BALTHASAR AND LONERGAN ON DISTANCE AND MUTUAL OPPOSITION IN TRINITARIAN RELATIONS

Christopher M. Hadley, S.J.
Doctoral Student,
Marquette University Theology Department

Pascal writes the following in at the end of his "Transition from knowledge of man to knowledge of God" in the *Pensées*:

> Finally to complete the proof of our weakness, I shall end with these two considerations…. [The first: 200, H.3] Man is only a reed, the weakest in nature, but he is a thinking reed. … Thus all our dignity consists in thought. [And the second: 201] The eternal silence of these infinite spaces fills me with dread.[1]

Depending on one's methodological orientation in theology, and given a choice of analogies to use, what one considers weakest, what is most dignified, what is most worthy of dread, and the proper role of human thought will play their respective roles with regard to reading different theologians. Bernard Lonergan's adaptation of Aquinas' psychological analogy in *The Triune God: Systematics* (TGS)[2] or Hans Urs von Balthasar's speculation in *Theo-Drama IV: The Action* (TD4)[3] on infinite distance as marker of personal distinctions in the eternal Trinity offer a contrast that invites a theologian to consider where she or he stands regarding these issues in theology and theological anthropology. It is difficult to imagine a coherent appropriation of both of these analogies simultaneously. But there is a compelling hint of a meeting point between them within the larger projects of these two thinkers, Lonergan's and

[1] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées: Translated with an Introduction by A.J. Krailsheimer* (London: Penquin Books, 1966), 95.

[2] Bernard Lonergan, *The Triune God: Systematics*, trans. Michael G. Shields, eds. Robert M. Doran and H. Daniel Monsour, vol.12 in The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007).

[3] Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Volume IV: The Action*, tr. Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994).

Balthasar's, a possibility for new light shed on a mutually reinforcing relationship between metaphysics and biblical theology. Given Balthasar's use of aesthetics and dramatics in an analogy that is so concretely metaphorical, the challenge is to reconcile it with Lonergan's hypothesis regarding divine processions and missions in an analogy that is so austerely abstracted from most human categories of experience. In the following commentary on how distance functions in Balthasar's trinitarian theology I will be looking to some aspects of Lonergan's thought with which it is fruitfully compared. The comparison will be limited by the level of my familiarity with Lonergan, but my hope is that it will shed light on an integral aspect of Balthasar's thought that Lonerganians might have difficulty reconciling with their own methodological commitments.

Distance serves, first and foremost, as Balthasar's way of thinking about religious epistemology within a theological-anthropological context. This context is always informed by his trinitarian theology, which is in turn informed by biblical theology.[4] Distance enters directly into biblical and dogmatic theology via Jesus' human experience of faith as the incarnate son of God at the beginning of Balthasar's *Glory of the Lord* (GL1),[5] and thus at the very beginning of his sweeping 15-volume "trilogy" of aesthetics, dramatics, and logic. The theological aesthetics of GL ends in Vol.VII with Balthasar's meditation on the glory of the NT, the redemptive trinitarian love of God revealed in the Son and the Spirit across distances of divine mission, abandonment by the Father in the passion, and the divine absence of the Son and coming of the Spirit in the Ascension. This anthropological-biblical journey eventually leads to the midpoint of TD4, where his

[4] See especially *Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics: Vol. VII: Theology: The New Covenant*, trans. Brian McNeil, C.R.V. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 109: "this [biblical] theology can and must dare to offer itself to dogmatic systematics as its inner form."

[5] *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics: Volume I: Seeing the Form*, tr. Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983).

most expansive trinitarian speculation is found. Balthasar's methodological program can be summarized in the following passage, occurring almost halfway through the implementation of the method it describes:

> 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 is christological and trinitarian implications—is grounded in God. (TD4, 324)

But "feeling one's way back" also functions as a meditation on God as divine act in a way that corresponds with Lonergan's use of the psychological analogy. For Balthasar, God's is a dramatic consciousness, revealed in the divine economy, but not one that is dependent on what happens in the divine economy. Lonergan is also keen on excluding from his trinitarian theology "all intramundane experience and suffering." In ch.2 of TGS, Aquinas' psychological analogy of the Trinity recommends itself to Lonergan because it can and must "be understood in such a way that the likeness is not sought between the sensitive part of our nature and the triune God" (TGS, 133), thus removing limiting any categories from trinitarian theology to the furthest extent possible.

