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THE GROUNDING OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE SAINTS:  
A STUDY IN HANS URS VON BALTHASAR'S  
THEOLOGY OF THE SAINTS

By Pauline Dimech

ABSTRACT

The authority of the saints is, in a sense, presupposed by the tradition, and yet, formulating this presupposition proves to be awkward. This dissertation is an exploration into the nature, the grounding and the limits of the authority of the saints, with reference to the theology of the saints in the work of Hans urs von Balthasar. My argument is that, in his use of the saints, Balthasar does not merely interpret the saints as a resource for theologians and for the Magisterium. For Balthasar, theology and the Magisterium are there to serve the saints, since the saints are the real witnesses whose testimony requires dynamic paraphrase and vigorous rendition. My argument will be that Balthasar wants to avoid the theory of multiple teaching offices, but that – while avoiding the theory of multiple offices – also attributes to the saints an authority that is analogical to that of the Magisterium. Balthasar uses the saints, not only to teach other theologians but also to teach the official Magisterium, thus handling the saints as if they were themselves a Magisterium. Four dimensions – the existential, the epistemological, the pneumatological and the ecclesiological – are identified and used to elucidate the nature, the grounding and the function of the authority of the saints. It will be argued that authority of the saints is grounded within each one of these dimensions and that these are the dimensions within which the saints function authoritatively. I will defend my own construal of Balthasar, argue for the credibility of Balthasar's defence of the authority of the saints, as well as, locate and criticise some of the contradictions that are found in Balthasar in this regard, and identify some of the consequences of Balthasar's position concerning the authority of the saints, for his own theology, for theology in general, and for the Church.

**THE GROUNDING OF THE AUTHORITY OF THE SAINTS:  
A STUDY IN HANS URS VON BALTHASAR'S  
THEOLOGY OF THE SAINTS**

**Pauline Dimech**

**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the  
degree of  
Doctor of Theology**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

C	Convergences: To the Source of the Christian Mystery
CL	Cosmic liturgy
CS	Creator Spiritus: Explorations in Theology III,
CSL	The Christian State of Life
DWH	Dare we Hope “That All Men be Saved?”
E	Elucidations
EG	Engagement with God: The Drama of Christian Discipleship
FG	First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr
LA	Love Alone
MH	Man in History: A Theological Study
MP	Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter
MWIR	My Work in Retrospect
NE	New Elucidations
OP	The Office of Peter
P	Prayer
PT:	Presence and Thought
SW:	Spouse of the Word: Explorations in Theology II
TA1	The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Vol 1, Seeing the Form
TA2	The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Vol 2 Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles
TA3	The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Vol 3 Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles
TA5	The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Vol 5



	The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age
TA7	The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Vol. 7: Theology: The New Covenant
TD2	Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, II: Dramatis Personae: Man in God
TD3	Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, III, The Dramatis Personae: The Person in Christ
TD5	Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, V
TE	Test everything: Hold Fast to what is Good. An Interview with Hans Urs von Balthasar by Angelo Scola
TH	A Theology of History
THL	The Theology of Henri de Lubac: An Overview
TKB	The Theology of Karl Barth
TL2	Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory, II, Truth of God
TL3	Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory, III, The Spirit of Truth
TS	Two Sisters in the Spirit. Thérèse of Lisieux & Elizabeth of the Trinity
TSA	Truth is Symphonic: Aspects of Christian Pluralism
WF	The Word Made Flesh: Explorations in Theology I

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No part of this thesis has previously been submitted by me for a degree in this or in any other University. Material from the work of others has been acknowledged and quotations and paraphrases suitably indicated.

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*'We are slowly returning to the realization that those of the faithful who stand out by the way in which they live the Church's faith, who used to be called "saints" (whether they were canonized or not), are the people in whose hands lies the whole destiny of the Church of today and tomorrow and who will determine whether or not the Church will achieve recognition in the world. It is by no means necessary that such "saints" as these should be exceptional individuals. Some have such a calling, but they are few and far between, and these are often only the spark that kindles a group, be it great or small, which does the work of spreading the new light that shone in its founder in the scattered places of the world...And such authentic Christianity will give the world a great deal more to worry about than the towering edifices of the hierarchy.'*

Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Engagement with God*, pp.95-96.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM OF SAINTLY AUTHORITY

#### INTRODUCTION

As a Catholic, a Religious Educator, a Catechist and a member of the Society of Christian Doctrine, the commemoration of the saints has always been a part of my life. As a member of the Society of Christian Doctrine, I also followed closely the process whereby the Founder of my Society – a Catholic priest by the name of Fr George Preca (1880-1962) – was beatified in 2001 and then canonized in 2007. Since I have known and often spoken to people who knew Fr Preca personally during his lifetime, and who were, literally, mesmerized by him, the influence of the saints – on other people and in the Church – has always fascinated me. Although the term ‘authority’ used within an ecclesiastical context generally evokes images of prelates, judgments, verdicts, dogmas, and *imprimaturs*, I have always believed that the saints themselves had an authority which, though not exactly like that of the Magisterium, was analogical to it, in the sense that it had a propelling quality. As Victor Lee Austin, a priest and theologian in the Episcopal Church, has said, an authority always has ‘*something to convey to us*’, always has ‘*a place to lead us toward*’, always embodies ‘a sense of what the human good is’ and always ‘exist[s] to help us flourish in [that human good].’<sup>1</sup> As a Catholic priest and theologian, and an ex-Jesuit, Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) was also captivated by the saints and by their writings. Moreover, he personally knew, and collaborated closely with, the Swiss theologian and mystic Adrienne von Speyr (1902-1967), whom he met in 1940. All things considered, I became convinced that Balthasar would help me clarify the issues surrounding authority and particularly the authority of the saints. Although he did not develop a full-

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<sup>1</sup> Victor Lee Austin, *Up With Authority: Why we Need Authority to Flourish as Human Beings*, (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), p.7.

blown doctrine of the authority of the saints, I believe that his work can be used as a resource to navigate the way through such a doctrine.

My thesis is that Hans Urs von Balthasar manifests remarkable sensibility to the theology of the ‘saints’, expresses huge respect for the theology of each saint, and develops a generic theology of the saint. Balthasar regards the life of the saints and their theology as crucial to the task of writing significant theology – not just his own, but also that of others – and to the task of building the Church. He makes various remarkable connections, which in turn can serve to ground the authority of the saints in the eyes of others, particularly in the eyes of practicing theologians, but also in the eyes of the Church as a whole. One such connection is that between theology and life, a link which Balthasar defends and validates in a particularly notable manner. It is clear that Balthasar attributes an authority to the saints (in the case of the link between theology and life, an existential authority) that is analogical to that of the Magisterium. This authority (that of the saints) has at least another three dimensions which I identify here, and which I employ to argue for the authority of the saints. These are: the epistemological, the pneumatological and the ecclesiological. All four dimensions represent the different grounds for the authority of the saints, as well as the different settings in which the saints function authoritatively.

The study of the authority of the saints may seem unusable. Some would think it an unnecessary endeavour because the saint’s authority is already recognized. Others would think it provocative because authority has always been associated with the Magisterium, that is, with the official teaching authority, and not with the saints.<sup>2</sup> The scientist and philosopher Michael Polanyi (1891-1976) once said that ‘[t]he curious thing is that we have no clear knowledge of what our presuppositions are and when we try to formulate them they appear quite

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<sup>2</sup> Michael Fahey quoting Francis A.Sullivan, p.200. The word *Magisterium* refers to that group within the Church who is responsible for ‘providing ecclesiastical teaching that is *magisterium authenticum*.’ Francis A.Sullivan points out that ‘the Latin adjective *authenticum* should be translated as “authoritative” (in the sense of bearing the force of a teaching that is consistent with the Scriptures), and not as “authentic” (as opposed to inauthentic?).’



unconvincing.’<sup>3</sup> This is precisely what Balthasar may have encountered: a certainty concerning the authority of the saints, and a struggle to formulate it. The question becomes: does Balthasar set out consciously intending to investigate the matter, and having established the authority of the saints, then work with the saints as an authority? Or does he rather take the authority for granted, and then leave it up to the reader to articulate these thoughts, as I have done here? To my mind, Balthasar proceeds with the second approach, so that it requires quite some effort on the part of the reader to flesh out his underlying views and concepts. But let us, for one moment imagine the opposite scenario: theology without the authority of the saints. What would Balthasar’s theology have been like, had Balthasar not trusted the saints, and what would theology and the Church be like if they rejected the authority of the saints? The authority of the saints is presupposed, and yet, formulating this presupposition of ours proves to be awkward. This dissertation is an exploration into the nature, the sources and the limits of the authority of the saints, with reference to the theology of the saints of Hans urs von Balthasar.

## **THE SAINTS AND HAGIOGRAPHY**

Before we delve more deeply into Balthasar’s theology in order to emphasize the importance of the theology of the saints in that context, we have to say something about Balthasar as a hagiographer, or rather, about Balthasar’s non-typical hagiography. Traditionally, hagiography contained accounts of the discovery or relocation of relics, bulls of canonization, investigations held into the life of a candidate for canonization, legends associated with the saint, as well as descriptions of sermons, visions, and other extraordinary phenomena. The typical hagiographer would consider the saint as a thaumaturge, an ‘epitome of...ethical excellence,’<sup>4</sup> a romantic hero, an excessive ascetic, someone who deserves to be admired for having withdrawn from the world, or for having performed strange deeds. Historians, particularly medievalists, and liturgists would typically focus on verification and authentication of the evidence. None of this is to be found in

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-critical Philosophy* (Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, Corrected Edition 1962), p.62.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp.221-2.

Balthasar's explorations of the saints. Balthasar's is certainly not a modern rationalist stance that reduces truth-theory to verification.<sup>5</sup> What concerns Balthasar is the theological content of hagiography. What concerns him is that the saints are 'rich in suggestions that theologians only need to expand in order to bring out their lasting value,'<sup>6</sup> and that 'their sheer existence proves to be a theological manifestation that contains most fruitful and opportune doctrine' not only for theologians, but for 'the whole Church', and for all Christians.<sup>7</sup> It is clear from such statements that Balthasar attributes to the saints an authority that others would generally attribute to the Magisterium, and that he attributes to them an authority that is similar to that of the Magisterium. With Balthasar, the individual theologian and the Church must look to the saints (more than to the Magisterium), and the role of the theologian is to expand the suggestions of the saints (rather than to elucidate the documents of the Magisterium).

If we were to take a segment of Balthasar's work – let us say, that between the early 1950's and the early 1970's - we would be able to see that his perception, his hermeneutics of the saints, remains constant, even when he uses different images or makes different emphasis. The saint is always much more than a patron who offers protection and security, one who acts as a mediator between God and ourselves.<sup>8</sup> In *Two Sisters* the saints are those who 'lift' the world, by having God as their 'fulcrum', and prayer as their 'lever'.<sup>9</sup> They are 'a new type of conformity to Christ...a new illustration of how the Gospel is to be lived.'<sup>10</sup> In his *Das betrachtende Gebet*, the saint is 'an almost inexhaustible storehouse of light and love, providing strength and nourishment for centuries.'<sup>11</sup> In *Theologie der Geschichte*, the saint is

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<sup>5</sup> Aidan Nichols, *Say it at Pentecost: A Guide Through Balthasar's Logic* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), p.11.

<sup>6</sup> *Two Sisters in the Spirit. Thérèse of Lisieux & Elizabeth of the Trinity. Thérèse von Lisieux* was translated by Donald Nichols and Anne Englund Nash. *Elisabeth von Dijon* was translated by Dennis Martin. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), p.150. Henceforth referred to as *TS*.

<sup>7</sup> *TS*, p.25.

<sup>8</sup> *TS*, p.25.

<sup>9</sup> *TS*, p.199.

<sup>10</sup> *TS*, p.25.

<sup>11</sup> *Prayer*, trans. by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992). Title of the German original: *Das Betrachtende Gebet* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1955), p.106. Henceforth referred to as *P*.

a presentation to his own age of the message that heaven is sending to it, a man who is, here and now, the right and relevant interpretation of the Gospel, who is given to this particular age as its way to approach to the perennial truth of Christ.<sup>12</sup>

In the first volume of the *Aesthetics*, the Christian saint is the one ‘who has made the deep-rooted act of faith and obedience to God’s inner light the norm of his whole existence’,<sup>13</sup> the figure who is ‘characterized by the Christ form’.<sup>14</sup> In his *Einfaltungen*, the saints are the ones who represent the glory of God’s justice and mercy. They are those who ‘let themselves be expropriated into Christ’s personified “justice of God”, to stand in the authority of Christ as his “ambassadors” in the “ministry of reconciliation”’.<sup>15</sup> In *Engagement with God*, the saints are individuals who are ‘specially chosen’,<sup>16</sup> ‘individuals who tower above the rest,’ ‘the chosen’.<sup>17</sup> In his essay on Matthias Claudius, the saints are depicted as more perceptive, more responsive, more alert, than the typical Christian. They are the ones who clarify things for the Church. They are those who trust God ‘to perform the greatest work’, those who ‘sense falsehood’.<sup>18</sup> And so on, and so forth. These seemingly insignificant descriptions of the nature and function of the saint are, in fact, very suggestive, on three levels. First of all, with Balthasar, the focus is the saints’ message ‘from God to the Church’,<sup>19</sup> rather than on the comfort which the saints provide to us when we become aware of their similarity to ourselves, or on their role as facilitators when there is something that we would like God to grant us, as with most spiritual writings about the saints. Secondly, Balthasar attributes to the saints an authority that the Magisterium has traditionally attributed to itself. He grounds the authority of the saints there, were the Magisterium is generally expected to be authoritative. Thirdly, that Balthasar

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<sup>12</sup> *A Theology of History*, [n.translator]; *A Communio Book* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, repr.1994), p. 105. Henceforth referred to as *TH*.

<sup>13</sup> *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, I, *Seeing the Form*, ed. by Joseph Fessio and John Riches, trans. by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press; New York: Crossroad Publications, 1982), p.165. Henceforth referred to as *TAI*.

<sup>14</sup> *TAI*:36.

<sup>15</sup> *Convergences: To the Source of the Christian Mystery*, trans. by E.A.Nelson (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), pp.20-21. Henceforth referred to as *C*.

<sup>16</sup> *Engagement with God: The Drama of Christian Discipleship*, trans. by R.John Halliburton, new edn (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), p.19. Henceforth referred to as *EG*.

<sup>17</sup> *EG*, p.20.

<sup>18</sup> ‘A Verse of Matthias Claudius,’ in *Elucidations*, trans. by John Riches, reprint. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), p.17. Henceforth referred to as *E*.

<sup>19</sup> *TS*, p.27.

intends to revive the familiarity with the ‘saints’ as pedagogues and interpreters, presenting them as adept and skilful, as unique and exceptional.

Interestingly, Balthasar does not depict the saint as perfect.<sup>20</sup> ‘Even true saints often have faults.’<sup>21</sup> Nor does Balthasar depict the saint as inerrant. As Austin has said, authority may not always be right.<sup>22</sup> Rodney Howsare grants that, in Balthasar, even those saints who would generally be considered more important may be wrong sometimes.<sup>23</sup> Authority would naturally be lost if that individual holding it was generally wrong, or wrong in something that was considered substantial, but this would not be the case with the more authoritative saints. Howsare has suggested that what Balthasar does is to discern between the ‘better’ and the ‘weaker’ moments of the saints. He attempts to identify the ‘better’ moments when Christ ‘shines through’ and to correct the ‘weaker’ ones, when the Gospel is being obscured. Howsare’s is a fair assessment.<sup>24</sup> I would agree with him that an essential part of Balthasar’s project requires the ‘retrieval of past Christian thought’ which will always involve a process of discernment.<sup>25</sup> What is significant is that, in Balthasar, this past thought is always closely coupled to its thinker. Balthasar goes beyond Blondel’s emphasis that tradition was a living reality, through which dogma developed.<sup>26</sup> Significantly, Balthasar does not just think and analyse thoughts or examine the development of dogma, as if dogma could be disconnected from its human source. Balthasar would rather analyse the individuals who fabricated these thoughts. It is the thinkers whom he discerns, rather than the thoughts. In Balthasar, the theology of the saints is not detached from the saints.

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<sup>20</sup> In Balthasar, ‘perfection is not in itself self-sufficient and purposeful.’ See *The Christian State of Life*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1983), p.82. Henceforth referred to as *CSL*.

<sup>21</sup> *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, trans. by Antje Lawry and Sr.Sergia Englund (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1981), p.73. Henceforth referred to as *FG*.

<sup>22</sup> Austin, p.3.

<sup>23</sup> Rodney Howsare mentions Balthasar’s criticism of Augustine’s theory of predestination and of Aquinas’ doctrine on the immaculate conception and on the torture of heretics. See Rodney Howsare, *Balthasar: A Guide for the Perplexed*, (London: T&T Clark, 2009), p.161.

<sup>24</sup> Howsare, p.34.

<sup>25</sup> Howsare, p.34.

<sup>26</sup> Boersma (2007), p.248.

## WHICH SAINTS?

Yves Tourenne has said that '[o]ne way to enter into Balthasar's thought process is to note the proper names he cites, to compile an index, and to try to understand why certain names appear in certain passages or alongside certain other names.'<sup>27</sup>

I would agree with anyone who says that it was discernment which led Balthasar to make decisions concerning which saints to use in a particular context, and that it is necessary to evaluate this process of discernment. I would say that Balthasar's decisions were based on four criteria. First of all: there were the saints who were especially alluring to him personally, those he came to know spiritually, who most fascinated and inspired him in his own life. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) would fall into this group. There were then the saints who were already established as authorities, whom all worthy theologians quoted, like Augustine and Aquinas. Thirdly, there were those saints whose wisdom he had discovered, but who were no longer known to the Western world, or whose import was yet to be discovered.<sup>28</sup> The Fathers of the Church – like Gregory and Maximus – and Thérèse of Lisieux would fall among this group. I actually think that, if it were up to Balthasar, he would also include Adrienne in this group. Balthasar believed that along with the latter saints, she could be presented as a paradigm, and he wanted to divulge her wisdom, and to make her theology known. Finally, there were those 'saints' who were not generally recognized as such, because they were associated with philosophy and literature, rather than theology. These were those philosophical and literary figures whose work manifested the glory of the Lord, even if their connection with the Church may have been partially or totally invisible.

Needless to say, Balthasar makes innumerable references to saints throughout the whole of his work. He is especially attracted by the Fathers of the Church, the contemplatives, and the productive theologians. In his *Theo-Aesthetics*, it is the constellation of Christ, or the 'fourfold tradition of archetypal experience in the

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<sup>27</sup> Yves Tourenne, in the introduction to *The Christian and Anxiety* (Johannes Verlag, Ignatius Press, 1989), p.17.

<sup>28</sup> *Test everything: Hold Fast to what is Good. An Interview with Hans Urs von Balthasar by Angelo Scola* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989)., p.13. Henceforth referred to as *TE*.

Church'<sup>29</sup> which takes precedence.<sup>30</sup> In terms of their theological fruitfulness, it is these four archetypal figures in the Gospels<sup>31</sup> who are most favoured: John and Peter in particular, but also Paul,<sup>32</sup> and especially Mary.<sup>33</sup> According to him, it is Mary who presents to us the highest paradigm of what is meant by the 'art of God', and by well-structured sanctity'.<sup>34</sup> As Lucy Gardner has said, the 'hermeneutic of theological-personal significance', particularly where Mary is concerned, is indubitable.<sup>35</sup> In *The Office of Peter*, Balthasar also gives prominence to the 'constellation' of Jesus, but he now widens the circle, including other figures besides the four archetypes: the Twelve,<sup>36</sup> John the Baptist,<sup>37</sup> Joseph, Mary Magdalen, Martha, Mary, Simon of Cirene, Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, Judas Iscariot – whom no Christian would consider a saint<sup>38</sup> – and the constellation in the Acts of the Apostles.<sup>39</sup> For Balthasar, these saints were not just dead figures from history, narrative material for catechesis, or resources for dogmatic announcements. They were the chief sources for the theological enterprise, and the primary prototypes for the configuration of the Church. Balthasar claims that all the members of the constellation were made 'structural principles' of the Church.<sup>40</sup>

The monographs dealing with the individual saints: Maximus the Confessor, Gregory of Nyssa, Thérèse of Lisieux, and Elizabeth of the Trinity, written in the first two decades of his theological career, are an important part of Balthasar's theological corpus. So were the anthologies and translations of select texts from

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<sup>29</sup> *TAI*: 351.

<sup>30</sup> In Balthasar, Christ is the archetype and the prototype *par excellence*. However, those who experienced Christ first hand are also designated as archetypes because of the universal significance of their experience.

<sup>31</sup> *TAI*: 351.

<sup>32</sup> Paul is not one of the 'foundation stones' or one of the 'gates' (See *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church*, trans. by Andrée Emery, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2007), p.150. Henceforth referred to as *OP*. But he is a 'type'. This is a 'prelude to the great missioning of the saints in Church history', and 'an unheard of clarification of what will be called office and authority within the Church.' *OP*, p.152. See also *TAI*: 568.

<sup>33</sup> Jesus' relationship with Mary is 'a primary, all-embracing relationship'. *OP*, p.145.

<sup>34</sup> *TAI*: 36.

<sup>35</sup> Lucy Gardner, 'Balthasar and the figure of Mary,' in Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.67 and 72.

<sup>36</sup> The twelve is, according to Balthasar, a community in life, mission and authority.

<sup>37</sup> The relationship between the Baptist and Jesus is, according to Balthasar a 'deeply significant' one theologically, even if 'in the theology of the Church he is forgotten'. *OP*, p.145.

<sup>38</sup> *OP*, pp.146, 167.

<sup>39</sup> *OP*, p.335.

<sup>40</sup> *OP*, pp.243-4.

Irenaeus, Basil of Caesarea and Augustine, which Balthasar provided in the early years.<sup>41</sup> The list of saints mentioned by Balthasar is endless, covering not only figures from the Scriptures and from the early Church Fathers, but also the Medieval mystics (most of whom were never canonized either), the founders of the mendicant orders, and the French mystics of the Grand Siécle. One finds in his work continuous references to ‘the Great Tradition of Western Theology.’<sup>42</sup> There are also a considerable number of women saints featuring alongside Augustine, Anselm, Bonaventure, Ignatius of Loyola, Francis of Assisi, the Curé of Ars, Bernard of Clairvaux, John of the Cross, Francis Xavier, de Caussade, and Peter Canisius. Balthasar manifests remarkable sensitivity to the theology of the saints. His sensitivity to the wealth and the vibrancy of the theology of the saints is especially evident in the inter-saintly debate which Balthasar creates in his book *Dare we Hope “That All Men be Saved?”*<sup>43</sup> Here, Balthasar brings forward the testimony of the mystics who indicate that ‘hope for all men is permitted’ (Mechtilde of Hackeborn, Juliana of Norwich, Angela of Foligno, Mechtilde of Magdeburg, and Adrienne von Speyr) against that of Augustine, Gregory the Great, Anselm, Bonaventure, Aquinas, John Henry Newman, and so on, who maintain that there are, *de facto*, humans who are or will be eternally damned.

Aidan Nichols argues that Balthasar would have voluntarily chosen those saints who had a lot to contribute to the contemporary Church.<sup>44</sup> While agreeing with this sensible supposition, I feel that it is only partially accurate. I would add that Balthasar would also have voluntarily chosen saints who influenced him personally – spiritually and theologically – as well as saints who had a lot to contribute to the contemporary philosophical and theological arena.

Clearly, Balthasar’s preferred saints were theologians, saints who, however humble, left behind autobiographical reflections, letters, treatises, in short, a

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<sup>41</sup> Karen Kilby, *Balthasar: A (very Critical Introduction)* (Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing: Cambridge, 2012), p.31.

<sup>42</sup> See Noel O’Donaghue, *A Theology of Beauty*, in John Riches, *The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), pp.1-10 (p.7).

<sup>43</sup> *Dare We Hope “That All Men be Saved?” with a Short Discourse on Hell* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986). Henceforth referred to as *DWH*.

<sup>44</sup> Aidan Nichols, *Divine Fruitfulness: A Guide through Balthasar’s Theology beyond the Trilogy* (London: T & T Clark, 2007), p.3.

record of their insights documented in what would generally be considered authentically authored texts. He maintained that the saints live out what they know in a dramatic existence, and consequently become the best interpreters of theodrama.<sup>45</sup> Gregory of Nyssa is a case in point. Balthasar states that it is the contradictions one finds in him, and which create the drama, that makes him so effective.<sup>46</sup> The trilogy is testimony to the fact that the saints whom Balthasar selects are the ones whom he considers to have been strategic, having provided estimable aesthetic, dramatic or insightful interpretations of Christian existence and of Christian wisdom. Steffen Lösel has accused Balthasar of a ‘tendency to offer an elitist view of the Christian existence’, as well as that he has a ‘monastic (in the larger sense of the word) perspective.’<sup>47</sup> This may be true. But then, as Balthasar himself remarked ‘[t]he vast majority of canonized saints have been members of religious orders or persons who shared by vow in the form of that life,’ and when he claims that [o]nly in exceptional instances (Thomas More, Anna Maria Taigi) have married persons been canonized’.<sup>48</sup> Moreover, Balthasar contemplates the view that this evangelical state ‘is normative for all states of life within the Church’, and that the evangelical state and the lay state are necessary complements.<sup>49</sup>

The case of Adrienne von Speyr is more complicated. Not only are her insights considered by Balthasar to be as splendid as some of those associated with the major saints, Balthasar even relies on Adrienne when she claims that she experiences the saints and communicates with them, even when some of what she professes in this regard seems to be far-fetched. In addition, there is enough evidence that she is herself counted by Balthasar to be among the saints. We are

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<sup>45</sup> *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory, II, Truth of God*, trans. by Walker, Adrian J. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004), p.14. Henceforth referred to as *TL2*. See Nicholas M. Healy, *Church, World and the Christian Life, Church, Practical-Prophetic Ecclesiology*, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.72. See also *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory, I, Prologomena*, trans. by (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), pp. 25-50, 122, 125-31. Henceforth referred to as *TD1*.

<sup>46</sup> *Presence and Thought: Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. by Mark Sebanc; A Communion Book (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1995), pp.16-18. Henceforth referred to as *PT*.

<sup>47</sup> See Steffen Lösel, ‘Conciliar, Not Conciliatory: Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Ecclesiological Synthesis of Vatican II’, *Modern Theology*, 24:1 (2008) 23-49 ( pp.41-2).

<sup>48</sup> *CSL*, p.377-8. On this issue, See Kenneth L. Woodward, *Making Saints: Inside the Vatican: Who Become Saints, Who Do Not, and Why...* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990).

<sup>49</sup> *CSL*, pp.19-20.



not quite sure as to how much of Balthasar's theology of the saints rests on the 'visions' and 'transports' which drew her into 'the *turba magna* of the saints'.<sup>50</sup> What we know is that Balthasar transcribed many of her visions and mystical commentaries,<sup>51</sup> and that he claims his general indebtedness to her, stating that she was the source of much that is original in his theological reflections.<sup>52</sup> Considering that his treatment of the saints is significantly original, there is no reason for doubting that her own theology of the saints was influential and even authoritative for him.

Adrienne's case provides evidence that Balthasar does not feel constrained to use the more typical saints to initiate or enliven his arguments, or to substantiate his claims. He also uses individuals whom he deemed to be pertinent for Christian thought: philosophers, poets, novelists and dramatists, and it sometimes seems as if these are as commendable and as reliable as the saints, and their theological contribution to be taken just as seriously.<sup>53</sup> He claims that the two criteria that assisted him in volumes II and III of his *Herrlichkeit* were 'intrinsic excellence and historical efficacy'.<sup>54</sup> These two criteria are central. In Balthasar, any work which exhibits the qualities of 'intrinsic excellence and historical efficacy', whether from the fields of philosophy, drama or literature is worth preserving. But a more theological reason for valuing such work is that, in Balthasar, everyone – and, therefore, even the lay figure – is already involved in the Christological drama, whether they like it or not. David S. Yeago's avowal is not too far-fetched in this regard: 'what von Balthasar writes of the philosopher can be said equally well of the poet, the novelist, or the playwright.'<sup>55</sup> And what does Balthasar write about the philosopher? In a nutshell, he says that the philosopher could also be a theologian. More precisely, he says that

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<sup>50</sup> *FG*, pp.33-4.

<sup>51</sup> Stephen Wigley, *Balthasar's Trilogy* (London/New York: T & T Clark International, 2010), p.22.

<sup>52</sup> Adrienne tells Balthasar that it was because of his relationship with Mary, that 'the question of the other saints also became acute' for her for the first time.' *FG*, pp.179-80.

<sup>53</sup> Contributors include 'writers and poets, mystics and philosophers, old and new, Christians of all persuasion'. Kilby, pp. 31 and 151.

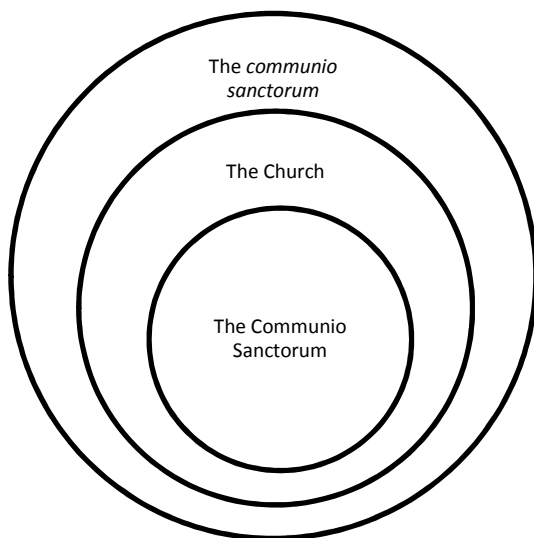
<sup>54</sup> Aidan Nichols, 'Balthasar's Aims in the "Theological Aesthetics"' in *Glory, Grace, and Culture: The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Block, Ed Jr. (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), pp.107-126 (p.116).

<sup>55</sup> David S. Yeago, 'Literature in the Drama of Nature and Grace: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Paradigm for a Theology of Culture,' in *Glory, Grace and Culture: The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Block, Ed Jr (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), pp.88-106 (p.101).

Insofar as the philosopher knows nothing of revelation (of God's Word) and looks out on a cosmos that is noetically and ontically saturated with moments of the supernatural, he will *also* be, at the very least – without knowing it - a crypto-theologian. The outlook of his reason will not be the outlook of a *ratio pura* but of a reason that already stands within the teleology of faith or unbelief.<sup>56</sup>

Balthasar often treats these philosophers, and literary figures, in the same way as he does the 'saints', that is, as authoritative figures – though this happens only in selected contexts. It is also possible that he wants the term 'saint' to be used more widely, so that it includes not just contemporary saints, but also others, like Origen and Plotinus,<sup>57</sup> who were never canonized, and the lay 'theologians', whom he discusses in Volume III of his *Theological Aesthetics*.<sup>58</sup>

Because of what at first sight seems like a lack of clarity on Balthasar's part, I have become ever more convinced that Balthasar's ecclesiology is best described as a series of concentric circles: the Church is the middle circle, the *communio sanctorum* (all of humanity) is in the outer circle, whereas the *Communio Sanctorum*



*Sanctorum* (in capital letters, referring to the saints in the narrow sense) is in the inner circle. Here, Balthasar's scheme is marked by a dialectic between the maximalist and the minimalist position: the saints in the narrow sense, and the saints in the wide sense. Furthermore, it seems to me that, in the order of redemption, Balthasar

takes an inclusivist approach. He wants to emphasize the inclusiveness of salvation (as opposed to exclusivism and pluralism). In this way, according to

<sup>56</sup> *The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, trans by Oakes, Edward T., (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1992), p.280. Henceforth referred to as *TKB*. Also quoted in Yeago, p.101.

<sup>57</sup> Concerning the importance of Plotinus, see Peter Henrici, 'The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar,' in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. by Schindler, David L., (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), pp.149-167, (p.156).

<sup>58</sup> Balthasar wrote about Dante, Pascal, Hamann, Soloviev, Hopkins, Péguy. That is, if one does not mention the Klosterberg collection, which also included writings on Goethe, Novalis, Nietzsche, Claudel, Bernanos and Mauriac. See Howsare, p.5.

Balthasar, Ishmael, Esau, the Pharoah and Israel could be saved alongside, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and the Church. According to him, the grace of redemption need not be bestowed ‘directly through the Church as an external institution.’<sup>59</sup> However, my opinion is that, whereas in the order of redemption, Balthasar clearly takes an inclusivist approach, in the order of sanctification, Balthasar fluctuates between an inclusivist and an exclusivist position. In the earlier work – in the early 50’s – Balthasar claims that the Church is the only place where the subjective sanctity of the members can be realized,<sup>60</sup> and therefore asserts that no subjective sanctity is possible outside the Church. A few years later, in *A Theology of History*, ‘*sentire cum Spiritu Sancto*’ (what I will translate as holiness) requires a closeness to the Church: a ‘thinking with the Church, and hence the thinking of the Church’.<sup>61</sup> Writing about objective and subjective holiness, Balthasar claims that the model of authentic sanctification must be sought not simply in the Church, but in the heart of the Church. It

must be sought where it really exists: namely, not in the average views of the mass of sinners that populates the Church, but rather where, according to the Church’s prayer, the *forma Christi* best comes to prevail and best becomes impressed on the form of the Church – in Mary, in the saints, in all those who have consciously made their own form to wane so as to yield the primacy in themselves to the form of the Church.’<sup>62</sup>

Philosophers, and literary figures may or may not be part of the *Communio Sanctorum* (in the inner circle). I have already said that Balthasar sometimes treats these philosophers and literary figures in the same way as he does the ‘saints’, that is, as authoritative figures. Certainly, in treating them as members of the *communio sanctorum* (the outer circle), Balthasar wants to establish that *sentire Spiritus Sancti* (the thinking of the Holy Spirit (my Italics)) is wider than the *sentire ecclesiae* (the thinking of the Church).<sup>63</sup> The unity between the order of creation and the order of redemption will allow him to include individuals whom he believes to be an ‘intimation of Christ’, and ‘a highway for the divine’ even within

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<sup>59</sup> *CSL*, p.441.

<sup>60</sup> *TS*, p.19.

<sup>61</sup> *TH*, p.100.

<sup>62</sup> *TAI*: 256.

<sup>63</sup> *TH*, 100.

the inner circle. However, Balthasar's awareness of the distinction (though never the separation) between the order of redemption and the order of sanctification will not allow him to *automatically* include individuals like Socrates, Buddha and Lao Tzu, whom he believes to be an 'intimation of Christ', and 'a highway for the divine', among the saints.<sup>64</sup> His category of the 'saints' (in the narrow sense) does not include every man whose doctrine describes a beneficial and effective way of salvation for an individual. But neither does Balthasar rule out the possibility of having someone from 'outside' become authoritative on the inside: it is possible for 'the keenest discernment of spirits' to have us include more unusual specimens into the category.<sup>65</sup>

We would have to say, here, that Karl Rahner's concept of the 'anonymous Christian' can arise even among the saints. We do know that Balthasar did not approve of the Rahnerian concept of anonymous Christianity,<sup>66</sup> but, at the same time, he claimed that to dismiss the possibility of having God becoming 'visible in one privileged existent'<sup>67</sup> is either to fall 'below the level of ('natural') religion or [to dissolve] that possibility in a scholastic, rationalistic manner.' Therefore, in spite of his criticism of Rahner (1904-1984), Balthasar was not willing to dismiss the possibility – even if he does not approve of the terminology – of having a non-Christian who appealed to us, just as much as a saint would. He simply found the notions of *Fides Implicita* and of *Baptismus in Voto* to be sufficient.<sup>68</sup> He insisted that 'this borderline case of natural religion demands from Christians the keenest discernment of spirits; but discernment presupposes, besides its No, also a possible Yes.'<sup>69</sup> This is in agreement with a whole series of other theologians (Augustine, some of the Fathers and Henri de Lubac himself).<sup>70</sup> It is also in keeping with common (popular) practice. Few would question the continuing influence, and even holiness, of individuals such as Dorothy Day

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<sup>64</sup> *TAI*: 184.

<sup>65</sup> *TAI*: 185.

<sup>66</sup> *EG*, p.5.

<sup>67</sup> The reference here must be to Heidegger.

<sup>68</sup> *TE*, p.39.

<sup>69</sup> *TAI*: 185.

<sup>70</sup> De Lubac writes, 'We willingly allow...that divine mercy was always at work among all peoples, and that even the pagans have had their "hidden saints" and their prophets.' Henri de Lubac, *Catholicism: Christ and the Common Destiny of Man* (London: Burns & Oates, 1962), p.108.

(1897-1980), of Thomas Merton (1915-1968), of Nelson Mandela (1918-2013) and even of Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948), although these individuals do not fit into the conservative definition of the saint, and may never receive official recognition by the Church hierarchy. My conviction is that it is Balthasar's sacramental theology of revelation which allows him to acknowledge the possibility that 'God's true light' also falls 'upon figures of the human imagination (myths) and speculation (philosophies), and that this light can lead through them and their partial truth to the God of revelation.'<sup>71</sup> This would explain Balthasar's own respect, not only for the saint and theologian, but also for philosophers and literary figures like Georges Bernanos, Charles Péguy and Paul Claudel. Péguy's influence<sup>72</sup> is especially pervasive.<sup>73</sup> De Lubac (1896-1991) had already identified the sacramental order of reality as that which draws humanity to a deeper participation in divine life.<sup>74</sup> In this regard, Balthasar is following his lead. Also on account of his sacramental theology of revelation, not only does the *communio sanctorum* in Balthasar's theology include 'writers and poets, philosophers and mystics, ancients and moderns, and Christians of all denominations,<sup>75</sup> but Balthasar seems to consider the poetry, drama and fiction of these literary figures, as authentic lay theology. In his *Aesthetics*, Balthasar states quite clearly that, 'anything which reflects, mediates, and helps us to perceive...beauty becomes legitimate theological material'.<sup>76</sup> Balthasar seems to be saying that the theology of Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900), Gerald Manley Hopkins (1844-1889), Charles Péguy (1873-1914), Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), Georg von Hardenberg, better known as Novalis (1772-1801), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), Paul Claudel (1868-1955), Georges Bernanos (1888-1948) could be

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<sup>71</sup> *TAI*: 156.

<sup>72</sup> As Fergus Kerr has said, including this 'controversial' figure was especially 'provocative'. See Fergus Kerr, 'Forward: Assessing this 'Giddy Synthesis'', in *Balthasar at the end of Modernity*, ed. by Gardner, Lucy; Moss, David; Quash, Ben; Ward, Graham (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), pp.1-13 (p.4).

<sup>73</sup> Ed Block Jr, 'Introduction', in Ed Block (ed), *Glory, Grace and Culture: The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), p.2.

<sup>74</sup> Boersma (2007), p.245.

<sup>75</sup> De Lubac quoted in Antonio Sicari, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar: Theology and Holiness', in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. by David L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), pp.121-132 (p.127).

<sup>76</sup> Beauty is conceived of transcendently. Therefore its definition is derived from God himself. God's self-revelation in history and in the Incarnation becomes for us 'the very apex and archetype of beauty in the world, whether men see it or not.' *TAI*: 69. See also Kilby, p.54.

as pertinent as that of Thomas, if it sheds light on God's glory. Whether this is a helpful inclusion remains to be seen. At this stage, it is enough to state that for Balthasar, not only does Christian existence (in what seems like an automatic manner) lead to authentic theology, but authentic theology proceeds (in what seems like an automatic manner) from authentic Christian existence.

While agreeing that, within Balthasar's scheme, everything and everyone seems to have theological import because – through Christ's humanity – everything and everyone has become sacramental, the question then becomes, are we then to discard the distinction between the theological and the non-theological and between the Christian saint and the non-Christian saint? Are we to consider everyone on a par? Balthasar hints at a reply to this matter in his essay on 'Martyrdom and Mission'. In this essay, Balthasar asserts that the martyrs whom the 'crowd' venerates could very well 'be called Scholl or Stauffenberg just as well as Delp or Bonhoeffer or Kolbe.' Balthasar is arguing that, from the outside, Christian martyrdom 'is perceived as', looks like, human martyrdom. However, there is an important difference. The two differ in the 'motive' that triggers the martyrdom.<sup>77</sup> Thus, whereas Balthasar would attribute an instructive character to all martyrdom, the two martyrdoms are essentially different. We could say that Christian martyrdom is a sacramental, with 'sacramental' being used adjectivally, whereas human martyrdom is sacramental, with 'sacramental' being used as a noun. The importance of 'motive' for the authority of the saints will become clear as the argument progresses. In all dimensions – the existential, epistemological, pneumatological and ecclesiological – the 'motive' is that which grounds the authority of the saints, and which enables their authority to function. In the meantime, it is very clear that Balthasar's theology of the saints is anthropocentric, so that, in spite of the fact that his concept of sacramentality extends to all of creation, the saints are limited to humankind. Moreover, since it is a theology which deals with the saints, it is restricted to what (we would presume) would be a small group of humans, or rather, that it would not extend to the whole of humanity.

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<sup>77</sup> 'Martyrdom and Mission', *NE*, pp.285-6.

A word should be said about the terms we are using. As we know, there is nowadays a pressing demand for clarifying the terminology, particularly in view of the Postmodern literary sense of the term ‘saint’, which though using the term ‘saints’ often canonises the scoundrels. Nowhere does Balthasar contrast his own theology concerning the saints with postmodern representations of sainthood, but the dissimilarity is enough to beg description. First of all, Postmodern saints are taken from a different context from that of the ‘real’ saints. The Postmodern saints are generally taken from literary texts (e.g. Henry James’ *The Wings of the Dove* or Jean Genet’s *Our Lady of the Flowers*), from writings which deconstructed these literary texts, from the musical scene, from the film industry – actors or movie characters – from the world of politics, or even from everyday life.<sup>78</sup> Please note, they are generally fictitious figures. On the contrary, Balthasar’s saints are generally taken from the Scriptures and from the Catholic tradition, they are all historical figures – often theologians of some importance – and they all play an important part in his theology. Having said that, Balthasar expresses appreciation for the work of literary figures such as Bernanos and Claudel whose work includes saintly figures, and he does utilize Cordula, an apocryphal young girl saint in his ‘The Moment of Christian Witness’.<sup>79</sup> What is certain is that Balthasar does not confuse the saint with the scoundrel.

Moreover, because otherness and difference is critical for postmodernism,<sup>80</sup> practically anyone who offers an alternative vision for the world, could conveniently be promoted to sainthood. For Balthasar, originality – or even shockingly scandalous behaviour or thought – is far from enough. Neither is one’s importance to be measured by the radical challenge he or she generates in the onlooker. Balthasar prefers to emphasize and explore that which grounds the saint,

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<sup>78</sup> David Matzko McCarthy, ‘Desirous Saints,’ in *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body* ed. by Loughlin, Gerard, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp.305-312 (p.305).

<sup>79</sup> *The Moment of Christian Witness*, trans by Richard Beckley (S.Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), Title of the German original *Cordula oder der Ernstfall*, (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag , 1966). See Philip Endean, ‘Von Balthasar, Rahner, and the Commissar’. Accessed online, 7/09/2014. <http://www.theway.org.uk/endeanweb/vonbrc.pdf>. See also Ed Block, ‘Balthasar’s literary Criticism’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans urs von Balthasar* ed. by Oakes, Edward T. and Moss, David, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.207-223.

<sup>80</sup> Matzko, p.26.

rather than to focus on the outrageous in that which can be perceived, or on the adulation of the one who perceives. Referring to Philip Rieff, Victor Lee Austin has said that the ‘amoral (thus shallow and false) charisma of what is called “celebrity culture”’ reflects ‘[o]ur culture’s inability to understand authority’. He goes on to say that, because charisma is grace, authentic charisma ‘cannot be separated from morality, obedience, authority’.<sup>81</sup> A comparison of Balthasar’s concept of the saint to that of postmodernity would only be useful because it could ultimately be used as a corrective to it.

### **THE FUNCTION OF THE SAINTS IN BALTHASAR’S THEOLOGY**

Before we can argue that Balthasar regards the life of the saints and their theology as crucial to the task of writing significant theology and of building the Church, we have to establish the importance of the saints for his own theology. We have already pointed out that the saints are an inspiration to Balthasar’s own spiritual journey as a Christian. But he is particularly fascinated by them as a theologian. He wishes to be guided by the ‘vision, this way of looking at things and this way of thinking common to the saints’.<sup>82</sup> He wishes his own theology *of* the saints (i.e. *concerning* the saints) to be based on the theology *of* the saints (i.e. *belonging to* the saints). In *The Office of Peter*, Balthasar claims that the word ‘saint’, like the term ‘holy’, *heilig*, is an analogical concept, and adds that one cannot speak of all ‘saints’ in a univocal sense.<sup>83</sup> This may seem to denounce the very idea of a generic ‘theology of the saints’ (*concerning* the saints). However, despite what Balthasar said here, it is possible to accumulate a body of knowledge which provides an overall view of what Balthasar has said about the saints in general. As a matter of fact, scholars persist in writing about Balthasar’s theology of the saints or in making a reference to it. It is also possible to speak about the totality of their theology, that is, of the theology of the saints (i.e. which *belongs to* the saints) as a whole, rather than as individual parts unearthed at different historical moments,

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<sup>81</sup> Austin, p.39. Referring to Philip Rieff, *Charisma: The Gift of Grace, and How It Has Been Taken Away From Us* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2007).

<sup>82</sup> *E*, p.17.

<sup>83</sup> *OP*, pp.343-4.



and, likewise, it is possible to refer to Balthasar's portrayal of the theology which belongs to the saints as a group, or more precisely, as a community.

Needless to say, the saints have various functions in Balthasar's work. They stimulate, revitalize, debate, serve as models of reflection and creativity, synthesise.<sup>84</sup> As David Moss puts it, Balthasar advocates and promotes, endorses and recommends the saints 'as a resource for investigation and employment'.<sup>85</sup> In the next few paragraphs I explore Balthasar's use of the saints in his own theology, how and why he uses them, what it is that they allow him to see, how they help him theologise and the various ways in which the saints function as authorities of both content and form (in the sense of method).<sup>86</sup> At this stage, what I would like to argue is that Balthasar manifests remarkable sensibility to the theology of the saints, and that the theology of the saints – in both senses distinguished above – is integral to Balthasar's theology, and that, if one were to discard all references to the saints or to their work, very little of substance would remain.

To begin with, the saints function as a means for animating, enlivening and invigorating Balthasar's own theology. They are situated within his theological discourse, making his writing more vivid and exciting. Already in the early stages of his theological career, he had claimed 'that few things are so likely to *vitalize* and *rejuvenate* theology, and therefore the whole of Christian life, as a blood transfusion from hagiography.'<sup>87</sup> Balthasar puts this principle into practice in his own theology, so that the saints are intimately connected with Balthasar's method of doing theology, acting as a means of rejuvenation and revitalisation. Here, the function of the saints is to act as a resource: the records of the real-life events and sayings, the letters, the autobiographical descriptions and the reflections, which Balthasar (or any theologian) uses to create a more vivid theology. In a way,

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<sup>84</sup> See for example, Brian E. Daley's essay on 'Balthasar's reading of the Church Fathers' in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed by Edward T. Oakes, and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.187-206 (p.189).

<sup>85</sup> David Moss, 'The Saints', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed by Edward T. Oakes, and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 79-92 (p.84).

<sup>86</sup> Like Karl Barth, Balthasar puts a lot of emphasis on the relation between the form and the content of theology. See Kilby, 25.

<sup>87</sup> *TS*, p.39.

Balthasar's method is similar to that of medieval theology, particularly Aquinas', where one had to reconcile the authorities.<sup>88</sup> But, whereas, in medieval theology, it is reason that takes precedence, it is the rational mind which brings the different authorities to bear on that particular question, with Balthasar, the ideas are never detached from their source, and it is the saints, not the ideas that are being reconciled to each other.<sup>89</sup>

More importantly, Balthasar is not concerned with establishing the importance of individual saints, as much as with emphasizing the importance of individual saints for the whole of the tradition. In *The Office of Peter*, Balthasar insists on the '*mitmenschlichen Konstellation*'. He maintains that '[a]ll men are interrelated in a human constellation', and '[o]ne sole human being would be a contradiction in terms, inconceivable even in the abstract, because to be human means to be with others.'<sup>90</sup> Balthasar emphasized that, in order 'to be able to function meaningfully, the individual must find his particular place in the social body.'<sup>91</sup> This perspective is reflected in his theology of the saints. Balthasar emphasizes that the 'massive achievements' of the saints must not be rejected, but that one should see saints 'alongside' each other, and in 'relationship to the others, both past and future'.<sup>92</sup> An isolated saint does not really seem right to him. Saints are always part of the *communio sanctorum*.<sup>93</sup> They have to be placed within the context of a constellation, an ecclesial or a religious community, in order to be understood. The method which Balthasar employs is precisely that of listening to the saints shed light on theological matters, trying as much as possible to cover all reactions on the matter. While appreciating each contribution of the saints, Balthasar does not commit himself to any of them, and recommends the same stand to other

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<sup>88</sup> See Austin, p.37.

<sup>89</sup> Writing about St Francis, Balthasar states that he is not an 'idea', but a 'reality'. *TE*, p.83.

<sup>90</sup> *OP*, pp.142-3. 'The Communion of Saints', *E*, p.98. The social character of Catholicism was emphasized by de Lubac, who describes the growth of an individualist ecclesiology in the high Middle Ages. It was also defended by Alfred Loisy against Adolf von Harnack. Whereas Harnack believed that the essence of Christianity was the relationship between individual and God, making an organized church a largely unnecessary creation, Loisy argued that it was necessary and inevitable for the Catholic Church to form as it did, and that God intended this. Boersma, p.19. Also, Boersma (2007), p.246.

<sup>91</sup> *OP*, pp.4-5.

<sup>92</sup> See *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), p.35. Henceforth referred to as *CL*.

<sup>93</sup> We have already pointed out that Balthasar's lack of clarity requires that we distinguish between the *communio sanctorum*, which is wide enough to incorporate all those called to holiness, and the *Communio Sanctorum*, which consists of those who are holy.

theologians.<sup>94</sup> Despite the Vatican's publicity in the encyclicals *Aeterni Patris* of 1879 and the *Studiorum Duce* of 1923,<sup>95</sup> Balthasar upholds that one need not commit 'oneself to the view that Augustine is the "Father of the West"', or to the view that Aquinas is 'the unsurpassable climax of theology'.<sup>96</sup> These expressions must have sounded scandalous at the time, but, clearly, Augustine and Aquinas are only two among the many saints and scholars whom Balthasar commends. The reason is that, according to him, even Augustine and Aquinas can only be comprehended within the context of a community consisting of other saints. In this regard, Balthasar shows himself to be typically post-liberal. As with Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic model of religion, the intratextual intelligibility of the individual saints rests on the wider comprehension of the community of saints.<sup>97</sup>

Significantly, Balthasar defines tradition in psychological terms: as a 'consciousness' and a 'memory', but his model of tradition is, above all, personalistic, where individuals 'succeed in keeping the "sacred deposit" alive and intact in an incredibly diverse panoply of situations.'<sup>98</sup> This model of tradition, complemented by a doctrine of mission, makes Balthasar especially sensitive to the theology of the saints not as a static reality in one historical moment, but as an actuality that is constantly on the move throughout the ages. For example, in Balthasar, Maximus' task 'was to carry the spirit of the Areopagite into the heart of [scholastic theology's] academic distinctions...it was to strike mystical and spiritual sparks out of the rough scholastic lint' which one associates with scholasticism.<sup>99</sup> In Balthasar's work, '[t]here are connections and dialogues to be had' between saints wherever you look.<sup>100</sup> Origenist spirituality made its way into the Eastern tradition, through Maximus, and it found a home in the West thanks to

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<sup>94</sup> 'Tradition', *E*, 123.

