the Church and Christendom" (*A Theological Anthropology*, 207 [G 231]). He adds: "[The Bible resists] a 'systematic' interpretation of eschatology. Only in this way does it become clear that it is in the New Testament, where the total *yes* of God's decision on the world resounds, that the message of hell as the eternal loss of God's grace also resounds. Hell, like purgatory, could have had no place in the religious view of the world in the Old Testament. God's loving deed in Christ on the cross (and in Christ's descent into abandonment by God and into the darkness of death) is so precious and exposed that it cannot be presented to man, with his understanding dulled by sin, in any other way than against that background. If all the power that appeared in Christ is the power of God's love, then it is impossible that in the whole cosmos of grace, thus in the Church also, any other form of power should become manifest" (208 [G 231-

Accepting Anselm's interpretation of Augustine's theology of grace involves a lack of Thomistic development, as interpreted by Bernard Lonergan.[19] Conceiving human power as intrinsically antithetical to divine power, consequent to the first sin of man, inevitably involves conceiving divine grace in terms of the power desperately needed by a now totally enslaved human nature.[20]

Dramatis Personae: Finite Freedom Conceived Solely in Terms of Infinite Freedom

Although the full fruition of Balthasar's neglect of the *de auxiliis* debates is not seen until the final volume of his *Theodrama*,[21] the second volume of the *Theodrama* contains a generous

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232]). Hence, his answer to the problem of Augustinian grace is not a new theology of grace, but a more universalistic understanding of its application through descent of Christ into gracelessness (or, as it he would say, godforsakenness). For a more nuanced understanding of the Council of Organge, see William Most, *GPSWG*, 39-41, 150ff.

[19] This point will become clearer in the chapter below dedicated to Lonergan's theology of grace.

[20] Other places in the same work where he conceives of grace primarily in terms of power include the following: "This relation between the 'capacity' of man and the grace given him (as word, as strength, but also as temptation) can, from a human point of view, be dislocated to a maximum of God and a minimum of man, so that the demands of the grace-power of God appear as beyond the strength of human nature. . . . precisely this dislocation is seen [by Paul] as a training in trusting faith . . . It is following him who in the Garden of Gethsemane 'is strengthened,' not so as to fight in his own strength the suffering laid upon him, but so as to endure in human powerlessness under the overtaxing omnipotence of God" (201-202 [G 225]). And: "All understanding of the Christian theology of power depends on seeing this self-revealing divine power (in Christ, in the Church, in the cosmos) truly and exclusively as the power of grace (grace as opposed to law, John 1, 17), the power of the one God which goes as far as lending men the power to receive this power (John 1, 12). In the concrete man and his concrete history the power of creation and the power of grace must collide (according to the idea that *non destruit, sed supponit, elevat, perficit*), and from this collision the most difficult questions of human ethics will arise" (198 [G 221]).

[21] His neglect appears to be intentional from the following statements: "There may even be advantages in not pursuing the topic [of grace or the relationship between the two freedoms] in too much detail, for it concerns the most delicate and most mysterious of aspects; our words and concepts are better employed in protecting it against misues rather than in subjecting it to the microscope of worldly reason" (*TD* II, 312 [G 284]). Oakes thinks that such a move is precisely what is needed to undercut the apparently irresolvable dichotomy between human freedom and divine sovereignty: "It is little wonder then the solution to these antinomies seems well-nigh impossible. As one author says: 'The whole problem then lies in this point of the relation between the divine permission and the evil initiative or, if you prefer, the failure of the creature. I see only two ways that are open to explain this, and each of them seems impossible to follow to the end.'

section on the relationship beween finite and infinite freedom in which Balthasar develops what he thinks is a Thomistic synthesis of Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine.[22] While it appears that he is striving to develop a theology of the grace-freedom relationship in this relatively small portion of his *Trilogy*, in later chapters it will become clear how he could have benefitted, particularly, from attention to the twentieth-century developments on this question within Thomist circles.

Balthasar honorably treats the relationship between finite and infinite freedom in the context of the Incarnation, according to which "infinite freedom indwells finite freedom, and so the finite is perfected in the infinite, without the infinite losing itself in the finite or the finite in the infinite."[23] But his Christocentric paradigm neglects to do justice to the terrible possibility of the

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[M.-J. Nicholas, 'Simple reflexions sur la doctrine thomiste de la grace'] Moreover, and more depressing yet, the past history of this debate shows that it doesn't really work to try to combine the insights of the two schools into a more overarching system . . . I have rehearsed this strange history of unresolved problems (with their deleterious pastoral implications) because I think it is the best way of entering into the vasty deep of Balthasar's Theodramatics. For what he has done by foregrounding all of the theatrical and dramatic metaphors embedded in theology is to alter *in a stroke* the entire perspective out of which theologians consider this problem. What Balthasar has done is really as simple as it is brilliant: dropping all talk of arrows, efficient causality, etc., he takes the metaphor of playwright, director and actor, and shows how a successful theatrical production always depends on the harmonious cooperation of three freedoms, which are *not* however equal . . ." (*Pattern of Redemption*, 216-218). Other ways of approaching the "antinomies" than resorting to metaphor and thus ignoring the theoretical aporia will be presented later.

[22] See *TD* II, 235ff.

[23] *TD* II, 201 [G 181-182]. The optimism with which he approaches finite freedom in the context of the incarnation also appears in the next volume: "[F]inite freedom, which possesses itself by acknowledging that it owes its being to Another, must simultaneously transcend itself by rising to its fulfillment in the infinite ambience of freedom that characterizes its origin and goal. Thus it is both present to God *and* present to itself. If this is true in the case of every free, created being, it is superabundantly true of the God-man; his finite freedom is so deeply rooted in his infinite freedom that it continually transcends itself toward infinity – not in oder to rest there, however, but to receive his mission. In turn, *the implementation of this mission guarantees the final fulfillment, in God, of created freedom, thus demonstrating the latter's sovereign and glorious quality*" (*TD* III, 199 [G 182], first emphasis original and last emphasis added).

finite definitively rejecting the infinite.[24] Balthasar certainly wants to uphold the integrity of finite freedom, but he understands the grace-freedom dynamic in terms of a struggle between self-transcending liberty and ultimate captivity, contrary to what Lonergan calls the "theorem of the supernatural."[25] Briefly commenting upon man's inability to reach the Absolute in the light of Lubac's understanding of the "Thomist paradox" concerning the *desiderium naturale*, that man strives for what he cannot attain by his own efforts, which he says "according to Thomas, constitutes man's dignity,"[26] he states in a footnote: "Again we must stress that finite freedom cannot be compelled in any way by infinite freedom, even if God (as *causa prima*) can influence it from within, as befits its own nature (which is to strive for a good) . . . Thomas definitely accepted Bernarnd's threefold division of freedom (and hence the entire Augustinian issue of a 'captive will') . . ."[27] Here we have an attempt at a balanced vision of the finite-infinte freedom interplay, but his failure to maintain it throughout the *Theodrama* appears already with the proclivity to interpret the inability of human freedom to reach the infinite in terms of captivity, as if everything

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[24] He does say, "[a man] may see that finite freedom, if it remains alone and is posited as absolute, is bound to become the hellish torment of a Tantalus if it is not permitted to attain full development in the self-warranting realm of absolute freedom. We shall see why we are bound to choose this second solution" (*TD* II, 213 [G 192]). But it will be seen that this tragedy is met by the ever-deeper hellish sufferings of Christ, in the end converting the drama of salvation into a definitive victory for infinite freedom. See *TD* II, 244 [G 221]; *Explorations* IV, 456-457 [G 443-444]; *TD* V, 187, 194, 269, 312, 314, 369 [G 166, 173, 243, 284, 287, 337]; and *Epilogue*, 118-123 [G 94-98].

[25] For example, he uses Gregory of Nyssa to say "the element of infinity that indwells finite freedom comes from the free gift of infinite freedom: the latter not only 'frees' finite freedom and gives it room to operate but actually opens itself to it as the context of its self-fulfillment" (*TD* II, 238 [G 216]). Of course there is nothing wrong with such reflection, but it displays an inadequate framework within which to conceptualize the grace-freedom dynamic. This typical Augustinian understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic in terms of liberation vs. captivity permeates both the second and third volumes of the *Theodrama* (that is, II/1 and II/2 of the *Theodramatik*); e.g., see *TD* III, 35ff. [G 32ff.]

[26] See *TD* II, 225-226 [G 203-204].

[27] *TD* II, 226n45 [G 204n45].

depends on grace, a symptom perhaps of a Lubacian understanding of the grace-nature relationship (in which the influence of Augustine is indisputable).[28]

After defending Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and Bernard as having "no difficulty in incorporating a link with absolute freedom in human autonomous motion"[29] (and essentially in agreement with Augustine and Thomas), not to forget Maximus and Irenaeus,[30] he treats Augustine in a little more detail, before concluding (with very vague references) that Thomas bridged the small gap between Augustine and Gregory.[31] He agrees with Augustine's decision not to start with "the definition of finite freedom as freedom to choose good or evil; rather, his basic position is that finite freedom, which is necessarily equipped with this ability, can only fulfill itself within the context of infinite freedom. Only in such a context can it actually be freedom (*libertas*) at all."[32] Again, in reaction to a false absolutization of freedom of indifference, he stops at the affirmation that infinite freedom is not within the power of finite freedom and even defines grace in terms of this relationship: "grace, that is, the freely given indwelling of infinite freedom in finite freedom."[33] Thus, he takes a stand with Augustine against the "Pelagians' absolutizing of the first pole . . . According to them, God, respecting their freedom, only has to present man with the laws of the good, and he will decide to embrace them in virtue of his freedom to choose."[34] Balthasar is perfectly justified in siding with the Doctor of Grace over heresy, no doubt; but nowhere are the defects of later Augustinian understanding predestination through the time of the Reformers and

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[28] Lonergan's understanding of this relationship will be elaborated in a later chapter as the answer to this particular deficiency in Balthasar's theology of grace.
[29] *TD* II, 227 [G 205].
[30] See *TD* II, 213-227 [G 192-206].
[31] See *TD* II, 238-239 [G 216].
[32] *TD* II, 232 [G 210].
[33] *TD* II, 232 [G 210].
[34] *TD* II, 232 [G 210].

the Bañezians exposed or countered.[35] This severe lack becomes clearer as the theodramatic project marches on.

Regardless of Balthasar's relationship to Augustine, indeed a complex topic,[36] the fact that Balthasar sympathizes so much with Gregory's theological anthropology could speak volumes about the eschatological conclusions of his implicit theology of grace. Engaging Gregory's dialectical approach,[37] he manifests an element of excessive optimism toward man (notably in contradistinction to Augustine):[38]

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[35] Nevertheless, he appears to contradict his own general tendency to over-emphasize the efficacy of grace over against the power of freedom to resist or not resist. He states in *TD* IV, 375 [G 349-350] that "[in] the conflict between Pelagius and Augustine . . . various more recent attempts to rehabilitate Pelagius are not without justification," as "Augustine, in later life, abbreviated his earlier positions for polemical reasons, and he may have interpreted Pelagius in the snese of his more radical pupils . . ." But if one reads on, it becomes relatively clear that Balthasar merely wishes to take a more optimistic view of human nature/freedom than did Augustine, not a less emphatic position on the dominance of grace with respect to finite freedom. Regarding the created power to resist or not resist, see William Most, *Grace, Predestination, and the Salvific Will of God* (Front Royal: Christendom Press, 1997), c. 7, developed below in chapter five. Kilby also sees in his work, *Dare We Hope*, a rejection of the "*massa damnata* as something which has led to the contortion and distortion of Christian thought and piety" (*Balthasar*, 68), although she does not name the theory 'Augustinian' (even if Balthasar's attribution of it to Augustine is unmistakable in that work).

[36] The patristics scholar, Brian Daley, confesses Augustine's influence on Balthasar's aesthetic as well as "his understanding . . . of the priority of God's initiative in the interplay of grace and created freedom" ("Balthasar's Reading of the Church Fathers" in *Cambridge Companion*, 200). But, at the same time, he notes that "[Augustine's] mature theology surely deserves a deeper and broader consideration than Balthasar ever managed to give it" (202).

[37] Brian Daley complains that Balthasar's work on Gregory of Nyssa reflects more his own project to synthesize Hegel and neo-Thomism than a sustained examination of Gregory's own work (see "Balthasar's Reading of the Church Fathers" in *Cambridge Companion*, 197). See Balthasar, *Presence et Pensee: Essai sur la philosophie religieuse de Gregoire de Nysse* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1942).

[38] Balthasar does not mention this contrast, but Augustine is (in)famous for consigning all men to the 'condemned mass' effected by the sin of Adam and, consequently, taking a restrictive view of election, as he understood it to be a datum of revelation that only some were saved and his anthropology mandated that fallen man could not do any good of his own and thus would have no hope of life without God unless gratuitously granted prior to all possible merit. Ultimately, St. Augustine's hard-line position on predestination and grace derives from his *massa damnata* interpretation of Romans 5-11. (St. Thomas in his commentary on *Romans* similarly could not

> Certainly Gregory describes the loss of true freedom as a result of sin, and its restoration solely through grace, with no less pathos than Augustine but from a different starting point. . . . on the one side, there is the radiant picture of a finite freedom that is 'infinitely' open to infinite freedom (a picture that will only be fulfilled, in real terms, eschatologically, in Christ), and, on the other side, this pure movement is mixed with a 'pathic' element, introduced by God into man's original nature in anticipation of his coming estrangement from the good, so that human nature, when it falls, will come up against the limits inherent in temporality and evil; thence, coming to his senses as a result of the harm he suffers (46, 524CD) and liberated from the bonds of passionate craving (*pathos*, *epithymia*), man will open up, in the end, to infinite freedom. . . . *Qua* finite: it springs forth from God at every moment, and this is a process of becoming, a movement (*alloiosis*, *kinesis*) written into its very nature (44, 184CD) . . . insofar as freedom is a free gift of the Eternal and the Good, its motion, its 'free flight' (*horme proairetike*: 46, 1253B) is characterized by an inherent instinct for what is 'always better'.[39]

Certainly Augustine's more realistic treatment of man as a fallen creature is needed to balance this view, and perhaps that is part of the reason why Balthasar wishes to align the two, while recognizing differences of approach.[40]

Wishing to avoid an "infinite freedom, which is necessarily final arbiter, [that] now threatens to swallow up finite freedom,"[41] he nevertheless concludes the following regarding the "dawn of infinite freedom":

> [C]reated reality discovers that it has no ground under its feet but 'stands above itself' (Augustine) in the sole Will of infinite freedom, which is as such a Will of wisdom and

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escape the Augustinian mindset, even though he also develops another line of thought on grace and predestination, particularly, in the *Prima Secundae*.) Edward Oakes, in his treatment of Balthasar, seems to approve of the *massa damnata* theory when he quotes Niebur (see *Pattern of Redemption*, 215n8). On the development of Augustine's *massa damnata* theory and contemporary interpretation of it, particularly, in light of William Most's treatment of grace and predestination, see my forthcoming, "Augustine's *Massa Damnata* Theory and Contemporary Interpretation of Romans 5-9."

[39] *TD* II, 235-237 [G 213-215].

[40] He notes that "by a rather different path from that taken by Augustine, [Gregory] arrives at finite freedom's complete dependence on (*douleia:* 44, 701B) and indebtedness to infinite freedom. Certainly Gregory describes the loss of true freedom as a result of sin, and its restoration solely through grace, with no less pathos than Augustine but from a different starting point. The starting point in Augustine is Adam in paradise, who is endowed with a somehow colorless '*posse non peccare*' and, through the experience of sin and the grace of redemption, will arrive at the state of '*non posse peccare*'. In Gregory the starting point is dialectical . . ." (*TD* II, 235 [G 213]).

[41] *TD* II, 250 [G 227].

> salvation. But this infinite Will is also final: there can be no appeal to any other court. There is nothing that is not given by him, and that applies particularly to finite freedom itself. Insofar as the latter – like all created reality – originates in infinite freedom and receives its own freedom then, it is willed and affirmed in its finitude down to the last detail. However unsure of itself it may become, it must hold fast to this Yes that has been pronounced upon it.[42]

This immediately begs the question: then, why are not all men saved? And, of course, his famous answer to that is: we do not know if all are saved or not, but because of God's infinite wisdom and power and love we can (and, in fact, must) "hope against all hope" that all men are saved. In fact, he gives a clear clue to his own answer even in the second volume:

> God's freedom somehow penetrates human freedom (as it penetrates everything creaturely), but man's freedom is not granted any inner access to divine freedom. . . . [human wisdom] is unprepared for the paths God's freedom will take, in Jesus Christ, to redeem this waywardness from within. This barrier, this lack of reciprocity, is broken down in Jesus Christ, who 'penetrates all things' in quite a different way from the wisdom of 'Solomon'. In his being 'made to be sin' and bearing the 'curse', infinite freedom shows its ultimate, most extreme capability for the first time: it can be itself even in the finitude that 'loses itself' . . . only here, where 'God's love' is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given to us,' is finite freedom driven out of its last refuge and set on the path toward infinite freedom . . .[43]

Das Endspiel: "Undergirding" the Possibility of Refusal

Turning to the final volume of Balthasar's *Theodramatik*, the peculiar German term '*Unterfassung*,' often translated by Graham Harrison in its participial function as "undergirded and undercut,"[44] which appears in the title of a significant section, *Der Ernst der Unterfassung*[45] (changed in the English to "A Comprehensive Redemption"),[46] plays a role in Balthasar's conception of the infinite-finite freedom relation that is, indeed, serious. In this section, he quotes

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[42] *TD* II, 254 [G 230-231].
[43] *TD* II, 244 [G 221].
[44] See *TD* V, 283.
[45] See G 253.
[46] *TD* V, 279 [G 253].

the following from von Speyr: ". . . But when God makes demands of God he makes sure that *God always overtakes man*, that grace has more weight than sin, that redemption is complete."[47] The less peculiar term translated "overtaken" [*überholt*] is used elsewhere by Balthasar in conjunction with the notion of "undergirding," displaying the detrimental function of the latter innovative term with regard to the infinite-finite freedom relationship:

> Creaturely freedom is respected but is still overtaken by God at the end of the Passion and once more undergirded ("*inferno profundior*", as Pope Gregory the Great put it). Only in absolute weakness does God want to give to each freedom created by him the gift of a love that breaks out of every dungeon and dissolves every constriction: in solidarity, from within, with whose [sic] who refuse solidarity.[48]

It is not necessary to locate Balthasar somewhere in particular on the spectrum of opinions within the Augustinian-Thomistic framework to determine that his view of the relationship of grace to freedom is over-emphatically anti-Pelagian (that is, reactionary to a fault).[49] It is sufficient to show that he manifests a certain proclivity to favor a 'dominance' of grace over freedom, even if he tries to stay true to the Thomistic theme of primary causation playing itself out through the participation of secondary causes. He attempts to distance himself from Barth by dedicating a

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[47] *TD* V, 280 [G 254] (emphasis added).
[48] *Explorations* IV, 422 [G 408-409].
[49] Oakes presents the following critical response to Pelagianism in defense of Balthasar's understanding of the finite-infinite freedom relation: "[T]here is a theoretical difficulty which holds that to make salvation contingent in any way on an individual's moral behavior and the exercise of free choice would be to make God's decision to save dependent on a finite event inside creation, which would be the equivalent of making God's intellect a passive determination susceptible to the self-determining choices of the creature. But all choice, in the Aristotelian and Thomisitc framework (where this objection first arises), means to move from possibility to act; but God *is* pure Act and so cannot move from possibility to act. *Ergo:* his decisions cannot be dependent on finite choices. But even if one were tempted to dismiss these objections as merely speculative and overly dependent on an abstract definition of God's omnipotence, other considerations bear down heavily against a too-casual assumption that man remains free to decide his eternal fate" (214-215). Thereafter he briefly critiques Molina, altogether sounding here too much like a Bañezian, a position which will be critiqued later.

section of the fifth volume to "the serious possibility of refusal,"[50] but all that he says here is undermined by the surrounding, more panoramic reflections on the drama of salvation history orchestrated by the sovereignty of infinite love.[51] In fact, the section begins, utilizing again the word "Unterfassung," asserting: "[Respect for created freedom] throws doubt on the whole possibility of someone standing in our place and 'representing' us – even in the heightened form whereby the Trinity 'undercuts and undergirds' all the world's sin and goes beyond it."[52] Hence, just a few pages later he flips on its head the concern that infinite freedom may limit finite freedom, rather than developing a sophisticated understanding of their inter-relationship: "While infinite freedom will respect the decisions of finite freedom, it will not allow itself to be compelled, or restricted in its own freedom, by the latter."[53] Furthermore, he applies the notion of 'laid up' [*hinterlegt*], which he usually utilizes with respect to Christ's knowledge and glory,[54] to human freedom in order to slight in a subtle way the capacity of refusing God's love in the end:

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[50] See *TD* V, 285-290 [G 258-264]. A more literal translation of the subtitle would be "the seriousness of self-refusal" (*Der Ernst der Selbstverweigerung*) [see G 258].

[51] For example, he says "After all it is not simply a question of taking something that has been isolated from the sinner and making it disappear: it a question of the sinner's own free refusal, which God, if he respects the freedom he has given to man, cannot overrule simply because his absolute freedom is more powerful than created, finite freedom" (*TD* V, 285 [G 258]). But this, of course, is not to deny that the infinite freedom undergirding finite freedom as its origin and end, its only and ultimate source of self-fulfillment, retains the power accorded divine wisdom of persuading the sinner from the depths of Godforsakenness in which He who was made to be accursed for our sake reaches into the heart of the lost sheep. "They are not seized by redemption against their will" (*TD* V, 287 [G 261]), certainly, but does not divine mercy retain the ultimate attraction that draws all men to Himself, quenching the thirst that begs for the nourishment He alone can provide? God does not need to seize the will from without when He is more interior to us than we are to ourselves. But if He can draw our wills to His without coercion, would He not?

[52] *TD* V, 285 [G 259]. Using again a form of the same german word (namely *unterfasst*), he says: "What John brings together in his concept of exaltation and glorification is not so contradictory that it cannot be *undergirded by the absolute stance of Trinitarian self-surrender* and – albeit in a way that remains mysterious – thus reconciled" (*TD* V, 152 [G 132], emphasis added).

[53] *TD* V, 295 [G 268].

[54] What he means by *hinterlegt* can be glimpsed by his usage of its forms elsewhere. See, for example, *TD* V, 259 and 514 [G 234 and 470] for *hinterlegung*.

> [M]an is called through grace to realize his freedom within the eternal exchange of love that is the life of the Trinity . . . given man's supernatural vocation to trinitarian love, something of the freedom granted him is 'laid up' in God, ultimately to be handed over to him, in the exchange of love, as the final gift that will bring his freedom to fulfillment.[55]

The motif of infinite and finite freedoms in dramatic encounter lends itself, at least in Balthasar's rendering, to an implicit rejection of the power of man to nihilate divine movements.[56] If one does not accept that God has granted man the ultimate freedom to impede His divine influxes, then he is inevitably confronted with Balthasar's dilemma: either God decides not to grant the necessary grace(s) for salvation to all men and hence does not ultimately desire the salvation of every soul or He truly desires the salvation of all and therefore uses His omniscience and omnipotence to outwit the clasp that evil has upon sinners, converting them in the end to His love. Certainly, the latter option is the more beautiful and Balthasar's aesthetic approach to theology prepares the way for his readers to grasp such *gestalt* in the theo-drama he articulates. But, the dilemma presupposes something false, namely, that God does not give man the final capacity to refuse His mercy, and it neglects the possibility that God may have a greater end in view in offering

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[55] *TD* V, 302 [G 275]. He also says, "[God] cannot give man his finite freedom in such a way that it would be cut loose from its profoundest origin: its rootedness in the divine freedom. Finite freedom, to fulfill itself, must be ordered to divine freedom. Our freedom is 'laid up' in God's Word (p. 132); thus, so is our true 'I' (pp. 145, 283, 300-303). If our ultimate freedom is laid up in our Idea, there are necessarily two sides to it: one side concerns the Idea in God, who waits for us to be fully realized in him" (389 [G 356]). Earlier in this same paragraph he proclaims his fundamental operative principle: "Everything that, in the created world, appears shot through with *potentiality* is found *positively* in God."

[56] For instance, in the *Epilogue* to his trilogy, he says: ""God – beyond the highest form of Being of the world, of spirit – is absolute Spirit and thus absolute self-possessing freedom. This is a freedom that so pervades his whole Being that there cannot be a remainder of Being outside this freedom, nor could some corner of his Being manage to withdraw from this freedom" (85 [G 66]). The deficiency of such an apparently Thomistic approach will be seen later when Maritain's theory of divine permission is presented.

grace to creatures capable of nihilating its movements. Balthasar knows full well that he is dealing with such a dilemma:

> . . . should we not restrict, a priori, the extent of created freedom – understood to go as far as plainly rejecting God – and impose limits, accordingly, on the concept of the *causa secunda*? If however, we take seriously the mysterious 'absoluteness' that characterizes the created will, and its resultant ability to reject God – as the traditional theology generally has done – we cannot fail to be astonished at the cool indifference with which this same theology consigns a part of this creation, supposedly designed for heaven, to eternal perdition. Amazingly, it does not see this as diminishing the glory of God, whose justice is allegedly glorified in this lost portion of mankind just as much as his mercy is glorified in the portion that is to be saved. No doubt this indifference was nothing other than obedience to the New Testament texts…the basic axiom of the theology that is faithful to such texts…is this: 'The touchstone of a correct teaching will always be that there must not be any playing with apokatastasis.' Today, however, the opposite question must be raised, namely, is there not a playing with hell – not deliberate, perhaps, but ultimately irresponsible? . . . It is not surprising to find, among theologians everywhere today, an open and marked tendency toward the doctrine of apokatastasis . . . there are also deeper arguments based on hope-inspiring scriptural texts and ultimately on the dogma that Christ died for all men and for all their sins. Moreover, Christ's work was not merely 'sufficient' but 'superabundant', having made available to mankind an 'immeasurable' and hence 'inexhaustible treasury' of graces.[57]

Leaving aside the exegetical questions (which may be at the root of the matter), due perhaps to neglect of the debates within Thomism concerning the particular relationship that obtains between grace and freedom in predestination, he appears unaware that his dilemma follows from an inadequate foundation, yielding an unexamined conceptualization of the relationship between created freedom and divine grace.

Dare We Hope: The Unrestrained Will to Save

Balthasar had an opportunity to recognize and distance himself from such an understanding of grace when in *Dare We Hope* he cites the following comments of Henri Rondet on Augustine,

[57] *TD* V, 191-193 [G 172-173].

but he limits himself to the conclusion that Augustine focused too much on Adam and not enough on Christ:

> Even the great Augustine, in describing grace as an irresistible desire, as the pure counterpart to sinful lust, inadvertently projected the paganly imagined omnipotence of God onto his love. He therefore did not really accept that Christ died for all men, including the damned, for then human freedom would have been able to resist omnipotent mercy. Since one cannot resist that, it necessarily follows that grace is not granted to the damned. Accordingly, predestination to salvation is limited, as opposed to what is stated by Paul (1 Tim 2:4). But God predestines no one to hell. The limitation of the great Saint Augustine is found at that point where he throws sacred history out of balance by centering it on Adam instead of Christ.[58]

Ignoring the questionable assertions here, there is room presented for development of thought regarding the space granted finite freedom in the arena of love as a response to a call rather than a compulsion or the mere effect of sagacious persuasion. The real mental block that Balthasar has when it comes to the question of damnation concerns the consequences for thinking about God of granting that man can actually limit His universal salvific will. Notice the reaction he has to the idea of setting up distinctions in God's salvific will:[59]

> Can human defiance really resist to the end the representative assumption of its sins by the incarnate God? If one replies to this confidently and flatly: 'Yes, man can do that' and thereby fills hell with naysayers, then the theologians will again have to set up strange distinctions within God's will for grace: there is, then, a 'sufficient grace' (*gratia sufficiens*), characterized as something that, from God's viewpoint, would have to be sufficient for converting the sinner yet is rejected by the sinner in such a way that it is actually not sufficient for achieving its purpose; and an 'efficacious grace' (*gratia efficax*), which is capable of attaining its goal. On the other hand, we will not be allowed to say that this latter simply takes the sinner's will by surprise, since his assent has to be freely given. Into what sort of darkness are we straying here?[60]

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[58] *Dare We Hope*, 71-72 [G 58].

[59] In other words, as Oakes says: "[I]t is almost as if, in Balthasar's view, Augustine and his followers were simply too blinded by the light of predestination, which only dawned with the revelation of the New Testament (*TD* 2, 243). And yet the New Testament was always dazzled by the light of God's plan as revealed in the events of Christ and not by some abstraction of itself . . ." (*Pattern of Redemption*, 227). The allergy to abstractions only enters where the grace-freedom dynamic is concerned, which is understandable given the centuries-long standstill following the suspension of the *congregatio de auxiliis gratiae divinae*.

[60] *Dare We Hope*, 208 [G 56]. See also 23-24 [19-20].

At the same time, he proceeds to offer a view according to which a given grace is either strong enough, as it were, to create the needed psychological effects for conversion to occur or destined to be inadequate for the task:

> . . . the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of absolute freedom, allows us to see, within our free spirit, what our *own* true freedom would be, that is, by confronting us with ourself, with our own highest possibility. We *would* not *be able* just to say 'Yes' to ourselves (that is effected for us vicariously); also, the meaningfulness of such a 'Yes' and the *desire for it* are set before us, indeed, inspired in us. Do you really want to exist forevermore in contradiction with yourself? Grace can advance as far as that. And if one wishes to keep to the distinctions noted above, then one would have to say: grace is 'efficacious' when it presents my freedom with an image of itself so evident that it cannot do other than *freely* seize itself, while grace would be merely '*sufficient*' if this image did not really induce my freedom to affirm itself but left it preferring to persist in its self-contradiction….it would be in God's power to allow the grace that flows into the world from the self-sacrifice of his Son (2 Cor 5:19) to grow powerful enough to become his 'efficacious' grace for all sinners. But precisely this is something that we can only *hope for*.[61]

In a world where grace is thought of in terms of gradation of power, of course finite freedom will always have to yield to the will of infinite freedom. But the God of Christianity is not to be placed inside such facile comparative structures. Thomas Dalzell sees Balthasar substituting Christ's "Yes" for the human "No" to God:

> Balthasar does understand redemption in terms of the human being being drawn into the relationship between God and God, but what is crucial to him in the context of redemption is not so much the Father's eternal 'Yes' to the world, but the *historical* work of Jesus in turning the human 'No' into 'Yes'.[62]

Again:

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[61] *Dare We Hope*, 209-210 [G 57-58]. See also *Epilogue*, 73-74 [G 56]. While it is clear that for Balthasar the death-descent of Christ provided the adequate means through which divine grace becomes effective for all who are incorporated into it, his confidence that all may in fact receive the efficacious fruits of such sacrifice lies precisely in his belief that grace has within it the divine power necessary to bring about efficaciously the association of all men with such infinite love without diminishing human freedom.

[62] Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter*, 142n1.

> To his mind, the 'No' by which human freedom cuts itself off from the transcendent brings about a situation in which what seems like a liberation to it, is really a falling into chains out of which only the action of God can set it free. But how Balthasar can justify his position that God does not have to regard human freedom's 'No' as final while taking its autonomy seriously, is a question . . .[63]

Balthasar finds himself in agreement with Karl Rahner on this score, leaving room theoretically for a definitive 'No' to God, and states the following in connection with commentary on Romans 5:

> Rahner supports this statement through his doctrine of the "inequality between 'Yes' and 'No'"'; the "No" of a created being does "*not*" stand "*with equal rights and equal power* alongside the 'Yes' to God, because the 'No' always derives the life that it has from the 'Yes', …only becomes understandable in terms of the 'Yes', and not vice versa": ibid. [*Grundkurs des Glaubens*, 1977], pp. 108-9. Therefore, human freedom "naturally does not" limit "the sovereignty of God with respect to that freedom" (ibid., p. 111).[64]

Balthasar, wishing to set himself apart from Augustine's "knowing too much about hell," sets forth "two motifs" of an alternative tradition in Christian eschatology, one of which is, however, unmistakably Augustinian in its conception of grace, even if freed of its restrictive scope. The first is "that this love is stronger than any resistance that it encounters," which smacks of 'irresistible grace,' "and that from the Christian standpoint, hope for all men is therefore

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[63] Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter*, 140. Schumacher quotes *TD* IV, 327, stating: "[Balthasar] returns to the conclusion that the human actor has little, if any, determining influence upon the conclusion of the drama: '. . . in the defenselessness of absolute love, God endures the refusal of this love; and, on the other hand, in the omnipotence of the same love, he cannot and will not suffer it.' Hence, 'the creature's No . . . must be located within the Son's all-embracing Yes to the Father, in the Spirit'" ("The Concept of Representation," 68n81).

[64] *Dare We Hope*, 80n9 [G 64-65n9]. He continues without comment with a quote from von Speyr and a quote from F.-X. Durrwell, respectively: "Yet our darkness is not related to his [God's] light as one absolute to another. Even the darkness of sin does not fall outside God's power. Therefore it is possible that God graciously overshadows our sinful darkness with his greater darkness [on the Cross]" (*Johannes* I [1949], 61). "Can a man be lost if another, anchored in God, is bound to him? To be lost would mean resisting love so violently that it is no longer possible to stay attached to him. But will the refusal to love ever be stronger than the infinite love of the Spirit?" (*L'Esprit Saint le Dieu* [Cerf, 1982], 96).

permitted." The second is the desire of St. Paul to be accursed for the sake of his kinsmen, i.e., the spirituality of vicarious suffering for the conversion of sinners.[65] From this it is clear why *kenosis* is so central to Balthasar's reflections on the salvific will of God – God descends into the realm of finite freedom so that His love will be accomplished through our sufferings, which He shares and exemplifies:[66]

> While Balthasar maintains that God has to take seriously the freedom he has created and therefore be open to the possibility of losing the human response, it could be argued again that the logic of his idea of Christ's descent into hell to enter into solidarity with and accompany the damned…makes it doubtful that a person could ever really choose and experience radical isolation from God and therefore that God could actually lose the human response.[67]

However, it is not that men sin and suffer the consequences, then God chooses to enter into solidarity with them, and consequently their grief is transformed proleptically; instead, God directs the drama of history and therefore predestines the descent before all time, foreknowing by whatever unknown means the sinfulness of man that would be 'necessary' for such.[68]

Conclusion

The passion-death-descent of Christ is a cipher into his understanding of God's universal salvific will, both with respect to how it is worked out in history and how it is incorporated into

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[65] *Dare We Hope*, 97 [G 79].
[66] In fact, His suffering is the exemplar of our own, rather than ours being the 'superior reason' for His. Our sins certainly cause His suffering, but only because the Father wills to abandon His Son to them economically and the Son accepts them into His flesh, imaging the kenotic exchange of the Trinitarian life.
[67] Dalzell, *Dramatic Encounter*, 206n1.
[68] Apparently borrowing from Barth, he says: "Man's freedom to sin does not strike God like an event coming from outside: it is always anticipated and overtaken by God's decision and goal. God remains the one who acts, even when allowing himself to be mistreated. In the Cross he is the 'attacker' even before sin attacks him" (*TD* V, 237 [G 214]).

the drama of each finite freedom. Notice the precise way in which he ties together his descent theology and the problem of universal salvation:

> [T]he Cross of Christ, laden with every sinful refusal of man, must stand at the very last extremity of hell; indeed, it must stand beyond hell, where the Son is forsaken by the Father….the necessity whereby God has to reject the man who rejects his love appears to signal a defeat for God, who comes to grief in his own saving work. This aspect of judgment in the New Testament writings needs to be brought and given greater prominence, *not as a final conclusion, but as a starting point for subsequent deeper reflection*.[69]

Hence, in the context of Romans 5-11 he says, "[J]udgment stands, not at the end, but at the beginning; what triumphs at the end is the fruit of the world's reconciliation through Christ."[70] Evidently the "deeper reflection" to which he is alluding is precisely that although God is "defeated" preliminarily by man's rejection of His love[71] (and thus His own judgment of man in Christ), paradoxically through such a tragic descent (the culmination of God's "*pathos*") the freedom of Love Itself is able to persuade all men to accept the infinite good for which they were created.[72] But he states the same more explicitly in terms of hope (rather than love):

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[69] *TD* V, 193-194 [G 173] (emphasis added). He also says, "Not only has the everlasting inadequacy between God and his creature been eliminated by Christ: the very trinitarian profundity of the work of reconciliation, by undercutting every refusal the world may make, seems to relativize this same refusal" (*TD* V, 269 [G 243]).

[70] *TD* V, 195 [G 175].

[71] "Can divine freedom, even if it is the freedom of love, simply 'overpower' created freedom? On the other hand, if, as Irenaeus and the Fathers use to maintain, the divine freedom operates 'by persuasion, not by force', can it be sure of attaining its goals? In the latter case, surely, may we not have to envisage a final refusal, resulting in a final rejection?" (*TD* V, 55 [G 47])

[72] "Paul's thought is based on *this Cross-event, understood as God's final victory*; from this vantage point he reflects on the judgment affecting those who refuse to let this salvation take root and grow within them" (*TD* V, 199 [G 178], emphasis added). Citing *You Crown the Year with Your Goodness*, trans. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 84-85, and *TD* IV, 324-325, Schumacher reports: "[Balthasar] argues that the sinful alienation of the creature is located within the distinction of the hypostases. Similarly, Balthasar argues that '[s]ince the world cannot have any other *locus* but within the distinction between the Hypostases [there is nothing outside God: *Theo-Drama* 2.260-62], the problems associated with it – its sinful alienation from God – can only be solved at this *locus*. The creature's No resounds at the 'place' of distinction within the Godhead' (ibid. 4.333-34)" ("The Concept of Representation," 60n40).

> So it is not God's foreknowledge, not the 'overpowering' of his love, but hope's gentle, persuasive self-commendation that enables God to be vindicated (even, so to speak, to his own surprise) after all the dramatic interplay between himself and human weakness and freedom . . . Here the 'hope principle' has become Christian: what is at stake is the attainment or the loss of eternal life on the part of man (who is both body and soul), through God's grace and through penance, within and through the communion of saints. Here, in this present reality that is vertically open to God, are the last things, here is the Last Act, and not in some end-time at the close of a horizontal future.[73]

The imminence of such total fulfillment, or the completion of a "last act" that is not tragic but triumphant (albeit attained through the tragic), is understood because this "hope principle" has its origin in God's own hope,[74] which certainly cannot disappoint, even if man in principle has the capacity to reject His love (i.e., the miracle would be precisely that he, in fact, never does resist till the end).

Underlying all of his reflections and speculations regarding the redemptive quality of Christ's hellish sufferings, the theological character of man's hope for the universal efficacy of such vicarious sacrifice, and the infinite love with which the triune God undertakes such a task is an implicit theology of grace. Balthasar does not pursue a precise understanding of the relationship between finite and infinite freedom in his attempt to resolve the "antinomy" of persistent moral evil and the universal salvific will of God, but instead he has recourse to a simplistic theodramatic perspective.[75] Since the infinity of divine mercy is not the only reality involved in the drama of

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[73] *TD* V, 187 [G 166]. The significant role of the communion of saints in Balthasar's scenario of universal salvation (for which he says we are obliged to hope) is seen, for example, in *Explorations* IV, 456 [G 443].

[74] See *TD* V, 181 [G 160]. Nicholas J. Healy also notes that "[in] Balthasar's proposal for a dramatic eschatology . . . God himself 'hopes for the salvation of the world,'" citing *TD* V, 181-188 (*The Eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Being as Communion* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2005], 2). Balthasar asks approvingly, "Can we say, as Peguy did, that there is anxiety and anguish in the heart of God, producing not 'certainty of salvation' but something far more, namely, the flower of 'hope'?" (*TD* V, 290 [G 264].

[75] Concerning the "interplay, in the liberation of man, between the *gratia sola*, on the one hand, and man's creaturely freedom, on the other," Balthasar reflects: "This is the theo-drama into which the world *and* God have their ultimate input; here absolute freedom enters into created

salvation history, a robust theological anthropology is needed if we are to come to terms with the reality of moral evil. God wants all men to *freely* accept His own glory, which He offers with infinite intensity, and thus eschatology must presuppose a sustained theological inquiry into the nature of human freedom as God created it. The theodramatic perspective, whose point of departure is the dramatic pattern of reality, need not be simplistic. But Balthasar renders it so by neglecting to consider contemporary developments in the theology of grace (from a Catholic perspective) ends up slighting the natural integrity of human freedom, which subsists by divine will in dialogue with the sanctifying power of God's unrelenting mercy. He approaches the divine in dynamic categories, drawing an analogous relationship between God and His creation that is not entirely traditional or modern.[76] It should become evident in the next chapter that this

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freedom, interacts with created freedom and acts *as* created freedom. God cannot function here as a mere Spectator, allegedly immutable and not susceptible to influence . . ." (*TD* IV, p. 318 [G 296], emphasis original).

[76] Ben Quash notes the patristic origin of some of his more controversial points: "Maximus the Confessor had prepared the ground for Balthasar's elevation of existence to the level of a special mode of being (perhaps even the most divine mode), in order to overcome the difficulties with the language of essence (see *CL*, 56-57). Gregory of Nyssa had argued for the suitability of dynamic categories for description of the immanent life of God (*TD5*, 77). His galvanized ontology of the divine life can lead him to suggest that it is not only love which has a heavenly form that can tentatively (analogically) be attributed to the Trinitarian Persons, but that faith and hope have such a heavenly form too. Human experiences of faith and hope have their analogical counterparts in the way that the Persons of the Trinity are eternally oriented to one another in anticipation while eternally having this mutual anticipation met, rewarded, and exceeded in the response of the others" ("The *theo-drama*" in *Cambridge Companion*, 151-152). Regarding the influence of Maximus on Balthasar's thought, see Cyril O'Regan, Cyril, "Von Balthasar and Thick Retrieval: Post-Chalcedonian Symphonic Theology," *Gregorianum* 77 (1996): 227-60. Pitstick argues that Balthasar misinterprets Maximus: "[O]ne of Maximus' important contributions to Christology was to make clear that a person acts in virtue of a nature. Thus Christ, having two natures, always had two acts, one appropriate to each nature: for example, he suffered emotionally and physically while continuing to possess his divine beatitude and impassibility. Balthasar in effect rejects Maximus' contribution by insisting (1) that the Word gives up his divine attributes and so his power to act according to them, and (2) that to redeem mankind, he must suffer in his divine filial relation. Both suggestions would be reprehensible not only to Maximus, but to the Fathers in general, who insist that Christ suffered only 'in the flesh'. The union in person of Christ's natures does not result in the identification or mixing of those natures, nor in the transmogrification of the divine one into

approach, which focuses on how God may be involved in the sufferings of the world and yet remain God, does not shed much light on the relationship between the divine will and human freedom.

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the human. Thus the 'claim' validated in Christ's resurrection cannot be that 'the least human gesture enacts the most characteristic traits of the Son's existence' [Mark McIntosh, *Christology From Within: Spirituality and Incarnation in Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), p. 41, quoted in Oakes, 'Internal Logic', p. 198]" ("Development of Doctrine or Denial," 141).

Chapter 3

God's Relation to Evil: Divine Impassibility in Balthasar and Maritain[1]

It ought to be clear from the preceding chapter that at the heart of Balthasar's theodramatic theology is the question of how divine respect for created freedom may cohere with the fact that finite freedom is not self-constituted but finds its perfection in God. The reality of moral evil points to a need for a proper understanding of the dynamic relationship between finite, created, imperfect freedom and infinite, uncreated, perfect freedom. But Balthasar wishes to transcend such scholastic disputes by appealing to the metaphor of drama and drawing on kenoticism in hopes of elucidating this relationship as it exists concretely in the world. It remains to see what such an approach may (or may not) contribute to a proper understanding of the divine permission of moral evil.

Balthasar exhibits a certain preoccupation throughout his *Theodramatik*, but especially in the final volume (concerning "the last act"), with the kenotic trinitarian "undergirding" (*Unterfassung*) of the tragic dimensions of divine-human interaction.[2] It has already been seen that his descent doctrine and his trinitarian theory are very much inter-connected, and therefore

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[1] A simplified version of this chapter will appear in a forthcoming issue of *Irish Theological Quarterly*.

[2] Texts from the last volume have already been cited. Here follows an illuminating example from the second volume: "[W]hile the life of the Trinity must not under any circumstances be described as a 'becoming' (since, despite the order of origin, Father, Son and Spirit are coeternal), *the creaturely process of becoming can present an 'image' of this primal life*. Furthermore, as a result of the opposition of Persons in God, the 'not' ("the Son is *not* the Father", and so forth) possesses an infinitely positive sense; thus, too, "*not* holding on" to the divine nature but giving it away is part of the absolute positivity of the divine life (for the Spirit too gives himself away to the love of Father and Son – which he is): this being the case, the transition from infinite freedom to the creation of finite freedoms (with all this implies) need not constitute the 'absolute paradox' of thought" (*TD* II, 261 [G 236-237], emphasis added).

much of what he thinks about one has implications for the other (not to mention the consequences of both upon his doctrine of hell, which will feature in the concluding sections of this dissertation). His theology of the descent is one aspect of his overall appropriation of kenotic theology, which has contributed in a peculiar way to the debate on divine impassibility. But he has also proved to be numb to the significance of speculations concerning the relationship between divine grace and human freedom, neglecting the topic practically without mention, even while purportedly treating in several places the infinite-finite freedom dynamic in the face of the problem of evil.

Edward Oakes and Karen Kilby agree that he is attempting to transcend the difficulties of such a question by appealing to the aesthetic metaphor of drama.[1] However, reversion to metaphor in the face of speculative difficulty cannot substitute for articulating complex theological relationships. One consequence of his neglect to consider the problem of the grace-freedom dynamic is seen in his approach to the question of divine impassibility and how God relates to evil.[2] The question of how God relates to moral evil is at the heart of both the *de auxiliis* controversy, which will be explored later, and the problem of how suffering may be related to the divine being. The perspective on the divine permission of moral evil that is inherent to his assumed theology of grace is essentially that of the traditional Augustinian Thomist. But Balthasar is faced with the twentieth century phenomenon of the Holocaust (without a twentieth century theology of grace at his disposal), a theme of endless reflection for contemporary theologians, many of whom serve as dialogue partners for Balthasar in the *Theo-drama*. Therefore, in order not to be unsympathetic to such a relevant theological concern, he must over-compensate for his Barthian

[1] See Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 217ff., and Kilby, *Balthasar*, 63 and 67-70.
[2] The tension between the two issues is already present in *TD* I, 48-50 [G 44-46].

emphasis on "divine prevenience and sovereignty" by yielding to many of the claims of the passibilists (e.g., Moltmann and Bulgakov).[3]

Of course, he seeks to maintain a delicate balance between the kenoticist strain of contemporary theology and the traditional theology of divine immutability articulated by Augustine, Thomas, and their disciples. Wishing not to enter so much into the historical details of these theologies and his appropriation of them, it is imperative here to contrast how Balthasar treats the question of divine impassibility, patching together a hodge-podge of thoughts without much of an underlying structure, and how Maritain, whose esteemed essay, "Quelques réflexions sur le savoir theologique,"[4] he cites as support (more, a launching pad for his own kenotic speculations), treats the question in logical connection with his understanding of divine predestination and foreknowledge.[5]

Recall that one of the central Balthasarian theses is that the trinitarian processions are constituted by what he calls *ur-kenosis*, or an original analogue to the love-filled suffering permeating Christ's redemptive work. Mark A. McIntosh comments on a passage from *Das Endspiel*:

> [T]he divine Persons have themselves, on the Cross and in the Resurrection, revisited the alienated distance between human and God, emplotting it once more with the 'space' between the Father and the Son: 'The extreme distance between Father and Son, which is

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[3] There are hints here and there to Balthasar's sympathies with Moltmann, even though he explicitly wants to distance himself from his project. For example, presenting Moltmann's position that « an impassible God could not be the God of this world," he notes: "Protestant polemics is directed, not against the natural knowledge of God, but against a picture of God understood as *apatheia* along the lines of the ancient world, which is then elevated into a norm for Christianity. Moltmann is right to protest against this, pointing to God's 'pathos' in the Old Covenant (as interpreted by A. Heschel and even by the Rabbis)" (*TD* IV, 295n41 [G 274n41]).

[4] "Quelques réflexions sur le savoir théologique," *Revue Thomiste* 69 (1969): 5-27.

[5] Throughout the article, wherever Maritain reflects on the question of divine suffering, he refers back to his position on the problem of divine permission of moral evil (i.e., his theory of grace, predestination, and foreknowledge). This chapter is to flesh out the relationship between the two issues in Maritain, compared to Balthasar.

> endured as a result of the Son's taking on of sin, changes into the most profound intimacy . . . The Son's eternal, holy distance from the Father, in the Spirit, forms the basis on which the unholy distance of the world's sin can be transposed into it, can be transcended and overcome by it' (*TD4*, 361-2; see also *TH*).[6]

Christ's descent serves as the perfect created reflection of the *ek-stasis* between the first and second divine persons of the Trinity.[7] Thomas Joseph White has done a service to theology by bringing some light to the contrast between the eschatological consequences of Balthasar's "hyper-Augustinianism" (with respect to grace and predestination) and Maritain's theses on the divine permission of evil.[8] It is necessary, though, to go deeper into Balthasar's ambivalent position on suffering in God and evaluate the implications of Maritain's proposal for the former's kenotic approach to the problem of divine impassibility. It is evident that the lack of a proper theology of grace in Balthasar leads him to overcompensate for the deficiencies of his over-emphatically anti-Pelagian perspective as it applies to God, projecting onto the divine essence the suffering of the world,[9] while Maritain's doctrine of divine permission allows for a more modest understanding of suffering in God.

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[6] McIntosh, "Christology" in *Cambridge Companion*, 35.

[7] Pointing to the Father as the origin of trinitarian surrender, Balthasar reflects: "Inherent in the Father's love is an absolute renunciation: he will not be God for himself alone. He lets go of his divinity and, in this sense, manifests a (divine) God-lessness (of love, of course). The latter must not be confused with the godlessness that is found within the world, although it undergirds it, renders it possible and goes beyond it" (*TD* IV, 323-324 [G 301]).

[8] See White, "Von Balthasar and Journet." White refers consistently to Journet rather than Maritain but does not fail to make clear throughout that the former is indebted to the latter. Here I will briefly present Maritain's position on predestination as at once in consonance with the Augustinian-Thomistic heritage (in a less radical manner) and in keeping with the profound reality of human freedom.

[9] Wishing to avoid both the "classical dogmatism" on divine impassibility and the mythological excesses of modern passibilist accounts, Balthasar strives to incorporate contingent realities into God's immutable identity via the intra-divine personal relations themselves as eternally enriching. Hence, Guy Mansini summarizes Balthasar's argument in the *Theodrama* regarding the relationship between the Trinitarian God and the created world: "If creation is really to count and add something to God, *if created freedom is to be in real dialogue with God*, if the event of the Cross is really to matter to the interior life of God, then the reality of God must be such as to be an

I will argue that Maritain's anti-Bañezian revisions of the Thomist doctrine on predestination may serve as a corrective for Balthasar's approach to divine impassibility,[10] and that Balthasar's notion of *ur-kenosis* or self-surrender in God may be maintained in a modified form, that is, if it is appropriated to the Son and construed in consonance with divine impassibility. In the place of Balthasar's theory of a primordial self-emptying constitutive of the trinitarian life itself ought to obtain a more modest thesis in line with Maritain's understanding of God's relation to evil and suffering,[11] namely, that God's essence does encompass the 'perfection of suffering,' which is precisely divine affectivity and the root of His intentional *passio* with respect to creation.[12]

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ever-more increasing event of Trinitarian exchanges" (Mansini, O.S.B., "Balthasar and the Theodramatic Enrichment of the Trinity," *The Thomist* 64 [2000]: 499-519, at 508 [emphasis added]). The point of departure for this chapter is precisely Balthasar's view of created freedom, compared to Maritain's. The latter develops a sophisticated understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic that preempts the problematic with which Balthasar is faced regarding how most meaningfully to relate the immutable God to the contingent reality of moral evil.

[10] For his doctrine of predestination and divine foreknowledge, see Jacques Maritain, *Dieu et la permission du mal* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1963), in English, *God and the Permission of Evil* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966); *Court traite de l'existence et de l'existant* (Paris: Paul Hartmann, 1947), in English, *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948), c. 4; *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil* (Milwaukee: The Aquinas Lectures, 1942), in French translation, *De Bergson a Thomas d'Aquin* (New York: Edition de la Maison Francaise, 1944), c. 7. For Bañezian criticisms of Maritain's thoughts concerning God's permission of evil in *Existence and the Existent*, see Jean-Hervé Nicolas' "La Permission du Péché" in *Revue Thomiste* LX 1 (January-March 1960), LX 2 (April-June 1960), and LX 4 (October-December 1960). White (« Von Balthasar and Journet, » 663n70) notes that Nicolas eventually concedes to Maritain's position in "La volunté salvifique de Dieu contrariée par le péché," *Revue Thomiste* 92 (1992): 177-196.

[11] See Jacques Maritain, ''Réflexions; » Jacques and Raïssa Maritain, *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 14 (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires; Paris: Editions St.-Paul, 1993), 791-792, cited by Gilles Emery, "The Immutability of the God of Love and the Problem of Language Concerning the 'Suffering of God'" in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), eds. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White, 27-76, at 58n105.

[12] Hence, Maritain concludes toward the end of his article: "To the problem of evil taken in all its dimensions, there is only one answer, the answer of faith in its integrity. And at the heart of our faith is the certitude that God, anyway Jesus said so, has for us the *feelings of a Father*. . . . the great mystery of what, in an infinitely perfect and infinitely happy God, corresponds to what suffering is in us, not with regard to the frightening mark of imperfection it implies, but with regard to the incomparable grandeur that it also reveals" ("Réflexions," 26, translated by Bernard Doering

In other words, when Balthasar's theology is purged of the tendency to see grace and freedom in competition with one another, there is no reason to posit a divine analogue to human suffering *per se* since the 'perfection of suffering' is not of itself a notion mandating passibility in God.[13] I am therefore concerned with clearing the way for affectivity to stand out as the true ground in God for the suffering He permits men to experience,[14] where the second person of the Trinity is the most direct correlate of such (i.e., it may be "appropriated to Him) and therefore could be designated as, in a certain sense, the "*ur-kenosis*" of God.[15]

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in *The Collected Works of Jacques Maritain: Untrammeled Approaches*, vol. 20 [Indiana: University of Notre Dame, 1997], 243-264, at 263 [emphasis original]). The English translation of this text in the *Collected Works* also contains a postscript written by Maritain in 1972.

[13] In order to make clear exactly why this is so, I will include parenthetical reference to three 'middle positions' with respect to passibility, influenced potentially by both Maritain and Balthasar, to aid reflection on precisely how suffering ought to be conceived or where in God it ought to be located, as it were.

[14] There are typically two meanings given to "affectivity," namely, ontological and psychological. Ontologically, it simply means being the object of some act, whether internal or external to the subject. Psychologically, it indicates the capacity of the heart (or the person's core being) for value-laden experience. There is an analogous relationship, though, between these two meanings, which is glimpsed if one realizes that feelings are typically involuntary responses to stimuli, whether internal or external to the subject. In other words, one can only be affected by something when one is the object of some value-laden act (i.e., experiencing oneself responding to an act presupposes the fact of being the object of some act). Moreover, affectivity is closely aligned with emotivity, and we can recognize in ourselves the existence of emotions or sentiments that are not tied up with animal appetites, but are spiritual in nature, even if still imperfect. Hence, when affectivity is predicated of God, only the perfection belonging to spiritual feelings (e.g., compassion) is intended and attributed to the transcendent *per via eminentiae*. The idea will be put forth that it is because God is the object of His own permissions of evil initiated by creatures that He can be said to be 'affected' by such evil, albeit indirectly, such that the sympathy inherent to His infinite love for His creatures wills to become empathy in the form of the Son's incarnation, who represents the free tendency of divine receptivity (in Son and Spirit as from the Father) to surrender itself (*kenosis*) in love.

[15] I hold a 'free inevitable tendency' of God both to create *ex nihilo* and to relate to His creation through the redemptive incarnation, a point shied away from by many a Thomist but essential to understanding how a divine contingent act can be identical to His necessity and how Maritain's theory of predestination can be true without introducing any dependency into God. See, for example, the brief comments of Norris Clarke, favoring Bonaventure over Thomas on the question of freedom in creation (*Explorations in Metaphysics: Being–God–Person* [Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994], 108-109). This free inevitable tendency both to create

It will become obvious that while Balthasar wants to preserve a form of divine impassability, he sometimes undermines it by obscuring the line between the economic and immanent dimensions of the Trinity, wishing precisely to utilize the aforementioned reflections of Maritain. Stating, "We need to trace this intuition of the philosopher Maritain [on the mysterious perfection of suffering in God] back to the life of the Trinity," he cites Francois Varillon and H. Schurmann with approval saying:[16] "in God, becoming is a perfection of being, motion a perfection of rest, and change a perfection of immutability….Can we consider life without movement to be life?'…The 'death of God' actually takes place in him in the *kenosis* and *tapeinosis* of the love of God."[17] It is one step to say the dynamism of self-motion necessarily implies any 'change' or 'passibility' and another to conclude from this that the Trinitarian processions must be constituted precisely by suffering in some original form (i.e., "*ur-kenosis*"). The "suffering" of God due to the existence of evil, or His being affected by the evil He wills to permit, Balthasar wants to trace back to a *primordial* 'wound' of sorts that is to constitute the very being of God as triune.[18]

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and redeem may be seen as essential to the constitutive relation of filiation. I cannot develop every element of this position here; hence, many points will have to remain implicit.

[16] Gerard O'Hanlon comments: "There is in God something which is somewhat analogous to worldly suffering and which is the foundation for the latter. Philosophically, with Maritain, Balthasar is prepared to accept that we have no proper name for this divine attribute – it is however an integral part of the divine perfection and happiness and allows God to be freely affected by such aspects as the suffering of Christ and our sins. With Maritain again it may be described loosely as a victorious seizing or acceptance or overcoming of pain by God. This philosophical description is anchored in the trinitarian framework with which we are already familiar. There is something ultimately unsatisfactory in Rahner's formulation that God is immutable in himself but mutable in another: with Varillon Balthasar believes one must go further and at least begin to suspect that in God becoming is a perfection of being, movement a perfection of immobility and mutability a perfection of immutability" (*The Immutability of God*, 71).

[17] *TD* V, 243 [G 219] (emphasis original). Balthasar there cites Varillon, *La Souffrance de Dieu* (Paris: Le Centurion, 1975) and Maritain, ''Réflexions." For statements of Balthasar admitting immutability in principle, see *TD* II, 278 [G 253], *TD* III, 523 [G 479], *TD* V, 222 [G 200], and for reticence towards it, see *MP*, 34 [152]; *TD* II, 9, 280, 293 [G 9, 255, 266-267]; *TL* II, 352n131 [G 321n57].

[18] For Balthasar's use of the term 'wound' in this context, see *Mystery of Redemption*, 37-38.

Maritain clearly does not go this far and his theory of predestination does not necessitate it, even if his consequent understanding of divine foreknowledge arguably leaves room for such speculations on the basis of some kind of 'super-temporality' in God.[19] The central question to be addressed is how Maritain's thought, which is utilized not only by Balthasar but also by many holding 'middle positions' in the passibilist debate, relates to the thesis of some primordial form of "suffering" constitutive of God's essence. The contributions of Maritain to the question of predestination and divine foreknowledge form the background to his comments on the 'wound' that free men are said to inflict on God.[20] Without any comment that would indicate acquaintance with the former, Balthasar purports to build upon the latter. Before attending to Maritain's understanding of how the divine will relates to the creature's initiative of moral evil, I ought to present briefly Balthasar's ambivalent theology of suffering in the Trinity as it is formulated in his *Theo-drama*.

Balthasar's Ambivalent Position

Any attempt to contextualize Balthasar's thought on divine impassibility would be vast, and even the passages in the final volume of the second part of his trilogy that touch upon this topic are too many to analyze in full. Therefore, in addressing the specific question of intra-Trinitarian suffering, I will focus primarily on the segment of *Das Endspiel* that surveys the so-

[19] The topic of super-temporality in God, explicit in Balthasar and one might say implicit in Maritain, will not be a point of focus in this essay, although the necessary groundwork according to which one would have to contextualize this question will be laid.
[20] See Jacques Maritain, *Neuf leçons sur les notions premières de la philosophie morale* (Paris: P. Téqui, 1951), 175-176, cited by Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Evil*, trans. Michael Barry (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1963), 183 [F 199].

called 'theologians of the pain of God'[21] and the subsequent sections in which his own conclusions on the topic are more explicitly drawn, forming the basis for his treatment of universal salvation.[22] But before attending to the specifically Trinitarian dimension of divine suffering, for Balthasar, it is important first to recognize that throughout the *Theodramatik* he does advocate a certain form of suffering or passibility in God, despite his affirmations of divine immutability.[23]

While almost all his talk of suffering in God takes a trinitarian form, he also exploits philosophical reasoning in support of his moderate passibilism, namely, that in God there must be some analgous ground for the reality of suffering experienced in the world. Yet, he manages to maintain such a philosophical claim only in the context of revelation:

> Christian theology has to hold unswervingly to the fact that the God who manifests himself in Jesus Christ exists in himself as an eternal essence (or Being), which is an equally eternal (that is, not temporal) 'happening'; when we ponder God's being, we must not forget this fact for an instant. . . . [T]he divine 'essence' and 'being' . . . manifests itself, in the historical 'happening' of Jesus himself, as an eternal 'happening'. . . . We must resolve to see these two apparently contradictory concepts as a unity: eternal or absolute Being – and 'happening'. This 'happening' is not a becoming in the earthly sense: it is the coming-to-be, not of something that was not (that would be Arianism), but, evidently, of something that grounds the idea, the inner possibility and reality of a becoming. All earthly becoming a reflection of the eternal 'happening' in God, which, we repeat, is per se identical with the eternal Being or essence.[24]

Hence, Edward Oakes, summarizing the meaning of 'theo-drama' as such, says:

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[21] Although this section is preceded by a disclaimer of sorts (on 212), his treatment mostly consists in agreements with the authors presented.

[22] Recall that in *TL* II, 345n75 [G 315n1], Balthasar asks scholars to look no more to *Mysterium Paschale* for his theology since it was "a quickly written work" that he thinks somewhat compromised the radicality of Adrienne von Speyr's *Kreuz und Hölle*, for instance. Hence, as a late work, the *Theo-Drama* ought to be regarded as his definitive statement on the questions there treated.

[23] See especially, Gerald O'Hanlon, *The Immutability of God*, for extensive discussion of how Balthasar both affirms and denies not only divine impassibility but also divine immutability; O'Hanlon seems to conceive the two as inextricably standing or falling together, construing Balthasar's analogical argumentation in as persuasive a form as possible.

[24] *TD* V, 67 [G 58-59].

> [A]ccording to his interpretation, in the Triduum of Good Friday, Holy Saturday, and Easter Sunday, *something happens to God*, and this is why this part of the trilogy deserves the title *Theo-Drama* in every sense of the word, being both a subjective as well as objective prefix. Now it is true that one must approach such a statement with considerable care and we shall not be surprised to learn that the drama that Balthasar is talking about must be analogically understood. But that makes his theology even more radical, for of course, in such analogies the *analogatum* is even more true of God than it is of us!"[25]

[25] *Pattern of Redemption*, 231 (emphasis original). Perhaps, more aptly, Guy Mansini defines theodrama thus: "Theodrama is the drama between God and man reflecting the inner-Trinitarian drama of Father, Son, and Spirit" ("Balthasar and the Theodramatic Enrichment," 499). Pointing to the preface of the second edition of *Mysterium Paschale*, written after the *Theodrama*, Mansini then summarizes Balthasar's trinitarian kenotic resolution to the problem of divine impassibility: "while it is true that God does not change by dependence on the world such that without the world there would be something in him there is not, it is nevertheless the case that he does change, with a change already forever 'included and outstripped in the eternal event of Love' [*Mysterium Paschale*, ix]. It is this solution, though not always so compactly expressed, and with an appeal to the same clue, that Balthasar develops at length in the *Theodrama* [see *TD* V, 61-65, 75-76 [G 53-57, 65-66)]" (501).

Perhaps incorporating Hegelian dialectics into his interpretation of key scriptural texts,[26] in dialogue with Moltmann's radical "death of God" theology,[27] he reflects on hell's relationship to the economic trinity, intending to rescue the imagery of the Old Testament from the realm of the merely metaphorical.[28] Balthasar seems to endorse the trend in modern theology of professedly

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[26] For example, he states: "What we see in Christ's forsakenness on the Cross, in ultimate creaturely negativity, is the revelation of the highest positivity of Trinitarian love" (*TD* V, 517 [G 473]). Quoting Hegel with apparent approval, he says: "'the human, the finite, the frail, the weak, and the negative are all features of the divine. All this is in God himself; otherness, finitude, negativity are not outside God…they are an element of the divine nature itself'…This is of course the idea of the Trinity, indissolubly bound to the Cross and death of Christ; yet we can still ask whether Christ is to be regarded, on the one hand, as the unique historical event or, on the other, as the necessary, the highest 'representation' of the most general law of being" (*TD* V, 226 [G 204]). In the end it remains unclear what his answer is to this question, if it is not "both." It is interesting to see Balthasar summarizing Hegel in a way that could very well apply to his own thought (particularly in *TD* II and IV): "Hegel emphasizes that the absolute Idea's self-expropriation – and its adoption of the categories of nature and history – becomes visible in the destiny of one man, Jesus Christ. In the end, however, this is only the visible appearance of a basic spiritual law, namely, that if there is to be a uniting of the 'infinite with the finite', the finite must not cling to itself: it must surrender to the infinite" (*TD* IV, 128 [G 118]). But adopting some aspects of Hegelian logic is a far cry from embracing it in the full force of its metaphysical and epistemological consequences; the question of consistency and coherence in such revised appropriation is, nevertheless, always valid. He has this to say about the Hegelian dialectic: "We are not saying that the eternal separation in God is, in itself, 'tragic' or that the Spirit's bridging of the distinction is the sublation of tragedy, that is, 'comedy'. Nor are we saying, in a Hegelian sense, that the trinitarian drama needs to pass through the contradictions of the world in order to go beyond the 'play', to go beyond the 'abstract, and become serious and concrete'" (*TD* IV, 327 [G 304]).

[27] See, for example, *TD* V, 243 [G 219]. Despite confessing an understanding of divine suffering essentially in agreement with Moltmann (see *Mystery of Redemption*, 38), their differences on divine impassibility are outlined throughout *TD* V. See also Steffen Lösel, "Murder in the Cathedral," especially 428-429, and Thomas G. Dalzell, "The Enrichment of God," 4-5.

[28] See *TD* V, 214-215 [G 193]. Interpreting Philippians 2, especially, he states: "The event by which he consents to be transferred from the form of God into the 'form of a servant' and the 'likeness of men' (Phil 2:6f.) affects him as the eternal Son. It does not matter whether we say that eternity enters into time 'for a while' or that eternity takes a particular 'time' and its decidedly temporal contents into itself: neither statement explains how such a process is possible. We can call it *kenosis*, as in Philippians 2, but this does not imply any mythological alteration in God; it *can* express one of the infinite possibilities available to free, eternal life: namely, that the Son, who has everything from the Father, 'lays up' and commits to God's keeping the 'form of God' he has received from him. He does this in order to concentrate, in all seriousness and realism, on the mission that is one mode of his procession from the Father. There is nothing 'as if' about this: the

abandoning "a Greek theo-ontology of 'absolute Being'" in favor of "the Johannine definition that God is love," succumbing to the oft-repeated claim that a truly impassible God must be indifferent and uncaring toward His creation, instead of recognizing Greek metaphysics as providentially included in the notions themselves employed by the sacred writers.[29]

Although he is usually careful to avoid intrinsic attribution of suffering to God's love,[30] at points he evidently wants to expand the way in which contingent predicates (i.e., anything involving nonbeing) are attributed to God beyond the *modus predicandi* of extrinsic analogy. For example, he says, "the 'suffering' with which the creature is familiar is something quite different from being 'receptive,'" and then he says "once God is drawn into the total process of being…"[31] One may argue in light of other passages that he does not mean to predicate process of the very being of God, but is simply referring to the economy of the incarnation (i.e., God as having entered a finite world).[32] He argues for a real "pathos" in God, which he says is evident in some of the Fathers, distinguishing various ways of understanding it.[33] Even though he maintains divine

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outcome is that he is forsaken by God on the Cross. Yet this 'infinite distance', which recapitulates the sinner's mode of alienation from God, will remain forever the highest revelation known to the world of the diastasis (within the eternal being of God) between Father and Son in the Holy Spirit" (*TD* III, 228 [G 209]).

[29] See, for example, *TD* V, 213, 217f., 235 [G 291, 195f., 212]

[30] For example, he says, "the unchangeable God enters into a relationship with creaturely reality, and this relationship imparts a new look to his internal relations" (*TD* III, 523 [G 479]), and again, "something in God can develop into suffering" (*TD* IV, 328 [G 305]).

[31] *TD* V, 213 [G 192]

[32] "'. . . But the Three-Person God has never ceased being One and Infinite.' So we cannot speak of a 'process' in God, as if he could attain fullness only through the world's sinful alienation" (264 [G 239]).

[33] See *TD* V, 218-222 [G 197-200]. For example, pointing to an anticipation of "the solution proposed by Karl Barth," he says: "If God, says Gregory, wishes to save men by freely choosing suffering, He suffers impassibly; since He suffers freely, He is not subject to suffering but superior to it" (*TD* V, 219 [G 197]). Gerard O'Hanlon comments: "[I]n general, with some exceptions, when [the Fathers] used the term *apatheia*, borrowed from Greek philosophy, they did so in a way which allowed God that liveliness, freedom and emotional response to human beings which are characteristically biblical. The term *apatheia* was stressed so strongly because for the Greeks the

immutability, he seems to opt for an extreme interpretation of "pathos," citing approvingly Origen's words: "If this is true of the Son, it must be true of the Father: Does not he, too, the long-suffering and merciful One, 'somehow suffer? In his Providence he must suffer on account of men's suffering, just as the Son suffers our *passiones*.'"[34] It will become clear, though, in light of other passages that Balthasar is not here approving of the assertion that man's sinfulness affects God directly, although he does approve of the attribution of suffering to the Father as enjoying infinite communion with the Son. This answer forms part of his response to the following question, which lies at the heart of his concerns: how can we say with Cyril that "One of the Trinity has suffered" and maintain the Athanasian rule?[35] His answer is to find an eternal analogue to the suffering of Christ's human nature in the Trinitarian processions of the Godhead itself because

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opposite term, *pathos*, had so many connotations which made it utterly unsuitabl for application to God. It implied an external experience that was not freely willed, and was understood in connection with sin. Nonetheless Origen ascribed pathos to the eternal Son and even to the Father; and in doing so he was not as isolated a figure as modern commentators, overlooking the differentiated and qualified use of *apatheia* in the other Fathers, have asserted" (*The Immutability of God*, 69).

[34] *TD* V, 221 [G 199].

[35] Here I refer to the classical axiom that whatever is said of one divine person must be said of the others, except the mutually defining relations by which each susbsists in distinction from the others. Christologically, the question revolves around the so-called *communicatio idiomatum*. Gerard O'Hanlon displays the connection between the Christological and Trinitarian dimensions of the issue in Balthasar's attempt to resolve it: "[Balthasar] arrives at the necessity of positing a real kenosis in God, and from his repeated emphasis on the ontological, personal identity of the Logos as the subject who unites the two distinct natures in Christ, he will refuse to limit the change and suffering which Christ experiences [to] his human nature alone. This is the advance on Chalcedon and its traditional interpretation which Balthasar proposes. The tendency to consider the human nature of Christ as an *instrumentum conjunctum* which does not affect the divine person he sees as Nestorian in character. And so he is anxious to insist on a more than merely logical *communicatio idiomatum*, to accept that the formula 'one of the Trinity has suffered' does indeed mean that God has 'suffered', albeit mysteriously. But why 'mysteriously': why not say univocally that God suffers? Because – and here we find Balthasar's respect for Chalcedon – there *is* an enduring and incommensurable difference between God and the world, between the divine and human 'unmixed' natures of Christ" (*The Immutability of God*, 43, also cited by Oakes, "He descended into hell," 244n48).

"the event of the Incarnation of the second divine Person does not leave the inter-relationship of those Persons unaffected."[36]

He wants to distinguish his own appropriation of the 'theology of pain' from that which "sees God's *essence* coinvolved, in the Hegelian manner, in the world process."[37] He points out the tension in Moltmann between a Hegelian-inspired panentheism and a Christian doctrine of free divine passibility.[38] Bound to the former, he says, is identification of "immanent *processio*" with

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[36] *MP*, 30 [G 152]. This essay suggests a different answer, partially on the basis of Maritain's thought, which I also suggest is misappropriated by Balthasar.

[37] *TD* V, 227 [G 205].

[38] Thomas Weinandy makes the following reflection about Balthasar's posture on the question in relation to Hegel and Moltmann: "[W]hile he wishes to uphold the immutability and impassibility of God in himself, he also argues that, because of God's free and loving engagement with the world, he can be said to be mutable and passible in his relationship to the created order. His perfect immutable love allows him to be affected by the created order and so respond to it. Von Balthasar wishes to steer a position between the mythological notion of God's action in the world as, he believes, is found in Hegel, Moltmann, process theologians and others, and that of the traditional position, as found in Aquinas, where God appears to be disengaged from the vicissitudes of human life" (*Does God Suffer?*, 13n38). It seems that, according to Balthasar's mode of thought, if God were not a Trinity, Hegel and process theology would be right. Gerard O'Hanlon states: "If God were simply one he would become ensnared in the world-process through the incarnation and cross. But because God is triune, with both poles of difference and unity guaranteed by the Holy Spirit, the difference between Father and Son can accommodate all created differences including that extreme distance shown on the cross which becomes a revelation of the closest togetherness of Father and Son. In this way the ever-greater trinitarian love of God is the presupposition of the cross" (*The Immutability of God*, 27). Thomas Weinandy seems to agree, at least, with the idea that only a triune God would be free not to create (*Does God Suffer?*, see 139n75). A potential problem with this kind of view may be discerned in the following from Gerard O'Hanlon: "The question remains open as to whether this Trinitarian drama involves a 'wound' in God which is identical to the Trinitarian processions themselves, or is merely 'consequent' on the decision to create – the question already raised as to whether or not God is essentially kenotic . . . [Balthasar] is asserting that while secondary, created causes cannot *per se* change God, they can, when taken into the trinitarian life, become part of that eternal drama of love which allows opposites to exist and reconciles them" (*The Immutability of God*, 34). The ghost of Hegel appears little more escaped here than in Moltmann. Nonetheless, Brian J. Spence points out both similarities and differences between Moltmann's and Balthasar's relationship to Hegel's philosophy of religion (see "The Hegelian Element in Von Balthasar's and Moltmann's Understanding of the Suffering of God," *Toronto Journal of Theology* 14, no. 1 [1998]: 45-60).

"economic *missio*," apparently indicating divergence from his own theory.[39] Even the 'Christian' side of Hegel's thought, according to which the 'bifurcation' in God contains all of history and God-forsakenness within itself, "needs some clarification."[40] He concludes that 'Lutheran Hegelianism' cannot avoid mythology precisely because it identifies the world's suffering with that of God and thus confuses the divine and finite worlds.[41]

Karl Barth is certainly the most influential theologian in Balthasar's thought.[42] He takes Barth's side against Moltmann in tracing all the pain endured by God to His own freedom, rather

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[39] See *TD* V, 228 [G 206]. Also, "If our reflection proceeds (as in the case of Moltmann) exclusively from the perspective of the Cross, the divine freedom to create the world becomes questionable (just as Moltmann questions it)" (*TD* V, 234 [G 211]). Nevertheless, David Luy in this regard points to a problem in Balthasar, the solution to which he correctly alludes: "Statements in Balthasar . . . are suggestive, for many, of an immanentizing trajectory, so prominent in contemporary theology, in which such classical distinctions as the immanent and economic Trinity (God's life *ad intra* and his actions *ad extra*), and the important distinction between God and the world are blurred or conflated. By identifying the revelation of God so closely with the cross, Balthasar seems to risk entangling the divine into the realm of the economy. But is this indeed the intent of Balthasar's crucicentrism? Does he cross the boundary traversed so often in twentieth-century theology from cross as divine *self-expression* to cross as divine *self-constitution*? If we allow Balthasar to speak for himself, we shall see that nothing coud be further from his intentions" ("The Aesthetic Collision: Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Trinity and the Cross," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 13, no. 2 (2011): 154-169, at 155).

[40] See *TD* V, 229 [G 207]. The influence of Hegel's dialectical mode of thinking upon Balthasar's conceptualization of trinitarian life is already discernible in the second volume of the *Theodramatik*, which is more evident in Rowan Williams' translation than in Graham Harrison's: "The hypostatic modes of being constitute for each other the greatest opposition we could think of (and so are always inexhaustibly transcendent to each other), precisely so that the most intimate interpenetration we could think of becomes possible" (*TD* II, 258 [G 234], cited by Rowan Williams, "Balthasar and the Trinity" in *Cambridge Companion*, 41).

[41] See *TD* V, 231 [G 208]. "[Deliberately submerging the life of God in the world's coming to be] achieves a certain distance from Hegel, but formally his 'ambivalence' remains. In short, the model for seeing pain and death *in* God remains pain and death *outside* God in the world, and this cannot avoid the danger of mythology" (*TD* V, 231 [G 208]).

[42] I consider the immensely influential figure of Adrienne von Speyr more a "mystic" than a theologian, not that the two are mutually exclusive or that a theologian should not "do theology on one's knees." For Balthasar's relationship to Barth, see D. Stephen Long, *Saving Karl Barth: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Preoccupation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014). See also John Webster, "Balthasar and Karl Barth" in *Cambridge Companion*: 241-255.

than to created being (as if the latter had any power to reach into the heart of the divine).[43] At the same time, he adds to Barth the notion that Christ's condemnation is in a way the consequence of love's own inner logic (that is, the Trinitarian life).[44] Balthasar seems to agree with Barth that the Cross is not a temporal repetition of an eternal reality within the Trinity and yet "the Father is no mere spectator of the Passion."[45] But he does not say whether he agrees or disagrees with Barth's stance against the notion that God 'continues to suffer eternally after Christ's temporal sufferings.'[46] Balthasar highlights Barth's "failure" to discern in the trinitarian life an archetype of Christ's 'obedience unto death on a cross.'[47]

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[43] See *TD* V, 237 [G 214].

[44] See *TD* V, 277-278 [G 251-252]. It may be worth pointing out that although he most likely adopted the damnation language of Luther and Calvin in a spirit of ecumenism, it is evident that he differs from them in some significant respects on the vicarious nature of His suffering. See, for example, Antoine Birot, "Redemption in Balthasar," 275n14.

[45] *TD* V, 238 [G 215].

[46] *TD* V, 239 [G 216].

[47] John Webster notes: "[B]oth [Balthasar and Barth] explore how God's saving works and God's immanent being are mutually interpretative, particularly through reflecting on the obedience of the Son as the form of the intratrinitarian relations. In both, this issues in a doctrine of God which registers the effects on trinitarian teaching of the Son's act of self-emptying, though without imperiling the aseity of God. Though Balthasar presses the logic of kenosis further than Barth, his core claim ('that the God-man can surrender himself to God-abandonment, without resigning his own reality as God'; *MP*, 81) is explicitly derived from Barth" ("Balthasar and Karl Barth" in *Cambridge Companion*, 252). In response to Bruce Marshall's article, "The Absolute and the Trinity," which targets the appropriation of Hegelian dialectic to trinitarian theology in authors like Balthasar, Paul D. Molnar, although essentially in agreement with Marshall's critique, wants to add a Barthian consideration, which is distinct from what Balthasar seems to be advocating: "There is a sense in which we must admit that, in virtue of the doctrines of *perichoresis* and *opera trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa*, God suffered in his divinity. On the one hand, 'in the perfect oneness of his human and divine nature it cannot be said that Christ suffered only in his humanity and not in his divinity' . . . On the other hand, we could also say that the Father and the Spirit were involved in the suffering and death of the incarnate Son since the Son was never separated from the other Persons of the Trinity in his actions for us. Hence, we must also say that there is a suffering even in God the Father–that is, there is 'the pain of God the Father in giving up his beloved Son . . . in atoning sacrifice for the sin of the world and its redemption' [T. F. Torrance, *Christian Doctrine of God*, 252]. Thus, 'the whole undivided Trinity is involved in our salvation . . . [each Person] in their different but coordinated ways'" ("A Response: Beyond Hegel with Karl Barth and T. F. Torrance," *Pro Ecclesia* 23, no. 2 [Spring 2014]: 165-173, at 173). While I

When speaking of intra-trinitarian self-surrender, by adding the German prefix '*ur*-' to the Greek term *kenosis*, Balthasar introduces a qualification, albeit ambiguous, into his attribution of suffering to God.[48] More radical than Barth on suffering in God, at least in the following attempt to distance himself from Moltmann, he takes the care to introduce the distinction between the economic and immanent aspects of the Trinity: "the sinner's alienation from God was taken into the Godhead, into the 'economic' distance between Father and Son."[49] But, for Balthasar, the *ur-kenosis* that constitutes the inner life of God enables Him to suffer lovingly in Christ something much worse than (and yet encompassing) the torments of the damned; thus, his Trinitarian theology becomes a theology of the descent.[50] For Balthasar, death, suffering, and hell take on meaning in the descent of Christ into hell only in the context of Trinitarian love: "The Judgment that takes place within the Trinity can be understood only in terms of the suffering love between Father and Son in the Spirit."[51]

Balthasar, therefore, asserts that neither Jean Galot nor Maritain, to whom the former was indebted, went far enough in their reflections on the reality of suffering in God.[52] They sought to

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sympathize with this reflection, it should become clear that it is not exactly how I think the matter ought to be formulated.

[48] See Birot, "Redemption in Balthasar," 281. Birot notes this move also in Bulgakov.

[49] *TD* IV, 381 [G 355]; see also Birot, "Redemption in Balthasar," 285. Steffen Lösel as well indicates that "Balthasar relativizes the ontological distinction between the economic and the immanent Trinity," ("Murder in the Cathedral," 436), noting that "Balthasar writes: '(I)t seems, as if only this revelation of the 'economic' Trinity brings out the whole seriousness of the 'immanent' Trinity' (Balthasar, *Theo-Drama* IV, 320). In the English translation, the German '*erst*' has been translated with 'for the first time,' a translation which is in my view imprecise. Accordingly, I have translated it here with 'only'" (Lösel, "Murder in the Cathedral," 436n53).

[50] See Chapter 1 above.

[51] *TD* V, 278 [G 252].

[52] "[W]e should not make such an abrupt distinction as Galot does…between a divine inner life that is completely untouched and the Trinity's relation to the world that is *touched*, at least 'affectively', if not 'effectively'… [further profiting from Maritain, beyond Galot], the pain that comes to us in the world 'imparts to us an incomparably fruitful and precious nobility' and…has its origin, by analogy, in God…" (*TD* V, 242 [G 218]). Thomas G. Weinandy, on the other hand,

preserve divine immutability and at the same time permit a free divine decision for "a world that can involve these Persons in pain." But while Maritain denominates suffering a metaphor mysteriously applicable to God,[53] Galot locates real suffering in "the embrace of the divine joy."[54]

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argues that Galot and Balthasar (but not Maritain) go too far: "Immutability and impassibility must never be perceived, as Galot and von Balthasar do, as stumbling blocks that need to be overcome, as if, despite being immutable and impassible, God is, nonetheless, in a dialectic fashion, still loving and merciful. Rather, God's immutability and impassibility are the absolute presuppositions and prolegomena for ensuring that he is perfectly loving. Moreover, by attempting to distinguish between God-in-himself and God-for-us, a distinction that is highly dubious in itself, they have placed a breach between God as he truly is and God who relates to us. Such a chasm is not only philosophically unwarranted, but it is also theologically detrimental to biblical revelation and the Christian tradition, which glories in the fact that God actually interacts with and relates to us as he truly is in the fullness of his divinity. God need not 're-fashion' himself in order to interact with us" (*Does God Suffer?*, 163n31). He defends Maritain not entirely accurately, before quoting a lengthy passage from his "Quelques réflexions," stating: "This notion then [of Aquinas'] of God's fully actualized love as containing all the various facets and expressions of love provides theological depth and philosophical precision to the patristic understanding which equally subsumed God's anger under the rubric of God's love. While J. Maritain maintains that God does not suffer, he also wishes to uphold the realism of God's compassion and mercy within his perfect love. It is not solely or simply metaphorical when applied to God. . . . God's mercy is seen in its effects and not as a passion" (166).

[53] Every time Maritain refers to the suffering of God in this article, he makes sure to clarify that he is speaking metaphorically in applying such a term to the divine. Hence, he states: "there are concepts whose object also implies limitation and imperfection in its very notion and so cannot be said of God except metaphorically, but which in the reality to which it refers as we experience it, does designate a perfection *emerging* above the sensible, as is the case with suffering in the human person. Suffering is an evil and an imperfection, but by the fact that the spirit approves of it and consents to it and seizes upon it, it is incomparably noble as well. . . . From this we can understand that the concept and the word *suffering* can be used only metaphorically with regard to God and that nevertheless we ought to seek in an *unnamed* divine perfection the eternal exemplar of what in us is suffering with all its noble dignity" (*Untrammeled Approaches*, 261 [F 23]). Maritain reflects on something Balthasar addresses frequently throughout his many works, stating that "[Christ] does keep for all eternity His five wounds which are glorious forever," which he says is metaphorically reflected in the sufferings reported by Our Lady of LaSalette; and just before this, he states: "this mysterious perfection which in God is the unnamed exemplar of suffering in us, *constitutes an integral part of the divine beatitude* – perfect peace at the same time infinitely exultant beyond what is humanly conceivable, burning in its flames what is apparently irreconciliable for us" (*Untrammeled Approaches*, 259 [F 21-22], emphasis original).

[54] Almost willing to recognize that Galot goes beyond Maritain, Balthasar states: "[Galot] deliberately and courageously opposes the long tradition of God's *apatheia*, though not without taking refuge behind J. Maritain's celebrated 1969 essay in which the Thomist adopts a position

This paradoxical union of suffering and joy in God Balthasar takes up along with the key notion that 'the bond between love and pain' is founded "in the reciprocal 'ecstatic love' of the Persons, who 'bring forth one another through reciprocal surrender of self.'"[55] Galot adds, though, that the ecstasy is not painful in itself – it is a love which contains the primordial origin of the pain involved in love of humanity. So, while Balthasar presumably wants to exclude with Galot the notion of pain from God's suffering, he borrows Galot's point (against Maritain) that suffering in God is not merely metaphorical in order to center his trinitarian theology on the notion of *ur-kenosis*.

Professedly elaborating upon Galot's approach to the distinction of divine persons in *ek-stasis*, he says every theology of pain "is insufficient unless…we can identify, in the Trinity, the basis for attributing to God things like pain and death." Thus, he wants to "attribute to God, impassible in his essence, a passibility that he himself has willed."[56] Consequently, he ends up making God the primary analogate in the analogy of suffering, effectively subsuming the immanent dimension of the Trinity under the economic dimension of the Trinity in a manner differing little on the surface from Moltmann's theology.[57] An alternative position would be that the Son alone is characterized by a *kenosis* freely undergone such that the love that constitutes the

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contrary to Thomas and the aforesaid tradition" (*TD* V, 239 [G 216]). The latter assertion is disputable, but interpretation of Thomas will not be undertaken here.

[55] All quotations in this paragraph are from *TD* V, 241 [G 217-218].

[56] *TD* V, 234 [G 211].

[57] See *TD* V, 242 [G 218]. Celia Deane-Drummond points out several similarities between Balthasar and Moltmann's theology, particularly on the relationship between the Cross and the Trinity (see "The Breadth of Glory," 49 especially), but she also thoroughly exhibits disturbing signs of an evolutionist worldview, not to mention jumping on the banwagon (with Kilby and Pitstick) of dismissing Balthasar's exegesis regarding the "cry of dereliction" (see 52; see also Kilby, 107-108), although she only cites as her authority John Yocum, "A Cry of Dereliction?"

union of the divine persons is supra-kenotic and the primary analogate in the analogous structure of *kenosis* is created being.[58]

Balthasar proposes instead an "interweaving of Christ's suffering and the suffering of the Trinity."[59] The Father in begetting the Son surrenders everything He is, the Godhead itself; and the persons are infinitely distinct, consisting in reciprocal relations (paternity and filiation). Accordingly, "the distance between the Persons, within the dynamic process of the divine essence, is infinite."[60] Balthasar continually returns to the theme of divine person as subsisting relation consisting in self-surrender.[61] For whatever can be criticized in such a theory, he does well to differentiate between the "infinite distance" that is constituted by the self-subsisting reciprocal relations in the immanent Trinity, on the one hand, and the apparent separation on the cross between Father and Son in the economic Trinity. He says, "what seems to us to be the sign of separation . . . the separation that is perceptible to us,"[62] but that "the Father does not leave the Son for a moment."[63] Hence, there is no real "alienation of the Son from the Father," but only a psychological experience of separation (hence the cry of dereliction).[64] This 'subjective'

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[58] This is part of the modest conclusion to which I will point in the end as being more along the lines of Maritain's thinking.

[59] *TD* V, 245 [G 221]. "[T]he whole Trinity accomplishes the Incarnation, which is already a kenosis on the part of the Son; the Son's whole life, and his Passion most of all, is both a work of the Father and a revelation of him; the Father, the perfect Abraham, surrenders his Son (cf. the parable of the Vineyard)" (*TD* V, 240 [G 216-217]).

[60] *TD* V, 245 [G 221].

[61] See *TD* V, 255 [G 230-231].

[62] *TD* V, 262 [G 236-237].

[63] *TD* V, 263 [G 238].

