The All-Embracing Frame: Distance in the Trinitarian Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar

Christopher Hadley

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THE ALL-EMBRACING FRAME: DISTANCE
IN THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY
OF HANS URS VON BALTHASAR

by

Christopher M. Hadley, S.J.

A Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School,
Marquette University,
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ABSTRACT
THE ALL-EMBRACING FRAME: DISTANCE IN THE TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY OF HANS URS VON BALTHASAR

Christopher M. Hadley, S.J.
Marquette University, 2015

The notion of distance plays a complex role in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s trinitarian theology. The infinite distance that metaphorically marks out the difference between God and creation serves Balthasar as a negative-theological guard against earthly projections in images of God. But this distance also structures the biblical, ascetical, and phenomenological imagery upon which trinitarian theology so often depends. The infinite distance between Father and Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit structures Balthasar’s richly symbolic vision of a divine infusion of grace into a suffering world. Not only is inner-triune distance a controversial notion, but it strikes some of Balthasar’s recent critics as a flagrant misuse of theological analogy. Balthasar is also heavily criticized for importing alienation, suffering, and domination into the Godhead via his notions of kenosis, gender, and hierarchy in the processions of the Son and Spirit from the Father.

It is difficult to assess Balthasar’s work and the recent criticisms of it without a thorough study of his theology of trinitarian distance. The dissertation provides two things: 1) a genealogy of distance in Balthasar’s thought and 2) a critical engagement with some of his more controversial trinitarian texts in light of this genealogy. Although he does not systematically distinguish them, there are identifiably distinct varieties of theological distance at work in Balthasar’s thought. The more developed and complex forms build on and incorporate the others as he develops them chronologically over the course of his career. The two elements of genealogy and critique overlap in the second half of the dissertation concerning Balthasar’s controversial later texts.

What emerges from the study is a clear sense that Balthasar’s poetic and symphonic method of doing theology possesses a sound rigor. His controversial and sometimes excessive uses of distance, kenosis, hierarchy, and gender in trinitarian theology can fruitfully and productively be held accountable to this rigor. Rather than separating him out from the Catholic tradition he seeks to develop, Balthasar’s theology of distance places him firmly within it as he faces some of modernity’s greatest theological challenges.
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Christopher M. Hadley, S.J.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Works By Balthasar

PT
Presence and Thought

TKB
Theology of Karl Barth

The Theological Aesthetics:

GL1
Glory of the Lord I: Seeing the Form

GL2
Glory of the Lord II: Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles

GL3
Glory of the Lord III: Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles

GL4
Glory of the Lord IV: The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity

GL5
Glory of the Lord V: The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age

GL6
Glory of the Lord VI: Theology: The Old Covenant

GL7
Glory of the Lord VII: Theology: The New Covenant

The Theo-Dramatics:

TD1
Theo-Drama I: Prolegomena

TD2
Theo-Drama II: Dramatis Personae: Man in God

TD3
Theo-Drama III: Dramatis Personae: Person in Christ

TD4
Theo-Drama IV: The Action

TD5
Theo-Drama V: The Last Act

The Theo-Logic:

TL1
Theo-Logic I: The Truth of the World

TL2
Theo-Logic II: The Truth of God

TL3
Theo-Logic III: The Spirit of Truth

Works By Others and Reference Works

CD
Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics

KD
Karl Barth, Kirchliche Dogmatik

CE
Gregory of Nyssa, Contra Eunomium

PG
Migne, Patrologia Graeca

NJBC
New Jerome Biblical Commentary

NPNF
Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers

ST
Aquinas, Summa Theologiae

TDNT
Theological Dictionary of the New Testament
HANS URS VON BALTHASAR AND THEOLOGICAL DISTANCE

Balthasar as a Theologian and Distance as a Symbol

Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) was a 20th-century Swiss Catholic theologian who approached the practice of theology via his early love of music and literature. His first book, published in 1925 when he was twenty years old, was on music.¹ He completed his doctoral thesis in German literature in Zurich just prior to his entrance into the Society of Jesus in Bavaria in 1928. As a young Jesuit scholastic he experienced much frustration with his formal theological education and made up for its inadequacies under the tutelage of his Jesuit mentors Henri de Lubac and Erich Przywara.² For his first post-ordination assignment as a Jesuit, Balthasar worked on staff for the Jesuit journal Stimmen der Zeit in Munich. He then turned down an opportunity to teach and do research on a theological faculty in the Gregorian University in Rome, opting instead to be a university chaplain in Basel, Switzerland. This was partly due to Balthasar’s own insistence that he was not properly trained as an academic theologian. But it was also due to his distaste for the idea of being professionally constrained by a Neo-Scholasticism that he believed to be rationalistic, reductionistic, and symbolically bankrupt. It is not possible to understand Balthasar apart from his long-standing, vehement detestation of what he called “sawdust Thomism.”³ It is also necessary to note


the importance of his friendship with Adrienne von Speyr, a Swiss mystic for whom he served as spiritual director and with whom he founded the intentional lay Community of St. John (Johannesgemeinschaft) in Basel in 1945. When Balthasar’s Jesuit provincial superior asked him to walk away from his work with this community to focus on other more Jesuit-centered apostolic priorities, he painfully and reluctantly discerned that his higher obedience lay with the Johannesgemeinschaft. He left the Jesuits in 1950 and paid for this decision dearly in his ecclesial and professional life. The ostracization by Church hierarchy and academy he experienced in the following years in Basel did not inhibit him from writing voluminously on countless theological themes. He was, of course, unrestricted by any academic limitations.

It was only after Vatican II in Europe and in the 1980s in North America that he was rehabilitated as a valued theological force in Catholic and academic circles. Balthasar’s crossings of boundaries between theology and other disciplines such as philosophy and literary criticism have increasingly had an impact on post-Vatican II theology. Balthasar has influenced the thought of two recent popes (John Paul II and Benedict VI) has become a prominent “go-to” theologian for Anglicans and Protestants who wish to dialogue with Catholicism. The editors of a collection of essays on Balthasar from the British-Anglican perspective of radical orthodoxy proclaimed in the late 1990s that “his time has come.”

---

6 Lucy Gardner, David Moss et al., eds., *Balthasar at the End of Modernity* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), vii.
Recent Critical Responses to Balthasar and a Thesis Regarding “Theological Distance”

Balthasar’s thoroughly trinitarian outlook characterizes his writing on virtually all theological, philosophical, and spiritual topics. This trinitarian orientation provides the occasion for many serious criticisms of his thought, particularly in recent literature. Karen Kilby sees a tendency in him to write an “unfettered” theology “that does not seem to hold itself accountable to Scripture, tradition, or its readers, but somehow soars above them all.”7 She asks “Whether [Balthasar] has the right to such a vivid picture of the eternal life of God” and “whether the integration he achieves requires too resolved a vision—too positive a vision, indeed—of suffering and evil.”8 Kilby commends Balthasar for his attempt to deal head on with earthly suffering and divine wrath, but she thinks his trinitarian theology is too integrated with his soteriology at too great an expense in terms of the epistemological limits of negative theology.9

Matthew Levering raises questions about Balthasar’s use of a paschal analogy for the Trinity that relies on “cruciform abandonment” for its prime analog. He suspects Balthasar’s metaphysical rigor because of a perceived contradiction between Jesus’ simultaneous knowing and not-knowing in his experience of the Cross.10 For Balthasar, Jesus’ divine self-knowledge as the Son of God (an indispensible doctrine) is translated more and more into his experience of distance from the Father even to the point of

7 Kilby, Critical Introduction, 40; emphasis in her text.
8 Kilby, Critical Introduction, 94.
10 Matthew Levering, Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004); 121, 126-27.
forsakenness on the Cross.\textsuperscript{11} But Levering fears that Balthasar’s Cross-centered trinitarianism results in a complete veiling of Jesus’ living connection to the Father in an experience of “the hopelessness of [sinners’] resistance to God and the graceless No of divine grace to this resistance.”\textsuperscript{12} Levering remains unconvinced that Balthasar’s cruciform analogy for the Father and Son’s eternal relation in the immanent Trinity bears the weight he puts upon it. He questions whether Balthasar has successfully avoided conflating the immanent and economic Trinity and importing ignorance, suffering, and even death into the Divine Being.\textsuperscript{13}

The complex connections that Balthasar makes between gender difference and trinitarian-personal difference is another lively arena for much of the current debate over his contribution to theology. One of the prime examples of Balthasar’s “gendered” theology is how he conceptualizes the divine nuptiality between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:27) in terms of Christ’s self-emptying and abasement (Phil 2:5-11). The Church is called to imitate Christ as a wife imitates her husband, says Balthasar. Does the man-woman relationship really take its model from the Christ-church relationship? For Balthasar, the answer is “yes.” At the end of \textit{Theo-Drama III: Dramatis Personae: Persons in Christ} (TD3) Balthasar claims that the earthly dynamics of sexual or gendered relationships cannot be projected onto the Trinity.\textsuperscript{14} But Lucy Gardner and David Moss suspect that he violates this precept in \textit{Theo-Drama II: Dramatis Personae: Man in God}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{11} Levering, \textit{Scripture and Metaphysics}, 128.
\textsuperscript{13} Levering, \textit{Scripture and Metaphysics}, 131.
\end{flushright}
(TD2), in TD3, and particularly in *Theo-Drama V: The Last Act* (TD5). They point out how the femininity of Mary as representative of the Church becomes doubly marked as difference from the divine in opposition with Christ as God and difference from the masculine in opposition with Christ as her Son and Savior. Georges De Schrijver describes extensively (without explicitly evaluative commentary) how Balthasar seems to think that both men and women can perform both masculine and feminine roles in Church and society but that there is a limit to this fluidity when it comes to the highly symbolic nature of liturgy and ordained priesthood.

It is Christ’s kenotic availability to the will of the Father that gives the Church its feminine form because Christ plays the ultimate feminine trinitarian role in the structuring of the form of the Church in his “kenosis.” Paul calls the believers to imitate Christ in this way in Phil 2:5-11. But Christ becomes for the Church the masculine husband, allowing his wife to participate fully in his own night of abandonment and suffering for the life of the world. Balthasar traces in TD3 the development of Mariology from the femininity of the Church vis-à-vis Christ so that the “total availability” of Mary to God and the Church to Christ are characterized as *essentially* feminine. The feminist critique of this *theologoumenon* is that the feminine pole of this figure is too often characterized by weakness, passivity, abasement, self-denial, and availability to be penetrated or abandoned by the masculine. Based on the hierarchical divine processions

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and the order of God-world and Christ-Church relations, these gender roles are then applied (or re-applied) to missions and roles in the Church; not just “contemplative” and “active” vocations and roles, but even to the genders that are expected to perform these roles. But Balthasar worries that without the gendered difference of these roles there would be insufficient complementarity and aesthetic balance to the form of the Church. Divergence from these “norms” would have both theological and moral ramifications.

Balthasar explains that the personal relations corresponding analogically to gender roles are arranged hierarchically in God, but in no way is each Divine Person “consigned” to a particular gender: the Father is masculine in the generation of the Son.

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19 While appreciative of Balthasar’s own attempt at theological appreciation of sexual difference, John O’Donnell raises questions about (what he calls) Balthasar’s rigidity on male-only ordination, on a certain lack of fluidity in gender roles in earthly married life and male-female relations, and on the strongly biological character of Balthasar’s focus on sexuality; “Man and Woman as Imago Dei in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar,” Clergy Review 68 (1983): 126-27.

20 De Schrijver, Le merveilleux accord, 318. Examples of how gender roles determined by men functioned in writings from the Middle Ages show that while women often saw themselves as disciples of Christ, men often were not able to see any likeness between women and Christ and therefore wrote biographies of women saints as imitators of Mary instead (Catherine Mooney, “Imitatio Christi or Imitatio Mariæ? Clare of Assisi and Her Interpreters,” in Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters, ed. Catherine Mooney (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 71. This was deemed more acceptable in social contexts in which men were dominant. At the beginning of Book Two of the Life of Holy Hildegard, the author compares Hildegard of Bingen to both Moses and John the Apostle; Jutta and Hildegard: The Biographical Sources, trans. Anna Silva, Brepol Medieval Women Series (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1998), 152. This is consistent with how many women in the High Middle Ages saw themselves as disciples and imitators of Christ and male figures in the tradition; Caroline Walker Bynum, “...And Woman His Humanity’: Female Imagery in the Religious Writing of the Later Middle Ages,” in Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 153. Catherine Mooney describes how Clare of Assisi’s image of herself as an imitator of Christ is gradually replaced by her male biographers with an image of her as the imitation of Mary; Imitatio, 67. This supports Caroline Walker Bynum’s observation that women writers rarely explicitly marked their own gender in their religious imagery, seeing themselves rather as simply human; “Woman His Humanity”; 156, 167. In writings from the 12th century on, it is men who most often make explicit gender distinctions in spiritual and theological writings. Bynum gives the example of Bernard of Clairvaux’s references to himself as a merciful caring “mother” to his monks, but as an exploration of his own “ambivalence about the exercise of authority and, at a deeper level, about the growing power of the clergy”; “Woman His Humanity,”160. Indeed, elsewhere he refers to bishops as “men” in the world while monks should aspire to be “women,” an image borrowing from the perceived weakness of women but in such a way as to exalt weakness as a way of radically converting one’s life away from the world of power and towards Christ; “Woman His Humanity,” 165. These images and reflections correspond with a tendency in the Middle Ages to focus on the humanity of Christ in mystical, spiritual, and hagiographical writing, but divine union with God as a goal in the spirituality of women was also a prominent feature of this period.
the latter is feminine in being generated, the two of them are masculine in the spiration of
the Spirit, and the latter is feminine in being spirated; but the Father is also feminine in
letting Himself be conditioned by these relations, without which He would not be
Father.21 As David L. Schindler notes, “all three persons share both “genders” (share in
some sense both generativity and receptivity), but always by way of an order that
remains asymmetrical.”22 Balthasar claims to adhere to the logic of theological analogy
according to which human beings participate in this genderedness of personhood in a
worldly sense that is outshone by the “ever-greater difference” of God’s inner-Personal
relations.23 But there is a parallel asymmetricality in the ordering—the masculine always
first, then the feminine—that always seems to subordinate the latter to the former. Many
commentators take issue with this hierarchization of Trinity and gendered humanity in
Balthasar’s thought because it defeats the equality of genders that he claims to maintain
and even smacks of trinitarian subordinationism. But does the analogical “distance” itself
between Divine-Personal difference and created sexual difference need to be gendered,
and does this gendering need to be hierarchical with priority accorded to the masculine
pole in every case?

Linn Marie Tonstad’s position with regard to these issues is representative of
many of the themes in feminist criticism of Balthasar, but holds the advantage of being
focused on his trinitarian theology. The following criticisms sum up Tonstad’s reading of
Balthasar’s trinitarian theology in the Theo-Drama as we shall address it in this essay: 1)
kenosis or “self-emptying” for the sake of another and the complementarity of male and

21 The argument from TD5 as neatly summarized by David L. Schindler in Heart of the World,
Center of the Church: Communio Ecclesiology, Liberalism, and Liberation (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans;
22 D.L. Schindler, Heart of the World, Center of the Church, 244; emphasis in his text.
23 D.L. Schindler, Heart of the World, Center of the Church, 245.
female in relation are co-extensive in Balthasar’s thought; 2) “the hierarchical nature of trinitarian decision-making shows that the order of the processions determines the concrete shape of the divine persons in their eternal relations to each other in such a way that ‘something like’ death and sacrifice belongs to the very being of God”; 3) Balthasar repeats the images of kenosis and submission in his account of created sexual difference in a way that makes it impossible to extract them from his trinitarian theology, which shows how beholden the latter is to the former; and 4), “the connections between sexual difference, trinitarian difference, and the kenotic relations that make the cross possible invite a revision of the relation between mission and procession in any account of the Trinity.”

Tonstad is suggesting in this last point that the traditional role of the “monarchy of the Father” in the processions of the Son and Spirit in the immanent Trinity and in their subsequent missions in the New Testament is inadequate for contemporary trinitarian theology. Because the monarchy of the Father has influenced earthly gender relations both directly and indirectly in such negative ways, she proposes that other ways of imagining the equality-in-divinity among the Persons in light of the NT narrative must be sought.

Gender is only one possible focus within the text of TD5, but Sarah Coakley offers a helpful general perspective on the issue: “gender ‘matters’ primarily because it is about differentiated, embodied relationship—first and foremost to God, but also to others;

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25 “Human (sexual) difference, made ontological and essential, ought not to be construed along trinitarian lines, at least so long as a hierarchical account of the processions or the Father’s monarchy within the Trinity are preserved. These latter moves threaten the full divinity of the trinitarian persons as well as moving inappropriately from trinitarian to human difference. The proper location for considering the human consequences of trinitarian ways of being is found in Jesus’ relations to the people around him, particularly in images of table fellowship with transgressors, excessive banqueting, and the destabilization of hierarchical relations and insider-outsider distinctions”; Tonstad, “Sexual Difference,” 623.
and its meaning is therefore fundamentally given in relation to the human’s role as made in the ‘image of God’ (Genesis 1.26-27).”

Because of the globally trinitarian and eschatological orientations of Balthasar’s thought, the analogy he sees between human sexuality and triune-personal difference directly touches all of Kilby’s, Levering’s, and Tonstad’s concerns. A response to these recent criticisms therefore provides an opportunity to test Balthasar’s fidelity to the principles of theological analogy as he understands them from the Fourth Lateran Council; namely, that any similarity between God and the world is always situated within a greater dissimilarity between them. Is Balthasar’s trinitarianism illegitimately conditioned by suffering and destructive imbalances of power and self-worth? Kilby’s, Levering’s, and Tonstad’s criticisms are valuable in that they allow us to discern more deeply how trinitarian distance is related to kenosis and hierarchy in Balthasar’s reading of the Catholic dogmatic tradition.

To be sure, Tonstad, Tina Beattie, and other critics of Balthasar have no intention whatsoever to preserve the integrity of his thought. They rather wish to move beyond Balthasar and correct what they believe is his undue influence in contemporary theology. Tonstad and Beattie, who work as Roman Catholic theologians, also mean to hold the very tradition itself up for examination and ask critical questions about whether theologoumena such as “kenosis” and “trinitarian hierarchy” are capable of serving the proclamation of the Gospel. Balthasar maintains that they are essential to the Gospel, so any attempt at a retrieval of Balthasar’s thought must keep kenosis and trinitarian hierarchy as integral to the structure of trinitarian theology. While Tonstad rightly notes a tight link between hierarchy and gender in Balthasar’s thought, I do not believe that it is

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so ontologically tight in reality. Balthasar must be criticized, but he cannot be dismissed as entirely as she would do to him. The analogical distance between the economy and the Trinity does not have to be gendered in the way Balthasar believes it does, but the hierarchical ordering of the divine processions is not as hopelessly patriarchal as Tonstad claims it is. I will offer in the final chapter of this essay a reading of TD5 that does this rethinking without problematizing and destabilizing Balthasar’s trinitarian theology to the extent that Tonstad does.

What must be done is an uncoupling of gender and hierarchy in a critical reading of Balthasar’s appropriation of the tradition. Therein lies the possibility of a retrieval of not only kenosis, but also of the hierarchical ordering of the trinitarian processions. The rationale for the retrieval of hierarchy lies not only it is deep integration with the rest of Balthasar’s thought, but also because it represents a faithful development of the Catholic tradition. Tonstad claims that what is needed in trinitarian theology—which Balthasar does not provide—is “a logic of superabundance, or better, an economy of plenitude.”27 This new logic would necessitate a focus on “resurrection—considered not merely as a restitution of wrongness, but more fully as the inauguration of a new, irreversible reality where friendship and adoptive relations structure the whole cosmos—as the lens through which trinitarian theology considers the whole of the divine economy as well as the being of God itself.” I hope to demonstrate in a new reading of Balthasar’s trinitarian theology that his understanding of kenosis and hierarchy has to do more fundamentally with superabundance than many of his critics allow.

It also must be acknowledged that the way Balthasar approaches the logic of superabundance causes serious problems for his critics. He either goes too far or is

inconsistent, eventually allowing for darkness and suffering to slip into the Trinity behind what looks like a theology of mystery. Because God’s inner life is personal and yet ultimately incomprehensible in human terms, the mystery of personhood-in-relation can be thought of in earthly terms as “surprise,” or the “unvordenkbar, that which cannot be anticipated or foreseen.”

But this language is meant to refer to a greater dissimilarity within the life of God that Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr frequently call the je-mehr or “ever-greater” of God. This expression for life in God may strike some as a great stretching of analogy and a presumptuous view of what is utterly beyond access to the human mind. It would, however, serve as evidence for exploring a logic of superabundance in Balthasar’s trinitarian thought. But there is another darker side to this unvordenkbar. Adrienne von Speyr also speaks of “the weakness of the Son in shéol” as an expression of the Son’s relation to the Father even in the immanent Trinity.

Balthasar adopts this move as his own in TD4 (Theo-Drama IV: The Action), TD5, and Mysterium Paschale. Speyr and Balthasar interpret this image from Holy Saturday to mean that the absolute passivity of Christ in death as he waits to be raised up by the Father expresses something positive in his relation to the Father from eternity. Beattie and Tonstad fear that such imagery valorizes masochism as a response to oppression, while Levering warns that such blind faith in the Son’s total abandonment on the Cross as an expression of triune relations implies an unacceptable imperfection in the divine intellect and “strains the doctrine of analogy and the biblical revelation of the Trinity to

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29 De Schrijver, Le merveilleux accord, 313.
the breaking point.”

By weighing one side of the analogy between triune love and Incarnate obedience to mission too heavily, even the idea of God as the “ever-greater” to God’s own Self within the triune relations becomes clouded by this perceived lack or deprivation within the Trinity. Whether it is the “weakness of the Son in sheól” or any kind of analogy of progress, growth, or surprised delight (even in the context of love), Levering cannot see how any such imagery can be reconciled with Balthasar’s Johannine claim that the Father has given everything to the Son from all eternity. Balthasar is, for him, simply inconsistent and playing fast and loose with dangerous imagery.

What I propose is a new focus on a group of images central to Balthasar’s thought. “Distance” is a spatial metaphor that informs and connects several different expressions of the God-world relation and as well as the divine-Personal relations in the immanent Trinity. A closer look at how distance functions reveals it to be a key element in some of his own greatest theological resources in an authentic development of the Catholic tradition. Greater awareness of Balthasar’s theology of distance can also inform a better critical approach to some problematic issues within his thought.

Theological Distance in Balthasar’s Thought

Balthasar joins many pre-Vatican II nouvelle théologie thinkers in France and Germany in lamenting the loss of the primacy of symbols over “neutral abstract

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31 Levering, Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 175-76. Alyssa Pitstick’s critique of Balthasar’s theology of Holy Saturday Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ’s Descent into Hell (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007) is cited favorably by Levering as well as by some of the feminist critics of Balthasar. As relevant as Christ’s descent into hell is to his trinitarian “theology of hell,” an evaluation of Pitstick’s work in this area is beyond our scope.

32 Levering, Scripture and Metaphysics, 131-32.
concepts,” a primacy that had held sway in patristic theology. He never denies the need for analytical concepts but rather insists that they be held critically subject to the irreducible, superabundant reality of grace. The various metaphoric images that Balthasar denotes with the word “distance” are expressions and representations of the theological realities of creation, redemption, and grace. “Distance” is not an analytical concept but rather bears witness to the structural arrangement of the iconic dimension of revelation that both hides and reveals the triune mystery of God. Distance is a cipher that guides a metaphysical ordering of concepts in Balthasar’s trinitarian theology. A cipher is a code for something else, and in this case, for many conceptually related concepts that mutually interpret each other. Balthasar speaks of glory in his New Testament theology, *Glory of the Lord VII* (GL7), as “an original cipher’ [German: *Chiffre*]” encompassing all biblical expressions of God’s beauty, righteousness, power, wisdom, and love without being resolvable into any of one of them. Glory is a statement about God that is “‘more than a concept [German: *Begriff*] ...because the doxa transcends all speech and every word,’” and distance functions in similar kinds of statements. That is, Balthasar employs “distance” in this way in GL7, TD4, TD5, and other texts as a cipher for various biblical, metaphysical, and dogmatic concepts and images. He describes the thought-task of soteriology in TD4 as one of “feeling our way back into the mystery of the absolute” under the conditions of three kinds of distance: 1) an infinite distance between God and the world that nonetheless forms the conditions for interpersonal relationship and love; 2) the condition of our sinful alienation from God introduced by the fall from which we

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need to be redeemed, but which is also prolonged by actual sins for which we need to be forgiven; and 3) an infinite distance marking the “economic” mission of the Son from the Father, seen in its fullness in the Cross. This third kind of distance also measures the Spirit’s procession from the Father to include believers in the Son’s divine filiation by their adoption as children of God. Obviously the language of “measurement,” “distance,” “depth,” and “way back” depend on experiences of the sheer alterity of a mystery that cannot be named directly. Because of the infinite ontological gap that the human spirit encounters in its reaching back to God as its source, the conditions for knowing the personal distinctions within the Godhead lie in an immanent Trinity Who is incomprehensible, beyond the “borders” (so to speak) of the economic Trinity that we “see” on the Cross. However, because of the activity of the Spirit of adoption Who “relocates” believers and the Church to the position or topos (place) that Jesus now inhabits in glory, these three distances laid out in the drama of salvation and the order of theological thought must correspond to something within God that is “like” inter-personal distance between the Father and Son. Distance therefore also gives Balthasar a concrete language in which to speak of theological analogy in one of its primary senses of a “proportion” or “measurement” in which different entities may participate in an intelligible way.

I am taking a cue from Kevin Mongrain, whose task in his “Irenaean retrieval” of Balthasar’s eschatology is to “identify dominant themes that conceptually regulate the

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36 TD4, 324.
system of his thought.” An identification of major themes like the mutual glorification of God and creation in Mongrain’s case or “distance” in mine should also make possible a critique of the validity and coherence of Balthasar’s project and any point within it.

There are two things that a genealogy of distance in Balthasar’s thought accomplishes. Firstly, it shows him at work in dialogue with his sources and contemporaries. Secondly, it shows him modeling a particular practice of theology in the very development of the idea of distance. Beginning as I do with Balthasar’s reading of Gregory of Nyssa and arguing that he can be more adequately critiqued in light of Gregory’s influence on his thought, it is tempting to describe this study as a “Nyssan retrieval” of Balthasar’s trinitarian theology. Although the “Nyssan” factor is present throughout the genealogy of Balthasar’s thought that I will provide, I hesitate to claim it as its chief characteristic. One could just as easily offer (and some have offered) “Bonaventurian,” “Dionysian,” “Irenaean,” “Bulgakovian,” and other valid author-based readings of his work. The image of distance that makes its appearance in Balthasar’s early reading of Gregory expands and multiplies to include different analogically related images as Balthasar seeks to respond more adequately to revelation in light of his theological, philosophical, and even literary concerns in the survey of texts I have chosen. John R. Sachs describes Balthasar’s theological method as one of becoming enfolded within God’s loving mercy (Einfaltung), which then leads to the Spirit’s own unfolding of the divine mystery to the theologian (Entfaltung). This is an eschatological reality that the theologian is being incorporated into by God’s revelation, but there is also an indispensible soteriological movement that much be engaged. The cognitive experience of our distance from God is the very

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38 Mongrain, *Systematic Thought*, 14; he sees a lack in this area in the secondary literature on Balthasar, which he finds too expository.
mediation of God’s self-revelation to us through the Son’s experience of his “hour” given by the Father.\textsuperscript{40} Doing theology is an expression of faith from the standpoint of this distance. It is not that God’s life story is reduced to an \textit{exitus et reditus} but that the theologian is enfolded (\textit{eingefaltet}) into God’s unfolding (\textit{Entfaltung}). This, it could be said, is a very “Nyssan” theme.

By challenging Kilby’s and Levering’s critiques that Balthasar has exceeded what speculative theology should attempt and broken with the tradition, the genealogy will demonstrate that even the most controversial image of the infinite and eternal distance between the Persons within the Godhead is the result of a legitimate development of the tradition. Balthasar’s development of the images of distance is not without dangers, as we shall see in his theology of gender that is so integrated with his trinitarian doctrine. But by addressing the concerns of feminists like Tonstad and Beattie, I will argue that hierarchy in the processions, the biblical image of kenosis, and other key elements of trinitarian-theological tradition can be retrieved in Balthasar’s thought for fruitful use. The essay is therefore offered as an apology for and retrieval of Balthasar’s development of the tradition in light of valid criticisms from some recent prominent systematic theologians. The criticisms addressed will also require a more in-depth look at how Balthasar understands the analogy of being and how kenosis and gender function in his soteriology and eschatology.

What follows is a review of secondary literature on Balthasar’s trinitarian theology and the topic of distance in theology, after which I will proceed with a description of the methodology to be followed in the four main chapters of this essay.

\textsuperscript{40} TD4, 319-20.
Studies of Balthasar Concerning Theological Distance and Related Topics

There has been little focused work on the role of distance in Balthasar’s trinitarian theology. Most mentions of theological distance come in sections of books and articles and not as the main subject of a study. It is frequently admitted among scholars how difficult it is to come to an adequate definition or understanding of it as Balthasar uses it.\(^{41}\) Karen Kilby acknowledges Balthasar’s development of infinite trinitarian distance as an attempt both to avoid modalism and to account for the economy of salvation via the Cross of Jesus. But then she asks “what exactly it might mean to talk of infinite distance in the eternal Trinity” in a way that does not simply cut off the discussion in an appeal to the analogical nature of the language.\(^{42}\) She also wonders if it is not a flagrant eisegesis of the Catholic tradition from his exalted viewpoint as spiritual director for a mystic (Adrienne von Speyr).\(^{43}\) Nicholas Healy, although generally positive on the potentials of Balthasar’s theology, notes that “Balthasar’s extreme language of ‘God’s separation from himself’ undoubtedly runs the risk of anthropomorphism and a loss of analogy. ... Words such as ‘separation’ and ‘distance’ stand in need of further clarification.”\(^{44}\) Interestingly, Rowan Williams apologetically changes the translation of one of Balthasar’s common terms, Abstand, from “distance” to “difference” in a quotation from Theo-Drama IV on “the fundamental theme of the production of radical otherness” in the Trinity.\(^{45}\)

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\(^{42}\) Kilby, Critical Introduction; 107, 109.


While certain senses of distance are necessary for Balthasar’s spatial, kinetic, and “ergonomic” metaphors for God’s immutability, Gerard O’Hanlon does not thematize distance in Balthasar’s thought to any extent in his otherwise excellent analysis. Edward Oakes in his classic study, Pattern of Redemption, duly notes the role of distance between God and the world in an epistemological approach to theological analogies in light of the greater dissimilarity in God according to Lateran IV. He even notes the relationship of a kind of inner-trinitarian distance to the theologoumena of perichoresis and kenosis. But he does not dwell on these senses of distance at any length. Other classic studies of Balthasar’s thought such as those by Angelo Scola, Manfred Lochbrunner, and Georges De Schrijver scarcely mention the theme of distance in Balthasar’s thought at all.

The situation changes somewhat after Lucy Gardner and David Moss’ study of analogical representation in Balthasar’s work in Balthasar at the End of Modernity, where distance is considered at some length as integral to the structure of Balthasar’s theology. Aidan Nichols’ analysis of TD5 takes up the most space compared to any other part of Balthasar’s trilogy in his three-volume commentary on it. In this analysis he notes how the eternal distance between Father and Son is “at once ‘ever greater’ and yet

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47 Oakes, Pattern of Redemption; 115, 288-89.

For another example similar to those mentioned above, Angelo Scola does not explicitly dwell on “distance” as an image or category in Balthasar’s method, which he describes as a meeting of movements in two different directions: the analogic “upwards” towards the Trinity from the humanity of Christ, and katalogic “downwards” from the Trinity to Christ as the expression of Divine Personhood. This method obviously depends on a spatial metaphor involving distance between God and the world. Although Scola also gives due attention to the centrality of the union of trinitarian processio and missio in Balthasar’s thought, he does not dwell on their dependence on spatial metaphor; Theological Style; 55, 58.
49 Gardner and Moss, “Something like Time, Something like the Sexes,” 69-138. Of course, not all of the studies mentioned here include responses to Gardner and Moss. The point is that distance comes to the fore as a more central feature of Balthasar’s thought after this point in time, particularly in Anglo-American literature.
perfectly bridged” by the Spirit who bears witness to the “primordial union of doing and letting be in God himself.”50 Distance within the Godhead is thus “the foundation of both labour and repose among creatures who are made in [God’s] likeness,” as well as for all love both in God and in the world. (As we shall see in Chapters 1 and 4, this is where Balthasar is at his most “Nyssan.”) Kevin Mongrain notes the centrality to Balthasar’s trinitarian theology of the distance that is necessarily opened up in the divine economy by kenosis, which then allows for a reincorporation of the “separated” sinner into communion.51

Some recent philosophical studies of Balthasar point to the vital role that distance plays in structuring this analogy of being. Junius Johnson writes in his study of the metaphysical constitution of Balthasar’s trilogy: “Analogy measures the distance between the Creator and the creation, and as such it grounds the real distinction between essence and existence on the Trinitarian distinctions.”52 This is true because God’s aseity (i.e. the quality of being the source of God’s own essence and existence) marks the furthest “distance” between God and creatures and is yet also imperfectly participated in by creatures.53 Their essence and their existence are both given to them and “precede” them in a way as “gifts.” Creatures therefore must “live out” their essences in the finite temporal flux of their existences. As difficult as she admits that “distance” is as an image, Angela Franks looks to TD4 to understand the indispensable role of inner-trinitarian

50 Nichols, No Bloodless Myth (Washington: CUA, 2000); 105, 198.
51 Mongrain, Systematic Thought; 90-91, 97.
52 Johnson, Christ and Analogy, 25. Johnson refers to the trilogy of GL, TD, and TL as a “triptych” because its structure is based on the unity of being and the interpenetration of the transcendentals of beauty, truth, and goodness: “triology implies a separation among the three parts that would deny the type of unity von Balthasar wish to champion; rather, the dramatics is already both an aesthetic and a logic, and so on”; 43.
53 Johnson, Christ and Analogy, 140.
distance in structuring the analogy between God and the creation.\footnote{54} This analogy is based on the salvific event of God’s grace as an elevation of creation to a greater and greater participation in the harmonious “tension” of God’s inter-Personal life.\footnote{55} David C. Schindler creatively takes up “the pathos of distance” from Nietzsche as the structure of truth as Balthasar sees it: subject-object-Gestalt, with the third element of Gestalt bringing the whole into unity by creating space between subject and object.\footnote{56} The structure of truth therefore has “parts” which necessitate an inner difference and distance for its constitution and allow for movement and “act” in the dramatic event of truth: it is God Who, in the end, is the drama of dynamic truth.\footnote{57}

German-language studies are also increasingly noting the significance of distance in Balthasar’s thought. Thomas Schumacher in his monumental study of trinitarian perichoresis or circumincession gives an in-depth account of the function of distance in that image.\footnote{58} Silvia Cichon-Brandmaier outlines Balthasar’s varieties of distance (using such terms as Distanz, Abstand, Raum, Trennung) in light of his theology of kenosis as a “happening” within God. Epistemological access to this “happening” is given only through the New Testament witness to Jesus’ kenosis out of obedience to the Father to overcome the alienation of sin in the world. Christ “visibly” distances himself from the

\footnote{54} Franks, “Trinitarian Analogia Entis,” 534: “Most puzzling to many readers is the claim that the otherness between the Trinitarian Persons is the most fundamental otherness which founds all other distances, even the distance between God and creation. For von Balthasar, however, only this radical claim can make sense of the unity and multiplicity of being, without falling into either univocity and pantheism on the one hand or pious agnosticism on the other; the analogy of being is possible only through the Trinitarian features of unity and distance, which provide the basis for the analogous relations of similarity and dissimilarity.”


\footnote{57} D.C. Schindler, Dramatic Structure, 421.

Father by becoming flesh on earth, which presupposes the initial distance of the world from God.\textsuperscript{59}

Studies of trinitarian distance outside the context of Balthasar’s work are much more rare than works that focus on distance within it. The late American Balthasar scholar Edward Oakes observes in “Diastasis in the Trinity” that the many passages in the NT where the Father \textit{acts upon} the Son and \textit{sends} the Son would make no sense semantically without the diastasis that is implied, and nor would many of the Thomistic formulations of activity, passivity, and procession.\textsuperscript{60} Remarkably, Balthasar plays no role whatsoever in this small contribution (by a Balthasar scholar!), to which Oakes undoubtedly wished to add had he had the opportunity.

There are two notable recent studies of spatial and topographical metaphors in trinitarian theology, both of which are influenced by Cappadocian theology. They are both relevant to Balthasar’s theology of distance even if they do not directly address it. The first is a brand new study, \textit{The Place of the Spirit}, in which Sarah Morice-Brubaker traces a path beginning in Basil of Caesarea’s reflections on prepositions of place in liturgical trinitarian language to the social domains of suffering and redemption in Moltmann’s theology and the epistemological domains of Marion’s phenomenology.\textsuperscript{61}

Morice-Brubaker notes in Gregory of Nyssa that, while God is \textit{adiastaton} (without


\textsuperscript{61} Sarah Morice-Brubaker, \textit{The Place of the Spirit: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Location} (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013), 40-41. See also Chapter 3, “Moltmann’s Perichoretic Spaces for God and Creation,” 67-97; Morice-Brubaker is critical, as is Balthasar, of Moltmann’s overly dialectical and process-conditioned understanding of mutual indwelling in the immanent Trinity; 95-96. See also Chapter 4, “No Place for the Spirit? Jean-Luc Marion’s Placial Refusal,” 98-121; here she criticizes Marion’s over-reliance on filial distance between the Father and Son as a category of thought to the exclusion of a properly personal account of the Spirit.
“distance” or interval) because of the mutual indwelling of the Persons in the Godhead, the trinitarian relations are nonetheless characterized by the terms *periphera* and *anakyklosis*. These spatial and kinetic metaphors “evoke a rotating movement of the three persons around each other in the godhead.”⁶² The tension in Gregory’s thought between absolute divine simplicity (the *adiastatos*) and dynamic eventfulness (*anakyklosis*) has the potential to bear fruit in understanding trinitarian relations. As we shall see, Balthasar will exploit this tension to vivid, far-reaching effects. In our second example of a study of spatial images in trinitarian theology, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, David Bentley Hart uses the language of distance to illustrate the Cappadocian understanding of *perichoresis*, the “dancing” or “moving around” of the Divine Persons with each other in the Godhead.⁶³ Hart develops his own trinitarian thesis with regard to distance rooted in the theology of Gregory of Nyssa in direct continuity with Balthasar’s project, even if he seeks to do so without depending too heavily on the latter as a modern source for such a development.⁶⁴

Not all commentators on Balthasar’s work see positive potential in his use of theological distance. Kilby acknowledges Balthasar’s starting point for trinitarian theology in “a particular construal of the Cross itself” and “a more speculative move from the Cross (thus construed) to what one could call the eternal conditions of its possibility.”⁶⁵ This results in his theology of trinitarian distance, but it goes hand-in-hand with what she suspects is an over-integration of soteriology and Trinity that results in a “proclivity to cast suffering in a positive light” against his own best negative-theological

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intentions.66 Like Kilby, Matthew Levering is critical of Balthasarian distance as a kind of de-centered grab-all for a constellation of other images that he believes are unclear and self-defeating at best and heretical at worst. He believes Balthasar’s position oversteps the doctrine of analogy and goes beyond the legitimate parameters of biblical revelation.67 These two criticisms of Balthasarian distance come in the context of wider criticisms of his work and thus demonstrate how integrated the category of distance is in the method and content of his theology.

I will maintain that distance-language has a legitimately “kataphatic” (positive, descriptive) function, even if the negative-theological orientation in his work is sometimes difficult to see because of it. In defense of Balthasar, Peter Henrici comments on the inadequacy of “difference” as a translation for Balthasar’s term Abstand, particularly in reference to the Trinity.68 The German term calls for a concrete, intelligible image, whereas “difference” is merely abstract and supplies no content for the relation that Balthasar wishes to describe. Thomas Schumacher agrees that mere Differenz does not supply the proper ontological content, much less the personalist content, for the relations that constitute the divine unity. For him, Diastase or “separation” is a better word to describe the ontological distinction between the Hypostases in the Trinity because it properly characterizes the dynamics of Divine Being as an “ever-greater” eventfulness that eludes all staticity. Diastase allows for the kind of ratio that establishes a divine unity between what appears to be opposite in earthly terms:

66 Kilby, Critical Introduction, 115.
67 Levering is quite critical of Balthasar in Scripture and Metaphysics but especially so in Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths.
68 Henrici noted this in a personal conversation (January 8, 2014) when I relayed to him how Rowan Williams had changed the translation of Abstand in a passage in TD4 from “distance” to “difference” in “Balthasar and the Trinity,” Cambridge Companion to HUvB, 41.
the eternal Father in glory and the humiliated Son on the Cross, united in the Spirit who traverses this distance in witness to an eternal, immanent bond between them. Most importantly this *Diastase* conveys (albeit paradoxically) the interpersonal intimacy of the divine relations. Erich Przywara, a major influence on Balthasar, also maintains that any likeness within a greater dissimilarity between God and creation according to the Fourth Lateran Council always presumes the deepest intimacy: first within the Trinity itself among the Divine Persons, then between God and the world to which the Father sends the Son and Spirit out of infinite love, and finally among the members of the Church. For Przywara, only this intimacy within the Godhead can become “the place of the most formal emergence of the distance between God the Creator and creation.”

Intimacy is always an enrichment of interpersonal distance, never an erasure of it. And intimacy always depends on the revelation of a mystery at the depths of a person that can never be be exhausted or comprehensively grasped.

Balthasar’s theology of distance is fundamentally related to two controversial areas of his thought that implies a third category controversial among many feminists: kenosis, gender, and hierarchy. Gardner and Moss name kenosis, and more particularly “the kenosis of the Son prefigured in the *Urkenosis* of the Father” as the central theme in Balthasar’s thought around which all others revolve in an increasingly deepening

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symbolism. The Urkenosis of the Father is an image borrowed from Sergei Bulgakov that expresses the Father’s generation of the Son and spiration of the Spirit in a bestowal of the Godhead. Supporters of Balthasar and those who maintain the theological legitimacy of kenosis would further maintain that trinitarian difference, creation, Incarnation, the sending of the Spirit, and even differences within the created world cannot be characterized by lack, involuntary emanation, or the degradation of pure being. Scola notes how these differences all find their grounding in a self-donating act of love. But not all readers are favorable to Balthasar’s theology of kenosis, or even to the theologoumenon of kenosis itself. Daphne Hampson, writing from a post-Christian perspective, wishes to abolish kenosis from theological discourse entirely as a hopelessly masochistic concept. Tina Beattie’s argument in New Catholic Feminism is not primarily focused on Balthasar’s trinitarian theology but on what she perceives as his irredeemable patriarchal theological anthropology; namely, that kenosis and gender (and hierarchy too) are irredeemably and irretrievably intertwined, thus placing the masculine in a violent dominant position vis-à-vis the feminine. We have noted above that Linn Marie Tonstad holds much in common with Beattie on this topic but finds the entangled roots of these problems in Balthasar’s trinitarian theology.

Is kenosis too bound up with gender and domination in the tradition and in Balthasar’s thought? Shelly Rambo offers a response to these critiques in her book Spirit and Trauma. Her key move is to indicate the positive role that the Spirit plays as the “bond of love” between Father and Son in Balthasar’s account of Holy Saturday, as the

72 Scola, Theological Style, 63-64.
Hypostasis that holds together what seems to be separated in the Son’s suffering. In a direct response to Hampson’s criticisms, Aristotle Papanikolaou points to Balthasar’s thought to rethink kenosis and the element of risk in relationship as acts of generosity and self-actualization. This line of argument in Papanikolaou begins to make common cause with Sarah Coakley, who in her new book *God, Sexuality, and the Self* and other articles finds a locus for the understanding of kenosis in a kind of “power-in-vulnerability” in silent prayer. This willful act of vulnerability that lets God be God actually undermines the damaging gender essentialism that favors patriarchy and male dominance. Such an understanding of kenosis is comparable to what one can find in Balthasar (as well as in Adrienne von Speyr), although Coakley does not make this connection. The kind of vulnerability Coakley suggests is not essentially subject to exploitation but rather to an abundant reception of love from the Other. To repress this kind of vulnerability before God and to refuse God’s access to the soul in prayer would be harmful in the spiritual

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75 Shelly Rambo, *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), 71; she says more than Balthasar does when she writes about the Spirit as the One who secures that in the Godhead which was “in danger” of being severed in the Son’s suffering and death. This may go too far, but it can be corrected with the reading of Balthasar on “risk.” Like Balthasar, Rambo is trying to give a theological account for the trauma that arises from being “stretched” between death and resurrection on the path of human life, a path into which Jesus entered not only as a human being, but also as the Word of God. The survivor lives in a Holy Saturday experience analogous to Jesus’ own; 138. In her development of pneumatology in light of Balthasar and Speyr on Holy Saturday, Rambo “hypostasizes” the kind of trinitarian “risk” or unresolvedness that Balthasar indicates as the very Spirit of God; 139. This seems to me to be too simplistic and perhaps even tritheistic a resolution to the theodicy problem she addresses, but perhaps not so far from Balthasar in its orthodox intent.

76 Aristotle Papanikolaou, “Person, Kenosis and Abuse: Hans Urs von Balthasar and Feminist Theologies in Conversation,” *Modern Theology* 19, n.1 (2003): 42: “Kenosis for Balthasar is not self-sacrifice, but the movements of self-giving toward the other in order to receive the other that are constitutive of divine and human personhood. Personhood, for Balthasar, is not a quality possessed, but a unique and irreducible identity received in relations of love and freedom that can only be labeled as kenotic.” The rejections of kenosis that he argues against are reductionistic, and in Hampson’s case, ultimately self-defeating: the kind of relationality that she advocates for in the end is indeed “kenotic” in key Balthasarian ways. Tonstad disagrees that an interpretation of kenosis such as Papanikolaou’s could result from a reading of Balthasar, but this disagreement is based on her understanding of how tightly hierarchy and gender difference are linked to each other in Balthasar’s trinitarian theology; Tonstad, “Sexual Difference,” 622.

life, regardless of gender or social location. Christian feminists, in Coakley’s opinion, cannot afford to avoid or jettison this fundamental attitude before God.

Cyril O’Regan clarifies Balthasar’s theology of kenosis in light of Hegel’s kenosis. The latter is not an example of the kind of kenosis that leaves feminists so wary, but it reveals a dynamic in triune relations that could be characterized by a certain “lack” and a drive for fulfillment at the expense of the Other. In Balthasar’s Trinity, infinite distance is eternally being opened up in the Father’s Ur-Kenosis to the Only-Begotten, a true self-“emptying” so that the Son may truly be and the Spirit may proceed from them both. The Son and Spirit then open themselves to receive the fullness of Godhead from the Father. This constitutes the Persons in their relations, but in a way directly opposed to Hegel’s “eroticization” of kenosis as God’s own Self through the realization of the Other. This dynamic would be more like “investment” than self-emptying and Balthasar abhors such implications. Balthasar’s kenosis—as in Phil 2:5-11—forms the distance of both economy and intimacy, the very depth of love, unity, fidelity, and glory.

The second controversial concept to which Balthasar’s theology of distance is fundamentally related, that of gender, has been anticipated in the feminist critiques of kenosis considered above. The controversies in the third area of hierarchy stem directly from the Balthasarian intersection of kenosis and gender. According to Balthasar’s understanding of the kenotic structure of the triune relations and the act of creation, sexual difference bears an analogy with the God-world difference. In Genesis 2:18-25 and Ephesians 5:27 the man and Christ open themselves kenotically to the woman and to the Church. The man and Christ thus allow the woman and the Church to “proceed” from

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78 O’Regan, Anatomy; 166-68, 229-30. For Hegel, “Kenosis is not the figure of gift, but the figure of economic exchange in which the divine becomes more and more until it is fully actualized”; 259.
their wounded sides, respectively, in sleep and in death while also allowing God to conform the woman and the Church to the man and Christ. Although Balthasar insists upon the equality of male and female before God, the masculine always has priority in this hierarchical arrangement: God always takes the masculine pole vis-à-vis creation’s receptive femininity. How distance is related to these issues is complex, but it has to do with a kind of superiority expressed temporally by “priority” and spatially by “height.” A proper understanding of his trinitarian distance-theology will function more as a potential corrective to some of Balthasar’s own excessive essentialism as well as to some over-reaching criticisms of him.

Gardner and Moss and Coakley point to some of the very problems that a new understanding of distance can solve if it is freed from serving as a marker of ontological or temporal priority in the male-female opposition. These authors point to a tension in Balthasar’s thought where the hierarchized gender difference that he wishes to secure actually unravels within the dynamism of the trinitarian relations. I will agree with them on this point, but I will also seek to demonstrate how Balthasar’s theology of distance can guide theological thought back to its primordial, symbolic depths and guard the oppositional limit between God and the world. If Balthasar sometimes too readily assigns to genders what is more appropriate to persons, a proper understanding of inter-personal Balthasarian distance can provide some resources for retrieval. I will likewise agree with Jennifer Newsome Martin when she argues that Bulgakov’s influence on Balthasar’s project via the image of the Father’s Ur-Kenosis actually allows for a more truly

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79 Gardner and Moss, “Something Like Time,” 73; citing TD2, 409.
relational human anthropology than acknowledged by many feminist critics of Balthasar and of the doctrine of kenosis (e.g. Beattie, Tonstad, and Hampson). 81

**Methodology**

I have introduced four types of “Balthasarian” distance: the distance between the world and God, the distance of the alienated sinner from God, the distance of the Son’s descent from the Father in the economy of salvation, and the interpersonal distance between the Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit. The scheme I will use to distinguish them from each other is adapted from an enumeration given by Robyn Horner in Jean-Luc Marion: a Theo-logical Introduction. Balthasar’s influence on Jean-Luc Marion is beyond the scope of this essay, but my indebtedness to Horner for the idea of such a schematization will be clear throughout what follows. 82

Balthasar uses many different words to denote the spatial dimensions of God-world relations and triune relations in his texts (diastasis, Diastase, Distanz, Abstand). They are used interchangeably in reference to any of the four distances identified in this study and are often translated into English as simply “distance.” The primary form of distance in the order of thought and experience is “The basis of the biblical religion,” which is “the diastasis, the distance between God and the creature that is the elementary presupposition that makes it possible for man to understand and appreciate the unity that

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82 Robyn Horner, “A Theology of Distance,” Ch.5 in Jean-Luc Marion: A Theo-logical Introduction (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 51-53. Balthasar’s thought regarding theological distance is one of the most significant influences on Marion’s phenomenology and his theology.
grace brings about.” This first kind of “Balthasarian” distance will be called D1. The second kind, D2, is an alienation of the creation from God as the result of sin. It can characterize an individual person or a whole state of existence. D2 represents the creature’s rejection of the Creator at its own end of the “polarity” of D1, and therefore finds the possibility for its existence in D1. The remaining two kinds of distance to be considered “from the divine side” are numbered as follows: D3 is the economic, salvific distance “between the Son and the Father which is a result of Christ’s taking on human sinfulness, which leads to the hiatus of the Cross and to the descent into Hell”; and D4 is “an eternal intra-trinitarian distance of the Son from the Father that actually forms the condition of possibility for the divine-human diastasis [D1].” We can see from this enumeration that, even including the rupture indicated by the difference of D2 from D1, these four distances build on and incorporate each other in an ascending order from D1 to D4. All four varieties of distance are implicated in how Balthasar approaches Paul’s hymn in Colossians. First, the Pauline passage:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:15-20, NRSV)

84 I have changed Horner’s taxonomy by switching the order of the third and fourth varieties of distance in a way that better suits the development of the idea in Balthasar’s texts.
85 All English Bible quotations will be of the NRSV.
This is Paul’s view of how God and the world meet each other in the definitive event of love and reconciliation, the horizons of which stretch to eternity. The following passage from TD5 lays out Balthasar’s goal in theo-dramatic analysis in these Pauline terms:

In general the twofold vision of the Colossians hymn corresponds to that of the present book [TD5]: the trinitarian diastasis between God (the Father) and “the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15, the Son) forms the all-embracing frame: at its center is the historical drama of Cross-Resurrection-Church that is acted out within history, in such a way that “becoming” is already lodged safely in “being”; accordingly no opposition can be set up between the process of “being reconciled” and the state of “always having been reconciled”.  

The “all-embracing frame” to which he refers in the passage is D3, the diastasis between the visible icon (Son) and the invisible reality he represents (Father). The economic distance of D3 therefore also includes and doubles D1 by virtue of the Incarnate Son’s place in the creation. These two distances, D1 and D3, bear a common proportion. The frame “frames” a particular vision of the God-world relation as “measured” by the Father-Son relation, but the interpersonal distance is infinite in scope. It is the Spirit who ultimately gives the measurements and frame for this picture. The Spirit does not so much define or delimit this scope but rather suggests the infinite abundance and potentiality of the contents of the scene. The object of the vision, also contained in the Colossians hymn of Paul, has a triple aspect that is played out in history: Cross-Resurrection-Church. Christ is the head of a body, as Paul proclaims, in such a way that every historical reality of the Incarnate Christ is a reality for the Church and vice versa. All of this “economic” eventfulness (Balthasar argues) is “lodged firmly” in God’s eternal being by virtue of God’s role as the Primary Actor in the drama. The economic distance of D3 therefore also bears witness on earth to the love between the Father and Son in the unity of the Spirit across D4, the interpersonal distance of the immanent.

86 TD5, 423.
Trinity. D3 “expresses” D4 just as the Son fully expresses the Father in Balthasar’s “Bonaventurian” understanding of theological analogy’s foundation and operation.87 Through the divine Action played in the drama of the Cross, the sinful distance of D2 is overcome and doubled by D3, thereby reconciling the creation in D1 and manifesting its inclusion in D4 because of the places the Son occupies in both D3 and D4.

These four distances are present in Balthasar’s later works that touch upon trinitarian theology and their interrelation will be treated extensively in the last two chapters of this study. But they are related to two more varieties of distance and a kinetic image that emerge in Balthasar’s early-career reading of Gregory of Nyssa. The opening chapter of Balthasar’s early volume, *Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa* (PT),88 is an outline of Gregory’s understanding of “spacing,” or what is called in Greek the διάστασις or διάστημα (transliterated as “diastasis” and “diastema”). Diastema connotes senses of “separation,” “standing-over-against,” and “extension.”89 Balthasar always emphasizes the need to guard against delusions regarding the human spirit’s adequacy in its ascent toward God and to reject the illusion of any kind of identity between creation and God according to nature. He insists on the “gift” quality of God’s descent to the world in mercy and grace and he favors Gregory’s common insistence on it.

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87 Johnson, *Christ and Analogy*, 95.
89 Gregory also uses the term αἰων for the same general concept, but less often than the other two. See also Scot Douglass, “Diastêma,” in *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, eds. Lucas F. Mateo-Seco and Giulio Maspero, trans. Seth Cherney (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 227. The transliteration “diastasis” often occurs in Balthasar’s later works, while “diastema” is the more commonly used term in *Presence and Thought* (PT).
There are two senses of diastasis (or diastema, the slightly more commonly used word) in PT. The first one is the spatial and temporal distension of a creature’s being as the condition for growth and progress, which I will call $\Delta_1$. The second, called $\Delta_2$, denotes a kind of ontological “gap” or “abyss” as a marker of the utter qualitative difference between God and the world. These two varieties of diastasis together constitute the condition for all created existence (including spiritual existence) and all analogical-theological thought. They also form the condition for an image around which Gregory of Nyssa’s spiritual writings constantly revolve, that of *epéktasis*. In the 1950s Jean Daniélou proposed *epéktasis* as the epitome of Gregory’s entire spiritual doctrine.\(^9^0\)

*Epéktasis* is the noun form of various lexemes that Gregory uses based on Paul’s use of the verb *ἐπεκτείνω* in Phil 3:13, a kind of stretching-forth towards God by a creature who has been graced by the Holy Spirit. For Gregory this image signifies the perfection of spiritual life in an endless approach to God. It is foremost among the overarching themes of Gregory’s thought. Balthasar appreciates Gregory’s emphasis on the role of grace and divine action in God’s attraction of the soul in a withdrawal deeper into infinite transcendence.\(^9^1\) Perhaps because his colleague Daniélou did not authoritatively coin the use of *epéktasis* as a synthesis of Gregory’s spiritual doctrine until years after Balthasar wrote PT, Balthasar does not refer directly to the Greek noun *epéktasis* in that volume. However it will become clear over the course of this essay that Balthasar has appropriated the idea of *epéktasis* almost as completely as Gregory has. In fact, Balthasar’s own theology is not comprehensible without attention to its role in both the spiritual life of the Church and trinitarian theology, even if he is always anxious to

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subject it to “christological and trinitarian regulation.” We can therefore use *epêktasis* with confidence in referring to Balthasar’s reading of Gregory of Nyssa and to his own spiritual theology. The title of *Presence and Thought* bears witness to the dynamic Balthasar appropriates from Gregory: *epêktasis* is the soul’s response to God’s *Presence* as the One who beckons in a paradoxical withdrawal into deeper transcendence; and the human response of *Thought* is part of this *epêktasis* towards God. The diastasis between God and the world both conditions this relationship and sets its boundaries. In the logic of both Gregory’s and Balthasar’s thought, without diastasis there can be no desire for God; without desire there is no *epêktasis* towards God and therefore no act of love for God; without the approach to God in love, there is no participation in God’s infinite goodness.

The logic of Balthasar’s argument dictates that participation in God’s goodness is ultimately a participation in D4. The creation’s stretching towards God in spiritual *epêktasis* across D1 (or Gregory’s Δ2) becomes its increasingly perfected participation in the triune relations in D4. This participation is never achieved perfectly and never

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92 See O’Regan: “While it is true that Balthasar is able to validate Nyssa’s view of *epêktasis*, it is also the case that in his early work on the Cappadocian thinker, he worried about the radical apophaticism in which the knowing that is ‘stretched forth’ (lexical root) there is a hint that this has as much to do with the constitution of the subject as with the mysterious nature of God, indeed, God as triune. Nonetheless, there is equally considerable evidence that over his career Balthasar’s concerns about Nyssa on this point were very much assuaged. Indeed, it is possible to say that they were assuaged to the extent that when David Bentley Hart makes Nyssa’s *epêktasis* the corner-stone of his theological aesthetics in *The Beauty of the Infinite*, he is perfectly justified in thinking that his project continues and develops that of Balthasar. Still for the record Balthasar shows himself anxious in *Theo-Logic I*, written within a few years of his major Nyssa text, to resist an emphasis which, in his view, is a perennial possibility within the apophatic tradition that shows reluctance to submit itself to christological and trinitarian regulation”; *Anatomy*, 144-45. This hesitation, at least with regard to Gregory himself, has very much dissipated by the time he writes TD4 and TD5.

93 “Since there is always a gap (diastêma) between God’s Being and our becoming, there will always be something of God the soul loves that eludes its grasp even in the resurrection. Therefore, God will always be the object of the soul’s *epithymia* [desire] that is ever straining forward [in *epêktasis*] to glimpse more of the God whose infinite goodness exceeds our grasp”; J. Warren Smith, “Desire,” *Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 222.
becomes part of the creature’s “nature,” as it is God’s nature. But by virtue of the Son’s belonging to creation via D3 and creation’s capitulation in the Son, creation is adopted and included somehow in D4. The emergences of D1-D4 over the course of Balthasar’s corpus up until TD5 are noted in each chapter starting with D1 in Chapter 1 and adding a new layer until all four are encompassed by D4 in Chapter 4. It is Balthasar’s “symphonic” methodology, according to which he is always looking for how the end draws the beginning towards it in progression and growth as in a symphony.⁹⁴ It can be said that Balthasar is always writing eschatology.⁹⁵ This is not only generally true in how he organizes his own thought, but specifically noticeable in how the varieties of distance develop chronologically in his trinitarian writings. One of the key goals of the genealogy of distance I am proposing will be a better discernment of this form of his thought.

\textit{A Chart of Balthasar’s Theological Distances}

The following chart outlines the varieties of theological distance in Gregory’s and Balthasar’s thought and indicates where they are developed in Balthasar’s works and examined in the chapters of this study:

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{95} Personal conversation with Henrici, January 8, 2014.
\end{itemize}
## A Chart of Balthasar’s Theological Distances

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gregory’s two diastases in PT:</th>
<th>Balthasar’s four distances in the trilogy volumes of GL7, TD4, and TD5:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Δ1</strong> = spatio-temporal tension within created being, which affects even spiritual beings in their progress in ever-greater union with God. <strong>Gregory’s Δ1 informs Balthasar’s analogy for the trinitarian “processes” in TD5.</strong> Introduced by Balthasar in PT, treated in Chapter 1.</td>
<td>(Gregory’s Δ1 is analogically related to Balthasar’s <strong>D4</strong> by nature of the dynamism of <em>epéktasis</em> as an image of God’s triune Being as the “ever-greater” of the Persons to each other.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Δ2** = the ontological and epistemological gap between God and the world, which persists eternally even in the created spirit’s progress in becoming more united with God. **Gregory’s Δ2 is identical to Balthasar’s D1.** Developed by Balthasar in PT, treated in Chapter 1. | **D1** = the ontological and epistemological gap between God and the world, described in *Creator Spirit* as “the elementary presupposition that makes it possible for man to understand and appreciate the unity that grace brings about.”