Before we go further into the comparison with Balthasar, it is necessary to set the stage with Lonergan's basic outlook in TGS. Lonergan sees an analogy for the divine Persons in their relations to each other, primarily of the Son and Spirit to the Father, in the intellectual emanations of "real, natural, and conscious act[s] from … real, natural, and conscious act[s], both within the intellectual consciousness and also by virtue of intellectual consciousness itself as determined by the prior act" (TGS, 141). In the

analogy, the divine processions are "according to the mode of *processio* operati" without actual being *processio operati*. What this means is that when an intellectual act, such as the judgment of the goodness of being, proceeds from another intellectual act, such as understanding the being in question, this kind of procession in a human mind can only serve as a particular *mode* in which we see the Son proceeding from the Father. The Father, Son, and Spirit are one with each other in the divine essence in a way that is beyond the temporality and determination that we must employ to conceive the procession of human intellectual acts from each other. Nonetheless even these speak of a kind of unity that is useful. The acts of generating and spirating, the act of being generated, and the act of being spirated are internal to God (TGS, 157), which means they occur eternally in the immanent Trinity. They are considered as notional and relational acts, constituted mutually in terms of each other. But God is utterly simple, and there is only one essential divine act in the absolute reality of God. Lonergan frequently refers to the Council of Florence as his axiom, that "everything [in God] is one except where there is relational opposition" (TGS, 159 *passim*). Thus the persons in their processions from each other are really distinct, but only in terms of their relationality to each other in mutual opposition. Lonergan's definition of *mutually opposed relations* in Assertion 6 in ch.3 is that "each is the term of the other; thus father is the term to which son is related, and conversely son is the term to which father is related" (TGS, 247). The relations of any one Person to the other two are "made one by ordering, since the one who in one word utters a true good speaks the word and at the same time, through the mediation of the word, spirates love" (TGS, 253). The reader must remember of course that this is an analogy for the Trinity, not a schematics. Lonergan emphasizes that, "although there is

in the created world no instance that has been proven or is perfectly understood by us of mutually opposed relations being verified in the same reality, nevertheless such an instance is to be believed with certitude from divine revelation, and is to some extent understood by us" (TGS, 287).

With this background in Lonergan, we return to Balthasar on distance, asking how it might be related to the idea of intelligible conceptions that ground a real distinction between mutually opposed relations within the same absolute reality. "Distance" is Balthasar's word, or rather his idea, since he employs different German, Greek, and French words to cover its various meanings in his writings (and not always consistently). Distance works as a kind of cipher for theological and NT concepts. All of Balthasar's theological senses of distance come together in TD4, to interpret each other and give insight into the biblical narrative (particularly that of the NT), into the cognitive dimensions of religious experience, and into the nature of God's triunity. There are four varieties of distance in Balthasar's theology, two of the "created" or human kind and two of the "divine" kind. I am borrowing and adapting this enumeration from an Australian Jean-Luc Marion scholar named Robyn Horner, as Marion's own sense of theological and phenomenological distance is heavily influenced by Balthasar.[6] Balthasar explains the first kind of distance, considered in the order of both experience and thought, in *Creator Spirit*:

> The basis of the biblical religion 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 grace brings about. (ExT3, 173)[7]

[6] Robyn Horner, "A Theology of Distance," Ch.5 in *Jean-Luc Marion: A* Theo-*Logical Introduction* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 51-53.

[7] Quoted by Horner in ibid., 52.

But in the NT, especially in John's Gospel and Letters, the unity that grace brings about is constituted in part by the knowledge that God is a mutual indwelling of Father and Son in the Holy Spirit, and by the Spirit's gift to human believers of a share in this trinitarian indwelling,[8] even though God is higher than the highest heavens.[9] We will call this first variety of distance in Balthasar's thought "created distance." It serves as the condition for a loving communion between "others" in their difference, but it also carries a kind of ambiguity regarding separation that Balthasar exploits in his soteriology, particularly in the second and third kinds of distance.