[64] See, for example, *TD* V, 264 [G 238-239]. Maritain, likewise, affirmed that while Christ "no longer experienced [the Beatific Vision] at all through His infused contemplation" in the abandonment of the agony and the passion, still "Jesus was more than ever united with the Father, but in the terror and the sweat of blood, and in the experience of dereliction" (*On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, 61). Hence, Maritain may have accepted a Balthasarian view of the descent (see also his "Beginning with a Reverie" in *Untrammeled Approaches*, 3-26, at 11n13 [French

separation, as it were, "begins in the Incarnation and is completed on the Cross,"[65] is "experienced not only in the body and the senses but also spiritually."[66] The Spirit provides the unity that is most profoundly present where the phenomena of rupture between Father and Son appear.[67]

Therefore, distinguishing economic and immanent dimensions of the Trinity, he says: "This 'economic' reality is only the expression of something 'immanent' in the Trinity."[68] Although he wants to locate suffering and death in the economic Trinity, not the immanent Trinity, he still seeks a 'foundation' for such in the immanent Trinity, since the economic expresses the

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original unavailable]), but he, like Ratzinger (see the next chapter), does not project Christ's sufferings onto the Trinitarian processions.

[65] *TD* V, 262 [G 237].

[66] *TD* V, 263 [G 237].

[67] See *TD* V, 262 [G 237]. Also, in the *Epilogue* to the Trilogy, he more clearly assigns the Spirit the role of unity transcending difference: "Here 'To Be', as perfect self-expression and as self-surrender within the identity, will be the personal difference of Father and Son, a difference that must, as love, have its *fruitfulness as Holy Spirit*. 'Son' is therefore at the same time 'Word' (as self-expression). He is 'expression' (as the One who shows himself). He is also, and equally, 'child' (the One lovingly begotten). And this personal difference must be overtaken in the personal unity of the different Persons, a unity that does not abolish these differences but rather unites them in the *unity of the fruitfulness transcending the differences*" (*Epilogue*, 85-86 [G 66], emphasis added).

[68] *TD* V, 258 [G 233].

immanent.[69] However, in so doing, he at times blurs the line between the two dimensions.[70] Consult the following texts from volume four:

> [T]he *Trinity does not hover 'unmoved' above the events* of the Cross (the view that Christ is somehow 'above' his abandonment by God and continues to enjoy the beatific vision), nor does it get entangled in sin as in a process theology à la Moltmann or Hegel, becoming part of a mythology or cosmic tragedy.[71]

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[69] "This reflection on 'the Cross and the Trinity' (319ff.) leads Balthasar to take a position with respect to Rahner and Moltmann (and thus Whitehead, and ultimately Hegel). Balthasar is able to get beyond these various forms of identifying the economic Trinity with the immanent Trinity, as we have seen, by basing his treatment on the biblical theology of the Covenant, with what it reveals of God's kenosis, and, on this basis, deepening the mystery of absolute love by refusing any form of *Prozesstheologie*, and endeavoring, rather, to develop a doctrine of the immanent Trinity such that it is able to *ground* what is affirmed at the economic level, which traditional theology has been unable to do. Like Bulgakov (and many others, but who do not always master their Hegelian heritage), Balthasar uses the concept of *Ur-kenosis* to describe the most profound mystery of God: the self-disappropriation of the Father, the Source of love, in the generation of the consubstantial Son. This original kenosis, which expands to the whole of the Trinity, provides the ground for those kenoses constituted by creation, the covenant, and the Cross. This latter, since it is, in the abandonment of the Son, the economic presentation of the self-abandonment of the Father in the Trinity, is, as the great Tradition has always seen it, the revelation of God's unfathomable love for the world" (Birot, "Redemption in Balthasar," 281-282 [emphasis original]). For an attempt to iron out the imprecision in Balthasar's treatment of the immanent-economic relationship as it pertains, particularly, to the Father's "self-disappropriation," see Margaret Turek, *Towards a Theology of God the Father: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theodramatic Approach* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001).

[70] Nicholas Healy reflects on the analogical relationship between the immanent and economic dimensions for Balthasar: "The relation between the events of the economy and the eternal processions within the Godhead is one of analogy (difference-within-unity). The simple reason for this distinction is the ontological difference between God and the finite world. A God who does not radically transcend the process of world history is a mythological God unworthy of belief. However, this abiding difference does not mean that the immanent Trinity is merely formal or static, with the seriousness of love and death reserved for the economic Trinity. In fact, the economic Trinity reveals just the opposite to be the case: 'The immanent Trinity must be understood to be that eternal, absolute self-surrender whereby God is seen to be, in himself, absolute love; this in turn explains his self-giving to the world as love, without suggesting that God "needed" the world process and the Cross in order to become himself'" (*Being as Communion*, 129).

[71] *TD* IV, 333 [G 310] (emphasis added).

> His wounds are not mere reminders of some past experience. Since this drama is experienced by the *economic Trinity, which is one with the immanent Trinity*, it is constantly actual…[72]
>
> While this view is right to *locate the historical work of Jesus in the realm of the eternal, or*, as we have said, *the economic Trinity in the immanent Trinity*, we must ask whether it is sufficient.[73]
>
> The next thing for consideration is the abiding actuality of the historical Passion, not primarily because it affects every human being who enters history at any time, but rather because – as we have already shown – *what takes place in the 'economic ' Trinity is cherished and embraced by the 'immanent' Trinity* and, in particular, by the Holy Spirit…[74]

Consequently, in volume five, he states categorically: "everything serves to reveal this eternal relationship.'….*we can inscribe the temporal upon the eternal* – paradoxically and in a way that can be misunderstood in a Hegelian direction."[75] The foundation in God Himself for the mystery of the cross is the 'primordial *kenosis*' or self-surrender constituting the infinite distinction-in-union (to be distinguished from real 'separation') between each mutually opposed subsisting relation.[76]

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[72] *TD* IV, 363 [G 338] (emphasis added).
[73] *TD* IV, 393 [G 366] (emphasis added).
[74] *TD* IV, 390 [G 364-365] (emphasis added).
[75] *TD* V, 264 [G 239] (emphasis added). Repeating Balthasar's phrase, Birot says: "The Christological concept of mission, which Balthasar finds in Scripture, and which he interprets, with Thomas, as the economic figure of procession, ultimately requires that we *inscribe* economic modes *within the immanent modes of the trinitarian relations*" ("Redemption in Balthasar," 278 [emphasis original]). Vincent Holzer treats detail precisely this question of how Balthasar avoids the Hegelian conflation of the two dimensions: see « La Kenose Christologique Dans La Pensee De Hans Urs Von Balthasar: Une kénose christologique étendue à l'être de Dieu, » *Theophilyon* 9, no. 1 (2004): 207-236.
[76] "[T]he *Cross* can become the 'revelation of the innermost being of God.' It reveals both the distinction of the Persons (clearest in the dereliction) and the unity of their Being, which becomes visible in the unity of the plan of redemption. Only a God-man, through his distinction-in-relation vis-à-vis the Father, can expiate…" (*TD* V, 260 [G 235]).

This dialectical-dialogical[77] approach clearly carries over into Balthasar's treatment of time, life, and joy in God. He refers to the "super-time of eternal life"[78] as well as the "timelessness in the bosom of God."[79] He says, "this temporal sphere does not unfold 'outside' eternity but within it."[80] Is this not analogy without negation/apophaticism? It certainly manifests a common inheritance of Barth to conceive eternity as in some way temporal because dynamic (where the Boethian formula '*totus simul*' is erroneously thought to imply staticity).[81] It remains unclear

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[77] Balthasar subscribes to both dialectical and dialogical 'methods' as complementary in *TL* II, 43ff. [G 40ff.]. 'Dialectic,' classically understood, is prominent in Plato and other ancient authors, even though it is not utilized in exactly the same manner as in Hegel. While Balthasar may intend to adhere more to Kierkegaard's literary-dialectical style, it may be argued that Kierkegaard himself, although it was almost his sole purpose to oppose Hegel, evidently could not escape the influence of Hegelian logic. This is because while Kierkegaard flips Hegel on his head in giving primacy to the individual over the universal, he shares with him an implicit rejection of Aristotelian syllogism in favor of a form of dialectical reasoning that is nevertheless distinct from Hegel's. Although Balthasar utilizes some Hegelian *terminology*, at least, he strives admirably to avoid the pitfalls of attempting to synthesize Thomistic analogical discourse with idealist dialectical discourse (i.e., Hegel's radicalization of Kant's antinomous approach). Whether or not he succeeds is another question up for debate.

[78] See *TD* V, 250 [G 225].

[79] "'[A]lready as Son in the Father he was the Lamb of God…His mission is not temporal; it is already perfected before its beginning. Certainly there is a moment in history in which he suffers. But it is preceded by the *timelessness in the bosom of God*'. . . his whole suffering – a suffering that goes to the utter limits – follows from and actually expresses his eternal triune joy" (*TD* V, 251-252 [G 227-228], emphasis added).

[80] *TD* V, 250 [G 226]. Hence, Larry Chapp claims: "God's existence is pure act, not so much in the Aristotelian sense of an absolute actuality in contradistinction to the potentiality of the world (although Balthasar grants a certain legitimacy to the medieval reformation of Aristotle's notion of God as Pure Act), but rather as absolute *event*. The theology of revelation becomes incoherent when revelation is conceived of as an attempt to capture something of the immutable God in a bottle, so as to provide us with an indisputable, supernaturally provided, universal concept that all can agree upon. This is not only impossible, but it betrays a fundamentally Hellenistic conception of divinity with its opposition between the temporal and the eternal" ("Revelation" in *Cambridge Companion*, 19).

[81] See, for example, Adrian Langdon, "Confessing Eternity: Karl Barth and the Western Tradition," *Pro Ecclesia* 21, no. 2 (Spring 2012); Gary Culpepper, "'One Suffering in Two Natures': An Analogical Inquiry into Divine and Human Suffering" in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, eds. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 97n44; Robert Jenson, "Ipse Pater Non Est Impassibilis" in *Divine Impassibility*, 117-126.

precisely how the "super-time" of the Trinitarian blessedness relates to the timelessness of the descent and hell.[82] A-temporality is certainly a key concept for Balthasar's understanding of the descent and consequently of our redemption.[83] "These two forms of timelessness – the Godforsakenness of the damned and the God-forsakenness of the Son on the cross – are not simply unrelated. The latter is because of the former."[84] Since his every mention of timelessness seems to be connected to God-forsakenness and not to the immanent Trinity, God's eternity is not conceived by Balthasar as completely a-temporal. It is rather 'super-temporal,' that is, transcending the distinction between the temporality of the world and the a-temporality of hell.

Asserting that the eternal becomes temporal, Balthasar avoids the Hegelian trap of attempting to transcend the distinction via a superior "synthesis" of the two.[85] But at times it seems

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[82] Nonetheless, he does specify the following: "On the Cross he will feel lonesome unto death, unto a limitless, eternal death in which every temporal moment and viewpoint will completely disappear. What will be a short while for mankind [Jn 14:19] will be an eternal while to him…We see in this the timelessness of his suffering, the timelessness of the redemption…Nonetheless the timelessness of the Cross is not the mere negation of time that characterizes hell, but a 'super-time'" (*TD* V, 310 [G 282-283]). See the third chapter of Gerald O'Hanlon's *The Immutability of God* for an extensive discussion of Balthasar's understanding of eternity's relation to temporality.
[83] See, e.g., *TD* IV, 336-337 [G 313].
[84] *TD* V, 311 [G 283]. Pointing to the importance of this notion for his Christology and consequent soteriology, he also says in an earlier volume: "In order to illustrate this reciprocal causality [between Christ and the historical world], we could refer to Jesus Christ's 'time'. Insofar as he knows that he is the Only Son of the Eternal Father, he has his own particular time (even as man), measured by his acceptance of the Father's will concerning his particular, all-embracing mission. But insofar as he genuinely becomes man, his existence is subject not only to general human and historical time but also to that modality of time that is marked by universal sin ('subject to futility'). So the question arises – prior to all dramatic action – how, cleaving entirely to the Father's will, he can surrender himself to this modality of '*vanitas*'. From this point we can anticipate the difficulty of the entire doctrine of the divine-human person of Christ. It will have to combine the freedom of the 'descent' with the unfreedom of the existence that results from it; the intuitive knowledge of the Father with the veiled nature of an exemplary 'faith'; the unity of the divine and the human will in himself with the – 'economically' necessary – clash between perfect obedience and instinctive horror in the face of the task of bearing sin. The dramatic essence and constitution that make Christ both Alpha and Omega infuse drama into every aspect of his being, his action and his conduct" (*TD* III, 15-16 [G 14-15]).
[85] See *TD* V, 264 [G 239]].

his poetic spirit overcomes his capacity for theological precision. For example, he strangely asserts that there is no pain without joy and no joy without pain.[86] Certainly there are modifications or qualifications needed here in order to avoid the falsity of mere 'paradoxism.'[87] He attempts to justify it with the comment, "On the cross, the lived reality of death, objectively, is life; so extreme suffering, objectively, is joy."[88] There is confusion here – Christ's death is a means to the end of our eternal life, from which one cannot conclude that joy, which is constitutively an experience (i.e., it pertains to a subject as such), always accompanies pain, another experience constitutively subjective (in the classical sense of the term). Again, "He is beyond life and death as known in the world…"[89] While the Thomist would insist that life precedes death with respect to God, according to the structure of the analogy of being, it sometimes appears as if Balthasar wants to say God relates to both in equal or reciprocal manners. He is certainly correct to assert that joy is caused by God, coming from "heaven" rather than "earth,"[90] but he also wants to affirm the pre-existence of its opposite in God.[91] Although one clearly perceives an odd usage of analogical (or dialectical?) predication[92] at work in the following enumeration of opposites interpenetrating in

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[86] See *TD* V, 253 [G 228-229].
[87] By this term I mean a tendency to view truth at its profoundest moment to consist necessarily in the affirmation of apparent contradictories, thereby affirming contradictories as a means to truth. Oakes falls into this aesthetic excess in "'He descended into hell': The Depths of God's Self-Emptying Love on Holy Saturday in the Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*, ed. C. Stephen Evans (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006): 218-245, at 218-219.
[88] *TD* V, 254 [G 230]].
[89] *TD* V, 245 [G 221].
[90] See *TD* V, 256 [G 231].
[91] See *TD* V, 252-253 [G 228-229].
[92] Balthasar generally tries to transition from dialectic to dialogic to analogic; the last item Aidan Nichols characterizes as "enquiry into reflection of the Trinity in the truth and being of the world" ("The theo-logic" in *Cambridge Companion*, 164). Fergus Kerr notes that "[Balthasar and Erich Przywara] would agree that Aquinas's notion of analogy is not a semantic theory, just about the use of words, as many interpreters would say. On the contrary, the 'analogy of being' (not that Aquinas ever used the phrase) refers to the creature's real participation in the divine life,

God, one could argue that the "modes" are inferior to that in which they participate: separation is a mode of union, death a mode of life, suffering a mode of bliss, God-forsakenness a mode of "profound bond with the Father in the Holy Spirit."[93]

Maritain on Nihilation and Eternal Vision

Before reverting to the foundation from which Maritain builds his position on divine impassibility, namely, God's merely receptive relationship to moral evil (contra the theory of infallible permission), it is fitting to summarize the conclusion he draws concerning divine impassibility with an exemplifying passage from his article:

> Each time that a creature sins (and in each case the creature takes the first initiative, the initiative of nothingness), God is deprived of a joy ('above and beyond' according to our way of looking at things) which was due to Him by another and which that other does not give Him, and something inadmissible to God is produced in the world. But even before triumphing over what is inadmissible by a greater good which will overcompensate for it later on, God Himself, far from being subject to it, raises it above everything by His consent: In accepting such a privation (which in no way affects His being but only the creature's relation to Him), He takes it in hand and raises it up like a trophy, attesting to the divinely pure grandeur of His victorious Acceptance (ours is never such except at the cost of some defeat); and this is something that adds absolutely nothing to the intrinsic perfection and glory of the divine *Esse*, and is eternally precontained in Its essential and

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anticipated here and now by faith" ("Balthasar and Metaphysics" in *Cambridge Companion*, 225-226). For more on the relationship between Erich Przywara's and Balthasar's metaphysics, see James Zeitz, "Przywara and von Balthasar on Analogy," *The Thomist* 52 (1988): 473-498. Kevin Duffy, on the basis of contemporary Thomistic discussions, critiques Balthasar's peculiar attempt to combine metaphorical discourse and analogical predication, according to Gerard O'Hanlon's esteemed interpretation (see "Change, Suffering, and Surprise in God: Von Balthasar's Use of Metaphor," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 76, no. 4 [2011]: 370-387, cf. O'Hanlon's Response: "A Response to Kevin Duffy on von Balthasar and the Immutability of God," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 78, no. 2 [2013]: 179-184).

[93] *TD* V, 257 [G 232]. "Such distance [namely, alienation from God] is possible, however, only within the economic Trinity, which transposes the absolute distinction of the person in the Godhead from one another into the dimensions of salvation history, involving man's sinful distance from God and its atonement. We have to show, therefore, that the God-forsakenness of the Son during his Passion was just as much a mode of his profound bond with the Father in the Holy Spirit as his death was a mode of his life and his suffering a mode of his bliss" (*TD* V, 257 [G 232]).

> super-eminent infinity. For this is an integral part of a mysterious divine perfection which, even though it has reference to the privation of what is due to God by creatures existing at some particular point in time, is infinitely beyond the reach of these creatures. In fact, the creature, by his free nihilation, is indeed the cause of the privation in question in whatever concerns itself, in his relation to God, which is real only from his side, responsible for some privation or other of what is due to God. And such privations are presupposed from all eternity by that mysterious divine perfection I am speaking about. The divine perfection is eternally present in God and, by the infinite transcendence of the Divine Being, is the unnamced exemplar, incapable of being designated by any of our concepts . . . which corresponds in uncreated glory to what is suffering in us. . . . What sin 'does' to God is something which reaches God in the deepest way, not by making Him subject to some effect brought about by the creature but by making the creature, in its relation to God, pass over to the side of the unnamed perfection, the eternal exemplar in Him of what suffering is in us . . . [Raissa wrote] 'Jesus is the image of the Father offended by sin . . .'[94]

Maritain's position on predestination and divine foreknowledge is thoroughly Thomistic, but it is also innovative insofar as it rejects the Bañezian notion of 'negative reprobation' or 'infallible permissive decrees.'[95] The foremost twentieth century exponent of the Bañezian approach to predestination was Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange[96] (even if he sought to temper its

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[94] *Untrammeled Approaches*, 257-258 [F 19-21].

[95] Michael Torre argues that Maritain's position can be traced back to Francisco Marin-Sola in "Francisco Marin-Sola, OP, and the Origin of Jacque Maritain's Doctrine on God's Permission of Evil," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4, no. 1 (2006): 55-94. Most has a section on the system of Marin-Sola in his book, *Grace, Predestination, and the Salvific Will of God* (Front Royal: Christendom, 1997), 451-452 (the original Latin text published in 1963). It contains very detailed responses to objections taken from the works of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, and it is primarily theological in character (containing many sections of quotations from saints and authoritative texts as well as exegesis of Sts. Augustine and Thomas). Most notes what is to me a small discrepancy between his proposal and what appears in *Existence and the Existent* (see *GPSWG*, 485). The essence (or metaphysical foundation) of the two proposals, I think, is found in Maritain's earlier *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*. Maritain expands on his understanding of the issue in *Dieu et la permission du mal* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1963); *God and the Permission of Evil* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966). The discrepancies on the topic of divine foreknowledge and the problems in each author would be a topic for another work.

[96] For his doctrine of predestination and grace, see Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination: The Meaning of Predestination in Scripture and the Church* (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, 1998); *God: His Existence and His Nature*, vol. 2 (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1936), c. 4, nos. 64-65, Appendix 4, and Epilogue; *The One God: A Commentary on the First Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1954), cc. 19, 22-23; *Grace:*

harshness).[97] According to this position, God decides without any reason besides His own will to provide a randomly selected group of men with the "efficacious" graces necessary for meriting salvation. In so doing He leaves the others with "sufficient" graces that are destined not to be efficacious because of the defectability that belongs to men as creatures. He so predestines and reprobates (prior to any foreknowledge) in order that God's glory may be manifest as both merciful and just (hence the need for some to be condemned).[98] In other words, God's antecedent will does not discriminate between men and His consequent will chooses some for beatitude, leaving the rest to their own inevitable self-condemnation; this election is not consequent to any particular foreknowledge, but consequent only to His own act of creation and the inherent defectability of man as a (fallen) creature.[99] Because nothing can exist or happen without God first willing it in some manner, the divine intellect can only foreknow the good and evil acts of each man once He has decreed which good acts each is to perform (and therefore which each will fail to perform).[100] In the end, this approach is justified against all sensitivities to the contrary as being metaphysically commanded by the impossibility of divine foreknowledge preceding God's final predestinating

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Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 109-14 (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1952).

[97] See Maritain, *God and the Permission of Evil*, 19 [F 25]; John Salza, *The Mystery of Predestination According to Scripture, the Church, and St. Thomas Aquinas* (Charlotte: TAN Books, 2010), 86-87; Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 333-334; T. J. White, "Von Balthasar and Journet," 663n71.

[98] See Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, Part 1, cc. 3 and 5; Part 2, sect. 1, c. 2; Part 2, Synthesis; and Part 3, c. 1.

[99] See, for example, *Predestination*, 80-84. Augustinians emphasize the post-lapsarian dimension of man's defectability, while Bañezians believe that the fall is just another instance of an infallible permissive decree and thus man's defectability is not intrinsically tied to his fallenness but to his being a creature who inevitably falls into evil if he is not predestined to do good.

[100] I find it odd that the Thomistic principle that intellect precedes will is so co-opted here that the Bañezians fail even to question their assumption that the consequent will must in effect determine the contingent objects of divine knowledge. It seems a nominalist view of divine freedom may be operative here.

will.[101] Hence, there is an entire metaphysics of the divine will and intellect that is an inextricable part of the fabric of the Bañezian position, and there is an alternative metaphysic of the same developed by Maritain in response to the problematic aspects of such.

According to Maritain, the doctrine of infallible permission ends up attributing evil to the divine will at least indirectly.[102] As an alternative to this theory Maritain describes two metaphysically distinct moments ("instants of nature") that need not be temporally distinct. The first is the non-consideration of the moral rule, which is a *mera negatio*, and the second is the *defectus* that is the cause of the evil act itself, the moral *privatio*.[103] Maritain finds in St. Thomas the theory that the cause of moral evil in man is a failure that is not yet culpable, a voluntary non-consideration of the rule but a "*mera negatio.*"[104] In other words, for Thomas the evil of an action is caused by the nonbeing of the free non-action of not considering the rule, whereas for Bañez this non-consideration of the rule is already a privation, that is, a moral evil, which therefore cannot be the cause of moral evil in the free creature.[105] For Maritain the nonbeing that is the *defectus voluntatis* is the (deficient) cause of the *defectus actionis* as such, even though the being itself of

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[101] See, for example, *Predestination*, 341-345.

[102] "God thus seemed…the initiator of the evil which He punished….these Thomists taught not only that unthinkable thing…that one calls 'negative reprobation,' which *precedes any demerit* " (*God and the Permission of Evil*, 14 [F 21], emphasis original). See also 28-29 [F 34-35].

[103] A *mera negatio* is "a mere withdrawal from being, a mere lack of a being or of a good *which is not due:* a mere absence which I introduce voluntarily into being" (35 [F 39]). The *defectus* that causes a moral evil is "the *non-consideration of the rule* – which is not, note well, an *act* of non-consideration, but a *non-act* of consideration" (35 [F 39]). Nevertheless, "this non-consideration of the rule is something *real*, since it is the *cause* of the sin; and it is something *free*…being the *cause* of the evil, it *precedes* the evil, at least by a priority of nature" (35 [F 40]).

[104] He cites the following passages from St. Thomas: *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3, co. and ad 13; *ST* I, q. 49, a. 1, ad 3; I-II, q. 75, a. 1, ad 3; *SCG* III, c. 10 (see *God and the Permission of Evil*, 35n1 [F 39n1]).

[105] See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 21-22 [F 27-28].

the evil act must be totally caused by God.[106] What the Bañezian Thomists do not see is that such a nonbeing logically precedes the being of the effect (that is, of the evil act itself), since the *privatio* as such is first caused by the free creature and only consequently permitted by God, who nevertheless is the ultimate reason for the action insofar as it is free and existent.

The core idea Maritain combats is that God is the 'architect' of evil acts, on the basis of the necessary absolute innocence of God. Contrary to the Bañezian idea that the divine plan necessarily determines which evil acts God knows into existence, even though freely chosen and not willed directly by God, Maritain argues effectively that the free creature alone is the first cause of evil acts. He states:

> [T]he first cause or the *inventor* of moral evil *in the existential reality of the world* is the liberty of the creature – I mean, this liberty *in the line of non-being*. All of this implies that at the very first origin of the evil act – and, above all, of the evil election… – there is not only the *fallibility* of the creature, but an *actual failure* of the creature, a created initiative which – since it is not caused by God – can only be an initiative of non-being, of deficiency in being, of lack, what I have called a nihilation.[107]

Once the free creature activates this absence or *negatio* (that is nevertheless 'real'), it becomes a privation in the moral order (*privatio*), that is, an action that deviates from a good that is *due*; this

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[106] *God and the Permission of Evil*, 24 [F 30]. Criticism of this metaphysic of Maritain is offered by Gilles Emery in "The Question of Evil and the Mystery of God in Charles Journet," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4, no. 3 (2006): 529-556, and especially by Steven A. Long in "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4, no. 3 (2006): 557-606. See also a brief response to their critiques by Thomas Joseph White, "Von Balthasar and Journet," 662-663n70. White points out that Long in particular runs the risk of identifying moral and natural evil, invoking a few passages of Thomas (and neglecting the ones White cites) for the position that created being necessarily tends to privative acts without positive impulse from God, which makes God an indirect cause of evil rather than acknowledging man's capacity to be 'first cause' of such an ontological deficiency. See William Most, *GPSWG*, for thorough responses to the Bañezian rebuttals. Long confesses his unfamiliarity with this work (see "Providence," 576). An adequate response to his and Emery's critical comments would go outside the scope of this essay.

[107] *God and the Permission of Evil*, 33 [F 37-38] (emphasis original).

is where Maritain derives his two 'instants of nature.' Regarding the ontological status of such, Maritain says, "Now we know that our human intellect can conceive non-being, and therefore evil, only *ad instar entis*, after the fashion of being, and consequently by speaking of it as of *some thing*, as of a kind of so-called quality."[108] Hence, the perspective of nonbeing is crucial for discerning the true origin of evil action.

The being of nature is wounded by voluntary evil, but the nonbeing of nature does not determine the acts or non-acts of the will. In other words, although in the world of nature every evil operation results from a defect in being, the world of personal freedom transcends the laws of natural agency.[109] "The cause of this defect must be the will itself, not nature."[110] He appeals to Thomas' *Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo*, q. 1, a. 3, to answer the question about the metaphysical origin of evil acts, which must itself be both free and not yet evil:[111]

> '…that the will *does not make use of* the rule of reason and of divine law,' that it does not have the ruler in its hand, – this then, is the absence or the deficiency 'which must be considered in the will before the faulty choice in which alone moral evil consists. And for that very absence or that lack which consists in not making use of the rule,' not taking the rule in hand, '*there is no need to seek a cause, for the very freedom of will, whereby it can act or not act, is enough.*' The lack or defect which we are discussing has as its primary cause freedom itself, which can act or not act and which does not act, does not pay attention to the rule…a defect of which freedom itself is the negative and deficient primary cause; – and it is the will thus in default which, acting with this defect, is the cause – *in quantum*

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[108] *God and the Permission of Evil*, 36 [F 40]. He continues: "If in spite of this, *through* or *beyond* the auxiliary being of reason which we have thus constructed, we have seized non-being in its existential reality in the bosom of being rendered 'lacking' or 'deprived' by it – well then, in order to treat of evil in its existential reality itself, by disengaging it as much as possible from the being of reason which reifies it, we shall find it absolutely necessary to employ a language which does violence to our natural manner of thinking and does violence to words. We shall have to say that when the creature takes the free initiative not to consider the rule – *mera negatio*, non-act, mere lack – it *dis-acts*, it *nihilises* or *nihilates*; and that moral evil, the evil of free action, is likewise, as such, a *nihilation*, which this time is a *privation*, privation of a *due* good" (36-37 [F 40-41]). See also *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 32.
[109] See Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 20ff.
[110] *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 23.
[111] See *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 24.

> *deficiens* – of moral evil. But this defect that is a prior condition of evil and which depends on freedom, is not itself an evil. 'This very lack,' St. Thomas continues…*is not an evil*.[112]

Hence, the free cause of evil acts is a nonbeing that is not itself evil. But this is not understood unless one realizes from the start that there are two different trails of thought to track: the line of evil and nonbeing, on one hand, and the line of good and being, on the other.[113] The Bañezian trap is to collapse the former into the logic of the latter.

> It is God Who has the first initiative of the good act. And when the creature does not produce nothingness under grace (this is no merit in its part, for not to take the initiative of nothingness is not to do something, it is only not to move under divine action), – when the creature does not take the initiative of nothingness, then divine motion or grace merely sufficient or breakable fructifies of itself into *unbreakable* divine motion or into grace efficacious by itself. Thus we must reason in two different ways according to whether we are considering the line of evil or the line of good. Such a dissymmetry is absolutely necessary from the very fact that the line of good is the line of being, and the line of evil is the line of non-being and of privation...Man does not render efficacious grace efficacious, but he can render sufficient grace sterile…[114]

Hence, the antinomy set up by the principle that all good comes from God, on one hand, and the fact that evil exists in human action, on the other hand, can only be resolved once the dissymmetry between the line of being and the line of nonbeing is recognized.

The question remains how in this system God is able to foreknow which of the particular goods antecedently willed for each man will be resisted before their resistance is actually exercised (an actualization caused by God). For Maritain, once one has opted for divine frustrable decrees instead of infallible permissions, the language of '*pre*-determination' and '*fore*-knowledge' must

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[112] *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 25-26.
[113] See *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 38.
[114] *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 37-38.

admit of adjustment.[115] While desiring to keep the Boethian notion of eternity as *totus simul*,[116] he conceives of the relationship between time and eternity such that the divine purpose is a determined plan 'improvised' from within time, not a predetermined drama or immutable map detailed 'before' all time; for this reason, he resists the terms 'pre-motion' and 'fore-see.'[117] Since beings alone are caused by God, the nonbeings that are 'produced' by the freedom of men must be derived from such beings and therefore also present in some way to the eternal vision of God.[118] Hence, while universal causality is necessary for eternal vision of all things, not everything seen is therefore caused by God, since nonbeings are known through the beings themselves to which they relate and by which they are defined but not determined. Since all things in time are present immediately to the eternal instant of God's 'science of vision' (*scientia visionis*) and not known 'in advance' or in some 'time before time,' it is not proper to think of His eternal purpose in terms of a play that is directed by a "stage manager."[119] Still, His universal causality precedes in some way what actually happens.[120] Maritain does not think this contradicts certain admittance, however, of a kind of created 'indetermination' and divine 'improvisation,' thanks to the reality of man's nihilations, which are not caused by God but initiated solely by finite freedom.[121]

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[115] "It follows from this that, properly speaking, God does not foresee the things of time, he sees them; and he sees in particular the free options and decisions of the created existent which, in as much as they are free, are absolutely unforeseeable. He sees them in the very instant when they take place, in the pure existential freshness of their emergence into being…" (*Existence and the Existent*, 87 [F 144-145]).

[116] He develops John of St. Thomas' notion of the 'physical' presence of all moments in time to the eternal being of God in *Existence and the Existent*, 86 [F 142-144], and *God and the Permission of Evil*, 77 [F 78].

[117] See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 65 [F 66-67], 78-79 [F 79-80].

[118] See Maritain, *Existence and the Existent*, 86-87 [F 142-145]; *God and the Permission of Evil*, 78-79 [F 79]; Thomas, *In Sent.* I, d. 38, q. 1, a. 5.

[119] See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 79-80 [F 80-81].

[120] See *Existence and the Existent*, 113-114 [F 182-184].

[121] Therefore, in a footnote to the statement that evil acts initiated by free creatures are eternally and immutably permitted but ordained to a higher good that is "willed either determinately or

In other words, although there is a certain sense in which all things known eternally are 'fixed' as known, our mode of conceiving such an eternal vision in relation to temporal events must discern a kind of 'indetermination' in the eternal purposes for good, as we take into account the 'nihilations' originating solely from the freedom of creatures. Thus, rejection of infallible permissions as a viable explanation for how universal causality must relate to the existence of evil acts entails a particular understanding of creaturely freedom. Building on the notion of the free creature alone as the first cause of evil acts, Maritain says:

> We must say that in a certain fashion those creatures have their part in the very establishment of the eternal plan, not, indeed, by virtue of their power to act (here all they have they hold of God) but by virtue of their power to nihilate, to make the thing that is nothing, where they themselves are first causes. Free existents have their part in the establishment of God's plan, because in establishing that plan, He takes account of their initiatives of nihilating.[122]

It is clear, then, that while Maritain does not explicitly attribute to the eternal divine *scientia visionis* something analogous to temporality, it is easy to see how one might think he implicitly affirms a transcendental analogical structure to temporality, in light of his resistance to the term

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indeterminately," Maritain issues the following important clarifications: "There is nothing that is willed indeterminately, if we consider the eternal will and the *entire* procession of events in time with all the free acts contained therein. But in relation to a *given moment* in history and in time, where a given event is willed or permitted, I understand by 'good willed indeterminately' a good willed as to be attained, by modes, ways, and determinations which, *considering that moment in time* and taking account of the free nihilations which can still intervene and bring about other divine permissions, are not yet fixed. All is eternally fixed in the eternal plan, where there is no succession and which embraces every time. But we cannot imagine any idea of this eternal plan and the ordinations it includes except by introducing the distinctions of reason and the moments of reason required by our human mode of conceiving" (*Existence and the Existent*, 118n24 [F 188-189n1]).

[122] *Existence and the Existent*, 114 [F 183-184].

'pre-determination' and his preference for speaking of a plan that is in some respects 'indeterminate' and thus 'improvised' from within time.[123]

Balthasar meets Maritain

Going outside the *Theo-Drama* for a moment (but remaining with his later thought), Balthasar displays evidence of an attempted appropriation of Maritain also in the following statements made in conference setting:

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[123] Robert Jenson exhibits concerns similar to those of Maritain when he argues for a divine providence that takes into consideration time-bound prayerful petitions in an indeterminist manner. He wants both to maintain Thomas' causal view of providence (i.e., his answer to the problem of necessity in predestination) and to give the prayer of petition a determinative power in the divine execution of that providence (see *Divine Impassibility*, 125-126). He also argues for something similar to Balthasar's "super-temporality," namely, that time and timelessness are together constitutive of eternity. His novel approach to time sees an analogous relationship between narrative time and the immanent life of God (124). He defines narrative time as "neither linear nor cyclical…the ordering of events by their mutual reference" (122). This "immanent narrative time" is neither a total negation of linear time, nor is it identical to linear time. The Trinitarian processions are, therefore, the archetype of all times (124). The eternal for him cannot be the mere negation of time; it must both transcend and encompass the narrative time in which God reveals Himself. Hence, Jenson reframes the whole question of impassibility vs. passibility in God in terms of his own conception of time, which he extrapolates from divine revelation. He too emphasizes that God's history with us is the economic revelation of something about the immanent Trinity. Nevertheless, he maintains that Moltmann's God is no more biblical than the impassible God invoked from Nicaea to Chalcedon (120). Jenson wants to transcend the language of paradox and reframe the question so as to deny both passibility and impassibility of God, since Scripture affirms He is in some way affected by human sinfulness (120-121). For him there is 'passio' in the Father and the Son, but only in a dynamic manner, since in the economic order, God is always 'in narrative' with us. Taking a cue from Origen's apparent attribution of suffering to the Father, Jenson asserts that both impassibility and passibility must be only partially negated of God, and hence the two are not conceived as mutually exclusive (where one is the total negation of the other). Thus, God is not the total negation of both attributes – rather, a partial negation of passibility is most applicable to a God that transcends but lives within linear time. God is both within and without narrative time, thus indicating impassibilty and passibility in different respects (an analogy for which he sees in Western music) [121ff.]. However, his faulty point of departure is the assertion that if we can say that "One of the Trinity has suffered," there is no grammatically correct sense in which we can say, "God is impassible" (119). His argument is ultimately undermined from the beginning by the false claim that the Cyrilian formula inevitably undercuts the attribution of impassibility to God.

> [I]t seems to me that this proposition of the Son [namely, the Passion] touches the heart of the Father – humanly speaking – more profoundly even than the sin of the world will be able to affect it, that it works in God *a wound of love* already from the beginning of creation – if not to say that it is the sign and expression of this ever-open wound in the heart of the Trinitarian life, a *wound* identical to the procession and circumincession of the Divine Persons in their perfect beatitude. This *wound* is earlier than that which Saint Anselm had in mind, to wit, the offense made to the Father by sin and expiated by the Son…[124]

Gary Culpepper draws upon this line of thought to argue for a modified form of divine passibility that admits a kind of temporality in God,[125] agreeing essentially with Robert Jenson's analysis of the problem[126] and admitting also an agreement with the Barthian position of Bruce McCormack.[127]

Leaving aside the peculiarities of these 'middle positions,' influenced in more or less measure by Balthasar and Maritain, Culpepper seems to be the most indebted to a Balthasarian reading of Maritain. For Culpepper, Christ's suffering (and Incarnation) shows us that our suffering can be a "participation in the eternity of the joyous suffering of the divine persons."[128] Human suffering finds its proper analogical basis ultimately in the distinction between divine

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[124] *Mystery of Redemption*, 37-38 (emphasis added).
[125] See his essay "'One Suffering in Two Natures': An Analogical Inquiry into Divine and Human Suffering" in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, 77-98.
[126] See his essay "Ipse Pater Non Est Impassibilis" in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, 117-126.
[127] "The agreement I share with McCormack and Jenson is rooted, I think, in openness to rethinking the categories of eternity and time in light of the belief that God's life is one of infinite, unchanging movement. McCormack works this out in terms of a divine act of freedom that encompasses the whole of divine action in history, and Jenson through the development of speech about the 'infinite temporality' of God inscribed in the 'narrative time' of the biblical story…I think that the Chalcedonian distinction of two natures remains important in our speech about the unity of the divine freedom or the infinite temporality of God's life. I agree that the distinction between two natures is abstract when speaking of Jesus in the unity of his person, and hence can never name two subjects. However, insofar as Chalcedon also wants to speak of Jesus as a representative man, as 'one in being with us,' language about Jesus must incorporate the real distinction between divine and human nature…" (*Divine Impassibility*, 97n44). See McCormack's essay, "Divine Impassibility or Simply Divine Constancy? Implications of Karl Barth's Later Christology for Debates over Impassibility" in *Divine Impassibility*, 150-186.
[128] *Divine Impassibility*, 98.

persons and proximately in the distinction between the antecedent and consequent wills in God.[129] He borrows from Maritain the notion that the permissive will of God encompasses a divine 'wound' caused by sin,[130] constituted by the Father's knowledge and permission of the sufferings imposed upon His incarnate Son. God Himself is said to "suffer" in the secondary sense of the word, that is, in being an object of action.[131] Thus, the Father 'suffers' the otherness of the Son, being "moved to love by the other," and the Son likewise suffers the Father. The person moving each to love is the Spirit.[132] This suffering is infinitely greater than that of His antecedent will to the moral evil initiated by His creatures,[133] but the "suffering" of God is simply a being-moved by another.[134] The human suffering of Christ, therefore, is merely a human form of the divine suffering constituting the trinitarian processions.[135] Hence, for Culpepper, there is an analogical basis in God for the reality creatures experience as suffering, revealed in the economic manifestation of God's eternal nature (i.e., Jesus Christ).[136]

There seems to be a fusion here of Maritain's and Balthasar's approach to divine impassibility, but it is a faulty synthesis. Such a position falls prey to a temptation to make the love of God admit the necessity of an object *ad extra*, an objection even he inadequately counters.[137] Again, there is at work here a reluctance to distinguish between the economic and immanent dimensions of the trinitarian God – to project onto the inner life of the Trinity an image (albeit exemplary) of the drama of suffering endured by Christ in the face of those who resist His

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[129] See *Divine Impassibility*, 78 and 96n42.
[130] See *Divine Impassibility*, 87.
[131] See *Divine Impassibility*, 81-82.
[132] See *Divine Impassibility*, 89ff.
[133] See *Divine Impassibility*, 90.
[134] See *Divine Impassibility*, 96.
[135] See *Divine Impassibility*, especially 95ff.
[136] See *Divine Impassibility*, 93.
[137] See *Divine Impassibility*, 93.

grace is just too much kataphaticism. Divine self-movement, a Platonic notion employed to describe the dynamism interior to God,[138] need not entail being acted upon by another, whether this 'other' exists *ad intra* or *ad extra*. It takes divine revelation to know that the 'movements' of divine knowledge and love involves a multiplicity of subsistent relations in the one Supreme Being. To speak of these relations in terms of action and passion is to venture onto the terrain of affirming multiple, really distinct, wills in the one God.

Although Barth as interpreted by Bruce McCormack wishes to sever divine impassibility from divine immutability, upholding the latter with no interest to preserve the former,[139] his proposal that the subsistent relation of filiation inherently involve a primordial humility (whose created realization would be the obedience of Christ's human nature) comes closer to what I am proposing in reconciling Balthasar and Maritain.[140] In this model divine suffering in time is understood as the "outworking" of the humility that is itself proper to God as Son (the originate or begotten Deity). Without attributing a multiplicity of wills to the divine nature, something analogous to humility and obedience may be appropriated to the Son's distinctive mode of being-God insofar as He is most fittingly made Incarnate.[141] Since "obedience" is a manifestation of

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[138] See *Divine Impassibility*, 92.
[139] See *Divine Impassibility*, 173, 180.
[140] See *Divine Impassibility*, 170ff.
[141] Here I mean only to predicate humility of God in an improper manner, perhaps of metaphorical analogy. I merely wish to indicate that Christ's *kenosis* reflects the divine receptivity that is the second divine person, and in this sense whatever perfection belongs to humility may be appropriated to the Son in an eminent way. In other words, since the divine being proper to the second hypostasis is filiation and therefore characterized by a free tendency toward Incarnation, supposing the free decision to create, the Son is the exemplar of all created obedience, even though He does not actually exercise obedience except via the human will of Christ. For an appreciatively critical appropriation of Barth's trinitarian theory, see Thomas Joseph White, O.P., "Intra-Trinitarian Obedience and Nicene-Chalcedonian Christology," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 6, no. 2 (2008): 377-402. For a refutation of the idea that humility may be properly applied to God, see also Guy Mansini, "Can Humility and Obedience be Trinitarian Realities?" in *Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth: An Unofficial Catholic-Protestant Dialogue*, eds. Bruce L. McCormack

humility and etymologically signifies "hearing" (*ob-audire*) in its deepest sense (i.e., listening) and listening is fundamentally a form of receptivity (even if it formally supposes a distinction of wills), the Incarnation of the Son points to the divine exemplar of such creaturely virtues, that is, the receptivity proper to the Son's self-surrender.[142]

Balthasar's kenotic project lends itself in a particular way to the tendency to insist that the 'intentional dependence' of God upon creation is truly analogous to human suffering.[143] If the divine act of creation is to be truly free, there must not be any dependence in God upon His contingent effects, and therefore the fact that we must think of the Creator as in some way related to such (in a metaphysical sense) rather indicates the deficiency of discursive thinking about the 'contingency' of the divine will with respect to creation. The 'wound' in God of which Maritain speaks is neither an intra-trinitarian reality nor a real *passio* in God as God, but it signifies the divine affectivity manifest in Christ, where the evil committed by free creatures is eternally accepted by the divine will, which expresses itself in the passion of Christ. If Balthasar had recourse to Maritain's theory of predestination, he would not have felt the need to compensate for his quasi-Bañezian approach to divine permission of moral evil by projecting an exemplary form

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and Thomas Joseph White, O.P. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2013): 71-98. Mansini, therefore, rightly criticizes Balthasar for "[imagining] the Son 'offering' to become incarnate and the Father being 'touched' at this offering" (ibid., 96). But he does not capitalize upon Thomas' words that "for the Son *to hear* the Father is to receive his essence from him" (97, citing *Super Evangelium S. Ioannis Lectura*, no. 2017). If to receive His essence from the Father can be called in some sense "hearing," then the divine receptivity of the Son must in some sense be the exemplar of created obedience.

[142] White speaks of the Son's divine receptivity, invoking Thomas, in "Intra-Trinitarian Obedience," 398-399. Mansini speaks of obedience in terms of hearing in "Can Humility and Obedience be Trinitarian Realities?," 78.

[143] Culpepper appears to adopt the distinction between real and intentional dependence from Norris Clarke; see the latter's *Explorations in Metaphysics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1994), 81n8; 87; 192-195; 205ff.

of suffering into the inner life of the Godhead and could have simply discerned the *affective receptivity* of God in His creative activity to the nihilations initiated by finite freedoms.

Revisions to Balthasar's Treatment Consolidated

Consequently, there is simply no need to ground human suffering in the trinitarian processions. Despite Balthasar's attempt to transcend the debate on impassibility through an odd usage of paradox and analogy,[144] the depth of his theology is undermined by his imposition of the mystery of *kenosis* upon the intra-trinitarian life. Even though he attempts to distance himself from Rahner's (in)famous identification of the immanent and economic Trinities,[145] his doctrine

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[144] Matthew Levering, hinting at Balthasar's conspicuous synthesis of Hegelian logic and Thomistic metaphysics, comments on Balthasar's mutation of analogical discourse: "Once 'analogy' ultimately overturns the principle of contradiction, one wonders whether the limits of human language about God have been overstepped" (*Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* [Oxford: Blackwell, 2004], 132, cited by John Yocum, "A Cry of Dereliction?," 74n8). The question, of course, is whether Balthasar stretches analogy beyond the principle of contradiction, and if so, how precisely.

[145] "The laws of the 'economic' Trinity arise from the 'immanent' Trinity . . . But the economic Trinity cannot be regarded as simply identical with the immanent" (*TD* III, 157 [G 143]). See Karl Rahner, *The Trinity*, trans. Joseph Donceel (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1970, 1997), 22 and 31; "Der dreifaltige Gott als transzendeter Urgrund der Heilsgeschichte," in *Die Heilsgeschichte vor Christus*, vol. 2 of *Mysterium Salutis: Grundriss heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik* (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1967), 328 and 336. Rahner's view on divine immutability can be seen in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1 (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), 330; see also J. Norman King and Barry L. Whitney, "Rahner and Hartshorne on Divine Immutability," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 22, no. 3 (1982): 195-209. The dispute between the two is perhaps most vivid in *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965-1982*, ed. Paul Imhof and Hubert Biallowons, trans. Harvey D. Egan (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 126-127. Edward Oakes thinks that Balthasar adopts Rahner's axiom (see *Pattern of Redemption*, 279). Nicholas Healy evidently thinks Rahner's position to be illogical when he says, "Balthasar is, of course, committed to maintaining God's immutability, and thus a distinction between the economic and the immanent Trinity" (*Being as Communion*, 127). Balthasar, in fact, sees at least some similarities between Rahner's and Bulgakov's views on divine immutability: "In view of this doctrine of God's absolute immutability, we are bound to ask Rahner why he clings with the same tenacity to the theologoumenon that God, who is not subject to development *in himself*, 'is changeable *in another*' and that the 'primal phenomenon of self-emptying is the *kenosis* and *genesis*' of God. In this perspective (and here Rahner resembles Bulgakov), creation is only a first realization, 'secondary in rank', of that self-emptying that will attain fullness through the

of *ur-kenosis* constituting the very distinction of persons in God effectively involves a conflation of the two dimensions in the form of a forced unification (that is, he never distinguishes real vs. logical identity). His reliance upon an over-emphatic anti-Pelagian approach to grace seems to be what determines his understanding of divine impassibility, as defining the Trinity in kenotic terms is the only way for such an inherited framework to respond to the demands of the soteriological problem. In other words, where there is no perception of the role of nihilation in the free creature's causation of evil, either God must take the responsibility for sins or His very being must be constituted by empathy – he opts for the latter. The other possibility – where nihilation is accepted as a reality – is that God becomes empathetic with our suffering through the Incarnation, thanks to the sympathy His love knows in divine receptivity to the free initiative of sinfulness in creatures.

With this we can return to Balthasar's core concern in the debate on impassibility: If God the Son suffers, albeit in the human nature of the Word *incarnate*, and whatever is said of one divine hypostasis must be said of the others, must we not conclude that the Father and the Spirit likewise suffer via the human nature of Christ? Certainly, the mode of union between the Father

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Incarnation, with the adoption of the weakness it implies. Does not God's self-emptying mean that he *can* be affected? We recall the doctrine of intercessory prayer as set forth by Thomas, concerned to preserve the freedom of the *causa secunda*: the immutable God is affected by the freedom of his creature insofar as, from eternity, he has included the latter's prayers in his providence as a contributory cause" (*TD* IV, 277-278 [G 256-257]). Gerard O'Hanlon argues that Balthasar and Rahner differ on immutability more than Balthasar would like to admit: "[I]n an excursus [in *TD* IV] on the soteriology of Karl Rahner, Balthasar's own position becomes clearer by contrast to that of Rahner. Central for Rahner, as we have already seen, is the assertion that the absolutely immutable God cannot be changed from an angry to a reconciled God through the inner-worldly event of Christ's cross. . . . [Balthasar allows] some kind of willed mutability within God's eternal love – as indeed Aquinas seems to do in his theology of petitionary prayer. . . . while in several works Balthasar expresses himself in agreement with Rahner's formulation on this issue, it is clear that his own understanding of the Rahnerian formulation, in allowing for change within God, goes further than Rahner would wish to go" (*The Immutability of God*, 36-37). Guy Mansini offers some incisive comments regarding their differences on the question: see his "Rahner and Balthasar on the Efficacy of the Cross," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 63 (1998): 232-49.

and the Spirit, on the one hand, and the human nature of the incarnate Son, on the other, differs from the mode of union between the second divine person and His human nature. However, if the divinity of Christ is in need of a human nature in order to suffer, could we not sustain the Athanasian rule by specifying that it belongs uniquely to the constitutive relation of filiation to be inclined to suffer by assuming passibility?[146] Moreover, the Father and the Spirit must be said to suffer economically, as whatever is said of one divine hypostasis must be said of the others (excepting the subsistent relations of opposition defining each), even if the distinction between the economic and immanent must be asserted so as to prevent equivocations that may infringe upon the absolute freedom of the transcendent God. But if the expression 'economic Trinity' is truly to denote a divine Trinity (albeit, under the aspect of its free self-communication in salvation history), we must affirm that it is really identical to, even though logically distinct from, the immanent dimension of the Trinity? It is immediately apparent that while Balthasar does not simply identify the immanent and economic dimensions of the Trinity, he does not sufficiently '*distinguish* in order to unite' them.[147]

Further qualification is needed to add theological precision to what may be called 'mystical excess' in Balthasar's 'infinite distance' or *ek-stasis* description of the trinitarian processions. I

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[146] With this one could agree with Balthasar's earlier articulation of the matter: "the conditions of mankind become transparent to the conditions of the Word in its divinity. And in the Passion (which here leads to the kenosis of the Incarnation in its greatest intensity and obviousness), through the sufferings of humanity, are revealed both the victory and the power of God and the will of the divine person of the Son (and in him the will of the whole Trinity) to let himself be affected by this suffering. The subject of the suffering is the person who is the Word (and the Son is the Word precisely as a divine person, not as a divine nature, which he shares with the Father and the Spirit), even if he requires human nature in order to suffer" (*A Theological Anthropology*, 275-276 [G 298])

[147] This scholastic axiom, "*distinguere per unire*," is of course the great theme of Maritain's monumental, *Les Degres du Savoir*. But whether or not Balthasar accepts this principle or rather wishes to diverge in part from it on an operative level would be a question of research concerning, in fact, his unique approach to analogy.

propose that the following qualifying addenda are needed for the theory to be acceptable in any sense: (1) there is also an infinitely perfect union between the persons, (2) the distinction of mutual opposition between the persons is not a real 'separation' or 'rupture,' (3) the 'self-surrender' attributed to the processions is not 'temporal' or 'free' in any sense ordinarily derivative of contingent experience,[148] and (4) avoiding all subordinationism, paternity does not pre-exist filiation – rather, the two are relations that exist concomitantly. The first two points Balthasar concedes,[149] and the last two are deficiencies commonly observed in Balthasar's treatment.[150] It does not seem that this idea of infinite distance between persons really necessitates the *ur*-kenotic theory of the trinitarian processions, which appears to be the foundation for all of Balthasar's speculations about the Trinity. But the transposition of Christ's suffering onto the Godhead as a whole is a subtle move made *ad initium* without thorough justification.

Balthasar reflects beautifully on the fire of God's love engulfing all the impurities assumed by the suffering Son, ultimately consuming Him *pro nobis*.[151] While the love of God is one in the three divine persons, it is fitting alone for the Son to take on human nature in order to bear such infinite fire on our behalf and for our sakes. I therefore ask Balthasar: why does it not suffice to identify the Son as the very self-surrender of God hypostasized? Is not the *kenosis* of God Christ

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[148] I would argue that as God is said to will Himself even though He is Himself necessary, those acts of His which cannot not be (i.e., intra-Trinitarian or self-constitutive ones) may be freely reiterated by the divine essence (and, in fact, probably are confirmed in some sense in every *ad extra* action) and thus called not only "necessary" but also "free" since God transcends the difference between necessity and contingency that comes about in creation itself. But the point made here is that it ought to be clearly stated that God's intra-Trinitarian acts cannot not be and are therefore essentially distinct (that is, according to our mode of conceiving them) from His *ad extra* "free" acts (in the sense of notionally contingent).
[149] See respectively, *TD* V, 260, 263; 262-264 [G 235, 237-238; 237-238].
[150] See, for example, Bertrand de Margerie, S.J, "Note on Balthasar's Trinitarian Theology," trans. Gregory F. LaNave, *The Thomist* 64 (2000): 127-130.
[151] See *TD* V, 268 [G 243].

Himself? "Suffering keeps us receptive to love."[152] If the Son receives His divinity from the Father (i.e., divine receptivity), is not filiation at least in part constituted by the receptivity of love personified?

Since Barth (at least in McCormack's reading) appropriates humility to God the Son, and humility here seems to be quasi-equivalent to Balthasar's *ur-kenosis*, the divine exemplar of love-filled suffering must in this view be effectively limited to the "mode of being" divine that is the Son (or filiation). But insofar as humility (and obedience) is a created moral virtue, it cannot be applied in one-to-one fashion to any divine person – a robust examination of analogy would be needed to discern the sense in which such could be predicated of the transcendent. With Maritain's theory of nihilation in mind, Culpepper's development of his insight concerning affectivity in God appears misguided. Maritain merely admits that the antecedent will of God 'suffers,' so to speak, the nihilation of free initiatives to moral evil, yielding a consequent will that does not ensure the salvation of all and thus involves God in a kind of eternal disappointment that nevertheless cannot take away from the infinite joy that constitutes His essence. But Culpepper, like Balthasar (following Barth), wants to go a step further both to say there is suffering, properly speaking, in God due to this "rupture," and that there is also a deeper ground for such a reality constitutive of the inner life of the Trinity. I think Maritain, as a good Thomist, would quickly rebut such an extrapolation on the grounds that suffering as such is an evil and therefore a privation; privations do not demand the existence of correlate realities in God, as the analogy of being is rather constituted by entities and only relates in a cognitional and relative manner to non-entities. Maritain's insight was rather to discern in love-filled suffering a relative perfection that is not notionally present in *caritas simpliciter* – hence the necessity for the notion of affectivity in God.

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[152] *TD* V, 255-256 [G 231].

It is a wholly distinct endeavor to see suffering itself as an entity worthy of analogous representation in the very constitution of the trinitarian processions, for which no one has proffered proper metaphysical justification.

The *kenosis* of Christ is indeed the perfect reflection and manifestation of God's eternal and unchanging love, as the eternal being-affected of God is infinitely concentrated in the *passio* of Christ – divine affectivity becomes temporalized in the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The divine subject of the two natures of Christ really suffers all the evils of history because the infinite love of pure act has freely overflowed into the economy of salvation. This suffering is infinitely concentrated in the God-man, but it properly manifests the perfection of God's love. Hence, as Maritain affirms, the perfection of suffering is eminently contained in God without the defectability of suffering itself (as it exists in the world). This perfection cannot be simply identified with divine *caritas* without qualification – there is a real identity between the two and even a notional proximity, but it is important to state that, conceptually speaking, the term 'perfection of charity' does not necessarily include the note 'perfection of suffering.' I am proposing that the latter concept links to the former via the notion of affectivity and that the reality of God's charity therefore includes the particular perfection that is peculiar to suffering (with God). In other words, eternal divine affectivity suffices as the analogue of the suffering of the God-man in time, and it is not appropriated to any one of the divine persons, but the Son alone tends freely toward *kenosis* in the Incarnation (and therefore can be called in Himself *ur-kenosis*).

Conclusion

I have explored Balthasar's paradoxical statements about suffering in God, which take Maritain's innovative thomistic approach to divine impassibility, and juxtaposed them with Maritain's interpretation of Thomas on divine predestination and foreknowledge. Maritain's

doctrine of 'nihilation,' derived from Francisco Marin-Sola's understanding of divine permission, is key to defending the innocence of God in the face of evil. Balthasar's appropriation of Russian kenoticism goes hand-in-hand with his adoption of Barth's extreme Augustinian approach to predestination and therefore divine permission of evil. He must therefore revert to reflections from the 'death of God' theology, which he nevertheless attempts to temper and modify, in order to account for why God permits evil, that is, His relationship to the reality of moral evil. But, as was discovered in the previous chapter, Balthasar's perspective on the relationship between divine grace and human freedom is deficient by virtue of its lack of sophistication. Since he assumes a mistaken paradigm on the relationship between infinite and finite freedom (i.e., predestination or the grace-freedom dynamic), he cannot understand God's relationship to the reality of evil in the same way in which Maritain does. Hence, he takes Maritain's insight into the 'wounds' that God suffers in relation to His creatures and moves beyond attributing suffering to God in a metaphorical manner to argue that the inner-trinitarian relations are constituted by an original analogue to creaturely suffering, designated *ur*-kenosis. Maritain recognizes, instead, that evil is a privation, not an entity itself, and therefore has no original analogue in God. Thus, what God "suffers" is precisely His own willed receptivity to the nihilations initiated by created freedom, but His consequent will takes into account every proposed resistance to His antecedent will. Suffering is not a reality inherent to God's identity because evil is initiated by creatures, according to God's free decision to permit resistance to His own primordial desires, but it is a relative non-entity to which God subjects Himself in the Incarnation of the Word, consubstantial with the Father and Spirit but hypostatically united to the "flesh" in which sin is punished.

Thus, affirming the affectivity of divine love should suffice as a solution to the debate over the "passibility" of God. While it is not proper to say that God suffers in Himself eternally, it is

possible to say that He is eternally affected by evil in an indirect manner.[153] He is 'affected' by evil insofar as He wills eternally to permit evil and His decision to do so is constitutive of His essence[154] since He is really identical to His own decisions (and thus He is both subject and object *par excellence* of all His acts). Therefore, He is called 'affective' by virtue of the receptivity of His own intellect and will toward the "line of nonbeing," and in the Incarnation this eternal συμπαθεια becomes the Redeemer's personal empathic experience of (relatively) infinite evil, descending into the darkness in order to raise mankind heavenward. In more philosophical terms, as the actions of God are in some way determinative of His eternal and unchanging essence, the category "passio" of Aristotle can be said to be, in an analogous manner, as 'primordial' to God (in the person of Christ) as are the predicates "ουσια" and "*relatio*."[155] Hence, Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI went so far as to say that the God of Revelation is *εροϛ* as well as *αγάπη*.[156]

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[153] John Paul II affirms the same in his Encyclical, *Dominum et Vivificantem*, which seems to appropriate some of Balthasar's reflections on the Trinity, all the while sticking to the scriptural texts and avoiding mystical hyperbole (see nos. 39 and 41).

[154] But the word 'affected' here is used not only in reference to the reality even Aristotle discerned, namely, that God is 'passive' (only) to His own action (i.e., the notion of self-movement in God, also attested to by Plato). It also relates to the spiritual reality of 'affectivity,' analyzed by Dietrich von Hildebrand in his monumental work, *The Heart* (South Bend: St. Augustine's, 2007), Part 1. Hildebrand reasons that man's spiritual nature is not exhausted by his intellect and will but is also constituted by a third faculty (precisely) of spiritual affectivity, called "the heart." Wojtyla also notoriously argued that while the Thomistic tradition tends to understand human emotion simply in terms of appetitive passions, the more recent phenomenological tradition (particularly, the strain developed by Max Scheler) is better fit to analyze the subjective dimension of conscious experience (in which emotion plays a definitive role). See, for example, *Person and Community: Selected Essays* [New York: Peter Lang, 1993], 169-171. If affectivity has a spiritual component as well as a material one, it can in some way be attributed to the divine essence as well.

[155] See Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 182-184 [G 125-127], for his reflections on *relatio* as "an equally primordial form of being" as *substantia* (or *ousia)*; see *Introduction to Christianity*, 145-148 [G 96-98] for discussion of affect in the God of Revelation versus the God of philosophy.

[156] See *Deus Caritas Est*, nos. 7-10. He indicates, particularly, in note 7 to no. 9 that he adopts the position of "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who in his treatise *The Divine Names*, IV, 12-14 (PG 3, 709-713) calls God both *eros* and *agape*."

Chapter 4

Hell's Relation to the Triune God: Developments in Balthasar and Ratzinger Compared[1]

In the preceding chapter, I sought to create a rapprochement between Balthasar's trinitarian *ur*-kenotic answer to the problem of divine impassibility (and the Christological economy) and Maritain's creative thomistic view of an antecedent will that 'suffers' metaphorically the infliction of human resistance to divine grace. Arguing that Balthasar does not truly build upon Maritain's approach, as he may appear to do, I propose that the proper route for doing so is that of divine affectivity, or a divine sympathy that freely wills to become empathetic through the Incarnation. There is an analogous (rather than equivocal) relationship between the notion of affectivity as an ontological category that designates being an object of an action and the psychological notion of affectivity as feeling something in response to an internal or external stimulus. But not only are feelings psychological responses to being the object of some action (or 'happenings'), affectivity as the quality of the heart whereby the person has value-laden experiences could apply in analogical manner to God insofar as spiritual feelings (such as compassion) have a perfection that is not tied up with lower appetites. In other words, borrowing from Catholic phenomenologists of love (i.e., Hildebrand and Wojtyla), I want to attribute some kind of emotivity to the love of God, not as if His "feelings" are of the same quality as ours, but there is some kind of affective element to His love. Yet, in order to maintain a thomistic notion of divine impassibility, I wanted to argue that God is not directly affected by any creature; rather, He is affected by His own free decisions to permit every evil that actually occurs, which would mean He is receptive in an intentional manner (not "really," in the

[1] An earlier version of this chapter is set to appear in a forthcoming issue of *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*.

scholastic sense) to the evils free creatures initiate. As God's love is not cold or abstract, the free tendency of His self-diffusive goodness is to surrender Himself to the will of His creatures; hence, His free self-surrender is personified in the Son, who could therefore be appropriately called the *ur-kenosis* of God. Now, it is time to go deeper into what the Christological mystery reveals (and does not reveal) about the will of God to suffer with mankind and about the inner life of God, utilizing Ratzinger here (rather than Maritain) in comparison to Balthasar's developing thought. But because these two thinkers are often thought to be of a piece with one another, I will follow step by step the emerging divergences between the two as they develop their distinct theologies, particularly with respect to the descent of Christ into hell and how the latter relates to the identity of God as *amor ipsum*.

A Crucial Difference

The formative influence of the thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar on the theology of Joseph Ratzinger is common knowledge.[1] Ratzinger pays tribute to him on more than one

[1] Ratzinger's allegiance to the *nouvelle theologie* with Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar, among others, is, perhaps, most evident in his article, "Gratia praesupponit naturam: Erwägungen über Sinn und Grenze eines scholastischen Axioms" in *Einsicht und Glaube*, ed. Heinrich Fries (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1962): 151-165 (English translation in *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Living*, unabridged edition [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2011]). But, interestingly enough, he bases his position on the nature-grace relation (common to the *Communio* school) upon Bonaventure rather than Thomas, thus not being subject to much of the critique directed toward the position as it appears in Lubac. Moreover, his relationship to Lubac's position is further complicated by his laudatory comments on M. J. Marmann's *Praeamubla ad gratiam: Ideengeschichtliche Untersuchung über die Entstehung des Axioms 'Gratia praesupponit naturam'* (unpublished dissertation, Regensburg, 1974); see the appendix to Ratzinger's *In the Beginning: A Catholic Understanding of the Story of Creation and the Fall* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1995), trans. Boniface Ramsey, O.P. (originally published *Konsequenzen des Schopfungsglaubens* [Regensburg: Univ. A. Pustet, 1979]), nn. 1 and 19. Finally, his mature thought on the subject is further distinguishable from Lubac's, however still only implicitly, in Pope Benedict XVI's Encyclical Letter, *Deus Caritas Est*; see Serge-Thomas Bonino, OP, "'Nature and Grace' in the Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est*," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 5, no. 2 (2007): 231-248,

occasion.[2] The unifying thread of Balthasar's theodramatic thought, containing within itself both his doctrine of Christ's descent into hell and his hope-filled tendency toward universalism, is the conviction that the infinite love of the Trinity itself is *ur-kenotic*. In other words, central to his theology is the dual claim that the descent of Christ into hell is the most perfect reflection of the self-surrender that constitutes the trinitarian life[3] and that it is most fitting for the triune God to embrace (by first "undergirding") hell in all its New Testament horror (i.e., the "second death" of Rev 20-21), freely surrendering impassibility in the economy of salvation, wherein the Second Person of the Trinity "becomes sin."[4]

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originally "'Nature et grace' dans l'encyclique *Deus Caritas Est*," *Revue Thomiste* 105 (2005): 531-549, translated by Shannon Gaffney.

[2] Perhaps most notably, in his memoirs, he says: ". . . meeting Balthasar was for me the beginning of a lifelong friendship I can only be thankful for. Never again have I found anyone with such a comprehensive theological and humanistic education as Balthasar and de Lubac, and I cannot even begin to say how much I owe to my encounter with them" (*Milestones*, 143). See also Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, "Homily at the Funeral of Hans Urs von Balthasar" in David L. Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1991), and Pope Benedict XVI, "Papal Message for Centenary of von Balthasar's Birth: Reflections on the Swiss Theologian," available online at http://www.ignatiusinsight.com/features2005/benxvi_praiseshub_oct05.asp (accessed 27 March 2014).

[3] For the Cross as revelation of the Trinity, see *TD* V, 510-511, 259-260 [G 466-467, 234-235].

[4] Edward Oakes wants to say that, according to Balthasar, "if hell is defined by its essence, and not by its place inside salvation history (that is, as the *eternal* and *irrevocable* place of divine reprobation), then of course Christ did not descent into *that* hell; otherwise the resurrection would make no sense. . . . [Christian objectors] confuse the permanent hell, *which only came into existence after Christ's departure from the underworld at his resurrection*, from that undifferentiated realm of the dead that he encountered in his descent" ("*Descenus* and Development," 23). On the contrary, this clarification is not at all clear in Balthasar's writings, particularly, *Mysterium Paschale*, as the reader will come to recognize. Gerard O'Hanlon recognizes Balthasar's understanding of the 'second death': "The full implications of the way in which Christ dies this 'second death' of the sinner . . . are brought out in Balthasar's very distinctive and original theology of Holy Saturday (*MP*, 139-77). . . . Christ is now in solidarity with the essential passivity and solitariness of the dead, and the expression 'descent into hell', a later interpretation of the NT affirmations on this theme, ought not to take away from this central notion of passivity. Because of his ability to substitute for our sins Christ's experience in Hades, the OT Sheol, is absolutely unique. He alone experiences the full consequences of *the 'second death' – that is the definitive, timeless abandonment by God that is the NT hell* and that consists

Ratzinger also reflects on the hellish descent of Christ and its impact upon the reality of damnation, but it remains to be seen to what extent he may agree with the most radical points of Balthasar's theology and how much (or little) influence the trinitarian thought of the latter had upon him. I will assert that even if Ratzinger shares an understanding of divine impassibility that is similar to Balthasar's, the descent for Ratzinger relates to damnation and the Trinity in a way that is fundamentally different from the way it is developed in Balthasar's theology.[5]

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in the vision of sin itself, detached from its adherence to individual people" (*The Immutability of God*, 26 [emphasis added]; cf. 119). Even in *TD* IV, Balthasar says the following: "Every sin committed in the world is borne and atoned for on the Cross, including that sin that by its very nature 'brings forth' the 'second death' (Revelation 21:8; James 1:15); it follows that the Cross must be erected at the end of hell, without being equated with the latter" (495, cited in Schumacher, "The Concept of Representation," 62n49). Bruce Marshall sees in this move an indebtedness to Hegelian logic, stating: "[Post-Hegelian theologians] distinguish what is true of the one divine *nature* in virtue of what the Person of the Father (or the Spirit) is and does from what is likewise true of the divine nature in virtue of what the Person of the incarnate Son is and suffers. The traditional semantic practice aimed to dispel the appearance of contradiction bound up with Christian faith in the Incarnation–that is, with statements such as 'The immortal dies' and 'The impassible suffers'–by clarifying the different respects in which these opposed properties are true of one and the same Person. The post-Hegelian practice aims to *create* contradictions within one and the same divine nature, which can then be overcome in a dramatic historical reconciliation between the Persons who possess these contradictory properties. One might, perhaps, expect theologians to be wary of a Trinitarian claim that attributes this sort of diastasis and opposition to the divine Persons. On the contrary, an exuberant embrace of this idea is now common in Trinitarian theology. Hans Urs von Balthasar, for example, argues that in his descent into hell, Jesus undergoes the 'second death' that the book of Revelation reserves for those definitively rejected by God" (Marshall, "The Absolute and the Trinity," 158).

[5] Therefore, I disagree with Edward Oakes' assertion that "The most obvious proponent of this view that the Trinity is fully engaged in the event of Christ's descent into hell is of course Hans Urs von Balthasar . . . his most important ally on this theologoumenon will surely prove to be Joseph Ratzinger, whose career shows a remarkable consistency when he comes to discuss the connection between Christ's vicarious, atoning suffering and his descent into hell" ("*Descensus* and Development" 12); he then quotes *Introduction to Christianity*, 297, 301, *Eschatology* 217-218, and *Jesus of Nazareth* I, 20, all of which reflect remarkeably on the descent-sufferings of Christ's passion and death but say nothing about the Trinity or even Christ's relationship to the Father as such (see Oakes, "*Descensus* and Development," 12-14). Nevertheless, Ratzinger appears to broach Balthasar's position on impassibility in his *Schauen auf den Durchbohrten* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1984), although it is difficult to judge precisely where he falls in the spectrum between Adrienne von Speyr's mystical excess, as it were (adopted by Balthasar), and Maritain's moderately Thomistic approach. He is certainly more careful than Balthasar, but

Rather than attempt to summarize Balthasar's detailed treatment of each of the terms in this relation and then develop Ratzinger's relationship to that treatment, I will briefly take up in chronological order what in each of their major works directly pertains to damnation and its relationship to the triune God.[6] It will become clear that while Balthasar's eschatological concerns cause his understanding of the triune God to center on the hellish passion of Christ and his being-dead on Holy Saturday, Ratzinger zeroes in on Christ's vicarious descent (on the Cross) in terms of the Son's economic 'being-for,' which proceeds from His own being-from the Father (and the two are one in the unifying gift of being-with that is the Holy Spirit). Ratzinger's Trinitarian thought is therefore an apophatic ontology of relation,[7] comprising at once a

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he does not say enough for one to draw out clearly a precise formulation of his position on the matter (see *Behold the Pierced One: An Approach to a Spiritual Christology*, trans. Graham Harrison [San Francisco: Ignatius, 1986], 56ff. [G 48ff.]).

[6] I therefore exclude minor works, such as Ratzinger's *Meditationen zur Karwoche* (Freising: Kyrios-Verlag, 1969), in English, *The Sabbath of History*, trans. John Rock (Washington, D.C.: The William G. Congdon Foundation, 2000), which is simply a set of talks he gave on a Bavarian radio station (see Edward T. Oakes, "Pope Benedict XVI on Christ's Descent into Hell," *Nova et Vetera* [English Edition] 11, no. 1 [2013]: 231-252, at 242). The English edition also includes a preface written by then Cardinal Ratzinger in 1997. What concerns the Holy Saturday doctrine in the original text is summarized by Oakes, "Pope Benedict XVI," 242-243, and the material of the preface on 245-247. I did not find his article overall particularly illuminating. In fact, he concludes the section on *Spe Salvi* with a comment that is clearly Balthasarian without evidence of such a position in Ratzinger/Benedict: "[T]he outcome of final judgment must remain unknown, precisely so that hope may be given its proper room and not be trumped by certainty" (249-250). This is the position advocated in Balthasar's *Was dürfen wir hoffen?* But I will show that it is not necessarily shared by Ratzinger. In fact, his words in *Spe Salvi*, nos. 45-46, claim that some are in fact beyond the point of conversion, lost in egoism, even if the number of lost is less than the number destined for purgatory; if one admits the existence of an irreversible egoism that does in fact culminate in damnation, then he cannot have a *theological* hope for the salvation of all men.

[7] For the development of this theme of 'relational ontology' in the *Communio* school, to which Ratzinger contributed, see especially: Norris Clarke, *Person and Being* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1998), an extended version of his article, "Person, Being, and St. Thomas," *Communio* 19, no. 4 (1992): 601-618; Norris Clarke, "Response to David Schindler's Comments," *Communio* 20, no. 3 (1993): 593-598; Norris Clarke, "Response to Long's Comments," *Communio* 21, no. 1 (1994): 165-169; Norris Clarke, "Response to Blair's Comments," *Communio* 21, no. 1 (1994): 170-171; Hans Urs von Balthasar, "On the Concept of

"negative theology" and a foundation for a more disciplined soteriology and eschatology than is exhibited in Balthasar. This contrast is a significant one that no one, to my knowledge, has exposed as of yet, given that many of Ratzinger's admirers also, if not primarily, consider themselves disciples of Balthasar and therefore do not wish to drive a wedge between the two thinkers. While some may want to turn a blind eye to differences between the two thinkers, it is imperative to recognize Ratzinger's theology for what it really is, namely, something entirely distinct from, even though very influenced by, the theology of his senior theological confrere and close friend, Hans Urs von Balthasar.

Ratzinger's Nuanced Relation to Balthasar's Controversial Theses

Many may not realize that not only did Balthasar's thought on these matters not receive definitive shape until the 80's with the publication of the final volumes of the *Theodramatik*, but it is not at all clear that Balthasar's earliest formulations of the significance of Christ's descent preceded Ratzinger's earliest comments on the same, as is commonly assumed by those who emphasize Balthasar's influence on Ratzinger.[8] Therefore, I will turn first to Ratzinger's

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Person," *Communio* 13, no. 1 (1986): 18-26; Joseph Ratzinger, "Concerning the Notion of Person in Theology," *Communio* 17, no. 3 (1990): 439-454; David L. Schindler, "Norris Clarke on Person, Being, and St. Thomas," *Communio* 20, no. 3 (1993): 580-592; David L. Schindler, "The Person: Philosophy, Theology, and Receptivity," *Communio* 21, no. 1 (1994): 172-190; Kenneth L. Schmitz, "The Geography of the Human Person," *Communio* 13, no. 1 (1986): 27-48; Kenneth L. Schmitz, "Selves and Persons: A Difference in Loves?" *Communio* 18, no. 2 (1991): 183-206. For the critiques addressed by Clarke and Schindler, see Steven A. Long, "Divine and Creaturely 'Receptivity': The Search for a Middle Term," *Communio* 21, no. 1 (1994): 151-161, and George A. Blair, "On Esse and Relation," *Communio* 21, no. 1 (1994): 162-164.

[8] The German original of Balthasar's *Mysterium Paschale* first appeared in 1969 (as part of the *Mysterium Salutis* series), also published separately as *Theologie der Drei Tage* (Einsiedeln: Benziger, 1969). Ratzinger's *Einfuhrung in das Christentum* (*Introduction to Christianity* in the English) was published originally in 1968. Balthasar does make mention of the Holy Saturday doctrine in his *Verbum Caro* (in English, *Explorations* I) in 1960, but the most significant remark there is the following: "Fundamentally, the goods of salvation (such as faith, hope, charity) in

Introduction to Christianity before I compare its remarks to Balthasar's *Mysterium Paschale*. Commenting on a thought presented by Jean Danielou,[9] perhaps the source for both Ratzinger and Balthasar on this matter, he says:

> In the last analysis pain is the product and expansion of Jesus Christ's being stretched out from being in God right down to the hell of 'My God, why have you forsaken me?' Anyone who has stretched his existence so wide that he is simultaneously immersed in God and in the depths of the God-forsaken creature is bound to be torn asunder, as it were; such a one is truly 'crucified'. But this process of being torn apart is identical with love; it is its realization to the extreme (Jn 13:1) and the concrete expression of the breadth it creates.[10]

Alluding to the 'dark night' of the mystics as a participation in the suffering inherent to Christ's love, a common connection drawn by Ratzinger, he acknowledges a hell of sorts in the cry of dereliction, but his understanding of it focuses upon the person of Christ, how He is

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sheol – assuming there to be such – must be considered, at best, a kind of 'anticipation' of the illumination brought by the Redeemer's descent into the that 'temporal *poena damni*' (Pohle-Gierens, *Dogm* III, 660). It must be emphasized that the believer also understands what damnation really is – taking the term strictly theologically and in its primary sense – when he takes full account of the *terminus a quo* of the redemption. The darkness into which sinful humanity must sink becomes evident at the moment when – in Christ's 'descent' into (we do not say the 'place', but) the 'state' of perdition – this darkness becomes a yawning abyss ready to be illuminated by the light of the redemption. The mystery of Holy Saturday is two things simultaneously: the utmost extremity of the *exinanitio* and the beginning of the *gloria* even before the resurrection. This was the view of the Fathers, as it is today the idea of redemption in the Eastern Church. Only with Christ's descent into the stagnation of sheol does there come into being, in the 'beyond', something in the nature of a 'way', a mode of access; and this means that 'purgatory', meaning the aspect of the judgment that opens to the sinner a purifying passage through fire, had no existence in the Old Testament (either in the logical or temporal order), and could only be *created* through the 'evacuation' of sheol" (*Explorations* I, 263-264 [G 285-286], emphasis original). Notice that he has not yet brought the Trinity into the discussion; he will do so in the fourth volume, where he treats the descent properly. He does treat universalism in the first volume, but he still does not explicate any clear relationship between Christ's descent into hell and the prospect of universal hope; he, nevertheless, anticipates here Ratzinger's development of the theme of the 'dark night' as the hell embraced by mystics (in solidarity with Christ and sinners). See *Explorations* I, 249-250 [G 269-270], 268-269 [G 290-291].

[9] He cites Daniélou's *Essai sur le mystère de l'histoire* (Paris, 1953).

[10] Joseph Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, trans. J. R. Foster (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2004), 290 [G 212].

simultaneously in full communion with God's inner life and immersed in the darkness of the human sinfulness He wished to take upon Himself in the passion for our sakes. The suffering embraced by Christ is an expression of God's love for us:

> The New Testament is the story of the God who of his own accord wished to become, in Christ, the Omega – the last letter – in the alphabet of creation. It is the story of the God who is himself the act of love, the pure 'for', and who therefore necessarily puts on the disguise of the smallest worm (Ps 22:6 [21:7]). It is the story of the God who identifies himself with his creature and in this *contineri a minimo*, in being grasped and overpowered by the least of his creatures, displays that 'excess' that identifies him as God.[11]

The Cross does not function here as the perfect image of God's own life, but it reveals the love God has for a sinful mankind:

> The truth about man is that he is continually assailing truth; the just man crucified is thus a mirror held up to man in which he sees himself unadorned. But the Cross does not reveal only man; it also reveals God. God is such that he identifies himself with man right down into this abyss and that he judges him by saving him. In the abyss of human failure is revealed the still more inexhaustible abyss of divine love. The Cross is thus truly the center of revelation, a revelation that does not reveal any previously unknown principles but reveals us to ourselves by revealing us before God and God in our midst.[12]

So, the Cross does reveal something about God, but these comments do not indicate anything about the *immanent* life of God (i.e., the Trinity); rather, it reveals God's loving response to man's rejection of truth, and this revealed love both judges and saves mankind.

Notice that, for Ratzinger, the descent of God into the "abyss" takes place on the Cross and that it does not function as a launching pad for speculation about the secret recesses of the Trinity itself, even if certainly, the triune God is love itself and the passion of Christ is a response of divine love to human sinfulness. The question remains: what is the relationship between the descent and the hell of the damned? Ratzinger answers this question in the following manner:

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[11] *Introduction to Christianity*, 291-292 [G 213].
[12] *Introduction to Christianity*, 293 [G 214].

> [T]he Old Testament has only one word for hell *and* death, the word *sheol*; it regards them as ultimately identical. Death is absolute loneliness. But the loneliness into which love can no longer advance is – hell….This article [of the Creed] thus asserts that Christ strode through the gate of our final loneliness, that in his Passion he went down into the abyss of our abandonment. Where no voice can reach us any longer, there is he. Hell is thereby overcome, or, to be more accurate, death, which was previously hell, is hell no longer. Neither is the same any longer because there is life in the midst of death, because love dwells in it. Now only deliberate self-enclosure is hell or, as the Bible calls it, the second death (Rev 20:14, for example). But death is no longer the path into icy solitude; the gates of *sheol* have been opened.[13]

Christ has done the impossible of separating death from hell; he suffered the depths of human loneliness and abandonment, but "the second death" replaces the hell that existed prior to His redemptive work – the hell due those who finally reject God's love is not embraced by Christ, but is rather a possibility consequent to His triumph over the hell that is death.[14] However, it is not this simple – there is a tension present in Ratzinger's thought, where he appears to say something closer to what Balthasar will claim later:

> [T]his article of the Creed turns our gaze to the depths of human existence, which reach down into the valley of death, into the zone of untouchable loneliness and rejected love, and thus embrace the dimension of hell, carrying it within themselves as one of their own possibilities. Hell, existence in the definitive rejection of 'being for', is not a cosmographical destination but a dimension of human nature, the abyss into which it reaches at its lower end. We know today better than ever before that everyone's existence touches these depths…Christ, the 'new Adam', undertook to bear the burden of these depths with us and did not wish to remain sublimely unaffected by them; conversely, of course, total rejection in all its unfathomability has only now become possible.[15]

Thus, "definitive rejection of 'being for'" is a fundamental dimension of every man's existence and the abyss into which Love descends in the form of Christ's passion, but even though God lets Himself be affected by our rejection of His love (our resistance to His grace), it is this divine act of vulnerability that makes "total rejection" (definitive refusal) of God truly possible.

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[13] *Introduction to Christianity*, 301 [G 220-221].

[14] In *Spe Salvi* (no. 37), Pope Benedict, similarly, reflects on the "hell" into which Christ descends not in terms of damnation proper, but in terms of dark human experiences and the mystical expressions of the Psalmist.

[15] *Introduction to Christianity*, 311-312 [G 229-230].

Perhaps, he wants to say that prior to Christ man could issue final refusal of God's love and that this refusal, which affects every man as part of the same body of humanity, is borne by Christ in the descent, and yet this divine event brings about the reality of still a more profound possibility for self-exclusion from God's love.

Kenoticism in Balthasar's Earlier Work

In any case, Ratzinger's reflections here clearly do not go as far as Balthasar's in *Mysterium Paschale*, even though Balthasar later undermines this book as "a quickly written work" that compromised the full import of Adrienne von Speyr's radical insights;[16] the latter serve to radicalize his interpretation of the descent doctrine. Relevant to the topic of the Trinity's involvement in Christ's condemnation and consequent relation to the hell of the damned, Balthasar seems to take a position directly in opposition to that of his friend, Ratzinger:

> [T]he real object of a theology of Holy Saturday does not consist in the completed state which follows on the last act in the self-surrender of the incarnate Son to his Father – something which the structure of every human death, more or less ratified by the individual person, would entail. Rather does that object consist in something unique, expressed in the 'realisation' of all Godlessness, of all the sins of the world, now experienced as agony and a sinking down into the 'second death' or 'second chaos', outside of the world ordained from the beginning by God. And so it is really God who assumes what is radically contrary to the divine, what is eternally reprobated by God, in the form of the supreme obedience of the Son towards the Father, and, thereby, in Luther's words, *sub contrario* discloses himself in the very act of his self-concealment.[17]

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[16] See his *TL* II, 345n75 [G 315n1]; Steffen Lösel, "A Plain Account," 150n54. His heavy dependence on Adrienne von Speyr's mystical visions lends itself to the ready critique of a need for a de-mythologization of the inherited language in order to distinguish adequately between the economic and immanent orders, which Balthasar attempts at times but only with partial success. For example, he says: "Such distance [namely, alienation from God] is possible, however, only within the economic Trinity, which transposes the absolute distinction of the person in the Godhead from one another into the dimensions of salvation history, involving man's sinful distance from God and its atonement. We have to show, therefore, that the God-forsakenness of the Son during his Passion was just as much a mode of his profound bond with the Father in the Holy Spirit as his death was a mode of his life and his suffering a mode of his bliss" (*TD* V, 257 [G 232]).

[17] *MP*, 51-52 [G 160-161].

Hence, for Balthasar there is a dialectical struggle between the loving self-surrender of Son to Father, on the one hand, and the "second death" or reprobation that man brings upon himself in rejecting such – the latter is the hell into which Christ descends in order to reveal the solidarity of God with godlessness.

The redemptive incarnation for Balthasar is not merely a renunciation of divine immutability,[18] but it, more so, reflects an eternal sacrifice in the Triune God:

> The truth which intervenes between [divine immutability and divine mutability] concerns the 'Lamb slain before the foundation of the world' (Apocalypse 13, 8; cf. 5, 6, 9, 12) . . . [The 'slaying'] designates, rather, the eternal aspect of the historic and bloody sacrifice of the Cross (Apocalypse 5, 12) – as indeed Paul everywhere presupposes. Nevertheless what is indicated here is an enduring supratemporal condition of the 'Lamb'…a condition of the Son's existence co-extensive with all creation and thus affecting, in some manner, his divine being. Recent Russian theology . . . was right to give this aspect a central place…that basic idea of [Bulgakov] which we agreed just now to give a central place high on our list of priorities. The ultimate presupposition of the Kenosis is the 'selflessness' of the Persons (when considered as pure relationships) in the inner-Trinitarian life of love . . . And since the will to undertake the redemptive Kenosis is itself indivisibly trinitarian.' God the Father and the Holy Spirit are for Bulgakov involved in the Kenosis in the most serious sense: the Father as he who sends and abandons, the Spirit as he who unites only through separation and absence.[19]

The effect of such a position can be no other than precisely a strong presumption in favor of the salvation of all men because the godlessness of those who reject divine mercy is itself taken up into the *kenosis* of Christ, rendering such rejection a mere moment in the dialectic of love and sin, which itself functions as a most fitting expression of the original *kenosis* that constitutes the Trinitarian life. He expresses the relationship between Trinity and hell when he states:

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[18] Balthasar holds divine immutability in principle (see *TD* II, 278 [G 253]; *TD* III, 523 [G 479]; *TD* V, 222 [G 200]), but the "Greek" notion (as he says) has little effect on his understanding of divine impassibility – God, in his estimation, wills to become passible (see *TD* V, 234 [G 211]) and suffers not merely in the human nature of Christ (as his *ur-kenotic* theory of the Trinity makes clear). See his ambivalence toward immutability in *MP*, 34 [G 152]); *TD* II, 9, 280, 293 [G 9, 255, 266-267]; *TL* II, 352n131 [G 321n57]. See also Gerald O'Hanlon, *The Immutability of God*, 24.

[19] *MP*, 34-35 [G 152-153].

> Christ takes the existential measure of everything that is sheerly contrary to God, of the entire object of the divine eschatological judgment, which here is grasped in that event in which it is 'cast down' (*hormemati blethesetai*, Apocalypse 18, 21; John 12, 31; Matthew 22, 13). But at the same time, this happening gives the measure of the Father's mission in all its amplitude: the 'exploration' of Hell is an event of the (economic) Trinity.[20]

Although here he includes the qualification 'economic,' he reports without rebuke the view of Bulgakov, which he acknowledges as indebted to "a perspective borrowed from the philosophies of Schelling and Hegel," that "the economic Trinity is 'from time immemorial assumed' in the immanent Trinity."[21] This relationship is developed in his later writings, but even here, while expressing reticence about "temptations of a Gnostic or Hegelian sort" in the "sophiological presuppositions" of Bulgakov,[22] he is, nonetheless, not shy about appropriating Russian kenoticism.

Here is a glimpse into the kenotic view he adopted of the Trinitarian persons:

> Lossky interprets the Kenosis as a revelation of the entire Trinity. This permits one to grasp how, on occasion, the thought arises, tentatively and obscurely, that when the Creator first made man the ideal Image he had in mind was the Incarnate Son as our Redeemer. If one takes seriously what has just been said, then the event of the Incarnation of the second divine Person does not leave the inter-relationship of those Persons unaffected. Human thought and human language break down in the presence of this mystery: namely, that the eternal relations of Father and Son are focused, during the 'time' of Christ's earthly wanderings, and in a sense which must be taken with full seriousness, in the relations between the man Jesus and his heavenly Father, and that the Holy Spirit lives as their go-between who, inasmuch as he proceeds from the Son, must also be affected by the Son's humanity.[23]

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[20] *MP*, 174-175 [G 248].

[21] *MP*, 35 [G 153]. Yet, he appears later to align Bulgakov with Rahner concerning the immutability of the triune God (see *TD* IV, 277-278 [G 256-257]). But, in the same work, he expresses fundamental agreement with Bulgakov's trinitarian "doctrine of redemption" (see *TD* IV, 313-314 [G 291-292]).

[22] *MP*, 35 [G 153].