<sup>95</sup> *Aeterni Patris*, given by Leo XIII and promulgated on 4 August 1879 and *Studiorum Duce*, given by Pius XI and promulgated on June 29, 1923.

<sup>96</sup> 'Tradition', *E*, p.123.

<sup>97</sup> George Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), pp.34 and 114.

<sup>98</sup> *PT*, p.11.

<sup>99</sup> *CL*, p.51.

<sup>100</sup> Kilby, p.88.

Jerome, Ambrose, and Cassian.<sup>101</sup> Maximus ‘is heir...to the Cappadocians, to Evagrius, to Pseudo-Dionysius...to Origen.’<sup>102</sup> Dialogue with Plato, with Greek tragedy and ‘with Asian metaphysical ways’ becomes possible only through Meister Eckhart (c.1260 – c.1328). The idea of ‘man never measuring up’, held by Blessed John of Ruysbroeck (c.1293-1381), will continue in the Idealists and Neo-Kantians.<sup>103</sup> And so on and so forth. Balthasar is always more than willing to point out these synchronic and diachronic connections. The authority of the saints comes mostly from the role which they played within the historical tradition, a role which surpasses their life-span. As D.Nussberger puts it, ‘Balthasar’s project never sees the end of this movement between multiple encounters with epochs and figures in the tradition and contextual understanding of these meetings.’<sup>104</sup> In Balthasar, each and every individual saint is a juncture, an instant, where other theologies come together. Every great thinker is at the confluence of diverse tendencies. Aquinas, he says, is ‘the fruit of the meeting between Augustinianism and Aristotelianism’, and Kant benefitted from the conflict between Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz (1646-1716) and David Hume (1711-1776).<sup>105</sup> Balthasar describes how saints point to each other, complement each other and, so to speak, create each other. For example, according to him, Thérèse of Lisieux and Elizabeth of the Trinity should not be weighed ‘against each other’, but they ought to be allowed to ‘confront’ each other.<sup>106</sup> Balthasar claims that the motive behind this confrontation of the saints is definitive. It is not done out of ‘a snobbish liberal pose, but out of responsibility to the Church’. Balthasar felt duty bound ‘to take hold once again of material that had been lost...and to make the central results of that dialogue [his] own.’<sup>107</sup> This is because – in agreement with Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) – Balthasar believes that, as soon as the work of ‘the great minds’ is ‘surpassed’ it is ‘already misunderstood’.<sup>108</sup> For this reason, in

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<sup>101</sup> *CL*, p.27.

<sup>102</sup> *CL*, p.98.

<sup>103</sup> *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, Vol V: *The Realm of Metaphysics in the Modern Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), pp. 69, 72-73. Henceforth referred to as *TA5*.

<sup>104</sup> Danielle Nussberger, ‘Review Symposium’, *Horizons: The Journal of the College Theology Society*, 40:1 (2013) 91-96 (p.95).

<sup>105</sup> *PT*, p.17.

<sup>106</sup> *TS*, p.11.

<sup>107</sup> *CL*, p.35.

<sup>108</sup> *The Theology of Henri de Lubac: An Overview* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), p.92. Henceforth referred to as *THL*.

Balthasar's theology, the saints function as a means of approving or disapproving 'corrections' that were made to tradition over the centuries. Balthasar may use one saint to defend and clarify another saint's theology, to express approval when some forgotten element within tradition has been restored, or disapproval when something significant has been ignored, or to endorse saints or traditions whose credibility had been put into question. Does Balthasar have a right to do this? The answer would be 'yes' only if we see Balthasar, as he sees himself, as part and parcel of this tradition. Balthasar does not do what he does out of conceit, but out of a conviction (was this pretentiousness?) that his clarification of their position, and his defence or criticism of them could validate them once again, or rectify things, and thus be of service to theology and ecclesiology generally. Likewise, because of the personalistic model of tradition, it is possible to have saints promoting other saints who represent specific theological traditions. Balthasar points out that Maximus designates Gregory of Nyssa as 'the Universal Doctor', that Gregory was confirmed 'Father of the Fathers' by Nicaea II, and that Scotus Erigena quoted Gregory more than he quoted Augustine.<sup>109</sup> In all of this, I believe that Balthasar transcends the level of doctrinal polemics. He uses Maximus to project a view of the Christian truth not as an 'anti-heresy', but as 'a synthetic whole.'<sup>110</sup> This synthetic method is something which he admires in the saints, and it is clear that it is precisely this method which he attempts in his own theology.

To recapitulate: It should by now be clear that how and why Balthasar uses the theology of the saints – in both senses distinguished above – is integral to Balthasar's theology, and that the Balthasarian corpus would be reduced to a skeleton, if all references to the saints or to their work were removed. Balthasar theologizes through the saints (the saints are unquestionably the authority assisting his theological enterprise) and applies the synthetic method which he admires in the saints. Indeed, I am not stating that Balthasar is alone in *emphasizing* the saints. Nicholas M.Healy confirms that Scripture and tradition provide us with these 'debate partners' with whom 'we can engage' and from

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<sup>109</sup> *PT*, p.15.

<sup>110</sup> *CL*, p.30. See also the Forward by Brian E.Daley, pp.2 and 17-18.

whom we can learn.<sup>111</sup> But Balthasar is unique, at least among contemporary theologians, in *theologizing through* the saints. What Karen Kilby sees as a flaw<sup>112</sup> is in fact an asset. But I shall have to get back to this point. At this stage it is enough to say that, what Balthasar's project was meant to depict and to promote, was a model of theology as a 'collaborative enterprise', to use Rowan Williams' expression,<sup>113</sup> and an image of the Church as a '*colloquium*' or 'conversational community'.<sup>114</sup> Although the latter terms are not Balthasar's, Balthasar held that 'our need for one another as debate partners, ...our need for genuine others who can challenge us and thereby help us to receive and embody truth more adequately' unifies us 'in our diverse activities'.<sup>115</sup> Not only is it possible, but also necessary for us to have 'a genuine intellectual dialogue...with an earlier author.'<sup>116</sup> Here, Balthasar adopts the theme from dialogical philosophy, where *communio* involves letting the other be other. Furthermore, whereas Modernism is characterized by a break with the past, and therefore, by a break with authority, Balthasar seeks to have the saints function as links to previous 'concrete and unique situation[s]' in the past, in order to create connections with the past. In Balthasar's theology, the saints also inform the present.<sup>117</sup> Thus, writing about his study of the Greek Fathers: Gregory, Origen, and Maximus, Balthasar states

[w]e should like rather to penetrate right to those vital wellsprings of their spirit, right to that fundamental and hidden intuition that directs every expression of their thought and that reveals to us one of the great possibilities of attitude and approach that theology has adopted in a concrete and unique situation.<sup>118</sup>

Balthasar does not just – effortlessly – transfer chunks of past history into the present and pretend that that was sufficient. According to him, the rejuvenation of

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<sup>111</sup> Nicholas M.Healy, p.105.

<sup>112</sup> Kilby, p.35.

<sup>113</sup> Rowan Williams, 'Theological Integrity,' in *On Christian Theology: Challenges in Contemporary Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), p.9.

<sup>114</sup> See Francis A.Sullivan's examination of the 12 thesis on 'The Ecclesiastical Magisterium and Theology' in *Magisterium: Teaching Authority in the Catholic Church* (Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1983), pp.174-218. Referred to by David J.Stagaman, *Authority within the Church* (Collegeville): The Order of St Benedict, 1999), p.xii.

<sup>115</sup> Nicholas M.Healy, p.153. See also p.125.

<sup>116</sup> *CL*, p.35

<sup>117</sup> *PT*, pp.13 and 10.

<sup>118</sup> *PT*, p.13.

the thought of the Fathers requires ‘a total critique’.<sup>119</sup> The implication is that even if the thought may not provide much ‘support to the task of the theologian today’, yet it is important that the Church keeps the memory alive,<sup>120</sup> even if it does so by critiquing it, because only then will the whole of the theological substance be grasped. Balthasar’s theological approach is thus evidently pro-dramatic, enabling him to highlight the interactions – even the disagreements – between saints within tradition over time. The dramatic method enables him to embrace theological differences which he would otherwise not have been able to embrace. In fact, there is a proliferation of drama on account of the saints. In Balthasar, truth is ‘symphonic’, and, to the extent that our views ‘contain truth partially’, we are contributing ‘to the living organism of unity’, when we contribute our own share.<sup>121</sup> On account of his dramatic concept of truth, Balthasar can explain ‘contradictions’ away, as possibly being ‘the simple and necessary expression’ of a dramatic vision, or as ‘[t]he outlines of a system of thought that is in progress’.<sup>122</sup> Through this ‘dramatic’ perspective, not only is Balthasar able to explain away the contradictions pertaining to individual saints, but also those pertaining to tradition. Balthasar harbours the hope that ‘these contradistinctions’ may one day ‘be harmonized and diminished in a “synthetic” outlook that embraces all the winding, sinuous turns of thought that have been traversed’.<sup>123</sup> For the time being, however, ‘the form of theology must...remain uncompleted, because only the *Kyrios* has the full vision of the final form of revelation.’<sup>124</sup>

It is only on account of Balthasar’s model of theology as a ‘collaborative enterprise’,<sup>125</sup> involving discernment’,<sup>126</sup> of his model of the Church as a ‘colloquium’ or ‘conversational community’,<sup>127</sup> and of his model of the structure of the truth as dramatic, that Balthasar is able to pose ‘modern questions’ which

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<sup>119</sup> *PT*, p.13.

<sup>120</sup> *PT*, p.11.

<sup>121</sup> Balthasar considers ‘antithesis’, as Johann Adam Möhler had taught it, to be a ‘fruitful’ method. See *OP*, p.247.

<sup>122</sup> *PT*, p.18.

<sup>123</sup> *PT*, p.18.

<sup>124</sup> *C*, p.73.

<sup>125</sup> Williams, p.9

<sup>126</sup> Howsare, p.161.

<sup>127</sup> Francis A.Sullivan, p.216.

are ‘set by the peculiar situation of French and German Catholic theology in the mid-twentieth century’ to saints long departed.<sup>128</sup> As R.Howsare has stated, the concerns which Balthasar has are typically modern: ‘individuality, difference, personhood, historicity, event, freedom’.<sup>129</sup> There are clear examples where the saints function as an instrument in Balthasar’s hands in order to elucidate these modern philosophical and theological issues. The saints act as a medium which provides new insights on familiar material, providing a different standpoint on the subject under discussion. Two examples should suffice. Let us first take the example of freedom: Balthasar was very much aware that the ‘one great anxiety’ of the Modernists was ‘to find a way of conciliation between the authority of the Church and the liberty of believers’.<sup>130</sup> Balthasar therefore uses the saints to try and reconcile the two. His proposal in this regard will be a much more active form of Eckhart’s and of Heidegger’s ‘*Gelassenheit*’.<sup>131</sup> A second example would be that of ‘modern evolutionism’, which Balthasar describes in *Engagement with God*. Balthasar uses the saints to argue that a world based on the principles of the ‘aggressiveness of the strong and the destruction of the weak, on ‘exploitation’ and ‘suppression’ is ‘quite unacceptable for us Christians’.<sup>132</sup> In contrast, Balthasar uses the saints to emphasise the paradox that the highest power is to be found in powerlessness.

We have so far argued that, in Balthasar’s theology, the saints stimulate, revitalize theology. They synthesise, clarify misunderstandings, elucidate specific theological issues, and so on. We have not mentioned anything about the authority of the saints where terminology is concerned. Patrick Sherry once said that the task of theology is not simply to use the saints to teach people the meaning of ‘theory laden theological terms’. Its task is rather to be able to create a theological language using the saints’ lives.<sup>133</sup> Balthasar’s sensitivity to the theology of the

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<sup>128</sup> Brian E.Daley, *CL*, pp.11-21.

<sup>129</sup> Howsare, p.68.

<sup>130</sup> *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, Encyclical promulgated by Pope Pius X, 8 September 1907, 23.

<sup>131</sup> Löser, Werner, ‘The Ignatian Exercises in the Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar,’ in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. by David L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), pp.103-120, p.108.

<sup>132</sup> *EG*, 7.

<sup>133</sup> See Patrick Sherry, ‘Philosophy and the Saints’, in *The Heythrop Journal*, 18 (1977), 23-37.



saints has made available to him a whole miscellanea of theological terms. The saints function as an authority for him where theological language is concerned.

Sometimes, perhaps too often, the saints function as validation for Balthasar's own theological positions. In this sense, they are the authority to which he refers when his arguments are not yet sufficiently convincing. R.Howsare has said that Balthasar's method of doing theology actually requires that he 'point out a whole list of people to defend his cause'.<sup>134</sup> Saints are used to substantiate and authenticate his claims. Balthasar uses the saints to corroborate, to demonstrate, and to verify his own assertions. He seeks support in them. He uses them to confirm beliefs that either have already been established through his use of other sources, or else simply to sanction his own. In this case, the saints do not really add much to what has already been said. It is K.Kilby who finds particular objection to Balthasar's method of doing theology. She claims that Balthasar arrives at his case in the process of presenting the various contributions of his figures, rather than refers to these figures to substantiate a case that he would like to defend.<sup>135</sup> My problem with Kilby's objection is that it does not put enough weight on the choice of contributors, which would have taken place before the actual presentation, so that it is in itself significant and integral to the case that is being made.

In Balthasar, the saints also function as an excuse for experimenting with new methods. The method which Balthasar proposes for the study of the saints is what he calls 'a sort of supernatural phenomenology' of the mission of the saints, or what he calls, 'a hagiography "from above"'.<sup>136</sup> Phenomenology has been described as 'a purely descriptive approach to that which appears to us, without bringing in theory or explanations', and it 'focuses on the manner in which the subject structures, or "constitutes" the world differently, on the basis of different experiences and cultural backgrounds, but also on the basis of adaptation to other

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<sup>134</sup> Howsare, p.146.

<sup>135</sup> Kilby, p.35.

<sup>136</sup> *TS*, p.26.

subjects through interaction and communication.’<sup>137</sup> It is a descriptive science of consciousness, a science that describes the structure of intentional experience, and hence of experience itself. The phenomenological method claims to be relatively unadulterated, since it prefers pure description to explanation and interpretation. It is a descriptive theory of the essence of pure experiences and, therefore, as a method, it is certainly suited for a theology about the saints.<sup>138</sup> We could say that Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) gives Balthasar a method to describe phenomena as observed by the saints, as well as the license to do it. The method is especially helpful because, here, the form, the shape of consciousness is not a private item. It is public, and it can be shared. There is, in Husserl, an intentional realism: you are not trapped in your own mind. This would have suited Balthasar.

I do not think anyone can coherently argue that Balthasar provides his readers with a full-blown phenomenology of the consciousness of the saints, but he does use the method of phenomenology to shed some light on the consciousness of the saints. A. Nichols has said that Balthasar’s phenomenology of the saints is particular in that, unlike late nineteenth and early mid-twentieth century phenomenology, his phenomenology is at the service of Christian ontology. Balthasar’s is not the positivistic phenomenism of Hegel, nor the noumenalism of Kant.<sup>139</sup> But his phenomenological approach allows him to identify and describe the ‘structure of anticipations’ which the saints experience, the *noema* (the object or content of the thought, judgment, or perception) – to use Husserl’s terminology – without ignoring the object which they experience, that is, God. Balthasar does this in *Wahrheit der Welt (TLI)*, but instances of this are also evident in his hagiography.

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<sup>137</sup> Dagfinn Føllesdall, ‘Phenomenology’, in Kim J., and Sosa, E., *A Companion to Metaphysics*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1995, 483-4.

<sup>138</sup> Among other things, it can describe how experience as consciousness can give or contact an object and how experiences can be mutually legitimated or corrected by means of each other, and not merely replace each other or conform. See Edmund Husserl’s ‘Philosophy as Rigorous Science’, in *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy*, trans. By Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), pp.71-147. Accessed online 5/09/2014. <http://twileshare.com/uploads/Husserl-Philosophy-as-a-Rigorous-Science.pdf>

<sup>139</sup> Nichols (2001), p.12.

Balthasar also uses the saints to handle ecumenical issues, insisting, in the process, that the saints are authoritative in this regard, and that both the ecumenical movement and academic theology have a lot to learn from the saints. He claims that the differences between denominations ‘can only be handled by living organisms which have a capacity to meet and understand each other, only because they all can be animated by just *one* life: that of God in Christ.’<sup>140</sup> Clearly, abstract dogmatics are not sufficient, for in their abstraction they are not capable of resolving the differences.<sup>141</sup> It is not surprising that Balthasar sees a saint (Thérèse) as the solution to the dogmatic issues of the Reformation.<sup>142</sup> Balthasar used her to teach *Catholic integration*,<sup>143</sup> and claimed that she could help resolve various other issues:

the rejection of Old Testament justification by works; the demolition of one’s own ideal of perfection to leave room for God’s perfection in man; the transcendent note in the act of faith...; the existential fulfillment of the act of faith; and, finally, disregard for one’s own failings...<sup>144</sup>

This exploration of the multiple ways in which the saints function in Balthasar’s theology is certainly not comprehensive, but it should be enough to demonstrate that, in his own theology, Balthasar takes the saints and their theology very seriously. The saints are his models, his guides, his resources, even his sources. In his work, the authority of the saints is evoked and articulated in a variety of ways. Balthasar articulates it by praising their achievements, and by endlessly referring to them in his writings. In the way in which Balthasar uses the saints, and in his references to them, Balthasar attributes to them an authority that, though difficult to describe, is undeniable. The rest of this chapter will help us to determine the importance which Balthasar attributes to the saints within theology in general, and within the Church, as well as establish what it is that we understand by authority.

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<sup>140</sup> C, p.45.

<sup>141</sup> C, p.45.

<sup>142</sup> TS, p.283. Balthasar writes that ‘[o]ne would have to be blind not to see that Thérèse’s doctrine of the little way answers point by point the program outlined by the Reformers and that she presents the Church’s bold, irrefutable answer to Protestant spirituality.’

<sup>143</sup> Christoph Schönborn, ‘Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Contribution to Ecumenism’, in Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work ed. by David L.Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 251-263 (p.261).

<sup>144</sup> TS, pp.283-4.

## THE FUNCTION OF THE SAINTS IN THEOLOGY

We have just seen that the ‘authority of the saints’ as we are using the phrase refers primarily to the accreditation which Balthasar gives them, that is, to the authority which he attributes to them, simply by using their work recurrently, by mentioning their name, by praising their theological contribution, and by attributing to them a critical function in his theology. Here, we are stating that the ‘authority of the saints’ refers also to an explicit recommendation of the saints as competent and worth considering, even when they are wrong, and to an endorsement of the saints’ life and teachings by theology in general. I would agree with K.Kilby that ‘there is no real suggestion...that Balthasar would want to point to his own saintliness, to his own sanctity, as in any way a guarantee for his theology.’<sup>145</sup> But Balthasar would certainly want to point to his dependence on the theology of the saints as a guarantee for his theology. Balthasar regarded the life of the saints and their theology as crucial to the task of writing significant theology. In this respect, Balthasar considered his own method of doing theology as exemplary. He maintained, not only that authentic theology should use the saints to stimulate it and that theology should contemplate the saints, but also that theology should serve the saints by elucidating their accounts of their own encounter with God. Therefore, with Balthasar we have theology *through* the saints and theology *for* the saints (that is, in their service). Balthasar insisted that the academic distinctions of scholastic theology required ‘mystical and spiritual sparks’.<sup>146</sup> The solution to the predicament in which theology had found itself was to be found in the saints, who could counteract the arid style of a theology that was disconnected from life, and who could restore to theology a dynamism that he believed was essential. According to Balthasar, the saints function as the way for integrating theology with spirituality.<sup>147</sup> Balthasar complains that ‘theologians have tended to treat [the] opinions [of the saints] as a sort of by-product,

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<sup>145</sup> Kilby, p.156.

<sup>146</sup> *CL*, p.51.

<sup>147</sup> In Balthasar, spirituality is not equivalent to ‘ascetic(-mystical) theology’. According to Balthasar, the latter ‘narrows down the personal portrayal in life of the fundamental religious decisions to particular “practices” and “experiences”.’ He defines spirituality as ‘the practical or existential fundamental attitude of a person, the consequence and expression of his religious...understanding of existence’. See ‘The Gospel as Norm’, *Creator Spiritus: Explorations in Theology III*, trans by Brian McNeil (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993) p.281. Henceforth referred to as *CS*.

classifying them as *spiritualité* or, at best, as *theologie spirituelle*.<sup>148</sup> The problem which disturbed Balthasar ultimately concerned the form which ‘theology’ should acquire in order that ‘spirituality...could join with it’, as he puts it.<sup>149</sup> Balthasar maintains that the only theologies which ‘became vitally effective in history’ were the ones ‘which bore their spirituality not as an addition but within themselves, which embodied it in their innermost being.’<sup>150</sup> He himself views spirituality as the ‘subjective side’ of dogma.<sup>151</sup> With respect to their function, the saints are portrayed as models for genuine theologians, and of authentic theology, thanks to their ability to overcome the ‘divide’ between spiritual theology and dogmatic theology,<sup>152</sup> and between ‘theoretical and affective theology’.<sup>153</sup>

### THE ECCLESIAL FUNCTION OF THE SAINTS

For Balthasar, the function of the saints is not restricted to the production of theology and to the method used by theologians. The theological importance of the saints extends to the wider ecclesiological domain. Their import has to be seen within the context of the whole body of the Church. For one thing, as Gerard Mannion has said, the saints ‘have also helped build up the body of teaching and contributed to the authoritativeness of the Roman Catholic Church’s mission and witness in the world.’<sup>154</sup> Therefore, Balthasar sees the saints as much more than a resource, or even a source, for theology. More precisely, Balthasar does three things: he interprets the saints as principal contributors to the authority of the Church, he sees the Magisterium (as well as theology) as the mouthpiece of the saints, and, thirdly, he allies the authority of the Church with the authority of the saints, so that, not only does the Magisterium become pointless without the

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<sup>148</sup> *TS*, p.26.

<sup>149</sup> *C*, p.23-4.

<sup>150</sup> *C*, pp.30, 43-44.

<sup>151</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, writing about Randy Sachs, ‘The Pneumatology and Spirituality of Hans Urs von Balthasar,’ 1985 CTA Proceedings p.40.

<sup>152</sup> Howsare, pp.4 and 19; Antonio Sicari, ‘Hans Urs Balthasar: Theology and Holiness’, in *Hans Urs Balthasar, His Life and Work*, ed. by David L.Schindler, and Balthasar’s essays, ‘Theology and Sanctity’, *The Word Made Flesh: Explorations in Theology I*, (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1989), pp.181-210. Henceforth referred to as *WF*.

<sup>153</sup> *C*, p.34.

<sup>154</sup> Gerard Mannion; Richard Gaillardetz; Jan Kerkhofs and Kenneth Wilson, (eds.) *Readings in Church Authority: Gifts and Challenges for Contemporary Catholicism* (Hants: Ashgate, 2003), p.5.

tradition of the saints, but the authority assigned to individuals becomes meaningless without holiness.

In Balthasar's theology, the saints have a more pronounced claim to credibility, they are more deserving of respect, they are more qualified at providing instruction to the Church, they merit more consideration than the non-saint. Balthasar sees the saints as better capable of challenging the Christian community and more deserving of being heard, remembered, quoted, but also confronted. Balthasar evidently sees their position within the Christian community as a privileged one, although this privileged position is not one assumed by them, but rather one that is attributed to them. Any authority that they may have, that may become manifest in them, is always to be seen within an ecclesial context. It is others within the *communio* who recognise this authority and who ascribe it to them. All the saints are *animae ecclesiasticae*, and it is in the spirit of the Church that they are judged. For instance, Maximus is described as 'one of the founders of the Middle Ages, even in the Latin West'. He is 'the philosophical and theological thinker who stands between East and West'.<sup>155</sup> He is 'a genius', 'a biblical theologian', a 'philosopher', a 'mystic', a 'theologian', a 'monk', a 'man of the Church',<sup>156</sup> 'a martyr of the intellectual life',<sup>157</sup> 'the last great theologian and martyr of the Christological controversies'.<sup>158</sup> Similar praise can be located for other saints whom Balthasar examines. From this ecclesial perspective, Gregory of Nyssa is 'the most profound Greek philosopher of the Christian era, a mystic and incomparable poet'.<sup>159</sup> Pseudo-Dionysius is 'the man who may well be the most profound thinker of the sixth century'.<sup>160</sup> Origen is a 'man of the Church', a martyr, a great lover of the Scriptures, a 'daring theologian' who took that which was good and positive in Hellenism and 'put it at the service of Christ's truth'.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> *CL*, p.25.

<sup>156</sup> *CL*, p.57.

<sup>157</sup> *CL*, p.37.

<sup>158</sup> *CL*, p.41. Balthasar uses Erich Caspar's *History of the Popes*.

<sup>159</sup> *PT*, p.15.

<sup>160</sup> *CL*, p.27.

<sup>161</sup> *CL*, p.33.

Thomas is the *kairos*, mediating between the ancient and the modern world.<sup>162</sup> Unless we consider these words to be mere exaggerations or mere rhetoric, we have to take these comments seriously. Balthasar is stating very clearly that the saints are indispensable for the Church, that the recognition of their contribution is mandatory, and that their function is authoritative.

In Balthasar, the saints also function as unifying figures within the community. Yves Simon (1903-61) has argued that a community requires means to unify and to generate its common action.<sup>163</sup> Balthasar once wrote, almost in passing, that ‘we should not underestimate the community-building power’ of ‘the memory of a great dead person’.<sup>164</sup> In this respect, the saints resemble Max Scheler (1874–1928)’s ‘value persons’.<sup>165</sup> Memories of them are mandatory, if the community is to survive. We have to remember that community building was an important part of Balthasar’s project, and his judgment on all kinds of individuals is based on whether he interprets their experiences as ones which ‘bound them...the more intimately’ to the community of faith, rather than which separated them from this community.<sup>166</sup> We are yet to see, how Balthasar’s preoccupation with unity, paradoxically becomes counter-productive to his theology of the saints. But for the moment, it is important to note the emphasis which Balthasar makes on the unifying effect of a commemoration of the saints.

Balthasar may not have stated that the saints have the power or right to give orders, to make decisions, and to enforce obedience, but he furnishes them with an authority that is analogical to that of the Magisterium where theological authority is concerned. Balthasar is clearly presenting the saints as a corrective, particularly in challenging situations where authority becomes distorted. He presents them as a coping mechanism in situations where the sinfulness of the empowered authority requires some kind of regulation. Having determined that the saints

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<sup>162</sup> *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, III, *Studies in Theological Style: Lay Styles* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986), p.356. Henceforth referred to as *TA3*. Concerning the importance of Aquinas, See Howsare, pp.39 and 160, and Henrici, ‘The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar’, pp.162-3.

<sup>163</sup> Quoted in Austin, p.24.

<sup>164</sup> *TA1*: 573.

<sup>165</sup> Eugene Kennedy, *Material Ethics of Value. Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann*, (London and New York: Springer, 2011), *Phaenomenologica* 213, p.211.

<sup>166</sup> *TA1*: 260-1.

function authoritatively in Balthasar's own theology, as well as that Balthasar recommends the saints as an authority for theology and for the Church in general, this next section will help us continue to reflect on what it is that this authority which I am claiming that Balthasar attributes to the saints denotes, more precisely, what I understand when I apply the term 'authority' to the reliability which Balthasar associates with the saints.

## **THE AUTHORITY OF THE SAINTS**

What authority do the saints manifest? Or rather, what kind of authority does Balthasar attribute to the saints? Furthermore, what response do the saints demand? Or rather, what does Balthasar believe our response to the saints should be? The answer to these questions will be followed by an inquiry into whether the saints can demand any recognition of their authority (or rather, whether Balthasar thinks we can remain indifferent to the saints). We shall take these one at a time, beginning with the first of them: that is, the nature of the authority which the saints manifest.

The 'authority' which the saints manifest and which Balthasar attributes to the saints consists primarily in the competency and the credibility of their being, their action and their words. The saints are worthy of attention, they are deserving of serious consideration. They inspire, convince, persuade (though not by means of reasonable arguments). There is something in them, in their actions and in their writings, which makes their statements challenging and often irrefutable. Even when they are wrong, they deserve to be taken into account. This means that when the aptitude of an individual is noteworthy, the contribution of that individual is always to be taken seriously, and any so-called minor blunders do not affect the authority with which his judgments are held.

Balthasar attempts to provide a description of this authority in various of his works. In his *Aesthetics*, Balthasar writes of 'the shaping power and the genius of the human spirit' and 'the overpowering historical influence' which the human



spirit may bequeath.<sup>167</sup> Although he is hereby describing the human spirit in general, these words could easily be applied to the saints. In *The Christian State of Life*, moreover, Balthasar talks about the ‘imprint’, the ‘mark’, which the founder saints may place upon a candidate for the religious life.<sup>168</sup> In his interview with Angelo Scola, Balthasar writes of ‘the ecclesial radiance of a person’.<sup>169</sup> The implication is that the *anima ecclesiastica*, and particularly the saints, have an appeal, an attraction about them that draws others to their way of life. Evidently, the authority of the saints which Balthasar suggests is more than just moral, and more than just cognitive. In *Theo-Logic*, we are told that the saints are able to ‘restore anyone who has fallen.’<sup>170</sup> Is this an attribution to the saints of the restoration that may only take place through Christ? It could be interpreted in that way, were it not known that Balthasar understands the *communio sanctorum* to be itself Christ, and consequently competent to share in the restitution which is possible through him.

Let us now attend to the second issue: What response do the saints demand? Or rather, what does Balthasar believe our response to the saints should be? Although to some extent, it is peculiar to write about the saints presuming a response from others, what Balthasar wrote about the saints was partly meant as an appeal to the theologian, to the reader, to the Christian, and to the Church generally, to turn to the saints and to attend to them. Therefore, this issue of the response is one thing we have to discuss, even if hypothetically, since there is no authority unless there are those to whom this authority is addressed. Edith Wyschogrod has said that

[t]he saints’ addressees are acutely sensitive to the problem of interpreting hagiography. They believe that understanding hagiography consists not in recounting its meaning, but in being swept by its imperative force. The comprehension of a saint’s life understood from within the sphere of hagiography is a *practice* through which the addressee is gathered into the narrative so as to extend and elaborate it with her / his own life...<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> *TAI*: p.78.

<sup>168</sup> *CSL*, p.483.

<sup>169</sup> *TE*, p.82.

<sup>170</sup> *TL3*: 379.

<sup>171</sup> Wyschogrod, p.xxiii.

With Balthasar, we could then say that the response which the saints could be said to envisage – and to which we ought to comply – is to be recognized as the true eye-witnesses of revelation, to serve as types for the Church.<sup>172</sup> It is also to serve as a challenge to the way of life of the Christian, to question the way theology is done, to express reservations about the way the Magisterium makes its decisions or pronounces its statements. The authority that the saints envisage – and which we ought to recognise – is that we accept their role in fraternal correction, that we recognise them as role-models for how to be Church. The authority which they anticipate – and which we ought to concede – is their propensity to act as sacraments of God, their aptitude to operate as models for a proper *martyria*, their proficiency for leading us in *leiturgia*, their adeptness for inspiring our *diakonia*. The authority which most of them (not Paul!) shunned during their lifetime, is something which we might suppose that they would expect today – not for themselves, but for God’s sake – namely, that of being listened to and remembered, because their being, their actions and their words, have made us the church we are, and, because – since their influence is diachronic – it continues to make us the Church we are. Moreover, we have to establish whether the recognition of this authority of the saints is only indispensable for the lay Christian, or whether it applies also to the members of the Magisterium, or even to every human being. Are we all to recognise the authority of the saints, and abide by what they advocate? Or is their calling merely reserved for one or two categories within the Church?

Finally, we have to inquire whether the saints can demand that which they envisage, whether they can request a recognition of their authority, or rather, whether Balthasar thinks we can remain indifferent to the saints without losing much. The complete answer to this question will have to wait until the end of this dissertation. The saints seem to be communicators, not enforcers, of principles and truths. However, something in the nature and the quality of their contribution stimulates our trust, arouses our respect, and claims our assent almost

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<sup>172</sup> Yves Simon claims that the importance of the witness lies in matters of truth, and that the role of the witness is not to give orders or to command obedience, it is to point (See Austin, p.46). With Balthasar, the saint is a pointer, but he or she is more than that. The saint also carries, and judges, which is why, in Balthasar, saints assume a leadership role.

spontaneously. As Austin has put it, '[a]uthority never functions without drawing forth a response.'<sup>173</sup> The saints may not command, but they do provoke, and they do counsel, and a provocation and a counsel can be just as exacting, especially when it is given in a believable manner, as with the authentic saints.

That is another issue. We have to determine whether the authority which Balthasar attributes to the saints is analogous to that of the Magisterium, and what it is that makes this authority analogous to it. Needless to say, the Magisterium is a political agent, but it is first of all an authority of those who teach. The saints are also, for Balthasar, *loci theologici*. In this sense, the two are certainly similar. The authority which is attributed to the saints is not exactly the power of jurisdiction, but it is an authority notwithstanding. Steffen Lösel has emphasized that, in Balthasar, the Magisterium is above Scripture and tradition. As it stands, this statement requires qualification, and I hope to be able to explain it further. For the time being it is enough to point out that, in Balthasar, the authority of the Magisterium is not as unlimited as it may seem. The fundamental truth is that 'the ecclesial *magisterium* can represent Christ's truth only from the standpoint of doctrine and not of life.'<sup>174</sup> On the other hand, the authority of the saints is best described as an authority of both doctrine and life, one that goes even beyond the authority which we associate with the Magisterium. The authority of the saints is one of influence. It is an impression that others will commit to memory, an inspiration that will challenge others to come out of their apathy and act, probably in a deeper way than when faced by the decrees of the Roman Curia. What makes the saints' authority analogical to that of the Magisterium is, firstly, that both the authority of the Magisterium and that of the saints point to the good. Both of them are concerned with faith and morals. Secondly, and this has become more so today, both are ultimately based on credibility. Even the pronouncements of the Magisterium only have force in so much as they are credible. Hannah Arendt once said that authority is not persuasion (in the sense of a reasonable argument) and it

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<sup>173</sup> Austin, p.54.

<sup>174</sup> *TAI*: 212-3.

is not coercion.<sup>175</sup> The wisdom of the saints is intrinsically alluring, and, as such, authoritative and influential. On the part of the observer, this authority is perceived, recognised, and ascribed to the saints, in such a manner that the observer may abide by what they propose without any enforcement being necessary. Thirdly, what makes the saints' authority analogical to that of the Magisterium is that, for Balthasar, the Cross is integral to both. The Cross transforms the saints into a political authority and transforms the members of the Magisterium into saints. This subject will be further developed as we implement the four dimensions to argue for the different sources for the authority of the saints, and for the different settings in which the saints may function authoritatively. At this stage, we shall just say that Balthasar is the master of analogies,<sup>176</sup> and to attribute an analogy to him, even one which he never fabricated is not as appalling as it may seem. 'Analogy in Balthasar has ontological, epistemological and linguistic grounds'.<sup>177</sup> In the sense in which I am using it here, it has an ecclesiological foundation. This is a very loose use of the term 'analogy' but a theological one all the same.

Even once the concept of an authority on the part of the saints is accepted, however, there are still questions which need to be asked: The first concerns the grounding of the authority of the saints: what is it that really makes these saints an authority? What are the sources for this authority of theirs, and which are the different settings in which the saints function authoritatively? This will be discussed in our third, fourth, fifth and sixth chapters. The second question is just as important: Considering Balthasar's preoccupation with Church unity, does Balthasar dare to write openly about the Magisterium of the saints, or about the *Successio Sanctorum*?<sup>178</sup> Or will he emphasize the authority of the saints, only to then refuse to distinguish the saints from the rest of the Christians?

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<sup>175</sup> Hannah Arendt, 'What is Authority?' reprinted in *Between Past and Future: Six Exercises in Political Thought* (New York: The Viking Press, 1961).

<sup>176</sup> See Chapter II on Balthasar's analogy of love in Joseph Palakeel's *The Use of Analogy in Theological Discourse: An Investigation in Ecumenical Perspective* (Rome: Gregorian Biblical BookShop, 1995), pp.67-122.

<sup>177</sup> Palakeel, p.72.

<sup>178</sup> Balthasar came very close to inaugurating a *successio sanctorum* through his emphasis on the Marian and the Johannine principle.

Balthasar's creative contribution to the theology of the saints is original in that he attributes to the saints an authoritativeness that goes beyond mere mention, citation or recommendation. Would Balthasar consider a statement, attributing authority to the saints, problematic? Probably. And yet, there is evidence that Balthasar considers the saints as an authority for him, for theology, for the Church and for humanity in general. The solution is therefore not to avoid mentioning it, but rather to try and deal with it. In order to define the authoritativeness that is associated with the saints, I thought it would help to analyse Balthasar's approach to authority, and to the concept of power.

### **AUTHORITY AND POWER**

The emphasis today is more on the misuse and misdirection of authority, on one's mistrust of it, and on creating structures that would prevent its misuse. This reflects the ecclesiology provided in the Gospel of Matthew. On the contrary, Balthasar seeks to emphasize and protect, but also to purify and reform, ecclesial authority. In this he is more in accord with the Pastoral Letters. As Raymond E. Brown has pointed out, both ecclesiologies are legitimate, although they have a different focus.<sup>179</sup> In Balthasar, the legitimacy of authority always comes from the distinct mark that it carries, namely that of the Christ-event.<sup>180</sup> His understanding of 'power' is in agreement with most New Testament exegesis.<sup>181</sup> Balthasar is most expressive of the paradox of authority in the last volume of the *Theo-Logic*. He claims that Christ's 'power' is best grasped when it is scorned: 'what Christ means by "power"... must bear witness in the face of the world and its different kind of power – and this witness can be most victorious and fruitful when it is rejected and violently suppressed by the world.'<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*, (New York/Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1984), p.145. See also p.136.

<sup>180</sup> '[T]he will of the Son transmits to the Church the authority he possesses in the Father so that in his name the Church, too, can make unconditional demands on the company of believers.' *CSL*, p.259

<sup>181</sup> See Raymond E. Brown, p.140. Writing about Matthew, Brown states that 'By the standards of other societies the greatest authority or power makes one the greatest figure in the group...in Jesus' eyes, not power but a lack of it can make a person great.'

<sup>182</sup> *TL3*: 402.

John McDade has said that ‘the question is not about where “power” lies in the Church; the question is about how to eliminate the category of “power” from Church members’ attitudes.’<sup>183</sup> In this John McDade exemplifies the tendency for the depoliticization found in contemporary thought. But, whether we like it or not, power is an element of all authority, and Balthasar chose to preserve the concept of power and to rework it using a Christian paradigm, rather than to avoid or exclude it. Some insights about what Balthasar means by authority, and its relationship to power may be obtained from passages where Balthasar discusses ‘power’ with reference to Christ. In *Theology of History*, Balthasar maintains that Christ speaks and acts as someone who has plenary power (*exousia*), but he always speaks of [this power] as something *given* to him’, and not as *belonging* to him. Therefore, although Christ ‘*does* have power and he *does* exercise it’ (my emphasis), but he does so only ‘in obedience to the will of the Father’. More precisely, it is a power that ‘is entirely governed by his receptivity toward the Father’.<sup>184</sup> Something similar is repeated in his essay dealing with ‘Authority’.<sup>185</sup> In his *Theo-Logic* there is an emphasis on the fact that this ‘power’ that the Son has is entirely governed by his receptivity toward the Father, so much so that it can even adopt the paradoxical form of the powerlessness of the Cross, where (*sub contrario*) the power to reconcile the world with God takes on its perfect form’.<sup>186</sup>

In *Gottes Einsatz Leben*, written in 1970,<sup>187</sup> Balthasar formulates the principle of the authority of love into a paradoxical principle where love is powerful precisely because it refutes power: ‘for love does not conquer in the way that power conquers, but wins its victories precisely because it does not resort to power.’<sup>188</sup> The same concept is repeated elsewhere, particularly in other works published in the 70’s. In the same essay on authority, Balthasar claims that, in its original sense, *auctoritas* means ‘promoting’, ‘increasing’ power. Moreover, he asserts

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<sup>183</sup> John McDade, ‘Von Balthasar and the Office of Peter in the Church’, *The Way*, 44/4 (October 2005), 97-114 (p.112).

<sup>184</sup> *TH*, pp.28-9. See also Howsare, pp.149-50.

<sup>185</sup> ‘Authority’, *E*, pp.137-139.

<sup>186</sup> *TL3*: 400.

<sup>187</sup> Translated as *Engagement with God*.

<sup>188</sup> *EG*, p.45.

that, if authority is to be ‘edifying’, it will have to ‘develop and flower in an interplay with that which is to be “increased” in a fundamental relationship of trust.’<sup>189</sup> This reflects the post-war mentality, which brought about a shift from an understanding of authority in terms of essence to one in terms of relationality, so that authority is to be understood as a relation ‘constantly in flux’ rather than a ‘fixed essence’.<sup>190</sup> Balthasar seems to think that this concept of authority as a relation does not contradict the concept of authority as an essence (that is, as a gift which comes from above, and which generally accompanies particular roles). My interpretation is that, for Balthasar, both concepts (that of relation and that of essence) are necessary, and that the two are closely interwoven. Without the ‘fixed essence’ of authority, so to speak, the authority that comes from relationality does not hold sway, and vice-versa. However, what allows him to combine the two is the fact that the way Balthasar understands relationality is different to the way that it is generally understood. This requires further explanation.

Let me begin by acknowledging that the concept of trust is integral to the contemporary investigations of authority.<sup>191</sup> John McDade speaks for many when he says that, ‘[f]or authority to work well, the one *in* authority and the one *under* authority must be in accord; either of them can cause the process to break down’ (my emphasis).<sup>192</sup> With Balthasar, however, the relationship in question is more specifically theological. It does not refer to the relationship between the person who commands and the one who obeys, but between the one who will do the promoting and the object whose power will be increased, where ‘object’ stands for the divine and not the human subject. With Balthasar, authentic *auctoritas* promotes another, and not itself. It is a power that is *given* to another, and not one that *belongs* to oneself, and, if I understand Balthasar correctly, this ‘another’ is God. Like Christ, the authentic *auctoritates do* have power and *do* exercise it, but

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<sup>189</sup> ‘Authority’, *E*, p.128.

<sup>190</sup> Stagaman, p.4.

<sup>191</sup> See also Austin, p.21.

<sup>192</sup> McDade, p.110.

they do so only in obedience to God's will. Their power 'is entirely governed by [their] receptivity toward the Father'.<sup>193</sup>

*Der Antirömische Affekt*, published in Freiburg in 1974<sup>194</sup> provides us with most of what we know about Balthasar's concept of authority within the Church. Here, Balthasar adopts a Pauline – and therefore pre-Augustinian – position concerning authority.<sup>195</sup> The Pauline model of authority has three distinct characteristics: it is 'distinctively marked by the unique Christ-event,' it 'proceeds in harmony with the community,' and it 'strives to create *communio*'.<sup>196</sup> In this work, Balthasar retains his support for authority, without discarding its link with power. This is the first point I would like to make: for Balthasar, *exousia* is not detached from power. He defines it as '*supreme power for service*' [my italics].<sup>197</sup> Balthasar maintains that service *requires* authority, and that the People of God benefit from a service only when 'authority' is effectively present. Balthasar concedes that the *exousia* that Jesus entrusts to the Twelve on *choosing* them can be expressed in Latin only as *potestas*, that, though not exactly power, certainly implies a 'fullness of authority'.<sup>198</sup> With Balthasar, authority is present in each and every act of the Church, not just that of government.<sup>199</sup> Balthasar indicates authentic proclamation, and the administration of the sacraments as two other situations where service is beneficial precisely because of the 'authority' with which that service is given.<sup>200</sup> The 'full authority' which Jesus gave to his disciples against the demons would be another example of *exousia*.<sup>201</sup> With regards to authority, Balthasar, openly confronts the criticism that comes from atheistic positivists concerning authority: such as Auguste Comte (1798-1857),<sup>202</sup> as de Lubac had done,<sup>203</sup> Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), as well as from the historical

<sup>193</sup> *TH*, pp.28-9. See also Howsare, pp.149-50.

<sup>194</sup> Translated and published as *The Office of Peter and the Structure of the Church* in 1986. Henceforth referred to as *OP*.

<sup>195</sup> *OP*, p.xiii.

<sup>196</sup> *OP*, p.154.

<sup>197</sup> *OP*, p.18.

<sup>198</sup> *OP*, p.18 and *CSL*, p.147.

<sup>199</sup> Where the Church's authority to govern is concerned, Balthasar considers it significant that, both in practice and in theory, this authority is called the '*power of jurisdiction*'. *OP*, p.27.

<sup>200</sup> *OP*, p.134.

<sup>201</sup> *OP*, p.244.

<sup>202</sup> Comte claimed that linguistic concepts of God and belief in God were meaningless and that religion is unable to contribute towards explaining reality.

<sup>203</sup> *TE*, p.15.



materialists represented by Karl Marx (1818-1843). In *The Office of Peter*, Balthasar indirectly refers to these opponents when he claims that ‘authority is interpreted as a socially detrimental ideology in pejorative words borrowed from sociology’.<sup>204</sup>

Having attended to the nature of authority in Balthasar, the second step is to survey the various degrees and holders of authority in the Church, according to him.<sup>205</sup> There is the authority of the bishop who ‘participates integrally in the fullness of hierarchical power’, whose call is to ‘enlighten’ the whole Church and to transmit to it the divine graces and powers.<sup>206</sup> There is the authority of the doctors of theology, who are, as it were, chief artificers who inquire and teach how others are to procure the salvation of souls.<sup>207</sup> There is the authority of the clergy,<sup>208</sup> and the authority of the spiritual director.<sup>209</sup> According to Balthasar, the ‘individual confessor’ may not ‘represent the fullness of the ecclesiastical office, nor is there a guarantee that he can represent God’s pure will in each direction he gives’,<sup>210</sup> but his authority is not without its importance. There is also the authority of the religious superiors.<sup>211</sup> Here, Christ’s obedience becomes incarnate ‘in the relationship of superior and subject within the supernatural sociology of the evangelical state.’<sup>212</sup> Within the monastic framework, authority and office can acquire ‘a sacramental significance’, acting as ‘the means of coming into direct contact with the divine will’.<sup>213</sup> There is also the authority of the contemplative, of the missionary, of the scholar. As in the secular sphere, this is often an official authority, that is one that is strictly coupled with the corporate role that one has.<sup>214</sup> It is a terrible thought to think that the authority which the Church itself has come

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<sup>204</sup> *OP*, p.100.

<sup>205</sup> ‘Obedience in the Light of the Gospel’, *NE*, p.244.

<sup>206</sup> *CSL*, p.302.

<sup>207</sup> *CSL*, p.304.

<sup>208</sup> *OP*, p.197.

<sup>209</sup> Kilby, p.161.

<sup>210</sup> *FG*, pp. 69 and 177.

<sup>211</sup> *TS*, p.182.

<sup>212</sup> *CSL*, p.157.

<sup>213</sup> *TS*, p.181.

<sup>214</sup> The authority of the scholarly theologian is not without its problems. Christopher Steck has said that nowadays, ‘[t]here exist two forms of moral authority, that of the saint and that of the scholar, neither of which is by itself sufficient as a source of moral wisdom.’ Christopher Steck, ‘Studying Holy Lives: A Methodological Necessity for the Christian Ethicist?’. Accessed online 29/11/2014. <http://www.pcj.edu/files/2014/1339/4583/steck12-1.pdf>

to approve has now been transferred to the scholarly academy within a University, rather than to the saints within itself. Balthasar himself would never have contemplated it.

Balthasar also speaks of the pneumatic, whose authority is more personal, and whose authority is 'based on knowledge, ability, maturity'.<sup>215</sup> In all of this, as Austin has argued, if we are to understand ecclesial authority and the relation of authority to God, 'it is to [the Church] that we should look.'<sup>216</sup> Evidently, express importance has to be given to the ecclesiological dimension and particularly to the diverse practices of authority within the Church.

This is our third point. Balthasar writes of the authority 'to govern', the power of jurisdiction, or legal authority, which, in Balthasar, is there to uphold 'the purity of faith and love',<sup>217</sup> but which involves the power 'to interfere in disciplinary and legal concerns',<sup>218</sup> and includes both the power to command and the power to impose sanctions on those who fail to obey,<sup>219</sup> both the power to arrive at judgments and that of giving verdicts.<sup>220</sup> Balthasar sanctions an ecclesial authority which can 'intervene in the consciences of individuals', although this only occurs 'among those who believe of their own free will'.<sup>221</sup> There is then the 'educational', or teaching authority,<sup>222</sup> and the *exousia* to cast out demons.<sup>223</sup> There is the pastoral authority, the sacramental authority, which includes the authority to forgive sins,<sup>224</sup> the authority for the dispensation of grace',<sup>225</sup> the authority to 'arouse', to 'prompt', to 'train the saints...for the execution of their service, for building up the body of Christ,'<sup>226</sup> and so on and so forth. There is also the power to canonize. This is one of the ecclesial practices of authority

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<sup>215</sup> 'Obedience in the Light of the Gospel', *NE*, p.247.

<sup>216</sup> Austin, p.3.

<sup>217</sup> This is evident 'in practice and theory in the life of the Church as well as in canon law.' See *OP*, pp.27 and 174, 182-3.

<sup>218</sup> *OP*, p.73.

<sup>219</sup> *CSL*, p.264.

<sup>220</sup> *OP*, pp.245-6.

<sup>221</sup> *TAI*, p.590.

<sup>222</sup> 'Authority', *E*, p.137; 'Obedience in the Light of the Gospel', *NE*, p.238.

<sup>223</sup> *OP*, p.147 and p.244.

<sup>224</sup> Raymond E.Brown, pp.135-6. See also p.145.

<sup>225</sup> *CSL*, p.287.

<sup>226</sup> 'Shared Responsibility,' *E*, pp.140-1.

which has been charged with controversy. The process of canonization allows for an individual to be examined, for his holiness to be recognized, and for his or her life and work to be promoted as a model for others.<sup>227</sup> If one applies a hermeneutic of suspicion, this process could be seen to assume malicious proportions. Because in this dissertation, I will want to argue that Balthasar assumes (perhaps even envisions) a practice of authority that complements the holiness of the saints, and because canonizations have been the subject of a lot of controversy over the years, the issue of canonization will require further treatment. At this stage, I just want to point out, as Stagaman does, that '[p]ractices of authority are distinguished from other human practices.' According to Stagaman, what distinguishes the practices of authority is the fact that 'the rules inherent in [them] are themselves the reasons for keeping the rules', and the reason why this is so is 'because these rules are stipulated in laws, embedded in custom, or constitute the bedrock whereby the community has its life.'<sup>228</sup> Where the authority of the saints is concerned, one may need to distinguish between the practices of authority of the saints themselves, and the practices of authority of the Church concerning the saints. Once again, this is something which we may need to come back to.