**Balthasar’s D1 is identical to Gregory’s Δ2.** Developed by Balthasar in PT, treated in Chapter 1. |
| **D2** = the alienation from God that is the result of sin. **Distinguished by Balthasar from D1 in his reading of Barth in TKB,** treated in Chapter 2 (not exclusively). | **D3** = the scope of God’s love and glory revealed by the Spirit between the Father’s missioning of the Son within the Trinity and the Son’s death on the Cross. Developed by Balthasar in GL7 and TD4, treated extensively in Chapter 3. |
| (Gregory’s Δ1 is analogically related to Balthasar’s **D4** by nature of the dynamism of *epéktasis* as an image of God’s triune Being as the “ever-greater” of the Persons to each other.) | **D4** = the infinite abyss of Personal distinction between the Father and Son in their eternal mutual love and self-giving in the unity of the Holy Spirit; the trinitarian condition for all other kinds of distance in the economy of salvation and between God and the world. **Balthasar’s analogy of “process” for the trinitarian relations in the Godhead is informed by Gregory’s Δ1.** Developed in TD5, treated extensively in Chapter 4. |

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*96 Creator Spirit, 173.*
Gardner and Moss imply these enumerations of distance in their own explanation of how these triune distances interrelate (with references to my numbering system in brackets):

For Balthasar, all difference and all distance (including the difference of the creation from God [D1], and ultimately the distance of the sinner from God [D2]) can only occur within the infinite difference of the Son from the Father [D4]. All difference and distance (including the infinite distance of the Son from the Father which is the Son’s procession from the Father as far as the descent into hell and his apparently paradoxical return [D3]) occurs within God [within D4]. But ...this (‘original’) difference between Father and Son itself [D4] also only occurs within the Spirit’s (a ‘second’) difference from them both [also D4].

To explain how Balthasar argues for this in his wide-ranging, literary, narrative, and eidetic methodology will be the task of the following chapters. In noting a correspondence between Δ1 and D4 in the chart above, I stress that I am charting a departure from Gregory of Nyssa in Balthasar’s thought. But the departure also implies the initial meeting point of positive influence. It is my belief that this departure is also a development, even if it is of a rather radical nature. For Gregory of Nyssa and the other Church Fathers of his time, God is the adiastatos, the One completely “outside” (Δ2) our earthly condition of diastasis (Δ1). So how does Balthasar move from Gregory’s adiastatos to what I am labeling as D4, “infinite distance” between the Divine Persons? This seeming contradiction is what makes Balthasar’s theology either infuriating and dismissible or radically creative and compelling.

Balthasar sees in created spiritual being a kind of stamp or character of the divine being, even if he does not approach the problem in the way Augustine and Aquinas do by developing a psychological analogy for the Trinity. Junius Johnson points out a general problem with theological analogies based on such images as the imprint of a stamp, as in “creation : God :: an imprint : the stamp that makes it: ...on the one side, the second term

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is an activity (God’s act of sharing), but on the other side, the second terms are existents (a mathematical point or a material object)."\(^\text{98}\) What is needed is an identity between God’s being and God’s action, whereby such analogies are easier to understand. With an understanding of the identity of Being and Act in God, \(\Delta_1\) becomes an analog for the divine life itself because of how it has been imprinted onto creation by the Incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son sent from the Father in D3; particularly in how it stretches in *epéktasis* towards God under the influence of the Spirit and in conformity to the Son. I will argue that this is not so alien to Gregory’s own thought in texts like the *Life of Moses* where the human being imitates God’s own divine impassibility (God’s “adiastatic” Being) precisely by virtue of a graced stability in spiritual progress and growth.\(^\text{99}\) Gregory always insists on God’s impassibility and immobility along with the other Fathers, but Balthasar will place new stress on the imitation as an analogical mirror for the triune relations in light of the Incarnate Christ. This in turn enables both creation itself (\(\Delta_1\)) and the divine-created relationship (\(\Delta_2/D_1\)) to become an analog for the triune relations in D4 by way of participation. The spiritual-theological reconciliation of rest and motion involves an image of process, but this image can do no more than point in the direction of a mysterious “event” in the transcendent Godhead. A spatial metaphor is needed for its intelligibility because endless motion becomes endless rest only when one is welcomed into God’s infinite space, which is the perfect blessedness of divinity.

The outline of the genealogy shows Balthasar’s image of distance germinating in his reading of Gregory of Nyssa in PT, being honed in *The Theology of Karl Barth*

\(^{98}\) Johnson, *Christ and Analogy*, 92.

\(^{99}\) See Mateo-Seco, “*Epéktasis*,” *Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 266-67 for his citation of the *Vita Moysis* 2, PG 44, 405C, to which we shall return often.
and then developed more extensively in key volumes of his great trilogy of *Glory of the Lord: Theological Aesthetics, Theo-Drama, and Theo-Logic*. I have chosen to focus on key moments in the *Theological Aesthetics* in GL7 and in the *Theo-Drama* in TD4 and TD5 because the structure of the trilogy is a “repeated rehearsal of fundamental theological (and metaphysical) commitments in ever new configurations” that is centered on the theo-drama.\(^\text{101}\) A musical analogy for the structure of the argument I am pursuing is appropriate in that distance-language in Balthasar’s thought also forms a kind of theme that resounds throughout his work. In this analogy, eschatology would be the “overture” that appears at the beginning of a symphony. When he returns to eschatology at the end of each rehearsal of trinitarian themes, the many layers of topics each guided by the resounding theme of theological distance are included a holistic vision. TD5 is best read as the climax of the symphony (although TD4: *The Action* is intended as the climax of the *Theo-Drama* itself), while the *Theo-Logic* is an enunciation of its ontological dimensions. Because of their (slightly more) systematic orientation, *Theo-Logic II: Truth of God* (TL2) and *Theo-Logic III: The Spirit of Truth* (TL3)\(^\text{102}\) do not rely on imagery like distance and *epéktasis* to the extent that the *Glory of the Lord* and *Theo-Drama* volumes do. These two volumes are therefore beyond the scope of this study.

PT was written in the late 1930s and published in 1942, making it one of Balthasar’s earliest books. The two varieties of diastasis, \(\Delta 1\) and \(\Delta 2\), and the image *epéktasis* as spiritual progress that emerge from Balthasar’s reading of Gregory are the

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focus of Chapter 1. As Δ2 represents the gap between the Creator and creation in Gregory’s thought, it is equal to D1 in the Balthasarian schema I have outlined above. *Epéktasis* will eventually form one term of an analogy for the eventfulness of the triune life of God in D4. So, two important themes in Balthasar’s “symphony” of trinitarian distance begin to sound in Chapter 1. The beginning of a response to Kilby’s criticism that Balthasar is too unmoored from Catholic theological tradition will also emerge in Chapter 1 as it lays the groundwork for my apology for Balthasar’s legitimate development of the tradition. The chapter will also chart the early phases of Balthasar’s deep appropriation of the analogy of being as he examines Gregory’s own analogical juxtaposition of material and spiritual being in the image and likeness of God.

The second chapter outlines how D1 (the good and holy distance between God and the world) gets distinguished from D2 (the entirely negative distance of creation’s sinful state of being) in Balthasar’s chronicling of Barth’s thought in TKB. This distinction is crucial to Balthasar’s discernment of the analogy of being emergent in the evolution of Barth’s *Theologie der Distanz*. The dialectical moment in the analogy of being is the “is not” marked by D1, which is positive in value as opposed to the total depravity that marks D2. Balthasar notes how Barth becomes open to the idea that the human act of faith both responds to and mysteriously corresponds with God’s act of salvation, setting up the possibility for a limited analogy of being within an analogy of faith. As D1 emerges a trustworthy condition of human thought in Barth’s anthropology, and D3 begins to make its appearance when Barth considers the “place” of Christ vis-à-vis the Father. This is soteriology, but the analogy of being paves the way for soteriology to be grounded in a more extensive eschatology. Again, there will only be a brief
introduction of these two latter themes in Chapter 2. The chapter will be supported by
some context from another early and roughly concurrent volume, *Warheit der Welt*
(“Truth of the World”), written in 1947 and republished in 1985 within the trilogy as
*Theologik I*. The genealogy continues in this chapter not only via Balthasar’s
interaction with Karl Barth but also in via interaction with the conciliar tradition of
Lateran IV on the possibilities and limits of theological analogy.

Chapter 3 examines the soteriology of GL7 (*The New Covenant*) and TD4 (*The
Action*). Balthasar enters the most methodically explicit stage of his theology of distance
in the New Testament theology of GL7 by choosing the word “distance” (sometimes
*Diastase*, sometimes *Distanz* in the German original) to form the spatial structure of the
process by which the eternal mutual glorification of the Father and Son is manifested to
the world in the Spirit. The economic distance of the Son, D3, thus becomes the structure
of the act of the Son’s kenosis or self-emptying obedience to the Father in Phil 2:6-8. The
similarity between Christ’s faith and what the Christian is enabled to do by the grace of
the Spirit becomes increasingly important in Balthasar’s development of the analogy of
faith. Kenosis is also the economic manifestation of their mutual glorification for all
eternity as witnessed in John’s Gospel. Balthasar then borrows the image of *Ur-Kenosis*
of the Father from Bulgakov in TD4 for a theology of the Son’s generation and Spirit’s
procession, establishing the triune God as the lead “Actor” at the heart of the theo-drama.
The immanent *Ur-Kenosis* presupposes D4, which now encompasses all other distances
in creation and the economy of salvation. Pneumatology plays a double role in all of
these moments as the tool by which Balthasar grounds knowledge of the relations in God

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in the existential position of the Church vis-à-vis God as adopted children. Chapter 3 thus concerns itself primarily with D3, but we begin to see the development of D4. The analogical border between D3 and D4 must be seen in such a way that allows kenosis and Ur-Kenosis to be expressions of the Trinity’s action in both soteriology and eschatology. The other crucial theological move that comes to light is Balthasar’s use of Ur-Kenosis as his expression of the doctrine of the Father’s “monarchy” within the Trinity and the origin of the hierarchical order of processions. The Spirit then begins to appear as the perfecter of this triune hierarchy of processions in Balthasar’s pneumatology. At this point we will hear in the “symphony” the integration of all prior themes in the resolution of all the strife of D2 in D3. By demonstrating that soteriology is rooted in trinitarian theology (and the economy in the Trinity) without dictating its terms to it, Chapter 3 will address Levering’s and Kilby’s criticisms of Balthasar’s alleged over-integration of soteriology and trinitarian theology.

Chapter 4 turns to a critical reading of TD5. Theo-Drama V: The Last Act was published in German as Theodramatik IV: Das Endspiel in 1983, more than forty years after PT appeared. We meet in this volume the fullest development of D4 as the “absolute, infinite ‘distance’ that can contain and embrace all other distances.” D4 forms the condition for the distance of creation (D1), the human freedom that ultimately results in sin and alienation (D2), and the distance of the divine missions (D3). This constitutes Balthasar’s appropriation of a scholastic trinitarian theme according to which trinitarian difference grounds all other difference in the created world. Even the

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104 Theodramatik IV: Das Endspiel (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1983).
105 TD4, 323; I quote this volume in anticipation of TD5, naturally.
106 See Oakes, “Diastasis in the Trinity,” 142-43; cit. Aquinas, I Sent., d. 2 and d. 27, q.2, a.3, ad.6. See also Nichols, No Bloodless Myth, 190. When considering Balthasar’s appropriation, as I am calling it
conditions of the possibility of “Hell” as D2 and as an inner state of the sinner exist in God in a real way by virtue of D4. This is because the free response of the creation in D1 from God allows for the possibility of D2, a rejection that God has “risked” in the act of creating finite freedom. But because of the grounding of the divine missions as expressions of the divine processions, D3 is now in an analogical relationship with D4 just as D1 was before. By this point I will have demonstrated that Balthasar’s analogy of Christ’s archetypal faith and his pneumatology of the Spirit as perfecter of the triune event of mutual glorification provide the deeper ontological structure of D4, thus showing it to be an event of intimacy. The intimacy of the triune relations is therefore the deeper ontological context for all other distances and differences, enabling more biblically, pastorally, and systematically adequate notions of impassibility and perfection in God. These more adequate notions can in turn be brought to meet the challenges raised by Levering, Kilby, and Tonstad with regard to suffering, an economy of lack, and a hierarchy of domination and submission within the Trinity, between God and the world, and between the sexes.

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Here, it must be remember that Aquinas says absolutely nothing of distance in the Trinity, but speaks only in Personal distinctions in relation. He avoids certain language in trinitarian theology, not only “separation” but even “difference”:

Thus, to avoid the error of Arius we must shun the use of the terms diversity and difference in God, lest we take away the unity of essence: we may, however, use the term “distinction” on account of the relative opposition. Hence whenever we find terms of “diversity” or “difference” of Persons used in an authentic work, these terms of “diversity” or “difference” are taken to mean “distinction.” But lest the simplicity and singleness of the divine essence be taken away, the terms “separation” and “division,” which belong to the parts of a whole, are to be avoided: and lest quality be taken away, we avoid the use of the term “disparity”: and lest we remove similitude, we avoid the terms “alien” and “discrepant.” For Ambrose says (De Fide i) that “in the Father and the Son there is no discrepancy, but one Godhead”: and according to Hilary, as quoted above, “in God there is nothing alien, nothing separable”; ST I, q.32, a.2, Summa Theologica, trans. English Dominican Province (Benziger Brothers Edition, 1947), 221; in Christian Classics Ethereal Library, http://www.ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa.html.

However, even Aquinas’ language of relation, procession, and mission rely on spatial metaphors that imply distance.
As it was at Nicaea and many of the other early councils, the issue of trinitarian language is how to account for what is salvific. Balthasar is exploring the meaning of revelation and of theological formulations of truth, but he is not doing so in any of the theological modes that have been commonplace in recent centuries. Danielle Nussberger responds to Kilby’s dissatisfaction with a perceived vagueness in Balthasar’s language of infinite distance in the immanent Trinity by observing that in such expressions he integrates Speyr, Gregory of Nyssa, Irenaeus, Bulgakov, and other sources into a method of theological linguistic play. The results, “infinite trinitarian distance,” always points and refers in an unfinished way: “As visual and literary art glimpses truth in ways that the logic of syllogisms cannot do on its own, so the practice of drawing analogies between creation’s traces of the divine image and the Trinity itself gestures toward eternal truth without claiming total comprehension of it.” Balthasar’s play is a back-and-forth movement between key moments in the thought of key theological figures in their historical contexts and his own reading of the tradition—without explicitly stating that he is taking his place as one of them in this ongoing theological process. This is the way he should always be read, and never as someone who stands outside this history. We now begin our long exploration of how these differencings within God and between God and the world form an indispensable core of Balthasar’s theological thought.


108 Edward Oakes, one of Balthasar’s leading proponents, sees a quintessentially speculative and unfinished nature in his work that takes part in a legitimate theological tradition that is quite ancient: “But let us not deny Balthasar’s astonishing leaps of imagination and theo-logic. And I mean ‘deny’ in both senses: let us not deny him the right, which Origen too assumed, of every theologian to speculate on the truths of revelation and to draw out their implication. Nor should we deny the presence of these speculations as speculations: they are probes and forays into areas of Christian truth that many venture not to assay”; Oakes, Pattern of Redemption, 242.
CHAPTER 1
DISTANCE IN BALTHASAR’S READING OF GREGORY OF NYSSA:
PRESENCE AND THOUGHT

Introduction

The genealogy of Balthasar’s notion of infinite distance in the Trinity starts in an unlikely place from the viewpoint of strict patristic methodology. The God of Gregory of Nyssa and the Fathers of the early creeds is the \textit{adiastatos}, the One without diastasis and outside space and time. Furthermore, \textit{Presence and Thought} (PT) is not a work of trinitarian theology. If the challenge of this study is to show that Balthasar’s speculative trinitarian theology has not broken with the tradition and exceeded its bounds, then the present chapter must begin to make the case with what Balthasar finds important in Gregory’s thought. Balthasar is certainly innovative in his use of patristic texts and stands apart from many of his Catholic contemporaries in patristics, but I am calling what Balthasar does with the Catholic tradition a development. While he is perfectly ready to hold aspects of the tradition up to a more critical view, and even more ready to reject what he considers inessential to it, he would never consider a departure from tradition to be legitimate. Balthasar claims in \textit{Glory of the Lord VII: The New Covenant} (GL7) that a biblical theology centered on the revelation of God in Christ “can and must dare to offer itself to dogmatic systematics as its inner form.”\textsuperscript{109} This theological form is always guided by the self-giving descent of God into the world in the sending of the Son from the bosom of the Father, a form into which Christian life is molded by the Spirit.

As I emphasized in the General Introduction, Balthasar is a trinitarian and eschatological theologian. He could also be called a biblical theologian, with some

\textsuperscript{109} GL7, 109.
reservations: he is too much of a metaphysician to fall completely into that category. But these overarching themes in Balthasar’s theological project of trinity, eschatology, and Bible must be viewed as the background for his work PT and not as central to his focus. Balthasar reads Gregory Nyssa, as he does all of his sources, in order to re-establish his position in the tradition in light of contemporary issues as he saw them. Brian Daley names these issues as primarily centered on “the tensions between modern Catholic theology/spirituality and the German Romantic/post-Romantic intellectual tradition.”110 The latter-named tradition is the seedbed for Balthasar’s intellectual training in his doctorate. Giving a complete account of how he interacts with this tradition would require a completely separate and exhaustive journey through his great trilogy, let alone his whole corpus. But for the purposes of this trinitarian, eschatological, and biblical study of Balthasar’s theology of distance, the German post-Romantic tradition will be represented directly by Hegel and indirectly (via Hegel) by Moltmann. The most relevant to my thesis of Balthasar’s many objections to Hegel is his that Hegelian kenosis is “an ironic form of kenosis” that “moves from emptiness to fulfillment across both the immanent and economic domains” and thus blurs them.111 This is the concern of Chapter 3 more than it is our present concern; Hegel makes a brief appearance in the present chapter, while Moltmann appears in Chapter 3 when we consider Balthasar’s critique of him in TD4.

It is in this genealogical context of the development of theological distance, which both O’Regan and I note, that Brian Daley’s critical observations on how Balthasar’s

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111 O’Regan, Anatomy, 209.
holism influences his readings of other authors must be placed.\textsuperscript{112} Just as he is not a professional systematic theologian, nor is Balthasar a patristics scholar. Daley wonders if Balthasar’s attempt to organize all of Gregory’s thought into one thread that systematizes the salvific relationship between God and creation is not somewhat forced. He criticizes Balthasar’s lack of historical-critical engagement with the Fathers and his often unjustified selectivity in his references to them.\textsuperscript{113} “Often brilliant commentaries on these authors within the specialized context of Balthasar’s theological project,” Daley observes from the standpoint of his own discipline that “they are usually less than successful in allowing ancient authors to speak clearly to us in their own voices.”\textsuperscript{114} In an attempt to “systematize” one of Balthasar’s central images, that of distance, my focus is on PT as a “brilliant commentary” on Gregory of Nyssa in light of his own project and not as a work of pure patristics. Balthasar would most likely object to any attempts to systematize the rich symbolism of his own work. But since he is suspected of doing the same here (at least by Daley), a more systematic and critical awareness of how he uses Gregory’s thought is relevant. With that aim in mind, I will provide a (very) brief background to \textit{Presence and Thought} via one of Balthasar’s other early articles and a few scholarly notes on Gregory of Nyssa. Additionally, the exegetical section of this chapter will contain some occasional examinations of Balthasar’s rather dense and synthetic citations of Gregory’s texts in PT.

\textsuperscript{112} Daley, “Balthasar’s Reading of the Church Fathers,” 187: “Precisely because a single vision animates the totality of Balthasar’s theology, his studies of the Fathers cannot be judged in isolation from his other works. In fact, so thoroughly has he exploited his patristic scholarship to advance his overall concerns that he often puzzles those whose interests are primarily directed towards understanding early Christian theology in its own context.”


The two varieties of diastasis in Gregory of Nyssa that I have outlined in the General Introduction, the spatio-temporal stretching of $\Delta 1$ and the God-world gap of $\Delta 2$, are the focus of this chapter. These two diastases constitute the condition for all created existence. They also provide the spatio-metaphorical footing for Gregory’s primary image for the spiritual life, which is the kinetic notion of stretching or running towards God in *epéktasis*. These two themes of diastasis and *epéktasis* make their entrance here in Balthasar’s “symphony” of trinitarian distance. By examining what Balthasar is doing in his appropriation of Gregory in PT in light of some criticisms of his method, and why it matters to his theological project, I intend to make clearer the performative nature of his reception of the Catholic tradition that includes Gregory.

*Balthasar’s “Basic Law of Christianity”*

When Balthasar was working as a Jesuit on the staff of *Stimmen der Zeit* in Munich in 1939 he wrote an article for *Theologie der Zeit* entitled “Patristik, Scholastik und Wir.”115 Brian Daley identifies Balthasar’s theological project in this essay as one that seeks “to identify ‘a general concept’ or ‘law’ that sums up the essence of Christianity.”116 Balthasar’s “basic law of Christianity” in the “Patristik” article seeks to be fulfilled in fidelity to the characteristics of each era of Church history: “the analogical character of this fulfillment... is given first of all with the law of space and time, which makes non-identity and otherness the basis of earthly fulfillment.”117 Balthasar characterizes the human desire for transcendence beyond earthly limitations as

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117 “Patristik,” 352.
fundamentally distorted by the selfishness of sin. In Genesis 3:5 the main characteristic of “original sin” is to desire to be like God or even to be God, which is to “fly over” the ontological gap of Δ2 and eliminate the basis for the proper relationship between God and the creature. But it is also a violation of Δ1, the fundamental characteristic of created being, in a Platonizing attempt to bypass the conditioning in space and time without letting God make it fruitful by grace. We can anticipate Balthasar’s further development of “distance” categories by keeping in mind the identity of Gregory’s Δ2 with Balthasar’s D1.\textsuperscript{118} The attempt to transgress D1/Δ2 by spurning one’s own created nature in Δ1 results in an alienation from God in what we are calling D2. The spatiality of this alienation is not a main theme of the “Patristik” essay, in which Balthasar emphasizes the role of grace: it is only God as “Other” Who can restore to the soul its proper sense of self in a relationship between Creator and creature. However, the restoration of this relationship does require a removal to the “distance” of worship and obedience on the part of the creature.\textsuperscript{119}

Balthasar is critical of the language of analogy in the Greek Fathers, which he locates within a predominantly Platonic schematic: “To put it in Christian terms, [the whole Platonic schematic] is able to be an excellent expression of the supernatural relation between the God of grace and the engraced creature (grace is of course essentially ‘participation’ in the divine nature), but it is not able to sufficiently to clarify

\textsuperscript{118} See “A chart of Balthasar’s theological distances,” pp.35-36 above in the General Introduction.

\textsuperscript{119} Daley summarizes this nicely in his commentary: “This very otherness, in fact, is the basic condition for love: ‘only where there is non-identity is love possible’ (355). So, in the Incarnation, the full reality of God’s love for humanity is revealed precisely in what is wholly other: ‘the weakness of the flesh . . . is chosen as the crucial place of redemption’ (357). And that same ‘law’ of God’s self-emptying presence in what is wholly finite, wholly human, is realized in Christ’s continuing presence in the Church, which ‘herself is not identical with Christ the Redeemer, but stands over against him in the distance of worship and obedience’ (363); “Balthasar’s Reading of the Church Fathers,” 191; the embedded citations are of the English translation of “Patristik” that I have been citing.
the relationship of the two natures that lies at the basis of every act of grace."¹²⁰ This general deficiency in patristic thought is perhaps why Balthasar is focused so intently on Gregory’s work at the beginning of his own career, as he finds in him a robust doctrine of the analogy between the human and divine nature via the progression in blessedness of spiritual being. The fulfillment of this basic law of Christianity in each age of the church is “analogical” because it involves a deepening formation of the Christian and the Church in the image and likeness of God and a participation in the divine nature. The distance between human nature and divine nature seen as a “cleft... tempts us to despair when considered abstractly.” Balthasar emphasizes the positive role this “cleft” plays:

But as soon as we ourselves are the lovers and stand in the perfection of love, what is frightening is transformed immediately into what gives sweetness and delight. For the eternity of the cleft is at the same time the eternity of the juxtaposition that allows for love to happen at all. ...For only this interplay between presence and distance lets us possess an ever more inexhaustible object of admiration and “divinization.”¹²¹

So, the fulfillment of this law is analogical because it is divinizing and it is divinizing because it allows the creature to do what God does in its very act of being. Balthasar refers to “divinization” here, but the Greek Fathers often used the term theosis. Theosis denotes a process of becoming divine, or even becoming God. One similarity that Balthasar has with Gregory of Nyssa is his reluctance to use the word theosis, which was still in its early stages of use in Gregory’s time.¹²² Gregory himself stresses that growth and progress in participation in eternal life is a never-ending process and always a gift of grace, one conditioned by the impossibility of ever crossing the boundary of Δ2 between

¹²⁰ “Patristik,” 378-79.
¹²¹ “Patristik,” 355.
¹²² David L. Balás, “Deification,” Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa, 211; the word theosis is more prominent in the writings of Gregory of Nazianzus.
God and the world. The word that Gregory uses much more than *theosis* in his spiritual theology is “participation.” Participation is “to have [a share in something] not by nature but as received from above.” The “kenotic” and self-emptying moment of the creature’s obedience to God’s voice and will facilitates the creature’s transformation into a lover. The created soul is now characterized by an *epéktasis* or stretching towards God in love and desire, but this is now what makes it to be like God. *Epéktasis* is a participation in God’s nature as Love. God is the Author of this analogical fulfillment in the creature by becoming the object of the creature’s love, but the location of this fulfillment is now within the creature. Balthasar is saying here that the “ineluctable not-being-God” that characterizes the human being can become “the reflection of the uniqueness and incomparability of God” according to God’s grace.

Balthasar lays special emphasis on the basic law of Christianity as expressed in modernity by uniting the patristic ascension to God with the descending movement of Christ deeper into the world in humility, obedience, and solidarity. In the fulfillment of the basic law in the life of the Church, the disciples too must “participate” in the descending movement of Christ’s mission by allowing themselves to be sent out into the world. The Cappadocians are concerned primarily with being “transformed into His image—and always in a manner that was reverent, that explicitly rehearsed the incommensurable gap between the *διάστημα* and the *adiastemic* God, between the

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123 Gregory often refers to participation by the words μετοχή, κοινωνία, the verb μετέχειν, and quite commonly by the word μετουσία; Balás, “Deification,” *Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, 212.
126 “Patristik,” 356.
127 “Patristik,” 388-89.
128 “Patristik,” 362.
created world of time and space and the eternal God beyond all time and space."

Balthasar also sees this gap (Δ2/D1) as the arena where this transformation is worked out, but with a different emphasis. A passage from another early Balthasar text, *Heart of the World*, illustrates the context of his thought on the divine image in humanity and its dependence on distance from God:

This is a new mystery, inconceivable to mere creatures: that even distance from God and the coolness of reverence are an image and likeness of God and of divine life. What is most incomprehensible is, in fact, the truest reality: precisely by not being God do you resemble God. And precisely by being outside of God are you in God. For to be over and against God is itself a divine thing.

How is this the case? A clear trinitarian theology of distance, which is not yet explicit in PT, suffuses this 1954 spiritual text. Deirdre Carabine makes a point of emphasizing yet another difference between Balthasar and Gregory on how one fulfills the image of God in created being, in which Balthasar develops the idea of “being like the Son in his descent from the Father, being sent out (Sendung) by the Father with the Son” without which “any attempt on the part of the soul to rise up to God will attain only nothingness and empty air.” Balthasar never claims that this is totally lacking in the Fathers, but only insufficiently developed under the influence of Platonizing tendencies. Indeed, “despite the formally orthodox post-Nicene view of the Trinity, no corresponding trinitarian piety and mysticism seemed inclined to develop” in the thought of Dionysius,

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Maximus, and others. But Balthasar finds a quite robust trinitarian development of mysticism in Gregory of Nyssa. He reads several texts to find it, but it is all “there” for him in the end.

This brief reflection on Balthasar’s “Patristik” essay establishes some of the contours of this trinitarian thought as the background for PT: there is an analogy between D1 (difference from God) and God’s very being as Love. The analogy is sharper still when considered as two dynamic acts: epéktasis as kinesis towards God and Love as God’s act of being. It is in this way that PT will lay the groundwork for construing the analogy more and more in terms of distance, ultimately resulting in D4 (difference within God.) Some (also very brief) points on diastasis and epéktasis in Gregory’s thought without reference to Balthasar’s reading of it will deepen our background before we turn to the text of PT itself.

**Background: Diastasis and Epéktasis in Gregory of Nyssa**

Mar Gregorios describes the notion of diastema in Gregory’s doctrinal milieu as “the fundamental nature of the Creation” that is constantly in flux on “a journey from one point to another.” The two “points” are an origin (ἀρχή) and an end (τέλος), and the journey is a path (ὁδός) stretched out between them in a temporal mode. Gregory describes time *De mortuis* as leading a creature along its path from birth to death according to the changes it undergoes by necessity according to its nature, using the

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132 “Patristik,” 374-75.  
images of agriculture and fruit as illustrations.\(^{134}\) “Interval” is also an appropriate translation for the diastasis between to entities or events in time. Sarah Morice-Brubaker explains, that “Nyssen’s way of framing *diastema* [in the context of theology] points to a paradox; ordinarily the word would refer to a gap between two points, a boundary applying to one in the same manner as the other.”\(^{135}\) These two points can characterize human life as being stretched from birth to biological death or two human persons as spatially separated. But in the relation between God and creation characterized by \(\Delta 2\), the boundary “applies only to one of the parties: creation.” Mar Gregorios concurs that this “one-way” distance from the world to God or “standing apart” (*apostasis*) of the world from God is a central feature of Gregory’s thought: there is distance from us to God that guards God’s ontological difference and incomprehensibility, but God cannot be limited by any diastasis vis-à-vis the world.\(^{136}\)

What is more, any kind of diastema between the divine Persons must be denied of God, as is in fact it is in the Antiochian Creed’s condemnation of Arianism. The Arian formula infamously claims: “There was a time when the Son was not.” In response and in defense of the Antiochian Creed, Athanasius replies: “There was *not* a time when he was not, as some people unscripturally and mistakenly say that some temporal gap has to be presupposed in him.”\(^{137}\) A temporal gap between the existence of the Father alone and the existence of the Son “after” this “point” implies a limitation to both Persons that is unacceptable to the orthodox position on divine simplicity. More examples can be seen in Alexander of Alexandria’s letter to Alexander of Constantinople in which he denies any

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\(^{134}\) Cit. *De mortuis* 3, PG 46, 520C, which is also cited by Balthasar in PT, 30, n.37.

\(^{135}\) Morice-Brubaker, *Place of the Spirit*, 56.


temporal or spatial diastema between Father and Son; in Basil of Caesarea’s *On the Holy Spirit*, in which he denies any temporal diastema in the Trinity against the Arians and the Sabellians; and in Cyril of Alexandria’s naming of God as the “adiastatic Triad.”\(^{138}\) By the fifth century the Trinity is referred to primarily as *adiastatos*. Gregory follows this tradition of the Orthodox Church of his time and plays a vital role in establishing it in the fourth century, staunchly maintaining that diastema must be denied of the God Who is above all boundary and limit and beyond space and time, especially regarding the distinctions among the Divine Persons.\(^{139}\) The challenge is, of course, to see how Balthasar can arrive where he does given this starting point.

Relationality within created being, in contrast with divine being, is conditioned by space and time. Each created thing is in relation to other things in the substratum of space-time that upholds all things in being, and so even intellectual spirits must follow an order of thought that can lead them only so far. Mar Gregorios explains that, for Gregory:

> The *θεωρία* of the *ἀκολουθία* or understanding of the sequence of the created order can proceed to the limits of creation, but there it encounters the *διάστημα* [the wall] and cannot leap beyond [Δ2]. The understanding discovers that it has to go beyond the *tà ὅντα* [finite created being] to see the *αἴτια* [cause or origin] of the *ὅντα* but it cannot get to the *ἐνάργεια* or immediate clear vision of ὁ ὅντως ὤν—He who really is, the True Being.\(^{140}\)

The diastema of the “huge and infinite middle wall which fortifies the Uncreated Being vis-à-vis the created existence”\(^{141}\) is thinkable only from the side of creation, but what is “beyond” it is not thinkable. The physical being will only come to know its own end in death, only one extreme of its Δ1. But access to the origin of creation itself is denied even

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\(^{138}\) Mar Gregorios, “Diastēma and Diastasis,” 245-46; for Alexander’s letter see PG18, 557B; for Basil see *De spiritu sancto* 59, PG 32 177B; for Cyril see *Homiliae diversae* 4 in *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* 104, 28.


\(^{140}\) Mar Gregorios, “Diastēma and Diastasis,” 253; citing *Contra Eunomium* 1, PG 45, 364-65.

\(^{141}\) Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* 12B, PG 45, 933A.
to the spiritual human intellect, because it is bound to begin with phenomena from the world of space and time and therefor has no epistemological tools to imagine the Being that is not bound by them.

David Bentley Hart is a systematic theologian who relies heavily on Gregory of Nyssa and not a patristics scholar. But his explanations of Gregory’s theology can at the very least be seen as an independent source of corroboration for Balthasar’s own project. Hart reflects on the spiritual aspect of human existence in Gregory’s thought with regard to the diastasis of Δ2: “To be human is to be an ‘act,’ thoroughly dynamic (in either one’s sensible or intelligible aspect), in transit, without center in oneself, borne away or driven toward what lies beyond.”

For Gregory, human nature’s perfection this dynamic act becomes an “endless desire for beauty and more beauty, this hunger for God (De vita Moysis 1.10; GNO 8.1:4-5).” Gregory’s Δ2 and Δ1 therefore establish the conditions for spiritual progress in a thinking intellectual being as epéktasis. A deeper examination of how Balthasar interacts with Gregory’s texts, particularly Vita Moysis and In Canticum Canticorum, will form part of my exegesis of PT in the following main section of this chapter.

It is worth noting in the brief background material provided here that there are two contexts for diastasis and epéktasis in Gregory’s work, the first doctrinal as in texts such as Contra Eunomium (CE) and the second spiritual as in texts such as Vita Moysis. One cannot draw too hard a line between these contexts, but Balthasar goes so far as to fuse them into one synoptic view of Gregory’s thought. He thus lays the foundation in PT for how the ontological barrier between the “adiastatic” God and the diastatic world

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142 Hart, Beauty of the Infinite, 189-90.
143 Hart cites the Sources chrétiennes and Jaeger editions of Vita Moysis here, but I will continue to use the Patrologiae Graecae numbers that Balthasar uses; Hart’s PG citation would be PG 44, 301BC.
functions as a dialectical moment in the analogy between the two different ways of being in his later texts. This development will reach its climax in TD5, as we shall see in Chapter 4.

**Diastasis and Epéktasis in the Text of PT**

*Diastasis as the Opening Key of PT*

By “opening” in the subheading above, I mean both the beginning of the text of PT and the hermeneutical overview of it. Balthasar’s citation of Gregory’s texts in PT is dense, wide-ranging, and almost “canonical” but for his occasional hesitations over some of Gregory’s tendencies. PT is Balthasar’s attempt to discern the logic of Gregory’s thought as represented by the latter’s entire corpus. But that is of course also the significance of PT’s location within Balthasar’s entire corpus: his reading of Gregory is a model in miniature for his own project, even if this is hard to tell at times from the details. While Balthasar’s work on Gregory could perhaps have been strengthened by some more attention to historical-critical detail, his synoptic view of him is a masterful achievement of mid-20th century theology that expresses a systematic grasp while avoiding an essentialist-manualist reduction. PT proceeds in much the same manner as Balthasar’s presentations of the thought of his author-subjects in volumes II and III of *Glory of the Lord*.144 As Daniélou will go on ten years later in the 1950s to claim *epéktasis* as the fundamental characteristic of Gregory’s thought,145 so does Balthasar

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144 See *Glory of the Lord II: Clerical Styles*, tr. Andrew Louth, *et al.* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984), which is on five doctrinal patristic and medieval writers; and *Glory of the Lord III: Lay Styles*, tr. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986) on seven late-medieval and modern poets and spiritual writers.

bring “spacing” or diastasis into bold relief as a guide to the project of PT. Daniélou is perhaps more correct in claiming the centrality of *epéktasis*, but Balthasar is not wrong to emphasize diastasis as the spatial metaphor under which *epéktasis* must function. A focus on diastasis fits Balthasar’s own project, as we will see in the unfolding of the “symphony.”

Balthasar begins PT in a negative-theological move:

The first essential characteristic of the creature... consists of the very fact that the creature is not God. In taking its referential bearings entirely from him, the creature distinguishes itself from him by this self-same referential relationship: “It is precisely through its comparison and union with the Creator that it is other than him.” This abyss [Δ2] that separates the two forms of being is the fact of creation, which in and of itself surrounds that which is created with a magic circle, which it will never escape. There is no stratagem by which the creature will ever understand its own origins. ... There is, in effect, in a created being a fundamental character [Δ1] that at one and the same time reveals to it and hides from it its origins. This is the *diástēma*, or the *diastasis*, which is to say, spacing.146

In this citation of juxtaposed doctrinal and mystical passages from Gregory’s texts, the “abyss” (*l’abîme*)147 between God and creation (Δ2) marks difference between them. Since Δ2 also refers to the event of creation, it is ontologically prior to the stamp of Δ1 on the creature’s existence. In how we have applied this enumeration to Gregory’s categories, Δ1 is prior in human experience to Δ2 and is in fact its limit. Δ2 can only come into view as an incomprehensible horizon by the grace of being in relation to God. Balthasar acknowledges that, for Gregory, “In God all diastasis is excluded, be it in the distinction between his Persons or in his nature as such. It is necessary, therefore, that this diastasis be linked to the idea of creation itself.”148 He here cites several passages from Gregory’s apologetic-trinitarian treatises having to do with how there is no division of

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146 PT, 27-28; cit. CE 1, PG 45, 368C; *In. Cant.* 10, PG 44, 980B.
147 *Présence et pensée*, 2.
148 PT, 28.
units of time and space or of operation in God;\textsuperscript{149} with how a diastatic limitation of the
being of the Son comes dangerously close to limiting the Father in a similar way;\textsuperscript{150} and
with how the creation must necessarily be “cut off as by a great wall” from the Deity.\textsuperscript{151}
The denial of diastasis in God thus plays a crucial role in Gregory’s negative theology.

The denial of such spatio-temporal qualities in God is not negative in Gregory’s
thought and from this Balthasar draws some quite “aesthetic” conclusions. Δ1 is the
measure of a creature’s unity that ultimately implies a relation to God as the source of its
existence, directly implying Δ2: “It is in fact Divine Wisdom that ‘has circumscribed
each being within its own proper dimensions, by giving it a suitable rhythm as a limit, so
to speak, so that it may be included in the rightful harmony of the universe’.”\textsuperscript{152}
Gathering citations primarily from Gregory’s CE, Balthasar describes diastatic time as
consisting of successive intervals of change in a physical being: “It is an ordered
unfolding (τάξις καὶ ἀκολουθία).\textsuperscript{153} On the one hand, it is a kind of manifestation of the
parts of a being, a distension of its members [παράστασις διαστηματική].\textsuperscript{154} On the other
hand, this spacing is also a movement (διαστηματικῶς ἐκ τινος εἰς τῇ ζωῇ διοδεύουσα),\textsuperscript{155} ... and thereby a tension.”\textsuperscript{156} Balthasar cites these passages to stress
the beauty of created existence vis-à-vis God, specifically as limited by the “wall” between it
and God and defined within God’s infinity.

\textsuperscript{149} Quod non sint tres dii, PG 45, 129AB; De comm. not., PG 45, 180C; CE 1, PG 45, 304D.
\textsuperscript{150} CE 1, PG 45, 360AB-361D.
\textsuperscript{151} CE 1, PG 45, 445B.
\textsuperscript{152} PT, 29; cit. CE 1, PG 45, 365B.
\textsuperscript{153} CE 1, PG 45, 364C.
\textsuperscript{154} Διαστηματικός can mean “dimensional” in
opposition to αδιάστατος; def.III, LSJ: the Online Liddell-Scott-James Greek-English Lexicon,
\textsuperscript{155} CE 12, PG 45, 933B.
\textsuperscript{156} PT, 30-31.
Most of the citations of CE that Balthasar uses in this argument come from a context in Book I where Gregory is explaining how God is *adiastatos*. It is part of Gregory’s argument against Eunomius’ Arian importation of an interval (diastema) of time in the generation of the Son by maintaining that “there was a time when the Son was not.” If the Son had a beginning, says Gregory, then the Father was not always Father and is thus defined by the beginning of the Son’s diastasis as a creature who is not eternal. Importing any kind of diastasis or “beginning” into the eternal God starts to break up the unity of God and compromise the eternity as well—God seems to have “parts” and intervals of “time” now in the way a creature does, and so forth. It is important that here, for Gregory, diastasis implies a lack or a diminishment that compromises the eternity and simplicity of God’s being.

So far I have been focusing on Balthasar’s first chapter in PT on “Spacing” in which he has been establishing the limit and tension of material being that results from \( \Delta_1 \). Because \( \Delta_1 \)’s context of existence is ultimate nestled within \( \Delta_2 \) and therefore surrounded by God beyond this ontological gap, this limit and tension is also the beauty of material being in its difference from God. The purpose that drives Balthasar’s reading of Gregory in PT is the intelligibility of the analogy of being: the beauty of creation must say something about God, particularly as God is reflected in the spiritual nature of human being as God’s likeness and image. Gregory insists in CE that in God there is no diastasis separated by “beginning” and “end” as distinct and separate “points,” even if this is the condition of a created being and even the measurement of its unity. But Balthasar reads a very positive note in this context:

This apparent contradiction [within the diastema of time that both unites the parts of being and creates tension within it] is translated into the order of knowledge by
a rending of consciousness with respect to memory of the past and a prevision of the future (τῆς ζωῆς σχιζομένης κατὰ τὴν τοῦ διαίρεσιν), even though this consciousness remains that of a unique subject possessing the πάθη πρὸς ἐλπίδα καὶ μνήμην (passions of hope and memory).\textsuperscript{157}

Difference from God in this manner therefore has a positive value, as can be seen in Gregory’s own text from the area of Balthasar’s citation:

This is the Being in which, to use the words of the Apostle, all things are formed; and we with our individual share in existence [καθἐκαστον εἶναι μετέχοντες], live and move and have our being [Acts 17:28; Col 1:17: “He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together”]. It is above beginning, and presents no marks of its inmost nature: it is to be known of only in the impossibility of perceiving it.\textsuperscript{158}

The diastema of time is therefore the condition under which the human spirit experiences hope and is enabled to participate in God’s eternal being, even if never fully. If the intellectual act of reaching towards God in eternal epéktasis becomes the created spirit’s mode of participation in God, then it also constitutes the location of an analogy of being between God and creation.

At the end of the chapter on “Spacing” Balthasar infers from various other passages in \textit{CE} that “since all diastema is, as we have seen, inseparably linked to the idea of creation, the categories of time and space cannot be completely foreign to spiritual beings.”\textsuperscript{159} Spatio-temporal imagery is unavoidable as Gregory writes: “The nature of souls and angels does not know limits, and nothing stops their respective natures from progressing to the infinite.”\textsuperscript{160} Balthasar then cites a passage from Homily 6 \textit{On the Song

\textsuperscript{157} PT, 31; cit. \textit{CE} 1, PG 45, 367AB.
\textsuperscript{158} Gregory, \textit{CE} 1, PG 45, 368B; the English is from \textit{Against Eunomius} I, §25, \textit{NPNF} 5, 70.
\textsuperscript{159} PT, 34; “For all the things that come to be (πᾶσι τοῖς γενομένοις),” see n.52 citing \textit{CE} 9, PG 45, 812D; see also \textit{CE} 1, PG 45, 368A: “The order of nature in creation” (Ἡ ἐν τῇ κτίσσει φύσις); also \textit{CE} 8, PG 45, 793C.
\textsuperscript{160} Gregory, \textit{CE} 8, PG 45, 792D.
of Songs on the limitlessness of created spiritual being as it reaches for its First Cause, a recent translation for which I provide below:

The second kind [of intelligible nature], however, is brought into existence by an act of creation. It looks eternally \( \text{ἀεὶ βλέπει} \) on the First Cause \( \text{πρὸς τὸ πρῶτον αἴτιον} \), the first kind of intelligible nature of the things that are and is preserved in every respect in the good by its participation \( \text{µετουσία} \) in what transcends it. It is also, in a certain fashion, always being created as it is changed for the better by being enhanced in goodness. For this reason, no end point can be conceived for it either, and its growth toward the better is not confined by any limit, but the good that is given at any particular time is always a starting point for something more and better, even though it already appears to be as great and complete as possible.\(^{161}\)

Balthasar does not make note of it at this point in PT, but the next sentence is Gregory’s citation of Phil 3:13 on Paul’s \textit{epéktaσis} towards the goal of eternal life with Christ. There is a certain dynamic aspect of materiality that is metaphorically elevated into the spiritual dimension. There is no other way for Gregory to speak of this dynamism of spiritual being, especially when referring to infinity as the horizon of its progress. What is noteworthy here is how the soul’s traversing of the infinite diastasis of \( \Delta 2 \) towards God as its goal now coincides with the traversing of the soul’s distension of \( \Delta 1 \). The end term of this process of \textit{epéktaσis} is infinite and gives the spiritual dimension of reality a limitless character. Another key moment in the development of Balthasar’s project involving theological distance comes into view: now \textit{infinity} has a role in the analogy of being between creation and God.

The Pauline exegesis of Exodus lies at the center of Gregory’s image of spiritual progress: God places Moses on “the rock,” and “the rock is Christ” (Ex 33:21, 1 Cor

\(^{161}\) Gregory of Nyssa, Homily 6, in Richard A. Norris, trans., \textit{Homilies on the Song of Songs} (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 185-87. Balthasar’s citation, without quotation, is \textit{In Cant. 6}, PG 44, 885C.
Christ the Rock then becomes the immobility upon which spiritual progress can find its footing as it runs and climbs endlessly towards greater levels of blessedness and virtue. What Balthasar has done in his first chapter in PT is derive an image of spiritual vitality that involves one of our primary senses of theological distance from various negative-theological moves within Gregory’s trinitarian and spiritual texts. Later in TD4, as we shall see in Chapter 3, he shall make analogical moves to reach back towards the over-abundant and mysterious source of this spiritual vitality. The Exodus passage of Moses on the rock entails another analogical move by Gregory in which motion and rest become asymptotically united in eternal spiritual progress. This spiritual reality is only imperfectly glimpsed but also deeply rooted in Gregory’s Δ1, which is the spatio-temporal “stretching” that is the character of createdness. Epéktasis becomes the bliss of enjoyment, the bliss of possessing God in the work of obedience to God’s call under the conditions of one’s limitations and aided by God’s grace. But the movement towards God is never-ending, and is in fact the eternal increase of the enjoyment. This is because the reference point of Δ1 (the stretching of a being towards its own goal is ultimately Gregory’s Δ2 (the gap between the soul and God that narrows asymptotically as it paradoxically expands to increase desire in the soul). The distance not only preserves the distinction, but also eternally guarantees the fruitfulness of the relation between God and the created person who seeks union with God.

Balthasar shows two forms of becoming in Gregory’s thought coming together in his second chapter in PT: the horizontal and material form of change on the one hand and the vertical and spiritual form on the other. The latter also “expresses the ascending

\[162\] Gregory, *Vita Moysis* 2, PG 44, 405C.
movement of becoming,\footnote{PT, 38, n.8: “Cf. Erich Przywara, Analogia Entis (Munich, 1932), 73ff.”} which is the innate idea and desire for God in the creature.\footnote{PT, 38; For this he quotes Gregory’s De beatitudinibus orationes in n.9: “The notion of the divine lies in all men naturally”; De beat. 5, PG 44, 1249D.} These two forms of becoming are linked in “the total formula for the analogy of being,”\footnote{PT, 38.} by which he means that both material and spiritual created being are measured by a common proportion. One must read the adjective “total” here with some reservation in light of the latter development of the analogy of being in his thought. The analogy of being is most properly between God and the world, but what is behind this phrase here (most likely) is his anticipation of the joining of two natures in Christ, who is “the concrete analogy of being” and “the analogy of being in person” because of “both the similarity and the distance between created and uncreated being.”\footnote{See Healy, Eschatology, 22; citing Balthasar in A Theology of History (London: Sheed and Ward, 1964), 74 and Epilog (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1987), 69. In anticipation of Chapter 2, see also Angela Franks: “Von Balthasar recognizes that Christ cannot be squeezed into any independent formal structure: “He himself as this concrete, unique, personal and free being, simply is his own form.” And if he is a unique form, then “the form of his revelation and the form of the creation that has emerged from him and from whom it takes its being” must depend on this unique form of Christ. Thus, as we saw above, “the problem of analogy in theology must finally be a problem of Christology”; “Trinitarian Analogia Entis,” 538, citing TKB, 55.} But before making this connection himself in his own thought, Balthasar must summarize Gregory’s argument for the analogy between material and spiritual being. Understanding this analogy allows for yet another analogy between the creation and the Creator that is measured in turn by the latter’s image and likeness.

In Gregory’s worldview (as Balthasar summarizes it) the heavens and the earth constitute one whole cosmos, diverse in parts and diverse in motions. The heavens appear to move from the standpoint of earth, even if they are unchanging according to their own nature. By contrast the earth appears to us to be stable, but it is in fact in constant flux in
all its geological and biological forms.\textsuperscript{167} There are two reasons for God’s bestowing of these qualities to create tension within the totality according to Gregory’s understanding of creation and Divine Wisdom. The first is that these parallel and contrasting tensions within heaven and earth between stability and movement are endowed by the Creator so that (again, as Balthasar summarizes Gregory) “creation may find itself moving between the extremes (\textit{μεταξὺ τῶν ἐναντίων κτίσις}).\textsuperscript{168} This produces a harmony and a beauty within the interrelated totality of created being in its opposition to the divine, which God sees as “very good.”\textsuperscript{169} Balthasar finds in Gregory’s texts many musical metaphors on the theme of a “song of praise” that creation offers back to its Creator in the rich harmony of its diversity.\textsuperscript{170} The second reason for this tension within creation is so that its absolute, qualitative difference from the impassible God who created it can be made clear, as Gregory does in \textit{CE} in his warning against the latent paganism hiding in an absolutizing of any one part of creation: “Polytheism arose when men marveled at the world, no longer in its entirety, but rather in its parts.”\textsuperscript{171} Each part of the whole is good only by virtue of its relation to the other parts in God’s view of the whole as “very good.”

Gregory’s doctrine of participation plays a critical role in how he establishes the analogy between God and creation (again, according to Balthasar’s reading). What Balthasar wishes to emphasize is that infinity is good insofar as it is divine or participates in the Divine; that change is good insofar as it expresses a participation in the Divine by means of progress in perfection; and that the Divine as infinite source of good creates the holy tension of change by drawing the human creature in his or her spiritual dimension

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{167} Citing Gregory from \textit{De hom. op.} 13, PG 44, 165AC; 1, 128C-132A; PT, 39-40, nn.11-14.
\item \textsuperscript{168} PT, 39.
\item \textsuperscript{169} PT, 40; cit. \textit{De mortuis} 3, PG 46, 500BC.
\item \textsuperscript{170} PT, 41; cit. \textit{In Christi resurr.} 3, PG 46, 672D; \textit{In Ps.} 3, PG 44, 440CD-441C.
\item \textsuperscript{171} PT, 40; cit. \textit{CE} 5, PG 45, 682B.
\end{itemize}
deeper into communion (across Δ2), not in spite of material diastasis (Δ1) but even at first by means of it. To this effect, Balthasar finds a passage from CE directly parallel to the passage on the same theme from Homily 6 on the Song of Songs I quoted above: “Since the First Good is infinite in its nature, communion with it on the part of the one whose thirst is quenched by it will have to be infinite as well, capable of being enlarged forever.”¹⁷² This grounds Gregory’s thought in the metaphorical intelligibility of epéktasis, which in turn depends on an analogy between the striving of created physical being on earth and the soul’s striving for infinite beatitude with God. The latter can only be understood in terms of the former, given the conditions of human thought as diastemic thought. By being “penetrated,” “transformed,” and granted power through God’s agency, created being can achieve a ceaseless and “happy state of alteration”¹⁷³ “in the direction of that which is most divine.”¹⁷⁴ This is the power to love, given to the soul by God in order to transform its mutability into the very means by which it can now approach God in a joyous, endless ascent: “Thus the mystical works of Gregory of Nyssa are all built on the idea of a perpetual surpassing of self: ‘Always higher, always greater than oneself.’”¹⁷⁵ In a cautious anticipation of Balthasar’s use of Adrienne von Speyr’s imagery of “surprise” and “surpassing of expectations” in the Trinity in TD5, it is worth noting the importance of the surpassing of self in endless progress in the analogy that Balthasar is seeking to establish in PT. It is the form of the soul’s participation in the

¹⁷² PT, 38; quoting CE 1, PG 45, 340D.
¹⁷³ PT, 44; cit. In Ps. 5, PG 44, 452BC
¹⁷⁵ PT, 45.
divine nature, according to Gregory. This locates Balthasar’s development of the analogy more firmly in the Catholic theological tradition than some of his critics have allowed.176

Balthasar makes somewhat revealing observation regarding Gregory’s philosophical orientation. It is even self-revealing of Balthasar in light of Daley’s note that he is constantly addressing intellectual, spiritual, and philosophical problems that arise from German Idealism. There is a passage cited by Balthasar in De anima et resurrectione in which Macrina teaches Gregory that our senses are the means by which we are guided “toward an idea” and “deeper into the invisible from the visible.”177 The choice of the word “idea” (or idée in the French) is an interesting choice, and by it Balthasar maintains that Gregory is an “idealist” rather than a Platonist. Hegel could very well be in the background of such an interpretation of De anima et resurrectione and of Gregory’s philosophy. Here is a more literal translation of the text:

[Macrina] replied, “It is said by the wise that the human being is a kind of small cosmos, containing in himself the same elements with which the whole is built up. If this is true (and it seems likely), perhaps we would not need any other assistance to confirm for us what we have assumed concerning the soul. We have assumed that it exists in itself, with its own nature, utterly different from the solidity of the body. As we observe the whole universe through sensual apprehension, by the very operation of our senses we are led [ὁδηγοῦμεθα] to conceive [nou, ἔννοιαν] of that reality and intelligence [πράγματος και νοήματος] which surpasses the senses [ὑπὲρ αἴσθησιν]. Our eyes become interpreters [ἑρηνεύς] of the omnipotent wisdom which is contemplated in the universe, the wisdom which reveals through itself the One who maintains the whole in accordance with it.”178

As it is in Hegel, the “idea” (or “reality and intelligence”) of the One is concrete and not completely separated from the world because it is actively involved in holding it all together. Unlike Hegel (and like Balthasar), Gregory maintains that the One transcends

176 Meaning here are Kilby and Levering.
177 PT, 49; De an. et res. 3, PG46, 28C, 33BC.
178 Gregory, On the Soul and the Resurrection, trans. Catherine P. Roth (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1993), 34; see also PG46, 28C.
the world as the source of its perfection and is not co-joined to the world as the result of its perfection. The idea cannot be identified with the world because it draws the world on to its perfection. But neither is the idea accessible without the world of sense perception, at least to the human spirit.

What Balthasar gets from Gregory and the *De anima et resurrectione* is that, in this partnership of God and the soul as relational unities, the soul can function as a totality of concrete, physical, and spiritual reality embraced by Christ’s Incarnation, death, and resurrection. But in the communion of human nature with God, human nature itself then takes on a form that corresponds more and more to its end as it progresses through life: “God has ‘by his magnanimity given the rest of what is good to human nature. As for spirit and thought, he has not, properly speaking, given [δέδωκεν] them, but he has caused them to be participated in [μετέδωκεν] by imparting to his image the particular beauty of his own nature.’ For the unity of the spirit cannot be explained on the basis of matter.”

God’s nature is therefore the idea or the ideal, the *concrete* idea that has a direct relationship with the creature who pursues it. Human spirit is given a share in this nature via this chance to relate to it personally and gain strength to persevere in an endless progression. There are other aspects of the analogies between God and the world and between spiritual and material being that Balthasar notes in Gregory.

**Sin, Gender, and Metaphors in PT**

Balthasar finds elements in Gregory’s thought according to which God also intends for the ravages of sin, which are the limits of sensory life that begin in slavery, to

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179 PT, 53-54; cit. De hom. op. 16, PG 44, 185BC; 180 PT, 65-66; quoting De hom. op. 9, PG 44, 149B.
be the very means by which creation can be redeemed and make its way back to a loving relationship with God:

“But if nature falls prey to any accident, the movement of thought finds itself fettered.” The same goes for sensory life, properly speaking, for the πάθη (passions). The latter are far from being useless to the spiritual life. They “carry the soul on their back in a way and raise her toward the heights”. This is true of anger as well as concupiscence. “Reason, in dominating them, transforms each of them into a special virtue..., and thus one finds that all these motions, raised as they are for their part, as well, by the transcendence of the spirit, are conformed [συσχηματιζεται] to the beauty of the image of God.”

If we read this passage in view of the Balthasarian scheme of distance I have adopted, D2 represents alienation from God. The Son’s taking on the ravages of sin in D2 in his mission of D3 from the Father becomes the overtaking and restoration of D2 back into a proper D1 of reverence and mutual love. But without reference to D3, the unity of material being is never perfect in embodied human life before the eschaton and always disrupted by the strain of expansion in space and time. This is the condition of suffering in the diastema, of living in Δ1 (ruined by the alienation of “Balthasarian” D2).

Gendered sexual life has more than one role to play in this life: it is the punishment for sin, the means for a meaningful survival, and even the root metaphor for many other Nyssan metaphors for spiritual progress. There is one in particular that we will consider below. Adam and Eve are central in Gregory’s biblical theology, but Balthasar really seeks to showcase them as a gendered pair in Gregory’s reconciliation of 1) the earthly process of “real becoming” under spatio-temporal conditions (ιστορικός) and “earthly passions” (βίος παθητικός) with 2) the fact that “God, by his foreknowledge, honored the totality of human nature with a unique action, so that it shares in an elevated,
angelic lot.” Adam and Eve dwell in Eden in the image and likeness of God, Balthasar notes, in “an account that denotes an ideal becoming (τὴν περὶ ψυχῆς φιλοσοφίαν) under an image of a real becoming (ἰστορικῶς).” However, the condition of real becoming includes the possibility and actuality of sin.

Balthasar points out that in De hominis opificio, “the free and sinful act is at once the first cause of the whole series of real, material becoming and its last effect, presupposing the whole series.” But this is only implicit in Gregory’s thesis. Balthasar maintains that for Gregory sexuality is not evil in the moral sense, but that it is a mark of being mired in the passions: “Sex and the ‘passions’, Gregory tells us, are a punishment inflicted by God for the sin arising from our freedom.”

This can be seen in the biblical accounts in 1 Samuel 8 and in Genesis 3, respectively, where the evil consequences of kingship in Israel and physical death are also punishment for freely turning away from God and choosing selfishness. The first example of Israelite kingship is purely Balthasar’s, but the latter can be found in Gregory’s De virginitate. In that text, sexuality and marriage are not only the signs of an individual’s mortality but also God’s gift to humanity for the continuation of life and “an alleviation of [this] hard and mortal life on this sad and wretched earth.”

In the Oratione in funere Pulcheriae, and analogously to Israelite kingship and marriage, “The same goes for death itself. Although it is the supreme punishment for man’s original fault, it is death, nonetheless, that detaches us from the world and purifies us of all concupiscence.... Death is the entry into man’s original life—a life that has never existed in its integrity—and therefore death is a good

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182 PT, 69; cit. De hom. op. 8, PG 44, 144D; and 17, 189D.
183 PT, 69; cit. De hom. op. 8, PG 44, 144D.
184 PT, 76.
185 PT, 78.
186 PT, 78-79; quoting De virginitate 7, PG 46, 376A.
thing: ἀγαθὸν ἂν εἴω ὁ θάνατος.” Such a thing is possible by grace because the very changes endured in these alternating states from birth through life to death, which are sometimes induced by sin, can be the means by which the being or the system or the community perdures in being.