[23] *MP*, 30 [G 152]. Commenting on this passage (and others nearby), Oakes states: "[Balthasar's] explanation of what the Trinity 'does' as Jesus descends into hell . . . [the descent] involves nothing less than a change in the relationship between God and the world *that affects the relations within the Godhead:* 'the event of the incarnation of the second Person does not leave the inter-relationship of those Persons unaffected.' And this means nothing less than, in short, allowing 'an "event" into the God who is beyond the world and beyond change' (*MP*, 24).

Hence, not only the descent into hell but every redemptive act of Christ is truly a window into the Trinitarian relations, as "the entire Trinity" has willed to be affected by the events of the economic order.[24]

Trinitarian language, I therefore venture to say, is the consequence of admitting the possibility of *event* into the Godhead: in no other way can it be explained. Just as the Cappadocians were forced into their own explanations of the Trinity, which to us sound so bizarre, because of the unacceptable implications of Sabellian modalism, so too Balthasar (I hold) is compelled to speak of the 'rejection' by the Father of the Son, the Son 'losing' the Father, the Spirit 'reconciling' the two *because of what it means for Jesus to descend as the Son of God into the realm of the dead*. Underneath this language we must be ready to hear the Anselmian logic of 'it had to be so'" (*Pattern of Redemption*, 243). He quotes a little later Balthasar speaking, in the final volume of his *Theodramatik*, of "the incorporation of godforsakenness into the Trinitarian relation of love" (*Theodramatik*, Band IV, 236 [cf. *TD* V, 261, translated more ambiguously by Graham Harrison]).

[24] His justification for such a move is both Scriptural and methodological. He interprets Philippians 2, on grammatical grounds, to be indicating a self-emptying that takes place in God Himself, not simply in Christ Jesus (see *MP*, 23-24). Mansini presents Thomas' interpretation of this text very cogently and concisely, relying upon his *Super Epistolam ad Philippenses Lectura*, c. 2, lect. 2, no. 57 (see "Can Humility and Obedience Be Trinitarian Realities, 94-95). Defending Balthasar's understanding of *kenosis*, Antoine Birot argues against Thomas: "In short [for Thomas], the mystery of the Incarnation 'was not brought about by the fact that God changed in some manner the state in which he exists from all eternity, but by the fact that he united himself to the creature, or rather, that he united himself in a new manner' (*ST* III, 1, 1, ad 1). We can see the problem: the 'fullness' that Thomas is talking about was not understood in a trinitarian sense; it is therefore unable to be reconciled with the idea of a humbling, of a 'kenosis' or a 'deposit.' In this context, 'kenosis' cannot mean a *loss*; this notion must be rejected. As for the notion of a 'deposit,' it is in this context simply inconceivable, because there is no otherness that is capable of receiving and safeguarding this deposit. Moreover, the fullness of the divine Pure Act is therefore irreconciliable with an 'assumption.' With the notion of *handing oneself over* (at the level of personal relations), it becomes impossible to account for the christological kenosis affirmed by Paul without weakening the literal meaning of the text; it would imply some form of 'loss of substance' in God (which would be a mythological understanding of God, the sort that in fact characterizes many post-Hegelian theologies). Thomas was perfectly correct to insist that, for the eternal God, there can be *neither change nor loss* in the Incarnation. But we can understand this only if we accept an interpretation of the trinitarian mystery itself as an original drama of love, which emerges through the free generation of the Son by the Father, which is for the Father an absolute gift, including the whole of divine freedom, and thus is a 'kenosis of original love' to which the Son responds eternally and freely (see *Theodramatik* III, 303 [*TD* 4])" ("The Divine Drama, From the Father's Perspective: How the Father Lives Love in the Trinity," *Communio* 30 [Fall 2003]: 406-429, at 421-422n23). It is not very clear whether Birot thinks such a 'depositing' of divine nature without loss coheres well or not with the

Balthasarian Developments

After *Mysterium Paschale* and before Ratzinger's *Eschatologie*, Balthasar published the fourth volume of his *Skizzen zur Theologie* (in the English, *Explorations in Theology*), entitled *Pneuma und Institution*, the concluding section of which treats the descent into hell and eschatological themes together.[25] At points in this work I notice a transition in Balthasar from understanding the descent into hell through Eastern tradition and Christology toward his own Trinitarian eschatology that borders on mysticism but does not quite reach the intensity it will later under the cumulative influence of Adrienne von Speyr's life and work.[26] For example, he

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Thomistic doctrine of analogy, but the latter is certainly something Balthasar did not wish to abandon (only to modify); in any case, this will not be a question here explicitly addressed. Pitstick characterizes Balthasar's position as follows: "Since [Christ's] human nature is incapable of bearing the punishment of all sins, 'the whole superstructure of the Incarnation' is removed in his descent. . . . Thus, since the incarnation is suspended in his descent, his redemptive suffering after death is a suffering as divine Son" ("Development of Doctrine or Denial," 133). She bases her reading on *TD* III, 228; *TD* IV, 335 and 495; *TD* V, 221-222 and 277; *Explorations* IV, 138, 411-412; *GL* VII, 205-206, 213 and 231; cf. *Light in Darkness*, 117-122, 131-133, 148-158, 190-203, 235-239, 288, 302-308 (cited in "Development of Doctrine or Denial," 133nn12-14 and 143n54). Steffen Lösel adds a comment on *Theologik* II, 324: "The agony of the cross increases upon the Son's death, when the Son enters the emptiness of hell, or what Balthasar calls the dwelling-place of 'sin having become already amorphous'" ("Murder in the Cathedral," 434).

[25] See *Explorations* IV, Part Three. The original German text was published in 1974.

[26] Even though he met her early on in his career, her mystical experiences, which he helped put into writing, had an increasing influence on his own thought after her death in 1967. Geoffrey Wainwright corroborates the interpretation of Balthasar's development on this question: "The notion of Christ's 'solidarity with the dead' as set forth in [*Mysterium Paschale*] . . . a compromise that would eventually give way to the even more radical idea that in his descent into hell Jesus underwent – vicariously of course – *the full fate of the damned*. In his later writings, Balthasar begins to lean ever more heavily for his eschatology on the mystical experiences of his collaborator Adrienne von Speyr, whose meditations on this theme were privately published . . . A short, resumptive article of Balthasar's on 'The Descent into Hell' dates from 1970, and already a shift in emphasis from *Mysterium Paschale* of a year earlier can be detected" ("Eschatology" in *Cambridge Companion*, 117 [emphasis original]). Nonetheless, there is an enduring continuity throughout his writing, as Andrew Louth points out in comparing his *Heart of the World*, written five years after meeting von Speyr in Basel, and his *Theodramatik* (see

says: "[T]he experience of the abyss he undergoes is both entirely in him (insofar as he comes to know in himself the full measure of the dead sinner's distance from God) as well as at the same time entirely outside of him, because what he experiences is utterly foreign to him (as the eternal Son of the Father): on Good Friday he is himself entirely alienated from himself."[27] This self-alienation begun on the Cross and culminating in his being-dead on Saturday (whether the events of the two days are conceived as temporally distinct or an existential unit celebrated in two phases)[28] certainly involves an alienation from the Father. After implying that the hell of the damned is itself taken up by Christ's descent,[29] he explains in what way this alienation plays into the relationship between Father and Son:

> [T]he most ultimate ground of all is the Trinitarian difference between Father and Son: the Father's surrender of the Son and the Son's being surrendered in the unity of the trinitarian agreement. The path is one of total self-alienation, for the triad of death-Hades-Satan is the summation of everything that resists God's way, that cannot be united to God and is, as such rejected by God. This path is trod in 'obedience' (Phil 2:7-11) to the surrendering will of the Father in a willingness that is itself 'power' (Jn 10:18) but which lets itself be available even in the ultimate powerlessness of dying and being dead. The perfect self-alienation of the experience of hell is the function of the incarnate Christ's obedience, and this obedience is once more a function of his free love for the Father….this truly being dead is a function of the total surrender of the Son.[30]

"The Place of *Heart of the World* in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar" in *The Analogy of Beauty*, 154-155).

[27] *Explorations* IV, 409 [G 395]. Likewise, he says: "By going all the way to the outermost alienation, God himself has proven to be the Almighty who also is able to safeguard his identity in nonidentity, his being-with-himself in being lost, his life in being dead. And so the Resurrection of Christ and of all who are saved by him can be seen as the inner consequence of his experience on Holy Saturday. There is no 'reascent' after the descent; the way of love 'to the end' (Jn 13:1) is itself love's self-glorification" (413).

[28] There are occasional indications in Balthasar that he does not conceive the events of "Holy Saturday" as temporally distinct from his suffering on the Cross, and there are occasions where he seems to envision the descent as a continuance of the passion after the "moment" of His death. At times in *Explorations* IV he seems to relegate His suffering proper to Friday (e.g., see 406 [G 392]), while *Mysterium Paschale* (his "quickly written work") seems to assert a distinction between the passion of Friday and its continuation on Saturday (e.g., see 164 [G 240]).

[29] See *Explorations* IV, 410 [G 395-396].

[30] *Explorations* IV, 410-411 [G 396-397].

The Trinitarian move seems to be necessary in order to bolster the claim that Christ's death-descent "undergirds" and is thus capable of destroying from within any creaturely attempt to exclude oneself from the superior freedom of God's infinite love.[31] Hence, he links the Father-Son relationship to the "farthest reaches of hell" in the following way:

> The stripping away of the man Jesus is the laying bare not only of Sheol but also of the Trinitarian relationship in which the Son is entirely the one who springs forth from the Father. Holy Saturday is thus a kind of suspension, as it were, of the Incarnation, whose result is given back to the hands of the Father and which the Father will renew and definitively confirm by the Easter Resurrection. That the death of Jesus, like his Incarnation, was a function of his living, eternal love makes it that special death that 'shatters to pieces the terrifying gates of hell'. It thus lifts off its hinges the whole law of 'death, followed closely by Hades' (Rev 6:8) as the consequence of sin (Rom 5:12; James 1:15). This basically gives a positive answer to the dispute about whether the dead Lord descended into the farthest reaches of hell, to 'chaos', or not.[32]

The universalist implications of his position become apparent already at this stage when he says:

> [T]here is, on Holy Saturday, the descent of the dead Jesus into hell: that is (speaking very simplistically), his solidarity in nontime with those who have been lost to God. For these people, their choice is definitive, the choice whereby they have chosen their 'I' instead of God's selfless love. Into this definitiveness (of death) the Son descends….the sinner who wants to be 'damned' by God now rediscovers God in his loneliness – but this time he rediscovers God in the absolute impotence of love. For now God has placed himself in solidarity with those who have damned themselves, entering into nontime in a way we could never anticipate…even the battle cry 'God is dead' – that self-asserting *diktat* of the sinner who is finished with God – gains a whole new meaning that God himself has established. Creaturely freedom is respected but is still overtaken by God at the end of the Passion and once more undergirded ("*inferno profundior*", as Pope Gregory the Great put it). Only in absolute weakness does God want to give to each freedom created by him the gift of a love that breaks out of every dungeon and dissolves every constriction: in solidarity, from within, with whose [sic] who refuse solidarity.[33]

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[31] See *Explorations* IV, 422 [G 408-409].
[32] *Explorations* IV, 412 [G 397-398].
[33] *Explorations* IV, 422 [G 408-409].

Here we see an undermining of human freedom. Nevertheless, the structure of this 'undergirding,' that is, how Christ's alienation is already somehow present in the distinction of divine persons, is not fully expressed until the *Theodramatik*.

Ratzinger on Hell

Before Balthasar presented his more developed soteriology, eschatology, and trinitarian theory, particularly in the *Das Endspiel* volume of his *Theodramatik*, Ratzinger published his *Eschatologie: Tod und ewiges Leben* in 1977. There it is clear that one of the fundamental notions pervading Ratzinger's thought, which is already present in *Introduction to Christianity*,[34] is that of being as relation (or the transcendentality of *relatio*).[35] Developing what he acknowledges as Origen's "mythological expression" on "the indestructible relation" which obtains between the lives of men and their intra-historical destination, according to which the joy

[34] Invoking Augustine's *De Trinitate* (5, 5, 6) [*PL* 42:913f.], he states: "With the insight that, seen as substance, God is One but that there exists in him the phenomenon of dialogue, of differentiation, and of relationship through speech, the category of *relatio* gained a completely new significance for Christian thought. To Aristotle, it was among the 'accidents', the chance circumstances of being, which are separate from substance, the sole sustaining form of the real. The experience of the God who conducts a dialogue, of the God who is not only *logos* but also *dia-logos*, not only idea and meaning but speech and word in the reciprocal exchanges of partners in conversation – this experienced exploded the ancient division of reality into substance, the real thing, and accidents, the merely circumstantial. It now became clear that the dialogue, the *relatio*, stands beside the substance as an equally primordial form of being. . . . [The divine Persons] are not substances, personalities in the modern sense, but the relatedness whose pure actuality ('parcel of waves'!) does not impair the unity of the highest being but fills it out. . . 'Father' is purely a concept of relationship. Only in being for the other is he Father . . . Person is the pure relation of being related, nothing else. Relationship is not something extra added to the person, as it is with us; it only exists at all as relatedness. . . . In this idea of relatedness in word and love, independent of the concept of substance and not to be classified among the 'accidents', Christian thought discovered the kernel of the concept of person . . . 'In God there are no accidents, only substance and relation.' Therein lies concealed a revolution in man's view of the world: the sole dominion of thinking in terms of substance is ended; relation is discovered as an equally valid primordial mode of reality" (*Introduction to Christianity*, 182-184 [G 125-127]).

[35] "A being is the more itself the more it is open, the more it is in relationship" (*Eschatology*, 155 [G 166]).

of the blessed and of Christ is incomplete for as long as members of His body are "missing," Ratzinger reflects on how Christ (and the saints derivatively) fulfills the myth of the Bodhisattva:

> The nature of love is always to be 'for' someone. Love cannot, then, close itself against others or be without them so long as time, and with it suffering, is real. No one has formulated this insight more finely than Therese of Lisieux with her idea of heaven as the showering down of love towards all. But even in ordinary human terms we can say, How could a mother be completely and unreservedly happy so long as one of her children is suffering? And here we can point once again to Buddhism, with its idea of the Bodhisattva, who refuses to enter Nirvana so long as one human being remains in hell. By such waiting, he empties hell, accepting the salvation which is his due only when hell has become uninhabited. Behind this impressive notion of Asian religiosity, the Christian sees the true Bodhisattva, Christ, in whom Asia's dream became true. The dream is fulfilled in the God who descended from heaven into hell, because a heaven above an earth which is hell would be no heaven at all.[36]

Hence, love for him is a relational category (and the person is constituted by his capacity to love),[37] which creates a problem when one is faced with the reality of damnation. He wants to indicate that God descended upon earth in order to rescue it from the darkness of rejecting love, where man lives the self-contradiction of "Sheol-existence."[38]

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[36] *Eschatology*, 188 [G 193-194].

[37] "This abidingness [human being's eternal relationship to the eternal], which gives life and can fulfil [sic] it, is truth. It is also love. Man can therefore live forever, because he is able to have a relationship with that which gives the eternal. 'The soul' is our term for that in us which offers a foothold for this relation. Soul is nothing other than man's capacity for relatedness with truth, with love eternal" (*Eschatology*, 259 [G 274-275]).

[38] "An existence in which man tries to divinize himself, to become 'like a god' in his autonomy, independence and self-sufficiency, turns into a Sheol-existence, a being in nothingness, a shadow-life on the fringe of real living. This does not mean, however, that man can cancel God's creative act or put it into reverse. The result of his sin is not pure nothingness. Like every other creature, man can only move within the ambit of creation. Just as he cannot bring forth being of himself, so neither can he hurl it back into sheer nothingness. What he can achieve in this regard is not the annulment of being, but lived self-contradiction, a self-negating possibility, namely 'Sheol.' The natural ordination towards the truth, towards God, which of itself excludes nothingness, still endures, even when it is denied or forgotten. And this is where the affirmations of Christology come into their own. What happened in Christ was that God overcame this self-contradiction from within – as distinct from destroying human freedom by an arbitrary act from without. The living and dying of Christ tell us that God himself descends into the pit of Sheol, that in the land of absolute loneliness he makes relationship possible, healing the blind and so giving life in the midst of death" (*Eschatology*, 156-157 [G 167]).

In his treatment of the competing streams of tradition regarding hell, he takes a stand against the proto-Hegelian tendency of Origen to lodge hell into a neat logical system, as if it were a necessary moment in the dialectic of history.[39] Opting instead for the belief in the absoluteness God grants to human freedom (or "God's unconditional respect for the freedom of his creature"),[40] in commenting upon the tendency consequent to Origen to "concede to all the

[39] In *Explorations* I, Balthasar likewise remarks on Origen's tendency to systematize, but he accuses Augustine of the same kind of error on the opposite side of the issue (which is a theme developed in his *Dare We Hope*, c. 3) and ultimately leans toward the Origenist perspective: "Human thought always has the urge to 'systematize'; but scripture lets the possible, indeed the actual twofold outcome of the judgment remain 'unreconciled' alongside the prospect of universal reconciliation; nor is there any possibility of subordinating one to the other. Origen attempted this from one standpoint, reducing hell to a kind of purgatory, and so weakening what scripture says of the judgment. Augustine (and other theologians who followed him) did so from the opposite standpoint, depriving the hope of universal redemption of all foundation. Yet this too enfeebles faith in eschatological doctrine, as was well understood by Charles Peguy who, on account of the 'intolerableness' of what was taught about hell, left the Church, returning to it when he found a kind of 'solution'. This he expressed in his 'Mystere de Jeanne d'Arc', where Joan, with her inward 'revolt' against the possible damnation of her brothers, the sinners, suddenly realizes in prayer that she is at one with God himself in her revolt against the loss of anyone at all. As regards scripture, Christ's statements about the judgment (particularly Matthew 25:31ff.) are not intended to impart a placid 'knowledge' of facts, unfortunately unalterable, which like the damnation of a part of mankind must be accepted with resignation" (267-268 [G 289-290]). Unfortunately, Karen Kilby in her *Balthasar: A (very) Critical Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2012), although indeed very critical, accepts Balthasar's treatment of the prospect for universal salvation as an exemplary instance of the dramatic perspective he wishes to inculcate (see 63-70). Oddly enough, she shows herself, at the same time, sympathetic toward much of Alyssa Pitstick's critique of Balthasar's doctrine of the descent in her *Light in Darkness*; see Kilby, *Balthasar*, 11-12 and 121-122n68.

[40] He seems to indicate his option against universalist hope in the following: "Nevertheless, Origen could not wholly let go of his hope that, in and through this divine suffering, the reality of evil is taken prisoner and overcome, so that it loses its quality of definitiveness. In that hope of his, a long line of fathers were to follow him . . . But the mainstream tradition of the Church has flowed along a different path. It found itself obliged to concede that such an expectation of universal reconciliation derived from the system rather than from the biblical witness. The dying echo of Origen's ideas has lingered through the centuries, however, in the many variants of the so-called doctrine of *misericordia*. These would either except Christians completely from the possibility of damnation, or else concede to all the lost some kind of relief from suffering – in comparison, that is, with what they really deserve" (*Eschatology*, 215-216 [G 218]).

lost some kind of relief from suffering – in comparison, that is, with what they really deserve,"[41] his understanding of love leads him to emphasize a key difference between the redemptive work of Christ and the universalist dream of the Bodhisattva:

> What can be given to the creature, however, is love, and with this all its neediness can be transformed. The assent to such love need not be 'created' by man: this is not something which he achieves by his own power. And yet the freedom to resist the creation of that assent, the freedom not to accept it as one's own, this freedom remains. Herein lies the difference between the beautiful dream of the Boddhisattva [sic]…and its realization. The true Boddhisattva [sic], Christ, descends into Hell and suffers it in all its emptiness; but he does not, for all that, treat man as an immature being deprived in the final analysis of any responsibility for his own destiny. Heaven reposes upon freedom, and so leaves to the damned the right to will their own damnation. The specificity of Christianity is shown in this conviction of the greatness of man. Human life is fully serious. It is not to be natured by what Hegel called the 'cunning of the Idea' into an aspect of divine planning. The irrevocable takes place, and that includes, then, irrevocable destruction. The Christian man or woman must live with such seriousness and be aware of it. It is a seriousness which takes on tangible form in the Cross of Christ.[42]

So, the seriousness of human freedom met on the Cross is taken as a call to participate in Christ's redemption of man from *Sheol*, as he does not want to vanquish all hope for the apparently lost or discourage saints from doing penance for the conversion of sinners.

Thus, there is a certain tension in his thought between affirming the power of Christ's descent to transform hearts and the freedom of man to reject even this summit of God's love for him:

> [T]he question also arises…whether in this event [of the Cross] we are not in touch with a divine response able to draw freedom precisely as freedom to itself. The answer lies hidden in Jesus' descent into Sheol, in the night of the soul which he suffered, a night which no one can observe except by entering this darkness in suffering faith. Thus, in the history of holiness…'Hell' has taken on a completely new meaning and form. For the saints, 'Hell' is not so much a threat to be hurled at other people but a challenge to oneself. It is a challenge to suffer in the dark night of faith, to experience communion with Christ in solidarity with his descent into the Night. One draws near to the Lord's radiance by sharing his darkness. One serves the salvation of the world by leaving one's own salvation behind for the sake of others. In such piety, nothing of the dreadful reality

[41] *Eschatology*, 216 [G 218].
[42] *Eschatology*, 216-217 [G 219].

> of Hell is denied. Hell is so real that it reaches right into the existence of the saints. Hope can take it on, only if one shares in the suffering of Hell's night by the side of the One who came to transform our night by his suffering. Here hope does not emerge from the neutral logic of a system, from rendering humanity innocuous.[43]

Certainly he would admit the power of the Cross to draw freedom to itself, that is, the efficacy of grace offered through the redemptive work of Christ. But he does not consequently imagine the interaction between divine freedom and human freedom in terms of a power-struggle; instead, he points to the participation of those exemplifying hope (the saints) in Christ's triumph over the darkness of sin. Hence, he does not seek to subordinate the testimony of divine revelation to any presupposed conceptualization of the grace-freedom dynamic:

> No amount of artificially forced interpretation (*Deuteln*) is of any use: the thought of eternal damnation, which had developed progressively in the Judaism of the last two centuries before Christ (cf. LThKV 445 sq.), holds a solid place both in the teaching of Jesus (Mt 5:22 and 29 par.; 8: 12; 13: 42 and 50; 22: 13; 25: 30 and 41; 18: 8 par. And 18: 9; 24: 51; 25: 30 and 41; Lk 13: 28) and in the writings of the apostles (Rom 9: 22; I Cor 1: 18; II Cor 2: 15 and 4: 3; Phil 3: 19; I Thess 5: 3; II Thess 1: 9 and 2: 10; I Tim 6: 9; Rev 14: 10; 19: 20; 20: 10-15; 21: 8). Thus, the dogma has a firm basis for its affirmation of the existence of hell (DS 72; 76; 801; 858; 1351) and of the unending character of its punishments (DS 411).[44]

Balthasar and Ratzinger on Divine Suffering

While Ratzinger, even after *Mysterium Paschale*, does not drag the Trinity into the realm of the damned (via Christ's descent),[45] he does in the "Afterword to the English Edition" of

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[43] *Eschatology*, 217-218 [G 219-220].

[44] *Eschatology*, 215 [G 176]; translation provided by Richard Schenk, "Factical Damnation," 140. Schenk prefaces this excerpt thus: "[Ratzinger] came, at least later, despite continued sympathy for Balthasar's life and work as a whole, to the conviction that such a reduction of one set of texts to a mere, or even an infinitely improbable, possibility runs counter to the texts themselves" ("Factical Damnation," 140).

[45] Balthasar, on the other hand, describes hell with Adrienne von Speyr as a "trinitarian event": "For her, hell is a trinitarin event. She describes at length the trinitarian form of sin . . . on Holy Saturday, the Son (as man and redeemer) is initiated into the dark mystery of the Father . . . 'The Father is never more present than in this absence on the Cross'" (*TL* II, 352 [G 321]). Matthew Levering, citing this passage in his *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths* (New York:

Eschatology compliment the final volume of Balthasar's *Theodramatik*, published in 1983, as "a foundational contribution to a deepening of the eschatology theme."[46] In this volume Balthasar's theory of the Trinitarian processions in terms of the suffering, death, and descent of Christ becomes fully developed. Perhaps overreacting to the anthropocentric approach of Karl Rahner,[47] Balthasar's more nuanced position on the relationship between economic and

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Oxford University, 2011), comments: "Far from cutting off persons from God's presence, then, hell places persons inescapably at the heart of the Trinity" (165-166). Balthasar also quotes Speyr stating: "'If you take hell away, the Word has no more foundation in the Father. However dreadful hell is, for the history of salvation it, so to say, lays the foundation of the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit. It is out of this darkness that the Cross can be light in the first place' (ibid. [*Kreuz und Hölle* II], 233). . . . This gives rise to 'the question whether hell, which is the eternal night of sin, is so included in the mystery of the Trinity that the sin vanquished on the Cross is ultimately used to solidify what (at the Cross) still remains of the world's shaken structure' (KH 1, 207-8)" (*TL* II, 346n79 [G 316n5]). Therefore, Edward Oakes notes: "[F]or Balthasar other antinomies and paradoxes besides those purely Christological ones have compelled him to look at the ultimate moment of God's self-emptying: when the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity descended into hell for the sake of the damned. In that way, hell becomes for Balthasar not just a Christological place but above all a moment in the life of the Trinity" ("'He descended into hell': The Depths of God's Self-Emptying Love on Holy Saturday in the Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar," in *Exploring Kenotic Christology: The Self-Emptying of God*, ed. C. Stephen Evans [New York: Oxford University Press, 2006]: 218-245, at 232). Oakes also says, "[for Balthasar] the entire event of the Triduum is seen as an inherently trinitarian event" (*Pattern of Redemption*, 241).

[46] *Eschatology*, 262. He says the "concern" for the "aspects of eschatology" manifest in Balthasar's "profound analysis of the essence of Christian hope, of the pain of God, of judgment and the consummation" "could well release the subject [of eschatology] from a narrowly anthropological concept of its own task" (262). This comment, written in 1987, need only be taken as an endorsement of the Trinitarian approach to eschatology as an effective tool against the anthropological approach of theologians like Karl Rahner; it does not imply that he accepts everything said about these themes in the work or that he agrees with Balthasar's Trinitarian theory itself.

[47] His polemic with Rahner on this point is already seen in *MP*, 140 [G 226], 147n106 [G 223-224n1]. He opposes Karl Rahner's "anthropocentric tendency" by turning to "the Trinitarian background of the Cross" (140 [G 226]). Celia Deane-Drummond criticizes Balthasar's trinitarian theology as "[leaning] towards tri-theism and thereby parsing of the God/human analogy too far in an anthropocentric direction" because it is based on "peculiarily *human* experiences of sin and reconciliation" ("The Breadth of Glory," 52 [emphasis original]). Acknowleding his indebtedness to Bulgakov, she also criticizes him for characterizing the Trinity "through such drastic separation of persons . . . [breaking] up the unity of the Trinity, but also [straining] any analogical understanding of the Trinity to breaking point" (51), citing as her

immanent trinities,[48] nevertheless, incorporates a qualified passibilist position.[49] For him "'economic' reality is only the expression of something 'immanent' in the Trinity,"[50] and yet "The Son has been offering his sacrifice to the Father from the very beginning."[51] Since "the ontic possibility for God's self-emptying in the Incarnation and death of Jesus lies in God's eternal self-emptying in the mutual self-surrender of the Persons of the Trinity,"[52] "[t]he Judgment that takes place within the Trinity can be understood only in terms of the suffering love between Father and Son in the Spirit."[53] Hence, Balthasar seeks in the inner life of God a 'foundation' or 'ground' for the privative character of Christ's passion.[54] Since the descent to hell is at the center of Christ's experience of suffering, he goes so far as to say with von Speyr

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support Matthew Levering's *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 132.

[48] He states that he fundamentally agrees with tightly binding the two dimensions together, but he does not subscribe to a simple identification (or convertibility) of the two dimensions (e.g., see *TD* III, 508 [G 466]).

[49] Comparing Balthasar to Rahner, Gerard O'Hanlon states: "One of the premises of [Rahner's] argument is that it is impossible that a secondary cause could influence God and make him change his opinion. Therefore there can be no question of a sacrifice which would appease an angry God. Rahner goes on to consider Jesus in terms of the incarnate sign of God's initiative and engagement in our favour. Balthasar's objection to this view is that Jesus need not be God to accomplish such a mission; his human death and resurrection by God are sufficient to indicte God's saving love for us. What is implied – but not stated – in his rejection of this position is that, within the parameters laid down earlier in our treatment of the incarnation, there is indeed some sense in which a change must occur in God, and for this to happen Jesus must be both God and man. The further implication of this is that while secondary causes *per se* cannot influence God, still in so far as they are rooted in the Trinity itself – as Christ obviously is, and as we shall have to investigate concerning purely created reality – they may do so" (*The Immutability of God*, 31-32).

[50] *TD* V, 258 [G 233].

[51] *TD* V, 510 [G 467]. This is a quote from Adrienne von Speyr's *Kath. Briefe*, vol. 2. He says in the introductory note to the volume that "I quote her to show the fundamental consonance between her views and mine on many of the eschatological topics discussed here" (13). I have not found one place where he expresses disagreement with her.

[52] *TD* V, 243 [G 220]. This is an approving quote from H. Schurmann's *Jesu ureigner Tod* (Herder Verlag, 1975).

[53] *TD* V, 278 [G 252].

[54] For development of this point, see Antoine Birot, *"Redemption in Balthasar,"* 281-282

that "the Father allows the Son to experience the most intimate thing that he possesses: his darkness…"[55] and with Ferdinand Ulrich that "pain and death are eternally the language of his glory."[56]

For Balthasar the passion, especially the cry of dereliction, provides the believer with a glimpse into the mutual self-giving that constitutes the very life of God and, particularly, reveals the distinction of persons, which flows from divine *ek-stasis*. He wants to affirm infinite distance between the persons as persons but maintain also their inextricable union as divine[57] – hence the "separation" between the divine persons that is experienced on the Cross becomes a "mode of union."[58] "[T]he distance between the Persons, within the dynamic process of the divine essence, is infinite."[59] Furthermore, concerning their distinction, he says: "[T]he Father was never more distinct, never more earnest, than at this hour of the Cross…the distinction of the Persons has never been more clearly revealed than in the relationship between the Son who is abandoned and the Father who abandons him."[60] Not only does Christ's experience of abandonment reveal the Father and Son as distinct persons, but there is an actual rupture that occurs in the economic order and that reflects the infinite distance there is between the persons precisely as hypostatically distinct. The suffering of Christ points to something analogous within the Trinitarian life: "there is nothing hypothetical about the 'pre-sacrifice' of the Son (and hence of

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[55] *TD* V, 267 [G 242].
[56] *TD* V, 246 [G 222].
[57] See, for example, *TD* V, 513, 517-518 [G 469, 473-474].
[58] See *TD* V, 257 [G 232].
[59] *TD* V, 245 [G 221].
[60] *TD* V, 517 [G 473].

the Trinity)."[61] Hence, "The Son's death is the exemplification of the supreme aliveness of triune love."[62]

Whereas for Balthasar, the generation of the Son occurs because the Father totally surrenders the Godhead, constituting an *ur-kenosis* in the immanent Trinity,[63] Ratzinger is generally hesitant to speak, as Balthasar does, of any "interweaving of Christ's suffering and the suffering of the Trinity."[64] The following more modest words are a notable exception to such apparent reticence:

> In the period of the Fathers, it was doubtless Origen who grasped most profoundly the idea of the suffering God and made bold to say that it could not be restricted to the suffering humanity of Jesus but also affected the Christian picture of God. The Father suffers in allowing the Son to suffer, and the Spirit shares in this suffering, for Paul says that he groans within us, yearning in us and on our behalf for full redemption (Rom 8:26f). And it was Origen also who gave the normative definition of the way in which the theme of the suffering God is to be interpreted: When you hear someone speak of God's passions, always apply what is said to love. So God is a sufferer because he is a lover; the entire theme of the suffering God flows from that of the loving God and always points back to it. The actual advance registered by the Christian idea of God over that of the ancient world lies in the recognition that God is love.[65]

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[61] *TD* V, 510 [G 467].
[62] *TD* V, 327 [G 298].
[63] "[The self-giving of the divine persons] is a total surrender of all possessions, including Godhead…the Father's generation of the Son gives him an equally absolute and equally free divine being" (*TD* V, 245 [G 221]). "[T]he Father who sends him, the Father who, in doing so, surrenders himself" (*TD* V, 327 [G 297]). There are many questions that arise from Balthasar's words: is it not, more properly, the Son who surrenders himself to the Father? Is not the subsistent relation of paternity concomitant with that of filiation (rather than prior)? Does the category of *kenosis* really do justice to the entirety of love's essence? In answer to the second point, Ratzinger says: "[T]he first Person does not beget 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" (*Introduction to Christianity*, 184 [G 127]).
[64] *TD* V, 245 [G 221].
[65] These words first appeared in a paper he delivered on the mystery of Easter to the Sacred Heart Congress in Toulouse, 1981, collected in the volume, *Schauen auf den Durchbohrten*, translated by Graham Harrison as *Behold the Pierced One*, 57-58 [G 49-50]. He also refers to Origen and Gregory Nazianzen in interpretation of the groaning of the Spirit in Rom 8:26f., depending again on Balthasar's *Das Ganze im Fragment* (Einsiedeln: Benziger Verlag, 1963) as well as Heinrich Schlier's *Der Romerbrief* (see *Behold the Pierced One*, 58n9 [G 50n9]). But

Even though he cites Balthasar's *Das Ganze in Fragment* for interpretation of Origen and Gregory Nazianzen, in the final footnote to this text he clarifies: "This must be made absolutely clear, lest the way be opened for a new Patripassianism, as J. Moltmann seems to be proposing," a charge of which he nevertheless exonerates Balthasar's *Zu einer christicher Theologie der Hoffnung* (n. 11).[66] He also indicates there his admiration for comments made in an article by Jacques Maritain on divine "com-passion,"[67] which in fact provide some of the least radical reflections utilized by Balthasar as a launching pad for his own.[68]

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the texts merely indicate the usage of 'passion' as a term of love, even if the Father and Spirit are in some way associated with the Son's historical suffering (*the* passion). Steffen Lösel cites this note in Ratzinger (see "Murder in the Cathedral," 438n66) among the support for his proposal that the Spirit's procession is as kenotic as the Son's (438-439). Lösel notes that Balthasar is particularly modest in this regard, to a fault, in his opinion: "Notice that both in the economic and the immanent Trinity, the Spirit is merely the bond of love who keeps open and bridges over the painful distance between Father and Son; as such, the Spirit itself cannot be said to suffer. At this point Balthasar's trinitarian drama of suffering love reveals itself as merely *binitarian*. Neither the Son nor the Father, but rather the Holy Spirit is the true victim in Balthasar's theo-drama; denied to suffer, the Spirit is 'murdered in the cathedral' of Balthasar's theology" ("Murder in the Cathedral," 438). And yet he notes, in a later article, that "[Balthasar] adopts Adrienne von Speyr's term 'pre-sacrifice' (*Voropfer*) to describe the mutual self-giving relationship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" ("A Plain Account," 163). In fact, Balthasar states in an early work: "The Holy Spirit anticipates all the tragedy of the sinful world, not only by being beyond it in a cloudless heaven, but also by being in its innermost heart. Thus, the divine Spirit which implants itself in humanity can have infinite compassion and, through love, infinite knowledge, without necessarily on that account succumbing to the tragedy of not-loving. It is precisely the freedom from all not-loving and paralysis of the heart which makes possible that intimacy and ultimate knowledge and involvement which characterize the Spirit. If this is so, then the conquest through the Holy Spirit of man's tragic incompleteness in the ordering of existence is truly ensured if the Spirit does not stand out against impotent humanity as the one fully potent force" (*A Theological Anthropology*, 73 [G 94]). Lösel does not present any analysis of Ratzinger's work in either article, and I would argue that Ratzinger is at least as modest as Balthasar on this point as well. For the dangerous implications of a misconceived pneumatological kenosis, see my forthcoming, "Kenotic Pneumatology as Ecclesiology in Ephraim Radner."

[66] However, in 1985, Balthasar quotes approvingly the following words of Adrienne von Speyr from *Kreuz und Hölle*: "hell is a 'Cross' for the Father" (*TL* II, 352n135 [G 321n61]).

[67] See "Quelques reflexions sur le savoir theologique" *Revue Thomiste* 69 (1969): 5-27.

[68] See *TD* V, 242.

While Ratzinger is clearly not a strict impassibilist,[69] he speaks of God as revealed in man (with Christ as the exemplar) in terms of being-for, being-from, and being-with.[70] He does subtly link the *theologia crucis* with the revelation of the Trinity, but in a very different way from Balthasar. In the first volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*, he says both that John the Baptist's "reference to the Lamb of God interprets Jesus' Baptism, his descent into the abyss of death, as a theology of the Cross"[71] and that at Jesus' baptism "together with the Son, we encounter the Father and the Holy Spirit. The mystery of the Trinitarian God is beginning to emerge, even though its depths can be fully revealed only when Jesus' journey is complete."[72] Hence, he sees the entirety of Jesus' life, culminating in His resurrection and ascent, as revelation of the Trinity, but he does not presume to envision the mystery in such detail as it is relayed to Balthasar by the alleged visionary, Adrienne von Speyr. Ratzinger appears to take the interpretation he develops there of the descent through the event of Jesus' baptism from a page in Balthasar's *Explorations* IV,[73] which depends on Danielou's patristic research. But he skillfully weaves together the

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[69] He certainly does not fall prey to the notion that impassibility is Greek and therefore subject to dismissal, as may be charged of Balthasar: "Historic Christianity rests on a fusion of the biblical inheritance with Greek thought" (*Eschatology*, 247 [G 263]). His nuanced (and brief) treatment of this question does contrast the 'God of the philosophers' and the 'God of faith,' but it also emphasizes the unity of the two in historical Christian revelation. See *Introduction to Christianity*, 118-119, 145, 147-148 [G 74-75, 96, 98]. Compare this to *TD* V, 213, 217f., 235 [G 291, 195f., 212].

[70] He says, "Man is God's image precisely insofar as being 'from,' 'with,' and 'for' constitute the fundamental anthropological pattern" ("Truth and Freedom," *Communio* 23, no. 1 [Spring, 1996]: 16-35, at 16). It will become clear how this triadic structure of man reflects God's own life.

[71] Pope Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 1, *From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (New York: DoubleDay, 2007), 22 [G 49]; each volume of this series will be subsequently designated by the respective Roman numeral.

[72] *Jesus of Nazareth* I, 23 [G 50].

[73] "Another theme…is the theme of the connection between the sea's abyss (as the rebellious power of chaos resistant to God, the *tehom:* see also Noah's deluge) and Christ's baptism, where his immersion in the River Jordan bespeaks a first 'cultic' anticipation of his definitive baptismal immersion in the abyss of chaos (*abyssos* [Rom 10:7]): the waters of judgment have been

"strong man" tradition deriving from Matthew 12:29 and Luke 11:22, a 'triumphant' interpretation of the descent that Balthasar undermines,[74] and the Jonah motif, which Balthasar esteems,[75] in his reflections on the descent as represented in the baptism.[76] Jesus as Lamb of God is also "the Servant of God who bears the sins of the world by his vicarious atonement . . . 'By the expiatory power of his innocent death he blotted out…the guilt of all mankind.'"[77] Ratzinger's balanced approach is evident here:

> The act of descending into the waters of this Baptism implies a confession of guilt and a plea for forgiveness in order to make a new beginning. . . . His entering into the sin of others is a descent into the 'inferno.' But he does not descend merely in the role a spectator, as in Dante' *Inferno*. Rather, he goes down in the role of one whose suffering-with-others is a transforming suffering that turns the underworld around, knocking down

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'purified' by him and transformed into 'the waters of salvation'. And correspondingly, the judging fires of hell are changed over into a purifying fire. However we cannot go any farther into the details of the rich and much-ramified symbolism. A third theme can be linked to Good Friday: the (perhaps commonly held) saying of Jesus: 'No one can break into a strong man's house and rob him of his possessions unless he first ties him up; only then can he plunder the house' (Mt 12:29). The strong man, in this context, is Satan, 'the Prince of the evil spirits', his house (in the predominant view) is the underworld" (406).

[74] He says of the "strong man" interpretation of Christ 'chaining' and 'robbing' Satan: "Christ in his descent is depicted as someone who is active in the extreme: 'I have entered by foot into Hades and bound up the strong and led men into the heights of heaven' is how even so early a figure as Melito of Sardis puts it. Nor is it any different in the *Anaphora* of Hippolytus, which thanks God because he gave Jesus the Logos over to suffering 'to abolish death, burst the bonds of the devil, descend into Hades and shine his light on the just'. Along with this increasingly drastic action of Christ, there appears the motif of the light shining in the darkness" (407).

[75] Balthasar says in *Explorations* IV: "Antin has gathered in his introduction (18ff.) the still extant patristic literature on Jonah (Origen's commentary has been lost). The harvest for a *theologoumenon* of this rank is quite meager. The theology of the *descensus* has not followed this important trail but has rather held more to the Hellenistic and apocalyptic track in which, to its harm, the motifs of 'descent', of struggle and powerful victory come to the fore. See J. Kroll, lib c 3-4, on the two types of *descensus* doctrine: Jesus gains victory over the underworld either as one dead or as one alive. The second type has 'proved to be much more vigorous'. Kroll counts among the first type the Jonah typology that he thinks can be shown to be a living tradition by its frequent presence in the iconography of sarcophagi" (412-413n29 [G 398-399n29]). Apparently he thinks it unfortunate that the 'better' tradition became minor.

[76] See especially, *Jesus of Nazareth* I, 18-19 [G 44-46].

[77] *Jesus of Nazareth* I, 21-22 [G 48]. He points there to Joachim Jeremias' observation that the Hebrew word *talia* probably used by John the Baptist at Christ's baptism can mean 'lamb,' 'boy,' or 'servant.'.

> and flinging open the gates of the abyss. His baptism is a descent into the house of the evil one, combat with the 'strong man' (cf. Lk 11:22) who holds men captive (and the truth is that we are all very much captive to powers that anonymously manipulate us!). Throughout all its history, the world is powerless to defeat the 'strong man'; he is overcome and bound by one yet stronger, who, because of his equality with God, can take upon himself all the sin of the world and then suffers it through to the end – omitting nothing on the downward path into identity with the fallen. This struggle is the 'conversion' of being that brings it into a new condition, that prepares a new heaven and a new earth.[78]

A running theme in both Balthasar's and Ratzinger's understanding of redemption is the replacing of the influential "much-coarsened version of St. Anselm's theology of atonement"[79] in the so-called 'satisfaction theory' with emphasis on the dimension of vicarious representation in Christ's passion.[80] While Balthasar is in fact more appreciative of Anselm than many would like

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[78] *Jesus of Nazareth* I, 17, 20 [G 44, 46].

[79] *Introduction to Christianity*, 281 [G 204]. Interestingly, Balthasar appears to impugn Ratzinger as too harsh on Anselm in the midst of a critique of Bultmannian exegesis: "Kessler continues the (now customary) frontal attacks on Anselm's doctrine of satisfaction (K. Rahner, J. Ratzinger, L. Bouyer, et al.) . . ." (*TD* III, 107n29 [G 97n29]). Referring later to this text he omits Ratzinger's name: "We have already observed that it is currently fashionable to campaign against Anselm's so-called 'satisfaction theory' [note 36: In addition to Rahner, cf. Kung, Duquoc, Kessler, Schillebeeckx, Bouyer, etc. . . .]" (*TD* III, 240 [G 220]).

[80] Ratzinger early on wrote a compelling article propounding this model of redemption, which extends to the Church's role in the world as the 'little flock' and 'light to the nations,' and includes an alternative to Rahner's notorious notion of "anonymous Christianity," entitled "Stellvertretung" in *Handbuch theologischer Grundbegriffe*, ed. Heinrich Fries, 2 vols. (Munich: Kosel Verlag, 1962-1963), 2:566-575 [in English, "Vicarious Representation," trans. Jared Wicks, *Letter & Spirit* 7 (2011): 209-220]. Christopher Ruddy elaborates on some aspects of Ratzinger's approach to the redemption throughout his theological career in "'For the Many': The Vicarious-Representative Heart of Joseph Ratzinger's Theology," *Theological Studies* 75, no. 3 (2014): 564-584. Also, in *Introduction to Christianity*, he expresses his reservation regarding Anselm's perspective on the redemption in the following terms: "It is not hard to see that, in spite of all the philosophical and juridical terminology employed, the guiding thread remains that truth which the Bible expresses in the little word 'for', in which it makes clear that we as men live not only directly from God but from one another and, in the last analysis, from the One who lived for all. And who could fail to see that thus in the schematization of the 'satisfaction' theory the breath of the biblical idea of election remains clear, but the call to live for others? It is the call to that 'for' in which man confidently lets himself fall, ceases to cling to himself, and ventures on the leap away from himself into the infinite, the leap through which

to admit,[81] Ratzinger gradually appears less critical of the satisfaction model. In his late work, *Jesus of Nazareth* II, Ratzinger seems not only more appreciative of Anselm's approach, but also reticent toward the more radical dimension of Balthasar's soteriology, particularly, his appropriation of the contemporary death of God theology.[82] His treatment there of Christ's death as atonement or reconciliation certainly borrows from Anselm and Thomas.[83] Yet, such is not to deny his earlier view of redemption as vicarious representation (shared by Balthasar). Hence, he still warns against the 'coarsened version' of Anselmic soteriology:

> The reality of evil and injustice that disfigures the world and at the same time distorts the image of God – this reality exists, through our sin. It cannot simply be ignored; it must be addressed. But here it is not a case of a cruel God demanding the infinite. It is exactly the opposite: God himself becomes the locus of reconciliation, and in the person of his Son takes the suffering upon himself. God himself grants his infinite purity to the world. God himself 'drinks the cup' of every horror to the dregs and thereby restores justice through the greatness of his love, which, through suffering, transforms the darkness.[84]

Finally, in the second volume, oddly enough, while treating "Jesus' cry of abandonment," he does not develop the same Balthasarisn theology of the descent that he had entertained as late as the first volume of *Jesus of Nazareth*; instead, he relies primarily upon Augustine's theology of corporate personality.[85]

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alone he can come to himself. But even if all this is admitted, it cannot be denied, on the other hand, that the perfectly logical divine-*cum*-human legal system erected by Anselm distorts the perspectives and with its rigid logic can make the image of God appear in a sinister light" (*Introduction to Christianity*, 233 [G 166-167]).

[81] See, e.g., *TD* III, 240ff [G 220ff]; *TD* IV, 255ff. [G 235ff.])

[82] In the "Bibliography" section of *Jesus of Nazareth*, vol. 2, *Holy Week: From the Entrance into Jerusalem to the Resurrection*, trans. Vatican Secretariat of State (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2011), there is a note corresponding to his criticism of "modern theologies of God's pain" as "too narrowly individualistic" (215 [G 238]) in chapter eight, which refers the reader to Moltman's *The Crucified God* and Balthasar's *TD* V as examples (see 306 [G 326-327]).

[83] See 229-240 [G 254-264].

[84] *Jesus of Nazareth* II, 232 [G 256].

[85] See 213ff. [G 237ff.]. See also Bruce Marshall, "Reading the Gospels with Benedict XVI: How the Pope Finds Jesus in the Bible," *First Things* (October 2011).

Ratzinger interprets Jesus' mission (action) and identity (being) in terms of 'pro-existence,' a heuristic he attributes to Heinz Schurmann,[86] even while Balthasar attributes it to Norbert Hoffmann.[87] It is clear that for Ratzinger one's understanding of the redemption must go hand-in-hand with the category of 'being-for.'[88] The couplet being-for and being-from has long been at the core of Ratzinger's conception of how the Christological economy and the immanent life of God relate:

> The event of the crucifixion appears [in Johannine theology] as a process of opening, in which the scattered man-monads are drawn into the embrace of Jesus Christ, into the wide span of his outstretched arms, in order to arrive, in this union, at their goal, the goal of humanity. But if this is so, then Christ as the man to come is not man for himself but essentially man for others; it is precisely his complete openness that makes him the man of the future . . . the future of man lies in 'being for'. This fundamentally confirms once again what we recognized as the meaning of the talk of sonship and, before that, as the meaning of the doctrine of three Persons in one God, namely, a reference to the dynamic, 'actual' existence, which is essentially openness in the movement between 'from' and 'for'. And once again it becomes clear that Christ is the completely open man, in whom the dividing walls of existence are torn down, who is entirely 'transition' (Passover, 'Pasch') . . . . [A]fter 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 . . . 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.'[89]

Ratzinger's Trinitarian Theology

One can extrapolate from Ratzinger's reflections here and elsewhere that the notions of being-for, being-from, and being-with offer us a glimpse into the Trinitarian life, but he does not push the parallelism so far that each corresponds directly with a divine person, although it is

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[86] See *Jesus of Nazareth* II, 174 [G 197].
[87] See *TD* V, 244 [G 220].
[88] See also his homily, "Sin and Salvation" in *In the Beginning*, 59-78 (originally published *Im Anfang schuf Gott* [Freiburg: Erich Wewel, 1986]), for development of the notion of sin as a rupture in relationality (i.e., assertion of autonomy) and Christ the Redeemer as the antithesis (i.e., utter dependence, selflessness, surrender, being-for).
[89] *Introduction to Christianity*, 240-241 [G 172-173].

apparent that in the immanent Trinity these are most fittingly appropriated to Father, Son, and Spirit, respectively. As Jesus is literally God-with-us, so the Spirit is the God who dwells within us. But God and being are not simply convertible such that one can then say Christ is being-with-us and the Spirit is being-in-us. He says not only that 'Son' means being-from-another, but also that the Son defines Himself on earth completely in terms of His Father; thus, He is being-for by mission because He is in Himself 'being-from' the Father.[90] Therefore, when a Christian strives to unite himself fully to Christ, he replaces his own individuality with "pure, unreserved being 'from' and 'for.'"[91] Hence, the Incarnate Word also inculcates being-for, being a transparent window into the Father and even an example for men of paternal virtue. But it is the Father who is the very act of self-giving in God.[92] Again, "'Father' is purely a concept of relationship. Only in being for the other is he Father…"[93] Moreover, the "completely open being" of Christ's being-from or being-toward, which does not stand on its own, must be "pure relation (not substantiality) and, as pure relation, pure unity."[94]

Finally, speaking of 'spirit' generically but in the context of this Trinitarian theology, he prepares the way by means of analogy for the traditional appropriation of unity and love to the third divine person: "pure oneness can only occur in the spirit and embraces the relatedness of love."[95] Earlier he had stated the following regarding the Spirit:

> This new experience [of God as 'I' and 'You' in the dual nature of the God-with-us ("Emmanuel")] is followed finally by a third, the experience of the Spirit, the presence of God in us, in our inner-most being. And again it turns out that this 'Spirit' is not simply identical either with the Father or the Son, nor is he yet a third thing erected between God

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[90] See *Introduction to Christianity*, 186-187 [G 128-129].
[91] *Introduction to Christianity*, 187 [G 129].
[92] See *Introduction to Christianity*, 184 [G 127].
[93] *Introduction to Christianity*, 183 [G 126].
[94] *Introduction to Christianity*, 187 [G 129].
[95] *Introduction to Christianity*, 188 [G 130].

> and us; it is the manner in which God gives himself to us, in which he enters into us, so that he is *in* man yet, in the midst of this 'indwelling', is infinitely *above* him.[96]

The Holy Spirit is the continuation in history of God-with-us by dwelling in man insofar as he is a member of Christ's body and therefore a spiritual agent in history.[97] The Church is the created mirror of the Spirit because the Spirit herself is receptive, as the divine exemplar of what it means to listen and to remember. He says the following in *The Nature and Mission of Theology*:

> A further characteristic of the Spirit is listening: he does not speak in his own name, he listens and teaches how to listen. In other words, he does not add anything but rather acts as a guide into the heart of the Word, which becomes light in the act of listening…the Spirit effects a space of listening and remembering, a 'we' . . .[98]

The Spirit is, therefore, the principle of communion among men, but only because He is first the *communio* of Father and Son, the One who unites the two, who reveals their unity.

He conceives pneumatology as the link between Christology and ecclesiology, as a theology of the Spirit precisely of Christ, according to which the Son is the revelation (*logos*) of God in history. It is understood that 'deposit' reveals very little about the Holy Spirit in Himself.[99] He, nevertheless, speaks in his essay on the "The Holy Spirit as Communion" of self-giving as the very being of the Spirit as well, who as *datus* opens up the Son as *natus* to the world as *factus*. The doctrine of the Spirit provides the link between the economic and immanent

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[96] *Introduction to Christianity*, 164 [G 111].

[97] "[T]he Holy Spirit [is] the power through which the risen Lord remains present in the history of the world as the principle of a new history and a new world" (*Introduction to Christianity*, 332-333 [G 246]). For the sacramental and institutional Church as the locus of the Spirit's presence, see 334ff [G 247ff.]. "[I]n our Creed the Church is understood in terms of the Holy Spirit, as the center of the Spirit's activity in the world" (335 [G 248]). He also develops this point in his essay, "The Holy Spirit as Communion: On the relationship between pneumatology and spirituality in the writings of Augustine" in *Pilgrim Fellowship of Faith: The Church as Communion*, trans. Henry Taylor (San Francisco: Ignatius, 2005), edited by Stephan Horn and Vinzenz Pfnur.

[98] Joseph Ratzinger, *The Nature and Mission of Theology: Essays to Orient Theology in Today's Debates*, trans. Adrian Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1995), 55.

[99] See *Introduction to Christianity*, 331ff. [G 245ff.]

dimensions of the Trinity – the Spirit bridges the gap between salvation history and the *logos* behind creation.[100] The Spirit is the unity of the being-for and being-from of God; He shares in the being-from of the Son and yet communes equally with the Father's being-for[101] – He joins the being-from of the Son to the being-for of the Father in the being-with that is the love of God.[102] Flowing from this identity, the Spirit in history acts as the "wholly other" dimension of God at the core of every religious experience,[103] which provides a kind of portal into eternity, the realm of abiding love.[104] The Church is the gift of God to the world, the very image of the Spirit, who is God as gift.[105] From the crucified Christ the divine power of living and moving in *agape* flows forth and "enlightenment about what the Holy Spirit is" may only then come.[106]

While the Spirit is 'being-with' the Father and the Son (and thus is the continuation of the Emmanuel's presence), the being-from of Christ's identity is the reason for His mission of being-for;[107] Christ is a 'being-for' others in time precisely because He is wholly one with the Father

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[100] See *Pilgrim Fellowship*, 48-49.
[101] "[T]his characteristic identity of the Son [namely, being from the Father] is extended to include the Holy Spirit: 'He will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak' (16:13). The Father sends the Spirit in Jesus' name (14:26); Jesus sends him from the Father (15:26)" (*Jesus of Nazareth* II, 98 [G 115]).
[102] See *Pilgrim Fellowship*, 41.
[103] See *Pilgrim Fellowship*, 43.
[104] See *Pilgrim Fellowship*, 45.
[105] See *Pilgrim Fellowship*, especially 51 and also 49.
[106] See *Pilgrim Fellowship*, 46-47.
[107] This connection is not entirely clear in his later work, where a focus on the 'pro-existence' or being-for of Christ seems to elevate the economic dimension to identity with the immanent dimension of the Son's divine being. "Recently theology has rightly underlined the use of the word 'for' . . . a word that may be considered the key . . . to the figure of Jesus overall. His entire being is expressed by the word 'pro-existence' – he is there, not for himself, but for others. This is not merely a dimension of his existence, but its innermost essence and its entirety. His very being is a 'being-for'. If we are able to grasp this, then we have truly come close to the mystery of Jesus . . ." (*Jesus of Nazareth* II, 134 [G 154]). Again, "Jesus' 'substantial' being is as such the entire dynamic of 'being for'; the two are inseparable" (88 [G 106]). But he also says: "Jesus, the Holy One of God, is the one sent by God. His whole identity is 'being sent' . . . He lives totally 'from the Father', and there is nothing else, nothing purely of his own, that he brings to

from eternity. Hence, Ratzinger affirms that "'Mission' theology is again theology of being as relation and of relation as mode of unity . . . through the concept of the mission, being is interpreted as being 'from' and as being 'for' . . ."[108] Thus, the category (or rather, transcendental) of *relatio* is revealed to us in the economy of creation and salvation history as a window into the inner life of God as well as into man as His image.[109]

The triadic theme of being-for, being-from, and being-with appears in subtle ways throughout most of Ratzinger's writings, but the relative infrequency of these terms compared with other more common theological expressions does not undermine the almost programmatic function of this profound triad in his work. It plays the role of uniting his anthropology, which conceives the person as essentially relational and thus called to a *communio* of love, with his understanding of God's revealed being, where Christ is the bridge between the inner-divine exchange and the person as the center of the cosmos.[110] Balthasar, instead, approaches the

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the Father" (97-98 [G 115]]). Hence, it may be that he simply wants to maintain the inseparability of *processio* and *mission*. See also *Introduction to Christianity*, 165 [G 112].

[108] *Introduction to Christianity*, 188-189 [G 130-131].

[109] For Ratzinger's understanding of *relatio* in terms of Augustine's Trinitarian theology, itself also a theological anthropology: see *Introduction to Christianity*, 182-184 [G 125-127]. Notwithstanding his inapt characterization there of 'accidents' in Aristotle, he clearly wants to elevate *relatio*, on the basis of God's ontological identity as mutually subsisting relations, to the point of having equal status with substance, sitting alongside each other, as it were, distinct in creatures but neither subordinate to the other. In support of *relatio* as transcendental, he could have also quoted the following from Augustine: "So we are left with the position that the Son is called being by way of relationship, with reference to the Father. And this leads us to the most unexpected conclusion that being is not being, or at least that when you say being you point not to being but to relationship" (*De Trinitate* 7, 2 [see *The Trinity* (second edition), trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park: New City, 2012), 220]).

[110] Hence, even in his liturgical theology the theme makes an appearance with the following words: "And now the challenge is to allow ourselves to be taken up into [Christ's] being 'for' mankind, to let ourselves be embraced by his opened arms, which draw us to himself. He, the Holy One, hallows us with the holiness that none of us could ever give ourselves. We are incorporated into the great historical process by which the world moves toward the fulfillment of God being 'all in all'" (*The Spirit of the Liturgy*, trans. John Saward [San Francisco: Ignatius, 2000], 59). Furthermore, he speaks of the eucharistic consecration in terms of divine action in the

mystery of God kataphatically, extrapolating from the revelation of Christ's descent into hell (begun on the Cross) a sort of topography of God's inner life. Ratzinger shares with Balthasar a similar vision of the profundity and extremity of the descent,[111] but he explicitly limits it to the suffering of Christ on the Cross (culminating in his death)[112] and he does not extrapolate from this event an eschatology or a theology of suffering in the Trinity.

Conclusion

There are two theological novelties that rush to the mind of any student attempting to characterize Balthasar's peculiar thought: (1) his doctrine of Holy Saturday, or the descent of Christ into the hell of the damned, and (2) his quasi-universalist argument in favor of a theological hope for the salvation of all men. There is a third dimension of Balthasar's thought that takes up these two features into a higher plane, as it were: the Trinitarian processions themselves are constituted by an *ur-kenosis* that renders it fitting for God as Trinity (in some sense) to be dragged into the "second death," making "him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21).

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world and reflects: "For a moment the world is silent, everything is silent, and in that silence we touch the eternal – for one beat of the heart we step out of time into *God's being-with-us*" (212, emphasis added).

[111] In his early work, Ratzinger interprets Christ's passion, like Balthasar, in terms of two traditionally minimized scriptural passages: "[Christ's] holiness expressed itself precisely as mingling with the sinners whom Jesus drew into his vicinity; as mingling to the point where he himself was made 'to be sin' and bore the curse of the law in execution as a criminal – complete community of fate with the lost (cf. 2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13)" (*Introduction to Christianity*, 342 [G 253]). In his much later work, *Jesus of Nazareth*, Ratzinger emphasizes Christ's death on the Cross as the culmination of His *kenosis*, even appearing to discourage an understanding of the descent into hell that would separate it temporally from His suffering on Friday: "God descends, to the point of death on the Cross. And precisely by doing so, he reveals himself in his true divinity. We ascend to God by accompanying him on this descending path. . . . [T]he man who is God . . . who, precisely because he is God, descends, empties himself, all the way to death on the Cross" (vol. 1, 95, 99).

[112] See, for example, *Introduction to Christianity*, 290, 293, 297-298, 300-301 [G 212, 214, 217-218, 220-221].

While Balthasar conceptualizes the Trinitarian God almost exclusively in terms of *kenosis*, where the descent of Christ into hell is its economic culmination, Ratzinger opts instead to reflect on the transcendental relationality of divine being, as revealed in the redemptive incarnation as such. As the paschal mystery is, for Balthasar, a perfect reflection of the self-surrender constitutive of the infinitely distinct but united divine hypostases, the divine 'undergirding' of sin and death penetrates even "the second death." Instead of associating the economic Trinity with the hell of the damned by virtue of Christ's descent, Ratzinger's more disciplined approach discerns in every dimension of Christ's life a 'being-for' that points to His being-from the Father, united by the being-with of the Spirit. Therefore, more than Balthasar, Ratzinger reveres the Creator's intractable respect for the radical freedom of the human person to refuse His love definitively.

The Trinitarian eschatology of Balthasar, which relies on an over-emphatic anti-Pelagian understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic and a brutal interpretation of Holy Saturday, clearly acts to undermine the real possibility of damnation for men. Ratzinger distances himself from Balthasar's sympathies with the Origenist *misericordia* tradition, while at the same time reflecting deeply on the implications for an objectively redeemed humanity of Christ's descent into *Sheol*, the utter darkness of human loneliness and *Angst* proper to sin and death. There is certainly a tension, however, between Ratzinger's understanding of the community of man in terms of an all-pervading *relatio* and the reality of damnation. It is unclear how heaven can be heaven 'above' a hell, how it is tolerable for the elect (and for God!) that some of Christ's body be lost forever. He does not attempt a resolution to this perplexing dilemma precisely in order to avoid falling into the trap of over-systematizing the faith by positing, as Balthasar does, the necessity of a hope-filled response to a concealed promise that God's desire for universal

salvation, ultimately, cannot be impeded even by the terrible reality of a finite freedom that is, nevertheless, in principle, always capable of refusing His love. Ratzinger seems, rather, to acknowledge the divine decision to create man with the capacity to reject definitively any and all grace offered him by his Creator, that God does not ordinarily contradict the order of nature He has created in man by offering Himself in an irresistible fashion, even if He reserves the right to do so. In any case, it remains unanswered for him how precisely this apparent frustration of the divine will ought to be understood.

Chapter 5

Toward a Consensus in the *De Auxiliis* Debate[1]

Now that some preliminary revisions of Balthasar's trinitarian eschatology have been proposed in comparison to Maritain and Ratzinger, it is necessary to return to the chief point of criticism directed by this dissertation toward Balthasar's larger theodramatic perspective on eschatology and theological anthropology, namely, the implicit theology of grace that underlies and determines the ultimate conclusions of his *Theodramatik*. It is only fitting to transition from considerations of how his trinitarian and eschatological thoughts differ from Maritain and Ratzinger to an exploration of the more foundational questions of theological anthropology, particularly, the theology of how grace operates in man.

In the previous chapter, the caution with which Ratzinger approaches questions of grace, when he does broach them, was noted in comparison to Balthasar's more overt option for a form of Augustinianism influenced by Karl Barth (explored in chapter two, albeit from a systematic rather than historical perspective). In chapter three, immediately preceding the comparison with Ratzinger, Maritain's philosophical understanding of divine predestination from the perspective of the divine permission of moral evil was briefly treated, particularly, as it relates to the question of divine impassibility. In this chapter, I will recap and defend Maritain's position against the neo-Bañezian approach he attacks, after having added William Most's theological formulation of essentially the same proposal (with different emphases and complementary insights). The following chapter will treat Bernard Lonergan's unique approach to the same question (the grace- freedom dynamic) in conjunction with his treatment of another key

[1] A version of this chapter is set to appear in a forthcoming issue of the journal *Nova et Vetera*.

component of an adequate theological anthropology, the supernatural-natural (or grace-nature) relationship, from the entry point of the problem of the natural desire for the beatific vision, again presented primarily with respect to the Bañezian approach.

The (neo-)Bañezian approach to the grace-freedom dynamic is singled out as the only real competitor to the Molinist/Suárezian approach, which no one now seriously considers Thomistic (and therefore is not treated here), and as the natural and historical inheritor of the Augustinian approach to grace and predestination. If this modern-day form of over-emphatic anti-Pelagian (or 'hyper-Augustinian') theology of grace is refuted at its foundations, then the natural assumptions of Balthasar's inherited under-developed Augustinian approach to the grace-freedom dynamic are replaced by more adequate notions that Balthasar should have obtained, if he had not neglected the *de auxiliis* debate, and that may lead to eschatological conclusions other than his (e.g., subjunctive universalism). Therefore, before briefly entering into the broader problematic of the grace-nature relationship à la the natural desire in Lonergan's defense of the natural integrity of the human intellect and will with respect to the supernatural order, thanks to the "theorem of the supernatural," it is necessary to address the even more pertinent and pressing issue of the particular relationship that exists between human freedom and divine grace à la the *de auxiliis* debate as it has developed in the twentieth century, particularly, the question of the divine permission of moral evil, which itself directly relates to Balthasar's trinitarian eschatology.

The Landscape of the Debate as it Relates to the New Proposal

In the first half of the twentieth century, the dominant position among Thomists on the issue of predestination and grace[1] in the (largely Dominican) commentator tradition was represented by Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, called by some "the sacred monster of Thomism,"[2] which was challenged alone by Francisco Marin-Sola, O.P.[3] According to the former, the universal causality of God is of such a nature that His eternal wisdom and love decides without any reason outside His own sovereign will to provide only some men ("the elect") with the efficacious graces necessary for meriting salvation.[4] In Garrigou's conception of grace as either "efficacious" or "sufficient," sufficient graces are those intrinsically efficacious (as all grace

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[1] The topic of grace is, of course, vast and multi-faceted; similarly, the topic of predestination stretches out into the complex realm of divine foreknowledge. The range of questions presentable here involves enormous theological resourcefulness as well as philosophical acumen. Therefore, I am choosing to zero in on the most relevant aspect of the *de auxiliis* controversy, namely the question of the manner in which God permits evil, and approach the debate primarily from a metaphysical perspective (although informed by revelation). The far-reaching implications of the growing consensus regarding the solution to this aspect of the controversy are yet to be explored in much detail. For example, it seems a consensus on this question would constitute at least a significant portion of the foundation necessary for any substantial union with the more Augustinian-inclined Protestant denominations on the question of the precise manner in which grace is transformative of human nature. My goal here is simply to signal the impending emergence of a consensus (within Catholic Thomistic circles) on the controversy.

[2] This title is taken from Richard Peddicord, *Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine Press, 2004).

[3] See Francisco Marín-Sola, "El sistema tomista sobre la moción divina," *Ciencia Tomista* 32 (1925): 5-52; "Respuesta a algunas objeciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina," *Ciencia Tomista* 33 (1926): 5-74; "Nuevas observaciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina," *Ciencia Tomista* 33 (1926): 321-397. See also Michael Torre, *Do Not Resist the Spirit's Call: Francisco Marin-Sola on Sufficient Grace* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013) and *God's Permission of Sin: Negative or Conditioned Decree? A Defense Of The Doctrine Of Francisco Marin-Sola, O.P. Based On The Principles Of Thomas Aquinas* (Fribourg: Academic, 2009).

[4] For his doctrine of predestination and grace, see Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination: The Meaning of Predestination in Scripture and the Church* (Rockford: Tan Books and Publishers, 1998); *God: His Existence and His Nature*, vol.2 (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1955), nos. 64-65, Appendix 4, and the Epilogue; *The One God: A Commentary on the First Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1954), cc. 19, 22-23; and *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 109-14* (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Company, 1952).

must be, contrary to Molinism) that are predetermined not to come to fruition, that is, not to be extrinsically efficacious (or actually effective). One way in which he distinguishes the Thomist position from the Augustinian is to base the refusal of efficacious grace on God's part not upon the deficiency proper to fallen human nature,[5] but upon a prior resistance to the intrinsic efficacy of the sufficient grace offered to all,[6] a resistance that is infallibly ensured to take place by a physical premotion determined by an antecedent divine decree to permit sin (hence the concept of 'infallible permissive decrees,' shortened occasionally to 'infallible permissions').[7] The purpose for infallibly permitting such deficient creatures to bring about their own moral self-destruction, inevitable wherever efficacious grace is absent, is to manifest the glory proper to divine justice – that is, if the damnation of some were not ensured, only His mercy would be manifest, which would not indicate the full measure of His glory.[8] In the mid-20th century, diverse Thomists proposed from slightly different angles essentially the same revision of the Thomist position in opposition to the doctrine of infallible permissive decrees.[9] Although

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[5] See, for example, *The One God*, 709.

[6] See, for example, *Predestination*, 207ff.

[7] There is inherent in this type of position a tendency toward the Protestant (and Jansenist) conception of human nature as essentially corrupt. Accordingly, sins are infallibly permitted wherever God does not provide an infallibly efficacious influx of grace, or a physical premotion to perform the good; hence, human nature is viewed as inevitably tending toward sin (absent infallibly efficacious grace) by virtue of its radical ontological dependence on God (or "defectability"). Francisco Marin-Sola argues at length for the Thomist (indeed, Catholic) conception of human nature as wounded, not corrupted, and therefore capable of performing good acts that are easy, but incapable of performing good acts that are difficult and of persevering in the good indefinitely. See especially his "Nuevas observaciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina," 324-329, 353-357, 366-367, 380-383.

[8] See Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, Part 1, cc. 3 and 5; Part 2, sect. 1, c. 2; Part 2, Synthesis; and Part 3, c. 1.

[9] For Jacques Maritain's most developed formulation of the position, see *Dieu et la permission du mal* (Paris: Desclee de Brouwer, 1963), in English, *God and the Permission of Evil* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1966), which is in some ways anticipated by his lecture, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil* (Milwaukee: The Aquinas Lectures, 1942), published originally in English but made available in French translation as chapter seven of *De*

Garrigou did attempt to dulcify the Bañezian discourse on negative reprobation,[10] in the course of argumentation with Marin-Sola, he would not concede to the latter (as Jean-Hervé Nicolas conceded to Maritain several decades of debate).[11]

Bergson a Thomas d'Aquin (New York: Edition de la Maison Francaise, 1944), as well as chapter four of *Court traite de l'existence et de l'existant* (Paris: Paul Hartmann, 1947), in English, *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1948). Published in the same year and arguing for the same fundamental position is Guilielmo G. Most, *Novum tentamen ad solutionem de Gratia et Praedestinatione* (Rome: Editones Paulinae, 1963). Most notes the essential agreement between him and Maritain on *GPSWG*, 485, mentioning also Philippe de la Trinite (484, cf. 391-392), Dom Mark Pontifex (484, cf. 392), and Charles Journet (485, cf. 392); he also mentions Francisco Muniz (on 384ff. and 451) in conjunction with Francisco Marin-Sola, but he never mentions Bernarnd Lonergan. Charles Journet adopts Maritain's formulation but from a more theological perspective in *The Meaning of Grace*, trans. A. V. Littledale (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1960) and *The Meaning of Evil*, trans. Michael Barry (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1963). Regarding his correspondence with Maritain and Francisco Marín-Sola, see Torre, "Francisco Marin-Sola, OP, and the Origin of Jacque Maritain's Doctrine on God's Permission of Evil," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4, no. 1 (2006): 55-94. Bernard Lonergan independently develops a similar but unique formulation in his dissertation on g*ratia operans*; it was originally published in the form of four 1941 articles in *Theological Studies*, then as *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. J. Patout Burns (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971), and finally *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas: Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 1, eds. Frederick E. Crowe, SJ, and Robert M. Doran, SJ (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2000).

[10] See, for example, his *Predestination*, 333-334. Thomas Joseph White cites *The One God* (St. Louis and London: B. Herder Publishing Company, 1943), 554-556, 683-688, and *Predestination*, 175-177, as "self-consciously indebted to Rene Billuart . . . in contrast to the perspectives of commentators such as Bañez and John of St. Thomas" (see "Von Balthasar and Journet," 663n71). Maritain says: "Father Garrigou-Lagrange caused the traditional doctrine to progress considerably . . . the disciples of the great commentators, Father Garrigou-Lagrange for instance, endeavored to improve the theory of their masters on the permission of evil" (*God and the Permission of Evil*, 19 [F 25]). For an attack on Garrigou-Lagrange's effort here, see the recent Bañezian account of John Salza, *The Mystery of Predestination According to Scripture, the Church, and St. Thomas Aquinas* (Charlotte: TAN Books, 2010), 86-87. It is well-known that Bañez held a restrictive view of election, indebted to the late Augustine, which the Church rejected in the course of the Jansenist controversy.

[11] See Garrigou-Lagrange's response to Marin-Sola's *Ciencia Tomista* articles in his article, "La grace infailliblement efficace et les actes salutaires faciles," *Revue Thomiste* 31 (1926): 160-173 and his pamphlet circulated at the Angelicum, entitled *Principia Thomismi Cum Novissimo Congruismo Comparata: Thomismi Renovatio an Eversio?* (Rome: L'Angelicum, 1926). For Nicolas' retraction in the face of Maritain's argumentation, see "La volunté salvifique de Dieu contrariée par le péché." Thomas M. Osbourne, Jr., neglects to mention such retraction when he curtly dismisses "the objection that the Thomist position [he means Bañezian] entails that God is

Garrigou's close personal friend, the great philosopher, Jacques Maritain, had been working on the question (of the divine permission of evil and its metaphysical interplay with human freedom) since the 20's, as his correspondence with Charles Journet on the work of Marin-Sola reveals.[12] While the core of the new proposal may be traced to Marin-Sola (as Michael Torre has effectively displayed),[13] I will be concerned primarily with presenting the version of it in Maritain's treatment together with William Most's more comprehensive (albeit imperfect) analysis of the issue.[14] Without entering into the minor discrepancies between these

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responsible for evil actions" as "overwhelmingly refuted by J. H. Nicolas, 'La permission du peche,' *Revue Thomiste* 60 (1960)…" ("Thomist Premotion and Contemporary Philosophy of Religion," *Nova et Vetera* [English Edition] 4, no. 3 [2006]: 607-631, at 614n17). Nicolas very clearly yields to Maritain's critique on this point, even if he expresses reservations in other regards. Osbourne also appears completely ignorant of Lonergan's dissertation, as he endeavors to critique (however briefly and inadequately) the points there argued with respect to premotion, mentioning only David Burrell and Brian Shanley as culprits (see 619, 623ff.).

[12] For information on the debate between Garrigou-Lagrange and Marin-Sola and regarding the influence of Marin-Sola upon Maritain via the latter's correspondence with Charles Journet, see Michael Torre, "Francisco Marin-Sola." Torre also suggests that, despite some differences, Bernard Lonergan comes down on the side of Francisco Marin-Sola because under the influence of his dissertation director (Charles Boyer), who had written an article defending many of Marin-Sola's points in the dispute (see *Do Not Resist*, 237-238). While it is true that Lonergan and Marin-Sola are in essential agreement on divine permission of evil (i.e., divine innocence), the former's work on *gratia operans* is largely concerned with refuting the thesis of *praemotio physica*, which Marin-Sola takes for granted in his preoccupation with *gratia sufficiens*; the two are different but complementary paths of exonerating God of responsibility for moral evil or defending the divine innocence (to use Maritain's emphatic terms).

[13] See especially his dissertation, *God's Permission of Sin*.

[14] Most distinguishes his treatment more from Marin-Sola's position than from Maritain's, particularly, on the points of whether there is divine foreknowledge of demerits prior to His predestinating will and of interpreting Thomas on the grace of final perseverance (see *GPSWG*, 385-391, 451-452). With regard to Maritain, he notes the "considerable difference . . . [on] the point of entry for evil," but also concedes that "the broad lines of his solution are identical to ours," (485) which he does not accord Marin-Sola. I will not enter into these difficulties. I could have just as easily focused upon Marin-Sola's treatment in the *Ciencia Tomista* articles, but Michael Torre has done a superb job of that already. The slight differences between all the players in this consensus will not be explored, but it is evident to the scholar that Most's treatment, while unique in its comprehensive approach and peculiar interpretation, is not up to par when it comes to textual analysis (i.e., proof-texts abound and the historical reasoning is imprecise).

diverse accounts, I will depend upon the particularly complementary expressions of the solution to the *de auxiliis* controversy found in Maritain and Most, presupposing here the essential identity of their proposals, in portraying the coherence of the central proposal, a hypo-Augustinian Thomistic[15] understanding of predestination (purged of the notion of the necessity for infallible permissive decrees),[16] against the recent push-back expressed by contemporary defenders of the (neo-)Bañezian position.[17] Therefore, I will utilize the arguments presented by both Most and Maritain against the Bañezian position to defend (with some help from Thomas Joseph White) what they hold in common against the criticisms offered by Steven A. Long, before concluding with some brief but necessary comments on a recent book by John Salza and an essay by David Bentley Hart.[18] But first it is necessary to summarize the primary theses of

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[15] The 'hypo-' here is meant to indicate a distinction from what is sometimes called the 'hyper-Augustinianism' of Calvinists, Jansenists, and the like, which designates a rigid predestinarian approach to the relationship between grace and freedom. It will become clearer in the course of this essay what precisely this contrast I wish to emphasize entails.

[16] The debate concerning Thomas' definitive opinion on the question will be left aside.

[17] Steven A. Long, "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4, no. 3 (2006): 557-606 (originally, "Providence, liberté, et loi naturelle," *Revue Thomiste* 102 [2002]: 355-406); John Salza, *The Mystery of Predestination*; Thomas Osborne, "Thomist Premotion and Contemporary Philosophy of Religion." Gilles Emery, without taking an explicit stand in favor of the Bañezian position, concludes his essay, "The Question of Evil and the Mystery of God in Charles Journet," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4, no. 3 (2006): 529-556, with doubts similar to Long's, which Maritain himself had previously entertained (under the influence of Garrigou-Lagrange). For a brief rebuttal of their arguments against Maritain, see T. J. White, "Von Balthasar and Journet," 662-663n70.

[18] In *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths* (New York: Oxford University, 2011), Matthew Levering cites the following explicit supporters of Maritain's thesis (at 155n96): Charles Journet, *The Meaning of Evil*, trans. Michael Barry (New York: P. J. Kennedy, 1963); Jean-Pierre Arfeuil, "Le Dessein sauveur de Dieu: La doctrine de la predestination selon saint Thomas d'Aquin," *Revue Thomiste* 74 (1974): 591-641; Michal Paluch, *La Profondeur de l'amour divin: La predestination dans l'oeuvre de saint Thomas d'Aquin* (Paris: J. Vrin, 2004), 33-36, 314-317; Jean-Pierre Torrell, "Préface" to *La Profondeur*; John Saward, "The Grace of Christ in His Principal Members: St. Thomas Aquinas on the Pastoral Epistles," in *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to His Biblical Commentaries*, eds. Thomas G. Weinandy, Daniel A. Keating, and John P. Yocum (New York: T & T. Clark International, 2005): 197-221 (see 200-209). He also cites (at 156n101 and 178n2, respectively) implicit support of Maritain's position

Most and Maritain in confrontation with Garrigou-Lagrange and "neo-Bañezianism," respectively.[19] Between Most and Maritain it will become clear that at the crux of a proper understanding of the interaction between infinite and finite freedom is the reality, as it were, of diverse species of nonbeing.[20] Hence, I will be focusing on the question primarily from the metaphysical perspective, which strikes at the heart of the debate since every position is one conceptualization or another of the data of revelation in scripture and tradition and none can claim authoritative status.

Most Confronts Garrigou on Infallible Permissive Decrees

Taking from divine revelation the model of God as loving father, William Most thoroughly displays how the "traditional" (i.e., Bañezian) Thomist position is fundamentally

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in W. Matthews Grant, "Aquinas on How God Causes the Act of Sin without Causing Sin Itself," *Thomist* 73 (2009): 455-496, and David Bentley Hart, "Providence and Causality: On Divine Innocence," in *The Providence of God: Deus Habet Consilium*, eds. Francesca Aran Murphy and Philip G. Ziegler (London: T &T Clarke, 2009). Levering himself criticizes Maritain's thesis as an attempt to understand what cannot be understood, opting instead to defend the apophatic tension, as exhibited in Catherine of Sienna and Francis de Sales, between two apparently irreconcilable affirmations of faith (namely, that God loves each free creature infinitely and that He permits free creatures to reject Him definitively). Perhaps, it is not incongruent with this double affirmation to opt for one speculative understanding of how it may be coherent over another.

[19] I begin with Most's treatment and proceed next to Maritain's both because it deals more extensively with the problems of the Bañezian position (as seen in Garrigou-Lagrange) and because it is the more neglected of the two, despite the fact that his very thorough proposal appeared in the same year as Maritain's most developed (but still concise) work on the matter. Nevertheless, Maritain's 'Aquinas Lecture,' *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, is a profound interpretation of Thomas' texts on the divine permission of evil, which may be said to form the basis of what I am calling the "new proposal" or the "revised position" adopted by many in opposition to the most common position of the Thomistic commentator tradition (i.e., negative reprobation understood in terms of infallible permissive decrees).

[20] Simply put, since being admits of species, even though being is not a genus (i.e., they are related analogically), there must also be diverse species of nonbeing, or diverse ways in which being is absent (e.g., privation is distinct from negation, evil is distinct from imperfection).

opposed to the universal salvific will of God.[21] Garrigou defends the position of the great commentators on the metaphysical grounds that it is impossible for God to foreknow anything (contingent) prior to His final predestinating will (or "consequent will").[22] According to this popular Dominican view, God has an antecedent will that does not discriminate between men and a consequent will that both infallibly permits the fall of man and randomly chooses a few who will be rescued from the inevitable destiny of the *massa damnata*.[23] The consequent will, therefore, is not consequent to any foreknowledge, but to creation and the natural defectability of man's creaturely being.[24] The divine intellect can foreknow the good and evil acts of each man

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[21] See Most, *GPSWG*, cc. 3 and 17. There may be a difference between the typical position of many commentators in the neo-scholastic period, or what I refer to as the Bañezian (Thomist) position, and the actual position of Domingo Bañez – there are diverse plausible interpretations of his writings that seem to have been exegeted only recently. For example, Robert J. Matava presents three possible interpretations of Bañez' theory of physical premotion, utilizing texts of various periods (particularly the lesser known, published posthumously). Still, he argues in favor of one of those options; see Matava, *Divine Causality and Human Free Choice: Domingo Bañez and the Controversy 'De Auxiliis'* (Boston: Brill, Forthcoming), 55-70. He also ends up opposing Bañez' understanding of the divine permission of evil (see 98-99), which goes hand-in-hand with the view that every created act must be (ontologically) preceded by a particular divine predetermination, even though he wants to blaze an altogether different trail from that of Marin-Sola and Maritain (see 37-39). At the same time, Matava seems to entertain a slightly different interpretation of Bañez on at least one occasion (see 46n80), which, if true, would exempt him from Marin-Sola's critique concerning the woundedness of fallen human nature, who nevertheless directs his comments toward the modern Bañezians, not Bañez himself.

[22] See, for example, *Predestination*, 341-345.

[23] See, for example, *Predestination*, 80-84. This language of selecting a few out of a condemned mass derives from Augustine's *massa damnata* interpretation of Romans 9, which may be the origin of the Bañezian understanding of negative reprobation. Although Most argues that such a view was adopted because of the predominance of this interpretation, Garrigou clearly thinks that original sin is not the reason for the defectibility that causes resistance to sufficient grace and the consequent deprival of its efficacy. Rather, he says, the divine abstinence from predestining acceptance of grace is the indispensable condition that infallibly permits actual defection from the good (see *The One God*, 709). Garrigou also believes this to be the teaching of St Thomas. Most argues convincingly that Thomas usually adopts Augustine's "massa damnata" theory and that this is the reason for his occasional teaching that sins occur infallibly by divine permission (see *GPSWG* 305-307). I will not enter into questions concerning Thomas' texts.

[24] This points both to the problem in Garrigou of not sufficiently acknowledging the goodness of nature and to the point of difference in Garrigou with other Thomists, namely, the question of

only in or by the consequent will, that is, once He has willed to cause only these men to perform these meritorious acts. In response to such a claim, Most argues effectively that it need not be impossible for God to foreknow evil acts prior to His consequent will, addressing on metaphysical grounds every related objection proposed by Garrigou.[25] Most explains that, in fact, it is fitting that His foreknowledge of evil acts be the *reason* that distinguishes His antecedent will (that all men do only what is good) from His consequent will,[26] wherein is contained, in some manner, everything that actually occurs.[27] According to this position, instead of randomly abandoning some men to their own devices, which will inevitably lead them to an evil destiny (since God alone is the source of good), God chooses to predestine those to beatitude whom He does not foreknow to be consistently willing evil for themselves. This implies that man does not inevitably commit every moral evil for which he does not have the "efficacious grace" to avoid, but that he can either propose resistance to grace or be metaphysically inactive by his own power with respect to any particular good.[28]

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whether it is the consequent will *per se* or sin itself that is the primary reason for the inefficacy of the divine antecedent desire for universal salvation.

[25] For his replies to the previous line of argumentation, see Most, *GPSWG*, 609-612.

[26] See *GPSWG*, 5ff.

[27] "So it is true that the will of God always accomplishes what it wills. But it does not will everything without any condition: the consequent will takes into consideration the condition of the creature…that is, after the absence of resistance" (*GPSWG*, 202).

[28] See *GPSWG*, c. 7. Most seems to use the term "efficacious grace" with reservations, but given such a framework, he defends the intrinsic efficacy of grace (see *GPSWG*, 469). Assumption of the framework according to which sufficient and efficacious grace are distinguished as mutually exclusive and exhaustive categories of grace in the context of its relationship to freedom does not render it an adequate framework. A given linguistic-conceptual framework, even if inadequate to a particular conceptual task, need not be first replaced for the logical problems it may induce to be resolved – the mind can so stretch the terms involved that the limits need not always impede resolution. Nevertheless, the division of grace into sufficient and efficacious is deceiving. Most is not the only one, however, who does not unreservedly subscribe to the hard division of grace into "efficacious" and "sufficient," as if sufficient grace is any less *intrinsically* efficacious and as if each grace must of necessity be predetermined by God to be either *extrinsically* inefficacious or efficacious. White says: "As Bernard Lonergan has shown in his

Hence, after creating men and before predestining each to his own good acts, God foresees the particular evil acts desired by each man and, at least ordinarily, He causes each man to perform freely the good acts the man has not already willed to resist (albeit not yet by a positive decision against it).[29] Since God is the cause of everything that exists, even our free good acts are effects of God's predestinating will and performed freely precisely in virtue of this will, and yet the *reason* God does not predestine some to accept His (efficacious) grace may be that they have already chosen to resist it;[30] this does not mean that God gives efficacious grace to those who do good, but that He gives it to those who do not, so to speak, go on a 'pre-emptive strike' in favor of evil.[31] In other words, man is free because God simply causes his acts to be

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doctoral thesis, the notion of grace as 'sufficient' and 'efficient' in Aquinas pertains not to two distinct *kinds* of grace, but to the same grace considered as sufficient for salvation and effective when it is not refused. See Lonergan, *Gratia Operans*, 333, 441. However, the notion of a distinct form of grace that can be refused versus a grace that is irresistible was developed in the post-Tridentine period by Thomists to oppose Jansenism and Protestantism on the one hand, and Molinism on the other" ("Von Balthasar and Journet," 661n68). The former distinction presupposes grace in principle can be resisted, whereas the latter distinction implies that it either cannot be resisted or it need not be resisted in order to fail. Lonergan's dissertation is also in part concerned with establishing a distinction between Thomas' Aristotelian understanding of *praemotio physica* and the Bañezian understanding of this notion in Thomas. In any case, on the topic of operative grace, Reinhard Hütter is correct when he says this work is "still to be the benchmark analysis of Aquinas' profound treatment of this utterly complex topic" ("*Desiderium Naturale Visionis Dei – Est autem duplex hominis beatitude sive felicitas*: Some Observations about Lawrence Feingold's and John Milbank's Recent Interventions in the Debate over the Natural Desire to See God," *Nova et Vetera* [English Edition] 5, no. 1 [2007]: 81-131, at 103n42).

[29] "For if a man can lack even one evil disposition without grace, then he is negatively disposed in regard to at least one grace that can come" (*GPSWG*, 493).

[30] "It must be stated that God moves everything according to its manner. So divine motion is imparted to some things with necessity; however, it is imparted to the rational nature with liberty because the rational power is related to opposites. God so moves the human mind to the good, however, that a man can resist this motion. And so, that a man should prepare himself for grace is from God…*but that he should lack grace does not have its cause from God but from the man*, according to Hosea 13:9, 'Your ruin is from yourself, Israel; your help is only from me.'" (Thomas Aquinas, *Quodlibetale* I, q. 4, a. 2, ad 2 [emphasis added])

[31] For a detailed account of how this follows from what was said above, one would have to consult the whole of Most, *GPSWG*.

done with that created freedom which cannot lie outside the power of His providence. Nevertheless, since we know by revelation that God sincerely wills the salvation of every person (e.g., 1 Tim 2:4), it is fitting that the resistance proposed by each man be taken into consideration prior to His infallible causation of what actually occurs.[32] This is the only Thomistic alternative to the doctrine of infallible permission.[33] What follows in this section is a virtual back-and-forth between Most and Garrigou on whether infallible permissive decrees (and negative reprobation conceived accordingly) are metaphysically necessary or, rather, implicate God as the indirect cause of evil.

According to Most, the doctrine of infallible permissive decrees ends up making the divine will an indirect cause of evil acts,[34] even if such an implication is explicitly denied (as it is by Garrigou). Garrigou, nevertheless, justifies the theory of infallible permission in the following manner: "God is not bound, indeed, to conduct effectively all angels and men to the glory of heaven and to prevent a creature, of itself defectible, from sometimes failing. He can permit this evil of which He is by no means the cause, and He permits it in view of a greater good, as being a manifestation of His infinite justice."[35] Most argues that this kind of approach

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[32] See, for example, *GPSWG*, 166 and 202.