A fourth point that one needs to take issue with is Balthasar's claim that juridical authority is actually the spiritual aspect of the Church, rather than the mundane aspect of the Church. As with Erich Przywara, Balthasar refuses to interpret juridical authority as the more concrete and worldly aspect of the Church's mission. On the contrary he sees the 'juridical formalism' of the Church as her 'spiritual aspect', as 'the inmost form' of the Church.<sup>229</sup> Balthasar thus inverts the hylomorphic model of Church. The soul of the Church is located in the power of the organization (which corresponds to the body), because of what he claims is its power to organize the 'freely willed cooperation of superior and subject'.<sup>230</sup> In doing so, Balthasar, though indirectly, also attributes to the saints a power of

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<sup>227</sup> Karen Kilby has commented on the fact that Balthasar nowhere catalogues the factors contributing to the Church's official recognition of the saints at one period or another. See Kilby, p.154.

<sup>228</sup> Stagaman, p.xv. The contribution that Stagaman has made through his work on authority is just enormous, and its relevance to our own research will be evident throughout this dissertation.

<sup>229</sup> *OP*, p.248.

<sup>230</sup> *OP*, p.248.

jurisdiction. Although this may sound rather odd, in reality, it will not seem as outlandish if one bears in mind the original function of ecclesial authority. Initially, juridical authority would have been concerned more with the definition of dogma, the interpretation of the deposit of the faith, or the regulation of our language for expressing particular truths, as Lindbeck's rule-theory of truth has established. The question then becomes whether Balthasar truly believes that the physical absence, or rarity of saints at the level of the juridical in the Church, damages or slows down the spiritual development of the Church, and, if not how one is to resolve the issue of structural authority and transgression.

This is my fifth point. Balthasar acknowledges that structural authority may have been tinged with transgression, particularly because of the combination of 'spiritual (and also truly juridical) evangelical authority' with the exercise of secular power', a practice that Balthasar finds unfortunate.<sup>231</sup> Balthasar outrightly condemns the surrender of theology to 'the frightening power of politics'.<sup>232</sup> He is convinced that political integralism and emphasis on producing 'politically correct dogmatic formulas' had negative consequences on the Church. Among the consequences, he mentions the extinction of a 'living biblical theology', as well as the withdrawal of monastic spirituality into the cloister and the elimination of theological dialogue.<sup>233</sup> In his *Theo-Logic*, Balthasar mentions Augustine's appeal to the secular authorities against the Donatists, and the Inquisitions' handing over of heretics to the secular authorities for burning. He strongly condemns the use of 'temporal power to extend the spiritual realm of Christ's authority'.<sup>234</sup> He also condemns the use of 'propaganda, advertising and marketing' to promote particular Catholic lines of thought. He condemns those who promote 'themselves with all means available', those who make 'the attainment of positions of worldly power' their prime aim.<sup>235</sup> Balthasar candidly expresses disapproval of the 'subtle spiritual kind of triumphalism', which in the past affected the hierarchy.<sup>236</sup> He

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<sup>231</sup> *OP*, p.28. See also *CL*, p.31.

<sup>232</sup> *CL*, p.34.

<sup>233</sup> *CL*, p.31.

<sup>234</sup> *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory, III, The Spirit of Truth*, trans. by Graham Harrison (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2005), p.402. Henceforth referred to as *TL3*.

<sup>235</sup> *TL3*: 405.

<sup>236</sup> *EG*, p.96.

laments that, in the Counter-Reformation, ‘the positive ecclesiastical structures and institutions were made into the definitive form of manifestation of divine glory.’<sup>237</sup> Authentic authority, as Balthasar views it has nothing to do with vanity, and Balthasar does not completely exonerate some saints from it. This does not mean that the saints never get to operate politically. In the absence of effective government within the Church, the saints may be the authoritative figures that lead it back to stability. Balthasar expresses huge admiration for saints such as Maximus and Catherine of Siena, the former for having separated the Greek Christian tradition from the political integralism of the time,<sup>238</sup> the latter for her role in restoring the Church after the Papal Avignon crisis.

The authority that Balthasar empathized with is best understood in the light of his doctrine of mission and of sacramentality, rather than of political triumphalism. In Balthasar, what really counts is the mission from above. Realities like martyrdom and mysticism almost become inconsequential, except as they reflect the mission that the individual is fulfilling. On the other hand, the doctrine of sacramentality, re-discovered by the movement of the *Ressourcement*<sup>239</sup> is clearly at the foundation of Balthasar’s many claims concerning the authority of the saints. Balthasar maintains that authority is sacramental.<sup>240</sup> The question obviously arises as to whether authority is sacramental *always* and *everywhere*? The answer is that, in Balthasar, authority within the Church *is* sacramental *always* and *everywhere*. The best way to understand his position would be to use the seven sacraments and grace as an analogy for comprehending authority and its outcome. As with the grace of the sacraments, the sacramentality of authority always remains, but the *extent* of the outcome of authority, the *effect* that it will have, the response that will be generated, its fruitfulness, will depend, not only on the disposition of the recipients<sup>241</sup> but also on the authenticity of the individual exercising that authority

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<sup>237</sup> Bellarmine and Baroque art are identified as the main culprits. *TA5*: 110.

<sup>238</sup> *CL*, pp.37 and 42.

<sup>239</sup> Boersma (2009), p.31.

<sup>240</sup> *TS*, p.182.

<sup>241</sup> The fruitfulness of the sacraments depends on the disposition of the recipient. (CCC 1128).

(*ex opera operantis*).<sup>242</sup> In Catholic sacramental theology, the latter does not directly determine the validity of a sacrament. But it does determine its fruitfulness. The same thing applies to authority. The holiness and reverence with which a minister exercises his authority will have a great effect on the potential fruitfulness.

## CONCLUSION

Our intention for this Chapter has been to establish the importance and the function of the saints in Balthasar's theology. We provided a hermeneutics of the saints as Balthasar would have it, deliberated on the significance of Balthasar's choice of saints, explored the different ways in which the saints function in Balthasar's theology, including (but not limited to) that of corroborating, validating, verifying and supporting his claims. It was determined that, Balthasar emphasizes more than other theologians that the saints are authorities for theology generally, and for the Church. In this Chapter we determined that, in Balthasar, *exousia* is not detached from power, that there is an authority that complements the saints precisely because they are saints, that there is something specific about the practice of authority of the saints, that the concept of authority has a plurality of meanings which can only be understood within the context of a theology of sacramentality and a theology of mission, that authority is therefore not restricted to the Magisterium and that, on the contrary, Balthasar ascribes to the saints an *auctoritas* which is analogical to that of the Magisterium.

I am dealing here with a subject that has been left out of the frame, both by those who study the saints generally – social and cultural historians, medievalists, literary specialists and feminists – and by Balthasarian scholars, namely, the 'authority' of the saints according to Balthasar. What I want to demonstrate is that there is something which Balthasar finds alluring in the saints, and which he wishes to present as a paradigm. There is something that fascinated and inspired him in their life and works, so much that he wanted, not just to divulge their

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<sup>242</sup> In this respect, Balthasar may have been influenced by Karl Jaspers (1883-1969), for whom the term '*Dasein*' meant existence in its most minimal sense, whereas '*Existenz*', represented the realm of authentic being.

wisdom, and to display their proficiency, but to provide a theology that would underscore their *phronesis* and their theological proficiency. There is something that is so forceful and lucid about them that made him want to refer to them over and over again in his own theology and to set them down as a criteria for the assessment of the integrity of any theology, and of the ecclesiological reality itself. I would especially like to demonstrate that the ‘grounding’ of this authority is especially significant for Balthasar. He could not have been attracted simply by the scholarly reputation of the saint. I want to demonstrate that there must have been something beneath their asceticism, their mortification, their martyrdom, their charisms, their reputation, which he himself thought was the one thing that mattered, and which he wanted to establish as that which distinguished the saints and made them authoritative. I would also want to demonstrate that what Balthasar writes about the hermeneutic of the saint, and the grounding of the saints’ authority, has the capacity to surmount the confusion ensuing from the injudicious postmodern application of the title ‘saint’. It is important to note that I may sometimes need to freely interpret Balthasar’s thought for him to be able to respond to the issues which I raise, but I hope that there will be no outright modification of his thought, and that readers of Balthasar can associate with what I am trying to claim.

After this introductory Chapter which acquainted the reader with Balthasar’s writings on the saints, and the second Chapter which will deal with the state of the question in contemporary research, the dissertation engages in dialogue with the four dimensions in order to elucidate the different aspects of the ‘the grounding’ of the authority of the saints, i.e. why the saints acquire an authority for theology and for the Church, and the different settings in which they seem to function authoritatively.

I would like to demonstrate that an exploration of the grounding of the saints’ authority, requires a multi-dimensional approach, and will have multi-dimensional outcomes. The dimensions that I have identified are four: the existential (which will be dealt with in Chapter 3), the epistemological (Chapter 4), the

pneumatological (Chapter 5), and the ecclesiological (Chapter 6). I start with the most fundamental level and move on to the more concrete, the more structural, which is the ecclesial. Since Balthasar claimed that Christology should permeate all of theology,<sup>243</sup> the Christological will be incorporated within the various dimensions.

In the concluding Chapter, I want to demonstrate that Balthasar's emphasis on unity and on the equality of the saints within the *communio sanctorum* is often inconsistent with, and even counter-productive to his emphasis on the exceptional character of individual saints. I also want to demonstrate that Balthasar's portrayal of the individual saints as outstanding individuals is weakened by his vision of the Church as a community of equals, and that his portrayal of the Church as a conversing community is debilitated by his emphasis on a governing authority that calls for obedience. It will be determined that, inspite of it all, no doubt can be cast on the fact that, *de facto*, Balthasar gives to the saints an extraordinary prominence in his own theology and in his recommendations for theology, for the Church and for humanity. I would also like to point out some of the consequences of having a theology concerning the authority of the saints.

Due to restrictions of time and resources, this dissertation will only deal with a selection of texts. I have chosen what I considered most relevant to our subject, namely texts which would enable me to demonstrate and to interpret the authority of the saints in Balthasar's theology. Evidently, because of Balthasar's association both with the 'retrieval of the Catholic Tradition',<sup>244</sup> and with Karl Barth,<sup>245</sup> his work ought to be understood against the background of both Catholicism and Protestantism, even where the theology of the saints is concerned. However, because of Balthasar's own strong Catholic affiliation, and because of my own active involvement with the Catholic Church, the Catholic elements will be more evident.

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<sup>243</sup> Aidan Nichols, in the Introduction to the *MP*, p.4.

<sup>244</sup> Howsare, p.147.

<sup>245</sup> *TKB*: 383. See Wigley, p.84.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THEORETICAL INSIGHTS**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

At least three things were ascertained in the introductory Chapter: firstly, that Balthasar's work on the saints and on sanctity is integral to an understanding of his work, secondly that, according to Balthasar, the saints can be used to respond to (and to resolve) the philosophical and the theological questions of his time, and thirdly, that, according to Balthasar, the saints' contribution is authoritative, and not merely informative, for theology and for the Church. By now it is evident that the subject of this dissertation is innovative for two reasons: first of all because it examines the subject with reference to Balthasar's work, but, more than that, it is innovative because it deals with a subject that is relatively unexplored, namely the attribution of authority to the saints, or rather, the theology of the authority of the saints. Although scholars such as Victoria Harrison, Danielle Nussberger and Patricia Sullivan have carried out research specifically on the theology of the saints in Balthasar, to the best of my knowledge, general research about the theology of the authority of the saints within the Church, is yet to be carried out. As a consequence, it is not, properly speaking, possible for me to examine the contemporary state of the question. What I would like to do in this chapter, is to indicate the more important theologians who have carried out research on the issues with which this dissertation is concerned, and to discuss some of the relevant material being published. What I will want to demonstrate is that a lot of progress has been made in the scholarship dealing with Balthasar, with holiness and the saints, and with authority within the Church. Balthasar's theology of the saints is, to some extent, present in all of his works and, therefore, there is nothing in the literature about Balthasar that is not, at least minutely, relevant to our own focus area: the theology of the authority of the saints. What I have done is select material which discusses the more pertinent issues involved.

## BALTHASARIAN SCHOLARSHIP

In recent years, we have had theologians attempting to write more generally about Balthasar's thought, certainly no easy feat. Rodney Howsare has addressed what he calls, 'perplexing aspects' of Balthasar's theology. He also discusses Balthasar's influences: Erich Przywara (1889-1972), Henri de Lubac, Adrienne von Speyr and Karl Barth) and his method of doing theology. Among other things, Howsare provides a chapter about Balthasar's theological style, and introduces the reader to central aspects of Balthasar's theology. Focusing particularly on the analogy of being, on Christology and the doctrine of the Trinity, Howsare comes up with suggestions concerning Balthasar's role in theology.<sup>1</sup> Howsare's work does not contribute directly to the subject of the grounding of the authority of the saints within the Church. However, in discussing the central aspects of Balthasar's theology – the meaning of Scripture, freedom, the Trinity and the Cross – he has contributed greatly to themes which are critical to this study, as will become evident in subsequent chapters. Howsare has also elaborated on Balthasar's method of doing theology by creating space for dialogue and debate between the saints. He describes how Balthasar brings Augustine and Aquinas 'into dialogue with modern thinkers' such as G.W.F.Hegel (1770-1831), Max Ferdinand Scheler (1874-1928) and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).<sup>2</sup> Always, the assumption is 'that thinkers across time can be brought into dialogue over the so-called big questions' which they would not 'have foreseen.' Howsare describes the outcome that ensues as 'fresh', since 'past thought' takes 'on a new light in the context of current conversations'.<sup>3</sup> Where Balthasarian scholarship is concerned, Aidan Nichols' contribution to Balthasarian research cannot but be commended. Nichols is especially known for his introduction to Balthasar's Trilogies.<sup>4</sup> But he also has several other works in his name. The book that has proved most useful to us is *Divine Fruitfulness*, published in 2007. Here, he

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<sup>1</sup> Howsare, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> Howsare, p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Howsare, p.5.

<sup>4</sup> Aidan Nichols, *The Word Has Been Abroad: A Guide Through Balthasar's Aesthetics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998); *No Bloodless Myth: A Guide Through Balthasar's Dramatics* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000); *Say it is Pentecost: A Guide Through Balthasar's Logic*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001).

discusses the sources of Balthasar's theology, namely, the Fathers of the Church, de Lubac, Barth and Adrienne, and discusses the main themes in Balthasar's theology.<sup>5</sup> Nichols has provided clarification of most of the concepts which, I will be arguing, are at the root of the authority of the saints.<sup>6</sup>

Balthasar's theological integrity has been questioned by more than one scholar. Karen Kilby has radically criticized what seems to her to be Balthasar's omniscient position, or what she calls, his 'presumption of a God's eye view', and his 'extraordinary; and unwarranted, authority'.<sup>7</sup> She argues that his standpoint is not always corroborated by appropriate criteria for judgment, yet that, at the same time, he expects his readers to consent.<sup>8</sup> Kilby adds that while expressing approval, or disapproval for a theology, including that of the saints, Balthasar does not develop the principles behind his positive or negative conclusions.<sup>9</sup> Although I can see why Kilby is so condemnatory, my interpretation is not as radical as hers. In my opinion, Balthasar's 'God's eye view' is a reflection of his extensive knowledge of the saints. There is, I agree, what seems to be an authoritative tone to Balthasar's voice. Considering his erudition, I compare this authoritative voice to the impatient tone of a tutor who is tired of having to spoon-feed his students. There are various instances when Balthasar expects his readers to be familiar with the tradition, as well as with all the literary works which he himself knows well.<sup>10</sup> You could say that his authoritative voice comes from the fact that he can speak about God with the certainty he has acquired from the saints. It is the authority of the saints that furnishes him with this authoritative voice. Balthasar is not above, but within, and drawing the reader in, as it were. Balthasar's own vision of the saints themselves is that they were *within* tradition, *within* Scripture and *within* history. Naturally, this should not excuse what sometimes sounds like arrogance, seems like obscurity, or acts as an avoidance tactic. In the meantime, I am convinced that, in using the saints so extensively,

<sup>5</sup> Aidan Nichols, *Divine Fruitfulness: A Guide through Balthasar's Theology beyond the Trilogy* (London: T & T Clark, 2007).

<sup>6</sup> See Aidan Nichols, *A Key to Balthasar: Hans Urs von Balthasar on Beauty, Goodness, and Truth* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Kilby, p.162. See also pp.40, 151.

<sup>8</sup> Kilby, p.55.

<sup>9</sup> Kilby, p.145.

<sup>10</sup> See Nichols (2005), p.116.

Balthasar is actually wanting to familiarize the reader with tradition, attempting to encompass his readers into it. Although Balthasar's own place or perspective within the tradition is not always made explicit, his position often becomes evident through his choice of scholars, his choice of works and the connections which he makes, so that not only is Balthasar's erudition never doubted, but his insistence on speaking for the best specimens of the community (the saints) is – if not well-regarded by everybody – at least tolerated by most. It is Balthasar's erudite knowledge of the saints which gives him access to the 'universal meaning' which comes from the form of Christ, which is reflected in the individual saints and the wider *communio sanctorum*. According to Balthasar '[a]ll our destinies are interwoven' and it is possible to achieve clarity about the significance of the other.<sup>11</sup> In his *Convergences*, Balthasar envisions 'the great I', which is formed by humanity as a whole, looking back 'on the millions of little I's'. He says that Christ is able to integrate these 'little I's', this 'formless and futile mass' into an organic whole.<sup>12</sup> Does this Ignatian vision of humanity gathered as one, and this hope in the universal meaningfulness of the totality of being, make of Balthasar an impertinent creature? Rowan Williams' essay on 'Theological Integrity', could help us arbitrate. According to Williams, the test for a theology of integrity lies in its ties with the community. A theology of integrity – and I would certainly classify Balthasar's theology as such – 'will not regard its conclusions as having authority independently of their relation to the critical, penitent community it seeks to help to be itself.'<sup>13</sup> The profound ecclesiological flavour found in Balthasar's theology is proof that he does not consider *himself* to be the measure of theology, and that he is therefore not playing God. Rowan Williams has argued that the 'rigour' and 'discipline' which characterises theology, evokes a paradox, namely that of 'keeping on the watch for our constant tendency to claim the 'total perspective'.<sup>14</sup> This is done by 'speaking to God', by 'opening our speech to God's', and by 'speaking of those who have spoken to God'. Williams thus recognizes that speaking of the saints is actually the only kind of universal

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<sup>11</sup> *TH*, p.73.

<sup>12</sup> *C*, pp.132-3.

<sup>13</sup> Williams, p.13.

<sup>14</sup> Williams, p.13.

meaning possible without the tyranny of a ‘total perspective’,<sup>15</sup> rather than yet another means for Balthasar to express his own inflated authority.

Kilby has also claimed that Balthasar’s work lacks a sense of ‘direction’,<sup>16</sup> that it consists of a combination of ‘collation, exposition, and commentary on the thoughts of others,’<sup>17</sup> that it denies the need to discuss concrete relationships,<sup>18</sup> that it refuses any concrete, reasoned account of how the things which differ are related,<sup>19</sup> that his method is purely an avoidance mechanism.<sup>20</sup> I find this criticism rather severe, simply because I can see no sign on Balthasar’s part to relinquish the effort of struggling with the various individual perceptions. It is true that Balthasar sometimes ‘leaves it up to the reader to discover’ these connections and dialogues, but to say that he *denies* the need to discuss these relationships does not do justice to his efforts. My interpretation is that what Balthasar is rejecting here is ‘the notion that he should narrate *a single* line of development of doctrine’ [my emphasis]. Balthasar warns his readers that any connections which they discover ‘cannot all fit into any system,’<sup>21</sup> which is why he circles around the various theologies (biblical and extra-biblical), trying to approach each matter from various perspectives (what Kilby has fittingly called ‘radiating’). Here is the work, I would say, of someone who really does believe, not that he himself has the last word and the definitive overview, but that the one transcendent central point of theology needs expressing through a multiplicity of ‘rays,’<sup>22</sup> and that the saints themselves are this multiplicity of ‘rays’.

For a description of the historical context, and consequently for an understanding of Balthasar, Hans Boersma’s book *Nouvelle Théologie and Sacramental Ontology* proves very useful, since it discusses the influence of significant

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<sup>15</sup> Rowan Williams, ‘Theological Integrity,’ in *On Christian Theology: Challenges in Contemporary Theology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), p.8

<sup>16</sup> Kilby, p.21.

<sup>17</sup> Kilby, p.3.

<sup>18</sup> Kilby, p.88.

<sup>19</sup> Kilby, p.89.

<sup>20</sup> Kilby, pp.89-90.

<sup>21</sup> Kilby, p.88. Referring *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, II, Studies in Theological Style: Clerical Styles* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press; New York: Crossroad, 1984), p.22. Henceforth referred to as *TA2*.

<sup>22</sup> Kilby, p.90.

theologians and philosophers like Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838), Maurice Blondel (1861-1949), Pierre Rousselot (1878-1915) and Joseph Maréchal (1878-1944). Boersma demonstrates how the *nouveaux théologiens* (including Balthasar) advocated a return to mystery by means of a sacramental ontology. In the process of his discussion, Boersma analyses the most characteristic elements of the movement, namely the reintegration of nature and the supernatural, the reintroduction of the spiritual interpretation of Scripture, the approach to Tradition as organically developing in history, and the communion ecclesiology of the movement. All of these elements are relevant to Balthasar's theology of the authority of the saints, as will become clear in subsequent chapters. Among other things, Hans Boersma reflects on the emphasis which the *nouvelle théologie* makes on the vocation of the laity, the return to the Bible, the one source theory of authority, and the unity of nature and the supernatural.<sup>23</sup> In this study, I apply much of what Boersma has said about the *nouvelle Théologie* in general to Balthasar's theology of the saints, and, even more particularly to the theology of the authority of the saints within the Church. This is not something Balthasar would disapprove. In his interview with Angelo Scola, Balthasar claims that the *nouvelle Théologie* is, strictly speaking, the theology of the saints, and consequently that it is not *nouvelle* at all, but rather 'the oldest theology'.<sup>24</sup>

My research would not have been as productive had there not been some attempts at unravelling what others have said about Balthasar's vision of the saint. One such attempt was made by David L.Schindler in one of his more recent essays. Here, the saints are presented as an antidote to Nietzsche's 'God is dead'. Schindler recognizes Balthasar's promotion of the saints as a means of 'renewal of God in the cosmos'.<sup>25</sup> This is a clear response to Nietzsche. In fact, Schindler creates a contrast between Balthasar and Nietzsche, arguing that Nietzsche calls for the formation of the *Übermensch*, that is for a *seizure* of heaven.<sup>26</sup> Schindler does not develop the contrast between the *Übermensch* and the saint, but it becomes clear

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<sup>23</sup> Hans Boersma, *Nouvelle Theologie & Sacramental Ontology. A Return to Mystery* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.14.

<sup>24</sup> *TE*, p.14.

<sup>25</sup> David L.Schindler (2005), p.34.

<sup>26</sup> David L.Schindler (2005), pp.24-5.

from this essay, not only that the Nietzschean *Übermensch* and the saint are different, but also that any authority which is attributed to the saints is a consequence of their receptivity, rather than of their aggressive appropriation of authority. With Balthasar, heaven comes to earth as a free gift and it is more a question of receptivity than of seizure.<sup>27</sup> Schindler's article contributes to the research question by provoking some very valid reflections on Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and the concept of archetype in Balthasar, on the heaven and earth motif, but especially by emphasising that it is the obedient attitude, rather than achievement, that is at the core of Balthasar's theology of the authority of the saints. On his part, Ben Quash provides a comparison between Balthasar's saints and Hegel's 'great men of history', as well as between Church and Christians (especially the saints) and Hegel's treatment of the State and the individuals within it. Both Schindler and Quash's work are especially pertinent, even if their work may not be sufficiently adequate for analyzing a theology of the authority of the saints.<sup>28</sup>

Balthasar's theological aesthetics, dramatics and logic, is yet to be applied to a theology concerning the authority of the saints. As a matter of fact, this dissertation reflects some of my own efforts to do precisely that, namely to try and unearth where it is that Balthasar grounds the authority of the saints. The contribution of Oliver Davies to the appreciation of *Theo-Aesthetics* and of Ed Block to the appreciation of *Theo-Drama* are especially important, the former because he provides what one could call an aesthetic epistemology, the latter because of his exploration of the dramatic nature of existence. Davies has focused on the intimate connection found in Balthasar between aesthetics and knowledge, on Balthasar's delineation of the dual structure of the beautiful (following Aquinas) in terms of the principle of form and splendor,<sup>29</sup> on Balthasar's supposition that form is always material and particular, on his inference that form is a sign and an appearance of the splendor and glory of being, on Balthasar's

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<sup>27</sup> David L. Schindler (2005), pp.25 and 27.

<sup>28</sup> Ben Quash, *Theology and the Drama of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Davies (2004), p.133.

engagement with the beautiful,<sup>30</sup> on Balthasar's new analysis of faith as 'aesthetic cognition',<sup>31</sup> on Balthasar's reassertion of the transcendental value of Being, on the analogy between divine and worldly beauty, on the 'theory of vision' and the 'theory of rapture',<sup>32</sup> and on the true 'glory' of the act of existence.<sup>33</sup> All of these are very expedient for a theology of the authority of the saints. On the other hand, Ed Block focuses on Balthasar's explicit intention to emphasise the dramatic element found in Jesus' form of existence, in the ecclesial form of existence, and in 'our mortal and transitory existence'.<sup>34</sup> Ed Block interprets the issues raised in the *Theo-Drama* from the perspective of their relevance to drama. Indirectly, however, his arguments serve as a clarification for Balthasar's phenomenological description of the dramatic existence of the saints, both as individuals and as a body.<sup>35</sup> Most of what Block says about the tension between self and role, the suffering undergone in the accomplishment of one's mission, the authority of all those involved in the dramatic endeavour, the 'answerability' of the audience, and other motifs, can shed light not only on the dramatic nature of the existence and mission of the saints, but also on the authority of the saints and the response to the authoritative nature of the dramatic holy life.

But it is probably to Ben Quash that we owe the greatest debt where the dramatic is concerned. Ben Quash is known mostly for his work on 'the dramatically social character of all our searching for truth' and on the 'irreducibly social dimension to drama',<sup>36</sup> but it is *Theology and the Drama of History* which proves to be most relevant to us. Here, Quash examines the value and the potential of a theo-dramatic conception of history, claiming that this approach to history makes available insights which would remain hidden with other theological

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<sup>30</sup> Davies (2004), p.134.

<sup>31</sup> Davies (2004), p.135.

<sup>32</sup> Davies (2004), p.136.

<sup>33</sup> Davies (2004), p.139.

<sup>34</sup> *TL3*: 308.

<sup>35</sup> On their part, Karen Kilby and Ben Quash have expressed reservations as to whether, in practice, Balthasar's theology is as dramatic as it makes itself out to be. Kilby, p.63. See also pp.64 and 166. See also Ben Quash, *Theology and the Drama of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.161 and 221.

<sup>36</sup> Ben Quash, 'Drama and the Ends of Modernity', in *Balthasar at the end of Modernity*, ed. by Lucy Gardner; David Moss; Ben Quash; Graham Ward (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), pp.139-172, (p.140).



methodologies.<sup>37</sup> Theo-drama, he writes, ‘displays *human actions* and *temporal events* in *specific contexts*, and it explores action, time and space ‘*in relation to God’s purpose*’. The three conclusions which Ben Quash reaches, where his investigation of Balthasar’s drama of history is concerned, are especially helpful. Firstly, theo-dramatics always has an eschatological dimension. Secondly, theo-dramatics provides a better interpretation of freedom than other theological methods, and, thirdly, it provokes questions on ecclesiology and the saints.<sup>38</sup>

Where the authority of the saints is concerned, I believe that there are five areas which are especially relevant, and where advances have been made where research is concerned. These are eschatology and the concept of universalism, the theology of nature and grace, the dialectic of the objective and the subjective, the theology of language and the theology of the spiritual senses. Let us provide a quick overview of the research that has been done in each of these fields.

The first of these is eschatology and the concept of universalism. In his book *The Eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Being as Communion*, Nicholas J.Healy is especially absorbed with the meaning of ‘the end’ as Balthasar represents it, namely, Christ’s return to the Father in the Spirit. He engages with Balthasar’s writings on the *eschaton*, in order to demonstrate that Balthasar’s understanding of ‘the end’ includes, as he says, ‘a rigorous, and properly philosophical, reflection on being.’<sup>39</sup> Because Nicholas J.Healy’s work focusses on being, rather than on soteriology, it is Geoffrey Wainwright’s exploration of Balthasar’s eschatology<sup>40</sup> which I have found most helpful to my work. Wainwright refers to the lecture which Balthasar gave at the University of Trier in 1988 on *apokatastasis*, or universal restoration, which is one of the most controversial of his works. Universalism, or the belief that all will be saved, is doctrinally heretical, and was condemned by the Councils of Constantinople in 543 and 553

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<sup>37</sup> Quash (2005), p.9.

<sup>38</sup> Quash (2005), p.4.

<sup>39</sup> Nicholas J. Healy, *The Eschatology of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Being as Communion*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.4.

<sup>40</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, ‘Eschatology’, in Edward T. Oakes and David Moss, (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 113-127 (p.113).

AD.<sup>41</sup> Wainwright argues that Balthasar's fascination with *apokatastasis* 'springs directly from his initial *intuitive and comprehensive* perception of the "shape" or "pattern" (*Gestalt*) of the Christian faith, that is, from his vision of the Christ event'.<sup>42</sup> The relevance of this work to my subject is evident. The question of universal salvation in Balthasar's eschatology has been a debatable subject over the years. As with most postliberal theology, Balthasar merges a high Christology with an unlimited soteriology. This does not make Balthasar a universalist, but it does make it clear that he justified a universal *hope*.<sup>43</sup> According to Balthasar, Christ has made saints out of all of us. God wishes everyone to be saved – and Balthasar himself dares to hope that all of us will be saved – even if he knows that *de facto* the possibility of some of us not being saved still exists.

The question for us becomes, why should anyone argue for the authority of the saints, and how can one do it, when the possibility of damnation has almost been completely undermined? Balthasar simply refuses to divide humanity into the elect and the damned.<sup>44</sup> He is outright in his rejection of double predestination.<sup>45</sup> He would rather be associated with *apokatastasis* than with Calvin's position or with that of the Jansenists who restricted the redemption to the 'elect'.<sup>46</sup> He does grant that some may be elected, but it is the Christian doctrine of election, and not the salvation-damnation dialectic that rules his thought.<sup>47</sup> More precisely, it is 'Barth's doctrine of the election of all people in Christ, against any Calvinistic notion of a limited atonement'<sup>48</sup> that guides him. Although, as I have already stated, it would seem as if the issue of universalism is contrary to the concept of having authority attributed to the saints, this is not necessarily the case. There is

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<sup>41</sup> Wainwright, pp.121-2.

<sup>42</sup> Wainwright, p.115.

<sup>43</sup> Wainwright, p.124. See also 'Christian Universalism: On Two Collections of Papers by Hans Urs von Balthasar' in *Joseph Ratzinger in Communion*, Volume 1, *The Unity of the Church*, Ressourcement, Retrieval & Renewal in Catholic Thought, (Cambridge: Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), pp.131-143.

<sup>44</sup> Balthasar treats the position of Calvin and of classical Calvinism concerning 'the twofold division of mankind into the chosen (*élus*) and the damned (*réprouvés*) in his *DWH*, pp.195-196.

<sup>45</sup> Wainwright, p.124.

<sup>46</sup> *THL*, p.36. See also Médaille John C., 'The Daring Hope of Hans Urs Von Balthasar', Online Resource. <http://www.medaille.com/hope.htm>. Accessed 17/06/2014.

<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, he accepts the doctrine of election of all people in Christ in the sense that Barth did. However, whereas, for Barth, the eternal predestination was *for* salvation and *for* sanctification, for Balthasar the election is *for* mission which incorporates both salvation and sanctification. Quoting Jeremiah, Paul, Jacob, John the Baptist, Samson, and Samuel as examples, Balthasar writes that 'eternal predestination takes place in time as an election and separation (*segregatio*) from the world *even from the womb*.' *CSL*, p.403.

<sup>48</sup> Howsare, p.10.

no limit as to how many saints convey authority within the Church and the world. It could also be that there is no temporal limit. For instance, Austin argues that authority is something that transcends this world. He uses Dante to raise the issue of authority in the after-life, claiming that ‘the notion of authority is not antithetical to paradise’, and that, when authority does not mean ‘authority over’, it is possible for difference (which is entailed by authority) to be compatible with the equality expected in heaven. Balthasar claims that, within a context of close solidarity such differences convey no pain.<sup>49</sup>

The second important theme is Balthasar’s theology of nature and grace. Balthasar’s theology of the saints cannot be understood except within the context of this theology. It is David S. Yeago who has provided us with the more stimulating approach to this aspect of Balthasar’s theology. Yeago’s focus is more specifically literature and culture, but, in the process, he discusses the relationship between nature and grace, claiming that Balthasar’s *dramatic narrative configuration* – rather than a general rule that could be described theoretically<sup>50</sup> - enables him to reconcile claims that may otherwise seem incompatible.<sup>51</sup> Thus, for example, it is possible to reconcile ‘[t]he certainty of the natural striving for the goal of our life and [the] *gratuity* of grace’.<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, Yeago claims that ‘Balthasar’s theological account of nature and grace ...provides a distinctive paradigm for a reflective Christian engagement with the works and achievements of human culture’.<sup>53</sup> As Yeago has said, with Balthasar, ‘culture does not have to be explicitly Christian to be intelligible and interesting to Christian thought – positively or negatively,<sup>54</sup> precisely ‘because all people in reality inhabit a creation that is ordered to Christ’. On her part, Patricia Sullivan has noted a connection between Balthasar’s theology of nature and grace and his theology of the saints. In this regard, I have tried to build on Sullivan’s conclusions. Sullivan has also provided a comparison between Balthasar’s theology of the saints with

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<sup>49</sup> Austin, p.151-154, 158.

<sup>50</sup> David S. Yeago, ‘Literature in the Drama of Nature and Grace: Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Paradigm for a Theology of Culture,’ in *Glory, Grace and Culture: The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Ed block ((New York: Paulist Press, 2005), pp.88-106 (p.92).

<sup>51</sup> Yeago, p.93.

<sup>52</sup> *TKB*, p.296.

<sup>53</sup> Yeago, p.97.

<sup>54</sup> Yeago, p.101.

that of Rahner, claiming that the two theologies of the saints are grounded in ‘articulations of the relationship between nature and grace and, by association, the relationship between faith and revelation.’<sup>55</sup>

There is also the advancement that has taken place with regards to the objective-subjective dialectic, which is so significant in Balthasar. The familiar modern ontological disjunction between the subjective and the objective is inadequate for him. In this regard, Christophe Potworowski’s work proves to be instructive. Potworowski explores Balthasar’s notion of objectivity by examining three areas in which the ground of objectivity is laid out in complementary ways: in a phenomenology of the act of knowing, in the aesthetic experience, and in the dialogical situation. Potworowski maintains that, in Balthasar, ‘[o]bjectivity in knowing is based primarily on receptivity, service, and obedience’.<sup>56</sup> According to Potworowski, in Balthasar, the aesthetic does a number of things. Firstly, it introduces ‘a new notion of objectivity into theology, transcending the pitfalls of subjectivism, yet avoiding the violence of extrinsicism.’<sup>57</sup> Secondly, in Balthasar, objectivity takes the form of an attitude of ‘welcome’ and an acceptance of mystery.<sup>58</sup> Thirdly, this original experience is usually intersubjective and dialogical.<sup>59</sup> Finally, in what he describes as ‘a reflection on the relation between scriptural interpretation and holiness’, Potworowski claims that there are a number of implications which ensue from this notion of objectivity.<sup>60</sup> Potworowski’s essay raises ‘[t]he question of credibility, which, for Balthasar, cannot be settled on the basis of anthropological reduction’.<sup>61</sup> Since Potworowski understands the saint as the subject who ‘bring[s] the object to its objective truth,’<sup>62</sup> his essay will help me to argue that, in viewing knowledge as an act of obedience, Balthasar is able to argue that what the saints know is ultimately objective, without being

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<sup>55</sup> Patricia A. Sullivan, ‘Saints as the ‘living gospel’: Von Balthasar’s Revealers of the Revealer, Rahner’s Mediators of the Mediator’, *The Heythrop Journal*, LII (2011), 1-16 (p.2).

<sup>56</sup> Christophe Potworowski, ‘An Exploration of the Notion of Objectivity in Hans Urs von Balthasar,’ in *Glory, Grace, and Culture: The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Ed Block, Jr. (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), pp.69-87 (p.74).

<sup>57</sup> Potworowski, p.78.

<sup>58</sup> Potworowski, p.77.

<sup>59</sup> Potworowski, p.78.

<sup>60</sup> Potworowski, p.70.

<sup>61</sup> Potworowski, p.77.

<sup>62</sup> Potworowski, p.75.

either extrinsic (that is, without being hostile to nature) or purely immanent (that is, without ruining the mystery).

Another important development in Balthasarian scholarship concerns the theology of language. Peter Casarella has done sterling work in this regard. Because my intention is to unearth the general theology of the authority of the saints located in Balthasar's work, and because a very important aspect of the authority of the saints is that of expression and of proclamation, Casarella's explication of Balthasar's theological theory of language is highly expedient.<sup>63</sup> Casarella explains the relationship, in Balthasar, between the expression and the form of the Word. Form is the manner in which content is expressed, appearing 'immediately in expression', but not reduced to expression.<sup>64</sup> According to Casarella the foundation for Balthasar's theory of language and the basis for his Trinitarian hermeneutics is precisely this 'polarity of expression and form'. What is especially relevant for a theology of the authority of the saints is that, in this essay, Casarella examines Balthasar's 'verbal anthropology', namely that 'we are...God's own speech'.<sup>65</sup> He maintains that, in Balthasar, the theology of the Word is linked with the human word, that each word spoken is measured by the testimony of a life, that the truth is measured by its correspondence to Christ, and that human speech can imitate divine speech, respond to God's speech, and is sacramental.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, Casarella discusses the analogies which Balthasar develops between human speech and the liturgy. Finally, Casarella claims that this view of language can potentially contribute 'to a renewal of Christian theology and the Christian state of life.'<sup>67</sup> In Balthasar there is already an attempt to develop this in his representation of the saints as the mouthpiece of God, and in his emphasis on the fact that only the saints can renew and rejuvenate theology and the Church.

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<sup>63</sup> Peter J. Casarella, 'The Expression and Form of the Word: Trinitarian Hermeneutics and the Sacramentality of Language in Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theology,' in *Glory, Grace and Culture: The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Ed Block Jr (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), pp. 37-68 (p.40).

<sup>64</sup> Casarella, pp.43-45.

<sup>65</sup> Casarella, p.56.

<sup>66</sup> Casarella, pp.56, 58, 61.

<sup>67</sup> Casarella, p.64.

Finally, there is the development that has taken place where Balthasar's theology of the spiritual senses is concerned. Mark McInroy has produced a remarkable book about the recovery by Balthasar of the doctrine of the 'spiritual senses', more precisely the faculties that can enable human beings to perceive the absolute beauty of the divine form through which God reveals himself.<sup>68</sup> According to McInroy, in Balthasar, the spiritual senses help to resolve the high-profile debates in modern Catholic theology between Neo-Scholastic theologians and their opponents. McInroy investigates Balthasar's own exploration of the spiritual senses as provided by the Church Fathers, but also by Bonaventure (1221-1274), Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), Karl Barth (1886-1968), Romano Guardini (1885-1968), Gustav Siewerth (1903-1963) and Paul Claudel (1868-1955), all of whom influenced Balthasar's own doctrine. McInroy asserts that Balthasar breaks from previous articulations of the doctrine when he draws on the notion of the human being as a being-in-encounter,<sup>69</sup> concluding that Balthasar's model of spiritual perception provides a third option between Neo-Scholastic 'extrinsicism' – which construes grace as simply added to a nature that is whole in itself – and 'immanentism'. McInroy's work will serve as a ground for my own emphasis on three issues: firstly, on whether, according to Balthasar, it is possible to deepen the capacity to perceive that which is non-corporeal and 'spiritual', secondly, on whether, in Balthasar, the spiritual senses of the saints exhibit extraordinary perception and uncommon vision, and, thirdly, on whether, in Balthasar, holiness is the cause of this enhancement of the ability to perceive God and to understand reality.

Lamentably, Balthasar has been widely criticized for misrepresenting texts and quoting authors out of context. This is an accusation that has to be taken seriously, since one cannot discuss the authority of the saints in Balthasar, or his implicit development of a theology of the authority of the saints if there are such serious doubts about the way Balthasar interprets texts. Alyssa Pitstick has even accused Balthasar of relying on positions previously rejected by the Magisterium.

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<sup>68</sup> Mark McInroy, *Balthasar on the Spiritual Senses, Perceiving Splendour* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)

<sup>69</sup> McInroy, p.120.

Published in 2007, Alyssa Pitstick's book deliberates on the doctrine of Christ's descent into hell, an aspect of theology which Balthasar believed had been 'overlooked and misinterpreted',<sup>70</sup> and which he sought to rehabilitate. Pitstick sets this theology within a dogmatic context, comparing Balthasar's doctrine with the traditional doctrine of the Church, and claiming that Balthasar's is at odds with the teaching of the Fathers and of the Doctors of the Church. According to Pitstick, although Balthasar attempts to present the doctrine as a rereading of historical sources, his own interpretation of it was not only different but even entailed a rejection of Catholic tradition. Significantly, Pitstick does not think it necessary to examine Balthasar's work along with Adrienne's, even though Balthasar's theology of the *descensus* is generally attributed to Adrienne's influence.

Pitstick is not the only one who has criticized Balthasar for providing one-dimensional readings of texts. Ben Quash has criticized Balthasar for providing a simplistic reading of Euripides and of Shakespeare, and for overdetermining them theologically.<sup>71</sup> On his part, Martin Simon has argued that Balthasar provides a reading of Hölderlin that is much more Christian than it ought to be.<sup>72</sup> Philip Endean accuses Balthasar of misrepresenting Rahner.<sup>73</sup> Karen Kilby also sheds doubts on Balthasar's interpretation of texts. She accuses Balthasar of misusing the many 'figures' whom he refers to, or whom he quotes directly.<sup>74</sup> She says that the exploration of Balthasar's work 'should be combined with a certain wariness, a readiness to question him, to wonder how he knows what he seems to know, to ask where he stands so that he can tell us what he wants to tell us'.<sup>75</sup> Kilby claims that Balthasar does not provide an impartial reading of tradition. He only uses the elements of tradition which 'fit with and illustrate an already established

<sup>70</sup> Alyssa, Lyra Pitstick, *Light in Darkness: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Catholic Doctrine of Christ's Descent into Hell*, (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), p.5.

<sup>71</sup> Cyril O'Regan, 'Review of *Theology and the Drama of History* by Ben Quash,' *Modern Theology*, 23:2 (2007), pp.293-296 (p.294). See Quash pp.139-144.

<sup>72</sup> Martin Simon, 'Identity and Analogy: Balthasar's Hölderlin and Hamann', in *The Analogy of Beauty: The Theology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar* ed. by John Riches (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986) pp.77-104. On Balthasar's interpretations of texts, see Ed Block's 'Balthasar's literary Criticism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans urs von Balthasar* ed. by Edward T. Oakes, and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.207-223, especially, p.208.

<sup>73</sup> Endean, p.33-4.

<sup>74</sup> Kilby, p.35.

<sup>75</sup> Kilby, p.167.

[concept]’. She says that sometimes he even modifies these elements to suit his purposes. Indeed, while agreeing with Kilby that Balthasar can sometimes come out as an ‘idiosyncratic...reader’,<sup>76</sup> and while agreeing with Brian E.Daley that Balthasar has his own ‘theological enterprise’,<sup>77</sup> the impression that Balthasar is *always* prejudiced in his readings, or that he *deliberately* misrepresents the thought of others, is itself biased. In all honesty, as a hagiographer in his own right, Balthasar has a distinctive way of interpreting the words, visions, and writings of the saints. His reading of the saints may sometimes be ‘idiosyncratic’ but that does not make it necessarily erroneous, or bigoted. Peter Henrici’s assessment of Balthasar’s philosophy and literary theory can easily be applied to Balthasar’s theological method, namely, ‘to allow himself to be taught by the great writers and by their spiritual adventures, but at the same time,...to preserve the freedom to think differently, or even to think the opposite.’<sup>78</sup>

Kilby has also expressed misgivings concerning how Balthasar treats the saints in particular. This is a much more serious allegation in our regard. Kilby suggests that Balthasar treats the saints in too romantic and nostalgic a manner.<sup>79</sup> On his part, Steffen Lösel has described the saints of the Christological Constellation as ‘un-fleshly’.<sup>80</sup> While accepting that Balthasar may have misunderstood or misinterpreted some things, I would contend that there is no evidence of dishonesty, obstinate intention to deceive, or pathological chronic distortion on Balthasar’s part. If we were to agree that Balthasar’s reading of tradition, and his interpretation of the saints, were persistently jaundiced, the whole issue with which this study deals, namely, the saints’ authority and the grounding of the authority of the saints according to Balthasar, would become a hopeless endeavour. On the contrary, I will argue that Balthasar’s use of the saints is generally quite appropriate, choosing those whom he considers – as the professional theologian that he is – to be most knowledgeable on the issue being debated. Just to give one example, in developing his theology of history, using

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<sup>76</sup> Kilby, p.8.

<sup>77</sup> *CL*, pp.16-17.

<sup>78</sup> Henrici, ‘The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar’, p.155.

<sup>79</sup> Kilby, p.154.

<sup>80</sup> Lösel (2008), p.40.



Augustine, Irenaeus and Bonaventure is a mature choice, and not a biased one in the negative sense. Naturally, Balthasar is not always predictable. Brian E. Daley has pointed out that he fails to include saints whom one would have expected him to include because of their compatibility with his work.<sup>81</sup> In my opinion, Balthasar's work lends itself more to criticism for its lack of clarity than for misrepresentation. It is a lack of clarity that most probably comes more from having published in his own publishing house without an editor to point out his inadequacies.

## SAINTS AND HOLINESS

My main argument for this dissertation is that, ultimately, there is an authority that is associated with holiness. Although, as I said earlier, the theological investigation of this subject is still relatively unexplored, the same cannot be said about the various aspects with which this dissertation is involved. For example, a lot of work has been published on the subject of holiness. For his publication, Stephen Barton commissioned international experts from a wide range of theological and related disciplines (social scientists, philosophers of religion, feminists, biblical scholars, historians, moral theologians and systematic theologians) to reflect on the topic.<sup>82</sup> Evidently, the subject of holiness and the saints is not exactly a current subject, nor is it the sole property of the theologian. My research has taken me back at least 50 years, to books like Paul Molinari's *Saints: Their Place in the Church*,<sup>83</sup> Peter Brown's *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity*,<sup>84</sup> Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell's *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700*,<sup>85</sup> Thomas J. Heffernan's *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the*

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<sup>81</sup> Among these, Brian E. Daley mentions Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, Gregory Nazianzen and Cyril of Alexandria.

<sup>82</sup> *Holiness Past and Present*, ed. by Stephen Barton, (London: T&T Clark, 2003).

<sup>83</sup> Paul Molinari, *Saints: Their Place in the Church* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1965).

<sup>84</sup> Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981).

<sup>85</sup> Donald Weinstein and Rudolph M. Bell, *Saints and Society: The Two Worlds of Western Christendom, 1000-1700* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1982).

*Middle Ages*,<sup>86</sup> Kenneth L. Woodward's *Making Saints: Inside the Vatican: Who Become Saints, Who Do Not, and Why*,<sup>87</sup> Edith Wyschogrod's *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy*,<sup>88</sup> Lawrence Cunningham's *A Brief History of Saints*.<sup>89</sup>

Where Balthasar is concerned, holiness is strictly associated with theology. In his essay on theology and holiness, Antonio Sicari maintains that 'the holiness demanded by Balthasar of theology and of theologians is an objective rather than a subjective matter, or even a "methodological" rather than an ascetical or moral one.'<sup>90</sup> Sicari claims that what Balthasar is saying is not that theologians should be saints, but that theologians ought to be saints in order to be theologians. Sicari argues that Balthasar is questioning what it is to be a theologian.<sup>91</sup> Karen Kilby's reading of Balthasar is also, as I understand it, methodological. According to Kilby, Balthasar's 'suggestions cluster around the notion' that saints and theologians need 'to pay more attention to [each] other'.<sup>92</sup>

In this regard, Danielle Nussberger's perspective is, in my opinion, more radical. Nussberger claims that, rather than simply trying to encourage theologians to pay more attention to the saints, what Balthasar is doing is trying to encourage other theologians to be resources for the saints.<sup>93</sup> This means that theologians are meant to seek out the present day saints, and to be at their service in every sense: to supply them with their own knowledge and to provide them with whatever assistance that they may require. In actual fact, this is what Balthasar seems to have done with Adrienne. Whether he is recommending his own lifestyle (and not just methodology) to all other theologians is less certain. In Nussberger's case, the

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<sup>86</sup> Thomas J. Heffernan, *Sacred Biography: Saints and Their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>87</sup> Kenneth L. Woodward, *Making Saints: Inside the Vatican: Who Become Saints, Who Do Not, and Why...* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990).

<sup>88</sup> Edith Wyschogrod, *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy*, Religion and Postmodernism Series, (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990).

<sup>89</sup> Lawrence Cunningham, *A Brief History of Saints*, (Oxford: Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion, 2005).

<sup>90</sup> Sicari, p.121.

<sup>91</sup> Sicari, p.122.

<sup>92</sup> Kilby, pp.154-5.

<sup>93</sup> See Danielle Nussberger, *Saint as Theological Wellspring: Hans Urs Von Balthasar's Hermeneutic of the Saint in a Christological and Trinitarian Key*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2007, Abstract.

authority of the saint for the theologian is made more obvious, since the degree of captivation of the theologian by the saint takes the form of a ministering to the saint. This interpretation certainly exacerbates the already problematic nature of the relationship between Balthasar and Adrienne. I have no objection to the use of Balthasar as a resource for understanding the inextricable unity between theologian and saint, as Nussberger does,<sup>94</sup> but such exemplars remain forever controversial.

The development in the field of hagiography has much to say in this regard. New directions in hagiography have raised fundamental issues of interpretation and method, particularly feminist ones. For example, writing about medieval saints in particular, Catherine M. Mooney claims that the voice of the hagiographer has to be distinguished from that of the saint because there are differences between ‘the way the women...speak of themselves from the ways their male associates speak about them’. Her co-authors provide various instances where portrayals of sanctity are influenced by gender. They find that ‘[w]hether authored by women or men, most texts regarding women bear the indisputable signs of men’s controlling influence’. They also deduce that ‘[m]ost clerical writers...were much more than scribes and simple translators, even when they claimed to be only that.’<sup>95</sup> Women’s stories were transformed, or rather manipulated by men. Moreover, Mooney and her colleagues identify a number of themes about which one finds differences between men and women, and between saints and their hagiographers.<sup>96</sup> Although dealing with medieval saints, these findings are very relevant to our subject, for various reasons. It puts Balthasar’s own interpretation of the female medieval saints (Hildegard, Clare of Assisi, Catherine of Siena etc) into question. It also raises the issue concerning his role as spiritual director and *amanuensis* (transcriber, editor and publisher) of Adrienne. Finally, it raises the issue concerning the actual authority that can be attributed to saints whom we only know indirectly. In a way, the only feasible argument would have to be similar to

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<sup>94</sup> Danielle Nussberger, ‘Theologians and Saints: The Drama of Iconic Reflections’, CTSA Proceedings 66 (2011), 155-156 (p.155).