The second kind of Balthasarian distance is human-caused, the result of sin, which Christ overcomes in the Cross and Resurrection. We will call this variety "sinful distance," and a fuller view of its nature will become clear in terms of the third kind. The third and fourth kinds of distance are divinely originated. What I am stipulating as the third kind we shall call "economic distance," "a distance between the Son and the Father which is a result of Christ's taking on human sinfulness, and which leads to the *hiatus* of the Cross and to the descent into Hell," as Horner describes it.[10] The fourth and last kind we shall call the "immanent distance" between the Father and Son in the eternal Godhead, "an absolute, infinite 'distance' that can contain and embrace all other distances" (TD4, 323), with the Spirit of the love of Father and Son penetrating, spanning, and bridging it. Balthasar posits the Father and Son as mutual "acts" of self-

[8] See John 14:15-20, 23; 16:12-15; 17:20-26; 1 John 2:20-29; 4:12-16.

[9] For OT passages on God's transcendence, see 1 Kgs 8:27; 2 Chr 2:6; 6:18; Job 22:12.

[10] Horner, 52. It should be noted that she calls this the "fourth" kind, an enumeration that I am slightly changing for the structure of my argument about the economic Trinity as the key to understanding the immanent.

emptying to each other in gift and receptivity across this distance, without which there can be no loving relationship (TD4, 325).

Considering one of Lonergan's footnotes in TGS on *Summa theologiae* I, q.31, a.2, "distance" would most certainly be included among the things that Aquinas believes cannot be said about the trinitarian distinctions:

> St Thomas notes that the words 'diversity,' 'difference,' 'separation,' 'division,' 'disparity,' 'discrepancy,' 'singular,' 'unique,' 'commingled,' and 'solitary' ought to be avoided in speaking of the divine persons. (TGS, 361, n.55).

While he certainly does avoid some of these terms, it must be admitted that Balthasar does make "diversity" and "difference" central to his conceptual approach, certainly regarding the divine economy and only slightly less explicitly in the immanent Trinity.

In the consideration of the economic Trinity, distance provides for Balthasar a concrete and vividly biblical illustration of what Lonergan calls an "external term" in a created relation to the triune God. In Lonergan's technical language, "external" here means "not divine" (TGS, 441). Through his human nature qua human, the incarnation of Jesus is the foundational "external term" for our knowledge of God, but by our human nature and our very createdness we also participate in this relation with God in which God's life can become true for us. In this mutual opposition in the relationship between us and God, originating in God as creator and forming a kind of unity in grace, the "externality" vis-à-vis to God's transcendent being is necessary for the truth to be *true*. This is not a controversial claim in itself, and is simply a statement about the necessity of mediation in our knowledge of the divine. But in Balthasar's thinking, the sense of distance forms a necessary element of this understanding.

In this case, a Lonerganian key to understanding what Balthasar means by the eternal "immanent distance" between Father and Son as the ground for the economic distance revealed by Jesus in the Incarnation, Cross, and Resurrection and in the gift of the Holy Spirit can be found in Assertion 15 in ch.6 of TGS, namely, that "What is truly predicated contingently of the divine persons is constituted by the divine perfection itself, but it has a consequent condition in an appropriate external term" (TGS, 439).[11] Through the Incarnate Son, and by relating to him in the grace that comes with the Holy Spirit, we become participants in Jesus' status as an "external term."

A crucial passage for understanding distance in Balthasar's larger project occurs in GL1, Part II, "The Subjective Evidence," a condensation of a large paragraph on the Chalcedonian formula and "Jesus' [human] Experience of God":

> The man Christ is, at one and the same time, a genuine human being and a human being who has been assumed into God. As genuine man he is not a super-man, but rather the perfection of creatureliness in its proper ontological and cognitive distance from the Creator…. Accordingly, the God-Man's experience as creature is, as such, an expression and a function of his trinitarian experience. In other words, his experience of distance from God, 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. (GL1, 327-328)

According to Chalcedon the incarnate Christ is a divine Person, so here "man assumed into God" refers of course to the Hypostatic Union and not to some sort of adoption or

[11] Lonergan expands on the kind of analogy he means in the explanation for Assertion 17: "For just as God knows that contingent things exist through his own knowledge, and not through an external term, which is nevertheless required, and just as God wills that contingent things exist through his own volition, and not through an external term, which is nevertheless required, and just as God makes contingent things exist through his own omnipotence and not through an external term, which is nevertheless required, so also the [incarnate] Son *is* all that he is through his own proper divine act of existence and not through an external term, which is nevertheless absolutely required, and the Holy Spirit is sent through that which the Holy Spirit is and not through an external term, which is nevertheless absolutely required" (TGS, 459).

apotheosis. Jesus necessarily experiences his own distance from the Father as a human being under the cognitive condition of faith, which is to say, in essentially the same way that we experience distance from God.