Balthasar relates two modes of ordered change, the cyclical and the evolutionary, through the use of a spatial journey metaphor of “path” in De mortuis to interpret a temporal organic growth metaphor of “budding seed” in De anima et resurrectione. In the De mortuis passage Balthasar cites Gregory compares the “necessary path” that a seed takes from its generation to fruition to the process by which the death of the body can lead to the original state of the image and likeness of God. In both images there is a principle of life: biological in the former and spiritual in the latter. The soul in the body is therefore analogous to the principle of life in the seed, and both bear the imprint of God’s immanence to all things and especially to living things, as De anima et resurrectione states: “We do not hesitate to say that the divine Nature and Power are immanent in all things,” even if the immaterial nature of the soul (as well as that of God) also transcends the body’s limitations. God can be contemplated not as only immanently present in and to the created spirit in the graced presence of the Holy Spirit, but also by means of the “deep-seated immanence” of divine power by virtue of its being created. The context from De anima et resurrectione for all of Balthasar’s citations is Macrina’s reflections on how the soul under the influence of grace can harness a person’s emotions and passions to guide the whole person, body and soul, to the goal of

187 PT, 79; cit. Oratìone in funere Pulcherie, PG 46, 876D-77A.
188 PT, 82; cit. De mortuis 3, PG 46, 520CD and De an. et res.3, PG 46, 157AB.
189 De mortuis 3, PG 46, 520CD.
190 De an. et res. 3, PG 46, 44B.
191 PT, 84; cit. De an. et res. 3, PG46, 73A.
fulfillment in the image and likeness of God in eternal life. The organic metaphor now governs the understanding of Δ1 as the mode of spiritual development. Balthasar reads in Gregory’s *Exposito in Ecclesiasten Salomonis* a relationship between the creature and God in which the creature “receives God’s creative act as ‘its nourishment and drink.’”\(^{192}\)

The created spirit’s very openness to receiving its createdness from God is 1) a free act of receiving God as a child of God,\(^ {193}\) and 2) a participation in its own ongoing creation via “the augmentation of its goods.”\(^ {194}\) Although Balthasar synthesizes disparate passages to arrive at this interpretation, it is borne out in a key quotation from *Vita Moysis*: “[The rational creature] thus becomes its own father in a perpetual rebirth.”\(^ {195}\)

The metaphor of perpetual rebirth directly involves the personal distinctions of father and son, the trinitarian implications of which Gregory does not dwell on and Balthasar does not infer here. Gregory is cautious in his language about relations among the hypostases in the Trinity, taking care not to overlay them with unnecessary references to the spatio-temporal aspects of parent-child relations. But what is relevant here to Balthasar’s later theological project is that the spiritual creature is given the power by grace to participate in the divine processions in the image and likeness of God. This is only the beginning of the developing analogy, but we can see here in Balthasar’s reading of Gregory how he seeks the intelligibility of the analogy of being first in the dynamism of spiritual life as progress towards the image and likeness of God. This intelligibility, as we have seen, depends on diastasis and *epēktasis* for its primary spatio-temporal and kinetic metaphoric structure. Balthasar truly reaps his results from a reading of Gregory.

\(^{192}\) PT, 85; cit. *In Eccles.* 8, PG 44, 753BC; what Gregory’s texts actually describes is a kind of contemplative, intellectual gaze of the creature upon its (invisible) Creator in light of its own createdness.

\(^{193}\) PT, 85; cit. *In Eccles.* 6, PG 44, 703A.

\(^{194}\) PT, 85; cit. *In Cant.* 6, PG 44, 885D.

\(^{195}\) PT, 85; cit. *Vita Moysis* 1, PG 44, 328B.
in light of overarching theological interests and not from any focused exegesis of carefully chosen works by means of historical-critical patristic methodology. But in that he is not unfaithful to Gregory: Balthasar seeks to put the author as the representative of all his works into a lively conversation with Balthasar’s own milieu.

An example of how Balthasar uses his own background in Gregory’s thought in later volumes comes in TD2 (Man in God) when he considers the meeting of infinite and finite freedom in the latter’s constant reference to the former as its source. The context there is the alienating nature of sin as revealed on the Cross. Creation’s rejection of God, is indeed an abuse of real freedom; but created freedom can only find its origin in the One who is rejected, the One who gave it as a gift of being. Balthasar turns again to Gregory of Nyssa in the Vita Moysis. We, as human beings, can exercise our God-like autoexousion at key moments in life by becoming “our own fathers, since we beget ourselves as the people we want to be.” The context of the quotation from Gregory is Moses’ choice of being either the son of a tyrannical pharaoh in Egypt or the son of God’s people destined for freedom. This relationship exists across the opposition of two poles, infinite freedom and created freedom. To choose Pharaoh as his father is to reject the infinite source of his freedom. Balthasar does not write in terms of theological distance in this context in TD2; but it is clear that Moses places himself at D1 with God as a child of Israel instead of D2 as a child of Pharaoh. Even as God in Christ retains the place of the pole of infinite freedom, God simultaneously heals the damaged pole of human freedom in D2. Jesus welcomes human freedom back to its divine source by virtue of his incarnate relation to the Father, enabling the choices that his disciples make

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196 TD2, 220; cit. Vita Moysis, PG 44, 328B.
197 TD2, 220; cit. Catech. orat., PG 45, 97D-100A.
to become rooted in the vast wealth that they had previously lost when they became alienated from God.\textsuperscript{198} Jesus recreates the finite freedom as a way of participation in God’s Being as image and likeness.\textsuperscript{199} The likeness to God finds its essential characteristic in an open-ended horizon of endless dynamism that corresponds to something in God:

Only in the finite realm can the fulfillment of an expectation denote a conclusion, something that produces stagnation of life, boredom, satiety and surfeit (\textit{koros}); in eternal life this is never possible—as Gregory of Nyssa showed most insistently. And this is not because God is always richer than finite freedom can expect (cf. Irenaeus, \textit{Adv. Haer.} II, 28, 3), but because God himself is always greater than himself on the basis of his triune freedom.\textsuperscript{200}

Here we see in a nutshell how Balthasar moves analogically from Gregory’s image of \textit{epéktasis} and diastasis (Δ1) and the infinity of God’s freedom to the rich eventfulness of triune life. The intelligibility of God as the \textit{je-mehr}, the always-greater even within the divine life, is based on the eventfulness of infinity. Because we are creatures, we always experience God’s grace in a deferral of our own perfection as constant growth in the presence of the infinite God.\textsuperscript{201} But this experience of grace corresponds to something in

\textsuperscript{198} TD2, 228.
\textsuperscript{199} TD2, 234-35: “Since Gregory adopts word for word Plotinus’ definition of infinite freedom: God’s ‘will is identical with him; he will be what he is, and he is what he will be’ (\textit{Enn. VI}, 8, 13 = \textit{PG} 45, 609B), plainly we should trace his definition of finite freedom back primarily to the same source, even if Stoic influences may have been strongly at work. As in Plotinus, the \textit{noûs} is the image that is the closest possible to the One, so too finite freedom in its purity—that is, as a pure motion coming from and proceeding toward infinite freedom—is the closest possible image of God. (Thus we see why Gregory, unlike the other Greek Fathers, cannot make a distinction between static ‘image’ and dynamic ‘likeness’);” the quotation of Gregory’s text is from \textit{Contra Eunomium III}; see also Plotinus, \textit{Ennead, Volume VI: 6-9}, trans. A. H. Armstrong, Loeb Classical Library 468 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 270-73 for the parallel that Balthasar is seeing in there. \textit{Noûs} is described as “a spiritual eternal movement toward the one, as a yearning (\textit{Enn. III}, 8, 11) [ἐφεσίς], as a turning toward the One (\textit{V, II}, 1), as a circle and a circular movement governed by its center (II, 2, 3; III, 8, 8), as the motion of the idea that thinks itself (VI, 2, 8), whereby this motion coincides with the repose of self-possession (II, 2, 3).” All citations are of Plotinus’ \textit{Enneads}.

\textsuperscript{200} TD2, 259.
\textsuperscript{201} On this infinite deferral, see Hart, \textit{Beauty of the Infinite}, 201; cit. Gregory, \textit{Vita Moysis} I, quoted here in English translation: “We should now show great diligence not to fall away from the perfection which is attainable but to acquire as much as is possible: To that extent let us make progress within the realm of what we seek. For the perfection of human nature consists perhaps in its very growth in
God that can only be said to be “like” deferral in the context of ever-increasing love and mutual glorification among Persons. Because there is no time in God, there is no deferral, but only eternal “eventfulness.” But before this eventfulness can be experienced as spiritual growth, or even participation in God, it must be experienced in this world as salvation.

Gregory’s biological metaphors of seeds and fruits must be relegated once again to their proper place as subservient to the dynamics of spiritual life unlimited by physical death. This is true freedom, for Macrina in De anima et resurrectione, for Gregory, and for Balthasar. But just as he does in the Theo-Drama, Balthasar emphasizes that the freedom of being a creature, even one liberated from the sexual cycle of birth and death, can never be exercised alone. This is immediately evident in the human person’s need for God in order to exercise one’s God-given freedom in divine adoption. But in Balthasar’s thought it is also the structure of God’s own inner-trinitarian freedom. Balthasar will later thematize this inner-trinitarian freedom based on Gregory’s influence. For now, and in terms of the title of Balthasar’s book, Presence is vitally related to Thought in his reading of Gregory. The cognitive dimension of Christian life, the Thought, is often referred to by the Cappadocian fathers (Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesarea, and Gregory of Nazianzus) as epinoia.

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202 Douglass explains that “ἐπίνοια ... is a type of intelligent imagination given by God as the chief resource for navigating ... within the diasteme”; Theology of the Gap, 55. Epinoia yields phantasms leading to concepts in the creation of metaphysical, speculative, and even “poetic” knowledge. In the practice of theology, epinoia must be constantly guided by the revelation of God’s active work, or energeia. But revelation itself is always mediated by the diasteme (Δ1), just as the conceptual ordering of all phantasms is strictly conditioned by it as well; Theology of the Gap, 9-10. But the adiastemic presence of God...
“Epinoic” thought does not entail reaching all the way to a comprehensive grasp of its object. This is forbidden and impossible even if naturally desired. Rather, it participates in “the ascensional (‘ana’) movement toward the logos,” in which the thinker obediently observes the contours and pathways of thought upon which he or she is led to self-critical and spiritually reverent knowledge of the object. Balthasar quotes Gregory from CE: “By a certain ana-logy [ascension towards the Logos], one arrives at a knowledge of being.”

Gregory does not see the incomprehensibility of essence (τὸ ακατάλυπτον τοῦ ὄσιας) as a deficiency in human thought but rather as a perfection of the super-abundance that is communicated by God to created spirit.

God is always withdrawing and drawing the human spirit deeper and closer, so this is a permanent state. God’s ongoing act of creation is analogous to God’s perpetual withdrawal from the mind: just as God allows there to be a world over and against God’s Self, God creates more momentum for the soul’s progress by withdrawing to an ever-greater distance. Without this distance there is no mediation of mutual self-gift, so the distance is permanent. What this means for Gregory is that knowledge is ultimately contemplative, reaching its fulfillment in facing the concrete reality of God’s presence. Balthasar summons a host of images from Gregory’s homilies on the Song of Songs—images of running, kissing, smelling spilled perfume, being “smithed” like gold—all concrete images placing the soul directly in the hands of God. However, the so-called fulfillment of knowledge is an endless journey towards a God Who recedes and increases

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204 PT, 93; CE 12, PG45 916A.  
205 PT, 93-94; De hom. op. 11, PG44 156AB.  
206 PT, 99; for running: In Cant. 5, PG 44, 876C; for kissing: 1, 777C; for the goldsmith: 4, 832AB; spilled perfume: 1, 781C-84A and 3, 821D-24B.
the potentiality for knowledge in direct proportion to the deepening of mystery. All of the images Gregory marshals in the Homilies build upon each other progressively, leading to other images that lead deeper into God’s withdrawal.\textsuperscript{207} The union of the soul with God is constituted by achieving this ceaseless approach, the grace of which is endless desire.\textsuperscript{208} This synoptic view of the Homilies \textit{In Canticum Canticorum} provides a good view of Balthasar’s mastery of Gregory’s texts and how he puts it to use. Balthasar neatly summarizes this philosophy of desire in a way that destabilizes any attempt at static abstraction: “It is a strange thing. We are dissatisfied with this metaphysics that erects into an absolute that part of us that is more radical: namely, dissatisfaction. However, this metaphysics is merely the result of a rigorous analysis that has been conducted precisely on the ontological constitution of the creature: diastema, time, becoming, indefinite progress.”\textsuperscript{209} He is perhaps being provocative with the focus on dissatisfaction—the real subject in Gregory’s thought is desire as an eternally renewed gift from God to the soul.

The last two chapters in PT are on Christology and pneumatology in Gregory’s “Philosophy of Love” (the title of Part Three). Balthasar construes Gregory’s Christology as the “Transposition of Becoming” (Pt. III, Chapter 2) and his pneumatology as the “Transposition of the Image” (Ch.3). Both of these transpositions involve mutual indwelling between God and the soul. Balthasar proclaims that “God is Life” in Gregory’s thought; and then, God is an “Ocean of Being that our thought would never be in a position to capture”; and finally that God’s “Being is a Super-becoming.”\textsuperscript{210} If the ascensional pattern is Gregory’s, the language of the last term, “Super-becoming,” is very

\textsuperscript{207} \textit{In Cant.} 5, 860A; 12, 1029C.
\textsuperscript{208} PT, 100; cit. \textit{In Cant.} 2, 801A.
\textsuperscript{209} PT, 104.
\textsuperscript{210} PT, 153.
Balthasarian. It gives a crucial aspect of “the total formula for the analogy of being” between the soul and God as Balthasar understands it: God may be “above” becoming, but it is “becoming” itself that helps us understand the analogy. To use Gardner and Moss’ formula: there is something in God that is like “becoming,” but becoming is more like something in God than that something-in-God is like becoming. In the event of Christ, God’s “Super-becoming” is transposed in the soul’s life of infinite progress: “The God who is ‘above God’ thus remains the God who is semper maior (always greater), even with respect to the most ‘supernatural’ aspirations of the creature.”

The image of God’s “Super-becoming” is transposed to us by the Holy Spirit.

Gregory’s Christology as Balthasar reads it in the Vita Moysis is one of “place” or topos. In one of the most famous of Gregory’s passages, there is an infinity of space or room in the spiritual life, a “place” in the realm of the divine that is “with God” or “beside God”: “Thus God spoke to Moses: ‘See, there is room in my house. I am going to place you on a steep rock.’” It is worthwhile to see Balthasar’s full quotation of the passage in question. It is provided via the English translation of PT, which clearly makes an interpretation of a key phrase that I emphasize in italics:

But in saying “room” [τόπος], [God] does not intend to circumscribe in terms of quantity he is denoting (since there cannot be dimensions of measure in what is not quantitative).... Here, rather, is what this word means, it seems to me: since your desire impels you toward what surpasses you and since there is no feeling of disgust to arrest your progress..., know, therefore, that in me there is space in such abundance that he who traverses it will never be able to arrest his flight. But this flight, from another point of view, is tranquil rest: “I am going to place you on a steep rock.” Here, indeed, is the full measure of the paradox: rest and movement are identical [τὸ αὐτὸ στάσις ἐστὶ καὶ κίνησις].... And the more someone becomes firmly established in good and immobilizes himself, the more rapid his flight becomes: rest itself serves him as a pair of wings.213

211 PT, 38.
212 PT, 161; Balthasar quotes CE 5, PG 45, 884B: “that very [God] who is beyond God.”
213 Quotation of Vita Moysis 1, PG44, 405BCD; PT, 157.
The English translation of “in me” just provided is only one possibility for the original Greek of Vita Moysis: Ἰδοὺ τόπος, φησὶ, παρ᾽ἐµοί.\(^{214}\) Balthasar’s French in Présence et pensée reads: “Ainsi parla Dieu à Moïse : « Vois, il y a de la place chez moi. Je vais te poser sur le rocher ».”\(^{215}\) A popular English translation (not Balthasar’s) reads: “Here is a place, he says, beside me.”\(^{216}\) Whether Gregory’s intention is “in me” or “by me” or something in between, the point of the passage is brought home in the identity of the Rock as Christ. Being placed “on Christ” as the Rock in Exodus 33:21-22 locates the soul in a paradoxical state of rest as continual movement, with the “presence” of God that will “go with” Moses and give him “rest” (Ex 33:14).

To emphasis the soul’s location with Christ as a state of perpetual bliss-in-movement, Balthasar immediately provides another lengthy quotation, this time from Homily 9 on the Song of Songs.\(^{217}\) In this passage the presence of Christ the Word of God within the soul becomes a living fountain, a perpetual flowing-out from God.

Juxtaposed with the passage from Vita Moysis in which the soul is place “in Christ” or “on Christ” in perpetual movement towards God, this passage completes Balthasar’s summary of Gregory’s doctrine of mutual indwelling between God and the soul: “In this text the transposition of becoming within the Eternal appears with the highest possible clarity. The life that is movement is that of God himself.”\(^{218}\) The infinite diastasis of Δ\(^2\) serving as the room in God’s mansion now stamps Δ\(^1\) with its character, giving created spiritual life its meaning and its content in eternal life: “The anguish of becoming is

\(^{214}\) Vita Moysis I, PG44, 405B.
\(^{215}\) Présence et pensée, 127. “In my household” is also possible translation, according to Liddell and Scott; see entry for παρά used with the dative.
\(^{217}\) In Cant. 9, PG 44, 977AD; quoted in PT, 157-58.
\(^{218}\) PT, 158.
identified with the tranquility of Being. It is the richness of the divine Presence in the soul and not the abyss between God and the soul that constantly creates the space (beyond all spacing) in which love accomplishes its necessary course.\textsuperscript{219} The scheme of Balthasarian distance that we are using in this study suggests D3, the distance of the “Rock” (or Son) from “God” (or Father) in the Incarnation, by which God makes this intimate contact with the created soul. The point I wish to make for the time being is that we have now found a firm basis in Gregory’s thought (of the “adiastatic” God) for Balthasar’s development of trinitarian distance. His point is never ultimately about distance, but about the appropriate metaphor for a deeper insight into the eventfulness of triune life that we participate in through contact with Jesus Christ, the Rock.

One of the global characteristics of Balthasar’s work is his completion of Christology with pneumatology for a fuller trinitarian overview. This pattern begins to emerge at the end of PT in his last chapter, “Transposition of the Image.” The transposition of God’s “super-becoming” into the soul via contact with the Word is incomplete without the Spirit. Growth in theological knowledge is governed by how God has entered into Δ1 by sending the Word across Δ2 in the Incarnation, but this descent of God into the human spirit is only fully accomplished by the Holy Spirit. As I did for Balthasar’s Christology in the “Transposition of Becoming,” I provide another of his quotations of a text. Gregory explains the dynamics of seeing God, which is to see the glory of the Father and the Son:

\begin{quote}
According to the Prophet, light can only be seen in light. ... [I]f, therefore, the only begotten light can be seen only in the light of the Father, that is to say, in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from him, it is only when we are illumined in advance by the glory of the Spirit that we can enter into a knowledge of the glory of the Father and the Son. Otherwise, how would we salvage the truth of the words of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{219} PT, 156.
the Gospel: “O God, nobody has seen you”? ... If the glory of the Father and the
Son were accessible to human nature and human power, these words would
certainly have been false and lying words.... It was only when caught up
[ἀνακραθείς] in the grace of the Spirit that Saint Stephen saw God, elevated by it
to the comprehension of God.  

The knowledge that Gregory discusses in this exegesis of Acts 7:54-60 is of salvific,
personal knowledge of God. What Stephen saw according to Acts 7:56 is “the Son of
Man standing at the right hand of God.” This is the knowledge of the Father that
constitutes eternal life in Johannine terms (John 17:3). Belief in the Son constitutes
eternal life (John 3:15-16; 5:24; 6:40), and the reception of the Spirit enables Stephen
himself to become “a spring of water welling up to eternal life” (John 4:14) in his own
witness to Jesus.  

Gregory makes these Johannine exegetical points himself in CE, and
Balthasar is quick to apply them to Gregory’s account of the martyrdom of Stephen.
When the Spirit is operating within Stephen to bring all this about, it constitutes “the
revelation of the Presence, that is to say, the depths, of Divine Being.” This Presence is
“in concrete terms nothing other than the revelation of the Trinity by the Trinity.” The
Presence in the title of Balthasar’s book is therefore the Triune Presence, while Thought
is ultimately a participation in eternal Triune Life.

Balthasar here brings up a fascinating aspect of Gregory’s pneumatology in light
of the latter’s patristic milieu. While it is the Father who is the “principle” or aitios of the
unity of the divine nature, this unity is “perfected in the Spirit who effects all in all.”

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220 In St. Steph., PG 46, 717ABC; quoted in PT, 164.
221 PT, 164; cit. CE 10, PG 45, 836B.
222 PT, 163.
223 For this reference, I borrow Bernard Lonergan’s paraphrase of Quod non sint tres dii, PG 45, 133AD) in his Triune God: Doctrines: “We believe that one is a principle [Father: αἴτιος] and the other originates from the principle [Son: τὸ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ αἰτίου]; and again we see a further difference between the originated, for one originated [Son] comes immediately from the principle [Father], while the other [Spirit] comes from the principle through the mediation of the first originated” (τὸ δὲ διὰ τοῦ προσεχός ἐκ τοῦ
The divine processions proceed linearly, as they do for many of the Greek Fathers. But for Gregory it is the Spirit who perfects the processions by glorifying the Father and Son with the same glory that the Spirit has received from them.\textsuperscript{224} (Gregory makes a “trinitarian” extrapolation from the Johannine texts of John 12:28 and 17:1-5 to include the Spirit within the mutual glorification of Father and Son.) By perfecting the divine nature as a circular movement of divine life, “the Spirit is the place that unites the Father and the Son, [and] he is, one may say, in an eminent fashion the very unity of God.”\textsuperscript{225} Balthasar concludes that it is the Spirit who signifies the divine unity for Gregory.

Here we have in Gregory, as discovered by Balthasar, a Spirit-based trinitarian theology of superabundance. This gives at least the beginnings of some evidence, against those critics who descry his trinitarian theology of hierarchical domination and abasement, that Balthasar has a great interest in a different way of carrying forward the tradition. As we shall later see, Sarah Coakley also wishes to develop this point in her own Nyssan-influenced theology, according to which “the circle of divine desire perfectly enacted, under the aegis of the Spirit’s own longing love.”\textsuperscript{226} Balthasar does not develop his own pneumatology quite to the extent that she does, but he goes much further than many give him credit. His reading of Gregory is an obvious influence on his pneumatology.

But, as we have seen elsewhere in Gregory’s texts and in PT, the difference that is in God “radically excludes that which forms the foundation of all distinctions in the

\textsuperscript{224} C. Maced., PG 45, 1329.
\textsuperscript{225} PT, 167; quoting C. Maced., PG 45, 1329B.
\textsuperscript{226} Coakley, \textit{God, Sexuality, and the Self}, 255-56.
world: spacing.” Balthasar specifically mentions this lack of diastema in the context of pneumatology and quotes Gregory from *Contra Macedonianos* in a footnote: “There is no diastema between the Son and the Holy Spirit.” But at this point in the study we can further clarify what Gregory means by diastasis and why it must be excluded from God-language and theological thought. By denying diastasis in God, Gregory is specifically denying what we have called Δ1. Positing Δ1 within the Divine Being would import the conditions for human personhood into God, according to which self-knowledge and knowledge of another are fundamentally different. But in God, knowledge of Self immediately implies perfect knowledge of Other: “The Only Begotten who is in the Father sees the Father in himself.”

What Balthasar emphasizes in PT in Gregory’s dogmatic exegesis of Acts 7:54-60 is that the immediate, mutual, Personal knowledge shared by the Trinity has been transposed to Stephen by the action of the Spirit who shines from Stephen’s own face in glory. Those who see Stephen see the Spirit as a shining radiance, but what Stephen sees is the immediacy and intimacy of the Father and Son as the Son of Man stands at the right hand of God. Gregory emphasize any “distance” or “diastema” in the structure of this experience, even though Balthasar has shown elsewhere in PT that Gregory structures the human spirit’s participation in divine life in terms of an infinite running and stretching out towards God across a diastasis (Δ2) that paradoxically expands as intimacy with God intensifies. But as I will demonstrate more thoroughly in Chapter 3, Balthasar will structure the experience of seeing the Son on the Cross much differently than Gregory structures the experience of seeing the Spirit resting on Stephen. The two witnesses are

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227 PT, 166.
228 N.16; quoting *C. Maced.*, PG 45, 1321A.
229 PT, 166; quoting Gregory, *CS* 12, PG 45, 1041B.
analogous to each other, of course, and the pneumatological phenomenon of the unity of Father and Son is the same. But for Balthasar in TD4: “It is only from the Cross and in the context of the Son’s forsakenness that the latter’s distance from the Father is fully revealed; when the unity between them is exposed, the uniting Spirit, their ‘We’, actually appears in the form of mere distance.”\textsuperscript{230} There are two different pneumatological moves being made here: in PT, Balthasar shows Gregory doing pneumatology in the context of the Spirit’s sharing of the mutual glorification of Father and Son with the believer for eternal life; while in TD4, Balthasar recontextualizes the same basic pneumatology in terms of the dereliction of the Cross. This is what necessitates his language of trinitarian distance, in all its varieties, both in what relates to soteriology (GL7, TD4) and from that viewpoint in what relates to eschatology and Trinity (TD4, TD5). How Balthasar carries out this project in his later texts will be the subject of Chapters 3 and 4.

Conclusion

Balthasar receives from Gregory the idea that created spirit’s “participation in all the goods of divinity”—spirit (nous), reason (logos), and ultimately love (agape)—is “the concrete form of the analogy” between the creature and God.\textsuperscript{231} Participation implies the diastasis between God and the world, $\Delta_2$, because the creature must receive the ability to participate as a gift of grace. The informing of creaturely $\Delta_1$ is what makes the creature “concretely analogous” to the divine source of the gifts. This participated connaturality is conditioned on the creaturely side by the “identity of the divine $\lambda\phi\gamma\omicron\varsigma$ with the internal

\textsuperscript{230} TD4, 320.
\textsuperscript{231} PT, 113.
δύναμις of creatures,” which is itself God’s gift of creation. Divine glory can thus proceed as light from within the creature, as it did from Stephen, so that the creature truly becomes the icon of God after the pattern of Christ. Now the human spirit is characterized (stamped) by the “transposed Super-becoming” of God’s own Life and no longer merely by its extension from birth to death in Δ1 and diastasis from God in Δ2. The “distance” and “diastasis” terminology I have stipulated in this study has sought so far to elucidate how Δ2 between creature and God and Δ1 within the creature now combine to form the possibility for the growth of created being in the image of God.

What I hope also to have shown is that Balthasar’s development of the idea of distance is deeply rooted in a key source for the Catholic (and Orthodox) tradition. “Rooted in” does not mean simply “repeating,” and no reasonable critic of Balthasar would think that it should. But Kilby’s concern still stands if a connection cannot be seen between Balthasar’s early reading of Gregory and his later speculative thought. In response to Levering, I also hope to have begun an on-going demonstration that Balthasar’s prioritization of love and the “always-greater” dynamic of divine life as hermeneutical keys to trinitarian doctrine is not a denial of divine omniscience, nor an importation of defect into the divine being. At least, not according to Gregory of Nyssa.

Balthasar makes Gregory sound almost like Kant when he points out that the movement and content of human thought is conditioned by time and space and yet is naturally inclined to “break the bonds” of the diastema that structures it. Karl Barth upholds the dialectical moment of God’s No to the human presumption that drives such unbridled thought. But one of Gregory’s key differences from Kant, as well as from Karl

232 PT, 115-16.
233 PT, 89.
Barth, is his belief that created spirit truly has a “natural kinship” with the spiritual and divine foundations of all of reality. This “natural kinship” is in no way a comprehensive grasp: it can only be actualized as a participation in divine nature granted as a gift of the God Who dwells on the other side of the “wall” of Δ2. And so, neither does the human spirit have any grasp on any kind of thing-in-itself outside the bounds of epinoia (thought) conditioned by Δ1. Gregory wrote Contra Eunomius to argue “that our concepts are only remote analogies, approaches to the infinitely rich reality of God, symbolic signs, which point out the direction without ever reaching their object. There is, between thought and its object, the same abyss that exists between word and thought.”234 If a “Eunomian” were to rest with the evidence of a mere mental concept, the mind of that person would miss the living being represented by the concept and the concept itself would become an idol.

The distance enumeration according to the chart will now change for the next chapter on Balthasar’s reading of Karl Barth. It will be important to remember that (what I call) Gregory’s Δ2 is the same as (what I call) Balthasar’s D1, the infinite distance between God and the world. I will not be referring much to Δ1 again until we arrive at a more in-depth consideration of the divine processions in TD5 in light of the analogy of being. The next chapter focuses on the distinction between D1 and D2. As we shall see, this distinction is at the very center of Balthasar’s account of Karl Barth’s struggle to accept the analogy of being.

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234 PT, 91-92; cit. CE 12, PG 45, 965C; 968D; and 1, 366C.
CHAPTER 2
DISTANCE IN BALTHASAR’S READING OF KARL BARTH:
THE THEOLOGY OF KARL BARTH

Introduction

While the last chapter investigated the roots of Balthasar’s theology of distance in an ancient source, the present chapter turns to a modern source in Karl Barth. Gregory of Nyssa’s spiritual theology of diastasis and epēktasis contemplates the graced encounter wherein the tensions of earthly life (in Δ1) are transformed into a spiritual journey towards God (in Δ2). Barth now provides Balthasar with the example of a modern struggle for insight into the connection between the divine and the human. What Barth seeks is a way of seeing the difference between God and the soul not as the alienated distance of sin and depravity (D2), but as the holy distance given to the creation to exist in the image and likeness of its Creator (D1). This modern view of theological distance is characterized by Barth’s occupation with self-consciousness in the event of grace.

A separate chapter between these two on Balthasar’s engagement with medieval sources would seem to offer a more complete genealogy of theological distance. The medieval theologians, particularly Aquinas and Bonaventure, play key roles in the development of Balthasar’s thought. Aquinas’ understanding of a kind of unidirectional proportion between the creature and God, by which the creature is “more like” God than vice versa, profoundly structures Balthasar’s own adherence to the limits on theological analogy decreed by the Fourth Lateran Council: “A likeness is not able to be noted between Creator and creature unless a greater unlikeness is to be noted between them”
This is the foundational structure of Balthasar’s understanding of the creation’s distance from God in God’s transcendence above creation. Likewise, Bonaventure’s “Exemplar Christology” with Christ as the perfect Expression of the Father influences Balthasar’s interest in spatiality and depth as metaphoric keys to thinking the triune processions. But theological distance is merely implied in these Western-medieval images (even in spite of Aquinas’ categorical rejection of distance-language in trinitarian theology in ST I, q.32, a.2). The diastasis between the world and the transcendent God (D1 or Gregory’s Δ2) plays a more explicit role in the thought of some late-patristic and early-medieval Eastern theologians such as Dionysius and Maximus. But all of these early- to high-medieval theologians from both East and West I will lay aside for now due to concerns of length.

I have chosen to proceed to Balthasar’s reading of Karl Barth because it constitutes the next major point in Balthasar’s career after PT at which theological

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235 Cited by Johnson, *Christ and Analogy*, 96; see also *Glory of the Lord IV (GL4): The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 394-95; quoting Aquinas from *In Boethius de Trinitate* I, 2: “There is, of course, a certain proportion between the creature and God as between effect and cause, between knower and knowable, but then again, because of the infinite transcendence of the Creator over the creature there is no proportion between them.”

236 See Johnson, *Christ and Analogy*, 95 on the role of Bonaventure’s Exemplar Christology in Balthasar’s thought; see also *Glory of the Lord II* (GL2), 264-65 on the tension between depth and dynamism in trinitarian imagery: “But Bonaventure needs the image of the river only because of the liveliness of the image of flowing; otherwise, he replaces it with the image of the depths of the sea: ‘The depth of the eternal emanations (of the divine Persons) is the sublimity of the divine nature...’”; quoting *Sententiae Prooemium* I, 1-5.

237 Balthasar continues his patristic studies after PT in another stand-alone monograph, *Kosmische Liturgie* (1946), which we do not have time and space to investigate in this essay. Here he reflects on the distance between God as featured in Maximus the Confessor’s thought, especially regarding the created spirit’s growth in intimacy with and imitation of God that yields an ever-greater distance of reverence, service, and awe: “Distance grows with increasing nearness,” and, “Unity is not the abolition of God’s distance from us, and so of his incomprehensibility; it is its highest revelation”; *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Brian E. Daley (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003); 92, 96; passages cited in Johnson, *Christ and Analogy*, 145. Dionysius, or Denys, plays quite a large role in GL2. He is relevant to the consideration of the complementarity of apophatic and kataphatic theology, particularly with his Celestial Hierarchies. (This also makes him relevant to the consideration of hierarchy in Chapter 4 below.) But again, I must bracket these key parts of Balthasar’s work on early-medieval Eastern theology for concerns of length.
distance plays an explicit major role. The evolution of Barth’s *Theologie der Distanz* from a purely negative D2 as the fundamental structure of the human being vis-à-vis God to a distinction between D2 and D1 is traced in some of Balthasar’s articles and in the monograph, *The Theology of Karl Barth* (TKB). D1 increasingly functions in Barth’s later thought as the fundamental structure of the graced encounter of two freedoms and takes over from D2 the status of difference-marker between God and the world. Distance becomes holy by association, filled with possibilities, life-affirming, and not just alienating. But Barth’s insistence on the dialectical moment of “is not” in “the world is not God” maintains its crucial importance in the proper functioning of theological analogy. This positive emphasis on the negating moment in theological analogy must always be grounded on the concrete eventfulness of God’s sovereign acts of existence, creation, revelation, and redemption. It cannot be reduced to a methodical step in philosophical abstraction. Both thinkers insist on this. Barth’s grounding of distance in dialectical and biblical theology also enables Balthasar’s own Christology of obedience to function as an analogy of being (*analogia entis*) within an analogy of faith (*analogia fidei*) in much the same way it does for Barth.

The *analogia entis* was the center of much theological debate in early 20th-century Germany and Europe. As such, it formed the center of the dialogue between Balthasar and Karl Barth. The early Barth saw the difference between God and the world as entirely negative on the side of creation. There was to be no analogy between God’s being and depraved, corrupted, sinful human being. Balthasar understood Barth’s early rejection of *analogia entis*, promoted by Erich Przywara as “the fundamental structure of Catholic

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238 Balthasar uses the phrase, *Theologie der Distanz* to describe Barth’s work on the God-world difference in the article “Analogie und Dialektik. Zur Klärung der theologischen Prinzipienlehre Karl Barths,” *Divus Thomas* 22 (1944): 171-216; but he does not use the phrase in TKB.
theology,” as a denial that Christ could be “the fulfillment of an already existing knowledge and reality” of a relationship already “recognized in our foreunderstanding (of natural theology).” The *analogia entis* was therefore truly the “anti-Christ” as far as Barth was concerned. What Balthasar calls Barth’s *Theologie der Distanz* in the “Analogie und Dialektik” article was necessarily focused on D2, the alienation of sin as the fundamental condition for all human thought not immediately touched by the sovereign power of grace.

Balthasar gives an exegesis of Barth’s *Theologie der Distanz* as it grows and changes from *Romans* 1 to *Church Dogmatics*, but Balthasar himself leaves a tricky path to follow. This is true at least partly because Balthasar is such a constructive and insightful reader of Barth. D. Stephen Long suggests that Balthasar’s symphonic-aesthetic approach to tracking historical change in culture, thought, and literature—“making sense of the earlier ‘cacophonous’ notes by what he heard later”—might be particularly suited to tracking the confusing paths Barth’s thought takes with regard to being, revelation, and grace. Balthasar sees (or “hears”) a true deepening of the doctrine of election via Christology and not just a simple replacement of dialectics with analogy. Bruce McCormack, in contrast, sees an underlying consistency in Barth’s doctrine of election and believes Balthasar has misread Barth’s Christology. But Balthasar is in fact basing his own interpretation of these changes on Barth’s own words in “How My Mind Has Changed.” Moreover, Barth never challenged Balthasar’s reading

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240 TKB, 37.
of him on the deepening of his own Christology.\textsuperscript{243} Barth’s later emphasis on Christology affirms “God’s perfections (the \textit{de deo uno}) within the doctrine of the Trinity, and not as a metaphysical precondition for that doctrine grounded in the doctrine of pure nature”; but this affirmation does not minimize his status as a dialectical theologian.\textsuperscript{244} Balthasar thereby retrieves Barth’s \textit{Dialektik} as a valid “form of a ‘theology of sinners.’”\textsuperscript{245} \textit{Dialektik} is a “warning” to remind theology that it is always speaking of God from D1, but also always by virtue of Christ’s distance from the Father (D3).\textsuperscript{246} In terms of our numbering system in this essay, D3 supplants D2 as the fundamental human theological perspective because of the sinlessness of Christ but also because of the role of the Cross in the redemption of the sinner from D2. With theological distance’s new perspective from D3, which comes by the grace of the Spirit and in the place of Christ “who has come in the flesh” (1 John 4:2), theology can now be undertaken as reverent service to God. Balthasar uses the image of the angel with a flaming sword (Gen 3:24) to describe Barth’s warning that any valid and licit theology is always a theology of sinners.\textsuperscript{247} But if Balthasar is correct in his interpretation, the changes in Barth’s Christology greatly recontextualize the \textit{Dialektik} within Barth’s theology as a whole.

Balthasar believes that Barth does not think through this “theology of sinners” quite rigorously enough, because there is no connection between Christ’s action for us and the resulting possibility of a moral response. The problem that Barth struggles with may stem from the infinite expanse of D3, in light of which only a robust metaphysical analogy based on Christ’s economic “being for others” can show how human love can

\textsuperscript{243} Long, \textit{Saving KB}, 105.
\textsuperscript{244} Long, \textit{Saving KB}, 110-12.
\textsuperscript{245} “Analogie und Dialektik,” 186.
\textsuperscript{246} TKB, 76; see also “Analogie und Dialektik,” 179-82.
\textsuperscript{247} TKB, 77-78.
mirror God's love.\textsuperscript{248} If this difference between Christ’s being for others and our being with others is given its proper metaphysical grounding in analogy, then the divine Being-in-act, the God Who is Love (1 John 4:16), is mirrored in Christian existence and not just in attitude. Barth himself gestures in \textit{Church Dogmatics III.2: Doctrine of Creation} in the direction of what could be seen as D4 within the Trinity, the \textit{Urbild} against which the God-world difference (D1) is the mirror.\textsuperscript{249} This iconic transmission of the presence of God is concrete by virtue of its quality as an event: the divine prerogative meets the givenness of created being. God’s in-breaking presence in the world is what Balthasar and Barth claim as the utterly real, and it lends its own concreteness to created being by God’s Personal involvement with the creation that God loves. This is a movement in the opposite direction of Hegel’s thought, even if it uses some of the same categories: the abstract does not become concrete by means of the evolution of Spirit in human consciousness through history; rather, the concrete arrives completely and entirely according to God’s prerogative, and human thought and life are then invited to participate in this event of God’s grace in their own mode. This is the positive insight in Barth’s theological anthropology of a presupposed openness to grace that exists in spite of sin after the fall. There are two brief tasks to accomplish before beginning the analysis of key passages on distance in “Analogie und Dialektik” and TKB that constitutes the focus of the present chapter. The first task is a brief look at Balthasar’s general theological orientation at the time of writing TKB, after which we will provide some separate

\textsuperscript{248} TKB, 243: “Barth ends up talking about Christ so much as the true human that it makes it seem as if all other human beings are mere epiphenomena,” and this is because “we are incapable of determining the distance between Christ and all other human beings from within theology. We cannot measure the difference between Christ’s ‘being for others’ and our ‘being with others’”; emphasis given in text.

\textsuperscript{249} TKB, 157.
background material on Barth. This will enrich the analysis of how they meet in Balthasar’s reading of Barth.

I. The Historical and Methodological Background for Balthasar’s Reading of Barth

I.A. A Transition from PT to TKB: Wahrheit der Welt

TKB was first completed in 1941 but was not published until 1951. Balthasar showed the 1941 manuscript to Karl Barth, but his Jesuit censors were concerned both with its preoccupation with Protestant theology and its apparent eschewal of the standard Neo-Scholastic orientation required of Catholic theology at the time. His provincial superior encouraged him to excerpt material from it in the form of several journal articles on Barth, including two major articles for *Divus Thomas* on analogy. He later reintegrated these articles and the feedback they received into the first official edition of TKB in 1951. *Wahrheit der Welt* was published as a stand-alone volume in 1947 and later republished within Balthasar’s trilogy with a new introduction as *Theo-Logic I* (TL1). It is therefore one of the major scholarly volumes alongside TKB that Balthasar worked on in the 1940s. Balthasar provides in TL1 (understood here in its original context as *Wahrheit der Welt*) a rare systematic, philosophical overview of his own project and a groundwork toward a systematic theology structured by contacts with

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252 TKB, xviii, n.4.
253 *Theo-Logic I: The Truth of the World*, trans. Adrian J. Walker (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000). All of my citations are of an edition of TL1, so that is how I will refer to it.
patristic theology and German Idealism.\textsuperscript{254} It is also influenced by metaphysical insights from Bonaventure and Aquinas. TL1/\textit{Wahrheit} therefore forms a chronological and developmental bridge from the analogy between Nyssan \textit{epékta\v{s}is} and the “Super-becoming” of God in PT to the concern with self-consciousness, faith, and the analogy of being in TKB.

Balthasar’s project in TL1 is a response to the problem of how “today’s positivistic, atheistic man, who has become blind not only to theology but even to philosophy, needed to be confronted with the phenomenon of Christ and, therein, learn to ‘see’ again—which is to say, to experience the unclassifiable, total otherness of Christ as the outshining of God’s sublimity and glory.”\textsuperscript{255} Christ’s otherness is a source of truth because He is God’s earthly translation of divine truth; but as a translation he is also the truth of the world. Truth is conceived of here as in the Old Testament as an unveiledness of being that is “trustworthy” to human self-consciousness.\textsuperscript{256} This trustworthiness, however, is realized in being’s elusion of any static concepts as it continually makes itself available to human subjectivity. Truth relies on a certain depth perception that is first measured by the object as it impacts the human subject’s consciousness and establishes a difference. That human subjectivity must first (in the order of a non-temporal causality) allow itself to be measured by the thing that appears in its difference. But then (at the same time) the subjectivity must participate in the measuring process by observing how the ground of the thing’s being withdraws to create the very distance between it and its

\textsuperscript{255} TL1, 20.
\textsuperscript{256} TL1, 38-39.
appearance to the subject. The subject finally speaks an interior word and makes a judgment on the truth of the object’s being. The other transcendentals, goodness and beauty, follow the same path in the manifestation of the ground of being in human self-consciousness.

Human self-consciousness, and indeed human existence, therefore achieves its real freedom when it participates vitally in measuring the distance between the ground and appearance of other beings, whether it be created being or Divine Being. In either

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257 TL1, 217-18: “Yet we must not imagine that being begins with a self-contained, not-yet-disclosed depth, which then, as a kind of afterthought, opens itself to the outside and, if it is so minded, goes out of itself into an appearing surface. No: being does not get its depth until it becomes inwardly illumined, until it obtains an interior space, an intimate zone, until it passes over (or better: has always already passed over) from the superficiality of mere being-in-itself into the depth and interiority of being-for-itself. It is only when the ground goes out of itself and appears that it therein truly becomes the ground, truly becomes something that does not gain depth until it has first measured its own depth. In the movement of self-disclosure, then, the ground is always also the goal: it is only when it has gone out of itself that being has truly attained itself, knows its own depth, and can present itself to others.”


259 TL1, 220-24. At the end of GL1 (*Seeing the Form*, trans. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), Balthasar acknowledges a “complexity of form” in Christ that necessitates “a glance that traces a course back into the very mystery of God”; GL1, 488. Christ is more than a twodimensional figure, and the Holy Spirit gives to the believer an image of him whose “plasticity and vitality” will “form [and] transform, the lives of believers”; Nichols, *Word Has Been Abroad*, 45. This transformation of the believer takes place across the distance (D3) between the ground of Divine Being and its manifestation in Christ as the beautiful icon who, when He is lifted up from the earth, will draw all to Himself (John 12:32):

> The illuminated space ‘between’ the ground and its appearing is the measure, and when this light becomes reflected the measure becomes a word expressive of the being’s nature which gathers itself up and reads itself (*intelligentia*), making itself into a value and a communicable gift. Thus, the light of Being becomes the source of bliss and the measure of Being becomes the source of truth. Now it is of course true that this movement of Being between ground and manifestation is not rounded and complete in itself, but rather occurs only in the straining of beings beyond themselves: something becomes true in itself only in so far as it is true for others, and something becomes good and worthy in itself only in so far as it is worthy of being striven for by others. And yet each being becomes true and good for others only because, in this state of openness and interchange, it becomes a reality in itself and for itself. (GL1, 610)

The withdrawal of God that draws and induces the straining or *epéktasis* of created being beyond itself is the very gift of God that constitutes the creature as someone who can participate in God’s unlimited goodness. The self-gift of God’s Being in its manifestation must be trinitarian: “The Father is ground; the Son is manifestation. The Father is content, the Son form”; GL1, 611. The Spirit is the “movement” between them both, their “appearing” and their “truth.” The Johannine Jesus’ being lifted up in both Cross and Ascension creates the space that draws the believer towards the source of His very manifestation, Who is the Father. According to TD4, the Spirit appears “in the form of mere distance” between Father and Son when the humiliated Son is on the Cross; TD4, 320.
case, human self-consciousness must reflect on its own finitude over and against an infinite self-consciousness that transcends, surrounds, and measures it:

In this way, there opens up an analogy of self-consciousness, whose inmost, irrefragable certainty is the nonidentity of finite and infinite consciousness. At the very moment when finite consciousness touches on the sphere of the divine (and, because it is self-consciousness, it must touch on it), it is immediately thrown back into an ever-greater distance from it.260

The analogy of self-consciousness between human and divine is fundamentally marked by D1, which is itself doubled in the event of contact with the divine: the latter “recedes” into its own transcendence to emphasize the distance. That finite self-consciousness must touch upon the sphere of the divine is Balthasar’s commentary on its transcendent nature, its need to refer itself beyond its present limitations in the direction of a horizon. The space between the object and the subject within a created self-consciousness is analogous to the inner space of its object. When the object of contemplation happens to be God, between whom and the contemplating subject the distance (D1) is infinite, the “objective” distance within God in the inner-triune act of Being is itself also infinite (D4). But this infinitely transcendent, divine consciousness is what measures the finite self-consciousness. The “measurement” is the basis for the analogy. My application of the fourth trinitarian distance (D4) to Balthasar’s analogy of self-consciousness here in TL1 presumes the dynamics of the divine processions, which are not yet part of his argument. How this distance (D4) corresponds to and analogically grounds the distances we have been discussing thus far will be explored more fully in Chapters 3 and 4. For now, Balthasar’s two points are: 1) the very existence of the created, perceiving, contemplating human subject takes on the character of being freely allowed to exist by

260 TL1, 228.
God in relationship with God;\(^{261}\) and 2) God’s measurement of being external to God’s
Self is the event of its creation. There is therefore great intimacy with God built into the
anatomy of human self-consciousness.

But there are ways in which Balthasar presumes upon the intimacy of the depth of
being that cause him trouble in the eyes of some critics. Karen Kilby suspects that
Balthasar has fallen prey to “his own self-concocted judgments and norms” and presumed
a position (perhaps vicariously through Adrienne von Speyr) from which he “frequently
seems to presume, to put the point in its sharpest and most polemical form, a God’s eye
view.”\(^{262}\) Such a view would be at odds with his own claims about divine mystery and the
legitimate plurality of theologies in the New Testament and in the Church. But what
Balthasar seeks is not comprehensiveness, nor to be free from “fetters” (his impatience
with Neo-Scholasticism aside), but rather to let himself be bound to the objectivity of that
which reveals itself. He seeks above all to model in his own writing what he considers to
be the genuine structure of theological and philosophical thought: a response to the
emergence of truth as a radiation from within a being or a text, a truth that measures itself
and accordingly makes demands on the beholder/reader. Truth calls the beholder/reader
to engage in active participation in God’s measuring out of truth to the world.\(^{263}\) To reach
for a “comprehensive grasp of the whole” or to adopt a “bird’s-eye view” (in Balthasar’s
own words) of the lay of the “spacious, immense land” of truth would be to do away with
one’s personal standpoint among other standpoints. It would be “to do away with the
intimacy of truth,”\(^{264}\) which is for him the most valid of viewpoints.

\(^{261}\) TL1, 229.
\(^{263}\) TL1; 41, 59-60.
\(^{264}\) TL1, 186.
Truth has a much more open-ended quality for Balthasar than a reader might immediately get from his authorial tone. The distance between God and the world is permanent. Because God the Creator is the source of all transcendence, the transcendent dimension of created being can only be seen against the backdrop of that ontological divide between God and creation. The horizon is therefore permanent and infinite. Creaturely transcendence occurs in the reference to creation’s transcendent source in God: God withdraws to let the creature exist in freedom, and the creature stretches back toward God in *epéktasis*, to borrow language from Gregory of Nyssa. This distance (D1) is laid out by God in the event of creation and manifested to the believer in the event of revelation. But the analogy between divine withdrawal and creaturely stretching finds its structure in D1, just as it did in PT (in Δ2, the “Nyssan” equivalent). Creation is therefore the concrete, spiritual, and ontological reality that establishes what Balthasar calls in TL1 “the analogy of analogies:”

The analogy between God and creature established by creation is congruent with every other analogy only in an analogous way. Now, the fact that such an analogy of analogies nonetheless exists is a consequence of the analogy of God’s revelation at the level of creation, which is the ground of every inner-worldly analogy. For it is precisely in this revelation that the creature, by God’s liberality, acquires a share in God’s truth, and God reveals his truth precisely by granting participation in this way. Participation in God’s communication of truth is therefore also a creaturely participation in creation itself by virtue of the subject’s act as a “relative center of truth” in measuring being and calling it “good.” This participated act of the divine measurement of being is ultimately a spiritual pursuit in the desire for beauty as the ground of being withdraws deeper into itself. The theme of participation thus forms another key link between

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265 TL1, 232.
epēktasis in PT and the analogy of faith in TKB (the latter point will become clear later in the analysis of that text).

D1 does not destroy human knowledge or annihilate the created agent intellect by overwhelming it with the violent “otherness” of revelation: it is rather a distance that enables a relationship, guards the mystery of God, and draws the human mind towards transcendence. Human thought wants to jump over, collapse, or eliminate this distance because it is uncomfortable and impatient with the question, “How can divine, infinite truth be translated into creaturely, finite truth?” But without the “imperfect” element of creaturely dependence on God, it cannot be the truth of the world. And the truth of the world is Balthasar’s emphasis in response to Karl Barth.\textsuperscript{266}

God loves the world, which means that God’s truth only enters the world in terms of God’s fidelity both to Self and to God’s covenants with the world made in love.\textsuperscript{267} So the world must be there to be loved by God; it must exist in order for there to be truth! (This is different from saying it must be there in order for God to be God.) God’s truth comes out of God’s infinite love and into the world, across the infinite distance between God’s invisible trinitarian life and the humiliation of the Son on the Cross (D3). Balthasar does not explain it in these terms in TL1, but in the trilogy we see that this is the way that God keeps all beings and the transcendentals (beauty, goodness, truth) safe, but also the created knower. D1 is redeemed in Christ’s D3 and “kept safe” in the Trinity’s D4, giving it an eternal goodness.\textsuperscript{268} This, in brief, is how Balthasar bears witness to the

\textsuperscript{266} De Schrijver, “Analogia Entis,” 249.
\textsuperscript{267} TL1, 264: “An urge to know that inconsiderately tears aside every veil would very quickly kill love. It would seek the measure of knowing in itself outside love and thus impose on love an alien measure. But love tolerates no measure; it itself is the measure of all things. The truth is the measure of being, but love in the measure of truth. And sin consists in placing the measure of truth above the measure of love.”
\textsuperscript{268} TL1, 266-67: “Because the archetype in God, that is, the higher reality into which the creature is elevated and that counts as its definitive truth before God, is a progeny of love, the creature knows that it
intimacy of truth within a worldview that belongs primarily to God and into which the knower is welcomed in a covenanted faith.

All differences, all correspondences between things in the world, are analogous to each other in relevant ways governed by the way difference and unity exist between God and the world. But this truth of unity-in-difference occurs only because grace establishes a unity between God and creation that can provide such a measurement. Vatican I teaches “that God, the first principle and last end of all things, can be known with certainty from the created world by the natural light of human reason,”\textsuperscript{269} and Balthasar certainly wishes to adhere to this teaching. It is based on a capacity inherent in the human spirit, without which the human person “would not be able to welcome God’s revelation. Man has this capacity because he is created ‘in the image of God.’”\textsuperscript{270} But the fullness of the relationship between God and the human spirit as between Creator and creature can only be achieved via revelation and the Self-Gift of God to the created spirit.

The theological virtue of hope as grounded in the biblical and theological view of the world speaks to the true ideality of the world. The virtue of hope allows the human spirit a participation in God’s act of judgment on the truth. But this requires a certain ethical, and even ascetical, attitude on the part of the human person: “Only a man who has learned to renounce his own self-concocted judgments and norms and, in the most intimate association with God, to look at the world, as it were, through God’s eyes (assuming God commissions and empowers him for the task) grant objects their truth and

\textsuperscript{269} Vatican Council I, \textit{Dei Filius} 2: DS 3004; cf. 3026; Vatican Council II, \textit{Dei Verbum} 6; quoted in \textit{Catechism of the Catholic Church}, §36; http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/__PB.HTM.

\textsuperscript{270} CCC, §36; citing Gen 1:27.
tell them what they both are and should be in the sight of the Absolute.”

271 Here we return again to a look at the world in faith “as it were, through God’s eyes” in the intimacy of truth. Yet again, critical readers of Balthasar will raise their eyebrows and ask questions of Balthasar’s epic authorial tone and his success or failure in avoiding epic narratives. Kilby is not the only one who asks these questions.272

It is clear that Karl Barth himself is at least one inspiration for the use of language of the “God’s-eye view.” This fact may not assuage Balthasar’s critics in and of itself. Barth not only uses the term “God’s-eye view” but even claims it as a necessary standpoint from which to do authentic theology. Such a viewpoint, however, is not as presumptuous or even “liberated” position in Barth’s thought as one might think. McCormack observes that Barth was constantly working on a “programme for theology which flows naturally from this state of affairs ... in which the theologian is placed in a situation of complete dependency. Intelligere, the attempt to attain to theological knowledge, is a human activity which occurs on the basis of a prior act of God.”273 This theological task is shared by Balthasar.

I.B. An Overview of Karl Barth on Distance and Analogy

Karl Barth’s theologizing is a striving to honor God’s sovereignty and guard God’s mystery while searching for the unity between the Creator and the creation that comes about via grace. The question of the formal principle of theology must be involved in any dialogue between Barth and Catholicism. As Balthasar explains, Barth believes

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271 TL1, 61.
272 Cyril O’Regan also acknowledges the obviousness of these questions in Anatomy, 176-77.
Przywara’s *analogia entis* puts God on the same level of being as sinful creatures under an overarching philosophical concept. But Przywara believes that Barth’s early theology of *Dialektik*, emphasizing the contrast between the absolute positivity of God’s being and revelation to an absolutely negative and sinful creation, places the truth of being too exclusively on God’s side of the divide. The result is that thinking the goodness of being necessitates a jump over the *Distanz* between God and the world to arrive at God, another kind of illegitimate epistemological grasping.274 The paradoxical result of Barth’s *Dialektik*, according to Przywara, is a kind of pantheism or theopanism in which created being has no genuine existence of its own vis-à-vis God and God becomes everything.

Without an understanding of the analogical distinction between Creator and creation by which one can adequately appreciate the goodness of created being (D1) even in spite of sin (D2), one falls into the two traps of which Barth and Przywara are so wary. Balthasar sees the conflation of D1 with D2 in the early Barth as a mistake, but he also understands the need to maintain the theological and moral insights contained within it. Balthasar wishes to remain constantly alert to how sin infects humanity’s innate “God-drive,” tempting humanity to “leap over” D1 and realize “the Creator’s way of being” on its own terms without accepting it as grace.275 For Barth as well as Balthasar, it is this kind of epistemic presumption that results in a paradoxical and tragic alienation from God in D2. “This is why,” Edward Oakes notes, “the concept of analogy plays so crucial a role for Balthasar: because it stresses the ever-greater dis-similarity with God even as

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274 “Analogie und Dialektik,” 171.
we come to recognize our derivation from him and thus the truth that we are made in the image and likeness of God.”

Balthasar maintains that Barth’s early rejection of the *analogia entis* as Przywara presented it was more appropriately a rejection of the concept of “pure nature” without grace. Such a rejection would be needless from Balthasar’s and Przywara’s standpoints, but Keith Johnson does not agree that Barth’s rejection of *analogia entis* is based on a misunderstanding. Rather, it is based on Barth’s own Protestant principle that there cannot be continuity “between God’s justifying act and human moral acts.”

For Barth, human moral acts are heavily conditioned by the state of being in sin, or by what we are calling D2. What is of the essence for Barth and his students in their reading of Przywara’s *Religionsphilosophie* is that the God-world relationship be thought through in all its concreteness, including the concreteness of the damage that comes from sin.

Barth rejects Przywara’s *analogia entis* “because he understands that it is built upon ... the notion that there is something ‘given’ in God’s act in creation – namely, the shape and structure of human existence itself – and that human reflection upon this ‘given’ can lead to knowledge of God.” This “given” in creation is in continuity with the Incarnation, which implies a continuity in human nature before and after the Fall. Such a continuity in human nature before and after the Fall is too much for Barth. Przywara’s version of the *analogia entis*, which seems not to account at all for the need for

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276 Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption*, 113. This stress is reinforced positively by his reading of Barth on the role of dialectic in “the fundamental biblical insight that we are not God and that even in the gift of divine life in grace, indeed especially there, we become even more aware of that awesome fact”; 114. This fact occurs to us in any “true approach to God... constructed only on the foundation of an ever more towering distance”; 115; quoting the German of “Patristik.” 71.


280 Johnson, *KB and the Analogia Entis*, 119.
justification by a *second* act of God after creation, must be rejected as false. There is no continuity between what one can know according to nature and what one knows by grace.

Przywara in contrast goes so far as to maintain that existence in the Church is the visible, historical participation of created being in the event of communion that is Christ’s Body. What the Christian thus experiences in *ecclesial* consciousness is analogous to God’s revelation to the world in Jesus Christ by virtue of analogy.²⁸¹ It is not an abstraction of a human ideal, but a concrete reality experienced in history. But against the Protestant concern over any perceived presumption in this “ecclesial” anthropology, both Balthasar and Przywara insist that “the stress of the theological analogy falls not on the side of proximity, similarity, and immanence but rather on the side of distance, dissimilarity, and transcendence.”²⁸²

Nonetheless, Barth agrees that theology as a human science must be a response to God in a kind of thinking “from God to us” or a “viewing things from God’s standpoint.”²⁸³ This is a key meeting point between Barth and Balthasar. Barth does not want such an epistemological attitude to slip into a neo-Protestant absolute certainty, as if a divine word had been comprehensively imparted to the believer in faith once and for all. Rather, the Word must impart itself ever anew to the believer.²⁸⁴ As in TL1 for Balthasar, so now for Barth: the ontic ratio of God’s Word, coeternal with the Father, must always precede and measure the noetic ratio of the believer’s thought.²⁸⁵ Barth qualifies the “God’s-eye view” thus:

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²⁸¹ Johnson, *KB and the Analogia Entis*, 90.
²⁸² Betz, “After Barth,” 68.
²⁸⁵ McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 430; citations of Barth’s *Anselm: Fides Quaerens Intellectum*; 41, 42, 47, 53, 55.
All theological statements are inadequate for their object. ... In the strictest sense, only God has a concept of God. All we have are concepts of objects which are not identical with God.

Just as everything which is not God would be nothing without God, but through God is something ... so also, statements which really are only appropriate to objects which are not identical with God, are able to be true statements when applied to the inexpressible God, per aliquam similitudinem aut imaginem [through a likeness or image].

These texts from Barth’s *Anselm* volume represent a high point in his analogical thought. Being something and not nothing “through God” is to be related to God as the Creator through the Word (John 1:3) Who has taken on flesh to dwell in creation (John 1:14). Balthasar, along with Barth, is constantly thinking through the problem of restoring theology to this “place,” not from within God but vis-à-vis God within a theological ontology of creation and its corresponding trinitarian epistemology. But this experience of theological thought can only be had in an intimacy of God, according to which the thinker’s intimacy with the truth takes its form.