<sup>95</sup> Catherine M. Mooney, ‘Voice, Gender and the Portrayal of Sanctity’, in Catherine M. Mooney (ed), *Gendered Voices: Medieval Saints and their interpreters* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p.7.

<sup>96</sup> Mooney, pp. 9-15.

that concerning biblical inspiration, in which case only the bible in its original languages, and not in its translations, can claim to be inspired. If ever we are to establish the authority of a saint, we would have to say that this authority is to be attributed only to the original life, action and words, and never to the repetition, or the restatement, which is always indirect and biased, especially within the context of postmodern paranoia and suspicion.

Meanwhile, some research has focussed on the discourse about the saints as a counter discourse for existent frameworks. One example is the work carried out by Edith Wyschogrod. In *Saints and Postmodernism: Revisioning Moral Philosophy*, Wyschogrod claims that hagiographic texts could act as an intratextual counter-discourse to existent theological or institutional frameworks.<sup>97</sup> Her argument is based on her conviction that narrative conceptions of ethics may respond better to the impasses created by the confrontation of various moral theories. She claims that the move to the life story is an important step, but agrees with Jean-François Lyotard that the idea of narrative as the encompassing framework for moral philosophy is at the risk of the same *naïveté* as using moral theory as a master narrative. Wyschogrod argues that both the metaphysical presuppositions of theoretical thought, and the philosophical biases in which narrative has been grounded must be brought into critical perspective. Altruism is at the basis of her postmodern analysis.<sup>98</sup> We shall see that, in Balthasar, the concept of altruism hardly features at all, as well as that Balthasar's analysis of the saint differs radically from the conclusions reached by many modern and postmodern scholars. Although Michael P. Murphy has claimed that Balthasar 'shares an affinity with the philosophical position of most postmodern theory',<sup>99</sup> my opinion is that there is no such evidence where the saints are concerned. Balthasar works with a concept of the saint that is at once traditional and

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<sup>97</sup> In this context, the work which Christopher Steck has done is also significant. Besides his book on *The Ethical Thought in Hans Urs von Balthasar* (The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2001), Steck has also studied the saints more specifically. In his essay 'Studying Holy Lives: A Methodological Necessity for the Christian Ethicist', he elicits six reasons why the saint is very valuable for the ethicist.

<sup>98</sup> This altruism is not equivalent to the altruism of a sentimental and parochial hagiography, nor is it the liberal altruism which was endorsed by John Stuart Mill or some recent analytic ethicists. But it is still altruism. Wyschogrod, p.xx. See Matzko, p.27.

<sup>99</sup> Michael P. Murphy, *A Theology of Criticism : Balthasar, Postmodernism, and the Catholic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.57. Two central themes of postmodernism – its critique of modern rationality and its critique of modernist politics – are very evident in Balthasar.

conservative, innovative and contemporary. It is true that Balthasar's concept of the *communio sanctorum* as a 'conversational community' and of tradition as a participation in an ongoing debate is reminiscent of the multiplicity of voices (including that of the addressee) which characterise the postmodern narratives. However, the differences between Balthasar's and Wyschogrod's notion of the saint or any postmodern reading of the saints, are huge. I will restrict myself to just two of these differences. First of all, altruism does not feature as strongly in Balthasar's theology of the saints. This means that Balthasar does not ground the authority of the saints in morality and altruism but rather in a dogmatic expertise that comes from an attitude of surrender. Secondly, whereas with Wyschogrod, there is an emphasis on the narrative conception of ethics, with Balthasar, the emphasis is on the phenomenological conception of dogmatics. Balthasar prefers a phenomenological description of life on the premise – I believe – that it responds better to the impasses created by the confrontation of various doctrinal theories than either doctrinal polemics (detached from life) or pure narrative hagiography does.

Wyschogrod is not the only one who has done work on theology and narrative. John Navone's book, *Seeking God in Story*,<sup>100</sup> is, as he describes it, 'part of an expanding theological discourse on the narrative quality of religious experience' and 'an introduction to a theology of story'. The book includes, among other things, a survey of what scholars have been saying about the relationship of faith and theology to story. These include scholars like James Wm. McClendon, Stanley Hauerwas, David Tracy and Andrew Greeley. As we said in the previous paragraph, rather than 'a theology of story', Balthasar's is a theological phenomenology of the mission of the saints. His choice for a phenomenological descriptive framework has the advantage of reducing the risks of misinterpretation. Balthasar also reduces this risk of misinterpretation by recognizing that, although the basic unity of doctrinal reasoning is the individual, the arbiter of doctrinal reasoning is always the *communio sanctorum* (the

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<sup>100</sup> John Navone, *Seeking God in Story*, (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1990). See also Michael Goldberg, *Theology and Narrative. A Critical Introduction* (Broadway: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001).

community), and in particular the *Communio Sanctorum* (the holy ones within the community).

On his part, D.M.Matzko has contributed to the body of research by comparing modernity with postmodernity where the saints are concerned. Matzko argues that whereas the predominant framework of modern moral deliberation resists the naming of saints, because of its subversion of rationality and its individualized subjectivity,<sup>101</sup> postmodernism is ‘not a framework from which a new idea of sainthood can emerge’, but it is a framework and a time in which saints can ‘re-emerge’ and ‘can have a renewed force in creating human community’.<sup>102</sup> Where the saints are concerned, it would be difficult to situate Balthasar either in a modern or in a postmodern context, just as it is difficult to situate him within the medieval context, in spite of the fact that that is the golden era of hagiography. Matzko’s claim that a narrative framework cannot be sustained when the basic unity of moral reasoning is the individual (as Wyschogrod does), is especially relevant. In his emphasis on the social context of holiness, Balthasar has a lot to contribute in this regard.

It will have become clear by now that saintliness bears within itself the traces of various distortions brought about by postmodern analysis.<sup>103</sup> Often, contemporary works contest the traditional notion of sainthood, deconstruct the meaning of the term ‘saint’, and claim that the saints’ lives are to be found across a broad spectrum of belief systems and institutional practices, and do not just emanate from one specific religious community. For example, in the book *The Making of Saints: Contesting Sacred Ground*, the anthropologist James F. Hopgood uses the term ‘saint’ to include folk saints, ‘near-saints’ and icons or secular saints,<sup>104</sup> besides the ‘true’ saints. All ‘saints’ have one thing in common: Like the ‘true’ saints, the former receive expressions of love, grief, and adoration, and the places significant to their lives become places for pilgrimages. According to Hopgood

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<sup>101</sup> Matzko, p.22.

<sup>102</sup> Matzko, pp.19 and 22.

<sup>103</sup> See Colby Dickonson, *The Postmodern Saints of France: Refiguring ‘The Holy’ in Contemporary French Philosophy* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2013). Cf p.82.

<sup>104</sup> The latter include people like Che Guevara, Elvis Presley, Evita Peron and James Dean.

‘[t]he difference...between an icon, secular saint, or church-canonized saint is not resolved’.<sup>105</sup> My conviction is that Balthasar’s work has potential to resolve this issue, since – as we shall see in the forthcoming chapters – he focuses on the grounding of the saints, rather than purely on the response of those who encounter the saint, whether that response takes the form of love, adulation or pilgrimage.

The theologian David Moss also acknowledges the crisis in the concept of sanctity. His claim is that ‘the very idea of sanctity is being threatened today by psychology’s “hermeneutics of suspicion”, which would demolish the ideal of sanctity as a disguised psychopathology or as a play for power.’<sup>106</sup> Moss has emphasized three things. Firstly, he has emphasized the central place of the saints and of the struggle for holiness in Balthasar’s theology,<sup>107</sup> just as I did in the introductory Chapter. Secondly, Moss has insisted that the central task of the theologian is that of providing an exegesis of the saints’ objective mission. Thirdly, Moss has emphasized that the effect of the saints is universal,<sup>108</sup> and, finally, that the saint’s life, which is the ‘*intelligibile in sensibili*’,<sup>109</sup> is the *form* through which the truth of Christian doctrine is grasped and becomes ‘followable’.<sup>110</sup> These arguments are extremely relevant to our task. Furthermore, Moss identifies three dimensions of saintly existence – the theological, the christological, and the mariological – which, he says, are always ‘present and embedded’ in Balthasar’s treatment of the saints. He claims that these three dimensions reveal to the eyes of faith another three dimensions, namely, unity, obedience, and fruitfulness.<sup>111</sup> Finally, Moss mentions Balthasar’s regard of the lives of the saints as the key to the understanding of the history of the gospel, and as ‘the prolongation of revelation’.<sup>112</sup> In this dissertation, I engage with various claims that Moss makes, and rework some of his conclusions to suit my own project. Among other things, I focus on different dimensions to those identified by

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<sup>105</sup> *The Making of Saints: Contesting Sacred Ground*, ed. by James F.Hopgood (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2005), p.xvii.

<sup>106</sup> David Moss, ‘The Saints’, in *Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Edward T.Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.79-92 (p.80).

<sup>107</sup> Moss, p.80.

<sup>108</sup> Moss, p.81

<sup>109</sup> Moss, p.85.

<sup>110</sup> Moss, p.83.

<sup>111</sup> Moss, pp.86-91.

<sup>112</sup> Moss, p.92.

Moss. The ones I develop in my own dissertation are the existential, the epistemological, the pneumatological and the ecclesiological, claiming, not only that these are the four dimensions where the saints function authoritatively, but also that this is where the grounding of the authority of the saints is to be situated.

In its tendency to deconstruct the concept of saints and sanctity, postmodernity has simultaneously been characterised by a more ecumenical, or even inter-faith interpretation of the saints. This is a key issue. To speak about the authority of the saints requires a clear understanding of who these saints are to whom this authority is to be attributed. Prompted by the Roman Catholic theologian Elizabeth Stuart's persistence that 'canonization be extended to include Hindus and Protestants,' Gavin D'Costa claims that one cannot call non-Catholics 'saints in the technical liturgical sense'. D'Costa claims that, despite what Rudolf Otto, Williams James and John Hick have said, saintliness and holiness are not properly speaking 'trans-religious' or 'cross-religious' concepts.<sup>113</sup> He does concede, however, that a person who is seen as a saintly example of holiness within his or her tradition may also be seen as a *saint-type* in another,<sup>114</sup> a notion that is similar to Matzko's 'saints-by-analogy' concept.<sup>115</sup> It is in this intratextual way that we ought to understand Balthasar's notion of the saints and sainthood. Speaking from below, if any 'saints' – including those from outside the Catholic community – are to be reckoned as holy, their holiness is to be compatible with that of the community, and if they are to be recognized as authoritative, the authority must originate from within the Catholic community and be regulated by it.

Štrukelj's book *Teologia e Santita' a Partire da Hans Urs Balthasar*,<sup>116</sup> is concerned with many of the issues with which this dissertation is concerned. Štrukelj discusses Balthasar's designation of holy theologians as 'pillars of the Church',<sup>117</sup> the saints as a lived theology, holiness as the essence of theology, and

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<sup>113</sup> Gavin D'Costa, 'The Communion of Saints and Other Religions: On Saintly Wives in Hinduism and Catholicism' in *Holiness Past and Present*, ed. by Stephen C. Barton (T&T Clark, London 2003), pp.421-440 (p.423). D'Costa, p.423.

<sup>114</sup> D'Costa, pp.424-5.

<sup>115</sup> Matzko, p.22.

<sup>116</sup> Anton Štrukelj, *Teologia e Santita' a Partire da Hans Urs Balthasar*, (Edizioni San Paolo, Milano, 2010).

<sup>117</sup> The Gospel as Norm, CS,294.



the force present in the witness of the theology of the saints. This means, among other things, that there is already, in Štrukelj, a strong inclination to interpret the holy life as itself theological, to associate authentic theology with holiness and to interpret the strong apologetic capacity of the saints as an authority. However, Štrukelj only touches the surface of these claims.

The role of the saints in Balthasar's theology has been the subject of some controversy. M.A.McIntosh has argued that Balthasar explores the participation of the saints and mystics in the life of Christ in order to understand Jesus' divine-human reality 'from within'.<sup>118</sup> His argument is that, when Balthasar delves into 'what the saints experienced', 'it is Christology that stands to gain most.'<sup>119</sup> According to McIntosh, it is in his eagerness to learn 'from the saints about Christ' that Balthasar fuses and reinterprets 'the Maximian hypostatic structure with an Ignatian structure of mission and election.'<sup>120</sup> Although I would agree with McIntosh's argument for the primacy of the Christological, I believe that this argument has a tendency of diminishing the importance of the *Mitspieler*, the secondary roles played by the saints in the entire drama, and in a way it may show that Balthasar is limited in his account. It would mean that Balthasar wanted the saints to interpret Christology when there is evidence that the opposite is also true, that is, that Balthasar wants Christ to interpret the saints. McIntosh could be interpreted as saying that the saints have a role of little significance, and therefore that their authority is inconsequential. My opinion is that, had Balthasar's *only* aim been Jesus Christ, Balthasar would not have chosen to use the phenomenological method to study the saints, since, as a method, it is more properly suited to accommodate a discussion of the interpreter, than of the object to be interpreted. This is not to say that the importance of Christ is diminished. As Fergus Kerr points out, in spite of what Karl Barth says, 'it is surely outrageous to claim that the figure of Christ is occluded in Balthasar's biographical studies of some saints.'<sup>121</sup> Rather, even if this may not have involved a conscious decision

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<sup>118</sup> Mark A. McIntosh, *Christology from Within: Spirituality and the Incarnation in Hans Urs von Balthasar* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996), p.21.

<sup>119</sup> McIntosh (1996) p.25. See also, pp.2 and 26.

<sup>120</sup> McIntosh (1996), p.42.

<sup>121</sup> Kerr (1999), p.9. Referring to Barth, IV/1, p.767.

on his part, the authority of the figure of Christ becomes more evident the more he writes about the authority of the saints.

On a very different note, the issue of the recognition of sainthood by the institution is integral to my insistence on a theology of the authority of the saints. Even here, there are some pertinent publications. Perhaps best known in this regard is the work of Kenneth Woodward. His book on the making of saints deals specifically with the politics and bureaucracy of contemporary saint-making.<sup>122</sup> The accentuation on the politics of canonizations continues with the historian Janine Larmon Peterson, this time not the politics of the Magisterium, but the politics of the clergy and the laity at the grassroots. In her book *Contested Sanctity*, Peterson describes the process through which the disputed saint was created, and argues that, in disputed sainthood, a community's religious devotion towards disputed saints (individuals whom the populace venerated in the face of papal and inquisitorial opposition) was used as a means of challenging the papacy's authority and expressing desires for political and spiritual independence.<sup>123</sup> Since the authority of the saints is closely associated with both the official, and the popular recognition of an individual life, canonization takes on a particular importance. It would seem as if the canonization of the saints is irrelevant for Balthasar, since he uses various saints who never went through the canonization process. This means that in Balthasar, canonization is not the only thing that grounds the authority of the saint. What is it, then, that gives canonicity to the saints? In 'The Gospel as Norm', Balthasar widens the concept of canonization, claiming that a 'synthetic' individual whose 'Yes' is indivisible 'is a canonical Christian', that is, a saint, irrespective of whether that Christian has been 'canonized by the Church or not'.<sup>124</sup> It would also seem as if Balthasar gives little importance to the ecclesial canonization *per se*. In his view, the saints who are worthy of esteem are those saints whom the Spirit himself canonizes, rather than those which the Church does.

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<sup>122</sup> Woodward, Kenneth L., *Making Saints: Inside the Vatican: Who Become Saints, Who Do Not, and Why...* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1990).

<sup>123</sup> Janine Larmon Peterson, *Contested Sanctity: Disputed Saints, Inquisitors, and Communal Identity in Northern Italy, 1250-1400* (Indiana University, 2006).

<sup>124</sup> 'The Gospel as Norm', *CS*, pp.292-3.

## ADRIENNE VON SPEYR

How we interpret Adrienne von Speyr is integral to our understanding of the authority of the saints, because it will dictate who is included among the saints, as well as the criteria for deciding not how reliable their theology is, but how reliable others consider their theology to be. Kilby suggests that whenever Balthasar does not indicate another source in the tradition, and whenever what he says cannot be accounted for elsewhere, then he may be relying on Adrienne.<sup>125</sup> Although I understand Kilby's concern, it would be risky to conclude that Adrienne is the source of all that may seem inexplicable in Balthasar. The exact relationship that existed between Balthasar and Adrienne has been hotly debated among scholars in the past decade. It should be said that this is not the first relationship where the spiritual director assumes the responsibility of publicising a visionary's experience. For instance, writing about Mechtild of Magdeburg, Voaden writes that Heinrich of Halle, her spiritual director, had encouraged her writing, as well as arranged and edited her visions.<sup>126</sup> If Adrienne's authority was simply restricted to being a theological resource, Kilby would find no objection. She has herself pointed out, that 'it is not unheard of for theologians in the Catholic tradition to look to the writings of the mystics as a theological source'.<sup>127</sup> What Kilby has objected to is the '*proximity* to [the] theological source'. This is somewhat peculiar, since Catholics do not generally have problems with *chronological* proximity. If they did, they would not be venerating and citing holy individuals before any official recognition has been announced. Our contemporaries Mother Theresa of Calcutta and Pope John Paul II are a case in point. If it is Adrienne's authoritative tone that Kilby objects to, then we would just have to respond that many now dead canonized saints wrote theology in an authoritative voice even during their own lifetimes, as Mongrain has said.<sup>128</sup> My question is, are we perhaps uncomfortable with a priest who confesses his debt to

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<sup>125</sup> Kilby, p.159.

<sup>126</sup> Rosalynn Voaden, 'All Girls Together: Community, Gender and Vision at Helfta', in Diane Watt (ed.), *Medieval Women in their Communities*, (Toronto Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 72-91 (p.83). See also John Wayland Coakley, *Women, Men and Spiritual Power. Female Saints and their Male Collaborators* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006) and Mooney, pp.1-15.

<sup>127</sup> Kilby, p.30.

<sup>128</sup> Mongrain, *Horizons*, p.99.

a woman? Or with a woman who inspires a priest? Or with an enigmatic woman inspiring a theologian? Are we objecting to the interference of a holder of office in a mystic's life? Do we object to the obedience on the part of the mystic to her confessor?<sup>129</sup> Whatever our opinion may be in this regard, if we were to use the phenomenological descriptive approach which Balthasar himself applied to the saints, we would have to accept Adrienne's authority in Balthasar's regard, just as much as his authority in her regard.<sup>130</sup> But even so, the level of authority may need to be measured. Kilby claims that Balthasar does not 'appeal to von Speyr's experience to ground the credibility of what he maintained', although he does sometimes rely on her visions and her writings.<sup>131</sup> She expresses reservations concerning the former, that is, whether Balthasar used Adrienne to justify his position, and none for the latter, that is, concerning the influence she had on him.<sup>132</sup> These reflections by Kilby contribute to our own research question in that they reflect on the different levels of authority one could associate with the saints, whether authority just denotes influence and inspiration or whether it denotes 'justification'. My claim is that, in Balthasar, the saints are integral to the theological enterprise, and that there are many instances when the saints as Balthasar uses them go beyond being mere 'influence and inspiration,' and that he relies on the 'saints', including – despite what Karen Kilby says - Adrienne, using them to justify his theological position. Peter Henrici has even suggested that some of Balthasar's work on other saints or figures is not just tinged by Adrienne's visions and writings, but actually revolves around them. More specifically, Henrici claims that Balthasar's work on Thérèse of Lisieux, on Elizabeth of Dijon, on Reinhold Schneider (1903-1958) and on Georges Bernanos (1888-1948) actually revolve 'around Adrienne's mission.'<sup>133</sup> In this regard, I believe that Henrici may be casting too much responsibility on Adrienne.

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<sup>129</sup> See Kilby's discussion of the expression 'under obedience', which gives some hint as to Balthasar's 'interference' in this mystic's experience.

<sup>130</sup> In this regard, I refuse to take seriously Tina Beattie's argument that, in the confessional, Adrienne von Speyr is the *casta meretrix*, whereas Balthasar is in *loco Christi*, being sexually tempted. See Tina Beattie (2006), p.158.

<sup>131</sup> Kilby, p.9.

<sup>132</sup> Kilby, p.160.

<sup>133</sup> Henrici, Peter, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Sketch of His Life,' in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. by Schindler, David L., (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), pp.7-44. See also, Kilby, p.32.

Matthew Lewis Sutton has provided an overview of Balthasar's statements regarding the relationship between himself and Adrienne von Speyr, as well as of the three main interpretations of this relationship.<sup>134</sup> The first interpretation is represented by Edward Oakes and also Alyssa Lyra Pitstick. Their position is that Balthasar's work stands on its own and does not necessitate a joint examination with Adrienne's works. In this case, there is a respect and appreciation for Adrienne's works, but the scholarly engagement of her works is believed to be unnecessary for an understanding of Balthasar's theology.<sup>135</sup> A second group of interpreters, represented by Kevin Mongrain, deny that this relationship had any impact on Balthasar. Rather than a positive theological influence on Balthasar, Adrienne is seen as 'a negative psychological presence that should be extricated from any theological reading of von Balthasar'.<sup>136</sup> The third group, among whom Sutton situates himself claim that Adrienne's relationship with Balthasar is essential to understanding him and deserves serious scholarly engagement. These include Raymond Gawronski, Aidan Nichols, Angelo Scola, Michelle Schumacher, Jacques Servais, Justin Matro and Blaise Berg. These scholars place an emphasis on the changes that happen in Balthasar's theology after his first meeting with Adrienne. They also emphasize the co-founding of the *Johannesgemeinschaft*, Balthasar's setting up of the Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, and Balthasar's use of Adrienne's works in his own, especially her theology of the descent of Christ into the Hell.<sup>137</sup> Sutton offers his own interpretation of this relationship by using Paul's theology of charism, and particularly by expounding Balthasar's doctrine of the double charism. He claims that the outcomes of this double charism will be a reinterpretation of central aspects of Balthasar's theology which include his theology of Holy Saturday, Trinitarian theology, and theology of the communion of saints. Later on in this dissertation, I intend to get back to this notion of the double mission and to the authority which such a mission bears.

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<sup>134</sup> Matthew Lewis Sutton, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr's ecclesial relationship,' in *New Blackfriars*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2012), pp.50-63.

<sup>135</sup> Sutton (2012), pp.56-7.

<sup>136</sup> Sutton (2012), pp.57-8.

<sup>137</sup> Sutton (2012), pp.58-9.

## THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS

David Stagaman has identified a shift, evident since after the second world war, from hierarchy to dialogue, so that ‘the will of God is not communicated simply and directly to Church officials, but through a Spirit whose activity in the Church is...pluralistic.’<sup>138</sup> The communion ecclesiology that has developed in the past decades focuses on dialogue, communication, listening, within the Church. It is based on an appreciation on the part of the bishop for all that the Spirit is doing within the Church. The exemplars of this communion ecclesiology include Richard Gaillardetz.<sup>139</sup> But the ecclesiologies of communion are really diverse. Gerard Mannion refers to Nicholas M.Healy’s work on ecclesiologies of communion, which, he says, is embraced by all kinds of theologians: *ressourcement*, liberation, feminist. Jean-Marie Tillard, John Zizoulas, Leonardo Boff, and Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, are only some of them.<sup>140</sup> In 1992 the CDF issued a Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on *Some Aspects of the Church Understood as Communion. Communionis Notio* espouses an ecclesiology of the Church as the sacrament of salvation for humanity and asserts the priority of the authority of the universal Church. For this reason, it has been criticized because its emphasis is on unity and the *immediate...communion*,<sup>141</sup> rather than on dialogue, communication, and listening, within the Church. Thus, whereas *communio* ecclesiology is generally contrasted to a more universalist ecclesiology, the official *communio* ecclesiology puts more emphasis on the priority of the universal Church. Gaillardetz has compared the official *communio* ecclesiology to earlier institutional ecclesiologies, criticizing the former particularly because of the priority which it gives to the universal Church over the local churches.<sup>142</sup> Balthasar has his own communion ecclesiology, and his theology of the saints is based on a communion ecclesiology that is quite distinguishable from other such ecclesiologies.

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<sup>138</sup> Stagaman, p.4.

<sup>139</sup> Stagaman, p.xii.

<sup>140</sup> Gerard Mannion, *Ecclesiology and Postmodernity: Questions for the Church in Our Time* (Collegeville, The Liturgical Press, 2007), p.70.

<sup>141</sup> Mannion (2007), p.64.

<sup>142</sup> Mannion (2007), p.68.

In this context, Elizabeth A. Johnson's book, providing what she calls in her subtitle, *A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints*,<sup>143</sup> is one of the rare books which deals directly with the communion of saints. Johnson's is an 'inclusive companionship paradigm'.<sup>144</sup> Guided by the metaphor of 'friends of God and prophets', Johnson attempts to salvage this symbol, so that it may function 'in a befriending and prophetic way'. Her hope is that this symbol may nourish women, and nourish the Church, and consequently assist the Church to really become a communion of saints and prophets.<sup>145</sup> There is no doubt that her exposition is very interesting and valid, that her use of the *communio sanctorum* is laudable, but there is not much in her feminist reading that bears a resemblance to Balthasar's own theology of the *communio sanctorum* with its emphasis on dialogue, rather than memory.

Although J-M.R. Tillard published his book *Eglise d'Églises* in 1987,<sup>146</sup> David McLoughlin claims that it was Cardinal Martini of Milan who first recommended to the Church that it work through a theology of *koinonia/communio*. This was in 1999, during the European Synod.<sup>147</sup> Clearly, therefore, whatever Balthasar wrote about the *communio sanctorum* was written prior to any intimation of such an ecclesiology. I believe that Balthasar's *communio* ecclesiology is distinctive not only because it was developed before all other known communion ecclesiologies, but also for other reasons, namely, because it is based on the traditional doctrine of the *communio sanctorum*, because it provides a vision of the Church as both *communio* and hierarchy,<sup>148</sup> because Balthasar manages to preserve the eschatological nature of the *communio sanctorum*, without dismissing the importance of the *communio sanctorum* for practical ecclesiology, and because the concept of *communio* enables Balthasar to stretch much further than the limits of the Church.

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<sup>143</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Friends of God and Prophets: A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints*, (London: Continuum, 2005).

<sup>144</sup> Johnson, p.2.

<sup>145</sup> Johnson, p.3.

<sup>146</sup> Jean-Marie Roger Tillard, *Church of Churches: The Ecclesiology of Communion*, trans. by R.C. de Peaux (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1992).

<sup>147</sup> David McLoughlin, 'Communio Models of Church: Rhetoric or Reality?' in *Authority in the Roman Catholic Church: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Bernard Hoose (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), pp.181-190 (p.181).

<sup>148</sup> About the post-Vatican II rival ecclesiologies, see Lösel (2008), p.23-4.

## THE AUTHORITY OF INTERPRETATION

Needless to say, Balthasar's exegetical method has been the subject of some debate in more recent research. One of those who has written extensively on the issue of Balthasar's reading of the Scriptures is W.T. Dickens.<sup>149</sup> Among other things, Dickens evaluates Balthasar's views of scriptural authority in the Church and the ways in which scripture functions authoritatively in his *Aesthetics*. Dickens acknowledges the criticisms against Balthasar's exegesis posited by Joseph Fitzmyer, John O'Donnell, Stephen Happel, and Louis Dupré. He then responds by arguing that, although Balthasar's approach in the *Aesthetics* is informed by historical criticism, yet it is compatible with pre-modern approaches. He also argues that Balthasar's *Theological Aesthetics* are in fact a worthy model for Post-Critical Biblical Interpretation.<sup>150</sup> In the context of this dissertation, I will acknowledge, and sometimes emphasise, particular aspects of Dickens' study. For example, what Dickens says about Balthasar's vision of the Church as the location for scriptural interpretation, about Balthasar's conviction that the proper purpose of scriptural interpretation is the development of lives conformed to Christ,<sup>151</sup> about Balthasar's 'literal-figural' mode of interpretation and about the benefits that ensue from such a mode of interpretation,<sup>152</sup> are all beneficial to an appreciation of the saints' role in interpreting the scriptures, and of the authority with which the saints do that. For the most part, Balthasar recommends the saints and their teachings both because of their originality and because of their propensity for clarity.<sup>153</sup>

Also of particular interest is what Dickens says about Balthasar's accent (as also de Lubac's) on the multivocality of the bible as text,<sup>154</sup> a multivocality which ultimately, Balthasar applies to the saints and to the principles which they

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<sup>149</sup> W.T. Dickens, *Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics. A Model for Post-Critical Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003).

<sup>150</sup> Dickens, pp.1-3

<sup>151</sup> Dickens, p.237.

<sup>152</sup> Dickens, p.6. See also p.237.

<sup>153</sup> Paul himself asserted that the *beati* were granted a clearer vision. Dickens, p.65.

<sup>154</sup> Dickens, pp.7 and 10.



represent. There is also, in Dickens, a reference to the pre-modern conviction that capturing Jesus Christ through static definitions is impossible. I will use this point to emphasize the efficacy of a life-form, rather than of propositions. According to Balthasar, ‘the very effort to put as much as possible into thoughts and formulations can imperceptibly lead us away from the source of prayer.’<sup>155</sup> Finally, there is Balthasar’s insistence on biblical interpretation as a continuing task for the Church. On this issue, I will want to emphasize the authority of the eyewitness and the eligibility of subsequent saints to interpret the Scriptures.

Dickens uses Roger Aubert, Robert Murray S.J. and Sandra Schneiders to argue that ‘among Catholics the Bible simply no longer functions in the lives of the faithful as it once did to provide the interpretive lenses through which they view and understand reality’.<sup>156</sup> Dickens is claiming that the postliberal approach is weakening. What Dickens has failed to note is that Balthasar views *the saints* as a corrective, that is, as a means whereby ‘to revive both biblical literacy and a biblically informed imagination,<sup>157</sup> and consequently, cultivate the *sensus fidelium*. In the meantime, what Dickens has said about the advantages of the ‘literal-figurative readings’ of the Bible is easily discernible in Balthasar’s work. Such readings are said to enable ‘fruitful dialogue among theologians’, assist agreement over ‘what is essential to Christian proclamation and action’ and nurture the *sensus fidelium*,<sup>158</sup> since ecclesiastical leaders, ordinary Christians as well as professional theologians and exegetes would share a sense of what lies at the heart of the Gospel.<sup>159</sup>

I have my doubts as to whether anybody would deny the authority of the saints on the practical level, that is, whether anyone can deny either the authority which is evident in the actions, deeds, exploits and writings of the saints or the authority which is attributed by others to their actions, deeds, exploits and writings. For example, if one were to read Werner Löser’s essay on ‘The Ignatian Exercises in

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<sup>155</sup> P, pp.256-7.

<sup>156</sup> Dickens, p.19.

<sup>157</sup> Dickens, p.19.

<sup>158</sup> Dickens, p.20.

<sup>159</sup> Dickens, p.20.

the Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar’, one would realise what an essential role Ignatius plays in Balthasar’s theology. Löser gives a number of examples, one of these being the original version of *The Christian State of Life*, written in 1945, which Löser claims was meant to focus on the theology of the *Exercises*.<sup>160</sup> Other examples include: what Balthasar says about the three forms of abandonment, the thinking with the Church, the two modes of faith (represented by Martin Luther and Ignatius),<sup>161</sup> the discernment of the Spirits, the image of humanity before God, and the emphasis on indifference. As Löser says, ‘[n]ot only did von Balthasar frequently take up texts and motifs of the Ignatian Exercises to interpret them in terms of larger theological contexts; he shaped his own theological conception out of the spirit of the Exercises.’<sup>162</sup>

## AUTHORITY WITHIN THE CHURCH

Kenneth Wilson has said that the question ‘what is to be taught and believed and on whose authority?’ is ‘both profoundly stimulating and difficult.’<sup>163</sup> Clearly, neither faith nor knowledge are possible without authority. And yet the criteria for the acquisition or the assigning of authority are not easy to outline. Gerard Mannion asserts that ‘something can be authoritative because general agreement and support is reached concerning its truth, validity, or desirability’ but also because it represents what is ‘true’, ‘good’ and so on.<sup>164</sup> This dissertation serves as evidence that the authoritativeness of the saints, of their life, their actions and words (including the texts attributed to them), is not a straightforward matter, and yet that it underlies much of what Balthasar writes not just about the saints, but about most things. Austin maintains that ‘neither documents nor dead persons nor bureaucratic institutions nor even reason can be, in the true sense, an authority’. According to him, we do not, from these writings or in them, have actual

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<sup>160</sup> Werner Löser, ‘The Ignatian Exercises in the Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar,’ in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. by David L Schindler, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), pp.103-120 (p.106).

<sup>161</sup> CS, pp.81-104.

<sup>162</sup> Löser, p.119.

<sup>163</sup> Kenneth Wilson in *Readings in Church Authority: Gifts and Challenges for Contemporary Catholicism* ed. by Mannion Gerard; Gaillardetz, Richard; Kerkhofs, Jan; and Wilson, Kenneth, (Hants: Ashgate, 2003), p.91.

<sup>164</sup> Gerard Mannion, in *Readings in Church Authority*, p.4.

authority. He says that '[w]ithout the living authority of a scholar actively engaged in the work that scholars do, which includes the study of "authoritative" texts, authority is at best latent or potential; it is not actual authority.'<sup>165</sup> From what I know of Balthasar, I believe he would disagree with Austin. If Austin were right, we would only be able to claim the authority of a *living* saint, or else the saint's authority would depend purely on the scholar who revives him or her. However, with Balthasar, authority lies also in a saint long-departed, irrespective of whether we appeal to his wisdom or not. Moreover, to use a phrase borrowed from Alisdair MacIntyre, it also lies in 'privileged texts', that 'function as the authoritative point of departure' for inquiry.<sup>166</sup> The reason why Balthasar can maintain the authority of a saint who has passed on is precisely because of his model of theology as a 'collaborative enterprise' and his image of the Church as a 'colloquium' or 'conversational community'. In Balthasar, the saints (what I have been calling the *Communio Sanctorum*, with capital letters) are very much alive in the *communio sanctorum*, and they remain an authority even when they are long deceased, even when they are still unknown!<sup>167</sup> On the contrary, Stagaman maintains that authority is not an attribute of a person. It is not a subjective reality. Neither is it the attribute of a thing, i.e., an objective reality.<sup>168</sup> Authority is rather 'the bond experienced by all members of a community as they interact in certain relationships.'<sup>169</sup> And it is a practice.<sup>170</sup> Among other things, Stagaman claims that we are to understand the authoritative as 'that set of norms and values the community holds or desires to hold', and to understand authority as a quality of human interaction which is 'grounded in the authoritative'.<sup>171</sup> The authoritative is thus seen as 'the standard by which authority is evaluated'. Stagaman also provides a distinction between authority and authoritarianism, insisting that only the former is legitimate, and he maintains that there are three distinctive features of Christian and Roman Catholic authority, these being its mystical character, its

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<sup>165</sup> Austin, p.37.

<sup>166</sup> Nicholas M.Healy, p.117. Quoting Alisdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, p.383.

<sup>167</sup> Despite my disagreement with Austin's limited view of the practice of authority, his contribution to the subject of authority is commendable. Austin uses Yves Simon, Michael, Oliver O'Donovan and Richard Hooker to discuss social, epistemic authority, political and ecclesial authority.

<sup>168</sup> Stagaman, p.xv.

<sup>169</sup> Stagaman, p.xiv.

<sup>170</sup> Stagaman, p.xv.

<sup>171</sup> Stagaman, p.xv, p.31. To explain what he means, Stagaman compares authority to freedom, and the authoritative to the character of an individual person.

eschatological character and its sacramental character.<sup>172</sup> In his statements Stagaman seems to make deductions about authority after establishing what the authoritative is. My tendency in this dissertation has been to invert this process. In my view, thoughts, words and actions become authoritative because they arise from a recognised authority.

One of the more relevant distinctions which Stagaman makes is that between authority as understood synchronically – in which case the tension or the balance may be between equals or between unequals – and authority understood diachronically, which Stagaman describes, using Paul Ricoeur, as ‘a matter of tension / balance between what is given as plausible in the tradition and what possible alternatives to the given are deemed desirable as tradition questions itself in each succeeding historical moment.’<sup>173</sup> This distinction is important, since the authority of the saints as explored in this dissertation is meant to refer to both its synchronic and diachronic aspects. As Stagaman says, [w]hen authority is analyzed diachronically, it is found embedded in traditions which bear the past into the present, but also critically assess that heritage in light of the demands that the future makes on the community.’<sup>174</sup> The temptation is to state that, with Balthasar, the saints only have diachronic authority. But this would be too simplistic a statement.

Where Church authority is concerned, Francis A. Sullivan’s work on authority and the Magisterium is still paradigmatic. In the 80’s, Sullivan was writing about the nature, function and limits of the teaching authority of the Church, as well as on the relationship between the magisterium and Catholic theologians. Using Aquinas’ distinction between the *magisterium cathedrae pastoralis* and the *magisterium cathedrae magistralis*, Sullivan suggested that theologians should share in the pastoral magisterium of the bishops, along with catechists, teachers of religion in schools and those involved in the formation of the seminarians.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Stagaman, p.122-3.

<sup>173</sup> Stagaman, p.32.

<sup>174</sup> Stagaman, p.xv.

<sup>175</sup> Francis A. Sullivan, p.204.

However, it seems to me that the authority which Balthasar attributes to the saints is not merely *pastoralis*. It is *magistralis* as much as *pastoralis*.

## CONCLUSION

My intention for this chapter has been to situate my research topic within the wider context, identifying some of the more important work that has been done on Balthasar, holiness, the saints, and on ecclesial authority. The question concerning the authority of the saints is still to be answered: namely, whether the saints have more authority than the non-saints, and whether, even among the saints, it is possible to conceive and to concede different levels of sanctity: very holy and less holy. Eventually, one would also have to establish whether authority correlates positively with the degree of holiness.<sup>176</sup> Whether it is a few, many or everybody who will be saved, one would still have to establish why each of these, or only some of these, should be recognised as authoritative.

Having established Balthasar's confidence in the extraordinary proficiency and 'authoritativeness' of at least some saints (including Adrienne), and Balthasar's association of authority with holiness, the next thing is to determine the different dimensions in which holiness – which we associate with the saints – acquires an authority for theology and for the Church. These dimensions also correspond to the different settings in which the saints function authoritatively. The four dimensions which I came up with, after some consultation, were the existential, the epistemological, the pneumatological and the ecclesiological. Having identified these four dimensions, the research question gradually became more clear. I wanted to focus not just on 'what do I mean when I claim that Balthasar associates authority with holiness?', but also on the ground of the authority of the saints. This is not the same as asking 'what make a saint holy?'. It is rather a question of asking about what it is about holiness that makes the individual so authoritative, so influential. I will be seeking to determine – and I will attempt this in each of the next four chapters – where the saints' authority is grounded,

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<sup>176</sup> As has been pointed out, [t]his might imply...a rather troubling idea of hierarchy in degrees of glorification'. Deane-Drummond, p.54.

that is, what it is that Balthasar attributes their authority to in each of these dimensions, and what are some of the arguments which Balthasar brings forward to substantiate his claim that the saints have existential, epistemological, pneumatological and ecclesiological authority precisely because they are saints.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE EXISTENTIAL DIMENSION

#### INTRODUCTION

Consistent with the traditional belief in the existence of the saints as a motive of credibility,<sup>1</sup> Balthasar argues that that which expresses ‘with plausibility for the world the truth of Christ’s Gospel...is the existence of the saints who have been grasped by Christ’s Holy Spirit.’<sup>2</sup> There is nothing extraordinary in this claim, except that there are sections where Balthasar even seems to reduce the *motiva credibilitatis* to just this one: the authentic Christian life. The ‘perfect proof of the truth of Christianity’ is to be found in the ‘perfect’ Christian.<sup>3</sup> It is the Christian who embodies for the world the evidence of the ‘rightness (*Richtigkeit*) of Christ’s truth’.<sup>4</sup> The other *motiva credibilitatis*: the miracles of Christ, the prophecies, the Church’s own growth and holiness, and her fruitfulness and stability<sup>5</sup> seem to take second place in sections where he emphasizes the individual Christian.

In this Chapter, I will want to interpret what I think Balthasar means when he says that the saints are the ‘most sublime figures of human existence’<sup>6</sup>, and I would like to demonstrate that, in Balthasar’s theology, the saints have existential authority precisely because they are these ‘sublime figures of human existence’. I would also like to determine what it is about a life of holiness, which, according to Balthasar, makes the saints so authoritative (that is, arouses authoritativeness in them, or drives others to attribute authority to them), in the existential domain. I would also like to show that it is from within their genuine human existence that the saints function authoritatively. Finally, I would like to establish that the

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Does Jesus Shine Through?, *NE*, p.18.

<sup>2</sup> *TAI*: 494.

<sup>3</sup> *TAI*:229. ‘

<sup>4</sup> *TAI*: 214.

<sup>5</sup> CCC, par.156.

<sup>6</sup> *TAI*: 28-9.

authority which Balthasar attributes to the saints, in the existential domain, is analogous to that attributed to the Magisterium for two reasons: firstly, because the saints are presented as those individuals whom one consults on existential issues, and, secondly, because the saints are those individuals whose existential stance one would want to emulate. My rhetorical question becomes: is this not the authority that the Magisterium generally demands and which the individual Christian is expected to attribute to it, that is, that it be consulted, and that it be emulated?

### EXISTENCE AS THEOLOGICAL

The connection which Balthasar establishes between theology and existence, between Christian thought and life,<sup>7</sup> is central to my argument. Like the *nouveaux théologiens*, Balthasar believes that ‘theology had the duty to connect with the experiences of people’s actual day-to-day lives’,<sup>8</sup> and that dogmatics should never be ‘far removed from life’.<sup>9</sup> However, Balthasar is not just saying that theology should use the experience of existence as one of its sources. He is not just saying that we need to attend to existence in order to make theology *relevant*.<sup>10</sup> I interpret Balthasar as saying that it is attention to existence that makes theology *possible*,<sup>11</sup> and it is attention to existence that validates the truth or falsity of theology.<sup>12</sup> He is saying that the existence of the saints both generates and adjudicates theology (to use a legal term), that is, their existence provides us with a measure. It stipulates which theology is worth keeping and which is not. It is a question of validity rather than relevance. Within the context of George Lindbeck’s Postliberal analysis, the saints would be ‘those who have effectively interiorized [the] religion’. For this reason, it is they ‘who are best able to judge [which of the

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<sup>7</sup> C, p.15.

<sup>8</sup> Boersma (2009), 4.

<sup>9</sup> C, p.68.

<sup>10</sup> Whereas for Heidegger, truth lies hidden beyond particular things, for Balthasar, the mystery of being is revealed, that is, made immediately apparent, in and through the encounter of particular beings. See David C. Schindler (2004), p.6.

<sup>11</sup> Balthasar is saying more than what Angelo Scola does in his essay ‘Christian Experience and Theology’, when he states that ‘[t]he priority of experience over theology is ontological’. Balthasar is saying that the reflection on existence is already theology.

<sup>12</sup> TH, p.20. Balthasar considers the term existential theology as a ‘tautology’.



changing forms is faithful to the putatively abiding substance.<sup>13</sup> According to Balthasar, this judgment of theology by the saints is possible ‘[e]ven when the saints have not been theologians, nor themselves very learned’.<sup>14</sup> And they may ‘radiate the most tremendous theological truths’, even if they are not ‘aware of their sanctity’.<sup>15</sup>

Let me explain what I mean when I say that, for Balthasar, the saints are the ones who, literally, existentialise dogma.<sup>16</sup> What Balthasar says about Thérèse and Paul is very helpful in this regard. Balthasar claims that Thérèse sees her life as a realization of her doctrine, and even proposes her life as an example for the Church.<sup>17</sup> Paul also demonstrates ‘the nature of Christian sanctity by pointing to himself’. Using Paul, Balthasar argues that, in a ‘faith lived in one’s existence’, one finds the ‘proof’ of dogma, the ‘coherence’ of dogmas, the ‘objective intelligibility’ of dogma and the ‘subjective comprehensibility’ of dogma.<sup>18</sup> What I think Balthasar is doing is transferring – and attempting to correct – the dualism of Tyrrell’s theology of revelation (dogma vs. experience), into the realm of theology in general.<sup>19</sup> For Balthasar, the saints are the *loci* where dogma complements existence. It is in this context that Balthasar’s concept of a ‘theological existence’ is to be understood. Thérèse and Elizabeth are among those who ‘devote their lives entirely to the reality of faith to live “theological existences”’.<sup>20</sup> Balthasar wants to show that any authority which the existence of the saints gains is a direct consequence of it being intrinsically theological: their existence generates theology, serves as a measure against which to appraise theology, and existentialises the dogma generated by theology.

It is because Balthasar wants to explore how it is that the saints have such a huge bearing upon the task of theology, that he conceives of a phenomenological

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<sup>13</sup> Linbeck, p.79

<sup>14</sup> *TS*, p.25.

<sup>15</sup> *TS*, pp.60-61. See also *TAI*: 229.

<sup>16</sup> Balthasar claims that one of Adrienne’s aspired goals was ‘the existentialization of dogma’. *FG*, p.68.

<sup>17</sup> *TS*, p.30.

<sup>18</sup> *TAI*: 229.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Michael Loome, ‘Revelation as Experience’: An Unpublished Lecture of George Tyrrell’, *The Heythrop Journal* XII (1971), 117-149

<sup>20</sup> *TS*, p.11. Balthasar provides a concept of a lived life as being a ‘theological existence’ vis-à-vis ‘existential theology’, (a theology based on experience) (300).

approach to hagiography. He claims that what he wants to do through this innovative method (because it had not been used in hagiography before) is to understand the ‘movement from the biographic and the personal to the dogmatic’.<sup>21</sup> He wants to understand what is entailed in the process of ‘dogma developing out of experience’.<sup>22</sup> He wants to comprehend how doctrinal comprehension and articulation follow from one’s encounter with God in real life. In order to do this, he finds no better way than that of observation and description, hoping that the phenomenological method will enable him to capture, and to portray to others, the movement from existence to dogma, which according to him is not extrinsic; at least with the saints it is not. With the saints, theology is not something extrinsic to existence. They are theological beings, and theological thought follows, so to speak, automatically, from life.

Balthasar would have been aware that the term ‘theological existence’ cannot be understood in a univocal sense when applied to different individuals. I am sure that he would have been willing to grant that there are different intensities, so to speak. There is a difference in the *quality* and the *quantity* of holiness which is, in turn, reflected in the *quality* and the *quantity* of the theology that materializes from such existents. What is certain is that Balthasar is willing to grant that there always is a correlation between the saintly existence, and the theology that emerges from it. What he says is that: more theology, a better theology, emerges from a life that is more holy, that is, more in correspondence with Christ, than from a life that is less holy, and less in correspondence with Christ. In his sight, the more beautiful, good and true that existent is, the more beautiful, good and true is the theology that arises from that existence, sometimes even when no speech is involved. According to Balthasar, strictly speaking, only the theology produced by the saints deserves the proper title of ‘theology’, since, according to him, authentic theology is constituted primarily by a holy existence and only in the case of the saints does existence truly constitute theology. Naturally, this is a deduction that others make in the saints’ regard, not one which the saints would

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<sup>21</sup> *TS*, p.31.

<sup>22</sup> Balthasar recognizes that modern hagiography has focused too strongly on the historical and the psychological point of view. *TA1*:231.

presume for themselves. According to Balthasar, the only reliable sign is ecclesial recognition, but only if such recognition comes from others, and is not claimed by the pneumatic person him or herself.<sup>23</sup> The theology which saints produce is – sometimes quite inexplicably – esteemed by others, in the sense that others recognise its worth. Thus, others within their community will apprehend that the theology which the saints supply, is more beautiful, good and true than that of others, whose existence lacks holiness. Speaking from below, the endurance over time of that theology is guaranteed. Speaking from above (as Balthasar generally does), the Spirit espouses such theology and warrants its survival. Writing of Maximus, Balthasar says that as ‘a humble monk, he seems almost deliberately to have avoided or concealed any claim to authority in the intellectual realm. There is never the slightest gesture of pretention.’<sup>24</sup> And yet, Balthasar emphasises, over and over again, the authority of Maximus on the theology of both East and West.<sup>25</sup> For both Erigena and Cyprisites, Maximus was an essential, indeed sometimes, the unique authority for interpreting the often obscure passages of Dionysius, particularly ‘in questions important to mystical theology – the nature of God, attributes of the Divine, and even the procession of the Holy Spirit.’<sup>26</sup> He is ‘the most daring systematician of his time’. He is ‘an incontestable pillar of the Church’. His is an authority that comes from the fact that he was a good theologian, but also from the fact that he was a monk, a spiritual advisor, a writer, and above all, a saint and a martyr.<sup>27</sup> Maximus was also ‘Catholic’ (he belonged to an ecumenical tradition when East and West were still undivided) which also have contributed to his authority.<sup>28</sup> This attribution of sanctification to the Spirit will serve as the third grounding for the authority of the saints, since saints acquire authority because of the Spirit’s action.

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<sup>23</sup> ‘Obedience in the Light of the Gospel, *New Elucidations*, 252.

<sup>24</sup> *CL*, p.30.

<sup>25</sup> Sherwood, 431.

<sup>26</sup> Geanakoplos, Deno J., ‘Some Aspects of the Influence of the Byzantine Maximus the Confessor on the Theology of East and West’, *Church History*, 38:2 (1969), 150-163.

<sup>27</sup> *CL*, p.29.

<sup>28</sup> Sherwood, referred to by Deno J. Geanakoplos, p.160.

In Balthasar's theology, while the theological transparency clearly belongs to all the saints, there are some saints whose mission is more specifically doctrinal. Writing about the 'content' of the 'great missions', Balthasar says that it 'has been something primarily objective: some task, some foundation, the formulation of a doctrine or the objective exposition of certain aspects of revelation'.<sup>29</sup> He quotes R.P.Philipon to state that, 'with some saints, not with all, the mission is not only that of a holy life but also of a doctrine, as with John of the Cross (1542-1591), Francis de Sales (1567-1622) and many of the founders of Orders'.<sup>30</sup> According to Balthasar, Thérèse also had an explicitly doctrinal mission.<sup>31</sup> Balthasar even claims that her "little way" can be regarded as the Catholic answer to the demands and questions raised by Luther'.<sup>32</sup> The authority that Balthasar attributes to Thérèse in this statement is enormous. One wonders why he himself never seriously pursued this critical issue after the 50's.

For Balthasar, to be holy is to live for God, but, in conjunction with this, so to speak, concurrently, there is also the ability to think, or even to speak, correctly about God. Thus, in Balthasar, the light which the saints shed on various doctrinal matters to do with human existence – 'the doctrine of man', 'the transcendental locus of human freedom', the suffering of God<sup>33</sup> and others – has value by the very fact that the light is shed by men and women who are (or who were, when alive) themselves authentic men and women, who are (or who were) free, and who are suffering (or who suffered), and therefore who are (or who were) soil for a proper theological existence. What is more, the theology which arises from theological existences is, so to speak, truly existential, in at least three senses: first of all, it arises from their existence, secondly, it is corroborated by their existence and thirdly, it is, so to speak, effortless. For Balthasar, the saints are 'dogmatic' from the outset.<sup>34</sup> They can express theology just by being who they are, and their actions (drama), their thoughts and their words (logic) become valid for others just

<sup>29</sup> *TS*, pp.59.