[33] Although Most (like Maritain) argues that infallible permissive decrees would make God the indirect cause of evil, an evident metaphysical impossibility, he also speaks of an 'extraordinary providence' in which God provides the the grace of positive non-resistance infrustrably (see *GPSWG*, 472-473). According to Most's schema, positive non-resistance is ordinarily willed in a frustrable manner, and therefore it is usually unbefitting of God to grant an infallibly efficacious (or infrustrable) grace. Thus, Most says: "God can, when He so wills, move the hearts of men infrustrably, so as to forestall or even cancel out resistance. But to do this belongs to extraordinary providence" (*GPSWG*, 453). He thus distinguishes between primary and secondary freedom; the former corresponds to the freedom exercised under 'ordinary' providence and the latter under that 'extraordinary;' see *GPSWG*, 158-160.

[34] See *GPSWG*, 431ff. It will be seen that Maritain holds the same.

[35] *Predestination*, 177. The question of whether willing that some inevitably condemn themselves for eternity truly manifests divine glory to a greater extent than would allowing for the possibility of universal salvation (even if conditionally willed) is another detail of the

coheres well with the *massa damnata* theory of St. Augustine as an exegete.[36] Arguing against the position later espoused by Most that predestination is consequent to foreknowledge of demerits, the true harshness of the Bañezian solution is put in near full relief in the following words of Garrigou:

> The motive for negative reprobation, taken absolutely or in a general way, is not the foreseen evil of the reprobates; for this negative reprobation is nothing else but the divine permission of these demerits, and therefore it logically precedes rather than follows the foreseeing of them. Without this divine permission, these demerits would not happen in time, and from all eternity, they would remain unforeseen. . . . If we ask why God chose this person and not that other, there is…no reason for this but simply the divine will which is thus the motive both for individual predestination and the negative reprobation of this particular rather than that other.[37]

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discussion treated at length by Most (see c. 3), who in my opinion shows the former option to be opposed by the First Vatican Council (see 46ff.). Nevertheless, Garrigou asserts (on the basis of *ST* I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3): "We must say…that the motive for negative reprobation is that God willed to manifest His goodness not only by means of His mercy, but also by means of His justice, and that it belongs to Providence to permit certain defectible beings to fail and certain evils to happen, without which there would be no good things of a higher order" (*Predestination*, 206-207). Marin-Sola rebuts the argument for infallible permissive decrees from the perfection of creation in the following ingenious manner: "Asi, por ejemplo, algunos novicios tomistas, al leer las frases de Santo Tomas en que dice claramente que el *unico* motive de la reprobacion negative es *el mayor bien del universo*, se figuran ya que la reprobación negativa no puede suponer la presciencia de los pecados actuales, cual si el 'ser unicamente por el mayor bien del universo' y el 'suponer la presciencia de los pecadoes actuales' fuesen cosas incompatibles, cuando, al contrario, son cosas que pueden estar unidas" ("Nuevas observaciones," 370n1 [emphasis original]). "So, for example, some beginning Thomists, reading the phrases of St. Thomas in which he says clearly that the *only* motive of negative reprobation is *the greater good of the universe*, already figure that negative reprobation cannot suppose knowledge of actual sins, as if 'to be only for the greater good of the universe' and 'to suppose knowledge of actual sins' were incompatible things, when, on the contrary, they are things that can be united." 'Negative reprobation' is a notion acceptable only if it does not entail infallible permissive decrees (for example, if it is posterior to prevision of demerit), as should become clear through the course of this chapter.

[36] See *GPSWG*, 278-302, for an exposition of two distinct theories in tension with each other throughout Augustine's writings, the aforementioned theory being indebted to a particular reading of Romans 5-9 that claims very few adherents today.

[37] *Predestination*, 206-207. Most thinks the precedence of negative reprobation to foreknowledge of demerits provides the prior rationale for the rest of the Bañezian schema: "All this is easy to understand when we recall that the Thomists insistently teach negative reprobation before foreseen demerits. They thereby implicitly teach that in no way can a man control whether or not he gets the application or efficacious grace…*In other words, negative reprobation*

Most outlines very well the maneuvers made by the traditional Thomists to justify such a position with respect to the efficacy of grace:

> [I]n one place [followers of Garrigou-Lagrange] will say that God gives sufficient grace to all men. Then, if someone wishes to infer from this statement that it depends on each man whether or not he is reprobated, they add that sufficient grace does not suffice for salvation. Then, if someone objects that God will not refuse the means needed for salvation, they add that no one is deprived of efficacious grace except for having resisted a sufficient grace. But if someone from this wishes to deduce that God does not desert anyone before prevision of demerits, they add that man always resists unless God, by efficacious grace, impedes resistance. Further, they sometimes say that efficacious grace is given to those who have sufficient grace and pray. But if someone then infers that man can determine by this means whether he will or will not get efficacious grace, they point out that no one can pray so as to get efficacious grace unless he first has an efficacious grace to pray.[38]

Despite Garrigou's evident attempt to temper the Bañezian position, the metaphysical confusion at the heart of the problem is also manifest in the following defense against the charge that a God who infallibly permits evil acts prior to foreknowledge of demerits would be an indirect cause of evil (and therefore unjust for punishing it):

> [N]obody is deprived of an efficacious grace that is necessary for salvation except through his own fault, for God never commands what is impossible . . . But this defect, because of which God refuses efficacious grace, would not happen without God's permission, which is not its cause but its indispensable condition. We must therefore distinguish between God's mere permission of sin, which is evidently prior to the sin permitted, and His refusal of efficacious grace because of this sin. This refusal is a punishment that presupposes the defect, whereas the defect presupposes the divine

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cannot be put into effect if man can control when and whether he gets efficacious grace. We can easily see now why Thomists insist that man is totally incapable of 'distinguishing himself' – in regard to doing evil or not doing evil…" (*GPSWG*, 435-436 [emphasis original]). Michal Paluch argues that Thomas, in fact, in his *Commentary on the Sentences* held something similar to Most's position that reprobation is *post praevisa demerita* but *ante praevisa merita*, whereas in the *Summa Theologiae* his position seems to be that reprobation is simultaneous to foreknowledge of demerits (which is distinct from the understanding of Garrigou-Lagrange and [early] J.-H. Nicolas that it is *ante praevisa demerita et merita*); see *La Profondeur de l'amour divin*, 200-211, cited in Levering, *Predestination*, 81n67.

[38] *GPSWG*, 195-196.

> permission. God's permission of sin, which is good in view of the end (for a greater good), implies certainly the non-continuance of the created will in the performance of good at that particular time. This non-continuance, not being something real, is not a good. But neither is it an evil, for it is not the privation of a good that is due to one. It is merely the negation of a good that is not due to one . . . He is not bound to maintain in the performance of good this will which by its nature is defectible . . . God's withdrawal of efficacious grace is a punishment, and it is a punishment that presupposes at least a first defection.[39]

It is unclear how such divine permission of evil acts can be called simply an 'indispensable condition' and not an indirect cause, if it is itself sufficient to guarantee the performance of such evil. And it is not clear how there would not be something lacking in the justice of a God who would punish men in effect for doing what was metaphysically impossible for them not to do (consequent to such divine infallible permission). Finally, it is unclear how God's will to permit this man and not that one to commit this evil act and not that evil act would not be completely arbitrary, if it is said to precede all possible foreknowledge. If there is no foreknowledge of demerit prior to His final predestinating will, then there can be no reason for the latter besides divine whim. Even the translator (Bede Rose) of the English version of Garrigou's *The One God* is troubled enough by his positive formulation of the absolute gratuity of predestination to glory in the divine consequent will that he feels compelled to restate it negatively: he incorrectly asserts of this position that it does not "mean that God predestined certain persons to glory by a purely arbitrary act of His will."[40]

Most explains how the application of the Bañezian theory of physical pre-motion to all acts indiscriminately makes God the indirect cause of evil:[41]

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[39] *Predestination*, 208-209. Oddly enough, he says something else in this passage (i.e., in the second portion excised for clarity's sake) that could be construed in support of Most's idea of 'negative non-resistance': "The non-continuance of our will in the performance of good is not an evil, either of sin or of punishment. It is a non-good…" (209)

[40] *The One God*, 540n170.

[41] Most does, nevertheless, admit physical pre-motion in some sense (see *GPSWG*, 470-472).

> But in the system of the older Thomists . . . God is also the first cause of the evil specification or determination, since, before any decision on the part of the man, God alone initiates the process as a result of which this man, e.g., Mark, is moved from a state of indetermination as to the sin, into a process as a result of which, by metaphysical necessity, in the full and adequate sense, the man *cannot do other* than commit that sin which God has determined, at the time determined by God, in the manner determined by God, and in the circumstances determined by God.[42]

In other words, the Bañezian Thomist holds that God from all eternity overrides His own "initial" desire (i.e., the "divine antecedent will") for all men to perform only good acts, in order to choose which particular acts each man will perform, good and evil. Since, for the Bañezian, God can foreknow the evil acts of men only by knowing which good acts He does not cause them to perform, God ensures that evil act x is performed by choosing not to cause the opposite good act to be performed by the man in question. Assuming that the species of an evil act is entitative and therefore caused by God, the traditional Thomist concludes that every evil act performed by a creature is inevitably the "free" result of God's eternal decision not to cause the opposite good act to be performed instead. Thus, the crux of the issue from a metaphysical perspective (the primary perspective engaged by Garrigou) is whether evil specification originates: (a) indirectly, yet necessarily, from divine causality of the particular species of a human act, or (b) from man as deficient cause, indirectly determining the particular species of the human act caused by God. Opting for the latter (i.e., not attributing evil acts even indirectly to God's predestinating will), Most propounds the corollary thesis that reprobation must be consequent to foreknowledge of demerits, even if predestination precedes foreknowledge of merits.[43]

Turning to the metaphysical reasoning at the core of the Bañezian thesis, Most makes inroads toward one of the ways in which he effectively destroys it as a viable option:

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[42] *GPSWG*, 432 (emphasis original).
[43] See, for example, *GPSWG*, 498ff.

> As to the reason why a man always resists unless he has efficacious grace, these Thomists sometimes explain by saying that man's fall comes from human defectability. . . . [T]he most basic reason because of which these Thomists say that it is metaphysically inconceivable for a man not to resist is a metaphysical reason. For they hold, as Garrigou-Lagrange says, that: 'not to resist grace is already some good.' [*De gratia*, p.190] Therefore, since in their system, non-resistance is a positive good, it is necessary to say that man, by sufficient grace, has the *ability* of non-resisting but he does not have the *application* of the ability of non-resisting . . . the older Thomists have not found the distinction on the two kinds of non-resistance that we explained above, an essential distinction. If there were only one kind of non-resistance, the kind they speak of, they would be right in saving [sic] it is beyond man's unaided power . . .[44]

The first way in which he responds to this Bañezian metaphysic is to draw a distinction between negative and positive non-resistance according to the following explanation:

> It is possible to speak of omission of resistance to grace in two senses: Non-resistance can mean: 1) *A positive decision, a complete act, in which we formally decide not to resist or not to sin* . . . It is obvious that such a decision is a salutary act, a positive good. Hence, it is not in man's unaided power . . . 2) *The mere absence of an evil decision, in which the will does not move itself at all, in the first part of the process* . . . grace initiates the process by presenting a good to our mind, which God wishes to perform, and by moving our will to take pleasure in that good . . . *the two effects can continue without any positive decision on our part. If we merely do nothing, they continue*, for they are produced by grace and the grace does not withdraw unless we resist.[45]

Failing to distinguish between negative and positive non-resistance (to particular good acts willed by the divine antecedent will, i.e., in a conditional manner) inevitably leads to conceiving God as the ultimate source of the evil specification of free acts. If man cannot but resist every good influx from God unless God infallibly causes him to accept it, then every evil act is performed precisely because the created agent does not receive (from God) actualization of the potency to perform the opposite good act and is pre-moved therefore (by divine permissive

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[44] *GPSWG*, 433-434 (emphasis original).

[45] *GPSWG*, 139-140 (emphasis original). Although he is referring in particular to the dynamic of grace and its free reception, there is no reason why the distinction itself could not apply equally to the divine causality of all free good acts.

decree) toward the particular evil performed, as his nature always inclines him to opt for evil over good, according to this hypothesis.[46]

The second way in which Most responds to the insistence of the traditional Thomists that infallible permissive decrees are metaphysically necessary is to point to the Church's own assertion of the power of human freedom for the omission of evil (i.e., negative non-resistance).[47] In other words, he contests the opinion that men left to their own devises must will every evil act since man, as the Second Council of Orange and the Council of Trent suppose,[48] has it within his power not only to do evil but also to do nothing. Certainly, it is true that although man by nature has the power for good action, he cannot actualize such potency without receiving actualization from God. But this does not mean that whenever someone performs an evil act, it is because God did not give him the actualization of the potency for doing the opposite good. Instead, it could mean that God did not effectively actualize such potency precisely because human deficiency had already resisted such actualization. Simply stated:

> Man by himself, without grace, cannot do any positive salutary good. . . . Yet man can, by his own power, decide when and whether he will do evil. For, he can fail by his own power. And he can resist grace . . . Man can also omit resistance to grace . . . it is not we who make the beginning [of good work]: grace does that alone, and we do nothing. But in making the positive consent, as Trent teaches, we truly, actively cooperate.[49]

Hence, as there is no necessity for man always to will such resistance, the potency for good is actualized precisely where such resistance is absent. In other words, whenever a man does not

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[46] In terms of grac, for the Bañezian it is 'absolutely' possible for sufficient grace to come to fruition in (extrinsically) efficacious grace, but such an 'application' is not proximately possible if God has chosen not to provide it (and He has already predetermined from eternity which graces are to be merely intrinsically efficacious). Most argues against this in *GPSWG*, 431ff. This kind of reasoning will be confronted throughout this essay, particularly, in defense of Maritain against Long's arguments.
[47] See *GPSWG*, c. 7.
[48] See Most, *GPSWG*, 150-155.
[49] Most, *GPSWG*, 452.

choose to do a particular evil act, God ordinarily infuses the opposite good action into the empty space, as it were, where the man has yet to do anything.

In sum, Most sees created being as the ultimate deficient source of the specification of every evil act, and he maintains the power of human freedom not to be automatically inclined toward every evil act. Bañezian Thomists must oppose the distinction between positive and negative non-resistance, as they assert that the only alternative to the deterministic thesis of Molina is that all foreknowledge is posterior to predestination.[50] Most's presentation is ultimately a confrontation with the argument that if man could be metaphysically indifferent to resistance, uncertainty would be introduced into the divine intellect and God would be "determined" by finite agents.[51] For the Bañezian Thomist, the difficulty explaining divine foreknowledge apart from predestination reinforces (and perhaps even gives rise to) the claim that man must resist every good act by nature (since he cannot actualize potential for such acts), in which case God must choose which evil acts each man is to perform.[52] In other words, man cannot even negatively determine the specification of an act before God predestines the entitative part of the act. On the contrary, according to Most's thesis, man (in the logical order) negatively

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[50] See, for example, Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 148-150, 251.

[51] As I am not concerned here with the complex problem of divine foreknowledge, it will suffice to quote one relevant passage from the fourth part of Most's work, which is dedicated to this topic. Most answers Garrigou's famous dilemma, "God determining or determined," which is found throughout his works (e.g., see the last sentence of his *Predestination*), in the following manner: "[W]ithout the use of causality as a means of knowing, God is not passive because His divine intellect is transcendent and because, by the will of God, all things are conditioned through negatives (the evil specification in resistance, and non-resistance) . . . He is not determined by creatures, nor is He passive. But neither does God determine the negative conditions: He permits them to be determined by creatures. Hence, the dilemma rests on a question that is not well put, and on an incomplete disjunction: Neither does God determine the creature, nor does the creature determine God. Rather God permits the creature to make a negative determination, but God Himself *produces the truth and determines Himself* to move or not to move the creature to positive determination, according to the resistance or non-resistance of the creature" (*GPSWG*, 609-610).

[52] See, for example, Garrigou-Lagrange, *Predestination*, 248ff., 278ff.

specifies which act he wants to perform, and God (usually) makes this logical moment into a metaphysical entity.[53] Of course, it must be true that what ultimately happens belongs to His final predestinating will. But before finally and infallibly willing the good acts that will be performed by men, He considers the evil proposed by each. His final predestinating or infallible will is *consequent* precisely to divine consideration of the particular resistances offered by men. Hence, the distinction between positive and negative non-resistance illuminates the possibility that divine foreknowledge of evil can precede His consequent/efficacious will, even though His foreknowledge of good acts can only follow upon it.

Essential Convergence of Most and Maritain (on Nonbeing)

Most responds thoroughly to the Bañezian charge that if divine foreknowledge of evil were to precede predestination, God would be passive to man's choice of resistance.[54] He points out that when resistance is absent in man, there is no divine causality required because there is no human action to be caused – there is simply the absence of action. Therefore, "He is passive neither under the evil specification which is a mere privation and falling away, nor in the exercise of the act which He himself produces."[55] A passage from Thomas that Most frequently invokes in support of the position that there is no contradiction in admitting man's power to omit

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[53] See, in addition to texts already cited in this regard, *GPSWG*, 600ff.
[54] See *GPSWG*, 205-207, 487, 492-493.
[55] *GPSWG*, 206. However, some cite Thomas' *De Malo* q. 3, a. 2, ad 2 to argue that the species of an evil act must be a positive entity if it is "a Deo causatur." I do not think Most would disagree that the species of an evil act *qua* species is entitative, but what he means by "evil specification" here is the deficiency itself proper to the species of an evil act. Hence, when Thomas says, "*deformitas* peccati non consequitur *speciem* actus secundum quod est in genere naturae; *sic* autem a Deo causatur," the antecedent of "sic" is not "deformitas" but "speciem."

resistance and attributing the positive choice of non-resistance to divine causality is the following:[56]

> [Since] a man cannot be directed to his ultimate end except by the help of divine grace . . . it could seem to someone that a man should not be blamed if he lacks the aforementioned . . . since he is not able to merit the help of divine grace . . . for *no one is charged with that which depends on another*. . . . To solve this problem we must consider that although a man, by the movement of his free will, can neither merit nor obtain divine grace, yet he can impede himself from receiving it. . . . And *since this is in the power of free will to impede or not to impede the reception of divine grace* not undeservingly is he charged with a fault who sets up an impediment to grace. For God so far as He is concerned, is ready to give grace to all…but they only are deprived of grace who set up an impediment to grace in themselves . . .[57]

If man were to have the power of positive consent independent of God, then God would be made passive to such an act. But the power of omitting resistance can belong to man as such, insofar as it is a non-act. As Most says:

> These Thomists . . . say that the transcendence of the divine intellect cannot be invoked in solving the question of foreknowledge, since before God can know or foreknow anything, that thing must exist. . . . This argument does not hold. For the critical and decisive factors in human freedom are found in *non-beings*, that is, in non-resistance and in the evil specification in resistance. But, for non-beings, divine causality is not required . . . divine causality is also needed to begin a motion in them . . . But once God has provided this much, the non-being factors can occur without the need of additional divine causality.[58]

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[56] See, for example, *GPSWG*, 156, 197, 309.

[57] *SCG* III, c. 159 (the emphasis is Most's, 197). "Cum in finem ultimum aliquis dirigi non possit nisi auxilio divinae gratiae . . . potest alicui videri quod non sit homini imputandum si praedictis careat . . . cum auxilium divinae gratiae mereri non posit . . . nulli enim imputatur quod ab alio dependet . . . Ad huius dubitationis solutionem considerandum est quod, licet aliquis per motum liberi arbitrii divinam gratiam nec promereri nec advocari possit, potest tamen seipsum impedire ne eam recipiat . . . Et cum hoc sit in potestate liberi arbitrii, impedire divinae gratiae receptionem vel non impedire, non immerito in culpam imputatur ei qui impedimentum praestat gratiae receptioni. Deus enim, quantum in se est, paratus est omnibus gratiam dare . . . ed illi soli gratia privantur qui in seipsis gratiae impedimentum praestant . . ."

[58] *GPSWG*, 498-499 (emphasis original). Most approaches the transcendence of the divine intellect as no less mysterious than the transcendence of the divine will, to which the Bañezian Thomists frequently appeal in explaining how predestination does not contradict human freedom (see *GPSWG*, 497-500). Most also says, "Negative determinations, since they are non-beings, do not have truth in them, nor do they convey truth to the intellect – not even to the human intellect, much less to the divine intellect. Because they do not have truth in themselves nor convey truth

Since created being has it within its power to 'author' nonbeings, divine foreknowledge does not completely and utterly depend upon divine causality, as the former includes nonbeings and the latter only beings.[59]

Maritain answers the same problem with the more explicitly Thomistic metaphysical distinction between *negatio* and *privatio*.[60] Just as Most distinguishes between two "logical moments" in the case of good action (namely, the absence of resistance and the good act divinely caused), Maritain describes two "instants of nature" that are not necessarily temporally distinct.[61] The first is the non-consideration of the moral rule, which is a *mera negatio*, and the second is the *defectus* that is the cause of the evil act itself, the moral *privatio*.[62] But the two instants of Maritain do not correspond directly with the two logical moments of Most. Maritain's "non-consideration of the rule" is the nonbeing that causes the privation that is the evil act, whereas for Most negative non-resistance is the nonbeing that precedes positive non-resistance as an indispensable condition for good action to be effectively caused in the creature. Nevertheless, both say that the good acts willed by God for free creatures to perform actually occur when there

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into the divine intellect, nor make the truth of negative propositions, it remains true that no truth is prior to the knowledge of God, just as it is also true that no thing or being is prior to the knowledge of God. Non-beings are no things" (604); see also 612. In a similar vein, Lonergan points to *ST* I, q. 17, a. 1, and makes the following precise comments: "The positive truth that the sun shines is something that is positively and conforms to the divine design. The negative truth that the sun does not shine on us is something that is not positively and yet conforms to the divine design. But the objective falsity of *malum culpae* is something that is not positively and further does not conform to the *ordinatio divini intellectus*. It is obviously impossible for Bañez to speak of anything as withdrawing itself from the ordination of the divine intellect. St. Thomas not only speaks of it but cites scripture as his ground for doing so [namely, John 3]" (*Grace and Freedom*, 330n34).

[59] See *GPSWG*, 600ff.

[60] See the following section for the relevant citations of Thomas.

[61] For similarities to Most in Maritain on the topic of negative non-resistance, see *Existence and the Existent*, 94 and 99n9-101n10 [F 155, 160-161n1, 163-164n1].

[62] See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 21 [F 27].

is no obstacle posed by the creature (i.e., resistance or nihilation), and that when there is no such obstacle, the influx of good from God is inevitably and freely performed (i.e., the good act is infallibly or infrustrably predestined).[63]

Similar to Most, the point of departure for Maritain is to refute the Bañezian Thomist theory of infallible permissive decrees.[64] Although Maritain refers in a friendly manner to Garrigou-Lagrange,[65] treading lightly upon his traditional stance,[66] he makes "neo-Bañezianism" his explicit target, which for him is primarily represented by Fr. Jean-Herve Nicolas.[67] He explains how the traditional school manages to forget the necessary dissymmetry between what

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[63] See, for example, *Existence and the Existent*, 94 [F 155].
[64] See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 13 [F 20].
[65] See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 19 [F 25]].
[66] The following text of Garrigou-Lagrange is evidence of Maritain's contention that he worked to make the traditional Thomist position less harsh (even if he did not change it essentially): "[i]t is not necessary that the first human defection precede the divine refusal of efficacious grace by priority of time; a priority of nature suffices. In this, we have an application of the principle of mutual relation between causes, which is verified in all cases where there is the intervention of the four causes; for, causes mutually interact, though in a different order. St Thomas invokes this general principle to prove that in the justification of the sinner, which takes place in an indivisible instant, the remission of sin follows the infusion of grace in the formal and efficient order, whereas liberation from sin precedes the reception of sanctifying grace in the order of material causality . . . Now if justification is thus explained by the mutual relation between causes, then it must be the same for the loss of grace, which is the reverse process; for the rule is the same for contraries. As John of St Thomas shows, the moment man sins mortally and loses habitual grace, his deficiency, in the order of material causality, precedes the refusal of God's actual efficacious grace and is the reason for this. From another point of view, however, even the first deficiency presupposes God's permission of sin, and it would not result without such. However, in opposition to justification, sin as such is the work of the deficient creature and not of God. Therefore it is true to say that purely and simply . . . sin precedes God's refusal of efficacious grace. In other words, 'God forsakes not those who have been justified, unless He be first forsaken by them.' (Denz., no. 804)…" (*Predestination*, 333-334)
[67] Nicolas offered criticisms in "La Permission du Péché," *Revue Thomiste* LX 1 (January-March 1960), LX 2 (April-June 1960), LX 4 (October-December 1960), of Maritain's thoughts concerning God's permission of evil, arguing in favor of the position of Dominic Bañez' interpretation of Thomas. Thomas Joseph White ("Von Balthasar and Journet," 663n70) and Gilles Emery (see "The Question of Evil," 551-552) note that Nicolas eventually concedes to Maritain's position in his 1992 article, "La volunté salvifique de Dieu contrariée par le péché." Steven Long will later take up arguments similar to Nicolas' against Maritain.

he calls the "line of good" and the "line of evil."[68] The principles of the good in relation to the first cause are that God is the universal cause and that His knowledge is the cause of things; the principles of evil in relation to the first cause are that the creature rather than God is the cause of evil and that He knows evil without in any way causing it. While Molina "disregarded the principle of the dissymmetry between the line of good and the line of evil…to put the good act as well as the evil act under the dependence of a first initiative of the creature,"[69] Bañez, John of St. Thomas, the Carmelites of Salamanca, and other "rigid Thomists" attempted to explain everything from the perspective of being alone. "God thus seemed . . . the initiator of the evil which He punished. . . . [T]hese Thomists taught [the unthinkable thing] that one calls 'negative reprobation,' which *precedes any demerit* . . ."[70] The fault of such "hard Thomists" does not lie in lack of logical rigor, but in forgetting this dissymmetry and ignoring the perspective of nonbeing. In this way, Maritain also thinks that the Bañezians end up attributing evil, albeit indirectly, to God as universal cause via "antecedent permissive decrees."[71]

Maritain's Alternative to Bañez on Divine Permission of Evil

Contrary to the (neo-)Bañezian claim that every finite will inevitably tends to a moral privation if God does not predestine the opposite, Maritain finds in St. Thomas the theory that the cause of moral evil in man is a failure that is not yet culpable,[72] a voluntary non-

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[68] See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 14ff. [F 21ff.] These expressions are borrowed from Marin-Sola (see especially, "Nuevas observaciones," 357).
[69] *God and the Permission of Evil*, 15 [F 22].
[70] *God and the Permission of Evil*, 14 (emphasis original) [F 21].
[71] See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 17-18 [F 24]. Hence, a father who withdraws his hand from a child who is incapable of writing straight lines without his assistance is the indirect cause of the scribble that is directly caused by the child alone (see *God and the Permission of Evil*, 28-29 [F 34]).
[72] He cites *In Sententiae* I, d. 40, q .4, a. 2; *ST* I-II, q. 79, a. 1; *ST* I-II, q. 112, a. 3, ad 2 (see *God and the Permission of Evil*, 6 [F 13-14]).

consideration of the rule, but a "*mera negatio.*" In other words, for Thomas the evil of an action is caused by the nonbeing of the free non-action of not considering the rule, whereas for the Bañezian this non-consideration of the rule is already a privation, that is, a moral evil, which therefore cannot be the cause of moral evil in the free creature.[73] Maritain utilizes a twentieth century scholastic manual to develop a Thomistic 'real distinction':

> This *real distinction* between cause and effect is even found in the case of immanent activity, where an agent "moves itself" – it is under relations *really* distinct (and not distinct merely by a distinction of reason) that there is then causation and effect produced. 'Causa *distinguitur ab effectu suo realiter*: nam quod ab alio *realiter* dependet, *realiter* ab eo distinguitur.' (J. Gredt, *Elem. Phil. Arist.-Thom.*, t. II, p.147) How does neo-Bañezianism come to forget such an evident axiom? '…There is not a real distinction,' we are told, 'but a *distinction of reason* between the *defectus voluntatis* which is the *cause* of the sin, and the *defectus actionis* which is *the sin itself*.'[74]

Hence, the *defectus actionis* is itself (deficiently) caused only by the *defectus voluntatis*, while whatever being belongs to the evil act must be totally caused by God and subordinately by the free creature. What the "rigid Thomists" cannot see is that there is no contradiction involved in affirming, at the same time, (1) that God is the supreme *ratio* for the being that belongs to every act (good and evil) insofar as it is free and good, and (2) that the *privatio* proper to each evil act is first caused by the free creature and *therefore* only permitted by God. In other words, the nonbeing of an evil act is logically antecedent to the being of the evil act, and therefore the latter is willed in view of the former.[75]

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[73] See *God and the Permission of Evil*, 21-22 [F 27-28].

[74] *God and the Permission of Evil*, 24n12 [F 30n1] (emphasis is Maritain's).

[75] Along the lines of both Maritain and Most, Lonergan says: "Third, the unintelligible can be related to the unintelligible: there is a certain explanation of sin in terms of other prior sin, but the reason for this is not any intelligibility in sin; it is simply due to the fact that sin is also evil, a privation of the good; *one privation leads to another, not because a privation does anything but becaue a deficient cause produces a deficient effect*. . . . [Reprobation] is not a cause because sin has no cause, but is unintelligible, inexplicable, and not to be related explanatorily to the intelligible [see *ST* I, q. 17, a. 1; q. 103, a. 8, ad 1]. But if it is antecedent [because it is a divine act] yet not a cause, and if there are three categories [of intelligibility] and not two, then how can

Therefore, Maritain's fundamental thesis is that God cannot be the original planner of any evil act because the free creature alone must be the first cause of his own evil acts. Even if God is not considered an indirect cause of moral evil, He must be conceived by the rigid Thomists as the 'architect' of evil because His intellect ultimately determines which evil acts are to take place according to His plan for all things.[76] Maritain's alternative is to approach the question of the origin of evil action from the perspective of the line of nonbeing, which is nevertheless an 'existential reality.' Hence, he states the following:

> [T]he first cause or the *inventor* of moral evil *in the existential reality of the world* is the liberty of the creature – I mean, this liberty *in the line of non-being*. All of this implies that at the very first origin of the evil act – and, above all, of the evil election… – there is not only the *fallibility* of the creature, but an *actual failure* of the creature, a created initiative which – since it is not caused by God – can only be an initiative of non-being, of deficiency in being, of lack, what I have called a nihilation.[77]

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it be infallible? *The answer to that lies in the theory of divine transcendence*: God's knowledge is infallible" (*Grace and Freedom*, 332-333 [emphasis added]). See also *Grace and Freedom*, 340-342, for arguments corroborating Maritain's concerning the *causa defectus* as *ratio culpae* (against *Deus causa peccati*).

[76] "So, supposing (without conceding) that God is not, under the relation of efficiency, in withdrawing His hand the indirect cause of the failure which succeeds the antecedent permissive decree, the fact remains that on the side of the *plan* conceived by God, it is God who in His thought, His creative design, His eternal purposes, has first had the idea, the *idée-matrix*, the idea infallibly followed by effect, of the culpable failure in question. In permitting it in advance as integral part of the plan of which He alone is the author, without consideration of the nihilations of which the creature is the first cause . . . God first has the initiative, not causal but permissive, in virtue of which all the faults. . . . In the theory of the antecedent permissive decrees, God, under the relation of efficiency, is not the cause, not even (that which I do not at all concede) the indirect cause, of moral evil. But He is the one primarily responsible for its presence here on earth. It is He who has invented it in the drama or novel of which He is the author. He refuses efficacious grace to a creature because it has already failed culpably, but this culpable failure itself occurred only in virtue of the permissive decree which preceded it. God manages to be in nowise the cause of evil, while seeing to it that evil occurs infallibly" (*God and the Permission of Evil*, 30-31 [F 35-36]).

[77] *God and the Permission of Evil*, 33 (emphasis original) [F 37-38].

The line of evil is the line of nonbeing because an evil act is an act "wounded by nothingness" and its metaphysical root must be a certain "withdrawal from being," a free non-action, a "mere nothingness of consideration."[78] Hence, even though an evil act is a being insofar as it is an act, the evil of the act is "the nothingness of a form of being *requisite* to a given being."[79] Therefore, one must reason about the line of evil in a different way than one does with respect to the line of good because the terms of one's thinking must relate directly to *nihil* rather than to *esse*.[80] Since the lack of considering the rule, which is not a privation, is the origin of the privation that constitutes the evil act, one must then ask for the origin of the *negatio*. But St. Thomas is content with stopping at the freedom of the will as the limit beyond which one cannot trace the origin of the evil act any further, as such sufficiently accounts for the non-action of the will with respect to the rule.[81] Thus, Maritain explains:

> The first cause (which is not an acting or efficient cause, but is dis-acting and de-efficient), the first cause of the non-consideration of the rule, and consequently of the evil of the free act that will come forth from it, is purely and simply the liberty of the created existent. [see Thomas' *ST* I-II, q. 79, a. 2, ad 2; I-II, q. 112, a. 3, ad 2] The latter possesses the free initiative of an absence (or "nothingness") of consideration, of a vacuum introduced into the warp and woof of being, of a *nihil*; and this time this free initiative is a *first* initiative because it does not consist in acting freely or allowing being to pass, but in freely not-acting and not-willing, in freely frustrating the passage of being.[82]

Hence, recognizing the dissymmetry between the line of good as being and the line of evil as nonbeing alone allows one to "break the iron-collar of antinomies" produced by the principles

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[78] See Jacques Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, for Thomas' teaching on these points.
[79] *Existence and the Existent*, 89 [F 147]. Here it is clear the nonbeing of a nihilation is never characterized as absolute, but rather understood in a relative sense, which will be pertinent in the next section.
[80] See *Existence and the Existent*, 89 [F 148].
[81] See Thomas' *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3, cited in *Existence and the Existent*, 91 [F 151].
[82] *Existence and the Existent*, 91-92 [F 150-152].

that all good comes ultimately from God and the evil in any act must come from the creature alone.

It is evident, then, that for Maritain (as for Most) the role of nonbeing in the origin of evil is crucial, and yet it is inevitably not entirely clear to finite intellects how such nonbeing can be properly understood. The *defectus* that is the origin of the evil act has been identified as a *mera negatio,*[83] but it is also called a 'free failure' that is constituted by not considering the moral rule and is said to 'cause' in some way the subsequent *privatio*. The *defectus* that causes a moral evil is "the *non-consideration of the rule* – which is not, note well, an *act* of non-consideration, but a *non-act* of consideration."[84] Nevertheless, "this non-consideration of the rule is something *real*, since it is the *cause* of the sin; and it is something *free*…being the *cause* of the evil, it *precedes* the evil, at least by a priority of nature."[85] Once the free creature brings this absence (which is nevertheless 'real') into act, it becomes a privation in the moral order, that is, an action that deviates from a good that is *due*; this is where Maritain derives his two 'instants of nature.'

How can an absence be called a 'real cause' of a fault freely chosen? It must be merely a logical entity that is ontologically nothing, which can therefore constitute the ultimate *reason* for the existence of an ontological privation; thus, it is one form of relative nonbeing yielding another form of relative nonbeing, which is called 'real' or 'existential' in the sense that it is experienced *as if* it were a form of being. Hence, Maritain says, "Now we know that our human

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[83] A mere negation is "a mere withdrawal from being, a mere lack of a being or of a good *which is not due:* a mere absence which I introduce voluntarily into being" (*God and the Permission of Evil*, 35 (emphasis original) [F 39]). He cites in the footnote to this text the following passages from St. Thomas: *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3, co. and ad 13; *ST* I, q. 49, a. 1, ad 3; *ST* I-II, q. 75, a. 1, ad 3; *SCG* III, c. 10.
[84] *God and the Permission of Evil*, 35 (emphasis original) [F 39].
[85] *God and the Permission of Evil*, 35 (emphasis original) [F 40]].

intellect can conceive non-being, and therefore evil, only *ad instar entis*, after the fashion of being, and consequently by speaking of it as of *some thing*, as of a kind of so-called quality."[86]

Confronting the Opposition

With this kind of reasoning in mind, together with the approach Most adopted toward Garrigou's objections, one can confront the recent objections against Maritain's thesis presented principally by Steven A. Long. Before addressing Long's article in relative detail, it is fitting to comment briefly on some doubts entertained by eminent Dominican theologian, Gilles Emery. While the expressed intent of Emery's article is merely to present the teaching of Charles Journet (as indebted to Maritain) on the innocence of God in the face of evil acts both known and permitted, he presents three potential problems with it from a Thomistic perspective. Leaving aside his objection based on the motive of the incarnation (which is peripheral to the issue at hand), his third objection is perhaps the most telling in that it expresses a concern with the far-reaching consequences of the proposal, even into the question of divine impassibility.[87] After summarizing the new approach to divine intellection of evil in contrast to the Bañezian thesis of divine permissive decrees,[88] he enters into some of the comments of Journet and Maritain on the

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[86] *God and the Permission of Evil,* 36 [F 40]. He continues: "If in spite of this, *through* or *beyond* the auxiliary being of reason which we have thus constructed, we have seized non-being in its existential reality in the bosom of being rendered 'lacking' or 'deprived' by it – well then, in order to treat of evil in its existential reality itself, by disengaging it as much as possible from the being of reason which reifies it, we shall find it absolutely necessary to employ a language which does violence to our natural manner of thinking and does violence to words. We shall have to say that when the creature takes the free initiative not to consider the rule – *mera negation*, non-act, mere lack – it *dis-acts*, it *nihilises* or *nihilates*; and that moral evil, the evil of free action, is likewise, as such, a *nihilation*, which this time is a *privation*, privation of a *due* good" (36-37) [F 40-41].

[87] See Gilles Emery, "The Question of Evil and the Mystery of God in Charles Journet," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4, no. 3 (2006), 551-554.

[88] I do not enter here into the differences concerning such, but Emery summarizes the conversation well (see "The Question of Evil," 534ff.).

"mysterious suffering" of God.[89] While he does not explicitly establish a clear link between the two issues, perhaps it is self-explanatory that a doctrine in which evil acts are not in any sense willed by God would lead to particular reflection on how such "nihilations" of the conditional movements of His antecedent will could "affect" Him.

Emery repeats the classical Thomistic explanation of how mercy ought to be conceived in an immutable God that he provides elsewhere in more detail, wherein he also cites Maritain as one of the contemporary approaches to divine impassibility and suffering that stands in contrast to the traditional Thomistic understanding of God's nature.[90] One can then safely assume that Emery's primary concern with Maritain's teaching on the divine permission of evil lies in the implications Maritain himself apparently drew in the question of divine impassibility. Quoting Garrigou-Lagrange many times on the topic of predestination and divine foreknowledge, it is apparent from the following that Emery perceives a problem with maintaining the "independence" of God if the Thomist position is purged of the Bañezian revisions: "According to Journet, the denial of the 'antecedent permissive decree' and of the 'determining decree' does not weaken God's action in the world. But a question remains: Can the theory of the 'consequent permissive decree' preserve the universal scope of God's providence and, above all, God's *independence?*"[91]

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[89] See "The Question of Evil," 544-551.
[90] See his "The Immutability of the God of Love and the Problem of Language Concerning the 'Suffering of God'" in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering,* eds. James F. Keating and Thomas Joseph White (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 27-76. David Bentley Hart's chapter in the same volume (utilized below) seems to oppose this contention.
[91] "The Question of Evil," 551.

The "theory of the 'consequent permissive decree'" to which Emery refers harkens back to his own summary of the opposition of Journet and Maritain to the Bañezian theory of antecedent permissive decrees (as the infallible origin of evil acts):

> Thus the first moment of sin, which is a privation, consists in the creature's 'nihilation' of the divine motion to the good. Here Journet is quite close to Maritain's thinking on the 'shatterable motion,' that is, the divine motion to considering the right rule of action, which the creature can put in check. Based on this, Journet takes up one of Maritain's central theses: The permissive decree is not antecedent but *follows upon* the evil will's nihilation of the shatterable motion….God knows sin by knowing the nihilating initiative in man's free will.[92]

While Emery may have hinted here at a deficiency in Maritain's formulation of divine foreknowledge, I would like to submit that the permission does not so much *follow upon* the nihilation so much as precede it, not in a formal manner (as in the Bañezian thesis) but insofar as it is eminently contained within the conditional nature of the good influx. In this way one can maintain that evil acts do not truly 'shatter' the antecedent will (a rhetorical excess perhaps), nor does sin actually affect God in any real sense (as He is *ipsum esse*), but rather His antecedent will predestines every good act *on the condition that* it not be obstructed by the autonomous resistance toward God for which man is always capable but which is not necessitated (at least, not in every instance) by his very nature. In contrast, though, to Emery's reduction of "the noble element in mercy" to the manifestation of charity toward the suffering in the willed effects of God's pure perfection, the mercy of the impassible God appears to be the exemplar precisely of *com*-passion, that is, the affective dimension of love. Nevertheless, relinquishing such a detailed debate concerning the most adequate formulations of impassible suffering in God, the first objection, upon which the rest are based, appeals to the criticisms launched by Steven Long.[93]

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[92] "The Question of Evil," 539 (emphasis original).

[93] Citing Long's article "Providence, liberté, et loi naturelle," *Revue Thomiste* 102 (2002): 355-406, esp. 376-398, he says: "But Maritain's explanation itself raises a problem. The notion of

The problem with Long's critique is immediately evident in the thesis statement of his article and consequently persists throughout. He says, "I will argue that the metaphysical and theocentric conception of natural law . . . is impossible if human volitional activity is outside of the divine causality."[94] His explicit target is Jacques Maritain's doctrine on the divine permission of evil; it is a good thing, then, that he is clearly exempt from the foundation of Long's argument – Maritain's "nihilation" (as Most's "negative non-resistance") is expressly not an activity but a non-activity, and of course evil is outside divine causality (except for whomever may confess God as indirect cause of evil). Evidently the latter assertion is precisely what Long wishes to contest, but without much force of argument. His primary approach is arguable exegesis of texts from St. Thomas, which I will pass over out of deference for the substance of the matter.

His second line of argument, appearing also in St. Thomas, has to do with the overall good of creation requiring the certain damnation of some.[95] The old argument goes as follows: (1) God's glory is more manifest if both His mercy and His vindictive justice are made eternally manifest, (2) without infallible permissive decrees there is no guarantee that His vindictive justice will be manifest; (3) therefore, infallible permissions are necessary to ensure that His glory is in fact manifest to the fullest degree.

Defending vindictive justice as a good quality of God that should be manifest in a really distinct manner from His mercy is one task, but the chief flaw in this argument is the failure to

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'nihilation' and of 'shatterable motion' is problematic, for if nihilation is something 'positive,' it must be caused by God; but if nihilation is purely negative, this means that God has not given something positive to the human person: In either case, it is not easy to see how the explanation can avoid the intervention of an antecedent decree" ("The Question of Evil," 551). I think the adequate reply has been seen already in Most and will be found again in my responses to Long's criticisms.

[94] Long, "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 558.

[95] See "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 573-576.

acknowledge that the reason God creates is not simply to communicate His goodness in whatever way imaginable (as if He were to "show off"), but to manifest it precisely by imparting it in the most fitting manner. Put another way, an act of communicating goodness that ensures the exclusion of some from truly enjoying it certainly would not be the most befitting of an infinitely good and glorious God. It belongs to the very essence of Christian revelation that the intimate identity of God's own inner life be precisely *caritas*. Thus, the only reason for the divine decision to create is to share His glorious being (i.e., goodness, truth, and beauty) *ad extra*. *Bonum est diffusivum sui*! If He were in fact the ultimate reason for each evil act and thus in some sense the architect of every such act, would not He in such instances be opposing the diffusion of goodness, whatever the end in view? It does not make sense to say that God wills to manifest His justice by infallibly permitting the ultimate moral destruction of some men whom He chose to create *for the purpose of communicating His own goodness.* Hence, a God who wills to allow His creatures to tend inevitably toward self-destruction would be incompatible with the idea of God as Creator in the Christian tradition.

Long, rather, opts for a Creator who prefers a good story, in which some are infallibly permitted condemnation, and he recruits a particular metaphysics in defense of it, rather than yielding to the mysteriousness of how the divine will and intellect relate, particularly, with respect to the existence of moral evil.[96] Speaking of Maritain's thought (in a way that I think coheres well with Most's formulation),[97] Long states:

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[96] See "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 577.

[97] Long mentions Most's proposal as essentially in agreement with Maritain's and confesses ignorance concerning its details (see "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 578n24). He also briefly notes the convergence of their proposals concerning the nothingness of non-nihilation (*St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 29; *Existence and the Existent*, 100n10 [F 163n1]); see "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 586, including n. 37.

> He wishes to assert that both the one who actually negates and the one who does not actually negate are equally *permitted* by God to negate (not to consider the rule of reason), and evidently he means this *in the composite sense*…But for classical Thomism, such a one cannot, at the very instant of being freely moved to consider the rule, not freely consider the rule. In other words, all conditions being given, even the one who does not negate but considers the rule of reason is, on Maritain's account, able to negate at the very instant when he does not negate, and this person receives no more aid toward this effect of non-negation than the one who *does negate*. This is to say that God gives a motion that has no actual natural effect save insofar as the creature does not negate. This seems to one formed in classical Thomism to imply something absurd, namely that not to negate (the same non-negation upon which efficacious aid is predicated in this theory) calls for no more divine help than to negate…[98]

As Long hints, upholding the potential of finite freedom to negate even as he does not actually negate is no more contradictory than the Bañezian belief that even in the case of a free creature that does not receive the 'application' or actualization necessary for meritorious work (that is, when only "sufficient" grace is bestowed, not "efficacious" grace), absolutely speaking, the creature maintains the power to perform the act. But according to Maritain (and Most), God always conditionally (i.e., 'frustrably') moves man to consideration of the rule of reason, but negation may be initiated autonomously by the creature precisely because the movement is fallible (or frustrable). It is not exactly true to say that the person who does not negate receives no more divine aid than the person who does negate – it need only be denied that God "distinguishes" the two *prior to any consideration/foreknowledge* of the nonbeing present in either. In other words, the person who does not negate does so by divine predestination, but it is not the case that the one who does negate in fact negates simply or precisely because God decided beforehand not to predestine him to non-negation – rather, without such permission he would not have been able to negate, and yet such permission did not necessitate the negation. In this sense, one might say that the actual permission followed the negation, but that the negation was possible because every free good act is predestined precisely *on the condition* that it is not

[98] "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 581.

negated. "Divine motion or grace merely sufficient or breakable fructifies of itself into *unbreakable* divine motion or into grace efficacious by itself."[99]

Presupposing the logic of infallible permissive decrees and apparently reducing the notion of 'conditional decrees' to that of "indifferent premotion,"[100] Long comes back again and again to the following disjunction: either *negatio* is something positive or something negative; if the former, then it must be caused by God; and if the latter, then it must exist wherever God does not supply the contrary.[101] The reason he is faced with such a "dichotomy of being and lack of being" is that he does not discern the existence of *species of nonbeing*.[102] "The negation of 'shatterable' divine motion by the creature is (and must be if this negation is to occur) permitted by God"[103] – yes, but not *infallibly*. "[T]he divine permission of evil must precede its realization, and this permission must certainly consist in not causing the contrary of that which is permitted"[104] – or in not causing it *infrustrably*. "Negation must consist of act or lack of act – it cannot inhabit an ontological limbo peopled with beings of reason..."[105] The premise ought to be granted but qualified: there are species of act and consequently also of non-act! Combining Most and Maritain, one can recognize that the following two non-acts are distinct, one preceding the good act and the other the evil act: (1) negative non-resistance and (2) the *negatio* of not

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[99] Maritain, *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*, 33.
[100] See "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 563.
[101] See "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 582ff.
[102] For a detailed taxonomy of nonbeings, see Jesús Villagrasa Lasaga, *Realismo Metafísico e irrealidad. Estudio sobre la obra 'Teoría del objeto puro' de Antonio Millán-Puelles* (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 2008); Joshua Brotherton, "Phenomenology and Metaphysics in *Realismo Metafisico e Irrealidad* by Jesús Villagrasa," *Información Filosófica* 5, no. 11 (2008): 219-237.
[103] "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 582.
[104] "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 582.
[105] "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 583.

considering the rule of reason. Hence, positive non-resistance is an act frustrably willed by God, and the *privatio* of willing to contradict the rule of reason is fallibly permitted.

Here is the formulation of divine permission, obtained exegetically from a few texts of St. Thomas,[106] that is at the heart of his defense of the Bañezian position: "[N]egation is either permitted by God in the non-conserving of the creature from the lack of being in which this negation consists, or else (if negation were thought to be positive) . . . it is caused by God in the creating of that being in which it consists."[107] In other words, because all good acts flow directly from divine causality, the only thing God has to do for evil to occur is withdraw that causality of good, and thus the withdrawal of such influx is itself the *sufficient condition* for an act to be evil. But consider this possibility instead: divine withdrawal of good is a *necessary condition* for an act to be evil, but evil is actually effected where there is also an initiative of evil from the creature, while divine causation *of good* is a sufficient condition for every good act, taking place only where the divine intellect does not 'foreknow' *negatio* on the part of the free creature. In fact, God both permits negation (fallibly) and provides the being of non-negation *on the condition* that it is not negated/resisted. Long objects that non-negation must be an act originating only in divine causality, but we have seen that it is a non-act logically antecedent to the divinely caused act of non-negation (positive non-resistance),[108] conditionally or "frustrably" willed (in the words of Maritain) and consequent to divine foreknowledge of demerits (in the

[106] See *ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2; *ST* I-II, q. 79, a. 4, ad 1; *ST* I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3.
[107] "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 583.
[108] In illustration of the sense of 'logical antecedence' here, consider the fact that even though the existence of a created world that is finite in duration does not imply a prior void and even though time in fact began with the universe (as it is an aspect of the created world), there is still some sense in which there was nothing 'before' there was something created, even in the case of an eternal creation. The only difference in the case of divine foreknowledge and predestination is that we are considering this logical entity that is an ontological non-entity to be in some way determinative of the ontological entity consequently caused by God, but only because God so chooses to base His predestination upon such foreknowledge of nonentities.

words of Most). In response to Long's second objection, that non-consideration of the rule of reason would inevitably follow where God does not efficaciously will its consideration,[109] again I say that the fact that He does not cause consideration infallibly does not necessitate the "effect" of non-consideration, precisely because the working hypothesis (of those who reject infallible permissions) is that He can cause consideration (and every free good act) in a conditional manner. The burden of proof lies on the side of those who deny His power to will the good on the condition of the absence of obstacles proposed by free creatures.

Long reserves for a footnote the metaphysical argument on which he must rely to reject the insistence of Maritain and Most that non-resistance can be a non-act and thus a nonbeing:

> [T]hat one not negate means an absence of a pure non-being, which in context means the positive act of consideration of the rule and hence God's actual causing of this consideration. Hence it seems to me Maritain correctly saw that non-negation had to be given formal priority over actual consideration of the rule if his account were to be upheld…Yet this seems to be…a pure fallacy…[William Most writes], 'causality is not required for non-beings, among which are the absence of resistance.' Since the absence of resistance is consistent with there being no subject and indeed no universe at all, this is true; but if we speak of the *absence of a particular negation in an existing being*, then we are necessarily speaking about something positive (if there is not pure non-being with respect to something, then in that same respect there must be being), and this must come from God.[110]

It is strange that Long himself, rather than Most and Maritain, seems to be guilty of the very thing he attributes to them here: texts have already been quoted in which he speaks in the general terms of good act versus negation, rather than specifying that every evil act in particular is infallibly permitted (according to the Bañezian thesis). I think all Thomists agree that God wills antecedent to all foreknowledge every particular good act and everything that is good or ontologically positive in all acts – in other words, the divine antecedent will is the ultimate origin of whatever is entitative in evil acts (i.e., every act insofar as it is free, an act, and existent); only

[109] See "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 585.
[110] "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 586-587n37.

the new proposal insists that man of himself does not necessarily always will evil.[111] With this in mind, it becomes clear that the central problem with the Bañezian mindset is to conceive, without reason, the being of an evil act to be determinative of its quality as an evil act. In other words, the real question is whether the 'evil specification' of an act is entitative or non-entitative. The Bañezian says the species of an act determines whether it is this or that particular evil act, whereas the new proposals want to affirm that the species of an act, while determinative of whether it is this or that particular *act* (prescinding fom its moral quality), is not necessarily determinative of whether or not the act is *evil*, as the evil in the act cannot simply result from what is good (or entitative) in the act. Addressing Long's last statements directly, the absence of resistance to a particular good act predestined by the divine antecedent will does not at all mean the absence of a subject or a universe – "the absence of a particular negation" (i.e., negative non-resistance) is not necessarily "something positive" when that designated as a "negation" is not total nonbeing but a particular nonbeing that brings about the evil of a free act. The nonbeing that is the absence of resistance to a particular good act (or a particular grace) is distinct from the nonbeing that is the absence of consideration of the rule of reason precisely because the first is a negation with respect to the being of an evil act (insofar as it is a being) while the second is a negation with respect to the being peculiarly present in every good act (that is, the psychological 'mechanics' involved).

Long again makes the odd argument that God cannot will that a free good act be performed *on the condition* that the creature does not obstruct such an influx because that would imply the non-existence of the universe:

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[111] "For if a man can lack even one evil disposition without grace, then he is negatively disposed in regard to at least one grace that can come" (Most, *GPSWG*, 493).

> It is *absolutely essential* to note that we may not say in the strict sense that God conditions the gift of efficacious help upon 'non-negation' *alone*, *simpliciter*, because the mere absence of negation as such *does not imply the existence of anything*…God cannot condition the bestowal of efficacious help upon *non-being*, and thus the absence of negation here must be the presence of something else, caused by God. Thus it is not merely by *an absence of negation* that the rule of reason is actually considered by some creature, but by the positive substance of an act of consideration that owes its being to God.[112]

First, nobody is arguing that God conditions efficacious help upon non-negation *simpliciter*. It is not simply absence that is indicated as the condition, but the absence of a particular act of nihilation (that is, of resistance to a particular good act). Second, to say God *cannot* do something should, at least, follow a more adequate understanding of the concepts involved – there is no reason why God cannot condition His efficacious help upon the relative nonbeing that is the absence of a particular act of nihilation/resistance. Therefore, the conclusion does not follow; in fact, the conclusion is based upon a set of assumed premises. He claims the "revisionist account" fails because "whether the creature negates or nihilates or shatters the divine motion . . . this very negation itself *presupposes* that God has not efficaciously moved the creature to consider the rule. One cannot consider the rule of reason without being efficaciously moved to do so by God, and only if one is not efficaciously moved by God to consider the rule of reason does negation occur."[113] It is true that nihilation would not be possible if God's motion were infallibly efficacious, but whether such motion *must be* unshatterable is precisely the question. There is no necessity for man not to consider the rule if he is not *infallibly* caused to consider it – hence, the problem is rather presupposing 'total depravity,'[114] or the inability of man without infallibly efficacious grace not to nihilate sufficient or resistible grace. To

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[112] "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 587 (emphasis original).
[113] "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 587.
[114] I do not know what other label could be applied to the following assertion: "one is always negating consideration of the rule *unless* God [infallibly] causes the contrary" (Long, "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 589).

presuppose that man must always nihilate or not consider the rule in the absence of infallible causation is to assert precisely that all efficacious grace is irresistible, that is, that there are no resistible graces that are not in fact resisted.

Perhaps such a rapprochement with Calvinism and Jansenism is explained by the Augustinian preoccupation with the overall good of creation most appropriately manifesting the glory of God only if the ultimate effects of His mercy and justice are eternally distinct (i.e., in the salvation of some and the reprobation of others). So much sacrificed for such an abstract ideal! Certainly there are other ways of allowing God's glory to shine forth to its fullest in all creation. Concerning the contemporary revision of Thomistic predestination, Long says:

> [I]n the newer account, the good for the sake of which evil is permitted is not the infinitely transcendent God and the manifestation of his justice and his mercy. Rather, on the new account, the good for the sake of which evil is permitted is an accident extrinsically pertinent to our acts, which in no way defines the essential character of our acts as does true freedom, and which accident is merely the *ab extra* effect of a self-limiting ordinance of God.[115]

While there is work to be done in the realm of mystical theology regarding the implications of the new proposal for the spiritual life,[116] it suffices to say here that in reframing the divine means of manifesting His own glory in a way more befitting of God (and creation) the new proposal need not view every evil as an accident (as if unforeseen by God). It does, however, take more seriously the role of human freedom in the execution of moral evil as well as the innocence of God in the course of human events.[117] Thomas Joseph White objects to Long's (neo-)Bañezian

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[115] "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 591.

[116] It would be interesting to see to what extent the mystical theology of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange in *Three Ages of the Interior Life*, *Christian Perfection and Contemplation*, and in *Providence*, necessarily depends upon the strict Augustinian-Thomistic view of grace and freedom, which he utilizes in foundational fashion throughout these works.

[117] The formulation of William Most seems better fit for understanding the way in which moral evil must be incorporated into divine providence than is that of Jacques Maritain. Most's speculations on providence may provide a way to address Levering's concerns with Maritain's

approach on the basis that the metaphysical arguments recruited for it fail to distinguish sufficiently between the different kinds of evil:[118]

> Long's interpretation runs the risk of identifying moral evil with natural evil…This lack, which inhabits sinful action, is the inevitable result of a tendency of the will toward privation, due to the natural 'entropy' of created being which tends toward nothingness…Because of this tendency, sin occurs necessarily in the wake of God's *inactivity* (that is, his permissive will to *not* aid the creature who will otherwise sin), rather than by a moral deformation resulting from the creature's *refusal* of the inspired movements of natural and supernatural goodness. In this case, the human act of sin is interpreted primarily as an act lacking the necessary stimulus from God such that sin would be avoidable. Both Maritain and Lonergan have argued cogently that this position seems to make God more a cause of moral deficiency than the creature itself, since God chooses to withhold resources from certain creatures *such* [sic] *they must necessarily* choose evil…one may consider sin as a negation of being and goodness that comes from the creature *alone* as a 'first cause' without this implying any ontological autonomy on the part of the creature. The reason for this is that sinful acts involve a form of negation

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nihilation doctrine. Levering says: "Regarding Maritain's metaphysical solution, nihilating consists in a non-advertence to the rule of reason. Does not this lack of advertence, from which follows the freely willed defect, require God's permission? If so, is God as 'first cause' entirely out of the picture, as Maritain supposes? As Steven Long puts it, 'One grants that the creature is defectible, but any actual defection presupposes the divine permission, since nothing pertinent to being in any way can occur unless it is at least permitted by God'" (*Predestination*, 176). Maritain might respond by saying non-acts need not be specifically permitted; in fact, he states that "shatterable motions" themselves include an "undifferentiated and conditional permission of evil" and where the free creature takes the first initiative to nihilate there is sin "determinately permitted" by a permissive decree that is "consequent to the non-consideration of the rule" (*God and the Permission of Evil*, 63 [F 64]). But Most would add that every resistance offered by each free creature is first known as such and then either permitted or overridden (and thus actually non-existent), even if the latter option is rarely chosen. The universality of divine providence is better respected if we do not simply say God's desires are either resisted (nihilated) or not, but also affirm that they are efficacious according to God's 'taking into consideration' the resistance posed to His (antecedent) will, which is "conditional" according to our manner of understanding its efficacy. See especially *GPSWG*, Part 4.

[118] See, especially, Long, "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 563: "[J]ust as the creature will fall into non-existence apart from divine conservation in being, so it will fail of good apart from divine conservation in the good…'To sin is nothing else than to fall from the good which belongs to any being according to its nature…' [*ST* I-II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2]." The alternative view is that God always supplies the good and man does not of necessity resist it since he is of himself also capable of nonbeing that is not morally deficient (i.e., negative non-resistance or non-nihilation). Against Long's interpretation, White in his article invokes Thomas' *SCG* III, cc. 159-161, in support of the position that grace is usually resistible and that man is capable of impeding grace (see "Von Balthasar and Journet," 661-662n68; 664n72).

> that is parasitical upon created being…For Aquinas, as I have noted above, this can occur even while the creature remains ontically dependent upon God for its being-in-action.[119]

Neo-Bañezianism in the Extreme

Long, however, is not the most radical contemporary proponent of the Bañezian thesis. He accepts the modifications offered by Garrigou-Lagrange: "Of course, divine aid is only withheld because of prior resistance; but this prior resistance itself traces to defect and negation, and these must be permitted if they are to be (no other answer is consistent with the omnipotence of God)."[120] John Salza dedicated an entire book to attacking the new proposal, primarily as it appears in William Most,[121] and he offers a fierce criticism of Garrigou's attempt to temper the harshness of the Bañezian position:

> In his classic book *Predestination*, Dominican Thomist Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange appears to make this Molinist argument. Although he accurately presents the Thomistic principles on sufficient and efficacious grace, he seems to fall into the trappings of Molinism when he attempts to apply these. For example, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange…says, 'If they resist [grace], they merit thus to be deprived of the efficacious help which was virtually offered to them in the preceding grace.' In this statement, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange seems to say that man (his cooperation or resistance) determines God (His granting or denial of efficacious grace)…From a Thomist perspective, 'efficacious help' is determined by God's eternal decrees and not man's actions…a Thomist would not say God 'virtually' offers efficacious grace to man. As St. Thomas teaches, if God intends man to attain to grace, man will infallibly attain to it because of God's efficacious will. In support of his opinion, Fr. Garrigou-Lagrange refers to St. Augustine, who says that if

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[119] White, "Von Balthasar and Journet," 662-663n70 (emphasis original). He immediately adds: "A helpful theological reflection that criticizes the Bañezian position adopted by Long and entertained by Emery can be found in the essay of Jean-Hervé Nicolas, 'La volunté salvifique de Dieu contrariée par le péché,' *Revue Thomiste* 92 (1992): 177-96…" (663n70).

[120] "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 599n46.

[121] Although he does so mostly on the basis of scriptural texts, utilizing a naively literalist approach, he recruits quite feeble metaphysical reasoning to bolster his case. For an alternative interpretation of the texts most frequently referenced in this argument (i.e., the stories of Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Moses and Pharaoh), see, for example, Joseph Ratzinger, "Christlicher Universalismus: Zum Aufsatzwerk Hans Urs v. Balthasars," *Hochland* 54 (1961): 68-76, at 74-75; "Christian Universalism: On Two Collections of Papers by Hans Urs von Balthasar" in *Joseph Ratzinger in 'Communio'*, vol. 1, *The Unity of the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010): 131-143, at 141-142.

> efficacious grace is granted to one, it is because of God's mercy; if it is refused to a certain other, it is because of His justice. Although this statement is true, it does not mean that God refuses efficacious grace because of man's sin.[122]

In defense of Garrigou, it is not an act of justice (which need not mean it is an act of injustice) to deny efficacious grace to a man for no other reason than His own (arbitrary) will. Furthermore, Salza fails to acknowledge Garrigou's position that man inevitably resists every sufficient grace if he is not infallibly decreed not to resist it.[123] But Garrigou's adherents ought to be alert to the fact that Salza is here applying a formula with which Garrigou himself ended *Predestination*: "God determining or determined; there is no other alternative."[124] It is certainly unfair to accuse Garrigou of Molinism: the thesis that efficacious help is refused a man because of his resistance does not even require that there be divine foreknowledge of resistance apart from infallible permissive decrees, as it is elsewhere asserted that such resistance follows upon infallible

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[122] *The Mystery of Predestination According to Scripture, the Church, and St. Thomas Aquinas* (Charlotte: TAN Books, 2010), 86.

[123] For example, he says in *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 109-14*: "Hence, the denial of efficacious grace is an act of justice, inasmuch as it is the punishment for preceding sin, at least with the priority of nature, that is, sin at least in its incipiency. But sin itself presupposes, not indeed as a cause, but as a condition, divine permission…the permission of the incipiency of the first sin has no reason of punishment with respect to any preceding sin, and this incipiency of sin could not occur without divine permission, since if God, at that instant, were to preserve a man in goodness, there would be no sin. But God is not bound to preserve in good forever a creature in itself deficient, and if He were held to this, no sin would ever take place.…" (222-223). Nevertheless, it may be argued that he confuses the issue by repeating further down the page in nearly identical words what Salza finds objectionable in *Predestination* (333): "But it is false to say that man sins because he is deprived of efficacious grace; rather, on the contrary, it should be said that he is deprived of efficacious grace…God refuses efficacious grace only to one who resists sufficient grace; otherwise there would be an injustice involved. And what on the part of God precedes this resistance is only the divine permission of sin. But this divine permission must not be confused with a denial of efficacious grace, which signifies something more…" (223).

[124] *Predestination*, 376.

permission. Salza takes the following statement of Garrigou to be congruent with Most's proposal:[125]

> [S]ufficient grace virtually contains the efficacious grace that is offered to us in it, as the flower contains the fruit…This efficacious grace is thus within our power, though certainly not something that can be produced by us, but as a gift that would be granted to us if our will did not resist sufficient grace…Thus it is true to say that man is deprived of efficacious grace because he resisted sufficient grace.[126]

Would that Garrigou actually meant what the words here seem to indicate: the new proposal![127]

Salza, however, offers criticisms of Most that are very similar to Long's criticisms of Maritain. Missing the distinction between two types of resistance clearly made by Most, Salza goes on to argue the following:

> [N]on-resistance is a condition of being (that is, the condition of man who is being). It is thus erroneous, from a metaphysical perspective, to label non-resistance in man as non-being. Rather, non-resistance in man is resistance in potency, and potency exists in being, not non-being. This is true because man has the power to resist, as Fr. Most admits. According to the spiritual axiom *agere sequitur esse* (action follows being)….If the resistance is not actualized, it is because God efficaciously willed to move man to freely cooperate with the grace…Although Fr. Most says that grace is made efficacious 'on condition of this non-resistance,' non-being has no such influence because non-being doesn't exist. Grace operates in man on account of his being, not his non-being. As Fr. Most admits, non-resistance is an 'ontological zero.'[128]

There are a number of unjustified assertions here: (1) simply because man is a being, everything in him is therefore a "condition of being;" (2) since man is capable of resistance, non-resistance in him is therefore identical with such *potentia*; (3) because potency cannot exist without at least some act in which to inhere, every potency is a real being (as opposed to a "being of reason") and thus no negation can be *in potentia* with respect to anything else; (4) resistance remains un-actualized only where God causes cooperation with grace; (5) the nonbeing of non-resistance

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[125] See Salza, *The Mystery of Predestination*, 87-88.
[126] *Predestination*, 331-333
[127] It should already be clear what meaning Garrigou intends.
[128] *The Mystery of Predestination*, 91.

precludes it from having any impact on reality; and (6) non-resistance, if it is a nonbeing, cannot function as a condition for the efficacy of grace. On the contrary: (1) nonbeings are parasitical upon beings, which is not aptly named "condition of being;" (2) one can be capable of a certain activity and yet the lack of performing that activity at any given moment is not precisely to be identified with the potency itself for performing such an activity; (3) nonbeings may inhere in beings and therefore nothing prohibits their being *in potentia* with respect to further being, e.g., blindness in a man stands in potency to the recovery of sight; (4) resistance *in potentia* in principle may exist where is the lack of actual resistance if non-resistance has not yet been positively chosen (i.e., Most's distinction between negative and positive non-resistance); (5) what is asserted does not follow,[129] e.g., blindness is felt in a sheer manner; (6) this is precisely the conclusion in question. Take note that the divine will to condition the actual effectiveness of grace offered upon the absence of resistance posed does not subject the intrinsic efficacy of grace to creaturely force, nor does it imply that being is made to depend upon nonbeing. Most never claims that negative non-resistance makes grace efficacious[130] – rather, all grace is intrinsically efficacious,[131] the act of non-resistance is itself the result of grace,[132] and such grace-impelled non-resistance is usually willed with the proviso that it not obliterate every possible obstacle of which human freedom is autonomously capable.[133] Like Long, though, Salza insists on

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[129] See Jesus Villagrasa, *Fondazione di un'etica realista* (Roma: Atheneo Ponficia Regina Apostolorum, 2005), for development of the argument (of Antonio Millan-Puelles) for the ethical impact on human beings of nonbeings.
[130] Salza disingenuously says this is Most's position on 88. Likewise, he pits Most's statements about negative non-resistance (as nonbeing) against his statements on positive non-resistance (as caused by grace), without noting the distinction between positive and negative made explicitly by Most.
[131] See *GPSWG*, 469.
[132] See *GPSWG*, 197.
[133] See, for example, *GPSWG*, 459ff.

recruiting faulty metaphysical arguments in defense of the *massa damnata* interpretation of Romans 9 developed by St. Augustine and at least at some point accepted by St. Thomas.[134]

A Distinct Outlook on the Debate

Looking past what he calls "a late Augustinian reading of Paul," David Bentley Hart develops a very different line of argument, which I will present as complementary to those attacked (Most and Maritain).[135] In his typical Orthodox manner, Hart emphasizes above all else the superb mystery involved in divine causation, permission, and foreknowledge of world events, and in the process makes some very interesting comments regarding Bañezianism. Utilizing an

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[134] Against this theory invented by St. Augustine and inherited by St. Thomas, Most appeals to an alternative strand of texts in Augustine that support his own theory of predestination after foreseen demerit but before foreseen merit, and he argues that Thomas develops this conception with respect to grace and freedom but is not sure how to reconcile it with the texts of Romans and therefore seems to maintain Augustine's interpretation in his commentary thereupon and other writings of the same time (see *GPSWG*, 305ff.). Besides appealing to the consensus of modern biblical scholars on the literal meaning of the Romans text, Most also presents textual support for his proposal from a vast array of saints and doctors of the Church (see *GPSWG*, cc. 13 and 16, especially 143ff., 481ff.). Salza dedicates most of his book to arguing for the "traditional" interpretation of St. Thomas and of the biblical texts therein employed. There is not enough space here to address the meaning of the particular texts invoked in this question; hence, I have limited myself primarily to the metaphysical arguments at hand.

[135] While he does not present the new proposal in any form, he criticizes a couple notions at times presented by St. Thomas that are then utilized for the Bañezian thesis. For example, commenting on the idea that a diversity of goods "requires the shadow of evil to make the lineaments of those goods more evident," he says: "*ST* I, q. 23, a. 5, ad 3, is unobjectionable in suggesting that it is through the variety of created goods that finite minds conceive some knowledge of the plenitude of God's goodness; but, in trying to integrate the theology of predilective predestination *ante praevisa merita* into this vision of things, he attempts to import an impossible alloy into his reasoning. Indeed, the entirety of I, q. 23, inasmuch as it merely attempts to justify a late Augustinian reading of Paul that is objectively wrong, can largely be ignored as a set of forced answers to false questions" ("Impassibility as Transcendence: On the Infinite Innocence of God" in *Divine Impassibility and the Mystery of Human Suffering*, 319n35). Note that Hart here is not necessarily opposing the idea of predestination *ante praevisa merita*. Levering agrees that Hart is in essential agreement with Maritain; see *Predestination*, 178n2.

insight of Heidegger without necessarily succumbing to his metaphysical misgivings,[136] Hart attacks the idea that evil may be necessary for God to attain the supreme good of creation:

> What must be emphasized here, however, is that the defects within the Bañezian position are the result not of too strict a fidelity to the principle of divine impassibility, but of an absolute betrayal of that principle: one that robs it of its true meaning, and thereby reduces God to a being among lesser beings, a force among lesser forces, whose infinite greatness is rendered possible only by the absolute passivity of finite reality before his absolute supremacy. It is the failure to understand omnipotence as transcendence that renders every attempt to speak coherently of God's innocence futile. It is the failure to place divine causality altogether beyond the finite economy of created causes that produces a God who is merely beyond good and evil.[137]

Leaving aside questions of analogy (e.g., the real attribution of good to God), it is a stimulating suggestion that the Bañezian attempt to preserve divine immutability in fact undermines it when it insists on limiting the transcendence of divine omnipotence to the categories of first and second causation. Without denying that the first cause must be the *total* cause (as opposed to *co-ordinate* cause) of all secondary causation, one must also keep in mind what Thomas saw as a necessary corollary, namely, that God transcends even the division between the contingent and necessary found in creation.[138]

Apparently responding to Long's article, Hart reflects on the implications of a truly transcendent cause:

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[136] The Thomistic philosopher, Cornelio Fabro, has frequently exploited the same insight, namely, that Being (*Sein*) is of an entirely different order than that of beings – for the Thomist, this points to God as *ipsum esse subsistens*, transcending entirely what Heidegger calls the 'ontical order' (see, for example, his *Tomismo e Pensiero Moderno* [Roma: Libreria Editrice della Pontificia Universita' Lateranense, 1969]). Heidegger attempts to replace metaphysics with a phenomenological ontology, having identified the human being (understood as *Dasein*) as *the* portal of insight into Being (*Sein*) (see, for example, *Sein und Zeit*, Intro, c. 2, sect. 7.C).

[137] *Divine Impassibility*, 319.

[138] See *ST* I, q. 22, a. 4, ad 3: "Et considerandum est quod necessarium et contingens proprie consequuntur ens, inquantum huiusmodi. Unde modus contingentiae et necessitatis cadit sub provisione Dei, qui est universalis provisor totius entis, non autem sub provisione aliquorum particularium provisorum."

> To say, moreover, that this freedom is not causally predetermined by God does not imply that it is somehow 'absolute' or that it occupies a region independent of God's power (as one strain of neo- Bañezian apologetics contends). It is in his power to create such autonomy that God's omnipotence is most abundantly revealed; for everything therein comes from him: the real being of agent, act, and potency…the sustained permission of finite autonomy; even the indetermination of the creature's freedom is an utterly dependent and unmerited participation in the mystery of God's infinite freedom; and, in his eternal presence to all of time, God never ceases to exercise his providential care…in us the free movement of the will towards God is one that passes from potency to act, and as such is dynamic and synthetic in form. Thus God works within the participated autonomy of the creature as an act of boundless freedom, a sort of immanent transcendence….it is no more contradictory to say that God can create – out of the infinite wellspring of his own freedom – dependent freedoms that he does not determine, than it is to say that he can create – out of the infinite wellspring of his being – dependent beings that are genuinely somehow other than God. In neither case, however, is it possible to describe the 'mechanism' by which he does this.[139]

While one may argue that there is nothing contradictory in stating that free acts can be 'determined' by God and still remain free in the created sense of freedom, his point is well-taken that the relative autonomy of created freedom can pose no threat to infinite freedom, regardless of the 'mechanism' of explanation one prefers, as long as the language of immanent transcendence is held front and center. He goes on to reply to a concern of Emery's article:

> As for those who fear that, in knowing actions he does not predetermine, God proves susceptible of pathos, one can only exhort them always to consider the logic of transcendence. God knows in creating, which is an action simply *beyond* the realm of the determined and the determining. Just as – according to Thomas – God can know evil by way of his positive act of the good, as a privation thereof, even so can he know the free transgressions of his creatures by way of the good acts he positively wills through the freedom of the rational souls he creates. Just as the incarnate Logos really suffers…by a free act, so God can 'suffer' the perfect knowledge of the free acts of his creatures not as a passive reaction to some objective force set over against himself, but as the free transcendent act of giving being to the world of Christ – an act to whose sufficiency there need attach no mediating 'premotion' to assure its omnipotence.[140]

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[139] *Divine Impassibility*, 313-314.

[140] *Divine Impassibility*, 314. Levering seems to acknowledge Hart's peculiar approach to these questions in his essay "Providence and Causality: On Divine Innocence" in *The Providence of God: Deus Habet Consilium*, eds. Francesca Aran Murphy and Philip G. Ziegler (London: T &T Clarke, 2009): 34-56, quoting him extensively as anti-Bañezian but not succumbing to the kataphatic errors he attempts to expose; see his *Predestination*, 157-158n107 and 177nn1-2.

Notice how the dichotomy set up by Garrigou ("God determining or determined") is explicitly 'transcended.' God is able to subject Himself not to 'determination' as such but to an encompassing receptivity to created activity – this is precisely where evil finds its place in the divine economy, the only way *pathos* can be a category legitimately applicable to God. Hart's appeal to transcendence in dismissing the traditional objection concerning divine foreknowledge appears parallel to Most's approach to "the transcendence of the divine intellect" as no less mysterious than the transcendence of the divine will to which the Bañezian Thomists frequently appeal in explaining how predestination does not contradict human freedom.[141]

Conclusion

It ought to be clear by now that if one approaches created instrumentality as a participation in divine causation and yet formally distinct from it, that is, if one views the deficiency of human action as a dispositive addition to divine agency, which must be entirely innocent, then the negative particularity of moral evils can be traced entirely to the instrument as origin without any *causal* relation to the transcendent source of such agency. While the nonbeing thus 'contributed' by the free creature is logically prior to the entitative species of predestined acts, the being of the acts that are actually produced eminently contains such negative determination insofar as the latter has reality only in terms of the former. God is the ultimate reason why some men choose to do the good He wills for them, but He is not the ultimate reason why others choose to resist His antecedent will. Since man can do nothing without God, he cannot actualize his own potency for performing good acts without efficacious help. However, such does not imply that anytime man chooses not to cooperate with grace, it is

[141] See Most, *GPSWG*, 497-500.

ultimately because God arbitrarily chooses not to provide the application of efficacious grace that He initially desires to impart.

The major purpose of this chapter has been to rebut the attempt of Steven Long to refute the proposed revision of Thomistic predestination represented chiefly by Jacques Maritain, who is indebted to Francisco Marin-Sola, with significant help from William Most. Continuing this rebuttal, Thomas Joseph White and David Bentley Hart have been recruited for support concerning distinct points, answering the doubts of Gilles Emery as well (which rely largely on Garrigou-Lagrange). John Salza's weak defense of Bañezianism ought to give way to a greater appreciation for the efforts of Garrigou-Lagrange to temper the "traditional" Thomistic position in the *de auxiliis* controversy.[142] If only Maritain could have more directly mediated the dispute on grace (not to mention other topics!) between Garrigou and Marin-Sola, the divide among Thomists on the issue of predestination and grace with respect to human freedom might not have persisted with such vehemence. Certainly a hypo-Augustinian Thomism is necessary to provide an eventual resolution to the *de auxiliis* debate. William Most aptly displays in detail how negative reprobation (conceived in terms of infallible permission)[143] contradicts the universal salvific will of God and intimates an alternative metaphysical framework (guided by revelation). Jacques Maritain explains in more philosophical terms why neo-Bañezianism is inadequate and lays out with precision a superior Thomistic metaphysic. Therefore, in response to critiques primarily of the latter, I have utilized both (but primarily the former) in order to help demonstrate

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[142] Most fails to note the effort of Garrigou to distance himself in part from a pure Bañezianism (see *GPSWG*, 339-340).

[143] It ought to be clear that both Most and Maritain believe it possible for God to infallibly cause a free good act. But while Maritain squarely opposes infallible permissive decrees altogether, Most focuses his criticism on the point at which infallible permissive decrees would serve as means of ensuring the damnation of free creatures (i.e., a particular Bañezian understanding of negative reprobation).

that infallible permissive decrees (and negative reprobation so conceived) are by no means a metaphysical necessity, a thesis around which the (neo-)Bañezian approach most evidently turns.

Chapter 6

The Integrity of Nature in the Grace-Freedom Dynamic: Lonergan's Perspective[1]

The previous chapter on the emerging consensus concerning the *de auxiliis* debate, particularly, with respect to the question of the divine permission of moral evil, was supposed to indicate the direction Balthasar should have taken in his treatment of the finite-infinite freedom dramatic. Instead, we find in Balthasar an over-emphatic anti-Pelagian (or 'hyper-Augustinian') view of human freedom that appears conspicuously similar to the neo-Thomist school of thought on questions of grace and predestination, the (neo-)Bañezian, which reigned (among Thomists) into the early twentieth century. Balthasar's Thomism, like many greats of his time, was in part a reaction to the Suárezian (and therefore Molinist) type inculcating the Jesuits at the time of his formation. Bernard Lonergan is another great of the twentieth century who decided to veer from the Molinist line taught them, but instead of falling back instinctually on the dominant Augustinian form of Thomism, popular among Dominicans, Lonergan decided to investigate the issue of the grace-freedom dynamic in great detail, resulting in his own peculiar take on the Bañez-Molina dichotomy and the developments in theology that preceded it. Since Balthasar leans more toward the side of Bañez on the level of fundamental tendencies, I will focus on Lonergan's critique of Bañezian Thomism with respect to the grace-freedom dynamic. But to further illustrate a fittingly delicate and intricate treatment of how grace operates in the human being, I will present Lonergan's theology of grace as a whole, indicating the fundamental

[1] Another version of this chapter has already been published: "The Integrity of Nature in the Grace-Freedom Dynamic: Lonergan's Critique of Bañezian Thomism," *Theological Studies* 75, no. 3 (September 2014): 537-563.

thread that unites the two questions of *gratia operans* and *desiderium naturale visionis Dei*, namely, "the theorem of the supernatural."

In the previous chapter, we saw how Jacques Maritain, drawing on Francisco Marin-Sola, argues that while all grace may be called "intrinsically efficacious," most graces that fructify are "shatterable," as they can be "nihilated" by the free creature, such that grace ordinarily brings about free assent to its efficacy *on the condition that* there is no impediment put up by the created will. William Most, acknowledging essential agreement with Maritain's doctrine, argues that in addition to the efficacy of the transcendent divine will there is the infallibility of the equally transcendent divine intellect, according to which God knows, prior to the merits caused by His consequent predestinating will, the demerits freely proposed by men, allowing Him to predestine, in most cases, only the good acts that are not resisted. Most assigns the blame for the traditional position that divine foreknowledge of evil follows upon infallible permissive decrees to an inheritance of Augustine's *massa damnata* theory.

Bernard Lonergan's principal tactic in combating the Bañezian theory of divine permission is to undercut its very foundations, namely, the notion of *praedeterminatio physica*, which results in the consequent hard division of grace into sufficient and efficacious that is foreign to St. Thomas. Lonergan's unique approach to the question in his dissertation, which predates the writings of both Most and Maritain on the topic, deserves separate treatment, without entering into exegesis of Thomistic texts (which, nevertheless, forms the paradigm comprising his dissertation). Furthermore, Lonergan's critique of the Bañezian interpretation of Thomas extends, in fact, beyond the question of the grace-freedom dynamic to the question of the natural desire for the beatific vision, which is in one respect more fundamental, even if he does not formulate his treatment of the issues according to this framework. Balthasar's position

on the natural desire (or the grace-nature relationship) is certainly not Bañezian, but it is still more Augustinian than is Lonergan's refined Thomistic position.

The third great presupposition of Balthasar's universalism, Lubac's position on the grace-nature relationship, is not unrelated to the second one (his understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic), with which I have been principally occupied up to now.[1] Nicholas Healy testifies to

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[1] I am here taking for granted the commonly held (and well-founded) belief that Balthasar essentially agrees with Lubac's thesis. While greater precision concerning the nuances and/or lack of coherence in his work on the question, which also evidently incorporates Barth and Rahner, will not be pursued here, it is opportune to note that what he says in the relatively early work, *Das Ganze im Fragment*, is more consistent with Lonergan's sophisticated (albeit brief) treatment of the question, which I discern to be significantly more harmonious than Lubac's. For example, he says there: "The mystery of the difference between spiritual being and the personality was seen with great clarity by Anton Gunther; all his thinking revolves constantly around it. Unfortunately, however, he made the mistake of equating directly that element in the personal which transcends nature with the theological supernatural. Thus, he remained caught in the idealism that he was combating. It is true that the uniqueness of the human person can have its root only in the uniqueness of having been created and called into being by the absolute uniqueness of a personal God. In this sense personal man stands in an immediate relationship to a personal God: it does not, however, necessarily follow that the infinite freedom of the personal God will reveal and offer to share the intimacy of his divine being with personal man, though it is true that the created person only becomes truly aware of his personality through the call of God's revelation" (*A Theological Anthropology*, 72n1 [G 64-65n1]). As well, he grants the category of obediential potency legitimacy, a key element in Lonergan's resolution to the impasse in the twentieth century: "Thus, Augustine distinguishes between what scholasticism later calls natural and obediential potency, the latter signifying the plasticity of the creature in the hands of God" (*A Theological Anthropology*, 42n21 [G 43n1]). But he also states, not in contrast to Lonergan, the following: "In [Michel] de Bay's opinion, perfection through grace belongs to the integrity of human nature; thus, the supernatural is something owed to nature (at least originally in Paradise), something which is bound up with it, and in this sense is 'natural.' In the reaction against this view, which was condemned by the Church, baroque theology deepened the gulf between the 'natural' and the 'supernatural.' The element of the gratuitousness of grace (as participation in the divine nature) could now apparently be salvaged only by contrasting with man actually called and raised to the supernatural (to the ultimate goal of the immediate vision of God) a 'pure nature,' which is admittedly only *possible*. This 'pure nature' never existed as a reality – since the first man was created immediately in grace – but it certainly could have existed, if grace really is grace. It was now tempting to trace the outlines of this hypothetical 'pure' human nature, for such nature did exist as a real element within the totality of the actually existing human being. Further, one could ask what would be a purely natural goal which was not the vision of God; he could ask whether or not the resurrection of the flesh, i.e., the perpetuation of earthly human wholeness, would have belonged to the goods of 'pure nature.' This was a

the importance of this presupposition in Balthasar when, after propounding briefly (without argument) Lubac's thesis regarding the impact of scholastic speculation on the distinction of orders, he notes that in a way his entire treatment of Balthasar's eschatology is intended to dispel the "reductive answers" of the scholastic commentators Lubac opposes, which "give rise to and perpetuate the nihilistic separation of nature and grace."[2]

The natural desire for the beatific vision is widely treated as the cipher to the problem of the relationship between nature and grace in general, or the natural and supernatural orders of reality. The unifying fount of Lonergan's critique of Bañezianism is a respect for the autonomy

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speculation which had serious consequences, for under the pretext of serving Christian theology it gravely endangered it. Not only did this idea of a so-called 'pure man' beneath the Christian nature directly serve post- and anti-Christian thought, it also made the supernatural orientation of man toward the God of elective love appear as an inessential, even dispensable addition and superstructure" (83-84 [G 103-104]). But he then goes a little too far: "Christian theology has never wanted to give the idea of a possible purely natural integration anything but a completely hypothetical significance. The question can be raised whether the hypothesis – making a statemet in the abstract without any content was unknown in the whole course of early theology – is a necessary part of Christian thinking. It cannot fill the gaps of concrete human existence: man, in fact, remains most painfully imperfectible by himself. . . . The theological demand of a possible purely natural man, of whose innermost being language would be a part (Aristotle), without his being engaged in a (two-sided) dialogue, is a rational impossibility" (84-85 [G 105-106]). In comparison to Lonergan, see below his "marginal theorem."

[2] Healy, *Being as Communion*, 212. Earlier in the work he makes only the following comments in a footnote: "The disproportion between human nature and its 'supernatural' finality led certain scholastic commentators to read back into the texts of Aquinas a foreign notion of 'pure nature'. For the history of this misinterpretation, together with a critique of the pernicious theological and cultural consequences of a nature-grace dualism, see Henri de Lubac . . . Balthasar identifies de Lubac's contribution as the recovery of the view common to the Fathers and Thomas Aquinas, for whom nature is intrinsically ordered to an ultimate end that it can only attain with the help of grace [he cites *ST* I-II, q. 5, a. 5, ad. 2]" (*Being as Communion*, 169n25). Chris Hackett also notes Healy's lack of argumentation on the matter as a weakness due to its significance for his project: "Throughout the book, Healy, following Balthasar's conclusions, takes unequivocal stances on key issues in theology, without any significant justification. . . . In chapter 4 he seems to regard the nature/supernature debate as an issue completely settled by de Lubac himself. Though I, at least, agree with him on these problems, one may feel that Healy ignores conflicting interpretations in order to secure his own (i.e. Balthasar's) argument" (Chris Hackett, Review of *The Eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* by Nicholas Healy, *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9 [April 2007]: 250-253, at 253).

of the nature of man as a free intellectual creature. Hence, underlying the issue of the grace-freedom dynamic is the problem of the precise relationship between man's rational nature and the supernatural order of grace (and glory). Therefore, the best way to present a resolution to the aporias that result from Balthasar's presupposed positions on the relationships between created freedom and divine grace, on the one hand, and the desire proper to man's rational nature and the supreme grace of the beatific vision, on the other hand, is to trace out the logic of Lonergan's theology of grace in contradistinction from the Augustinian Thomism developed by many of the late-scholastic commentators on Thomas. I will only broach such a task in the following presentation and defense of Lonergan's treatment of these two questions.

Setting the Scene for Lonergan's Contribution

Two of the hottest debates in theological anthropology today concern (1) the dynamic between the "helps of divine grace" and created freedom, and (2) the precise nature of the relationship between the orders of grace and nature as exhibited in the "natural desire to see God." But no one, to my knowledge, has spelled out the connection between these two issues.

The debate concerning grace and freedom is not quite as fierce now as it was in the early twentieth century and especially the seventeenth century (when Pope Clement VIII convened the *congregatio de auxiliis divinae gratiae*), but there is a steady return to the question. The most prominent modern proponent of the (neo-)Bañezian position, particularly on this issue, is certainly "the sacred monster of Thomism," Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange.[3] Francisco Suárez is

[3] See Richard Peddicord, O.P. *Sacred Monster of Thomism: An Introduction to the Life and Legacy of Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.* (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine, 2004). For Garrigou-Lagrange's doctrine of grace and predestination, see especially his *Grace: Commentary on the Summa Theologica of St. Thomas, Ia IIae, q. 109–14*, trans. Dominican Nuns of Corpus Christi Monastery (St. Louis: Herder, 1952); *Predestination: The Meaning of Predestination in Scripture and the Church*, trans. Dom Bede Rose, reprint ed. (1939; Rockford,

probably still the most notable adherent to the Molinist position,[4] which he revised amidst his massive – and many would say, disastrous – attempt to synthesize Thomistic thought with the Scotist school that dominated the Franciscan Order at the time.