What follows is the main section of this chapter, consisting of a close reading of passages in an important 1944 article on Karl Barth called “Analogie und Dialektik” and in 1951’s TKB. I will intersperse my own commentary on these texts with responses to criticisms of Balthasar by McCormack and other Barth scholars. The reader should be advised that Balthasar’s system of citing the volumes of *Church Dogmatics* in TKB is idiosyncratic and a bit confusing. I have chosen to maintain Barth’s own numbering of the volumes in my citations. “CD” is an abbreviation for Bromiley’s English translation, which is frequently cited in the secondary literature. Balthasar himself cites the German original of *Kirchliche Dogmatik*, and so I will use “KD” for those embedded citations.

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citations. My hope in this method is to answer potential questions about the legitimacy of Balthasar’s reading of Barth. More importantly, I hope to show more clearly what the historical, theological, and philosophical issues are in Barth’s thinking of theological distance and in Balthasar’s appreciation of it.

II. Balthasar’s Reading of Barth’s *Theologie der Distanz* in “Analogie und Dialektik” and TKB

II.A. A Summary of Balthasar’s Charting of Changes in Barth

A brief overview of Balthasar’s account of Barth’s evolution with respect to theological distance will help set the context for the main points in Balthasar’s texts. He first notes that the early Barth has confused the questions of “the relation of the sinful world to the gracious God” and the “relations of the natural world to the God of revelation.” This confusion results in Barth’s conflation of what we are calling D1 and D2. But Balthasar charts how Barth gradually corrected this error in his own thought. He reads an organic development of Barth’s thought in accordance with “the law (Gesetz) of progressive self-discovery of theology” in “Analogie und Dialektik,” one of the mid-40s articles excerpted from the censored first draft of TKB. He finds a rough correspondence in Barth’s thought to the three eras of theological development noted elsewhere in his “Patristik” essay: a Platonizing phase of Identitätsphilosophie and Identitätstheologie that collapses the ontological and cognitive distance between God and the world (D1), as in Romans 1; then, an “Augustinian correction” by means of a

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289 “Analogie und Dialektik,” 173.
dialectical *Widerspruchstheologie* ("theology of contradiction") in *Romans* 2; and finally, a "radicalization of Thomas" in an attempt to protect against identity while properly contextualizing the role of dialectics in theology, as seen in *Church Dogmatics*.\(^{290}\) This final phase results in a turn to analogy. The stages do not succeed each other with any hard breaks; dialectic and analogy are active in each stage and clearly belong together as moments in thought on its way to the truth of being, both created and divine.\(^{291}\) Barth’s focus on the need for redemption through Christ’s Cross is represented in the dialectical moment of thought. The dialectical moment of rupture and absolute difference between God and the world takes account of the concrete reality of sin and its mark on existence; but it also conditions the understanding of a true analogy brought about by grace. Created human spirit now has the gift of a new freedom in distinction from God as God’s beloved creation renewed in Christ. Barth’s approach to the analogy of being is therefore contained within an “analogy of faith.”\(^{292}\) “Distance” from God is no longer alienating, but now holy and filled with the potential of relationship in grace. This new distance, which we might call D1 as renewed by Christ’s D3, is a permanent distance that always protects God’s absolute mystery and sovereignty. But Barth’s theological thought has now finally settled in a new *Theologie der Distanz* that allows for a sense of analogy not so far as before from how Thomas Aquinas understood it.\(^{293}\)

\(^{290}\) Long, Saving KB, 44-45, 53.

\(^{291}\) TKB, 63.

\(^{292}\) This concept differs from the original Pauline/traditional sense of the “analogy of faith” in Romans 12:6, which indicates an interpretation of a Scripture passage or any other Church teaching must always be carried out in light of other passages. Przywara is highly critical of Barth’s and Söhngen’s application of the term *analogia fidei* to an “analogical knowing in faith”; see Kenneth Oakes, “The Cross and the *Analogia Entis* in Erich Przywara,” in *Analogy of Being*, 160-61.

\(^{293}\) “Analogie und Dialektik,” 173. The term *analogia entis* of course did not originate with Aquinas, but probably much later with Cajetan; Betz, “After Barth,” 38.
But Balthasar must remind his Catholic readers that sin is always something ontological and not merely epistemological for Barth. Creation is not totally corrupted by sin, but human thought must always be carried out in the awareness of having been redeemed and enlightened by grace. Without the dialectical warning, which is the “is not” between God and the world, there truly is no relationship and thus no grounds for any kind of analogy. Christ is always the concrete location of the analogy between divine being and created being in Balthasar’s thought. This is in accordance with the two-natures doctrine of Chalcedon, as the “distance” between divine and created is spanned by his very person. However, a properly theological distinction between the divine and human natures in Christ must be governed by “a certain kind of analogy between the two uses of the concept of nature,” lest the theologian measure the divine nature by an intellectual abstraction rather than the concrete event of God’s revelation. Similarly, there cannot be an abstract concept of “distance” that governs any kind of “attribution” of terms like Distanz to both God and the world. Balthasar himself “lays down the law” in Theo-Drama Volume III (TD3): “However analogia entis may be defined in

294 “Analogie und Dialektik,” 186.
296 TKB, 273.
297 Some good examples of Barth’s use of the word Distanz and related terms like Entfernung (distance, separation) can be found in Balthasar’s citations of Römerbrief II in the German original of TKB: “Denn Er soll, als der absolut Unanschaubliche, in diesem »Auf-Händen-Gehen« anschaulich werden. Der »unendliche qualitative Unterschied« [XIV] werden. »Distanz« [482] soll geschaffen werden, Platz für die Tranzendenz”; and “Das ist der »diakritische« Punkt, wo der Mensch am Ende ist, nur noch »Hohlraum« [5, 9 usw.], nur noch »Negativum«, »Einschlagstrichter«, und so am nächsten der Anerkennung Gottes als Gott: »Es zeigt sich in der Erkenntnis der grundsätzlichen Entfernung zwischen Gott und Welt die eine einzige möglichen Gegenwart Gottes in der Welt« [65]”; Karl Barth, 76; TKB, 69. Some of these terms, such as Hohlraum and Negativum reflect Barth’s early and overly-negative outlook on the God-world difference, an outlook he later rejects.
philosophical detail, it means that the terms employed cannot be traced back to a generic concept."\textsuperscript{298} The distance between God and creation is the concrete standpoint from which the theologian must make use of an abstract concept of nature in order to understand how God’s grace truly affects the creation, because the distance between Father and Incarnate Son in the divine economy must have an underlying unity in order to be intelligible as revelation.\textsuperscript{299} Theological analogy is always based on a participation in a proportion that has been established by God. God cannot remain God if the divine is submitted to an external proportion determined by the structure of human thought or by abstract concepts of “nature” or “being.” Therefore, “the final word of the analogy ...is God’s incomprehensible \textit{transcendence}.\textsuperscript{300} Guarding this transcendence is one of the chief purposes of distance in both Barth’s and Balthasar’s theologies.

Balthasar certainly agrees that the analogy of being does not measure Christ. If anything, it is the other way around: Christ’s own person determines the form and dimensions of the analogy of being.\textsuperscript{301} Balthasar sets the parameters of a proper discussion of this distance marking such a distinction in his response to Barth:

\begin{quote}
It is quite right to say, as Barth does, that being \textit{God} and being \textit{creature} \cite{td3} are utterly dissimilar, contrasting with each other in every way. And inasmuch as we focus on this relationship in our formal concept of nature, our stress will be quite properly on the dissimilarity. But even here we are already talking about the contrast between \textit{being} God and \textit{being} creature.
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[298] TD3, 221; quoted by Franks, “Trinitarian \textit{Analogia Entis},” 535-36.
\item[299] Edward Oakes makes clear the foundational role of distance in Balthasar’s understanding of the doctrine of analogy: “According to Balthasar, this is what the doctrine of analogy is meant to say; far from collapsing God and creation into a wider and more controlling schema, analogy of being is meant to put into a conceptual terms the distance that inheres in the relationship between God and creatures—a distance which, in Barthian terms, is the presupposition for the transformation that gives us a share in the divine life”; \textit{Pattern of Redemption}, 68.
\item[300] Betz, “After Barth,” 53.
\item[301] See Betz, “After Barth,” 82-85: “Thus, the \textit{analogia entis}, far from being unrelated to Christ [as Barth worried], turns out to be all about him” (p.85). See also Edward Oakes on the structure of Balthasar’s thought in response to the revelation of Christ: “I do not wish to maintain that [the analogy of being] controls his thought (in fact, just the opposite is the case)”; Oakes, \textit{Pattern of Redemption}, 10.
\end{footnotes}
[Gottsein und Geschöpfsein]. So we have already introduced some kind of similarity of the creature with the ever dissimilar God. This becomes clearer when we establish the possibility of distance between creature and God [D1] in the intratrinitarian distance between Father and Son (in the unity of the Spirit!) [D4].

Thus Balthasar finds in Karl Barth a real analogy of being, of Sein. We see here an early explicit reference in TKB to distance within the immanent Trinity as the ground of all other distances (D4), which I have indicated in brackets within the quotation. But even earlier in the text of TKB Balthasar has already postponed a fuller discussion of it: “We shall not investigate here the ultimate implications of the all-encompassing bracket” of God’s triune being (D4). Nevertheless, we have seen even in this brief survey of Balthasar’s tracking of Barth’s Theologie der Distanz that it provides glimpses of key moments in the development of Balthasar’s own theology of distance.

II.B. Identity, Alienation, and Positive Distanz

The theology of distance guarantees that the analogy of being will bear witness to the concrete event of God’s eternal triune life without governing it. God is always sovereign of God’s own acts, most especially of God’s act of being. This is something Przywara also continually stressed in order to lay to rest any fears that the analogia entis could be used as “an a priori principle from which anything could be derived.” On the contrary, for Przywara the analogia entis is “the measure of authentic religious experience” that expresses “a posteriori the fundamental structure of something factual, something expressed in Scripture and confirmed by religious experience: that God is

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302 TKB, 286.
303 TKB, 165.
304 Betz, “After Barth,” 55.
encountered ‘in’ the world (in the soul) as ‘transcending’ the world (the soul).”

Balthasar of course finds this to be consistent with the main thrust of Karl Barth’s theology: the absolute freedom and Lordship of God.

Barth first construes this absolute freedom and Lordship in an “insufficiently dialectical” phase, a “theology of identity” characterized by a latent pantheism: God’s sovereignty over the world is guarded to the extent that the world’s reality is collapsed absolutely into God’s monologue with God’s Self. The “identity” in this Identitätstheologie is between God and real being, which makes any kind of dialectical statements about God and the world virtually impossible. In such an identification the world has no real being. There is no meaningful “is not” between God and the world, unless in reference to the world’s complete lack of value due to sin and the Fall. Here Barth identifies human consciousness with the very event of alienation from God by placing oneself over and against God: “Sin is reflection, and reflection is sin. ...To be a self and to recognize oneself as such means distancing oneself from God, and this distancing is sin [D2]. The distance between God and creature is the fall of the creature from God [D2]. And now we see why analogy—which is the very expression and acknowledgment of this distance—is equated with the Fall.” It is not possible to form any meaningful analogy between two things founded entirely on alienation. The early Barth “is much more concerned with the miracle of the change” that takes place in the justification of the sinner, but the theological risk in his position is an annihilation of the


306 Long, Saving KB, 39.

307 TKB, 65-66; the word is Distanz in the 2nd German edition, Karl Barth, 73. This passage is virtually identical to a same text in “Analogie und Dialektik,” 188.
truth of created being vis-à-vis the “real” being of God. Barth becomes increasingly sensitive to the nature of this problem over the course of his career.\(^{308}\)

McCormack notes that Barth does posit a “fundamental diastasis” (D1) between God and the world that is prior to sin.\(^{309}\) The obvious implication of the very idea of a “Fall” is that there is no alienation without a prior communion, no D2 without a prior D1. Early on in Romans 1 the diastasis between the world and God gets cast in a negative light by being collapsed into D2. McCormack also notes how the later Barth laments his early “almost catastrophic” focus on the negativity of the God-world diastasis and how it desperately needed to be reformulated,\(^{310}\) but he is also right to point out that the negativity of diastasis has a positive, “critically objective” theological purpose throughout Barth’s project. The phrase “World remains world, but God is God” remains a constant axiom throughout the rest of Barth’s work, and the diastasis is in the “but.”\(^{311}\)

Even in Romans 1, where the connection (Beziehung) between God and the world in creation gets lost in a distance of negation, there is a sense that this distance still beckons and calls forth something positive within the human soul that seeks something positive in God. Barth claims in a lecture contemporary with Romans 1 that ‘It is precisely the wholly otherness of God . . . which drives us with compelling power to be on the look-out

\(^{308}\) TKB, 155-56.

\(^{309}\) McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 129.

\(^{310}\) McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 244-45.

\(^{311}\) McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 134. See also 129-30: “This critical distinction between God and the world found expression in a well-known formula as early as November 1915: ‘World remains world. But God is God.’ The practical consequence of his realistic starting-point was that he was now engaged in the (seemingly impossible) attempt to think from a standpoint lying in God Himself (‘ein Denken von Gott aus’) and therefore, from a standpoint lying beyond this world, history, and human possibilities. The net effect was a significant reorientation of theology. Where nineteenth-century theology originated in a ‘turn to the subject’, Barth’s course now clearly gave evidence of a ‘turn to theological objectivism’”\(^{3};\) citing Barth from the lecture “Kriegszeit und Gottesreich” given in Basel, Switzerland, Nov. 15, 1915, cited by Anzinger, *Glaube und kommunikative Praxis*, 120-22; Barth, *Der Römerbrief (Erste Fassung) 1919*, ed. Hermann Schmidt (Zurich: TVZ, 1985), 71; and Spieckermann, *Gotteserkennnis*, 73.
on our side for a root-like, principled, original connection of our life with that wholly other Life.”

But Balthasar is not satisfied, and nor is Barth, with the still overly negative evaluation of this diastasis. On what basis can the “root-like, principled, original connection of our life with that wholly other Life” if the essential nature of the God-world difference is a yawning abyss of alienation? In spite of this dissatisfaction, God is the truly real and God’s sovereign grace is all-powerful. McCormack also notes: “In spite of the pronounced emphasis on the diastic relation of God and the world, knowledge of God had yet to become problematic in the way it would in the phase of Romans 2. And so [Barth] could assert with an almost undialectical sense of assurance: ‘We do know God’.”

The diastic relation between God and the world is still primarily negative in the Widerspruch theology of Romans 2. But Barth is coming closer to an acknowledgment of the intrinsic goodness of D1 “as a place for transcendence” and increasingly seeking to emphasize the “formal structure of distance” between God and creation. The Christian instinct is to preserve and mediate God’s transcendence, majesty, and sovereignty in such ecclesial institutions as Scripture, sacraments, thus “bringing new awareness and honor to analogy.” Barth calls this formal structure of Distanz the analogia fidei: our knowledge of God is based on the fact that we are first known by God, and that God reveals God’s Self as the one who knows us. This is the only way, for both Barth and Balthasar, that any Denken von Gott aus could be possible. Any thought of God with the characteristic

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313 “Der Christ in der Gesellschaft,” 49; cited in Critically Realistic, 201.
314 TKB, 69; see also “Analogie und Dialektik,” 192. The term in the German edition of TKB is Distanz; Karl Barth, 76-77. See also “Analogie und Dialektik,” 214: “Er hat aber nicht nur diese einzelnen inhaltlichen Formen der Distanz wieder betont, er hat auch, was viel wichtiger ist, dies alles tragende formale Struktur der Distanz, die Analogie neu zu Bewußtsein und zu Ehren gebracht.”
of an ascent (*Aufstieg*) is only made possible by God’s descent (*Abstieg*) towards creation, thus expressing the unidirectionality of the form of analogical thought.\(^\text{315}\)

Balthasar’s reading of Barth on the unidirectionality of analogical thought from God to the world presumes his thinking in TL1 of the relationship between the “absolute unity of the divine Creator” and the “entire multiplicity of the created world.” But TL1 also clearly presumes Balthasar’s prior reading of Gregory of Nyssa on Δ1 as the “tensions [that] are constitutive modes and tokens of the nondivinity of worldly truth.”\(^\text{316}\)

Theological analogy can never start with tension and division to arrive at unity, and so the first movement must be to say (along with Gregory of Nyssa) “that the world [of tension and division] is not God.”\(^\text{317}\) The negative moment of denial or “contradiction” in Barth’s *Widerspruch* theology therefore forms the primary necessary condition for the working of analogy itself, and thus for the positive connection between God and the creation that is not-God.\(^\text{318}\)

But Balthasar notices that Barth is still struggling with creaturely being in *Romans* 2 because he had not yet disentangled it from sinful alienated being.\(^\text{319}\) Knowledge of God is conditioned by God’s prior descent to the human spirit in Incarnation and grace,

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\(^{315}\) “Analogie und Dialektik,” 212-13. See Gardner and Moss, “Something like Time,” 117: “For, properly speaking, the world does not bear an analogy to God such that God is analogous to the world. Analogy has ultimately only one proper direction, which means that we can never deduce or induce what God must be like from an observation of the world (from phenomenology, for example). In such a case one would argue that since ‘becoming’ in the world implies a change in being, requires a not-being and then a coming-to-be, or a being and then a ceasing-to-be (requires, that is, finitude – beginnings and ends to being), then, if God ‘becomes’ anything in any sense (even ‘God’), God either was not God, or God must cease to be God. Rather, the world bears an analogy to God such that its reflection upon its possession of a reflection of God can allow it to *conjecture* God, and so allow it to understand itself as like God, but always more like God than God is like it.”

\(^{316}\) TL1, 240: “The identity of divine truth is revealed in the nonidentity of its [worldly truth’s] creaturehood. This identity [of divine truth], which cannot be broken down into anything other than itself, is the measure both of itself and of all its communications *ad extra.*”

\(^{317}\) PT, 27.


\(^{319}\) Long, *Saving KB*, 54.
but the struggle with creaturely being is essential to the new problematic status that knowledge of God acquires for Barth in *Romans* 2. Christ takes the place of Adam in redemption almost too completely because Adam is entirely corrupted by guilt:

> Once more we read that the law of distance, the law of analogy, is sin [D2] (233-34). To be a creature is coterminous with being guilty .... And once more redemption in Christ coincides with the return to unity. In Christ, it finally becomes clear what being human means before God: death, hell, abandonment by God .... So Christ takes the place of Adam—and Adam is each one of us (148f.)

There can be no real analogy because Christ and Adam are still too different, with Adam having no positive truth vis-à-vis Christ’s truth. But Barth seems to be open to what we are calling D3, the expanse of Christ’s mission from the Father to redeem sinful creation from D2. Eventually Barth will even anticipate D4, as Balthasar notes in a passage from KD IV.1:

> Salvation, fulfillment, perfected being, does not refer to what created being possesses in itself. Salvation is a way to being that participates in God’s being, from which it comes and to which it is destined. It does not refer to a deification of being. Nonetheless, in a secondary sense (in its distance from God), fulfilled being is an eternal being hidden in God. Since salvation is not proper created being as such, it can only come to it; and indeed because it is a sharing in God’s own being, it can only come from God.

Here we see in the mature Barth (as far as Balthasar read in the KD volumes for TKB) a doctrine of participation in divine Being that is still fundamentally structured by distance from God (D1): grace must come from God to the creature across this distance. But like Gregory’s Moses on the Rock, D1 is now contained within a “mansion” in God (John 14:2).

Barth concludes that this is being, even as it is a participation in God’s being.

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320 TKB, 70; Balthasar’s parenthetical page number references are to *Romans* 2.
321 TKB, 377.
322 Barth, KD IV.1, 7; quoted in TKB, 394; Barth’s emphasis.
323 Gregory, *Vita Moysis* 1, PG44, 405BCD; Balthasar, PT, 157.
The Barth passage above also echoes Balthasar in TL1: created being is elevated by grace into its own “archetype in God,” where it is kept safe within God’s infinite love without collapsing its own distance from God.\textsuperscript{324} But the giving and the receiving of grace also happen in the context of grace, and therefore \textit{faith} is a fundamental condition of this mode of being. If the believer is included in Christ, Christ is also now in the believer. Balthasar can quote Ephesians 3:14-19 in this Barthian context to further illustrate the dimensions of the fullness of God that fills the believer: “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have the power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses all knowledge” (Eph 3:17b-19a).\textsuperscript{325}

\textit{II.C. The Analogy of Faith and the Redemption of Diastasis}

Barth’s senses of participation, distance (D1 within D4) and the soteriological-epistemological Christology of Ephesians all concern the location of an analogy of being within an analogy of faith. The act of faith itself can be considered an act of being, especially considering \textit{epéktasis} in Gregory of Nyssa. The concrete effects of sin still mark the creation, but now the sinner is a being-in-act: “But real sanctification never occurs without our awareness that it is lacking: we must thirst for it and run to meet it at the first opportunity.”\textsuperscript{326} We can only experience sanctification in terms of our distance from God, which becomes the arena of thirsting and running in \textit{epéktasis} towards and participation in God when D2 is redeemed by Christ’s D3 and returns to a state of D1.

\textsuperscript{324} TL1, 266-67.
\textsuperscript{325} TKB, 395.
\textsuperscript{326} TKB, 102; citing Barth, “Das erste Gebot als theologisches Axiom,” \textit{Zwischen den Zeiten} II (1933): 305.
The analogy of faith according to Barth therefore concerns a decision of the human person in faith that both responds to the action of God and corresponds with it. This is a change from his earlier assessment from reading Przywara with his students in seminar. The analogy of faith is at first an analogy of act, not of being or nature. McCormack maintains that, because Balthasar’s account is temporally limited to the two editions of the Römerbrief and the early volumes of CD, he is missing Barth’s more complete Christology in the later volumes. The following errors of interpretation result, according to McCormack: 1) Balthasar reads into Barth a concept of nature that is more directly dependent on a fuller Christology and on Chalcedonian dogma than Barth had genuinely intended in these early volumes; 2) Barth prioritizes the divine act of election over Being in his trinitarian analogy much more than Balthasar allows; and thus, 3) Balthasar ends up over-conditioning Barth’s theology of election with a Christology that he did not actually hold in the earlier works that Balthasar actually read. McCormack allows that Barth does develop an analogy of being in CD II.2 that “takes the form of an analogy between a divine act [of free election] in which God gives himself his true being, and a human act in which the human receives his or her true being” as an act of faith and obedience in “freedom for self-sacrificial service to others.” The human act of being corresponds to God’s eternal being by virtue of a correspondence of the act of obedience to the Incarnate Christ’s being. The latter is the

327 TKB, 108.  
328 See Kevin Johnson, KB and the Analogia Entis, 82.  
331 McCormack, “Karl Barth’s Version,” 117; 121-23  
332 McCormack, “Karl Barth’s Version,” 139.  
333 McCormack, “Karl Barth’s Version,” 121; citing Barth, CD II.2; 9, 50, 51, 72, 91, 92, 103, 167, 168.
measurement of the analogy between these two acts of being, but McCormack does not believe this constitutes an *analogia entis* in the way Balthasar does.

I will rely rather heavily on an article by George Hunsinger in what follows in order to defend Balthasar’s reading of Barth. What is most important at this point in the genealogy of distance is that Balthasar has found in Karl Barth a way to root human subjectivity in the concrete reality of grace. Faith is more than just a cognitive disposition, but is also a characteristic of human being-as-act towards God. And, God is not merely an Ideal towards which one reaches dialectically through history, or Who in a Hegelian fashion comes into concrete being through the dialectics of history. God is the One in Whose Being we are granted to participate by means of constant renewal in faith. This is what Balthasar reads in Barth.

Hunsinger problematizes McCormack’s first and third points about Balthasar’s eisegesis of Chalcedonianism in Barth when he points out that Barth has a strong sense of the “two modes” of Christ’s trinitarian existence: the eternal *logos asarkos* with the Father and the Spirit and the earth-bound *logos ensarkos* according to which he relates to Father and Spirit as a man. Hunsinger further notes, *contra* McCormack’s second claim that Barth prioritizes the divine act of election over Being in God, that Barth nowhere does this. Even in Barth’s own logic, “act” and “being” are inextricably bound to each other. Hunsinger quotes Barth from CD II.1: “To its very depths God’s Godhead consists in the fact that it is an event—not any event, not events in general, but the event of his action, in which we have a share in God’s revelation”; and, “The fact that God’s being is event, the event of God’s act, necessarily ... means that it is his own conscious,

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willed and executed decision. ... No other being exists absolutely in its act. No other being is absolutely its own, conscious, willed and executed decision.”

What this means for Barth is that “God’s being is absolutely in act. God’s being is therefore really his own, fully conscious, absolutely free, truly alive, unconditionally self-moving.” Being and act are mutually constitutive in the Godhead and are “equally and primordially basic” to it. God certainly determines God’s Self in the divine act of election to love and save the world in covenant with it, but this act of election does not constitute the Godhead.

Rather, the Godhead is eternally constituted by the processions of the Son and Spirit from the Father, in complete freedom from any reference to the created world. The Being-in-act of the Trinity is the basis and constitution for all external acts, including election:

> God as God is in himself the living God.... His eternal being of and by himself has not to be understood as a being which is inactive because of its pure deity, but as a being which is supremely active in a positing of itself which is eternally new [in ewig neuer Setzung]... (KD IV/1, 561)

> The triune life of God... is the basis of his whole will and action also [auch] ad extra.... It is the basis [ist begründet] of his decretum opus ad extra... of the election of the human being to covenant with himself; of the determination [Bestimmung] of the Son to become human, and therefore to fulfill the covenant. (KD, IV/2, p. 386; ET: p. 345 rev., italics added)

We can conclude from all this that Balthasar’s reading of Barth in KD on the simultaneity of being and act in God is at least a reasonable one. And if Balthasar is correct in this reading, then it really is possible to locate an analogy of being within an act of faith.

When seen in light of Barth’s definition of the analogia fidei in KD I.1 as quoted by Balthasar, Christ becomes the earthly measurement not only of God’s act but also (in

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336 Cit. Bromiley’s translation of CD II.1; 263, 271.
340 Hunsinger, “Election and the Trinity,” 180-81; “ET” refers to Bromiley’s translation of CD.
an extremely limited way) of God’s Being as perceived by the mind of faith: “By the power of faith and its profession, the Word of God becomes a human thought and a human word, certainly in infinite dissimilarity and inadequacy, but not in a total human strangeness with its model. The human copy [Abbild] is a real copy of its divine counterpart [Vorbild].”341 This similarity or “lack of total strangeness” between God and creature is one-directional, “fashioned from above, by the Word, which takes hold of the creature.” The creature has no natural predisposition attaining this similarity, but the concept of analogy is now unavoidable for Barth. This is inevitably heightened when “he finally admits [in KD II.1] that creation vis-à-vis God is thoroughly good and positive in itself; that is, in its very being as not-God.”342 Sin is therefore a ruination, a spoiling of the primordially good distance from God (D1) resulting in alienation from God (D2). As Balthasar explains by way of paraphrasing the gist of Barth on D2:

Sin may indeed enter the picture; but it does do by setting up its workshop in this relation, in this freedom and selfhood, warping them into demonic rebellion. How could it be otherwise since freedom means the potential for trying “to be like God”? Sin presupposes freedom and selfhood, but it is not to be equated with them. This clearly implies that the sinful creature does not plunge into nothingness or chaos, becoming a mere shadow of a shadow, as would be the case if creatureliness coincided with sin.343

There is an unavoidable question here as to whether D1 and D2 exist in the justified sinner simultaneously in any way. The doctrine of justification is certainly relevant to the discussion, but a proper discussion of it with regard to Balthasar’s dialogue with Barth must be bracketed for now out of concerns of space. In any case the goodness of D1 must be fully restored by God’s sanctifying grace.

341 TKB, 108; the German original of KD, Kirchliche Dogmatik, 4 vols. (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1932–67), is cited; i.e. KD I.1, 254. Balthasar had his own rather confusing way of citing the volumes in TKB. I have attempted to remain consistent with Karl Barth’s own numbering of the volumes.
342 TKB, 110.
343 TKB, 111.
The theme of this chapter within our “symphony” of Balthasarian distance now comes to a kind of climax: Balthasar’s reflection on Barth’s distinction between D1 and D2 has come to demonstrate how the two distances bear a certain analogy by virtue of the act of freedom in a created spirit. There has even been an anticipation of D3 in Barth’s thought, in that it must eventually come to bear an analogy to D2 by virtue of Christ’s “becoming sin for us” and suffering “outside the gate” of the Holy City. And because created being is good in the holy distance from God in D1, it bears an analogy to God’s own being in anticipation of D4. But the general theme of this chapter has been the immediate concern with Balthasar’s distinction between D1 and D2 (presuming my enumeration) as a clarification of Barth’s thought. This distinction is vitally concerned with the question of human subjectivity vis-à-vis God’s absolute subjectivity.

II.D. The Analogy of Faith, Subjectivity, and “Jesus Christ, God and man”

D2 manifests itself in Genesis 3:5 as the mortal alienation from the garden that results from the grasping presumption of Adam and Eve, instigated by the false promises of the serpent. The life activity of human being, and indeed the nature of the world around them outside the garden, has been profoundly conditioned by this new alienated distance from God. It eventually distorts the thinking of Cain and wounds his freedom, poisoning the generations that lead to Noah and his family: wounded human freedom vis-à-vis God is wounded human being, and God’s soteriological remedy can only be an overcoming of that alienation. For now, the distance between God and creation (D1) seen in light of God’s divine act of being and the believer’s act of faith becomes the basis for an analogy of being nestled within an analogy of faith: “Not only is there God’s eternal
fidelity, there is also man’s faith; not only are there God’s command and promise, there are man’s trust and obedience.... And so, despite the need to respect the notion of distance (indeed, in order to respect it), we will have to speak of a ‘secondary subject’ in the event of grace.”

The two beings, divine and created, become analogous to one another by the measurement of God’s prior action: the creature’s response in faith can never be perfect, but it bears a resemblance to God’s call by virtue of being a *free* response. It is a similarity to God within God’s greater dissimilarity from it because created being’s intrinsic value is also always relational, bearing a “built-in” reference to the source of its being. The source is not fully exhausted in the creature who must continue to be attentive and responsive.

Balthasar documents in “The Centrality of Analogy” how “Jesus Christ, God and man” has replaced “Word of God” as the center of Barth’s theology in CD. With this new center comes the presupposition of a basic form of humanity that makes the Incarnation of the human Savior possible. This basic form perdures even through the fall of Adam and Eve and the subsequent sins of actual sinners in history. The new Barthian presupposition implies the analogy of being in the duality between this basic form of humanity and its depraved, post-lapsarian instantiation. Barth does not allow himself to develop this analogy in an *analogia entis* proper, but he has moved beyond a simplistic doctrine of “total depravity” with regard to human nature with his own invented intermediary between depraved and sanctified states of being.

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344 TKB, 113; cit. KD II.1, 571. The “secondary subject” comes with a citation of Barth’s original German edition of *The Knowledge of God and the Service of God* (German, 178). The German edition speaks directly of “protecting the distance” (*die Wahrung der Distanz*, 123) and not of protecting the “notion of” distance as the English does.

345 TKB, 114.

346 TKB, 115, 119.

347 TKB, 120: “The unifying concept of ‘presupposition’ contains a duality of orders within itself; and it is this very duality that makes it possible for this concept to be unifying.”
Nevertheless, Balthasar sees a potential in the emerging openness to analogy. He quotes Barth from CD III.1 (with bracketed glosses) on the constitutive role that analogy must play in theology:

The analogy between God and man is simply the mutual existence in an I-Thou relation. In the first place, this mutuality is constitutive for God [in the eternal mutuality of the three Persons]. Secondarily, this relationship is also constitutive for the human being [primarily in the mutuality of man and woman]. To dismiss this relationality is to deprive God of what makes God God and the human being of what makes him human.348

Here Balthasar sees the metaphysical gender duality in the sense of a “primary” mutuality that houses the imago Dei.349 I will address some of the problems with ascribing to gender complementarity what is ultimately supposed to be a personal difference in Chapter 4. But Balthasar’s point for the time being is that Barth views human existence in a relation to God that is “no less radical or basic” than the relation the human Jesus has to the Father.350 In an extension of this analogy in Barth’s thought, the human spirit relates to the Spirit of God and is brought into the trinitarian relations by this grace.351 Relationality between God and the world is now analogically related to triune relations; not in a formal way, but in an utterly concrete and personal way.

Balthasar’s comments on KD III.1 and III.2 resonate strongly with his reading of Gregory of Nyssa on diastasis, God’s “Presence,” and the human response to it in thought (epinoia):

There is a transparency, an inner meaning and teleology, a perfection embedded in the depths of creaturely imperfection. Not of itself but insofar as God has destined it in his Son to share in his own nature and image [KD III.1, 438].... In the Gospels, faith and knowledge are not neatly separated from each other but are called the common way by which we come to a decision for Jesus. The reason for

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348 TKB, 125-26; cit. KD III.1, 207.
349 Cit. KD III.1; 216-33, 260-61.
350 TKB, 126; cit. KD III.1, 83-84.
351 TKB, 127-29.
this rests on the fact that Jesus’ own participation in the divine and his own human nature are not counterbalancing realities. It is his very participation in the divine that grounds his human being [KD III.2, 76].... To hear God’s Word means to know God [III.2, 210].\textsuperscript{352} There are clear parallels between the “teleological” tensions that arise from creaturely imperfections in Gregory’s spiritual \textit{epêktasis} and Barth’s holy tension between faith and knowledge as the common way to make decisions and know God. This is how one participates in Jesus’ own participation in triune being.

The God-world distance must always retain its critical function of guarding God’s sovereignty: it is always God who controls the directionality of the function of theological analogy from God’s perfection to human imperfection. But this is also where one can see how Balthasar construes Barth’s reluctance to accept the \textit{analogia entis} as a misidentification of the Neo-Scholastic doctrine of \textit{natura pura} without reference to grace.\textsuperscript{353} Balthasar proposes a new \textit{formal concept of nature} as a placeholder for that with which God enters into relationship in creation and revelation. This formal concept of nature is abstract, but it is based on a concrete relationship between two existences.\textsuperscript{354} Both Balthasar and Barth agree that a robust view of nature cannot be had outside the context of relationship with God, and this will always involve grace. The human response and human thought are made possible first by seeing how God has expressed God’s own being in terms of created time and space:

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{352} TKB, 141-42.
\textsuperscript{353} See Long, \textit{Saving KB}, 42. This is, according to Balthasar, the “tragic history” of Protestantism, which has no concept of “Nature” with which it can solve this problem; “Analogie und Dialektik,” 189.
\textsuperscript{354} TKB, 285: “Nature is to be sought in that \textit{minimum} that must be present in every possible situation where God wants to reveal himself to a creature. And that minimum is expressed by the term \textit{analogia entis}. If there is to be a revelation, then it can only proceed from God to the creature—to a creature that precisely as creature does not include revelation in its formal concept. ¶We shall call this concept of nature the \textit{formal concept of nature}.... ¶But if [God] decides to create a world, then of course this decision can only take the form of the analogy of being, which is grounded in God’s very ‘essence’ itself. Created being must be by definition created, dependent, relative, nondivine, but as something created it cannot be utterly dissimilar to its Creator.”
\end{quote}
From the ontic standpoint, one can say: the connection [Beziehung] from the creature to God rests entirely in a connection (by virtue of creation itself) of the Creator to the creature. Noetically speaking: the cogito [I think] of the creature rests entirely in a cogitor [I am thought] of the creature by God. All comparison and self-reference by the creature thus has its measure in God’s inverted self-reference in the creature.\(^{355}\)

The self-reference of God is seen in the creature’s experience of createdness, which necessarily includes the dissimilarity between God and creation. The creature’s self-reference is always within the consciousness of having come from somewhere. In a parallel fashion, the Word who was known to be of human estate as flesh also shows forth the incommensurability of the God who has never been seen (John 1:18).\(^{356}\) That God is “beyond” and “limitless” or “unlimited” is the dissimilarity. The dissimilarity is qualitative; but because the “quality” of God remains hidden behind an infinite distance (D1), the experience of faith in the mysterious God carries with it a kind of depth perception. Christ as the icon of the invisible God (Col 1:15) reveals the depth of the Father’s presence behind Him. Therefore, even any similarity between the Father and the Incarnate Christ is governed by the maior dissimilitudo of which Lateran IV speaks.\(^{357}\)

**II.E. The Ontic Ratio of the “God’s-eye view” as a Concrete Measurement**

For Barth, the depth of the experience of grace is measured by the “ontic ratio” between God and creation in the Incarnation of the Word. The ontic ratio has trinitarian roots by virtue of the divine and human in Jesus and also forms the fundamental

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\(^{356}\) “Analogie und Dialektik,” 179; these biblical witnesses of Paul and John are central to his argument in GL7 and TD4.

\(^{357}\) “Analogie und Dialektik,” 180.
conditions for the “noetic ratio” in the believer’s consciousness. Therefore both the ontic and the noetic ratios are grounded in this trinitarian ratio veritatis, or measurement of truth. Consciousness of the maior dissimilitudo in the form of depth behind Christ the icon of the Invisible God is therefore the condition for the “God’s-eye view” in theology. But the extent of Barth’s complete subordination of noesis to an entirely divine ontology, in Balthasar’s estimation, leads to an impoverished account of “the structure of knowing [that] has its own ontic dignity.” The human knower is simply too passive in this entirely Trinity-based measurement of truth. Matters are made more confusing in that the structure of knowing has not been completely annulled by sin, even for Barth.

But it is important not to go too far in the other direction of letting the structures of human knowing completely determine what God is capable of revealing. When a concept of being that is determined by cognitive structures made to exhaustively represent God, only idolatry can result. This why Balthasar is amenable to Barth’s incorporation of the analogy of being within the analogy of faith. God’s Self-expression as Subject in the Incarnation is analogous to human faith, that is, the subjective reception of the Incarnate Word: “And, because the order of creation is oriented to the order of the Incarnation, it is structured in view of the Incarnation: it contains images, analogies, as it were, dispositions, which in a true sense are the presuppositions for the Incarnation.”

358  TKB, 158: “the uncreated ratio veritatis, which is identical with the ratio summae naturae: the divine Word consubstantial with the Father”; citing Barth’s Anselm, 43.
359  TKB, 159.
360  TKB, 162. Balthasar lists some objections that Barth has to the analogy of being, and many of them are reflective of Balthasar’s own attitudes: “The concept of being, no matter how analogously we may conceive it, remains precisely that: a concept. That is, it is one ordering schema under which God and creature are subsumed in common. This demonstrates not only the impious traducing of the reverence due to God by the creature (who subsumes its Creator under one of its own conceptual possibilities), but also represents an unheard of anticipation of God’s own self-disclosure. Only God has the right and power to express what he is and how his most perfect being is to be named.”
361  TKB, 163.
In other words, the love with which we love God and other human beings is truly similar to the love by which we are loved first.\textsuperscript{362} Being created must be distinguished from being graced; but grace is the key to understanding the fullness of created being—not its annihilation in God’s overwhelming sovereignty. Since God’s being is love, our own act of being is fulfilled in its temporal mode by acts of love done for other human beings.

McCormack criticizes Balthasar for reading his own analogical presuppositions into Barth. He believes Balthasar’s presuppositions are grounded on an “abstract intersubjectivity of God” rather than on “the concrete intersubjectivity of God that is constituted in the covenant of grace.”\textsuperscript{363} But for Balthasar and Barth, “creation is the outer ground of the Covenant and the Covenant is the inner ground of creation.”\textsuperscript{364} The grace of the Covenant of Incarnation, as we have seen, is grounded on a trinitarian reality that is anything but abstract. Grace both preserves the distance between God and creation as they stand opposite each other and uses this distance to structure the relationship between them as Balthasar explains:

We must never forget for a moment, if we are to grasp the true essence of human nature, that man has been allowed to live in this mystery of God’s own concreteness. It is only here that his temporal being and finitude find their true features. Seen from below, from the confines and immanence of the world, both of these can only be the expression of man’s frailty and abandonment, his radical distance from God.... Seen from the place where God lays hold of man’s temporality and finitude and reincorporates them in the fountain of their origin \textsuperscript{365}\textsuperscript{[aufgehoben und begründet]} in the time and finitude of Jesus Christ, time becomes the medium of the manifestation of eternity.\textsuperscript{366}

The “radical distance from God” (\textit{der radikalen Gottferne der Kreatur}) might appear at first to have an entirely negative sense from the earthly standpoint of suffering and

\textsuperscript{362} TKB, 164.
\textsuperscript{363} McCormack, “Karl Barth’s Version,” 139.
\textsuperscript{364} TKB, 165.
\textsuperscript{365} German: Karl Barth, 207.
\textsuperscript{366} TKB, 194-95; cit. KD III.2, 616f.
sinfulness (D2). But from the “God’s-eye view” the theologian must see how earthly time and temporal existence is made holy and given to participate in God’s *kairos* and the eventfulness of God’s life. This is precisely the same dynamic that Balthasar reads in Gregory of Nyssa, where distance from God becomes a graced “spaciousness” of life with God and in God, “where God lays hold of man’s temporality and finitude and reincorporates them in the foundation of their origin.”367 The diastasis between God and creature informs the diastasis or tension within the creature, making it the condition of its *epéktasis* towards God. Barth’s theology of Incarnation thus develops in a way parallel to Gregory’s *epéktasis*, in that a kind of process is implied by way of analogy with eternal being.368

We have seen in TKB so far that the varieties of Balthasar’s trinitarian distance have not only analogical relationships with each other but also economic and effective ones. We have also seen references in Barth’s thought to a kind of mirroring between D4 and D1, even if Balthasar does not fully investigate the structure of this mirroring in TKB. In the latter half of TKB, we see how the economic distance of the Son in his descent from the Father as a Servant (D3) draws creation out of the form of alienated sin (D2) into a renewed relationship with God in a reverent attitude of praise, worship, and mutual love in the ontological (and epistemological) state of (D1):

Of course, for its part, grace certainly emphasizes the aspect of similarity, since by definition it gives a participation in the divine nature, but it does this precisely by allowing man to know the ever-greater and thus the ever-more-unknown God.369 And it accomplishes this by operating concretely—in other

367 TKB, 195.
368 TKB, 195: “real time is established in God, and man’s perdurance is assured [KD III.1, 72f.; III.2, 524f.]. Now time becomes a real participation in eternity, and discrete eventfulness becomes a real participation in God’s perdurance, and finitude and death express and enable the creature’s uninhibited surrender to God. Because of Christ, we can continually praise our finitude [KD III.1, 109, 147; III.2, 671f.; III.3, 96f., 264].”
369 Balthasar includes a footnote quoting Aquinas quoting Dionysius in ST I, q.12, a.12, obj.1 ad.1.
words, not by rapturously tearing man away from this world and bringing him up to God but by having God descend to this world, not only in the creaturely form of “God’s servant” but even more in the “form of sin” (forma peccati)—which could not be more dissimilar to God.  

The passage above is Balthasar’s synthetic response to several themes and issues in Barth’s theology. Jesus’ adoption of the “form of sin” in the Incarnation is consonant with Barth’s own emphasis on God’s absolute Lordship in a Self-communication that convict the world of its wrongness, whether in the Cross of the Son or the sending of the Spirit (John 16:8). Whatever human beings think must be true about God is subject to being confounded in some way by the sheer power of the revelation.

Balthasar follows the passage above with another synthetic overview of the issues in Barth regarding the mutual implications of distance and communion, nature and grace: “nature emphasizes the distance, while grace stresses the communion between the two.”

In the experience of mutual recognition between human persons, “the distance between subject and subject is not created by grace. It is a distance that belongs to nature, but it has its deepest foundation in the intradivine distance between Persons in the Trinity [D4], which only becomes visible to us in grace.” Again we hear the themes of D3 and D4. But in TKB the emphasis is on the distinction of D1 from D2 in Barth’s thought, and so D3 and D4 take their meaning from that distinction. D1 is the condition for a concrete relationship between God and the world and D2 is the ruination of the relationship. But the very ruination of D2 lays out the full scope of D3, of the full power of God’s grace.

By virtue of Jesus’ two places combined in D3—D1 as a human being vis-à-vis God and

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370 TKB, 286.
371 TKB, 287. See also Angela Franks: “By analogy, the unitive activity of the Spirit is necessary for the Christian life, because the unity of the Spirit grounds the ‘similarity’ of analogy. Only through this similarity to God can man have any understanding of revelation and any participation in the divine, Trinitarian life.” And yet, “Von Balthasar’s use of analogy indicates a rejection of ‘a generic concept,’ or, in Lateran terminology, he rejects the abolishment of the ‘greater dissimilarity.’”
372 TKB, 292.
D4 as the Son of the Father—D1 can now be seen in faith as the mirror of D4. This is as it was always intended to be.

The created participation in the intimate love of the Trinity takes places always at a reverent “distance [of] fear of the Lord” that allows for a paradoxical intimacy with God because it is a participation in divine filiation by “having the same mind” that was in the Son (Phil 2:5): “And the possibility of creation being distant from God derives ultimately from the divine Son’s readiness to empty himself in service and obedience to his Father.”

The fundamental attitude of service after the pattern of the Son in Phil 2:5-11 is an apt illustration of Balthasar’s general orientation, which can also be found in TL1. The intimacy of personal communion with an other gives rise to “the original spontaneity that enables the illumination of the cognitive space and ... prepares the knower for possible encounter with [other] beings.” This spontaneity “must be called service, and not striving or appetite (appetitus).” It cannot be a possessive grasping. What is more, the eternally renewed desire for God in loving, interpersonal distance opposite God, must always be characterized by a consequent reverence for beings in the created world: “If this spontaneity were fundamentally about striving, this striving would inevitably be grounded in the subject’s dissatisfaction, so that the object striven for would be sought insofar as it could fulfill a need.” Otherwise, “The movement of striving would have its primary ground in the subject itself, and the object would be a means by which the subject pursued its own needs. ... In the end, even God himself would be used, however subtly, for the satisfaction of the subject’s drive to know.” This would have the effect of erasing the distance of reverence, grounded on the distance of the God-world.

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TKB, 287.
374 TL1, 257.
375 TL1, 257.
difference (D1). This would in turn affect the knower’s objectivity with regard to even worldly knowledge, let alone divine. This could also be an apt summary of Barth’s own theological passion for God’s Lordship as well as of his increasing appreciation of D1 distinguished from D2.

A question remains as to what really happens to D2 in the event of salvation via D3, by which D1 is renewed as a blessed state of being within God’s D4. Is D2 abolished? Is it changed? The formula of *simul iustus et peccator* does not seem to apply to a person who stands in D1 vis-à-vis God as God intended D1. Balthasar deals with the issue of how D2 functions in theology more thoroughly as he develops the salvific distance of the Son’s mission in Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection (D3) as the outward expression of the mutual love among Persons in the eternal Trinity (D4) in his trilogy, particularly in the volumes GL7, TD4, and TD5. This will be treated more thoroughly in the next two chapters.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has been a study of the key function that theological distance between God and the world develops in Balthasar’s reading of Karl Barth. As the former traces the development of the latter’s Christology and his growing openness to the analogy of being, D1’s key function in the structure of analogy emerges more and more in its distinction from the alienation of the world from God in human sin. The dialectical moment in the analogy of being is the “is not” marked by D1 between the world and God. D3 begins to appear in Barth’s theological anthropology when he considers the “place” of Christ vis-à-vis the Father in the Incarnation and Cross, and so does D4 when Barth
begins to consider how the believer’s reverent worship of God at the distance of D1 is mysteriously included in D4. But the focus of this chapter is, again, how D1 develops in Balthasar’s thought in contrast with D2 in the early Barth. D1 serves three purposes as the condition for three things: 1) of creation’s createdness vis-à-vis God, 2) of the creature’s reverent service of God, and 3) of knowledge of God in the context of faith. I have sought to demonstrate how Balthasar finds in Barth a lively sense of the iconographic nature of the otherness of created being as a pointer to the Other that is behind them all. This is “mediation” in the Ignatian sense of “finding God in all things” (Balthasar’s words). Human beings are created with a capacity that allows God to meet them (on God’s initiative), by which they also perform the philosophical-theological *Urakt* of realizing (*Vernehmen, Vernunft*) the truth of all things in the perception (*Wahrnehmung*) of God mediated by them.

Kilby’s complaint is that the meaning of inner-trinitarian distance is vague and presumes this God’s-eye view: how could one say such things about the inner life of God with any authority? Kilby is correct that Balthasar takes a “God’s-eye view” in theological method. It is also present in Barth’s method. But her suspicion that Balthasar has presumed such a theological viewpoint would probably be answered by both Balthasar and Barth with the question of how theology could be properly done from any other viewpoint. This and the previous chapter have been (slowly) building the case for Balthasar’s (slow) methodological approach to the use of such distance-language from such a viewpoint. It is hardly presumption, as I hope to continue to demonstrate further in the next two chapters. Balthasar’s engagement with Karl Barth (who was also his friend)

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376 TKB, 153.
377 TKB, 152-53; the German words are also used by Barth.
demonstrates at the very least that his norms for theological practice are not as “self-concocted” and “unfettered” as some of his critics protest they are.\textsuperscript{378}

How the theologian comes to occupy such a “God’s-eye” viewpoint is a complex account of the intersection between divine grace and the rules of theological analogy: “We can indeed ‘ascend’ to the absolute from this world here below, but only insofar as we presuppose the priority of the absolute over the relative. Descent is prior to ascent; revelation precedes our perception of what has been revealed.”\textsuperscript{379} But the “truth” of distance in God is therefore also the “truth of the world” in relation to God, even if the reality of the former is prior to the reality of the latter. As we shall see in the next chapter, Balthasar describes his application of this method in TD4 as a negative-theological approach governed by the Cross of Christ that refuses to subject God to any “intramundane experience and suffering.”\textsuperscript{380} As Junius Johnson also explains: “To read backwards from inner-worldly analogy to the analogy of being is not to project finite realities into the infinite, but rather for the first time interpret finite realities in their proper relation to the infinite. Of course this only works as long as we remember that the relation between God and the world is not itself God.”\textsuperscript{381} And therein lies the importance of the Dialektik as Balthasar appreciates it in Barth: the eternal significance of the world’s difference from God and God’s transcendance to the world.

Balthasar’s “systematic impulse,” as Gardner and Moss call it, is a repetitive meditation on “An ever deeper experience of [the] fundamental structure of analogy.”\textsuperscript{382}

\textsuperscript{378} Kilby, Critical Introduction, 13-14.
\textsuperscript{379} TKB, 149.
\textsuperscript{380} TD4, 324.
\textsuperscript{381} Johnson, Christ and Analogy, 99.
Because the Cross is both a Self-expression of God and an event in history, it reveals in an earthly mode what Balthasar calls a trinitarian “process” by analogy in GL7. But Balthasar has already provided in TKB a brief footnote on this process based on an insight from Przywara: “Now a process has taken [the] place” of any metaphysically static principle in the heart of the analogy of being, and “God’s history in Christ, who lives on in the Church for humanity” reveals the divine nature in all its concreteness.\textsuperscript{383}

As we shall see in the next chapter, Pauline kenosis is at the heart of the analogy of being as a concrete location for a measurement of divine Being within the Godhead. The “all-encompassing bracket” (\textit{umgreifenden Klammer}) of which Barth speaks is God’s existence as the ground and container for all other existences.\textsuperscript{384} This space safeguards the integrity of creation as different from the divine, enabling the Incarnation to bear its fruit as an earthly expression of God’s loving action. It is an analogy of being within an analogy of “faith” because of the similarity between the eventfulness of God’s loving descent to created being in revelation and the eventfulness of creation’s loving response in faith.\textsuperscript{385} In all these cases of “all-encompassing” (\textit{umgreifenden}) distance, the “whole God” is revealed.\textsuperscript{386} The next two chapters will focus respectively how this God is revealed in the development of D3 in GL7 and D4 in TD4 and TD4: New Testament, soteriology, and eschatology.

\textsuperscript{383} TKB, 362, n.121.
\textsuperscript{384} Barth, \textit{Anselm}, 178-80; quoted in TKB, 164. German of TKB: Karl Barth, 179.
\textsuperscript{385} TKB, 164-65.
\textsuperscript{386} TKB, 87; cit. Barth’s \textit{Prolegomena zur Christian Dogmatik: Die Lehre vom Wortes Gottes} (Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1928), 137.
CHAPTER 3
THEOLOGICAL DISTANCE IN BALTHASAR’S TRILOGY, PART I: GLORY OF THE LORD VII AND THEO-DRAMA IV

Introduction

An “Overture” of Balthasar’s Theology of Distance in GL7, TD4, and TD5

The last chapter outlined Balthasar’s tracing of the emergence of D1 in the later theology of Karl Barth from an overemphasis on D2 in the early Barth. There we saw Barth’s growing openness to the analogy of being in the development of his Christology and in his growing appreciation of the positive function of D1. We also saw how Balthasar appreciates the continuing importance of the dialectical “is not” in the analogy between God and the world: the world is not God, but God created the world and called it good. The image and likeness of God in the human person requires a freedom that was not sufficiently emphasized in Barth’s earlier works, because divine infinite freedom must be met by a genuine finite freedom in order for covenant and election to have any meaning. By virtue of Christ’s “place” as the mediator—God to humanity, humanity to God—the goodness of the world is now given a permanent place within God’s Being that preserves its own distance from God and its own goodness vis-à-vis God as the object of God’s love. The signs of development in Balthasar’s analogy between distance from God and distance within God appear even in this early-period critical work on Barth. A crucial aspect of this development is Balthasar’s growing clarity on the analogy of being as the protector of the boundaries among these four varieties of distance that also marks the spaces where God is genuinely in contact with the world through the Incarnate Christ and the missioned Spirit.
The analogy of being therefore also structures the response to critics such as Kilby who suspect that Balthasar’s “God’s-eye view” constitutes an illegitimate epistemological grasping. If the goodness of creation is viewed biblically and eschatologically as being “kept safe” within God’s being, then any theological viewpoint on creation must also be a God’s-eye view. This was also the theme of the focus on epéktasis in Chapter 1. The movement from D1 to its eschatological “home” within God’s D4 implies a completion of Christology by a pneumatology that preserves the intimacy of unity and the distance of personal distinction in relation. A Christ-focused soteriology likewise finds its completion in eschatology. This is the pattern of the development of D1 to D4 in Balthasar’s works.

D3 will come into focus in the present chapter in the New Testament soteriology of GL7 and TD4. This is also the point in the study at which the context of Balthasar’s trilogy must be introduced, as before we have been concerned with some of Balthasar’s earlier stand-alone volumes: PT, Wahrheit der Welt (TL1), and TKB. The trilogy itself presents a more-or-less whole version of the symphony that we have been discerning in Balthasar’s thought, the form of argument that he typically employs. His texts and parts of texts are arranged in a rhetorical structure that bears witness to the structure of his thought. This is admittedly harder to see or “hear” over longer stretches of texts such as the whole 15-volume trilogy. I have chosen GL7, TD4, and TD5 from within Balthasar’s trilogy because they give the major trinitarian “movements” of the symphony as represented by the trilogy. The pattern of D1 finding its proper eschatological place within D4 by wandering through D2 and being liberated in D3 begins to reach its completion in TD4, which itself is the “climax” of the theo-drama. (It is difficult to avoid
the mixing of metaphors if one engages Balthasar at his own game.) But we shall see in the next chapter that TD5 represents a kind of trinitarian climax from the standpoint of drama, and that book is all about D4. TD5 is also where many of the critical issues in Balthasar’s theology as a whole come to the fore and show their interdependence.  

I will begin to address some of the more fundamental of these critical issues here in Chapter 3. GL7 introduces the theme of D3, the distance of the Father and Son from each other in the economy of salvation; and TD4 firmly establishes its role and function in Balthasar’s methodology. D3 is, as it were, an epistemological “gateway” to any legitimate language about the immanent Trinity. GL7 and TD4 set the stage where the urgency of Kilby’s and Levering’s criticism gains force. Their criticism is that Balthasar’s paschal analogy for the Trinity requires too strong an integration of soteriology and trinitarian theology. The boundary between the economic and immanent Trinity must ensure that God’s Being is not construed in terms of worldly suffering, and they are not sure that Balthasar has succeeded in protecting this boundary.

Kilby suggests that there are “at least two things required in order to learn of distance in the Trinity from the Cross,” namely, “a particular construal of the Cross itself” and “a more speculative move from the Cross (thus construed) to what one could call the eternal conditions of its possibility.” Balthasar’s exegesis of Jesus’ cry on the Cross from Psalm 22 in Mark and Matthew is her starting place for examining his “conditions in the Trinity for the possibility” of such an event in the divine economy, but she finds him too bold when speaking about this infinite distance in God. She

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387 I have mentioned before that Balthasar completes the trilogy with a Christological-trinitarian volume (TL2: *Truth of God*) and a pneumatological-trinitarian volume (TL3: *The Spirit of Truth*); but these two volumes do not use aesthetic and dramatic argumentation by means of distance to the same extent that GL7, TD4, and TD5 do.

acknowledges that Balthasar’s trinitarian theology is meant to provide the grounding for an understanding of the life and death of Jesus, but she adds in a footnote that Balthasar’s pneumatology is typically weak as an example of Western theology.\textsuperscript{389} I will demonstrate in response to this criticism that the two volumes of GL7 and TD4 richly display the movement of Christology towards its completion in pneumatology as a major feature of Balthasar’s theological argumentation. Pneumatology is “the third thing” necessary after the other two Kilby names above; without pneumatology, the Godhead is split up into parts and “distance” has no orthodox or spiritually sound meaning. Balthasar’s pneumatology is not systematically distinguished from other dogmatic and theological topics, but I seek to provide in this and the following chapter a rigorous account for it in his work.\textsuperscript{390}

Understanding how pneumatology gives Balthasar’s Christology its proper trinitarian context is crucial to understanding the distinctions among the varieties of distance and their analogical functions in trinitarian theology. The Johannine Spirit, especially in GL7 and TD4, makes D3 available to the believer and encompasses the life of faith into the loving communion of the Father and Son, making it into an imperfect but endlessly progressive participation in divine life.\textsuperscript{391} In this way, the diastemic, time-and-space-bound life of the Christian is sanctified and made holy as a progression in the life of grace.\textsuperscript{392}

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{390} Sachs provides a healthy guideline when discussing role of pneumatology in Balthasar’s work: “One can use such a term only loosely in reference to Balthasar’s treatment of the Holy Spirit. Balthasar says that he offers only ‘fragments of a doctrine of the Spirit’ rather than a systematic theology of the Spirit”; \textit{Deus Semper Major},” 637.
\textsuperscript{391} TD4, 320.
\textsuperscript{392} In the pneumatologies of Gregory of Nyssa and St. Augustine, the Spirit’s mode of trinitarian being is that of personified divine availability of the Father and the Son to each other within the Godhead. But because the Spirit is “God’s hypostatic option for the poor,” the Spirit also proceeds outward to the
\end{footnotes}
D2) by means of D3, recreating within created being a relationality to God that is analogous to D4. The Spirit shares with the disciples what the Son has from the Father according to Johannine and Pauline logic, namely, “power to become children of God” (John 1:12; 14:15-24; 16:14-15; Rom 8:23; Gal 4:4-7). D4 thus makes an appearance in TD4, speaking to the eschatological orientation of all trinitarian distance.

The image of “process” is related to the manifestation of the triune relations on earth, and Balthasar introduces the category of process into trinitarian theology in GL7. But because of the eschatological orientation of his argument in the trilogy, it is helpful to begin our investigation of GL7 and TD4 within a larger context that includes TD5. Balthasar ultimately peers into “the dynamic relationship between creature and Creator, or the way in which becoming is rooted in absolute Being” and concludes that “We cannot avoid using the concept of ‘process’, ‘procession’, in the context of the life of the Trinity to denote its constant vitality.”393 The divine life is indeed “the fullness of life... [in] perfect peace,” but “this peace, or rest, is not inert.” Saying what “process” is in reference to God requires, first of all, a stipulation that it is not a univocal term applied to both God and human beings. “Process” and “procession” can never refer to an exclusively erotic self-fulfillment through others at the expanse of God’s agape, or as a larger context that sublimates self-giving within a logic of exchange. God does not need the world to reject God in order to trigger some cruciform mechanism by which God can truly become God. As Balthasar explains, citing Adrienne von Speyr: “‘behind the sacrifice of the Son (to the world) stands the consubstantial loving surrender of the Father as the source of the Eucharist’, and not only this, but the absolute self-surrender of every

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393 TD5, 77.
Divine Person to every Other—and nothing in the ‘economic’ sphere can intensify this surrender.”