But why "distance"? The reason is because distance allows for a perspective between person and person that in turn allows for love and trust. In Lonergan's terms, for our salvation, what Balthasar calls distance allows Jesus to *be* the external term for a new kind relation originating in God, first in his incarnation, but secondly in the grace we receive to become "partakers in the divine nature" according to the incarnation of the Son of God (John 1:12; 1 Peter 1:4). But "as the expression of God's experience of himself within the Trinity," here, distance allows the *truth* of the triune God to emerge for us through and in Jesus.

Jesus' self-consciousness as a divine Person living under human conditions is at first something inchoate as the ever-present backdrop for his human, thematic, particular consciousness of things in the world. Jesus must "grow in wisdom and strength before men" (Luke 2:52) by progressively opening himself up to the truth as any human being would in coming to know himself or herself and the world. As the eternal but now *human* Son, he grows closer to the Father, which makes the still-persisting first variety of distance, the *diástasis*, all the richer. But it is because Jesus is a divine Person incarnate in human nature according to the Chalcedonian article of faith, that the immanent distance between Father and Son in the Trinity is the eternal pre-condition for in Jesus' particular experience of created distance. This is also because it is the pre-condition for his experience of the economic distance from the Father, his divine mission. Lonergan says in Assertion 17 of ch.6 of TGS that, "The mission of a divine person is constituted

by a divine relation of origin in such a way that it still demands an appropriate external term as a consequent condition" (TGS, 455). But in accordance with Lonergan, this economic distance spanning from the heart of the Trinity into creation would serve as the ground for the consequent condition of the truth of the eternal immanent distance between Father and Son, Speaker and Word, for us.

This is the key to one of Balthasar's deepest epistemological insights, his reflection on the fundamentally existential dimension of theology at the beginning of his trilogy, a search for meaning that lies in a transcendence beyond what is now concrete and yet allows us to name divine things:

> …whenever the spirit attains to real Being it necessarily touches God, the source and ground of all Being … The spirit's horizon is not confined to worldly being (*ens univocum*), but extends to absolute Being (*ens analogum*), and only in this light can it think, will, and love; only in this light of Being does it possess language as the power to know and name existents. (GL1, 158)

The ability of created spirit to "attain to real Being" and touch God is facilitated only by the Holy Spirit from the eternally distant horizon of triune being-in-love. But without the transcendent reality of the imminent Trinity, the distance of the divine Persons from each other in the divine economy loses its properly "economic" aspect because it loses its reference point. The created distance from God can no longer function as a window out to what is beyond, and the images of God we get in what was an "economy" then become a shadow play flickering on the wall of a cave. If the theologian cannot say something about the imminent Trinity, the *ens analogum*, who is yet only available to us via the economic distance and our redeemed distance as creatures, there can be no possibility for a properly *negative* theology. There is nothing for the theologian to use to guard against a false sense of *ens univocum* that can only ultimately objectify the living God,

eventually turning what she once saw in the divine economy into a dying idol, to borrow an "image" from Jean-Luc Marion.[12]

There is an obvious challenge involved in appreciating our human cognitive distance from God, which in Lonergan's terms yields an understanding of the triune God that is imperfect, analogical, obscure, gradually developing, synthetic, and yet highly fruitful (TGS, 19). For Balthasar, this means that the language of distance is, of course, subject to a higher reality and functions only in fidelity to it:

> This Son is infinitely Other, but he is also the infinitely Other *of the Father*. Thus he both grounds and surpasses all we mean by separation, pain and alienation in the world and all we can envisage in terms of loving self-giving, interpersonal relationship and blessedness. (TD4, 325)

Statements such as this one are as close as Balthasar gets to the kind of mutual opposition that emerges from relational processions of Word/Son from Speaker/Father, the spiration of the Spirit from both, etc. The passage above leads to yet another of Balthasar's programmatic statements, but one that is parallel to what Lonergan hypothesizes about the identity that each divine Person qua relation to other Person with the divine essence:

> For, in this self-surrender [to the Son, the Father] *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. (Ibid.)

Accordingly, the Son can only be God in the mode of receptivity: "he receives this unity of omnipotence and powerlessness from the Father" (TD4, 326). The immanent distance is eternally opened up in the Father's "primal kenosis" (TD4, 326), or *Ur-Kenosis* as the

[12] See Jean-Luc Marion, *The Idol and Distance: Five Studies*, trans. Thomas Carlson (New York: Fordham University Press, 2001). This book has some key references to Balthasar and distance, which serve as a significant influence on Marion's thinking of both the idol and the icon.