<sup>30</sup> *TS*, p.37. Philipon, R.P., *Sister Elizabeth of the Trinity, Spiritual Writings: Letters, Retreats, and Unpublished Notes* (New York: P.J.Kenedy and Sons, 1962).

<sup>31</sup> *TS*, pp.233, 413.

<sup>32</sup> *TS*, pp.95-6.

<sup>33</sup> *TA5*: 50.

<sup>34</sup> *TA1*: 231. Balthasar goes on to say that for such an experience, dialogue is necessary: 'the Spirit speaks to us in our interior'.

because these actions, thoughts and words belong to, and arise from a saintly existence. The ‘sheer existence [of the saints] proves to be a theological manifestation’.<sup>35</sup>

What Balthasar says becomes almost predictable when set within the wider context of the theology of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In his book *Action*, Maurice Blondel had emphasized the significance of lived human lives rather than of rational apologetics, and he had given an account of faith that was related to the whole realm of human experience.<sup>36</sup> In the 1930’s, Yves Congar identifies a ‘hiatus between faith and life’ in his essay ‘*Une conclusion théologique à l’etiquette sur les raisons actuelles de l’incroyance*’.<sup>37</sup> A decade later, Jean Daniélou publishes his ‘*Les Orientations présentes de la pensée religieuse*’, in which Daniélou writes about the ‘rupture between theology and life’,<sup>38</sup> a rupture which he attributes to the ‘strictly extrinsic character of the supernatural in neo-Thomism’.<sup>39</sup> Also, around this time, Romano Guardini (1885-1968) and Karl Adam (1876–1966) developed ‘a distinctive style of theological thought’ more generally known as ‘a theology of life’.<sup>40</sup> Whereas in the extrinsicist model, represented by the neo-scholastics, the object of faith remains external to the believer – it is simply ‘something to be assented to on the divine authority that is vouchsafed to the Catholic Church’<sup>41</sup> - with Balthasar we have an attempt at internalizing the object of faith, without falling into immanentism.

Balthasar seems to be saying something similar to what Thomas Aquinas did, namely that body and speech work together: ‘the body demands language’, and that, alternatively, language demands the body to speak the truth.<sup>42</sup> But Balthasar is saying more than that. Not only is he saying that the two (body and language)

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<sup>35</sup> *TS*, p.25.

<sup>36</sup> Maurice Blondel, *Action: Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice*, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1984), first published in 1893. See Boersma (2009), p.31.

<sup>37</sup> Boersma (2009), p.23.

<sup>38</sup> Boersma (2009), p.2.

<sup>39</sup> Boersma (2009), p.4.

<sup>40</sup> See James William McClendon, , *Biography as Theology. How Life Stories can Remake Today’s Theology* (Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1974), p.155.

<sup>41</sup> Dickens, p.35.

<sup>42</sup> Eugene F. Rogers, ‘Bodies Demand Language: Thomas Aquinas,’ in *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body*, ed. by Gerard Loughlin, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp.176-187 (p.181).

*need* each other. He is also saying that the two, body and language, *corroborate* each other, that is, that body (aesthetics) and language (logic) do not contradict each other.<sup>43</sup> Orthopraxy and orthodoxy validate each other. In Balthasar, ‘to begin with orthopraxy without first opening [one]self to the sight of the truth, [one’s] praxis could never be right (*orthos*) in God’s sense.’<sup>44</sup> Likewise, an orthodoxy that is not upheld by a life of holiness could never be right.<sup>45</sup> When Balthasar addresses the theologians on this issue, this takes on a more exhortatory tone. Here, he does not just say that a holy existence improves the quality of one’s theology, but that it is only the actual living of a holy life which gives rise to correct speech about God.

Ultimately, according to Balthasar, this ability to produce correct speech about God is one of the factors which makes the saints authoritative and influential in the existential domain. It is the ability to theologize which comes as a direct consequence – or rather as a complement – of a life lived in holiness. Balthasar writes that ‘the best authority for [a] statement of *theoria*’ is the one who both sees (*theoria*) the witness of the Spirit for Christ, and walks (*praxis*) with Jesus.<sup>46</sup> Balthasar is able to say this because, for him, theology, or speech about God, is part and parcel of praxis. It ‘involves man’s entire bodily constitution and has man’s “total existence” for its content.’<sup>47</sup> Balthasar maintains that

It is immaterial whether the Gospel is preached by word or by example, for the two are inseparable; the testimony to Jesus is always a testimony of both word and works...the testimony of the word has no value without works, while the testimony of one’s life can speak louder than the testimony of words.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Peter Casarella has said that ‘just as the Christian expression of the truth is measured by its correspondence to Christ’, so ‘[e]ach word spoken is measured by the testimony of a life.’ See Peter J. Casarella, ‘The Expression and Form of the Word: Trinitarian Hermeneutics and the Sacramentality of Language in Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Theology,’ in *Glory, Grace and Culture: The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Block Ed Jr (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), pp.37-68 (p.56).

<sup>44</sup> *TL3*: 191.

<sup>45</sup> The similarity with the postliberal theory of doctrine, as held by George Lindbeck cannot be missed.

<sup>46</sup> *TL3*: 192.

<sup>47</sup> *TL3*: 361.

<sup>48</sup> *CSL*, p.341. Balthasar’s focus on word and life has huge significance, in view of the emphasis in the apostolic constitution *Dei Filius* on the neo-Thomist belief in ‘miracles and prophecies’ as being ‘the most certain signs of revelation’. *Dei Filius*: Chap 2, 1 (DS 3009).

Two questions arise. Firstly, what difference is there between the nature of a holy existent (a saint) and that of someone whose existence is not holy, or who is not generally acknowledged as such? Secondly, according to Balthasar, what are some of the existential stances which would explain why some individuals function more authoritatively than others? In answer to the first question, which is one pertaining to his anthropology, we could say that, with Balthasar, the difference is in that the saints exist more, so to speak. They exist more because they are more of what they should be. Their beauty, truth and goodness – even in the eyes of others – lies primarily in their unspoilt humanity, that is, in the stance taken by them as finite creatures, vis-à-vis God and vis-à-vis the world. There is something about the being of the saints that goes further than others, that is more accepting of their creaturely finitude. This is why Balthasar chooses to explore the metaphysics of ‘saints’, and not the metaphysics of non-saints – even if most of the saints he chooses are not canonized, or mainstream saints. The saints’ own existence (even without the speech) can tell us more about metaphysics than the non-saints can (even if they may attempt to speak). And the reason is that the saints are the ones who come closest to an amalgamation of existence and essence, of their being human and their mission. In addition, this quality in the saints is perceptible, so that others can often tell that these holy individuals have become what they were meant to become.

Clearly, for Balthasar, to be a Christian is not simply to have as ‘ultimate goal the civilizing and humanizing of the world’, as it is with theologians involved with politics. The French philosophers Maurice Blondel (1861-1949), Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955) would all agree with Balthasar that the task of the Christian is not political involvement.<sup>49</sup> According to Balthasar, the task of the Christian is more importantly existential – and this is the Pauline and the Johannine view – to be with Christ, to be like Christ and to live for Christ. Balthasar uses the philosophical category of *Entsprechung* (correspondence), which is found in the Neoplatonic-Areopagite

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<sup>49</sup> *EG*, p.69.

and in the Thomistic tradition<sup>50</sup> in order to describe the nature of the saint, and to imply that any authority that others may perceive in the saint has to be a consequence of this correspondence with Christ.<sup>51</sup> According to Balthasar, existence *can* take up the *forma Christi*,<sup>52</sup> and *ought to* take up this *forma Christi*.<sup>53</sup> More importantly, for Balthasar, existence becomes comprehensible only ‘as a function of [this] Christ-form’.<sup>54</sup> Balthasar joins the Gospels and the Pauline corpus to argue that ‘Christian sanctity is “Christ-bearing”, “Christophorous” in essence and actualisation’.<sup>55</sup> Existential – not just cognitive – ‘prerequisites must be fulfilled’ in order that the Christ form ‘may also find a hearing in this total existence.’<sup>56</sup> The factor that makes the authentic Christian ‘authoritative’, is not simply the transparency to the original form that is Christ,<sup>57</sup> but the access which the individual Christian has to the image of him or herself which is contained in Christ, and subsequently, the actual assumption of this form. In the existential domain, an existent can become authoritative, and can function authoritatively, when his or her ‘Christophorous’ form becomes visible in him or her. Something of the mystery of Christ is made visible in concrete form to the world through each Christian who con-forms to the form which Christ gives to his or her existence.<sup>58</sup> In this sense, Balthasar speaks the language of Plato, claiming that there is somewhere a faultless ideal for every man and every women. However, unlike a typical Platonic idealist, Balthasar would acknowledge that it is possible for some individuals to draw quite close to that form (which is in Christ), and to embody it.

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<sup>50</sup> Ellero Babini, ‘Jesus Christ: Form and Norm of Man according to Hans Urs von Balthasar,’ in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. by David L. Schindler, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), 221-230 (pp.222-223 and 227).

<sup>51</sup> Correspondence does not mean identification. On the contrary, Balthasar claims that ‘[t]he authentic saint is always the one who confuses himself the least with Christ.’ *TAI*: 215.

<sup>52</sup> *TAI*: 464. See also *CSL*, p.212.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Experience of God?’, *NE*, p.29. See also *CSL*, p.67 and *CL*, p.125.

<sup>54</sup> *TAI*: 515. See also 28.

<sup>55</sup> *TAI*: 562.

<sup>56</sup> *TAI*: 464.

<sup>57</sup> Williams defines ‘authoritative’ as ‘transparent to its origin.’ Williams, p.15.

<sup>58</sup> Howsare, pp.130 and 136. Unlike Barth’s Christocentrism, which tends to reduce all activity to the activity of Christ, Balthasar also emphasizes the secondary roles.



## THE CREATED VS. THE UNCREATED ORDER

Clearly, Balthasar's hagiography is inspired by his 'meta-anthropology' which focusses on the being (the existence) and the essence of man (what essentially defines him). A few words must be said about this. First of all, as opposed to John Scottus Eriugena, Balthasar emphasizes the ontological distinction between God and creation.<sup>59</sup> '[D]ialectically: the stronger the union between God and man becomes, which the Word of God effects, the more clearly we see the difference between them'.<sup>60</sup> Whereas medieval hagiography would have emphasized the supernatural qualities of the saints, and approximated the saint toward the divine, Balthasar emphasizes the disparity as much as the likeness. In Balthasar, likeness to God and differentiation from Him co-exist in the saints more than in anyone else. More than anybody, the saint 'accepts [his or her creaturely] state of image and likeness and renders to God the reverence and service that are his due from one who is at a remove from him.'<sup>61</sup> In Balthasar's work, the real saints would be more aware than anybody else, of the difference between God and themselves.<sup>62</sup> They would know that they are finite creatures, rooted in humanity.<sup>63</sup> And they would live in a way that shows it. Balthasar totally rejects the pantheism associated with Eriugena and with Hegel.<sup>64</sup> The creatures are beings, whereas God is what Etienne Gilson has called the *actus purus essendi*, the pure act of existing, be-ing.<sup>65</sup> In Balthasar, this *maior dissimilitudo* between God and creature is even grounded in the dissimilarity within God himself, who could even abandon himself.<sup>66</sup> In his comparison of Nietzsche with Balthasar, David L.Schindler describes how liberalism 'entails a superficial ("*super-facies*") existence', and how the picture portrayed by Nietzsche – that of *forcing* the infinite within the finite – is very different to that portrayed by Balthasar, which is one of '*the*

<sup>59</sup> Nichols (2005), p.121.

<sup>60</sup> *TKB*, p.292.

<sup>61</sup> *CSL*, pp.68-9. See also p.75.

<sup>62</sup> *FG*, p.138. Writing about this difference, Adrienne says that 'somewhere there is an elementary non-correspondence.

<sup>63</sup> *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics*, Vol IV: *The Realm of Metaphysics in Antiquity*, trans. by Brian McNeil, Andrew Louth, John Saward, Rowan Williams and Oliver Davies; ed. by John Riches (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), p.404. Henceforth referred to as *TA4*.

<sup>64</sup> Fergus Kerr, 'Balthasar and Metaphysics', in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* ed. by Oakes, Edward T. and Moss, David, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 224-238 (p.233).

<sup>65</sup> Kerr (2004), p.234.

<sup>66</sup> *TKB*, p.286.

*breaking open* of the infinite within the finite'. I would agree with Schindler that it is Balthasar's stance – and not Nietzsche's – that 'enables the human-earthly to achieve...genuine depth or profundity: that is, truly to go beyond the surface boundaries that constitute its reality as finite.'<sup>67</sup>

A second point is, whereas Karl Rahner emphasizes the '*potentia oboedientialis*' (our openness to God, our desire for the beatific vision), and the 'supernatural existential' (that is, the gift of the capacity to accept grace), Balthasar focuses on the nature of this *potentia* (and in a sense corrects Aquinas), emphasizing that 'the trans-natural powerfulness denoted in the word "*potentia*" in the phrase "*potentia oboedientialis*" is not in the least a powerfulness of the creature.' He claims that, if this were the case, it would be a form of the *potentia naturalis*, when, in fact, this is a case of the 'powerfulness of the Creator'. Balthasar insists that the *potentia oboedientialis* presupposes the *potentia naturalis* – since the created intellectual being must exist in order that God can display his grace in it – but it is not the same as the *potentia naturalis*.<sup>68</sup> In this regard, although Balthasar concedes that Rahner is justified in preserving *natura pura* as a 'residual concept',<sup>69</sup> in agreement with De Lubac, Balthasar maintains that a *natura pura* does not exist in reality.<sup>70</sup> Nature is *intrinsically* open to grace,<sup>71</sup> and the purpose of nature was, from its origin, to be an instrument of grace.<sup>72</sup>

Thirdly, contrary to Eckhart, Balthasar emphasizes the concreteness of Being.<sup>73</sup> In Balthasar, as in Gregory of Nyssa, finitude is a positive characteristic of finite being, rather than a deficiency.<sup>74</sup> The *maior dissimilitudo*, this 'relationship of difference' with God is not shameful. Difference is no 'degradation'.<sup>75</sup> Being a creature 'outside God...is not something suspect but something excellent.'<sup>76</sup> With

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<sup>67</sup> David L.Schindler (2005), p.30.

<sup>68</sup> 'Movement Toward God', in *CS*, p.40. See *Love Alone is Credible*, p.384 quoted in *Howsare*, p.39.

<sup>69</sup> *TKB*, pp.298-302.

<sup>70</sup> Patricia Sullivan, p.3. De Lubac, on his part, had stressed the impossibility of defining that which would remain of nature had it not been ordered to grace.

<sup>71</sup> *THL*, p.69. See *Howsare*, p.18.

<sup>72</sup> *CSL*, p.216.

<sup>73</sup> Nichols (2005), p.121.

<sup>74</sup> *PT*, p.29

<sup>75</sup> *PT*, p.29

<sup>76</sup> *TL3*: 418.

Balthasar '[i]t is in the humanity that we find God, in the world of sense that we find the Spirit.'<sup>77</sup> The creature is 'saved only in the express preservation and perfection of his nature',<sup>78</sup> so that man (or woman) does not have to become supernatural. In Balthasar's theology, existence becomes, for the experienced person, 'a luminous space which he has embraced',<sup>79</sup> and the way of perfection lies in the acceptance of human existence.<sup>80</sup>

In Balthasar's view, withdrawal from the world, both of the individual and of the Church,<sup>81</sup> is, therefore, erroneous. It 'leads only to betrayal of the original analogy between God and creature' and, Balthasar adds in his typical overstated manner, 'to the destruction of mankind.'<sup>82</sup> Not only is the Christian to accept the reality of human nature as it is – the 'fundamental option' toward his or her existential situation, as in Rahner – he or she is also to take 'the finite, ontologically dependent concrete reality of individual material things, seriously' and to value concrete reality 'reverently'. He or she is called to 'the task of performing the act of affirming Being',<sup>83</sup> 'to be the guardian of metaphysics in our time.'<sup>84</sup> In Balthasar, this would apply to the saints in particular. As a true Christian, the saint is the one who works towards logically establishing the objectivity of being,<sup>85</sup> the one who works towards establishing the world as 'a sacred theophany'.<sup>86</sup>

We have already indicated in our first point that, through his emphasis on the *analogia entis*, Balthasar not only preserves the *in tanta similitudine maior dissimilitudo* with the Creator, which was enunciated at the Fourth Lateran Council, but also pays tribute to it. Balthasar's position is that being 'needs to be held distinct from God, neither confused with him, nor detached from him, but reconciled with him through the proportionalism (or analogy) of divine

<sup>77</sup> *P*, p.9. See also *TAI*: 230-1.

<sup>78</sup> See *CL*, pp.208, 289-290 and 256-7, for Maximus' idea of human perfection. David S.Yeago describes Balthasar's 'nature' as 'human historical existence, the reality of free and finite creatures groping splendidly and horribly and always unpredictably after the sense of their lives.'Yeago, p.98.

<sup>79</sup> *TAI*: 239.

<sup>80</sup> *TAI*: 438.

<sup>81</sup> See *Razing the Bastions: On the Church in this Age* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993).

<sup>82</sup> *CSL*, p.183.

<sup>83</sup> *TA5*: 648.

<sup>84</sup> *TA5*: 656. See also p.646.

<sup>85</sup> Brian E.Daley, in *CL*, p.18.

<sup>86</sup> *TAI*: 679.

creation'.<sup>87</sup> This leads us to our fourth point. With Balthasar, the creature is never neutral toward God, whether in its being, its action or its thought.<sup>88</sup> As Schindler has pointed out, even the postmoderns, like Nietzsche and Derrida, insist that 'the reality of God is such that his presence or absence changes everything.'<sup>89</sup> This is, ultimately, an understanding of the creature that is regulated by its relationship with its Creator. To be with God, or to be without Him, is simply not the same thing.

Balthasar articulates this concept of the analogy between 'concrete created nature and the concrete nature of God' most radically in his *Présence et Pensée*.<sup>90</sup> Having emphasized that the creature can never 'have' God, he adds that one 'could contemplate the possibility of having [naturally, within the terms of the analogy itself], the path of the creature 'in a certain fashion "be" God.'<sup>91</sup> This brings us to the fifth and final point. The involvement with God as Balthasar understands it, and as he develops it, presents a way of *being* God, in a significantly different way from the *theosis* of the east. In Balthasar, the model for every authentic relationship with God' (historical, personal and universal) is precisely this: 'the absolute abandonment of Christ to the will of the Father'.<sup>92</sup> Theosis as Balthasar understands it involves being one with the intra-trinitarian dynamics, attitudes and relationships, rather than with God's essence. Christian existence takes on the meaning of a process whereby one yields him or herself to be modelled by Jesus' attitude in relation to the Father.<sup>93</sup> What is significant is that Balthasar articulates the hope that every Christian may experience, and manifest, not only the attitude of Jesus towards the Father's authority, but also the Father's authority for Christ on the Cross, an authority that Balthasar describes as 'concrete, intimate and inevitable', 'demanding and unrelenting'. In this regard, Balthasar claims that 'if Christians are actually to achieve the 'radical and extreme

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<sup>87</sup> Davies (1998), p.12. See *TAI*: 244-5. See also *P*, pp.156-7.

<sup>88</sup> David L.Schindler, 'The Significance of Hans Urs von Balthasar,' in Ed Block (ed.), *Glory, Grace and Culture* (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), pp.16-36 (p.21).

<sup>89</sup> David L.Schindler (2005), p.19.

<sup>90</sup> *PT*, p.81. Balthasar maintains that it was Gregory of Nyssa who established this analogy which was to define Balthasar's agenda for doing theology in subsequent decades.

<sup>91</sup> *PT*, p.111.

<sup>92</sup> *TA5*: 51.

<sup>93</sup> *P*, pp.88-9.

obedience' of Christ all the way to the Cross, they must participate in the Father's authority vis-à-vis Christ.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the Christian is not only to participate existentially in the obedience of Christ, but also in the Father's authority in relation to Christ. He or she is to be *with* authority,<sup>95</sup> not in the same way as Christ,<sup>96</sup> but with authority all the same.

### **THE FEATURES OF THE SAINTS' LIFE THAT MAKES THEM EXPRESSIVE OF GOD'S FORM**

Having determined what we believe are the main characteristics of Balthasar's 'meta-anthropology' – which are, evidently, reflected in his hagiography – and before I proceed to provide arguments that are even more focussed on the saints' authority, I would like to spell out some of the features of the life of the saints that makes them expressive of God's form, according to Balthasar. These are, first and foremost, the transcendentals themselves, but one can identify, in Balthasar, other existential features which make *auctoritates* out of the saints. I have thought it best to order these other features under three subtitles, namely, the aptitude of the saints to reclaim human existence, the entrenchment of the saints in the world, and the saints' attitude of surrender. Needless to say, in Balthasar, these existential features would also have served to challenge, not just traditional hagiography, but also philosophical or theological trends. Let me begin with the transcendentals, which are the most straightforward among the existential features which contribute to the authority of the saints.

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<sup>94</sup> *CSL*, p.257. With Karl Barth, the Son's obedience to the Father 'constitutes his *opus proprium* within the *opera Trinitatis ad extra*, the Son's distinctive manner qua Son of executing God's undivided saving will. Church Dogmatics IV.1. See Scott Swain and Michael Allen, 'The Obedience of the Eternal Son', *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 15:2 (2013).

<sup>95</sup> In this regard, the accusation that Ben Quash brings against Balthasar, concerning the frailty of the dramatic because of the emphasis on obedience, may need to be rethought. See Quash (2005), pp.161 and 221.

<sup>96</sup> *TAL*:185. In Christ, 'divine authority' 'speaks in the I-form'.

### a. THE TRANSCENDENTALS

As with Denys the Areopagite, and the *nouvelle théologiens* in general, in Balthasar, mystery has permeated the created order,<sup>97</sup> so that the created spirit has a way through nature to the Creator, without God being surrendered ‘to the willfulness of the creature’.<sup>98</sup> In all the transcendentals of being: beauty, goodness and truth, one can see that it is the glory of God that is being manifested.<sup>99</sup> The Christ-form is the archetype of this beauty, goodness or truth of God and of man, and anyone who participates in Christ’s beauty, goodness or truth – as the saints do – himself or herself becomes a manifestation of the beautiful, the good and the true which is in God. The saints’ form expresses God’s own form.<sup>100</sup>

Significantly, Balthasar has stated that being beautiful does not necessarily mean being agreeable to the person with a creative aesthetic sensibility, so much so that, in Balthasar, beauty embraces the crucifixion. I think one could safely say that Balthasar also refashions the meaning of the other transcendentals in the same way, so that being beautiful, good or true is not necessarily to do with pleasure, graciousness or accuracy. Typical of Balthasar is the view from above. In Balthasar, drama is a *theo*-drama, just as aesthetics and logic are a *theo*-aesthetics, and a *theo*-logic. It is therefore not separate from that of the Trinity. As Werner Lösel has said, with Balthasar, we have a ‘theo-drama’ both *within* the Trinity and *without*.<sup>101</sup> But the question remains: how do the two relate to each other? Is the drama between God and man an extension of the divine drama? It would seem to be so. Lösel has said that the ‘conflict of infinite and finite wills’, which we find in the *Dramatics*, is an extension of an inner-divine *theo*-drama between the infinite wills of Father and Son in the Holy Spirit.<sup>102</sup> However, Nicholas M.Healy’s interpretation is more faithful to Balthasar’s in that he sees the human and the divine drama more as a merging than as an extension. Healy maintains that Balthasar has set one within the other, rather than one alongside the other.

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<sup>97</sup> Boersma (2009), p.32.

<sup>98</sup> *TKB*, p.310.

<sup>99</sup> See Henrici, ‘The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar’, p.165.

<sup>100</sup> *TS*, pp.392-3.

<sup>101</sup> Lösel (2001), p.201.

<sup>102</sup> Lösel (2001), p.221.

The dramatic ‘here’ is ‘grounded in the primary drama “beyond”, in the life of the immanent Trinity’,<sup>103</sup> so that our existence is interpreted as ‘a play that we play within the overarching divine play’, and we have to situate our own roles within the ‘primary drama’ in order to understand them, both as individuals and as church.<sup>104</sup> Balthasar situates this integration of dramas within the ontological order, which complicates matters quite a bit, but the notion remains an interesting form of the Eastern notion of *theosis*.

In addition to it being a *theo*-drama, in Balthasar, this drama is characterized by a ‘tensiveness’ that is ‘inherent in all aspects of Christian existence’.<sup>105</sup> Kilby has noted how, in Balthasar, Christ himself causes, and intensifies the drama. Conflict, tension, polarization, commitment and suffering ensue as a consequence of Christ.<sup>106</sup> On their part, the saints are illustrations, but also acute secondary examples – the primary being Christ – of this tension, of this state of being stretched tight. The saints know what it means to be tempted and distraught, in trying to preserve the equilibrium between heaven and earth. Particularly in his works on Thérèse and Elizabeth, Balthasar explores the saint in the contextuality of her very existence, and attempts to learn from outside what the ‘inscape’ is, that is, what goes on within the saint, what the mental processes of the saint are, what the inner drama is like,<sup>107</sup> how the individual saint grapples with her own demons, and so on. It is this dramatic struggle – which merges with the intra-trinitarian struggle – which makes the saints expressive of God’s form.<sup>108</sup> David L.Schindler has claimed that, in Balthasar, the saints labour to *receive* heaven, rather than to *seize* it, as with Nietzsche.<sup>109</sup> Schindler is right, but ‘to *receive* heaven’ does not mean to relinquish all elements of intensity and force. Paradoxically, it is this responsive conduct that enables the saints to become authoritative. In Balthasar, being holy is being able to actively receive the beauty, goodness and truth which

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<sup>103</sup> Nicholas M. Healy, p.61.

<sup>104</sup> See *TD2*: 53.

<sup>105</sup> Nicholas M.Healy, p.72. See *CSL*, pp.218-9.

<sup>106</sup> Kilby, pp. 60-61.

<sup>107</sup> This is a notion taken from Gerald Manley Hopkins. See *TA3*: 336

<sup>108</sup> *TL3*: 153.

<sup>109</sup> David L.Schindler (2005), pp.25 and 27.

is in the Triune God. It is here – between heaven and earth – as David Moss has said, that the lives of the saints serve as ‘a kind of pulpit’ and ‘a sermon’.<sup>110</sup>

### **b. THE RECLAMATION OF EXISTENCE**

In Balthasar’s theology, as in Ignatius of Loyola, man and woman are ‘called into existence for the historical actuality of meeting with [God].’<sup>111</sup> The *telos* of each and every individual is to be conformed to Christ, or rather to the Idea of him/herself which is contained in Christ.<sup>112</sup> In Balthasar, the saint is someone who has received insight into the mystery of existence and who exemplifies the essence of his or her existence. Subsequently, the authority of the individual saint is grounded in the cognizance of his or her *telos*,<sup>113</sup> and in the recognition of others that the *telos* features very powerfully in that individual’s existence. This is not merely ‘Aristotle’s *causa-et-finis* metaphysical realism’.<sup>114</sup> It is, specifically, Balthasar’s Christian ontology. With Balthasar, the more we are conformed to the ‘Idea’, that is, to the individual truth of ourselves in Christ, discovered in prayer, the more intrinsically human we become, and consequently, the more able we are to provide a credible image of humanity. We acquire authority when, rather than evading our existence, we claim it for ourselves. Subsequently, we not only grasp that we are, and what we are, but we also appreciate who we ought to be. We acquire authority because, in becoming a form through which the glory of God may manifest itself, we are transported into an existence that is characterised by fruitfulness, by solidarity, and by nuptiality,<sup>115</sup> all of which enable us to function authoritatively.

To re-claim one’s existence suggests that our existence had at some point been lost. Within a world where sin is a reality, to reclaim one’s existence is to accept

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<sup>110</sup> Moss, p.89.

<sup>111</sup> *CSL*, p.463.

<sup>112</sup> *P*, p.186. The neo-scholastic notion was that human beings have two separate ends: the natural and the supernatural, for *Ressourcement* theologians, human beings have one single end, namely to see God. Howsare, pp.11 and 15. See also Boersma (2009), p.53.

<sup>113</sup> The Judaeo-Christian portrayal of the human being stresses that there is more to one’s *telos* and the fulfilment of one’s nature than simply coming into existence. See V.Harrison, *Homo Orans*, 283.

<sup>114</sup> Kerr (1999), p.10.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics, Vol. 7: Theology: The New Covenant* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press; 1983). Henceforth referred to as *TA 7*.



one's finiteness, one's pure ordinariness, one's inconspicuousness, one's hiddenness. This is the essence of holiness. The saints have done precisely that. They may represent 'the universal' but 'they are thoroughly ordinary men with that ordinary *eidos* or meaning to their humanity which is immanent in this world: Simon, son of Jonah, John, son of Zebedee.'<sup>116</sup> There is something here that reminds us of Heidegger's *Dasein* in the sense of a being-there. In Heidegger, the fundamental constitution of *Dasein* is a being-in-the-world.<sup>117</sup> In Balthasar, the kind of involvement that being-there signifies is made possible by his understanding of both eternity and bodiliness. The authority of the saints is grounded in their very normality, and it is within this very commonplaceness that the saints function as an authority.<sup>118</sup> Balthasar asserts that in the saints – in Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, the charismatic Judges, the Prophets and the Martyrs of faith, and Mary – 'we confront life in the Holy Spirit, hidden life which is inconspicuous, and yet *so* conspicuous that its situations, scenes, and encounters receive a sharp, unmistakable profile and exert an archetypal power over the whole history of faith.'<sup>119</sup>

Another feature of the life of the saints that grounds their authority and enables them to function as an authority is the unity of their existence. Especially in his early, post-war works, Balthasar often presents the individual as a microcosm of the world which is fragmented and broken. According to Balthasar, how is it possible for the saints to defeat this fragmentariness, how is it that this unity of the saints' existence provides them with authority, or enables others to attribute authority to them? First of all, we have to remember that, in Balthasar, it is only Christ who can draw the separate experiences into a whole.<sup>120</sup> Only He can bestow form and unity upon our life.<sup>121</sup> Only He can act as 'the center of the gravity of life'.<sup>122</sup> So the implication is that there is a direct correlation between one's relationship with Christ and a certain harmony in one's life. According to

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<sup>116</sup> *TH*, pp.114-115.

<sup>117</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010).

<sup>118</sup> See *TAI*: 565.

<sup>119</sup> *TAI*:36. It is with Blaise Pascal that Balthasar associates this revelation-hiddenness dialectic.

<sup>120</sup> *C*, pp.120-1, 124.

<sup>121</sup> *C*, p.132.

<sup>122</sup> *TAI*: 515.

Balthasar, complete unity will never be achieved in this world, but, as Christians, ‘our existence will one day be given to us as unity...precisely as our form, in which we really encounter ourselves for the first time and are finally that which we had always wanted to be.’<sup>123</sup> In Balthasar, the mission which we are assigned by Christ often acts as the unifier of our existence. Mission unifies the history, the psychology, and the ‘little anecdotes and details that characterize saintly lives.’<sup>124</sup> The saints are characterized by a heightened sense of purpose and of meaning.

In the introduction to his *L’Action*, Blondel had established that the most fundamental philosophical question is whether human life has a meaning (*un sens*), and whether man has a destiny. He had claimed that the solution offered to this question cannot be negative. It is from the fact that there is meaning that Blondel establishes that *il y a quelque chose*.<sup>125</sup> Balthasar’s theology grounds the authority of the saints precisely in this: in the meaning that God has given to their existence, sometimes even before their birth. In Balthasar, the creature cannot be, and cannot find meaning except in relation with God.<sup>126</sup> What Balthasar says about the ‘ultimate meaning’ of the Christian’s existence is very Ignatian. Meaning emanates from one’s ‘life before God’,<sup>127</sup> one’s divine calling,<sup>128</sup> ‘the service of God’.<sup>129</sup> In this, Balthasar challenges the modern existentialists who would insist that the most important consideration for individuals is their individuality, and who would maintain that it is they — not society or religion, and its labels, roles, stereotypes, definitions, or other preconceived categories — who are responsible for giving meaning to life and living it authentically. In Balthasar, the saints’s existence is a response to the existentialist philosopher. As opposed to the existentialists, the saints derive the meaning of their existence, of their life, of their history not from within themselves but from God who often communicates through the Church.<sup>130</sup> The basic presupposition of the theology of

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<sup>123</sup> *C*, pp.127. Also 125.

<sup>124</sup> *TS*, p.27. See also *CSL*, pp.460-1.

<sup>125</sup> Michael A.Conway, ‘A Positive Phenomenology: The Structure Of Maurice Blondel’s Early Philosophy’, *The Heythrop Journal* XLVII (2006), pp. 579–600, (p.588).

<sup>126</sup> David L.Schindler (2005), p.22.

<sup>127</sup> ‘Martyrdom and Mission’, *NE*, p.287.

<sup>128</sup> *CSL*, p.83. See also p.191.

<sup>129</sup> *TS*, p.299.

<sup>130</sup> *P*, p.94.

the saints is that existence has no meaning unless God reveals its purpose when he ‘imparts a distinctive and divinely authorized mission.’<sup>131</sup> Balthasar states that ‘For each Christian, God has an idea that fixes his place within the membership of the Church; this idea is unique and personal, embodying for each his appropriate sanctity.’<sup>132</sup>

With Balthasar, every existent ‘possesses a certain degree of powerfulness of being...in such a way that he poses a demand to the world around him’.<sup>133</sup> This ‘powerfulness of being’ is especially evident in the saints. True sanctity, he says, ‘can become so dazzling in the testimony of Christians that its beauty and rightness will be visible and evident.’<sup>134</sup> One could say that the authority of the saints arises from the clarity which the saints enjoy with respect to the meaning of their existence, and that the saints start functioning as an authority, when the meaning of their existence also becomes evident to the community, when the mission and the manner of being holy is endorsed, even if this may only happen many generations into the future. On his or her part, the saint functions as an authority by supporting and building the community.<sup>135</sup>

Balthasar emphasizes the ‘absolute uniqueness of every person (the *Je-Einmaligkeit*),<sup>136</sup> and he attributes a particular authority to this uniqueness. The ‘incomparability’ of the individual person is not ‘predicated of him as a quality of his being’, but as a consequence of his personhood.<sup>137</sup> Whereas existentialism would have emphasized the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe, in Balthasar, the individual participates in Christ’s own uniqueness, and there is no isolation. Uniqueness stands for the incomparability between Christian subjects, that has a theological source, since it

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<sup>131</sup> *TD3*: 207.

<sup>132</sup> *TS*, p.20.

<sup>133</sup> See Balthasar’s discussion of *Seinsmächtigkeit* in his essay on ‘Authority’, *E*, pp.128-9.

<sup>134</sup> *TA1*: 603.

<sup>135</sup> *TD3*: 271.

<sup>136</sup> *Einmaligkeit* is generally translated as ‘singularity’ or ‘unicity’, but I prefer the term ‘uniqueness’. See also Romano Guardini: *Reform from the Source*, Communio Books (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010), p. 39.

<sup>137</sup> *MH*, p.45. Mark Ouellet has pointed out that the advantage of Balthasar’s ‘theological conception of the person’, is that ‘it establishes at once both uniqueness and ecclesiality’. See Mark Ouellet, ‘Foundations of Christian Ethics,’ in *Hans Urs Balthasar. His Life and Work*, ed. by David L.Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), p.238.

is God alone who can define the Christian subject and designate him or her in his qualitative uniqueness.<sup>138</sup> The authority of the saints is grounded in the uniqueness of the relationship with God that each of them has – since ‘it is to this particular, irreplaceable human being that God speaks’<sup>139</sup> – as well as in the unique portion of the truth which God has revealed to each one, and which each one is meant to convey. Balthasar emphasizes this in his book on *Prayer*. Every man is unique in that he or she ‘has his own particular truth, expressing the special, historical relationship which God has with him’, and which ‘has its place within the universal covenant-truth.’<sup>140</sup> However, there are some saints where uniqueness takes on a deeper significance. Here, uniqueness becomes a participation in the uniqueness that is attributed to God. Balthasar describes this process in his *Theology of History*. He writes that

One or a few are chosen to capture something of the aura of uniqueness which is of the essence of royal grace, and as individuals to some extent to share in it: naturally, in the name of all, and as mediators between the uniqueness of the King and the ordinariness of the people...The fact that the radiance of uniqueness has fallen on them, giving them an *eidōs* of a new value, raising it to the level of all-fulfilling uniqueness, is due solely to their having been freely chosen.<sup>141</sup>

The recognition by others of such uniqueness in each of the saints is often accountable for the authority which others attribute to such individuals.

### c. ENTRENCHMENT IN THE WORLD

In Balthasar’s theology, the saints are also assigned authority because of their entrenchment in the world, which, in turn, enables the saints to function as an authority. One called by God is ‘not of the world’ (Jn 17:14). And yet, the individual whose self is open to God ‘receives authentic power to penetrate the world’.<sup>142</sup> Balthasar sees the saints as individuals who struggle dramatically within the world rather than evade it. In Balthasar, ‘openness to the world’ is ‘to live the

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<sup>138</sup> Writing about Adrienne, Balthasar maintains that the supernatural dimension did not efface Adrienne’s natural individuality: ‘rather it underlined it.’ See *FG*, p.47.

<sup>139</sup> *P*, p.37.

<sup>140</sup> *P*, p.37.

<sup>141</sup> *TH*, pp.114-115.

<sup>142</sup> *P*, p.265.

real'.<sup>143</sup> It is to overcome the 'huge and 'seductive' temptation to flee this 'everyday existence'. It is only the person who overcomes such a temptation to flee that acquires the wisdom that others find so attractive.

In his *Catholicism*, published in 1938,<sup>144</sup> De Lubac had said that 'if Christians continue to proclaim louder than all others the need to flee from the world, *fugiendum a saeculo*, it is with quite a different meaning and with another emphasis,'<sup>145</sup> than that associated with certain philosophies or religions. In Balthasar, to die to the world in Christ should not take the form of an alienation.<sup>146</sup> On the contrary, it means to give oneself, along with Christ, for the world and for its benefit.'<sup>147</sup> In his *Aesthetics*, Balthasar offers Christianity as the religion which offers the best answer concerning the rapport with the world, claiming that Christianity has replaced the *despicere mundum*, which also includes 'the passive endurance of contempt of the world, with the *despici a mundo*.<sup>148</sup> Using the saints, Balthasar challenges the widely-held misconception of the *despicere mundum*, claiming, in contrast, that it is possible to both make one's stand exclusively in God and to be open to the world. Mary, he claims, has existentially shown that the two are 'complementary concepts.'<sup>149</sup> In the saints, Balthasar sees evidence of this stance before God and of a concurrent entrenchment in the world, and endorses it. The saints acquire authority and assume an authoritative function precisely because of their embeddedness within the world.

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<sup>143</sup> According to Balthasar, it is not to be understood as 'dialogue' and directly experienced 'sociability'. Neither is the value of a life to be calculated in terms of tangible productivity. According to him, this would be a very limited and narrow view. See *TS*, p.9.

<sup>144</sup> Balthasar considered de Lubac's *Catholicism* to be 'a composition formed of selections from unknown Church Fathers and from the great theology of the saints.' *TE*, p.14.

<sup>145</sup> Henri De Lubac, *Catholicism*, p. 67.

<sup>146</sup> Ed Block has called our attention to Balthasar's 'careful' historical outline where he traced the notion of alienation, starting from Neoplatonism through Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa, to Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. See Block, p.191.

<sup>147</sup> Balthasar maintains that this is another point which was pushed too far into the background in official monastic theology. Balthasar, 'Are there Lay People in the Church?', *NE*, p.78.

<sup>148</sup> *TA5*: 50-51. Balthasar considers this latter principle (*despici a mundo*) to be itself 'an elevation and fulfilment of metaphysics', because, he says, it explains 'ontologically the ontic (historical) event of salvation.'

<sup>149</sup> *CSL*, p.206. Balthasar condemns psychology for often ascribing 'to those called by God: lack of concern about the world and society; uncontrolled emotional complexes; even fear of life itself'. *CSL*, p. 478.

Since there is nothing that says embeddedness as does our body, corporeality is to be considered one of the main features of the life of the saints that entrenches them in the world, and, at the same time, makes them expressive of God's form. Balthasar claims that the role of man's corporeality is central,<sup>150</sup> and that 'man can only finally attain salvation in and through his corporeal existence.'<sup>151</sup> In this regard, the contribution of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) cannot be overlooked. Merleau-Ponty brings back the body as a way of being in the world, and he interprets perception as an embodied activity.<sup>152</sup> Especially in his doctrine of the spiritual senses, Balthasar does not fail to emphasise that our whole being is involved when we perceive an object. John O'Donnell has mentioned that 'bodiliness' is one of Balthasar's favourite words.<sup>153</sup> Despite his emphasis on bodiliness, some have suggested that Balthasar's theology is profoundly hostile to the body, and that this is most apparent in his treatment of sexuality.<sup>154</sup> Although his treatment of sexuality may leave a lot to be desired, and although his work may show 'lack of true understanding of earthly, created and biological reality',<sup>155</sup> Balthasar's emphasis on the incarnation, on faith as grounded in life, and on the visibility of forms of beauty, goodness and truth, are more than enough to prove his genuine appreciation for the physicality of our presence in the world.

Balthasar emphasizes that our bodies implant us within the world, empowering us to leave an indelible imprint upon it. Naturally, in his view, it is always 'in' Jesus Christ and 'oriented toward' Jesus Christ 'that man has been set in existence as a being of spirit and body.'<sup>156</sup> In Balthasar's theology, there is no space for Manicheism. Earthly life is not a prison, the body is not a punishment, and all flight from the body is anti-Christian.<sup>157</sup> In fact, 'all philosophy, theology and

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<sup>150</sup> *TAI*: 313-4.

<sup>151</sup> *EG*, p.80.

<sup>152</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London and New York: Routledge, 1962).

<sup>153</sup> John O'Donnell, *Hans Urs von Balthasar* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1992), p.57.

<sup>154</sup> Beattie (2005), p.168. See also Tina Beattie, *New Catholic Feminism: Theology and Theory* (London and New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2006).

<sup>155</sup> Celia Deane-Drummond, 'The Breadth of Glory: A Trinitarian Eschatology for the Earth through Critical Engagement with Hans Urs von Balthasar,' *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 12:1 (2010), 46-64 (p.54).

<sup>156</sup> *P*, p.264.

<sup>157</sup> See Weinstein & Bell, p.248.

mysticism that is hostile to the body...is anti-Christian.’<sup>158</sup> To become whole does not mean to dissolve mystically.<sup>159</sup> ‘God,’ he writes, ‘did not descend to the level of flesh simply so that we should “ascend” from flesh to spirit.’<sup>160</sup> Our flesh must remain, even if somehow altered. Origen’s eschatological ideal of a ‘city of souls’ is not what Balthasar anticipates. In Balthasar, the human body is itself a gift, offering ‘the human spirit an inconceivably sensitive and versatile set of instruments to make itself thoroughly comprehensive.’<sup>161</sup> One could argue that some saints never did integrate their sexuality, and that they therefore did not accept their corporeality. In reply, Balthasar would probably emphasize that the saints assume the form of Christ, and mention instances where saints manifested physical evidence of their oneness with him.<sup>162</sup>

The issue of corporeality is closely related to another of Balthasar's more important contributions to contemporary theology and exegesis, namely, his recovery of the spiritual senses (*sensus spiritualis*),<sup>163</sup> a doctrine first elaborated by Origen and later reformulated by Bonaventure and Ignatius of Loyola. The spiritual senses presuppose bodily senses, but, whereas Platonism understood the world of the senses as an obstacle, as ‘the prison and the veiling of the spirit,’<sup>164</sup> Balthasar considers the senses more as a gift which enables us to respond to God’s revelatory form. In Balthasar, the natural, bodily senses may become ‘Christian’, ‘in so far as they have been formed according to the form of Christ.’<sup>165</sup> The spiritual ‘senses and faculties’ are our senses which, having been liberated through the cross,

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<sup>158</sup> *TL3*: 247. ‘Catholicism is purported to have reaffirmed the unbridgeable gulf between the world and the spirit. For centuries, the Roman church taught that the life of penance and humility could be achieved fully only by withdrawal from the world.’ Weinstein & Bell, p.119. Quoting *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, pp.193-94.

<sup>159</sup> *TAI*: 586. Balthasar admired Maximus for bringing ‘into Chalcedonian Christology the whole Asian mystique of divinization on the higher level of the biblical mystery, and of the personal synthesis of an incarnate God, rather than on the lower level of natural dissolution and fusion’. See *CL*, p.48.

<sup>160</sup> *P*, p. 263.

<sup>161</sup> *TL2*: 252.

<sup>162</sup> Balthasar’s emphasis on corporeality creates some opportunity for dialogue with Postmodernism, for which the significance of the body is undeniable. As E.Wyschogrod has argued, in postmodernism, rather than proclamation or argument, it is the saint’s body, the flesh, that is to be taken as the unit of significance in saintly life. Wyschogrod, xxiii.

<sup>163</sup> Schindler, David, writing about Peter Casarella’s contribution on ‘Experience as a Theological Category: Hans urs von Balthasar’, *CTSA 1992, Proceedings* 47, 109.

<sup>164</sup> *P*, p.269.

<sup>165</sup> *TAI*: 424. See also *CL*, p.285 and *TL3*: 195.

can fix upon God... acquire something of the pneumatic quality of the Lord's glorified senses even prior to our own resurrection, so that, in him and together with him, we can grasp the Father and the Spirit and the entire world beyond.<sup>166</sup>

Thus, it is safe to say – although Balthasar does not specifically state this with reference to the saints – that, according to Balthasar, the authority of a saint would be grounded in his or her spiritual senses, which are awakened through the grace of the Incarnation, and through the believer's initiation into Christ's suffering, death and resurrection.<sup>167</sup> In this sense, the saints could be recognized as authoritative, and may function as an authority, because their corporeal senses have been aroused, more precisely, christianised, and this has an effect on others who then attribute authority to them.

The other central feature which one associates with bodiliness is time.<sup>168</sup> Bernhard Blankenhorn has said that Balthasar appeals to the Johannine interpretation of theological time to back up his language about God.<sup>169</sup> In fact, Balthasar also appeals to the same thing in order to back his language about man. In Balthasar, time is not an independent ontological being. It is an ontological property of our being. The 'primal origin' of time (as of space) is the generation of the Son from the Father in eternity, and the nature of time is the 'receptivity' of the Son for his existence from the Father. Eunsoo Kim has pointed out that Balthasar does not simply repeat the traditional concept 'of divine timelessness, immutability, or impassability'. In fact, he 'explicitly rejects any univocal attribution of temporality, mutability or passibility, any process notions of the creature becoming of God.'<sup>170</sup> What he does is conceive God's eternity as 'supra-time' in an analogical way, so that there is, in Balthasar, a big difference, but also a real

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<sup>166</sup> *P*, p.270.

<sup>167</sup> *P*, p.269-70. Balthasar claims that this 'actually fulfills and over-fulfills Platonism's ultimate goal (which it could not attain) in a totally unpredictable way.'

<sup>168</sup> As Eunsoo Kim has pointed out, Balthasar's is 'one of the most significant contributions to the contemporary debates on the understanding of God's eternity and its relation to time. See Eunsoo Kim, *Time, Eternity, and the Trinity. A Trinitarian Analogical Understanding of Time and Eternity*, PhD Dissertation, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Illinois, 2006, p.349. See also Thomas G. Dalzell, *The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Berne: Peter Lang AG, 1997), pp.253-285.

<sup>169</sup> Bernhard Blankenhorn, 'Balthasar's Method of Divine Naming,' *Nova et Vetera*, 1:2 (2003): 245-68 (p.253).

<sup>170</sup> Eunsoo Kim, p.348.



and positive relation, between God's eternity and human time.<sup>171</sup> We have here what Blankenhorn has called 'the negation of purely creaturely time'.<sup>172</sup> But this is not a negation of time – the finite remains finite – but rather a seizure of time, in the sense of Horace's *Carpe Diem*, while, paradoxically, being also an obedient 'waiting' for God's will. In speculative terms, Balthasar grounds the authority of the saints in their involvement with real time. As with Maximus, in Balthasar, the immediate experience of the divine presence and consolation takes place within the total movement of temporal existence.<sup>173</sup> And it is here that the saint must find it. Balthasar follows Augustine in describing sin as a desire to avoid the claim of others and of time. In his *Theology of History*, Balthasar claims that man will try to escape 'real time', the time in which he encounters God, 'by withdrawing into some timeless philosophical or mystical "eternity"; but this is not, for him, existential time.' This unreal time, will, according to Balthasar, throw man 'back again into the experience of empty, annihilating time', which is self-centred time.<sup>174</sup> Since 'Christ's act of existence as man' was a historical event within time, the follower of Christ can only participate in Christ by accepting time, and by evaluating time in the light of Christ, who is the archetype and the prototype.<sup>175</sup>

One feature of the being of the saints that makes their life and teaching authoritative, and enables them to function authoritatively, is what I would call their diachronic extension. Christ's 'pattern of life...embraces a compass infinitely and incomprehensibly vaster than that normally reckoned to be the scope of an ordinary human existence,' since it spans over 'the timelessness of the underworld,' and that of eternity.'<sup>176</sup> Through their participation in Christ, the 'life-forms' of the 'chosen' ones – those who have con-formed to Christ – will endure.<sup>177</sup> Here Balthasar is evidently influenced by Sergei Bulgakov and Rudolf Pannenberg, whose attention to the proleptical character of revelation is quite renowned. But there surely is some influence from Heidegger as well in this

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<sup>171</sup> Eunsoo Kim, p.351.

<sup>172</sup> Blankenhorn, p.254.

<sup>173</sup> *TAI*: 282.

<sup>174</sup> *TH*, p.34.

<sup>175</sup> *TH*, pp.40-1.

<sup>176</sup> *EG*, pp.36-37.

<sup>177</sup> *TAI*: 36.

regard. Heidegger claimed that *Dasein* is always oriented towards the future. The existence of the saints reaches back into the past and extends forward into the future, through its participation in the *Christus prolongatus* in history. The Old Testament ‘saints’ receive their retroactive fulfilment in Christ,<sup>178</sup> whereas the Christ-event already contains within itself all the ‘figurations’ which could appear in the future.<sup>179</sup> It is a future that is built on an understanding of the world that is rooted in Trinitarian relationships. Here, the saints’ participation in the Trinitarian relationships becomes the feature that makes their life and teaching diachronically extensive, and enables them to function authoritatively even beyond their lifetime.

#### d. SURRENDER

Perhaps the feature of the life of the saints that makes their life and teaching especially authoritative existentially, and enables them to function authoritatively not only within the Church, but also within being in general, is, paradoxically, their surrender.<sup>180</sup> In Balthasar, the saints mediate divine authority, not necessarily in the sense that divine power is visible in them, although this is also possible, but certainly in the sense that one can see in them the surrender to God’s absolute power. According to Balthasar, grace ‘claims and expropriates us’. It ‘compels us’ and ‘bestows absolute authority on God in us’.<sup>181</sup>

Balthasar’s emphasis on this theology of surrender has been the cause of some criticism, because it has been said that it diminishes the drama. Such criticism may or may not be deserved. What is certain is that there is, in Balthasar, a correlation, not only between existential surrender and holiness – the Christian saint is the one ‘who has made the deep-rooted act of faith and obedience to God’s

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<sup>178</sup> Oakes understands ‘theological’ interpretation as that which ensues once one has acknowledged that the Scriptures are inspired. Oakes (2005), pp 164 and 166.