The mutual self-giving that constitutes the processions in God is already fully actual from all eternity. The reference to the Eucharist evokes a metaphorical setting in which Balthasar stresses, probably against Hegel, that the life of the Triune God is a liturgy of true self-offering among the Persons rather than a narcissistic journey of divine self-fulfillment. The earthly Eucharist celebrated by the Church is a participation in this eternal liturgy. Participation is only accessible to the Church via Christ’s commandment to do the liturgy in remembrance of his love for the Father and to demonstrate the liturgy actively by means of love for others. The process that constitutes the earthly analog for the triune relations must therefore be characterized by Christ’s kenosis in Phil 2:5-11; not only as an event in God (vv.6-9) and between God and the cosmos (vv.10-11), but as an attitude or “mind” shared among the Christian community (v.5). In Nyssan terms, the mind of Christ is one of the “goods” to be desired by the soul in its *epéktasis* towards the risen life with Christ, only to be had when one empties oneself in humbleness of heart and in imitation of Christ who emptied himself (v.8; *ekénose*) for the benefit of others.

Balthasar is not a process theologian, but he dares to use such spatio-temporal images guided by the analogy of being. “Supertime” and “superspace” are integrated, particularly in TD4, with the meta-symbol of *Ur-Kenosis*, or “super-kenosis.”

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397 TD4, 326; German text in *Theodramatik, Band III: Die Handlung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1978), 303. Cyril O’Regan focuses on *Ur-Kenosis* in the context of his study of Balthasar’s reaction to Hegel’s trinitarian kenoticism: “Of the three meta-symbols for indicating the triune divine [along with supertime and superspace], ‘ur-kenosis’ is probably the most important, and I make no apology for privileging it here”; *Anatomy*, 307.
Kenosis of the Father, which makes its first appearance as a term in TD4, is the Father’s self-emptying to the Son of the entire Godhead. This does not constitute a loss of the Godhead by God, but rather the will and “mode” of the Father’s Being: the Father will be God only as the Father of the Son and the Spirator of the Spirit. Likewise, the Son will only be God as the Son of the Father, and so on. This development of the kenotic analogia entis is especially important after his reading of Gregory of Nyssa. O’Regan observes that “Balthasar believes his meta-symbols help to tutor the language of ‘impassibility’ such that specifically Christian use involves an emphasis on dynamism and receptivity not there in the Greek metaphysical tradition.”398 The supertemporality and the superspatiality of the triune event are the stage for the theo-dramatic act of kenosis within the Trinity. This allows the mysterious eventfulness of the triune life, of which Balthasar’s images are grounded in Johannine and Pauline New Testament witnesses, to be the ground for all the language of pathos in the Old Testament and the Passion narrative: there is no thinking of glory that does not center itself on the self-emptying of Jesus Christ who allows himself to be sent by the Father into the world, all the way to the Cross (John 3:16; Phil 2:7-8). Thus there is no thinking of the Holy Trinity that is not conditioned by the event of the self-emptying of the divine Persons to each other, and the Ur-Kenosis is the aitia or principle of this Being-as-mutual-self-emptying.

The distance of the economic Trinity, D3, emerges as the integral structure of Balthasar’s theology of New Testament glory in GL7. The glory of God takes its ultimate biblical form in the person of Jesus Christ, and “this [biblical] theology can and must dare
to offer itself to dogmatic systematics as its inner form.“399 GL7 charts the development of a kinetic metaphor of momentum for glory, the Old Testament kavod, into an aesthetic metaphor of radiance or light that is found in the New Testament dóxa. Dóxa also means “esteem” or gravitas, something that is both earned from others and radiated out to them from the person who has the dóxa. Glory is the manifestation of God’s Being as presented to the eyes of faith in a unification of all the Bible’s images of God’s active presence on earth; “glory” is the cipher for all these images. Whether they are kinetic, dramatic, or aesthetic, most of these metaphoric images depend on distance for their proper functioning. Any dogmatic systematization of them must take what is essential to their intelligibility, and this is what Balthasar is laying the groundwork for in GL7.

I. Trinitarian Distance in GL7

I.A. Glory and Distance in GL7

Balthasar gives a footnote at the midpoint of GL7 that makes a systematic and programmatic statement about the integration of Pauline and Johannine theologies to fill out the dogmatic picture of the economic trinity: “We choose this word [distance = German Diastase] to express the process described by John, which is indeed materially identical with the ‘kenosis’ mentioned in the Philippians hymn, but presupposes an explicit trinitarian thinking and therefore merits a terminology that makes this distinction

399 GL7, 109. See W. T. Dickens on how Balthasar sees the integration of revelation as event with its biblical mediation: “Balthasar distinguished between the form of God’s self-revelation and the form of its biblical mediation while nevertheless maintaining that God’s own vision of the former is adequately rendered by the latter”; Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Theological Aesthetics: A Model for Post-Critical Biblical Interpretation (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 75.
plain.” That he would do this in a footnote is somewhat strange given the prevalence of distance imagery before and especially after this point in the text. Glory and kenosis, are “materially identical” in that they both refer to the triune Being. But clearly the distinction between the mutual glorification of Father and Son “before the world existed” (John 17:5) and the kenosis of the Son in taking the form of a slave in obedience “to the point of death—even death on a cross” (Phil 2:6-8) is of utmost importance to Balthasar. The former represents the immanent Trinity and the latter the economic Trinity. Balthasar claims the terminology of “distance” is essential to clearly (“plainly”) make the distinction.

The Father’s exaltation of the Son in the Philippians hymn refers to an eternal event and is not an apotheosis of the Son after death. It originates in D3, which now encompasses D1 and D2. This “terminology” of distance will later set up the trinitarian soteriology of TD4 as “the heart of the theo-drama.” But for now in GL7, Johannine theology functions as the horizon to which all other NT witnesses and theologies point. Thus it serves as the backdrop for Balthasar’s integration of all cognates and synonyms of biblical glory in the NT canon under the one “cipher for the whole into this totality” of the event of Christ. By virtue of the philosophical interchangeability of each transcendent (Beautiful, Good, True, etc.) with the oneness of their referent, glory also functions as a representation of God’s unity. Dóxa also represents personhood in terms of “the absolute and unique ‘I’ of God in his free manifestation in the world”:

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401 TD4, 191.
402 GL7, 10; Johannine theology is last for Balthasar both because of its two placements in the canon (Fourth Gospel, Book of Revelation) and even perhaps because of its dating among the other NT literatures; see Nichols, Word Has Been Abroad, 211.
403 GL7, 242–43.
Every living being, and above all the free person, achieves for itself a sphere of power in its own environment, so that in this it may exercise control, may make itself known and appear; this powerfulness or importance (gravitas) merges in the physical-moral sphere into esteem, acknowledgment and praise, and, in a world of beings that are both intellectual and sensual, this radiance is always both intellectual and perceptible to the senses.\textsuperscript{404}

The moral force of the Latin gravitas merges here with the aesthetic metaphor of light or radiance, which is the transposition of the Old Testament notion of glory as God’s weightiness or kavod into the eternal light of dóxa that shines in the darkness.\textsuperscript{405} God’s glory is concrete, and so the aesthetic distance across which God manifests it and commands the esteem of others is concrete.

In order for the Son to manifest the full scope of God’s glory he must “go down into the absolute contradiction of the Lord’s glory,” which entails the Cross, death, and “the formless chaos of Hell.”\textsuperscript{406} The glory of the Lord is then allowed to shine across what was an unbridgeable distance but which now shows the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit, as well as the real way in which the world is joined to God: “The uttermost distance [D3]—the dimensions of which go to the extreme on both sides—proves for John the identity of the obedience and love in the Son, and likewise the substantial identity of the personal love of the Son and the personal love of the Father.”\textsuperscript{407}

This analogical thinking implies a proportion that functions throughout GL7 and the whole of the Theo-Drama:

\[ \text{momentum : radiance :: obedience : love} \]

\textsuperscript{404} GL7, 241.
\textsuperscript{405} Balthasar follows C.H. Dodd in seeing this transposition of the OT kavod into the Johannine theology of dóxa: “kavod means the manifestation of God’s being, nature, and presence, in a manner accessible to human experience”; The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 206–07.
\textsuperscript{406} GL7, 14.
\textsuperscript{407} GL7, 248-49.
The intelligibility of this analogy based on *momentum* obviously requires distance. God’s glory as *kavod*, grandeur, or weightiness must gain *momentum*; and this momentum is provoked, as it were, by the world’s rejection of God at the sinful distance of D2. The “extremes on both sides” of the distance between God’s eternal Being and the world’s state of alienation are the “highest majesty” of the trinitarian love in the Godhead and the “deepest descent” of the Son into death and Hell. The momentum of God’s manifestation of glory also carries God’s wrath against sin. But this *momentum* is also a *radiance* of God’s Being as light, as seen in John 1:4-5, 3:19, and 12:46. The Son comes into the world as light (John 12:46) but also out of *obedience* to the will of the Father, as seen throughout John’s Gospel and in Phil 2:8. This obedience is carried out in *love* for the Father and in return for the Father’s gift of love to the Son, as seen in the High Priestly Prayer of John 17.

The distance of D3 in the Son’s Incarnation, humiliation, and death on the Cross is the measurement of the proportion described above: *momentum* : *radiance* :: *obedience* : *love*. Distance ultimately manifests triune love because separation must always presuppose a connection or a unity, in this case the divine-Personal relations characterized by letting-be, mutual glorification, and esteem. Because God loves the world (John 3:16), the Son and Spirit also share this outward love freely based on their mutual love with the Father. Obedience and love are distinct; but in Jesus’ expression of his triune life with the Father in the unity of the Spirit, they are the same. The Father and the Son are distinct, just as Jesus’ human and divine natures are distinct; but his human obedience to the Father’s will is his full integral response to the Father’s love for him, which means it is also love shared in common in the unity of the Spirit in the eternal

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408 GL7, 248.
sphere. This love of all three of them in one shared divine will for the world is what is
given to the world. But human freedom with all of its consequences plays a role in the
full manifestation of this love and glory, even the consequence of D2. God is able to deal
even with this consequence out of God’s infinite love for the world. When a new path is
made available to alienated sinners when God overtakes and overcomes D2 by means of
the Son’s new “place” in D3, the sinner can traverse this alienated distance back to God
by the grace of epéktasis, the new arena of redemption and sanctification. This is Jesus’
own mapping of the “pilgrimage of quantity” (to use David Bentley Hart’s term) from its
beginning in the “highest majesty” of the Son’s eternal procession from the Father,
revealed by the witness of the Spirit. 409

The norm for what is glorious is perceived first and foremost in Jesus Christ, “and
ultimately in his absolute obedience of Cross and Hell. The unique ray of the divine
majesty of love is to become visible from the unique momentum of this event,
establishing the norm for everything that can lay claim to the predicate of ‘glorious’, at
whatever distance and periphery it may be.” 410 To be glorious is therefore not just a
correspondence to Christ but a connection with Christ, “at whatever distance.” Distance
is the concrete condition of the “kinetic force” or Wucht of God’s glory shining through
the Son on earth. 411 It is D3, God’s own Personal response to D2, that gives this kinesis
its full force and manifests the full “weight” of the Holy Trinity’s eternal decision:

409 GL7, 248; Hart draws out the contours of the relationship between finitude and infinity that
characterizes the communion of creation with God. Even in God’s transcendence from creation, God is
immanent to creation in the very marking of its own being as a reference to the One Who gave its own
beauty to it and loved it: “All of being is the place of return, the way of the creature’s progress from glory
to glory, through the folding and unfolding of an infinite that is always quantitative, even in its qualitative
distance. God’s infinite is weighty, and within it God is approached through the pilgrimage of quantity, the
ecstasy of epéktasis”; Beauty of the Infinite, 237; citing Gregory of Nyssa, In Christi resurrectionem 3.
410 GL7, 243.
411 Herrlichkeit III.2/2, 224.
The uttermost end that the Son enters [in his death, D3] is the revelation of a beginning that could not otherwise have been made known; that is, it reveals that the whole obedience upon earth of the Son has its source, not in a spontaneous decision of his human ego to offer himself for a commission that comes from outside himself, but in a decision made absolutely in advance, which is the basis of his earthly existence.\footnote{GL7, 247. See also St. Ignatius Loyola’s “Contemplation on the Incarnation” [101-09], a perennial influence on Balthasar’s trinitarian thought; The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius, trans. and commentary George E. Ganss, S.J. (St. Louis: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1992), 56-58.}

The beginning of this shared decision is rooted in the interpersonal distance between God and the Word Who was with God and was God (John 1:1-2). The primary focus of Balthasar’s NT theology in GL7 is on the glory of D3; but D3 itself serves as the concrete manifestation of D4, as suggested in the notion of God’s trinitarian decision in the sending of the Son and the Spirit in the economy. Jesus’ sensible, incarnate, aesthetic relation to the Father is the intelligibility of God’s freedom in the salvific-economic decision to reconcile the world on the Cross. But D3 is only ultimately intelligible in reference to the mysterious, transcendent reality of the Trinity. Although GL7 is the last volume of Balthasar’s aesthetics of divine glory, the aspect of dramatic action already makes its appearance via the spatio-temporal aspect of the triune decision and its economic execution: “In this whole process lies that which Jesus calls his glorification through the Spirit [John 16:14], which is nothing other than the bringing to light of the love that lies in obedience, of the identity with the loving Father that lies in the distance [D3].”\footnote{GL7, 252.}

\footnote{TKB, 87; GL7, 248. This is one of Balthasar’s rare mentions of the Divine Name in GL7. The historical-critical and philological examination of how it functions in the OT does not enter much into his discussion of God’s being, but the Name of God as revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:13–16 is perhaps the most fundamental echo of the OT in Jesus’ High Priestly prayer in John 17:6, 11–12; Larry Hurtado, Lord
We see here in GL7 the beginnings of Balthasar’s profound integration of
soteriology with trinitarian theology. The immanent Trinity may be the “basis” of
Christ’s “earthly existence,” but does the economic mission of the Son drag the Trinity
along with the earthly sufferings of the Son? Balthasar looks to John 17:1-26 for a key to
both the immanent and the economic Trinity. The mutual love and glorification of Father
and Son “before the world existed” (John 17:5) forms the transcendent location of Jesus’
prayer at the conclusion of the Last Supper Discourses. The prayer comes within the
case of the announcement of Jesus’ “hour,” which “reveals the meaning of his
glorification.” 415 Balthasar’s theological interpretation of the Prayer relies heavily on the
kinetic metaphor of a momentum created by the distance from the Father that Jesus
anticipates in his hour: “At the uttermost point where the Son makes way, the majesty of
the Father is to be brought into effect (‘For this reason I have come to this hour: Father,
glorify your name’, 12.27f.).” 416 A commonly accepted scholarly analysis of the prayer
corresponds with Balthasar’s own trinitarian and ecclesiological structuring of it, as well
as with his exegesis of the whole Johannine narrative and the Last Supper discourse that
precede it: in vv.1–5 Jesus requests his own glorification, in vv.6–19 he prays that the
Father keep his disciples “in your name,” and in vv.20–26 he prays for the glorious unity

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416 GL7, 248.
of all who follow them.\textsuperscript{417} For Balthasar, “\textit{Dóxa} is the divinity of God as it is freely made known,”\textsuperscript{418} but this divinity and glory is made known supremely in the Crucified One and through the Church:

The ‘radiance’ of the trinitarian love, which has disclosed itself in the New Testament as the truth of the \textit{kabod} of God, is a radiance that has its source only in the momentum of the obedience of the Cross. Therefore the only way for the crucified Christ to be ‘glorified’ in the Church (17.10) is for the \textit{eternity} of glory to be instituted in the Church by the Spirit of Father and Son.\textsuperscript{419}

We see in this passage the common measurement of “radiance” of God and the “momentum” of the Cross, carried on here by the Spirit who institutes God’s glory in the Church.\textsuperscript{420}

The role of distance as the structure of the material identity of obedience and love thereby structures the identity of obedience and love with kenosis. Kenosis is what initiates the force that produces the momentum and radiance in the economy of salvation. The Pauline kenosis of Jesus in the Incarnation and his death on the Cross has its condition “in the form of God” (Phil 2:6) as the Johannine mutual love and glorification of Father and Son (John 17:1-5), which is then imparted to the disciples in their visible unity-in-love with each other (John 17:20-26). Kenosis therefore also functions of a


\textsuperscript{418} \textit{GL7}, 265.

\textsuperscript{419} \textit{GL7}, 256. See also G. Kittel, “C. \textit{kābōd} in the OT,” \textit{TDNT}, 178–79.

\textsuperscript{420} Johannine scholar Nicole Chibici-Revneanu notes how the two meanings of δόξα/δοξάζειν as revelation and honor are intertwined in John’s Gospel and rooted in the \textit{kavod} language of the OT: “Glorification is an honoring by revelation, or as well a revelation in honor. ...God honors and reveals Jesus \textit{in him} as his Sent One, and Jesus honors and reveals God \textit{in him} in his earthly mission,” which means it is made known only as honor and a mutual honoring of Persons. It is only by the Spirit’s activity that believers “get involved in this process of glorification and will thus be able to participate in glorifying God and his Son”; Chibici-Revneanu, “Variations on Glorification: John 13,31f and Johannine δόξα-language,” in \textit{Repetitions and Variations in the Fourth Gospel: Style, Text, Interpretation}, eds. Gilbert Van Belle et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2008), 518, 521; see also Jesper Tang Nielsen on Jesus receiving glory as the Crucified One; “The Narrative Structures of Glory and Glorification in the Fourth Gospel,” \textit{New Testament Studies} 56 (2010): 355.
translation of God’s Being as eternal, mutual glorification (John 17:5) into earthly terms.\(^{421}\) For Balthasar there is no glory on earth without kenosis.

**I.B. Distance and Kenosis in GL7**

Kenosis is related not only to D3 but to D1 as well. But kenosis is neither a stage in God’s Self-realization nor a catalyst for the emanation of the world. The kenotic “selflessness of the divine persons” within the Trinity serves as the condition for the event of creation, and indeed, “for everything.”\(^{422}\) Balthasar borrows this insight from Sergei Bulgakov, from whom he will borrow the notion of the Father’s *Ur-Kenosis* in TD4. The “divine selflessness” does indeed form the condition for the world to stand apart vis-à-vis God in D1, but it becomes most visible to the world in the kenosis of the Cross.\(^{423}\) This selflessness even becomes the condition for the possibility of D2, “the uttermost consequences of creation’s freedom.” The triune relations are translated into D3 because of the reality of D2, which God seeks to “go beyond”: “The distance between the glory of love and the obedience unto death [D3] came into existence because of the world’s darkness [D2, the alienation of sin]: and the identity that persisted in this distance must be exhibited to the world, so that ‘the world may believe’ (17.21), ‘so that the world

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\(^{421}\) Interestingly, Moloney denies any parallel between Phil 2:9–11 and John 17:1–5; F.J. Moloney, *Gospel of John*, Sacra Pagina 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 464. But if one takes the complete pericope of Phil 2:5–11 and reads it in light of the Son’s obedience as fully accomplished in John as Balthasar does, it is difficult to deny the theological link between the two mentions of the Father’s exaltation of the Son in the Philippians hymn and the Father’s glorification of the Son in John 17:1–5. They are one and the same exaltation, even as it is revealed on the very Cross of Jesus in John, just as in Phil 2:5–11.

\(^{422}\) GL7, 213.

\(^{423}\) Balthasar suggests another kind of “first kenosis” as creation: “for the creator here gives up a part of his freedom to the creature, in the act of creating; but this he can dare to do only in virtue of his foreseeing and taking into account the second and truest kenosis, that of the Cross”; GL7, 214. But he does not use the language of creation as the “first kenosis” consistently throughout the rest of the trilogy, especially after he introduces the *Ur-Kenosis*. 
may recognise’ (17.23),”\textsuperscript{424} as Jesus states in the High-Priestly Prayer.\textsuperscript{425} Kenosis is therefore an expression of God’s Being for a world that has forgotten how to understand it because of sin. The force of God’s gravitas and grandeur would be unbearable and overwhelming, and so it must be translated into the humble obedience of the Son who takes his place alongside the humble, the outcast, and sinners.

Jesus “takes the form of a slave” by emptying himself of the “form of God,” but it is his translation of his love for the Father that he has from eternity:

In this, kenosis—as the surrender of the ‘form of God’—becomes the decisive act of love of the Son, who translates his being begotten by the Father (and in this, his dependence on him) into the expressive form of creaturely obedience; but the whole Trinity remains involved in this act, the Father by sending out the Son and abandoning him on the Cross, and the Spirit by uniting them now only in the expressive form of separation [\textit{Trennung}].\textsuperscript{426}

Balthasar expresses with the word \textit{Trennung} a paradoxical manifestation of God’s unity by the Spirit: divine unity is only visible in the Passion by means of D3, as seen especially in Mark’s and John’s accounts of the crucifixion of Jesus. He does not yet refer extensively in GL7 to any “infinite distance” in the eternal Godhead between the Persons, but the unity of God between Father and Son in the Spirit’s “spanning” of D3 can only presuppose it. The world’s being comes from God’s being in D1, not as an emanation, but as a result of God’s loving freedom to create. D2, the distance of sinful alienation, occurs as the result of the world’s freedom. D3 then comes about as God remains faithful

\textsuperscript{424} GL7, 251.
\textsuperscript{425} As Hart notes along with Augustine, Athanasius, and Cyril of Alexandria, kenosis is therefore “not a change, but a manifestation, of who God is”; \textit{Beauty of the Infinite}, 357. He cites in this context Cyril on how Christ appropriates human weakness while preserving divine impassibility in ΟΤΙ ΕΙΣ Ο ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ in Cyrille d’Alexandre, \textit{Deux Dialogues Christologiques}, ed. G. M. de Durant (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1964), 312-16 and in \textit{Scholia de incarnatione unigeniti}, PG 75, 1374; Athanasius on the same topic in \textit{Epistola ad Epictetum}, PG 26, 1064; and Augustine on accepting human limitation in the form of a servant cannot diminish God in \textit{Enarrationes in Psalmos} 74.5, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 39:1028.
\textsuperscript{426} GL7, 214; \textit{Herrlichkeit III.2/2}, 198.
to God’s covenant with the world and even assumes the world’s place by virtue of the Incarnation. What we see is D3, but this distance between the Father and Son is not merely a “clean-up job” on D2. D3 reveals to us who God truly is even as it conceals God’s unearthly mystery from us, just as God’s mystery is concealed from Moses on Mt. Sinai when God passes over him in a cloud and proclaims: “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exodus 34:6b-7a). In TD4 and especially in TD5, we will see more of how the inter-Personal distance between Father and Son in the communion of the Spirit (D4) is the analogical foundation for the existence of the world, existing freely as itself in opposition to God (D1).

The Trinity is the Giver of divine revelation according to the Trinity’s own glorious form of being, and only from this source-as-gift can the Church take its own form. More particularly, GL7 is focused on Jesus Christ as God’s Word about God’s Self.\textsuperscript{427} If a believer allows herself to be saturated by the Son’s love for her and for humankind, so that she might “have the same mind” that is in her brothers and sisters (Phil 2:5), the eternal glory of the Trinity can be recognized in its various aspects “in a genuine objective perception.”\textsuperscript{428} These aspects include the Son’s obedience to the Father, the Church’s obedience to the Son, and the mutual love that the disciples have for

\textsuperscript{427} GL7, 211: “The Father shows that this is so, when he raises the Son and elevates him to be the \textit{Kyrios} over all; but one who receives the dignity that belongs to God must already have possessed it (Jn 17.5), and only renounced the enjoyment of it (Phil 2.6; Heb 12.2). Precisely by disclaiming any word of its own, God’s Word demonstrates that it is the ‘word of power’ of the Father, the ‘effulgence of his majesty and expression of his being’ (Heb 1.3).”

\textsuperscript{428} GL7, 260.
each other. The biblical-symbolic movement of trinitarian separation (D3) gives the form of thought so that God’s presence is unveiled in his withdrawal. The logic of this process of presence and withdrawal points to an open-ended horizon, the vastness of which is analogous to the infinite distance in the Holy Trinity (D4). But the manifestation of this beauty across the economic distance of D3 cannot rely entirely on the Incarnate Son, even with the authority granted to him by the Father and even as he goes to the Cross: the Spirit must come, in order for God’s triune glory to be complete.

Those who miss the prominence and significance of Balthasar’s pneumatology might be tempted to jump straight to his ecclesiology; that is, they might get distracted by an over-emphasis on his ecclesial setting for the practices of theology. To make this mistake would be to relegate Balthasar to the vague category of Western Catholic theologians with overly-Christological and historical ecclesiologies and consequently weak pneumatologies. Indeed, Balthasar sees the flesh and blood of pneumatology being played out in the life of the Church as the Body of Christ. But this economic fruit of the Spirit in the Church also preserves the necessary distance between the Church and Christ, between the Body and the Head. Balthasar’s application of (what I am calling) pneumatological D3 enhances the connection of the Church to the historical Christ and protecting against a misguided and simplistic over-identification of the two.

429 Following this logic, Mongrain observes that “the cross’s lesson in trinitarian exile is to prepare Christians for participation in this unity-in-difference of the Trinity. The symbolic power of the Son separating himself from the Father through death and hell teaches the paradoxical trinitarian ‘logic’ of communion through separation”; Systematic Thought, 97. Mongrain calls this Balthasar’s OT hermeneutic of the “Babylonian Exile,” citing GL7; 239-55, 389-415.
430 GL7, 10.
431 GL7, 262-63.
I.C. Pneumatology and Ecclesial Fruits in GL7

The Spirit is the fruit of the Father and Son’s love Who in its Personhood “speaks,” “declares,” and “glorifies” that love in the Church and in the world. Accordingly, Gardner and Moss see Balthasar’s conception of Godhead as something beyond a single, resolvable, static identity. Rather, the unity of the Godhead is an event that involves three different “identities” as God that are mutually constituted in their relations. The Spirit makes the event of the love of the Father and the Son (D4) available to the Church, offering it the chance to be included within this event of love by establishing a new form across a newly redeemed distance (D3): “Here new distance in identity opens up: between the vine and its branches, between Christ and his Church; and as the Father is glorified in the Son, so is Christ through the working of the Spirit in his Church.” This the preservation of D3 in the Person of the Spirit after Christ’s Ascension: it is now the Spirit Who holds open the distance formerly held open by the Incarnate Son by instituting it in the Body of the Son, the Church. The sense of “identity” between the Ascended Christ at the right hand of the Father and the Church on earth here is one of union, but not a lack of distinction. The High-Priestly Prayer ends with Jesus resting in the infallibility of the Father’s love, praying that his loved ones may be united with him in this love and that the world might see it (John 17:22-24).

The Holy Spirit is not mentioned in the text of John’s High-Priestly Prayer, even after Jesus’ lengthy discourses about the sending of the Spirit at the Last Supper. Although this is a difficult exegetical question, there are some narrative clues within the

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432 GL7, 252.
434 GL7, 253.
Gospel of John that suggest why the Spirit is absent in the words of the High-Priestly Prayer. One such clue is a comment by the narrator in 7:39b: “for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified”\(^\text{435}\); another narrative comment reads: “for he gives the Spirit without measure” (Jn 3:34). Jesus must be glorified in order for the fullness of the Spirit to come forth, even as it was given partially to the Prophets of the OT,\(^\text{436}\) because the Spirit reveals the fullness of the mutual love of Father and Son. The Spirit is more than just an impersonal gift of Jesus to his disciples, but is rather a Person whom the Father sends in the name of the Son to the disciples to teach them “all things” and remind them of all that the Son has taught them (Jn 14:26; 16:13–14). This is how Jesus is glorified by the Spirit, who “gives the interpretation of Christ (and in him, the Father) through the Church to ‘the world’.”\(^\text{437}\) These exegetical solutions may not fully satisfy. The point here is that Balthasar centers his argument in GL7 on the fruitful activity of the Spirit sent from the Father to bear witness to the Son as the context of his interpretation of 17:5: “and now glorify me in your presence, Father, with the glory I had with you before the world existed.”\(^\text{438}\)

\(^{435}\) Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1994), 186; he notes, “lest an uninformed reader imagine that John meant that the Spirit was not in existence prior to Jesus’ glorification, copyists introduced a variety of modifications: (1) ‘the (Holy) Spirit was not yet given (δεδοµένου),’...’ etc.” Vaticanus (B) has the “not yet given” variant, and the RSV has chosen to use it. Sinaiticus (P\(^\text{66}\), κ, and many other major witnesses have οὔπω ἦν πνεῦµα, which is rendered in the NRSV translation used here.

\(^{436}\) GL7, 57.

\(^{437}\) GL7, 253.

\(^{438}\) God’s will and action “for the life of the world” is where God’s unity is most vividly perceived in the Bible, and supremely so on the Cross in John’s Gospel. Balthasar’s focus on the Johannine narrative of mutual glorification between Father and Son makes no connection to the Synoptic accounts of the death of Jesus on the Cross. However, the Synoptic accounts of this event also resonate strongly with Balthasar’s dialectical (and aesthetic) point that Jesus is revealed even to Gentiles who would not have any other reason to surmise that He is the Son of the Most High. In Luke, the sanctuary veil’s opening and the eclipse of the sun that occurs lead the centurion to proclaim Jesus’ innocence (Lk 23:44–7). In Matthew, “when the centurion and those with him, who were watching over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were terrified and said, ‘Truly this man was God’s Son!’” (Matt 27:54). But the most striking account (for our purposes here) comes in Mark: “When it was noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon. At three o’clock Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eloi, Eloi, lema
Balthasar’s trinitarian ecclesiology based on D3 in GL7 is meant to show how the proportion that governs the substantial identities of momentum with radiance, kenosis with glory, and obedience with love is both rooted in God and visible on earth in the community of believers. The cruciformity of D3 measures the proportion of this analogy of being between the Trinity and the Church in spite of all the Church’s sufferings and the fact that it is made up of sinners. But the unity that God wishes to bring about will not be fractured, and is even strengthened by the vital tensions produced by D3.

The beginning of an answer to Kilby’s and Levering’s criticism, that Balthasar’s paschal analogy for the Trinity is based on an integration of soteriology with divine processions that carries too high a price, is here in GL7. D3 is meant to preserve the distinction between the eternal mutual glorification of the triune Persons and the kenosis of the Son on the Cross, but his pneumatology is meant to ensure their analogical unity via the unity of the Father and Son as God at this impossible distance of humiliation on

*sabachthani?* which means, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ When some of the bystanders heard it, they said, ‘Listen, he is calling for Elijah.’ And someone ran, filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a stick, and gave it to him to drink, saying, ‘Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down.’ Then Jesus gave a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. Now when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that in this way he breathed his last, he said, ‘ Truly this man was God’s Son!’” (Mark 15:33-39). The Jewish bystanders, who should have known their Scripture, could not even understand Jesus’ reference to Psalm 22. But the Gentile centurion who was not supposed to know anything of the Scriptures and who did not believe (or so we would expect) had only the aesthetic power and the kinetic force of God’s glory and gravitas on the Cross to recognize the Son. Jesus’ “breathing his last” (Mk 15:37, ἐξέπνευσεν) and the centurion’s witnessing of this spiration in conjunction with the “unveiling” of the Holy of Holies and his proclamation of Jesus’ identity (Mk 15:38-39) in the words of the Gospel’s opening line (Mk 1:1) speaks of God’s universally valid Self-revelation to the world; Daniel J. Harrington, S.J., “Mark,” NJBC, 41:106, 628. It is also directly parallel to Jesus’ handing over of his spirit in John 19:30 (παρέδωκεν τὸ πνεῦμα). The revelation to the Gentiles evidenced by the centurion’s proclamation is not mentioned in the Johannine context, but only Pilate’s mocking ascription of the messianic title, “King of the Jews.” C.H. Dodd does “not feel able to decide” whether this use of πνεῦμα is meant merely to suggest an expiration of the body’s life principle or Jesus’ giving of the Holy Spirit, as suggested in my exegesis and towards which Balthasar inclines; C.H. Dodd, *Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 428. However, Raymond Brown and Francis Maloney both interpret Jesus’ spiration in John 19:30 as a giving of the Holy Spirit after having been “lifted up” on the Cross and thereby revealed to the world; R. Brown, *An Introduction to the Gospel of John*, ed. F.J. Maloney (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); 310, 314. This breathing out of the Spirit on the Cross in the presence of the centurion can be qualified in harmony with Balthasar’s view of the Johannine sending of the Spirit upon the disciples by the Risen Jesus on Easter Sunday in John 20:22: “The Spirit that is breathed out (19.30) becomes the Spirit that is eternally breathed in (20.22)”; GL7, 379.
the Cross. This is only the beginning of an answer to their questions, for we still need to think through the conditions for the possibility for such tensions and distances in the Trinity itself. This requires the deeper understanding of D4 that begins to emerge in TD4 and is more explicit in TD5. For Balthasar, “genuine unity always creates and sustains difference; this is true of what arises from below, from organic nature and human society, but also of what comes from above, from the kingdom of eternal, triune love.” There is no such thing as a static, blank, undifferentiated unity, just as there is no real unity that is merely an amalgamation of atomized parts. This way of thinking implicates the concept of form, which in turn implies balance and order. A form is an aesthetic unity with a certain dimension, and dimension implies distance. While GL7 is centered on D3, which is the economic distance of the Incarnate Son on the Cross from the heart of the eternal Trinity, all of Balthasar’s theological senses of distance come together in TD4 to interpret each other and give insight into the NT narrative, into the cognitive dimensions of religious experience, and into the nature of God’s triunity.

II. TD4: Balthasar’s Integrated Soteriology and Trinitarian Theology

II.A. D3 as Balthasar’s “Way Back into the Mystery of the Absolute”

TD4 is centered on the divine kenotic act of God in the Cross of Jesus, as is GL7. The decision on God’s part to make known to the world a deeper form of God’s love “is the heart of the theo-drama.” TD4 begins with a long exegesis of the book of Revelation and its implications for soteriology. It also anticipates throughout the

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439 TD4, 409.
440 TD4, 191.
eschatology treated in the next volume, TD5. TD4 is an intersection of Balthasar’s trinitarian ontology and classic biblical soteriological themes with his religious epistemology. The following text is a programmatic statement of Balthasar’s project and methodology, not only for TD4 but also for his entire theological method. It comes from the very midpoint of the volume and is worth quoting at length:

Accordingly, there is only one way to approach the trinitarian life in God: on the basis of what is manifest in God’s kenosis in the theology of the covenant—and thence in the theology of the Cross—we must feel our way back into the mystery of the absolute, employing a negative theology that excludes from God all intramundane experience and suffering, while at the same time presupposing that the possibility of such experience and suffering—up to and including its christological and trinitarian implications—is grounded in God. To think in such a way is to walk on the knife edge: it avoids all the fashionable talk of “the pain of God” and yet is bound to say that something happens in God that not only justifies the possibility and actual occurrence of all suffering in the world but also justifies God’s sharing in the latter, in which he goes to the length of vicariously taking on man’s God-lessness. 441

The kenosis according to “the theology of the covenant” is what establishes D3, which then lays out the epistemological path for the theologian’s “way back into the mystery of the absolute.” The “mystery of the absolute,” which is the “grounding in God” for the “possibility of intramundane experience and suffering,” is D4, “an absolute, infinite ‘distance’ that can contain and embrace all other distances.” 442 The “negative theology” of which Balthasar speaks is the analogy of being as conditioned by the ontological gap of D1. This negative theology seeks to ensure that the “is not” between God and the world will guard the distinction between the economy and the immanence, between D3 and D4. TD4 continues GL7’s theology of glory and kenosis in this way. 443 And yet both

441 TD4, 324.
442 TD4, 323.
443 See Balthasar’s footnote on the structural importance of “distance” to a trinitarian theology that makes the analogical distinction between glory and kenosis while maintaining their substantial identity; GL7, 249, n.5.
D3 and D4 refer to God; the former being a perfect expression of the latter in an earthly mode. D3 expresses something “that happens in God,” but this expression must justify God’s involvement in the world without compromising God’s impassibility—or it is not God Who is expressed. This “way of thinking” must make clear how God can engage in “Godlessness” in the Person of the Incarnate Son: not only humankind’s native land of D1, but even the conditions of suffering brought about by D2.

The “knife’s edge” in this way of thinking is an ever-present risk. Kilby refers to the classic formations of the Trinity according to which the Father is “unoriginate origin” with the Son and Spirit proceeding from Him. She positively notes Balthasar’s Christology in which the Son’s Personal identity is his very being sent by the Father.\textsuperscript{444} But Kilby believes Balthasar might have slipped on the knife’s edge, having weaved soteriology into trinitarian theology at too great an expense.\textsuperscript{445} How Balthasar does this without illegitimately presuming a God’s-eye view is Kilby’s related criticism, which we have already begun to address. If Balthasar is to be defended on these counts, as I intend to do, it must be shown that his notion of impassibility can accommodate the things he says it does. It must also be shown that he does not violate his own negative-theological principles. My thesis in this section of the chapter is that Balthasar posits \textit{Ur-Kenosis} of the Father as God’s act of Being, but always in the wider context of the Spirit’s perfection of the resulting indwelling (\textit{circumincessio, perichoresis}) of Persons. In this way I hope both to meet the critical challenges to Balthasar’s notion of divine impassibility and demonstrate that his pneumatology is much stronger than some critics.

\textsuperscript{444} Kilby, \textit{Critical Introduction}, 97-98.
\textsuperscript{445} Kilby, \textit{Critical Introduction}; 101-02, 106.
think it is. D3 is still the major “movement” of the Balthasarian symphony in TD4, but
the theme of D4 starts to make an undeniable entrance.

At the beginning of TD4 Balthasar works his way through the vivid and
extremely graphic book of Revelation in a way that does not let the whole biblical canon
get engulfed in apocalyptic mythology. This controversial NT book itself is John’s (or the
Johannine author’s) propheti cal reading of the times from a God’s-eye view. How can one
explain the vividness of this book as an expression of God’s love, power, will, and most
importantly, God’s apatheia or “impassibility”? Balthasar is dialoguing at various points
throughout TD4 with Hegel and Jürgen Moltmann, who both rightly place soteriology
firmly within a trinitarian context—and who are also seeking to view the world from a
God’s-eye view. By making their own integrations of soteriology and trinitarian
theology, they have both made way for a modern recovery of the doctrine of the Trinity.
But as Balthasar’s criticisms of these two thinkers bear witness, one cannot simply
assume this viewpoint—there are rules. In Balthasar’s estimation, it is Hegel and
Moltmann who paint too “integrated” a picture of the immanent Trinity in light of
soteriology and history, a picture too entangled in earth-bound processes. What Balthasar
is trying to do, as Cyril O’Regan notes, is follow a theological path that begins with
Gregory of Nyssa’s thought of the adiastemic (= “without internal distance”) God, who
nonetheless opens an infinite, inviting diastema or diastasis for the soul to enter in peace.
This path then leads through “an interpretation of the most symbolically dense text of the
Bible” (that is, Revelation, in TD4) to “the thought of the distance or interval of the
divine within which the entire world participates” (in TD5).446 O’Regan’s “anti-

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446 O’Regan, Anatomy, 238-39.
Hegelian” genealogy of Balthasarian distance is therefore parallel to the one I propose in this study.

God’s pathos in the divine involvement in creation centers in the Divine Person of Christ, who assumes two different positions in the Incarnation: first as representative of God to humanity, and then of humanity to God. Christ’s economic “placement” is therefore a major theme at the beginning of TD4, and the only way (according to Balthasar’s approach) to a proper understanding of his trinitarian place with the Father and the Spirit. Understanding the Incarnation and Cross as an expression of Divine Pathos is key to Balthasar’s argument about Divine Impassibility.

II.B. Christology of Place, Pneumatology of “We,” Pneumatology of Distance

Balthasar enlists Abraham Heschel to illustrate God’s pathos in the theo-drama, even if Heschel himself explicitly rejects any “metaphysical” reading of God’s pathos. For Heschel God cannot be thought of as unaffected by the people’s sin and rejection, but neither can the divine pathos be a simple, equivocal expression of God’s “feelings.” Rather, the divine pathos is an expression of God’s orientation towards the community of Israel. The divine pathos underlies all of God’s expressions (through the ministry of the prophet) of affection, joy, anger, sadness, and pity. It is manifestation of God’s will for the people, an active care for Israel and a deep desire to bless them: “I will take delight in doing good to them: I will replant them firmly in this land, with all my heart and soul” (Jer 32:41), and “My heart stirs for [Ephraim], I must show him mercy, says the LORD”

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447 TD4, 343-44.  
(Jer 31:20c). Divine wrath always presupposes God’s loving care and can never be seen in isolation.\textsuperscript{450} Care becomes anger only when God is betrayed by humankind’s cruelty, selfishness, and delusion.\textsuperscript{451} But Heschel is resistant to any idea of God’s omnipotence or impassibility in isolation from the people. God’s Shekinah or presence as the One who searches for humankind is central to Jewish theology in Heschel’s thought.\textsuperscript{452} Heschel does not deny “impassibility” in God outright, but rather questions how relevant its emphasis is to the prophetic witness to the Divine Pathos.

Balthasar’s metaphysics based on the Person of the Incarnate Christ as the “concrete analogy of being” is not in disagreement with Heschel’s divine pathos theology. The concreteness of Balthasar’s analogy of being presumes an eschatological trinitarian ontology in which God’s Yes overtakes the world’s No for the purpose of re-creating the world and including it in a new reality (to anticipate TD5),\textsuperscript{453} much like God’s mercy is the wider context for the moment of God’s wrath. In Balthasar’s Old Testament theology of \textit{Glory of the Lord VI} (GL6) even God’s wrath is part of the “entire disclosure of God’s grace,” a function of it that can never be seen in isolation from the wider context of grace, love, and mercy. Balthasar returns to God’s Self-revelation to Moses as God passes by the cave in Exodus 33:23, where God’s anger is slow and always overtaken by graciousness and mercy.\textsuperscript{454} Where love is made possible, even humanity’s sinful rejection of God executed out of its own finite freedom is something that “happens in God.” The Incarnate Jesus’s places or \textit{topoi} are both in the Godhead (where he is “the

\textsuperscript{450} Heschel, \textit{Prophets}, 297-8.
\textsuperscript{451} Heschel, \textit{Prophets}, 282-3.
\textsuperscript{453} TD5, 105.
Other in the non-Other”) and in the world (where, as God, he is “the Other as non-
Other”) on behalf of sinners, as we can see in TD2 (Man in God):

These two dimensions only open up, ultimately, in the Cross of Christ, where—putting it in a nutshell—God himself is forsaken by God because of 
man’s godlessness. Here the nub of the theo-drama must lie: God himself brings it 
to this point so delicately that, on the one hand, nothing godless is imported into 
God and, on the other, man’s freedom is not overridden by a drama within the 
Godhead that seems to have nothing to do with him.455

The last sentence harkens back to the latent pantheism that Balthasar opposed in the early 
Barth, where human beings seemed like more epiphenomena of Christ than real actors in 
the drama of salvation. The context in TD4 to which this passage from TD2 is relevant is 
the real power of evil as the bad fruits of human freedom; human beings contribute— 
negatively by opposition—to the Wucht or Macht with which God’s glory makes its 
impact. Balthasar actually cites Barth’s KD 4.1 in this context on the weight of sin in 
Anselm, for which the Cross serves as a measurement.456 Factoring in this weight 
increases the momentum, or Macht or Wucht, of God’s glory. Wucht can only occur by 
means of the distance that spatially conditions the “speed” or “timing” of God’s action, 
and Israel is the place where the momentum of the dramatic action reaches its peak.457

This peak is also represented in Christ as the telos of the law because the Cross as the end 
(final result, limit, furthest end) of the law reveals the depth of sin.458

At this point it still appears that God’s will is predominantly conditioned by 
“economic” concerns and carried out entirely in response to human sin and suffering. But 
Balthasar’s point is that the origin of this momentum or Wucht lies deep within the

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455 TD2, 194.
456 TD4, 161; cit. Barth, KD IV.1, 455-57.
457 TD4, 173.
458 TD4, 184; cit. P. Schoonenberg, Theologie der Sünde. Ein theologischer Versuch (Einsiedeln: 
Benziger, 1966); 115, 138, 199.
Trinity itself. The momentum is not only, or even primarily, a reaction to the world’s rejection, but is first and foremost a radiant Self-manifestation of God. God in D3 does not stop at opposing sin head on, but assumes humanity’s location in D2 and incorporates it into the momentum of divine kavod and dóxa. This has to do with both Christ’s topos or location within the Trinity and sinful humanity’s location in D2. It is Christ’s trinitarian location in D4 combined with humanity’s freedom that enables even D2 to bear some kind of analogy with D3:

For our shared nakedness, our common lack of an inner orientation toward God and his grace, has caused him to make known to us a deeper and more painful form of his love. Now, for the first time, he has shown us to what depths this love is ready to descend, once it has decided to give a share in absolute love and blessedness to the creatures it has freely (and without any necessity whatsoever) called into existence.

The analogy between D2 and D3 must be seen in the measurement of depth and not in some kind of moral quality or orientation, because the “deeper and more painful form” of God’s love ranks among some of Balthasar’s more controversial language. It is precisely the kind of language that raises concerns on the part of theological feminists and others who are on the lookout for any theological legitimizations or even normalizations of the abuse of power or masochism. And yet, the darkness of the Cross is indeed “experienced” within the Trinity, in “the profound depths of the relations of the Hypostases” in the theodrama. Jesus experiences “the darkness of the sinful state” on the Cross and in his death, but at depths “which are inaccessible to any creature” because of its eventfulness in the very being of the Trinity as the Persons face each other in love.

Does Balthasar then locate suffering in the immanent Trinity? Here the risks of his integration of soteriology and Trinity become apparent. But Balthasar’s point is that

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459 TD4, 190-91.
460 TD4, 336.
God and only God can be the victor over sin and death in the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus. “The heart of the theo-drama” is ultimately an inner-triune event, even as it involves human beings in the world as key players. But this inner-triune event is inaccessible to human experience or thought without a pneumatology that accounts for it, and this is what Balthasar seeks to provide in TD4.

The Spirit’s mode of divine being is that of an “existential exegesis” of divine reality, as John R. Sachs notes. The very witness to the heart of the theo-drama is a Person, the God who is Actor; but the form of the Spirit’s particular trinitarian personhood is unlike that of Father or Son. D3 is only visible through the action of the Spirit. What is more, Balthasar goes so far to claim that the Spirit itself is only visible as distance, in this case D3:

It is only from the Cross and in the context of the Son’s forsakenness that the latter’s distance from the Father is fully revealed; when the unity between them is exposed, the uniting Spirit, their “We”, actually appears in the form of mere distance. The surrendered Son, in bearing sin, that is, what is simply alien to God, appears to have lost the Father; so it seems as if this revelation of the “economic” Trinity brings out, for the first time, the whole seriousness of the “immanent” Trinity.

Because the form of Jesus’ appearance is trinitarian in how the Father’s love fills him completely, the Spirit’s own form is trinitarian by virtue of the unity between Father and Son across D3. But unity across this distance must always refer analogically to infinite distance in the very eternity of God’s life (D4). What is the “seriousness” of the immanent Trinity in D4? The Spirit glorifies the Son because it takes from what is the

461 TD4, 191.
463 TD4, 320. This statement could serve as one of Balthasar’s many interpretive paraphrases of Rahner’s axiom, “the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa” with a certain qualification. Hermann Stinglhammer observes that Balthasar theologizes on God’s infinite freedom from the standpoint of the first half of Rahner’s axiom, because the economic Trinity is grounded in and made possible by the immanent. But to reverse the axiom too simplistically runs the risk of mythologizing the Trinity by subjecting God to the vicissitudes of history; Stinglhammer, Freiheit in der Hingabe, 80-81.
Son’s and declares it to us, and everything that the Father has belongs to the Son (John 16:14-15). What is it that belongs to the Father and also to the Son, to be declared by the Spirit of the distance between them?

The declaration is not said in words in the aesthetics of GL7. Rather, it is the visible revelation of the divine Word who has become silent on the Cross as “not-a-Word.”464 The seriousness of the immanent Trinity will eventually contradict the world’s expectations of what Godhead is in a way analogous to Jesus’ warnings that the Spirit will prove the world entirely wrong about sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8-11). The Spirit’s unveiling of the Godhead of Father and Son comes in the most unlikely of places, at the extreme alienation from God at what looks to the world like D2:

When someone is convicted of a crime punishable by death and is executed, and you hang him on a tree, his corpse must not remain all night upon the tree; you shall bury him that same day, for anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse. You must not defile the land that the Lord your God is giving you for possession. (Deut 21:22-23)

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.” (Gal 3:13)

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor 5:21)

There is no way, according to Paul, that we can become the righteousness of God in Christ if Christ is not already in God. But only Christ crucified possesses the eloquence deeper than human words to reveal this (Gal 1:23), just as the centurion sees when the Son of God breathes his last (Mark 15:39). Therefore, in Balthasar’s understanding of the Rahnerian axiom (“The ‘economic’ Trinity is the ‘immanent’ Trinity and the ‘immanent’

464 GL7, 86: “And if the real ‘place’ of the Christian event at first lets man hear no word, since the place lies in man’s death, yet it more importantly makes visible an event of God (in the most literal sense of the word: ‘they look on him whom they have pierced’).”
Trinity is the ‘economic’ Trinity’\(^\text{465}\) it is by means of God’s Christological Self-expression in D3 and the pneumatology following from it that we have insight into D4. The Rahnerian axiom, which Balthasar takes up in his own way, is always a statement of the doctrine of salvation in light of Scripture and the real human condition. The Spirit as the “form of mere distance” as seen in Jesus on the Cross is therefore not so “mere.”\(^\text{466}\) This is in line with Gregory of Nyssa’s teaching, as we saw in Chapter 1 and PT: the Father is the principle of the unity of the divine nature, but the unity is “perfected in the Spirit who effects all in all.”\(^\text{467}\) The Spirit as the Personal “We” of Father and Son reveals God’s triunity, but as “distance” the Spirit both reveals and protects the distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity. The former identity of the Spirit helps Balthasar meet Rahner; the second helps him address Moltmann.

The Spirit’s trinitarian, Personal identity as the “We” of Father and Son serves as a foundation for one of Balthasar’s significant trinitarian arguments against Rahner in TD4. Rahner concludes in *The Trinity* (in a footnote) that the Father and Son “cannot address each other as “Thou”’ within the immanent Trinity but only in the humanity of Jesus in the economic Trinity: “Hence within the Trinity there is no reciprocal ‘Thou.’ The Son is the Father’s self-utterance which should not in its turn be conceived as ‘uttering,’ and the Spirit is the ‘gift’ which does not give in its turn. Jn. 17, 21; Gal. 4, 6; Rom. 8, 15 presuppose a *creaturely* starting point for the ‘Thou’ addressed to the Father.”\(^\text{468}\) Because there is no Thou in the immanent Trinity between Father and Son, Rahner denies that there is any mutual love among the three “distinct modes of


\(^{466}\) TD4, 320.

\(^{467}\) PT, 167; quoting *C. Maced.*, PG 45, 1329B.

\(^{468}\) Rahner, *The Trinity*, 76, n.30.
It is easy to agree with David Coffey that such a claim is inconsistent with classical Western pneumatology and the magisterium of the Church. It is plainly inconsistent with John 13-17, a section of that Gospel so central for Balthasar in his account of the mutual glorification of the trinitarian Persons before the world began in GL7. But Balthasar’s most potent criticism of Rahner’s conclusion is that it undermines his own interpretive principle of God’s self-communication if there is no Thou within the Trinity with whom to communicate as a “self.” There can be no “We” of the Spirit without the I-Thou of Father and Son. The Spirit perfects and makes objective the I-Thou within the Godhead, eventually making it available to others for their participation. For Balthasar, the absence of any inner-triune I-Thou would imply that the love and glory made known to the world has no foundation in the immanent Trinity, at least not in any way that is meaningful or coherent for human life.

469 These observations are of course made in a footnote and therefore cannot be made into too central a feature of Rahner’s argument. In “Oneness and Threefoldness,” written ten years after The Trinity, Rahner admits that the idea of mutual love and knowledge in the Trinity is “not heterodox,” but he is still quite apprehensive about claiming it himself because he thinks it would unnecessarily complicate the principle of knowledge and love in “the one sphere of the one nature of God”; “Oneness and Threefoldness of God in Discussion with Islam,” in Theological Investigations, Vol.18, trans. E. Quinn (New York: Crossroad, 1983), 112.


471 TD4, 321.

472 Because Rahner is trying to relate the tradition to a contemporary readership, he does not feel comfortable with the word “person.” The word “person,” as we will see below, carries too many problematic notions into Trinitarian theology. Rahner approves of the language of manner in the distinctions of the three hypostases of the Trinity because 1) it safeguards the unity of God but also implies the necessary distinctions within God, which the word “person” cannot do on its own; and 2) it avoids the importation of such incompatible modern connotations of “person” such as three distinct subjectivities; The Trinity, 43-44. See also “Remarks on the Dogmatic Treatise ‘De Trinitate,’” Theological Investigations, Vol.4, trans. K. Smyth (New York: Crossroad, 1982); 101; “Oneness and Threefoldness of God in Discussion with Islam,” 110-113. He admits that “distinct manner of subsisting” says very little about the persons as we have them by itself, but not when it is in turn interpreted by the concept of relation: “these three self-communications are the self-communication of the one God in the three relative ways in which God subsists”; The Trinity, 35. Rahner’s theological anthropology is otherwise so powerfully consistent and adequate that his embarrassment with the word “person” in his trinitarian theology is all the more surprising. It is perhaps the case that Rahner’s very positive convictions on the mystery of God and his vigilance against tritheism combined with his unfortunately narrow conception of modern personhood in such a way that did not allow him fully to account for what he heard in the tradition.
If the distinction between the economic and immanent Trinity in Rahner’s thought cannot accommodate the immanent Trinity’s deepest truth, namely, divine-Personal love, the problem is fundamentally different for Moltmann. Balthasar’s criticisms of Rahner and Moltmann are accordingly complementary. In the latter’s case, the appearance of the Spirit as “mere distance” both reveals and protects the immanent Trinity by revealing its depths behind the “economic” revelation of the Cross. Balthasar notes a particular lack of distance between the immanent and economic Trinity in Moltmann: one cannot “lump together” divine processions with salvation history, so that God’s self-communication would be tangled up in a world process. 473 Balthasar stresses that God always acts freely in accordance with the divine nature and the divine will, and never in reaction to a worldly situation that can subject God to its vicissitudes. Balthasar is thus clearly aware of the potential pitfalls of an integration of triadology with soteriology that Levering and Kilby warn against.

In spite of this obvious awareness of the risks in Moltmann’s and Hegel’s projects and the need to maintain God’s impassibility, Balthasar offers his notion of “divine recklessness” within the Trinity. There are biblical images to which such trinitarian recklessness can point, one of which in TD4 is Revelation’s “Lamb slain since the beginning of the world (Rev. 13, 8; also Rev. chapters 5, 6, 9 and 12).” 474 Balthasar interprets the Lamb who is eternally victorious and yet eternally slain as a sign of the eternal, kenotic, trinitarian event that is the life of God in the divine processions. The image of the Lamb manifests the triumph of God over all evil contained now within the eternity of God’s love after the event of the Cross. But even before it can be a sign of a

473 TD4, 322; “lumping together” is Zusammengeworfen in the German, Theodramatik III, 300.
sin offering, it represents the gift of God eternally present with God as God in an eternal Eucharist. The Incarnation and all it entails (Passion, Cross) does not begin as a temporal event but is rather rooted in God’s impassible, immutable act of existence as triune.\textsuperscript{475}

What is the condition in God for the possibility of the eternally victorious and slain Lamb? Balthasar turns to Bulgakov’s theology of kenosis again for an answer.

\textit{II.C. Ur-Kenosis as Principle of the Triune Act of Being}

As rich as Balthasar’s account of the Trinity’s involvement in the mysteries of Christ is, and as often has he assures his readers of the Oneness of God, some readers feel that Balthasar’s language of “distance” and “rupture” among the Divine Persons does not adequately account for the unity of operation among the Three in the divine economy.\textsuperscript{476} Ur-Kenosis, as borrowed from Bulgakov, is Balthasar’s primary image for thinking of the unity of the divine act, both as it is seen in the economy and in how the economy expresses the immanent Trinity. The \textit{Ur-Kenosis} is the notion of the Father’s “recklessness” that is shared completely by the Son as the slain and victorious Lamb. But the pneumatological account of their “We” and of the “distance” between them forms the complete account of Balthasar’s cruciform Christology.

Balthasar’s major move in TD4 is to think of what God’s acting in history means in Johannine and Pauline terms. The following passage is a fundamental, programmatic integration of all varieties of theological distance in Balthasar’s personal adaptation of the scholastic adage that the world’s diversity has its origins in triune diversity:

\textsuperscript{475} O’Hanlon, \textit{Immutability}, 22.
It is possible to say, with Bulgakov, that the Father’s self utterance in the generation of the Son is an initial “kenosis” within the Godhead that underpins all subsequent kenosis. For the Father strips himself, without remainder, of his Godhead and hands it over to the Son; he “imparts” to the Son all that is his. “All that is thine is mine” (Jn 17:10). The Father must not be thought to exist “prior” to this self-surrender (in an Arian sense): he is this movement of self-giving that holds nothing back. This divine act that brings forth the Son, that is, the second way of participating in (and of being) the identical Godhead, involves the positing of an absolute, infinite “distance” [D4] that can contain and embrace all the other distances that are possible within the world of finitude [D1, D3], including the distance of sin [D2].

There are two points and one implication that are noteworthy in this passage: 1) the Father constitutes himself as Father by his own act of positing the “absolute, infinite distance” of difference in the “initial” kenosis (Ur-Kenosis) that brings forth the Only-Begotten; 2) the Son is thereby constituted as the second way of “being the identical Godhead”; and 3) this means that sin cannot be ontologized as a participation in the eternal being of God because of its quality as a rejection of God’s kenotic way of being. The Ur-Kenosis of the Father, the Son’s thankful response-as-kenosis in order to receive his own Begotten-ness, and their breathing of the Spirit together is the eternal trinitarian event, the eternal sharing of the divine ousia-as-self-emptying. Gregory of Nyssa

477 TD4, 323; see Gardner and Moss: “This emergence of not-God within God is the aporia of creation as a limit ‘within’ God, rather than only ‘from’ (and therefore also ‘to’) God. It is God’s limiting of the world, God’s giving form to the world, in an ‘extension’ of the Urkenosis. For the creation, this is a standing in and through which Balthasar, with Gregory of Nyssa, calls diastasis”; “Something like Time,” 123.

478 TD4, 326; German, Theodramatik III, 303. For Orthodox theologian John Zizioulas, as for the Cappadocians, the Father is the principle of ontological freedom and the “cause” (aiтя) of the Trinity. In the Gospel and First Letter of John, God’s being is fundamentally an act of love (1 John 4:16); it is the Father who is love in this passage. Love is not a hypostatization that is common to all three persons as Trinity; Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1985); 46, n.41. This interpretation is demanded by the concept of the Father as the willing cause of the Trinity, the one who hypostasizes Himself, the Son, and the Spirit out of love as “modes” of existence. There is no love without freedom; otherwise, the act of existence as Trinity is merely the carrying out of necessary, pre-determined, natural functions. But as the Person who begets the Son and brings forth the Spirit from eternity “out of His good pleasure” (a reference to Basil) as “the willing one,” the Father unites the Trinity as a communion of Persons in the substance of the Godhead; Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church (London and New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 121. The Father is therefore the source of the unity of the Trinity. The Son and the Holy Spirit have their respective “freedoms” to exist as hypostases because the Father begets and spirates them as hypostases that are other than the Father, with this otherness being the foundation for their relationships with each other.
explains sin (or kakía, a quality of badness or vice) not as a genuine instance of created
being but only as the annihilation of participation in God as the source of real being.\footnote{PT, 27; cit. Gregory, \textit{In Eccles.} 5, PG 44 681C; 7, 725B.}

Sin is a refusal to participate, a refusal to exist in God’s “mode” of existence in
interpersonal generosity and receptivity. But to believe that human freedom stands over,
against, and outside the realm of divine freedom as a limitation to God’s omnipotence is a
misunderstanding of the relation between the two freedoms. Human beings can never
force God’s hand or ensnare God in “a trap [that God] set for himself” by granting them
freedom in the first place.\footnote{TD4, 326.} Such a mistake would be a simplistic distortion of Anselm’s
atonement doctrine. It might also represent the despair of a self-absorbed sinner who has
no hope in God’s power to save. But Balthasar finds the intelligibility of the divine
processions in the Father’s generosity of “heart”:

On the contrary, it is the drama of the “emptying” of the Father’s heart, in the
generation of the Son, that contains and surpasses all possible drama between God
and a world. For any world only has its place within that distinction between
Father and Son that is maintained and bridged by the Holy Spirit. The drama of
the Trinity lasts forever: the Father was never without the Son, nor were Father
and Son ever without the Spirit. Everything temporal takes place within the
embrace of the eternal action and as its consequence (hence \textit{opera trinitatis ad
extra communia}). So it is unnecessary—in fact, it is nonsense—to imagine a point
of time within infinity when the triune God decides to create a world.\footnote{TD4, 327. Aidan Nichols reminds Balthasar readers of three crucial elements of “God’s
covenanted self-binding—his restriction in the kenosis of creation itself,” namely: 1) that “man acquires the
ability to say No to God as well as Yes”; 2) “In self giving the Godhead observed no limits, thus revealing
at one and the same time power and powerlessness”; and 3) that “our capacity to say No to God itself the
result of the share we were awarded, with our creation, in the divine autonomy”; \textit{No Bloodless Myth}, 167.}

Because created freedom is a state of “sharing in” the infinite (Who is not thereby
diminished), the creature necessarily “contradicts its own character as analogy and image,
a character that arises necessarily from its position within the trinitarian relations” when
it commits sin.\footnote{TD4, 328-29.} In refusing to “participate in the Person of the Son,” the creature negates its own God-given character.