On the question of how the intrinsic efficacy of grace plays out in the free enterprise of human moral action, few scholars have taken a stand against the Bañezian neglect of the natural element in the dynamic, namely, created freedom.[5] Lonergan's position avoids the pitfalls of the two polar-opposite schools of thought in the *de auxiliis* controversy by his unparalleled analysis of Thomas' developing positions on how grace and freedom interact in the intellectual creature. While this topic occupied his doctoral work,[6] his subsequent *De Ente Supernaturali*[7] also addressed the question of the relationship between grace and nature in general and in a way that again cuts a unique path between (or above) the diametrically opposed neo-Augustinianism of

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IL: TAN, 1998); *The One God: A Commentary on the First Part of St. Thomas' Theological Summa*, trans. Dom Bede Rose (St. Louis: Herder, 1954), cc. 19, 22–23.

[4] See Francisco Suárez, S.J., *Disputatio Metaphysicae* XXII; in English, *On Creation, Conservation, and Concurrence: Metaphysical Disputations 20-22*, translated and introduced by A. J. Freddoso (South Bend, IN: St. Augustine Press, 2002).

[5] Thomas Joseph White, O.P., has indicated that he sides with Jacques Maritain, Charles Journet, and Bernard Lonergan against Long: White, "Von Balthasar and Journet," 663 n. 70; for White's references to Lonergan's dissertation, see 640 n. 14, 642 n. 21, 654 n. 49, 661 n. 68, 663 n. 70. Long does not mention Lonergan, but he indicates the fundamental agreement between Jacques Maritain and William Most (see "Providence, Freedom, and Natural Law," 578) as well as Maritain's indebtedness to Francisco Marin-Sola (578 n. 22); see William G. Most, *Grace, Predestination, and the Salvific Will of God* and Michael Torre, "Francisco Marin-Sola."

[6] See *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas*, ed. J. Patout Burns (New York: Herder & Herder, 1971); republished as *Grace and Freedom: Operative Grace in the Thought of St. Thomas Aquinas: Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan*, vol. 1, eds. Frederick E. Crowe, SJ, and Robert M. Doran, SJ (Reprint, Toronto: University of Toronto, 2000). Reinhard Hütter lauds this work that it is "still . . . the benchmark analysis of Aquinas' profound treatment of this utterly complex topic" ("*Desiderium Naturalis Visionis Dei*," 103n42).

[7] *De Ente Supernaturali: Supplementum Schematicum*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe [Toronto: Regis College, 1973].

Henri de Lubac and the "extrinsicism" of the traditional Thomist commentators, much like his interpretation of Thomas transcends the false dichotomy of Bañezianism versus Molinism.

Henri de Lubac is famous for igniting the firestorm that is the second debate, and his primary target was the scholastic commentator tradition, whose leading figures were Tommaso de Vio Cajetan, Domingo Bañez, Francisco Suárez. Lawrence Feingold has shown to the satisfaction of many that Lubac misinterpreted both Thomas and his commentators.[8] Along with Feingold a host of so-called "neo-Thomists" have rushed to rescue the integrity of the natural order in the debate on the relationship between grace and nature.[9] More balanced approaches have also come onto the scene.[10] In any case, the debate runs deeper than what the great Doctor intended to convey on the natural desire to see God. Bernard Lonergan stands out

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[8] Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2010).

[9] Reinhard Hütter, "*Desiderium Naturale Visionis Dei—Est autem duplex hominis beatitude sive felicitas*: Some Observations about Lawrence Feingold's and John Milbank's Recent Interventions in the Debate over the Natural Desire to See God," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 5, no. 1 (2007): 81–131 as well as "Aquinas on the Natural Desire for the Vision of God: A Relecture of Summa Contra Gentiles III, c. 25 apres Henri de Lubac," *Thomist* 73 (2009): 523–591; Steven A. Long, "On the Loss, and the Recovery, of Nature as a Theonomic Principle: Reflections on the Nature/Grace Controversy," *Nova e Vetera* (English Edition) 5, no. 1 (2007): 133–84 as well as *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University, 2010); Thomas M. Osborne Jr., "*Natura Pura*: Two Recent Works," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 11, no. 1 (2013): 265–79; see also Guy Mansini, O.S.B., "Lonergan on the Natural Desire in the Light of Feingold," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 5, no. 1 (2007): 185–98.

[10] See the compilation of essays by diverse authors, *Surnaturel: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth-Century Thomistic Thought*, ed. Serge-Thomas Bonino, O.P. (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia Press, 2009); Mansini, "The Abiding Theological Significance of Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel*." *Thomist* 73 (2009): 593–619; Harm Goris, "Steering Clear of Charybdis: Some Directions for Avoiding 'Grace Extrinsicism' in Aquinas," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 5, no. 1 (2007): 67–80; David Braine, "The Debate between Henri de Lubac and His Critics," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 6, no. 3 (2008): 543–590. Braine's article is an excellent appropriation of Lubac, particularly, regarding his inconsistent use of the term "natural," which is particularly relevant because it calls to mind Lonergan's assessment of de Lubac's position, which is in need of Lonergan's notion of "vertical finality." See also the formidable defense of Lubac by Nicholas J. Healy, "Henri de Lubac on Nature and Grace: A Note on Some Recent Contributions to the Debate," *Communio* 35 (2008): 535–64.

as not only a premier interpreter of Thomas, but also as a somewhat neglected figure in this debate.[11]

While Bañezian Thomism exhibits a tendency to over-emphasize the autonomy of intellectual creatures with respect to the order of grace,[12] which is manifest in undue speculation on "the state of *natura pura*," it also undermines the dispositive role of the *appetitus rationalis* in the effective ordination of free creatures toward deification. Since "grace builds upon nature," not only does man have the faculty of free will with its own natural integrity in its ordination to the supernatural good, he has an agent intellect capable by nature of receiving the light of glory, which render his finite being super-abundantly fulfilled in the beatific vision for which we hope by the aid of divine grace. Bernard Lonergan stands almost alone in defending the integrity of human nature in both debates.[13]

I do not intend here either to trace the development of Aquinas's thought regarding nature/grace and grace/freedom or to rehash the polemics surrounding Lubac and Molina. Instead, I will focus on how Lonergan's positions relate to Bañezian Thomism as it stands today

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[11] Mansini, "Lonergan on the Natural Desire in the Light of Feingold" is a notable exception. I engage this article below. Lonergan's voluminous presentations of Aquinas's thought published by the Gregorian University are well known.

[12] This seems to be born of an epistemology that emphasizes the inability of the agent intellect to produce intelligible species that are beyond the data of sense experience over the natural orientation of the possible intellect (as *capax Dei*) toward the infinite. The requisite intelligible species for perfect vision of His essence can be generated by God alone, but the human mind is created intrinsically capable of receiving such (*anima est quodammodo omnia*).

[13] Jacques Maritain may be the only other Thomist who maintains the integrity of nature in both ambits. For his critiques of the Bañezian revision of Thomas on the grace-freedom dynamic, see his *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil* and *Dieu et la permission du mal*. René Mougel argues in "The Position of Jacques Maritain Regarding *Surnaturel*: The Sin of the Angel, or 'Spirit and Liberty'" (*Surnaturel: A Controversy*: 59-83) that Maritain by no means fits squarely into the Bañezian camp on the grace-nature question. Still, Maritain certainly seems to follow the traditional Dominican line in a privately circulated and an essay posthumously published in *Approaches sans Entraves* (Paris: Librairie Arthem Fayard, 1973); in English, "Beginning with a Reverie" in *Untrammeled Approaches*, 3-26. In any case, Lonergan's unique conclusions with respect to both issues will be the topic of this chapter.

(i.e., neo-Bañezianism). After setting the parameters for these two interrelated debates in contemporary theology of grace, I will begin with Lonergan's critique of the Bañezian errors concerning the grace-freedom dynamic. Subsequently, I will present Lonergan's proposed solution to the central question of the grace-nature debate, namely, in what sense intellectual creatures have a *desiderium naturale ad videndum Deum* (or *desiderium naturale visionis Dei*).[14] I will make significant use of J. Michael Stebbins' monumental work on Lonergan throughout the chapter, but especially in the section on the grace-freedom dynamic,[15] indicating where my emphases differ from his. On the second issue, I will confront Guy Mansini's critique of Lonergan on the natural desire to see God and, therefore, indirectly engage Feingold's monograph insofar as it is the basis for Mansini's conclusions.[16] The theme that unifies the two questions is precisely Lonergan's defense of the natural integrity of both intellect and will in the event of "elevation,"[17] exhibited in the "theorem of the supernatural," coupled with the notion of "vertical finality," synthesized in the reality of "obediential potency." I propose Lonergan's analysis as both a powerful Thomist critique of the Bañezian interpretation and a unique contribution to the debate that transcends the typical divides.

Parameters of the Debate

On the topic of the *congregatio de auxiliis gratiae divinae*, the Dominican commentator tradition is typified by Bañez and his followers, although the twentieth century has seen another

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[14] For these phrases, see, e.g., Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 75, a. 6; *Comp. Theologiae*, 104; *SGC* III, 25.
[15] J. Michael Stebbins, *The Divine Initiative: Grace, World-Order, and Human Freedom in the Early Writings of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1995).
[16] See Guy Mansini, "Lonergan on the Natural Desire."
[17] Here I mean to include g*ratia operans* as the working out (in the form of acts that merit salvation) of *gratia elevans* as an initial ordering of man to the supernatural. I am proceeding from what is first for us (acts or effects) to what is first in itself (nature or being).

school of thought on the question of divine permission of evil.[18] Representing the traditional Jesuit position on the *de auxiliis* controversy are Luis de Molina and his followers (e.g., Suárez and Robert Bellarmine); today there is probably as much diversity on the question in the Society of Jesus as there is to be found anywhere else.[19] Against the error of Pelagianism, the Bañezians emphasize (with much support in Augustine and Aquinas) the intrinsic efficacy of grace precisely as supernatural aid intended to effect supernaturally meritorious acts. Against the errors of Luther and especially Calvin, the Molinists defend freedom against the late-Augustinian tendency to assert the necessity of supernatural aid for nature to be capable of any good whatsoever. Augustine's *massa damnata* theory contributed to the view – prevalent among Dominican Thomists until relatively recently – that fallen man cannot avoid evil without the aid of grace. This pessimistic understanding of fallen human nature (shared by the chief Reformers) caused the reactionary stance of many Jesuits, who held that grace is made efficacious when it is freely accepted. The theory, based on Romans 5–9, says that humankind is a *massa* (or *conspersio luti*), clay in the hands of a potter, destined for hell if it is left to its own corrupt nature and, therefore, only those whom God elects by a special predilection receive the efficacious help necessary to merit salvation.[20]

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[18] See, especially, Spanish Dominican Francisco Marín-Sola, O.P., "El sistema tomista sobre la moción divina," *Ciencia tomista* 32 (1925): 5–52; "Respuesta a algunas objeciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina," *Ciencia tomista* 33 (1926): 5–74; "Nuevas observaciones acerca del sistema tomista sobre la moción divina," *Ciencia tomista* 33 (1926): 321–97.

[19] Lonergan was a Jesuit. Other prominent Jesuit theologians (e.g., Karl Rahner, Hans Urs von Balthasar [formerly Jesuit], and Henri de Lubac) are practically silent on the issue, even if they each exhibit a general tendency toward an Augustinian emphasis in the theology of grace.

[20] For the development of Augustine's *massa damnata* interpretation of Romans 5–11, see: *De natura et gratia*, book 1 (*PL* 44, 4.4—5.5 [CSEL 60]; *De genesi ad litteram* 10.13–12.16 (*PL* 34) [CSEL 28.1]; *De diversis quaestionibus ad Simplicianum*, book 21.2.5–7 (*PL* 40) [CCL 44/ BA 10]; *De dono perseverantiae liber unus* 14.35 (*PL* 45) [BA 20]. See also Paula Fredriksen Landes, *Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans, Unfinished*

The key question for each school is precisely how a fallen creature can accept any particular grace (let alone, be justified by the infusion of habitual sanctifying grace) without the assistance of additional divine aid. The Bañezians argue that since man is incapable by himself of doing anything but resist divine help, God must predetermine that some graces will be accepted and therefore efficacious, but since sin and damnation remain realities in the face of God's desire "that all men be saved" (1 Tm 2:4),[21] the graces that are rejected must have been predetermined to be merely "sufficient" for salvation, not actually effective; hence, God knows which graces will be rejected and by whom precisely because His sovereign will is the transcendent cause of all graces, predetermining which are to be inefficacious, as God must will for every act a physical premotion that specifies the nature of each act.[22] The Molinists, however, argue that God first knows what each person would freely choose under every possible circumstance; therefore, the graces that are actually inefficacious are known to be so because those to whom they were offered chose to reject them and God knew this would be the case before choosing to grant such graces. In other words, graces are efficacious because their recipients choose to accept them, as God chooses to grant said graces precisely because He

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Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (Chico: Society of Biblical Literature, 1982); Landes, s.v. *massa* in *Augustine through the Ages*: *An Encyclopedia*, ed. Allan D. Fitzgerald and John C. Cavadini (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999); Ernesto Buonaiuti, "Manichaeism and Augustine's Idea of 'Massa Perditionis,'" *Harvard Theological Review* 20 (1927): 117–27; Domenico Marafioti, "Alle origini del teorema della predestinazione," *Atti*, vol. 2 (1987): 257–277; Bernard Leeming, "Augustine, Ambrosiaster, and the *massa perditionis*," *Gregorianum* 11 (1930): 58–91; James Wetzel, "Predestination, Pelagianism, and Foreknowledge" in *The Cambridge Companion to Augustine*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Norman Kretzmann (New York: Cambridge University, 2010): 49–58.

[21] The Bañezian school followed Augustine's interpretation of the universal salvific will as a metaphorical expression (see *Enchiridion de fide, spe et charitate*, book 1 [*PL* 40], 27.40.103) [CCL 42]. But the condemnations of Jansenius led them to rely more on the distinction between antecedent and consequent divine wills to explain the discrepancy between the universal salvific will and the revealed *datum* of damnation.

[22] See Garrigou-Lagrange, *Grace: Commentary* 222–23; *The One God* 530–38, 709; *Predestination* 80–84, 206-209., 246-250, 278-279, 341–45.

knows that, given these particular circumstances, they would be accepted.[23] Hence, while the Molinists grant the transcendent divine intellect a knowledge of all possible hypotheticals (*futurabilia*) in order to ensure it a determinative role in which actually existent graces are freely accepted, the Bañezians turn to the divine will as the transcendent cause of all free good acts in order to acknowledge divine control over which graces will be accepted by whom, regardless of the circumstances.[24]

In the broader debate on grace and nature, the late-Scholastic or traditional (neo-)Thomist position on the nature-grace relationship takes Thomas' assertion of a twofold beatitude as the *de facto* end of man[25] and then argues that man could have been created with a singular end, namely, the natural one of imperfect beatitude consisting in natural knowledge and love of God.[26] The latter speculation is justified by appeal to the principle that the end intrinsic to something cannot be disproportionate to the means at its disposal for attaining such an end,[27] which is an elaboration on the principle that "for every natural passive potency there must be a corresponding natural active power."[28] In other words, the end of man's nature as such cannot

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[23] See Luis de Molina, S.J., *Concordia liberi arbitrii cum gratiae donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione ad nonnullos primae partis divi Thomae articulos*; Part 4 is available in English: *On Divine Foreknowledge: Part IV of the Concordia*, trans. Alfred Freddoso (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1988).

[24] For a more thorough summary of the two systems, see Most, *Grace, Predestination, and the Salvific Will of God*.

[25] E.g., *In III. Sent*. d. 23, q. 1, a. 4, sol. 3; *De veritate* q. 27, a. 2; *ST* I, q. 62, aa. 1–2; *ST* I–II, q. 62, a. 1; *ST* I–II, q. 114, a. 2. Hereafter I use "man" instead of the awkward "human person"; no gender specificity is intended.

[26] Thomas explicitly mentions such a possibility in *Quodlibet* 1, q. 4, a. 3 [8], although Jean-Pierre Torrell concedes that Thomas' *naturalia pura* is not equivalent to the later Scholastic *in statu naturalium* or *in puris naturalibus* (Torrell, "Nature and Grace in Thomas Aquinas" in *Surnaturel: A Controversy*, 155–88, at 169). See also *In II. Sent.* d. 31, q. 1, a. 2, ad 3; and *De malo* q. 5, a. 1, ad 15.

[27] *ST* I–II, q. 62, a. 1, ad 3; *ST*, I–II, q. 63, aa. 1 and 3; *De veritate* q. 27, a. 2; q. 14, a. 2; *In III. Sent*, d. 23, q. 1, a. 4; *In III. Sent*. d. 27, q. 2, a. 2, ad 4; *In III. Sent*. d. 27, q. 2, a. 3, ad 5.

[28] See Aristotle, *De anima*, Book 3, for example. Thomas appeals *to De anima* in, e.g., *Summa*

be supernatural because he does not naturally possess the requisite means for attaining such an end. To argue otherwise, for the commentators, is tantamount to denying the gratuity of grace;[29] consequently, it is helpful to speculate about a state of *natura pura*.

Stebbins does not mention Bañez's understanding of the natural desire to see God, although he engages the Bañezian position in the grace-freedom dynamic, presumably because he, like so many, understandably lumps the former with the position of Cajetan and the commentator tradition in general,[30] which exhibits a consistent thread of interpretation of Thomas but also contains internal differences relevant to an integral understanding of the issue. Feingold treats these minor discrepancies at length throughout his work,[31] although Mansini points up the outstanding lacuna that is Feingold's neglect of Lonergan's analysis.[32]

Bañez and Cajetan agree that the natural desire to see God as He is in Himself is elicited, not innate, because there is a disproportion between the natural being of man and the

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contra gentiles (hereafter *SCG*) III, c. 45.6. Lubac denies the universal applicability of this principle (along with John Duns Scotus); see *The Mystery of the Supernatural* (New York: Crossroad, 1998) 140–46.

[29] Feingold cites *ST* 1–2, q. 111, a. 1, ad 2; see *Natural Desire*, xxix.

[30] Stebbins focuses on Cajetan as the proponent of the late Scholastic "two-story-universe" approach to the question of the relationship between nature and grace (see *Divine Initiative*, 162). I agree with Feingold that a two-story building is an imperfect analogy for the neo-Scholastic understanding of the relationship between grace and nature, as it undermines the belief that grace fulfills in a super-abundant manner the desires of nature (see Feingold, *Natural Desire*, xxxvi–xxxvii). William H. Marshner treats the differences between Cajetan and Bañez especially in his chapter, "The Debate about Seeing God: Cajetan, Soto, Bañez, and de Lubac," in *Natural Desire and Natural End: A Critical Comparison of Cajetan, Soto, and Bañez* (Rome: Lateran University, forthcoming).

[31] For a brief exposé of Bañez's doctrine in comparison with the other commentators, see Feingold, *Natural Desire*, 216–18, 261–63.

[32] Mansini, "Lonergan on the Natural Desire" 185. Mansini here was working with Feingold's dissertation. In the *Faith and Reason: Studies in Catholic Theology and Philosophy* edition on which I am depending, Feingold apparently sought to remedy his neglect of Lonergan's analysis by adding a few notes on Lonergan; the references, however, are repetitive and marginal (Mansini, *Natural Desire*, xxx, xxxi–xxxii n. 50, 356, 357 n. 157, 403 n. 17) except where he briefly attempts to rebut Lonergan's characterization of the hypothesis of *natura pura* as a "marginal theorem" (437, where he also cites Mansini's article [437 n. 28]).

supernatural end to which he is *de facto* called by God's free initiative. Where they differ is the point of entry, as it were, of the elicited desire.[33] But Cajetan thinks that man's natural inclination to seek the causes of things means he will desire to know the supernatural cause of supernatural effects (e.g., miracles), whereas Bañez acknowledges that man desires to know God in Himself as soon as the intellect knows that God exists and is disproportionate to nature. But since God is disproportionate to man's nature, the preceding knowledge of God granted by revelation can only elicit a conditional desire for perfect beatitude (as the possibility of the beatific vision is not naturally knowable). In other words, whereas Cajetan did not distinguish between conditional and unconditional desire for the vision and consequently made it more difficult even for such "natural" desire to be elicited, Bañez sees a "natural" desire for vision elicited as soon as man comes to know God's existence. As soon as one realizes the disproportion between Creator and creature, he can entertain the possibility of being gifted perfect vision of God and therefore desire it on the condition that such a vision is possible. Certainly, many questions could be asked about these points, but I want to move on to Lonergan's own position.

On the opposite side are more recent theologians, such as Lubac, who argue in effect that the principle of proportionality does not apply to the supernatural realm. In this view, man by his very nature has an innate orientation toward the beatific vision. If man were not ordered toward the supernatural, he would not be man, because it is by his immaterial soul created directly by

[33] Feingold defines "elicited" in contradistinction from "innate" in the following descriptive manner: "when St. Thomas speaks of an *inclination* coming from the very nature of the will, it is clear that he is referring to an innate appetite. On the contrary, when he speaks of a natural desire that is a *movement* or *act* of the will, aroused by prior knowledge, then it is clear that he is speaking of an elicited desire" (*Natural Desire*, 16 [emphasis original]).

God that he is destined for direct vision of his Creator.[34] God is free to create man without grace, but it would not only be cruel to deprive intellectual creatures of elevation to the supernatural order; it would also contradict the nature of God as *ipsum amor subsistens*.[35] Lubac originally argued that such an order could exist only in the sense that God is free, absolutely speaking, to create whatever He desires; Lubac later adjusted this argument to say that while it is a real possibility for God to create man without grace, in such a case man would be other than what he is *de facto*.[36]

The *desiderium naturale ad videndum Deum* provides the key that unlocks the grace-nature problematic, since the exigencies of a nature are manifest in its innate desires.[37] It would, in fact, be a cruel existence for something to have an innate tendency toward something and have no adequate means for actually attaining such an end. As both intellect and will must be involved in man's natural *desire* to *know* God (with the "mind's eye," hence the meaning of "vision"

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[34] See Thomas, *De veritate* q. 8, a. 1. Feingold (*Natural Desire* 29–30) considers this argument not to be demonstrative. See also *SCG* 3, c. 25, another text on which Lubac relies in *Mystery of the Supernatural*.

[35] For a good summary of Lubac's arguments, see Mansini, "The Abiding Theological Significance."

[36] Compare Henri de Lubac's *Surnaturel: Études historiques*, new edition, ed. Michel Sales (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1991), 467, with his "The Mystery of the Supernatural," *Recherchés de science religieuse* 35 (1949), 91, and *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 54. For Lubac's general argumentation taken to its logical extreme, see John Milbank, *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005). See also the critique of Milbank's book by Edward T. Oakes, "The Paradox of Nature and Grace: On John Milbank's *The Suspended Middle: Henri de Lubac and the Debate concerning the Supernatural*," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4, no. 3 (2006): 667–96; see also Hütter, "*Desiderium Naturale Visionis Dei*."

[37] I will argue that Lonergan does not hold, as Feingold implies (*Natural Desire* xxxi n. 50), that man has an innate desire for perfect beatitude, but rather that the innate tendency of an intellectual creature is to seek knowledge of anything and everything, especially what is most significant, and yet this inclination does not become a determinate desire for the beatific vision as such until one knows of its possibility through revelation. Therefore, one can agree with the traditional Thomist position that a nature's innate desires are indicative of its exigencies without saying that the supernatural is an exigency of nature (namely, that of the intellectual creature), which is the conclusion to which Lubac's reasoning seems to lead.

here), the nature of such desire in man is indicative of the relationship between God and the spiritual being of man. If there is a connatural tendency toward perfect knowledge of God, then man's essence is inextricably connected with the divine, at least in some sense. If his natural desire to know God *ut in se est* is augmented or ameliorated by something extrinsic, then finite intellectual creatures are in need of something beyond nature in order to seek perfect beatitude as such. It will become clear through analysis of Lonergan's position that the way in which I have formulated just now the parameters of the question on the nature of man's desire to see God does not succumb to the false dichotomy that is typically set up between the approaches of the neo-Augustinians and the traditional Thomist commentators.

The starting point for understanding Lonergan's approach both to the natural-supernatural relationship and to the grace-freedom dynamic is his "theorem of the supernatural." He sees in Thomas the culmination of a gradually developing realization among Catholic theologians that in fact there are distinct orders of reality, one essentially superior to the other, and each with its own relative autonomy.[38] At the same time, according to the actual design of divine providence, every lower order of reality, even in the natural plane, is somehow integrated into a more complex and sophisticated order that does not destroy the operations proper to the elements integrated but elevates them to serve the higher purpose of this new organic unity of diverse realities, now forged into a dynamic complexity.[39]

Lonergan's Critique of Bañezianism on the Grace-Freedom Dynamic

The Development of Lonergan's Critique

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[38] See especially Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 527.
[39] This notion of "vertical finality" through operators and integrators appears throughout *Insight*.

Taking the "theorem of the supernatural" as a point of departure, Lonergan summarizes concisely the history of the debate concerning the grace-freedom dynamic: "The twelfth century was oppressed with an apparently insoluble problem, with the necessity of distinguishing between divine grace and human freedom and, at the same time, an inability to conceive either term without implying the other."[40] In the only other place in *Insight* where he explicitly addresses this question, he almost offers a summary of the conclusion to his doctoral research on the topic:

> It will be noted that this account of divine control of events differs from the accounts of both Bañez and Molina. For they ascribe divine control of all events to the fact that God by a peculiar activity controls each. But on the above analysis God controls each event because he controls all, and he controls all because he alone can be the cause of the order of the universe on which every event depends. Moreover, though our analysis is cast in contemporary terms, one has only to replace modern by Aristotelian physics to arrive, I believe, at the thought and expression of Aquinas.[41]

After arguing that Lonergan's understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic transcends the framework in which the Bañezians and Molinists operate, Stebbins in the conclusion of his book points to the need to transpose Thomas' doctrine of grace into the methodical shift involved in

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[40] *Insight*, 527.

[41] 664. He also indicates in *Insight* fundamental agreement with the Molinist position on the transcendence of the divine intellect, but his interpretation of the *scientia media* is different from the typical (which includes knowledge of *futurabilia*): "Since the divine act of understanding is unrestricted and true, it grasps not only every possible world order . . . independently of any free decision (*in signo antecedente omnem actum voluntatis*) God knows that if he were to will any world order, then that order would be realized in every aspect and detail; but every world order is a single, intelligible pattern of completely determinate existents and events; and so quite apart from any divine decision, God knows exactly what every free will would choose in each successive set of circumstances contained in each possible world order. The foregoing *scientia media* includes Molina's notion of divine wisdom grasping the order of every possible universe but it does not include Molina's tendency to speak of the conditioned futurables as entities at which God looks for guidance. Again, it rests neither on Molina's super-comprehension of the human will nor on Suárez' unexplained objective truth but on Aquinas' familiar contentions on the immutability of God and the conditioned necessity of what God knows or wills or causes. Finally, it is radically opposed to Scotist voluntarism and to the voluntaristic *decreta hypothetice praedeterminantia*" (662-663). I agree with Stebbins that Lonergan is here simply explicating the doctrine of *scientia simplicis intelligentiae* (see *Divine Initiative*, 264-265).

the turn toward interiority exemplified in Lonergan's later work.[42] Without broaching this project,[43] I simply stress that a rise to the level of interiority need not undermine the positive contribution of 'common sense' to philosophy and theology,[44] just as the theoretical need not be aligned too much with its deficiencies in order to achieve the third level of consciousness

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[42] See *Divine Initiative*, especially 296-298. In *Method in Theology* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2007), he says about his previous Thomistic studies: "I have done two studies of the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. One on *Grace and Freedom*, the other on *Verbum*. Were I to write on these topics today, the method I am proposing would lead to several significant differences from the presentation by Aquinas. But there also would exist profound affinities. For Aquinas' thought on grace and freedom and his thought on cognitional theory and on the Trinity were genuine achievements of the human spirit. Such achievement has a permanence of its own. It can be improved upon. It can be inserted in larger and richer contexts" (352). Robert Doran and Frederick Crowe have made it their life's work to respond to intimated needs such as this one. See, for example, Robert Doran, "Essays in Systematic Theology 3: 'Complacency and Concern' and a Basic Thesis on Grace," *Lonergan Workshop* 13 (1997): 57-78.

[43] The most Lonergan says about this transposition from metaphysical theory to transcendental interiority, at least in *Method in Theology*, is the following: "To illustrate the difference [between theoretical and methodical theology], consider the medieval doctrine of grace. It presupposed a metaphysical psychology in terms of the essence of the soul, its potencies, habits, and acts. This presupposition represented the order of nature. But grace goes beyond nature and perfects it. Grace, accordingly, calls for special theological categories, and these must refer to supernatural entities, for grace is tied up with God's loving gift of himself to us, and that gift is due not to our natures but to God's free initiative. At the same time, these entities have to be prolongations perfecting our nature. Accordingly, they are habits and acts. Supernatural acts ordinarily proceed from supernatural operative habits (virtues) and supernatural operative habits proceed from the supernatural entitative habit (sanctifying grace) which, unlike the operative habits, is radicated not in the potencies but in the essence of the soul. Now to effect the transition from theoretical to methodical theology one must start, not from a metaphysical psychology, but from intentionality analysis and, indeed, from transcendental method. So in our chapter on religion we noted that the human subject was self-transcendent intellectually by the achievement of knowledge, that he was self-transcendent morally inasmuch as he sought what was worthwhile, what was truly good, and thereby became a principle of benevolence and beneficence, that he was self-transcendent affectively when he fell in love, when the isolation of the individual was broken and he spontaneously functioned not just for himself but for others as well. . . . It is this other-wordly love, not as this or that act, not as a series of acts, but as a dynamic state whence proceed the acts, that constitutes in a methodical theology what in a theoretical theology is named sanctifying grace. Again, it is this dynamic state, manifested in inner and outer acts, that provides the base out of which special theological categories are set up" (288-289). See also 107 and 120.

[44] This is not to deny the general bias of common sense; see *Insight*, 225ff.

(interiority). Lonergan does not undermine common sense or theory when he speaks about the medieval theology of grace as an intermediate stage of meaning in *Method in Theology*:

> To speak of sanctifying grace pertains to the stage of meaning when the world of theory and the world of common sense are distinct but, as yet, have not been explicitly distinguished from and grounded in the world of interiority. To speak of the dynamic state of being in love with God pertains to the stage of meaning when the world of interiority has been made the explicit ground of the worlds of theory and of common sense. It follows that in this stage of meaning the gift of God's love first is described as an experience and only consequently is objectified in theoretical categories. Finally, it may be noted that the dynamic state of itself is operative grace, but the same state as principle of acts of love, hope, faith, repentance, and so on, is grace as cooperative.[45]

Although Lonergan indicates in his dissertation that the Fathers, including Augustine, and theologians as late as Peter Lombard failed to undergo fully intellectual conversion from the first to the second level of consciousness,[46] he does not suggest that the Bañezian and Molinist systems remain below the theoretic level of consciousness (in fact, he commonly refers to them as 'theories'). Stebbins goes further to claim that unlike the "method" Lonergan employs in his dissertation, the late-scholastic attempts to resolve the points on which St. Thomas was not entirely clear lack "an explicit orientation to theory" and pose a threat "to faith's quest for understanding."[47] While he appears to want to interpret Lonergan's method by retrojecting into his dissertation the theory of knowledge explored in *Insight*,[48] he does not go so far as to assert

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[45] 107.

[46] See *Grace and Freedom*, 7 and 165. For this notion of conversion, see *Method in Theology*, 238ff.

[47] See *Divine Initiative*, 290. He does not explain in much detail what Lonergan's methodology is at this stage.

[48] "He does not cast his lot with either the Bannezians or the Molinists; nor does he tinker with one or the other position in the hope of setting things right with a few minor repairs; nor does he attempt to construct an intermediate position capable of somehow bridging the basic differences that separate the disputants. Instead, Lonergan saps the foundations of the entire debate by showing that the very formulation of the question, and each of the systems proposed as an answer to it, rests on a series of misconceptions about fundamental philosophical issues. He finds in the writings of Aquinas a superior approach that is at once straightforward and profound, illuminating the role of grace in human living without making the Molinist claim that we can

that the errors of Bañezianism and Molinism are due to the general bias of common sense. Even though, formally speaking, Lonergan undercuts the entire Bañez-Molina antinomy,[49] he apparently thinks that the Bañezian system is much closer to Aquinas's system than is the Molinist,[50] and of course he considers himself a Thomist, even if he strives to go beyond him in the latter part of his career.

Lonergan's dissertation brilliantly fleshes out the stages in St. Thomas' own thinking on the relationship between grace and freedom and of identifying the pieces to the puzzle missed by previous interpreters who therefore replaced them with inadequate substitutes. Contrary to Stebbins,[51] I think the Bañezian system is much closer to Thomas' than is the Molinist.

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have an insight into the manner in which divine knowledge operates, and without employing the Bannezian device of making a mystery out of human freedom. And all these results hinge, as the introduction to his dissertation insists, on the methodological issue of how the human mind operates - the issue at the heart of so much of Lonergan's work" (*Divine Initiative*, xviii).

[49] For example, "St. Thomas posits three *actiones* but only two products; Durandus maintained that if there are only two products, there are only two *actiones*; both Molina and Bañez were out to discover a third product that they might have a third *actio*, and the former posited a *concursus simultaneus*, the latter a *concursus praevius*" (*Grace and Freedom*, 449). See also Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 293

[50] Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 448–49. Although Stebbins admits that Bañez, contrary to Molina, strived to do nothing other than stay faithful to Thomas himself (*Divine Initiative*, 194), he does not see the matter quite the same way (ibid. 248). Lonergan appears to come very close to the Bañezian position, if one is not attentive to his differentiation of "premotion" in the Aristotelian sense from the Bañezian understanding of the term (see *Grace and Freedom*, 75–79, 277-280, 286).

[51] Stebbins wants to claim great divergence between Bañezian Thomism and Lonergan's interpretation: "A point-by-point comparison with the Bannezian position reveals little but divergence (*DES*: 146; cf. *GF*: 71). First, the Bannezians posit their physical premotion not in order to explain the intermittence that characterizes the activity of terrestrial agents but rather to account for the very possibility of created efficient causality; more precisely, they want to explain how any being other than God – who alone is proportionate to the production of *esse* – can produce an effect as actually existing. Second, this premotion is prior causally, but not temporally, to the agent's *actio*. Third, its function is to bridge the supposed ontological gulf between *posse agere* and *actu agere*. Finally, a premotion of this kind affects only the agent, not the patient. These points of contrast make it plain that what Aquinas holds with regard to physical premotion bears not even the vaguest resemblance to what the Bannezians suppose him to hold" (*Divine Initiative*, 248).

Lonergan says as much:

> I think it may be said that Bannezian thought, point for point, corresponds to the thought of St. Thomas, yet between the two there is a notable difference which arises from the arrangement of the points. St. Thomas' synthesis of premotion, application, instrumental participation; his affirmation of universal instrumentality, of divine transcendence and efficacy, of operative grace as a special case of instrumental control – all these points are to be found in the Bannezian interpretation. But the difference lies in the analysis of the instrument: St. Thomas posits three *actiones* but only two products; Durandus maintained that if there are only two products, there are only two *actiones*; both Molina and Bañez were out to discover a third product that they might have a third *actio*, and the former posited a *concursus simultaneous*, the latter a *concursus praevius*. . . . But if we conclude that the Bannezian position is not what the Molinist has hardly claimed to be, an exact interpretation of St. Thomas, we would not be thought to mean that it is a strange or surprising interpretation.[52]

Nevertheless, a small error in the beginning naturally becomes amplified by the end of the reasoning process regarding any matter; hence, Lonergan argues that the Bañezians misinterpret premotion and application, instrumental participation and liberty, divine transcendence, and the distinction between *posse agere* and *actu agere*.[53]

The chief principle defended by the Bañezians is the transcendent efficacy of the divine will, which Lonergan also upholds against the Molinists. The Bañezian mistake is precisely the attempt to work out the details of how this efficacy operates through human freedom; Lonergan simply refutes the necessity for a *praemotio physica* on the grounds that no created reality can mediate the infallible efficacy of the divine will. Lonergan's refutation has the effect of

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[52] *Grace and Freedom*, 448-449. Stebbins also admits the following: "The most renowned of the detractors [from Molina] was the Dominican theologian Domingo Bañez. What was needed to remedy the poisonous effects of Molina's teaching, he thought, was not some equally original and ingenious system but rather a return to the sound doctrine of Aquinas. Whenever Bañez introduced a new term, he did so only with the intention of giving clearer expression to Aquinas's own thought. Hence, he felt justified in making the claim that 'even in questions of lesser moment, I never would have separated myself by so much as a finger's breadth from the teachings of the Holy Doctor.' This firm disavowal of novelty explains why the followers of Bañez more commonly identify themselves as 'Thomists' than as 'Bannezians'" (*Divine Initiative*, 194).

[53] See *Grace and Freedom*, 449.

recognizing the proper contribution of human freedom to the exercise of divine providence (without appealing to the Molinist mechanism of *concursus simultaneus*). More precisely, he says: "we agree with the Bannezian synthesis of premotion, application, instrumental participation, and fate, but we think the explanation of the transition from rest to activity found in *In VIII Phys.*, lect. 2, to be more germane to St. Thomas than their distinction between *posse agere* and *actu agere*."[54] It is this 'real distinction' between the capacity to act and the action itself to be endured by the recipient ("suffered by the patient") that leads to the necessary invention of *praedeterminatio physica* or *praemotio physica*, which expresses the divine transcendent will itself.[55]

Divine Efficacy and the Intregrity of Human Freedom

Holding the transcendence of both the divine will and the divine intellect, Lonergan advances the discussion by using the integrity of human free will as a principle by which to critique both dichotomous approaches:

> To St. Thomas cooperation was a theorem. . . . Remove this key position and it becomes impossible to reconcile human instrumentality with human freedom: one can posit a *praedeterminatio physica* to save instrumentality, or one can posit a *concursus indifferens* to save self-determination; one cannot have a bit of both the antecedents and the whole of both the consequents. There is a material resemblance between the Molinist *gratia excitans* and the Thomist *gratia operans*, but the resemblance is only material, for the Molinist lacks the speculative acumen to make his grace leave the will instrumentally subordinate to divine activity. But the Bannezian has exactly the same speculative blind spot: because he cannot grasp that the will is truly an instrument by the mere fact that God causes the will of the end, he goes on to assert that God also brings in a *praemotio* to predetermine the choice of means.[56]

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[54] *Grace and Freedom*, 315.

[55] Lonergan differentiates "premotion" in the Aristotelian sense from the Bañezian understanding of the term (see *Grace and Freedom*, 75-79, 277-280).

[56] *Grace and Freedom*, 147–48. Lonergan's critique of Molinism and Bañezianism exhibits a delicate balancing act, which is impressive given that he was a Jesuit writing a dissertation for the Pontificia Università Gregoriana di Roma (which was certainly run by Molinists in the 1940's).

Nevertheless, Lonergan holds with Thomas that "God is the cause of each particular motion inasmuch as his mind plans and his will intends the endless premotions that make up the dynamic pattern of the universe."[57] Note that Lonergan specifies the particular manner in which it is true to say that God is cause of each motion, namely, insofar as God orders the dynamic pattern of created causes, and thus no extra divine impulse is needed for every potency of a free creature to be actualized other than God's predestination of each to its final end. Lonergan stands firm against the claim that every "choice of means" on the part of the free creature depends upon a particular (pre-)motion from God as cause of all things because "as our examination of the ideas of physical premotion, application, and *virtus instrumentalis* established, there is no evidence for the Bannezian view that St. Thomas is proving the existence of additional motions."[58]

One product of this notion that every choice must be preceded by a particular premotion is the hard distinction between "sufficient" grace and "efficacious" grace, where the former

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[57] *Grace and Freedom*, 286 (emphasis added).

[58] *Grace and Freedom*, 312. Levering (*Predestination*, 157n106) refers to the dissertation of Robert Joseph Matava on the Bañez-Molina debate, in which he critiques as deterministic Lonergan's understanding of Thomas' premotion, arguing that the antecedent conditions that make up fate can no more explain the determination of free acts than can Bañezian premotion. Lonergan might respond that premotion, for Thomas, does not by itself infallibly bring about free acts, but that the restricted autonomy of the free creature is one of many elements comprising fate, itself the intended contingent effect correlative to the provident mind of God. Thomas M. Osbourne Jr., defends the Bañezian view against Lonergan's critique of premotion here, but he is apparently unaware that the position he criticizes is precisely Lonergan's, as he merely mentions David Burrell and Brian Shanley as proponents (who depend on Lonergan's dissertation). Arguing for a priority of nature rather than of time, Osbourne misses the mark entirely—he does not address the relationship between *posse agere* and *actu agere*—and proposes that premotion is not so much a real creature as an intentional being that is nevertheless somehow distinct from God, without clarifying how an intentional being can function as a created intermediary (see "Thomist Premotion and Contemporary Philosophy of Religion," *Nova et Vetera* (English Edition) 4 [2006] 607–32, at 627).

indicates grace that, while intrinsically efficacious, does not fructify, and the latter indicates grace that actually yields an act that is supernaturally meritorious. Lonergan states:

> With regard to the difference between efficacious and sufficient grace, there is no difference entitatively. Both *ab intrinseco* are proportionate causes of changes of will: but in the one case the changed will *because changed* consents to the change, and this follows from the nature of the case; in the other case the changed will *though changed* does not consent to the change but reverts to evil, and, like all other sin, this is unintelligible, a fact but not a problem.[59]

Some of the early Thomist commentators discern the necessity for a grace that is infallibly efficacious precisely because they adhere to the *massa damnata* theory of Augustine, apparently adopted by Thomas.[60] If man by himself is incapable of any free acts that may be preparatory for grace, if he is destined to fall from good in every act that is not predetermined to a particular good, then he does not have the free capacity of consenting to a grace that is not predetermined to be freely accepted. Lonergan does not point out that Aquinas opens the way to this thinking when he states: "As a creature would fall into nothing unless it were held fast by the divine power, so also it would fall into non-good if it were not held fast by God. But it does not follow that, unless it were held fast by God through grace, it would fall into sin; *unless (this be true)*

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[59] *Grace and Freedom*, 333 (emphasis added). Thomas Joseph White paraphrases this thought thus: "As Bernard Lonergan has shown in his doctoral thesis, the notion of grace as 'sufficient' and 'efficient' in Aquinas pertains not to two distinct *kinds* of grace, but to the same grace considered as sufficient for salvation and effective when it is not refused. See *Gratia Operans*, 333, 441." He continues: "However, the notion of a distinct form of grace that can be refused versus a grace that is irresistible was developed in the post-Tridentine period by Thomists to oppose Jansenism and Protestantism on the one hand, and Molinism on the other. . . I have preferred to use the terms 'resistible' versus 'irresistible' so as to avoid confusion. Aquinas, at any rate, most certainly teaches throughout his theological corpus that grace is (at least much of the time) capable of being refused, or 'resistible.' For a clear example, see *ScG* III, c. 159-60" ("Von Balthasar and Journet," 661-662n68).

[60] See Thomas Aquinas, *In Romanos*, c. 9, lects. 2–3; and *SCG* III, cc. 159–161. Lonergan's interpretation of this can be discerned in *Grace and Freedom*, 340n47, 344, and 355.

only of fallen nature, which of itself has an inclination to evil."[61] Thomas may very well have held that the condition here stated as necessary for the truth of the consequent is fulfilled, that is, that fallen man does, in fact, fall into sin unless prevented by grace.[62] But certainly Lonergan's analyses indicate why Thomas was not constrained to hold such a position (in agreement with Bañezians).[63]

The "additional motions" asserted by Bañez result from holding that every particular choice of means is to be preceded by a divine "application" that causes actualization of the potency for such action (*posse agere*). Lonergan shows that such a created mediation is an unnecessary postulate and a threat to the integrity of human freedom. While Bañez reduces the essence of freedom to the sustained ability of the intellect to deliberate about the means adequate for the end to which he is directed,[64] Lonergan finds in Thomas four essential elements of human freedom enumerated in the Disputed Questions *De Malo* and the *Prima Secundae* of the *Summa Theologiae*: (1) the objective possibility of more than one course of action, (2) the intellectual capability of inclining toward more than one course of action, (3) a will that is not determined by the first course of action that occurs to the intellect, and (4) a will that selects a course of action

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[61] *De malo* q. 16, a. 4, ad 22; quoted in Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom* 112 n. 88 (emphasis added).

[62] Most provides an interesting analysis of how Thomas may have appropriated the theory, in fact, an alternative account of how Augustine himself could have understood the theory (see *Grace, Predestination, and the Salvific Will of God*, 278–302). Lonergan poses the *massa damnata* theory as an objection, to which he responds briefly (*Grace and Freedom* 344, citing Thomas, *In Romanos*, c. 9, lect. 3 ad fin., and *De malo* q. 3, a. 1, ad 9 and ad 16).

[63] The strength of Lonergan's analysis as an interpretation of the Thomistic texts is his steady presentation of the development of Thomas's formulations from his *Commentaria in Libros Sententiarum* to the *Prima secundae*. It would seem the latter text (of the *Summa theologiae*, e.g., I-II, qq. 109-111), his latest on the topic, embodies a progression beyond both the *De malo* and the *Pars prima*, which are said to have been written around the same time.

[64] See *Scholastica commentaria in primam partem Summae Theologiae S. Thomae Aquinatis* I, q. 19, a. 10 (Madrid: Editorial F.E.D.A., 1934), 443-444.

through self-motion.[65] Therefore, the *motio moventis praecedit motum mobilis* of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*[66] ought to be understood in conjunction with his later distinctions "between what God wills to happen, what he wills not to happen, and what he permits to happen"[67] and "between *non bonum* and *peccatum*; and . . . the obvious third, *bonum*."[68] Lonergan also discerns in Thomas the following "trichotomy": the positive objective truth of being, the negative objective truth of not-being, and the objective falsity of moral lapse, where the third element represents withdrawal from the ordinance of the divine intellect.[69] This stands in direct opposition to the Bañezian *praedeterminatio physica*:

> *Scientia Dei est causa rerum*. God is not the cause of sin. Bañez's solution to this problem is well known [see *Scholastica commentaria in primam partem Summae Theologiae S. Thomae Aquinatis* I, q. 14, a. 13]. God knows what is by causing it; God knows what is not by not causing it; sin is not a reality; therefore God knows sin inasmuch as he is not the cause of the opposite good. But, while according to Bañez there are only two categories, namely, what God causes and what God does not cause, there are according to St Thomas three distinct categories, namely, positive truth, negative truth, and objective falsity. Positive truth corresponds to what God causes; negative truth corresponds to what God does not cause; objective falsity is a third category that contains one element, *malum culpae* [see *Summa Theologiae*, I, q. 17, a. 1].[70]

In other words, Bañezians are forced to say that men sin because God has not predestined them to perform the opposite good acts. Lonergan, however, discerns in Thomas a third category

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[65] See *Grace and Freedom*, 96-98. Hence, Stebbins claims that a *praedeterminatio physica* would destroy created freedom, based on similar statements of Lonergan (see, for example, *Divine Initiative*, 198).
[66] See *SCG* III, cc. 149 and 152.
[67] Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 112; *ST* I, q. 19, a. 9, ad 3 and q. 23, a. 5, ad 3. Perhaps the second term would be more profitably translated, "what he does not will to happen," so that it may correspond with *non bonum*, in which case *peccatum* would be "what he permits to happen." I do not know whether Lonergan wants *peccatum* to correspond with "what he wills not to happen" and *non bonum* with "what he permits to happen." It strikes me that discussion of antecedent and consequent divine wills would have been beneficial for the sake of clarity and completeness.
[68] *Grace and Freedom*, 112-113; *De Malo*, q. 16, a. 4, ad 22.
[69] See *Grace and Freedom*, 113-115, 328-333; *ST* I, q. 17, a. 1, co. and q. 103, a. 8, ad 1. Most makes similar reflections, utilizing other passages from Thomas (see *GPSWG*, 601-602, 612).
[70] *Grace and Freedom*, 329.

besides the good and non-good (evil), subdividing the latter into what is simply not willed (the non-good or non-true, i.e. nonbeing) and what contradicts His will (the evil, the false, i.e. absurdity). This enables Lonergan to avoid the Bañezian "hard place" of saying God must know all evils by infallibly permitting them, while at the same time avoiding the Molinist "rock" of basing divine predestination upon divine knowledge of hypothetical conditional futures ("futuribles").

Divine Providence and Transcendence

Therefore, some "means" elected by men are mere absurdities, objective unintelligibles, evils that are not the result of merely being deprived of predetermination toward particular goods. But presumably everything is in some sense factored into divine providence. The question becomes the manner in which each member of the trichotomy falls under divine governance, which Lonergan does not make entirely clear – perhaps intentionally, in recognition of a proper apophaticism. But Lonergan does discover something peculiar to Thomas' treatment of fate:

> Aristotle's universe had only a limited intelligibility; it included the *per accidens*, which could never be an object of science, and which radically refuted even natural determinism. Now, St. Thomas departed from this position by his affirmations of divine providence and divine transcendence, and such a departure leaves terrestrial contingence intact. Moreover, it gives the *per accidens* intelligibility, not absolutely, but only inasmuch as coincidences, concurrences, interferences are reducible to the divine design. Accordingly, if sin is a withdrawal from the ordinance of divine intellect, if it is something that God wills neither to be nor not to be, if in a word it is a third member of the trichotomy we have been examining, then sin is a *per accidens* that does not reduce to divine design. Thus, however much the unintelligibility of sin may sound strange to the modern theologian, for St. Thomas it was no intruder into the Aristotelian framework, but, on the contrary, a partial acceptance of Aristotelian views.[71]

[71] *Grace and Freedom*, 115.

Unlike Aristotle, Thomas affirms the transcendent efficacy of the divine will (together with an equally transcendent divine intellect),[72] but he joins Aristotle in assigning a certain autonomy to secondary causes, one that contradicts the Bañezian view that God creates particular motions that transcend and causally (rather than temporally) precede all free acts:

> This *dispositio* [*fatum dicitur dispositio*][73] may very naturally be identified in single instances with the *dispositio* or *habitude* that must exist between mover and moved if the one is to move the other [i.e., Aristotelian *praemotio*]: thus, we have the idea of physical premotion which is necessary *quo actualiter agat*. Next, if this *disposition* is considered in its relations to all other secondary causes, then there is the *intention*, the participation of divine art in the secondary cause. Again, if the *dispositio* is taken in conjunction with the divine will, it is the term of the *applicatio*, for, as has been shown, application is premotion as intended. Finally, all of these *dispositiones* taken together give fate. Admittedly St Thomas's thought on the issue is rather complex. But if he ever dreamt of a Bannezian *praemotio physica*, he simply could not have asserted that fate is merely the arrangement of secondary causes. For the *praemotio physica* is far too obviously fatal not to be mentioned by its originator when fate itself is under discussion.[74]

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[72] Lonergan mentions throughout his dissertation the equal transcendence of divine intellect and divine will as key to resolving the Molinist-Bañezian impasse (see, e.g., *Grace and Freedom*, 107), much like William G. Most (see the preceding chapter). But he seems to differ from Most's treatment at one point when he addresses this impasse: "It may be asked whether divine knowledge of sin is prior to divine permission of sin or divine permission of sin is prior to divine knowledge of sin. The Molinist system would require the former to be true. The Bannezian system would require the latter to be true. Since the distinction between divine intellect and divine will has no foundation except in our limited natures, and since both divine knowledge and divine will are self-explanatory because identical with the divine substance, it would seem most probable that the question is meaningless" (348). But later he states that there is justification for Thomas' assertion "in the commentary on Romans 9, lect. 2, that predestination is *ante praevisa merita* while damnation is *post praevisa peccata*" (447). He also seems to side with Marin-Sola (and Maritain) when, immediately prior to the previous excerpt here quoted, he states concerning the divine permission of evil, indeed the context here: "To the objection *Deus causa peccati*, God causes the sinful act: the entity of this act is related to God by a causal relation, but God causes the sin neither by compound nor by pure antecedence; not by compound antecedence, for God moves to the good; not by pure *antecedence*, for in operating the operation of the sinner he does not do what he ought not to do" (348, emphasis original). Differences between Marin-Sola and Most, however, may be discerned in "Nuevas Observaciones," 366 (compare to *GPSWG*, 159) and 393 (compare to *GPSWG*, 214-220); the first passage concerns whether it is a perfection or imperfection of created freedom to be able to resist grace, and the second concerns the type of grace required for final perseverance.

[73] See *ST* III, q. 62, a. 4, ad 4; see also *ST* I, q. 116, a. 2, ad 2.

[74] *Grace and Freedom*, 296. Stebbins adds: "The Bannezians are certain that the *intentio*, the *esse incompletum*, the *vis* – that is to say, the *virtus instrumentalis* – that God gives the creature

In the Bañezian system, divine transcendence is presumed to be communicated in effect to the created reality of *praemotio* in an effort to bring divine efficacy to the rescue of human freedom, but the resultant bipolar classification of acts (or "two-lane highway") is open to the charge that God is indirectly responsible for sin.[75] *Gratia divina* must, therefore, either be identical to God Himself for its effects to be irresistibly efficacious or a created reality that does not necessarily produce contingent effects with such efficacy.[76] It may be safe to assume with Lonergan that grace is at least ordinarily *gratia creata*. The key feature of his theology of the

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and by which it actually functions as an efficient cause, is nothing other than a physical premotion in their peculiar sense of that term. But Lonergan argues that a series of parallel passages shows quite convincingly that Aquinas has something else in mind (*GF*:82-84; *GO*:147-51). . . . in the *Pars prima*, Aquinas makes it clear that fate is not some cause above and beyond natural causes but rather the ordering or intelligible pattern of secondary causes. Lonergan concludes that for Aquinas *fatum* and *intentio* are one and the same thing . . . This analysis clarifies what it means to say that secondary causes participate in the active potency of the universal cause. This participation or *virtus instrumentalis* is not a motion that, added to the active potency of some creature, causes it to produce an effect that exceeds its own proper proportion. . . . Instrumental virtue and the movement received by the instrument from the principal cause are not simply identical (*DES*:147). Instrumental virtue consists not in movement as such, but in 'the seriation, the arrangement, the pattern of the instruments in their movements' (*GO*:150) through which the disproportionate effect is produced" (Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 242-244).

[75] See Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom*, 110 and 148. Against the Bañezian "infallible permissive decrees," he notes a distinction in Thomas between permission of concession and permission of one who prohibits: "[P]rincipal supernatural acts confer active potency [*posse agere*], and do so completely, without man necessarily cooperating with these gratuitously given acts; for man's cooperation is free, and God does not always intend that man cooperate with grace. . . . this irrationality [of willing an end and not the means] does presuppose God's permission, which is not, of course, the permission of concession but rather the permission of one who prohibits . . . Hence, those principal supernatural acts to which there is added the divine permission that man not cooperate with them are truly but merely sufficient graces" (*De Ente Supernaturali*, 177).

[76] It seems to me that, perhaps, if *praedeterminatio physica* were not conceived as a created entity mediating divine efficacy, but precisely as an uncreated act of the divine will, the results of Lonergan's research could still be maintained without abandoning such a notion, provided that the above distinctions are used to adapt the way in which divine decrees are said to function.

grace-freedom dynamic is essentially negative,[77] that is, it seeks merely to preserve divine transcendence against the errors of the Bañezian and Molinist systems.[78] His critique of the Bañezian interpretation hinges on obliterating a particular understanding of the distinction that provides reason for Bañez to introduce *praemotio physica*, namely, the distinction between *posse agere* and *actu agere*.

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[77] "This ability to explain why there is no conflict between God's absolutely efficacious providence and the exercise of human freedom is an impressive feature of the synthesis, and it clarifies the notion of actual grace. Instead of staking out another position within the narrow confines of the *de auxiliis* debate or concluding that the issue is beyond resolution because the confluence of divine efficacy and human freedom is thought to be intrinsically mysterious, Lonergan deftly undercuts the very premises on which the supposed problem rests. Rather than solve the controversy, he dispels it" (*Divine Initiative*, 293). In the original text of his dissertation, Lonergan states: "[Thomas] affirms nothing merely to have a theory of divine control. He affirms nothing merely to have a theory of the possibility of human liberty. He simply asserts all the truths he knows on both points and then argues that all arguments against the compatibility of these truths are fallacious. Thus his thought is properly a 'dialectical position' and it is easily extended to the problem of *Deus causa peccati* [God the cause of sin] by adverting to his three categories: positive truth, negative truth, objective falsity; good, not-good, sin; what God wills, what God does not will, what God permits. It is this subtle folding of his thought, like the mathematical movement into the region of complex numbers, that justifies his assertion in Romans 9, lect. 2 that predestination is *ante praevisa merita* [prior to foreseen merits] while damnation is *post praevisa peccata* [subsequent to foreseen sins]" (*Gratia Operans*: 332-33, cited in *Divine Initiative*, 290). This last affirmation is precisely that for which William Most argues throughout his book. But, interestingly enough, this text as such is not to be found in *Grace and Freedom* – only a variant of the last affirmation appears (see 340n47).

[78] From the unpublished *De scientia atque voluntate Dei: Supplementum schematicum* of Lonergan: "[S]ince God is an agent who acts through intellect and will, the irresistibility of his action can be deduced from the infallibility of his intellect and the efficacy of his will. This irresistibility adds nothing to the divine infallibility and efficacy but rather is identified with them, just as the divine power to act [*potentia agendi*] does not add anything to the divine intellect and will but rather is identified with them. But according to the theory of physical predetermination, the irresistibility of divine action adds something to the infallibility of the divine intellect and the efficacy of the divine will; namely, it adds a physical predetermination, which is a creature received in a creature. But why the addition? Do the advocates of this opinion fear that without physical predeterminations the divine intellect would lack infallibility and the divine will would lack efficacy? Do they suppose that the infinite divine perfection does not suffice to ground both the infallibility of the divine intellect and the efficacy of the divine will? Do they dream that the divine power to act is something different from the divine intellect and the divine will? Or do they perhaps believe that action [carried out] though infallible understanding and efficacious willing is somehow not irresistible? (*DSAVD*: 127-28; cf. 121)" (*Divine Initiative*, 268).

Vital Act and the Supernatural

Lonergan has a quite nuanced understanding of how *posse agere* and *actu agere* ought to function in the divine causality of free meritorious acts. After detailed exegesis of Thomas' appropriation of Aristotle on the matter, he grants a real distinction between the two realities in general, but he insists on not placing the *actu agere* in the agent itself such that the agent cannot enact its potency to act without undergoing an additional motion to cause such a change.[79] The creation of the action does not need to change the agent through which it is produced in order to effect the change in the recipient of the action. In fact, there is no real distinction between the action itself produced by the agent and the reception of that effect in the "patient;" for, it is truly the act itself that is "suffered," and the change brought about does not affect the agent (as the act of creation does not cause a real relation in God but in the thing created). Thus, the actualization of the active potency of the (finite) agent and the passive potency of the recipient is the effect of one motion; a*ctio* and *passio* are one reality considered under two different aspects. In scholastic terminology, the change effected is attributed to an agent as *actio* by extrinsic denomination, but it is called *passio* in the recipient by intrinsic denomination because it is wrought precisely in the recipient, not the agent (i.e., bringing about the change is not a change in itself, but a power that is exercised transitively in the recipient).[80]

According to the Bañezian (and Molinist) "theory of vital act," the "first act" (identified as *posse agere*) of a subject is the efficient cause of its own vital acts ("second act" identified as *agere actu*), but since something less perfect cannot produce something more perfect, such

[79] Here one may discern a difference between the position developed by Francisco Marin-Sola and Lonergan, a difference less obvious in Maritain, where the former assumes the traditional theory of vital act he inherited. See, for example, "Nuevas Observaciones," 322 and 343.
[80] See *Grace and Freedom*, 65-69; *Divine Initiative*, 231-232.

causality must be brought about through the aid of an 'application' (of act to potency) provided by a higher-order cause. Against this kind of thinking, Lonergan denies that there is any divine motion that brings about the actualization of a potency for operation precisely because, in Lonergan's Aristotelian-Thomistic language, the "first act" of a being (form) is ontologically inferior to the "second act" of a being (operation). Second act is caused by God, not by first act through some divine impulse, as potency cannot actualize itself, even if under the influence of a *praemotio physica*. No form can be made proportionate to its corresponding operation. Therefore, Lonergan places active potency (*posse agere*) on the level of second act (instead of first act), which means there is no need for a divine "application" to produce the *agere actu* because the *posse agere* is itself a proportionate second act capable of producing another second act.[81] Instead of reducing second act to the exercise of efficient causality, Lonergan conceives efficient causality as a real and intelligible relation of dependence. Lonergan, therefore, opposes the idea that divine causality of contingent effects is exercised through some intermediate created influx, which would demand an infinite series of intermediary influxes.[82]

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[81] See *Grace and Freedom*, 253ff.; *Divine Initiative*, 186, 345n10, 218.

[82] "The foregoing models of mediate efficient causality and their corresponding explanations of divine concourse hinge ultimately on the notion of efficient causality as an influx. The alternative is to think of the reality of efficient causality as consisting in the real relation of dependence of B on A, of an effect on its cause. On this view, which Lonergan advocates, efficient causality is not some third reality but simply an intelligible relation that is grasped by understanding; it is 'the relativity of the effect *qua* effect.' Lonergan argues . . . '[I]f the influx is a reality, it would seem that there must be an infinity of influences for each case of efficient causality. For if the influx is a reality, it must be produced itself; that production would involve a further influx, and that influx a further production'. . . . If someone were to reply that no such series is implied because a single influx suffices to produce the effect, Lonergan would press the issue by asking whether the influx is really distinct from the effect. For the influx is also an effect; consequently, if indeed the influx is distinct from, and prior to, the effect that it produces, it must be accounted for by a distinct and still more prior influx. If the influx is not distinct from its effect, of course, then the questioner has abandoned his or her position. Confronted with this choice, one might admit the real distinction of influx and effect but try to avoid the problem of an infinite series of influxes by asserting that 'the influx is a different type of reality from the

Hence, divine efficacy is not exercised through some actualization of an active potency, but *gratia operans* is essentially a new supernatural relation of dependence added to a passive potency (namely, obediential potency). Stebbins ties together various dimensions of the issue in the following manner:

> The Bannezians insist on an intrinsic distinction between sufficient and efficacious grace: one premotion causes the will to produce an indeliberate act, thereby conferring on the potency the capacity to produce (*posse agere*) a deliberate act; another, wholly distinct premotion causes the will actually to produce (*actu agere*) a deliberate act. This definition and Lonergan's are in harmony insofar as both deny that human beings are in any way the efficient cause of internal actual grace (*DES*: 164) . But the Bannezians go too far, Lonergan contends, when they deny that we vitally elicit internal actual grace, for the eliciting of a vital act does not necessarily involve the production of that act by the recipient potency. Sometimes, as in the case of acts of sensing or of understanding, the potency elicits its vital act simply by receiving it; and so, according to Lonergan's definition, we vitally elicit actual grace by receiving a supernatural act of knowing or willing. The more fundamental divergence, of course, has to do with the issue of whether actual grace ought to be conceived as an act or as a Bannezian physical promotion.[83]

With respect to the supernatural order, Lonergan admits that the performance of supernatural acts presupposes elevation of the subject above the natural order (*gratia elevans*) and that the supernatural operation of a finite agent/subject is necessarily *received*. But, he also affirms that choosing the means to a supernatural end is itself a supernatural act that is *produced* by the finite subject.[84]

In general, the free creature does not need to receive an active potency for the supernatural before being moved to supernatural acts because the obediential potency proper to a

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effect - the type that eliminates the infinite series.' But, barring magic, the only type of reality that qualifies is the real relation. . ." (*Divine Initiative*, 224-225).

[83] *Divine Initiative*, 283.

[84] *De Ente Supernaturali*, 177. This passage also affirms that "merely sufficient graces" are those graces accompanied by the divine permission of one who prohibits (not a permission of concession) because man chooses the irrationality of not cooperating with the means proportionate to the end that is willed.

finite intellectual being is the only condition necessary for reception of such elevation.[85] Obediential potency by itself suffices for the *reception* of supernatural acts (i.e., there is no need for some prior motion to make the subject proportionate to such), but the *production* of supernatural acts requires *gratia operans*. While the latter is an effect of the infallible efficacy of the transcendent divine will, the former is precisely the essential, passive potency of finite intellect and will.[86] In *De Ente Supernaturali*,[87] Lonergan exposes as superfluous the connecting thread throughout the Bañezian treatment of grace and freedom, namely, the need for some intermediary (*praedeterminatio physica*) to enact man's capacity to perform acts of the supernatural order.[88] Lonergan rightly gets rid of all unnecessary intermediaries and asserts that

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[85] See *Divine Initiative*, 215. The special cases in which reception of a supernatural active potency exists prior to all supernatural acts that may follow upon it are charity and the beatific vision. Charity is a "principal supernatural act," that is, a supernatural habit (*posse agere*), which the subject needs in order to *receive* every other supernaturally meritorious act (see *De Ente Supernaturali*, 88). Hence, Lonergan states concerning habitual grace: "it is also a premotion. Recall the nature of premotion: it is a condition of activity in the *agens in tempore*. If there is action *now* and not *before*, then there is some reason for the difference. That reason is the premotion. God continuously causes habitual grace in the regenerate, but he does not continuously premove the regenerate; only the infusion of habitual grace is a premotion, for only the infusion effects a change in the situation; by definition (at least in Aristotle and St Thomas) a premotion is the change in the situation that accounts for the emergence of subsequent change" (*De Ente Supernaturali*, 88).

[86] *Divine Initiative*, 214.

[87] See 85 and 99.

[88] "If, like the Molinists, one argues for an elevation extrinsic to the subject, then in fact that elevation refers to nothing real at all: *ex hypothesi* it is not something in the subject; nor is it something in God, since the elevation of a potency implies some change or movement, and God is immutable. On the other hand, if one claims in Bannezian fashion that the required elevation is some reality intrinsic to the subject, then one has to specify whether or not that reality is supernatural. If it is not, then how can it raise the subject to the supernatural order? But if the intrinsic, elevating reality is said to be supernatural, then it stands in need of exactly the same explanation as does the supernatural act itself. If obediential potency alone does not suffice to render the subject proportionate to the reception of a supernatural act, then neither does it suffice to render the subject proportionate to the reception of some prior supernatural elevation" (*Divine Initiative*, 214).

there is no incoherence in maintaining that God is capable of raising man to supernatural dignity without some 'tertium quid.'

Defense of Lonergan's Position on the Relationship between Grace and Nature

Before I critique the analysis that Guy Mansini, on the basis of Feingold's treatment, performs on Lonergan's position, I should briefly cover the Thomistic background to the ideas Lonergan takes up.[89]

The starting point for understanding Lonergan's position must be the Thomist psychological doctrine of possible and agent intellect. Presuming the reader's general familiarity with the basics of this theory of knowledge,[90] Lonergan repeatedly points to the (possible) intellect's unlimited capacity to understand being; much of *Insight* is occupied with plumbing the depths of this transcendental capacity native to the human mind.[91] But this limitless inclination

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[89] Feingold is primarily concerned with an exegesis of Thomas' many texts on the matter, which he interprets through the lens of late scholastic thought (or the commentator tradition). His division of natural desire into either innate/pre-rational and elicited/rational is the prism through which he operates. Interestingly, he does not quote the following text, which would help in understanding Lonergan's own position: "Ad quartum dicendum quod naturale desiderium rationalis creaturae est ad sciendum omnia illa quae pertinent ad perfectionem intellectus; et haec sunt species et genera rerum, et rationes earum, quae in Deo videbit quilibet videns essentiam divinam. Cognoscere autem alia singularia, et cogitata et facta eorum, non est de perfectione intellectus creati, nec ad hoc eius naturale desiderium tendit: nec iterum cognoscere illa quae nondum sunt, sed fieri a Deo possunt. Si tamen solus Deus videretur, qui est fons et principium totius esse et veritatis, ita repleret naturale desiderium sciendi, quod nihil aliud quaereretur, et beatus esset. Unde dicit Augustinus, V Confess.: Infelix homo qui scit omnia illa (scilicet creaturas), te autem nescit: beatus autem qui te scit, etiam si illa nesciat. Qui vero te et illa novit, non propter illa beatior est, sed propter te solum beatus" (*ST* I, q. 12, a. 8, ad 4).

[90] I am prescinding from the peculiarities of a full-scale interpretation of the details of Thomas' theory of knowledge, such as is developed in Lonergan's *Verbum* articles.

[91] Thomas quotes very frequently the Aristotelian axiom, *anima est quodammodo omnia* (*De Anima*, bk. 3); see, for example, his commentary on Aristotle's *De Anima* III and *ST* I, q. 84, a. 2, ad 2. None of this is to deny the fact that the *proportionate* object of human intelligence is the quidditative being of sensible things. Hence, one could specify that the *natural* passive potency of the intellect is precisely for those intelligibles that the agent intellect is able to abstract from phantasms. See *De Veritate*, q. 18, a.2. But dividing the passive potency of the intellect into

to know more and more about reality cannot be actualized fully by the operations of the (agent) intellect, which grasps intelligible species in the phantasms the imagination creates from (sensate) experience. Since the agent intellect is limited both by the imperfection of its power and the deficiency inherent to abstractive knowledge, the full potential of the possible intellect can be actualized only by understanding God Himself through an intelligible species that is nothing but His very own essence.[92] Still, the possible intellect can receive such knowledge only according to its created state (*quidquid recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur*), as it is not divine; nevertheless, perfect vision of God would have to entail a *species impressa* surpassing every *species intelligibilis* that is accessible to the agent intellect.[93]

Lonergan inherits this Thomist doctrine and takes as his point of departure the nature of the inclination toward the infinite that is proper to the human mind. Utilizing the Aristotelian categories of active and passive potency, he clarifies that the intellect is in passive potency to perfect vision of God, but he is quick to note that this truth is only known by the revelation of the reality of the beatific vision (i.e., the fact of perfect vision alone proves its possibility and it is known only by revelation).[94] Moreover, the passive potency for such vision is remote and obediential, meaning that there is a disproportion between the created intellect and the infinite being; thus, only the latter can bring about the actualization of such potency. In this sense, the

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natural and obediential does nothing to deny the intrinsic capacity of the intellect to receive infinite knowledge, whether in the horizontal or vertical sense (to use metaphorical language), even if the latter requires a *lumen gloriae* (see *SCG* III, c. 53.6).

[92] See, e.g., Thomas, *Compendium Theologiae* I, c. 104, where he gives a less technical summary of this argument.

[93] In other words, the *species expressa* of the possible intellect will be inferior to the *species impressa*, if the latter is infinite, precisely because the human mind's capacity to understand the infinite is necessarily finite.

[94] See Lonergan, *De Ente Supernaturali*, 78; and Lonergan, "Natural Desire to See God" in *Collection: Papers by Bernard Lonergan*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Herder & Herder, 1967), 87.

potency of the intellect for such vision is not natural insofar as "natural" in contradistinction to "obediential" indicates a proportionality that enables the thing in potency to acquire the means necessary for attaining its end. However, this "obediential" potency is called "natural" in the restricted sense in which something is of such a nature that it is capable of receiving what is disproportionate to it (i.e., the intellect can be rendered proportionate to the divine by a supernatural gift).[95] Stebbins summarizes Lonergan's position in the following complementary manner:

> In order to affirm the existence of a natural desire to see God, therefore, the term 'natural' must be carefully defined 'not only as excluding an elicited act but also as in no way implying that the beatific vision is natural or owed to nature or that it must be given according to the exigencies of nature' (*DES*:68). The absolute disproportion between the desire and its ultimate fulfilment must be maintained. Lonergan is confident that the existence of a desire that satisfies these criteria can be proved, although he admits that, because 'natural' is an ambiguous word the term 'natural desire' no longer aptly expresses the reality to which it originally referred (ibid.). . . . Lonergan says that the natural desire to see God is natural in two ways (*DES*:69). First, 'insofar as "natural" is opposed to "elicited"; this first sense is silent as to whether the desire is within or beyond the proportion of nature.' Second, 'insofar as the difference between natural and obediential potency is not intrinsic but only extrinsic. Obediential potency posits nothing real in the natural potency itself, for the entire difference between natural and obediential potency is due to a consideration of the agent cause.' A natural potency lies within the proportion of the nature that is its source. At the same time, however, both natural and obediential potency are passive, essential, and remote; since they are not even virtually of the same proportion as the respective acts to which they are ordered, neither has any exigence for those acts (*DES*:60, 61). The natural desire to see God, then, is an innate tendency of a potency, rather than an act; because it is found in a potency that flows from human nature, it is proportionate to that nature; but because the desire is only a remote potency in relation to its object, it does not ground a natural exigence for the beatific vision. . . . [T]he human intellect stands in a relation of natural potency to proportionate acts of understanding the forms of sensible objects, and in a relation of obediential potency to the strictly supernatural act of seeing God; it is a potency for both actuations.[96]

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[95] Stebbins summarizes Lonergan's position in *Divine Initiative*, 153–54. Stebbins seems to want Lonergan to be more in line with Lubac (against the late-scholastic model) on the natural desire (see 163, 178-179). He is also particularly concerned to distance Lonergan from Bañez on the grace-freedom dynamic (e.g., see 286).

[96] *Divine Initiative*, 153-154. He seems to contradict some of these statements when he attempts to align Lonergan more with Lubac (despite Lonergan's critique of the latter) by distancing his position from the late-scholastic understanding: "For him, the difference between natural and

Thus, the essential remote passive potency of the intellect for the beatific vision is more properly called "obediential" than "natural" because of the absolute disproportion between the desire and its ultimate fulfillment.[97] But since the distinction between obediential and natural is merely extrinsic (i.e., it has only to do with its relation to an agent cause), the desire can be called natural insofar as it is a tendency innate to potency rather than an elicited act (where "elicited" means willed into existence). The "determinate" desire for perfect vision of God is rooted in the intellect's innate tendency to seek an unlimited knowledge of being. Hence, the two terms describe the same potency from different but not incompatible angles.[98] "Obediential" is the best term because it indicates that the potency cannot be actualized through natural means

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obediential potency is only extrinsic: obediential potency is, as it were, an amplification of the innate virtualities of finite nature. Like all higher grades of being, grace preserves and is conditioned by the lower grades that it subsumes. Hence, there is no obediential potency without a corresponding natural potency. But in the bifurcated cosmic scheme, where no finite nature has an innate inclination towards anything lying beyond its own proportion, obediential potency represents the 'mere non-repugnance' of any creature to God's action on it. Natural and obediential potency are no longer intrinsically linked: the former is necessary and determinate, the latter contingent and wholly indeterminate. Within this perspective, which so carefully seeks to maintain the transcendence of grace, the claim that grace perfects nature seems to have been drained of all meaning" (163). "Certainly the two of them [Lonergan and Lubac] affirmed the existence of a natural desire to see God, and so in some sense shared the opinion that the idea of a wholly extrinsic relation between the natural and the supernatural orders has no foundation either in the texts of Aquinas or in the world as it actually exists. . . . Whether he correctly interpreted de Lubac is a question that lies outside the scope of this study; in any event, it may be helpful to see how Lonergan distinguished his own position from that of his celebrated fellow Jesuit" (178-179).

[97] "[A] potency is said to be natural 'insofar as it can be actuated by a finite efficient cause which acts according to its proper proportion'; it is said to be obediential 'insofar as it can be actuated by God alone' (*DES*: 61)" (Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 147).

[98] Even though Henri de Lubac accuses him of defining natural and obediential potency as mutually exclusive (see *Surnaturel*, 137), Cajetan actually affirms that the rational creature's obediential potency for the beatific vision can be called, in a certain sense, 'natural' insofar as the capacity is specific to intellectual nature. See his commentary on *ST* III, q. 9, a. 2 (Leonine ed., 11:141-142), cited by Feingold, 115n45.

and, therefore, actualization is not in any sense owed to it.[99] In fact, when the beatific vision is explicitly or determinately desired, Lonergan says the desire must be supernatural, not natural:

> Since the object of the will's act is the good as known by intellect, and since the proportion of an act is specified by the proportion of its object, it follows that one can coherently affirm the occurrence of a specifically natural act of desiring the beatific vision only by denying the supernaturality of that vision and hence the necessity of grace for its attainment. An act of desiring the beatific vision is a supernatural act of willing, that is, an act of either hope or charity (*DES*: 68); that act, like the object which specifies it, exceeds the proportion of any finite substance.[100]

Therefore, Stebbins also says, based on *De Ente Supernaturali*, 73:

> [O]ur natural end is to know the divine essence imperfectly and analogically, on the basis of our knowledge of sensible things, while our supernatural end is to know it as it is in itself, by means of the perfect and intuitive vision enjoyed by the blessed. Ultimately, then, it turns out that our capacity to answer questions does not measure up to our capacity to ask them . . .[101]

In other words, the "duplex finis" of man (in Thomas' words)[102] is materially one object and formally two (i.e., it is the same God under two different aspects, namely, author of being and author of grace).

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[99] See Lonergan, *De ente supernaturali*, 60–61.

[100] Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 152. This would seem to call into question the very notion of a conscious desire for quidditative knowledge of God being conditional or, at least, make an oddity out of such a speculative possibility. If I know God exists by reason, then of course I know that the nature of such existence can be known in some measure, as my intellect seeks knowledge precisely of what is intelligible. Furthermore, if I know by reason that God's being is disproportionate to that of nature, then I would only put a condition on the possibility of *perfect* knowledge of God, but this conditional desire cannot define the 'natural desire.' If I know God by faith, then I will consequently know by the same that perfect knowledge of God is possible and therefore no condition is necessary.

[101] *Divine Initiative*, 156.

[102] *Summa Theologiae*, I-II, q. 62, a. 1: "Est autem *duplex hominis beatitudo* sive felicitas. . . . Una quidem proportionata humanae naturae, ad quam scilicet homo pervenire potest per principia suae naturae. Alia autem est beatitudo naturam hominis excedens, ad quam homo sola divina virtute pervenire potest"; *In II Sent*., d. 41, q. 1, a. 1: "Finis communis et ultimus... est *duplex*;" *De veritate*, q. 14, a. 2: "Est autem *duplex hominis* bonum ultimum, quod primo voluntatem movet quasi ultimus finis."

Lonergan, therefore, is not satisfied with Lubac's treatment. Mansini's reduction of the former to the latter will become clearer when I show how Lonergan does not fall into the camp of the Bañezian Thomists, such as Garrigou-Lagrange and Feingold, who speak merely of a conditional and inefficacious natural desire to see God.[103] Stebbins reports Lonergan's critique of Lubac: "Lonergan cautions against making too much of the natural desire to see God. Its object is obscure; we naturally desire the most perfect knowledge of God that is possible, but we have no way of knowing naturally that this knowledge is in fact identical with knowledge of God *uti* [sic] *in se est*."[104] The natural desire to see God is indeterminate with respect to the perfection of the vision and, therefore, it is implicitly "conditional" (with respect to the beatific vision) even though not elicited; only the unconditional desire to see God can be called "elicited" as distinct from "natural" and "innate," although God must be assigned as its agent cause, since such supernatural hope can only be brought about through faith in the reality of the beatific vision as revealed (which is therefore known to be possible). Lonergan opposes Lubac's apparent assertion that man's innate tendency to self-transcendence and the liberal self-giving of God together exclude the possibility of human existence without elevation to the supernatural order (called the "state of pure nature").[105] In an article specifically on the natural desire, Lonergan says about the "state of pure nature":

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[103] Lubac agrees that the natural desire is inefficacious, but he characterizes the qualifier "conditional" as an inadequate description: "Désirer la communication divine comme un libre don, comme une initiative gratuite, c'est bien la désirer d'un désir par lui-même inefficace, mais ce n'est pas pour autant, ainsi qu'on dit parfois, n'en avoir qu'un désir platonique, conditionnel ou conditionne" (*Surnaturel*, 484). "To desire divine communnication as a free gift, as a gratuitous initiative, is by itself an inefficacious desire, but that does not mean it is, as is sometimes said, a mere platonic desire, conditional or conditioned" (my translation).
[104] *Divine Initiative*, 180.
[105] See *Divine Initiative*, 179-180, based on a 'reportatio' of Frederick Crowe in Lonergan's course on grace: *De gratia* [*et virtutibus*] (Toronto: Regis College, 1947-48), cited in Stebbins, *Divine Initiative*, 150.

> [A]ll things are possible to God, on condition that no internal contradiction is involved. But a world-order without grace does not involve an internal contradiction. Therefore a world-order without grace is possible to God and so concretely possible. The major premise is common doctrine and certainly the position of St Thomas. The minor premise stands until the contrary is demonstrated, for the onus of proof lies on anyone who would limit divine omnipotence.[106]

Besides critiquing Lubac's attempt to rehabilitate the Augustinianism associated with Enrico Noris and Gianlorenzo Berti, Lonergan concedes that the hypothesis of a "state of pure nature" is a "marginal theorem," even while disputing the late-scholastic arguments for it from the gratuity of grace and the freedom of God. Some late scholastics purportedly argue that for this state to be concretely possible not only must static natures not have any exigency for grace, but also the act whereby God bestows grace must be distinct from the act whereby He freely creates such natures. Lonergan wishes to leave aside the conceptualism inherent in such reasoning and maintain that a concretely possible world order comprehended by God alone would certainly entail more than the absence of grace and the existence of human beings (i.e., we simply do not know any concrete details about how the "state of pure nature" would play out). Lonergan's lucid reasoning regarding the divine is manifest in the following careful statements:

> [T]he number of divine acts of will seems to me to be quite independent of possibility or impossibility of world-orders without grace, and directly to depend upon the number of objects that are willed. Hence there will be only one act of will, one freedom of exercise, and one freedom of specification if, as God knows all existing things by knowing one concrete world-order, so also God wills all existing things inasmuch as he wills one concrete world- order. What I fail to see is any contradiction in affirming both that God wills the existing concrete order by a single act and that God could will another world-order in which there was no grace.[107]

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[106] Lonergan, "Natural Desire to See God," 92.
[107] "Natural Desire to See God," 94.

Mansini, nevertheless, takes issue with Lonergan's characterization of the "state of pure nature" as a marginal theorem because he overlooks a flaw in Feingold's own argumentation,[108] namely, the contention that an innate desire to see God is necessarily unconditional and therefore demands grace. If the "vision of God" is not qualified as either indeterminately desired (by nature) or desired precisely as beatific, then there is room for equivocation. It remains to be proven that the human intellect's potentially infinite desire to know God, whether as author of being simply or also as author of grace, involves a demand for grace. It is therefore unjustified to set forth, as Mansini does, only three options regarding the natural desire: innate and unconditional, elicited and conditional, or elicited and unconditional.[109]

Mansini says, "If the desire is innate, an inclination of the will or the nature itself, a preconscious inclining and tending to quidditative knowledge of God that is prior to knowledge, then the desire is also unconditional and absolute."[110] But he offers no argument for this assertion. Feingold, on whom Mansini heavily relies, likewise, says: "if one conceives the natural desire to see God as an innate appetite or inclination, then it follows that it will be absolute rather than conditional, for a conditional desire is possible only on the basis of knowledge."[111] Cannot a connatural tendency incline the intellect toward indefinite (i.e., implicitly conditional) knowledge? Lonergan is not advocating a preconscious desire for quidditative knowledge of God that somehow also involves knowledge of the possibility of such vision. Knowledge of the possibility of "seeing God face to face" requires deliberation. But for

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[108] See Mansini, "Lonergan on the Natural Desire," 193ff. However, later in "The Abiding Theological Significance," Mansini says: "One may say, as Bonino does, that one of the abiding achievements of de Lubac is to have shown the openness of nature to grace, and this against over-confident systems of late Scholasticism, imagining in too great detail a world without grace. But the exact way de Lubac asserts this openness cannot be sustained" (608).
[109] See Mansini, "Lonergan on the Natural Desire," 185-186.
[110] "Lonergan on the Natural Desire," 186.
[111] Feingold, *The Natural Desire*, xxx.

Lonergan, there is a preconscious inclination to seek ever-greater knowledge of God as author of all that may fall within one's purview of experience, and this "desire" assumes by its very existence the possibility that such increase in knowledge is always possible, even though deliberation is required before the parameters of such a possibility can be circumscribed.

Furthermore, Mansini says, "If we are not ordered to vision except by grace, and if the principles of attainment are grace and the theological virtues, then there is no natural desire for vision, no innate inclination to it."[112] Again, the term "vision" is unqualified here. Lonergan does not speak of an innate inclination or natural desire for perfect knowledge (or "vision") of God *ut in se est*. Rather, he prefers to speak of an obediential potency for this knowledge and, at the same time, recognizes an innate inclination toward (or natural desire for) knowledge of God *in whatever measure possible* – an indeterminate or indefinite horizon. The degree to which the possible intellect can apprehend the divine essence is unknown until by faith/grace man accepts revelation, whereby grace also produces in man a supernatural desire for the beatific vision as such. What is inefficacious and only implicitly unconditional (i.e., indeterminate), therefore, only later becomes transformed into an elicited, explicitly (or determinately) unconditional, and efficacious desire.

Moreover, Mansini says, "To make the potency obediential fits with his denying that the desire constitutes an 'exigence' for fulfillment, but not with saying the desire is innate."[113] But can an obediential potency be elicited (the supposed opposite of innate)? It seems that the only way to avoid Lonergan's compelling reasoning on this matter is to dismiss obediential potency as a proper category for speaking of the *desiderium naturale ad videndum Deum*. It is this concept (obediential potency) that allows Lonergan to say that the desire we have for some kind of vision

[112] "Lonergan on the Natural Desire," 189.
[113] "Lonergan on the Natural Desire," 190-191.

of God is concomitant to the nature of the possible intellect and therefore "innate" rather than "elicited." "Obediential potency" also enables Lonergan to deny "natural" exigency for grace and instead admit the possibility that such a preconscious inclination will never be elevated to the reflective state of formal desire for perfect vision of God.

Finally, it is therefore clear what is wrong with the following reasoning: "For an innate appetite, Feingold reminds us, is determined to one end; if the end is natural, there is no innate desire for vision, and if there is a desire for vision, there is no innate desire for a natural end. No innate desire for vision means innate desire is for a natural end, and this implies the possibility of 'pure nature.'"[114] What happened to Thomas' *duplex finis*? There is no reason to deny to the possible intellect an innate desire for an indeterminate knowledge of God through unspecified means (whether grace or mere nature); in fact, one could argue to the contrary that if, prior to being "ordered" to grace, the intellect has only a natural end,[115] then elevation to the supernatural order would cause the intellect to have a natural end no longer (i.e., the innate tendency of its nature would be eradicated by the extrinsic influx of a supernatural ordering).

Since Lonergan says with Bañez that "The natural desire to know *what* God is . . . supposes knowledge *that* God is,"[116] and since at the same time he says that this knowledge is not elicited, perhaps reflection on how men naturally come to know God's existence would be necessary. Certainly, the possible intellect begins to function very early in life, and yet the

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[114] "Lonergan on the Natural Desire," 193.

[115] The distinction between being 'ordered' and being 'called' to the supernatural vision of God can be drawn, but such a distinction does not help Mansini's (or Feingold's) case. To say one is called to something is merely to indicate that one's call has an end, even if the requisite intrinsic means for attaining that end are not presently possessed, because the necessary supernatural means are nevertheless present to all in an extrinsic manner. One called and ordered has immediate access to the means for said end.

[116] "Natural Desire to See God," 90 (emphases added); cited by Mansini, "Lonergan on the Natural Desire," 191. Mansini claims this statement contradicts others of Lonergan's (already cited) in which he argues that the natural desire ought not be called 'elicited.'

conscious rejection of its connatural conviction that God exists does not deny the fact, but rather points to the fact, that the natural desire concomitant to the obediential potency of the intellect can never be eradicated, even if it can be covered over (or alienated), as it were. Leaving aside the issues of atheism and how God's existence may be known through reason (and how the virtue of faith may grant knowledge of the preambles to the articles of faith), one might argue that Lonergan's position is qualifiedly consonant with the late-scholastic attempt to defend the integrity of man's intellectual nature with respect to the gratuitous gift that is *gratia elevans*. He speaks even in *Insight* of the realization of the relative autonomy of the natural and supernatural orders resulting from the "theorem of the supernatural":

> In the first third of the thirteenth century, there gradually was evolved the notion of two entitative orders so that grace stood above nature, faith above reason, and charity above natural human excellence. With increasing thoroughness this distinction between a natural order and a supervening gratuitous order was carried through by successive theologians to receive after the middle of the century its complete formulation and its full theological application in the writings of St. Thomas Aquinas. . . . [O]nce reason is acknowledged to be distinct from faith, there is issued an invitation to reason to grow in consciousness of its native power, to claim its proper field of inquiry, to work out its departments of investigation, to determine its own methods, to operate on the basis of its own principles and precepts.[117]

At the same time, Stebbins's defense of the *nouvelle* perspective has some credence, on the basis of Lonergan's statements:

> For [Lonergan] . . . obediential potency is, as it were, an amplification of the innate virtualities of finite nature. Like all higher grades of being, grace preserves and is conditioned by the lower grades that it subsumes. Hence, there is no obediential potency without a corresponding natural potency. But in the bifurcated cosmic scheme, where no finite nature has an innate inclination towards anything lying beyond its own proportion, obediential potency represents the "mere non-repugnance" of any creature to God's action on it. Natural and obediential potency are no longer intrinsically linked: the former is necessary and determinate, the latter contingent and wholly indeterminate. Within this

[117] *Insight*, 527.

> perspective, which so carefully seeks to maintain the transcendence of grace, the claim that grace perfects nature seems to have been drained of all meaning.[118]

In this light, the intellect's obediential potency for the beatific vision is called "natural" insofar as it is an inclination toward a potentially and negatively infinite knowledge of God. The obediential potency also becomes a supernatural desire for perfect knowledge through the excitation of grace, and as such constitutes a framework on which to model a theological anthropology. Accordingly, man's free will maintains its own integrity even as it is incorporated into a higher finality ("vertical finality"), namely, the supernatural order of grace, which itself has the order of glory as its ultimate and proportionate end; or, in the terminology that pervades *Insight*, freedom also functions as operator in the higher viewpoint of the integrator that is the supernatural order.