German text has it,[13] to the Only-Begotten. 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:

> Proceeding from both, 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. (TD4, 324)

This bridge of the Spirit will form the blessed resolution to the dramatic tension, as we will see in the narrative. The Father, Son, and Spirit lovingly establish the creation in a new kenosis by virtue of the Father's Ur-Kenosis to the Son, thus giving existence (*ousia*), life and freedom to all of creation.

On the level of the divine economy of salvation in which human beings also participate as external terms in a redeemed relation with God, the significance of the Cross and of sin in this "primordial drama" lies within the scope of the communion of trinitarian love. The gift of human freedom that is presupposed by sin is part of the very gift of human existence, given out of the infinite freedom of God's love. It is a misunderstanding of human freedom to think that it stands over, against, and outside the realm of divine freedom. Regarding the "exaggerated self-importance, on the part of creaturely freedom … [due] to the illusion that man's ability to say No to God actually limits the divine omnipotence" (TD4, 326), Balthasar has this to say:

> 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

[13] German text, *Theodramatik: Dritter Band: Die Handlung* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1978), 303.

> distinction between Father and Son that is maintained and bridged by the Holy Spirit. The drama of the Trinity lasts forever…. (TD4, 327)

Thus for Balthasar, God as intellectually conscious act is a *dramatic* consciousness, a dramatically conscious act of divine love.

Lonergan has a way of making explicit the ways in which the Persons of the Holy Trinity all effect the one divine act in their perfection as notional acts that are really identical with it. He asks in q.26 after Assertion 17 in what ways an appropriate external term is constituted by a divine mission:

> Besides, in the incarnation the Son is both God and man through his own divine act of existence. This contingent truth as contingent has its correspondence of truth through a secondary act of existence by which the nonsubsistent nature is assumed; and since this assumption exceeds the proportion of nature, this secondary act of existence likewise exceeds the proportion of nature. But in the giving of the Holy Spirit, it is through his own proper perfection that the Holy Spirit is gift and is given to the just. This contingent truth as contingent has its correspondence of truth through sanctifying grace whereby a subsistent nature is rendered holy and pleasing to God; and since both uncreated gift and the created holiness exceed the proportion of this nature, sanctifying grace also exceeds the proportion of nature. (TGS, 471)

The incarnation and sanctifying grace are two elements of what is called the four-fold hypothesis, the other two being the habit of charity and the light of glory (TGS, 473). Together they make up "four very special modes that ground the external imitation of the divine substance," the very substance to which the four real divine relations of paternity, filiation, active spiration and passive spiration are "really identical" in God (TGS, 471).

But for Balthasar, the human way of being received into and living out this existence as a participant and new "external term" of relation in God's grace does have consequences for how God reveals the truth of the divine substance:

> 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. (TD4, 190-191)

The passage only explicitly mentions our human lack and our disorientation, but the point is really that we act out of this wounded nature. By becoming actors in the drama, our concrete actual rejections of God establish us in the sinful distance from God that overlays the created distance that allows us to exist in the first place. God's decision to descend to the depths of our sin, to cross the distance established by our sin, "is the heart of the theo-drama" (TD4, 191). But it is a decision to make something known that is already eternally true about God, namely the "distance" that marks the eternal trinitarian relations in love, expressed on earth by means of the economic distance of the Incarnation, life, passion, and death of Jesus, followed by his Resurrection and Ascension to the Father, and crowned with the descent of the Spirit.

In the chapter of TD4 entitled "Dramatic Soteriology," in the first section and sub-section, "The Cross and the Trinity" and "The Immanent and the Economic Trinity," Balthasar explains how the Son on the Cross and the Spirit who appears there illuminate a boundary between the economic and immanent Trinity, but one in which the beholder of the event is enfolded:

> 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. (TD4, 320)