The differences among the varieties of distance serve as Balthasar’s protection against ontologizing sin and suffering within God. The distances of the Father’s \textit{Ur-kenosis} to the Son and of their Spiration of the Spirit always imply a connection without which the idea of “separation” has no meaning. In the Trinity the connection is a communion and a relation. Balthasar states in what could be a paraphrase of 1 John 4:8b (“God is Love”): “For, in this self-surrender, [the Father] \textit{is} the whole divine essence. Here we see both God’s infinite power and his powerlessness; he cannot be God in any other way but in this ‘kenosis’ within the Godhead itself.”\footnote{TD4, 325: “This Son is infinitely Other, but he is also the infinitely Other \textit{of the Father}. Thus he both grounds and surpasses all we mean by separation, pain and alienation in the world [D2] and all we can envisage in terms of loving self-giving, interpersonal relationship and blessedness [D1].”} The logic of God’s divine essence is therefore one of movement. Accordingly, the Son can only be God in the mode of receptivity: “he receives this unity of omnipotence and powerlessness from the Father.”\footnote{TD4, 326.} The \textit{Ur-Kenosis} of the Father is the source of this unity, the Son is its Personal reception, and the Spirit is the union of the gift-as-given with the gift-as-received between them: “Proceeding from both [the Father and Son] as their subsistent ‘We’, there breathes the ‘Spirit’ who is common to both: as the essence of love, he maintains the infinite difference between them, seals it and, since he is the one Spirit of them both, bridges it.”\footnote{TD4, 324.} The Spirit therefore completes the \textit{perichoresis} or \textit{circumincessio} that the Father’s \textit{Ur-Kenosis} begins, and even holds the “shape” of the Trinity, so to speak. This
shape is visible in the Spirit’s witness to the Father’s love and the Incarnate Son’s kenotic faith in response.

**II.D. The Father’s “Recklessness” and the Analogy of Faith**

The increasing presence of D4 as a theme in Balthasar’s trinitarian dramatics anticipates the next volume, TD5 (*The Last Act*). Because all other theological distances are contained in D4, including D2 and God’s “paschal” response to it in D3, the role of Jesus’ suffering takes on an eternal significance. Matthew Levering suspects that Balthasar conflates the economic with the immanent aspects of the Trinity by presupposing too strong a correspondence between Jesus’ human experience of cruciform abandonment and his generation from the Father in the Godhead. For Levering, Balthasar is not necessarily falling (hypocritically) into the same error that Balthasar sees in the common misunderstanding of Anselm, namely, that God must now escape with honor intact from a trap that humankind’s treachery has set. In his critique of Balthasar’s paschal trinitarian analogy, Levering quotes TD5 on the rootedness of this economic distance (D3) in the immanent distance of the eternal Trinity (D4), which gives D3 its eschatological dimension.\(^\text{486}\) The main point of Levering’s critique is that D4 is ultimately negative and alienating, even with the being of God and in spite of what Balthasar intends. Levering objects to what he sees as a violation, not only of a proper distinction between the economy of salvation and the triune life, but also of the law of contradiction in the Son’s knowing-while-not-knowing. He suggests that in order for Balthasar’s paschal trinitarian analogy to work, “Theologically and philosophically, the

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\(^{486}\) Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 129; quoting TD5, 502.
analog requires 1) an understanding of sin as ‘chaff’ so that Jesus can engage sin interiorly without perverting his will, 2) an understanding of charity as made perfect by lack of knowledge, and 3) an understanding of the distinction of Persons as an infinite ‘distance’ encompassing the divide (of will) between sinners and God.\textsuperscript{487}

One must say in response to Levering’s first point that Jesus’ experience of abandonment, ontologically nestled always within the divine communion of Persons, allows him to deal with sin as a state of alienation but not as a perversion of his own human will. It is rather Jesus’ distance from the Father and his taking the place of sinners while remaining in communion with the Father that allows him to engage sin interiorly. To put it another way, as we see in both GL7 and TD4, the interiority of this engagement with sin springs from his experience of abandonment in the world and from his “place” or \textit{topos} in the Trinity, rather than from any hypostatization or substantiality of sin. This is related to Levering’s second point that in order for Balthasar’s analogy to work charity must be perfected in a lack of knowledge. To be sure, Jesus’ lack of beatific vision on the Cross is more than a mere occasion for this externalization of a trinitarian relation in the world (and to the world), because without it there would be no concrete experience of faith that we could understand or that the human Jesus could genuinely have.

Balthasar contemplates in GL1 how the human Jesus possesses an “archetypal faith” that implies a hidden relation to God. The cognitive experience of human distance from God (D1) becomes the mediation of God’s self-revelation to us by virtue of the Incarnation and the action of the Spirit. Jesus has taken on human experience as the “Chalcedonian” mediation of his pre-existent knowledge and love of the Father. Doing

\textsuperscript{487} Levering, \textit{Scripture and Metaphysics}, 131.
theology is for Balthasar an expression of faith from the standpoint of this distance, as well as from the profound distance of the Son’s alienation from the Father on the Cross:

As genuine man he is not a super-man, but rather the perfection of creatureliness in its proper ontological and cognitive distance [Distanz] from the Creator, the perfection also of the Old Testament covenant-relationship between the chosen people, the chosen individual, and the God of the Covenant. In this sense Christ possesses the archetypal faith and the hiddenness of the relation to God which it implies.\(^{488}\)

Barth’s analogy of faith combines with Gregory of Nyssa’s notion of epinoia to point to an “experience” within the Holy Trinity itself. This application of distance and faith to trinitarian theology is seen in the continuation of the passage, scaffolded by references to the distance chart from the General Introduction:

Accordingly, the God-Man’s experience as creature [in D3 from the Father] is, as such, an expression and a function of his trinitarian experience. In other words, his [cognitive] experience of [ontological] distance from God [in D1], which in him constitutes the archetypal fides, is as such the expression of God’s experience of himself within the Trinity in the distance of distinction between Person and Person [D4].\(^{489}\)

D3 forms the link between D1 and D4 in Jesus’ experience of being sent. The general concept of theological distance starts to diversify in these passages in GL1, but the roots of these developments are in the text of PT. This is why Balthasar places special emphasis in PT on the passage in The Life of Moses that mentions the eternal “space” that God has prepared beside God’s Self where the soul can rest in an eternal “running” across infinite distance in infinite desire. Balthasar specifies in later texts the cruciformity of this arena of sanctification in conformity with the mission-consciousness of the Incarnate Christ. The common “mind” of disciples proclaimed in the Philippians hymn contains the true meaning of deiformity in obedience. We have seen in GL7 and

\(^{488}\) GL1, 327; the German Distanz from Herrlichkeit, Band I: Schau der Gestalt (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1961), 315.

\(^{489}\) GL1, 328.
especially in TD4 how the intelligibility of Jesus’ suffering is expressed as God’s own pathos. Balthasar’s further appropriation of Bulgakov’s theology of kenosis as Ur-Kenosis and Adrienne von Speyr’s theology of infinite “surprise” in God will all find their grounding in Jesus’ archetypal faith, as we shall see in Chapters 4.

Regardless of Balthasar’s borrowing of Adrienne von Speyr’s language of “surprise” in TD5 and how strongly it suggests a kind of ignorance or incompleteness, it is rather the distance of mutual esteem and glorification that serves as the concrete intelligibility of D4. It is admittedly strange to think that Jesus’ experience of abandonment on the Cross implies an analogy with his generation from the Father. But, as we have seen in GL7, it is Jesus’ obedience that is identical with his triune love of the Father, not his ignorance. It is not a lack of knowledge but an analogy of faith that perfects charity, a covenant of fidelity and truth in a relationship. How this analogy works we have already seen in Chapter 2 in Balthasar’s analysis in TL1 of the objectively and subjectively personal aspects of truth, as well as in his reading of Karl Barth. This may seem circular at first glance, and there is indeed a dialectical moment in the analogy: whatever we mean by human knowledge is certainly not the means by which Jesus has his connection with the Father during his suffering on the Cross. But for Balthasar, faith can never be reduced to a deprivation of knowledge. It is rather an eternally renewing openness to the Person of the Father, eternally rooted in the triune relations.

The kind of unknowing within the Trinity that Levering criticizes therefore cannot serve as the ground for Balthasar’s analogy of faith in the Trinity, and nor can it be inferred from Balthasar’s D4 (in our terminology). The third of Levering’s points above, which concerns Balthasar’s paschal trinitarian analogy, is really a concern for how the
infinite distance of D4 could encompass the divide between God and sinners in D2. Answering this question necessitates a principle for distinguishing D4 from D3, which Levering does not believe Balthasar has provided. I have attempted to show how the *analogia entis* governs this distinction with a refocusing on the admittedly hard-to-pin-down “center” of triune life in the de-centered “letting-be” of the divine Persons out to each other. But propositional statements about the doctrines of the faith do not ultimately apply to static concepts; they apply to living, personal realities. The fidelity and love of Jesus is the ground of the intelligibility of the analogy, not his human ignorance. These questions regarding Jesus’ experience of faith as an analog for his divine life will be dealt with in the next chapter when we consider Levering’s critique of Balthasar on Jesus’ consciousness.

For Gregory of Nyssa as well as for Balthasar, there is no way to come to any true knowledge of God *except* via one’s experience of growth and progress as God’s image. This is a more dynamic and relational (and less stringently propositional) method of doing theology. God allows the creation to stand over-and-against God in D1, which is conceived of as a kind of “divine God-lessness on God’s part,” the condition for the possibility of sin in creation and the suffering resulting from the human-caused distance of D2.\(^490\) This suffering, while not caused by God and not properly a condition of God’s own existence, corresponds analogically to the divine “recklessness” within the Trinity. The intelligibility of the analogy between sin and this Balthasarian “divine recklessness” lies in the notion of “godlessness,” both in creation and in sin. Both of these bear a further analogical relationship with the *Abstand*, the separation, the “not-being-Father” of the Son’s eternal generation:

\(^{490}\) TD4, 324.
As a result of the creation, the most positive God-lessness on God’s part [creation and D1] has produced a real, negative godlessness [sin and D2]; the latter is impossible to God because he is always in a covenant relationship with his creation, and particularly because of his formal covenant with Noah and Israel. It is “unbearable” for the rebellious, sinful, self-sufficient creature to look divine love in the face; this means that God too finds it “unbearable”—precisely because he has to “bear” it and it causes him to suffer. Man’s refusal was possible because of the trinitarian “recklessness” of divine love, which, in its self-giving, observed no limits and had no regard for itself. In this, it showed both its power and its powerlessness and fundamental vulnerability (the two are inseparable). So we must say both things at once: within God’s own self—for where else is the creature to be found?—and 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. 491

D3 is the earthly expression of this triune “recklessness.” Balthasar expresses with this word “recklessness” the absolute generosity of God from the standpoint of sinners who have spurned it in D2. But D3 is also (simultaneously) an expression of God’s omnipotence in sending the Son. The divine, immortal, and eternal God refuses to suffer sin, and so God acts in D3 as an expression of the personal truth of D4: the Father sends the Son in the power of the Spirit. But what is accomplished in D3, namely, the reconciliation of sinners, is now seen in terms of what was always true about the Father, Son, and Spirit in D4. Following this analogical translation of D4 into D3 and borrowing Balthasar’s argument from TD2, one must conclude that there can be no alienation in D4: “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 (because it can neither go back and take possession of its origins nor can it attain its absolute goal by its own power), becoming alienated from itself in the realm of the infinite.” 492  It is a syllogistic argument, if Balthasar’s premises are granted: the Trinity is an event of letting-be in D4; the sending of Son and Spirit in D3 expresses D4 on earth; D3 also redeems D2 and reorients it as the

491 TD4, 329.
492 TD2, 259.
original D1; reconciliation with God implies reconciliation among creatures; therefore, alienation cannot occur in God.

Does this mean that all of creation will eventually be redeemed and reconciled with God and within itself? Balthasar has been criticized for suggesting this possibility without due caution. But he claims universal salvation is God’s will, even if not all of creation is cooperating and participating at the moment. It is difficult to imagine the ramifications of what Balthasar means by the “unbearability” of sin for an omnipotent God without picturing this God overpowering the wills of creatures who reject the divine will. To open up a new possibility for sinful creatures who have desecrated the divine image in the world, God takes their place of punishment in the Son.

Aidan Nichols explains that the Son already and always represents the world from the very place of his distance from the Father in D3, which represents in an earthly mode his *topos* within the Trinity at D4. The Son shares everything with the Father: “it was of his own volition that the Son desired only to do the Father’s will, to fulfill his own mission.”[^493] What appears on the Cross cannot be punishment from God’s objective standpoint because it is freely chosen by the Son out of love for and obedience to the Father. But from the standpoint of the Son’s experience, “subjectively the Cross was punishment” because it was the pouring out of the Father’s wrath over sin in the world. The section of TD4 dealing with René Girard’s “The Scapegoat Mechanism” is a significant example of how Balthasar thinks through the problems of wrath and love,

punishment and reconciliation.\textsuperscript{494} The analogy of divine being between D3 and D4 becomes all important as the key to understanding his reading of Girard.

According to Girard’s Scapegoat Mechanism, God’s wrath takes the form of humanity’s own murderous evil against itself in the crucifixion of the Victim. Real human evil (and possibly diabolical evil as well) lies at the root of every culture in the form of a foundational murder, a killing of Abel by Cain. Jesus Christ on the Cross is the ultimate revelation of the violence lurking at the roots of human communal life; he is the rejected Human One Who lets himself function in the murderous exchange of the death of an innocent for a false and temporary peace in society. But Balthasar, appreciative as he is of the power of Girard’s analysis, corrects him by insisting on the theological reality undergirding the Cross’s confrontation with the Scapegoat Mechanism. God is always responding to human evil in the divine economy, but God is never determined by it. Only the Son from his eternal divine \textit{topos} within the Trinity, God Himself, can work this process of salvation out to the end. We have already seen this in GL7,\textsuperscript{495} and Balthasar continues to develop the same line of thought in TD4 by once again centering his focus on the Markan Jesus’ cry of abandonment. The true significance of this cry lies within God, which means that “abandonment” must refer to some analogically transcendent reality within God:

We are only establishing negative limits, so to speak, by eliminating the two above-mentioned extremes [of the Trinity hovering “unmoved” above the events of the Cross or of the Trinity getting entangled in sin as in Moltmann or Hegel]: if Jesus can be forsaken by the Father [in D3], the conditions for this “forsaking” must lie within the Trinity, in the absolute distance/distinction [D4] between the Hypostasis who surrenders the Godhead and the Hypostasis who receives it. And while the distance/distinction between these two is eternally confirmed and

\textsuperscript{494} TD4, 297-316.
\textsuperscript{495} GL7, 211.
maintained ("kept open") by the Hypostasis who proceeds from them, it is transcended in the Godhead that is the absolute gift they have in common.\textsuperscript{496} With this passage, Balthasar institutes what he believes is a more adequate apophatic theology that refuses, like Heschel, to lock God into a state of indifference with regard to the world’s sin and suffering, even as it also refrains from dragging God into a process of becoming. Without the divinely grounded capacity that Jesus has to bear the weight of sin, humankind would never have been able to “load it on him.” But he is willing to bear it with a willingness “grounded in the distinction we have established, within the mission, between the ‘life’, which is preparatory, and the ‘hour’, which is the goal of his expectation.”\textsuperscript{497} The vividness of Balthasar’s picture of trinitarian soteriology is therefore based on the intimacy that must always be presumed when thinking of infinite and absolute distance, whether it be D4 or D1. It is “The fear of the Lord, which is the basis of all wisdom (Prov 1.7; Sir 1.11-20), [that] places man only in that distance of reverence which permits true and unlimited intimacy with God” in the OT.\textsuperscript{498} And yet, for Jeremiah, the intimacy of God can be so overwhelming that the only protection from God’s terrible grandeur is the “incomprehensibility” of God’s simultaneous distance: “‘Am I only a God at hand, says Yahweh, and not also a God afar off?’ [Jer 23:33].”\textsuperscript{499} The way Balthasar thinks diastasis and distance, particularly with regard to trinitarian relations, requires this intimacy for its intelligibility. God will not suffer the refusal of God’s love by simply letting it stand. Human beings are already always invited to

\textsuperscript{496}TD4, 333. See also GL7, 211: “Only God himself can go right to the end of the abandonment by God. Only he has the freedom to do this. The Father shows that this is so, when he raises the Son and elevates him to be the \textit{Kyrios} over all; but one who receives the dignity that belongs to God must already have possessed this (Jn 17.5), and only renounced the enjoyment of it (Phil 2.6; Heb 12.2). Precisely by disclaiming any word of its own, God’s Word demonstrates that it is the ‘word of power’ of the Father, the ‘effulgence of his majesty and the expression of his being’ (Heb 1.3).”

\textsuperscript{497}TD4, 334.

\textsuperscript{498}GL6, 162.

\textsuperscript{499}GL6, 256.
participate in the Eucharistic eternal reception of the Father’s love by the Son, and in the Son’s autonomy by means of their own God-given autonomy.\textsuperscript{500}

Will sinful creatures eventually let themselves be expropriated by God and included back into their sharing in the divine image of D4? We now see in the theodrama only what God wills for the end, while it is up to creation to play its own role according to its finite freedom. There is still a risk involved, because God can only integrate the form of sin in D2, which results in the form of D3, back into a glorious D1 to be re-included within D4. God does not compel the creature’s will and does not negate its status as an image of God. Even the sinner still retains a remnant of trinitarian dimensions just by being alive and free. Just as the Son “participates” in sin by “becoming sin” in D3, so even does the sinner “participate” in the Trinity by being free, even in a tragically distorted and inverted mode that only increases separation and compromises the sinner’s very being: “Like the ultimate ground that cannot have some further rationale beyond it and is hence ground-less—that is, the Father’s self-surrender to the Son and their relationship in the Spirit (which grounds everything)—human freedom participates in the divine autonomy, both when it says Yes and when it says No.”\textsuperscript{501} Trinitarian life and fully human life are based on “self-expropriation” within the Trinity itself: by generating the Son, who is truly other and different, the Father has expropriated himself for the Son. The Spirit is divine-Personal in a similar way to the Father and Son: “For the Spirit does not want anything ‘for himself; but, as his revelation in the world shows, wants simply to be the pure manifestation and communication of the

\textsuperscript{500} TD4, 329.
\textsuperscript{501} TD4, 328.
love between the Father and Son (Jn 14:26; 16:13-15).”

This brings us to the more properly economic aspect of Balthasar’s pneumatology in TD4, which goes hand-in-hand with his Christology of place and Christ’s archetypal faith. The Spirit first manifests Jesus’ own place and hour to him and then Jesus to the world as the Christ before the Spirit is sent by the Risen Jesus upon the world in power. Balthasar calls this the “trinitarian inversion.”

II. E. The Trinitarian Inversion and the Spirit’s Perfection of Ur-Kenosis and Kenosis

Without the coming of the Spirit, there is no more economic distance after the Ascension. The logic of the inversion of the Son’s position vis-à-vis the Spirit before and after the Resurrection and Ascension is necessary for Balthasar’s insight into Jesus’ experience of his hour. The Spirit has two different roles respective of the immanent and economic aspects of the Trinity: to unite the Father and Son in immanence, and to anoint and send the Incarnate Son as the Christ in the economy. Both roles are relevant to the hour of Jesus as the full revelation of the Father. In Luke-Acts the Spirit constitutes Jesus as the Christ on earth in his conception (Lk 1:35) and in his baptism (Lk 3:22), drives him into the desert to fast and pray (Lk 4:1), leads him back to Nazareth and anoints him to prophesy and preach (Lk 4:14-18), fills him with the power of prophecy and prayer (Lk 10:21), and constitutes the Church at Pentecost (Acts 2:4). The theological priority of the Spirit’s procession from the Father (Jn 15:26) and being given abundantly by the Son

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502 TD4, 331.
503 TD4, 364-65; the “trinitarian inversion” occurs as Jesus’ submission to the Holy Spirit, the very Spirit that proceeds from the Father with and through him. This presumes a discussion on the trinitarian inversion from TD3, 183ff., which Balthasar frequently cites in TD4. See Zizioulas, Being as Communion, 110-13 for a comparable development of this theme in the context of the pneumatological constitution of Christology, ecclesiology, and trinitarian theology.
“without measure” (Jn 3:34) is more prevalent in John’s Gospel. However, even in John, the Spirit is sent by the Father in a similar way to that in Luke-Acts to bear witness to the Son in the disciples’ prayer and ministry (Jn 14:26), even if the Johannine Jesus actually breathes the Spirit into the disciples directly after his Resurrection (Jn 20:22). The Johannine Spirit, similarly to the Lukan Spirit, descends upon Jesus so that John the Baptist can recognize him (Jn 1:32), even if there is no Johannine account of Jesus’ own baptism. But the Johannine Jesus does indeed submit to the Spirit in order to establish his own identity on earth. But even in this Johannine passage, Jesus is immediately known to John as the one who baptizes with the Spirit. The trinitarian inversion occurs in Jesus’ human submission to the Holy Spirit because it is “fitting” to do so (Matt 3:15), even though from his immanent trinitarian location he has always sent the Spirit Who proceeds from the Father with and through him (John 15:26). When the Spirit reveals to Jesus his hour it can only be overwhelming. Deluded humanity in its “perverse 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.”\(^{505}\) But he must do this in the economy in order eventually to send the Spirit from the Father after the Resurrection.

The sending of the Spirit by the Risen Jesus is for the purpose of humanity’s new divine filiation vis-à-vis the Father, with Jesus the divine Brother. Jesus “gives himself eucharistically,” but in baptism he also “enables [God’s new children] to participate in his proceeding from the Father. However, the grace of sonship is always identical with the bestowal of the Spirit of Christ.”\(^{506}\) And so the Risen Jesus is our forgiveness, because his

\(^{505}\) TD4, 335.  
\(^{506}\) TD4, 366.
is the freedom in which we can participate in the Covenant. In the Resurrection believers participate in the Covenant by being made divine by the Spirit in the communion that is the Body of Christ. There is heilige Distanz (D3) and unheilige Distanz (D2), the former being “the basis on which the unheilige Distanz of the world’s sin can be transposed into it, can be transcended and overcome by it.”\(^{507}\) This happens when D4 issues out to the world in D3 so that “the world’s fate [is lifted] to the level of the economic Trinity, which always presupposes the immanent.” Without the action of the Spirit, there is no more access even to D3, let alone D4. The Spirit witnesses to the D4 by keeping the distance of D3 open for believers after the Son has returned to the side of the Father in D4.

Balthasar’s pneumatology in TD4 is initially grounded from the economic perspective: “For the Spirit accompanies the Son’s entire mission, shares in the experience of it and, as it were, enfolds this mission in himself.”\(^{508}\) Looking back to the aesthetics of GL7, Jesus as “the icon of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15) only becomes visible when the God whom he represents withdraws and allows the icon to be other-than-God, and then when the Spirit remains after the Son himself has withdrawn: “[the Spirit’s] work unfolds as a consequence of the bringing about of a ‘distance’ between the Father and the Son in the kenosis and the ‘abolition’ of this [distance] in the return of the Son to the Father, and hence lies out beyond the ‘form’ which Jesus made visible to us and the subsequent replacement of this by invisibility.”\(^{509}\) The leftover invisibility of the Son after his “withdrawal” from the disciples in Emmaus and in the Ascension becomes the focus of the religious experience by way of being drawn deeper into the mystery that

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\(^{507}\) TD4, 362; German: Theodramatik III, 337.

\(^{508}\) TD4, 384.

\(^{509}\) GL7, 389.
has been glimpsed but never grasped. The Cross represents both the distance and the “hour;” hence Balthasar’s image of momentum or Wucht. The Spirit who is “set loose in and for the world” now gives the access to the experience by including the believer within this power and momentum of the Cross and Resurrection. The two focal points of the drama are: 1) the triunity of God’s love that persists throughout the story, and 2) the sense of timing without fidelity to which there is no manifestation of that love. The “trinitarian Spirit” manifests both the unity of God across D3 between Father and Son and the timing of the eternally eventful theo-drama. The sense of time in this “timing” informs the theologoumenon of perichoresis, of “dancing around”: the Spirit now (the appropriate time) completes the Ur-Kenosis and kenosis of the Father and Son in the economy just as it has done so eternally in the immanent Trinity.

John’s Gospel says that before the Cross “there was no Spirit yet” (7:39) because the Spirit is not the kind of “thing” or “stuff” that Jesus can infuse into the disciples step by step. The Spirit is one and whole, the personal involvement in the divine trinitarian act, because it speaks and witnesses according to the promises of the Johannine

510 We have noted that Balthasar’s theology of distance is one of the most significant influences on Jean-Luc Marion’s phenomenology and theology; Horner, Jean-Luc Marion, 51-52. Regarding the “withdrawal” Marion writes: “The one who would like an evidence of God other than this manifest withdrawal undoubtedly does not know what he asks for. Unless he asks that God himself be made Bild, eikōn, and therefore that he there still remain in withdrawal so that his own image might be born. And withdrawal is established then at the very heart of God: kenosis”; The Idol and Distance: Five Studies, trans. Thomas Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001), 89. In a footnote to this passage Marion acknowledges the basis of his thinking on distance and withdrawal in Balthasar’s chapter on kenosis in GL7, Pt. I. God’s kenosis involves a withdrawal that creates the momentum of the attraction of the believer’s gaze, not only in the prayerful contemplation of a Byzantine icon, but in any kind of contemplative spiritual experience: “The icon regards us—it concerns us, in that it allows the intention of the invisible to occur visibly…. The icon opens in a face, where man’s sight envisages nothing, but goes back infinitely from the visible to the invisible by the grace of the visible itself: … the icon opens in a face that gazes at our gazes in order to summon them to its depth”; God Without Being: Hors-Texte, trans. Thomas Carlson (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 19.

511 TD4, 319-20.

512 TD4; 324, 384.

513 Many ancient witnesses have “had not yet been given” instead of “was not yet,” but the latter is probably more authoritative.
Last Supper discourses. The Spirit gives gifts according to Paul (1 Cor 12-13), and actively directs the life of the Church in Acts. It is neither an ontological “product” of the immanent Trinity nor a bi-product of God’s collision with sin. What people see in the whole economy of salvation (the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, Ascension, etc.) is the unity of God: just as Christ has a trinitarian form, so does the Spirit. Christology and pneumatology always need each other in Balthasar’s thought. Jesus is the synthesis of his own entire mission, and therefore he who has the Spirit “without measure” (John 3:34) is authorized to give it to whomever he wishes in abundance. But while Jesus is the synthesis of the mission in his very person, he cannot be such without the Spirit. After his death and Resurrection, Christian persons and the whole Church can be new “syntheses” of the mission of Jesus after the form of Jesus himself, according to the unitive graces of the Spirit.

Therefore it is difficult to agree with Kilby that Balthasar’s pneumatology is characteristic of Western Catholic theology’s weaknesses. Without the pneumatology that I have outlined in this study so far, Balthasar would certainly be liable to allegations that he has speculated on dubious Father-Son divine relations that depend too exclusively on the earthly drama of the Cross. But Balthasar rather seeks to show that the Spirit is the very availability to the world of something within the Trinity that precedes even the Cross. The Cross is necessary for us to see it; but the Cross does not constitute the inner-divine reality in which we are invited to participate. There is no participation in it without

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515 TD4, 385: “We always carry in the body the death of Jesus, so that the [glorified] life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies’ (2 Cor 4:10). ‘Always’ refers to the fact that a certain temporal succession of phases is a natural possibility, arising out of the historical nature of our existence, but it is secondary: the most important factor is the unity and integrity of the Spirit of Christ, simultaneously bearing death and Resurrection within him.”
the Spirit; only a view from across time into the Scriptures, which in turn view the Son and the Father’s right hand merely from D1. But the new D3 of the Spirit involves and includes the spectator in something new, something alive.

What I have attempted to show in TD4 is that *Ur-Kenosis* serves as the trinitarian-ontological foundation for Balthasar’s Christology and pneumatology, while his pneumatology spells out the full ramifications of his “paterology” of *Ur-Kenosis*. TD4’s contemplation of the unity of God as Actor, both in the immanence and in the economy, presupposes the aesthetic analysis of the divine form of revelation given in GL7. The infinite distance between the Father and Son in the immanent Trinity (D4) must always be distinguished from that of the economic Trinity (D3) because the latter is conditioned by the world’s suffering. But D3 must always also be considered as expressive of the eventfulness of D4. According to the logic of the *analogia entis*, the reverse can never be said: D4 cannot be “expressive” of the eventfulness of D3. Gardner and Moss’ formula of the analogy of being provides a paraphrase: D3 is more like D4 than D4 is like D3.

Mongrain observes that Catholic theology—not just as Balthasar presents it, but in general—must account for the fact that the economic trinity “interprets itself as the epistemological ground for the immanent Trinity, but not that the immanent Trinity is the ontological source for the economic Trinity.”517 This distinction between *epistemological* and *ontological* is a tricky one, but it does preserve Balthasar’s intent: certainly D3 cannot express a “natural process” that occurs within the Godhead and then must work itself out in creation in order for God to “be God.” The “process” that we see in salvation history and the economy of salvation does indeed occur, but only as an epistemological cipher for the dynamic love of God that is utterly free and does not accord with the

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limitations of inner-worldly suffering. The D3 of the Cross, which takes place in time, reveals the triune love of D4 by laying out a distance that also conceals it. D4 seen as the “dimensions” of God’s loving act of Ur-Kenosis is “prior” to the dimensions of God’s response to the Godlessness of the world in D3 and does in a way “cause” these salvific dimensions to take on a certain form. But D3, which manifests the expanse of God’s love to the world in response to its rejection, does not thereby determine the shape or expanse of that eternal love, which lies behind it in a like manner to the mysterious depths lying behind a Byzantine icon. Therefore D3 possesses the form of the analogy for D4, but the Ur-Kenosis from Father to Son and then to Spirit that establishes D4 only allows for the possibility of this form to be manifested to a sinful world as D3. The critical epistemological characteristics of D3 are the result of a world stuck in D2 vis-à-vis God. To put in another way, God’s internal act of love is the condition for the possibility of God’s external act of love that redeems a lost world, but the latter is contingent upon the world’s free acts of acceptance and rejection in a way that the former can never be. The analogia entis governs the distinctions among the varieties of distance, D1-D4, within a metaphysics centered on kenosis as the mutual act of “letting-be” among the divine triune Persons. But, it is only D3 that reveals the epistemological form of this analogy: “it is only on the basis of the economic Trinity that we can have knowledge of the immanent Trinity and dare to make statements about it.” The kenosis of the Son conditions all statements about the Ur-Kenosis of the Father, but the latter is an expression of God’s pure act of Being that guards what the Fathers and the Scholastics intend to guard with the notion of apatheia or impassibility. We have also seen how the Spirit perfects this

518 TD3, 508; quoted by Mongrain, Systematic Thought, 58.
impassibility so that there is no need for any created “partners” in the fulfillment of God’s life.

Conclusion: Soteriology to Eschatology

Eschatology has already begun to emerge as the wider context for Balthasar’s thought in TD4, if not also previously in GL7. Redemption from sinful D2 is also the beginning of an incorporation into Jesus’ own triune life that has its origins and its end in eternity, and this is an eschatological event as well as a soteriological one.\(^{519}\) God’s kenotic outpouring through the Son in his paschal mission, sacramental presence, and revelatory teaching “for the life of the world” (John 3:16; 6:33; 6:68) bears an analogy with the soul’s response to God in \textit{epéktasis}. The \textit{epéktasis} of Gregory of Nyssa functions implicitly in Balthasar’s analog for divine life by virtue of the Spirit’s gift to human believers of a share in Jesus’ trinitarian indwelling.\(^{520}\) Balthasar has already explained in PT how the conscious reception and acknowledgment of one’s own createdness vis-à-vis God is the creature’s way of participating in God’s being:

> “Since it possesses the beginning (\(\alphaρχή\)) of its being by way of change, it is impossible that it should not be entirely variable (\(τρεπτός\)).” For the material creature, this perseverance is precisely time. For the spiritual being, on the other hand, it is participation in the cause of being not only insofar as it is the source but also insofar as it is end. Since its existence is, so to speak, a continuous effort to maintain itself in being, its perfection consists of a perpetual effort toward God. This effort is the spiritual participation in God: “Creation stands within the realm of the beautiful only through a participation in that which is best.”\(^{521}\)

\(^{519}\) Nichols notes that “soteriology and eschatology are separated more in notion than in reality” in Balthasar’s thought; \textit{No Bloodless Myth}, 165.


\(^{521}\) PT, 37; the first embedded quotation is from Gregory, \textit{Catech.} 21, PG 45, 57D; the second is from \textit{CE 7}, PG 45, 797A.
The effort will never result in the creature being God according to the divine nature. But a finite being participates in God’s act of eternal Being by grace, that is, as a gift; and it holds a place within God because it is in relation to God.

The spiritual effort of *epektasis* towards God in D1 (Gregory’s Δ2) is always carried out under the conditions of created existence (Gregory’s Δ1), but Christ has condescended to participate in this conditioning in the Incarnation. Christ’s condescension allows life within this gap to become the created spirit’s mirrored participation in God’s D4. This is always an eschatological reality because it is never finished, no matter at what stages of the journey the Christian, the Church, and the world find themselves. But its open-endedness becomes blessedness and endless gift. The incorporation of the world into D4 always presumes its prior incorporation in the cosmic Body of Christ, but all distances are maintained. Without these interpersonal distances, Balthasar says in TD5, there is no possibility for love in the image and likeness of God:

> If God’s idea of the world is to bring heaven and earth together in Jesus Christ in the fullness of time, … it follows that this incorporation of all created beings into the Begotten is, in trinitarian terms, the most intimate manner of union with God. For it implies that the creaturely “other-than-God” [in D1 and even D2] is plunged [via D3] into the uncreated “Other-in-God” [in D4] *while maintaining* that fundamental “distance” [D1] which alone makes love possible.522

The “plunging” of D1 into D4 is how Balthasar develops the patristic and metaphysical teaching of all created difference as rooted in the eternal generation of the Word. The eventfulness of creation in all its diastemic tension (Δ1) is included within and even serves as an analog for the eternal eventfulness of the divine life (in D4).

I have outlined in this chapter Balthasar’s soteriological dimensions of D3 as the analogical window into D4. D3 and D4 are ultimately intelligible only in terms of each

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522 TD5, 105; emphasis in English translation.
other, even if there is a greater dissimilarity in the latter. The journey of created existence towards its essence as an adopted child of God conformed to the Only-Begotten Son of God is necessarily cruciform. But it is also an analogy for trinitarian life in eternal Personal relations of coming-forth and *circumincessio* or *perichoresis*, at once originary and eschatological. The next chapter examines TD5, in which Balthasar meditates on the “all-embracing frame” of this trinitarian theo-drama from an eschatological perspective. It is in that volume where his “Nyssan” project reaches its climax and where the imagery is most vivid. It is also where some of the aspects of kenosis introduced in GL7 and TD4 will implicate Balthasar’s and Adrienne von Speyr’s images of gender in the Trinity. TD5 forms an integral unity with TD4 in spite of Balthasar’s very different method in writing the former. This method involves heavy quotations from Adrienne von Speyr as eidetic illustrations of the eschatological truth of the triune relations. Balthasar takes great risks in TD5; the results of this risk-taking are not always fortunate. The next chapter is groundwork for a retrieval of Balthasar based on the pitfalls of his “gendered” theology and strengths of TD5 in light of the “symphonic” genealogy of distance that I have sought to provide. Balthasar is in need of retrieval in TD5, but I propose that he is worth retrieving.

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CHAPTER 4
THEOLOGICAL DISTANCE IN BALTHASAR’S TRILOGY, PART II:
THEO-DRAMA V

Introduction

The Pauline, Johannine, and Nyssan Theological Background for TD5

This chapter is an exploration of Balthasar’s eschatological view of the “all-embracing frame,” namely, the distance of the Incarnate Son in space and time from the trinitarian processions in eternity (D3); and of his theological-analogical theory of how all earthly “becoming” (epéktasis in Δ1) becomes safely within the “being” of the Trinity (in D4) by virtue of this all-embracing frame. The previous chapter on GL7 and TD4 focused on how the soteriological dimension of kenosis and D3 provides the foundation for an eschatological trinitarian theology of D4. The kenosis of the Son gives insight into the Ur-Kenosis of the Father, but the Ur-Kenosis is now seen to establish the hierarchy of the divine processions in D4. The Holy Spirit is the perfecter of this triune perichoresis and mutual indwelling of the Persons in the Godhead. But because of the grounding of the divine missions in these divine processions, D3 is now grounded in D4. While it is always true that the free response of the creation in D1 from God allows for the possibility of D2, the Son engages and challenges D2 with the Cross: he does not share in the sinner’s will in D2, but in D3 Christ assumes the position vis-à-vis God as the Accursed One on the Cross (Gal 3:13). The Son thus participates in the sinful state of the human spirit, even if the Son does not share in the sinner’s will. Because D3 is an expression of D4, the conditions for hell as D2 therefore exist in God by virtue of the

524 TD5, 423.
possibility of the sinner’s rejection of God’s mercy in Christ. God does not participate in
the rejection, but neither does God force the sinner to participate in God’s kenotic and
generous way of Being. D4 is the metaphoric structure of this kenotic generosity and
therefore also represents the bond of greatest intimacy among the divine Persons.
Because of this intimacy within God, intimacy with God in epéktasis now bears a limited
resemblance to “something like” epéktasis between the divine Persons themselves. The
genealogical outline of Balthasar’s symphonic development of theological distance begun
with Gregory of Nyssa’s Δ1 and epéktasis in Chapter 1 is rounded out with the
eschatological view of D4 in TD5.

The criticisms of Balthasar by Kilby, Levering, and Tonstad that I have been
referring to throughout this study come to a head in the context of TD5. TD5 is perhaps
the best example of what Kilby calls Balthasar’s “vivid” and “unfettered” thought.
Balthasar seems to know that he takes risks in the volume’s vivid integration of D3 with
D4, but he defies Karl Rahner’s accusation of his “Gnosticism” and claims to uphold
God’s absolute mystery and impassibility in “an astonished stammering as we circle
around this mystery on the basis of particular luminous words and suggestions in Holy
Scripture.”.

Levering’s criticisms of Balthasar’s paschal analogy of cruciform
abandonment accordingly become more serious in TD5, as does Levering’s suspicion of
the metaphysical grounds of Jesus’ experience of “not-knowing” as an Incarnate
trinitarian Person. Balthasar’s theological distance ultimately implies to Levering
nothing more than a radicalization of alienation in God. Tonstad’s criticism that
Balthasar’s integration of gender essentialism with kenosis and classical hierarchical

525 TD5, 13.
526 Levering, Scripture and Metaphysics; 121, 126-29, 131.
triune processions makes the latter two irretrievable likewise becomes urgent in the
context of TD5. I argue, in response to Kilby and Levering and like-minded critics, that
TD5 is Balthasar’s summation of a theological development in which D4 serves as an
intelligible triune image of divine impassibility and perfection. The image of D4 as triune
intimacy that eschatologically includes creation within it also provides the basis for a
response to the concerns of Tonstad and others, for whom hierarchy and kenosis are
bound irretrievably together with Balthasar’s gender essentialism.

Kenosis and the hierarchy of triune processions have more to do with Balthasar’s
understanding and use of diastasis and epéktasis in Gregory of Nyssa than they do with
sexual difference. The Ur-Kenosis of the Father must always be properly distinguished
from the kenosis of the Son in Philippians 2:5-11, and the latter must always be read in
light of the epéktasis in Philippians 3:12-15.527 This stretching out of the human spirit
towards the goal of resurrected life with Christ is always in the background of Balthasar’s
Nyssan theology of distance because it is the foundation of Gregory’s doctrine of
spiritual growth as participation in the divine nature. But in Balthasar, as in the canon that
includes Philippians 2 and 3,528 kenosis and epéktasis mutually interpret each other and
bear an analogy to one another.529 Paul encourages his people in Philippi to think the

527 “Beloved, I do not consider that I have made [the resurrection] my own; but this one thing I do:
forgetting what lies behind and straining forward [ἐπεκτεινόμενος] to what lies ahead, I press on towards
the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. Let those of us then who are mature be of
the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. Only let us hold
fast to what we have attained” (Phil 3:12-15).
528 It must be noted that most scholars see a break between chapters 2 and 3 at Phil 3:2 that
suggests at least two different letters; Brendan Byrne, “Letter to Philippians,” NJBC 48:4, 791. In any case,
the common authorship and Pauline authenticity of both letters are not in doubt. The exhortatory themes
and contexts for both passages are also quite similar.
529 The analogy between kenosis and epektasis characterizes the basic outlook of Balthasar’s
spiritual theology in Heart of the World: “The very form of the Cross, extending out into the four winds,
always told the ancient Church that the Cross means solidarity: its outstretched arms would gladly embrace
the universe. According to the Didache, the Cross is σήμειον ἐπεκτασεῶς, a “sign of expansion,” and only
God himself can have such a wide reach: ‘On the Cross God stretched out his hands to encompass the
same way and have the same mind (\textit{phronéo} in both Phil 2:5 and 3:15) with regard to both kenosis and \textit{epéktasis}; the self-emptying of Christ out of love for God and others is to govern their communal mindset, but because of God’s great promise and love for them, striving \textit{together} for the goal of eternal life is also to govern their thinking. The trinitarian dimensions of this common mind “that was in Christ Jesus” are expressed in both kenosis and \textit{epéktasis} when the eternal distance between the trinitarian Persons (D4) become visible to the eyes of faith in the economic distance of the Cross (D3). This is where Balthasar’s insights into distance in PT and into the identification of kenosis with the Johannine “process” of mutual trinitarian glorification via the economic distance (D3) in GL7 bears its greatest fruit in TD5. God’s \textit{Presence} and human \textit{thought} come together in kenosis and \textit{epéktasis} held in divine tension. These distinctions and analogies thereby disallow Tonstad’s and Beattie’s limited view of a Balthasarian “freedom of choice” within God that would leaves itself open to the inadmissible idea of the Son deciding \textit{not} to have this mind and pit himself against the Father.

Even if there is “something like” death and risk in the very being of God, this must be understood in light of self-gift and availability and not in terms of domination and submission. An understanding of hierarchy rooted in self-gift and availability aids in the response to critics such as Kilby and Levering who argue that Balthasar’s straining of the analogy of being goes too far. I suggest that all of the major criticisms of Balthasar noted in this study are vitally related to each other in TD5 and need to be answered together as much as possible.

\footnote{bounds of the universe’ (Cyril of Jerusalem). ‘In his suffering God stretched out his arms and embraced the world, thus prefiguring the coming of a people which would, from East to West, gather under his wings’ (Lactantius)”; from the Preface of \textit{Heart of the World}, 13.}
Adrienne von Speyr’s Role in TD5

Kilby observes that Balthasar’s heavy reliance on quotations of Speyr in TD5 is not an aberration within his work as a whole. It is however an example of Balthasar at his most unmoored from tradition, Scripture, patristic theology, and accountability to the theology academy. Balthasar does not explain or justify his use of Speyr’s texts in TD5 other than claiming that she expresses what is on his mind completely and perfectly; but he evidently sees an inherent Johannine-based systematicity in many of her reflections. One of the most commonly quoted volumes in TD5 is The World of Prayer, Speyr’s first-order, non-critical, spiritual-experiential exegesis of John’s Gospel. Some of the background from that text, given here simply as an example of her thought, is easily seen in the very structure of Balthasar’s trinitarian theology. The Son’s eternal attitude towards the Father is expressed in every fact concerning his Incarnation. What occurs temporally in Jesus’ Incarnation is the process of the economy of salvation, which is worked out across the distance of D3 (in our Balthasarian terminology) from the Father who sent him:

And the Son must learn to stand where, in the Old Covenant, man stood in adoration before God; he must translate [by means of D3] the divine distance between Father and Son [D4] into the distance between God and man [D1].

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530 Kilby, Critical Introduction; 40, 113.
531 Although Edward Oakes professes agreement with Balthasar’s own claim that his and Speyr’s thought are “inseparable” as “two parts of one whole,” he also claims that Balthasar must be read and critiqued on his own terms (Oakes, Pattern, 10-11). This is effectively to agree with Mongrain regarding the extent and the relevance of Speyr’s influence on Balthasar. Mongrain quotes Balthasar as claiming that Speyr’s theology “laid the foundation for everything I have written since 1940” and must be read as a second half of a whole with his own work; Balthasar, My Work: In Retrospect, trans. Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1993), 89). Mongrain goes on to dismisses such claims as an exaggeration that was never validated by Balthasar or any of his critics; Mongrain, Systematic Thought, 11-12.
533 Speyr, World of Prayer, 52: “Praying on earth, the Son experiences the Father as he has known him as God from eternity: as the God whom he worships. He says that he is greater than himself (Jn 14:28); he lifts his eyes to him (Jn 17:1); he calls him his God and our God (Jn 20:17).”
Conversely, in spite of the distance between God and man [D1] he must attain, through prayer and adoration [for him, D3], to the intimacy of the distance between Father and Son [D4].

While some New Testament scholars might raise their eyebrows at the simple confidence with which she offers these interpretations of the texts, much of Balthasar’s work can be seen as a discernment of the theological structures undergirding these inspirations. He carries out this theological work always mindful of his position as Adrienne von Speyr’s spiritual director, but also always seeking to provide the necessary theological rigor to the thought that can only come after genuine experience.

The present chapter begins in Part I below with a layout of the critical questions to be answered in terms of Balthasar’s establishing of the terms of God and the world’s mirroring unities in “The World is From God.” There is a crucial section within this part entitled “The World is From the Trinity” in which Balthasar seeks the intelligibility for God’s triunity in terms of a hierarchical binary of gender complementarity. Part II of this chapter consists of a commentary on the later sections of TD5, where Balthasar relies on gender complementary much less extensively than at the beginning and focuses more on the integration of soteriology, Trinity, and the eschaton. I will argue that these latter parts of TD5 can be read and understood in light of the genealogy of distance I have provided without depending on Balthasar’s gender essentialism at the beginning of TD5.

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I. Commentary on TD5, Part I: the Critical Issues

I.A. God's Triunity and the World’s Unity in “The World is From the Trinity”

What follows is a description of Balthasar’s argument for God’s unity that leads to an engagement of the criticisms lodged against it regarding his integration of kenosis and hierarchy with gender categories. The two major sections of Part I of TD5 (“The World is From God”) are entitled (A) “The World is From the Trinity” and (B) “Earth Moves Heavenward.” The first section is Balthasar’s reflection on the “Scholastic Axiom,” namely, that trinitarian difference is the basis for all other differences between God and the world and within the world. “Earth Moves Heavenward” recounts the world’s “epektatic” response to God’s triune presence and transcendence. God’s unity is concrete, dynamic, and eventful. Creation reflects God’s being by virtue of God’s glory as radiance or light—not an emanation in a Plotinian, Platonic, or Gnostic sense, but as epiphany or theophany. The eventfulness of God’s unity has a shape that unfolds eternally in a mutual “dancing around” (perichoresis) that is mirrored (incompletely, imperfectly) in the (beautiful and free) process of earthly and human existence.535 Based on the Father’s Ur-Kenosis, the hierarchical directionality in God’s Being (which involves D4) and in God’s Self-expression to the world (involving D3) yields an asymmetry in the analogy of being.536 This is the structure of trinitarian hierarchy. It is essentially kenotic, beginning with the Father’s Ur-Kenosis out to Son and Spirit across

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535 TD5, 67: “This ‘happening’ [in God] is not a becoming in the earthly sense: is the coming-to-be, not of something that once 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 [Werden] is a reflection [Abbildung] of the eternal ‘happening’ [Geschehens] in God, which, we repeat, is per se identical with the eternal Being [Sein] or essence [Wesens]”; cit. of German text, Theodramatik IV, 59 in Gardner and Moss, “Something like Time,” 117.

D4. But the only epistemological access we have to the *Ur-Kenosis* of the Father is through the Son’s kenosis-as-response as seen in his Incarnation and Passion in D3, and through the gift of the Spirit in D3. Balthasar seeks in “The World is From the Trinity” to “construct a picture of the divine ‘essence’ and ‘being’,” and distance structures this eidetic image of God’s unity. We must wait until the *Theo-Logic* (particularly TL2 and TL3) for a more explicitly systematic reflection on the trinitarian content of Balthasar’s theological aesthetics, which is explored in the theo-drama. But for now in TD5, the analogical mirroring of the eternal with the created necessitates an analogy for a kind of eventfulness in God if “an essential aspect of Jesus’ self-disclosure” is going to be preserved.

As he does in GL7, Balthasar boldly defends his use of “process” language in TD5 and returns to Gregory of Nyssa for support in a footnote on how Gregory views the reconciliation of rest (*stasis*) with motion (*kinēsis*) in the texts of *Vita Moysis* and Homily 4 in *On the Song of Songs*. The soul’s running towards God becomes stable when it “rests” on Christ, implying an eternal eventfulness in the state of being with Christ in one’s journey “towards” God. The soul “stretches out” as it “runs the divine race” towards that which it desires by entering directly into the “house of wine” instead of merely draining a cup. In this way, the soul’s thirst never slaked even in the stability of the house. The soul is “wounded by love,” that is, by the arrow that is “the Only Begotten God” shot by the Father in a yet more trinitarian image of Gregory’s. But then

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537 TD5, 67.
539 TD5, 71.
540 TD5, 77, n.46; cit. Gregory, *Vita Moysis*, PG 44, 405BD; *In Cant.* 4, PG 44, 842D-854A.
the soul becomes the arrow in the hands of God to be aimed and launched at yet a new target of “incorruptible eternity” in an endless process of being paradoxically renewed in desire by having it fulfilled.\textsuperscript{542}

One can and must say that the soul is welcomed not only into an infinite space with God but in God, even if Gregory himself was not explicit about the location in God (the Greek par’emoi could mean either).\textsuperscript{543} This new location of the soul with Christ in God as it runs endlessly toward God in epéktasis is the stability of rest. This text and footnote in TD5 provides an example of Balthasar’s reading of Gregory in a trinitarian context; “in me” is at the very least a well-established dogmatic interpretation of Gregory in light of Balthasar’s whole project and the genealogy of distance. One can see in the image of endless running as endless rest with Christ (or on Christ the Rock) towards God the Father as an organic development of Gregory in Balthasar’s trinitarian theology of distance. The soul analogously participates in God’s D4 by its location with Christ, who places himself in D3 from the Father for our sake.

The dynamism in this location within God is illustrated by Gregory himself in the image of the soul running without koros, that is, without boredom or satiety. Balthasar here borrows Speyr’s image of God as “ever-greater” even to God’s Self, according to which the Persons of the Trinity are always “surpassing each others’ wildest expectations” and “surprising” each other.\textsuperscript{544} This is, of course, a significant departure from Gregory’s original thought of diastasis and epéktasis. The language of “surprise” in God certainly goes beyond Gregory’s lack of koros in the spiritual life, and it is surely

\textsuperscript{542} Gregory of Nyssa, In Cant. 4, PG 44, 852B; Norris, Song of Songs, 140-41.
\textsuperscript{543} The English translation of TD5 reads “in me there is so much space” while the German reads “es bei mir eine solche Fülle an Raum gibt”; Theodramatik IV, 67, n.46.
\textsuperscript{544} TD5, 78-79; citing Objektiv Mystik, 569, 575; Über die Liebe, 39-42; Johannes IV, 291, 298; and Sie folgten seinem Ruf, 68 [The Followed His Call (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986)].
drastically different from Gregory’s expression of God as the adiastatos. Indeed, it is some of Balthasar’s and Speyr’s most wildly speculative imagery. But this language of expectation and surprise can and must be viewed in light of the development of distance in PT and TKB (Chapters 1 and 2) and what he has said on the themes of D1-D4 in GL7 and TD4 (Chapter 3).

Balthasar situates his discussion of the divine unity in “The World is From the Trinity” in the context of his development of the idea of kenosis in the Ur-Kenosis of the Father. There must be a kind of transitive dynamism within the unity of God because: “The ideal of a mere unity without ‘the Other’ (Plotinus’ hen, but also the Monos Theos of Judaism and Islam) cannot do justice to the Christian affirmation that God is love.”545 The love of God therefore presumes a certain interpersonal distance within divine unity, across which the Abstanden of the divine processions become an occasion for love and generosity of “selves” to “others.” Balthasar cites Brunner in this context on the “self-giving [that] cannot be motivated by anything other than itself.”546 There are two differences, or “differencings,”547 in the Trinity that constitute the “selves” (used with due analogical and negative-theological caution) of the three Persons as they enact the Godhead. The first differencing is the Father’s generation of the Son and the second differencing is the Spirit’s procession from the dyad of Father and Son.548 The second differencing occurs because the spontaneity within the One God cannot be reduced to a
Lover and a Beloved lest it be locked into a self-defeating mutual dependency. The inner law of trinitarian life is kenosis, the principle of which is the Father’s *Ur-Kenosis*.

The inner nature and law of a being must arise spontaneously from an inner vitality, or it is not a living being. The Holy Spirit’s procession is the perfection (one might say) of “eternal amazement” in God in “something like” *epéktasis* between the Persons in their mutual kenoses. D4 thus emerges in the immanent Trinity between Father and Son together and between them and the Spirit who proceeds *ab utroque* (from both) in the Western *filioque* schema. This amazement needs no external “other” to be complete. However, this spiritual abiding in both Self and in Other is what God wants to share with creatures so that the world from the Trinity enters into communion with the Trinity: “The miracle that transforms man’s (relative) distance from God [D1] (particularly in his sinful existence [D2]) into ‘nearness to God’ [is] grace,” the grace of the Spirit in D3, proceeding from the Father in the Greek schema or from the Father and Spirit together in the Latin, but always sent from both in *missio* as the Spirit of inclusion.  

The problems arise in TD5 when Balthasar seeks intelligibility for these hierarchical trinitarian differencings in gender complementarity. That he does so is perhaps not problematic, but rather how he proceeds. Sarah Coakley offers a current perspective on Balthasar’s challenges. She reads in Gregory of Nyssa a “radical epistemic slippage at the height of Moses’ ascent in the *Life of Moses*, which seems to dissolve all structured order and hierarchy, even in the God who is encountered, [and] does not find any consistent or clear counterpart in Gregory’s understanding of the Trinity in his mid-

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549 TD5, 83; the last point is a quotation of Speyr from *Philipper (Dienst der Freude)*, 52.
career defenses of trinitarianism. Gregory is perhaps not to be blamed for this due to the occasional nature of his dogmatic treatises. The theologian must in light of present-day concerns (which are also occasional) find harmonization between Gregory’s trinitarian and ascetical thought if its full potential is to be realized. Coakley suggest that:

we have to ferret out the wilder trinitarian analogies of those later writings: less philosophically precise, to be sure, than those in the apologetic discourses, but freed up into a remarkable poetic and erotic license. Here, archers and arrows, winds and billowing sails, and human erotic lovers become the new analogues of the freedom of inner-trinitarian relations, and of their transfiguring relation to us.

Balthasar and Speyr move directly into such analogies in TD5 and The World of Prayer.

Balthasar does so precisely in reaction to the metaphysical and theological bankruptcy that results from attempts at philosophical precision in his day. Balthasar accordingly attempts to integrate such Nyssan imagery with an ontologically grounded and metaphysically responsible account of trinitarian processions. His results are consistent with the classical hierarchical formulations, but his erotic, relational, and “nuptial” imagery is also strongly biological (often using penetration, ejaculation, and impregnation) and locked into gender binaries. Because it is also hierarchical with a priority of male over female, it ultimately associates masculinity with divinity and femininity with creation and embodiedness in spite of his claims of gender equality.\footnote{Coakley, God, Sexuality, and the Self, 288.}

\footnote{Coakley problematizes the same gender binaries that Balthasar upholds, but she also wishes to uphold kenosis as a way of confounding an economy of lack in spiritual life and trinitarian theology. She proposes that the vulnerability of limited, passive, and embodied existence before God in a regular practice of prayer can take the form of an analogous participation in the kenoses that constitute God’s own divine Personal relations. Whether this conscious attitude before God is more properly masculine or feminine is beside the point, which is that it is kenotic. Without such a prayerful attitude enacted in regular practice of “The willingness to endure a form of naked dispossession before God” after the pattern (or having the “mind”) of Phil 2:5-11, the Christian could be denying her- or himself access to a genuine experience of the divine; God, Sexuality, and the Self, 19. I mention Coakley’s “Nyssan” ascetic theology of kenotic prayer (an essential aspect of her théologie totale) in this context because it makes common cause with the Balthasarian/Nyssan confluence of kenosis and epéktasis in a yoga-like stretching towards God and opening of self to grace. Coakley does not use Balthasar as a source for her théologie totale, but such a Nyssan reading of Balthasar as I am offering yields an analogical intelligibility for the Trinity as the je-}
Tina Beattie offers strong recent criticisms of Balthasar’s essentialist gender complementarity and of kenosis as a theological category. Kenosis characterizes the triune community, but the triune circulation of “self-emptying” can only imply competition and lack if one Person must be emptied in order for another to “exist.” Love for another must be enacted at one’s own deprivation to the benefit of the other. On the one hand Balthasar’s primarily masculine God is characterized by susceptibility to seduction by feminine bodily existence and becomes incarnate through “kenosis.” In other words, the physical world being can only come about through some kind of deprivation of divine being.\textsuperscript{552} On the other hand Beattie acknowledges that Balthasar finds a genuine place for receptivity within the very being of God, but she objects when this receptivity is gendered as absolutely and eternally feminine. She notes how receptivity can only play a role in violently securing the fatherhood of God in such a view.\textsuperscript{553} Maleness is thus characterized by competing drives for self-emptying to the female or violent self-assertion at the expense of the female. Such theological strife, should it become some kind of norm, has terrible theological-anthropological consequences for both women and men. But Balthasar’s position is incoherent and self-defeating to begin with.

Although I agree that Balthasar’s theological anthropology contains some vital flaws, I do not see them along the same lines as Beattie does. His position on gender is not coherent with his other analogical imagery, but neither is his trinitarian theology as a whole self-defeating. There are elements of Balthasar’s trinitarian personalism that

\textsuperscript{552} Beattie, \textit{New Catholic Feminism}, 159-61.
\textsuperscript{553} Beattie, \textit{New Catholic Feminism}, 247-49.
complicate Beattie’s wholesale dismissal of him. Balthasar has already imagined kenosis as the identity of the Son’s obedience with an economic expression of the love between Father and Son in GL7.\textsuperscript{554} And as we saw in TD4, kenosis is an eternal act of triune being-as-love in which all three Persons participate in mutuality.\textsuperscript{555} Such a kenotic constitution of divine personhood-in-relation does imply the risk of a Hegelian sense of kenosis, according to which mutual dependency for self-fulfillment drives the Divine Being. Hegel’s trinitarian kenosis hides a kind of selfish \emph{epéktasis} in a pseudo-kenosis that offers no real gift to the other. When Balthasar uses traditional trinitarian language to describe this sexual mutuality, such as \emph{missio}, \emph{processio}, “single principle” and “double principle” in TD3,\textsuperscript{556} and then uses this mutuality as an analog for trinitarian relations, the risk of importing a kind of lack, deprivation, and even death into the Trinity is indeed heightened.