Conclusion

The theme that unites Lonergan's treatment of the grace-nature relationship with the grace-freedom dynamic is the obediential potency of man toward God, a fruit of the theorem of the supernatural. Obediential potency is that by which man is capable of receiving both the *gratia elevans* involved in performing supernaturally meritorious acts and the *gratia operans* that efficaciously brings about such acts, producing along the way a cooperation with human freedom that is necessary for such acts to be meritorious for the finite instrumental agent. Lonergan preserves the integrity of man's nature in both intellect and will by defending the obediential potency specific to intellectual creatures and the autonomous inclinations or dispositions proper to his nature. There is no need for a "supernatural existential" to precede reception of the *habitus*

[118] Stebbins, *Divine Initiative* 163.

of sanctifying grace,[119] and the supernatural call that precedes the ordering of the spiritual faculties to their supernatural end by the indwelling of *caritas* does not necessarily confer a supernatural active potency; that is, particular graces producing supernatural acts do not require additional predetermined movements (*praemotio physica*). The essential remote passive potency of the intellect for the beatific vision is not a natural *active* potency (nor is it *properly* proportionate to supernatural active potency), and *posse agere* is not a first act in need of "application" or actualization from a second act (*agere actu*). Nevertheless, the obediential potency that is "naturally" constitutive of the intellect's motion toward the truth indefinitely discerned and the good indeterminately desired (until the intellect specifies the nature of its object by the light of revelation) is a "second act" that therefore stands (through *gratia elevans*) in proportionate relation to the *agere actu* received in the *gratia operans* through which God works every supernaturally meritorious act. *Gratia operans* produces in man a choice of means proportionate to the supernatural end to which he is called; this end is divinely – hence, efficaciously/infallibly – willed together with the requisite *gratia elevans* that orders the spirit to its supernatural end, producing in the mind and heart a supernatural *posse agere*, the *habitus* of sanctifying grace (or *caritas*).[120]

Having explained the key points of Lonergan's dissertation on grace and freedom (prescinding from the historical analysis) and defended Lonergan's position on the natural desire to see God, the coherence of each issue with the other ought to be evident. Lonergan's work on grace is to build upon the theorem of the supernatural, signaling the precise distinction of grace

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[119] See Karl Rahner, "Concerning the Relationship between Nature and Grace," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1, trans. Cornelius Ernst (Baltimore: Helicon, 1961), 297-317; "Nature and Grace," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4, trans. Kevin Smyth (Baltimore: Helicon, 1966), 164-188.

[120] Charity is the "conjugate form" (accidental quality) that accompanies the "central form" (substance) of sanctifying grace, in the language of *Insight* (436-437).

from the natural realm of intellectual desire for God and the dispositions of created freedom as well as the particular relationships that obtain between these two orders of reality. Although sin has fundamentally damaged both the power of the will to adhere to God's intentions and the execution of the intellect's potency for continuous growth in knowledge of God in this life, the very nature of the intellect orients man toward the infinite being of God, and his freedom to act in accord with his deliberations remains intact. The natural integrity of both intellect and will cannot be forgotten in the midst of discourse about the supernatural order and the intrinsic efficacy of divine grace. Man does not need revelation or even philosophical knowledge of the first cause in order to desire some understanding and beatitude beyond what is attainable by one's natural capabilities, and he is not naturally destined always to perform only evil. God freely wills to elevate man to the supernatural order, where his natural tendency to move toward an infinite horizon is made perfect. God knows into existence every free good act of elevated man through a conditional offer of grace, both truly sufficient and efficacious. At the same time, God permits what He prohibits, namely, the will to fall away from His desires; yet He is ever ready to lift the creature back into a realm where God's love rules through wisdom, a wisdom made available to all.

Chapter 7

The Eschatological Dimension: Balthasar's Hope and Maritain's Proposal

Now that we have proposed an alternative approach to the theology of grace by discussing some twentieth century proposals that seek to purge the Thomist position of its Bañezian revisions, it is opportune to return to Balthasar's theodramatic eschatology. The final piece to the puzzle, as it were, comprising Balthasar's "subjunctive" approach to the question of hell belongs also, in a way, to the theology of grace. The second theological (or supernatural) virtue, the life of God by which we desire and strive toward the glory for which we were destined, obviously pertains to the outworking of grace in the life of man. But before we present Balthasar's argument for universalist hope, that is, for the necessity of including salvation for all men in the object of theological object and discuss the most likely means through which he envisions this hope to be fulfilled, a recap of some aspects of what has gone before may be in order.

It is not the intention of this dissertation to argue that Balthasar held a Bañezian Thomist view of the grace-freedom dynamic. Rather, it has been demonstrated that his approach to the question is deficient insofar as he approaches the infinite-finite freedom relationship in terms of power, reminiscent of an exaggeratedly anti-Pelagian approach, termed 'hyper-Augustinian,' like that commonly discerned in Karl Barth's work, with whom Balthasar had profound contact. But beyond any historical judgments regarding the origin of Balthasar's approach to the question, it is most clear from analysis of the texts that there is lacking in his work an adequate coming to grips with the entire problematic of grace as it relates to human freedom. His neglect of the *de auxiliis* controversy, which resurfaced in the twentieth century, may have been intended as an

attempt to transcend what was viewed as an interminable debate about particularities beyond the scope of theological reasoning. However, his retreat into the metaphor of drama certainly did not serve as an adequate substitute for disciplined theological inquiry. There is no eschatology without theological anthropology and the value of the latter is emphatically determined by the character of one's theology of the grace-freedom dynamic. The question cannot be escaped. Apophaticism is a noble endeavor. But it does not exist wherever a piercingly relevant question is ignored. Lonergan provides a good example of how the *via negationis* mediates a pathway not merely between but above the dichotomous Bañez-Molina divide.

The Molinist view has not been treated at any length in this dissertation because it is presumed to be non-Thomistic and less relevant to discussion of an adequate theology of grace that must provide what is lacking in Balthasar's theological anthropology. For the purposes of this dissertation it is sufficient to give a generic version of the opposing view alive at least since the time of the *de auxiliis* controversy, which Balthasar would have had to consider as another way of looking at the economy of salvation. The Molinist school holds that grace is not efficacious in itself but made efficacious by the free consent of the will to its offer; hence, grace is offered in accordance with divine foreknowledge, which encompasses not merely what the divine will has deigned (as the Bañezians would hold), but also an understanding of what each man would do in any given circumstance – in fact, the latter precedes the former in this view). Now, the Molinists did not entertain the idea of universal salvation on the basis of God's infinite wisdom, which presumably would be ingenious enough to devise circumstances in which any man would feel the weight of the grace offered and thus opt to consent. Balthasar does not take an explicit position on the relationship between divine foreknowledge and God's universal causality, although his reflections on the infinite-finite freedom interplay appear to accord more

with the Augustinian-Thomistic view (even if he clearly rejects 'negative reprobation'). In response to any speculations on Molinist grounds that all men may in fact be saved, one might retort (on the same grounds) that in order for man's freedom to be left intact, it must always be capable of rejecting grace, regardless of the circumstances God may devise. Balthasar does not say whether he resists the Molinist view on the grounds that divine causality must precede divine foreknowledge or on the grounds that the free decisions of man cannot be predicted, even by God, through comprehension of circumstances and inclinations.

As was established toward the beginning of this dissertation, Balthasar clearly takes a view of secondary causality as sub-ordinate rather than co-ordinate, and with that fundamental option the present author agrees wholeheartedly. Hence, the extreme to be avoided (and therefore discussed) for a Thomist of such a conviction is the Bañezian position, a view toward which Balthasar often appears to tend, particularly, with respect to the question of divine permission of moral evil. It is this perspective, coupled with his justified rejection of 'restrictive election' (or 'negative reprobation'), that leads directly to the aporia that plagues Balthasar's eschatological work.

The view termed hyper-Augustinian, the classical Catholic variant of which is the Bañezian Thomist view,[1] starts with the truth that grace is intrinsically efficacious, since God is ultimately in control of history and man is both a radically contingent and sinfully inclined being. But it then draws the conclusion that the grace offered to each man is destined effectively to be either truly "efficacious," that is, producing the fruits naturally consequent upon the power

[1] I exclude explicit consideration of Protestant "Augustinian" views, which are often more radical than the Bañezian, because the Catholic version of the approach is the most relevant to Balthasar, who preferred to engage views that are not explicitly condemned by the Catholic Church. Although he chose not to engage it in this question, it is most relevant to the predominantly intra-Catholic character of the questions here discussed.

intrinsic to such a divine gift, or merely "sufficient," that is, inevitably fruitless although containing within itself the same principle of efficacy which belongs to grace as such; hence, the sin that inevitably occurs in the absence of "efficacious grace" is still due only to the freedom of man, which always opts for evil unless it is caused by God to perform the good. The neo-Bañezian view has been thoroughly refuted in the previous two chapters, thanks to the work of Jacques Maritain (indebted to Francisco Marin-Sola), William Most, and Bernard Lonergan.

In addition to the question of the dynamic relationship between divine grace and creaturely freedom, integral to an adequate theological anthropology is a coherent position on the problematic of the relationship between grace and nature as seen in the natural desire for the beatific vision. Lonergan's treatment of the latter question has been advanced as exhibiting a more balanced and precise understanding than is assumed in Balthasar's fundamental acceptance of Lubac's imprecise (and some would say, incoherent) but laudable attempt to counteract the Bañezian interpretation of Thomas. While Balthasar's treatment of the natural desire may be more nuanced than Lubac's, a thesis that is not detailed in this dissertation, it is clear that fundamental agreement with his interpretation of Thomas exacerbates his consternation with the doctrine of eternal damnation. If desiring perfect union with the God of grace and infinite glory belongs to the very structure of the intellectual creature, then damnation is all the more dramatic a tragedy. It makes sense for someone who possesses such an understanding of the *desiderium naturale ad videndum Dei* to argue from the good of universal hope for the 'infinite improbability' of divine freedom opting not to fulfill such supernatural yearning (a theoretical possibility, nonetheless). Instead of arguing at length for a particular understanding of the grace-nature relationship via the precise nature of the 'natural desire,' I want only to engage

Balthasar's argumentation regarding the virtue of hope itself, as it relates to the 'problem of hell' and/or the possibility of universal salvation.

Desire, Hope, and Caritas

Universal hope, or the desire for universal salvation, Balthasar discerns, is both a sign and a cause of salvation for all, if God were in fact to accept the pleas of His holy ones. Whether or not the unanimous prayer of the saints is for the salvation of all men indiscriminately is a topic that would require additional investigation. What is pertinent here is precisely the argument that such desire indicates the real possibility of universal conversion (and hence its inevitable actuality, given the divine salvific will). For Balthasar, the fact exemplified in the mystics that the Christian is driven in prayer to hope for the salvation of all is a sign of a deep reality in human nature, namely, the structural orientation of the intellectual creature toward the beatific vision. The desire to see God face-to-face that is inherent to every man, according to Lubac's reasoning, indicates for Balthasar the human capacity to bring about the conversion of all as belonging objectively to the Redeemer's body, which is abandoned to hell precisely for our sake; this is effected, at least in part, by the very hope for all that is expressed in prayer and expressive of the radical interconnectedness of the human community.

In the penultimate volume of the *Theodramatik*, Balthasar reflects on the connection between grace-filled vicarious suffering and the firm hopefulness that such charity can affect those presently untouched by grace:

> How far can we act on behalf of someone else? Is it possible to win the grace of conversion for a person in grave sin? Thomas answers, 'If by grace a man fulfills the will of God, it is appropriate, according to the laws of friendship [*secundum amicitiae proportionem*], that God should carry out the saving will of one man for another, even if there is an obstacle on the part of the person whose justification is being sought.' This qualification leaves everything open; all that is hidden from us is the mechanism by which the members of the Body can act on behalf of one another. God alone can know

> this. But it gives us a firm hope that the energies of this 'acting on behalf of others' can affect the innermost regions of others' freedom…Paul was profoundly convinced of the fruitfulness of his work and sufferings for his communities and for the Church as a whole. This highlights one of the fundamental elements of Catholic dramatic theory, even if its way of working remains hidden. There is in principle no limit to the possible influence of one member upon another within the spiritual community of goods, both in space and time. 'A particular movement of grace that saves me from some profound danger can have come from the loving act (yesterday, tomorrow, or five hundred years ago) of an entirely unknown person, whose soul stood in a mysterious relationship to mine and which thus found its reward…'[2]

His loyalty to Lubac's thesis on the natural desire for the beatific vision causes a conflation of hope on the natural plane and properly supernatural hope. He notes a distinction in Thomas between natural love and *caritas* that should have sparked in his mind the necessity to draw a similar distinction in regard to hope. Distancing Thomas from Augustine's position, which is to restrict "theological hope to the hoping subject, so that one cannot hope on the part of others and their salvation," he cites Thomas saying: "Thus, where there is this unity of love with another, it is possible to envisage and hope for something on the other person's behalf, just as on one's own behalf."[3] Balthasar comments: "It must be borne in mind, however, that the love referred to here is supernatural *caritas*, and he is speaking only of particular close individuals: for Thomas, on the basis of his eschatology, there can be no question of hoping for the salvation of all."[4] Apparently conceding that Thomas clearly would not agree with his conclusion, there seems to be no argument made for why the founding of this "hope for something on the other person's behalf" upon supernatural charity makes the former properly or intrinsically theological/supernatural.[5]

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[2] 412-413 [G 385-386]
[3] *ST* II-II, 17, 3; see *TD* V, 317 [G 289].
[4] *TD* V, 317 [G 289].
[5] There is also no argument for why this theological hope could not extend to the fallen angels, unless one considers his moderate realism with respect to the scriptural passages on the damnation of the rebellious spirits (see *TD* III, 471ff. [G 432ff.]) He implicitly specifies the

In *Dare We Hope* Balthasar's basic argument appears in variant form. He sets the stage with Augustine's notorious assertion in the *Enchiridion* that whereas faith extends to things good and bad as well as things past, present, and future, hope is limited to what is good and future for the person affected by them.[6] Thomas is the first to overcome such a restriction in his *Commentary on the Sentences*, "[circumventing] the problem by allowing certainty (*certitude*) to theological hope, which, however, can deceive '*ex aliquot accidentale impedimento* [from some accidental obstacle]' (meaning when merits or steadfastness are lacking), so that 'here below, the fear of separation [from God] is bound up with the hope' (3 d 26 q 2 a 4, ad 2 and 4)."[7] His interpretation of this passage seems to be that the certainty of theological hope, which can extend to the salvation of others (i.e., everyone), does not therefore necessitate doctrinal universalism since there is always the possibility of obstacles causing a 'falling away' from perseverance in grace. The problem is that when it comes to others there is no basis for thinking *caritas* exists there in the first place, which is necessary for hope to be theological and therefore certain, even if the latter quality must be qualified by the necessary concomitant existence of a filial fear of separation (also an effect of grace). Therefore, when he proceeds to argue on the next page that Thomas "tears to shreds a veil that had been hanging for centuries over Christian hope" because when hope is considered in unison with love (which he notes the Marietti edition says may be natural), "it is the same virtue of hope through which one" desires eternal salvation "for oneself and for the other."[8] True, it is an expression of love to hope for the salvation of others, but it is important to stipulate that such a desire is not necessarily efficacious. In fact, since Thomas

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hope for the salvation of all men as "theological" when he outright denies it to the fallen angels in *Dare We Hope*, 144 [G 117]. On the theological character of Balthasar's hope, see Margaret Turek, "Dare We Hope," 101-103.

[6] See *PL* 40, 235, cited in *Dare We Hope*, 73 [G 59].

[7] *Dare We Hope*, 74n2 [G 60n2].

[8] *ST* II-II, q. 17, a. 3, cited in *Dare We Hope*, 75 [G 60-61].

obviously thought it was a datum of revelation that some men were condemned, he certainly would not have allowed for an indiscriminate hope for all in the sense for which Balthasar is arguing.

Balthasar soon thereafter in a slightly different context unwittingly cites a passage of Thomas in which he distinguishes between desire and hope: "Man can, namely, also have desire for things that he does not believe he can attain; but hope cannot exist in such circumstances."[9] Man experiences often in life the desire to pray for particular things he thinks may be good for him, and many times he may in fact be right, but if these things are not supernatural goods, they are not the object of supernatural hope. There may also be things we think are supernatural goods without being entirely certain of such a conviction and for that reason also 'leave them in the hands of God,' as it were. Balthasar sometimes appears to argue that the salvation of all men is one of these supernatural goods about which we cannot have the certainty of revelation.[10] But throughout the work he also suggests that because there appears to be a lacuna in revelation about whether some are definitively condemned (which itself can be disputed), the existence itself of such vicarious prayer (the strongest form of which is the spiritual darkness granted the mystics) is a reason to have certainty in such hope for the salvation of all. The primary argument of *Dare We Hope* is precisely that because it is good for us to desire out of love the salvation of all men, we ought in fact to hope for the salvation of all and that this indicates in an anticipatory way the fate of humanity in God's mysterious design.[11] This 'argument from hope,' in fact, says too much: if we have a theological hope for the salvation of all, then there must be a promise in revelation that salvation will be granted to all men (if one understands the virtue as a response to

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[9] *Compendium Theologiae*, c. 7, cited in *Dare We Hope*, 76 [G 61].
[10] See *Dare We Hope*, 36-38n3 [G 30-31n3].
[11] See *Dare We Hope*, 36-38n3, 53-55n10, 74ff, 87 [G 30-31n3, 43-44n10, 59ff, 71].

a revealed promise); he does not want to draw such a conclusion explicitly, but it is inevitably implicit if one fails to draw the distinction between the theological virtue of hope and hope that is merely natural (or 'human'). If he wanted to argue, instead, that we must have a natural hope for all to be saved, there would be no weight in the conclusion that perhaps hell is empty, as there is no need for correspondence between our human hopes and supernatural realities.[12]

He does not consider the possibility that in prayer men may bring to God conditional desires that belong to the natural love for mankind, such as the hope that no one would reject his own ultimate good.[13] Just as we ought to hope that no one definitively rejects divine mercy, we ought to hope that no evil be performed by anyone. As the latter hope obviously is not fulfilled, it is equally possible that the former will not.[14] There is little or no grounds for thinking these desires belong properly to theological hope (i.e., the virtue of hope is a supernatural response to a

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[12] Hence, Ralph Martin argues: "There is an equivocation in his use of the word [hope]. In some places he seems to claim only a very weak meaning for the word, such as when we 'hope' that someone overcomes an illness. There can be no objection to 'hoping' that all who have not already been condemned to hell, be saved, in this sense of the word 'hope.' Indeed, we all should have this hope. In other places he seems to claim a stronger meaning for 'hope,' something more than 'mere desire,' approaching theological hope that is virtually certain since it is based on the promise of God and his efficacious grace" (*Will Many Be Saved?*, 174). Martin then shores up the support of James T. O'Connor ("Von Balthasar and Salvation," *Homiletic and Pastoral Review* [1989]), Thomas Joseph White ("Von Balthasar and Journet"), and Kevin Flannery ("How to Think about Hell").

[13] Kevin Flannery draws on a distinction made by Francisco Suarez regarding two kinds of desire motivating prayer: "[Suarez] says that it is one thing to pray for the salvation of all out of the 'simple desire' which would include the condition, expressed or not, that that which is prayed for be subordinate to the will of God. It is another thing to pray out of 'absolute and efficacious desire,' as Christ did when, according to Suarez, he prayed for those predestined to glory . . . it is possible to pray for the salvation of all with simple desire, even if we know by revelation that some are damned–thus, our 'thin basis' [of not knowing who is condemned] is irrelevant here. To pray in this fashion is simply to conform our wills to God's, who might will the salvation of all, even knowing that some will refuse it" ("How to Think about Hell," 479).

[14] Nonetheless, whether one's hope never to sin again when praying the act of contrition is truly supernatural, presumably, does not rest on whether it is actually effective, but on whether one truly believes that God always provides the grace necessary to overcome temptation, and if an 'accidental obstacle' prevents this hope from being effective, it is perhaps because that faith was diminished in the moment of temptation.

revealed promise).[15] But this kind of parsing is evidently repugnant to Balthasar and is therefore matched with sarcasm and dismissal.[16]

Ratzinger, on the contrary, takes issue with an aspect of Balthasar's treatment, derived from Josef Pieper, whom the two greatly respect. In his article "On Hope," in the section entitled "faith as hope," he discusses the dependence of hope as response to divine promise upon faith as its 'hypostasis', and makes the following comment relevant to Balthasar's argument: "[Pieper] rejects all anticipating as contradicting hope. While there does exist a manner of anticipating which is incompatible with hope, there is also an attentive gift without which even hope is impossible. For the Christian this attentive gift is faith."[17] While it is a recurrent theme in Ratzinger to emphasize the solidarity of all men in the economy of salvation,[18] he concludes his essay on hope with the following insight, quoting Pieper: "The one who prays, says Josef Pieper, 'keeps himself open to a gift which he does not know; and even if what he has specifically asked

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[15] In fact, he does mention "the Scholastic distinction between hope understood as a human possibility, as *spes communis* (a *passio animae* that can actually rise to the level of *virtus*) and hope as a theological virtue, which is a pure gift of grace that comes to us from the divine mercy," (*TD* V, 175 [G 155]) but his understanding of the former is fuzzy at best. He continues: "Augustine himself drew the same distinction between the *spes de terrenis* found in the world and the hope that he describes as 'praesumentium de coelestibus, quae promisit non mendax Deus'. . . Hope looks forward primarily to the highest good, God himself, our ultimate aim, and secondarily to the acquisition of graces that help us attain this final goal . . . Christian hope, theological hope, goes beyond this world, but it does not pass it by: rather, it takes the world with it on its way to God . . . Hope must never be individualistic: it must always be social" (175-176 [G 155-156]). It is a long shot to conclude from all this that, therefore, theological hope includes universal salvation in its object. The arguments that have been presented are precisely his attempt to draw such a conclusion.

[16] See, for example, *Dare We Hope*, 183ff. [G 31ff.]

[17] Joseph Ratzinger, "On Hope" in *Joseph Ratzinger in 'Communio'*, vol. 2, *Anthropology and Culture*, eds. David L. Schindler and Nicholas J. Healy, 34n10 ["Über die Hoffnung," *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift Communio* 12, no. 1 (Spring 1985)].

[18] As Pope Benedict XVI, he reiterates: "Our hope is always essentially also hope for others" (*Spe Salvi*, no. 46).

for is not given him, he remains certain, however, that his prayer has not been in vain.'"[19] Thus, we may fervently pray the beautiful petition given the children of Fatima by the Blessed Virgin, "O my Jesus…lead all souls to heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy," all the while knowing that some are most likely condemned (as the seers knew). The desire for universal salvation is a legitimate human hope that is integrated even into the Church's Eucharistic liturgy, but it cannot be designated properly theological since such would in fact presuppose faith in something not revealed (and therefore not suitably ground a supernatural response to a divine promise), namely, that all human beings will in the end turn toward divine mercy and accept His salvation. The conviction that revelation indicates the condemnation of some does not inhibit the believer from possessing a human hopefulness that he might be wrong and that everyone may convert in the end. But such hope is not a "theological" one, as theological hope "does not disappoint" (Rom 5:5). To "hope against hope" (Rom 4:18) is not to hope theologically for something that is either not promised in revelation (whether explicitly or implicitly) or actually contrary to it.

Defending Balthasar's position, John Sachs and Margaret Turek mention Ratzinger only parenthetically (and hence as superficially as is typical),[20] but they do present and argue against Leo Scheffczyk's objections.[21] After arguing in favor of a purported theological consensus on

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[19] "On Hope," 41.

[20] See Turek, "Dare We Hope," 93; John R. Sachs, S.J., "Current Eschatology: Universal Salvation and the Problem of Hell," *Theological Studies* 52 (1991): 227-254, at 242n66. I do not find Ratzinger reducing the meaning of such texts to that of warning alone. Turek also excises a small passage from Ratzinger's *Eschatology* (the same passage cited by Sachs), which apart from the surrounding text appears to be support for Balthasar's universalism, as she understands it (see 112); she also claims Marc Ouellet's private validation of her Balthasarian interpretation of the passage (120n62).

[21] The article by Scheffczyk cited by both is entitled "Apokatastasis: Faszination und Aporie," *Internationale katholische Zeitschrift* 14 (1985): 34-46. Turek summarizes Scheffczyk's argument thus: "According to Scheffczyk, theological hope presupposes a divine promise, and its

the plausibility of universal salvation, depending largely on Karl Rahner's thesis of anthropological asymmetry between the two possible outcomes of final judgment, Sachs briefly rebuts Scheffczyk's "narrow notion of hope."[22] He quotes Scheffczyk stating, "[Since] faith does not contain the promise of the non-existence of hell, it cannot give rise to supernatural hope. Hope for beatitude is possible only for the believer herself (and for the other who is bound with her in supernatural love)." And he responds: "Surely the hope that believers may have that all will be saved does not necessarily depend upon the promise that this will be so. For such (supernatural) hope, it is sufficient that faith 'knows' that God loves all creatures and wills that they be saved and 'knows' nothing which positively excludes that this might happen."[23] On the contrary, since theological (or supernatural) hope is by definition certain, that is, impossible of disappointment, the abstract possibility of universal salvation does not by itself warrant theological hope for such. The supernatural character of this hope is simply asserted, not demonstrated.

Margaret Turek also argues that (theological) hope need not be the supernatural response to a promise in divine revelation, on the basis of texts in the new *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.[24] Leaving aside the fact that the Catechism carries no additional doctrinal weight than

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scope is restricted (on God's side) to that which is promised and (on the side of creaturely freedom) to those who are meeting the conditions of this promise. Since God's promise of eternal life pertains solely to those who believe, one can hope only for those who already accept God's offer of salvation through Jesus Christ (granted that this faith may be more or less implicit in those who 'fear God and do what is right'). In what concerns those who at present do not believe, there is no concomitant divine promise of non-damnation and hence no foundation for hope" (Turek, "Dare We Hope," 101-102).

[22] Sachs, "Current Eschatology," 242n66.

[23] Sachs, "Current Eschatology," 242n66.

[24] The director of her dissertation on Balthasar, Christoph Cardinal Schoenborn, was the chief drafter of the Catechism under the direction of the then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger.

that already belonging to the documents themselves quoted,[25] her argument also falls prey to a lack of distinguishing between natural and supernatural hope. She argues against Scheffczyk:

> [I]s it necessary for us to follow Scheffczyk in confining the scope of theological hope to the certitude attendant upon God's promises? Evidently not, if we examine the notion of supernatural hope as presented in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Especially noteworthy is a passage which, though it begins by affirming the elements that are central to Scheffcyzk's conception, concludes nonetheless by declaring that *supernatural* hope can be directed to the salvation of all: '. . . In *hope*, the Church prays for 'all men to be saved' (1 Tim 2:4).[26]

On the contrary, nowhere does the Catechism specify that the hope with which the Church prays the words of Scripture is theological rather than merely human. The Church prays for lots of good things that may never come about (e.g., world peace). She is obliged by the virtue of charity to hope for all good to be bestowed upon all men at the Lord's discretion. But properly *theological* hope responds to an article of faith about what is beyond (i.e., the last things). The question is whether scripture or tradition warrants a confident hope in universal salvation as a coming reality consequent upon God's own infinite love and power.

Hence, Turek then turns to the real issue:

> Scheffczyk, it seems to us, considers theological hope primarily within the context of this first series of texts: insofar as human freedom chooses to believe and live by love it can rely on the promise of heaven. Hope for another is permissible in virtue of the free assent he or she renders to divine grace. The dramatic encounter between infinite divine freedom and finite human freedom is thus viewed with the spotlight cast on the creature's self-disposing; given that God does not promise universal salvation, it is the role of human freedom that appears ultimately determinative of the scope to Christian hope. Von Balthasar, however, because he grants 'an equal chance' to the second series of texts, will follow its directives and cast the spotlight in the other direction – toward the role that infinite freedom plays in the encounter. It then becomes a matter of illuminating how the work of infinite divine freedom *vis-à-vis* finite human freedom can be ultimately conducive of an outcome in which all may be saved, without disallowing human freedom the possibility of a final 'No' to God.[27]

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[25] See Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger and Christoph Schonborn, *Introduction to the Catechism of the Catholic Church* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 25-27.
[26] Turek, "Dare We Hope," 102 (emphasis added).
[27] Turek, "Dare We Hope," 103-104.

If the primacy (or intrinsic efficacy) of grace had the sole word, then Balthasar would be right "to see the prospect of universal salvation" ultimately in terms of divine omnipotence rather than human freedom.[28] But God created free creatures with the power to nihilate His motions, and although He is certainly powerful enough to overcome such nihilations, His salvific will does not contradict His creative will.

Perhaps, there is a way in which this hope that is founded upon faith in God's infinite love, wisdom, and power, which we desire to extend to all but which we cannot precisely articulate (since divine revelation itself has not), perhaps it may be fulfilled in a way thus far unforeseen, certainly in a mysterious economy beyond the reach of theological speculation in this life, but nevertheless approachable in an apophatic manner. Before exploring Jacques Maritain's proposal for how divine grace may play out in human freedom eschatologically, it is opportune to investigate briefly how Balthasar conceives the plausible means through which the prospect of universal salvation may become a reality.

Conversion in Death

As has been seen briefly,[29] the cry of dereliction or abandonment comes to represent for Balthasar the depths of suffering into which the God-man descends in that timeless event

[28] Turek states that the Catechism "see[s] the prospect of universal salvation as resting primarily with the will and the power of God rather than with human freedom" ("Dare We Hope," 102). The truth of such a claim depends on how one construes "primarily" here. I do not think there is anything wrong, strictly speaking, with the Catechism's statement that "The Church prays that no one should be lost. . . . If it is true that no one can save himself, it is also true that God 'desires all men to be saved' (1 Tim 2:4), and that for him 'all things are possible' (Mt 19:26)" (no. 1058).

[29] See the section on timeless descent in Chapter One.

celebrated on Holy Saturday and for the sake of our salvation.[30] In his death, Christ took on the hell that He preached and therefore transformed death itself (Sheol) into a salvific-judgment event:

> It must not be forgotten, however, that Jesus' words on judgment, which sharpen the Old Testament language on the theme by their concrete reference to his presence here and now among men, were all uttered prior to his death on the Cross. This death is the 'hour of darkness' (Lk 22:53), itself described in eschatological, apocalyptic colors (Mt 27:45-53) and culminating in Jesus' cry of forsakenness. So, when Jesus' words speak of those who are cast into outer or outermost darkness . . . we must realize that this baffling realm 'outside' the sphere of divine salvation is itself outstripped and encompassed by an even more baffling 'outside': namely, the Son of God confronted by the salvation-judgment of the divine Father. Paul's thought is based on this Cross-event, understood as God's final victory; from this vantage point he reflects on the judgment affecting those who refuse to let this salvation take root and grow within them.[31]

Therefore, he quotes Hamann approvingly with respect to the soul's conformity to the fate of Christ: "Christ's soul had to go to hell before it went to heaven. So it must be with the human soul….When a man knows and beholds himself, and finds himself so evil and unworthy of all the good…"[32] There appears here to be a self-judgment in death posited, where divine judgment is consequent upon it.[33] He explicitly states that conversion after death is not a possibility.[34] If

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[30] In his earlier work Balthasar seems to draw a sharper distinction between the events of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, but he seems to transition more and more in his later works, perhaps under the influence of Joseph Ratzinger, toward the view that the article of the descent is fulfilled by Christ's *kenosis* on the Cross, culminating in His death. For example, compare *Explorations* IV, 406 [G 392], to *MP*, 164 [G 240]. There is, however, still an ambiguity in his later work; for example, compare his statements on the timelessness of Christ's Cross on *TD* V 307-308 [G 280-281] and *TD* V, 310 [G 282]. Ratzinger throughout his writings collapses the suffering aspect of the descent event into Christ's passion and death on Friday, even though the descent proper is celebrated on Holy Saturday (see the chapter on Ratzinger).

[31] *TD* V, 199 [G 178].

[32] *TD* V, 293 [G 266].

[33] See also *TD* V, 321 [G 293].

[34] See *TD* V, 297 [G 270]; *Dare We Hope*, 182 [G 29]. Edward Oakes is, therefore, mistaken when he opposes John Saward's interpretation of Balthasar (see *The Mysteries of March: Hans Urs von Balthasar on the Incarnation and Easter* [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990], 129-130) when he comments: "Perhaps, then, the issue boils down to whether there is a possibility of conversion after death, that is, in hell. Can the Church pronounce

he does not hold a hope for universal conversion in death (prior to judgment), then he would have to cast doubt upon the Catholic doctrine of mortal sin, which I presume not to be the case here. While he does not allow for conversion after death at one's 'particular judgment,'[35] a

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on that possibility if revelation has not?" (*Pattern of Redemption*, 318n35). In fact, the Church has already pronounced against such a possibility (ergo, it does belong to revelation) in three General Councils (Lyons I, Lyons II, and Florence) and the papal bull, *Benedictus Deus* (penned by Benedict XII in 1336), and Balthasar knew this (see *TD* V, 297 [G 270]). Oakes' speculation here is the basis for the following remark, in the previous footnote regarding a text supportive of the idea of conversion at death (*Pneuma und Institution: Skizzen der Theologie*: Band 4, 443-444 [Oakes, 316-317]): "While I believe it is permitted to hope that death itself would lead to a repentant encounter with God, we must not assume that it will be so" (*Pattern of Redemption*, 317n34). In another place he argues for an "infernal, as opposed to a purgatorial, approach" to how Christ the Judge "disposes of his graces," "bestow[ing] grace eschatologically on whom he will" "by means of his descent into hell" ("The Internal Logic of Holy Saturday in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 9, no. 2 [April 2007]: 184-199, at 188-189). In other words, he sees Balthasar's descent doctrine as a way of salvation for non-Christians (that is, everyone potentially), not by means of conversion in death (i.e., before judgment), even when conceived as purgatorial, but by means of a post-mortem infernal experience. Pitstick, while opining that "Oakes softens Balthasar's avowal that redemption is only achieved if Christ suffers that reprobation in his filial, that is, divine, relation to the Father; Oakes refers instead to Christ's experience of that forsakenness in his human soul," ("Development of Doctrine or Denial," 142-143) she also notes, commenting upon Oakes again, "Balthasar makes [the descent] a 'last thing' by proposing the eternal suffering of Christ. Because Christ experiences hell, which is eternal, he is allegedly present to all who descend there, whenever that may be. Balthasar's eschatological resolution is that this encounter with Christ after death may lead to conversion" (144). I think her interpretation of Balthasar on divine suffering is at best unnuanced, but she is right that his reflections open the door for Oakes to speculate about post-mortem conversion.

[35] "This is not to imply that a further 'conversion' is still possible at the Judgment, after death. Here it is only a question of the Judge's objective evaluation of a life's totality" (*TD* V, 297 [G 270]). See also *Dare We Hope*, 182 [G 29]. The existence of hidden conversion in the moment of death seems to be hoped for in certain passages, such as *Explorations* IV, 456-457 [G 443-444], reiterated in *TD* V, 312 [G 284]. Ralph Martin is, therefore, as mistaken as Oakes when he argues that Balthasar's theory supports post-mortem conversion (see *Will Many Be Saved?*, 155, 162, 180, 275n123). He writes: "Balthasar speculates that perhaps everyone will be pardoned anyway, even if they die unrepentant, or perhaps another chance will be given after death for repentance to happen, and that we should certainly hope this. Speyr in her mystical visions speaks of people's effigies being in hell but not them. Oakes acknowledges the difficulty in determining exactly what Balthasar is saying about how this universal pardon could happen when it appears that people are dying in mortal sin. Ambiguity surrounds Balthasar's speculations about the encounter of damned souls with Christ in hell. Oakes concludes, as we have previously noted: 'Perhaps, then, the issue boils down to whether there is a possibility of

certain timelessness in death would have to be admitted for one to maintain, as he clearly does, a theological hope that every man will before death "apply [the entire courage of Christian hope] to himself, to trust that, by the power of this miracle [of the Cross of Christ], what is damnable in him has been separated from him and thrown out with the unusable residue that is incinerated outside the gates of the Holy City."[36]

How does Balthasar attempt to reconcile the notion that all human beings might in fact be saved with the phenomenon of apparently obstinate sinners dying without any sign of remorse? Rather than arguing that there is the possibility of conversion (and therefore salvation) after death but before judgment, he starts with the assertion that the judgment takes into account one's entire life as much as it does one's final state:

> [I]f it is true that not only a person's last moment but his entire life is to be the object of judgment, it is impossible that 'nothing worthy of damnation' will be found in him. The image of the scales of justice rising or falling is false insofar as this 'weighing' is not a

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conversion after death, that is, in hell'" (*Will Many Be Saved?*, 180). Hopefully, the present treatment of the issues will dissolve some of the confusion evidently pervasive.

[36] *TD* V, 321 [G 293]. The alternative explanation would have to be that Balthasar casts doubt upon the Catholic teaching on mortal sin. If we cannot know who dies in mortal sin, but some publicly obstinate grave sinners die without sign of repentance, then do we conclude that perhaps no one ever fulfills the conditions of culpability or that there may be a mysterious opportunity for conversion in the silent moment of death itself? To suppose that everyone, no matter how evil, may be saved in judgment on the basis of the little good that must remain, as every man is in himself worthy of damnation and we are only good in the measure that He predestines it, a concession perhaps to the classical Lutheran interpretation of justification, smacks of the claim that no one is in fact culpable for acts involving 'grave matter.' Even Ambaum finds issue with this potential claim (of which I presume Balthasar is not guilty): "The quotations in this text [*Theodramatik* IV: *Das Endspiel*, 268-270] come from Adrienne von Speyr's Commentary on the First Letter of John, while reference is made in the footnote to a text of Mechtild Magdeburg. This mystic of the Middle Ages there describes how the heavenly Father comes to a burdened soul and speaks to her: 'Have I seen anything at all that is good in her?' It is not easy to bring this hypothesis of Balthasar into agreement with the Constitution '*Benedictus Deus*' written by Pope Benedict XII in 1336. There it is said: 'We further determine: As God has generally ordained, the souls of those who have departed in actual mortal sin immediately descend into hell where they are punished by infernal torments.' One does not need to accept without qualification that this involves a solemn infallible doctrinal pronouncement, but this conviction is nonetheless deeply rooted in the faith of the Church" ("An empty hell?" 51).

> quantitative matter: it is something qualitative here that cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Ambrose came up with the daring statement: 'Idem homo et salvatur ex parte, et condemnatur ex parte', man is somehow both to the right and to the left of the Judge. Accordingly, his hope can only cling blindly to the miracle that has already taken place in the Cross of Christ…[37]

At points he aligns himself with the idea of a purgatorial judgment, but he does not deny a distinction between the moments of death and judgment, that is, between a potential moment for transformative grace and the state in which one is judged capable of temporal purgation.[38] He gives no indication of subscribing to Karl Rahner's speculations on purgatory in death,[39] which implies a coincidence of judgment and the moment of death. He says instead, "we can agree with J. Ratzinger…after our death…eschatological fire. The transforming 'moment' of this encounter is beyond the earthly calculation of time."[40] Nonetheless, he wants to argue that the mysterious moment of death at least allows us to hope for a definitive encounter between finite

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[37] *TD* V, 321 [G 293]. In this enigmatic passage he goes on to assert that Christian courage is required to trust in this Cross, which has separated what is damnable in man from his person. I do not think he is asserting salvation without the cooperation of the sinner, nor do I think he is arguing that such reconciliation occurs only for those who manifest such theological virtue, nor does it make sense to bifurcate the person into his sinful self and his sanctified self at death (i.e., must be either saved or condemned as one person). The only alternative, therefore, seems to be that Balthasar maintains an inherited theology of grace, according to which he thinks (but cannot say for certain) grace is offered efficaciously to all in some mysterious way at death, through the sufferings of Christ and the prayers of His saints. The view that, according to *TL* II, Balthasar believes that after death the person in mortal sin is bifurcated into a condemned "copy" or "negative" that is ultimately incinerated as sin itself is in His descent and the purified goodness that exists at the core of every person, glorified, is undermined both by a lack of textual support and by the fact that Speyr speaks of "negative copies" existing in hell for every sinful person that is living, not the dead (see *TL* II, 356-357 [G 324-325]). More to the point, "The Son replaces what has been lost [what a man has given from his own substance to the sin he has committed] by his personal grace" (*TL* II, 356 [G 324]).

[38] I suppose one could hold a view of 'judgment in death,' if he posits a moment in the existential structure of death leading up to the definitive moment, wherein conversion could occur and whereupon purgatorial judgment could follow in that final moment of death, but Balthasar does not approach speculations so detailed.

[39] See Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 19, *Faith and Ministry*, trans. Edward Quinn (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1983), c. 14, esp. 186-187.

[40] *TD* V, 361 [G 330].

and infinite freedom wherein love triumphs before the person is purged in final judgment.[41] But when he mentions Rahner with respect to this point, he says the following:

> So the final Judgment occurs after the death of the individual, which means that, as Karl Rahner put it so well, it takes place '"along" the temporal history of the world' and so coincides 'with the sum of particular judgments undergone by individuals'. Insofar as the individual has to step forth into his particular judgment, which is part of the judgment of the world, acts of faith are required of him, namely, hope and fear. These would not arise in the case of a final judgment that was separate from the particular judgment.[42]

It is unclear from this whether Balthasar is siding with Rahner's (in)famous thesis of "resurrection in death,"[43] but he appears at least confused about how death, judgment, purgation, and temporality all relate to one another in the human experience. He does seem to side with Rahner over Ratzinger on the question of whether to accept the traditional Thomistic anthropology of the intermediate state,[44] in facile terms: "[W]e discern the unsatisfactory nature of the dualistic philosophy that regarded man as a composite of a mortal part (the body) and an immortal part (the soul), since in reality the human being dies as a body/soul totality."[45]

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[41] Judgment in general for him is something the living are perpetually under here and now, an initial state rather than a later one, a means to an end, namely, that of reconciliation. For his thoughts on the temporality structure of death, see especially *TD* IV, 95, 99, 122, and 132 [G 88, 91, 112-113, 122].

[42] *TD* V, 357 [G 326].

[43] See Karl Rahner's essay, "The Intermediate State," in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 17, *Jesus, Man, and the Church*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1981): 114-124, at 115.

[44] For analysis of other problematic texts in Balthasar and comparison to Ratzinger's statements on the intermediate state, see Andrew Hofer, O.P., "Balthasar's Eschatology on the Intermediate State: The Question of Knowability," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 12, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 148-172.

[45] *TD* IV, 130 [G 119]. He also says in *Explorations* IV: "It is easy to see why the other interpretation [the tradition of the descent as triumphant rather than suffering]: a purely Greek anthropology has defined the essence of death, which holds that death is nothing more than the separation of the soul (that continues to live on) from the body. But this evades the essential issue. If this be so, then the direct soteriological implication of this will be first and above all else that the vicarious experience of being dead (in the biblical sense) had to be suffered, indeed could only be suffered, more deeply by the Son of God than by any other human being, because he possessed a unique experience of being connected with God the Father and *therefore* he had a

Amidst all the Heideggerian reflections on death and life, which are nonetheless different from Rahner's,[46] he offers very few speculative remarks that would justify entertaining the potential conversion of all those who appear to die in obstinate sin. It is unusual that he does not reflect upon the phenomenon of near-death experiences pointing to the distinction between physical (or clinical) death and metaphysical (or definitive) death. He does say, "[T]he exact moment of death occurs at different points depending on the categories used to determine it."[47]

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much deeper access to the experience of being dead and forsaken (again, in the biblical sense) than was available to a creature" (408-409 [G 394-395]). He appears to be asserting that if one realizes that the triumphant tradition is based on a false anthropology, then he is enabled to realize that the 'being dead' of Christ involved a more profound experience than that merely of his soul separating from his body, namely, a continuation of his personal encounter with the penalty due the sin he bore in the 'flesh' (which indicates his human nature rather than the body simply).

[46] Fergus Kerr asserts that while Balthasar rejected transcendental (or neo-Kantian) Thomism and "[u]nlike Rahner, Balthasar never attended lectures by Heidegger," Balthasar's "conception of metaphysics" is "far more radically 'Heideggerian' than Rahner['s]" (Kerr, "Balthasar and Metaphysics" in *Cambridge Companion*, 225) But Kerr seems to imply what is not granted, namely, that agreement with Heidegger on the centrality of the question of Being and even the history of metaphysics yields essential conformity to Heidegger's project. While he occasionally borrows concepts from Heidegger (as does Ratzinger, not to mention Rahner), Balthasar clearly prefers Christian existentialism to the rationalism inherent to Heidegger's reinvention of Hegel. Even though Balthasar sometimes tends unintentionally toward an archetechtonic schematization (akin to Hegel's), Rahner is (in)famous for his attempt to 'Christianize' Heidegger (and Kant before him, with Maréchal). The relationship between Balthasar's appropriation of Hegel, his eventual rejection of transcendental Thomism (see *Cordula oder der Ernstfall* [Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1966]), and his appropriation of Heidegger would, indeed, merit an extensive study, as well would Rahner's relationship to Hegel (and Heidegger). Rowan Williams argues briefly that "[c]ertainly the Heiddeger of *Sein und Zeit* is a considerable (if muted) presence in *Spirit in the World*; but whether the later Heidegger has left any serious impression on Rahner's mature work is dubious" ("Balthasar and Rahner" *Analogy of Beauty*, 29). So, perhaps, Rahner was more influenced by early Heidegger, while Balthasar was more influenced by the later cultural-linguistic work of Heidegger. For Heidegger's influence on Balthasar, see Imperatori, M., S.J., "Heidegger dans la 'Dramatique divine' de Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Nouvelle revue théologique* 122 (2000): 191-210.

[47] *TD* IV, 95 [G 88]. I think it may have been fruitful for Balthasar to reflect further on the distinction between physical or empirical death and metaphysical death, based upon an analysis of the phenomenon of so-called near-death experiences. Many people have been declared clinically dead, only to be revivified, sometimes many hours later and usually with a story to tell about the afterlife. Certainly the soul does not actually separate from the body, at least not in a

Again, acknowledging various degrees of actualizing one's human being and the correspondent forms of temporality, he says: "spiritual consciousness participates in this time form in such a way that it becomes an 'existence leading to death'. Existence's time can be cut off from outside

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definitive way, even as the mind imagines floating above the body and toward a great light, for example. The scholastic would argue that a person is not dead until the body begins to decay. Consider, then, the case of Lazarus. His body was already decaying and yet Jesus rose him from the dead in such a way that he apparently continued with his normal life afterward; if he had already been judged by God, his soul would have been definitively separated from his body (until resurrection proper). Does it make sense to say that, because particular judgment by Christ did not yet exist, one's eternal fate was not sealed in the other world's temporality once metaphysical death occurred? In any case, the thesis of "resurrection in death" is problematic because it takes away the inextricable linkage that exists between man's finite spiritual being and the temporal structure of history. Purgatorial experience may occur within the existential temporality of the metaphysical moment of death itself, if the existential time of purgatory is not at all commensurate with earthly time and the moment of metaphysical death is not identical with the moment of empirical death. God can delay as long as He sees fit the moment of metaphysical death, wherein God decides the soul's non-earthly destiny, and in the meantime the soul can remain with the body in a dormant fashion, that is, exist merely *in potentia* with respect to all bodily activity. All of this, of course, presupposes also a particular anthropology, which some would call "dualistic." Much of Ratzinger's *Eschatology* is dedicated to a defense and explanation of the biblical, traditional, and rational foundations for the idea of the "soul." I do not think it is necessary to bring the eschaton to the moment of death in order to preserve the integrity of the person, as the spiritual identity of the body is maintained in the selfhood of the person's self-conscious subjectivity, which transcends the death of the matter his soul informs, and yet the person as embodied spirit is not complete unless its essential bodiliness is also expressed in the spatio-temporal dimensions of a physical world like that in which it was created and developed (insofar as it is a world of spatio-temporal dimensions). The latter fulfillment is precisely that for which all of creation "awaits" in anticipation of its consummation (i.e., our Christian hope cannot be complete at our own individual death). In other words, the departed soul retains "bodiliness" and everything that belongs to the person without expressing its being in what is peculiar to the matter of his body itself, that is, quantifiable dimensions; the latter will be regained in the resurrection at the end of time, where not only a new heaven will be created, but also a new earth. This goes along well with the Thomistic understanding of form and matter as applied to the soul-body composite, since when the spiritual soul of man survives the corruption of his bodily activity, he is not split into two pieces, as it were, but the body ceases to be a body, becoming a mere corpse (assuming another substantial form), and thus the matter that previously belonged to him is now an ethereal "prime matter," while his soul retains all the particular actualizations of the potencies that were inherent to the particular matter previously informed in his body during life. It is worth further study whether it is coherent to suppose that death, particular judgment, and purgatory may comprise together a single existential structure of encounter with the crucified Christ, perhaps making contemporary sense out of the Augustinian notion of a 'purgatorial body.'

at any moment, but the biological unfulfillment by no means signifies that the drama of this existence has not been acted out to its end."[48] Although for him "dying is essentially different from the biological 'end,'"[49] he is not advocating that "meaning [be] shifted to the encounter with death itself,"[50] an error one might discern in Rahner's theology of death.[51] At the same time, even though he famously refers on occasion to the being-dead of Christ in terms of solidarity with the passivity of man in death, he also says about death the following in the *Prolegomena* of the *Theodramatik*:

> By means of this final act, whether he suffers it or seeks it out, he can imprint a meaning, retrospectively, on his whole existence. Thus in the drama it is generally only the last act that rids the preceding one of its fluid and provisional character and confirms the entire action. So, paradoxically, death can change from being a radically passive event, which, even if we try desperately to flee from it, will eventually overtake us, to become a highly active event, deliberately chosen and shaped as to its when, where and why. This presupposes a mysterious preknoweldge of death, which comes not only from familiarity with dying in the humam milieu, but from the fact that death is immanent in every temporal moment.[52]

The descent of Christ into the darkness of death and the hellishness of sin itself on the Cross transforms the temporality of one's entire life, not merely his death (but his death included, nonetheless), into an opportunity for receptivity to the grace that brings men into a purifying communion with the Triune God:

> And the most improbable thing of all is that God does not provide the answer from outside, from above…but comes on stage practically incognito and takes part in the action. He wants to share not only finitude, with all its happiness and sorrow, but also the human demise, human collapse and death. . . . something unimaginable happens to

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[48] *TD* IV, 99 [G 91].
[49] *TD* IV, 122 [G 112].
[50] *TD* IV, 121 [G 111].
[51] See Karl Rahner, *On the Theology of Death* (Edinburgh-London: Nelson, 1961), especially 70-75. Balthasar criticizes this aspect and others of Rahner's comments on the effect of the descent on death and the world, referring to this work, in *MP*, 147n106 [G 223-224n1], even though he seems to make similar assertions in the text corresponding to this note (see 137 [G 223]).
[52] *TD* I, 370 [G 345-346].

> existence: what is finite, as such, is drawn into what is ultimate and eternal; what is finite in its temporal extension, in each one of its moments and their interconnection, and not merely for instance, in its final result…he accepted the inherent tension between 'my death', which I anticipate with fear, and 'our death'…he plumbed the abyss of our death far more deeply than we could ever do. And that is the absolute center of the heart of the Christian faith.[53]

This perspective on the "heart of the Christian faith," on one hand, and the inextricable linkage of time to eternity, on the other, yields a hope for the conversion of all in some mysterious way known only to God. With this understanding of Balthasar's hope, the following passage is significant not only with respect to the importance he grants the descent in the redemption, but also, more to the point, with respect to the possible 'how' of the universal conversion for which Balthasar thinks all must hope with the vehemence of the saints:

> [A]nyone who tries to choose complete forsakenness – in order to prove himself absolute vis-à-vis God – finds himself confronted by the figure of someone even 'more absolutely' forsaken than himself. We should consider, therefore, 'whether God is not free to encounter the sinner who rejects him in the powerless figure of the crucified Brother, forsaken by God, in such a way that the sinner realizes that 'this man, like me forsaken by God, is forsaken for my sake.'[54]

There is no other 'time' in which this encounter could occur for those who apparently die in sin, besides some 'existential moment' between physical death and the (particular) judgment that renders destiny eternal.[55] The significance of time (or atemporality) for Balthasar's eschatology

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[53] *TD* IV, 132 [G 122]. Nicholas Healy corroborates this interpretation of Balthasar on death: "Balthasar claims that it is Christ's death which determines the eschatological significance of every human death. More precisely, by dying the death of a sinner abandoned by the Father, Christ 'undergirds' and ultimately includes every other death within his person. Death, then, is not simply a neutral event that already is what it is independently of Christ's death. Rather, death itself is a christological reality" (*Being as Communion*, 204).

[54] *TD* V, 312 [G 284]; the quotation inside the text is from his own "Eschatology in Outline" in *Explorations* IV, 456-457 [G 443-444], but the translation is not Edward Oakes', used by Graham Harrison.

[55] The following reflections of Gerard O'Hanlon may be recruited to support the notion here defended that the enigmatic relationship between time and eternity is most plausibly the key to interpreting Balthasar's hope for universal salvation: "[Balthasar] suggests a difference between the eternities of heaven, hell, and the state of Jesus on the cross, such that the condemned sinner

may be glimpsed in these words: "there is contradiction in the essence of hell itself, insofar as hell is discarded sin. Hell is and at the same time is not. Consequently, it is ultimately something that is at once atemporal-eternal and self-destroying."[56]

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may experience the definitive timelessness, the isolated *nunc stans*, of being forsaken by God and yet – because hell is a NT, christological place also in the sense that Christ's cross is raised at the far side of it – still be separated from his sin and transferred into the quite different, inclusive supra-time of the eternity of heaven. . . . since Balthasar wants to retain the traditional position that there can be no repentance of a definitive choice after death, it is not clear (*unless one supposes some experience of hell in this life*) how and when the sinner condemned to hell may with his or her own free consent be saved by the cross of Christ" (*The Immutability of God*, 74 [emphasis added]). Apparently I am not the only one who sees in Balthasar the subtle presence of a theory according to which those who desire to exclude themselves from glory will actually experience condemnation with Christ in the existential moment of death such that conversion and thus salvation is ensured before the particular judgment of each.

[56] *TL* II, 351 [G 320]. There are places in the final section of *TL* II ("Hell and Trinity"), which provide multiple quotations from Adrienne von Speyr's *Kreuz und Hölle* that could be interpreted as suggesting an odd form of annihilationism: "In his passage through hell, Christ encounters not only sin, which has now become an amorphous mass, but also figures which Adrienne has called 'effigies'. These effigies consist of what a man has given from his own substance to the sin he has committed: 'This lost piece of man goes into hell with sin.' The Son replaces what has been lost by his personal grace: 'So the erstwhile sinner is indeed now closer to the Lord, but at the same time, as sinner, he is copied, in negative, in hell. An effigy of him . . . lies buried and rejected in hell.' The effigies are like a hollow impression, as when a body has lain in the sand" (355-356 [G 324-325]). Furthermore, he argues from Lubac's thesis on the nature-grace relationship that the damned, certainly the fallen angels (and perhaps men, if there are any condemned), lose their personal being, citing Ratzinger's "Abschied vom Teufel?" in *Dogma und Verkundigung* (Munich and Freiburg: Wewel, 1973), 233, and Bernanos, *Diary of a Country Priest*, trans. Pamela Morris (London, 1937), 177. He states: "The problem [of the theological personality of demons] becomes acute if, as Henri de Lubac and we have done, we affirm that created conscious subjects – that is, angels and men – share a single supernatural ultimate goal, in such a way that, by striving toward and reaching it (which is made possible by grace), the subject becomes a person. Unlike man, however, the pure spirit is in a position to attain its ultimate goal in an indivisible act by which it grasps itself completely. Accordingly, if it totally renounces this goal, it loses its personality; it cannot even hold on to itself as a quasi-intact conscious subject since, as both the classical doctrine and St. Thomas say, this conscious subject does not have a 'purely natural' goal. . . . when communication breaks down, the dimension of time itself collapses; there is nothing to remember and nothing to hope for. Thus what we have is a timeless point, the extreme opposite of God's eternity and of the heavenly mode of duration" (*TD* III, 496-498 [G 455-457]). It is not completely clear whether he intends this vision of hell to be applied to men or only angels, even though he seems to limit his comments to angels, except where he affirms that men and angels have the same ultimate goal. But if we look at *TD* V, 321 [G 293], where some of the same language appears as in *TL* II, we find that this incineration of

Perhaps there is an option unforeseen by Balthasar that answers more adequately the great dichotomy in which he finds himself than does the solution that has lead him into such speculation, namely, subjunctive universalism. Maritain does not operate on the premise that the natural desire to see God is innate or structural and absolute or unconditional; in fact, he relies upon a hard distinction between nature and grace without entering into the question of the precise relationship between the intellect's propensity to seek the highest causes and the will's determination by the goods proposed to it by the intellect,[57] even if (like Lonergan) his approach to the question is more nuanced than the two typical parties in opposition on this question.[58]

Maritain's Answer to the Balthasarian Dilemma

Having looked at the presuppositions operative in Balthasar's approach to eschatology, there remains the question: is there an option available that is better than both Balthasar's

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sin that occurs by virtue of Christ's condemnation (reflecting the trinitarian undergirding of hell and sin) works itself out through, or presupposes, the triumph of divine grace in a moment of turning toward (i.e., "conversion") hope in divine mercy. Of course, it could be that Balthasar is not exactly sure how this hope for universal salvation may be fulfilled, in which case all we have are speculations here and there that do not entirely cohere with one another or reflect a systematic theory of how divine grace 'outwits' human sinfulness, rendering the possibility of perdition infinitely improbable. But the importance of atemporality to his eschatology remains, nevertheless (see *TL* II, 359 [G 327-328]).

[57] Here I am alluding to the debate that later circulates around Lawrence Feingold's naturally necessitated elicited act of conditional desire for the vision of God, which cannot here be commented upon. See his *The Natural Desire to See God According to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Ave Maria, FL: Sapientia, 2010), 186, 218, 261ff., for example.

[58] For development of the latter point, see René Mougel, "The Position of Jacques Maritain Regarding *Surnaturel*: The Sin of the Angel, or 'Spirit and Liberty'" in *Surnaturel: A Controversy*: 59-83. Although I think Mougel makes the general point that Maritain's position on the question is more nuanced than is typically affirmed, I do not think he does a good job of explaining his position when it comes to the details. Balthasar and Maritain hold the same position (in common with Henri de Lubac), although Balthasar does not acknowledge Maritain here, against the idea that developed in the commentator tradition that the angels could have been created in a naturally sinless state: see *TD* III, 480-482 [G 441-442]; Maritain, *The Sin of the Angel: An Essay on a Re-Interpretation of Some Thomistic Positions*, trans. William L. Rossner, S.J. (Westminster, MD: The Newman Press, 1959).

proposal and the 'traditional' views that he rejects? Whatever the reason may have been for Balthasar's deficient understanding of grace and predestination, there is no doubt the latter forms a significant part of the background to this unnecessary dichotomy: either the omni-benevolent God chooses to convert all men by the power of His grace and wisdom, or His desire for all to be saved is frustrated by mere creatures. He rejects out of hand the setting up of distinctions in God's will,[59] but it seems the reason for doing so is not so much an opposition to the making of distinctions with regard to how the divine being is to be understood as it is an opposition to the restrictive view of election inherited from Augustine. The latter view, shared in different ways by both Molinists and Bañezians, is precisely that God frustrates His own will to save all men, even if the two schools have different reasons for why God does such a thing, according to revelation. Neither of these schools is able to persuade Balthasar to think God has good reason to will in the end not to save all men, and from this discontent flows his forced exegetical maneuvers, claiming an aporia in Scripture on the matter and dividing the competing texts into pre- and post-Easter proclamations.[60]

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[59] See *Dare We Hope*, 23-24 [19-20], 208 [G 56].

[60] Nicholas Healy summarizes Balthasar's argument (in *Dare We Hope*) regarding the supposed two diverse strands of text on damnation and universal salvation in the following manner: "The first series speaks of individuals being condemned to eternal torment. Those who have rejected Christ are accountable for their actions and they will be cast into 'the outer darkness,' or 'the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels' (Mt 25:30f.; see also Mt 5:22,29; 8:12; 10:28; 2 Pet 2:4-10; 3:7; Rev 19:20f.). The second series of texts speaks of God's desire, and ability, to save all mankind: 'God our Savior . . . desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth' (1 Tim 2:4). Anticipating his suffering and death Jesus proclaims 'Now is the judgment of this world, . . . when I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to myself' (Jn 12: 31). 'God has consigned all men to disobedience that he may have mercy upon all' (Rom 11:32; see also 2 Pet 3:9; Titus 2:11; Rom 5:14-21; Eph 1:10; Col 1:20). A harmonious synthesis between these two series of texts is not possible. A universalist theology that knows with certainty that all will be saved invalidates the numerous passages in Scripture which speak of judgment and eternal damnation as the consequence of sin. Likewise a theology that knows in advance a double outcome of judgment cannot take seriously the universal salvific will of God as expressed in 1 Timothy 2:4 and elsewhere" ("On Hope, Heaven, and Hell," 84-85). This line of

If only Balthasar had taken cognizance of the late-twentieth century emerging Thomist consensus on how God's will relates to evil acts, which is based on a strand of Thomistic texts,[61] he may have been able to escape the apparent Molinist-Bañezian aporia that "undergirds" his claim to an aporia in the biblical texts, which is clearly recruited to support his theological speculations and not the foundation out of which he builds a theology. Although Maritain here (along with Marin-Sola, Most, Lonergan, et al) represents the moderate Thomist understanding of predestination that answers a fundamental concern of Balthasar with respect to the competing models embroiled in the *de auxiliis* controversy, one may accept Maritain's alternative proposal for how God may become "all in all" without accepting his pioneering reflections on the relationship between human freedom and divine grace. In fact, one could argue that Maritian's theory of predestination and grace was not fully developed until 1966, although he had begun to formulate its foundations in 1942, while what I will call his theory of "final limbo" was

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interpretation claims a sort of 'Kantian antinomy' in Scripture, which can only be resolved by "the mystery of hope" (85). Edward Oakes, though, surprisingly points to the weakness in Balthasar's scriptural exegesis, regarding his notion that "the parables of judgment in the earthly ministry of Jesus must be 'back-interpreted' in the subsequent light of the cross and resurrection" (*Pattern of Redemption*, 311), commenting that "[i]t seems odd to call the discourses of Jesus in John unaffected by the resurrection" (312n24). Regarding such a hermeneutic, he states: "I am not sure how convincing this argument will prove to be among exegetes, but it seems unnecessarily simplistic, and in particular ignores the influence of post-Easter paranesis (that is, catechetical training in the faith after conversion) on the formation of the parables of judgment as we have received them in the Gospels today" (312). He adds: "This is especially true of the Parables of the Sheep and the Goats [i.e., Matthew 25], and if Balthasar's exegetical ground is shaky there, it will prove unstable everywhere else as well" (312n25). He also implies (on 312) that Balthasar himself seemed reluctant to commit fully to this thesis (see *Dare We Hope*, 29-30). Concerning Balthasar's notion (in agreement with Rahner) that the first set of texts are only intended as minatory, Richard Schenk reveals the reason for such a hermeneutic, namely, an unapocaplytic interpretative philosophy of prophetic revelation, and Ralph Martin offers a strong critique of such a hermeneutical thesis; see Schenk, "Factical Damnation," 136ff., and Martin, *Will Many Be Saved?*, 140ff.

[61] There is also a competing strand of texts in Thomas' writings. He apparently felt compelled at points to side with Augustine's interpretation of Romans, despite his own understanding of finite freedom (see, for example, *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 3). See Maritain's *St. Thomas and the Problem of Evil*; *Court traite de l'existence et de l'existant*, c. 4; *Dieu et la permission du mal*.

apparently first formulated in 1939, although the "conjectural essay" in which it appears was revised in 1961 and the text was still being augmented as late as 1972.[62]

Since Maritain was not a theologian by profession, although his philosophical keenness and familiarity with Thomas' writings gave him an upper-hand on many a theologian, he does not entertain exegesis of the texts of Scripture even in the capacity of adding force to his argument, but he presupposes and builds upon a particular understanding of the relationship between grace and nature that today would be called "neo-Thomist." Although I would argue one need not agree with the particularities of such a view of nature and grace to entertain the theory he proposes as a possibility, it is certainly necessary to hold with Maritain and Thomas the *possibility* of a limbo – it is not necessary to accept the belief that limbo is *in fact* the destination of children who die before baptism.

Fundamentally, his hypothesis is that after the final judgment each of the damned may at some point be "pardoned" by God in such a way as to receive a flow of natural love for God, which would bring about a certain "natural felicity" that in effect counteracts the subjective severity of both the pain of loss and the pain of sense; the pain of sense is transformed, but since the pain of loss remains intact, even though it is in a way 'covered over' by a newfound gratitude for the enjoyment granted of growing in knowledge of God as author of nature. Therefore, the damned remain in hell, strictly speaking, but are transferred from a lower to a higher region, as it were. Maritain is not proposing a form of *apokatastasis*, if by the latter term one intends the

[62] Jacque Maritain, "Beginning with a Reverie" in *Untrammeled Approaches*, 3-26. The editor's footnote to the subtitle "Eschatological Ideas" reads: "Privately circulated. Thirty mimeographed copies were made in April 1939, and again in October 1961" (3n1). The only addition in 1972 explicitly noted is a long footnote in the middle of the essay that is primarily concerned with the limbo of unbaptized children after the resurrection (see 14-15n15).

heresy according to which the damned are eventually saved. He holds only a restoration of nature, not of grace, for the damned:

> They missed the end for which Love destined them. To have been miraculously restored, and put in possession of the simple end of their nature, gives them a truer feeling, though without torment or revolt, of what they have lost. And for similar reasons it can be said that, spiritually, the pain of sense also continues for them (in an analogical sense, but all the more real because, even though they suffered by means of fire, it was above all spiritually that their soul [sic] suffered). The evil which they remember having done will no longer gnaw at them through fire but will continue to afflict them by the thought that they have not made up for that evil and that they have cut themselves off by their own accord from the order of the goods of grace, from the perfect accomplishment of the designs of the Father; never will they live by the life of the Lamb, never will they know 'the delicious taste of the Holy Spirit,' never will they be filled with charity – and all this through their own fault. Nevertheless to this very sorrow which crowns, without diminishing it, their happiness at seeing the order of nature fully accomplished in them, they give their full consent; they know it is just, it dignifies them, and they thank God for it.[63]

Following Augustine and Thomas, Maritain accepts some sort of sensible fire constitutive of the pain of sense for the damned;[64] the consummation of all things would involve the remittance of this pain, which would produce a certain gratitude (an effect of the natural love to which they are miraculously 'converted'), but they will feel remorse for the evil deeds that contributed to their definitive rejection of His grace, even if it will be compensated by the natural joys granted them in God's mercy.

Maritain explains how this manifestation of divine justice and mercy takes effect after the final judgment:

> And so, through the prayers of the saints (and not only of the saints, but of their head, Jesus in His glory, and of His Mother) a damned soul is drawn from the first, but not from Hell. It is restored to the norm of nature, not of grace or of glory. Those who remain in the fire only rage and blaspheme and despair all the more at the departure of their companion. For they do not believe in divine mercy, which for them is nothing but hypocrisy. And they do not want to be made good by a miracle, such an idea exasperates them. And now, let this miracle be renewed at intervals of time as great as one would

[63] "Beginning with a Reverie," 23.
[64] See "Beginning with a Reverie," 10n11. See Thomas, *ST*, Suppl., q. 70, a. 3 and q. 97, a. 5.

> wish; since eternity exhausts all time, it will inevitably come about that at a certain moment the lower regions of Hades will be completely emptied. If such is the case, Lucifer doubtless will be the last one changed. For a time he will be alone in the abyss and will think himself the only one condemned to endless torments, and his pride will know no bounds. But of him also there will be prayers, there will be cries. And in the end he too will be restored to good, in the order of pure nature, brought back in spite of himself to the natural love of God, borne miraculously into that Limbo whose night glitters with stars. There he will once more assume his office of prince – still damned, in regard to glory; loved once again, in regard to nature. He remains fallen forever, forever humiliated, for he had been created in the state of grace and is now reduced solely to the goodness of his nature. He contemplates the infinite abyss which separates these two states. He bears for all eternity the scars of his wounds; for he remembers what he has lost, and what he now loves. Humiliated for all time, he is humble now.[65]

He points out that this is brought about only indirectly by the blood of Christ – it is more properly said to be the effect of the prayers of the saints. But the miracle of restoration to the good of nature, that is, the natural knowledge and consequent enjoyment of God as author of one's being (whether rational animal or pure spirit), can only be directly caused by God in concession to the petitions of such a *communio sanctorum*:

> And why could their prayer not be granted? Why could not the answer to the excess of their love be the excess of a miracle – a miracle of goodness in justice itself? God can make a man out of a stone; He can change bread into the Body of Jesus Christ. It is no more difficult *by a miracle* to change the will of a man or an angel, to raise up and rectify in its inmost being a will that is dead and confirmed in evil. It is by virtue of the order of nature that the will of the damned is fixed in evil in an absolute and immutable manner. A miracle, and a miracle alone, can change this. I mean leaving them in Hades, and simply transferring them from the abyss to the summits of an eternal Hell. . . . it seems that the possibility of such a miracle is conceivable in accord with the revealed formulas and sacred writ concerning the state of the damned. Pierced to its very center, the will, confirmed till then in evil, *is turned about* miraculously, as toward the true end of all nature, toward God the author of nature, toward the God it loved and detested at one and the same time. Now it loves Him above all else, with that same natural love which, at the time of the resurrection of the bodies, wells up naturally in the souls of the children who died without baptism and which, in the case we are speaking of, the will now receives through a pure miracle.[66]

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[65] "Beginning with a Reverie," 22-23.
[66] "Beginning with a Reverie," 21.

The case he wants to make, therefore, seems to be the following: (1) it is a law of nature that the final decision of a spiritual creature hardens into a static reality of eternal consequence, (2) but God is not bound by such ontological regularity, and (3) therefore, it is possible that God might respond to the prayers of the elect for the conversion of all by suspending such a law at some point, allowing those who have been eternally deprived of grace by their final refusal of salvation an everlasting opportunity (that will in time be realized by every condemned being through the divine power naturally operative in the inevitable actualization of a created potency, given infinite time) to embrace the love of God that is natural to one's being (which was previously impossible by the immutability of their rejection according to the order of nature, which is indelibly linked to the order of grace). It is not clear why one's rejection of grace is not itself reversible by a miracle or what the implications would be for the nature-grace relationship if creatures eternally deprived of grace were capable of regaining a proper relationship to one's natural love for God (by a miraculous contravention of the ordinary rules of being).[67] Nevertheless, Maritain is merely attempting to understand what appears to be the only orthodox solution to the problem of the efficacy of the Church's intercessions (triumphant and militant)[68] and the divinely intended universal expansion of His glory in the new creation.[69] He says:

> How could our love, this love which He has given us, be content to see God hated endlessly, and endlessly blasphemed by beings who have issued from His hands, to see crime endlessly added crime? And among these damned there are some whom we have loved, there are some whom we still love, as much as St. Paul loved his race, for which he wished to be anathema. No, we shall not cease, we shall continue to pray and to cry out through the Blood of the Savior. . . . I ask simply: Is [this transfer from abyss to

[67] He does not clarify how natural love is affected by loss of grace.

[68] The question of whether the Church purgative can offer intercessory prayers would take us far afield, but an affirmative answer would seem alien to the Thomistic understanding of *satispassio* in recompense for one's own sins. See, for example, *ST*, II-II, q. 83, a. 11, ad 3.

[69] His glory would be made more manifest if He is more evidently present in all the realities of the new creation, but such 'expansion' does not necessitate elevation of all to the order of glory.

> Limbo] not *possible* that it take place – *if God wills it* (and who dare to impose limits on Him)? And are we not permitted to hope for this?[70]

Therefore, his answer to my first doubt seems to be that while God *could*, if He wanted, will that all the damned be restored to grace (or, better yet, that there be no 'final' rejection of grace), He actually wills to respect the power of created freedom to refuse full vision of His glory,[71] and yet God could still have a "surprise" in store for the mitigation of the pains of the damned. If the damned are granted a "natural felicity," God can truly be said to be "all in all" because "in this way all the degrees of being will find their fulfillment."[72] In other words, it seems a most fitting reflection of divine justice and divine mercy, above all, for the hierarchy of creation in the end to include a hell that is not full of unquenchable pains but writhe with natural joys to compensate for the severe enough unrevoked penalties of the pain of loss and the remorse for self-exclusion from glorious communion with God that accompany natural love for God as the author of one's being. Hence, Maritain upholds the Thomistic idea that the order of creation as a whole is the supreme good for which all of its parts are ordained, but negative reprobation is not included as integral to such a design, and Thomas' famous position that "[the damned] are not punished . . . as much as they deserve" is elucidated.[73]

Challenges to Maritain's Proposal

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[70] "Beginning with a Reverie," 20, 22.
[71] It is hard to imagine a different *rational* basis (rather than *revealed* basis) for the Church's rejection of *apokatastasis* than this one.
[72] "Beginning with a Reverie," 16.
[73] See "Beginning with a Reverie," 20.

The principal problem concerning Maritain's proposal, at least according to some, is its apparent conflict with magisterial teaching regarding the everlasting character of hellfire.[74] Some might say that Maritain's moves to circumvent this conflict are acrobatic. Part of the problem is whether the biblical notion of an unquenchable fire could permit for an end to the pain of sense. Even though much of the tradition advocates a literal interpretation of the "fire" of hell, there is also room for metaphorical interpretation. Is not the pain of everlasting loss a sufficiently just "fire" inflicted upon those who refuse the order of glory? Surely there is a certain justice to suffering in the body for evils performed in the body, but is there not a more reasonable proposal for the fulfillment of justice than the quasi-mythological view that spirits are imprisoned in some mysterious manner by a corporeal fire? And why should sins committed in the body be punished forever in the body? These are questions that would take us outside the parameters of the present study, but raising the questions themselves in a critical manner should give rise to a more profound reflection upon the "chief punishment of hell," namely, the *poena damni*.[75] Perhaps the most incisive reference in scripture to the hellfire speaks of a "worm that does not die" (Mk 9:48), which is practically universally understood to be the 'worm of conscience.' Maritain maintains that the damned, even as they grow in natural happiness after having been delivered by divine mercy from the pain of sense that is consequent to the

[74] See, for example, the following Denzinger numbers (Ignatius Edition, 2012): 72, 76, 212, 338, 342, 442-43,485-86, 574-75, 630, 780, 801, 839, 2626, 4168 [*LG* 48], 4657; see also *CCC* ##1034-1035. Finally, Paul VI's "Credo of the People of God" in 1968 states: "He ascended to heaven, and He will come again, this time in glory, to judge the living and the dead: each according to his merits—those who have responded to the love and piety of God going to eternal life, those who have refused them to the end going to the fire that is not extinguished" (available at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/paul_vi/motu_proprio/documents/hf_p-vi_motu-proprio_19680630_credo_en.html [accessed on 10/25/2014]).
[75] See *CCC* #1035.

resurrection, will forever suffer regret for having excluded themselves eternally from the order of glory.

Avery Dulles criticizes Maritain's proposal as incongruent with the biblical texts about condemnation at the final judgment,[76] presumably on the grounds that the scene involves reference to an unquenchable fire, but a close reading of the essay reveals that this objection is escaped as well. Not only is a 'spiritualized' pain of sense, the remorse of those admitted to 'final limbo,' posited as everlasting, but "[a]fter the resurrection of the body, the damned will suffer in their bodies as well"[77] and the corporeal fire from which they are eventually released

[76] See "The Population of Hell" in *First Things* (May 2003). He also charges that there is no basis in tradition for his theory. On the contrary, Balthasar himself cites Maximus the Confessor propounding practically the same idea, interpreting Gregory the Great: "The third meaning [of *apokatastasis*] is used by Gregory especially in reference to the qualities of the soul that had been corrupted by sin and then are restored to their original state. Just as all nature will regain, at the expected time, its completeness in the flesh [at the resurrection], so also will the powers of the soul, by necessity, shed all imprints of evil clinging to them; and this after aeons have elapsed, after a long time of being driven about without rest [*stasis*]. And so in the end they reach God, who is without limitations [*peras*]. *Thus they are restored to their original state [apokatastenai] through their knowledge [of God], but do not participate in [his] gifts*" (*Questiones et dubia* 13, *PG* 90, 796AC [emphasis added], cited in *Dare We Hope*, 245-246n21 [G 93n36]). Balthasar, indeed, paraphrases: "Maximus has Gregory say, they will only come to enjoy the knowledge of God, not his gracious gifts, that is, eternal happiness" (245 [G 93]). In accord with this, I would interpret the line, "in the end they reach God," to be referring to God as the author of nature (i.e., the Creator God, not His trinitarian life). It was perhaps not until Maritain, though, that this proposal was clearly distinguished from the Origenist *apokatastasis*, as the final state of the damned is not salvation, but a lesser form of being without supernatural grace (alone proportionate to the order of glory). Nevertheless, for criticism of Balthasar's reading of Maximus in general, see Brian Daley, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 201f. Not only does Maximus the Confessor anticipate Maritain's theory, John Chrysostom offers some support for it as well when, according to Daley, he "urges his listeners to continue the traditional practice of praying for the dead . . . Even if the dead person whom we mourn is damned, he observes, 'it is possible—it is, if we wish it—that his punishment will be lightened. If we make constant prayer for him, if we give alms, then even if he is unworthy, God will listen to us'" (*Hope of the Early Church*, 108).

[77] "Beginning with a Reverie," 19.

itself remains forever.[78] Many theologians today would argue that the pain of sense need not be some mystical fire that attaches to souls and then to spiritual bodies but is simply "the worm that never dies," that is, the remorse of conscience. Moreover, the many considerations in Maritain's essay regarding limbo for unbaptized children need not be accepted to maintain the coherence of his proposal. Citing several times Thomas' position that the children in limbo are not aware of the beatific vision of which they are deprived, even though their happiness is incomplete, Maritain does want to draw a qualitative distinction between the limbo of children and the limbo intended for those who finally refuse the life of *caritas*, according to the diversity of experience and knowledge present in each.[79] What seems to be common to both experiences of limbo, although he does not explicitly bring out this point, is that "the natural love which accompanies

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[78] "Beginning with a Reverie," 22.

[79] "[N]o sadness, no sorrow will be joined to [the natural felicity of the children who died without baptism]; however, even in this final state, their nature…will be subject to a certain melancholy, the shadow caused by the privation (even if they are unconscious of it, as St. Thomas would like) of all they would have a right by the general call of the human species to the life of grace, if Adam had not sinned. Ontologically speaking, and in an analogical sense, it is a kind of punishment, a kind of condemnation, but unlike that of the pardoned because the little children experience no pain or sorrow" ("Beginning with a Reverie," 23-24). "[T]hey will never know absolute happiness. This is why, while being filled to overflowing with all the goods to which nature is entitle when it is righteous, while enjoying felicity according to nature, they are 'damned,' 'lost' (and here the analogical polyvalence of these words becomes clear to us), they inhabit the hemisphere of night, Hades – the higher regions of Hell. . . . The punishment of damnation, of which they will suffer only a kind of melancholy, will in no way alter their purely natural happiness. And even before the resurrection, the souls of these children do not suffer at all from this melancholy, whether they are asleep in Limbo as I imagine they are; or whether, on the contrary, one accepts that there they already exercise acts of knowledge; in either case they experience no affliction whatsoever…" (15-16). "Finally I know that it is our nature to aspire toward what is naturally impossible (cf. below the chapter 'Along Unbeaten Pathways,') and that this will be the case as well for the inhabitants of Limbo after the resurrection of the body. This is why I said a few lines later in those pages, that a *kind of melancholy* will be mixed with their happiness, without however changing it: for the joys included in this happiness will be so numerous, so noble, and so beautiful that in regard to the acuity of their consciousness they *will completely eclipse* this melancholy" (14n15 [emphasis original]).

[natural knowledge of God] will also increase without end, in its own order."[80] Given that "in all their activity as damned souls, they still show those ontological gifts and energies of which as creatures they could not be deprived unless they ceased to exist," there is already a basic structure in which the condemned may receive natural knowledge and love of God.[81] The miracle would seem to consist, above all, in the absence of a dissension from such a gift, that is, in the cessation of the perpetual conflict between the natural love for God as author of one's being that must persist in the damned and the hatred for Him as author of grace, a consequence of refusing to accept His offer of salvation. Maritain's hope seems to think that such a hatred for His mercy will be obliterated by an injection of natural love sufficient to bring about a gratitude for God as author of nature and consequently for an ever-increasing speculative knowledge of His being, which for immortal creatures produces pleasures that counteract and compensate for the pain of loss and the memory of one's self-exclusion from the order of grace.

Conclusion

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[80] "Beginning with a Reverie," 15.

[81] J. Michael Stebbins reports that Bernard Lonergan also acknowledges the relative autonomy of the realm of natural knowledge and love: "[The theorem of the supernatural] first issued from a specific line of investigation into the possibility that human beings have a natural capacity to love God above all things . . . The repudiation of a natural love of God, then, was another instance of the general disinclination to recognize the existence of true virtue or of truly good acts in any but the justified. . . . Since the mode of that love corresponds to the mode of the knowledge from which it springs, and since we possess two sources of knowledge about God - faith and reason - there must be a corresponding duality in our love of God. By faith we acquire knowledge of God that lies beyond the grasp of unaided reason (the fact that God is a Trinity of persons, for instance, or that the Word became flesh), and by this means our intellect is raised above itself. The knowledge of faith gives rise to charity, which elevates us *per gratiam et per gloriam* (through grace and glory). By reason, on the other hand, we acquire knowledge of God through creatures and accordingly are moved to a natural love of God above all things. This latter knowledge and its consequent love do not elevate us above ourselves because they are the result of natural gifts bestowed on us by the Creator. Nonetheless, the natural love of God constitutes a true love of God *super omnia* that is radically distinct from self-regarding appetite" (*The Divine Initiative*, 78-79).

Balthasar is met with the apparent aporia of conflicting biblical texts, where some seem to imply universal salvation and others seem to indicate the eternal condemnation of a number of men. His approach is to undermine the latter strand of texts and so elevate the former such that it appears inevitable for all men to accept God's love before particular judgment.[82] His understanding of the relationship between finite and infinite freedom and His rejection of any restrictive view of election impel him to develop a theory of Christ's descent into hell, wherein the Trinity itself is the exemplar equally of suffering as of joy and the death of Christ is conceived as an event that permeates all time. The most profound hell possible is assumed on the Cross in such a way that every refusal of divine grace is "undergirded" by the transformative power that empties itself (*kenosis*) to the point of becoming sin. The moment of death for man is therefore understood in existential fashion, potentially including a personal encounter with the crucified God, where infinite freedom is sure to "overtake" the inadequacies of a finite freedom whose inner core is "laid up" in eternity. The saints are therefore inspired both to participate in Christ's own condemnation and to offer their entire being for the conversion of all sinners. Such a gesture of *caritas* indicates a hope that must be intrinsic to every Christian life, namely, that no man perish, since God Himself "desires that all men be saved." The setting up of distinctions in God's will is derided as proper only to a system that displays too much certainty in the outcome of final judgment. While the relationship between predestination and divine foreknowledge apparently comprises too great a mystery to scrutinize, the trinitarian processions are judged to be *ur-kenotic.*

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[82] Since he does not admit the possibility of post-mortem conversion but many men appear not to convert before their physical death, it would seem necessary to hold that death is not metaphysically definitive until the moment of judgment. But it is not opportune to speculate here at further length regarding such a notion.

Jacques Maritain, on the other hand, does not succumb to the false choice set up by Balthasar between a divine will that is efficacious and therefore saves all men or a drama in which salvation history is a tragedy with no return, a descent without ascent, a play in which finite freedom conquers the infinite. Maritain offers a theory that reconciles the 'universalist' and 'reprobative' strands of biblical revelation. He accepts the power granted man and respected by God of nihilating the naturally fruitful efficacy of grace. He proposes that divine mercy might be made fully manifest by another means than the compulsory (or irresistible) conversion of all sinners in death. Perhaps, all the condemned, men and angels, are 'pardoned' at some point after the final judgment and thereby restored to a state in which created nature is in harmony with its natural love for God. Although he presupposes the existence of a *limbus puerorum*, which he nevertheless distinguishes from that other ('natural') state for which all the damned are destined (which I have called "final limbo"), the essence of Maritain's conjecture is that God's will to be "all in all" is fulfilled by an eternal hell that eventually functions in a way similar to the classical notion of limbo, but wherein divine justice and mercy are most manifest by an influx of natural love granted those who have eternally excluded themselves from the order of grace (and consequently that of glory), resulting in an ever-increasing natural knowledge and love of God. But the efficacious "pardon" that brings about such a state, issued in response to the unceasing pleas of the saints, does not produce in them greater internal strife because, by a miracle of God's mercy in the order of nature, it is freely accepted. The eternal pain of loss and even the pain of remembering their own unbreakable will to exclude themselves from the order of grace and glory is 'covered over,' as it were, by the natural joys of increasing in natural knowledge and love of God as Creator, accompanied by the gratitude consequent upon being mercifully liberated from the corporeal fire that previously constituted their pain of sense; in this

sense, the damned are said to be transported, as it were, each in his own time, from the depths of the "second death" to the upper regions of hell.[83]

Hence, Maritain agrees with Balthasar on the first theological question, the universal salvific will of God. He has a nuanced Thomistic understanding of the second, which now claims an increasing number of adherents. His position on the third issue of the relationship between nature and grace is very different from Balthasar's Lubacian approach. While I do not think acceptance of Maritain's theory requires agreement with him on the actual existence of a limbo for unbaptized infants (i.e., that there are human beings destined for a merely natural end),[84] one must at least accept a clear distinction between the orders of nature and grace in order to entertain his conjecture of a restoration of damned natures consisting in a felicity inferior to the beatific. I think anyone who would concede the abstract possibility of a limbo could grant his proposal a hearing; one who says God could not grant men natural joys to compensate for the

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[83] Interestingly enough, Maritain, without explicitly linking this act of mercy to the descent of Christ into hell, speculates that the soul of Christ may have suffered the malediction of the Father (in the lower regions of hell) in the form of an abandonment incurred on the Cross for the salvation of all men. Commenting on Thomas' opinion that the soul of Christ went only to limbo since "the soul of Jesus could not enter into the world where there is no redemption: a reservation which seems stamped with a certain sadness (what surprise is He perhaps preparing?)," (12) he says: "But can we not ask if . . . taking on Himself *all the sins of the world* . . . during His descent into Hell (which lasted one day and two nights), His holy soul, after having visited Limbo, did not next descend into the Hell of the damned, to make them look upon the Savior they wanted nothing to do with, and for a moment to feel on His soul the weight of the malediction which the Father so infinitely dear to Him reserved for those who, making perverse use of the inviolable gift of human freedom, refused to the very end to be healed of the sins of the world and chose evil above everything else. For God and His Christ want all men to be saved, and this divine will was checkmated by these men for all time. And can we not think that such a rejection was one of the reasons why Jesus said on the cross, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?'" (11n13 [emphasis original])

[84] Accordingly, all are *called* to the supernatural end of knowing and loving God as author of grace, but until the grace of baptism (whether of water, desire, or blood) is effected in the soul, the person is not constitutionally oriented towards such a supernatural end (i.e., 'ordered'). Hence, only actions performed by those actually in the order of grace can have supernatural value, and only the natural virtues are accessible to those who have not been ordered to the supernatural end intended for all men.

pain of loss, that there can be no limbic realm of hell, in other words, might turn to other ways of conceiving how God has mercy on the damned by punishing them less than they deserve. Finally, appreciation for Maritain's position does not rest on the assertions that Balthasar hoped explicitly for universal conversion or had one or another understanding of timelessness with respect to Christ's death-descent and our own deaths, even if there is much here still to be explored.

Throughout this dissertation my primary concern has been to point out the prior commitments Balthasar must have had in order to arrive at his own eschatological conclusions, however implicit. In this chapter, I have particularly zeroed in on his form of hope (conceived as a virtue rather than a wish) for the salvation of all men by whatever means necessary, explicating certain aspects inherent to such a hope and comparing this way of approaching the aporia that plagued him with how Maritain attempts to answer such unresolved questions in the tradition. In order to think Maritain's theory of "final limbo" plausible, it is not absolutely necessary to accept his solution to the problem of the relation of the divine will to moral evil. Instead of arguing, as would be most amenable to this dissertation, that Maritain's theory of nihilation to leads his own eschatological proposal, one might as well use the plausibility of the latter (over against Balthasar's or anyone's resolution to the scriptural aporia) as an argument in favor of either his position on the grace-freedom relationship or even the neo-Thomist position on the nature-grace relationship.[85] Is not a salvation that rewards free creatures capable of nihilating all divine offers of grace, even though God is capable of granting irresistible grace, a more perfect manifestation

[85] For example, if one takes the Lubacian position on the grace-nature relationship and looks at the available eschatological options, he is confronted with the tumultuous decision between a hell that is exceedingly cruel for its inhabitants and a hell that is in fact empty. Maritain's proposal may be seen as a more moderate possibility, but at the same time it suggests a more modest position on the natural desire to see God than is promoted by staunch defenders of Lubac's articulation.

of the glory of God's free love than a creation in which finite freedom inevitably yields to the operation of infinite freedom within it? Is it not better to have a creation in which some finite freedoms are infallibly directed to beatitude (e.g., Jesus and Mary) and others have a respected capacity for nihilating grace, yielding an order of glory that inevitably does not include every free creature?[86] One who accepts as revelation the existence of condemned spirits must grant that at least some angels possessed the real potential for nihilation and, indeed, actualized it, if God's universal salvific will is to be taken seriously (i.e., by rejecting the idea of an infallibly permitted reprobation). Likewise, one who believes in the existence of angels must take seriously Augustine's objection in the *City of God* to the notion that all men might be saved.[87]

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[86] Furthermore, one could ask if it is not better also for all whom God created with immortal being to persist in being and glorify God in a purely natural way than to end in self-annihilation, whether progressively or immediately upon judgment? Interlocutors may go back and forth on whether it is more fitting for spiritual creatures to continue existing even if tormented forever or for them to have received from God a self-annihilative power. One might object that such questions evoke Leibnizian reasoning; but, in fact, questions of *conveniens* escape Thomistic critiques of Leibniz' "best of all possible worlds" since the latter culminates in a metaphysical "monadology" that constrains divine freedom rather than in a morally most fitting freely created world that is graced and glorified.