About the act of *looking* at the Son on the Cross, Balthasar makes a cognitive-aesthetic claim about both the "economic" and "immanent" aspects of trinitarian being: distance gives insight into the Father, Son, and Spirit, the latter being the "We" of the former two. The economic distance between Father and Son is the very trinitarian form of the Spirit, rooted in the eternal spiration of love from Father and Son (TD4, 324). If the form of Jesus' appearance is trinitarian in how the Father's love fills him completely, glorifying him in his kenotic obedience as the Son as in GL7,[14] the Spirit's own form is trinitarian by virtue of the unity between Father and Son that it manifests across distance. But that economic distance in turn refers itself to something beyond it that is eternal, or it is not a revelation of God. The Spirit glorifies the Son because it takes from what is the Son's and declares it to us, and everything that the Father has belongs to the Son (John 16:14-15; 17:10). In this way Balthasar's pneumatology forms this link between the economic and immanent Trinity in the revelation of salvation. But this pneumatology must also incorporate theological distance in *all* of its forms in order to be understood. We can participate in God's life by being remade by the Spirit in the economic form of the Son in a loving distance from the Father, a revitalized created distance that imitates and participates in the immanent distance.

Just as Ignatius of Loyola directs the retreatant practitioner of the Spiritual Exercises to do, Balthasar directs the Christian thinker to contemplate the eternal trinitarian decision of God to redeem the world. For many theologians, Ignatius' vision of "how the three Divine Persons gazed on the whole surface or circuit of the world, full of people; and … seeing that they were all going down into hell, they decide in their

[14] See especially p.291 in the subsection entitled "The Substance of Glory."

eternity that the Second Person should become a human being, in order to save the human race" (*SpEx* [103]),[15] might appear crude and tritheistic at first glance. But if we read and pray as Balthasar reads the NT, Ignatius' insight into how the Persons "decide in their eternity" can be shared in its more profoundly orthodox light. This trinitarian decision is rooted eternally in a love that is there from the beginning, before the foundation of the world. Both the decision and the love, which are without a doubt essentially identical, just as the decision is equally enacted commonly by all three Persons, are shown to have a biblical pattern. Both decision and love are trinitarian love, Incarnational second, and redemptive third in the order of God's being. But these three moments are simultaneous, and as per their origin in God, they are eternal.

Conclusion

In his trinitarian systematics, as it must be culled from the sweeping narrative quality of his work, Balthasar relies heavily on a patristic concept of distance initially borrowed from Gregory of Nyssa and the Fathers.[16] But he adapts and expands this concept to include categories not originally intended by the Fathers. With regard to what Aquinas and Lonergan labored so strenuously to do with their trinitarian theologies, Balthasar appears to have by-passed the psychological analogy of the Trinity entirely. I have attempted to show that his language of distance is not fundamentally at odds with Aquinas' limitations on the appropriate language of trinitarian theology, and on the contrary makes common cause with some key elements of Lonergan's thought, particularly in the idea of a necessary external term as a contingent condition for the truth

[15] *The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius: A Translation and Commentary by George E. Ganss, S.J.* (St. Louis: Institute for Jesuit Sources, 1992), 56.

[16] See *Presence and Thought*, especially chapter one on "Spacing."

of the trinitarian relations. Nevertheless, Balthasar's language of distance also poses an undeniable challenge. While he does indeed use distance to posit a trinitarian personal ontology, he does not do this according to the formalities of traditional metaphysics. I have perhaps dwelt too briefly on Balthasar's theology of the Cross, which is so absolutely central to all of his thought. The reason for this lack in this particular study has to do with my attempt to relate Balthasar's thought as closely as possible to Lonergan's TGS. Perhaps TGS itself is too narrow a focus within Lonergan's corpus for an adequate comparison with Balthasar on the topics I have raised. Were I more familiar with Lonergan myself, I do not doubt that I could gather more resources on how he sees the relationship between the Cross and the Trinity. But the challenge of Balthasar lies in how he sees the up-front and central nature of this connection, his refusal to postpone the consideration of the Cross, but rather to make it central to his understanding of the Church's dogma.

The methodological distinction that is so apparent in the works of these two men is of the very nature of their challenges to each other. Lonergan provides clarity and precision, and as a student of Balthasar I have been helped by Lonergan to see more precisely what the issues are in theological anthropology, especially regarding consciousness. On the other hand, Balthasar provides a necessary breadth of theological data, one that includes the distance of sin and alienation not only explicitly within the scope of grace, but also as an analog for something that is most profoundly (if mysteriously) true about the eternal love of God. These two perspectives need each other, even if there will never be anyone who can, or should even try, to incorporate both

perspectives in a comprehensive methodological whole. Rather, I hope that the problems that have arisen in this presentation will present an impetus for more work in the future.