It is worth turning briefly to TD3. The problem in Balthasar’s interpretation of the second account of creation in Genesis 2:4-24 there, which is at the heart of much of the criticism he receives, is that he renders himself beholden to only one image for the Trinity. It cannot be denied that Paul uses the Genesis account of “flesh and bone” in the background of his own hierarchical metaphor of marriage between Christ and the Church in Ephesians 3:25-33. Nor can it be denied that the creation account in Genesis 2 is a prominent source for Balthasar’s trinitarian theo-drama in which the trinitarian processions become highly sexualized. Balthasar construes the account of Eve’s \emph{missio} from God to be fruitful in Genesis to be “an extrapolation and continuation of her \emph{processio} from Adam” vis-à-vis Adam. Moreover, her response to this \emph{missio} from God

\textsuperscript{554} GL7, 247-52.\textsuperscript{555} TD4, 326.\textsuperscript{556} TD3, 286-87.
after the Fall is through sexual reproduction, a feminine fruitfulness derived from the primary masculine fruitfulness and bound up with the deaths of the individuals who engage in it. It is a secondary fruitfulness because “it is an answering fruitfulness, designed to receive man’s fruitfulness (which, in itself, is helpless) and bring it to its fullness. The two, man and woman, are dependent on each other for their respective fruitfulnesses to be realized, and are therefore forced to be open to each other.” As we have seen in GL7 and TD4 and will see more in TD5, the gender-dependent images of triunity based on Genesis 2 and Ephesians 3 are not the only images he uses. But gender is indeed more that just “occasional” in Balthasar’s thought, even if it is not always a factor in his trinitarian thought.557

Tonstad’s global criticism of Balthasar centers on an understanding of kenosis that presumes an exchange in an economy of lack, a “zero-sum game” of existence (or being) that contains the constant threat of self-annihilation as a result of submission to another.558 Papanikolaou explains the issues for many critics of kenosis as a Christian ethical imperative in inter-personal relations:

> Rather than offering a liberating salvation, the experience of kenosis, feminists would contend, has depersonalized women. For the sake of obedience to God’s command, or self-sacrifice to one’s family, women have been advised for centuries “to go back” to their husbands, often at the price of their own lives. Less tragic uses of kenosis have denied women full dignity with men by relegating them to socially constructed, gender-specific roles. Women have every reason to be suspicious of an ethic of kenosis.559

As a result, theologians like Tonstad, Beattie, and Daphne Hampson propose that kenosis be eliminated as a theological category; not as merely inadequate but as positively dangerous. All of these critics and Balthasar himself agree that trinitarian ontology is a

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557 TD3, 285-86.
559 Papanikolaou, “Person, Kenosis, and Abuse,” 42.
guide for ethical and moral life, as it is in the Philippians hymn when Paul calls upon the community to “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5).

However, critics of kenosis maintain that the more loving and moral imperative for such victims of abuse is to maintain oneself in the face of unjust opposition and to take on their rightful roles in co-determining reality with others in relationship. This possibility is precluded for them by the existence of any kind of hierarchy, which is inextricably linked both to gender difference and to a particular understanding of kenosis that imports suffering and violence into God.

However, Jennifer Martin suggest that Balthasar “recovers a wider, deeper, even vivifying grammar of the theological datum of kenosis” when he borrows from Sergei Bulgakov’s kenoticism. She observes that for Balthasar, kenosis both allows for and presumes (in a dynamic back-and-forth) a fundamental “distance between Father and Son” (that is, D4). Martin criticizes Tonstad, Beattie, and others for illegitimately reducing Balthasar’s kenoticism to a notion of “Christological self-sacrifice.” There are several reasons against doing this, the first being that “the fact of creation and embodiedness itself is dependent upon kenosis.” Beattie and Tonstad have already criticized Balthasar on this point, but Martin points out that the divine-created difference and all other differences are based more on Nyssan diastasis than on gender difference.

560 Daphne Hampson, although operating from a post-Christian standpoint that makes no investment whatsoever in retrieving elements or images of Christian tradition (particularly with regard to the Trinity), has a point about the different moral demands of love on those who are oppressed: to them, kenosis as self-emptying makes no sense because their very selves are unjustly embattled from the start; Hampson, “On Power and Gender,” 240.

561 She continues: “but this distance is not introduced by the cross but expresses the already existing ‘distance’ between the relations of the immanent Trinity. Because both Bulgakov and Balthasar hold that eternal self-donation is essential to the nature of the Trinitarian relations, the Incarnation and cross of Christ does not represent a change in God, but is a continuation of the substantial dramatic modality of self-giving love which remains at the core of divine being. For Balthasar, ‘all the contingent “abasements” of God in the economy of salvation are forever included and outstripped in the eternal event of Love’”; Martin, “The ‘Whence’ and the ‘Whither,’” 13; quoting Balthasar, Mysterium Paschale, ix.

Gregory’s diastasis (Δ2 or the “Balthasarian” D1) is the ground for a mysterious confluence of love and generosity in both eros and agape. This complicates the view that unhealthy “Hegelian” gender dynamics of strife and competition are at the heart of Balthasar’s understanding of the hypostatic relations. What this means in the end is that “the cross is contextualized within these other kenotic modalities of self-gift and love [and thus] the potential for an undue glamorization of suffering qua suffering is mitigated.” Along with Martin, I maintain that this is the proper standpoint from which one can rightly criticize Balthasar’s essentialist assignation of gender polarities to inner-trinitarian dynamism. To approach him this way is not to dismantle his work but rather to strengthens some of his key insights, as well as retrieve kenosis as a powerful and life-giving theological category.

Martin traces the influence of Bulgakov’s “sophiology” on Balthasar’s trinitarianism. Bulgakov’s trinitarianism is based on the feminine Sophia, a divine-kenotic act of God that is non-hypostatic and characterizes each of the Person’s expression of this divine act. This allows for a much more positive reading of kenosis, as Martin aptly describes it:

With the Russian profile in Balthasar amplified, kenosis seems as if it could sidestep the problematic “unmaking” of the female self: in this opened-out, Trinitarian model, kenosis is not simply an evacuation or subtraction of the self, but fundamentally a kind of self-divinization, a move toward flourishing, whole human persons participating in the mysterious life of the divine Trinity. Here the kenosis of Christ thus can be thought not as a model of behavioral self-sacrifice, but as “a model for every human being . . . trying to realize his [or her] own divine-humanity.”

These observations by Martin are perfectly in synch with the mutually reinforcing interpretations of kenosis and epéktasis that flow from the synchronic readings of

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Philippians 2:5-11 and 3:12-16; the ultimate meaning of kenosis is not exclusively or exhaustively in self-abnegation, but in the generous offering of self to another in response to love received. The result is mutual glorification as illustrated by the High-Priestly Prayer in John 17:1-26 and in GL7. Martin lists three implications for a feminist retrieval of “Bulgakovian-Balthasarian kenosis”: “it accents the goodness of created bodies [because these exist by the sheer loving generosity of God], foregrounds difference which permits relationality [via Nyssan diastasis], and contextualizes the cross into a kenotic mode of divine love [in terms of the Father’s Ur-Kenosis to the Son and the Son’s response in the unity of the Spirit.]”564 I have also tried to retrieve Balthasar’s theology on these three counts via a Nyssan-Balthasarian theology of diastasis in Δ1, the character of created being by which it is invited to participate in divine being; via a genealogy of the relational distance of D4 that traces its layered development from a foundation in the God-world gap of D1; and via the analogical mutuality of kenosis and epékhtasis.

Balthasar chooses to relate kenosis to trinitarian hierarchy by virtue of “activity” and “passivity” in the divine processions. His thinking implies a syllogism: 1) the taxis of the divine processions is necessarily hierarchical beginning with the Ur-Kenosis of the Father in the generation of the Son and spiration of the Spirit; 2) this Ur-Kenosis is active (and not passive) in the order of priority (not of temporality, of course); 3) masculinity is

564 (I have supplied the bracketed glosses within the quotation). What complicates Balthasar’s use of Bulgakov is his reserved and somewhat cryptic appropriation of the gendered nature of the latter’s kenotic trinitarianism. For Bulgakov, “Sophia” is the feminine, receptive “substrate” for the inner-trinitarian acts of mutual kenosis; Martin, “The ‘Whence’ and the ‘Wither,’” 13-14. Sophia is both uncreated and created, mediating between God and the world. While this could be gathered from a reading of the Wisdom literature of the OT (as it was in the Arian controversies of the fourth century), Balthasar is uncomfortable with its overly Hellenistic and Gnostic overtones. Nevertheless, Bulgakov’s (and Soloviev’s) doctrine of gender duality makes its way into Balthasar’s thought. For both Balthasar and Bulgakov, any androgyny in the theological account of creation must be resisted; gender is an ontological category, not an accidental one, and it is constitutive of humankind as an image of God in Genesis 1 and 2; p.15. However, while in Bulgakov’s thought Sophia functions as an intermediary between God and the world, Balthasar more explicitly leaves this function to the diastasis (Δ2/D1) of Gregory of Nyssa; p. 17.
primarily active and femininity primarily passive; therefore, 4) something like a sexual hierarchy is absolute in God. That is, it is absolute within the order of creation because there is “something like it” in God. However, Gardner and Moss remind readers of Balthasar that there is a directionality in this analogy that locates the greater mystery within God according to Lateran IV: “sexual difference is more like ‘something like (the) sexes’ [in the activity and receptivity of the divine processions] than that something is ‘like’ sexual difference.” Human femininity is like something in God more than that something in God is like human femininity, and likewise with masculinity. But Balthasar uses “activity” and “passivity” and a sense of the near-absolute biological and psychological differences between males and females to determine the outlines of what “something like” masculinity and femininity in God could be. He presumes this absolute characterization of masculinity and femininity respectively as active and passive to be universally applicable to all aspects of human existence and experience, even if he does also read it in a biblical narrative that includes various places in the OT and NT. Mary can be active but she is masculine in that mode; just as John is feminine when he passively receives the Word. Even though difference from God is the very fact of creation and the male-female difference is a good that God proclaims and praises in the first account of gender difference in Genesis 1:26-31, Balthasar chooses to overlay it with the second account of sexual difference based in temporal priority of man over woman from Genesis 2:18-24. When the Christ-Church relationship becomes thus centered on this biologically sexed metaphor, then it will also hold a place in Balthasar’s trinitarian analogies. All difference between God and creation and within creation is rooted in the

Personal differences in the Godhead.

But Balthasar has thus marked sexual difference by woman’s “procession” from the side (or heart) of man in Genesis 2 within a hierarchical analogy, according to which God sets creation apart from God, the Son proceeds from the Father, and the Spirit proceeding from both. The distance between man and woman in relation is now hierarchically mapped by D1 between God and the world. Sexual difference takes on Aristotelian overtones with the male supplying form and order and the female supplying “matter” that needs to be ordered. The God-world distance of D1 and even the inner-trinitarian distance of D4 accordingly both tend to be “reduced to a synchronic cross-sectional slice that purports to establish the operation of creation as diastasis, conceived not so much as graceful unity but as a fixed distance or measure.”

This occurs because the differences that these distances are supposed to mark become absolutized based on a projection. Accordingly, with such “fixed” distances, it becomes much more difficult to conceive of the divine unity that D3 is supposed to manifest in the Incarnation, life, death, and Resurrection of Jesus.

As Tonstad points out in her commentary on TD2, man’s achievement of sexual personhood is a kenotic “speaking-out” or Wort (word), to which God responds with the creation of woman. Woman then “proceeds” from man as his Ant-Wort, who does not speak on her own, and she does this as a result of his kenosis—she is taken out of him as he sleeps. Female personhood is fundamentally constituted by a kenotic opening and response to man that can only be fruitful by derivation from the man’s primary fruitfulness. But prior to this, male personhood is characterized by a kenotic opening to woman that is necessary for his own fulfillment. Kenosis is therefore hierarchical in a

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566 Gardner and Moss, “Something Like Time,” 86.
way that mirrors the trinitarian hierarchy of divine processions. The equality of the sexes to be structured by this kind of complementarity of Word-Answer is thereby rendered impossible, because the man always has a hierarchical priority over the woman. This “subordination” in the created realm of woman to man gets expressed “trinitarianly” in the Logos’ procession from the Father as the Word that is spoken. The subordinationist risk here is thereby compounded by the gendering of the triune processions. If woman cannot approach man with her own word, to which he is the “answer” for her, then how does she in fact approach him? That woman could ever “speak a word” to man that is not just an answer to his first word is rendered impossible by the overlaying of the trinitarian hierarchy between Father and Son upon their relationality.


569 The question, therefore, is how the hyper-femininity of the Son translates into his obedience, his Antwort to the Father’s Wort (that is, to his own being). Here femininity necessitates the restraint of speaking only when one is spoken to, only in answer to someone else’s utterance that must always come “first.” This is related to how one answers Tonstad’s question: “But how is the divinity of the Son represented in his human existence?”; “Sexual Difference,” 619. Balthasar’s answer, as Tonstad notes, is that he is feminine in a divine mode but must be masculine in the world in order to represent the Hypostasis who sends him, the Father. Jesus must be male as a “speaker” in this world, because, while the male body is able to signify what it is not—the divine—the female body can signify only the human who answers. They cannot represent either male or female divinity, at least when it concerns hierarchical order within the “feminine” Church. Balthasar makes an analogical connection in New Elucidations between equality of persons within the Trinity and within the Church: “In the dogma of the Trinity, the Persons must be equal in dignity in order to safeguard the distinction that makes the triune God subsistent love; in a similar way, the Church stresses the equal dignity of man and woman, so that the extreme oppositeness of their functions may guarantee the spiritual and physical fruitfulness of human nature”; Balthasar, New Elucidations (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), 195. Disruptions of this “extreme oppositeness” of function between male and female results in the denigration of both sexes, in the erosion of “the dynamics of humanly possible love,” and in disorder in culture and society. But on the Church’s human side of this analogical polarity, the concrete female human being cannot symbolize the Christ who is, so to speak, “locked in” to a masculine role as soon as he faces the Church as its High Priest, a role that apparently “functionally” excludes Christ’s other roles as Teacher, Shepherd, Vine, and Bread in its symbolic context.

In his “Women Priests?” chapter in New Elucidations, Balthasar sets the context for his discussion within the feminist “assault” for equal rights, which he sees as an abandonment of the properly feminine role of securing “reserves that will assure survival after the downfalls [that will result from the technological over-masculinization of civil society and culture]: reserves ... geared to being, to the background that gives meaning to things, to security, to making a home for man who is always on the run, exposed to the world”; 190. In his estimation, “feminism,” particularly qua “assault,” colludes too much with what is wrong with masculinity in the world by pitting women against men in the competition for equal access to “roles”; 191. The role of “securing being” is a feminine one in which the Church stands, but it does so only as Christ’s Bride-Mother and not as His Body. Because the Church represents the immaculata, the pure Bride to whom Christ speaks and to whom he comes and implants his own primordial
According to Tina Beattie (as summarized by Tonstad), “if men as well as women are female in relation to God, we have not yet established any significant locus of sexual difference” in trinitarian relations. Tonstad replies: “We have indeed established a locus of sexual difference, but precisely one which cannot count as such. The locus of sexual difference is hierarchy itself—there is nothing else it could be. But hierarchy does not and cannot provide real difference.” She then asks, “perhaps trinitarian difference can rescue sexual difference?” She tends to think not because “For Balthasar, the risk of love is only taken when the possibility of ontological dissolution is undercut by the secure differentiation of hierarchy.” Tonstad and Beattie are generally right to point out the lop-sidedness and unintentional inequality of the hierarchized sexes in Balthasar’s thought when it comes to the God-given dignity of representing the divine. Tonstad claims her critique is therefore primarily about a hierarchical, Logo-centric trinitarian theology, namely, of a cryptic subordinationism that compromises the equality of the Persons and the freedom of their communion. But the subordinationism is also fundamentally characterized by lack.

It remains to be seen how these elements function in the text of TD5; but before we can supply that account, we need a more detailed look at the “gendering” of kenosis

fruitfulness, “One can say that Christ, ...insofar as [he] is a man, ...again represents the origin, the Father, for the fruitfulness of the woman is always dependent on an original fructification. Neither of these points is to be relativized” [emphasis added]; 193-94. A woman who would seek priestly ordination, in which the minister stands in Christ’s position vis-à-vis the feminine Church, “would be aspiring to specifically masculine functions, while forgetting the precedence of the feminine aspect of the Church over the masculine.”

572 Tonstad, “Sexual Difference,” 621: “The giver, the Father, revels in a seeming threat—handing himself over entirely to another—yet never risks losing himself in this handing-over, because he is always ontologically secured and guaranteed precisely in the event of handing himself over. In a relationship of domination and submission, the submissive partner always retains the power by consenting to being dominated, and a responsible dominant is dominating the submissive for the sake of the submissive’s pleasure. Power-exchange provides a surprisingly accurate picture of Balthasar’s transsexual Trinity.”
and hierarchy that occurs in “The World is From the Trinity.” The gendering of kenosis and trinitarian hierarchy occurs primarily in the subsection, “The Positivity of Letting Go.” After examining this section of TD5 in light of the genealogy of distance in PT and TKB and its applications in GL7 and TD4, and in light of the criticisms by Tonstad and others, I will proceed to reading the rest of TD5 that does not depend on the controversial moves that Balthasar makes in the first half of his text.

**I.B. The Gendering of Kenosis and Hierarchy in TD5**

Tonstad, like Beattie, believes that Balthasar’s theology is ultimately harmful to men as well as to women. Given Balthasar’s location of “something like” death and suffering in the triune kenotic processions, and given the “death-like” sleep that Adam must undergo to be “robbed” of his rib in Genesis 2:21-24 for the production of the woman, “His understanding of personhood turns out to be fundamentally masochistic” even for males. Tonstad notes the parallel notion of the hypostasis of the Father as the hierarchical “origin” of the Trinity in an absolute self-emptying to the hypostasis of the Son (Ur-Kenosis), so that “The possibility of a hidden nihilism can hardly be avoided.” Both Ur-Kenosis and kenosis are masochistic. Tonstad turns her focus upon a passage in TD5 worth quoting at length. Here Balthasar attempts to navigate between a masochistic sense of Ur-Kenosis and a Hegelian-dialectical sense of using the Other for one’s own Self-fulfillment:

> In giving himself, the Father does not give something (or even everything) that he has but all that he is—for in God there is only being, not having. So the Father’s

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being passes over, without remainder, to the begotten Son; and it would be a mistake to suggest that he, the Father, becomes or develops as a result of this self-giving .... This total self-giving, to which the Son and the Spirit respond by an equal self-giving, is a kind of “death”, a first, radical “kenosis”, as one might say. It is a kind of “super-death” [Übertod] that is a component of all love and that forms the basis in creation for all instances of “the good death”, from self-forgetfulness in favor of the beloved right up to that highest love by which a man “gives his life for his friends”.  

This introduction of the idea or image of death into the constitution of vulnerable trinitarian selves carries too high a risk for Tonstad: “A super-death introduced into God already in the relations between the persons? Before any consideration of sin and incarnation? A super-death a ‘component of all love’?” Her rhetorical questioning presumes the background of the creation of woman from man’s rib in Genesis 2:21-24, implying the following hierarchy via a temporal sequence: Adam—deathlike sleep—“donated” rib—Eve—Adam’s fulfillment. There is a tension between Adam’s deprivation and his need for the female for his own “dialectical” fulfillment: does the kenosis of his deathlike sleep deprive him of flesh and blood for the existence of another, or does the existence of the other serve his own ends? Tonstad does not think that Balthasar can really avoid either extreme of this paradox, and nor does she believe he successfully balances them.

Her real criticism in this context, however, is that Balthasar has “hypostasized” death in God, or introduced a “super-death” “into God,” “before any consideration of sin and incarnation.” But it should be clear by now from the genealogy of D1-D4 and the subsequent reading of GL7 and TD4 that the Übertod is postulated as an expression, guided by the analogy of being, of God’s infinite capacity to overcome sin and death precisely in light of the Incarnation. TD4 is Balthasar’s long account of how nothing else

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575 TD5, 84.
could possibly be the case: there is no peering back “into the mystery of the absolute” without going through the New Covenant that God has with creation in the Incarnation and the account of the Cross, always holding to a “negative theology” that denies all inner-mundane suffering as constitutive of Divine Being. Acknowledging that Balthasar is trying to give a trinitarian account of the Cross, Tonstad notes that “Balthasar’s own view of personhood” depends on an “absolute love [that] is only realized where there is this surrender of what is one’s own, where this separation is taken seriously, where there is this ‘going under’ so that the Other can ‘rise up’ in himself.”

Such an exchange sacralizes (in her view) an economy of unfair exchange where, “perhaps especially, in the divine case: existence with another is founded on a prior sacrifice of self.” This theologically normalizes a detriment to human beings by imposing moral demands (“Have among yourselves the same mind that was in Christ Jesus”; Phil 2:5) upon those who already face the systematic, cultural, political, and racialized diminishment of their own selves.

But Balthasar does not sacralize this economy of exchange so much as Tonstad presumes one and reads it into his trinitarian theology. Balthasar foresees the problem of an economy of lack when he says that “We cannot say the Father, in begetting, gives his substance to his Son by way of a bequest, that is, not retaining it in himself; for in this case he would cease to be the divine substance” (DS 805).

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577 TD4, 324.
580 TD5, 85-86. The divine substance, in Thomistic thought, is pure act shared and participated in equally by each Divine Person. There is no self-annihilation in the Father’s begetting of the Son: it is an act of a Person who eternally remains Person. Speyr’s World of Prayer provides much of the context for his reflections on the distance and closeness between Father and Son in their respective begetting and allowing self to be begotten: “The Son prefers nothing to doing the Father’s will,” and the Father “gives [the Son]
establish a theology of abundance with the Father’s Ur-Kenosis to the Son and Spirit who are given the hypostatic freedom to enact the Godhead as separate from the Father in D4. He will do this throughout the remainder, indeed the majority, of TD5.

The problems arise with how Balthasar accounts for gender when he says: “From this standpoint [i.e., the D4 that spans the reciprocity between othernesses within the Trinity in kenosis and epéktasis] we can already see that certain dualisms become possible within creation, between act and potency, for instance, between action and contemplation and between the sexes.”581 There is nothing controversial about this idea from the biblical and scholastic-systematic perspectives; the two sexes constitute a “dualism” that “becomes possible” because they are part of the richness of the diversity of creation and on account of the reciprocity of the Persons in the Trinity. Certainly from the biological perspective, a male-female dualism determines and makes possible the continuation of all animal species. But Tonstad draws attention to a passage in TD2 on gender complementarity that must be presumed when reading TD5, and which exemplifies the kind of essentialism to which Balthasar is prone:

He says, “[t]he male body is male throughout, right down to each cell of which it consists, and the female body is utterly female; and this is also true of their whole empirical experience and ego-consciousness. At the same time both share an identical human nature, but at no point does it protrude, neutrally, beyond sexual difference.” The first statement is biologically and trivially true, although the implications thereof are debatable. The latter statement concerning empirical experience and ego-consciousness is neither trivial nor obviously true.582

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581 TD5, 87; quoting Speyr, World of Prayer, 67.
Martin is even less sure than Tonstad that the former claim about cellular biology is factually true and I tend to agree with her.\textsuperscript{583} The ego-consciousness of Jesus plays a role in the trinitarian economy and in Balthasar’s own contemplation of Personal difference in the eternal trinitarian immanence, but here it is based on a metaphysical worldview that seems to limit the data of experience and science rather than respond to it. Perhaps nothing else could be expected from his Swiss-patrician worldview.

But what Balthasar has done is assigned personal, even Divine-Personal, significance to gender difference. He does not assign sexes to the divine Persons themselves, but he comes very close to implying that genders function like “persons” in the Trinity. Balthasar infers a trinitarian hierarchy from existing gender relations according to a particular cultural and anthropological understanding. He claims that male and female are fundamentally equal just as Father, Son, and Spirit are equal in the Godhead. He also believes “equality” and a certain kind of “priority” are compatible in the earthly created realm. But the trinitarian equality of divine persons is the cause of gender equality, even as earthly gender hierarchies inform the taxonomy of the divine-personal processions. Balthasar claims in \textit{Creator Spirit} that, “despite all the personal equality in value, the man has a primacy and is in the image of God as the one who begets, shapes and leads, while the woman, as the one who receives and gives birth, is essentially an answer to the man, a ‘helper’, but also ‘fullness’ and ‘glory’ and therein the image of the creaturely world.”\textsuperscript{584} The critical point is that “hypostatic” difference and “distance” between the male gender and the female gender absolutely conditions embodied human personhood and is thus of the same significance of D4. Gender

\textsuperscript{583} Martin, “The ‘Whence’ and the ‘Whither,’” 22.
\textsuperscript{584} Balthasar, \textit{Creator Spirit}, 378-79.
complementarity is directly (and absolutely) in the “image and likeness” of D3, as he goes on to claim in *Creator Spiritus*: “The teaching in the Old and New Testaments about the difference between the sexes is not conditioned by its time and cannot be superseded (e.g., 1 Cor 11:7-12) but is rather the presupposition for the full unfolding of God’s making himself known in his Incarnation.” Returning to the text of TD5, it must again be acknowledged that Balthasar does *not* assign genders to the divine Persons, but rather the hierarchical priority of male over female to the taxonomy of the divine processions. Balthasar then borrows from Speyr the notion upon which trinitarian hierarchy and taxonomy depends: “This, then, is ‘freedom’s primal shape. In order for a will to be free, it must be part of a hierarchy.’”\(^585\) This is supremely so in the case of the divine will.

Tonstad acknowledges that hierarchy is essential to the divine processions and can even account for “a certain distance, an interval …[that allows for] for mutual love and enjoyment in freedom between persons.”\(^586\) She even acknowledges that this distance “protects the distinction and distance between the persons both immanently and economically” and must necessarily be initiated by the Father’s begetting of the Son. But she does not see how this hierarchy can allow for the equality of the persons, because its intelligibility is grounded in an anthropological inequality between male and female. Freedom, therefore, can never be properly exercised within a hierarchy.

I agree with Tonstad that Balthasar’s gendering of the triune relations makes it difficult to see the equality of the Persons in the Godhead, or even their unity in the Godhead. Gender difference, because it is so absolute for Balthasar, cannot carry the analogical weight he places upon it. Whereas he relies on the distance between the

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\(^585\) Speyr, *World of Prayer*, 57-58; quoted in TD5, 88.
\(^586\) Tonstad, “Sexual Difference,” 608; citing TD5, 94.
Persons both internally and externally in relation to the world to express their difference-in-love later in TD5, in this early section of TD5 he places too much importance on a gender-assigned understanding of difference in terms of activity and receptivity. The following passage is one of the most controversial in TD5 and is worth quoting at length:

Finally, the divine unity of action and consent—which, as we have seen, share equal dignity within love—is expressed in the world in the duality of the sexes. In trinitarian terms, of course, the Father, who begets him who is without origin, appears primarily as (super-) masculine; the Son, in consenting, appears initially as (super-) feminine, but in the act (together with the Father) of breathing forth the Spirit, he is (super-) masculine. As for the Spirit, he is (super-) feminine. There is even something (super-) feminine about the Father too, since, as we have shown, in the action of begetting and breathing forth he allows himself to be determined by the Persons who thus proceed from him; however, this does not affect his primacy in the order of the Trinity. The very fact of the Trinity forbids us to project any secular sexuality into the Godhead (as happens in many religions and in the gnostic syzygia). It must be enough for us to regard this ever-new reciprocity of acting and consenting, which in turn is a form of activity and fruitfulness, as the transcendent origin of what we see actualized in the world of creation: the form and actualization of love and its fruitfulness in sexuality.

What is interesting in this passage is how each Divine Person can be both masculine and feminine in the varied relational dynamics of the Divine Processions. This is supposed to form the basis for understanding the richness of sexual difference in the created realm, as well as the condition for the ontological possibility thereof. The fact that each Divine Person manifests super-masculinity and super-femininity is also supposed to guard the reality of divine mystery in a negative-theological mode. But by transposing

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587 Coakley also suggests this in her reflections on the filioque: “Indeed, were we to speculate further about the ‘processions’, we would not only need to speak thus of the Son eternally coming forth from the Father ‘in’ or ‘by’ the Spirit (rather than the Spirit proceeding from the Father merely ‘and’, or ‘through’, the Son, as in classical ‘Western’ and ‘Eastern’ language); but, more daringly, we would also need to speak of the Father’s own reception back of his status as ‘source’ from the other two ‘persons’, precisely via the Spirit’s reflexive propulsion and the Son’s creative effulgence”; God, Sexuality, and the Self, 333.


589 See Tonstad, “Sexual Difference,” 628, n.65: she notes how Robert Pesarchick claims that such über-language protects Balthasar from projection and violation of theological analogy in his dissertation,
hierarchically (and biblically—Genesis 2:18-24) arranged gender-based categories of activity and passivity into the realm of trinitarian relations, Balthasar risks absolutizing an earthly understanding of sexual complementarity in a way that compromises the analogy of being. If trinitarian relations constitute an ever-greater dissimilarity beyond their supposed similarity with sexual difference in accordance with Lateran IV, the seriously limited nature of male-female complementarity as an intelligible analog must be acknowledged.

Balthasar himself claims in accordance with the teaching of Lateran IV that the trinitarian Persons cannot be thought of as masculine and feminine in the same way humans are masculine and feminine:

In God, distance and nearness exist in a unity that exhibits their constantly intensifying relationship: “The more the Persons in God differentiate themselves, the greater is their unity.” It is like the relationship of the sexes: “The more different the other is, the more worthy of love he appears. There may come a point of interpenetration in their union where neither is aware any longer of where one begins and the other ends; but in this very unity the Thou is even more exalted.” No doubt this image is only remotely approximate. The image is only remotely approximate because there is a greater dissimilarity governing the similarity between personal difference in God with sexual difference in human beings. The illustrative (and very bizarre) sexual language of “interpenetration” in this passage comes from Speyr and is apparently intended as an image of *perichoresis*. (But it does not seem at all consistent in this case with gender complementarity.) My

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*The Trinitarian Foundation of Human Sexuality as Revealed by Christ According to Hans Urs von Balthasar: The Revelatory Significance of the Male Christ and the Male Ministerial Priesthood* (Rome: Editrice Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2000), 176-77. She suggests that this claim is rather unfounded and raises more questions that it answers. Pesarchick acknowledges the risk of absolutizing gender and projecting it back into God, but he concludes that the structure of Balthasar’s argument with regard to the necessity of a male ordained priesthood is consistent. My essay does not focus on Balthasar’s conclusions about a male ordained priesthood, but I am concerned with potential faults in Balthasar’s methodology due to gender essentialism.

590 TD5, 94-95; quoting Speyr from *Epheser (Kinder des Lichtes)*, 100 [*The Letter to the Ephesians* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1996)]; and *World of Prayer*, 73.
argument in Part II of this chapter is that Balthasar has resources other than gender difference that are more significant as analogical windows into divine-personal difference.

Of course, the distance between man and woman that allows for the intimacy of communion cannot be construed entirely as a biological duality, and Balthasar does not really try to do this. A man and a woman are persons, which means they are embodied iconic representations of two great mysteries that face each other in love. But how far into the mysteries of their two personhoods does the gender difference of male-female reach? Balthasar believes it characterizes them absolutely with a kind of “character” that is itself absolute. While this character of masculinity or femininity is not “stamped” onto any of the divine persons, the hierarchical arrangement of masculinity and femininity does characterize the interpersonal distances of the processions.

Balthasar begins to move away from considerations of gender at the end of “The World is From the Trinity.” Personal freedom exists within a hierarchical arrangement when the persons involved share the same will. Balthasar quotes Speyr on how the Father actually fulfills the Son’s will by sending him into the world. The Son’s will may be determined hierarchically by the Father, but its glorious fulfillment depends on the Son’s and Spirit’s freedom in acting as Persons. This freedom is not solely the human freedom of the Incarnate Son, but has its antecedent in the divine freedom of the eternal Son. The Spirit shares in the divine will by perfecting it in a way analogous to the Spirit’s perfection of the Father’s Ur-Kenosis and Son’s thankful response as a circumincession:

As for the Spirit, whose specific part is to choose and decide in all freedom (since the Spirit is the absolute, divine will), one might say that he embodies that reciprocal “mode of granting requests” which is an invention of the whole Trinity.

591 TD5, 89.
so that the decision on the part of the united Trinity (within the order of processions) is completely mutual and common to all the Persons. At the same time each Person surprises and surpasses the Others by coming up with a “divine ever-greater”, a divine “heightening” and “exuberance”. The unanimity of the decision expresses the unity of a love that is vital and creative.

The latter half of this passage is Balthasar’s descriptive assertion of the spontaneity of divine personhood in perichoresis and the enactment of the divine will. The “surprise” language that he borrows from Speyr is anthropomorphic, but the idea of “ever-greater” has been a theme latent in Balthasar’s thought since his early work on Gregory that now becomes explicit in the Theo-Drama.

Tonstad seems to take special issue with the language of the “ever-greater,” the je-mehr: “The principle of the ever-greater means that the Father is surprised and delighted by the Son’s enactment of his role. But the content of the Son’s role is nothing other than to place himself at the disposal of the Father, even to utmost self-abandonment in death and descent into hell.” She is not convinced that there is blessedness in the end, but rather only deprivation. It is thus helpful to distinguish between the distance between Father and Son in the event of the Cross (D3) and the Son’s being at the disposal of the Father from all eternity in the immanent Trinity (D4). The Father is “surprised and delighted,” not at the Son’s suffering and death, as she infers, but in the Son himself. This is what Balthasar is reaching for analogically by means of the Son’s enactment of his role in the divine economy to which believers have access through the NT narrative of Incarnation, Cross, Resurrection, as well as through the presence of the Spirit, who is the

592 Citing Speyr, World of Prayer, 60-65.
593 TD5, 89.
“We” of Father and Son made available. The Son is “ever-greater” for the Father as is
the Holy Spirit for them both. The almost unavoidable temporal metaphor for priority
must be excused here, but the delight of the Father takes place first in the context of D4.
It certainly does not occur “in the death of the wicked” (Ez 18:23) and even less so in the
“death of his faithful ones” (Ps 116:15). The Son enacts his role visibly from the
standpoint of D3 and mysteriously from the standpoint of D4. This role is, primarily, to
be loved and glorified by the Father: “So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence
with the glory that I had in your presence before the world existed,” and “Father, I desire
that those also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory,
which you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world”
(John 17:5, 24). This canonical NT perspective disallows any reading of Philippians 2:5-
11 which would suggest that the Father exalts the Son in the economy only because he
has been obedient to death on the Cross, and this is the perspective to which Balthasar
consistently returns.

Even the suffering of the Son in time is rooted in his trinitarian joy, which is
attested in John (16:20, 17:13). His point concerns primarily the “heightening” and
“exuberance” that comes from interpersonal relations in mutual esteem and love. The
Christian now sees time and space sanctified in their origin in trinitarian processions.

595 TD4, 320, 324; see also Khaled Anatolios for a parallel perspective on this point: “When we
appropriate the experience of Pentecost, we not only exult in the availability of God for us; we not only
respond by being available to God, but we become ourselves active perpetuators of the dynamic of mutual
availability, animators of perichoresis, communion-makers, authors of fellowship. Thus, the biblical
revelation of the Spirit at Pentecost is not a revelation that presents any new objective content about God or
humanity. Rather, it is the revelation of a new milieu of being, in which the experience of human division
and failure of communication, represented by the Babel-like impermeability of foreign languages, is
overcome by the experience of the other as another I: ‘each one heard [the others] speaking in his own
language’ (Acts 2:6). The experience of the Spirit at Pentecost is thus the appropriation of a radically new
active agency in bringing about the mutual receptivity, the reciprocal self-donation, and the collective
outwardness which constitute the life of communion. This experience represents the climax of the
manifestation of the hypostatic ethos of the Spirit and the consummation of the Spirit’s work in bringing
about within us the radical availability of absolute charity’; “Divine Disponibilité,” 307.
through the revelation of the Trinity that comes in Christ’s resurrection, which is also the revelation of trinitarian joy: “Our primal ideas of time and space, too, originate in the coming-to-be of the divine processions. Unless we see eternal being in terms of eternal event, we are condemned to see the form of its duration as a mere nunc stans, which deprives it of everything that makes world-time (in all its transience) exciting and delightful.” But this is also the sign of a fulfillment of endless spiritual progress as blessed rest, which is also rooted in the processions in the immanent Trinity: “in the eternal process of being begotten, the Son eternally receives himself from the Father in a presence that includes both his always-having-been and also his eternal future (his eternal coming) from the Father.” The distance between them is seen through the analogical lens of infinite progress to be the place of eternal encounter:

Again, we must not see the “distance” in opposition to, or in conflict with, the “closeness” (of circumincessio in the one divine nature): at the same time, such distance is necessary, for two reasons: first, in order to hold fast to the personal distinctness of each Person both in being and acting; and second, in order to establish the basis within the Trinity for what, in the economic Trinity, will be the possibility of a distance that goes as far as the Son’s abandonment on the Cross.

In God, distance and nearness exist in a unity that exhibits their constantly intensifying relationship: “The more the Persons in God differentiate themselves, the greater is their unity.”

This mutually intensified differentiation does not have to be construed along gender lines in the way Balthasar does. His theology of the je-mehr and interpersonal mystery legitimately exceeds his own gender categories of absolute activity and passivity, while the latter illegitimately exceeds the former. This becomes clear through most of the text of TD5. According to the logic we have been tracing in Balthasar’s thought, the greater the difference between male and female, the greater their communion and the greater
their freedom to be what they are. But Balthasar also uses the image of faith in the Divine-Personal relations, by which “the love that grants freedom to the other always offers him something ‘that transcends his capacities for knowing’, something that has an utterly unique origin, springing from the ‘hidden depths of the one and communicated to the hidden depths of the other’.” The greater their “ever-greater” and “surprise” between male and female vis-à-vis each other, after the model of the triune life itself, the greater their integrity and freedom in their difference from each other and vice versa. But in the context of hyper-masculinity and hyper-femininity, the divine unity is constituted by a gender complementarity that hardens to the extent that it is mapped on to the Trinity. Admittedly, this would seem to preclude or at least obscure the images of surprise and joy that can be had between men and women as friends and partners in a life of mutual discovery, let alone in their exercise of personal freedom within their communities. It would render as increasingly formal the analogical sense of what Balthasar and Speyr denote in such terms, which is the opposite of what they wish to achieve.

It is easy to understand Tonstad’s and others’ concerns with Balthasar’s (and Speyr’s) tendency to impose trinitarian hierarchy back onto gender relations after they have already used the latter to understand the former. Patriarchal cultures have always drawn their life-force from conformity to sacralized hierarchies at the expense of women and children. Indeed, it is in the face of this punishing worldly reality that John proclaims the freedom of the children of God: “But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13). Paul proclaims a

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599 TD5, 97.
similar freedom when he declares that the dividing wall between male and female has been broken down in the Body of Christ (Galatians 3:28). 600

As committed to his own views on gender complementarity as Balthasar is, and as intertwined as they are with trinitarian hierarchy, it would be reductionistic to relegate his understanding of D4 to a mere gate-keeping function for the hierarchical primacy of the Father. Jesus’ human consciousness is structured by his “location” in the trinitarian hierarchy as the eternal divine Son and Word of God, but also by his human condition. Tonstad overcompensates for the perceived collapse of the economic and immanent Trinity into each other by advocating for an absolute difference between the missio and the processio of the Divine Persons. 601 But in Balthasar’s thought, our access to an understanding of this hierarchy is structured by the dynamics of Jesus’ earthly life and behavior among his disciples and the people in his world. Thus the communal and eschatological nature of Jesus’ earthly life is itself an expression of these eternal Divine Relations. All of this is done not only from his Divine “location” [at D4] vis-à-vis the Father, but also from his economic “location” [at D3]. The analogical relationship between Jesus’ places vis-à-vis the Father in both D3 (as the Incarnate Son) and in D4 (as the eternal Son) necessitates a consideration of the role his human consciousness plays.

The hierarchy of the divine processions beginning with Ur-Kenosis is necessary, but its goal is the perichoresis of the divine communion that is perfected in the procession of the Spirit. I have already noted that Balthasar’s attention to the gendered nature of the triune relations in the first part of TD5 is largely absent from the rest of the book. There is one notable instance near the midpoint of TD5 of a confluence of gender

600 Which, admittedly, he seems to “rebuild” elsewhere (1 Cor 14:33-35).
essentialism with Balthasar’s near-hyposatization of suffering that bears a striking contrast with its context. I will comment upon this instance in due time. But for the most part, his focus begins to shift late in Part I of TD5 to the consciousness of the Incarnate Jesus as the enactment of his trinitarian-eschatological position vis-à-vis God and the world. What I suggest in Part II of this chapter is that Balthasar offers an eschatological theology of God’s abundance in TD5 that runs deeper than his speculations on gender.

II. Commentary on TD5, Part II: a Retrieval of Balthasar’s Trinitarian Theology

II.A. The Analogy of Faith: Overcoming a Theology of Lack

A trinitarian analogy based on Jesus’ archetypal faith relies on ontological and anthropological categories more fundamental than gender difference. The analogy of faith is behind most of Balthasar’s borrowings from Adrienne von Speyr, and particularly behind her images of “surprise” and “exceeded expectations” in the Trinity. These metaphors point analogically to something like faith and something like prayer in the Trinity. Not only does Speyr accept the risks of using the metaphor of faith in a mystical trinitarian theology, but she deems it essential. It is essential not only because of the faith of Christ, but because of the gift of faith to human beings that is God’s own participation in their growth in spiritual life. Faith is relevant to the content of human knowledge of God because it structures both human participation in God and divine participation in humanity.\(^{602}\) But the analogy depends on a simultaneity of faith and sight in mystical

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\(^{602}\) Speyr, *World of Prayer*, 35: “If we were to give up the concept of faith in order to clarify our idea of the divine life, then that life would no longer be at all accessible to us. In initiating us into his inner-divine world of love, showing us ways to his trinitarian nature and guiding us into the ‘greater-than’ of his being, God lets us keep our human concept with all its inadequacy because it can be transformed through
experience, and this is precisely the issue for critics of Balthasar’s “God’s-eye view” like Kilby and Levering.

Levering questions the suitability of faith as a basis for trinitarian analogy because he believes it precludes omniscience in God. He notes in a quotation of TD5 that for Balthasar “[i]t is an indispensable axiom that the Son, even in his human form, must know that he is the eternal Son of the Father” and thus also “the unbreakable continuity of his processio and his missio” that grounds “his transcendental obedience, which upholds his entire earthly existence.” But Levering is critical of Balthasar’s orientation of trinitarian theology within a description of how “Humankind’s (and Christ’s) separation from God is experienced within human consciousness” in such a way that makes for a new kind of psychological analogy in a “Christology of consciousness.” Levering objects to how “The content of Jesus’ supreme knowing is precisely unknowing or not-knowing” in Balthasar’s view. The implications of all this for Levering are that Balthasar has projected a kind of alienation from God into the very being of God. This lack of knowledge is then intensified in the suffering of the human Jesus.

We have already seen in GL7 that the divine love of Father and Son in the unity of the Spirit is enacted by Jesus by virtue of his obedience to the divine will. This enactment of obedience is characterized in turn by Jesus’ archetypal faith. Faith is the proper ground for the analogy between economic obedience and immanent love that grace. And precisely those highest gifts of God which come directly from his inner-divine life, faith, love and hope, are far better adapted to reveal his nature than any powers of our creaturely nature as such. We must use what experience we as Christians have of God as access to his nature, as a means of interpreting his being.”

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604 TD5, 123-24.
605 Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 125; cit. TD3, 166.
606 Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 128; “[Christ’s] depth of not-knowing (as the not-knowing of the Son, the Word) goes infinitely beyond any mere human separation from truth”, p.129.
Balthasar seeks, and it takes place in the realm of trinitarian distance. The following passage is one of Balthasar’s most explicit statements regarding the logical need for something like D4 in God for the proper functioning of the analogy of being within an analogy of faith:

Accordingly, it is the Father’s will to be “outstripped, for all eternity, by the Son’s love. Faith is, as it were, the space that must be opened up so that there is room for infinite fulfillment, beyond the limits of all expectation.” … All this refers back to the element of distance that is indispensable to love…. Each leaves the other “time” and “space” to reflect on and present his wishes and to “prepare his gifts.” Without this personal distance in the circuminessio of the Persons it would be impossible to understand either the creature’s distance from God or the Son’s “economic” distance from the Father—a distance that goes to the limit of forsakenness. 607

Such language of the triune Persons “giving each other time and space” tempts the reader to focus on what seems like an extremely indulgent anthropomorphism, but the real intelligibility is in the basic structure of interpersonal distance. D4 (the immanent distance) is the ontological foundation for a proper understanding of both D1 (created distance) and D3, the divine-economic “limit of forsakenness” that overtakes D2 (alienated distance). And yet Jesus’ archetypal faith in the Father speaks to the positive value of D3 even from a trinitarian perspective: Jesus trusts that what he does will be fruitful. The fruit of the Resurrection is beyond what is humanly knowable, for both Paul (Phil 3:10-14) and for Jesus himself according to his human nature—else he would not have experienced anxiety in the Garden. Faith does not supplant Jesus’ very human fear and distress, but rather outstrips it in his enactment of his task on earth (John 12:27-28). The interpersonal distance of D3 is not alienating but rather the very condition “for infinite fulfillment, beyond the limits of all expectation” even as it “goes to the limit of

607 TD5, 98.
forsakenness.” This is true not only because of the Resurrection but because of D3’s grounding in the immanent Trinity (D4).\textsuperscript{608}

Even if one were to grant the hardest and strictest dichotomies between faith and knowledge in Christian experience—which I am not presuming many would do—it is not a lack of knowledge that drives intelligibility of Balthasar’s paschal trinitarian analogy. By using Christ’s faith as the analogical lens through which he glimpses the mystery of the triune life, Balthasar is not denying the Thomist-scholastic notion of omniscience. Something like faith in the Trinity, even with its aspects of “delight” and “surprise,” does not obviate omniscience in God. It is rather the fulfillment of all faith in the eternal, eschatological trinitarian relations of Father, Son, and Spirit. This is something Balthasar believes Jesus shares in and expresses even in the Incarnation. He insists (along with Speyr) that the “I-Thou” within the Trinity involves worship.\textsuperscript{609} Even given the hierarchical taxis of the trinitarian processions, this is not a unidirectional, reverse-modalistic worship from Son to Father and from Spirit and Son to Father because there is mutuality in inner-trinitarian worship.\textsuperscript{610} Balthasar is rather putting a different emphasis on the human cognition of divine life in terms of a patristic analogy ruled by the logic of symbolic reference, because the role of Christ’s consciousness in Balthasar comes into focus in TD5 only after the concentration on the analogy of faith.

The analogy of faith relies on a new value of the temporal in redeemed Christian existence.\textsuperscript{611} It is crucial not to miss the significance Balthasar finds in the temporality of “process” imagery in his trinitarian analogies. Time or “super-time” in God does not

\textsuperscript{608} TD5, 98.
\textsuperscript{609} TD5, 96-97.
\textsuperscript{610} TD5, 96; citing Speyr, \textit{Objektiv Mystik}, 82.
\textsuperscript{611} TD5, 100-01: “Insofar as it is an image of God, the temporal/material becomes something vital and living; insofar as it is an image of the Trinity, it becomes generative and fruitful.”
signify natural emanations or change in God, but rather points to the mystery of freedom and love within God. Freedom is not the ability to choose otherwise in the divine processions, according to which the Persons of the Trinity really have to “wait” to see what the Others will do. Rather, temporally-structured images like “surprise” and “expectation” signify something that is already eternally “happening” in God in the spontaneity of the Persons’ communal enactment of the Godhead. The fruitfulness of the divine relations is eternal and open-ended, even if there is real physical death for both Christ and the Christian who follows after him. If triune fruitfulness informs the life of faith, then death is not the end of growth. Gregory of Nyssa’s (and Jesus’ own) agricultural images achieve their intelligibility: “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:23b-24). Faith in the larger, divine, eschatological reality is directed towards Resurrection as its goal, which is God’s gift to created being. Resurrection is not absorption, but everlasting communion with God and others as the perfection of created being. Only then can one say (as Balthasar says) that the process in GL7, TD4, and TD5 as Gregory’s *epēktasis* becomes the image of the Trinity, in imitation of which all earthly existence is redeemed according to its primal truth.

Because there is “something like time” in God, Whose image Christ is and the Christian by extension, there is “something like” faith and “surprise” and eternal eventfulness in God. What happens between God and the world becomes an analogical mirror for the most important “event” *within* God, and so:

If each of the Persons in God was himself because of his pure transcendence to the other two, and therefore, for each Divine Person, the divine essence had the
attribute of “ever greater”, it follows that a world that is essentially developing can only exist in self-transcendence, especially since in its developing it is completely dependent on the priority of the Divine Being and can strive toward and attain this being only in virtue of prior divine grace and condescension.  

There is no self-transcendence without kenosis, either in the ascetical theology of Paul in Philippians 2:5-3:16 or in Balthasar’s trinitarian theology of self-opening and personal availability. From this perspective, the mistake of an overly-narrow interpretation of kenosis in Balthasar’s theology comes into bolder relief. All thought of kenosis must be held in tension and balanced with the thought of an equally important Nyssan and Pauline epéktasis, without which self-giving can too easily tend towards self-annihilation. This particular insight into epéktasis as an expression of the divine dynamism implicated in D4 is viewed, of course, “from the order of being” and not from the order of knowing. The epistemology is grounded in the analogy between a developing system and universal being, which is characterized by the act of creation in “grace and condescension.” Because the divine essence exists first as hypostases in relation, God must grant the participation in this relation to that which is not-God as a gift.

The first part of TD5, “The World is From the Trinity,” ends at this point with the completion of Balthasar’s “overture” of D1-D4, which I have suggested is a kind of musical analogy of being. We now see how the content of Balthasar’s analogy of being reaches its fullness as his “symphony” of D1-D4 reaches its completion in TD5. The next part, “Earth Moves Heavenward,” charts the world’s “epektatic” response to God’s kenotic condescension in the economy. Jesus’ consciousness as the perfect human response to the Father’s love increasingly takes on importance in the intelligibility of

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612 TD5, 102.
613 TD5, 103; Balthasar here says: “no existent essential being enters reality solely by participating in universal being,” because it had to come from somewhere; “and universal being can realize itself only by infusing itself into a particular hypostasis.”
Balthasar’s analogy of faith. But the stakes are also high due to the Chalcedonian truth of the Incarnation of the Son as a *divine* Person with a human nature. A full thematic consciousness of trinitarian Sonship in the Incarnate Jesus is not necessary in Balthasar’s analogy of faith. Karl Rahner has (what I believe is) a helpful parallel approach: Jesus’ pre-thematic awareness of his eternal Divine Sonship is real knowledge by virtue of its translation into his knowledge of being loved by the Father. Because he is without sin, there is nothing within him to hinder his free response to the Father’s love. Christ’s natural human lack of full thematic awareness of the eternal ramifications of his trinitarian mission does not obviate the fullness of divine omniscience because it does not obviate the fullness of the “intellectual act” that is interpersonal triune life. This so-called “lack” can be understood anthropologically, theologically (especially according to Chalcedon), biblically (according to Luke’s narrative of increasing “in wisdom and years,

614 Rahner provides an apt illustration of the role of Christ’s consciousness, even if Balthasar goes further than Rahner on its significance for triune relations. Jesus’ self-awareness is part of the very self-communication of God to creation. Jesus’ consciousness is not the self-awareness of the Father, but truly the self-awareness of the Son and Logos. Based on Rahner’s reluctance to attribute three separate consciousnesses to the divine persons, it would appear that Rahner is uncomfortable with these conclusions from the standpoint of Trinitarian theology. But perhaps he is *not* so uncomfortable with it from the standpoint of his Incarnational theology: “Thus given that this self-consciousness is a property of the human reality, then this ontological self—communication of God is also—and, indeed, specially and primarily—a factor in the self-consciousness of the human subjectivity of Christ”; “Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-Consciousness of Christ,” *Theological Investigations*, vol.5, trans. Karl H. Kruger (New York: Seabury, 1966), 206. Rahner is primarily discussing Jesus’ access to the *visio immediata* of God; but he is at pains to resist any objectification of God by a human consciousness. Thus Rahner claims that, “this direct presence [of Jesus to God] is the same kind of presence as is meant by the *visio immediata*, except that it excludes the element of ‘standing opposite’ an object …; we can quite rightly speak of a vision even in this case, as long as we exclude from our notion of vision this particular element of an objective, intentional counter-pole”; “Knowledge and Self-Consciousness in Christ,” 209.

An important qualification in this discussion, which also has profound implications for how Jesus experiences the Father, is how Rahner views Jesus’ self-consciousness as present to the divine Logos and *not* directly to the Father; “Knowledge and Self-Consciousness in Christ,” 211. Balthasar himself is much keener to emphasize how Jesus is standing, objectively, opposite the Person of the Father in relation to Him. But in Rahner’s schema, Jesus’ consciousness of himself is of the way in which the Logos is communicated to him by the Father. For Rahner this consciousness implies and includes his very relationship with the Father, which makes his position not so fundamentally different from Balthasar’s and thus suitable as an illustration: the Father communicates Jesus’ very self to him by communicating the Logos to him. Thus, the divine Son can be the Incarnate Jesus in no other way than by virtue of his particular human experience of Sonship. By having this “a-priori, unobjectified knowledge” about himself, which is a knowledge of himself as mystery, Jesus also has knowledge of the Father.
and in divine and human favor” in 2:52), and certainly pastorally (according to the agony in Gethsemane and the Markan cry of abandonment on the Cross).

Balthasar sees Christ always returning to the Father who sent him, that is, “Heavenward”: “This path is his essence and his life’, and he imparts it to the temporal existence of those who are his. He has ‘set our being in motion again, toward him, on the eternal path of the Son’, namely, to the Father in the Holy Spirit.”

This is how “our creaturely becoming has a share in the ineffable ‘becoming’ of the Diving Being.”

“Earth” does indeed move “Heavenward,” according to the title of this second part of TD5, but it does so as an expression of God’s triune perichoresis of Father, Son, and Spirit. Paul’s kenosis hymn in Philippians 2:5-11 and his exhortation of the community to engage in epēktasis in Phil 3:12-16, as we have seen, both express his desire that the community of believers have the “same mind” as Christ, to take the “God’s-eye view” of Barth and Balthasar; not as a presumptuous grasping towards total comprehension, but as an open-ended quest in imitation of the Incarnate Christ who both reaches out and empties himself out to others.

The distance from the Father in Jesus’ experience of God is therefore not the result of ignorance or alienation from God. Balthasar is not overturning the principle of non-contradiction by using such illustrations of his point, but rather applying the analogy of being as conditioned by the analogy of faith applied to the suffering of the Incarnate Son of God, something that he has consistently done since his critical reading of Karl Barth. What Balthasar says in a series of quotations and citations from Speyr’s World of Prayer in TD5 is that Jesus is both treading and making a “path” for humankind to God.

615 TD5, 130; cit. Speyr, Johannes III, 225 [Farewell Discourses]; I Korinther, 242.
616 TD5, 131.
that “is possible because of the distance between the Father and the Son in the Trinity.”  

From the perspective of divine ontology, “Now, however, the divine distance between Father and Son [D4] must be translated into the Christian distance between God and man [D1].”  

This translation (D3) is beyond what Gregory of Nyssa explicitly developed in his own trinitarian thought, and may even appear to be in conflict with it because of his disallowance of diastasis language in reference to God. But it is consistent with Gregory’s own analogy between the diastasis of spiritual progress and the diastasis of spatio-temporal existence. By grace, the former redeems and uplifts the latter. Balthasar speaks to this reality of grace in a quotation from Speyr:

> For “the believer’s spirit obeys now new direction and principles. These are not the law imposed by the limitations of human existence in space and time.... Life thus takes on at once the meaning and the fullness of the eternal. The infinite belongs to it.” But this mysterious communication between time and eternity—a time that is not destroyed by eternity yet is embedded in it—is something we owe to the *time of the Mediator*, Jesus Christ.  

Jesus Christ becomes the “Mediator” of eternity to time by embodying the eternal Logos, which informs and stamps spatio-temporality with an eternal significance. In fact, it makes time part of God’s “history,” a moment in a “process” that “begins” in the divine processions: “once the eternal God determines to create a world-time characterized by *becoming*, his eternal time will be, of necessity, contemporaneous with every moment of transitory time,” which “gives each moment [in world-time] its content, its urgency” in such a way that “created time bears ‘the mark of its divine origin’ and exhibits an analogy to it.” Here near the end of the “Earth Moves Heavenward” section, Balthasar begins to

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617 TD5, 125.  
618 TD5, 125-26.  
619 TD5, 126; quoting Speyr, *Sieg der Liebe* (Romans 8), 36-37 [*Victory of Love* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990)].  
620 TD5, 126-27.
unfold the implication that Earth can only truly move Heavenward by being
eschatologically included in Heaven through the Incarnate Christ.

But Christ cannot be the Mediator of this trinitarian event without the
“Mediation” of the Spirit. Balthasar makes his characteristic Johannine-Pauline
pneumatological move: Christ informs the cosmos with the divine life of the Word, but
the Spirit must inform Christian existence after the pattern of the Incarnate Word in order
to preserve the relation that Christ has with the Father in D3. This is characterized by the
Pauline “groaning of the Spirit” from Romans 8:24 in a created analog for inner-
trinitarian worship in the believer’s spiritual progress in hope beyond human knowledge:
“So the whole delay in the fulfillment of the beatific vision (since it is “not yet”) has, as
such, a divine, trinitarian basis,” but in such a way that “the Son’s redemption may be
fulfilled in the world.”\(^{621}\) Thus the theological virtue of hope springs “from the life of the
Trinity,” because there can be no salvation if the human being does not freely participate
in it. Hope is the means and the mode for this participation, which requires a
pneumatological understanding of both Christ’s “experience” and our “experience in
Christ” as the very “seal of the vision of God: \textit{inchoatio visionis}.\(^{622}\) Balthasar has
already discussed in TD3 and TD4 the implications of this pneumatological \textit{inchoatio
visionis} for the person of Jesus himself in the “trinitarian inversion”—his earthly
experience of being conceived, anointed by, driven by, filled with, and ministered to by
the Holy Spirit before he resumes his “place” as the Sender of the Spirit after his
Resurrection and Ascension. His place as the Sender of the Spirit with the Father is in D4
with the Father, and the Spirit then takes up a “position” at D3 from them both in the

\(^{621}\) TD5, 146; Romans 8 also plays a prominent role in Sarah Coakley’s pneumatology in \textit{God,
Sexuality, and the Self}.

\(^{622}\) TD5, 148.
hearts of believers and in the body of the Church. But before the Resurrection Jesus must experience the Spirit as a human being does, even if his reception of the Spirit is as an Incarnate Divine Person who is without sin. This is the structure of Balthasar’s argument for a simultaneity of faith and knowledge in the Christ experience that is imparted by the Spirit to believers, thus forming an analogy for the triune relations themselves.

We can only say negatively at this point that Balthasar’s analogy of faith in TD5 has refrained, for the time being, from masochistic gendered imagery. He will continue to do without these gender binaries, with one strong exception that I will acknowledge below, in his final efforts in the trilogy to integrate his soteriology with his trinitarian eschatology. He does however make thorough use of kenosis and the traditional taxis of the divine processions of Son and Spirit from the Father.

II.B. The Eschaton in Light of the Analogy of Faith: a Theology of Divine Processions

Balthasar then turns to a consideration of “The Final Act as Tragedy” in Part II of TD5, which is his treatise on the classical eschatological topics of sin, death, suffering, and divine judgment in a trinitarian theological mode. As we have already seen in GL7 and TD4 and now again in TD5, a certain tension produces a beauty in the event of the Cross that sometimes seems marred by harshness. Jesus is the Light of the world, but the Cross is God’s judgment on the world; it is God’s response to the “darkness... [that] compels the light that comes into the world to show itself as judgment.”623 This darkness now has an eternal significance as the result of God’s creation of finite free beings in D1, an act of “differencing” that has its precondition in the eternal triune “differencings” of

623 TD5, 200.
D4. The overcoming of this tragedy of created freedom (D2) is accomplished in the economy of God’s condescension (D3), which is only a “con”-descension if it really expresses something of who God is (D4). Balthasar draws a controversial conclusion, one that he knows carries great risks: “Thus, at least by analogy, we are justified in speaking of an eschatological ‘tragedy’ in the very midst of ‘God’s victory’ (and we must remember that God is righteous both in his mercy and in his justice); it is a tragedy insofar as a portion of God’s plan for the world has failed.”

D2 plays an eschatological—because soteriological—role of provoking D3, setting up an analogy between D2 and D3 in God’s “proportionate response.”

The story does not and cannot end with judgment and tragedy within God because the moment of judgment is eternally lodged within another moment. The analogy between D2 and D3 is contained within the analogy between D3 and D4. There is yet another analogical relationship between God’s mercy and God’s judgment, which in turn is proportional to the difference between the divine immanence and economy in God’s impassibility and God’s suffering.

Jürgen Moltmann professes to maintain the difference between divine impassibility and divine suffering by means of “the ultimate diastasis between Father and Son on the Cross” (D3). But D3 is not “enough”: it must “come from” somewhere that is not here if God is truly God. Balthasar believes that Moltmann goes too far in adopting “Hegel’s ‘ambivalence’ with regard to suffering, that without the pain and death of the Cross there can be no Trinity at all.”

There is for Balthasar a much more ultimate diastasis within the Trinity (D4), but Moltmann does not

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624 TD5, 212.
625 TD5, 213-14.
626 TD5, 227.
adequately distinguish between D3 and D4. He holds the latter too much under the becoming-based ontology of the former.