[87] *De Civitate Dei Contra Paganos Libri XX* (*PL* 41), 17-18 and 23-24. Balthasar opposes the universal restoration (*apokatastasis*) of damned angels and men at the end of time, apparently seeking merely to protect himself against official charges of heresy by simply asserting without argument: "Let it be said at the outset that theological hope can by no means apply to this power [namely, Satan]" (*Dare We Hope*, 144 [G 117]). In the "Afterword to the Second Edition" of *Pattern of Redemption*, Oakes cites Barth's answer to Augustine's objection as possibly Balthasar's because "his remarks on Barth's angelology are generally quite positive," namely, that the rebellious angels "assume the status of *Nichtigkeit* . . . when they choose evil, because then they become pure wills whose essences are *defined* by this choice of evil. This decision then leaves them as vacuous and hollowed out as the evil which they have chosen, for evil in Christian metaphysics can have no ontological reality" (324). I would argue that Oakes' interpretation of Balthasar on this point is mistaken, although the passages are obscure (see *TD* III, 471, 483ff. [G 432-433, 443ff.]). Balthasar notes that the parable of the lost sheep was interpreted "through the patristic centuries" in a way that "contained the idea of *apokatastasis*," which he purportedly desires to avoid, and that "the theme is given a characteristic twist in Augustine . . . Mankind is created to fill the vacant space in the Civitas Dei: *Enchir.*, 62f. (PL 40, 261)," adding "the idea has become a firm part of the tradition" (*TD* III, 483n48 [G 443n55). Flannery points to *Dare*, 145, where Balthasar entertains the idea that fallen angels may have lost

Balthasar does what he can to avoid addressing the problem of the revealed condemnation of angels, while Maritain's proposal adequately responds to the difficulty by conceding human damnation but positing a restoration of nature (i.e., natural felicity) for all the damned.

Even if it is pegged as another form of the *misericordia* tradition Origenist in origin,[88] Maritain's proposal provides an answer to Augustine's fundamental objection to this tradition, to which many illustrious Catholic theologians may be said to belong, at least in some respects, including doctors of the Church such as Jerome and Angelic Doctor himself.[89] But, certainly, it is not necessary from the reasoning here presented to hold rigidly to the particular proposal offered by Maritain for how God's infinite and unending mercy may be reconciled with the eternal tortures incumbent upon those who persist in rejecting His grace and glory. There may be other reasonable proposals as well for how God may be "all in all" in the new creation such

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their personhood, and appeals also to *The City of God*, bk. 21, c. 23 in response (see "How to Think about Hell," 474). But this idea does not really do anything to solve the problem of how damnation can be reconciled with the universal salvific will.

[88] I encountered this label in Joseph Ratzinger, *Eschatology*, 216 [G 218], which he does not appear to utilize derisively. Balthasar, likewise, resists the notion of pity for the demons on the basis of Lubac's position on the nature-grace relationship: "Theologically speaking, all the literary attempts to portray the figure of the devil egngaged in communication – often making the devil into an object of pity (Milton, Klopstock, and so on) – are misconceived. More accurate is the imagery used by Bernanos in describing the damned: 'Truly if one of us, if a living man, the vilest, most contemptible of the living, were cast into those burning depths, I should still be ready to share his suffering. . . . The sorrow, the unutterable loss of thos charred stones which once were men is that they have nothing more to be shared'" (*TD* III, 497-498 [G 456-457]). I fail to see how a willingness to suffer with damned men, if there ever be any, squares with the rejection of all pity for fallen angles, even if the lost becomes "the un-person, the dissolution and collapse of personal being" (Ratzinger, "Abschied vom Teufel?", cited in *TD* III, 497 [G 456]). Richard Schenk does not do justice to Maritain's proposal when he describes it as a return to *apokatastasis*, amidst exoneration of Edith Stein from the position Balthasar takes up in *Dare*: "If, on the one hand, greater caution should be employed in listing E. Stein under the witnesses to a new obligation of apocatastastic hope, then, on the other, the name of Jacques Maritain could well be added to the list of admirable Christians who have in fact entertained the possibility of *apocatastasis*; *cf.* his 'Idées Eschatologiques,' in: Jacques and Raissa Maritain, *Oeuvres complètes* XIII (Fribourg/Paris 1993) 445-478, especially 469 *sq.*" (Schenk, "Factical Damnation," 150-151n35).

[89] See Thomas, *ST*, Suppl., q. 99, a. 2, ad 1.

that His glory is most perfectly manifest both in its mercy and its justice.[90] Perhaps, with such speculations we are venturing onto terrain that lies beyond the capacity of the human mind in this life, but as with topics as lofty as the Trinity, certainly worthy of speculative attempts to render intelligible for the men to whom God so deigned to reveal Himself, an apophatic approach need not exclude all attempts to conceptualize the apparently irreconciliable realities of divine love and irrevocable moral evil, so unintelligible to many and so disturbing even to great theologians like Hans Urs von Balthasar.

[90] Flannery points to Balthasar's reflections on time in hell, building on a couple comments of Thomas, where he refers to eternal death as "complete withdrawal to the point of shriveling into a disconsolate immovable now" (*Dare*, 133, cf. Flannery, "How to Think about Hell," 475). He later seems to suggest that the idea may have originated in a note that John Henry Cardinal Newman at some point appended to his *Grammar of Assent*: "[Regarding 'Note III' of *Grammar of Assent*, 1930 edition, pp. 501-503], [i]t is, to my mind, a legitimate use of the notion that the eternity of hell might shrink to a 'disconsolate immovable now'. But again, the notion that the hypothetically condemned might be taken out of hell could play no part in such a theory" (481n25). His latter qualification would not exclude Maritain's theory, as has already been explained, even if some assert otherwise (see the above note on Schenk). But in this terse description intended by Newman as "a way of mitigating the objections to the notions of eternal damnation" ("How to Think about Hell," 481n25), one cannot help but be reminded of the quaint saying, "when hell freezes over," which is often intended to convey the message "never," but may in fact point to a deep anthropological hope. If hell were literally to "freeze over" (in as literal a sense as is possible for a non-spatial state of being), the damned would be stuck in a limbic state of sorts between the pain of loss and the joys of any self-aware knowledge or love of the author of their enduring being. Perhaps more speculation in this area, particularly in comparison with the other eschatological options, is warranted.

Epilogue: Final Assessments

Towards an Overall Assessment of Balthasar's Controversial Project

The project of this dissertation has not been either to defend unequivocally or revamp totally Balthasar's endeavor, but rather, appreciating very much the many insights that flow from his aesthetic-theodramatic approach to the great theological questions of our time, I wish merely to hone in on one deficient element that, nevertheless, pervades his eschatology and that, if corrected, would yield slightly different, but no less significant, conclusions. Whether it be thanks to Barth, German idealism, Russian kenoticism, or late-Augustinianism, the exaggerated anti-Pelagian proclivities of Balthasar cannot reckon adequately with the reality of moral evil – literacy in the twentieth-century developments concerning grace and freedom is needed to discern an intelligible reconciliation between the realities of divine love and moral evil. Balthasar's emphasis on the universal salvific will of God is truly necessary at a time when divine mercy is in such demand. But, no less is there a need for a robust theological vision of man as an image of God with his own respective power and responsibility. The argument of this dissertation has been that even though the particular means through which Balthasar seeks to dissolve the problem of hell is his eminently trinitarian understanding of the descent of Christ into hell, his ambivalent attitude toward the prospect of damnation results ultimately from the

simplistic understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic that pervades his theodramatic project.[1] While Balthasar's late-Augustinian perspective on grace is actually incongruent with his moderate passibilism, the former appears to be the result of a negligent attitude toward the *de auxiliis* controversy and it demands the latter if the problem of hell is not to be resolved by a restrictive view toward election (as in Augustine).[2] Although the problem of hell can still arise for one who does not assume the "traditional" posture toward predestination (or the grace-freedom dynamic), someone with a more "libertarian" approach to the latter would not approach the problem of hell in quite the same way.[3] No matter how much Christ or even the triune God in Himself may be said to suffer, a finite freedom that is not ultimately subordinate to an infallible influence of infinite freedom is not anymore persuaded by divine love than it would have been without said suffering. Therefore, the problem of hell, as Balthasar has formulated it,

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[1] Ben Quash, rather, argues that the problem stems from Balthasar's aesthetics, borrowing too much from Hegel's literary theory and thus falling prey to the same tendency as the latter to err on the side of an epic narrative rather than maintaining the balance between epic and lyric that is drama (see "Balthasar's Theology of Drama," 295ff.). In other words, the 'necessary' takes such precedence in the over-arching scheme of things that plays itself out, albeit by means of the contingent, that the integrity of freedom in the drama is effectively downplayed (see especially 299-300, 303-308). In fact, Quash appears to draw a connection (without developing it) between this theme and the timelessness of Christ's hell in Balthasar: "The Hell of von Balthasar's theology of Holy Saturday is *outside* and *beyond* our own time: it is, in effect, 'fundamentally different and totally remote'. It is this Hell which is emphasized as the realm in which the trinitarian relations are acted out for us and for our salvation. Here again, I think, we see that recurrent epic tendency in von Balthasar's thought, which is prepared to sacrifice some of the existential, unfinalizable, dialogical seriousness of human self-determination" (310 [emphasis original]). Perhaps, then, the entire thrust of Balthasar's work, at least in the Trilogy, is determined by his proclivity toward universalism.

[2] See the tension between these issues especially in *TD* I, 48-50 [G 44-46].

[3] By the term 'libertarian' I mean to include the Molinist system, according to which free creaturely causality is conceived as co-ordinate with divine causality instead of subordinate to the universal causality of *ipsum esse subsistens*. However, Robert Matava advocates "libertarian freedom" without subscribing to Molinism; see *Divine Causality and Human Free Choice*, 247. Regarding the link between the grace-freedom dynamic and the problem of hell, recall that Balthasar makes the connection briefly as early as *A Theological Anthropology*, 207-208 [G 231-232]; see also *TD* IV, 318 [G 296].

inevitably leads to subjunctive universalism, unless one adopts a more sophisticated theology of the interactive relationship between grace and freedom in man.

While some may find Balthasar's doctrine of the descent and its trinitarian elements most troublesome (and inextricably tied to his tendency toward universalism), his perspective on the descent can not only be separated from the excesses of his trinitarian theology,[4] but it also need not lead to universalism, that is, if one maintains a position on the grace-freedom dynamic that does not succumb to the reactionary stance of an over-emphatic anti-Pelagianism.[5] Although I argued for a particular construal of Balthasar's doctrine of the descent, exegesis of Balthasar is secondary to the actual project of this dissertation.[6] As the goal of the first chapter was to appropriate Balthasar's theology of the descent in a peculiar way, the goal of the entire work has

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[4] Here I am not referring to the genuine insights regarding the infinite "distance" or "difference" that exists between divine hypostases precisely as irreducibly distinct subsistent relations, each nonetheless mysteriously identical to *esse per essentiam*. The idea that the trinitarian difference underlies and permeates the "ontological difference" (to use a Heideggerian term), or the "real distinction" (a scholastic term) between essence and *esse*, in creatures, or that the latter presupposes the former, is indeed profound but need not involve predication of death, suffering, and kenosis as constitutive of the immutable divine essence. For the development of such a notion, see Nicholas Healy, *Being as Communion*; Martin Bieler, "Meta-anthropology and Christology: On the Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar," trans. Thomas Caldwell, S.J., *Communio* 20 (1993); James J. Buckley, "Balthasar's Use of the Theology of Aquinas," *The Thomist* 59 (1995): 517-45; Angela Franz Franks, "Trinitarian *Analogia Entis* in Hans Urs von Balthasar," *The Thomist* 62 (1998): 533-59.

[5] One can, therefore, discern the deficient and accurate dimensions of Steffen Lösel's conclusions: "For Balthasar, Christ's descent into hell is God's ultimate reserve, the 'endgame' by which God determines the final outcome of the theo-drama. Although Balthasar affirms that nothing can be said definitively with regard to the ultimate outcome of this endgame for each and every human being, he expresses hope that the Son's perfect obedience will indeed have averted the tragedy of any individual's eternal death" ("Murder in the Cathedral," 434).

[6] In interpreting Balthasar's more controversial theses, Matthew Levering notes the potential significance of the fact "that volume 5 [of the *Theo-Drama*] was published five years after volume 3. In the later volume, Balthasar is taking the opportunity to clarify some of the positions adopted in the earlier volume, and he goes over much of the same terrain again in volume 2 of the *Theologik*" ("Balthasar on Christ's Consciousness," 577n36). He points to a passage in the latter work heavily influenced by Adrienne von Speyr's *Kreuz und Hölle*, vol. 1, concerning Christ's redemptive descent, namely, *Theologik* II, 324 (see 579n48).

been to revise, reclaim, and de-mythologize Balthasar's theodramatic eschatology. While interpretation obviously plays a role in such reconstruction, the primary aim is rather to present a coherent approach to particularly underdeveloped elements of Balthasarian theology, specifically, his theology of grace.

I have proposed a contemporary thomistic view of the questions involved in the *de auxiliis* controversy, particularly, the way in which God permits moral evil, that is amenable to Balthasar's general thomistic perspective, a view that, perhaps, he would have discovered if he had examined the twentieth century reevaluation of the issue. Leaving aside questions of theological method, the aesthetic perspective underpinning Balthasar's theodramatic approach ought not to be a tool for evading the detailed and complex philosophico-theological question of the dynamic relationship between infinite and finite freedom (i.e., the grace-freedom dynamic). In short, Balthasar does not succeed in fulfilling what he sets out to do near the beginning of his *Theodramatik*,[7] as the over-emphatic anti-Pelagianism of Barth's (revised Calvinist) theology

[7] "The confrontation between divine and human freedom has reached a unique intensity; the contest between the two has moved into the center – the really dramatic center stage – of the problem of existence. The old theology recognized that God's noninterference in free human decisions implied the possibility of damnation, while making allowances for God's absolute freedom to bring a sinner to repentance through 'irresistible' grace. Here also, however, the two things were juxtaposed in a certain naïveté. *Now* we have to look the question in the eye: What is the relationship between divine and human freedom? Should we suppose that God accepted some limit on his freedom when he created man, by whom his world could be brought either to perfection or to destruction? Is he powerless in the face of autonomous man's 'No'? And how is this divine powerlessness related to the Godforsakenness of his Son on the Cross? Things that flitted like shadows at the periphery of the old theology now move into the center" (*TD* I, 50 [G 46], emphasis original). At the conclusion of the same volume, he points already to the final two volumes and hints at the implicit resolution in *Das Endspiel* to the "problem" of human freedom: "finitude and death are part of the action and how the battle for the good is waged [see *Die Handlung*] at a more profound level [in Christian theo-drama] than anywhere else; for here man's freedom is established by God's freedom, and the doctrine of the *imago Dei* in man is taken to its ultimate conclusion. As a result the 'aesthetic' picture becomes dramatically three-dimensional. It follows quite naturally that if, obedient to his mission, a person goes out into a world that is not only ungodly but hostile to God, he will be led to the experience of

exerts too much influence on his attempt to reconcile divine and human freedom.[8] Barth's faith in *apokatastasis* is simply replaced by a theologically certain (but somehow unassured) hope for universal salvation, to be accomplished in the end by means of the mystical body in union with the hellish sufferings of Christ (as a 'trinitarian event').[9]

Godforsakenness. And this will take place . . . in the fifth act, where events converge on the final action [see *Das Endspiel*], which becomes a passion: in death. The question here will be this: How, in Christian terms, can the highest tragic action be reconciled with a tragedy that in fact has been overcome?" (*TD* I, 647-648 [G 606]).

[8] Karen Kilby and Thomas Joseph White both name Barth as the culprit influence on this question (see *Balthasar*, 25; "Von Balthasar and Journet," 650). Nicholas Healy also draws attention to Barth's influence on Balthasar's understanding of predestination, drawing on the dissertation of Margaret Harper McCarthy on "Recent Developments in the Theology of Predestination": "Barth's doctrine of universal election allowed for the dramatic overcoming of Calvinist double predestination and exercised a 'powerful and permanent' influence on Balthasar. If all of creation is predestined in Christ, then Jesus Christ is the concrete analogy of being and thus the only measure of the relations between nature and grace, philosophy and theology. . . . [C]areful exegesis of Paul's Epistles shows that the limiting of predestination to only part of humanity is unwarranted. According to St. Paul, all of humanity, indeed the whole cosmos, is predestined in Christ, the Firstborn of all creation" ("On Hope, Heaven, and Hell," 82, 88). Ralph Martin quotes the following from Balthasar's *Unser Auftrag*, translated in Oakes' *Pattern of Redemption*: "Barth's doctrine of election, this brilliant overthrow of Calvin, attracted me powerfully and lastingly; it converged with Origen's views and thus also with Adrienne's theology of Holy Saturday" (*Will Many be Saved*, 184). Balthasar retains with Barth a predestinarian approach to salvation, but together with him "overthrows" the restriction of election to a few, which Calvin extrapolated from the late Augustine.

[9] Some may argue that Ratzinger also thinks Balthasar is arguing for suspension of judgment regarding universal salvation rather than a theological hope for it from the following: "In several passages Balthasar expresses the opinion that the tightening vise of the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, which sets a final limit to the Church's ability to aid and bear the sinner, is gradually beginning to open up again today. Not that Balthasar, the great scholar and translator of Origen, intends to argue in favor of Origenism in the sense of a doctrine of *apocatastasis*. He is well aware that such a move jeopardizes every notion of election and he is absolutely resolute in his objection to 'a certain exhilaration at being redeemed' (I, 250). But he teaches us again more plainly to leave to God what is God's and not to take it upon ourselves to fix the decision ahead of time in one direction or another – in Origenian or extreme Augustinian fashion. And above all he reminds us that when God acts historically to reject or to elect, as Holy Scripture records in relating the stories of Isaac and Ishmael, of Jacob and Esau, of Moses and Pharaoh, and finally of the whole of Israel, what is at stake is not the eternal salvation and damnation of these figures, but, quite simply, action belonging to salvation history executed in this world" ("Christian Universalism: On Two Collections of Papers by Hans Urs von Balthasar" in *Joseph Ratzinger in 'Communio'*, vol. 1, *The Unity of the Church* [Grand Rapids, MI: William B.

In this Epilogue I will recapitulate the most significant points of the dissertation by attending to some of the most significant secondary literature on the issues in Balthasar that are investigated here, but I will engage the material within a slightly different framework in order to tie together more clearly the central themes of the chapters already presented. In the course of the dissertation, it seemed more fitting to follow up an appropriated appreciation for Balthasar's theology of the descent with an exposition of his deficient approach to the grace-freedom dynamic, only to return to the theme of divine suffering in the form of the question of divine impassibility from the perspective of God's relationship to the moral evil He wills to permit and from which He redeems man through the descent, which led naturally into a comparison of Balthasar with Ratzinger on these very topics, followed by a somewhat detailed tour through contemporary discussions in the theology of grace, engaging Maritain and Lonergan primarily, and finally an analysis of the distinct eschatological proposals that result from such divergences. Now that we have undertaken such a journey through theological themes that could appear to some at first glance to be relatively disparate, it is incumbent upon us to take what may be considered a smoother trail from one aspect of Balthasar's theodramatic trinitarian eschatology to another. First, his theology of the descent has served here as a point of departure that is to develop into a *theos-logos* proper, that is, in contemporary terms, a 'theology of God' (an etymological redundancy, of course), but with a particular focus on His relationship to the existence of evil in the salvific history of creation; second, involved in one's understanding of how God relates to moral evil is one's perspective on how God relates to man as a whole, that is,

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Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010]: 131-143, at 141-142 ["Christlicher Universalismus: Zum Aufsatzwerk Hans Urs v. Balthasars," *Hochland* 54 (1961): 68-76, at 74-75]). But at that time Ratzinger merely had the first two volumes of Balthasar's *Skizzen zur Theologie* (*Explorations in Theology*) to comment upon; hence, they preceded the fourth volume of the same series, *Theodramatik: Das Endspiel*, *Was dürfen wir hoffen?*, and Balthasar's ensuing defenses of the latter.

as a free creature called to accept His infinite love, and thus the "subjunctive" aspect of Balthasarian universalism will be confronted in the light of a more balanced theological anthropology; and only on the basis of these two elements of the problem can we, finally, approach competing eschatological models for how God may super-abundantly fulfill authentic universal hope with a theological acumen that is adequately informed.

Trinitarian Being vis-à-vis Divine Receptivity

Before going deeper into the question of suffering in the trinitarian God, it is opportune to see how a leading Balthasar scholar skillfully weaves together the themes of divine impassibility and the finite-infinite freedom dynamic in a way that anticipates the universalist implications:

> By establishing freely this kind of reciprocal relationship between himself and the world God has chosen to be affected by our finite freedom. He has in this sense given us rights over himself, and this divine vulnerability is seen most dramatically in God's relationship to the sinner. . . . suffering the salvation of the entire universe. God's sovereignty is not threatened by this drama, in which he chooses to make himself vulnerable, because God is triune. Once again, then, it is the trinitarian event which grounds the possibility of this kind of dialogical relationship between God and us. . . . In his concern to remove any impression that God out-maneuvers us in a way which destroys our human freedom, Balthasar reminds us that God's eternal omniscience and providence contain a differentiated awareness of human time with its past, present and future. Because of this it is more correct to speak of God creatively (through the Holy Spirit) responding to each human decision and situation as they arise, than to imagine that God's response is 'already' always decided. We may express this by using the image of drama which Balthasar so favours: not only does the drama conceived by God require us to be actors in it . . . but also – as was said of Christ's incarnation – it is . . . 'an event of total originality, as unique and untarnished as the eternally here-and-now birth of the Son from the Father'.[10]

[10] O'Hanlon, *The Immutability of God*, 62-64. He continues: "Rejecting an older approach, which with a certain amazingly cool indifference could assert that God's glory was served equally well by either our eternal happiness or our eternal punishment, Balthasar nonetheless wishes to respect the NT texts concerning the twofold issue of divine judgment, the increasing opposition to the love of God after the event of Christ, and also the freedom of man to make a definitive choice with his life without being forced or overwhelmed by God. In doing so he must reject any simple apocatastasis solution. Obviously, in presenting the matter thus the question about universal salvation is of key concern to us. But it is so because implicit in Balthasar's

O'Hanlon here sounds remarkably more Maritainian than is Balthasar himself in his treatment of divine impassibility. Rather than spinning a doctrine of intra-trinitarian *über*-suffering that is later manifest in God's becoming vulnerable to the infinite darkness of sin itself, he begins with the insight that God allows Himself to be affected through a dialogical relationship with human freedom. While he does argue for an ultimate ground in God Himself for this relationship to creation, he focuses on Balthasar's occasional insistence against Barth that man is not a cog in a machine of salvation and speculates that divine timelessness is such that He is not in a position so much to *pre*-determine the free decisions of His creatures as to direct them *hic et nunc* by virtue of His own omnipresence within the drama He orchestrates. Finally, the drama of salvation is purportedly an event equally original, in some sense, to the generation of the Son, which is an image that ties together God's infinite intra-trinitarian freedom and the infinite subtlety of His freedom pervading all things creatively. As beautiful as such expressions may be at first sight, it is necessary to parse out with precision what exactly is being said and determine which claims can be successfully defended.

Concerning the problem of how God relates to moral evil, it was argued in chapter three that while Maritain represents a creative thomistic position on divine impassibility vis-à-vis divine receptivity to evil (as an invention of His free creatures), Balthasar capitulates too much to contemporary death of God theology, which itself is nevertheless sublated by the trinitarian theology that he extracts from Adrienne von Speyr's mystical visions.[11] Nevertheless, O'Hanlon offers a compelling defense of Balthasar's understanding of the divine being as "trinitarian

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rejection of the older approach is an acknowledgement that in some way the world does affect God" (*The Immutability of God*, 65).

[11] The link between these two (i.e., Moltmann and Speyr) seems to be Russian kenoticism, especially as seen in Bulgakov; see, e.g., *TD* IV, 314 [G 292]. But again, this historical claim is not a central point of the present work of systematic theology.

event," arguing that God's eternal being is both immutable and "super-mutable."[12] Central to this notion that there is an event-quality to the divine being is the idea that in God is the perfection of both being and becoming, as if the perfection of becoming is not simply *ipsum esse*. It is argued that *ipsum esse* is not as 'static' as it is commonly assumed to be, but rather contains within it both the staticity of being and the pure dynamism of becoming (hence the event-quality of the trinitarin life).[13] O'Hanlon wants to clarify that this is not a capitulation to process theology:

> Within this context [of trinitarian kenosis] there is no simple identification, as in Process Theology, between the world process (including the cross) and the eternal, timeless 'process' of the divine hypostases. The economic does not constitute the immanent Trinity. Rather, we must tentatively approach the mystery of the inner-trinitarian event by means of a negative theology which rules out any inner-wordly experience and suffering in God, and yet which establishes that the conditions for the possibility of such realities outside God are in fact to be found within God. But these realities of pain outside God have Christological and trinitarian implications, so that one is then forced to conclude that the trinitarian event must also allow God to participate in suffering . . .[14]

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[12] For this notion in Balthasar, see, e.g., the interesting footnote in *TD* III, 159n18 [G 145n18]; see also *TL* II, 352 [G 321].

[13] Guy Mansini argues that the Balthasarian "event" must exist in itself (as substance), if it is not to be process or becoming, and adds: "If one wants to think of such an 'in itself' as a pure event, as a pure liveliness, then what is wanted, it would seem, is a sort of pure act--a line of thought already well developed in the history of Western theology and metaphysics" ("Balthasar and the Theodramatic Enrichment," 518). To the objection that such an argument unduly forces Balthasar's thought into Aristotelian categories, he responds: "This is not a matter of a Thomistic and Aristotelian account of change versus some other possibility of thought. There is no other analysis of change besides that of Aristotle. There are denials of change, from Parmenides to (in his own way) Hume. There are assertions that some kinds of change are really other kinds of change, as with the reduction of qualitative to quantitative change in materialism. There are assertions of novelty with no ground or cause, with Nietzsche and Bergson. There are reversals of the priority of act to potency, with Hegel. But there is no *analysis* of change, a location of the principles of change, except that of Aristotle. It is hard to see how the invocation of a change in God unlike that which we find in our earthly experience, therefore, can be anything more than words. Change requires passive potency; it requires composition in the subject of change. To speak of change that is not like this, that does not involve a passage from potency to act, is not to speak of anything at all" (518).

[14] O'Hanlon, *The Immutability of God*, 38. Balthasar's ultimate answer to the question of divine impassibility is the following: "[I]f we ask whether there is suffering in God, the answer is this: there is something in God that can develop into suffering. This suffering occurs when the

While the God of the philosophers may be immutable being, the God of Christian revelation, it is thought, must be 'something more,' namely, infinitely dynamic – this seems to cohere better with the vision of God as trinitarian life, the very life of *amor ipsum*.[15] Certainly, there is even more to the God of revelation than is discoverable in the realm of pure philosophy, but it is another question whether that 'something more' is aptly expressed in the terminology of dynamism. Evidently, speaking of God in terms of event involves more than simply affirming dynamism of the life of divine love. O'Hanlon states:

> This emptying [of cross and incarnation] is real even if throughout it God still remains God. This means that an historical event affects God. This is so even though the temporal cross is present eternally in God so that it is real in God 'before', 'during' and 'after' its earthly occurrence and, in particular, even after the resurrection, the cross of Jesus is an abiding reality in heaven, the eternal God being capable of containing all these different modalities. There is a great mystery here, in the way a temporal event can be present to God eternally, and can affect God albeit in a non-temporal way.[16]

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recklessness with which the Father gives away himself (and *all* that is his) encounters a freedom that, instead of responding in kind to this magnanimity, changes it into a calculating, cautious self-preservation. This contrasts with the essentially divine recklessness of the Son, who allows himself to be squandered, and of the Spirit who accompanies him" (*TD* IV, 327-328 [G 305]). Hence, for Balthasar, there is in the tri-hypostatic essence of God a primordial analogue to the suffering that follows contingently upon creation and sin – it is the "condition of possibility" (to use a Kantian phrase he frequently utilizes) for divine affectivity to exist in God's relationship to His creatures: "Here the God-man drama reaches its acme: finite freedom casts all its guilt onto God, making him the sole accused, the scapegoat, while *God allows himself to be thoroughly affected by this, not only in the humanity of Christ but also in Christ's trinitarian mission*. The omnipotent powerlessness of God's love shines forth in the mystery of darkness and alienation between God and the sin-bearing Son…" (*TD* IV, 335 [G 312], emphasis added).

[15] After much ado about the intra-trinitarian freedom of the divine processions (against Thomas), Antoine Birot states: "These things cannot be understood unless the mystery of God is seen to be, from the beginning, a mystery of love, and thus in a metaphysical sense as *both being and event simultaneously*" ("The Divine Drama," at 413n10 [emphasis original]).

[16] O'Hanlon, *The Immutability of God*, 28.

Despite my paraphrasing of the argument from the perspective of the analogy of being, the argument seems to be fundamentally Christological – it is not an accident that Balthasar notoriously designates Christ as the incarnation of such analogy, the 'concrete *analogia entis*':[17]

> [T]here is the basis in God for what can become suffering. . . . It seems strange that the kind of influence which the earthly life of Jesus has on the *persons* of the Trinity should have no foundation at all in their own *nature*. . . . Christ's humanity is an appropriate expression of the divinity. . . . the obedience of Christ [is] the supreme manifestation of the divine being. . . . the whole being of the Son is there to express and represent the Father . . . [created realities] point to a mode of love that embraces a self-giving to the point of being freely affected by the other, and a divine enrichement that is neither necessary, nor temporal, nor caused by anything external to God.[18]

So, does it make sense to speak of this trinitarian life as an eternal event? One last comment from O'Hanlon is necessary to assess the meaning Balthasar evidently intends to convey:

> The relationship between God and Christ is one of *expression* and of *dialogue*. . . . By 'expression', a term developed in some detail by Balthasar in his treatment of Bonaventure, he does not mean that Christ is a mere reduplication of the Father. Rather – and this takes us on to the second aspect of the relationship – Christ is personally other than the Father, so that God is revealed as a trinitarian event in which there is mutual interaction and dialogue between the personal poles. In being so clear about the tri-personal nature of the mysteriously one, identical, absolute, divine being, Balthasar is affirming the reality of a real I/Thou exchange within God who is love.[19]

Granted, love is an interpersonal reality, but I fail to see exactly what dialogue has to do with event, process, becoming – ultimately, *change*. Either God is eternally self-changing because of His interpersonal nature (and then there is little in the way of saying He can be changed by creatures, particularly, since God became one) or there is no change, no process, no event-quality to the infinite love that constitutes His hypostatically interpersonal nature. The fact that God became man, that Christ reveals something (in fact, a great deal!) about God, and even that

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[17] Regarding Balthasar's Christocentric metaphysics, see Junius Johnson, *Christ and Analogy: The Christocentric Metaphysics of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2013).
[18] O'Hanlon, *The Immutability of God*, 44-45.
[19] O'Hanlon, *The Immutability of God*, 47.

therefore God may be said to be affected (at least, in some sense) by the sins of men – none of this seems to necessitate change and thus the language of 'event' when speaking of the trinitarian processions must be designated, at best, as metaphorical.

Kevin Duffy objects to "the metaphor defense" of Balthasar on divine impassibility, opposing as incoherent the argument of Gerard O'Hanlon (and Thomas Dalzell)[20] that Balthasar's predication of change, suffering, and surprise to God is justifiable on the basis of Balthasar's unique blend of metaphor and analogy. Striving to clarify the difference between metaphor and analogy, Duffy responds to the Balthasarian claim that "God is metaphorically super-mutable, but in a non-creaturely way" by engaging contemporary philosophical discussions of metaphor, siding ultimately with Thomas' restriction of analogical predication (in the case of God) to created realities that do not involve intrinsic imperfection.[21] In his view, Balthasar so blurs the line between metaphorical and literal (analogical) predication that his predications of suffering to God cannot be merely metaphorical and the value of analogical

[20] See Dalzell, "The Enrichment of God." In defense of Balthasar's thesis that the Trinity is in some ways enriched by its relationship to creation, Dalzell has recourse to the 'metaphor defense' that Duffy in turn rebuts: "When Balthasar talks about the trinitarian event in terms of an eternal 'I-thou' relationship, he is clearly speaking analogically. But when he starts to describe the dynamism of that 'I-thou' in terms of suffering, surprise, and increase, he is using properly metaphorical language. He argues that concepts alone fail to tell us much about the mystery of God's love and must be combined with metaphor and image. To his mind, this way of paradox yields more knowledge than conceptual thought alone, and is closer to the approach of the Scriptures. Yet, if this use of metaphor means suspending the objections from negative (apophatic) theology, Balthasar does recognise that metaphorical language can be stretched too far and needs a corrective. Hence if he thinks 'the metaphysical without the metaphorical is empty', he does accept that 'the metaphorical without the metaphysical is blind'" ("The Enrichment of God," 8).

[21] "Some terms can only be used metaphorically [of God], because creatureliness is part of their meaning. Change, suffering, and surprise, like courage, sorrow and contrition, imply creaturely imperfection" (Duffy, "Von Balthasar's Use of Metaphor," 375).

predication in theological discourse is undermined.[22] The result is confusion: "For 'I-thou' discourse between the divine persons is analogous; divine surprise at the content of their dialogue is metaphorical. A statement that God is immutable is analogous; to say that he is super-mutable is metaphorical."[23] O'Hanlon's argument seems to be that mutability, in Balthasar, can be both affirmed and denied of God in different respects such that the *via eminentiae* takes precedence, and yet Duffy illustrates how only metaphor can be both affirmed and denied and still remain coherent. In the end, it is apparently unimportant to Balthasar to clarify when a predication is metaphorical and when it is properly analogical; thus, Duffy accuses him of a "qualified pan-metaphoricism," a perspective that Balthasar does not seek to justify.

Furthermore, Duffy claims that certain statements are by their very nature to be taken literally, not metaphorically, and that "I cannot make a statement such as 'there is super-change in God' metaphorical simply by saying that I am speaking metaphorically or that I am associating my statement with a metaphor."[24] He argues that metaphor and simile are generally equivalent and that where a real simile exists, the predication cannot be then denied, whereas when Balthasar says, "there is something like change in God," it would not make sense for him later to say that, literally speaking, there is nothing like change in God, and therefore his affirmation is a literal one.[25] After taking out such 'hard distinctions,' Duffy confesses:

> Von Balthasar's understanding of the divine nature stands or falls on whether or not new analogical senses of change, suffering, and surprise can pass muster in their own right. The nub of von Balthasar's project, as articulated in the metaphor defense, is to bring what is proper to poetry and symbolism into theological language by extracting what is

[22] See Duffy, "Von Balthasar's Use of Metaphor," 379, citing Blankenhorn, "Von Balthasar's Method of Divine Naming," *Nova et Vetera* 1, no. 2 (2003): 245-268, at 257.
[23] Duffy, "Von Balthasar's Use of Metaphor," 380.
[24] Duffy, "Von Balthasar's Use of Metaphor," 383-384.
[25] Duffy, "Von Balthasar's Use of Metaphor," 384.

> most distinctive in metaphor and expressing it in literal, analogical terms. . . . literal statements containing expressions such as 'super-change' or 'something like change' would have to be vehicles for what, in metaphors, escapes paraphrase and is intimated rather than asserted.[26]

It remains unclear not only how something that is intimated may be asserted, but also whether there are any metaphorical statements about God that yield anything significant for our knowledge of God as such.

It seems from Balthasar's adamant use of such rhetorical excess that he wants to restore to metaphor an epistemic validity that equals that of literal predication (in this case, analogical), and this on the basis of the centrality of metaphor in scripture's language about God (particularly, in the Old Testament). And this does not necessitate collapsing all knowledge into the realm of the metaphorical.[27] But Duffy concludes his essay thus:

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[26] Duffy, "Von Balthasar's Use of Metaphor," 386.

[27] While Duffy briefly reports the views of George Lakoff and Nicholas Lash that theological discourse is universally metaphorical and cites radical statements of Anthony Kenny and Robert Butterworth (see 380-381), a veritable slippery slope argument against what he calls the 'metaphor defense' of Balthasar's fluid usage of analogical and metaphorical predication, he neglects to mention that it is typical of transcendental Thomists, who frequently draw upon Paul Ricoeur as well, to speak of language as fundamentally metaphorical, particularly, in the realm of theology, since what transcends ordinary experience is being approached. In the same context, he mentions Balthasar's option for a neo-Chalcedonian Christology, problematic with respect to coherent theological discourse, according to Rahner, who opts instead for classical Chalcedonianism (see O'Hanlon, *Immutability of God*, 171, cited by Duffy, 382n61). Balthasar does not seem exempt from this 'transcendentalist' error; see *TL* II, 273-275 [G 247-248]. But the deep-seated difference between Balthasar and Rahner has its roots in their very distinct appropriations of modern philosophy. Rahner's theology is fundamentally characterized by the "transcendental Thomism" of Joseph Maréchal, while Balthasar comes to reject wholesale the anthropocentric tendency born of the subjectivist epistemology inherent to Maréchal's purported synthesis of Thomas and Kant in *Le point de départ de la métaphysique: leçons sur le développement historique et théorique du problème de la connaissance*, 5 vols, (Bruges-Louvain, 1922-47). Brian Daley, however, states that "Like Karl Rahner and other Catholic theologians of the mid-twentieth century, Balthasar's understanding of scholastic philosophy was heavily influenced by Maréchal's dynamic perspective" ("Balthasar's Reading of the Church Fathers" in *Cambridge Companion*, 205n25). Surely, Balthasar's approach is "dynamic," but in the course of his critique of Rahner, he comes to repudiate his earlier call to engage Maréchal (see "On the Tasks of Catholic Philosophy in Our Time" in *Communio* 20, no. 1 [Spring 1993]: 147-187;

> Given the way in which human language works – its *modus significandi* (mode of signifying) – von Balthasar is to be seen as trying to state what cannot be stated literally. Predicating change, suffering, and surprise of God, he tries to give literal expression to what in metaphors is essentially non-propositional, and to what is intimated or suggested rather than asserted. The result in a classical context is incoherence.[28]

Is human language really so restrictive? Certainly, poets daily attempt to put in words what cannot be expressed, at least in prose. But the point is that Balthasar is purportedly writing theology, not poetry. That is precisely the problem – to what degree ought mystical utterances be translated into rational discourse? Perhaps "kataphatic excess" is the inevitable result of such a project. Duffy's proposed remedy is to pay greater attention to the Chalcedonian distinction between the divine and human natures of Christ.[29]

In chapter three, I argued in favor of Maritain's qualified predication of passibility to God, rooted in the Son's eternal act of incarnation (free but practically inevitable, i.e., beyond the created freedom-necessity dichotomy), where divine receptivity to evil is willed in His creative act, rather than being intrinsic to the relationships that define the divine persons. If change, suffering, and surprise cannot be predicated of God either metaphorically or literally, then they

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Fergus Kerr, "Balthasar and Metaphysics" in *Cambridge Companion*, 224-238). Karen Kilby argues that Rahner's Kantianism is not as determinative of the weaknesses discerned in his theology as is commonly argued (see *Balthasar*, 7, referencing her argument in *Rahner: Theology and Philosophy* [London: Routledge, 2004], and her essay, "Balthasar and Karl Rahner" in *Cambridge Companion*, 256-268). Meanwhile, Rowan Williams and John Riches concur that the respective theologies of Balthasar and Rahner are irreducibly at odds on certain key points precisely because of this fundamental philosophical difference (see John Riches, "Afterword" in *The Analogy of Beauty*, 186-188). For a concise and precise summary of Rahner's development of Maréchal's attempted synthesis and Balthasar's critique of this project, both foundationally and in its theological implications, see Rowan Williams' essay, "Balthasar and Rahner" in *The Analogy of Beauty*, particularly, 15-21). See also Cyril O'Regan's comments on the difference from a Christological perspective, "Von Balthasar and Thick Retrieval," 256ff. For Balthasar's comments on Maréchal, Williams cites, in addition to *Karl Barth: Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie*, *Love Alone* (34), *GL* I (149), and *Herrlichkeit* III/1 (799, 881, 884, 904).

[28] Duffy, "Von Balthasar's Use of Metaphor," 387.

[29] See "Von Balthasar's Use of Metaphor," 387.

are such imperfect realities that they cannot find any place in God, however one conceives these realities, which seems an unacceptable conclusion in light of the events of salvation history (particularly, the redemptive incarnation). While I think it is necessary to emphasize the *communicatio idiomatum*, and the lack of a precise understanding of the relationship between grace and nature contributes to Balthasar's shift toward a "neo-Chalcedonianism," it is also true that the horizon of grace has so perfected nature through Christ that we can learn something, even if it remains beyond the realm of propositional truth, about the love that is God through a modest phenomenological analysis of human love in its primordial innocence. Hence, O'Hanlon replies to Duffy:

> Qualities like increase ('ever-more'), receptivity, and surprise have not, of course, traditionally been seen as perfections, and this is where von Balthasar's claim will stand or fall. Arguing from the human experience of love, von Balthasar notes that love given is not perfected until received, that mystery increases rather than decreasing in proportion to greater intimacy, so that a knowledge that is 'already in the picture' is symptomatic of a love grown cold. Again, where love is on the way to perfection, there exists a reserve and discretion that allow and want the other to be other in a way that preserves the freedom of self-giving and the creativity, wonder, and surprise which accompany that freedom. As Duffy notes, materiality and composition, including of course temporality, are intrinsically creaturely and so may not be predicated analogously of God. But, with careful modification, even 'light' and 'generation' may so be predicated, perhaps even 'desire' (Rowan Williams in Duffy) and certainly liveliness.[30]

Without speculating on the role or 'place' of receptivity within the intra-trinitarian relations, which is certainly beyond our comprehension,[31] it does seem there is a sense in which it can be said that the triune God "enriches" Himself through His own creative activity insofar as diffusing one's glory into participatory manifestations may be designated "self-enriching." Nicholas Healy explains how Thomas conceived the 'positivity' of created otherness:

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[30] O'Hanlon, "A Response to Kevin Duffy," 182.

[31] Balthasar seems to use the principle that there is greater dissimilitude between God and creation than similitude to speculate about the event-quality of God's inner trinitarian processions: see, for example, *TL* II, 82-83 [G 76-78].

> As Thomas writes, 'even the difference between one being and another is a being. Wherefore since God is not the cause of a thing tending to non-being, but is the author of all being, he is not the principle of evil, but he is the cause of multitude' [*De Potentia*, q. 3, a. 16, ad 3]. . . . *esse* [which is non-subsistent in creatures] is a unity – it contains all the perfections of being – that, without ceasing to be one, contains a polarity within itself such that it depends on another. Difference is inscribed in the heart of the unity of being as something fundamentally positive.[32]

Balthasar takes this insight and develops reflections on the giftedness of being as revealed in the experience of interpersonal love, phenomenologically examined.[33] To escape from Plotinian Platonism it is necessary to affirm the 'positivity' of created being, both true and good and beautiful.[34] In other words, multiplicity is no longer conceived, in the Christian tradition, as a necessarily privative reality; both created multiplicity and divine multiplicity are good, even while God alone is perfectly one.[35] Therefore, while God cannot gain anything, strictly speaking, from finite beings, He does make Himself vulnerable to the realities He creates in such a way that His desires for them may either be fulfilled or frustrated.

Healy begins his book on Balthasar presenting the concluding section of *Das Endspiel* as the fundamental philosophical contribution of Balthasar's dramatic theory to the metaphysical synthesis of Thomas Aquinas.[36] The concluding paragraph of the entire *Theodramatik* asks, "What does God gain from the world?" and answers, "[a]n additional gift" given by each divine

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[32] *Being as Communion*, 52.

[33] For development of this and related themes, see especially Kenneth L. Schmitz, *The Gift: Creation* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1982); D.C. Schindler, *Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth: A Philosophical Investigation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

[34] Hence, Balthasar states: "[Both Bonaventure and Thomas enunciate the axiom] that (derived, worldly) otherness vis-à-vis God presupposes an (original, trinitarian) otherness in God, an otherness that, as such, is supreme positivity. We can immediately infer from this basic axiom that anyone who reckons the world's otherness as purely negative in comparison with the sheer divine One will ipso facto take a path radically divergent from that of Christianity" (*TL* II, 107 [G 99]).

[35] See Healy, *Being as Communion*, c. 2; Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, 178ff.

[36] *Being as Communion*, 1-6.

person to the other, as the world is given "divine things" "and return[s] them to God as a divine gift" by its participation in the interior life of God.[37] Thus, the immanent Trinity reaches a certain fulfillment, as it were, through the economic expressions of creation, incarnation, passion-death-descent, resurrection-ascent, and final judgment (and/or universal consummation).[38] Perhaps offering a defense of Balthasar's nuanced posture with respect to the notorious Thomistic notion that God has only a 'virtual' (rather than a 'real') relation to creation, but more likely an exegesis in line with Maritain's speculations, Thomas Weinandy states:[39]

> Aquinas consistenly states that the relation between the Creator and the creature 'is not really in God, but only in our way of thinking' (*ST*, I, 13, 7). . . . If Aquinas means by this that God is not actually related to creatures in reality but only related in our way of thinking, then, as I stated above, no relation exists between God and creatures, and thus God could not actually be the Creator. This is how Aquinas' critics consistently interpret him. However, the above examination clarifies and demonstrates that this cannot possibly be what Aquinas means. He himself states: 'It cannot be said, however, that these relations exists as realities outside God' (*SCG*, II, 13, 1), and he further gives this interpretation as an objection to his own positions . . . The point that Aquinas is making is that God is actually related, in reality, to the creature, not because of some change in him,

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[37] *TD* V, 521 [G 476].

[38] It has been seen already how Balthasar apparently agrees with Rahner's opinion that the final judgment occurs at one's own death, which would leave for the end of time only the "consummation of all things." Regardless, it is thanks to the God-man's transformative passion that His timeless love encounters the freedom of every man in the mysterious 'moment' of his death (which is thus understood personalistically as an existential event). For Maritain, the consummation of all things will follow the final judgment in a progressive manner. As Healy puts it, Christ 'undergirds' death by His death (see *Being as Communion*, 204).

[39] Healy refers to Weinandy's book as "a rigorous and creative defense of this traditional understanding of immutability" (*Being as Communion*, 132n109), according to which "suffering and change [are] predicated of the human nature of Christ while . . . strict immutability and impassibility [are attributed to] his divine nature" (132). Characterizing Balthasar's position as both faithful to the tradition and going beyond it, Healy notes Origen's influence and states: "during the Theopasichite [sic] controversy in the sixth century, the statement 'one of the Trinity has suffered' was declared orthodox. It is possible on the basis of the *communicatio idiomatum* to interpret this statement as referring solely to the Son's mode of existence in the Incarnation. However, this line of interpretation leaves unanswered the question of how the suffering of the Son reveals the eternal love of the Father. Furthermore, if one of the persons of the Trinity has 'suffered,' surely the other two persons are not indifferent to this suffering" (133n109). For a rigorous and precise exposition of such Christology, Healy adverts to O'Hanlon's magisterial book (133).

> but only because the creature is really related to him as he exists in himself as *ipsum esse*. It is because the creature is really related to God that we come to understand God in a new way as Creator. Thus God is in reality Creator and is actually related to the creature, but only because the creature is related to him as he is.[40]

Thomas Dalzell comments on this aspect of "enrichment" in Balthasar's trinitarian theology:

> Balthasar claims that such receptivity on God's part is made possible by the eternal receptivity in God, the Son's receiving from the Father and the Father's receiving from the Son. . . . It is this positing of an excess (*Überfluss*) of loving in God that allows Balthasar to save the world's gift to God from being regarded as superfluous. While God's love is ever complete, its ever-greater dimension is perceived as making room for the world's contribution. Rather than the latter being understood as adding to God's love so as to complete it, it is thought to find its place in the ever-greater dimension of that love in such a way that what comes about can even be spoken of as an enrichment

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[40] Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?*, 136n69. Thomas Dalzell, on the contrary, opposes this aspect of Balthasar's theology to Thomas' position: "God freely allows himself out of love, it is suggested, to be affected by the freedom he has made and any increase implied is situated in an eternal increase resulting from the ongoing exchange of love constituted by the divine processions. While Aquinas understood creation in terms of a real relationship of dependence between the creature and God, he safeguarded God's transcendence by ruling out the existence of a real relationship between God and creation. The fact that Balthasar understands the increase implied by created freedom's affecting God to be over and above an already realized perfection of divine love ensures that God's transcendence is not compromised and so it can be argued that he makes a good case for leaving Thomas' position behind" (*Dramatic Encounter*, 290). Bruce Marshall, impugning Hegel's influence as the catalyst of such thought, argues: "In particular, the contingency of creation and reconciliation entails that neither the distinctions among the divine three, nor their unity as the one God, can be a mere abstract starting point or background for their temporal acts. Since all such actions are contingent, neither the distinctions among the three Persons nor their unity as God can depend, in even the slightest degree, on any such action, nor be its term or outcome. No action or event in creation or the economy of salvation, in other words, can be at all constitutive either of the personl uniqueness of Father, Son, and Spirit or of their essential unity. Both the individuating characteristics unique to each Person, what the Scholastic tradition called their *propria*, and the numerical identity of the essence and existence of the three must, on the contrary, constitute the unalterable presupposition of all that comes to pass in creation and reconciliation. We may come to know that the one God is a Trinity of Persons from the revealed economy of salvation, and perhaps even from creation itself, but nothing in the contingent history of creation or salvation realizes, perfects, intensifies, or otherwise alters the divine Persons in either their distinction or their unity" (Marshall, "The Absolute and the Trinity," 163).

> (*Bereicherung*) of heaven, a becoming ever-richer (*Je-reicher-Werden*) of the Trinity and an embellishment (*Ausschmuckung*) of the Father's richness.[41]

Dalzell may not be careful enough to avoid what Marshall impugns as the infiltration of Hegelian dialectic into trinitarian theology, according to which the world is a dialogue partner, as it were, of God's own identity as supreme love.[42] But, at the same time, I do not think it can be denied that God in His love is *de facto* incapable of being indifferent toward His own creation and that the self-effusiveness of the good, or the ek-static quality of love, is precisely the transcendent sufficient reason for being as a whole (that is, *ens commune*).

Dalzell concedes that "it is one thing to use an 'I-Thou' analogy to understand the love in God and another to describe that love, as Balthasar does, in terms of suffering, surprise, and increase."[43] I would add that it is one thing to speculate on some analogue of receptivity in the divine intra-trinitarian exchange and another to put such a notion at the center of one's trinitarian theology, alongside infinite *ek-stasis*, as if one has familiarity with the inner workings of the divine life. I think the most we can say about God is that in some sense He makes Himself receptive to the reality of evil, that His creative acts flow super-abundantly from His infinitely free love, and that the distinction of hypostases within His own nature is the prototypical origin of creaturely otherness (both as the world relates to its Creator and, derivatively, as finite things relate to one another).[44] Clearly going beyond the realm of precise speculation, bordering on the mystical (which is necessarily nebulous to the human mind), Dalzell paraphrases some of Balthasar's more eccentric theorizing about the trinitarian life:

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[41] Dalzell, "The Enrichment of God," 15.
[42] Marshall, "The Absolute and the Trinity."
[43] "The Enrichment of God," 7.
[44] Balthasar argues the third point through Thomas and Bonaventure, utilizing particularly the interpretative work of Gustav Siewerth, throughout *TL* II, but especially at 179-186 [G 165-170].

> In letting the Son be, the Father is thought to give himself away to the Son. Indeed, the Father is said *to be* this 'giving up movement', holding nothing back for himself. There is then, according to Balthasar, an absolute renunciation in the first divine person of being God alone, a letting go of being God and in that sense a divine Godlessness (*Gott-losigkeit*) out of love which, he proposes, pre-eminently lays a foundation for the very possibility of worldly Godlessness – that of those who have abandoned God but also the 'Godlessness' of the one abandoned on the cross. . . . The Father doesn't cease to be God in expropriating himself, for it is precisely in that self-expropriation that the Father is God. . . . the Son's reception of the divinity must, it is argued, include self-gift and this is understood in terms of a readiness to affirm his own being God as a loving response to the original *kenosis* of the Father. Balthasar will even go so far as to suggest that the Father 'only' (but eternally) receives himself as Father when the Son 'agrees' to be the Son.[45]

The talk of Godlessness in the Father's self-gift and the Godlessness of hellish suffering seems more like an equivocation than a genuine analogy, but here we run up against the limits of language again when confronted with the reality of love that is expressed in suffering.

As created otherness mirrors trinitarian difference for Balthasar, he finds in the Trinity the ground for his theology of the God-man's sufferings, expressed dialectically:

> The Son is eternally begotten by the Father: within the infinite divine nature, in other words, one Person is 'let be' in absolute Otherness; what deep abysses are here! God has *always* plumbed them, but once a finite world of creatures has been opened up, these depths must be traversed stepwise as forms of alienation. Nonetheless these steps can only be taken as part of a journey already (and always) accomplished in the infinite Trinity. And when the particular mystery of the Son's Incarnation takes place, he traverses – as man and together with all sufferers and on their behalf – the realms of forsakenness that, as God, he has already (and has always) traversed.[46]

Everything in Balthasar's theology is tied together. Edward Oakes is then able to connect summarily Balthasar's trinitarian theory not merely to his theology of descent, but also to his

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[45] Dalzell, "The Enrichment of God," 6-7. Concerning the Holy Spirit, Dalzell continues: "It is this dramatic giving and receiving of love in God that leads Balthasar to characterise the Holy Spirit as the 'correspondence' of fathering gift and filial answering gift. As the identity of giving gift and thanking gift, the Holy Spirit is said to be self-gift in the form of an absolute 'We', which not only holds open the infinite difference between the 'I' and the 'Thou' in God, but eternally bridges it over" ("The Enrichment of God," 7).

[46] *TD* V, 502 [G 459] (emphasis original).

approach toward the grace-freedom dynamic, without pinpointing the implications criticized in this dissertation:

> All attributes that inhere in us must be grounded in God: 'the infinite distance between the world and God has its foundation in that original distance between God and God, within God.' And that even goes for sin (how daring this man is!); for God's freedom is the presupposition for man's freedom, the very ground of its possibility, including to sin; and giving man freedom must include the risk that he will abuse that freedom in sin. Now of course, Balthasar is not saying that God wills the creature to sin, nor that the 'primal image' of sin subsists in God; but he does insist that the experience of separation from God which ensues as a direct consequence of sin must be capable of being integrated into the Trinitarian differences – otherwise there is no salvation.[47]

Hence, there is a trinitarian theology that 'undergirds' Balthasar's eschatology, even though it is precisely his understanding of God's relationship to moral evil (i.e., his inadequate treatment of the grace-freedom dynamic) that determines his eschatology in the direction of a 'subjunctive universalism.'[48]

The Problem of Freedom in Balthasar's Universalist Framework

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[47] Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 288-289. Oakes continues, corroborating Dalzell's remarks: "For in the Trinity distance and separation are always positive realities; in the Trinity, and there alone, distance comes to be *because* of love: God the Father's love is so total that there is 'nothing left,' so to speak, when he generates his Son in love; and the Son returns that love so totally, also holding nothing back, that he too is totally 'emptied'" (*Pattern of Redemption*, 289).

[48] Hence, for all his speculations, divine *kenosis* serves as the infallible means through which God ensures the attainment of the end for which He created: "For with the *kenosis* of Christ, eternity has put itself in motion and has passed through time with all of its darknesses. There is no alienating hiatus between the Father's remaining at home and the Son's going forth in pilgrimage, for the 'distance' of the *kenosis* is a mode of inner-trinitarian nearness and of the circumincession of the divine hypostases. In the *kenosis* of the Son, it is true that his innate 'form of God' stays back with the Father, is 'left behind' with him, both as pledge of his faithfulness to the will of God and as a 'reminder' to the Father of how much he himself is committed to the world adventure. In this kind of tension between eternity and time, God is not split apart but more than ever is with himself, for he perfects the free commitment that he began with creation. *It is as if he had wagered with himself that he could do the apparently impossible: create creaturely freedoms that subsist in themselves and yet not let them be lost*" (*Explorations* IV, 138 [G 131-132], emphasis added).

Balthasar warns in the second volume of his *Theodrama* against the doctrine of (double) predestination because, according to it, "infinite freedom, which is necessarily the final arbiter, now threatens to swallow up finite freedom."[49] The only problem is that instead of taking human freedom on its own terms, he speaks generically of finite freedom in relation to infinite freedom and habitually conceptualizes the former solely in terms of its relationship to the latter.[50] He certainly *intends* to take human (or even creaturely) freedom on its own terms: "[God] allows [human] freedom to act in its own part according to its nature–and this is the greatest mystery of creation and of God's direct creative power."[51] Or at least he thinks it may be a good idea to do so; unfortunately, he fails to do so adequately.[52] He does not develop, as might be expected, a

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[49] *TD* II, 250 [G 227].

[50] As chapter two above displays, Margaret Turek is wrong to make the following defense of Balthasar on this point: "Von Balthasar is clear that on no account can we interpret this divine work of empowering to be an *over*powering of human freedom. Otherwise, the end result could not serve as an appropriate reflection of the gracious autonomy out of which God acts. Instead, since the goal of God's self-communication is to bring to consummation a relationship of mutual love with finite freedom, it must be that God allows the creaturely partner a genuinely distinct self-disposing *vis-à-vis* his advances of love" ("Dare We Hope," 104-105). Hence, commenting upon Balthasar's praise of Lubac's notion that "God cannot posit a creature that is free yet, from the start, 'congealed in goodness,'" which contradicts Balthasar's correct understanding of Mary as the immaculate conception, she states: "This is not to deny that the realization of finite freedom as ordained by infinite freedom lies solely in its partaking of eternal life in the Son. Since finite freedom is intrinsically oriented toward this (supernatural) end, to refuse divine grace is to exercise human freedom in contradiction to itself. Thus, such a decision is no mere symmetrical option alongside that of accepting salvation" ("Dare We Hope," 119n50). The latter argument is, in fact, Rahner's and will be critiqued below when John Sachs' article on universalism is discussed. One can glimpse here perhaps more than anywhere else where the grace-nature problematic and the grace-freedom dynamic are intimately related to one another in the Balthasarian system. If nature does not have its own relatively autonomous dynamism toward what transcends it, that is, without aid from *gratia elevans*, then the creature's natural freedom is defined simply in terms of its subordination to the infinite freedom of *gratia operans*.

[51] *TD* I, 646 [G 605], quoting Theodor Haeker approvingly.

[52] Even Turek concedes, however modestly: "some few of [Balthasar's] own reflections are not entirely invulnerable to the criticism that sees human freedom, at least with respect to its fundamental decision, in danger of being trivialized. These problematic points notwithstanding, von Balthasar's overall approach is aimed at accentuating the gravity of the decisions taken by human freedom precisely in view of its being encountered by a divine self-disposing of the

theological anthropology on the basis of phenomenological reflection on the data of human experience, particularly, how man experiences himself and his own freedom in relation to the divine. And, as has been shown, he does not wish to enter into the pedantic quibbles of Neo-Scholasticism, as it were.[53] It would be detrimental to the universalist trajectory of his eschatology to take scholastic distinctions seriously. He treats human freedom from the perspectives of trinitarian freedom, christological freedom, and marian freedom. His goal is to "see how finite freedom has been established inside the infinite freedom of God."[54] Certainly, there is nothing wrong with such a goal, and yet it alone cannot provide the whole picture of human freedom in its created integrity.

The closest he comes to considering human freedom on its own terms is to consider it from the prototypical perspective of Mary's own freedom. Hence, Edward Oakes recounts:

> 'Answer,' then [based on *TD* III, 287], is quintessentially feminine, and this is why it was so 'fitting,' as Thomas Aquinas says, that the consent to the incarnation come from a woman. Moreover, not only was Mary predestined to be the Mother of the Savior, whose consent to the incarnation would inaugurate the drama of our redemption, she would do so entirely by the power of the grace of God. Only this realization, enshrined in the infallibly defined dogma of the Immaculate Conception, can preserve the essential feature of our theodramatic redemption: that God has in his infinite freedom decided to save us in a way that respects our finite freedom but which also demands his infinite power of grace to fulfill.[55]

But, according to Catholic dogma, her freedom was not wounded by original sin and, therefore, cannot be a completely accurate representation of how grace and freedom actually interact in the

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utmost seriousness. In his words: 'The seriousness that we are confronted with is the seriousness of a love that goes beyond punitive justice'" ("Dare We Hope," 113). Again, we have here an appeal to love versus justice, as if the relationship between freedom and grace, nature and the supernatural, man and God, can be so simplified.

[53] Hence, he follows up quickly his earlier comment in volume two with: "We need to keep ever before our eyes the way in which infinite freedom was pleased to appear in the midst of finitude, if we are not to be drawn into abstract (and hence falsely posed) speculative problems" (*TD* II, 251, cited by Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 228).

[54] Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 228.

[55] Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 252-256. He, then, quotes from *TD* III, 296-297, as support.

rest of humanity, even though she is the exemplary model of how they were originally intended to interact.[56] In addition, Balthasar is infamous for equating femininity with receptivity,[57] and thus his view of the creature as essentially receptive (or feminine) is not entirely satisfactory precisely because a creation that is free, like femininity, cannot be relegated to the purely receptive. Yes, the free activity of creatures, like all being, is received from God, but creatures also author non-beings (e.g., evil acts), which are not created (strictly speaking), and thus God is capable of making Himself receptive to such non-entities (including privations, e.g.); in other words, the entitative qualities (or 'positivity') of every finite act are created, but all 'negativity' comes from the creature alone (as constituted by being and non-being together – hence the chasm between God who is *ipsum esse* and essences that are other than *esse*).

Moreover, approaching human freedom from a christological perspective, while providing much insight into the perfection of finite freedom and graced human nature, does not shed light on the dark reality of man's power to nihilate divine grace, from which the God-man

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[56] For Balthasar's comments on Mariology in the *Theodrama*, see, e.g., *TD* II, 365-382 [G 334-350]; *TD* III, 283-360 [G 260-330].

[57] His interpretation of femininity versus masculinity, as well as its implications for trinitarian theology, has been hotly debated. See, e.g., Linn Marie Tonstad, "Sexual Difference and Trinitarian Death: Cross, Kenosis, and Hierarchy in the *Theo-Drama*," *Modern Theology* 26, no. 4 (2010): 603-631; Agneta Sutton, "The Complementarity and Symbolism of the Two Sexes: Karl Barth, Hans Urs von Balthasar and John Paul II," *New Blackfriars* 87, no. 1010 (2006): 418-433; Barbara K. Sain, "Through a different lens: rethinking the role of sexual difference in the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Modern Theology* 25, no. 1 (2009): 71-96; Gerard Loughlin, "Sexing the Trinity," *New Blackfriars* 79, no. 923 (1998): 18-25; Celia Deane-Drummond, "The Breadth of Glory," 59ff.; Karen Kilby, *Balthasar*, c. 6. While I would defend the view that the male-female relationship may be accurately characterized by activity-receptivity on some levels (e.g., physical), on other levels it may be precisely the opposite (e.g., social), and thus the couplet is not an adequate framework within which this dynamic may be comprehended. Likewise, the feminine-masculine language in regard to the trinitarian relations is unhelpful in most cases; I think there is something to be said of femininity in the Spirit (which Balthasar does not elucidate), but speaking of the Son's antecedent consent to his procession and the Father's receptivity to the Son's procession is at best not sufficiently apophatic and at worst simply incoherent (see, e.g., *TD* V, 91).

was necessarily exempt. Nevertheless, although fallen man is perpetually inclined toward sin, his finite being exists as it does precisely because God willed to permit his fall from a state of habitual grace (i.e., the "original sin"). Maintaining this delicate balance between man's capacity for evil and the rootedness of his freedom in God's is not something Balthasar does well.[58] Hence, even Oakes states: "Balthasar is very much like Barth in this respect: he is bursting with confidence in the power and victory of grace. True, he criticizes Barth for over-confidence in the outcome of this victory, but perhaps that [criticism] holds true for him too."[59] It has been the primary task of this dissertation to show how Balthasar does not escape such over-confidence, why he should have, and especially how he could have.

Despite the intriguing quality of his trinitarian speculations, it is all too optimistic to view human freedom from the top down, so to speak, a temptation that inevitably leads to an over-systematization that does not take seriously enough the reality of moral evil:

> Thus, finally, it becomes clear why finite freedom can really fulfill itself in infinite freedom and in no other way. If *letting-be* belongs to the nature of infinite freedom . . . there is no danger of finite freedom, which cannot fulfill itself on its own account . . . becoming alienated from itself in the realm of the Infinite. It can only be what it is, that is, an image of infinite freedom, imbued with a freedom of its own, by getting in tune with the (Trinitarian) 'law' of absolute freedom (of self-surrender): and this law is not foreign to it – for after all it is the 'law' of absolute Being – but most authentically its own.[60]

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[58] We turned in this dissertation, instead, to Maritain, Ratzinger, and Lonergan for a more integral vision of man's relation to God and to evil.

[59] Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 247-248.

[60] *TD* II, 259 [G 235]. David Luy quotes this text to support his argument that, "In light of the immanent self-emptying that is central to the divine life, we ought not conceive of power in terms of God's ability to assert himself and overpower those external to himself, but rather in terms of his loving freedom to allow 'room' for an other with no threat to his own identity" ("The Aesthetic Collision," 163). It remains problematic to treat the entry of infinite freedom into finitude and not the created power of finitude to resist such 'entry,' considering only one side of the question.

It is true, "man's freedom and choice are not infringed by the freedom of God."[61] But, at the same time, man's freedom was created by God with the real potential for rejecting its full actualization, for contradicting its own deepest needs, and for refusing the higher freedom offered as a divine reward.

John Sachs takes up a Balthasarian perspective on this question as a point of departure and utilizes a few comments of Karl Rahner, eventually reaching the logical end-point of the universalist approach to created freedom. Tellingly, the first significant passage of Rahner that Sachs quotes in support of Balthasar's universalist inclination, right after adverting to Ratzinger's insistence that "God has created human beings as free creatures and respects human freedom unconditionally,"[62] clearly undermines the relative autonomy (i.e., the natural integrity) of created freedom: "God can establish freedom as good or as evil freedom without thereby destroying this freedom. The fact that as subjects of a freedom still coming to be we do not know whether or not God has so established all freedom that it will reach a good decision, at least finally and ultimately . . ."[63] This quasi-Calvinist estimation is followed up by the optimistic statement, "God has not created freedom as the possibility of the creative positing by a subject of what is good and evil but as the possibility of creatively positing what is good."[64] In other words, God has, in fact, 'so established all freedom that it will reach a good decision.'[65] This

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[61] Balthasar, *Theology of History*, 58, cited by Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 221.
[62] Sachs, "Current Eschatology," 234.
[63] Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury, 1978), 105, cited by Sachs, "Current Eschatology," 234n28.
[64] Rahner, "Guilt–Responsibility–Punishment within the View of Catholic Theology" in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 6 (New York: Seabury, 1974), 210, cited by Sachs, "Current Eschatology," 241.
[65] At the same time, however, Sachs argues, on the basis of Rahner's "hermeneutics of eschatological assertions" (see *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4 [Baltimore: Helicon, 1966], 323-346), against the idea that scriptural texts such as Matthew 25 can be used to say that some

judgment is the result of reflection on the so-called asymmetrical possibilities of human freedom for saying "yes" or "no" to divine grace, where the latter contradicts the very nature of man as imbued with the supernatural end of final union with God.

Approaching Rahner's perspective on the grace-nature relationship as if it were practically identical to that of Henri de Lubac (rightly or wrongly),[66] Sachs invokes another place where Rahner, like Balthasar (whose statements on the matter were seen in chapter two), conceptualizes the infinite-finite freedom relationship in terms of a power struggle: "contemporary theology stresses the fact that, because of God's action in Christ, human freedom exists concretely in the realm of grace, which undergirds and carries it. Thus Rahner suggests that it would be wrong to view human freedom as 'so autonomous that it cannot be seen as embraced by God's more powerful freedom and his mercy.'"[67] Apparently concerned with preserving divine sovereignty over against any creaturely claim to autonomy, a legitimate concern likewise overemphasized by the Bañezians, Sachs turns to Balthasar's theory for how God may in fact convert every soul without violating human freedom:

> [Balthasar suggests that] God, in the visage of the crucified Son, may have ways of moving even the most obdurate human will, not in a way which would deny or overrun human freedom by force, but could in weakness persuade and compel 'in his solidarity from within with those who reject all solidarity' [*The Von Balthasar Reader*, eds. Medard Kehl and Werner Loser (New York: Crossroads, 1982), 153]. For Balthasar this is possible because human freedom is not absolutely autonomous but relative: it is founded upon, and exists within, the mystery of Christ's freedom, in particular, his free self-identification with sinners. Thus what seems for finite freedom to be a definitive rejection of God need not be evaluated by God as definitive. Such a decision cannot be simply overturned or overpowered from the outside but in such a way that God 'accompanies the human person to the most extreme situation of this (negative) choice. This is what happens in the passion of Jesus' [*Reader*, 152f.]. What is happening here is not a

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will be condemned in the end because "the free response of human beings is not predetermined," as "[the Church condemns] theories of double predestination" ("Current Eschatology," 238).

[66] I do not claim here that there is definitively such an alliance or that Sachs explicitly identifies the two, only that he appears to conflate the two, whether such is justified or not.

[67] Sachs, "Current Eschatology," 242, citing Rahner, *Our Christian Faith*, 121.

> 'theoretical' judgment about two truths: finite human freedom (and its ability to say 'no' to God) vs. infinite divine freedom . . . it seems infinitely more probable that the love which reveals itself so radically in the mystery of Holy Saturday has a compelling power (in weakness!) to change the heart of any sinner.[68]

Indeed, everyone should share the hope that in the moment of death the crucified Christ may confront in weakness the heart of each sinner and the sinner may respond by yielding, as it were, to such divine mercy. But not only is there no such guarantee, but it is important not to turn a blind eye to the terrible reality that God (presumably, for a greater good) ordinarily permits His creatures the enduring power (however defective such a 'power' may be) to resist His grace. No doubt, God may make His grace irresistible, but the fallen angels certainly resisted and there is little or no evidence that human beings do not also refuse to submit to the 'weakness' that is divine power in all its majesty and beauty.

Yielding to the optimistic temptation to doubt whether any human being would actually reject divine love in the end, that for which all free creatures have been made to enjoy, Sachs pushes the universalist impulses in both Rahner and Balthasar to its logical limits (without openly contradicting the Church's faith):

> Both Balthasar and Rahner, for example, have insisted that the human 'yes' and 'no' to God are not on the same level. . . . I would like to focus on human freedom and push these insights further by asking whether or not there are reasons for doubting that human freedom can truly reach final, that is eternal definitiveness in the state of rejecting God. I believe that there are. And if there are good reasons to question the presuppositions concerning human freedom which lie behind the Church's doctrinal pronouncements regarding the existence of hell, it may be possible to speak to the issue of apocatastasis in a new and positive way.[69]

Considering it not an object of faith that "human freedom entails a capacity to reject God definitively and eternally," despite acknowledging that such a "presumption enjoys the weight of

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[68] Sachs, "Current Eschatology," 245-246.
[69] "Current Eschatology," 247.

the authority of Scripture and tradition,"[70] he attempts to shed doubt on the possibility of a finite bodily creature making an eternal decision.

Without entering into disputes about the time-quality or mutability of man's moral determinations, even in the moment of death (traditionally understood as the separation of soul from body), it is necessary here only to note that the conclusion, "faith [in the salvation of Christ] expresses itself most consistently in the hope that because of the gracious love of God, whose power far surpasses human sin, all men and women will in fact freely and finally surrender to God in love and be saved,"[71] he confesses to derive from "Rahner's own insistence that human freedom's 'no' to God cannot be simply a parallel alternative to a 'yes' to God."[72] This foundational assertion of Rahner's appears almost random, and yet it has its roots in his 'transcendental anthropology' (taking Joseph Maréchal's attempt to synthesize Thomistic and Kantian epistemology as its point of departure), which will not be investigated here but certainly cannot be upheld as if it were weightier than scripture and tradition.[73]

Despite the similarities between Balthasar's and Rahner's universalism, John Sachs fails to note that Balthasar explicitly rejects his assertion regarding human freedom, imputing Rahner at least with a tendency toward *apokatastasis*, stating: "Rahner's soteriology lacks the decisive dramatic element. Thus God's 'wrath' is always, *antecedently*, overtaken by his will to save men,

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[70] "Current Eschatology," 253.
[71] "Current Eschatology," 253.
[72] "Current Eschatology," 247.
[73] It is a common criticism that Rahner's theology is unduly determined by his antecedent philosophy, rather than by the data of revelation, and yet such a criticism must not yield a naïve biblicism or an a-philosophical theology, as both fideist and rationalist tendencies must be avoided such that history and being are related to one another in a coherent way that is true both to human experience and divine revelation. For development of this problematic and a cursory attempt to harmonize the elements in tension, see Joseph Ratzinger, *Fundamentals of Catholic Theology: Building Stones for a Fundamental Theology*, trans. Sister Mary Frances McCarthy, S.N.D. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1987), 153ff.; see also the Encyclical Letter of John Paul II, *Fides et Ratio*.

a will that is always ahead of all human resistance to God (in the direction of *apokatastasis*)."[74] In the note to this text, Balthasar quotes the same words of Rahner's *Foundations of Christian Faith* invoked by Sachs (in which he states that man's "Yes" and "No" are not on a par with each other since the latter involves him in a contradiction) and proceeds to outline Rahner's "radically 'Scotist' point of view" with a quote from the tenth volume of the *Schriften zur Theologie*, wherein Rahner concludes that "sin in the world is only permitted as the condition whereby God's all-embracing and undergirding relationship to the world can be radicalized."[75] And yet, as in the case of Balthasar's critiques of Barth, he does not entirely escape his own criticism here. For example, earlier in the same volume of the *Theodrama*, Balthasar states the following:

> There is God's initiative, yet it cannot do without man's cooperation; there is God's reconciled love, yet the jealous and wrathful side of his love still call [sic] for reconciliation. There is sinful man's inability to achieve a more spontaneous reconciliation with God, an inability that must be remedied if the reconciliation is to prove effective; only thus can man – impotent as he is – be drawn into reconciliation from the very outset and not only at the end of the process. These complex questions bring us to the very heart of the theo-drama, for there can only be a denouement when all the dimensions of the mystery are before us . . . only on the basis of the doctrine of reconciliation can they [the theological persons] begin to play their parts on the stage.[76]

Hence, Balthasar's universalism is more 'subjunctive' than is Rahner's, which might be characterized as 'indicative' in comparison, because of his desire to view salvation history through the prism of drama. Nevertheless, this dissertation has shown that, whether it be due in part to his understanding of drama (that is, his literary theory) or not, his dramatic approach is not entirely adequate to treat the dynamic relationship between divine grace and human freedom with all its eschatological significance.

The Need for an Adequate Theological Anthropology

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[74] *TD* IV, 283-284 (emphasis added) [G 262].
[75] *TD* IV, 284n55 [G 262n55].
[76] *TD* IV, 229 [G 211].

What is needed in order not to undermine creaturely freedom or to rationalize the utter unintelligibility of moral evil in itself is a more adequate theological anthropology than is present in either Balthasar or Rahner. Chapter six outlined how Lonergan mediates between neo-scholastic and *nouvelle* extremes on the dynamic relationship between human nature and divine grace. I think it is important to clarify how Lonergan's proposal relates to both interpretations of Thomas on the question (without entering into exegesis of Thomas' writings). Raymond Maloney, like J. Michael Stebbins, may concede a little too much to the popular Lubacian line of thought, but he does provide additional comments on Lonergan's approach to the question of the natural desire that ought to be taken up here before returning to the most significant point in confronting Balthasar's theological anthropology, i.e., how one conceives of the efficacy of divine grace with respect to man's freedom in the eschatological history of salvation.

Moloney illustrates the divergence and convergence between Lonergan and Lubac on the nature-grace problematic, largely on the basis of ideas highlighted in Lonergan's *Insight*, in addition to the classical notion of obediential potency (which was utilized significantly in chapter six above). Although, like Lubac, Moloney does not display an accurate knowledge of the traditional Thomist (or "neo-scholastic") view of the natural desire,[77] he recognizes the force of Lubac's approach as its biblical-patristic roots rather than its metaphysical precision.[78] Like

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[77] Concurring with Lubac's interpretation of the commentators in *Surnaturel*, he states incorrectly that "an alternative approach [to Thomas'] began to emerge later in writers such as Cajetan and Suarez, according to whom any desire on our part for the vision of God could only be supernatural, not natural" ("De Lubac and Lonergan," 510). Again, relying on Lubac's account of Blondel in *A Brief Catechesis on Nature and Grace*, Moloney restates the common characterization of the commentators' approach, even if it is in some cases on point: "[Natural being], according to this view, is perfectly intelligible in itself without any need of recourse to the supernatural. In such a universe, grace and the supernatural are seen as additions from beyond human nature to a nature perfectly indifferent to them" (511).

[78] See "De Lubac and Lonergan," 512.

David Braine,[79] he notes that Lubac used the term 'nature' differently than did Aristotle (or Christian Aristotelians, more relevantly), more like Augustine purportedly used it, focusing upon the existential order rather than the essential (or man in the concrete rather than human nature in the abstract).[80] But he adds the following about Lubac's rejection of the "dualist approach" to pure nature and natural beatitude:

> Once de Lubac had dismissed the possibility of any such natural beatitude [proportionate to the "Aristotelian view of nature as one closed in on itself and unrelated to any other possible state"] as irrelevant, the significance of human nature as such lapses into confusion as de Lubac opts instead for his so-called mystical approach to the human person. In this way de Lubac fails to do justice to the more general meaning of human nature as a reality in itself, common to any order of things on earth and as in fact open to more than one kind of actualization, as the course of history shows.[81]

Instead of admitting different kinds of actualization, Lubac runs into problems explaining the gratuity of the supernatural order because, wanting to avoid a "two-tiered" view of graced humanity (even though he later speaks of a two-tiered gratuity),[82] he wants the only possible actualization of man's natural desire to see God in the present world order to be supernatural in character.[83] Lonergan does not commit such an error, even though he too does not want to base his understanding of the nature-grace relationship on speculations about other possible world-orders. Understanding obediential potency in the classical Augustinian-Thomistic sense, not in

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[79] See David Braine, "The Debate between Henri de Lubac and His Critics," 551ff.
[80] See "De Lubac and Lonergan," 512.
[81] "De Lubac and Lonergan," 513. At the same time, he notes Lubac's intent to do "historical study," which he then designates as pre-theoretical (that is, belonging to the realm of common-sense language rather than that of theory); see 522.
[82] "This even leads [Lubac], who had so criticized the dualism of the 'two-tiered' universe, to speak of gratuitousness as existing on 'two levels, two floors with no communication from the lower to the higher'" (Moloney, 514, quoting *Mystery of the Supernatural*, 169n54).
[83] See "De Lubac and Lonergan," 514.

Lubac's sense of "non-repugnance" (extrapolated from a few scholastic commentators),[84] Lonergan speaks of both natural and supernatural knowledge of God in the present world-order:

> [F]ormally and as such, the desire for knowledge belongs to neither a purely natural nor a supernatural order but is simply human. In itself it is not specifically a desire for the beatific vision but for its own fulfilment. In so far as the desire for knowledge is innate and, in that sense, natural to our humanity, it retains its meaning as a desire with its own constitutive finality, whether our humanity exists in a purely natural or supernatural world order. As Lonergan succinctly puts it, 'The end of man is God, in any case, but the mode in which man attains God may be natural or supernatural.'[85]

Drawing from Lonergan's essay, "Mission and Spirit,"[86] Moloney also explains Lonergan's position in terms of finality:

> Horizontal finality is that of any finite essence on its own to its own proportionate end, namely, the end that results from what a thing is and what follows from it. Vertical finality arises where there is a hierarchy of entities and ends, namely, where a plurality of entities exemplifying different grades of being come together within an ordered whole. It can also be found among the different levels of being or consciousness within a single entity, each level having its own definition and activity, but so ordained that the lower is subordinate to the higher. Vertical finality is the up-thrust from lower to higher levels within a dynamic whole 'in which instrumentally, dispositively, materially, obedientially, one level of being or activity subserves another.' De Lubac's discomfort with the notion of a human nature orientated to a natural beatitude can be seen as a problem of horizontal finality. Unfortunately he failed to do justice to the way a lower level of being, by being drawn into a plurality and higher unity (in our case, that of life in the Body of Christ), can

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[84] Referencing Lonergan's *Triune God*, Moloney summarizes Lonergan's understanding of obediential potency thus: "Obediential potency is defined by Lonergan, not by invoking the aspect of nonrepugnance, but by the implications of the words themselves. It is an obediential potency only in so far as it can be actuated by God alone – in 'obedience' to his power. On the one hand, this potency is understood as more than nonrepugnance; every potency has some relationship to its eventual act, even if it can be actuated only by the Creator. On the other hand, obediential potency does not differ intrinsically from a natural potency; the only difference is extrinsic, namely, in the power of God. Such potency is described by Lonergan as a remote passive potency for the vision of God. If one contrasts this account with de Lubac's, despite a number of common points arising out of their sense of the dynamism of the mind, a crucial point of difference arises once one considers what reality is to be granted to the natural order of things, even within the present supernatural order" ("De Lubac and Lonergan," 517-518).

[85] "De Lubac and Lonergan," 516-517, quoting Lonergan's *Phenomenology and Logic*.

[86] See Bernard J. F. Lonergan, *A Third Collection: Papers*, ed. Frederick E. Crowe (New York: Paulist, 1985), 23-34.

> acquire a higher finality (in our case, the beatific vision) that does not eliminate but elevates and fulfils on a higher plane its original horizontal finality.[87]

Such precision with regard to the species of finality also guards against the essentialist vision of the universe as "a series of noncommunicating strata," wherein *finis* is conceived merely in terms of what is demanded by a nature that is proportionate to it.[88]

Therefore, Lonergan does not fall into the essentialist trap of conceiving ends solely in terms of static nature, nor does he allow nature to be subsumed by the supernatural. Moloney, however, attempts to align Lubac with Rahner's "supernatural existential" and to relativize the differences between this proposal and Lonergan's in light of the latter's later shift toward intentionality analysis.[89] But while discussing the notions of sublation and emergent probability from Lonergan's *Insight*, a work that represents a kind of meeting point between Lonergan's early Thomistic analyses and his later existential-phenomenological investigations, Moloney justifies the objectification of religious experience (which Lonergan discusses on the level of interiority as the feeling of being-loved unconditionally) into the theoretical categories of natural and supernatural. Although he lists Rahner's proposal as a companion to Lonergan's (in effect, seeking to initiate a truce between Lonergan and Lubac through a Rahnerian lense, without discussing the latter's ideas),[90] he reconciles the essential and existential considerations of Lonergan thus:

> In this notion [of sublation] the key aspect is the way the higher level preserves the lower level in going beyond it. This is the pattern we have already seen in the relationship of natural to supernatural, and in particular how the orientation to a natural end is not suppressed but preserved by being fulfilled in a higher way. The natural end of human nature can be considered under two aspects. One is that of the orientation of nature to its

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[87] "De Lubac and Lonergan," 519.
[88] "De Lubac and Lonergan," quoting *Phenomenology and Logic*, 349.
[89] See "De Lubac and Lonergan," 522-524.
[90] See "De Lubac and Lonergan," 526, where he cites Rahner's essay, "Concerning the Relationship of Nature and Grace" in *Theological Investigations*, vol. 1.

> natural end; the other is that of the natural end itself as an actual state. De Lubac's attention has been predominantly on the latter, which he regards as so illusory in the present world order that it is not worth serious consideration. His dismissal of it is so sweeping that the natural orientation to that end seems to be dismissed as equally irrelevant. For Lonergan and other authors [Rahner], the point about the natural orientation is always relevant at least as a structure of the concrete, whether it is ever fulfilled in an actual state or not. In brief and in the concrete, the supernatural order sublates the natural . . . and our Christian desire for the beatific vision sublates our natural desire for God.[91]

The notion of sublation, based upon the distinction between different levels of finality, which are present even in the natural world, is also related to the evolutionary principle of 'emergent probability.' According to statistical laws, certain discontinuities become resolved spontaneously through complexification, given adequate opportunities for such development. While statistical laws cannot be applied in any real sense to divine action, Moloney utilizes the analogy in a manner that hints at the relationship between God's self-diffusive free love and man's inherent potential for self-transcendence:[92]

> If, however, one understands the emergence of the supernatural, not according to classical and necessary laws, but according to statistical laws and schemes of probability, then one can retain the intelligibility de Lubac was reaching for while disowning any intrinsic and necessary ordination of natural to supernatural. In this case, of course, the probability lies only minimally in the natural orientation of the human mind. According to the general pattern of obediential potency, the key factor has to lie extrinsically in the goodness of a loving God, where any predisposition in our favor cannot be more than a question of probability. Because God is love, one could conceive of a probability that he will raise his rational creatures to a supernatural destiny in the love of friendship, but it is no more a necessity in God than that there is a necessity in him to create the best possible world.[93]

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[91] "De Lubac and Lonergan," 525-526.

[92] Perhaps, 'probability' can serve as an earthly analogy for what Norris Clarke calls more aptly, in line with Bonaventure, the 'inevitability' of God's loving acts (see *Explorations in Metaphysics*, 108-109). I think this kind of approach to divine freedom, as transcending both created freedom and necessity, sheds light upon the deeper reason for why Lonergan is able to call the "theorem" of pure nature a "marginal theorem," while still maintaining the significance of the fact that God is not constrained to elevate free creatures to the supernatural order (for which he argues on a slightly different basis).

[93] "De Lubac and Lonergan," 525.

Just as it appears most fitting for the God of infinite love to elevate man to supernatural dignity, even though there cannot be any "necessity" for Him to do so, conversely, it would also seem rather unfitting for God to abandon human beings to inevitable self-destruction because the first man and woman decided to turn away from Him. The overarching theme of divine revelation is not how God came to save the few from a torturous hell to which the rest are unfortunately destined by virtue of the fallen natures they inherited, but that "where sin abounded, grace abounded more" (Rom 5:20). Affirming that God cares for every free creature with infinite compassion in Christ does not, however, imply that He will not allow men to reject His offer of glory on their own accord. Thus, there is a need for some kind of moderation between an optimism regarding man's relationship to God, to which Balthasar and Rahner are prone, and a pessimism regarding human nature and divine judgment, in which others seem to languish.

H. Rosalind Smith proffers a critique of Maritain's treatment of the question of the origin of moral evil in the free creature's nihilating inititative.[94] She concedes his distinction, following Thomas, between the two ontological moments of *negatio* (or non-consideration of the rule) and *privatio* (or election of an evil deed), but she discerns an over-emphasis on the first moment as cause of the second moment such that man's collective culpability for the "primordial sin" is diminished and the role of divine judgment for sin, manifest in concupiscence, is not taken sufficiently into consideration. Although at points apparently siding with Nicolas' rebuttals of Maritain's proposed metaphysical alternative to the theory of infallible antecedent permissive

[94] *Man's "Conquest of Liberty" and the Problem of Evil: A Study of the Meaning of Salvation in the Writings of Jacques Maritain*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America, 1979), cc. 5 and 7.

decrees,[95] her strong critique of Maritain's thomistic metaphysics of moral evil is that he focuses too much on the inevitability of finite freedom failing to consider the rule of reason and not enough on the evil election itself, toward which man is inclined by nature (consequent to the fall), to the point of neglecting to consider how God may justly abandon men to themselves, according to Thomas' understanding of guilt and punishment for sin. Preoccupied with defending divine innocence in the face of great moral evil plaguing the modern world, "Maritain tends to postulate of every evil act the conditions proper to the primordial act" and demonstrates an "unwillingness to admit that God could in any way will to abandon man to himself alone."[96] She concedes that "Maritain follows St. Thomas very carefully in his answer to this problem [of the metaphysical root of evil acts]. What Thomas says, essentially, is that the defect or deficiency which is the root of the evil act is in the will itself, but in the will *as not acting*."[97] But, at the same time, she relates a number of texts of Thomas that seem to undermine Maritain's emphatic defense of divine innocence,[98] and she seems to conclude from these that the distinction between

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[95] See her footnotes on 287-289, 292-294, 301ff. Appearing to contradict the content of these footnotes, she explicitly states: "Maritain succeeds in establishing the absolute innocence of God, within his metaphysics of the evil moral act" (284). But the general thrust of her argument is precisely that such a metaphysical explanation does not take into account the effects of the "primordial sin" upon human nature. Hence, she states: "A theological difficulty remains . . . [i]t is that the mera negatio, the non-culpable, non-consideration—anterior-in-time to the instant of privation, remains, in Maritain's theory, the cause of the loss of grace" (289 [emphasis original]).

[96] Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 252.

[97] Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 280 (emphasis added). She sums up Maritain's thomistic reasoning thus: "The defect cannot be in the nature of the being (in this case- -the will), for the resulting evil action would then not be free and voluntary. The defect must be in the will itself, but not in the nature of the will" (280).

[98] For example, here is part of the text quoted from *ST* I-II, q. 79, a. 1: "it happens that God does not give some the assistance whereby they may avoid sin, which assistance were He to give, they would not sin. But He does all this according to the order of His wisdom and justice since He Himself is Wisdom and Justice; so that if someone sin it is not imputable to Him as though He were the cause of that sin" (Smith, 283n11). She seems to think that texts like these substantiate Nicolas' arguments against Maritain's objection to infallible permissive decrees, but they can certainly be understood in other manners. Certainly, God could give grace indefinitely to a man

negatio and *privatio* really does not provide an explanation for the origin of moral evils, given man's connatural inclination to sin.

Without entering into exegesis of Thomas' comments on these questions, it may be conceded that Maritain does not broach the detailed analysis of the psychological causes of human sin in the present state of concupiscence, and yet the implication that his metaphysical analysis is therefore not in accord with a thomistic view of fallen nature is not substantiated. She argues that there is in Maritain an "undue isolation of the cause of sin in the first ontological moment of the free evil act" to the neglect of the particular internal and external causes of sin, analyzed by Thomas in the *Prima Secundae*.[99] But why would a focus upon the metaphysical cause of moral evil detract from the psychological mechanisms of sin in the present world? Perhaps Maritain should have addressed this aspect of the question as well, but his neglect to do so does not negate in any way the conclusions obtained regarding the power of nihilation that belongs to creaturely freedom and the problems with the contrary theory of infallible permissive decrees.