<sup>179</sup> C, pp.93-4.

<sup>180</sup> Balthasar uses various terms to describe this theology: obedience and availability, abandonment, readiness for service (*Bereitschaft*), inner dedication, yielding, expropriation (*Enteignung*), unselfing (*Entselbstung*), handing-over, being led, death, consent, dispossession, renunciation, self-emptying, kenosis, *exinanitio*, selflessness, self-emptying, sacrifice, abandonment, serious penance and renunciation, and so on and so forth.

<sup>181</sup> *TAI*: 162.

inner light the norm of his whole existence'<sup>182</sup> – but also between existential surrender and the theological enterprise. In Balthasar, knowledge of God, theology and dogma are simply inconceivable without surrender. In Balthasar, one 'knows' God and 'possesses' him only when one is oneself expropriated and handed over.'<sup>183</sup> More will need to be said about surrender and the theological enterprise. With regards to the first of these however, that is, the correlation between surrender and holiness, it would be appropriate to provide a few examples. In *Cosmic Liturgy*, Balthasar attributes the almost effortless victory of dyothelite Christology at the Third Council of Constantinople and the prestige of the synod to 'the martyrdom of the pope, [of] Maximus, and [of] Maximus' companions'.<sup>184</sup> Writing about Elizabeth of the Trinity, we are told that she

is able to develop an explicitly Trinitarian doctrine because her mind goes out toward its object so completely, leaving only the very slightest scope for her own personality and history – just sufficient to remain a subject for the operations of the Trinity.'<sup>185</sup>

In Thérèse, there is renunciation on all levels.<sup>186</sup> Even the yearning for God, so powerful in the Psalms, the *desiderium visionis Dei*, is to be given up. Balthasar follows the trend which the theological doctrine of surrender has taken throughout the history of Western metaphysics when he discusses the metaphysics of the saints.<sup>187</sup> Not only does Balthasar use the saints to sum up the theological aesthetics of the 'postmedieval Western tradition',<sup>188</sup> Balthasar also offers the saints as a corrective. Two examples should suffice. The first involves Nietzsche. Balthasar uses the saint as an antidote to Nietzsche's concept of the 'master-morality', which emphasizes power, strength, egoism and freedom.<sup>189</sup> Moreover, Balthasar uses the saints to condemn spiritual utilitarianism.<sup>190</sup> He wishes to avoid the risks associated with transcendental Thomism, namely that of 'measuring and appreciating objective revelation and the means of grace by the degree to which

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<sup>182</sup> *TAI*: 165.

<sup>183</sup> *TA7*: 400. Quoted in J.A.Vogel, 'The Unselfing Activity of the Holy Spirit in the Theology of Hans Urs Balthasar,' *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 10:4 (2007) 16-34 (p.24).

<sup>184</sup> *CL*, pp.44.

<sup>185</sup> *TS*, pp.300-1.

<sup>186</sup> *TS*, pp.43-4, 272, 274, 276 and 278.

<sup>187</sup> *TA5*: 48-140.

<sup>188</sup> Nichols (2005), p.123-4.

<sup>189</sup> See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (New York: Prometheus Books, 1989), pp.223-232.

<sup>190</sup> See *TS*, p.150. This is a strong element in De Lubac, *Catholicism*, p.191.

they satisfy the individual's spiritual longings'.<sup>191</sup> The saint becomes an authority not – as with Nietzsche – because of his or her drive toward domination and exploitation of the inferior, nor – as with spiritual utilitarianism – because of an endless pursuit for spiritual merits,<sup>192</sup> but because he or she relies completely on God, because, as Nichols describes it, he or she becomes

a kind of personalized version of *esse* in its outpouring, a personalized version of the way that for Thomas Aquinas being in its dependence on God only consolidates itself in giving itself away to beings. The saint, not the cosmos, in other words, now becomes the epiphany of glory.<sup>193</sup>

D.M.Matzko has justifiably stated that sainthood (and the saint) is a scandal to modern morality 'because it counters the modern moral standards of autonomy, freedom, and choice', in the meantime creating 'possibilities for community, apprenticeship.'<sup>194</sup> In contrast with the modern approach, in Balthasar, the human-divine relationship requires a 'double, reciprocal dispossession: of God into the human form and of man into the divine form.' The life of man 'attains its form by letting itself be shattered to become the form of God', whereas the life of God 'gains man for itself by renouncing its own form and [by] pouring itself into the form of existence unto death.'<sup>195</sup> As was said before with regards to theo-drama, in Balthasar, these two dispossessions do not remain parallel and disconnected. They actually merge. The saint's expropriation, his *sich-geben*, is conceived only 'in light of the dogma of God's own expropriation',<sup>196</sup> and is possible only because the Divine Persons make it possible.<sup>197</sup>

Blankenhorn has identified a number of human characteristics which Balthasar interprets as an attribute of perfection in God.<sup>198</sup> Surrender is one of them. I would also add that, with Balthasar, the process of expropriation that goes on within the

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<sup>191</sup> W.T.Dickens, *Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetics. A Model for Post-Critical Biblical Interpretation* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), p.32.

<sup>192</sup> As he writes in his *Theo-Logic*, 'we are forbidden to prescribe any anthropologically normative mode of access.' *TL3*: 31.

<sup>193</sup> Nichols (2005), p.123.

<sup>194</sup> D.M.Matzko, p.20.

<sup>195</sup> *TAI*: 673.

<sup>196</sup> The Son's incarnation included Christ's 'pro-existent living, suffering and dying.' *TL3*:197

<sup>197</sup> *TL3*: 300 and *CSL*, pp.157-8. See also Bulgakov's intratrinitarian kenosis. Howsare, p.142.

<sup>198</sup> Blankenhorn bases his argument on *Theo-Drama*, volume 5.

Trinity is identical to the process which makes the individual authoritative. Balthasar could be describing this process when he says that ‘the Spirit’s introduction into this milieu of love’ between Father and Son – opened up by the Son’s self-surrender to the world – is ‘*also the Spirit’s self-surrender to the person who receives his testimony*’ (my emphasis).<sup>199</sup> There is nothing that screams authority more than having the Spirit surrendering himself to that individual, and turning that individual into a proper *imago Trinitatis*. Balthasar claims that God’s ‘allowing us to participate in his Godhead...occurs not in a second process, but in the one and only process. This is the *admirabile commercium et conubium*. In God’s condescendence lies man’s exaltation.’<sup>200</sup>

What is it in the saints that makes their surrender visible by us? How does that surrender come through? In Balthasar’s theology, surrender often takes the form of a readiness to be, do and say what God wills, not just on the individual level, but also on the communal. Even ‘the goal of the communion of saints’ is ‘to hold oneself ready’, ‘the abandonment of all aims of one’s own, in order that God’s aims may be fulfilled through his own people.’<sup>201</sup> ‘Readiness’ is everything, whether it takes the form of a ‘readiness for engagement’ or a readiness for ‘an endurance.’<sup>202</sup> The authority arises from the fact that it is the form of Christ which ‘brings out in man...the readiness to go to the very limit in obeying the Father’s commands’.<sup>203</sup> In Balthasar, the ‘open attitude of readiness and permeability’ on the part of the individual ‘permits the Other to act and allows the divine to have the perfect precedence in rank that is proper to it in man and in the world.’<sup>204</sup> From the perspective of historical theology, the saints procure an authoritative place within Tradition, because they exhibit to perfection the Thomistic view of being as ‘being-for-one-another’, while at the same time exhibiting the Ignatian view of *indifferentia*.<sup>205</sup> However, unlike in Christian Platonism, where indifference and

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<sup>199</sup> *TL3*: 74. See also p.300.

<sup>200</sup> *TAI*: 302. See also pp.126, 164 and 604.

<sup>201</sup> ‘The Communion of Saints, *E*, p.97

<sup>202</sup> ‘Martyrdom and Mission’, *NE*, pp.296-7.

<sup>203</sup> *TL3*: 204.

<sup>204</sup> ‘The Gospel as Norm,’ *CS*, p.287.

<sup>205</sup> Balthasar often uses the term *apatheia* to mean ‘passionlessness’, ‘indifference’ or ‘inner freedom’. See *CL*, pp. 281-3 and 331.

contenance ‘carried strong overtones of flight from the world,’<sup>206</sup> for Balthasar, ‘[i]ndifference is the highest possible degree of openness to the world’. By emphasizing it, Balthasar makes classical *apatheia* an instrument for the Pauline idea of overcoming the world by becoming ‘all things to all creatures.’<sup>207</sup> My interpretation is that, in Balthasar, the authority of the saints is grounded in their extraordinary freedom, which is a direct result of their preoccupation with the will of God, rather than with their own. This is a freedom that enables them to express themselves both theologically and in other ways, without *amor proprio*. According to Balthasar ‘no violence is done to human nature in making such an act of submission’ to the divine will.<sup>208</sup> Thus, whereas Marx, Freud, Marcuse and others had attempted to remove ‘the legal structures of existence’ ‘in order that from there may result a free human disposition’, Balthasar inverts the sequence, proposing ‘a change of disposition’ rather than of structures, arguing that ‘by itself [this will alter] the whole status and character of the structures (which in fact cannot be removed)’.<sup>209</sup> The official Magisterium made a statement on similar lines in 1964,

[T]he Church will rediscover its youthful vitality not so much by changing its external legislation, as by submitting to the obedience of Christ and observing the laws which the Church lays upon itself with the intention of following in Christ’s footsteps.<sup>210</sup>

With such a depiction of reality, we would then have to say that Balthasar attributes the authority of the saints, both as individuals and as a community, to the fact that they are freer than most, and that this freedom enables them to do more, to know more and to understand more.<sup>211</sup> The saints would function authoritatively because they are unhindered and unconstrained by fear and by ulterior motives. Everybody knows, however that to establish the *status quo* on the grounds of individual disposition, regardless of social structures, has its risks. The theological concept of *kenosis*, which Balthasar uses to describe both Christology

<sup>206</sup> Origen, Evagrius and Dionysius were ‘the three Alexandrian Platonic’ theologians, who met and mingled ‘[o]n the bedrock of a philosophy of created being that was valid in its own right’. *CL*, p.37.

<sup>207</sup> *CL*, p.282.

<sup>208</sup> See *TS*, pp.21 and 320; *EG*, pp 29 and 38; *CSL*, p.60. Balthasar cannot be accused of Quietism, since the person does not ‘drown his will in the will of God’.

<sup>209</sup> *EG*, p.79. See also *TAI*: 111.

<sup>210</sup> *Ecclesiam Suam*, 51.

<sup>211</sup> The latter is what Yves Simon argued concerning freedom in general. See Austin, p.25.

and the nature of the life of the Trinity, can easily become problematic if it leads to the subjugation of a race or of the female gender. The spiritualization of a disfunctioning society has radical consequences which Balthasar himself would certainly not have wanted to maintain. In claiming that the authority of the saints is a direct consequence of their surrender, and that it is one's surrender to God's will that makes a saint transparent to the divine authority, Balthasar does not intend to encourage fideism or pietism. There is an active and a rational aspect to this surrender, in the understanding that God himself will not abandon the poor, but neither will he defend the unjust.

### **THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM PARTICIPATION**

In *The Christian State of Life* Balthasar continues to impress upon us that any authentic authority will not ensue simply from an *imitation* of Christ, or from serving as a *reflection* of the drama of authority and self-effacement that takes place within the Trinity. It is a *participation* in this very drama.<sup>212</sup> All sorts of things are possible if there is 'direct participation in the divine essence': it is possible to behold God, to be purified, to be justified and to be sanctified.<sup>213</sup> Balthasar emphasises that 'no one becomes a saint without appropriate participation in the Cross'<sup>214</sup>. In Balthasar's theology, the authority of the saints, in the existential dimension is grounded in their participation in Christ's way of being in the world.<sup>215</sup> Balthasar claims that

the Christian's life and state do not simply run parallel to the earthly existence of Christ as though he had to live until his earthly death in imitation of the state in which Jesus lived until the crucifixion. Christian life is not a mere imitation of the Lord's hidden and public life. On the contrary, it is from the beginning and *at every moment a participation not only in the Cross but also in the Resurrection of the Lord.*<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> *CSL*, p.257.

<sup>213</sup> *TL3*: 448.

<sup>214</sup> 'Fragments on Suffering and Healing,' *NE*, p.260.

<sup>215</sup> *CSL*, p.220.

<sup>216</sup> *CSL*, p.220.

In his *Theo-Drama*, Balthasar examines three ways in which the issue of participation has been addressed in the history of theology: that of the Fathers, that of Eckhart and the Rhineland mystics and that of St John of the Cross.<sup>217</sup> As Ellero Babini has pointed out, the philosophical category of participation acquires a particular significance in Balthasar's work, precisely because it is situated within a dramatic context.<sup>218</sup> Balthasar excludes 'any suggestion that believers, who are, after all, created spiritual subjects, [a *Geistessubjekt*] are brought into the hypostatic union of the God-man. He also excludes any form of Eucharistic union that would be understood as an incorporation into Christ's 'physical body.'<sup>219</sup> We have already insisted that, in Balthasar, 'the otherness of God and the creature...is not destroyed'.<sup>220</sup> In *Engagement with God*, participation takes the form of a 'partnership', an 'involvement' an 'abiding in the source'.<sup>221</sup> In his study of Barth, Balthasar maintains that participation is 'both something conscious and ontically real', but there is 'an unconditioned priority to the ontological over the cognitive'.<sup>222</sup> Balthasar contends that the concept which he is portraying is based on that portrayed by Paul, where the 'metamorphosis...is above all an assumption of form, the receiving of Christ's form in us.'<sup>223</sup> The transformation spoken of by Paul 'is no "moral" transformation accomplished by making the copy similar to its exemplar, rather it is virtually a "physical" change in which the sovereign power of the exemplar is expressed in the copy...causing the exemplar to shine forth from the copy.'<sup>224</sup> Balthasar's concept is also indebted to that of Maximus in the *Ambigua*, which emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between divine incarnation and human deification dealing, among other things, with the 'transformational, theophanous effect upon the human body when the saints become united 'wholly' to God.'<sup>225</sup> In Maximus, the unity of God and the creature 'will go as far as the point of "indivisible identity" and will stop just short of the

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<sup>217</sup> *TD5*:

<sup>218</sup> Babini, pp.222-223 and 227.

<sup>219</sup> *TL3*: 292. See also what *Mystici Corporis*.

<sup>220</sup> *TL3*: 234.

<sup>221</sup> *EG*, pp.46ff.

<sup>222</sup> *TKB*, p.365. See Patricia Sullivan, p.5.

<sup>223</sup> *TAI*: 529.

<sup>224</sup> *TS*, p.464.

<sup>225</sup> Sherwood, p.435. Sherwood recommends further study on the concept of 'participation', which is, according to him, perhaps 'the acutest problem in Byzantine theology'.



irreducible difference of natures.’<sup>226</sup> Other approaches to participation which inspire Balthasar are those of Pierre de Bérulle and George Bernanos.<sup>227</sup>

In Balthasar’s theology, any authority granted to the saints, in the existential dimension, is grounded in the participation in inner-Trinitarian relationship and extra-Trinitarian operation.<sup>228</sup> Balthasar considers especially authoritative those saintly theologians who have achieved an ‘equilibrium’ within theology between ‘the personal effort to acquire the *intellectus fidei* and the participation...in the object of faith within one’s life-experience.’<sup>229</sup> Moreover, Balthasar is especially enthusiastic about those saints who can express the depths of their participation in Christ. Balthasar maintains that ‘the more a person participates (*teilnimmt*), in the original Christ-experience ‘the more must he (and can he), in turn, communicate (*teilgeben*)’ this Christ experience. Balthasar claims that this communication is precisely the reason for such an experience. The ‘intrinsic teleology of [one’s] experience’ lies in the communication of it.<sup>230</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In this Chapter, I explored Balthasar’s notion of existence as expressive of God’s form, identified some of the existential features of the saints’ life that make the saints expressive of God’s form, and focused on participation in the mystery of God as the reality which makes the saints authoritative, according to Balthasar. What do I think Balthasar was trying to do? However implicitly, Balthasar wanted to develop a theology of the saints which reflected his agreement with theologians like Daniélou, Guardini, de Chardin and Adam and his responses to philosophers such as Aristotle, Mounier, Blondel, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Heidegger. He sought to provide a sacramental ontology, which enables us to view the whole of existence as theological, but particularly that of the saints. He also wanted to establish that there is a correlation between a life of holiness and the ability to

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<sup>226</sup> *CL*, p.353.

<sup>227</sup> *TA5*: 123. In Bérulle, ‘[t]o partake of the divine life means to participate in the fundamental state and attitude of Jesus. M.A.McIntosh, p.23. See also p.37.

<sup>228</sup> *TL3*: 234-5.

<sup>229</sup> *TA1*: 602.

<sup>230</sup> *TA1*: 306.

speak correctly about God as well. With some saints, the mission is specifically doctrinal, and the experience of existence has dogmatic import. My interpretation is that, in Balthasar's view, a holy existence stimulates in the saints qualities that make them authoritative. Balthasar is trying to prove that it is from within their genuine existence that the saints function authoritatively. In a similar vein, the existential features which characterize the saints in their holiness drives others to attribute authority to them. Finally, in presenting the saint as someone whom one consults on existential issues, and as someone whose existential stance one observes and emulates, intentionally or unintentionally, Balthasar attributes to the saints an authority that is analogous to that of the Magisterium.

If I am correct in my own interpretation of Balthasar, that is, if this is really what he was trying to do, then I seriously think that Balthasar did a good job of it, even if this depiction may seem rather vague. Probably because of our prejudice towards the epistemic, to speak of existential authority is not really sufficient. This is why, in the next chapter I will discuss the epistemological domain, and determine how it is that, in Balthasar, the saints acquire authority in the epistemological dimension. I will also be arguing that the epistemological dimension is probably the principal dimension where the saints function authoritatively.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL DIMENSION

#### INTRODUCTION

Where the epistemological dimension is concerned, Balthasar is indebted to various contemporary philosophers, like Maréchal (d.1944), Przywara (d.1972), Maritain (d.1973), and to contemporary theologians like Mouroux (d.1973), Bultmann (d.1976), Rahner (d.1984), Frei (d.1988), and de Lubac (d.1991). In this Chapter it will be determined that, in Balthasar, the saints are acknowledged to be epistemologically proficient. I will want to demonstrate that, in Balthasar, there are aspects of holiness that furnish the saints with epistemological authority (both for theology and for the Church), as well as that the saints function authoritatively epistemologically. It will become evident that whereas in the existential dimension, an authority is someone who exemplifies the essence of existence, and someone whom one consults on existential issues, in the epistemological dimension, an authority is someone whom one invokes when there has been a failure to know and to whom one must submit in the process of learning.<sup>1</sup> This makes the authority of the saints analogous to that of the Magisterium. For is this not the authority that the Magisterium generally demands (namely, that it be invoked when there has been a failure to know)? And is this not the authority which the individual Christian is expected to attribute to the Magisterium (namely, to submit to it in the process of learning)?

Before I proceed, I would first like to say something about the important role which authority plays in the apprehension of truth. Victor Lee Austin maintains that ‘authority is necessary if we are to flourish as beings who have knowledge’, that ‘authority is...positively related to knowledge of the truth’, and that ‘it is epistemic authority that accounts for how our knowledge is greater than what

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<sup>1</sup> Austin, p.46.

reason can deliver.’<sup>2</sup> This chapter will continue to delve into the questions already outlined, namely: why is it that the saints are considered to be *auctoritates* in Balthasar’s eyes? What is at the basis of this authority? What is the grounding of this appreciation of the saints and of their theological contribution? Whereas in the third chapter, I dealt with the question of the authority of the saints from an existential perspective, this Chapter will deal with the epistemological grounding of the authority of the saints. It will be determined that, in Balthasar, the epistemological domain is both an essential source of the authority of the saints, that is, that which drives us to their side, but also the place where they function authoritatively. It will be argued that the saints exercise epistemic authority when they share with us what they know and understand about God and his economy, and that we attribute to them epistemic authority when we submit to them in the process of learning. It will also be determined that, in the epistemological domain, Balthasar thinks that the epistemic authority of the saints is grounded in their faith and in their love. That is where their deep knowledge, their extraordinary understanding, their grasp of the truth comes from. It is also grounded in their participation in the archetypal experience, and in the quality of their mysticism and their contemplation. Their epistemic authority is also grounded in their very lack of attachment to this very knowledge which they have acquired. Finally, I will determine that, in Balthasar, because all knowledge is interconnected, because there is no theology that is independent of the rest of theology, the epistemic authority of the individual saints is also dependent on the epistemic authority of the whole *communio sanctorum*.<sup>3</sup>

#### **THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM FAITH<sup>4</sup>**

One of the questions that occurs is how is it that the saints come to have insight? As with Augustine, so also with Balthasar, faith is inextricably part of his epistemology: ‘*nisi credideritis, non intelligitis*: you do not understand, unless you

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<sup>2</sup> Austin, pp.2 and 42.

<sup>3</sup> In this respect, for Balthasar, the saints are similar to ‘the community of authorities’ described by Austin, whose members ‘challenge, test, validate, qualify, and incorporate one another’s assertions of truth.’ Austin, p.65.

<sup>4</sup> Balthasar’s is a ‘metaphysics with a theological point of departure’. See David.C. Schindler, in ‘Hans Urs Balthasar, Metaphysics, and the Problem of Onto-Theology’, *Analecta Hermeneutica*, No1, 2009.

believe.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, possibly the best way to understand Balthasar on faith is to compare him with Barth and Przywara.<sup>6</sup> In Balthasar, the *analogia entis* does not contradict the *analogia fidei*, as with the early Barth.<sup>7</sup> With Balthasar, being itself already contains a likeness of God (*analogia entis*). But there is a godlikeness that derives from faith as well. What makes Balthasar's understanding of faith so particular is that he sees it as a partaking in the dynamics of the immanent Trinity. In Balthasar, the synthetic power of the active 'faculty' of believing (as *habitus and virtus fidei*) reside[s]...in God, who indwells him even as he reveals himself and in whose light and act the believer participates.<sup>8</sup> Christian faith is 'more than a psychological fact, more than something belonging to human nature. It is something 'specifically supernatural, something effected by God'<sup>9</sup> and residing in him.<sup>10</sup> Described in aesthetic terms, the light of faith is said to stem 'from the object which, revealing itself to the subject, draws it out beyond itself (otherwise it would not be faith) into the sphere of the object.'<sup>11</sup> In the epistemological dimension, the saints become most authoritative in their co-operation with God in the act of faith, in their readiness to be drawn into the form of God.<sup>12</sup>

Although Balthasar retains the cognitive character of faith, he 'breaks the link between faith and reason which has so dominated modern theological apologetics'.<sup>13</sup> In the process, he 'recovers the patristic and Orthodox understanding of the union of faith and experience.'<sup>14</sup> In Balthasar, faith 'involves

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<sup>5</sup> Augustine, *De Libero Arbitrio*.

<sup>6</sup> See Henrici, 'The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar,' p.151.

<sup>7</sup> See Joseph Ratzinger in *Communio*, Volume 1: *The Unity of the Church, Retrieval & Renewal in Catholic Thought, Ressourcement*, (Wm.B.Eerdmans Publishing, 2010), p.131.

<sup>8</sup> *TAI*: 179.

<sup>9</sup> *TAI*: 222-3. In his *Convergences*, Balthasar maintains that, 'it is not the subjective impression which releases the Christ event in my psyche'. Nor is it the 'the power of my faith which connects me to my unity in Christ. C, pp.129-30.

<sup>10</sup> *TAI*: 179. Balthasar claims that, in faith, 'what is involved is not at all a projection of the mythopoetic religious imagination', but God's 'fantasy'. *TAI*: 172.

<sup>11</sup> *TAI*: 181. See also *TAI*:465-6, *TA4*:394, *TL3*: 203, and Howsare, p.81.

<sup>12</sup> *TAI*: 181. See also 465-6 and 563. On its part, the subject ought not to grasp or attempt to control the object, but to receive it actively, so that the object is allowed to unfold for the subject. See Howsare, pp.11-12 and 79. See also 'Does Jesus Shine Through?', *NE*, pp.17-18.

<sup>13</sup> Oliver Davies, 'The Theological Aesthetic', in Oakes, Edward T. and Moss, David (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 131-142 (p.134).

<sup>14</sup> David L.Schindler, writing about P.Casarella's contribution on 'Experience as a Theological Category: Hans urs von Balthasar', *CTSA* 1992, Proceedings 47, 109.

‘seeing something, ...grasping it as a totality, and...being transfixed by it.’<sup>15</sup> In Balthasar, faith is simultaneously homogeneous to mystical experience, understood in the general sense, being a taste and a knowledge of God.<sup>16</sup>

But there is something else. In accord with Catholic tradition, Balthasar maintains that ‘this faith must not be taken in isolation to be an infallible criterion but has to prove itself in the various expressions of a lived life of faith; that is, it must show itself to be genuine through signs.’<sup>17</sup> It is not just that Balthasar sees life as an expression of faith. It is that, in Balthasar, ‘living by faith’ is ‘an experience that arises from the totality of the person’s life’.<sup>18</sup> Here, Balthasar would be in agreement with Augustine, but also with Jean Mouroux (1901-1973), whose work on Christian experience was so influential in the 1950’s. Subsequently, with Balthasar, any authority which the saints express would have to be grounded both in a life that is steered by faith and in a faith that arises from life.<sup>19</sup>

Because faith is understood as an encounter of the person with God, experience becomes an ‘indispensable’ concept.<sup>20</sup> What is one to understand by ‘faith’ and by ‘experience’? In Balthasar, experience is an ‘*event*’, and that which alone can become an experience (*Erfahrung*) is man’s ‘act of entering into the Son of God’.<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, faith is not ‘a purely emotional occurrence.’ It is not ‘a single content or state, a sensual or spiritual perception, a feeling or a particular experience’.<sup>22</sup> Faith is an *attitude* with which the ‘*genuine* believer’ identifies himself. The believer will not emphasise ‘the elements of experience to the detriment of the central element of faith’.<sup>23</sup> This is in total contrast with Medieval hagiography, where it was, customarily, the extraordinary experiences which attributed reliability and credibility to those ‘saints’ who claimed them. Using

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<sup>15</sup> Kilby, p.54.

<sup>16</sup> *TAI*: 300, 412.

<sup>17</sup> *TL3*: 282. See Elizabeth Stuart, ‘Sacramental Flesh in Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body, ed. by Gerard Loughlin (Oxford: Blackwell publishing, 2007), pp.65-75.

<sup>18</sup> *TL3*: 282.

<sup>19</sup> There is an emphasis on faith being ‘an “embodied” response.’ See *P*, p.36.

<sup>20</sup> *TAI*: 219.

<sup>21</sup> *TAI*: 222.

<sup>22</sup> *TAI*: 238-9. The reference could be to William James, to Schleiermacher or even to George Tyrrell. See also *TAI*: 169.

<sup>23</sup> *TAI*: 412.

Ignatius of Loyola (consolation or desolation), Bernard of Clairvaux (*sapor*) and Aquinas (*cognitio per connaturalitatem*) Balthasar delineates what it is that a ‘truly living Christian experience of faith includes’. His view is that the above are part of the Christian experience of faith. They could even be ‘breakthroughs to new depths of experience’, but they could also very well be mere psychological effects.<sup>24</sup> Consequently, in Balthasar, any authority emerging from faith can only be grounded in experience if experience is understood as man’s ‘act of entering into the Son of God’, and not as a feeling alone. Such experience always involves the transformative power of grace, so that authoritativeness would have to be a consequence of one’s transformation in Christ.<sup>25</sup>

We have already established that, in the existential dimension, it is only the actual living of a holy life which gives rise to correct speech about God. In the epistemological dimension, Balthasar underscores the necessity of a committed faith which alone makes theology possible. There is evidence of this in his exegesis, but also in his fundamental theology and in his dogmatics. As Howsare has said, Balthasar ‘is deeply suspicious of any attempt to bracket faith in order to get to the simple facts’.<sup>26</sup> Balthasar refuses the phenomenological reduction which follows from *epoché*. For Balthasar, the object cannot simply be cut away, and the object is only accessible through belief. According to him, for example, the socio-historical criticism of the Gospels, and Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976)’s search for the historical Jesus, without the assistance of faith would not provide a credible account. In more than one place, Balthasar declares the indispensability of faith in Christ for the theologian. For him, the representation of theological truth cannot be impartial, and commitment is necessary.<sup>27</sup> Against modern theological apologetics,<sup>28</sup> Balthasar maintains that the scientific objectivity of theology ‘rests on the decision to believe, and that there can be, therefore

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<sup>24</sup> *TAI*: 412.

<sup>25</sup> *TS*, pp.20 and 467.

<sup>26</sup> Howsare, p.150. Balthasar criticises certain Enlightenment style approaches to the biblical text which demand pure theological neutrality. Howsare, p.78.

<sup>27</sup> *TAI*: 223-4.

<sup>28</sup> We have already said that Balthasar broke the link of faith and reason which dominated modern theological apologetics. Oliver Davies, ‘The Theological Aesthetic’, in Oakes, Edward T. and Moss, David (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 131-142 (p.134).

(theologically considered), no neutral objectivity, no consideration of the object of belief without belief, or apart from belief and unbelief.<sup>29</sup> In Balthasar's theology, it is not the saints' capacity to use reason in order to prove faith's content that gives them credibility.<sup>30</sup> The credibility of their theology is grounded in the fact that their theology is stimulated and sustained by their faith in Christ, and by the fact that their faith participates in that of Christ. It is the quality of one's faith – which is much more than a mere cognitive assent to propositions – that enables the individual to speak correctly about God. In Balthasar, one's faith is a participation in the faith which is in God (that is, as a divine attribute). Balthasar claims that those believers whose faith is what it should be 'are *right*'.<sup>31</sup>

### THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM KNOWLEDGE

There is then the authority that comes from knowledge. The *Aesthetics* is full of deliberations on knowledge. Balthasar discusses human knowledge (in the context of his discourse on Plato),<sup>32</sup> knowing and not knowing (in his deliberation on the dialectic of sensory manifestation),<sup>33</sup> the distinction between conjecture and absolute knowledge (in the context of his conversation with Nicholas of Cusa).<sup>34</sup> Probably the more relevant consideration of theological knowledge is that provided in his discussion of the relationship between *pistis* and *gnosis* (in his discussion on faith),<sup>35</sup> and of aesthetic reason (in the context of his dialogue with Anselm).<sup>36</sup> Knowledge is also at the forefront in Balthasar's discussion about the knowledge of the saints, more precisely on folly and glory, in his sections on 'Holy Fools' and 'The Christian as Idiot'.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> C, p.51.

<sup>30</sup> EG, p.102.

<sup>31</sup> 'Our Shared Responsibility', E, p.147.

<sup>32</sup> TA4: 171-201

<sup>33</sup> TA6: 37-8.

<sup>34</sup> TA5: 238-247.

<sup>35</sup> TA1: 131-141.

<sup>36</sup> TA2: 213-237.

<sup>37</sup> TA5: 141-205.



Balthasar embraces the personalist model of knowledge vis-à-vis the classical view of knowledge.<sup>38</sup> In Balthasar, knowledge is not independent of the commitment, the passion, of the knower. As with Michael Polanyi, in Balthasar, the character of knowledge is personal, but ‘personal’ is not equivalent to relativism or subjectivism.<sup>39</sup> Balthasar is able to avoid both the false objectivism and naïve realism which mark so much modern rationalism and empiricism,<sup>40</sup> as well as avoid the false subjectivism and scepticism which marks the various forms of modern idealism and postmodernism. He finds support in the Church Fathers, in High Scholasticism,<sup>40</sup> as well as in later theologians and philosophers like Möhler, von Drey (1777-1853),<sup>41</sup> Newman (1801-1890), Blondel and Maréchal who had also taken this stance.

Balthasar’s theory of knowledge is significantly different from that of various other philosophers or theologians we know. According to Anthony Cirelli, in order to counter the dominance of subjectivity in modern German (and Western) philosophy since Kant, Balthasar appealed to the theocentric epistemology of Gregory of Nyssa, once again confirming the authority which the saints had for him. Here, finite thought is utterly dependent on God and not on finite subjectivity, and the creative powers (the *logoi*) of God enable us to come to know God.<sup>42</sup> On his part, Peter Henrici argues that, from a methodological point of view, Balthasar is closest to Anselm, whose philosophical doctrine of knowledge ‘explains the truth of revelation and the process of knowledge as disclosure/concealment.’<sup>43</sup> Victoria Harrison has claimed that Balthasar’s religious epistemology converges with Hilary Putnam’s ‘internal realism’.<sup>44</sup> On my part, I believe that Balthasar’s theological epistemology is influenced by that of Jacques Maritain (1892-1973), who was in turn influenced by Augustine and John of the Cross. David C.Schindler has already linked Balthasar to Maritain in

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<sup>38</sup> Riches (1986), p.45.

<sup>39</sup> Polanyi

<sup>40</sup> *TAI*: 257-8. Howsare, p.72.

<sup>41</sup> See Howsare, p.13. With Johann Adam Möhler, Johann Sebastian von Drey was the founder of the so-called Catholic School of Tübingen.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony Cirelli, ‘Re-Assessing The Meaning Of Thought: Hans Urs Von Balthasar’s Retrieval Of Gregory Of Nyssa’, *The Heythrop Journal*, L (2009), pp. 416–424.

<sup>43</sup> Henrici, ‘The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar’, p.164.

<sup>44</sup> Hunsinger, p.51.

his philosophical investigation of Balthasar's structure of truth.<sup>45</sup> Schindler claims that, like Maritain, Balthasar sees knowledge as 'a *vital* exchange' in which both the subject and the object come to be what they are through the act of knowledge.<sup>46</sup> After all, 'the reason and justification' for 'the subjective ability to experience' which is found in man and woman, 'lies in the object', and it is only thanks to the experienceability of the object that the 'experiential ability' of the subject can be 'demonstrated in its totality' and 'made comprehensible'.<sup>47</sup>

Maritain sought to explain the nature of knowledge: scientific and philosophical, but also religious faith and mysticism in *The Degrees of Knowledge*.<sup>48</sup> Here, Maritain speaks of different 'degrees' of knowledge hierarchically ordered according to the nature of the object to be known and the 'degree of abstraction' involved. According to him, those objects which are highest in intelligibility, immateriality, and potential to be known are the objects of the highest degree of knowledge. Like Maritain, Balthasar distinguishes 'natural knowledge' from 'mystical knowledge',<sup>49</sup> without considering them to be different 'knowledges'. In addition, along with Maritain, Balthasar emphasizes faith, rather than reason, as the medium for real wisdom. Balthasar can argue that faith is the means of access to real wisdom because, according to him, '[t]he whole order of reason is theologically embedded in the order of faith, just as the order of creation lies embedded in the order of grace'.<sup>50</sup> This means that, in Balthasar, reason is entrenched in faith.

It is to be expected that anyone using the saints as dependable sources of knowledge and who finds them so persuasive, as Balthasar does, would perceive a link between the saints' expertise in the eyes of others and their own spiritual life, between their adeptness and their own understanding of the Word, between their evident competence and their mystical knowledge. The descriptive nature of the

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<sup>45</sup> David, C. Schindler, *Hans Urs Von Balthasar and the Dramatic Structure of Truth. A Philosophical Investigation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

<sup>46</sup> David C. Schindler (2004), p.213.

<sup>47</sup> *TAI*: 429.

<sup>48</sup> Jacques Maritain, *The Degrees of Knowledge* (Notre Dame: The University of Notre Dame, 2011).

<sup>49</sup> *TAI*: 262.

<sup>50</sup> *TKB*, p.325.

phenomenological method enables Balthasar to state this, precisely because one can see evidence of it, even if it may be difficult to explain how the saints know so much, and express it so well. In Balthasar's theology, the 'saints' display exceptional understanding, remarkable knowledge, and an extraordinary ease of access to the truth. Bernard, Francis, Ignatius and Thérèse are compared to 'volcanoes pouring forth molten fire from the inmost depths of revelation'.<sup>51</sup> In his book on *Prayer*, Balthasar reverses the image with another that is just as powerful: the saints have been 'overwhelmed by the torrent which pours over and into them' thanks to their proximity to the 'total fullness' of Christ.<sup>52</sup> So, we know that saints are epistemic authorities.

But let us investigate the concept of knowledge a bit further. Although this is not the place to discuss all that Balthasar has said about knowledge, some things need to be said because of their relevance to our subject. The first of these is that, according to Balthasar, God's love and his donation of self are to be understood as 'an accomplished fact, outside the subject's psyche and psychology.'<sup>53</sup> Consequently, as in Karl Barth, the knowledge and vision of the Christian is not to be attributed to the individual *per se*, but to the object, in whose existence the Christian shares. '*Non ex visio credentis, sed a visio eius cui creditur*' (Not from the vision of the believer, but from the vision of him who is believed).<sup>54</sup> Neither is the object to be measured by the subject, just as the beauty of a work of art does not depend on the lack of appreciation of the subjects looking at it.<sup>55</sup> As a consequence of this transfer of focus onto the object, knowledge is no longer understood as the 'power' of the subject over the object of knowledge, as with modern philosophy. God is not a mere 'object' of knowledge which we are expected to possess. He is 'a Trinity of Persons that *makes itself known* in whatever way and to whomever it wills' (my emphasis).<sup>56</sup> True knowledge only

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<sup>51</sup> *TH*, p.105.

<sup>52</sup> *P*, p.213.

<sup>53</sup> *C*, pp.129-30.

<sup>54</sup> Karl Barth, *The Doctrine of the Word of God. Prolegomena to Church Dogmatics*, p.232. See also *P*, p.167 and *TAI*: 309.

<sup>55</sup> *TAI*: 23 and 465. Like G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831) – most notably in his *Phenomenology of Spirit*, published in 1807, Balthasar is challenging Kant's doctrine of the unknowable thing-in-itself, and declaring that by knowing phenomena more fully we can gradually arrive at a consciousness of the truth of Divinity.

<sup>56</sup> *CSL*, p.393.

occurs when the object of knowledge gives more than its appearance to the subject.<sup>57</sup> Thus, in Balthasar's theology, if the subject is to develop and grow in knowledge, if he or she is to gain any authority, it will have to be a receptive act, a direct consequence of 'the deeply personal relationship' with the revealing God.<sup>58</sup> That Thérèse of Lisieux had attained an 'understanding of the word of God without formal studies,' that she knew 'how to expound the mystery of grace with flawless orthodoxy,' could – according to Balthasar - 'only be explained through an essential kinship of her soul with the things she explained, a deep affinity that she undoubtedly experienced,'<sup>59</sup> with a reality which was more than just a subjective fabrication.

A second point, that is closely related to this first one, concerns the way in which the saints come to have theological insight, and especially how the fundamental organization and structure of the mind cooperates in the act of faith. At first glance, the nature of the quality of the knowledge of the saints in Balthasar is similar to Cardinal Newman's *implicit* (personal) reasoning or (*scire*),<sup>60</sup> except that, in Balthasar, 'the primal attunement to [God] is not an *intuition* in the epistemological sense, nor is it the result of a purely logical inference from the finite to the infinite.'<sup>61</sup> The finite and the infinite are too different for that to be possible. In the *Aesthetics*, Balthasar maintains that the point concerning knowledge is not that the *habitus acquisitus scientiae* [acquired knowledge] ought to be left behind and transcended by a *habitus infusus* and the *donum Spiritus*.' According to Balthasar, the two have to work together. Infused or mystical contemplation – which is pure gift – can (and does) develop and unfold 'in the very midst' of knowledge that is acquired by the ordinary process of knowing. The only way in which 'the shaping power and the genius of the human spirit' can 'be transformed by the shaping power of the Holy Spirit' is to allow the *habitus infusus* and the *donum Spiritus* to develop and unfold in the very midst of

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<sup>57</sup> Howsare, 72.

<sup>58</sup> Riches (1986), pp.46, 50, 55.

<sup>59</sup> *TS*, p.487. Quoting Monsignor Paulot.

<sup>60</sup> In Newman, it is largely unconscious, instinctive, intuitive, and yet, it is natural, rational, true, potentially powerful and accurate knowledge, precisely because human beings are rational animals. Such knowledge may not be immediately visible, but it is there. Cardinal John Henry Newman, *The university sermons*, Sermon 13 on Implicit and Explicit Reason.

<sup>61</sup> *TA1*: 245.

acquired knowledge.<sup>62</sup> Consequently, in Balthasar, the saints acquire their knowledge by willing to allow the Spirit to teach them and to do his work in them ‘in the very midst of acquired knowledge’.<sup>63</sup> Balthasar detects elements of this in Maximus and in Aquinas.

“We are not permitted to say that grace alone brings about, in the saints, insight into the divine mysteries without any contribution from their natural capacity to receive knowledge. Otherwise we would have to assume that the holy prophets could not receive and comprehend the enlightenments that the Holy Spirit bestowed on them...On the other hand, they did not come upon a true insight into reality simply through the investigations of natural reason, without the grace of the Holy Spirit....<sup>64</sup>

Balthasar attributes all significant knowledge to the Spirit. He inquires rhetorically, ‘[w]here...what is to be discerned is of final, ultimate importance, where we are concerned with the being and non-being of man before God, who would be bold enough to make distinctions there unless in the Holy Spirit?...<sup>65</sup> Writing about the French Philosopher Maurice Nédoncelle (1905-1976), for example, Balthasar states that ‘he could not have carried out his analysis of human interpersonal relations except by the radiant power of Existence / Truth, by the interpreter of the revelation of God in Christ, namely, the Spirit.’<sup>66</sup>

A third critical point concerns the relationship of faith and vision.<sup>67</sup> In Balthasar’s theology, there is ‘no glaring contradiction’ between the two.<sup>68</sup> On the contrary, authentic faith is already now *quaedam inchoatio visionis*. *Gnosis* grows out of, and is dependent upon, *pistis*.<sup>69</sup> According to Balthasar, to say that the Apostles possessed actual vision rather than faith, while we have naked faith without the vision is too simplistic, since even the archetypal experience is not an experience beyond faith,<sup>70</sup> and since even we have some vision.<sup>71</sup> Vision is, therefore, not

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<sup>62</sup> *TAI*: 78.

<sup>63</sup> *TAI*: 78.

<sup>64</sup> *CL*, p.72. See also p.73.

<sup>65</sup> ‘Criteria,’ *E*, p.21.

<sup>66</sup> *TL3*: 151.

<sup>67</sup> Balthasar condemns the ‘Christian schizophrenia that yields so much to post-Kantian scientific rationalism and secularism.’ *THL*, p.15.

<sup>68</sup> See for example, *FG*, p.86. See also Dickens, p.65.

<sup>69</sup> *TAI*: 166.

<sup>70</sup> *TAI*: 301.

reserved to those who had the archetypal experience.<sup>72</sup> Balthasar grants the possibility of having someone outside the archetypal period able to see and understand something as much as, or even more, than those within the archetypal period.<sup>73</sup> It is the saints who are the ‘eye-witnesses’, the ones whose existence is drawn into the vision,<sup>74</sup> irrespective of whether they were Christ’s contemporaries or not. Naturally, this *visio facialis* is not to be interpreted as a *comprehensio* in the sense of worldly science or even of philosophy.<sup>75</sup> In Balthasar, *si comprehendis non est Deus*.<sup>76</sup> God’s ‘grandeur and incomprehensibility’ never disappear.<sup>77</sup> God will remain unknown to creatures with respect to his majesty, even if he is forever known through Christ<sup>78</sup> with respect to his love.<sup>79</sup> Always ‘*infinitum, sed non infinite, totum, sed non totaliter*’.<sup>80</sup> This means that even the saints can never embrace God fully, because ‘infinite love will not be caught and held’.<sup>81</sup> Not even the most exalted contemplation will enable us to see God face to face.<sup>82</sup> Within the context of Balthasar’s aesthetic discourse, when knowledge is incapable, faith takes over, precisely because ‘the image of Christ cannot be fully ‘taken in’ as can a painting; its dimensions are objectively infinite, and no finite spirit can traverse them.’<sup>83</sup> Hence, in Balthasar’s theology, although reason has ‘its own evidential character’, faith can be more efficient than reason.<sup>84</sup>

With regards to knowledge, a fourth point is that Balthasar correlates *gnosis*<sup>85</sup> with holiness. *Gnosis* is, according to Balthasar, ‘pre-eminently a matter for the

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<sup>71</sup> *TAI*: 305-6.

<sup>72</sup> *TAI*: 416.

<sup>73</sup> Love Alone, p.47. Quoted in Block, p.78.

<sup>74</sup> *TAI*: 305-6. Balthasar claims that both the apostolic and the ecclesial kerygma can boast of the presence of eye-witnesses. It makes no difference whether or not the eye-witnesses are conscious of the aesthetic moment as they methodologically order and elucidate their material.’ *TAI*: 78.

<sup>75</sup> *TAI*: 461-2.

<sup>76</sup> In Balthasar, this is true even in heaven. *TAI*: 461-2.

<sup>77</sup> ‘Experience of God’, *NE*, p.45.

<sup>78</sup> *TAI*: 124 and 461.

<sup>79</sup> *TL3*: 67-8. Quoted in Howsare, p.65.

<sup>80</sup> In *Presence and Thought*, Balthasar quotes Gregory as saying that ‘to understand is not to understand God (to know that the object is ungraspable); not to understand is to understand God (in the self-negation of the intellect, to grasp the object)’. *PT*, p.153.

<sup>81</sup> *TL3*: 448.

<sup>82</sup> *CSL*, p.438.

<sup>83</sup> *TAI*: 520-1.

<sup>84</sup> ‘Retrieving the Tradition’, p.148.

<sup>85</sup> In this context, the term *gnosis* is being used simply to refer to the cognitive aspect of the union of God and creature.

Christian saint.’<sup>86</sup> The deeper the relationship with God, the more the knowledge and understanding of God grows. Does this then mean that, in Balthasar’s theology, the saints always know, and always understand? The answer provided consists of a paradox. Balthasar grants that, ‘in decisive moments’, the Christian, and the saint, ‘is placed in the realm of naked faith...and must do without any consolation from vision or illuminating assurance.’<sup>87</sup> But, in Balthasar, ‘naked faith’ is actually a more authentic Christian faith. This means that, paradoxically, the saints may not know rationally, understand distinctly, and necessarily be able to explain to others, but they may still know and understand on the level of faith. In Balthasar, Christian faith is *faith* because it is based on divine authority rather than on ‘sufficient rational certainty’. He claims that if anyone wants to achieve Christian faith, he has to renounce ‘all rational certainty and [believe] on the basis of mere probability’. Balthasar thus concedes that faith is not always ‘rational,’<sup>88</sup> but, as with Augustine’s ‘*Credo ut intelligam*’, it is always ‘comprehending’.<sup>89</sup> Mary, Thérèse,<sup>90</sup> John of the Cross, even Adrienne,<sup>91</sup> all serve as examples for Balthasar of the naked faith experience. According to Balthasar, it is, paradoxically, at such moments of darkness that one knows and understands more. For this reason, Balthasar considers ‘unsatisfactory’ those theologies which ‘disengage the Christian act of faith from all elements of insight and understanding.’<sup>92</sup>

Just as, in the existential dimension, orthodoxy and orthopraxy corroborate each other, so in the epistemological dimension, the authority of the saints would have to be grounded not just in their access to the truth, but also in their lives being a depiction of that truth. This is the fifth point. In *De Mendacio*, Augustine had proposed ‘that the saint’s deed is a more useful depiction of Christian truth than

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<sup>86</sup> *TAI*: 166.

<sup>87</sup> *FG*, p.86.

<sup>88</sup> *TAI*: 173.

<sup>89</sup> *P*, p.62.

<sup>90</sup> *TS*, pp.335 and 336. Thérèse even ‘draws up a list of reasons why seeing is not superior to believing, rather [that] the reverse is true.’

<sup>91</sup> *FG*, p.86.

<sup>92</sup> According to Balthasar, ‘[s]uch a disengagement is a disincarnating of the act of faith from the real context of a man’s life and spiritual development in which he encounters God’, and adds that it ‘can only lead to a supernaturalistic rationalism’. *TAI*: 139.

the employment of complex language in Christian teaching.<sup>93</sup> This is the age-old dispute in rhetoric between *res* and *verba*,<sup>94</sup> that could very well mean that Balthasar is recommending deeds before words. However, Balthasar seeks to unify, rather than to separate the two. In all of this, Balthasar's indebtedness to Blondel is evident. For Blondel, not only was action 'more intrinsic to knowledge itself', there was also 'no opposition between thought and action'.<sup>95</sup> The same can be said of Balthasar. A life lived according to the truth is intrinsic to thought and to knowledge of the truth. Only such a *life* according to the truth 'gives us real understanding'.<sup>96</sup> This suggests that, in Balthasar, lived holiness illuminates the intellect and opens up a radically new perspective on human nature and on God. As with the postliberal Hans Frei (1922-1988) and George Lindbeck (1923-), the 'cognitive and pragmatic aspects of truth' are 'seen as inseparable'.<sup>97</sup>

The question now arises as to whether the knowledge of the saints differs from the knowledge of the Magisterium and, if so, how. Balthasar would say that the knowledge that the saints acquire always leads to a transformation of their lives, that the knowledge which the saints have is based on their personal faith rather than on them being persuaded by rational arguments, and that their knowledge is attained through the contemplation of the Word of God, and not just through natural philosophy. Moreover, Balthasar would say that the knowledge of the saints has an uplifting and revitalizing effect on others, and, as a consequence, it is ubiquitously influential.<sup>98</sup> But perhaps, in this regard, it would be helpful to examine Balthasar's distinction between the 'two realities' which theology could transport itself to. There is 'the realm of pure logical exactness' and there is 'experience which leads to contemplation and can become truly mystical'.<sup>99</sup> Evidently, the realm towards which the theology of the Magisterium tends to

<sup>93</sup> Heffernan, p.4. Augustine naturally had to make allowances for the illiterate.

<sup>94</sup> Heffernan, p.4. See also A.C. Howell, 'Res and verba: Words and things,' *ELH*, 13:2 (June, 1946), pp.131-142.

<sup>95</sup> Oliva Blanchette, 'Maurice Blondel's Philosophy of Action', Translator's Preface to Maurice Blondel's *Action: Essay on a Critique of Life and a Science of Practice* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1984), p.xvii.

<sup>96</sup> *TL3*: 87.

<sup>97</sup> George Hunsinger, 'Postliberal Theology,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology*, ed. by Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp.42-57 (p.43).

<sup>98</sup> Balthasar may not have affirmed these conclusions as stated here. However, they are the logical implications of the interpretation of Balthasar's theology of the saints.

<sup>99</sup> *TA1*: 601.



transport itself is that of ‘pure logical exactness’, whereas Balthasar would associate the second of these with the theology produced by the saints, preferring the latter because of his lack of enthusiasm for the rational-propositional approach to doctrine, as represented by scholasticism. I should insist that Balthasar does not separate and juxtapose the saints against the Magisterium, however, he would be able to distinguish quite clearly between the theology produced by the saints and that produced by the official documents of the Church, and his preference for that of the saints is evident. This does not necessarily mean that the theology of the latter is easy to assimilate. As Rodney Howsare has pointed out, ‘the God who is revealed in Jesus Christ is even more incomprehensible to human reason than the God of negative theology and philosophy.’<sup>100</sup> But it is certainly more authentic.