What the patristic doctrine of God’s *apatheia* wanted to guard against was the idea an external misfortune would condition God’s will.\(^{627}\) Balthasar turns again to Gregory of Nyssa in TD5 to establish the sense of impassibility he thinks important: that God is always acting and working. Christ takes on the diastasis, “the working (*ergon*) of the created nature, which maintains composite beings in harmony by means of manifold vicissitudes.”\(^{628}\) This allows for a critical reappropriation of the medieval sense of impassibility. What many modern critics find so objectionable and contrary to Scripture in the medieval theologies is their tendency to guard divine impassibility by an overly stringent restriction of God’s manifestations of pity to the created earthly realm without any account of how God’s mercy truly manifested the divine being.\(^{629}\) The analogical distinction between (what we are calling) D3 and D4 thus allows Balthasar to respond to modern theology’s concern with medieval theology with a twofold task: 1) God’s freedom and sovereignty must always be accorded its supremacy; 2) but without addressing the concerns of suffering, vulnerability, and solidarity with creatures in the way that Hegel attempted to do (although in the wrong way, for Balthasar and Barth), any “fully successful defense of a more traditional view of impassibility could prove merely pyrrhic.”\(^{630}\) God must also be seen as the sovereignly free One who acts even “in

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\(^{627}\) TD5, 218.

\(^{628}\) TD5, 219; quoting from Gregory’s *Third Address against the Arians*, chapters 32-34. Augustine echoes this sense of God’s *impassibilis*: “in him, regret, mercy, patience are only the expression of his constant attitude, which is the very opposite of insensitivity”; TD5, 220.

\(^{629}\) TD5, 222.

\(^{630}\) O’Regan, *Anatomy*, 226; “At the very least, impassibility suggests that as radically different than finite creatures God does not suffer in the way his creatures do, is not vulnerable to outside influence in the same way (*TD5*, 216), is not subject to any kind of metaphysical compulsion (*TD4*, 322-23; also *TD3*, 523), or that God avails of the opportunity in experiencing the world and its history to actualize
suffering, ...since by doing so he is only remaining faithful to his own decision to carry out to the very end the Covenant freely entered by him”; but both Balthasar and Barth claim that the biblical account of God demands a lively sense of God’s solidarity with creation, even with sinful human creatures.  

The trinitarian pre-condition for the Covenant, as we have argued from within Balthasar’s own logic, does not need to be explicit or propositionally explicit throughout Jesus’ human consciousness in order to function as real knowledge of his divine Sonship. This idea is the background for Balthasar’s sympathy (as we have seen in Chapter 2) with Barth’s location of the analogy of being within an analogy of faith. However, Balthasar also notes that such an *analogia entis* within an *analogia fidei* would be strengthened by a robust theology of the processions. Bulgakov’s image of *Ur-Kenosis* is likened in TD5, as well as in TL2 (Truth of God), to the mutually-constituted poles of the divine act of being as a simultaneity of poverty and wealth: “the ‘self-expropriation’ in the act of handing over” is the poverty, while “the entire divine being” is the wealth that is circulated in the divine processions. Jennifer Martin points to this simultaneity of poverty and wealth in the Bulgakovian-Balthasarian *Ur-Kenosis* as a source for feminist

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631 TD5, 237. “The center of Barth’s reflection is found in the theology of the Covenant, of which he sees the theology of creation as a part. In the background he often speaks of the ‘analogy’ by which God’s life in the Trinity is translated into the terms of salvation history. Because of this, the Son’s ‘form of obedience’ within the Godhead becomes the precondition for his acceptance of Incarnation and Cross”; p.239.

632 TL2, 177-78; quoted in O’Regan, Anatomy, 232. This is analogous to the mutually constituted “poles” of essence and existence in the act of created being (TL1, 195-97), as well as to progress as spiritual development in the analogy of “begetting” in Gregory of Nyssa (PT, 85; *Vita Moysis* 1, PG 44, 328B).
theologians who see in trinitarian life the wellsprings of prayerful contemplation and genuine personal communion.  

Balthasar’s overarching thesis has been that the analogically-reflected “somethings” that are “like” prayer, faith, worship, and communion within the triune immanence form the undergirding that makes the “tragedy” in the economy possible. God’s own self-expropriation in the triune processions “is at the very heart of the present volume [TD5], which aims to understand eschatology, not anthropocentrically, but theocentrically and in trinitarian terms.” Balthasar approaches the question from the standpoint of salvation history, but not in a Hegelian way. Infinity in God must appear in the economy of salvation via a “historical” process of salvation that “begins” in God. God is not bound by time, but the divine processions set a pattern by which God will create, communicate with, and redeem the spatio-temporal world. Between Father and Son in the “We” of the Spirit, there is absolute gift with no remainder, absolute reciprocity, mutuality as God’s “blood circulation,” which is also “the basis for there being a ‘death’ in God.” But this “death” is not tragic because it is only analogically seen as a death. This moment of differentiation, where God’s eternal dynamism of mutual outpouring is also rest on the eternal Sabbath, is God’s own “blessedness.” Here the Nyssan analogy reasserts itself in TD5: the process that includes death is ultimately rest

633 Martin believes the Ur-Kenosis can meet the same challenges that Sarah Coakley engages from other thinkers such as Daphne Hampson and Tina Beattie: “Balthasar’s Trinitarian re-formulation of kenosis borrowed from Bulgakov, while absolutely consonant with Coakley’s insight that it must include in its adoption a posture of openness before God that is the source of true self and true empowerment, is able to maintain not only a strong connection to Scriptural revelation while resisting an automatic identification with abjection, self-sacrifice, or oppression, but also provides the theological mooring for relational anthropology and human beings in community”; “The ‘Whence’ and the ‘Wither,’” 9.

634 TD5, 243-44.

635 TD5, 245: “for the distance between the Persons [D4], within the dynamic process of the divine essence, is infinite, to such an extent that everything that unfolds on the plane of finitude can take place only within this all-embracing dynamic process. This is because the Father’s generation of the Son gives him an equally absolute and equally free divine being.”

636 TD5, 246.
after the same pattern that Moses’ running towards God in infinite epéktasis becomes rest on the Rock that is Christ. Death therefore ultimately corresponds to something like rest and bliss in the Godhead.

What Balthasar claims is that if God really enters into this world, and if the oikonomia is really an expressive representation in a divine act of God as the Divine Actor, then history is truly happening in God. This is not to say, exactly, that the economy changes the Trinity; but the theologia, God’s self-expression on God’s terms, is now displayed with a new depth and “seriousness” (as it is called in TD4) after the Passion of Christ. This dramatic eventfulness is now revealed to be God’s eternal Sabbath at the same time. And so Jesus has the authority (exousia) to heal on the Sabbath: “But Jesus answered them, ‘My Father is still working, and I also am working’” (John 5:17). The true end of the “Final Act as Tragedy” is rest, bliss, and communion, even if there is something like an eternal memory of the economy that includes the Cross.

II.C. Resisting the Feminization of Pain in the Trinitarian Dramatic Act

However, as soon as Balthasar has established this rich Nyssan analogy of rest and motion in God at the end of the “Final Act as Tragedy,” he wades back into a gendered representation of the simultaneity of joy and suffering in God in the section “Death/Life; Sorrow/Joy” within “The Final Act: Trinitarian Drama.” He offers a childbirth analogy that lands him squarely under the blanket of many prominent critiques of his own work and of kenotic theology in general. The idea that joy and pain together express the fullness of the share in Christ’s life is not controversial, and in fact cannot be

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637 TD4, 320.
denied by anyone who has read the four Gospels and Paul’s letters. As we have mentioned above, a reading of Paul in Philippians 2:5-11 and 3:12-16 shows the simultaneity of kenosis and *epéktasis* in the truly Christian mindset, and therefore, “The Passion is therefore the highest act of the Lord’s love” in the trinitarian drama of salvation.638 But Balthasar goes on to qualify: the Passion is the highest act of God’s love “just as the birth pangs are for a woman giving birth” the highest act of her love. He then hardens this into a general statement about idealized femininity borrowed from Speyr:

> “Pain always belongs to woman. But a woman’s birth pangs stand between her love for her husband and her love for the child. The Lord, too, causes love to embrace pain. He must include pain, as it were, in order to show his love, in order to satisfy the disciples’ expectation—since, at the very moment his body is stricken with pangs, they desire the fruit of the Eucharist from him.”639

Not even including the disturbing implication that the experience of pain is a necessary consequence of a woman’s love for her husband (here construed in its exclusively biological-sexual aspect), there are theological-anthropological problems with such a statement. Pain makes Christ “womanly” in that he is suffering, but by virtue of its status as “work” it makes him “manly.” Balthasar thus gives a classic example of the sacralization of pain and suffering by way of “feminizing” it. The trinitarian analogy of activity and passivity gets placed on the female body, granting her life its supreme analogical value in the pain of childbirth.

Tonstad and Beattie would find here a seemingly perfect example of the violent implications of kenosis and hierarchy in a legitimization of female suffering as the highest form of feminine love. But by Balthasar’s own biblical (kenotic) logic, he could have gone another way. What follows is my suggestion of a way he could have gone

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638 TD5, 253; citing Speyr, *Johannes II*, 415 [*Discourses of Controversy*].
639 TD5, 254; quotation is from Speyr, *Passion von innen*, 102-3 [*The Passion from Within* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983)].
according the implications of his own eschatological trinitarianism. Jesus himself uses a woman’s experience of childbirth to describe his and his disciples’ work in the world in the Last Supper, but he does not say that the woman’s joy is ultimately on account of her great suffering. Rather, the significance of her suffering is by virtue of a process that leads to communion and life:

Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn, but the world will rejoice; you will have pain, but your pain will turn into joy. When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world. So you have pain now; but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. (John 16:20-22)

Jesus’ analogy works here because of the temporal nature of his life, death, Resurrection, and sending of the Spirit. The woman experiences joy in communion with the child whom she has brought into the world, not in her pain; just as she (hopefully) experiences joy with her husband when the child is conceived. (This is, of course, not the only kind of joy and love a husband and wife experience together.) This serves as a mysterious representation of the communion of the disciples with the Risen Jesus “in the world” and forever. The pain of the Cross and the disciples’ suffering is eternally significant, as is that of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world (Rev 5:6; 13:8). But its ultimate significance is that it leads from and to communion in an analogical mirror of the communion of Jesus with the disciples and of the Trinity itself. The woman’s act qua mother in this particular scene could just as easily resemble the Ur-Kenosis of the Father in generating the Son, in whom the Father is well pleased (Matt 3:17; 17:5) and whom the Father has glorified since before the world was made (John 17:5). But for Balthasar (and Speyr), the dynamics of human birth seem to place women under an obligation to find joy primarily in suffering and only secondarily in the child: it is labor (ironically, not
“work”)—and not parenthood, not marriage as a communion of love—that is given to women as their way of imitating the divine in Balthasar’s and Speyr’s childbirth analogy.

I will not seek an excuse for Balthasar’s kenotic imagery of the woman suffering in childbirth. However, a focus on the analogy of self-gift and divine joy reveals the location of a deeper intelligibility in Christ’s willingness to serve, in being called to serve and sent by the Father.\footnote{TD5, 254.} He quotes again from Speyr on self-gift in the Trinity: “But if death is understood to mean the sacrifice of life, then the original image of that sacrifice is in God as the gift of life flowing between Father and Son in the Spirit. For the Father gives his whole life to the Son, the Son gives it back to the Father, and the Spirit is the outflowing gift of life.”\footnote{TD5, 251.} This is a big “if.” In most other contexts, death is not understood as the sacrifice of life but rather as the exhaustion of life or the violent destruction of life. But if this “sacrifice of life” is qualified by Gregory of Nyssa’s \textit{epéktasis} as a metaphor for the alterations from state to state from origin to goal, then the image of death as it pertains analogously to the divine relations is guarded from its more violent connotations. Balthasar eventually does make such qualifications: “‘Rather, the ray of life generates of itself an answering ray: everything that goes forth returns necessarily to the point of departure,’ even if it is not ‘possible to observe this return in the individual case.’ In this context, Jesus’ death, even his most bitter death in abandonment, is the pure expression of his eternal, trinitarian life.”\footnote{TD5, 252; quoting Speyr, \textit{Johannes II}, 277-78.} However, Balthasar is not always careful to make these qualifications explicit. His Nyssa-influenced analogies are always integrated with hierarchical structurings of kenosis that carry a moral imperative of self-renunciation, as are Paul’s in Phil 2:5-11 and 3:12-16. But when
these hierarchies are engendered it becomes much harder to excise a masochistic and traumatic interpretation of the divine processions from his work.

Tonstad’s and Beattie’s charge is that such violent patriarchy is inseparable from Balthasar’s trinitarian theology, my thesis has been that it is worth the effort to make the separation. To preserve the holistic possibilities of kenosis and the traditionally hierarchical understanding of the divine processions in Balthasar’s thought, I have attempted to isolate the Bulgakovian and Nyssan movements in the divine processions. They are reviewed here in a brief summary of the “theme” of the symphony that is playing at the midpoint of TD5: Balthasar preserves the “monarchy” of the Father as in orthodox tradition, but does so with Bulgakov’s *Ur-Kenosis* and Gregory’s *epéktasis* as the characteristics of triune Personal life. *Epéktasis* is the spiritual dynamic of Δ1, which in Gregory’s thought functions strictly as the spatio-temporal condition of a finite created being as it reaches towards God across Δ2, or Balthasar’s D1. But when Δ1 becomes the arena for *epéktasis* by reaching for its transcending source in God across Δ2/D1, it receives the grace to become an expression of the dynamism of love and joy given out and exulted in by Persons in communion, all within the eternal “super-time” and “super-space” of D4. When the transcendent, divine “likeness” of space and time in the trinitarian processions gets expressed on earth as Christ’s distance from the Father (D3) in the unity of the Spirit, the death of Christ becomes an expression not only of the deadly seriousness of creation’s rejection of God in D2—although it is certainly that—but also of his trinitarian self-gift to the Father. The Spirit who encompasses and manifests their eternal union with each other across D3 is the perfecter, teacher, and even the availability of this divine relation to others.
II.D. Separation and Darkness as Modes of Union and Light

To reiterate the dimension of Balthasar’s argument that I wish to preserve: this separation (Abstand, Distanz, Trennung) of Son from Father in D3 is the way we see the bond of their unity even on the Cross, as does the centurion of Mark’s Gospel when he sees how Jesus “breathes out” his life (Mark 16:39). As such, D3 also manifests the kind of distance required for interpersonal love and offering of self. The latter point is the controversial one that is subject to violent interpretations; but this distance is also the arena of solidarity and the triumph over death and suffering. Balthasar himself makes such a reiteration of his task in the section, “Separation as a Mode of Union”:

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. To understand this, we need to grasp what is meant by saying that the Son’s divine power and glory is “laid up” with the Father. This concept only summarizes what is described in Philippians 2:6-7 and is grounded in the eternal Son’s unerring movement to the Father (eis ton kolpon tou Patros, Jn 1:18; cf. 1 Jn 1:2). The passage uses the paradoxical identity of the kinetic images of kenosis and epéktasis: the Son’s movement towards the world as an expression of obedience is also his movement deep in to the heart of the Father, eis ton kolpon tou Patros. The “bliss” is what is “laid up” with the Father in D4, even as D3 takes on the form of alienation. My criticism of Balthasar’s use of childbearing imagery and my suggestion of a replacement of it with the Johannine Jesus’ own image both depend on the movement and timing that is inherent in Balthasar’s dynamic image of D4: a movement towards God or the other person that results in the triumph of life over death, of communion over alienation. It is

643 TD5, 257.
an eschatological vision: “When the Father’s presence was so veiled that the Son experienced God-forsakenness, ‘the certainty of being the Heir was laid up within this Sonship, ready to be communicated to men as a gift’.”\textsuperscript{644} It is eschatological because it involves all of creation: the Son is the Heir who inherits from eternity to eternity in D4, but in D3 he is also the firstborn of creation, enabling all to inherit the Kingdom along with him in the power of the Spirit (Col 1:15).\textsuperscript{645}

The economy must express an eternal bond via movement, timing, and process. Without a vision of the eternal bond of unity, the death and “darkness” of the Passion is nothing more than death and darkness. The Spirit testifies to this unity (1 John 5:7-8) and in so doing maintains the distance and preserves a certain “form” for the eyes of faith. Hence the importance of pneumatology in Balthasar’s integration of soteriology and trinitarian theology: Jesus has what Balthasar calls “archetypal faith,” as we have seen, which expresses the great intimacy he has with the Father at all times. The Spirit bears witness to this intimacy to Jesus and to the world, no matter what Jesus goes through and how his suffering affects his human awareness of his filiation (Jn 8:29). Even if he is in such suffering that he “no longer knows it,”\textsuperscript{646} the bond is still there. Jesus must exercise human faith in order to be true to the bond of intimacy with the Father, but this exercise of his human will is instrumental even for God. The “no longer knowing” then becomes an expression of what Jesus describes as the agony of the woman who is in the “hour” of giving birth (John 14:21). Jesus and the childbearing woman are passive in the sense that they are suffering pain in their “hour,” but they are both active in the work of this hour, and so is God. God is working through a process towards a goal, which is joy.

\textsuperscript{644} Quoting Speyr, \textit{Sieg der Liebe} (Romans 8), 51.
\textsuperscript{645} TD5, 261-62.
\textsuperscript{646} TD5, 263.
Balthasar knows that his bold claim about distance and suffering as expressive of a kind of eternal “hour” in the Trinity carries risks. Perhaps I would agree with his critics that he does not always adequately preserve the bond of triunity upon which a theology of distance depends to make any sense. But Balthasar’s focus on the moment of suffering and pain is an attempt to express God’s solidarity with creation. God expresses solidarity with creation and gives the first fruits of the promise that the suffering will end in the triumph of life over death. Balthasar is therefore sympathetic to Moltmann and other 20th-century European theologians who witnessed the Great Wars and the annihilation of so much life. And so he is anxious to make sure his readers have “securely grasped and affirmed” the divine bond that surpasses all worldly distance, so that:

we can inscribe the temporal upon the eternal—paradoxically and in a way that can be misunderstood in a Hegelian direction—and say, “If this separation had never taken place, the mutual act of giving would never have become so perfect.” “Only in the sacrifice that lies in separation can love unfold its whole depth,” thus “the Father completes his sacrifice by giving his dearest possession from beyond in sacrifice into this world below.”

Given Balthasar’s anxiousness to ensure that the readers have grasped the trinitarian bond that undergirds the economy of salvation, it is somewhat unfortunate that he quotes Adrienne von Speyr in such passages with such apparent abandon and without always fleshing out her claims. His (her) point about the “mutual act of giving” becoming “so perfect” in the passage above is really a pneumatological one in Balthasar’s logic: the Spirit, and only the Spirit, can turn such separation into the “perfection” of perichoresis, just as the Spirit does in the immanent Trinity. The bond is there, even when the Son on the Cross “no longer knows it” because of the physical pain. The bond is the deeper meaning of the pain, and not the other way around.

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647 TD5, 264; quoting Speyr, *Johannes II*, 292; *Johannes I*, 287.
But as Balthasar puts it (in Speyr’s terms): “eternal love needs its infinite places and its ‘darkness’ in order ‘to flow on eternally’.”648 This “darkness” in God leaves the reader with questions, and perhaps that is precisely Balthasar’s intention. The reader is called upon to “grasp and affirm” an eternal trinitarian bond beyond space and time so that the darkness of Jesus’ humiliation and visible alienation from the Father on the Cross can function as an “aspect of God’s light” that the reader “cannot understand.”649 Is the reader being called upon to suspend disbelief here and acquiesce to a kind of non-knowing? Or perhaps is it an example of Balthasar’s own great faith in the genuine religious experience of his spiritual directee, in whom he sees a mystic parallel to the great John of the Cross? John of the Cross also spoke of the need to pass through a moment of contact with the divine that must appear as a great darkness. So does Gregory of Nyssa in *The Life of Moses* when he talks about the “luminous darkness” of God.650

Balthasar is perhaps over-illustrating his point with these quotations from Speyr on God’s darkness, but what he is trying to do is establish an analogy between “darkness” in God and the kind of darkness within a sinner that God seeks to encompass and overcome. This analogy characterizes his appropriation of the “traditional” eschatological topics of Judgment and Hell. We saw at the end of Chapter 1 how in Gregory’s theology the diastasis between the soul and God can inform the diastasis within the soul when God

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648 TD5, 265; quoting Johannes I, 18.
649 TD5, 265.
650 “What does it mean that Moses entered the darkness and then saw God in it? What is now recounted seems somehow contradictory to the first theophany, for then the Divine was beheld in light now he is seen in the darkness. Let us not think that this is at variance with the sequence of things we have contemplated spiritually. Scripture teaches that this religious knowledge comes at first to those who receive it as light. Therefore what is perceived to be contrary to religion is darkness, and the escape from darkness comes about when one participates in light. But as the mind progresses and, through an ever greater and more perfect diligence, comes to apprehend reality, as it approaches more nearly to contemplation, it sees more clearly what of the divine nature is uncomemplated”; *Life of Moses*, trans. Malherbe and Ferguson, §162, 94-95.
comes to indwell the soul: Moses’ running towards God becomes a new blissful mode of existence within his own soul; but at the same time, the space *with* God—across which Moses runs endlessly—becomes a “mansion” *within* the Father’s house. This is Gregory’s theology of mutual indwelling based on John’s Gospel. All of our human suffering and even sin can be enveloped and redeemed as moments that participate in an eternal drama of grace within the eternally dynamic nature of God’s essence in the divine processions. Furthermore, such a dynamic is the only way that “we begin to see how the ‘economic’ modes of relations between Divine Persons are latent in the ‘immanent’ modes, without adding a foreign element to them as such.” Gregory’s original Δ1 (the spatio-temporal structure of spiritual life in one soul) thus bears an analogy with God’s D4 (the “spatio-temporal” structure of inter-Personal life within the One God).

**II.E. “Hell” “in” God**

The following argument is a bit tortuous (like the scare-quoted subheading above) and not explicitly laid out by Balthasar except via quotes from Speyr’s texts. But it functions within (and sometimes underneath or behind) the text of TD5 and accords with his “analogical” logic. In light of Balthasar’s Christology of “place,” according to which Christ takes the place of sinners in D3 in obedience to his mission while being eternally rooted in his relationship with the Father in D4, there remains a question about what happens to what we have called “D2” within God’s infinite space of D4. By virtue of D3’s analogy with D2 and the containment of this analogy within the analogy between D4 and D3, the darkness of sin bears a certain limited analogy to the “holy darkness”

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651 TD5, 268.
652 TD5, 277.
within God. Hell “is located in God, but it can equally well be portrayed as the inner condition of the damned person himself” overwhelmed by the “weight and fire” of divine wrath in perfect proportion with the divine love that is scorned by the damned.\textsuperscript{653} It is not only possible but necessary to say that Hell is “latently” \textit{in} God’s eternity by virtue of trinitarian difference, D4, and because of the analogical relationship between D2 (the alienation of sin) and D3 (the economic distance of the Son on the Cross). To say it again: if Hell is the inner state of a person experiencing the truth, grandeur, and even the love of the God whom he or she has rejected, then Hell also becomes a moment within God’s eternity and a place within God’s \textit{Raum} by virtue of its inclusion in Christ. The event of Hell therefore takes place in God in a quite concrete sense: “The Judgment that takes place within the Trinity can be understood only in terms of the suffering love between the Father and Son in the Spirit; henceforth, therefore, all the Old Testament rejoicing at the punishment of the wicked, all eschatological delight at their torment, must fall silent.”\textsuperscript{654} There can be no rejoicing over the judgment of guilty sinners, because there can be no rejoicing over the death of the innocent victim who has chosen to stand with them at all costs. But the horizon of Jesus’ suffering with sinners is always enveloped within a larger horizon because D3 is taken back up into its origin in D4.\textsuperscript{655}

The context of Balthasar’s discussion of Judgment and Hell also includes the idea of \textit{apokatastasis} (universal salvation). Balthasar remains purposely inconclusive as to the “reality” of universal salvation because he wishes to take human freedom as seriously as it deserves to be: there is no salvation if human beings do not participate in it freely, just

\\textsuperscript{653} TD5, 301-02. 
\textsuperscript{654} TD5, 278. 
\textsuperscript{655} TD5, 283: “If all sins are undercut and undergirded by God’s infinite love, it suggests that sin, evil, must be \textit{finite} and must come to an end in the love that envelopes it.”
as the damnation of the sinner cannot become actual unless he or she ratifies it by rejecting God’s mercy. The freedom of created personal existence is conditioned by space and time (D1), but also by the profound “intimation of the vast distance separating [one] from the heavenly realm.” D1 becomes D2, or Hell, always as the result of a creature’s choice. But here the aesthetic proportional analogy between D1 and D2 receives the added characteristic of an analogy of freedom between God and the sinner. Both of them are free, which is the foundation for the human being as image and likeness of God.

Hell-language is always experimental and provisional for Balthasar, and thus resistant to categorical stability. Trinitarian space gives room for the concept of freedom that is opened up “through our bond with Christ” and includes all limited, earthy, created freedoms; but trinitarian space is also ultimately incomprehensible. Hell is the possibility for the sinner in self-judgment, but this moment also contains the possibility for the sinner’s acceptance of God’s mercy. If Kilby, Levering, Tonstad, Beattie, and others are concerned that Balthasar hypostasizes suffering as a “part” or aspect of God, it is clear now that he does locate Hell within God. However, this is true only by virtue of an analogical understanding of “location” that is provisional and open-ended. Moreover, the image of Hell he entertains has as much to do with the very dignity of human freedom that makes love possible as it does with God’s suffering and God’s

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656 TD5, 290.
657 TD5, 299.
658 TD5, 304. The “condition of timelessness undergone by the Son on the Cross” can include “the experience of sinners abandoned by God, in two aspects: the intensity of the Son’s forsakenness on the Cross and its worldwide extension”; p.308.
659 TD5, 312: “In other words, anyone 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.”
wrath. The latter two are events in God only by virtue of the world’s covenantal relationship with God as it is fulfilled by Jesus Christ.

II.F. A Return to Aesthetics: the Imparting of Form

The latter half of TD5 is Balthasar’s spelling-out of how God’s being informs creaturely becoming; and by “inform” I mean “infuse with a new form.” This form is trinitarian as Balthasar has claimed all along, but what I have sought to provide is a specifically “Nyssan” retrieval of it. Balthasar’s eschatological vision of the God-world relation is always from the standpoint of the world already having been redeemed. It is not a statement about the Hegelian strife of a God and world coming to be in a symbiotic relationship. We have a fleeting glimpse of that space where the arche and the telos that are stretched across the diastasis of created existence (Δ1) become one, where Jesus is the infinite-space-holder who directs “creation’s longing gaze beyond itself, a longing to embrace a continuance of life that it cannot grasp; but it is he who is prior to and the ultimate ground of all this longing, he is the transition from the end to the beginning.”

When Balthasar moves from the “Trinitarian Drama” section to “Man’s Undergirding in God,” he is demonstrating the hierarchical unfolding (Entfaltung) that forms the conditions for the human person’s enfolding (Einfaltung) within God’s eternal being.

The supreme soteriological moment of the Cross is always eschatological as well, a revelation of the beginning of “everything” in God. More precisely, the beginning of everything is in the Father’s Ur-Kenosis. The Johannine missiology of the Last Supper

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660 TD5, 374-75.
662 TD5, 368: “Here too the eschaton is not man but the triune God, who, in Christ’s Cross, descent into hell, and Resurrection, undergirds all human activity—whether it be sin or love.”
Discourses and High Priestly Prayer is first and foremost for Balthasar a revelation of the Father’s love sending Jesus.\textsuperscript{663} Knowing that Jesus has been loved and sent as loved for the sake of others is what gives eternal life in John’s Gospel.

This knowledge, however, is not merely propositional. Merely propositional, abstract information about God could never give life. Rather, it is knowledge that truly informs and imparts a new form. As Aidan Nichols most astutely observes: “Balthasar affirms that being a form is, \textit{par excellence, what a Christian is}.”\textsuperscript{664} Participation in Christ’s participation in the Trinity by way of a graced imitation of Christ is offered to all persons by the Holy Spirit. The kenosis that the Christian is called to imitate by “having the same mind” as Christ (Phil 2:5-8) is neither self-annihilation nor self-fulfillment, but rather God’s Self-expression as the “undergirding” of Christian existence. What Balthasar affirms in TD5 is that a creature’s drive for life is ultimately a desire for growth in imitation of Christ; and this desire is given by the presence and action of the Spirit of love. Growth in being a new, graced self is now the controlling image, excluding all interpretations of “self-annihilation” or a need for self-fulfillment in the opposite sex. God does not need to be fulfilled, but God offers to creation the possibility of being fulfilled in collaboration with God in a call to a person’s freedom. This happens when the earthly stretching of diastasis (Δ1) is allowed to open up transcendently to be fulfilled in Christ, and thereby to become the earthly location of the analogy for the divine life of D4.

Balthasar turns again to Bonaventure (the first encounter happening back in GL2) for insight on the unidirectionality of the \textit{analogia entis}. For Bonaventure, imitations are

\textsuperscript{663} TD5, 336: “Jesus’ act of love for men always flows from the fact that he is loved by the Father (15:9). In the night of death, therefore, the Son’s work can be given into the Father’s hands (17:11). What believers ‘know’ is, not primarily the love of the Son, but the fact that he has been sent by the Father (17:25); and this knowledge, mediated by him who has been thus sent, is eternal life (17:3).”

\textsuperscript{664} Nichols, \textit{Word Has Been Abroad}, 4; italics in the original.
limited on their side in the direction of what is imitated and a difference always remains on the side of what is imitated. However, the similarity of an expression to whom expresses it is always much greater than any imitation, because it is caused by the intention of the One who expresses Oneself. Because God knows everything “to the utmost,” “the likeness of what God expresses in himself is greater than what created reality expresses through itself.”

And yet:

The creature is not unaware of this gap between idea and reality, and this in turn implies that he should do something about it. The creature’s very nature challenges him to realize and “catch up” with this Idea. Moreover, if the Idea is nothing other than a concrete thought on the part of God, who wishes the creature to collaborate in making it a reality, why should the latter not be able to “catch up” with the Idea, given the assistance of God’s elevating grace?

As seen in PT, a person’s “catching up” with God’s Idea of him- or herself ultimately becomes a life of bliss and rest, a taking up of one’s residence in God’s res publica or Kingdom. This is because, as we have seen in Gregory’s account of Moses and the Rock, Christ himself is “the most spacious house: in him everything is contained and ordered as in a state (res publica).” Balthasar’s “Nyssan” soteriology, which is really eschatology, reaches its climax at this point in TD5. Christ is the concrete Self-expression of God on

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665 TD5, 386-87; Balthasar gives a quote in Latin from Bonaventure, I Sent d. 35 a. u. q. 1 ad. 2, which I have paraphrased above. Johnson notes the following: “This principle [that the analogy must be controlled completely from the side of the Creator, and therefore that the meaningful part of analogy is the act of divine expression which causes us to be expressions of the divine (katalogy)] is to be expressed in the words of the great pronouncement of Lateran IV, alluded to by Bonaventure in I Sent d. 35 a. u. q. 1, that ‘A likeness is not able to be noted between Creator and creature unless a greater unlikeness is to be noted between them’ (DS 806). It is the downward thrust of analogy that assures that we will not lose sight of the dimension of greater dissimilarity and end in Plotinian indistinctness”; Christ and Analogy, 96. Balthasar is, in Johnson’s estimation, a Platonist of sorts, but always on guard against Neo-Platonism.

666 TD5, 387.


668 Balthasar turns explicitly to Gregory of Nyssa here near the end of TD5, this time in comparison with Scotus Erigena. For the latter, God chooses to participate intimately in our diastasis and make it an expression of God’s own Divine rest: “For God sees in himself everything that is, ...since there is nothing outside him..., but he also runs through everything, never standing still, fulfilling all things in his course, although he does not move in any sense. For of God it is most true to say that he is motion at rest and rest in motion”; Scotus Erigena, De Div. Nat. I, II (PL 122, 452C); quoted in TD5, 397. Balthasar reads
earth, as well as the concrete analogy of being between the God Who expresses and the 
humanity to whom God is expressed.

Viewing the “Creature in God” or from the “God’s-eye view” is how Balthasar 
understands the particular directionality of the diastasis between God and creation (D1, or 
Δ2 for Gregory) in the analogy of being. The directionality of the distance is from earth 
to heaven, but the contrasting fact that there really is no distance from heaven to earth is 
the result of the fact of the diastasis within created being itself (Δ1). However, the 
distance from earth to heaven (D1) is itself the result of God’s gift of freedom to exist in 
relationship with its Creator. This distance is creation’s allowance of the possibility of 
sharing in the delight of heaven; it is “the gift of the beautiful.” God also sees the 
creation when God calls it very good in Genesis 1-2. So, there is also “something like 
running towards” the creature in God’s very triune being. This is true in creation, but 
especially so by virtue of the eternal topos inhabited by the Incarnate, Crucified, and 
Risen Son. This is so, even in God, even as the Persons eternally approach and withdraw 

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669 TD5, 395.

670 Hart, _Beauty of the Infinite_, 19. David Bentley Hart summarizes what I have attempted to trace from Balthasar’s Nyssa-influenced thinking of diastasis in PT through the trinitarian aesthetics of GL7 to 
the eventfulness of the theo-drama in TD4 and TD5: “Beauty is the true form of distance. Beauty inhabits, 
belongs to, and possesses distance, but more than that, it gives distance. If the realm of created difference 
has its being for God’s pleasure (Rev. 4:11), then the distance of creation from God and every distance 
within creation belong originally to an interval of appraisal and approbation, the distance of delight. God’s 
pleasure—the beauty creation possesses in this regard—underlies the distinct being of creation, and so 
beauty is the first and truest word concerning all that appears within being; beauty is the showing of what 
is; God looked upon what he had wrought and saw that it was good. Within the world, beauty does not 
merely adorn an alien space, or cross the distance as a wayfarer, but is the true form of that distance, 
constituting it, as the grammar of distance”; _Beauty of the Infinite_, 18.
from each other in *perichoresis*. Distance gives the space for beauty to radiate as the Persons open to each other in kenosis, but it also draws the other to reach out in *epéktasis*. This is true of D1 because it is true first of D4. At this point at the end of Balthasar’s “symphony” of distance, I hope to have shown how a Nyssan retrieval of Balthasar needs the text of TD5 for some of its highest-priority data; not in spite of the language of infinite distance in God, but because of it.

**Conclusion**

My purpose of this final chapter has been to analyze Balthasar’s eschatology, which is centered on how the “all-embracing frame” of D3 lodges all earthly “becoming” (*epéktasis*, Δ1) safely within the “being” of D4. The analogical distinction between D4 and D3 allows the image of the Son’s kenotic obedience to the Father in fulfilling his mission on earth (D3) to become the expression of the mutual love of Father and Son in the unity of the Spirit from all eternity. We have seen along with Gardner and Moss, to whom we have often turned, that Balthasar’s “most central and startling insight ...[is] an account of the *analogia entis* [analogy of being] from which the experience of creaturely becoming and generation are no longer systematically excluded in an atemporal order of reflection. We can speak, analogically of course, of something like time and something like the sexes in God.” Balthasar’s use of metaphor therefore cannot easily be dismissed as methodologically naïve and metaphysically ungrounded.

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671 TD5, 423.
672 Gardner and Moss, “Something Like Time,” 76.
673 Tonstad also notes the difficulties of bringing this charge against Balthasar due to the complex and necessary relationship between metaphor and analogy—one ultimately cannot have the latter without the former—and to the “two-level nature” of all of Balthasar’s trinitarian language to illustrate basically orthodox theological positions regarding the Godhead; see “Sexual Difference,” 68, n.67.
is a thoroughly rigorous account of “a God freed from any ancient binary creaturely marking which would seek to marshal the multiple differences of creation against an absolute oppositional limit.” But we have also seen with some of Balthasar’s feminist critics how he suggests dangerous uses of hierarchy based on the priority of the male in the creation account of Genesis. These hierarchies lock female persons categorically into the very binaries that Balthasar would otherwise wish them freed from by adoption in Christ. We have attempted to respond to Linn Marie Tonstad’s concerns in particular by showing that Balthasar’s trinitarian theology does not depend on this identification of hierarchical ordering of triune processions with male-prioritized gender difference. We saw briefly how Coakley’s Nyssan theology of desire as a divine-ontological category in *God, Sexuality, and the Self* makes common cause with Balthasar’s Bulgakovian kenoticism. *Epéktasis*, when seen in a mutually enhancing synergy with kenosis, is thus freed from any Hegelian grasping for external fulfillment in the negation of an other. What we hope to have demonstrated in all of this is how the hierarchical ordering of the triune processions does not need to be mapped by gender binaries of active-male and passive-female in the way Balthasar does. We have not explored in depth Coakley’s two-part premise in *God, Sexuality, and the Self*; but in light of our investigations in this study and especially in this chapter, I believe these points can also be drawn as “Balthasarian” conclusions if his thought is purified of some its more simplistically biological dynamics:

First, Freud must be—as it were—turned on his head. It is not that physical ‘sex’ is basic and ‘God’ is ephemeral; rather, it is God who is basic, and ‘desire’ the precious clue that ever tugs at the heart, reminding the soul—however dimly—of its created source. Hence, in a sense that will be parsed more precisely as this book unfolds, *desire is more fundamental than ‘sex’*.  

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674 Gardner and Moss, “Something Like Time,” 76.
Human personhood is constituted firstly in terms of relation to God. Because humans are made in the image and likeness of God, the human relation to God is thus also limited reflection of and participation in divine Personhood. When human personhood is constituted too exclusively in terms of gender complementarity, and when this in turn is used as the “mirror” for the divine relations, a limitation on divine Personhood based on earthly gender relations gets projected onto God. But if limited human gender relations are seen for what they are—limited and sometimes very flawed reflections of divine relations—then they become the arena for grace and redemption. Balthasar strives to preclude any lack in God in a divine ontology of desire and kenosis (sometimes in spite of his gender essentialism and his categories of “absolute” masculine activity and feminine passivity). This not only keeps him in accord with patristic and medieval divine ontology, but also allows him to structure his own insight into the analogy of being.

The richness of the mutuality between kenosis and epēktasis in D4 as it is analogically expressed in D3 has been the standpoint from which we attempted to answer Matthew Levering’s and Karen Kilby’s concerns that suffering is given too positive a role in Balthasar’s trinitarian theology. At times he does give suffering and death too positive a role in trinitarian ontology; but these times are mostly in the context of feminization of suffering. Because of the analogical distinction between D4 and D3 and the latter’s inclusion of the alienation of D2 within its salvific reach, the richness in the interplay between God’s infinite freedom and creation’s finite but equally real freedom allows for the moment even of creation’s rejection of God to be included in the theodrama without compromising the Trinity’s freedom from any worldly suffering.
GENERAL CONCLUSION  
A NOTE ON PNEUMATOLOGY AND ESCHATOLOGY

Karen Kilby’s assessment on Balthasar’s notion of infinite absolute distance in the Trinity is that it “cannot be put forward as a kind of obvious and self-evident starting point for further argumentation or reflection, but is at most the highly tentative and rather precarious conclusion to a train of theological argumentation.”⁶⁷⁶ We have seen that Balthasar himself acknowledges in at least one place that to think in this way is “to walk a knife edge,”⁶⁷⁷ but one has to admit in agreement with Kilby that he does not always conduct himself as if he were on a knife edge. Using highly symbolic imagery “tentatively” is not usually Balthasar’s style.

I have attempted in this essay to demonstrate the systematic rigor of his imagery in trinitarian theology, even if this rigor is sometimes only implicit in his rich speculations. The substance of Balthasar’s understanding of distance comes from Scripture and a deep intuition of the inherently spatio-temporal metaphorical aspects of religious experience. The structure of his understanding is based on the analogy of proportionality, the comparison of different measurements.⁶⁷⁸ The measurement of the distance of Persons in God is accessible only via a metaphor that necessarily indicates a greater dissimilarity between it and anything else it is compared with. Balthasar is not trying to do with “distance” what Athanasius and his 4th-century orthodox colleagues were trying to do with the homoousious of the triune Persons in the build-up and aftermath of the Council of Nicaea; that is, he is not seeking to establish a certain word not previously used in tradition or Scripture as a dogmatic expression of the faith. But he

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⁶⁷⁷ TD4, 324.
does presume to use “distance” in a way somewhat analogous to the function of “glory” as cipher for the many aspects of God’s manifest Being in Scripture, liturgy, prayer, and the experience of grace.

The parts of Balthasar’s work that I have assembled and surveyed in this essay do not consist in what could be called a “systematic theology.” The Theology of Karl Barth is a good example of Balthasar’s systematic theology, and perhaps *Theo-Logic I: Truth of the World* in its first appearance as *Wahrheit der Welt* could have been offered as prolegomenon to a systematic theology. Even in its current place within the trilogy it introduces two of Balthasar’s most “systematic” trinitarian works, *Theo-Logic II: Truth of God* and *Theo-Logic III: the Spirit of Truth*. His early volume *Presence and Thought* could possibly be considered a quasi-systematic reading of Gregory of Nyssa, inasmuch as Balthasar in that book seeks the organizing principles of Gregory’s thought as a whole. But he would never call the *Glory of the Lord* and the *Theo-Drama* series “systematic theology.” Although I have tried to point out key elements of a Balthasarian trinitarian theology that structures these parts of his work, I have done nothing close to providing a comprehensive systematic trinitarian theology. Balthasar’s slightly more systematic work on the Trinity in TL2 and TL3 presumes the theology of distance established in a more eidetic and literary fashion in GL7, TD4, and TD5. My reasons for focusing more on these early and middle parts of the trilogy while bracketing the *Theo-Logic* involve both concerns of length and a desire for greater fidelity to the order of Balthasar’s thought: aesthetics first, then dramatics, and only then logic. I have only begun to address questions of his “logic” in this genealogy of distance, in which I have tried to explore
some of Balthasar’s resources for meeting some challenging current questions in systematic theology.

Balthasar did not embark on his trilogy before he had already engaged the theological issues of his own day by participating in the mid-century patristic revival in Western Europe and in ecumenical dialogue with people like Karl Barth. My goal in Chapter 1 was to take diastasis as a general category for both Gregory of Nyssa and Balthasar and then find a distinction within Gregory’s account that provides for Balthasar’s development of the category. The diastasis of created being (Δ1) is different from the ontological gap between God and the world (Δ2, or D1 in the Balthasarian scheme). But the endless process of “catching up with the divine Idea” of oneself becomes one with the goal of endless bliss in communion with God. This paradoxical joining of two processes on different spatio-temporal planes, as if they were two parallel lines meeting in infinity, depends on an eschatological union of action and contemplation and of “running” and “ beholding.”

Chapter 2 introduced Balthasar’s basic philosophical outlook from TL1 as the methodological background for his critical assessment of Karl Barth’s theology of distance in TKB. There is for Balthasar a kind of phenomenological depth perception in the event of a being’s unveiling to the human subject. We also saw that there is an intimacy within that depth that develops in the apprehension of truth via acts of desire, esteem, and acceptance. What Balthasar traces in Barth’s thought is a growing clarity on the positive reality of this depth and intimacy between God and creatures in a Theologie der Distanz. Balthasar then begins to sharpen his appreciation of the distinction between D1 and D2 as he sees Barth migrate from an implicit conflation of D1 with D2. D1 is the
condition under which we can come to an understanding of both creation and grace, not
to be confused with the alienation and depravity of a creature in a state of D2. D1 is more
originary and primary than D2, which is a distortion of the former. But Balthasar retains
from Barth the dialectical moment of “is not” in the analogy of being because he sees
how it protects the directionality of analogy: God is not like the world in the same way
that the world is like God. This remains true even though there is a commonality between
God and the world by virtue of God’s generous act of creation itself, and not just by
virtue of God’s grace.

With the genealogy of distance in the early Balthasar’s work underway, I offered
in Chapters 3 and 4 a careful reading of Balthasar’s kenotic trinitarian theology in GL7,
TD4, and TD5. The focus of the study began to shift towards Kilby’s and Levering’s
charges that Balthasar has overstepped the bounds of theological analogy. I also
attempted in those chapters to free the categories of kenosis and hierarchy from the
nihilist and masochist overtones that Tonstad and others have ascribed to them, while
acknowledging that Balthasar sometimes does misuse them in his “gendering” of
trinitarian theology. More generally, both of these chapters argued that Balthasar’s
pneumatology goes far beyond a mere third-point afterthought to the binary relation of
Father and Son. The Spirit is the divine Person who structures the acclimation of the
human mind to the divine processions and missions. The distance of D3 appears first in
the economy of salvation as the “measurement” of the Son’s position on the Cross and in
Hell vis-à-vis the transcendent Father but then secondly in the act of measuring the
believer’s position vis-à-vis Christ’s return to the Father in the inner presence of the Holy
Spirit. Neither of these senses of D3 is intelligible without a robust pneumatology.
Pneumatology “sets the stage”—that is, the entire stage—for the salvation of the world in the revelation of Christ as the climax of the theo-drama. All “events” within God and between God and the world in the Bible and biblically-informed spiritual experience are made analogous to each other by the “measuring” of the Spirit who knows the depths and breadth of God (1 Cor 2:9-11; Eph 3:16-19). This inner depth of God is ultimately measured by what we have called D4. Its analogical likeness to D3 is crucial to Balthasar’s argument, but also to a retrieval of positive elements of his project from some of his risky excesses.

Pneumatology has thus emerged as the beginning of the completion of Balthasar’s work, the introduction of the final trinitarian theme. I call it a beginning of the completion because Balthasar’s reflections on the Church and the saints are more properly the completion of his whole vision, and I have not addressed these aspects of his work in this study. The Spirit creates and sustains D3 between believer and God, between Church and God, and between creation and God after the D3 of the Incarnate Christ recedes in the Ascension. It is on this basis, Balthasar argues, that we have any (provisional, limited) understanding of how the Spirit also perfects the circumincession of the Persons in the Godhead in D4. Because this inner-divine reality is beyond the ontological gap in infinite D1 from creation, the Incarnation of the Son in D3 and the grace of the Spirit in its mission to double this D3 provide the proportion of divine Being in earthly terms. The initiative in coming to knowledge of this divine eventfulness is therefore all God’s in the beginning and end, as God’s mystery endures eternally through this relationship with the world in grace.
Pneumatology can also serve, as we have seen, as the foundation of a “Balthasarian” answer to worries that he has inextricably bound masochism and violence to God’s processions in his paschal analogy for the Trinity. The Spirit bears witness to the intimacy, glory, and love that is always the ultimate context for Jesus’ “process” of giving and receiving glory with the Father “on earth, as it is in Heaven. This process includes the obedience unto death on a Cross, which is now seen as an earthly expression of an eternal sharing of the divine will out of mutual love in the Trinity. The Cross has its ultimate meaning in God’s eternal triune glory, and not the other way around. This is only made visible to us by the Spirit.

Because the Spirit completes the hierarchy of divine processions that the Father initiates in *Ur-Kenosis* to the Son, and does so *actively*, these profoundly “Nyssan” aspects of Balthasar’s pneumatology complicate and confound his projection of gender binaries based on active masculinity and passive femininity onto this hierarchy. We have seen in Balthasar’s trinitarian-analogical reading of Ephesians 5:21-33 in light of Genesis 2:18-24 that Christ is the man who gives himself up to his unblemished woman, the Church, just as the Father gives Himself up in *Ur-Kenosis* to the Son. The Son then obeys and allows Himself (“Her”-self?) to be exalted, just as Eve and the Church do for Adam and Christ. Based on this biblical pattern from both the OT and NT, masculinity and femininity are then respectively assigned, not to the Persons, but to activity and passivity in the triune processions: the Father *actively* generates Son, the Father and Son *actively* spirate the Spirit, the Son *passively* receives his hypostatic being from the Father, and the Spirit *passively* receives its hypostatic being from Father and Son. Gardner and Moss have pointed to what can happen when temporal and gender analogies are fused in
Balthasar’s thought. What founds all difference in God, as we have seen, is the Father’s *Ur-kenosis* to the Son.\textsuperscript{679} But we have seen that kenosis becomes problematic for women when a temporal hierarchy is reinforced by the second creation story in Genesis 2:18-25, according to which the male has a kind of theological-anthropological priority because of his temporal priority. When this happens, the so-called super-masculinity and femininity within the Godhead get pulled towards an endless cycle in which the two can only realize themselves in something like domination and submission in Hegel. If the man is prior, he is also incomplete without the woman; the woman thus has a certain power vis-à-vis the man, but she can only exercise it in a response that is entirely conditioned by the man’s prior act. This makes for strife rather than for a holy tension.

Both Kilby and Tonstad criticize Balthasar for having a typically “weak” pneumatology in which the Spirit is little more than a passive by-product at the bottom of a hierarchy with only a formal claim to divinity with the Father and Son. But they do this only by ignoring his development and employment of a richer “Nyssan” pneumatology elsewhere. In this pneumatology, the Spirit *actively* holds open D4 between Father and Son and mediates between them their eternal intimacy within D4, *actively* completing the circumincession of mutual glorification and love. The hierarchy begins with the Father (non-temporally) but it ends with the Spirit (non-temporally). The spatial element of the

\textsuperscript{679} Gardener and Moss accentuate the expressive “Bonaventuran” tone in Balthasar’s trinitarian theology: “This *Urkenosis* is God’s definition of God; but this is not a limiting definition, nor a limiting in any sense. It is the form in which God grants God form. It is the un-finishing of God, rather than the limiting of God; it is the *explicatio* – the unfolding, the explaining, the self-expression, the interpretation – the translation of God. And so it is the opening up of God the always, ever ‘more’ of God, to which our limitations and their limited fruitfulness are analogous.” And yet: “This opening up of God, which only occurs within God, also only ‘occurs’ in one ‘direction’: *from* Father *to* Son, whilst yet neither the Father nor the Son is ever without or apart from this giving and receiving. It has, then, something to do with the ‘order’ of God. It is a moment. And yet, it has no end, is never finished. ... This order of *Urkenosis* leaves its mark in its translation of itself in and into creation, particularly in the nature of time”; Gardner and Moss, “Something like Time,” 125.
Persons’ facing each other and the kinetic element of the Spirit’s action are equally as important as the temporal image of the ordered processions from Father to Son to Spirit.

Balthasar’s absolutizing of gender binaries is also destabilized whenever he turns to temporal and process-based analogies, such as the analogy of Christ’s faith and the “Nyssan” simultaneity of kenosis and epéktasis in the spiritual life.\(^{680}\) To paraphrase Gardner and Moss again: time and human sexual difference are more like something in God than that something in God is like time and human sexual difference. The language of “Father,” “Son,” and “Spirit” is metaphorical as well as revealed. I have tried to argue that the metaphoric intelligibility of the hierarchy of divine processions is rooted more deeply in a strong pneumatology that supports his spatio-temporal images than in gender binaries. This claim is not meant to obviate a theology of gender as it relates to triune processions, but rather place it within a more proper context.

The “gendering” of this hierarchy, as some critics note, is indeed a choice given the biblical narratives of Genesis 2:18-24 and Paul’s marriage metaphor for Christ and the church in Ephesians 5:21-33. The question whether Balthasar was right to absolutely sacralize earthly gender relations by mapping them onto triune processions was not my point in Chapter 4, but rather that he seems to have made other choices that complicate this absolutely gendered trinitarian metaphor in the Theo-Drama volumes. The marriage metaphor in Paul does not have to be gendered or could even be assigned a reversal of gender roles in Ephesians 5:21-33, unless there is something untoward in women “giving themselves up” for their husbands who are likewise expected to be “pure and

\(^{680}\) Nichols makes an insightful point about potentiality and becoming: “we can see why he regards the doctrine of the triune God as a supreme manifestation of the significance of potentiality. The creature’s becoming, downgraded in the Parmenidean strain in metaphysics, here emerges as the ‘highest possible approximation to [the] ... unattainable vitality’ of God”; *No Bloodless Myth*, 198; quoting TD5, 90.
unblemished.” Most people would say there is nothing untoward there. The mystery of Christ’s marriage to the Church (language that is also both revealed and metaphoric) is in no way characterized by domination and submission. Paul’s language in Ephesians 5 might suggest something analogous to domination and submission on both sides of the husband-wife relation with a priority for the husband’s position. But even Paul is trying to emphasize the point that Christ and the Church give and respond to each other, not out of a need to use the other for self-fulfillment, but out of mutual generosity and the desire to glorify the Father in the communion given by the Spirit. The nuptial language that describes Christ and the Church is revealed and metaphoric, but this means it is also mysterious (as Paul says in Eph 5:32) and points to an incomprehensible abundance beyond human categories.

The problem with attempts to arrive at a non-hierarchical understanding of the divine-Personal relations in God lies in the “directionality” of analogy itself. The directionality in the inner-trinitarian opening up resides in an order without which neither the trinitarian processions nor the logic of analogy can be properly understood. To fix or lock the analogy as an interval between masculine and feminine or between prior and second in which one end of the pole is always determined in terms of the other would be to tie the analogy of being too tightly to earthly phantasms. What is needed is “to learn the belonging together of differences, to learn difference not as (only) the same and not-same, but as the belonging together and setting apart of those which are both same and not same, ...the chiastic interlocking of space, time and gender.”681 Gardner and Moss explain that when analogies become too fixed according to the essentiality of gender difference or priority in time, or “in the security of a first,” then “the second will always

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appear as a precondition for the first.” It is the tendency of weak pneumatologies to subject the Holy Spirit to “a necessarily self-effacing precondition for the relationship between Father and Son” in a parallel fashion.

Sarah Coakley’s framing of the issues in her new book provides the opportunity for a comparison that clarifies the issues in Balthasar that I seek to address, even if she does not dialogue with him directly in God, Sexuality, and the Self. She is also critical of the ontological priority of the kind of “binity” on Father and Son upon which classical Western theologies of the filioque have depended. But she is also hesitant to do away completely with an understanding of hierarchy in trinitarian theology. She notes that for Dionysius, “the aim of hierarchy is the greatest possible assimilation to and union with God ... Hierarchy is a holy order and knowledge and activity which ... participates in the Divine Likeness.” Secondly, hierarchy has more to do with the holistic, relational well-being of each member of a community or part of a system than with any kind of top-down repression. Thirdly, and most controversially to many feminists, Coakley is quite critical of classic feminist theology’s tendency to identify “hierarchical power” with “male power,” “thus ironically replicating the very ontological fallacy that it rightly critiques in its masculinist opponents.” She suggests an alternate way of understanding hierarchy along patristic, Dionysian lines in which an “authentic relation with God as Trinity through the Spirit” challenges and rearranges all earthly values and orders of hierarchy: “they are not imitating God thereby, but rather being radically transformed by

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682 Gardner and Moss, “Something like Time,” 129: “Woman... appears to be nothing other than the necessary, self-effacing precondition for man; and then again as nothing other than the withdrawing precondition for the relationship of God and man.”


ecstatic participation in the Spirit.” Balthasar is suggesting something similar, although he sometimes allows traditional earthly gender hierarchies to color his trinitarian-hierarchical thinking much more than he thinks he does.

Coakley’s description of William Blake’s “Throne of Grace” sketch provides a symbolic rendering of what is at the heart of Balthasar’s positive intentions in TD5:

The Father, again not noticeably male [as also in Rublev’s “The Trinity”], bends to embrace the Son face to face on the (absent, but allusively suggested) cross. The Spirit is huge, encompassing, and bodily; its outstretched wings mirroring the cruciform shape of the Son’s arms. It is as if, on the one hand, the dispassionate Father’s gaze of the original Gnadenstuhl... has been transmogrified into the anguished parent of a dying child; yet, on the other hand, and in contrast, the turned-around Christ is veritably leaping into the Father’s arms, in an ecstasy of simultaneous joy and costly gift. And because the presence of the Spirit (no ‘Hunt the pigeon!’ obscurity here) so exactly emulates the shape of the Son’s outstretched arms, the viewer experiences the movement of death precisely as a leap into life. Here is the circle of divine desire perfectly enacted, under the aegis of the Spirit’s own longing love.

Blake’s image of the Trinity as interpreted by Coakley here places the Spirit in the same unifying position as it takes in Gregory of Nyssa and Balthasar: the One Who perfects the perichoresis of the Trinity, the perfecter of God’s triunity. What begins in Ur-Kenosis is completed in Spiration, according to the dynamism of God’s very Being. The simultaneity of life and death, joy and suffering in this visual representation matches Balthasar’s and Speyr’s intent. But here, the joy and suffering are not gendered. The traditional hierarchical procession of the Son and Spirit from the Father is not represented in the picture, unless one looks first at the embrace by which the Father receives the Son’s embrace and which the Spirit then spans in its own embrace of them both: the Son

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686 Referring to the distressing tendency in some late-medieval renderings of the “Throne of Grace” theme towards eliminating all visible representations of the Holy Spirit, who was traditionally and formerly represented as the descending dove of the baptism scene in the Gospels.
687 Coakley, God, Sexuality, and the Self, 255-56.
is there to be embraced by the Father, the Spirit is there to embrace them both. Coakley offers this image as an artistic representation of difference and love within God that is outside gendered differences and yet might provide a Pauline-Philippian model for Christian communion and love. The communion to which Blake bears witness in this drawing rests on a harmony of kenosis and epéktasis. There is the perfect mutuality of Ur-Kenosis and epéktasis between Father and Son, witnessed and encompassed by the Holy Spirit; there is the perfect mutuality of obedience and joy in triune love, enacted equally by all three Persons; there is the perfect mutuality of self-gift and desire; and, there is a moment of laying down one’s life for a friend that is eternalized but ultimately given its horizon in the joy of perfect union.

The communion and intimacy enacted in the distance of the processions is here represented by the wings of the Holy Spirit itself, just as the Spirit appears in the form of “mere distance” in TD4. The “wingspan” or arm-reach of the Holy Spirit encompassing the union of Father and Son in mutual embrace would analogically correspond (as D4) to how we as believers and pray-ers experience D3 as a groaning and sighing with the Spirit according to Paul: “When we cry, ‘Abba! Father!’ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him” (Rom 8:15b-17); and “Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God” (Rom 8:26-27). It is the Spirit Who expresses D4 within us in our very groaning and

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688 TD4, 320.
sighing in D1, which God sees eschatologically as the first fruits of an eternal communion in the Kingdom. The groaning of the Spirit within created spirit is only possible in D3.

The Spirit speaks within the Christian, within the Church, and within the world of something that is taking place within God in a mysterious way. As a final note I circle back to Peter Henrici’s insight, that Balthasar is always writing eschatology. Balthasar himself leaves a signpost for his readers: “Almost my entire work ... can be understood under this heading: as an attempt not to underestimate the utterly mysterious step that revelation takes beyond the eschatology of the Old Covenant (which must be understood prophetically!) into the eschatology of the New and eternal Covenant.” This insight is offered in 1955, but he remains true to it through the entire great trilogy to the last volume. Eschatology speaks of a Christological event of growth towards fullness, but this is also always a pneumatological event:

But where the Spirit moves vitally in a Body a continuous, unwearying process of becoming new is under way, although the identity of the Person (the mystical Christ) is always the same. The supra-temporality of Catholic truth is not an atemporality, for Christ has become a human being and has grown from embryo to man, and he continues to grow in his members as they come into being, and in the forms that his Church takes through the ages. The “last times” are not the end of time, but the consequence of the fullness of times.

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689 See Nichols, *Say It Is Pentecost*, 181-82 for a brief account of how Balthasar’s heavily Romans 8-influenced theology of prayer influences his pneumatology and trinitarian theology in TL3. Due to concerns regarding the length of the present essay, I will merely mark this discussion here. It would be fruitful to explore it more deeply in a separate study of Balthasar’s more systematic trinitarian theology in TL2 and TL3: ‘At the risk of being thought ‘dolorist’ (contributing to a cult of suffering), Balthasar thinks our prayer is often inadequate because we do not share sufficiently in Christ’s sufferings, do not groan enough with creation that is in travail until the revelation of the sons of God. It is the Spirit’s task to transform our half-hearted hope into a ‘Christologically adequate invocation’, whereupon the Father, ‘perceiving in us the intention (phronema) of the Spirit, recognises the adequate content of this prayer of sighing and can answer it’; quoting TL3, 345.

690 Personal conversation with Henrici, January 8, 2014.


The eschatological theologian, as Balthasar believes, must look in two different directions at once. The theologian must look towards the “fullness of times” from within a Church who is that collective Person, the Body of Christ, who represents that part of creation in a state of growth towards a full stature that only the Spirit knows. But the theologian must always look in the opposite direction as well from the standpoint of participation in Christ’s own “trinitarian inversion.” That is, with the grace of the indwelling, groaning Spirit, the theologian must look at the world in a participation in God’s love for it that only the Spirit can enable.
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