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in order to prevent him from committing sin, but ordinarily He does not. Why? It need not be because God is "abandoning" man to his own sinful inclinations so as to create a cosmos in which some condemn themselves and others enjoy divine glory. God could overcome creaturely resistance (or better, prevent it altogether), but ordinarily He does not precisely because He wants men to learn through the experience of their fallenness to rely only on Him. This reality, and the fact that God orders all things that actually occur to their ultimate end by His wisdom, wherein His justice (as well as His mercy!) is expressed, does not in the least conflict with Maritain's explanation of nihilation as the free initiative of man (in need of no antecedent decree except the general permission that makes sin possible). She, therefore, simplifies the issue when she concludes that "[St. Thomas implies] a positive will to abandon man to himself alone, according to the justice and wisdom of God" (284). If by "abandon," she means to indicate the permission of sin already willed, I am at a loss as to how Maritain's "isolation of the cause of sin in the first ontological moment of the free evil act" is "undue," creating an "imbalance in relation to the 'Innocence of God'" (284). As Smith herself states in presenting Maritain's position: "The fact that [man] is abandoned to himself alone in the sinful choice is not <u>anterior</u> to foreseen demerits, but rather <u>posterior</u> to his 'fore'-seen demerits—after his having withdrawn from grace, after his having shattered the divine motion" (Smith, 237 [emphasis original]).

[99] Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 285.

While Thomas does analyze how one sin may be the origin of another in terms of efficient, material, and final-formal causality,[100] Smith seems to confuse the ontological and psychological orders when addressing how "one sin can be the cause of another sin."[101] Even though sins may prepare the way for other sins in various manners, there is still only one ultimate deficient reason for the emergence of the morally evil act, namely, the nonbeing that has its origin in finite freedom. Hence, much of Smith's difficulty with Maritain's explanation of the ultimate metaphysical origin of morally evil acts has to do with her lack of a metaphysics of nonbeing, which is founded upon a phenomenological taxonomy of diverse kinds of absence.[102] Nevertheless, the core of her critique directly concerns the question of concupiscence potentially inclining human nature always to negate or not consider the rule of reason, in which case we are dealing with an essentially theological question, namely, whether concupiscence is a wound in human nature that brinks on total corruption.

Behind whatever "accidental efficient cause" of sin (e.g., ignorance, debility, passion) is the ultimate deficient cause existing in the free will of man, and since man's nature is not totally corrupt by the effects of the primordial sin, he maintains the power either to nihilate divine grace or not in any given moment, resulting either in the privative election of a finite good over the infinite good or in reception of the divine power whereby good acts are performed.[103] Instead of

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[100] See *ST* I-II, q. 75, a. 4, cited by Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 325n49.
[101] Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 286.
[102] This point was covered briefly in the chapter on the *de auxiliis* debate. For a more detailed account of such a requisite metaphysics, see Jesús Villagrasa Lasaga, *Realismo Metafísico e irrealidad*, which I present elsewhere in a very condensed fashion (see Brotherton, "Phenomenology and Metaphysics").
[103] Hence, the confusion of orders is apparent when she states: "it is necessary that there be a deficient cause accounted for – an accidental efficient cause which is reducible to the act – and thus the inordinateness of the act is 'a result of the cause of the act.' St. Thomas does not seek the cause of sin in the simple negation, as it would exist in the first ontological moment apart from the act, as does Maritain" (290). The fact that Maritain does not address the contingent

locating the ultimate reason for moral evil in the nonacts of the created will, according to which sin is a surd (i.e., intrinsically unintelligible), the neo-Bañezian school (with which Smith seems to sympathize in Nicolas) subscribes to the idea that God's free will must be the ultimate reason for every evil act and thus whenever a man sins it is because he has been abandoned by God's inscrutable designs. Smith does not openly defend the system of infallible permissions as such, but it is the logical conclusion for one who asserts (without argument) that "[t]heologically speaking, it is impossible that any divine motion not attain its effect or its term infallibly,"[104] which is implicitly to exclude the very possibility of frustrable grace or conditional divine decrees (that is, "premotions" that can be impeded by created obstacles generally permitted).

Smith, therefore, (with Nicolas) entertains doubts about how divine providence could be trusted as efficacious, if every nihilation that actually occurs is not planned by Him.[105] Leaving aside difficulties in explaining divine foreknowledge, which William Most treats most adequately (at least, out of the authors examined in this dissertation), it can be affirmed that every evil that occurs in some sense belongs to divine providence both because God could will to prevent any and all evils (by His 'extraordinary will') and because He wills precisely that the free creature determine the 'evil specification' of the privative realities enacted. Divine providence need not mean that God pre-determines every action, negation, and privation in advance, but that all things are permitted in view of some future known only to Him. Hence, Maritain can say (with St. Paul), "grace and mercy superabound there where, through the free

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factors influencing election of the evil act does not deter from the truth that every moral privation ultimately originates in a prior ontological negation.

[104] Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 230.

[105] See, e.g., Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 307n30.

nihilation of the human will, frustrating God's 'antecedent' will, the offense abounded."[106] Thus, it would not be exactly correct to state (as Smith puts in the mouth of Maritain): "in the ordinary course of events, it is not 'both man who raises an obstacle, and God who of his own accord withholds His grace,' that is the cause of the loss of grace, but only man who raises an obstacle by his free nihilation, his non-consideration of the rule."[107] Every proposed evil crosses the desk of the Creator for 'approval,'[108] as it were, and yet God does not plan for sins x and y to be committed – that is, at least ordinarily, the work of the fallible free creature alone. Smith charges that, according to this view (of Maritain's), "the free nihilation itself, is not subject to the consequent will of God, either as willed, or as permitted."[109] On the contrary, the consequent will of God encompasses everything, beings and nonbeings alike (even if the two are encompassed in diverse manners). It is indeed true that "everything that is is ordered to drawing

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[106] See Maritain, *Philosophy of History* (London: Geoffrey Bles Ltd., 1959), 90, cited by Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 249.

[107] Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 313. Smith reaches this conclusion after paraphrasing Thomas' position thus: "To will to abandon man to himself alone is no more to cause him to sin, than to leave him with the inclinations of his fallen nature is to cause him to sin. In both cases – the one whereby God wills not to give some the assistance whereby they might avoid sin, and the other whereby God wills not to cure the sensuality which inclines to sin – St. Thomas indicates an absolute liberty on the part of God to choose to withhold His grace as part of His providential plan for man" (312-313 [emphasis original]). The point is valid as far as it goes, but it certainly does not warrant the necessity of infallible permissive decrees. I should clarify as well that, while Maritain wants to exclude the possibility of infallible permissive decrees altogether as implicating God in moral evil, I would not want to state categorically that infallible permissions are impossible, but I do agree with William Most that the loving God of revelation would never think to condemn free creatures to eternal punishment by (an infallible decree of) 'negative reprobation.' And since evil acts are the means by which free creatures merit condemnation, it would seem quite unfitting for God to decree the performance of particular evil acts, at least ordinarily.

[108] The analogy is, of course, imperfect because God's knowledge of evils, in a sense, precedes their actual existence precisely insofar as He knows all (contingent) nonbeings in His eternal comprehension of all beings.

[109] Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 298.

man to God,"[110] but that is precisely missing the point – *negatio* is not, by definition, and yet it has real repercussions, another kind of nonbeing, namely, moral evils (or privation).[111]

Smith seems to think that although the metaphysical distinction between *negatio* and *privatio* is correct, fallen man is in need of infrustrable (or infallible) grace in order to avoid 'not considering the rule,'[112] in which case Maritain's explanation applies only to the primordial sin since concupiscence offsets man's nature, as it were, perpetually in the direction of not considering the rule.[113] Although Smith reports many good questions raised by Nicolas in his debate with Maritain, many of which were addressed on the basis of the existence of species of nonbeing in chapter five above (with the help of William Most and later, in chapter six, with Bernard Lonergan), Maritain's approach, which centers around the "dissymmetry between the line of good and the line of evil," need not be infallible in its particulars. Maritain's works on the matter are a mere introduction to the voluminous writings of Francisco Marín-Sola.[114] Regardless of whether the "point of entry" for moral evil is precisely non-consideration of the rule or simply "negative non-resistance" (as in Most), Francisco Marín-Sola answers every possible objection regarding the impedibility of sufficient grace, and he provides a keen analysis

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[110] Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 334.

[111] Therefore, it can be affirmed with Thomas that "every evil that God does, or permits to be done, is directed to some good. . . ." (*ST* I-II, q. 79, a. 4, ad 1, cited by Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 335). First, when Thomas speaks of God doing evil, he is not referring to moral evil (but to evils such as guilt, death, natural disasters, etc.). Secondly, the fact that every evil is permitted by God does not mean He infallibly permits every evil, but that every evil that actually occurs could have been prevented but evidently was not; hence, moral evils in general are permitted by divine providence, but they are not antecedently willed in their particularity.

[112] See, e.g., Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 305n28.

[113] See Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 292-294.

[114] Much of his manuscripts addressing the matter in ever more detail remains unpublished: see Michael Torre, *Do Not Resist the Spirit's Call* and *God's Permission of Sin*. His familiarity with both the writings of Thomas and the great many thomistic commentators is unmatched.

of the Catholic balancing act with respect to the impact of concupiscence upon human nature.[115] While Jansenists and Calvinists hold that man's nature is totally corrupt consequent to the original sin such that it is incapable of performing any good without the aid of irresistible (i.e., infallible) grace and the Pelagians hold that man in his present state is capable of performing all good acts without special divine aid, the Catholic teaching is that man's nature is only wounded, not destroyed, such that everyone is capable of performing any particular good act by the natural power of his free-will, but he is in need of divine grace in order to perservere in such good to the end and in order to avoid venial sins habitually.[116] She certainly seems to be endorsing (albeit unwittingly) the Jansenist-Calvinist view of total corruption when she states: "That the reason can fail to consider the rule is a consequence of fallible created nature. That it does fail to do so – *infallibly, without grace* – is a result, not only of fallible created nature, but of fallen, wounded nature."[117]

Regardless of the details of one's particular interpretation of the consequences of the original sin upon human nature revealed in Rom 5-9 (e.g., Most's critique of Augustine's *massa damnata*), it is certainly an excessively pessimistic view (and, at least tacitly, one not consonant with current Catholic teaching) to think every sin following the original sin is pre-determined by concupiscence (in the absence of irresistible grace), a view that neither Maritain nor Balthasar

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[115] See, e.g., "Nuevas observaciones," 324-329, 353-357, 366-367, 380-383.

[116] Smith even endorses this view, at least in part, without realizing it when she quotes the following from Thomas: "In the state of corrupt nature it is accordingly not within the power of free choice to avoid all sins of this sort [venial sins], because they escape its act, although *it can prevent any particular one of those movements if it makes the effort against it.* But it is not possible for man continuously to make the contrary effort to avoid movements of this kind on account of the various occupations of the human mind and the rest required for it" (*De Veritate*, v. 3, q. 24, a. 12, cited by Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 320 [emphasis added]). If this is the case with venial sins, which are more difficult to resist than mortal sins, then certainly man ordinarily has the power to resist every mortal sin, given the availability of sufficient grace to everyone (as God does not "command the impossible"), whether through sacramental or extraordinary means.

[117] Smith, *The Problem of Evil*, 314 (underlining original, italics added).

takes.[118] Questions of biblical interpretation are never-ending; and one might say the same about the speculative debates surrounding the *de auxiliis* controversy. Bernard Lonergan attacks the Bañezian approach to grace and predestination on the grounds of 'physical premotion,' which he demonstrates to be both essential to the Bañezian system and untenable as a metaphysical explanation of the efficacy of the divine will. Robert Matava presents yet another approach to the question, agreeing with Lonergan's critique of the Bañezian view (and with the broader rejection of infallible permissions as an explanation of the surd that is moral evil),[119] but objecting to his interpretation of Thomas on fate and providence as obliquely deterministic, proposing in its stead an understanding of divine creation *ex nihilo* as all-pervasive. The details of the discrepant accounts (e.g., between Most and Marín-Sola, Lonergan and Matava) of how best to formulate the precise ways in which grace, freedom, predestination, and foreknowledge relate to one another cannot be resolved here (and may not even be resolvable). But one thing remains clear amidst all these analyses (and others): God does not plan for men to resist His grace (at least, not definitively) and there is no need for infallible antecedent permissive decrees (which the neo-Bañezians purport to be necessary).

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[118] Although Balthasar does not seem to take this pessimistic view of fallen human nature, he falls prey to the same problems as the Bañezians insofar as he agrees with Smith that, "Sin, according to St. Thomas, far from being an obstacle and impediment in God's plan of Salvation, is ordered to man's realization of his hopelessness in himself, so that he will seek the grace of Christ in and through his union with Him. Sin, then, is permitted by God for the purpose of drawing man into a deeper relationship with God" (*The Problem of Evil*, 354). While she grants Maritain's explanation of the entry of moral evil into the world, she apparently counteracts her rejection of his account of moral evil in fallen man with an optimism regarding divine providence with respect to the end of salvation, as if all sins are ordered to man's fulfillment). Balthasar, not considering Maritain's proposal, does not discriminate between divine permission in a pre- vs. post-lapsarian world and adopts the same optimism in order to avoid what appears to be the inevitable conclusion of metaphysical speculation on the grace-freedom dynamic, the Bañezian position, which in general also does not discriminate between pre- and post-lapsarian contingency upon divine grace for meritorious deeds.

[119] See his *Divine Causality and Human Free Choice*, 98-99. He focuses on the larger problematic rather than the particular question of the divine permission of moral evil.

Although Lonergan's treatment of *gratia operans* as such hits in a somewhat peripheral way upon the particular topic of moral evil in relation to the divine will, Jacques Maritain's more concentrated attempt to make sense of divine permission (à la Francisco Marín-Sola) was primarily engaged throughout the dissertation (with some help from William Most, who confesses to holding essentially the same position as Maritain). While the thought of Maritain and of Balthasar appear to converge at particular points,[120] their systems clash over the relationship between grace and freedom, particularly, the way in which divine permission of moral evil is to be explained.[121] But it is unclear whether Balthasar even read Maritain's work on the matter (or the others who came to the same fundamental conclusions);[122] at least, he chose not to comment on the relevant twentieth century conversations. Nonetheless, at least on one occasion, almost hinting at Maritain's defense of divine innocence, he seems to voice the concerns of Bañezian thomists, treating Nikolai Berdyaev: "[Nikolai Berdyaev] was attempting to relieve God of responsibility for evil and to preserve man's full autonomy; but this notion practically destroys the second pole of finite freedom (since man is no longer under a divine norm) and robs God of his omnipotence in order to preserve his goodness."[123] But at another

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[120] Balthasar's utilization of Maritain is touched upon in chapter three above. Maritain's quasi-Balthasarian comments have also been cited; see *On the Grace and Humanity of Jesus*, 61, and "Beginning with a Reverie," 11n13.

[121] Matthew Levering also acknowledges this point but critiques both approaches as excessively kataphatic (see *Predestination*, c. 5).

[122] Another piece of evidence besides what follows that Balthasar may have encountered something of what I have called the 'new proposal' (regarding the grace-freedom dynamic) is his reference to the work of Francisco Marín-Sola on the "evolución homogénea" of Catholic dogma in *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, vol. 1, *Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, eds. Joseph Fessio, S.J., and John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982), 554.

[123] *TD* IV, 149 [G 136-137]. He goes on to say, "Thus Berdyaev is compelled to adopt a Gnostic tone and speak of a 'tragedy of God'. An annihilating abyss of freedom…" Leaving aside the peculiarities of Berdyaev's thought, which Balthasar rejects emphatically, Balthasar himself often explicitly speaks of tragedy in the theo-drama. Rahner makes the same criticism of him

point in the *Theodrama*, in an enigmatic section criticizing Karl Barth's angelology as "a way of re-Christianizing German Idealism, particularly Schleiermacher," he makes the following conspicuous comments, almost as if to nod toward Maritain's theory of nihilation (and/or Lonergan's treatment of sin as a surd rather than intelligible):

> [I]n reality this 'nothingness' [that, according to Barth, pervades creation] can only have its point of origin in the creature's free will . . . The theologoumenon of 'nothingness', however, which is not explained with reference to creaturely freedom (of choice) but is seen as arising from the mere denial and rejection of what is 'chaotic', 'alien' and 'hostile to God', is untenable.[124]

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precisely on this point, concerning impassibility and immutability (see *Karl Rahner in Dialogue: Conversations and Interviews, 1965-1982*, 126-127). I have also argued that Balthasar's approach to the grace-freedom dynamic led him to over-compensate for the deficiencies of such a rigid perspective by taking a weak position on divine impassibility, according to which the suffering of the world actually exists in a super-eminent fashion in God's own being rather than affecting God indirectly as the one who permits finite freedom to nihilate the movements of the "hound of heaven" (i.e., the almost endless graces He offers to each of His beloved). This passage could also indicate his overall tendency to reject (at least implicitly) the possibility that God's creative project may in the end be tragic (i.e., that some are condemned) as infinitely improbable.

[124] *TD* III, 483 [G 443-444]. The assessment of Barth's Christology that follows in this text is quite obscure. Again, although Balthasar does not fully escape Barth's extreme Augustinian view of the grace-freedom dynamic, at one point he seems to criticize Augustine's treatment of evil, but it is unclear if he wants to accuse him of a tendency to over-systematize (akin to Origen or Hegel, which is precisely Ratzinger's criticism): "This 'not nothing' [diabolical contr-diction] engendered the speculations of Manicheism; Augustine can escape them only by interpreting evil as a *privatio boni* [privation of the good] that can have no *causa efficiens* [efficient cause], only a *causa deficiens* [deficient cause]. In this way, what being remains to the subject of the privation could still be integrated into the graded, temporally unfolding unity and beauty of the whole. But can sin, which openly contradicts the truth and, therefore, beauty, be incorporated into the structure of the – logical! – whole in this way, unless it be inwardly over- or 'under'-taken in some for now altogether unforeseeable manner? The Cross of Christ has in fact brought this about" (*TL* II, 323 [G 294]). Here, he seems to imply that his theology of the descent is the solution to the problem of the meaning of evil, but he also refers to his doctrine of "undergirding," which is the *raison d'etre* for the redemptive descent. He does want to replace the Protestant doctrine of double predestination with a Christology that confesses the virtual identity of economic and immanent Trinity as well as a soteriology of *admirabile commercium* (see *TL* II, 344-345 [G 314]), but none of that explicates the relationship between grace and freedom (that is, an adequate theological anthropology), leading inevitably to subjunctive universalism without such.

In any case, Balthasar certainly did not develop this point, and this dissertation serves to demonstrate how, if he had, it would have wreaked havoc upon his proclivity toward universalism, even if merely "subjunctive."

Drawing on the conclusion to the entire *Theo-Drama*, Geoffrey Wainwright fittingly links the themes of universalism and predestination:

> Has God, then, predestined *all* to beatitude? Such could seem to override the freedom of the creature (at least the human creature). A universalist outlook has to face the problem of a 'forced' salvation in its most extensive and stubborn form. . . . [human beings] are created not just to be free for any goal that might happen to suggest itself, but *for the sake of* participation in the divine life. . . . then the question becomes: how can finite freedom be 'contained' within, or 'held' by, infinite freedom – without being overwhelmed? . . . 'God gives man the capacity to make a (negative) choice against God that seems *for man* to be definitive, but which need not be taken *by God* as definitive' (*ET* 4, 421). Or as Edith Stein puts it, 'Human freedom can be neither short-circuited nor tuned out by divine freedom; but it may well be, so to speak, outwitted' (quoted favourably in *DWH*, 221). Balthasar refuses to say whether God can really 'lose the game of creation through the creature's free choice to be lost' (2*SW*, 51). But if Edith Stein is right, God is a pretty resourceful player; he may even, in Stein's account, bend the rules – which are, in any case, his own. So after all this gambling, what does God *stand to gain*? That is the very question with which Balthasar . . . closes the curtain on the 'last act' of his *Theo-Drama*.[125]

Hence, toward the end of his work on Balthasar's eschatology, Healy ingeniously points to the central problem with this part of Balthasar's Trilogy, without discerning it to be a problem: "The loss of a portion of humanity, although a real possibility, would be an unspeakable tragedy for God. *Against various positions in the history of theology that set limits on hope because of a false notion of limited predestination*, Balthasar situates the true form of hope within the universal mission of Christ."[126]

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[125] "Eschatology" in *Cambridge Companion*, 124-125.

[126] Healy, *Being as Communion*, 216 (emphasis added); cf. "On Hope, Heaven, and Hell," 80. In support of the possibility (surely abstract) of such a divine loss, Balthasar interprets a passage of Speyr thus: "[Speyr] describes hell as a 'preserve' of the Father, in the sense that, as Creator (indeed, as generator of the Son, in whom he has always already conceived every possible world) he foresaw, and took responsibility for, the possibility of the creature's freedom and, given the

Confronting Subjunctive Universalism

Throughout *Dare*, Balthasar criticizes the Augustinian restriction of the object of theological hope to the elect alone, consequent upon his restriction of salvation to a few, as "knowing too much."[127] But it would be easy to make the same criticism of Balthasar in a slightly different way: not only does he seem to know "too much" about the inner workings of

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abuse of this freedom, of its eternal perishing" (*TL* II, 352 [G 321]). Oakes summarizes Balthasar's treatment of the problem thus: "[Balthasar's] own last trump, so to speak, but one that is quite arresting: *if even a single human being is eternally lost by rejecting God and his holy grace, then God has lost the gamble he made with himself when he first created a universe of free beings who were made to receive that love freely*. The universe was not created, even partially, *for* damnation (this is the grotesque absurdity of double predestination, and Balthasar is quite right to condemn it outright). . . . Now here is the real issue: how far can the finite No reach? Balthasar is quite right on both sides of the dilemma: on the one hand, *if* a soul is lost, God has also lost his 'gamble' with himself when he first made the world and set free beings within it; on the other, when we fell and lost his fellowship through disobedience, he restored his friendship with us by sending his Son, *which only increased the disobedience and hatred.* Now how far can that go? Balthasar attempts to answer this question (for which he admits there is no real 'answer' while we yet remain *under* judgment) . . ." (*Pattern of Redemption*, 314 [emphases original]). Likewise, despite citing Sachs' article in support of various points, Margaret Turek seems to hold a more Ratzingerian position when she says, "if among the 'all' that is handed over by the Son there is included a human heart hardened against God, in such a case it may be that the omnipotent powerlessness of the trinitarian God is demonstrated in the freedom to endure all things as an expression of unsurpassable love" ("Dare We Hope," 111). Yet, immediately preceding this remark she says the following: "Yet even as we grant the open-endedness of human freedom's situation under judgment, we must affirm nonetheless that the last word concerning the expression of God's Fatherhood in the economy of salvation belongs to the relationship between the Father and the incarnate Son, in which relationship we see the identity of omnipotence and powerlessness as it originates in paternal love to be generative of a divine-human filial correspondence that will culminate . . ." ("Dare We Hope," 111). I cannot help but think that, given her disingenuous claims that Ratzinger conforms to Balthasar's universalism, she is here trying to forge a unity between the two possibilities (namely, that God suffers the loss of some and that God triumphantly saves all), as Balthasar himself does, by suggesting that His "loss" of some is itself suffered in Christ redemptively such that, in the end, all will be reconciled or so it is hoped, theologically (and therefore efficaciously).

[127] Oakes recounts Balthasar's argument thus: "But if we already *know* [that men are in hell], then what becomes of hope, the hope expressed in the Church's constant prayers, especially on Good Friday for the salvation of every human being ever born? And for him, 'it is precisely the *knowing* (about the ultimate futility of the Cross) that renders impossible this state of suspension of those on pilgrimage'" (*Pattern of Redemption*, 308 [emphasis original]).

the Trinity, but he purports to know how best to reconcile two apparently conflicting affirmations, namely, that God loves every human being infinitely and that free creatures maintain the ability to reject such love definitively.[128] It would seem scripture itself should provide a resolution to the aporia (or at least, hints toward coherence), even though alongside the texts that seem to imply universal salvation one can place just as many (in fact, probably more) texts in which definitive self-condemnation is asserted as a reality. O'Hanlon paraphrases the "irresolvable tension" Balthasar discerns between the "two sets of texts" in scripture:

> The incompleteness of the eschatological solution lay in the NT tension between the assertion of the efficacy, through Christ's cross, of God's will that all be saved and the continuing possibility of our damnation. . . . First, it cannot be the case that God is merely indifferent to our ultimate fate, that his glory is proclaimed equally by either our salvation or our damnation. Secondly, it is clear that with whatever pain and suffering there is in God, with whatever distinction one makes between its immanent and economic characteristics, God remains eternally happy and omnipotent. . . . *it would seem that the concurrence of these two points must favour the salvation of all. And so it does.* Nonetheless this conclusion, as we have seen, cannot be drawn with certainty. Balthasar does not speculate as to whether the compatibility of something like infinite pain with God's eternal joy and victory might allow for the existence of some creatures in hell.[129]

O'Hanlon also reluctantly puts his finger on Balthasar's covert way of resolving the "tension" between the purported two strands of New Testament texts (given much ado in *Dare*):

> Balthasar moves cautiously in this area [of reconciling the two different sets of data with regard to the final outcome of the relationship in hiostry between humankind and God (73)], clearly sympathetic to the modern tendency towards something like an apocatastasis teaching, and yet firmly committed to retaining the reality for us of the second possibility mentioned above [of self-condemnation]. The scriptural evidence of a

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[128] See Levering, *Predestination*, especially c. 6. One might argue, then, that at the heart of Balthasar's tendency toward universalism, despite his cautions against Barth's "over-confidence," is too much kataphaticism or a lack of proper apophaticism, which is discernible in his rejection of Erich Przywara's dictum, from the Fourth Lateran Council, that in every predicate applied to God there is greater dissimiliarity than similarity (see, e.g., *TL* II, 95n16 [G 87n16]). See also Zeitz, "Przywara and von Balthasar." One might argue that I also fall into the error attributed to Balthasar here by proposing a more defined understanding of the grace-freedom dynamic. Rather, my purpose is to deconstruct the inadequate framework Balthasar assumes and to point to more coherent options.

[129] O'Hanlon, *The Immutability of God*, 76-77 (emphasis added).

> God who comes not to judge but to save indicates that God would only condemn us if there were no good at all in our lives to relativise what we might judge to be our definitive rejection of God. However, one must still grant the possibility of such a condemnation, or, rather, of God's respect for our definitive rejection of him. . . . [Balthasar] suggests a difference between the eternities of heaven, hell, and the state of Jesus on the cross, such that the condemned sinner may experience the definitive timelessness, the isolated *nunc stans*, of being forsaken by God and yet – because hell is a NT, christological place also in the sense that Christ's cross is raised at the far side of it – still be separated from his sin and transferred into the quite different, inclusive supra-time of the eternity of heaven. . . . since Balthasar wants to retain the traditional position that there can be no repentance of a definitive choice after death, it is not clear (*unless one supposes some experience of hell in this life*) how and when the sinner condemned to hell may with his or her own free consent be saved by the cross of Christ.[130]

Thus, Balthasar's hope for universal salvation is not as formless as many suppose, but it is actually an explicit (although covert) hope for the conversion of every soul in the moment of death. This particular form of hope for universal salvation constitutes a tentative theory for how it may be possible for every soul to reach reconciliation with God, a theory based in part on the efficacy of grace and in part on the mysterious effects of Christ's descent (on the Cross) upon the temporal structure of human death: "the one who has timelessly closed himself off is opened up through the inescapable presence of another, who is just as timelessly near him and calls his presumptuous, seeming unapproachability into question."[131] This speculative (and purportedly theological!) hope, which flies under the radar of many a Balthasar scholar – that the possibility of self-exclusion from glory and the efficacy of the universal salvific will of God are reconciled

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[130] *The Immutability of God*, 74 (emphasis added).

[131] *Theodramatik* IV, 286, as translated by Sachs in "Current Eschatology," 244-245. Sachs also quotes from *The Von Balthasar Reader* the following excerpt from "Abstieg zur Hölle" (in *Explorations* IV): "[the abandoned Christ] disturbs the absolute loneliness striven for by the sinner: the sinner, who wants to be 'damned' apart from God, finds God again in his loneliness, but God in the absolute weakness of love who unfathomably in the period of noontime enters into solidarity with those damning themselves. The words of the Psalm, 'If I make my bed in the netherworld, thou art there' (Ps 139:8), thereby take on a totally new meaning" (see "Current Eschatology," 244). In this way, hell becomes a "gift of divine grace" (*Theodramatik* IV, 287f., 293, cited by Sachs, 244n76).

by an encounter of each sinner with the condemned Christ before that mysterious moment of definitive choice is closed – it is precisely a theory of the 'infinite probability' of universal salvation since the 'burden' of its realization lies purely on the side of God's infinite mercy.[132]

Balthasar justifies his theoretical attempts to make scripture cohere with his universalist arguments by appealing to the notion of mankind being presently (and therefore also at the time of Christ's preaching of hell) "under judgment" until the risen Christ is seen in His full glory at the end of time, drawing on the notorious idea of Barth that Christ alone is the reprobate so that

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[132] Although Edward Oakes is one of these scholars, he still points to the following passage from *Skizzen zur Theologie* as "the most crucial passage in all of Balthasar's treatment of this controversial subject" (*Pattern of Redemption*, 316): "There is a final question that arises at this point but which, after all that has been said, cannot be answered. How will the Judge behave toward those who come before him as ones who have turned away, who appear in the Gospel parables and other *logia* of Jesus as the ones whom he 'does not know', as the ones who have been 'rejected' and 'expelled' (Mt 22:13) and handed over to the powers of darkness? We do not know. We may ascribe a part of the definitive division of mankind into sheep and goats (as in Mt 25:31-46) to paranesis [catechetical pedagogy] – this is especially clear in Hebrews 6:4-12 – and another part supposedly to the form of eschatological black-and-white painting so common in the Old Testament. But there is still an unsettling residue that cannot be interpreted away. We can only go so far as to say: as Redeemer, God also respects the freedom that God, as Creator, has given to the creature and which gives the creature the freedom to resist God's love. This 'respect' means that God does not overpower, oppress or do violence to the precarious freedom of the creature by the omnipotence of his absolute freedom. It remains, however, to consider whether it still is not open to God to encounter the sinner who has turned away from him in the impotent form of the crucified brother who has been abandoned by God, and indeed in such a way that it becomes clear to the one who has turned away from God that: this One beside me who has been forsaken by God (like myself) has been abandoned by God for my sake. Now there can be no more talk of doing violence to freedom if God appears in the loneliness of the one who has chosen the total loneliness of living only for himself (or perhaps one should say: who thinks that is how he has chosen) and shows himself to be as the One who is still lonelier than the sinner. In order to see this, we must recall what was said at the outset, according to which the world has been founded in advance with all its freely chosen destinies in view of the mystery of the self-surrendering Son of God: whose descent is a priori deeper than the depths any lost person in the world can reach. Even what we call 'hell' – although it is indeed the place of reprobation – is still even more a christological place" (*Explorations* IV, 456-457 [G 443-444]). Margaret Turek, reflecting on passages in *TD* IV, appears to hold essentially the same interpretation of Balthasar here presented, that the grace of God is most likely to effect conversion in the moment of death for all who live in sin (see "Dare We Hope," 104-105, 111-112).

we who are naturally reprobate may be rendered "elect." He takes the idea that "whatever judgment will befall the human race, either collectively or individually, already resides entirely in the person of Jesus," and conjoins it with the fact that "Jesus admits *other co-judges* to join him in his role as Judge of the world" such that "the possibility of an economy of grace where intercessory prayers really count and we become bound to each other even across the borderline of death,"[133] taking effect through Christ's appearance in solidarity with every sinner before the Father completes the judgment already begun in life, justice being satisfied and giving way to mercy. But divine judgment cannot be transferred entirely to one's present state and/or to the end of time, and to pit mercy and justice in God against each other is a failure to account for the import of divine simplicity.

Balthasar apparently thinks this kind of approach is more pastorally sensitive and spiritually healthy. Oakes defends this assertion thus: "It is, I think, too little noticed how the command to hope for the salvation of all (and it *is* a command: 1 Tim 2:1-4) is intimately linked with the command to love one's enemies, and that a claim to 'know' that some are destined to hell will lead, by a short but inexorable logic, to a diminution of the love one should feel for one's enemies . . ."[134] Balthasar (and Oakes) is responding to those who argue that we can only pray for the salvation of the elect alone, as if our prayers cannot be instruments affecting who may be elect. Oakes blames the error that Balthasar attacks on a myopic focus upon the relationship between grace and freedom, and the proposed remedy is greater Christocentricity:

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[133] Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 314-315. He continues: "And finally – and this is the most revolutionary aspect of Balthasar's eschatology – he insists that when a person is condemned to hell, Jesus is still able to meet the one condemned, for he too has been there and can meet the sinner in solidarity with him. The passage where this is set out . . . I regard as the most crucial passage in all of Balthasar's treatment of this controversial subject [*Explorations* IV, 456-457 [G 443-444]" (316).

[134] *Pattern of Redemption*, 308.

"[I]t will be Balthasar's point that the pastoral crux of either lassitude-and-pride or anxiety-and-despair in regard to the doctrine of predestination has come from allowing the tension between finite and infinite freedom to be debated on its own terms rather than *in view of its ultimate resolution in Christ*."[135] Finally, the charge is sometimes made that rejecting Balthasar's arguments leads one to judge the souls of others rather than to focus upon the possibility of condemning oneself.[136]

Ralph Martin confronts Balthasar's (and Rahner's) universalist tendencies as detrimental to the new evangelization, founding his misgivings about the pastoral implications of the popularized theories upon the theoretical problems involved in such an eschatology. Although Martin misunderstands Balthasar's speculations regarding how universal conversion may play out and does not provide a firm theology of grace to replace that underlying such an eschatology,[137] he makes some significant points. Drawing largely on Schenk, O'Connor, and Flannery, Martin argues both that Balthasar's approach to scripture is mistaken and that his

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[135] *Pattern of Redemption*, 227. He continues: "In other words, unless we see how the antinomies of divine and human freedom are meant to culminate at that moment when Christ was 'made into sin' and became a 'curse' *for our sake*, we will forever be running aground on the dilemmas posed in the doctrine of predestination. . . . 'This plan always includes God's "answer" to every word that may possibly be uttered by finite freedom' (*TD* 2, 277)" (*Pattern of Redemption*, 227). It is the task of this dissertation precisely to rebut such a claim. Instead of leading to a sustainable eschatology, Balthasar's avoidance of the grace-freedom problem involves undermining the natural integrity of creaturely freedom and consequent universalism.

[136] See, for example, Sachs, "Current Eschatology," 254.

[137] For statements that Balthasar may be advocating post-mortem conversion, see *Will Many be Saved*, 162, 178, 275n123. The need for an adequate theology of grace for Martin's critique to be established on firm ground can be seen, for example, on 139, 142, and 172. Perhaps, this is simply a question Martin did not wish to address in the confined space, since does cite Thomas Joseph White, O'Connor, and Schenk each pointing out, at least parenthetically, that Balthasar seems to reject "the traditional distinction which says that God's will to save all men is not absolute but conditioned on their free cooperation" (O'Connor, "Von Balthasar and Salvation," 19, cited by Martin, 272n110).

arguments are theologically unsound, in the light of the Church's traditional understanding of the economy of salvation.

Regarding the testimony of scripture, Martin at one point states that "[w]hen the Scripture uses the future, indicative tense to communicate a meaning, it is specifically not making a conditional statement, and this is how the tradition has understood the statements in question [e.g., Matthew 25]."[138] But later, he clarifies that it is not entirely so indisputable that such prophetic parables cannot be interpreted as provisional or minatory, even if the "traditional" interpretation is more plausible. He concedes with O'Connor that the future indicative tense alone does not necessarily indicate information about the future: "It is true indeed that the future has not been described for us. Only enough has been revealed to stimulate our hope and desire, and to warn us that not all will share what is to be hoped for and desired. But the indications of what is to be hoped for, and the indications that not all will share those wonderful realities must be taken with equal seriousness."[139] He adds: "While we cannot judge the state of anyone's soul and what transpires at the moment of death, it certainly appears – from the view of human resistance to grace, and subsequent judgment, contained in the Scriptures and from empirical observation – that many people persevere to the end in their rejection of God and/or in a life of immorality."[140] He ultimately agrees with conclusions drawn by Flannery and O'Conner on the matter:

> [I]t is not just a theoretical possibility but probable, that many end up in hell. Flannery acknowledges that a case can be made that Scripture does not imply with the force of logical necessity that there are people in hell. He argues though that the overwhelming weight of Scripture and tradition 'approach logical necessity.' As O'Connor puts it, these passages and how they have been interpreted by the theological tradition and the magisterium lead us to *presume* that there will be many in hell, a presumption that the

[138] *Will Many be Saved*, 152.
[139] "Von Balthasar and Salvation," 18, cited by Martin, 153.
[140] *Will Many be Saved*, 155.

> Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures intends us to have . . . 'Against such a presumption one cannot have what is properly defined as *theological* hope, but we can and must have a human hope, a wish which expresses itself in prayer and zealous efforts, for the salvation of all' [O'Connor, "Von Balthasar and Salvation"].[141]

While there may be problems with Balthasar's exegetical methods, the real issue at the heart of his universalist interpretation is a conceptual one. Wanting to escape from neo-scholastic hair-splitting, Balthasar takes too broad a view of the reality of hope and infuses it with a discomfort for the idea that God might "fail" at bringing creation to the end for which it exists, salvation. Citing Wainwright and Oakes,[142] some comments of Martin hint at how Balthasar's universalist hope is his own answer to a problem that results from his understanding of God and His relationship to man in Christ: "Balthasar claims that . . . because the will of God is to save all men, and because of the nature of Christ's redemptive sacrifice, we not only can, but have the duty, out of Christian charity, to hope that every human being is saved."[143] Balthasar, therefore, rejects "[t]he solution that the theological tradition has taken in its meditation on the magnitude of the gift of eternal life . . . that a freely chosen relationship of love with God, necessarily 'running the risk' of human freedom, is somehow necessary for the greater good of the human race and the glory of God."[144]

Balthasar wants to avoid limiting the object of theological hope to "the chosen few," but he goes too far in the opposite direction. Not following Augustine in concluding from the revelation of eternally condemned angels that God's will for the salvation of all men is certainly

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[141] *Will Many be Saved*, 156.
[142] See *Will Many be Saved*, 164, citing *Patterns of Redemption*, 314, regarding the "gamble" God makes with Himself in creating. Wainwright writes: "Balthasar refuses to say whether God can really 'lose the game of creation through the creature's free choice to be lost' [*Two Say Why: "Why I am Still a Christian,"* 51]" ("Eschatology," *Cambridge Companion*, 125, cited by Martin, 265-266n24).
[143] *Will Many be Saved*, 165.
[144] *Will Many be Saved*, 166.

frustrated, Balthasar should have concluded from the revealed data that it is at least plausible, although perhaps not known with the certainty of faith, that some men definitively reject God's glory as well. Hence, Martin says:

> Even if one wanted to take a more cautious approach to interpretation than the tradition has, one would at least have to say that it is plausible that there are people in hell. Therefore, hope for the salvation of all would have to be restricted to those presently alive, and, of course, for the faithful departed and those 'whose faith is known to you alone.' We cannot properly have hope for those who departed this life persisting in their refusal of saving grace and faith, although only God knows who these are. And while we hope and work for the salvation of all those still alive, we do so knowing, based on the words of Jesus and the understanding of the tradition, that it is quite possible that many will refuse the offer of salvation and die unreconciled to God.[145]

While Martin appears hesitant to disagree with "the tradition," as if it were monolithic on the question, a point which he does not demonstrate, his tolerance for a kind of middle position is welcomed. Although he wants to argue that we can hope theologically only for the salvation of the living and the "faithful departed," it is important to note that he also wants to grant the possibility, at least in the abstract, that many who may appear to die in sin actually convert in a hidden manner before death definitively brings the soul to the seat of judgment.[146] Thus, Balthasar's problem consists more in attempting to rationalize the possibility of universal salvation than in objecting to the undue restriction of theological hope to the living, but the former effort affects the latter insofar as he thinks it necessary to argue for the possibility and obligation of possessing theological hope for the salvation of every human being.[147]

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[145] *Will Many be Saved*, 178.

[146] He cites Catherine of Siena's mystical reflection in *Will Many Be Saved?*, 22.

[147] Here I am revising Martin's argument. He does not state the matter this way, but says instead: "Flannery notes, 'If God can, without contradicting his own merciful nature, consign an angel to hell, there would seem to be no logical reason why he could not do the same to a human soul'. . . . Balthasar claims that because we do not know for sure that there is anyone in hell, not even Judas, and because the will of God is to save all men, and because of the nature of Christ's redemptive sacrifice . . ." (*Will Many be Saved*, 165). He also quotes T.J. White: "In refusing to appropriate the above mentioned distinction [between antecedent and consequent divine wills],

In one of his last publications, an article reviewing Martin's book, Oakes seeks to respond to a number of arguments against Balthasar's approach.[148] Concerned both with distinguishing Balthasar's perspective from Rahner's and with defending Benedict XVI's purportedly Balthasarian position,[149] Oakes seems to be proposing a more modest Balthasar than the one critiqued in this dissertation.

Perhaps reading Balthasar a little too charitably, he does not explain precisely how he can maintain theological hope for universal salvation and, at the same time, apparently agree (in the conclusion to the essay) with Wittgenstein that, "[Universal salvation] would make nonsense of everything else. If what we do now is to make no difference in the end, then all the seriousness of life is done away with."[150] Oakes concludes that it is not a task of Christian eschatology to waste time speculating about who is saved or condemned, arguing that "revelation wisely withholds providing any firm and sure 'information' about the Final Judgment" because if we knew that only a few were saved, despair would set in, and if we knew that most men are saved, presumption would come easily.[151] Oakes seems to think that by defending the distinction between antecedent and consequent divine wills, Martin practically adopts the "double

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he rejects along with it an authentic reception of the Catholic Tradition's teaching on the 'resistible' character of saving grace, and the corresponding reality of God's permissive will of evil. Consequently, persisting moral evil must necessarily be seen as a reality engendered by the *absence of the divine initiative* . . ." ("Von Balthasar and Journet," 665, cited by Martin, 185). He does not, however, bring out the significance of this critique or put it front and center, as has been the primary task of this dissertation.

[148] Edward Oakes, S.J., "Saved from What: On Preaching Hell in the New Evangelization," *Pro Ecclesia* 22, no. 4 (Fall 2013): 378-394.

[149] Oakes points to Martin's surprise (*Will Many be Saved*, 216) at Balthasar's comments on Rahner's tendency to *apokatastasis* (in *TD* IV, 283-284) as evidence that Martin does not really understand Balthasar's position, at least as it relates to Rahner's (see "Saved from What," 393). See also 380-382 for differences between Balthasar and Rahner. While Oakes is correct about the two not being synonymous approaches by any stretch, Martin is correct that their respective proposals both engender an over-confidence in God's "victory" over human freedom, as it were.

[150] "Saved from What," 394, citing Rush Rhees (ed.), *Recollections of Wittgenstein*.

[151] "Saved from What," 394.

predestination" that Balthasar criticizes in *Dare*;[152] such an over-simplification is to be expected of anyone who relies on Balthasar for insight into the problem of the grace-freedom relationship. But Oakes does effectively argue that Martin's unnecessary option in favor of a populated hell is not at all demonstrable:

> Martin goes astray, in my opinion, when he takes the reliance of *LG* 16c on Rom 1:21, 25 as demonstrating that the majority of the unevangelized will go to hell. Exegetically, this is troubling on several grounds. First, Martin assumes without argument that Paul's notion of God's wrath is an indication of the *eternal* reprobation of the objects of God's wrath rather than of God's permissive will to let the consequences of sin take their toll inside history. Second, he elides Paul's clear thesis that this wrath, however interpreted, falls upon mankind universally (Rom 3) *so that* God's mercy might also fall universally on mankind, as Paul makes especially clear in these two verses: 'For there is no favoritism with God' (Rom 2:11), and 'God has bound all men over to disobedience so that he may have have mercy on all' (Rom 11:32).[153]

Appealing to the centrality of "paradox" in the Christian faith, Oakes thinks it unnecessary to try to reconcile the purported two sets of texts in scripture. He admits that "Balthasar tips the scale . . . in a universalist direction," and then asks, "why do conflicting statements in Scripture *have* to be reconciled?"[154] At the same time, in response to Balthasar "ask[ing] whether God really intends to 'lose the gamble' he made with himself," he apparently concedes that, "as Martin points out, God presumably already did lose that 'gamble' with the fall of the rebellious angels."[155] While Balthasar certainly does more than innocently ask such a question, it appears Oakes may be willing to grant with Ratzinger that God does in the end suffer the loss of a portion of His free creatures, although he does not want to claim knowledge that some of these are in fact human.

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[152] See "Saved from What," 384.
[153] "Saved from What," 387 (emphasis original).
[154] "Saved from What," 388 (emphasis original).
[155] "Saved from What," 383.

Although Ratzinger (as Pope Benedict XVI) notoriously comes to the conclusion that there are most likely at least a few men who reject divine grace definitively, Oakes focuses on defending his statements in *Spe Salvi* against Martin's charge that predicting the salvation of all but a few has led to a presumptuous dearth of missionary activity.[156] Martin indicates the significance for Ratzinger/Benedict of Lubac's insight on solidarity in *Corpus Mysticum*, where he wonders how the blessed can rejoice when members (or potential members) of Christ's body are cut off forever.[157] But he does not note the fact that Benedict never extends the object of the virtue of theological hope to include everyone, alive or dead. Stating that "[o]ur hope is always essentially also hope for others; only thus is it truly hope for me too,"[158] while opposing in its implications a strict restriction of the object of hope to one's own salvation, does not necessarily mean either that (Christian) hope for the salvation of all is *theological* in character or that any genuine theological hope must have as its object the salvation of absolutely everyone. It is not necessary to agree with Balthasar's reasoning for universalist hope, which inevitably involves a subjunctive universalist eschatology, in order to say the following with Ratzinger (against Nietszsche's charge that *ressentiment* is essential to Christian faith):[159] "We cannot start to set limits on God's behalf; the very heart of the faith has been lost to anyone who supposes that it is only worthwhile . . . by the damnation of others. Such a way of thinking, which finds the

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[156] See *Spe Salvi*, nos. 45-47; Martin, *Will Many be Saved*, 284n14; Oakes, "Saved from What," 390-392.
[157] See "Saved from What," 391, citing *Spe Salvi*, nos. 13-14. Ratzinger also entertains this question in *Eschatology*, 188 [G 193-194].
[158] *Spe Salvi*, no. 46, quoted in Oakes, "Saved from What," 392.
[159] See *Genealogy of Morals*, first essay, sect. 15.

punishment of other people necessary, springs from not having inwardly accepted the faith; from loving only oneself and not God the Creator, to whom his creatures belong."[160]

Confusing the predestinarian approach with any attempt to delimit the object of theological hope, Oakes claims Magisterial authority against Martin's distinction between theological and merely human hope because "any hope that finds its expression in the Eucharistic Prayer of the Catholic Mass, of all places, and that moreover deals with the eternal fate of one's neighbor, would seem on its face to be a quintessentially theological hope if there ever was one,"[161] which is an unfounded claim about the relationship between prayer and hope if there ever was one. Oakes says he is not even clear why Martin is drawing such a distinction.[162] Perhaps, Martin should have spent some time discussing the intrinsic efficacy of the theological virtues as infused habits of grace. But that would have required a much deeper treatment of grace (i.e., the development of an adequate theological anthropology).

Oakes himself rules out some desires as possible objects of theological hope, namely, "that Abraham Lincoln not be assassinated on Good Friday of 1865," which he rightly deems to be "antecedently impossible."[163] He, therefore, bases his theological hope for universal salvation on the impossibility of knowing for certain the ultimate destiny of any human being: "[I]t is precisely that reality – that we really don't know what transpires in the human soul – that gives grounds for hope. . . . because it is *not* known who is in hell . . . hope (even if it is a 'hope against hope') remains possible."[164] The problem with this argument is that, in fact, if some are condemned, a very probable possibility in the eyes of faith and reason, then their salvation could

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[160] *God is Near Us: The Eucharist, the Heart of Life*, 35, quoted by Oakes, "Saved from What," 392.
[161] "Saved from What," 386.
[162] See "Saved from What," 386.
[163] "Saved from What," 384.
[164] "Saved from What," 384-385 (emphasis original).

not have been promised by God (as salvation is conditioned by its reception) and cannot be the actual object of theological hope. Although theological hope may extend to all in an indeterminate fashion, it must implicitly exclude those who are condemned.

Germain Grisez and Peter Ryan, in a recent short article, elaborated upon the argument of Martin's *Will Many Be Saved?*, concisely and rigorously arguing that the most doctrinally and pastorally sound position to take on the question of hope for universal salvation is precisely that "more than a few" are condemned, according to both scripture and tradition, and it is therefore detrimental to the Church's evangelizing efforts not only to suppose that all will be saved or that some are predestined to hell but also to hold either that only "a few extremely wicked human beings will be damned" or that "we cannot know whether any human being will be damned."[165] These are the four positions that are engaged, beginning with the broad and uncontroversial definition of Christian hope as "the absolute confidence with which God's children should count on the Father's grace and mercy as they strive to abide in his love and die in Christ, always looking forward to the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting in the kingdom."[166] They rightly point out that, "from the Church's hope and prayer for every single human being, a fallacy of composition leads some today to imagine that the Church has always hoped and prayed that hell be an unrealized possibility – an empty class."[167] But they are not exactly correct when they claim that those who firmly hope for universal salvation cannot consistently evangelize for the sake of salvation.[168] It is certainly true that people are naturally less inclined

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[165] See Germain Grisez and Peter F. Ryan, S.J., "Hell and Hope for Salvation," *New Blackfriars* 95 (2014), 609 (see also 607).
[166] "Hell and Hope," 607, citing *CCC*, no. 1821
[167] "Hell and Hope," 607n4.
[168] "Christians who hold (2) cannot, if consistent, choose to do or refrain from doing anything in order to promote their own or others' entrance into the heavenly kingdom. When Christians who hold (2) choose to repent, resist temptations, evangelize, or do other good works, they cannot, if

to evangelize when they believe that everyone will be saved (or that the numbers of saved and damned are predetermined), and it does seem a bit incongruent for universalists to think their own efforts may help save others. However, strictly speaking, in the tradition of Augustine and Thomas, people can seek to evangelize, knowing that God Himself ultimately determines who will be saved and damned, precisely because they know that God desires to save the elect through their own efforts to collaborate with God's salvific plan – in other words, the secondary cause may not be actually necessary to attain the end sought by the primary cause, but it may still be desired and utilized for such an end.

Although they do not distinguish between indicative and subjunctive universalism, that is, faith versus hope that all will be saved, they do argue that those who proclaim agnosticism as to whether any are damned (designated position #4), in practice, assume that God will save all in the end (designated position #2), stating: "If such people hope that all human beings will be saved, that is not the hope that excludes despair and presumption. Rather, it is the wishful expectation that (2) will turn out to be true."[169] Regarding the state of mind of those who think only a few very wicked people will be condemned (designated #3), they opine (probably accurately): "Therefore, holding (3) is likely to have the same effects that holding (1) [that some are predestined to hell] would have had. Hope is replaced by presumption with respect to oneself and those one cares about, and by despair with respect to those one regards as extremely wicked. If consistent, one can make no choice to do or refrain from doing anything for the sake of one's

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consistent, make such choices for the sake of their own or others' salvation" (608). Yes, they can. They can consistently believe that God saves all precisely through the efforts of whomever is willing to participate in such a plan of universal salvation and therefore choose to be one who participates in such a plan, making themselves instruments of His infallible providence. This is, nevertheless, a hard concept for many Christians to grasp, and thus it is very easy for believers in the infallible efficacy of the divine will to fall into passivity (hence the motivation behind the Molinist reaction to the Reformers).

[169] "Hell and Hope," 610.

own or anyone else's salvation."[170] But they fail to address the position that we should suspend judgment regarding the question of whether "many" or "few" are condemned in the end, who may or may not emphasize the real danger of damnation for each of the living even while emphasizing the infinite nature of divine mercy.

They briefly address the metaphysical and scriptural aspects of the question. In the midst of arguing that "The New Testament clearly teaches" not only "that God wills everyone to be saved and that Christ died for everyone," but also "that some, nevertheless, will be lost,"[171] they give a nod to the view that "God's causality transcends the created universe and is incomprehensible to us," denying the premise that "God's causality [is] similar to any causality we know of or can even imagine," and concluding that "God's causing completely accounts for the reality of a universe in which created causes of each sort account for their effects in their own ways. Among those causes are the choices by which human beings *freely* shape their own lives and relationships with God and with one another."[172] Their arguments that "more than a few" are in fact damned because Jesus' warnings cannot be devoid of all epistemic or prophetic content (against Rahner's "hermeneutics of eschatological assertions") are valid as far as they go, but at the same time, one must caution against such argumentation proving too much, as it were.

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[170] "Hell and Hope," 609-610.
[171] "Hell and Hope," 610.
[172] "Hell and Hope," 611-612. In favor of such an approach, they cite Kathryn Tanner's *God and Creation in Christian Theology*, David Burrell's *Freedom and Creation in Three Traditions*, Harm Goris' *Free Creatures of an Eternal God*, and Jacob Schmutz' essay in *Surnaturel*. They also recruit the support of W. Matthews Grant for supplementary points. They could have as well cited David Bentley Hart's essays on the matter. While I think their formulation of the question is philosophically imprecise, the suspension of judgment regarding the particular way in which human freedom and divine efficacy may interact could be an effective rallying point for the view that "more than a few" are condemned. I do think the views of some of these authors may be integrated into the argument put forth in chapters five and six, but it would require more detailed examination to adequately articulate precisely what is justifiable in each formulation and what is not (e.g., that there is no imaginable similarity between human and divine causality).

In other words, if Jesus' sayings are to be taken simply at face-value, as they seem to want to do with Luke 13,[173] then we should be arguing (with Martin, in fact, following Augustine) that a (great) majority of men are damned, which is a thesis I am not prepared to defend (and it appears neither are they). Hence, Balthasar's (and perhaps Rahner's) argument has some value to it: precisely that through the paschal mystery the economy of salvation reflects better the efficacy of divine grace and mercy than it did prior to the redemptive incarnation. In fact, when Jesus says, "Enter by the narrow door," he need not be referring to anything other than the straight path to heaven (the 'straight and narrow'), and yet we know by virtue of the Holy Spirit active in the developing tradition of the Church that the gates of heaven may be entered through another way than by perfect living, namely, purgation. Thus, Easter brings greater hope to God's people by creating an economy of salvation through communal suffering, that is, the intercessory power of the saints and the availability of imposed post-mortem penance ("purgatory").

Although the new *Catechism* at points seems to entertain the hope that everyone might accept salvation, a point that has been nuanced here, Grisez and Ryan interpret such passages in light of the regional Council of Quiercy, which affirms both the desire of God for all to be saved and "that not all are redeemed," since the Catechism treats it "as an authoritative source by quoting an excerpt from [Denzinger]," and yet the excerpt utilized is one invoking the intended universality of redemption in Christ's sacrifice.[174] Thus, the strongest counter-point from authority they offer is, rather, an argument from ordinary Magisterium or *sensus fidelium*, namely, that "for well over a millennium" Jesus' warnings (recorded in scripture) that many would be condemned "[conveyed] truthful information about their prospects if they failed to

[173] See "Hell and Hope," 612.
[174] "Hell and Hope," 611n8.

heed his warnings."[175] In other words, the claim is made that the tradition of the Church authoritatively interprets certain passages of scripture regarding the end as not only minatory but also predictive, invoking also *Dei Verbum* regarding the truth-value of Jesus' reported assertions.[176] But unless or until the Magisterium clarifies (or articulates with greater clarity) that it is a datum of revelation that some human beings are definitively condemned, we will not know with the certainty of faith that our hopes for universal salvation are inefficacious. Still, it certainly seems more in accord with scripture, tradition, and right reason to believe that at least in some cases our prayers for the conversion of sinners in death are simply good human desires that are not intrinsically connected to the supernaturally infused virtue of hope, even if these prayers are a natural expression of such hope.[177] It is true, nonetheless, that a legitimate "hope for the salvation of all . . . expresses itself in active discipleship which labors for the universal communion of love and justice which God has always intended for the world."[178]

Besides appearing quite certain that his 'theological hope' for universal conversion will be fulfilled by the God of infinite mercy, quoting his own speculation in *Explorations* IV about

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[175] "Hell and Hope," 612-613. Regarding the universal consent of the faithful, *LG* 12 is invoked, which cites Augustine's *De Praedestinatione Sanctorum*, 14.17 [*PL* 44.980] (see "Hell and Hope," 613n13).

[176] See "Hell and Hope," 610n7.

[177] This does not, however, give anyone the right to presume the discernment between those who will be saved and those who will be condemned. John Sachs is right to issue the following warning against too much certainty that many will not convert before judgment: "Unfortunately, history shows all too well that once one preaches the existence of hell with the same force as the existence of heaven, one is all too ready to populate it with those whom one condemns and then gives up on. After Judas, Hitler, and Stalin, why not other groups one may find reprehensible: terrorists, abortionists, atheists or gays" ("Current Eschatology," 254). Of course, suspending judgment on the final destiny of such individuals does not require suspension of judgment regarding the gravity of their sins, whether culpable or not. It is all too common for those rightfully convinced of divine mercy to proceed illegitimately to undermine the seriousness of sin and obscure the distinction between mortal and venial matters, a traditional teaching from the beginning of Christianity, even if it is not always clear which particular acts fall into which category.

[178] Sachs, "Current Eschatology," 254.

how it may play out in the life of each dying sinner,[179] Balthasar ties everything up into a neat little bow in the *Epilogue* to his voluminous Trilogy. Allow me to quote an extensive passage, for its systematic acumen is itself "inexorable" (to use Oakes' word):

> [T]he ever-greater weight of the proof of God's love always highlights the ever-increasing hatred for God . . . . The difficult question thus lies, not on God's side, but on man's rejection of God . . . . Jesus can hardly push the sinner aside to make room for his own place. He cannot appropriate for himself the sinner's to do with it what the sinner did not himself want to do. Even more pointedly: he can 'redeem' me . . . but never without my permission: I must continually *accept* this deed, letting it be true for me. Free men are not pieces of luggage, after all, that can be 'redeemed' from the lost and found. We are clearly entangled in the thickest knots of a mystery that can only be unraveled with great care. . . . Jesus will appropriate to himself this negative position – in accord with his commission and his inner ability and freedom – in such a way that it will be transformed by him into what it is in truth: into the pain of alienation that now is experienced no longer simply by God but by man, too. (Recall here that we are discussing this issue on the plane of the total structure of divine versus human nature; the question of individual freedom has not yet been mooted.) But second, we should admit that the change effected by the Head of the human race is realized only from this position, that is, as from someplace 'above' the totality of human nature. And this change transforms the situatedness of all who belong to this nature with their personal freedom. . . . the free assumption not only of human nature but also of its alienation can thus ensue only 'above' or 'beyond' or 'beneath' the situatedness of all natural beings. At the same time Incarnation means that the assumption of human nature, along with all its attendant forms of alienation, surpasses this nature and its alienations for something infinite. This is because, to put it bluntly, no one can be abandoned by the Father as the Son was, who is the only one who knows the Father as he really is . . . . What once was estrangement from God has now become a form of absolute love because he journeyed through this estrangement more deeply than a mere man could have managed to do: 'Love is stronger than hell.' . . . If the Spirit is the relation between Father and Son, then he is most so, indeed with extraordinary overabundance, on the Cross. This is so because the Spirit both reveals as well as effects the most extreme 'separation' of Father and Son *as* the epiphany of their highest unity, which happens from that transcendental plan where the 'holy exchange' takes place. This insight then opens out to another: as the Spirit of the Son breathed out onto the world, he comes into contact with individual finite freedom from this position. In other words, he does not do so externally, which would be impossible for someone endowed with freedom: rather, the Spirit breathes from where every created freedom – whether open or closed to God – has its origin and its constitution: in its orientation for the authentically good and, through this, in its drive to realize itself as freedom. As was already pointed out above, from this point of origin the Spirit confronts the finite and deficient freedom with itself and shows to it that it can truly be a freedom that finds fulfillment. What the Spirit accomplishes from the Cross is to work effects in

[179] See *TD* V, 312 [G 284].

> that region of the finite spirit where the finite form is given first of all to itself (whether in the form of *gratia actualis adjuvans* or a grace already *sanctificans* need not be discussed here, since the difference between actual and sanctifying grace only comes into play in the fourth moment, when a person either accepts or rejects grace). There is no room for extrinsicism here! There only remains the question of whether the finite spirit deigns to recognize that it must receive its own existence in order to be and whether, in those cases whether it is a spirit estranged from God, it will convert to this primal fact – both to itself and to God. . . . Jesus' death in the sinner's estrangement from God means that no sinner can now attain to a perfect 'autonomous' loneliness. . . . the Yes or No of finite freedom to the solicitation of the Spirit at the very roots of that freedom. . . . We do not know whether a human freedom can deny to the very end this offer of the Spirit to give it his own true freedom. If it could do so definitively, then it would be fully conscious in doing so and would be committing the sin against the Holy Spirit, an 'eternal sin' that 'never has forgiveness' (Mk 3:29). There is only room for hope at this point, where we simply can know nothing more. For a Christian, this is no arbitrary hope but one that makes, according to Jesus' command of love, no exception of any of our fellow human beings and lets none of them travel but halfway to the goal and then falter. . . . We have the *obligation* to hope for the salvation of all. . . . All we can finally do is simply ask: 'Will it really be *everyone* who can be reconciled? No theology or prophecy can answer this question. But love *hopes for everything* (1 Cor 13:7). I cannot do otherwise than hope for the reconciliation of all men in Christ. Such unlimited hope is not only permitted to the Christian, it is *commanded*.'[180]

Another Theodramatic Eschatology?

In this dissertation the theodramatic perspective as such is not rejected since it does not necessarily involve neglecting the question of the relationship between divine and human action – rather, one would think that applying the dramatic pattern of thought to God and man in salvation history should involve precise examination of the relationship between divine and human freedom. Regarding such a relationship, twentieth century discussions among Thomists have dissolved many of the false dichotomies developed by the Bañezian-Molinist divide.

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[180] *Epilogue*, 118-123 [G 94-98]. This fleshes out exactly what Balthasar anticipates even in the *Dramatis Personae* volume: "What remains of fate's pitilessness in the world of antiquity (erupting with redoubled cruelty in the post-Christian world) is found, in theo-drama, in the event of the Cross; here the harshest destiny is endured, to the very end, in the relationship between God and God, so that man can be spared it, or so that man's com-passion can be transformed into the grace of co-atonement (Col 1:24). 'For Love is strong as death' (Song 8:6)" (*TD* III, 535 [G 489]).

Maritain is the only one of these contemporary interlocutors to entertain the eschatological consequences of the resultant theology of the grace-freedom dynamic. While he may have lacked precision in the arena of the grace-nature problematic, which Lonergan provides, his eschatological proposal is more promising a path than Balthasar's subjunctive universalism.

Maritain's proposal is also a nice alternative to the annihilationist view, which has recently been defended by Paul Griffiths.[181] For the annihilationist position to accord with the Christian doctrine that all men will be raised from the dead, it would have to delay the point at which sinfulness becomes fully self-annihilative until after the final judgment, and yet this modification does nothing to make it cohere with the Catholic teaching on the immortality of the soul. Griffiths argues that even Thomas' arguments do not prove the *necessary* immortality of the soul, but only its *conditional* immortality; he also finds in them an apparent internal contradiction regarding whether spiritual beings have an intrinsic potency for nonbeing, given that they too are created *ex nihilo*.[182] But to make sense out of Thomas' arguments, it is necessary to understand his doctrine of the essence-*esse* relationship. All creatures by virtue of their created *esse* are radically contingent, but the spiritual creature by virtue of its essence is immortal, even as its existence is sustained by the Necessary Being. Hence, the radical dependence of every contingent being on divine conservation does not negate the natural immortality proper to spiritual natures; only a divine act withdrawing the continuity of His creative act in its effects could bring about self-annihilation. In other words, "conditional immortality" is conditioned upon God not willing to withdraw (the temporal effect of) His

[181] Paul J. Griffiths, "Self-Annihilation or Damnation? A Disputable Question in Christian Eschatology" in *Liberal Faith: Essays in Honor of Phillip Quinn*, ed. Paul J. Weithman (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008): 83-117. See also Ross McCullough, "The Darkling Lights of Lucifer: Annihilation, Tradition, and Hell," *Pro Ecclesia* 22, no. 1 (Winter 2013): 55-68.
[182] See "Self-Annihilation or Damnation," 99.

continuous creation of such being; therefore, there is no positive act required of God for our immortality, and there must be sufficient reason for Him to contradict the natural result, as it were, of His will to create immortal/spiritual beings. Harvey Egan presents the following argument against annihilationism:

> The annihilation theory, however, cannot be maintained for a number of reasons. It overlooks the fact that God alone can annihilate. By appealing to the unique power of God, this view is ultimately an unsatisfactory deux ex machina. Paul O'Callaghan correctly stresses that God not only loves and rejects nothing that God creates (Wis 11:24-25) but also 'constitutes humans as immortal beings.' He further argues that the annihilation theory confuses the distinction between nature and grace and that human beings are incapable of 'total metaphysical suicide.' Dutch Calvinist theologian Hendrikus Berkhof describes this theory as a 'defeat of God's love, though hidden by an act of force.' Rahner rejects this theory, too, because God respects human freedom and 'does not release one from a definitive state.' Moreover, a number of contemporary theologians and philosophers, including Pope Benedict XVI, argue persuasively for the immortality of the soul and soundly refute the view that this dogma is a Greek deformation of Christianity. Finally, the Catholic Church authoritatively teaches the immortality of the soul and 'the existence of hell and its eternity.'[183]

Although Harvey Egan effectively argues against both universalism and annihilationism, he fails to consider Maritain's proposal outright. He argues against the view of William Hoye that hell is in itself (i.e., because of the nature-grace distinction) mere limbo. Hoye apparently agrees with Maritain's exegesis of Thomas on the origin of evil as "an absence of consideration," but he also holds that "sin is a lack of grace, not its opposite, and contains within itself its own punishment," according to Egan.[184] This approach to grace in relation to freedom goes hand-in-hand with his "traditional" (i.e., Bañezian) view of the grace-nature relationship in general. Hence, Egan reports Hoye's conclusions:

> [t]he devil lacks nothing in the natural order but is deficient in the supernatural order because the demon neglected the necessity of divine grace . . . the damned are not

[183] Harvey D. Egan, S.J., "Hell: The Mystery of Eternal Love and Eternal Obduracy," *Theological Studies* 75, no. 1: 52-73, at 60.
[184] Egan, "Eternal Love and Eternal Obduracy," 65.

> deficient in something so fundamental that its absence is not even missed. Hell is a tragedy that lacks even the awareness of itself. The damned have all they want, but they want too little. . . . The damned neither hate nor are conscious of their suffering. . . . hell is the fulfillment of an underdeveloped natural desire for happiness (*desiderium natural*). Subjectively considered, the damned are actually fulfilled; objectively, their satisfaction with a lesser good punishes them.[185]

Surely some Thomists "of the strict observance" will deny that these are conclusions that follow their view of the nature-grace relationship. Regardless, Egan's response is not entirely adequate, reflecting the *Communio* view (i.e., Lubac and Balthasar):

> Aquinas also stresses that insofar as God is the universal good of all, even the damned (both human and angels) love God more than they love themselves. The contradiction between a creature's natural desire for God and its sinful choosing of something less causes both the objective and the subjective sufferings of the damned. Some Scholastic theologians even speculated about the possibility of a purely natural creation in which only natural sin, virtue, punishment, and fulfillment would exist. And if one assumes with some contemporary theologians that the natural desire for God is graced, freely opting for a lesser good cannot produce subjective satisfaction and happiness. Moreover, Thomists hold that the higher the degree of being, the higher the degree of consciousness, a consciousness that in the case of the damned is replete with eternal suffering. The natural and graced immense longing of every human being for God can never be extinguished. How can a spiritual creature miss the one thing necessary and be unaware of it? One might ask, cynically, whether God died to prevent us from being satisfied with an unfulfilled natural desire for happiness.[186]

What is lacking here is a more balanced approach to the grace-nature problematic, like that found in Bernard Lonergan's early theological anthropology. Only with such moderation between

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[185] Egan, "Eternal Love and Eternal Obduracy," 65.

[186] Egan, "Eternal Love and Eternal Obduracy," 65-66. After noting Teilhard de Chardin's submissive acceptance of eternal hell as a truth of divine revelation (53-54), Egan proceeds to present the salvation optimism of Balthasar and Rahner, without much in the way of value-judgments (54ff.). Balthasar, in fact, subtly slights Teilhard for this: "there can be no eschatological *descensus* in Teilhard, and the heaven-hell dualism has the final word (as in Judaism)" (*TD* V, 167 [G 147]). Meanwhile, Ratzinger makes extensive use of Teilhard's eschatological speculations (see, e.g., *Introduction to Christianity*, 234ff. and *Eschatology*, 191ff. [G 196ff.]).

extremes can one avoid the pitfalls of viewing hell either as limbo, simply speaking, or as the frustration of human nature itself.[187]

Certainly, one's conception of the relationship between natural and supernatural orders plays a part in one's eschatology, but this dissertation has focused on the more neglected, pointed, and decisive question of the particular relationship within this problematic that obtains between divine grace and human freedom, treated by Balthasar in the dramatic terms of infinite and finite freedom. Balthasar's theodramatic approach provides a perspective within which the question can be addressed. But Balthasar fails to take adequate account of God's choice to condition His grace upon our nihilation. While Balthasar makes a case for the depths to which God goes in attempting to convert men, he does not display how the supreme good of creation is not attained by infallibly ensuring the conversion of all men (i.e., the bestowal of the unconditionally efficacious grace of final perseverance), but by doing everything short of taking away man's power of nihilation to orchestrate the best possible outcome of all the efficacious graces He conditionally offers each man through the mystical body.

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[187] As the reader ought to recall, there is insufficient data to conclude definitively whether Ratzinger or Maritain maintains as harmonious a perspective on the issue as does Lonergan; while the former usually seems to tend more in the direction of Lubac, the latter usually seems to tend more in the direction of Garrigou-Lagrange. It is here that I see promise in the encounter between Balthasar and Lonergan, two theologians with the most rigorously faithful disciples, an encounter that has barely begun. Rowan Williams adds a note to the end of his essay on Balthasar and Rahner that reads: "Balthasar appears never to mention Lonergan (nor Lonergan Balthasar?); but there is a further and quite interesting job to be done in comparing and contrasting Lonergan's achievement with that of both Balthasar and Rahner. For a preliminary sketch, see A. J. Kelly, S.J., 'Is Lonergan's 'Method' Adequate', *The Thomist*, Vol. XXXIX, April 1975, pp. 437-470; on Balthasar, pp. 465-468. Kelly is not alone in finding Lonergan's epistemological scheme difficult to apply in aesthetics" (*Analogy of Beauty*, 34). Comparing the two has, indeed, largely been limited to the question of method, with which Lonergan was much preoccupied (and which determined the trajectory of his later work); see, e.g., Robert M. Doran, S.J., "Lonergan and Balthasar: Methodological Considerations," *Theological Studies* 58 (1997): 61-84.

After examining Maritain's treatment of divine innocence and before offering his own critique of Balthasar, Matthew Levering makes the incisive comment:

> Even were Maritain right that not considering the rule of reason is entirely describable as a non-action, therefore, he could not avoid the basic dilemma as regards predestination (absent universalism). Namely, if God can move the created will in an infallibly efficacious manner, and if God's antecedent will truly is the salvation of all, then why does God *not* ensure that all are saved by means of infallibly efficacious outpourings of grace? The tension between God's super-abundant love for all and his permission of some to rebel permanently against his love remains, thereby further exposing the impossibility of finding a solution within causal-chain logic.[188]

Maritain's position that it is more proper to the nature of our freedom for God to allow for 'nihilation' is sufficient as far as it goes, but it does not answer why God decided not to create us with the superior freedom of an impeccable created will like that of Christ (and the Blessed Virgin Mary). If we follow William Most's development of the issue, God could (by His "extraordinary will") overcome resistance to His grace, or better, He could will antecedently a grace that is not conditional upon the absence of nihilation, but He does not do so very often because such would make ordinary what is extraordinary and make extraordinary what is ordinary. But this is certainly an inadequate response. Does God respect the distinction between the extraordinary and the ordinary more than the salvation of men? Certainly not. Rather, He

[188] Levering, *Predestination*, 162. J.-H. Nicolas' seems to adopt an apophatic approach akin to Levering's in his latest article on the topic in conversation with Maritain (see "La volunté salvifique de Dieu contrariée par le péché"), but he also fundamentally accepts Maritain's critique of Bañezian permissive decrees (and less emphatically the consequent understanding of divine foreknowledge), even if he quibbles with Maritain's explanation of the point of entry for evil and expresses concern about the importance of defending the gratuity of election (contra any precise metaphysical explanation of nihilation). In other words, Nicolas capitulates to Maritain's defense of divine innocence, adopts a more apophatic posture toward divine foreknowledge than both Maritain and the neo-Bañezian view criticized, and prefers to leave the reconciliation of created freedom and divine election to faith instead of fully embracing Maritain's attempt to explain the dynamic of human initiation and divine permission in terms of 'negatio' and 'privatio,' which he also does not see in Thomas.

respects the natural integrity of the imperfect human freedom that He has willed in one way or another to exist as it is.

Just as the reason why God permitted man to sin seems to be so that a greater good may come of it by divine power, likewise, the reason why some are permitted to choose condemnation is so that God's glory may be more manifest, but not to the detriment of human beings (per the doctrine of infallible permissive decrees). But, it is truly fitting that He bring forth the greatest possible good out of the evil He suffers in voluntary receptivity to finite freedom. The glory of God is not more manifest through the eternal display of His mercy and His "vindicative justice" in distinct manners (i.e., via heaven and hell, respectively) than it would be if mercy alone were to endure (as the Bañezian Thomists argue), that is, if mercy were to subsume justice (as the two are inextricably united in divine activity). Instead, it seems His glory would be most manifest if a final perfect hierarchy of created goods were brought about such that some men be permitted (inevitably, but not infallibly!) to exclude themselves from glory but afforded respite from the intensity of such misery through the (ever-growing?) enjoyment of natural knowledge and love of God following the final judgment in the consummation of all things (i.e., the new creation).

Conclusion

In the course of this dissertation I have offered a few laudatory comments on Balthasar's theology, but I have limited myself primarily to correctives, hoping in the spirit of fraternal love, to reclaim his overall project from just a few evident weaknesses. Due to the limitations of space and time, I have not been able to assess his theological aesthetics,[189] his ecclesiology or

[189] See, e.g., Louis Roberts, *The Theological Aesthetics of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1987); Thomas Norris and Bede McGregor

Mariology,[190] his philosophical methodology or exegetical acumen,[191] just to name a few other characteristic dimensions of his monumental project here neglected. Therefore, my desire is not to reject Balthasar's theology wholesale; on the contrary, the research and analysis here presented reflect an enormous respect for this theological giant of the twentieth century, who certainly towers over many other well-known figures of the time in terms of both erudition and profundity. But in order to strengthen the fundamental thrust and overarching aims of Balthasar's theological project, I deemed it most fitting at the outset of this dissertation to turn from an appreciative appropriation of his controversial theology of the descent toward more critical efforts at substantial revision, utilizing some of the other great Catholic thinkers of the last century, namely, Jacques Maritain, Joseph Ratzinger, and Bernard Lonergan, among others.[192]

The revision I have presented includes a demythologization of Balthasar's trinitarian reflections, which are largely indebted to the mystical visions of Adrienne von Speyr, and a

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(eds.), *The Beauty of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994); Michael M. Waldstein, "An Introduction to von Balthasar's *The Glory of the Lord*," *Communio* 14 (1987): 12-33; Ben Quash, "Balthasar's Theology of Drama"; Ben Quash, "The *theo-drama*" in *Cambridge Companion*. In his essay, "Theodramatics, History, and the Holy Spirit" in the volume he edited, *Theology and the Drama of History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), Quash attempts to construct an alternative theodramatics to Balthasar's, but it is more a piece of literary analysis than of precise or rigorous theology.

[190] See, e.g., Brendan Leahy, *The Marian Profile in the Ecclesiology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: New City Press, 2000).

[191] See, e.g., W. T. Dickens, *Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics: A Model for Post-critical Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003); Robert Doran, "Lonergan and Balthasar;" Michael Maria Waldstein, *Expression and Form: Principles of a Philosophical Aesthetics according to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, Ph.D. Dissertation (Irving, TX: University of Dallas, 1981).

[192] The theology of John Paul II, who reportedly respected the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar a great deal (even while taking a few positions opposed to him), stands out as a neglected figure in this effort at revision, but that is due only to the enormous amount of space it would take to do justice to his thought, particularly, with respect to Ratzinger, his longtime confidant and collaborator.

friendlier (or less reactionary) stance with regard to the schools of Thomism that preceded the development of the *nouvelle theologie*, specifically, in the theology of grace and eschatology. A balanced evaluation of Thomistic theology with respect to the grace-freedom dynamic and the grace-nature problematic would have yielded careful distinctions with regard to the questions that seemed to plague Balthasar the most, particularly, the reconciliation of divine love and moral evil in the grand scheme of salvation history.

The Balthasarian claim that scripture seems to allow for a real hope that no human being will definitively reject divine glory, even while at times it appears to state that some will in fact resist His divine mercy to the end, is a welcome contribution.[193] The Church does indeed pray

[193] Richard Schenk makes the following interesting comments on the scriptural hermeneutic necessary to rule out the predictatory nature of the "first set of texts" (i.e., the teaching of eternal damnation): "Noting with Thomas' second objection [in *ST* II-II, q. 174, a. 1, concerning prophecy] the 'slight discrepancy' which seems to be involved in subsuming 'prophecies of promise' under the heading, 'prophecies of threat,' due to our common uncertainty about the outcomes of threats and promises, a connection reinforced by Thomas' reference to *Jeremiah* 18, 7 sq., Balthasar goes on to remark: 'Thomas' answer to this objection is profound. To name all our knowledge of this kind under the heading of "prophecies of threat" is justified in as much as names follow the *pars potior*, "because God is more inclined to relax a penalty than to withdraw promised benefits" (ad 2).' Without explicitly mentioning the question of final loss, Balthasar then continues in a vein which all but reverses the direction of Thomas' reflections and his sources: 'Thus, while all threats of punishments in revelation are conditional, the same cannot be said in similar fashion for divine promises. There is no correspondence here, but rather (the two kinds of prophecy have) basically different forms; cf. *Rom* 11, 29.' It must be conceded to Rahner and Balthasar that scholastic theology recognized that the *prophetiae praescientiae* and the *prophetiae comminationis et promissionis* of the kinds meant here are not always distinguishable by their grammatical forms; the paradigm of the latter is the seemingly apodictic statement by Jonah; 'Nineve will fall.' To know in questionable cases whether the prophecy is a mere threat or a shared knowledge of some future facticity was thought to require a further gift of prophecy. In contrast to Balthasar's own suggestions, however, scholastic theology, as Balthasar himself will later point out, was convinced generally that the magisterial tradition, speaking, unlike the scriptures, after the proposal of *apocatastasis* had arisen, had already mediated the discernment that the biblical statements which seemed to communicate the facticity of some final loss and of some final beatitude were in fact a share in God's non-predestining *scientia visionis*, even if each individual fate remains a less certain matter of *prophetia communicationis et promissionis*" ("Factical Damnation," 142).

that all may come to know and love God, as God Himself desires the same.[194] At the same time, it ought to be clarified that the mystical hope for universal salvation cannot be more than a

[194] See *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 1821, 1261, and 1058. See also, for instance, *Weekday Mass* I, *Tuesday Offertory Prayer*; *Liturgy of the Hours, Tuesday, Midafternoon Prayer*; *Collect* #22; *Eucharistic Prayer* III. See also the prayer given at Fatima, one of the few ecclesially endorsed apparitions of the Blessed Virgin: "O my Jesus, forgive us our sins! Save us from the fires of Hell! Lead all souls to Heaven, especially those in most need of thy mercy!" Roch Kereszty, himself very critical of Balthasar's universalism, nevertheless, maintains as well: "I do agree with Balthasar that, since the Church prays for the salvation of all, we should join in that prayer. And since the Church prays for all, we should hope for the salvation of all. My reservation regarding his position comes from the suspicion that the logic of his thought leads not just to hope, but to a (consciously denied but logically inescapable) certainty for the salvation of all" ("Response to Professor Scola," 229-230). Kevin Flannery points out that many of the texts of the German missal proffered in support of universalist hope by Balthasar (see *Dare*, 35n3) are not conclusive, but "might refer quite naturally to the living members of the Church" ("How to Think about Hell, 471. But he adds: "it must be acknowledged that nowhere in the Liturgy or in the Church's official teaching are we ever told to *exclude* any particular souls, living or dead, from our prayers. Suarez, indeed, says that we are forbidden to do this. Moreover, Leo XIII in the encyclical *Immortale Dei* teaches that 'Just as Jesus Christ came into the world in order that men 'might have life' [*John* 10.10], in the same way the Church has as its object the eternal salvation of souls: on account of which such is her nature that she extends herself toward the entire embrace of the human race, circumscribed by limits neither of place nor of time.' So then, it seems that we can agree with Balthasar to this extent: that there is no compelling reason why we cannot pray for the salvation of all souls" ("How to Think about Hell," 471-472). He also makes clear that, while he objects to Balthasar's arguments in favor of universal salvation (discerned particularly in *Dare*, 26-27), he is not therefore defending all the positions attacked by Balthasar (e.g., that we should only pray for the elect). Flannery does well to note the context of the combative words Balthasar first penned in *Was durfen wir hoffen?* against critics of his universalist tendencies at that time (Gerhard Hermes and Heribert Schauf): "Balthasar rejects those criticisms of his own work that suggest that, in so far as we know that at least some souls are damned to eternal perdition, we may not in any sense hope for the salvation of all souls. Hermes, for instance, writes with regard to hope for universal salvation: 'Such a hope does not exist, because we cannot, hope in opposition to *certain knowledge* and the avowed will of God' (15). Such certain knowledge is said to be found at, for instance, *Matthew* 25.31–46 . . ." ("How to Think about Hell," 469). Regarding Hermes, see also Turek, "Dare We Hope," 117n22. But there appears to be a contradiction that occurs in Flannery's piece. First, he argues that "the only reason we might have for so regarding [Matthew 25 as mere threats or warnings] would be if Balthasar (and others) were right: that it is incompatible with God's nature to allow to happen what Christ says will happen to those who are not merciful" ("How to Think about Hell," 476). Then, he concludes: "It makes sense that the Church to which we belong have in it neither knowledge that all men will be saved, nor, the knowledge that certain individuals are damned. If in the end God is going to save all souls and also be proved not to be a deceiver, this is the only locus for the hope that we have" (478). Presumably, by "certain individuals" here he means to

human hope, one that could possibly (at least, theoretically) in the end be fulfilled by God in ways unknown to men, but may also go formally unfulfilled, even if eminently fulfilled by the ultimate mysterious reconciliation of divine mercy and justice. In the end, theologians need to recognize that amid all our speculations about how the good and the true may finally be united in an infinitely beautiful dynamism, we do not know *precisely* in what the "endgame" consists because God has not chosen to reveal the intricacies of such a mystery. Balthasar knew this, and yet, for whatever contingent reason (e.g., the influence of Karl Barth's theology), it is not at all clear that he suspends judgment regarding the (probability of the) prospect of universal salvation. In light of the relationship between grace and freedom, perhaps even a healthy skepticism with regard to such a 'prospect' is needed.[195]

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indicate not that the Church does not affirm some are condemned, but that she does not attempt to name the condemned. But such a "thin basis for hope," as he calls it repeatedly, does not cohere well with his concession that "The prayers found in the Liturgy and quoted by Balthasar do appear to be prayers that the 'whole group' [i.e., all of humanity] be saved" (479). At the same time, he asserts: "it is impossible to hold that all souls will be saved, for even if God chooses to be especially merciful toward some, he cannot be so toward all without contradicting the revealed doctrine in *Matthew* 25" (477). Such attempts to limit God even to the face-value of the written Word may be precisely what the Church wants to avoid, just as it does not constrain God to save men only through the sacraments to which He bound His own saving grace. While it is true that the scriptures either reveal that some are definitively condemned or they do not, the Church appears to suspend judgment precisely on the question of whether the texts in question (e.g., Matthew 25) comprise mere warning or future prediction as well.

[195] Balthasar certainly wants to maintain a healthy abstension of judgment regarding how the director, producer, and chief actor of the play (to use his metaphor of drama) complete the "endgame," that is, to specify with too much certainty or precision the details of the "last act" of salvation history. This dissertation has argued that Balthasar did not completely succeed in this endeavor. Together with a warranted total confidence in God's infinite goodness, Balthasar does not wish to anticipate the sovereignty of His freedom, and yet he assigns all relevant power to divine agency (neglecting the reality of creaturely nihilation) and therefore refrains from presumption without good reason (or else, his suspension of presumption is merely nominal): "So long as the world endures, there remains for us the unresolvable contradiction between the atemporality of the Cross, the different atemporality of hell, and the yet altogether different all-temporality of heaven. This cannot be neatly calculated, much less be forced into a theory (of 'universal redemption', say). No one can try to anticipate the judge and look at the cards. Certainly Easter is the victory of the triune God over every contradiction; death is swallowed up

The claim of this dissertation, in the end, is that there are many reasons both for suspending definitive judgment on the question of the possibility of universal salvation and for supposing that, perhaps, there is another way for the universal salvific will of God to be fulfilled other than 'outwitting' the definitive rejection of divine grace for which human beings are revealed to be capable. Whether or not divine revelation includes the truth that some are in fact definitively condemned seems to be an open question not yet clarified by the Magisterium, presumably in coordination with scripture scholars and specialists in the theology of revelation. Other scholars have pointed out that Balthasar does not always exercise the restraint he requests in *Dare* regarding reconciliation of the two apparently conflicting strains of biblical texts,[196] but there has been significant confusion regarding the particulars of Balthasar's own implicit

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in victory, and with it, the sting of death, sin (1 Cor 15:54, 56). And if the Lord brings the marks of his wounds into his victory and eternally remains the 'Lamb as slain', it is surely not in order to integrate the contradiction of sin and hell into his heaven. He does have the keys of death and the underworld in his power, but only as the victor over both. The Lamb is at the same time 'the Lion of Judah', whose victory gives him alone the power to open the book of the history of the cosmos" (*TL* II, 359 [G 327-328]).

[196] See, e.g., Ralph Martin, *Will Many Be Saved*, 138ff. Along with Kevin Flannery (see "How to Think about Hell," 477), Martin cites Germain Grisez' *The Way of the Lord Jesus* (see *Will Many Be Saved*, 139), who argues: "Anybody who accepts both sets of passages as God's word must try to synthesize them, and von Balthasar himself tries – precisely in a universalist sense" (*The Way of the Lord Jesus: Difficult Moral Questions*, vol. 3 [Quincy, IL: Franciscan Press, 1997], 25, cited in Martin, 267n40). Flannery quotes Balthasar stating, "the two series of statements run along side by side in such a way that a synthesis of both is neither permissible or achievable" (*Dare*, 29), and argues: "it is apparent that Balthasar does not really believe that the two types of passage should be left with a 'cleft' between them ([*Dare*] 23), since he attempts to resolve the tension between them himself. That, indeed, is the motive for his second point, that to harmonise the statements in the way that Hermes chooses is to put limits on God. By removing these supposed 'limits' on God, Balthasar closes the gap by giving more weight to the second type of passage (interpreted in a particular way), thereby 'conditionalising' the first type. But who is to say that harmonisation is not to be achieved by going Hermes' route rather than Balthasar's? . . . Balthasar reconciles the two strands of scriptural tradition by an argument for the fact of universal salvation and not by an argument for the possibility of hoping and praying for universal salvation. . . . Beginning with the idea that God's 'triune will for salvation' may not be 'blunted' or 'thwarted' by men, Balthasar can only proceed to the conclusion that God cannot condemn anyone to hell lest he violate his own nature (or the nature of his will), but this is to go too far" ("How to Think about Hell," 473).

reconciliation of the "two affirmations" (in Levering's words). I have sought not only to display his "covert" systematization of the question, especially in *Theodramatik: Das Endspiel*, analyzing the merits of the detailed proposals that are most prominent throughout the second part of his voluminous Trilogy, but also to hone in on a question whose enormous relevance a great many have overlooked, namely, the relationship between grace and freedom and its significant role in eschatology.

The overarching argument of this dissertation has been that *the* lacuna in Balthasar's theodramatic development of a trinitarian eschatology, an admirable project indeed, is his implicit theology of grace, particularly, in dynamic tension with human freedom, which I have deemed deficient and inadequate, in need of a more robust and rigorous approach to the questions *de auxiliis*. In light of a more balanced, nuanced, and sophisticated perspective on the latter, it is clear that while conversion in death is a theoretical possibility for all and agnosticism regarding the damned may be counseled, not only has God created man with the freedom to reject definitively His mercy (and, therefore, participation in the order of glory), but it is fitting that He respect such perseverance in sin and it is possible that He may become "*omnia in omnibus*" (1 Cor 15:28) without saving every human being from the eternal pain of loss. While Maritain, Ratzinger, and Lonergan treat sin (and thus self-condemnation) fundamentally as a "surd," Balthasar dares to bring it (at least, analogously) into the trinitarian *ek-stasis*, as nothing, even the finite power to resist infinite freedom, can exist 'outside God.'[197] A more adequate metaphysics is needed here to interpret divine revelation more accurately. Certainly, all things will be reconciled to the Father in Christ and the Spirit, but the particular form that reconciliation takes need not be the salvation of all men, and universal salvation is, in fact, an especially

[197] See *TD* V, 395 [G 361], which is presented as a recap of *TD* V, 247-321 [G 223-293].

doubtful proposal. It ought to be recognized instead that the hierarchy of rewards and punishments in creation is an *eternal* good that gives glory to the beauty of God's infinitely merciful love!

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