Ratzinger has claimed that, in Balthasar’s work, ‘there is a straight path...from the theology of the word to the theology of silence’, but not in the sense of abandoning all words in the negation of the worldly and earthly.<sup>101</sup> As Ratzinger has said, Balthasar resorts to the *theologia negativa*, without his theology ever detaching itself from its basis in a *theologia positiva*.<sup>102</sup> The apophatic is anchored in the cataphatic.<sup>103</sup> It is not that theology cannot say anything about God.<sup>104</sup> It is that whatever it says about God will be inadequate.<sup>105</sup> The negative theology which Balthasar is proposing is therefore not a philosophical ‘negative theology’, but ‘a “negative theology” within the theology of revelation’.<sup>106</sup> Likewise, his saints will not be associated with a ‘negative theology’ in the philosophical sense, but with a negative theology in a theological sense. In a theological sense, ‘God’s incomprehensibility is...no longer a mere deficiency in knowledge, but the positive manner in which God determines the knowledge of faith.’<sup>107</sup> Balthasar presents two examples of theologians who ‘relied most consistently on the apophatic method’, and yet ‘never divorced it from the cataphatic approach’.

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<sup>100</sup> Howsare, p.65.

<sup>101</sup> Ratzinger, p.133-4.

<sup>102</sup> *TAI*: 124.

<sup>103</sup> *TAI*: 448. See O’Donaghue, in Riches (1986) p.3. See also Dickens, p.67.

<sup>104</sup> *TL2* is a defense of positive language about God against Neo-platonic apophatic theology and eastern mysticism.

<sup>105</sup> *TL3*: 358.

<sup>106</sup> *TAI*: 461.

<sup>107</sup> *TAI*: 461.

These are the Areopagite and John of the Cross, who, according to Balthasar, are the two ‘most decidedly aesthetic theologians of Christian history’.<sup>108</sup>

### THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM LOVE

In the *Apokalypse*, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard (1813-1855) are made to confront each other on the issue of love. Nietzsche’s is the ‘power love’, while Kierkegaard’s is the love that sacrifices itself.<sup>109</sup> With Balthasar, love ‘plays an indispensable role in thought.’<sup>110</sup> In his *Aesthetics*, Balthasar claims that ‘[a]ll theoretical and practical difficulties of faith as an intellectual act are solved once the deeper level of love is reached.’<sup>111</sup> It would seem as if Balthasar is opposed to Aquinas, and in accordance with Augustine. Whereas Aquinas would say that ‘knowledge comes before love’ (giving ultimacy to the intellect), in Balthasar love is ‘the foundation of knowledge’ (giving ultimacy to love).<sup>112</sup> In spite of this seeming opposition, David C. Schindler has convincingly argued that Balthasar is not opposed to Aquinas. He is opposed only to a simplistic reading of Aquinas.<sup>113</sup> Schindler claims that, in Balthasar, there is an affirmation of the supremacy of love that nevertheless includes an abiding priority of the intellect over the will.<sup>114</sup>

There is enough evidence in Balthasar to show that love is not unknowing, and blind. Quite the reverse, it is the source of all knowledge. In Balthasar, love precedes knowledge, substitutes knowledge, mediates knowledge, and is the foundation of knowledge. To quote Henrici, ‘it is the only thing that is truly intelligible, in fact the only thing that is truly “rational”, “*id quo maius cogitari nequit*”.’<sup>115</sup> Balthasar maintains that ‘in knowledge and in love’, ‘man is open to the Thou, to things and to God.’<sup>116</sup> Balthasar uses the saints (for example,

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<sup>108</sup> *TAI*: 124-5.

<sup>109</sup> Henrici, ‘The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar’, p.160.

<sup>110</sup> Nichols (2004), p.164.

<sup>111</sup> *TAI*: 193.

<sup>112</sup> *TAI*: 130.

<sup>113</sup> David C. Schindler, ‘Towards a non-Possessive concept of knowledge: On the Relation between Reason and Love in Aquinas and Balthasar’, *Modern Theology* 22:24 (Oct 2006), 577-607 (p.586).

<sup>114</sup> David C. Schindler (2006), p.580.

<sup>115</sup> Henrici, ‘The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar’, p.167.

<sup>116</sup> *TAI*: 243.

Augustine<sup>117</sup> and Bernard<sup>118</sup>) to ratify love as that which leads to knowledge. He uses Paul's letters to the Corinthians and to the Ephesians to emphasize that love alone mediates the authentic Christian *gnosis* (1 Cor 8.1ff) and that whatever is worth knowing, can only be known by love. With the spiritual theology of the Middle Ages, and on the foundations laid by Gregory the Great, Balthasar claims that '[i]t is through love that we attain knowledge.' Indeed, 'love itself is knowledge.'<sup>119</sup>

I would agree with David C.Schindler that 'Balthasar's insistence on the absolute priority of love...is not a concession to voluntarism and the irrationality it entails, but is ultimately due to a significantly different notion of reason than is generally assumed'.<sup>120</sup> The knowledge that this love has is, according to Balthasar, not the 'knowledge of itself or of its own work, but of the fullness of Christ.'<sup>121</sup> The authority of love is confirmed in his *Christlicher Stand* where Balthasar writes that

There is no authority higher than love. On the contrary, it is itself the highest authority, holding all else under its sway. Because it is compelled by no necessity, *necessity* and freedom are conjoined in it. When in all freedom it makes its decision to love, it fulfils all that is required.<sup>122</sup>

Brian Daley has said that, in Balthasar's terminology, '*Gnosis* generally means the quest for a cognitive union of the creature with God achieved by asceticism and renunciation', rather than by a union of love consummated in the midst of the finite world'.<sup>123</sup> I agree with Daley's interpretation of *gnosis* in Balthasar, but disagree with his interpretation of how it is achieved. Balthasar does emphasise renunciation, but not in the sense of asceticism, mortification and austerity for their own sake. In Balthasar, renunciation is not an alternative to the union of love but an essential element of it. Balthasar's own hymn to love is to be found in his

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<sup>117</sup> *MH*, p.x.

<sup>118</sup> *TL3*: 366. Noel O'Donaghue has said that 'Balthasar is not concerned primarily with the light in the mind...but with the fire in the heart.' O'Donaghue, in *Riches* (1986), p.9.

<sup>119</sup> O'Donaghue goes on to say that 'the fire in the heart becomes the light of the mind'. O'Donaghue, in *Riches*, p.10.

<sup>120</sup> David C.Schindler (2006), p.579.

<sup>121</sup> *TAI*: 130.

<sup>122</sup> *CSL*, p.30.

<sup>123</sup> See Brian E.Daley (2004), p.192.

first volume of the *Aesthetics*. ‘Love – indeed, love that partakes in God’s love – is the warrant of objective knowledge in the realm of Trinitarian revelation.’<sup>124</sup> It is for this reason that Balthasar can argue that authentic love ‘bears within itself in sensory fashion the quintessence of dogmatics.’<sup>125</sup> According to Balthasar, dogmas ‘must be nothing other than aspects of the love which manifests itself in ‘in all [of the Son’s] incarnate existence’.<sup>126</sup> In one of his essays, Balthasar objects to everything that could lead to *gnosis* rather than to love, and applies Nietzsche’s saying God is ‘dead’ to a dogmatics that prefers *gnosis* and reason over and above love and God himself.<sup>127</sup> This is where the authority of the knowledge of the saints is grounded, according to Balthasar: in its radical difference from simple *gnosis*.

Besides asserting that God can only be known through love,<sup>128</sup> Balthasar also insists that the truth can only be expressed by love. Balthasar builds on John. Here, ‘love that is practised contains the ability to demonstrate itself as the truth.’<sup>129</sup> Balthasar claims that ‘the task of the members of the Church is precisely to give living and existential [Christian] expression to the truth in the exercise of love.’<sup>130</sup> From an epistemological perspective, whereas the one who does not love is in ignorance,<sup>131</sup> genuine love enables the Christian saint to interpret, embody and communicate the Christological form which love takes.<sup>132</sup>

To recapitulate. In this Chapter, we have so far determined that, in Balthasar, the saints’ authority comes from their faith, their knowledge, their love, which gives the saints what I would like to call an *epistemological advantage*. Simply speaking, I have tried to establish that, in the epistemological dimension, the saints function as an authority within theology, the Church and even humanity, because of the quality of their faith, knowledge, and love which enables them to know

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<sup>124</sup> *TAI*: 618.

<sup>125</sup> *TAI*: 424.

<sup>126</sup> *TL3*: 74.

<sup>127</sup> ‘The Absences of Jesus,’ *NE*, pp.57-8.

<sup>128</sup> *TL3*: 382 and 448.

<sup>129</sup> *TAI*: 424.

<sup>130</sup> ‘Our Shared Responsibility’, *E*, pp.141-2.

<sup>131</sup> *P*, p.215.

<sup>132</sup> *TAI*: 424.

more, do more and be more. But where does such faith, knowledge and love, derive from, according to Balthasar? What is it that produces such an advantageous epistemological position? In spite of the problems associated with the concept, Balthasar, provides ‘experience’ as the answer.<sup>133</sup> In the following section, I will argue that the concept of experience enables Balthasar to provide a good grounding for a theology of the authority of the saints, particularly when he concentrates on the experience of contemplation, on archetypal experience and on mystical experience, without him falling into the Modernist traps of either belittling the intellectual or of over-subjectivising the subject’s experience.

### **THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM EXPERIENCE**

Along with other *nouveaux théologiens*, Balthasar takes the historical and experiential conditions of human existence seriously,<sup>134</sup> without, however, making them absolute, as Western rationalism and empiricism did.<sup>135</sup> For Balthasar, the theological concept of experience is only ‘intelligible when shaped by the perception of the basic form of revelation.’<sup>136</sup> However, in Balthasar’s theology, experience of Christ’s existence becomes much more than an imitation of Christ, or even a conformity with Christ.<sup>137</sup> It is also a *being* ‘drawn by grace into the original work at the place that is reserved’ for the individual.<sup>138</sup> This concept is the Pauline “en Christō”, which is much more than imitation.<sup>139</sup> This means that authentic discipleship consists of an experience of Christ’s own existence. It is a participation in Christ’s experience, which could sometimes even take physical form, although it does not necessarily have to do so.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Allesandro Maggiolini, ‘Magisterial Teaching on Experience in the Twentieth Century: From the Modernist Crisis to the Second Vatican Council,’ *Communio: International Catholic Review* (23:2) Summer 1996). Accessed online 2/09/2014 <http://www.ewtn.com/library/THEOLOGY/MT20THCN.htm>

<sup>134</sup> Boersma (2009), pp.22, 36 and 45. Johann Adam Möhler (1796-1838), Marie-Dominique Chenu (1895-1990), and also Louis Dupré (1926 -) in particular.

<sup>135</sup> This is the same dialectic between Gregory of Nyssa and Eunomius. Eunomius asserted that God could be fully grasped in concepts, whereas Gregory interprets Trinitarian theology and Christology as mystical theology. Ratzinger, p.154.

<sup>136</sup> David L.Schindler, writing about Peter Casarella’s contribution on ‘Experience as a Theological Category: Hans urs von Balthasar’, CTSA 1992, Proceedings 47, 109.

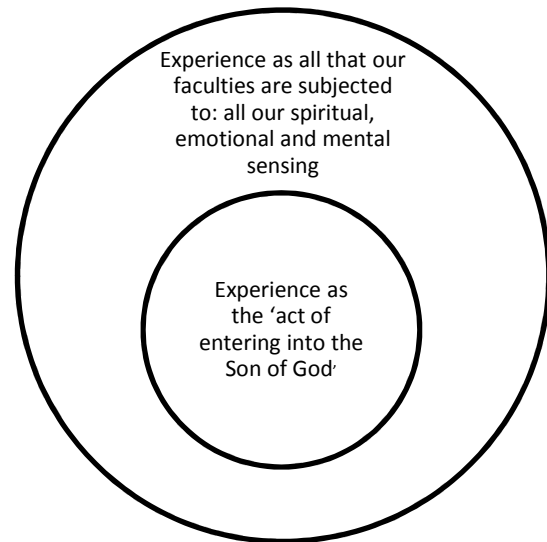
<sup>137</sup> *TAI*: 330.

<sup>138</sup> ‘The Gospel as Norm’, *CS*, p.290., *EG*, p.40. See M.A.McIntosh (1996) p.54 for a discussion of imitation.

<sup>139</sup> *FG*, p.245.

<sup>140</sup> *TAI*: 330.

Balthasar uses various saints, to describe the authentic ‘living Christian experience of faith’. In that notorious passage from the *Theo-Aesthetics* which we have already quoted, he claims that such experience includes ‘a certain experience of both nearness to God and distance from God, of consolation and desolation, a sense for God’s will for me here and now’ (Ignatius of Loyola), ‘a *sapor* for the divine wisdom (Bernard), a *cognitio per connaturalitatem* (Thomas).’<sup>141</sup> So, for Balthasar, generally speaking, experience encompasses all that our faculties are subjected to, all our spiritual, emotional and mental sensing, so to speak. But, more specifically,



experience is narrowed down to refer to the participation in Christ. In Balthasar, the authority of the saints would be grounded in the latter kind of experience, that is, in the surrender to Christ and to his ‘journey’,<sup>142</sup> and in one’s participation in Christ’s mission.<sup>143</sup> Pierre de Bérulle (1575-1629) had said that the ‘Christian experience of existence is the interpretation in faith of all that happens as a modality in the sphere of Christ’s life.’<sup>144</sup> In Balthasar, it is more a question of actual participation, rather than of interpretation. In this context, Balthasar utilises the concept of theological states, and he often alludes to the ‘christological states of being into which God draws the believer at various moments of life.’<sup>145</sup> This is where the authority of the saints is grounded: in their share in the Christological states, states which are dynamic, not static. In fact, Balthasar claims that ‘[a]s an attitude, faith is the surrender of one’s own experience to the experience of

<sup>141</sup> *TAI*: 412.

<sup>142</sup> *TAI*: 228.

<sup>143</sup> *TAI*: 477.

<sup>144</sup> *TA5*: 123.

<sup>145</sup> McIntosh (1996) p.55.

Christ.<sup>146</sup> The following is probably Balthasar's best attempt to explain what goes on in Christian experience. We are told that

What is here involved is not only an objectless and intentionless disposition (*Stimmung*), but rather a deliberate attunement of self (*sich-Einstimmen*) to the accord (*Stimmen*) existing between Christ and his mandate from the Father, in the context of salvation-history's assent (*Zu-stimmung*)... We speak, therefore, primarily of an empathy (*Mitfühlen*) with the Son... we speak of a sense for the path taken by Christ which leads him to the Cross; we speak of a *sensorium* for Christ's 'instinct of obedience.'<sup>147</sup>

It is on these grounds that Balthasar can say that, '[t]he Christological experience of God... presents two aspects: the *experientia Dei incarnati* as a subjective genitive and therefore posteriorly as an objective genitive.'<sup>148</sup> The two aspects are: the experience of *God incarnate*, where God incarnate is the subject, and the *experience* of God incarnate, where experience is the subject. The experience of the saint is not a replica of the subjective experience of Christ (as a subjective genitive), but a participation in it, an experience of it. In Balthasar's theology, this participation in the experience of Christ is both ontological – as we emphasized in the previous chapter on the existential dimension – and epistemological. And it takes place 'by virtue of the inversion'. Balthasar describes it as an 'intersecting double movement', namely the 'descent' of God into the 'flesh' and the 'ascent' of the flesh into the spirit.'<sup>149</sup> Without a doubt, it is an epistemological inversion: where God learns what is human and man learns what is divine.<sup>150</sup>

On his part, Balthasar plays on the two German words '*Einfahren*' and '*Erfahrung*', in order to emphasise that what has the potential of becoming an experience is the 'act of entering into the Son of God'. He uses these two terms to argue that the act of entering into Christ becomes the experience that alone can claim for itself [man's] undivided obedience. His emphasis is that '*Erfahrung*' (experience) is not '*Einfahren*' (man's entry into himself, into his best and highest

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<sup>146</sup> *TAI*: 412.

<sup>147</sup> *TAI*: 253.

<sup>148</sup> *TAI*: 324-5.

<sup>149</sup> *TAI*: 473.

<sup>150</sup> *TAI*: 264. See also *TL3*: 204-5.

possibilities].<sup>151</sup> Balthasar responds to various philosophers and theologians, by maintaining that that towards which existence is ‘travelling’ and has always ‘travelled’ (or been made to travel!) is the objective, Trinitarian reality of God,<sup>152</sup> and not his own realization and accomplishment. He also maintains that any ‘experience of piety’ which the individual may have is secondary, simply because, as Balthasar says, this experience is ‘rooted’ in the objective reality which is God.<sup>153</sup>

Significantly, Balthasar writes of the danger for ‘the believer...to make his own experience...almost as if it too were a *credendum*.’<sup>154</sup> On the contrary, in Balthasar’s theology, the authority of the experience of the saints paradoxically ensues from the saint’s detachment from it. Writing about experience, Balthasar insists on ‘the *renunciation* (of immediate experience)’. This, he says, ‘constitutes the condition for every truly Christian experience of faith.’<sup>155</sup> Balthasar insists that regardless of how personal the individual has felt his experience to be, he must nevertheless deprive himself of it for the sake of the Church; he must pass it on. As Balthasar puts it, the experience of the individual ‘was as of one expropriated’ and ‘he must administer it as one expropriated’.<sup>156</sup> This is what gives certainty to that experience: the active ‘self-abandonment’.<sup>157</sup> Balthasar thus justifies himself by using the theological concept of the dark night of the mystics, but with a twist. He again contrasts *Erfahrung*’ with ‘*Einfahren*’, this time using a totally different rationale. He claims that every ‘*Erfahrung*’ (deeper experience of God) will be a deeper entering into ‘*Einfahren*’ (the ‘non-experience’ of faith, the loving renunciation of experience, the depths of the ‘Dark Nights’),<sup>158</sup> but in Balthasar, the dark night is the eternal abandonment of Christ *to* God (rather than the abandonment of the individual to God, or the abandonment of the individual *by*

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<sup>151</sup> *TAI*: 222.

<sup>152</sup> *TAI*: 229.

<sup>153</sup> *TAI*: 132.

<sup>154</sup> *P*, pp.256-7.

<sup>155</sup> ‘Experience of God?’ *NE*, 43-4. Balthasar suggests Blondel as the one who may have best ‘understood and described’ this point. See Michael J. Kerlin, ‘Maurice Blondel: Philosophy, Prayer And The Mystical’, 2005. <http://www.aarmysticism.org/documents/Kerlin.pdf>. Accessed 19/09/2013. See also *TAI*: 257-8.

<sup>156</sup> *TAI*: 414.

<sup>157</sup> *TAI*: 228. As David C.Schindler has argued, in Balthasar, knowledge is essentially non-possessive’, where ‘the very act of appropriation is an act of expropriation’. David C.Schindler (2006), p.596.

<sup>158</sup> *TAI*: 412-3. These ‘nights’ are an ‘experience of non-experience, a participation in the total archetypal experience of the Old and New Testaments.



God), an abandonment which takes place in Jesus and in which the saints participate, and ‘which is greater than all knowledge’.<sup>159</sup> Thus, Balthasar does two things: he establishes the authority of the one who reveals,<sup>160</sup> and he establishes obedience as integral to reason. Contrary to the pagans – who ‘refuse the act of obedience’ and ‘do not place their natural faculties in the service of a believing submission to God’,<sup>161</sup> in Balthasar, obedience is an essential aspect of reason, leading to knowledge.

According to Balthasar ‘there is no Christian experience of God that is not the fruit of the conquest of self-will, or at least of the decision to conquer it.’ This is the only thing for which the believer is responsible: the decision to subjugate one’s own will. Otherwise, Balthasar condemns the ‘autocratic attempt of man to evoke religious experiences on his own initiative and by means of his own methods and techniques’, claiming, in Ignatian terms, that this is an example of ‘a *disordinate* self-will’ (my emphasis).<sup>162</sup> In Balthasar, ‘personal religious and charismatic powers’ should be forfeited.<sup>163</sup> In the *Theo-Logic*, Philip, Magdalen and John are presented as examples of individuals who had to transcend tangible experience.<sup>164</sup> In Balthasar, the authority of the saints is not necessarily grounded in that which is ‘consciously perceived’, simply because not all experiences which the believer has are necessarily ‘consciously perceived by him in a subjective and psychological sense’. There are experiences – which Balthasar calls ‘objective’ – which are not experienced in such a ‘subjective and psychological sense’, but which are still efficacious.<sup>165</sup> And they may still be authoritative.

But our question remains: how does a saint’s experience become authoritative? Why has the experience of so many saints been considered so exceptionally authoritative? One attempt at answering this question from an epistemological

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<sup>159</sup> Ratzinger, p.136.

<sup>160</sup> Riches (1986), p.54.

<sup>161</sup> *TKB*, p.315.

<sup>162</sup> ‘Experience of God?’, *NE*, p.26.

<sup>163</sup> *CSL*, p.370. Balthasar’s words reflect Karl Barth’s apprehension concerning man’s capacity not only for atheism but for idolatry. Understood in this way, such a forfeiture is laudable. Understood from the context of political theology, this is very dangerous. Howsare, p.31.

<sup>164</sup> *TL3*: 384.

<sup>165</sup> *TAI*: 258. To speak of ‘objective experience’ sounds contradictory, unless Balthasar simply means to say that there may be experiences of which the individual remains unaware at the conscious level.

standpoint is to be found in the *Aesthetics*. Here, Balthasar points to Aquinas' affirmation vis-à-vis the prophet's 'supreme certainty concerning those things which the prophetic Spirit expressly infuses into him, and also concerning the fact that these things are revealed to him by God'. Balthasar argues that the 'divine experiences' of the Prophets 'had to be considered as universally binding as soon as their authenticity was proven' [my italics].<sup>166</sup> There are then two important realities here. The first one chronologically is the establishment of the authenticity of the experience. This authenticity does not necessarily denote that the legitimacy of the experiences was never contested during their lifetime. It may have been aggressively contested, the people may have initially refused to believe the testimony of the prophets, but there was a point when their 'authenticity was proven', and when their testimony acquired credibility.<sup>167</sup> Secondly, there is a point when this witness became universally binding, when the experience of the individual acquired an archetypal (protological) 'normalcy', to use Balthasar's term.<sup>168</sup> In the 50's, Balthasar warns against allowing 'the subjective limitations of one person's experience' to be taken 'as the measure for the objective truths of revelation.'<sup>169</sup> In his later work, he seems to prefer the saints' collective experience as a reliable source of evidence.<sup>170</sup> While granting that the 'character of the saints' view of the world' may be 'temporally conditioned', Balthasar asserts that '[o]ne must be careful not to discard as outmoded things which from century to century [the saints] have experienced again and again.'<sup>171</sup> With Balthasar, the experience which the saints – collectively – had in their encounter with the form of revelation, can never be dispensed with.

#### a. THE EXPERIENCE OF CONTEMPLATION

We come now to the experience of contemplation. Once again, a few points need to be established. First of all, with Balthasar, reason and contemplation are not

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<sup>166</sup> *TAI*: 308.

<sup>167</sup> *TAI*: 335.

<sup>168</sup> *TAI*: 412.

<sup>169</sup> *TS*, p.65.

<sup>170</sup> I will argue that the issue of universalization is only resolved within a pneumatological context. The experience which fully embraces the individual does not automatically acquire canonicity, unless the Spirit wills it.

<sup>171</sup> 'Tradition', *E*, pp.125-6.

contrary to each other. In Balthasar's case, prayer and worship are actually indispensable to the inner act of reason.<sup>172</sup> So, Balthasar integrates reason and contemplation, which is very unusual. Furthermore – and this is also very unusual – Balthasar attributes to God a number of behaviours that other theologians would associate with the finite creature: tasks such as faith and prayer. For Balthasar, therefore, prayer is 'a participation in the inner-trinitarian prayer of God'.<sup>173</sup> Thirdly, Balthasar is very clear as to which contemplation he does *not* support, and is very candid with his criticism. He criticizes the 'predominantly individualistic conception of contemplation' which would have been influenced by the 'contemplative ideals' of Plato, Aristotle, Stoicism and Neoplatonism. He criticizes the contemplation of the medieval mystics which remains centered on the condition of the contemplative himself or herself.<sup>174</sup> He also warns against diverting the seeking of self-knowledge through contemplation,<sup>175</sup> claiming that many

engaged in contemplation in order to attain loftier states and illuminations, more subtle theological insights; perhaps, also, simply to get to know the internal laws of contemplation so that they could describe them, on the basis of experience, for the benefit of their fellow believers. They prayed and worshipped *in recto* while at the same time observing themselves *in oblique*, as it were photographing their own transcendence.<sup>176</sup>

In Balthasar, there is only one purpose for the 'light and spiritual understanding' given in contemplation, and that is 'to enhance and deepen' the contemplative's 'sensitivity to the divine will'.<sup>177</sup> Balthasar's book on prayer stipulates the characteristics of genuine contemplation, by providing a list of, what I would call, non-doables. First of all, '[c]ontemplation must not get stuck in the intellect...for "gnosis puffs up, but love builds up"'.<sup>178</sup> Secondly, contemplation must not become a self-contemplation. Authentic contemplation must be a devotional

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<sup>172</sup> *P*, p.63. Balthasar agrees with Heidegger that 'wonder is the element in which thought is always moving.' See Kerr (2004), p.235.

<sup>173</sup> *TE*, p.89.

<sup>174</sup> *TS*, p.195.

<sup>175</sup> *P*, pp.116-7.

<sup>176</sup> *P*, pp.116-7.

<sup>177</sup> Balthasar is careful not to be interpreted as putting forward a "voluntarist" theology of contemplation. 'The concept "will", he writes, is not here being used 'in the sense of a limited faculty of the soul as opposed to the "reason"'. *P*, pp.103-4.

<sup>178</sup> *P*, p.135.

attention to what is essentially the non-I, namely, God's word.'<sup>179</sup> Thirdly, in its longing 'for the *speculatio majestatis*', Christian contemplation should 'not try to bypass Christ'.<sup>180</sup> Finally, neither should contemplation 'strain away from the earth'.<sup>181</sup> Balthasar insists that 'the apostles and saints are not daydreamers in flight from the world, living in a fairyland divorced from reality.'<sup>182</sup> He maintains that prayer 'is not "ecstasy" in the sense of inspired inebriation or of divesting oneself of created reality, in order to live henceforth in God, beyond one's own self.' Inebriation and detachment could be part of the experience of contemplation, but they are not its core. What Balthasar wants to do is to restore to contemplation its original function, namely, worship. This is 'a worship which also contains the handmaid's discreet Yes, the consent to be possessed, to be at God's disposal'. Therefore, in Balthasar, the 'ecstasy' is one of 'service', rather than one of forgetfulness.<sup>183</sup>

In Balthasar's theology, in the epistemological dimension, the authority of the saints is grounded in their contemplation.<sup>184</sup> The saints are credible because their combination of *contemplatio* and *ratio* enables them to provide what others would consider a genuine interpretation. Contemplation invests them with authority. The faith, knowledge and love that ensues from the contemplative experience of the saints will become visible in one way or another, and authority will be bestowed on them. Balthasar states his position quite clearly: when the Christian emerges from prayer 'he appears as someone sent, who has received in contemplation (without being aware of it) all the equipment he needs for his Christian mission: the authority, the abilities and the taste for it.'<sup>185</sup>

Balthasar uses saints such as Thérèse and Elizabeth to both resuscitate the link between action and contemplation – which the desert monks and Dionysius the

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<sup>179</sup> *P*, p.115.

<sup>180</sup> *P*, p.272.

<sup>181</sup> *P*, p.290.

<sup>182</sup> *P*, p.290.

<sup>183</sup> *P*, p.79. Adrienne is of the same disposition. She claims that one should focus on 'a person's interaction with God in prayer' and not on visions and prophecies. *Book of All Saints*, p.414.

<sup>184</sup> The holistic encounter which takes place in 'constant contemplation' both transcends, and grounds, every individual act of self-giving. *TAI*: 242.

<sup>185</sup> *P*, p.122.

Pseudo-Areopagite already knew',<sup>186</sup> - and to stipulate the kind of contemplation which Balthasar associates with authenticity. According to Balthasar, Thérèse is 'the first to see quite clearly that 'contemplation in itself is a dynamic force and is indeed the source of all fruitfulness, the first impulse in all change'.<sup>187</sup> But how is the difference between saintly prayer and ordinary prayer to be understood? In Balthasar, what makes the contemplation of the saint efficacious is the 'attunement' to, or 'consonance' with God.'<sup>188</sup> It is also the solidarity with creation, and with Christ's involvement with it, which is more evident in the saints.

If the Spirit is to render our prayer effective with God, we need to declare our solidarity with the suffering of creation and with Christ's suffering for creation. In our search for salvation, all that is purely private has been rendered obsolete by the Spirit.<sup>189</sup>

#### **b. ARCHETYPAL EXPERIENCE**

Writing about the 'christological constellation', Steffen Lösel claims that Balthasar uses the typological interpretation of the New Testament in order to claim 'the authority of divine revelation for the present structural configuration of the Church'.<sup>190</sup> This is not how I interpret Balthasar. Balthasar does claim that the Church derives from 'the dignity and authority of the Biblical archetypes of Old and New Testaments, and that it is 'canonised' by these Biblical archetypes'.<sup>191</sup> But, to my mind, he is using the saints as a criterion for judging the *integrity* of ecclesial structures, not for emphasizing the *legitimacy* of these structures. He is not using the saints to *reinforce* the present structures, to *defend* them and their authority 'as divinely instituted'.<sup>192</sup> His role is pastoral not statutory. He is using them to kindle life back into the Church structures. It is a process of reformation based on *ressourcement*.

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<sup>186</sup> *TS*, p.430. See also *EG*, pp.47-48.

<sup>187</sup> *TS*, p.195. See also pp.194 and 200. Balthasar prefers the notion of fruitfulness to that of effectiveness.

<sup>188</sup> *TAI*: 242.

<sup>189</sup> *TL3*: 385.

<sup>190</sup> Lösel (2008), p.26.

<sup>191</sup> *TAI*: 351. In the emphasis he puts on Old Testament types as sacraments that point beyond themselves towards Christ, Balthasar follows de Lubac and Daniélou. Boersma (2009), p.33.

<sup>192</sup> Lösel (2008), p.28.

Moreover, I would like to argue that, in order to understand what Balthasar was trying to do with the concept of ‘archetype’, it is not enough to examine his ecclesiology. One also has to examine his Christology, as well as his exegetical and mystical writings. In Balthasar, that ‘experience which leads to contemplation and can become truly mystical’ always ‘radiates from the archetype.’<sup>193</sup> Christ is the principal archetype. He is the *Übermensch*: ‘the super-form’.<sup>194</sup>

Balthasar discusses ‘archetypal experiences’ in the first volume of the *Aesthetics* but he refers to the same subject again in the last volume of his trilogy.<sup>195</sup> The fact that he treats the subject in the beginning and at the end of his great work cannot be without significance. In Balthasar’s theology, the Old Testament Prophets and the Apostles of Christ represent ‘archetypal Biblical authority through experience’, along with Christ.<sup>196</sup> They are ‘the foundation upon which all Christian faith is built’, not just because these experiences are *eye-witness* experiences, nor because they are *mystical* experiences, but because they are ‘witnesses of Christian *faith*’ (my emphasis),<sup>197</sup> when faith entails ‘the participation in the archetypal faith of the Apostles and in the total structure of experience within the sphere of Sacred Scripture.’<sup>198</sup> Balthasar claims that there are other figures who ‘acquire a kind of secondary archetypicity’. These figures, and Balthasar asserts that there are ‘many’ of them, ‘yield on earth a very clear symbolic image, especially those figures who are manifestly intended to point the way for entire sections of the Church, entire epochs or regions or communities.’<sup>199</sup> Therefore, in Balthasar, there is the authority of the archetypal figures (including the patriarchs, whom the Fathers understood as types of Christ),<sup>200</sup> and then there are the post-biblical saints who participate in this original archetypal

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<sup>193</sup> *TAI*: 601.

<sup>194</sup> *TAI*: 602.

<sup>195</sup> E.g. *TL3*: 384.

<sup>196</sup> *TAI*: 387. The reference to Tyrrell’s theology of revelation is clear.

<sup>197</sup> *TAI*: 301.

<sup>198</sup> *TAI*: 306 and 592.

<sup>199</sup> *TAI*: 565.

<sup>200</sup> We have to ‘see and abide by this fourfold tradition of archetypal experience in the Church’. *TAI*: 351. See Gardner (2004), p.68.

experience.<sup>201</sup> They do so through private revelation and by personal sanctity.<sup>202</sup>  
He writes,

[s]omething similar is true of the great, fundamental charisms of Church history, above all of the founders of great religious families, from which spiritualities with a clearly defined profile go forth and continue to operate; but it is also true of Doctors of the Church and other personalities who set their mark on the Church...who share in giving Christianity its form far beyond the period in which they themselves live.<sup>203</sup>

In the epistemological domain, Balthasar grounds the authority of the biblical figures in their archetypicity, which enables Balthasar to attribute to these figures a diachronic effect that is extensive, stretching back into the past, and carried into the future. On the other hand, Balthasar grounds the authority of the post-biblical figures in their participation in this archetypicity, which takes two forms, namely, private mystical experience or personal holiness, which also has the diachronic faculty of extending over time.

In 'The Gospel as Norm', Balthasar writes about the disciples who act as mediating figures, and of how the form of Christ is impressed on the Church through them.<sup>204</sup> According to Balthasar, Peter and John, Paul and James, Martha and Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalen, the evangelists, and the other less prominent apostles 'are the starting point of forms of Christian existence that *continue to operate*'.<sup>205</sup> Lösel has said that, in Balthasar, the actions of the archetypes can 'amount to a soteriologically relevant action within the theo-drama between God and humanity'.<sup>206</sup> On my part, I see their contribution as representative (for example, Mary represents sinners, the Church, individual believers and Christian existence), exemplary, instructive, and mystical, rather than strictly soteriological.<sup>207</sup> Balthasar follows Markus Barth (1915-1994) in

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<sup>201</sup> *TAI*: 351. According to Balthasar, 'every Christian experience is open to the eschatological future.' *TL3*: 385.

<sup>202</sup> *TAI*: 348.

<sup>203</sup> *The Gospel as Norm, CS*, pp.296-7.

<sup>204</sup> *The Gospel as Norm, CS*, p.290.

<sup>205</sup> *The Gospel as Norm, CS*, pp.296-7.

<sup>206</sup> Lösel (2008), p.30.

<sup>207</sup> One may identify soteriological patterns, but not soteriological efficacy as such.

claiming that what makes the experience of the early constellation ‘archetypal’ is the fact that their ‘eye-witness’ was, by its nature, ‘exceptional’.<sup>208</sup> In Balthasar’s theology, in the epistemological domain, the authority of the New Testament archetypal saints is grounded in the fact that this ‘intimate group of chosen persons...have been made worthy’ of ‘visibleness’, that is, worthy to *see* Christ.<sup>209</sup> There is obviously some danger, as Steffen Lösel has said, in ‘superimposing a theological typology on one’s reading of scripture’,<sup>210</sup> but there is also a lot to be said in its favour.

There is a lot of what Balthasar says about the archetypes that echoes Heidegger, and the way in which past, present and future were disclosed as intertwined in Heidegger’s analysis of temporality. There is, in the concept of the diachronic validity of the archetypes, at least a hint of Heidegger’s concept of *Wiederholung* (translated as *repetition* or as *retrieving*), whereby it becomes possible for one to appropriate past actions, own them, make them one’s own, as a set of general models or heroic templates onto which one may creatively project oneself.<sup>211</sup> Even if this were the case, however, Balthasar has developed the concept theologically, and very differently. According to Balthasar, to participate in the archetypal experience is to participate in the archetypal unity between faith and vision that is found in the ‘eye-witnesses’.<sup>212</sup> Balthasar claims that ‘the God-experience of Christ’s witnesses is only ‘comprehensible’ if interpreted ‘as the foundation on whose functional experience the existence in faith of the coming Church can be built up’.<sup>213</sup> In some sense, therefore, the experience of the archetypes is only relevant because it serves the Church and, subsequently, the individual Christian.<sup>214</sup> Understood from the sociological point of view, this universalization, this thought that personal experience no longer remains private

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<sup>208</sup> *TAI*: 387. The title of one of Markus Barth’s books is *Augenzeuge*.

<sup>209</sup> *TAI*: 318.

<sup>210</sup> Lösel (2008), p.41.

<sup>211</sup> See Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Accessed 6/09/2014

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heidegger/#TemTem>

<sup>212</sup> *TAI*: 305.

<sup>213</sup> *TAI*: 306.

<sup>214</sup> *TAI*: 142, 304 and 350. It is possible that Balthasar is indebted to Möhler in this respect. According to Möhler, the Spirit first communicated the *Lebensprinzip* to the apostles. Consequently, ‘the new divine life is to flow from those already made alive. Such begetting is to bring about further begetting’. See Johann Adam Möhler, *Unity in the Church*, 77. Quoted in Hans Boersma (2009), 44.



in order to serve the community, has too much of a utilitarian flavour, and sounds as if it condones self-sacrifice for the institution, but, from the point of view of faith, it is a poignant notion. Balthasar provides some clarification of this dynamic in *The Office of Peter* when he contrasts experience with faith. Here, Balthasar maintains that '[e]xperience, psychologically, is always my own, evaluated by me, pertaining to me.' By contrast, faith, 'goes beyond me in that I have been dispossessed of myself (and this is always a prior objective reality) by the fact of Christ.'<sup>215</sup> The universalization of experience is therefore attributed to faith.

Mary is a special case. Hers is the 'more mysterious continuity', namely between her 'spiritual experiences in the body and the Church's maternal experience.'<sup>216</sup>

Mary is 'the *Realsymbol* of the (pure) Church.'<sup>217</sup> As Lucy Gardner has said,

Mary is model, type and archetype, symbol and example; there is a Marian principle or profile to the Christian Church and in Christian life; there is a Marian aspect or dimension to all Christian theology, indeed to all creaturely existence.<sup>218</sup>

Like Irenaeus, what Balthasar sees most in Mary is the spiritual power of her obedient consent, which has 'archetypal efficacy for salvation.'<sup>219</sup> Through her consent, Mary becomes not just an exterior model, but the *prägende Form* for the Church, a formative form, a prototype. She is an individual person who is 'liquefied' by the power of the Spirit and 'universalized' to become the principle of all that belongs to the Church.<sup>220</sup> Balthasar describes how Mary 'is universalized to a real symbol of the *Ecclesia*, the mediatrix of all grace and the flawless bride'.<sup>221</sup> Her theological personality extends backwards and forwards in time and incorporates within it the whole of the *communio Sanctorum*.

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<sup>215</sup> *OP*, p.325.

<sup>216</sup> *TAI*: 348. See also 341. According to Balthasar, the relationship between Mary and Jesus was intended 'to lead into the universal and social relationships between Christ and the Church.' *TAI*: 539.

<sup>217</sup> *OP*, p.210-211. A symbol, understood in the full sense is 'a sacramental reality which corporeally contains the spiritual truth in the sensible image and likeness.' *TAI*: 669.

<sup>218</sup> Lucy Gardner, 'Balthasar and the figure of Mary, in Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp.64-78 (p.66).

<sup>219</sup> *OP*, p.213.

<sup>220</sup> 'The Gospel as Norm', *CS*, p.295.

<sup>221</sup> *TS*, p.461.

In his *Aesthetics*, Balthasar claims that the main question is: 'In what manner is the archetypal Christian experience incorporated into the Church so that the members who are not graced with it can nevertheless participate in it?'<sup>222</sup> Balthasar uses the concept of re-enactment to provide an answer. He claims that the Church 're-enacts on a higher and universal level the part played in God's personal representatives among the people of Israel, that is, that of being the representative of God to the people and of the people to God.'<sup>223</sup> In faith, and through the Church, Christians of later generations are drawn 'into the archetypal experience of the eye-witnesses on the same footing with [these eye-witnesses].'<sup>224</sup> This could be interpreted as a 'contemporaneity with the Gospel', but it could also be interpreted as the 'participation of the believer in the eternal aspect of the definitive historical saving events.'<sup>225</sup> In fact, Balthasar describes the participation of the Christian in the archetypal experiences as both the work of the creative Spirit (who works with 'the material' of these 'exemplary experiences', and who creates 'new and unheard of marvels for each individual believer')<sup>226</sup> and that of Christ (who determines the 'sensory environment', so that the Christian 'stands in the same space and in the shared time of creation as the Prophets and the Apostles').<sup>227</sup>

Bultmann had already assumed that the interpreter in the present has access to the same reality with which those in the past wrestled. He had argued that when we identify ourselves with the human questions within a text, the past becomes intelligible to the present, a position that was also shared by Karl Barth.<sup>228</sup> However, Balthasar intends more than just an existentialist life relation with the subject matter, in the sense of a common human experience.<sup>229</sup> What really counts in Balthasar is that the world in which the Christian stands is governed and inaugurated by the appearance of God and is oriented to that appearance of

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<sup>222</sup> *TAI*: 351.

<sup>223</sup> The people' of which Balthasar speaks here is the whole of humanity. See *EG*, p.32.

<sup>224</sup> 'Experience of God?', *NE*, pp.42-3. Both the apostolic and the ecclesial kerygma can boast of the presence of eye-witnesses. *TAI*: 305.

<sup>225</sup> McIntosh (1996), p.17.

<sup>226</sup> *TAI*: 418-9.

<sup>227</sup> *TAI*: 420.

<sup>228</sup> See Heffernan, p.53.

<sup>229</sup> *TAI*: 387.

God.<sup>230</sup> In fact, Balthasar claims that ‘it is almost a matter of indifference whether [the Christian] possesses the sensory contemporaneity of the eyewitness.’ Ultimately, what counts is that we share the same world that has been transformed by Christ. The most significant factor is that the saint ‘stands in the world which has been determined and established by the appearance of God and which is oriented to that appearance.’<sup>231</sup> In fact, despite their significance, the archetypes remain provisional.<sup>232</sup> Balthasar claims that ‘the witness borne by the Apostles and their successors possesses only an ostensive, transitory character, and it is solely as a transitory witness that it can be incorporated in the content of what must be believed.’<sup>233</sup>

### c. MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE

Besides the experience of contemplation and archetypal experience, Balthasar would claim that the saints become authoritative, and are attributed authority as a consequence of their authentic mystical experience. We have already seen that, in Balthasar, archetypal experience in the Church and mystical experience within the Church are different in their ‘dignity and authority’, but that the mystical experience within the Church ‘participates in the Biblical archetypes’. According to Balthasar, mystical experience derives from the former, and ‘must be canonised’ by the former.<sup>234</sup> Thus, although in Balthasar, the death of the last Apostle is the beginning of ‘the main part of the drama,’<sup>235</sup> this main part of the drama originates in the Biblical archetypes, and is sanctified and legitimated by it.

The view of mysticism which Balthasar provides is mostly Ignatian. It is a historical, concrete and Christological mysticism. This is in direct contrast with most approaches, which focus on the sphere of religious needs, on personal mystical experience and on neo-platonic contact with a formless God. It is a

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<sup>230</sup> *TAI*: 420.

<sup>231</sup> *TAI*: 420.

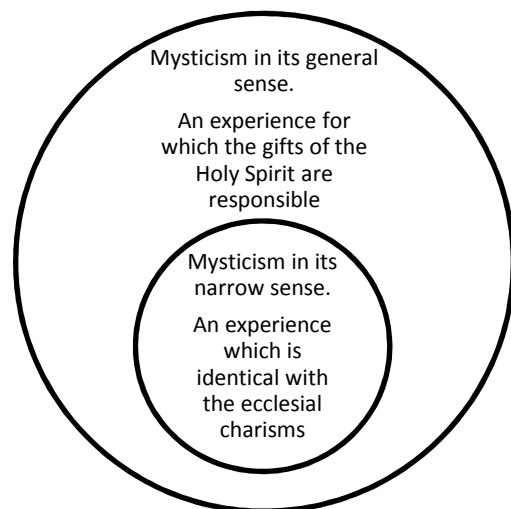
<sup>232</sup> *TAI*: 364.

<sup>233</sup> *TAI*: 211.

<sup>234</sup> *TAI*: 351.

<sup>235</sup> *TAI*: 408.

mysticism that emphasises form, a feature which will place him in conflict with the Fathers and with other saints. According to Balthasar, the theory of extreme Origenism that ‘every form which arises in contemplation’ should logically be considered ‘as a deceptive tactic on the part of the demons,’<sup>236</sup> is incorrect. Evagrius Ponticus, he writes, presses ‘on towards the borderlands of Buddhism where finitude and form threaten to become merely negative concepts to be abolished.’<sup>237</sup> Balthasar is sympathetic with pre- and extra-Christian mysticism, but he emphasizes that authentic Christian contemplation is very different.<sup>238</sup> Diadochus also argues that ‘it is better to reject these forms even if perchance they should occasionally come from God’. Balthasar detects the same ‘rule’ in Aquinas, Eckhart, and John of the Cross.<sup>239</sup> He regrets that ‘the tradition of Augustine and [of] John of the Cross plays into the hands of all those who would like to do away with all mystical elements in the Church as being an irrelevant private concern.’<sup>240</sup> Thus Balthasar begins with the claim that mysticism was ‘misunderstood’, ‘scorned’, ‘exiled and silenced by official theology and proclamation’. He asserts that he wants to restore and return mysticism to the center of salvation history. He believes that Adrienne has already done that,<sup>241</sup> and he wants to promote what she has done. Therefore, however indirectly, Balthasar



is claiming that, in this regard, Adrienne has corrected the Fathers and other saints. In a sense, Adrienne has also corrected the Magisterium.<sup>242</sup>

In his *Aesthetics*, Balthasar identifies two levels of mysticism. The first of these is that deep ‘awareness and

<sup>236</sup> *TAI*: 315.

<sup>237</sup> *TAI*: 551.

<sup>238</sup> Ratzinger, p.136.

<sup>239</sup> *TAI*: 315.

<sup>240</sup> *TAI*: 411.

<sup>241</sup> *FG*, 89. Balthasar links anti-mysticism to Augustine’s ‘Platonising mystical psychology’. *TAI*: 415.

<sup>242</sup> Bernard McGinn, ‘Evil-sounding, Rash, and Suspect of Heresy’: Tensions between Mysticism and Magisterium in the History of the Church’, *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol.XC April, 2004, No.2, pp.193ff.

experience both of the presence within [the Christian] of God's being and of the depth of the divine truth, goodness, and beauty in the mystery of God. This is 'mysticism' in its general sense,' an experience for which the gifts of the Holy Spirit are responsible. There is then the mysticism which is 'identical with the ecclesial charisms (particular vocations and gifts),' which 'normally presuppose[s] the development of the first level of mysticism.'<sup>243</sup> On his part, Balthasar detects 'the great mystical theologies' in those theologies where the aesthetic and the mystical converge. Among these 'great mystical theologies' he mentions Gregory of Nyssa, Denys the Aeropagite, Bernard of Clairvaux, William of St.Thierry, Mechtild of Magdeburg, John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila. These mystical theologians are among his most-favoured authorities.

I would say that Balthasar attributes four characteristics to authentic Christian mysticism, each of which was meant to respond and correct what he considered to be misconceptions concerning mysticism. First of all, authentic mystical experience has its origin within the Church,<sup>244</sup> ought to have an ecclesial 'function',<sup>245</sup> builds the Church',<sup>246</sup> and is to be judged within the Church. De Lubac had said that 'there is no authentic spiritual life which does not depend on the historic fact of Christ and the Church's collective life.'<sup>247</sup> Balthasar follows suit.<sup>248</sup> Here, Balthasar's mysticism is diametrically opposed to the existentialism of Søren Kierkegaard, where mysticism is fideistic and individualistic.<sup>249</sup> In Balthasar, even the experience of the dark night 'is always an ecclesial event'.<sup>250</sup> Balthasar grants that the authentic mystic may need to justify him or herself before the Church on the grounds of compatibility with Revelation. He or she may have to demonstrate that they are 'vitaly integrated into the communion of love of all the members, this communion constituting the total ecclesial archetype.'<sup>251</sup> Balthasar himself did all he could to integrate Adrienne and get the Church's

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<sup>243</sup> *TAI*: 166.

<sup>244</sup> *TAI*: 414. See also *FG*, p.101.

<sup>245</sup> *TAI*: 411.

<sup>246</sup> *OP*, p.326.

<sup>247</sup> De Lubac, *Catholicism*, p.101.

<sup>248</sup> See 'Tradition', *E*, p.127; *TAI*: 300-1 and *CSL*, p.380.

<sup>249</sup> *FG*, p.86.

<sup>250</sup> *P*, p.272.

<sup>251</sup> *TAI*: 409-10.

approval for her mystic writings. This means that although Adrienne was already authoritative for him – with or without official approval – he believed that her mystic experiences were meant for the Church, and would have liked to see the rest of the Church appreciate their value.

Secondly, in Balthasar, authentic Christian mysticism is an experience within faith, and complements the theology of mission. He identifies what he calls ‘a “radical homogeneity” between mystical experience and faith’. Furthermore, ‘faith in Christ is *already* a genuine and objective encounter of the whole man with the incarnate God’ [my emphasis], which means that extraordinary mystical experience is not necessary.<sup>252</sup> Wherever such mystical experience does occur, faith is always the basis of it, it is its object, and it is ‘renewed’ and ‘enriched’ by it.<sup>253</sup> Christian mysticism also happens when, ‘instead of a self-designed plan of life, [the individual] accepts a commission from God, a divine piloting in commandments and counsels, and carries out these directives through every temptation from without and within.’<sup>254</sup> Faith and the ecclesial concept of mission are integral to Balthasar’s theology of mysticism. They are also integral to a theology concerning the authority of the saints, which I am attributing to Balthasar.

There is a third characteristic. According to Balthasar, authentic mysticism, is accompanied by ‘bitterness and the humiliations of the Cross’.<sup>255</sup> In Balthasar’s theology, the intimacy of one’s share in the Cross is always the yardstick for the intimacy of one’s share in Jesus’ destiny and mission.<sup>256</sup> This is one reason why Balthasar would have been attracted to Adrienne. In Adrienne, the theological content of the work is made tangible. It is often accompanied by psychological distress or even physical pain.<sup>257</sup> When Adrienne writes her *Treatise on*

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<sup>252</sup> *TAI*: 300. See also *TAI*: 301 and 309.

<sup>253</sup> *FG*, p.86.

<sup>254</sup> ‘Experience of God?’ *NE*, p.26.

<sup>255</sup> ‘Experience of God?’, *NE*, pp.44-45.

<sup>256</sup> ‘The Absences of Jesus’, *NE*, p.56.

<sup>257</sup> Karen Kilby has commented on Balthasar’s fascination with suffering. Kilby, p.115.

*Purgatory*, ‘one could almost say she suffered it’.<sup>258</sup> In her case, what is involved is not the *spiritual understanding of the truths* of Christian revelation, or the *living of the truths* of Christian revelation ‘in a spiritual-mystical way’, but the *experiencing of the truths* (that is, the actual sensing) of Christian revelation in one’s own existence, ‘even bodily’.<sup>259</sup> For Balthasar the authority of Adrienne’s experience becomes indubitable. He even claims that Adrienne ‘filled in’ gaps in revelation where Christ’s suffering was concerned.<sup>260</sup>

The fourth and final characteristic is selflessness. Balthasar maintains that ‘neither the Church nor the Christian should ever aspire to mystical graces’ since the form of revelation is already sufficient.<sup>261</sup> Through Christ, ‘we are made free of the imposed, heteronomous law that had continually led us to attempt to capture God and his free light in the nets of our wisdom and praxis.’<sup>262</sup> On the contrary, it is only possible for us to receive the ‘totality of being, the divine mystery’ if and ‘when we renounce every partial experience and every subjective guarantee of possessing what is experienced.’<sup>263</sup> Even on the epistemological level, the self is called to depersonalise itself and to ecclesialise itself.<sup>264</sup> Selflessness and depersonalisation do not stand for lack of personal involvement. The description of the dynamic that takes place within the individual mystic, which Balthasar provides in *Theo-Logic* is evidence of this. ‘If at the moment when [the mystic] is speaking with God, he brings his entire self with him, planting these things in his rational ‘I’ without thereby intending to diminish the Spirit, his mind acquires a share in the Spirit.’ On the contrary, if the mystic fails to plant these things in his rational ‘I’, he or she ‘will not be able to give an adequate account of the insights and tasks he received in the Spirit.’<sup>265</sup> In this regard, the saints of the baroque period (Francis de Sales, Pierre de Bérulle and François Fénelon (1651-1715))<sup>266</sup> are criticized openly. Balthasar claims that Blaise Pascal (1623-1662), Marie de

<sup>258</sup> *FG*, p.56. One could mention other examples in this regard. For instance Adrienne’s ‘nocturnal introductions’ to John’s gospel, which were begun in 1943. See *FG*, p.36.

<sup>259</sup> *FG*, p.94.

<sup>260</sup> *FG*, p.35.

<sup>261</sup> *TAI*: 416-7.

<sup>262</sup> *OP*, p.7.

<sup>263</sup> ‘Experience of God?’, *NE*, p.44.

<sup>264</sup> *TAI*: 355.

<sup>265</sup> *TL3*: 376.

<sup>266</sup> *C*, pp.34-5.

l'Incarnation (1599-1672) and Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) are exceptions, being saints who went 'beyond the preoccupation with the pious self toward an apprehension of the gospel as a whole.'<sup>267</sup> According to Balthasar, the weakness of the baroque period 'lies in the fact that it is no longer a central meditation on the biblical revelation'. It ignores the eschatological, the openness to the world, and the soteriological, in order to proceed mystically introvertedly and anthropocentrically.<sup>268</sup>

It should be remembered that, in Balthasar, the terms 'mystic' and 'saint' are not univocal,<sup>269</sup> and yet '[t]hose who above all have undergone and enjoyed such experience have in every age been the saints.'<sup>270</sup> In one's reading of Balthasar, one may need to distinguish between the concept of authority attributed to the mystical experiences in themselves, and the concept of authority being attributed to the saints who happen to have had such experiences. With the latter, the authority would most probably be grounded in the personal sanctity, rather than in the mystical experiences themselves. G.M.Jantzen is of the opinion that – along with Bernard of Clairvaux, Eckhart, Ruysbroeck, and the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* – Balthasar does not seek the basis of mystical or spiritual authority in visionary experience.<sup>271</sup> However, although Balthasar would rather speak about 'vision' than about 'visions', at least in the context of faith, Balthasar does attribute authority to visionary experience. Adrienne's 'visions' certainly played a role in convincing Balthasar of the authenticity of her theology. Balthasar makes extensive use of Adrienne's mystical knowledge as a resource in his theology, thus legitimating the use of mystical theology in constructive theology generally, but also legitimating Adrienne's authority through her visions. It is difficult to attribute authority to those who have had such visions, without attributing authority to the visions themselves, and vice-versa. There is always the question of legitimacy, which is evident in the work of Karen Kilby and of Kevin Mongrain: Is it ever valid for a Christian intellectual to be fundamentally guided

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<sup>267</sup> See *C*, pp.35-6.

<sup>268</sup> *C*, pp.34-5.

<sup>269</sup> *FG*, pp.88-9.

<sup>270</sup> 'Tradition', *E*, p.125.

<sup>271</sup> G.M. Jantzen, *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995 191.



in his or her own writings about God by the charismatic mystical teachings of a living contemporary, and hence to write in the voice of one who is called by God to a special teaching vocation? Where Balthasar is concerned, the answer to this question is clear: 'Yes'.

## CONCLUSION

The question throughout this Chapter has been: in the epistemological dimension, where, according to Balthasar, is the authority of the saints grounded? In this Chapter, I argued that, in the epistemological dimension, the authority of the saints in Balthasar's theology is grounded in the faith, the knowledge and the love of the saints. I deduced that, in Balthasar, the faith, knowledge and love of the saints is quantitatively different from that of others, thus enabling the saints to have better access to the truth and to understand more. It was then confirmed that, in Balthasar it is experience that grounds the epistemological advantage enjoyed by the saints, since the quality of one's contemplation, the saints' participation in archetypal experience and the sharing of the saints in the mystical experience of the Church, enables the saints to grow in knowledge, and to act as a testimonial to others. It was also determined that, in Balthasar, the authority of the saints is grounded in the saints' very lack of attachment to the mystical knowledge, understanding and grasp of the truth, which humanity has such a thirst for.

My argument has been that, from Balthasar's theology, it is possible to infer that the saints are epistemologically proficient, and that there are aspects that we associate with holiness that furnish the saints with epistemological authority (both for theology and for the Church), as well as that the saints function authoritatively epistemologically. In the epistemological dimension, the saints function as an authority whom one invokes when there has been a failure to know and to whom one submits in the process of learning.<sup>272</sup> This makes the authority of the saint analogous to that of the Magisterium.

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<sup>272</sup> Austin, p.46.

So far I have looked at two of the dimensions which act as a grounding for the authority of the saints, namely the existential and the epistemological. These two dimensions are essential, but not sufficient without the other two dimensions which I am yet to discuss, namely, the pneumatological and the ecclesiological dimension. My next Chapter will treat the former. In Balthasar's theology, any authentic authority ensues from the Spirit. Without the Spirit, the existential and the epistemological are fruitless and ineffective. It is this that I would like to establish in the next Chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE PNEUMATOLOGICAL DIMENSION

#### INTRODUCTION

In this Chapter, I will want to demonstrate that the pneumatological realm is another dimension within which saints may be attributed authority and where the saints may function authoritatively. By pneumatological, I understand the whole realm of the Spirit, encompassing all time and space. It is the Spirit in the world which turns the saints into *auctoritates*. This would mean that, whereas in the epistemological dimension, an authority is someone whom one invokes when there has been a failure to know, and to whom one must submit in the process of learning, in the pneumatological dimension, an authority is someone who is bolstered by the Spirit, whom one invokes, and to whom one must submit, in matters requiring discernment. Once again, this makes the authority of the saints analogous to that of the Magisterium. For is this not the authority that the Magisterium generally demands (namely, that it be the one to discern the Spirit's involvement with the world)? And is this not the authority which the individual Christian is expected to attribute to the Magisterium (namely, the authority to discern)?

In Balthasar's theology, the Spirit is dynamic and powerful. He is behind all authority, including that of the saints. I will be arguing that the Holy Spirit is responsible for the inventiveness and the various charisms of the pneumatic person, for the saints' wise interpretation of the Scriptures, for the bestowal of meaning to events and to lives through the assigning of missions and calls, and for the assigning and sharing of gifts within the *communio sanctorum*. Finally, in Balthasar, it is the Spirit who publicizes the saints through canonization, and who steers the Church in its dogmatic development, in which the saints play such an important role.

## THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM THE SPIRIT

Before I delve into the subject, I should clarify a few pneumatological concepts that one encounters in Balthasar. The first is how, in Balthasar, ‘the Christological center of the economy of salvation is framed by a Pneumatology that precedes and succeeds it.’<sup>1</sup> We have, with Balthasar, the ‘double justification’: that of the *imputatio meriti Christi* and that of the *inhabitatio Spiritus*.<sup>2</sup> We also have the double image of flowing grace that is attributed to Thomas: that of grace flowing from Christ into his members and that of Christ breathing his Spirit into the disciples.<sup>3</sup> Finally, we have the concept of universalization: the Spirit universalizing the body of Christ on the cross,<sup>4</sup> and universalizing the words of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> This framing of the Christological by the pneumatological will serve as the first grounding for the authority of the saints, since they acquire authority because of the Spirit’s action.

[T]he Spirit never withholds anything of Christ’s fullness from any generation, but always opens up the entire treasure of truth (the interpretation of the divine love in Jesus Christ), yet remains free to throw new light on this totality and in particular on its center, so that not only does this totality, as such, *preserve* its newness: through this ever-new illumination it is actually always *receiving* its newness.<sup>6</sup>

The unity of the immanent and the economic pneumatology in Balthasar’s theology is the second theological concept on which the authority of the saints is grounded. The Spirit poured out by the Father and the Son is the same Spirit who surrenders himself ‘to the person who receives his testimony’.<sup>7</sup> The Holy Spirit who reveals Christ is the same Spirit who leads our weakened nature toward insight into the divine.<sup>8</sup> The ‘spiritualisation’ or ‘pneumatization’ of Christ on the

<sup>1</sup> TL3: 35. The relationship of Logos and Spirit in the event of revelation is inseparable. TL3: 17.

<sup>2</sup> This was a question that was debated in late Scholasticism and the Reformation, right up to the Council of Trent, particularly through Girolamo Seripando (1493-1563).

<sup>3</sup> TL3: 235.

<sup>4</sup> TL3: 295.

<sup>5</sup> TL3: 296-7. See also p.197. Balthasar follows Augustine and Anselm in maintaining that the Spirit carries out ‘his work of “universalizing” Christ, and his meaning.

<sup>6</sup> TL3: 199.

<sup>7</sup> TL3: 74.

<sup>8</sup> CL, p.72.

cross is an analogy of the ‘spiritualisation’ of the Christian.<sup>9</sup> The Spirit that ‘liquef[ies]...the apparently solid flesh and blood of the Son and make[s] it into a Eucharist to the Father’ is the same Spirit “‘poured out” as grace into the hearts of believers’.<sup>10</sup> And so on and so forth. What is specific about Balthasar’s pneumatology is his emphasis that the Spirit does not simply interpret a teaching, ‘but will guide us to the vital depths of what takes place between Father and Son, introduce us into the hypostatic realm’.<sup>11</sup> This close unity of the immanent and the economic pneumatology in Balthasar’s theology will serve as the second grounding for the authority of the saints. The saints will be those whose sanctification is grounded within the Spirit himself.<sup>12</sup>

The third theological concept – the Spirit’s role in sanctification – is closely related to the second. Balthasar insists that ‘it is the task of the Holy Spirit, above all, within the fullness of divine and ecclesial gifts to fashion genuine saints’.<sup>13</sup> As with the anti-Arian treatises, only the divine Spirit of holiness ‘can “anoint” finite spirit with divine holiness’.<sup>14</sup> Saints are fashioned by the Spirit, and they function as authoritative because they are sanctified by Him. Balthasar emphasizes the differences between the psychic and the pneumatic individual. From a pneumatological perspective, authority is grounded in the pneumatic (rather than the psychic). In Balthasar, it is only the ‘pneumatic’ who goes beyond theory, who actualizes the Spirit; who receives the gifts of the Spirit, discerns them, understands them, and so on.<sup>15</sup> The psychic’s possession of the Spirit, on the other hand, is only theoretical, but not actual.<sup>16</sup> The psychic can still do good works – but then, even ‘those who have been damned’ are capable of performing good acts<sup>17</sup> - but he or she is not invested or sanctioned by the Spirit in the same way as the pneumatic. Balthasar maintains that ‘[i]t is a long way from such abilities to

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<sup>9</sup> *TL3*: 201.

<sup>10</sup> *TL3*: 229.

<sup>11</sup> *TL3*: 18.

<sup>12</sup> Just as with the Trinity, in Balthasar, the economic pneumatology must be the basis for the immanent pneumatology. This does not mean that Balthasar equates or confuses the human ‘spirit’ with the Holy Spirit. See *TAI*: 316 and *TL3*: 417.

<sup>13</sup> *TL3*: 369.

<sup>14</sup> *TL3*: 271-2.

<sup>15</sup> *TAI*: 509.

<sup>16</sup> *TAI*: 228. See also p.509. Balthasar attributes this distinction between ‘a natural pneuma and a grace-bringing pneuma in man’ to Clement. *TL3*: 427.

<sup>17</sup> ‘The meaning of the Communion of Saints,’ p.166.

the prophetic spirit with which an Elijah or Elisha is filled.<sup>18</sup> The question then becomes: is it possible to sense ‘criteria’ which would ‘indicate whether the Spirit moves in a man, empowering him to clarify what is unclarified?’ Balthasar claims that it is.<sup>19</sup> In his *Aesthetics*, Balthasar writes that,

[a]lthough a Christian cannot ‘see’ the Holy Spirit, he is able to ascertain with compelling evidence that a saint does and says certain things and words in the Holy Spirit, and in this he can distinguish the *Holy Spirit* from a merely natural or demonic spirit’ (my emphasis).<sup>20</sup>

A fourth and final pneumatological concept concerns the Spirit’s role in theology. It is through the Spirit that authentic theology is produced, and it is the task of the Spirit to ascertain that theology is authentic. In Balthasar, ‘the word of God cannot be uttered by the mouth of man unless the latter is empowered by the Holy Spirit’.<sup>21</sup> Balthasar inquires rhetorically, ‘[w]here...what is to be discerned is of final, ultimate importance, where we are concerned with the being and non-being of man before God, who would be bold enough to make distinctions there unless in the Holy Spirit?...’<sup>22</sup> A more specific example would be that of Maurice Nédoncelle (1905-1976). Writing about this French philosopher whom he admired, Balthasar states that ‘he could not have carried out his analysis of human interpersonal relations except by the radiant power of Existence / Truth, by the interpreter of the revelation of God in Christ, namely, the Spirit.’<sup>23</sup>

## **THE AUTHORITY OF THE SCRIPTURES AND ITS INTERPRETERS**

Having clarified what I think are the more important pneumatological concepts that one encounters in Balthasar, it is now time to delve directly into the issue of authority from a pneumatological perspective, and our first relevant point concerning the authority of the saints involves the issue of Scriptural interpretation. We know that authority is needed to attest to the authority of the

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<sup>18</sup> *TL3*: 425.

<sup>19</sup> ‘Criteria’, *E*, p.22.

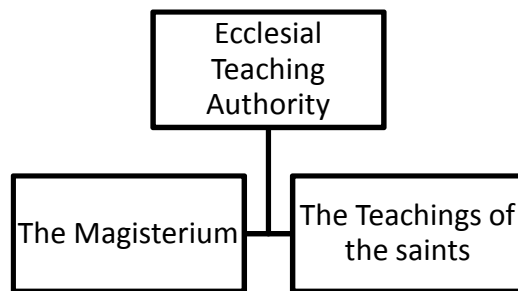
<sup>20</sup> *TA1*: 188.

<sup>21</sup> *TL3*: 329.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Criteria,’ *E*, p.21.

<sup>23</sup> *TL3*: 151.

Scriptures, to transmit the knowledge of the truth that is contained in the Scriptures, to teach us the skills we need to read Scripture correctly, as well as to authorize the individual believer who reads the Scriptures.<sup>24</sup> With Balthasar the authority attributed to the Scriptures and ecclesial authority are distinguishable, but not incongruent.<sup>25</sup> Balthasar would approve the one source theory of the *Dei Verbum*, where God is the one source of revelation, and where the authority of the Scriptures is totally dependent on the facts of revelation, just as ecclesiastical tradition is.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, ‘the canonical validity of Scripture does not exclude, but rather includes an ecclesial teaching authority’.<sup>27</sup> Whereas Modernism had questioned the historical reliability of Scripture and the Church’s authority to interpret it,<sup>28</sup> in Balthasar’s theology, Scripture is reliable, and the authority of the



Magisterium is not questioned. However, in Balthasar – and this is crucial – the ecclesial teaching authority does not just consist of the Magisterium alone. It also includes the teachings of the saints. In the *Two Sisters*, Balthasar states that although

it may be

true that the tradition is animated by the Holy Spirit, which in every age prompts those in apostolic office or in the hierarchy to interpret the scriptural revelation of Christ, but we should not forget that this prompting is equally urgent in the saints, who are the “living gospel”.<sup>29</sup>

We have to remember that, with Balthasar, the starting point for the *fides quaerens intellectum* is not the ‘*desiderium naturale visionis Dei*, as the creatures’

<sup>24</sup> Austin, pp.108 and 116.

<sup>25</sup> Augustine’s own practice was to speak of post-scriptural and ecclesiastical authority separately from the authority of the Scriptures. Yves Congar claims that it was the ‘desacralizing of the medieval imagination’, which made it possible to play off the ‘juridicized authority of the Church’ against the authority of the Scriptures. Boersma (2009), p.16.

<sup>26</sup> *Dei Verbum*, 1.

<sup>27</sup> *TAL*: 552.

<sup>28</sup> *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*. Encyclical of Pope Pius X, on the doctrines of the Modernists, 8 September 1907.

<sup>29</sup> *TS*, p.26.

core *existentiale*', but the Scriptures.<sup>30</sup> Balthasar's view is that we need an authority that can help us understand. The saints in Balthasar's theology are absorbed by the Word of God.<sup>31</sup> They are fascinated by, immersed in, and capable of interpreting the Word of God. The saints are also the ones most proficient in transmitting the real content of the Scriptures, the ones who have attested to the Scriptures sometimes with their blood, the ones whom we should trust to teach us the skills we need to interpret the Scriptures. The saints interpret the Scriptures, and demonstrate skills for reading the Scriptures. It is therefore understandable that, in Balthasar's theology, the saints function as a means for resolving issues related to exegesis. Balthasar's is an intra-textual interpretation. But he is not just saying that the Bible should be read within the *communio*. He is also saying that the saints can interpret the Bible *for* the *communio*. In this regard, however, Balthasar is not averse to criticising the saints either, if he considers their theology to be non-biblical. For instance, he criticizes quite harshly 'the so-called affective theology of the baroque', represented by such saints as Francis de Sales, Pierre de Bérulle and François Fénelon. His justification is that its mystical, introverted and anthropocentric manner is non-biblical.<sup>32</sup>

Secondly, Balthasar emphasises 'the *pneuma* within the letter', that is, the 'spiritual sense which is embedded in philology.'<sup>33</sup> He wants to show that the interest in the literal is not just modern, but that, both in ancient and in medieval times, priority is given to the literal sense.<sup>34</sup> This is reinforced in the *Theo-Logic*, where Balthasar maintains that the Spirit, who is infinite, 'is in the word itself'. But then he also insists that it is in the very presence and action of the Spirit, who leads us into this depth dimension of the Scriptures, that the 'word is truth', not in the letter.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the depths of the word are to be found in the Spirit who is in the word.<sup>36</sup> As Ratzinger has said, though 'unafraid' of philology, Balthasar refuses to

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<sup>30</sup> *TL3*: 365. See also 'The Gospel as Norm', *CS*, p.285.

<sup>31</sup> 'Obedience in the light of the Gospel', *NE*, p.241.

<sup>32</sup> *C*, p.35.

<sup>33</sup> *TAL*: 544.

<sup>34</sup> Dickens, pp.37, 47.

<sup>35</sup> *TL3*: 195.

<sup>36</sup> *TL3*: 195.



be ‘swamped’ by philology.<sup>37</sup> In Balthasar, the Scripture which is the body of the Logos becomes ‘spirit’, just as the incarnate Logos ‘wholly becomes *Pneuma*’.<sup>38</sup> The implication in this context is that not everyone can read and interpret the Logos which has become ‘spirit’, and that it is the saints who come closest to the genuine interpretation of the Scriptures. In Balthasar, the Spirit is the primary author, the ‘*auctor primarius* behind the word, ready to lead to deeper levels of divine truth those who seek to understand his word’.<sup>39</sup>

Clearly, in Balthasar’s work, the saints are no naïve realists where the interpretation of Scriptures is concerned, precisely because they interpret the Spirit within the Word, rather than provide a historico-critical analysis of the Word.<sup>40</sup> Neither is theological truth ‘abstracted’ from Scripture in a kind of theological sensualism. Having been dictated by the Spirit, it is only under his influence that ‘Scripture must be interpreted and grasped’.<sup>41</sup> The interpretation of the Scriptures is interpreted as ‘the Holy Spirit’s delivery of testimony’.<sup>42</sup> It is not like the interpretation of other literature.<sup>43</sup> For this reason, according to Balthasar, ‘[t]he purpose of the word is of course, not attained by those who read the Bible out of curiosity or study it scientifically.’<sup>44</sup> He also maintains that if exegesis ‘wishes to be scientific, [it] is faced with the fundamental decision of belief or unbelief’.<sup>45</sup> The implication is that the authenticity of the interpretation relies on the genuineness of the faith, and that what is correct – dogmatically and spiritually – is nothing else than the fruit of a deepened understanding of the Bible.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Ratzinger, p.143.

<sup>38</sup> *TA1*: 549. See Chrisophe Potworowski, p.83.

<sup>39</sup> This is Balthasar’s definition of inspiration. See Block (2005), p.13.

<sup>40</sup> It should be said that De Lubac and Daniélou had already recovered spiritual interpretation. As Boersma puts it, ‘their *ressourcement* of pre-modern methods of exegesis relied on a sacramental understanding of Scripture’. Boersma (2009), p.33.

<sup>41</sup> *TL3*: 325. Balthasar maintains that ‘the standpoint of faith’ is ‘the only one which does justice to the phenomenon of the Bible.’ *C*, p.80.

<sup>42</sup> *TL3*: 74.

<sup>43</sup> Dickens, p.69.

<sup>44</sup> *Prayer*, 94.

<sup>45</sup> *C*, p.79.

<sup>46</sup> *CL*, p.54.

Thirdly, because, for Balthasar, a proper interpretation of Scripture requires a dynamic theological and spiritual life,<sup>47</sup> Balthasar expresses great appreciation for the life of the saints which is, in itself, even more credible than any exegesis, or rather, which is an embodied form of exegesis. According to Balthasar, it is the saints who ‘are the great history of the interpretation of the gospel, more genuine and with more power of conviction than all exegesis’.<sup>48</sup> In Balthasar, ‘the saint is aptly recognized as a theological wellspring that reflects scripture and tradition.’<sup>49</sup> What Balthasar does is emphasize all the more that the Spirit’s testimony in the Scriptures is realized incessantly, not only by increasing the comprehension of the Scriptures, but by transforming those who contemplate it. Scripture is the vehicle used by the Spirit in order to constantly actualize, ‘with grace and as grace, this total historical form of the revelation of salvation.’<sup>50</sup> The Spirit is always in the process of carrying out ‘the ‘*abstractio*...in a continual *conversio ad phantasma*, a continual re-conversion to the sensible reality of the Gospel.’<sup>51</sup> In Balthasar, this takes the form of a reciprocal movement from the *logos-sarx* into *logos rēma* and from the *logos rēma* back into the *logos-sarx*. The saints reverberate this when their whole being becomes the word of God.<sup>52</sup> There is then, in Balthasar, a dynamic reciprocation between the *analogia entis* and the *analogia linguae*.<sup>53</sup>

Let me just recapitulate and clarify: in Balthasar’s theology, the theology of the Church is a continuation of the inner-biblical theology. Balthasar probably wants to criticize Ritschl and Harnack, who wanted to draw a sharp line between the Bible and the theology of the early Church.<sup>54</sup> Secondly, the saints are the best interpreters of the Scriptures. They even function as a means for resolving issues related to exegesis. This means that Balthasar wants to offer an alternative to the historico-critical method which claimed to be the supreme explorer of biblical

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<sup>47</sup> M.A.McIntosh, (1996), p.30.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Tradition’, *E*, p.125.

<sup>49</sup> Danielle Nussberger, *Saint as Theological Wellspring: Hans Urs Balthasar’s Hermeneutic of the Saint in a Christological and Trinitarian Key*, Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2007, Abstract.

<sup>50</sup> *TAI*: 548.

<sup>51</sup> *TH*, pp.89-90.

<sup>52</sup> *WF*, p.89, Footnote 11.

<sup>53</sup> *TL2*: 81. See also ‘God Speaks as Man’, in *WF*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>54</sup> John Riches, ‘Von Balthasar as Biblical Theologian and Exegete’, *New Blackfriars*, 923 (1998), 38-45 (p.38).

truth.<sup>55</sup> Thirdly, the authenticity of the interpretation relies on the genuineness of the faith, and the saints are the ones who can understand the *Pneuma* who is in the Word. This means that Balthasar wants to put faith back into the theological process. Finally, a proper interpretation of Scripture requires a dynamic theological and spiritual life, which only the saints can provide. This means that Balthasar wants to emphasize the self-involving nature of biblical interpretation, and the necessity of holiness for authentic interpretation.

The issue that arises now is: what is it that takes place in the act of interpretation of Scripture according to Balthasar? Balthasar wants to avoid both the extrinsicist model and the immanentist model of biblical interpretation. In the immanentist model, represented by Bultmannian Protestantism, the risk is that of having the object vanish within the subject.<sup>56</sup> Balthasar claims that Bultmann's theology is not faithful to the biblical core, because, in his work, objective theology loses its importance for the believer whereas the existential and subjective aspect gains significance.<sup>57</sup> On his part, Balthasar maintains that the interpretation of Scripture involves bringing 'to light "treasures" that are "hidden" in the enfleshed figure of the Word'.<sup>58</sup> He claims that, what really requires interpretation is not the written text *per se*, but the Son, that is, the 'enfleshed figure of the Word', which is 'permeated by the Spirit'.<sup>59</sup> This would mean that Balthasar emphasizes revelation as that which 'must set the criteria and informs for its own interpretation.'<sup>60</sup> It is for this reason that, in Balthasar, only the saints are able to authentically interpret the Scriptures, only they have this authority, only they can be credible, only their interpretation is reliable, because they draw the criteria for their interpretation from revelation itself. Balthasar states very clearly that '[o]nly they can understand and interpret God's word who themselves live in the world of

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<sup>55</sup> Edward T.Oakes, 'Balthasar's Critique of the Historical-Critical Method,' in *Glory, Grace and Culture: The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. by Ed Block Jr (New York: Paulist Press, 2005), pp.150-174 (p.163). See *TD2*: 106-30.

<sup>56</sup> Dickens, p.35.

<sup>57</sup> *C*, pp.38-9. In the Scriptures, the issue is the community and the Church, rather than the self.

<sup>58</sup> *TL3*: 239.

<sup>59</sup> *TL3*: 239. As Ratzinger describes it, in the Bible, one stumbles on the humanity of God, on man, 'on the *analogia entis* in the *analogia fidei*.' Ratzinger, p.134.

<sup>60</sup> Dickens, p.46.

the saints'.<sup>61</sup> In his *Aesthetics*, Balthasar explains this in phenomenological terms, '[t]he purity and clarity with which the Word of God presents itself in the world is in direct proportion to the transparency and purity of the medium of faith that receives it and from which it creates its own form.'<sup>62</sup> This daring statement reflects Balthasar's recurrent attempts to link the objective with the subjective elements within the exegetical exercise.

The fact that the saints whom Balthasar chooses to use are the ones whose exegesis he believes is the most reliable goes to show that, for him, the authority of the saints is grounded in their capacity for interpreting the Scriptures. Adrienne is certainly included among the saints in this regard. Balthasar describes the difference between the way a professional exegete listens to the biblical text and the way in which Adrienne listened to it. Adrienne had a gift for interpreting the Scriptures.<sup>63</sup> In Balthasar's view, Adrienne's listening to the word of God was more radical, and her living of it more exclusive than in anyone else.<sup>64</sup> Blankenhorn has acknowledged that 'Balthasar consistently gives Speyr's mystical understanding of the New Testament a great deal of authority'.<sup>65</sup> Riches even points out that Balthasar allows Adrienne's reading of the *triduum mortis* to assume 'pride of place over the canon'.<sup>66</sup> Whether Balthasar can be justified in attributing such authority to her will remain a matter of controversy. Was Adrienne the typical exegete in the historico-critical method? Certainly not, but the mystical exegesis which she provides is certainly an exegesis Balthasar approves. Naturally, scholars like Kevin Mongrain and Alissa Pitstick would argue that her influence on Balthasar was a negative one.

What I have said so far does not mean that, according to Balthasar, the saints would always agree on the interpretation or on the exegetical method. This is the

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<sup>61</sup> *TS*, p.26.

<sup>62</sup> *TAI*: 539.

<sup>63</sup> Georges Chantraine, 'Exegesis and Contemplation', in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. by David L.Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), pp.133-147 (p.137).

<sup>64</sup> *FG*, p.247. Concerning her contemplative hearing of the word of God, see also, p.101.

<sup>65</sup> Blankenhorn, p.260.

<sup>66</sup> Riches (1986), p.41.

advantage of spiritual and mystical exegesis. It lends itself to more creativity than the historico-critical method. Jeffrey A. Vogel has said that

there are always new directions in which [the Spirit] is able to go. At one and the same time, his interpretation is pure repetition and continually surprising, bound to the revelation in Christ and as free as the love Christ reveals. Though the Spirit imparts no new truths, his interpretation never approaches closure, because the object he interprets – the divine life – is itself always new, essentially creative, always more than can be grasped.<sup>67</sup>

Balthasar acknowledges the differences in exegetical styles among the saints. Gregory of Nyssa's 'exegetical method corresponds exactly to the antiplatonist theory of real becoming'. Origen's method preferred the separation of the literal and material meaning from the spiritual meaning.<sup>68</sup> For Maximus, the theological act of meditating on Scripture was 'one with the act of spiritual or mystical contemplation.'<sup>69</sup> But what is specific about the way in which the saints read and interpret the scriptures? Balthasar claims that to accept that a passage of Scripture is the word of God is to accept that one cannot fully understand it.<sup>70</sup> And this is what is generic among the saints. The saints approach the Word of God with humility, reverence and a sense of awe.<sup>71</sup> In his *Two Sisters*, Balthasar claims that contemplation and adoration of the Word are essential.<sup>72</sup> Balthasar thus puts the record straight by implying that the verbose method of the modernist theologians may be less helpful than they may think. In his book on prayer, he claims that the pursuit of theology and exegesis should be accompanied with 'a disposition to worship',<sup>73</sup> a 'habitual adoration' and, 'a liturgical attitude' of the mind. St Anselm is used as a good example of this.<sup>74</sup> So is Mary. 'Mary...does not speculate: she worships and obeys, opens her womb to the Spirit'.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> J.A.Vogel, p.20.

<sup>68</sup> *PT*, pp.57-8.

<sup>69</sup> *CL*, p.54.

<sup>70</sup> 'The Word, Scripture, and Tradition', *WF*, p.21.

<sup>71</sup> For Balthasar, dogmatics itself is 'a theory of rapture' (*Entrückung*). *TAI*: 126.

<sup>72</sup> *TS*, p.217.

<sup>73</sup> *P*, 94.

<sup>74</sup> *P*, 94.

<sup>75</sup> *P*, p.195.

Interpreting the Bible as authoritative for Christian life and thought is one of theology's main responsibilities. Balthasar has the theologian saints in mind: 'Who can withdraw his attention from those interpreters whom the Holy Spirit itself sets before the Church as authentically representing the meaning of Scripture?'<sup>76</sup> In his *Two Sisters*, Balthasar claims that the motive for the Church's interest in Thérèse should be the new vistas onto the Gospels that are opened up through her,<sup>77</sup> although she 'never acquired a genuine contemplation of the Scriptures'.<sup>78</sup> Elizabeth, on the other hand, 'seems to take each of the "teachings" of Thérèse and reset them into their framework in revelation'.<sup>79</sup> She is 'a faithful expositor of the finest and most profound passages of [Paul's] letters'.<sup>80</sup> Balthasar has high regard for Elizabeth of the Trinity's 'scriptural thought'. He says that

She does not perceive herself to be a theologian. In no sense is it her task to speculate or construct theories out of revealed concepts. Her power lies in reflecting (*speculari*), in gazing (*theōrein*), in glimpsing the depths of the simple word. These glimpses fully satisfy her, for she could never fully chart the depths of the word by taking soundings. She permits the word to stand, and, as she adores, its unforeseen dimensions reveal themselves...She desires not theology, but adoration; yet adoration of the word in its revealed character. This requires contemplation of the word, contemplation born of "the mind of God" as it is implanted in the believer.'<sup>81</sup>

Does Balthasar's emphasis on the authority of the saints in the exegetical domain go against the established belief that the revelation of Christ was concluded with the death of the last apostle (the last historical witness)? Balthasar uses his pneumatology to answer in the negative. He maintains that the Spirit's revelation is never concluded'.<sup>82</sup> This would be simply a repetition of Catholic belief, except that Balthasar interprets it in terms of mission. According to him, 'the Scriptures contain special sayings appropriate to each mission' and it is the mission that will

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<sup>76</sup> *TS*, p.26.

<sup>77</sup> *TS*, p.30. See also p.217.

<sup>78</sup> *TS*, p.92.

<sup>79</sup> *TS*, pp.413-4.

<sup>80</sup> *TS*, p.487.

<sup>81</sup> *TS*, p.376. See also 488.

<sup>82</sup> *TL3*: 199.

interpret it.<sup>83</sup> Balthasar acknowledges that this does not make it a straightforward process. He claims that

All these concrete norms in which the Holy Spirit expounds the Word of God to the Church are subject to many kinds of perils and contingencies: resistances in those who are thus chosen; resistances in their environment which hinder their work; resistances, finally, in the Church, who may not listen to their message, or only listen sceptically.<sup>84</sup>

What is Balthasar trying to do here? For one thing, I believe he is trying to avoid an impression that the critical exegete is autonomous.<sup>85</sup> Balthasar follows Ignatius, and insists that '[t]he relative independence of the exegete does not...exempt him from the "ecclesiastical sense" (*sentire cum ecclesia*).'<sup>86</sup> Thus thinking *with* the Holy Spirit (my italics) (*sentire cum Spiritu Sancto*), is closely linked to *sentire cum ecclesia* (thinking with the Church).<sup>87</sup> The model for this 'ecclesially appropriate hermeneutics' is to be found in other saints besides Ignatius: in Irenaeus, Origen, Augustine, Anselm, and Bonaventure.<sup>88</sup> In Balthasar's theology, there is a profound relationship between the Church's dogmatic and doctrinal exegesis and the saint's own exegesis. Both of them are at the service of the Scriptures. And both of them need each other.

it is never possible to apply the 'pneumatic' norms independently of the more 'formal' norms of Scripture, tradition, and the teaching and pastoral office. The saints themselves have to allow themselves to be measured by these norms, and if the Spirit of God is in them, they will not try to avoid such judgment; for he is the Spirit of the Church. But it is nonetheless true that in the final analysis, these formal norms exist for the sake of the living norm of holiness.<sup>89</sup>

In this respect, that is, in his emphasis on the importance of interpreting the Bible within an ecclesial setting, Dickens is right to say that Balthasar is in agreement

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<sup>83</sup> *TS*, p.84.

<sup>84</sup> *TH*, p.106.

<sup>85</sup> The issue of autonomy for the critical exegete was one debated by Alfred Loisy (1857-1940) and Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930). Boersma (2009), 19.

<sup>86</sup> *C*, p.70.

<sup>87</sup> *TH*, 100.

<sup>88</sup> De Lubac had used Hilary of Poitiers to argue that the spiritual meaning of the Scriptures is essentially an 'ecclesiastical' meaning: 'the meaning of the *praefigurationis significantia* is equivalent to the *spiritualis praeformatio*, and the *spiritualis praeformatio* alternates the *Ecclesiae praeformatio*.' De Lubac, *Catholicism*, pp.93-4. Balthasar 'regard[s] Holy Scripture as an inspired whole – one that is, moreover, interpreted in the essential tradition and history of the Church.' *CSL*, p.16.

<sup>89</sup> *TH*, p.106. Balthasar is adamant that 'theology must be as open as possible...towards the full sweep of the church's thinking, even if [he adds] such depersonalization imposes on the individual scholar an ascetical renunciation of his own opinions and fancies.' *TAI*: 556.

with the pre-moderns.<sup>90</sup> A few questions arise, however, as to what Balthasar is actually claiming, whether he is claiming that the authority of the saints arises from the fact that they feel with the Church (this would be an ecclesiological question), whether he is trying to establish that certain saints feel with the Church because he himself considers them authoritative (this would be an apologetic question), or even whether he is claiming that the saints require the help of theologians to establish them within the Church (this would be a methodological question). The apologetic question is especially evident in his attempts to integrate Adrienne's work. He wants to prove that Adrienne is not 'withdrawn...from the authority, guidance, and watchfulness of the sacred Teaching Authority'. She is totally an *anima ecclesiastica*.<sup>91</sup>

But to get back to our main argument: I have so far argued that the authority of the saints comes from their Scriptural interpretation, and that the saints function as authorities within the context of biblical interpretation, because of the quality of the interpretation which they provide. Naturally, we cannot ignore the fact that, in Balthasar, a proper understanding of the Bible is self-involving and dramatic. Biblical interpretation requires a living faith which involves a radical Yes to the offer of grace made through the Bible. Thus, the theologian-saint acquires his authority from the fact that he or she responds to God's Word (and often interprets it for others) and accomplishes in his or her life that which has been heard and understood in contemplation of God's Word.

## **THE AUTHORITY OF HISTORY**

Our second argument concerning the authority of the saints in the pneumatological dimension involves the issue of history: the historical involvement of the saints, the historical transformation that ensues on account of

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<sup>90</sup> Dickens, p.71.

<sup>91</sup> Johann Roten has said that, 'Adrienne insisted on an ecclesially precise rendering, and Balthasar's contribution and task was to protect and liberate her from any self-reflective tendency and to make sure that the whole process took place in the context of trustful obedience towards the Church, represented in the event by Adrienne's spiritual director.' Johann Roten, 'The Two Halves of the Moon. Marian Anthropological Dimensions in the Common Mission of Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs Balthasar,' in *Hans Urs Balthasar. His Life and Work*, ed. by David L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), p.72.



the saints and the authoritative interpretation of history by the saints. These different means of involvement in history allow the saints to have authority because they become more involved, more visible, and more vocal. Balthasar has been criticized for his ‘relative lack of attention to concrete instances of history’,<sup>92</sup> as well as for failing to do justice to the biblical view of history, assumed by political and liberation theologians.<sup>93</sup> It is true that Balthasar does not often refer to actual historic events, and his cyclical representation of history may radically differ from the linear one. However, this does not mean that history is not relevant for Balthasar. In this dissertation, history has found its place in the pneumatological domain. The reason is due to Hegel’s influence on Balthasar’s own work. Hegel’s words echo in Balthasar’s own: ‘Spirit...is that which determines history absolutely, and it stands firm against the chance occurrences which it dominates and exploits for its own purpose.’<sup>94</sup>

Let us begin with the more fundamental issue: the historical involvement of the saints. We have already indicated that, in Balthasar, all time has been taken up by Christ.<sup>95</sup> The primal movement, ‘the immovable axis around which all world history turns’, is ‘the Son’s historical movement from the Father to the world and from the world to the Father’.<sup>96</sup> Steffen Lösel has done a great job in analysing Balthasar’s perception and interpretation of history. According to Lösel, Balthasar proposes ‘a cyclical understanding of history and a corresponding theological concept of time.’<sup>97</sup> In Lösel’s words, in Balthasar, ‘the time of Christ gains a new presence in history that allows him to become simultaneous with later times without being subject to the transitory nature of time itself.’<sup>98</sup>

Although some critics, including Thomas C. Dalzell, have criticized Balthasar for subsuming ‘the history of the finite world into the inner-divine process’,<sup>99</sup> in

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<sup>92</sup> Deane-Drummond, p.57. See also Brian E. Daley (2004), p.202.

<sup>93</sup> Lösel (2008), p.42.

<sup>94</sup> G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History: With Selections from the Philosophy of Right*, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1988), p.58.

<sup>95</sup> Lösel (2001), p.205.

<sup>96</sup> *CSL*, p.193. See also *TS*, p.149; *TAI*, 619; *TH*, pp.59 and 140. And Howsare, p.113.

<sup>97</sup> Lösel (2001), p.216.

<sup>98</sup> Lösel (2001), p.210.

<sup>99</sup> Dalzell, p.253. See also Lösel (2001), pp.202 and 217. In this context, Lösel quotes Clemens Kappes.

Balthasar, the fact that ‘everything that happens on earth is already anticipated in the eternal, inner-divine drama itself’,<sup>100</sup> actually increases the significance of the history of the world, God’s engagement with history, and the significance of post-Christian history. Not only does the Christian’s time become a participation in Christ’s time, but the Christian’s appreciation of the nature of time becomes more enhanced than anyone else’s. I have already emphasized in my chapter on the existential dimension that the Christian – and the saint in particular – is in a way, through his association with Christ, more entrenched in time than anyone else. He or she is more rooted in time, so to speak. Because Balthasar ‘locates the meaning of every moment in time not in its relationship to the whole course of history, but rather in its relation to God’s eternity’,<sup>101</sup> this is precisely where the authority of the saints is grounded: in their insertion within God’s eternity. In the pneumatological dimension, what makes the saints authoritative is the fact that they are rigorously involved in that eternity, they participate laboriously in it, so that their authority can take the form of a powerful, vivid and on-going impact on the world, which is evident to the eyes of faith not only of their contemporaries but of others in future generations as well.

Besides the authority that comes from the saints’ involvement in history – or rather in eternity – in Balthasar, the saints function as authorities because the Spirit has chosen to use them in order to change the course of history – or rather of eternity – according to his own purposes. The Christian is called ‘to dispose of the infinite wealth in the life of Christ’, so that it will infiltrate ‘the variousness of history’.<sup>102</sup> For this purpose, the Holy Spirit may bestow a charism upon them, whereby ‘an individual aspect of the image’s total complex can come to be focussed upon more sharply’. The Spirit may also employ the saints to attain ‘greater clarity’ in theology, or even utilize ‘a political situation in the Church herself [in which they are involved] which makes magisterial clarification necessary’.<sup>103</sup> In Balthasar’s theology,

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<sup>100</sup> As formulated by Lösel (2001), p.202.

<sup>101</sup> See the Chapter on ‘Theological Reflections on History’, in *MH*, p.103-154. See also Lösel (2001), pp.203-205.

<sup>102</sup> *TH*, p.98. See also Healy, N.M, p.160.

<sup>103</sup> *TAI*: 552-3.

[i]t is above all the business of the Holy Spirit to bring about changes in the equilibrium of the charges given in the Church: he alone knows how an accent is to be shifted in the *kairos* of each particular present age in such a way that the other accents do not suffer thereby.<sup>104</sup>

Always it has to be the Spirit who determines the direction the changes are to take. ‘Where men themselves wish to shift the accents, they get things wrong almost of necessity’.<sup>105</sup> Theological history illustrates that, wherever there have been significant theological leaps, or magisterial clarification,<sup>106</sup> some saint or other has always been involved. Therefore, in Balthasar, saints become historically influential, not because of any personal initiative, but because the Spirit has himself chosen them to change the course of history. Balthasar is able to say this for two reasons. First of all, in Balthasar, the history of the Church is ‘but the patient expectation of the manifestation (*parousia*) of what already is a hidden presence (*parousia*).’<sup>107</sup> Secondly, in Balthasar, every act performed in faith is effective not only for the present (synchronically), but also for the future (diachronically), ‘determining and altering, effectively and infallibly, the structure of what is to come.’<sup>108</sup> The saints acquire historical substance, because the Spirit is working both in history and in the individual, who is, so to speak, furnished with theological substance by the Spirit. Balthasar emphasizes more than other *nouveaux théologiens* the ‘role in the history of dogma’<sup>109</sup> which saints had. For instance, Balthasar emphasizes the historico-theological significance in the case of Maximus. He expresses his approval of Maximus’ for correcting ‘Neoplatonic mysticism’, for confirming Aristotelian metaphysics, and for preventing ‘the Origenist-monastic strain from becoming simple escapism’.<sup>110</sup> Writing about Maximus, Balthasar says that

[t]he time had come to set forth antiquity’s conception of the universe in a final, conclusive synthesis. The time had come, too, to bring the doctrinal disputes about the being of the incarnate God,

<sup>104</sup> ‘The Gospel as Norm’, *CS*, p.297.

<sup>105</sup> ‘The Gospel as Norm’, *CS*, p.297.

<sup>106</sup> *TAI*: 552-3.

<sup>107</sup> *TAI*: 644.

<sup>108</sup> *TH*, p.73. See also *TAI*: 416.

<sup>109</sup> *CL*, p.37. See also Boersma (2009), p.47.

<sup>110</sup> See *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe According to Maximus the Confessor*, trans. by Brian E.Daley; A Communion Book (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), p.73. Henceforth referred to as *CL*.

disputes that had torn the Church apart for centuries, to a final resolution.<sup>111</sup>

In avoiding an emphasis on the actual context, the life and work of the saints whom Balthasar describes acquire a timeless quality (not in the sense of vagueness, but in the sense of relevance) that is quite uncommon in hagiography generally.

Needless to say, Balthasar is using the saints to counteract the ideas associated with historicism. Modernist historicism excludes ‘any supernatural impact on historical cause and effect,’<sup>112</sup> and suggests that the validity of dogma is reduced once the historical circumstances which brought them about had changed.<sup>113</sup> Balthasar avoids historicism, but maintains that the Spirit is always at work bringing the Word to expression in history and that he may – during the course of the Church’s history – repeat the missions and special archetypal experiences which are found in the Bible. ‘Often an answer from heaven is given to the open questions of an epoch, questions that men cannot come to grips with.’<sup>114</sup> Balthasar agrees with Adrienne that the saints are these ‘answer[s] from heaven’.<sup>115</sup> Balthasar thus uses the saints to emphasize the impact of the Spirit both on history, and on the unfolding of dogma.<sup>116</sup> After all, dogma can be developed ‘only on the model of the pneumatic’ and it can be fully understood only by the Spirit.<sup>117</sup>

Besides claiming the authority that comes from the saints’ involvement in history, and that comes of being chosen by the Spirit to change the course of history, in Balthasar, the saints also acquire a heightened authority through their capacity to explain history. As Ben Quash has pointed out, ‘[t]heology does not in general look at a different history from other academic disciplines; it looks at the same

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<sup>111</sup> *CL*, pp.65-6.

<sup>112</sup> Boersma (2009), p.53.

<sup>113</sup> *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, 13. According to Modernism, everything is subject to ‘the laws of evolution...dogma, Church, worship, the Books we revere as sacred, even faith itself’. See also 26.

<sup>114</sup> *TAI*: 416.

<sup>115</sup> Introduction to von Speyr, A., *Book of All Saints*, (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2008), p.1.

<sup>116</sup> Balthasar himself prefers to speak of a depth and an ‘intensity’ of dogma, and of an unfolding, rather than of extension or ‘expansion’. *TAI*: 229. See also ‘The Fathers, the Scholastics, and Ourselves,’ an essay written in 1939. Quoted in Howsare, p.35.

<sup>117</sup> *TAI*: 229.

history in a different way.’<sup>118</sup> What Christian theology does is, it ‘narrates and explicates history differently.’<sup>119</sup> De Lubac had already stated that ‘it is only the Christian...who can give to world history its meaning and direction.’<sup>120</sup> In Balthasar, the life of the individual, the historical era, do not have their ‘own self-contained meaning’. Moreover, ‘the significance of past ages and individual destinies is not irrevocably fixed, and they remain accessible to us [so that] their meaning can always be newly defined and be transformed with the passage of time.’<sup>121</sup> Interpretation, then is essential. In Balthasar’s view, the ‘[e]yes of faith’ must be ‘supported by eyes which are able to read history critically’.<sup>122</sup> In his *Theologie der Geschichte*, Balthasar writes of the saints as ‘the measure of judgment’, depending on ‘the measure in which [they] have been a force that has shaped history.’<sup>123</sup> This would mean that the saints not only have the eyes of faith but also the critical eyes that come from theological wisdom.

Balthasar attributes a great deal of authority to the saints who interpret the meaning of history. In Balthasar’s theology, the saints are, ultimately, the ones able to *decipher* ‘the meaning of things which have happened long since’, but also to *impart* meaning to individual lives and periods.<sup>124</sup> According to Balthasar, historical theological research can only establish the *historia* (Augustine) and the *littera* (Origen). The *sensus spiritualis* associated with Origen, and the *intellectus fidei* associated with Augustine, are not extracted from history automatically. The ‘comprehensive understanding of history’ *can* be determined, but not through ‘exact scientific method’.<sup>125</sup> Balthasar’s respect for the saints’ interpretation of history comes from his interest in ‘the overall “right” expression for the essential, revelatory, event embodied in that history’, rather than ‘in the exact interpretation of the historical events’ as such.<sup>126</sup> Augustine’s *Civitas Dei*, is given a lot of weight in Balthasar’s work. According to Balthasar, ‘the ultimate meaning of

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<sup>118</sup> Quash (2005), p.2.

<sup>119</sup> Quash (2005), p.3.

<sup>120</sup> *THL*, p.48.

<sup>121</sup> *TH*, p.72.

<sup>122</sup> *TAI*: 592.

<sup>123</sup> *TH*, p.74.

<sup>124</sup> *TH*, p.71.

<sup>125</sup> *TAI*: 75.

<sup>126</sup> Ratzinger, p.25.

history is to be found where Augustine sought it'.<sup>127</sup> Having said that, Augustine's interpretation is exceeded, according to Balthasar, by Dante's interpretation!<sup>128</sup> We have to remember that, according to Balthasar, Dante's aesthetic theology places him among the theologians. In this case, his authority for interpreting history is acclaimed as superior to Augustine's, something which more conservative theologians would not receive kindly.

### **THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM ONE'S MISSION**

So far we have established that, in Balthasar, the saints are proficient when it comes to Biblical interpretation, and that the interpretation of the Scriptures provided by the saints is particularly authoritative for various reasons. We also established that, in Balthasar's theology, the saints function as authoritative within the historical context. They are authoritative because of their involvement in history, because of the transformation that they bring about in the course of history and because of their competence in interpreting history.

In Balthasar, authority is also closely associated with the mission that one receives. Missions are ultimately 'different modes of sharing in [Christ's] temporal sufferings and in Calvary's profound mystery of judgment'.<sup>129</sup> They are the means by which the disciples are 'drawn by grace into the original work at the place that is reserved for them'.<sup>130</sup> In Balthasar, mission is not something reserved for the few. Everybody is called to it. One could almost consider it a transcendental, in the sense that it qualifies all living creatures. In the *Theo-Drama*, it is Jesus Christ who plays the role of yielding 'the principle for allotting roles to all the other actors' and so 'it is from this center that human conscious subjects are allotted personalizing roles or missions (charisms)'.<sup>131</sup> In the *Theo-*

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<sup>127</sup> *MH*, p.x.

<sup>128</sup> According to Balthasar, Dante's greatness ensues, among other things, from the very fact that he 'drew the concrete history of institutions – empire and Church, supremely – into his theology in a more constitutive fashion than had been the case with Irenaeus, Augustine and Bonaventure.' Aidan Nichols (1998), p.93.

<sup>129</sup> *Prayer*, 297.

<sup>130</sup> 'The Gospel as Norm', *CS*, p.290.

<sup>131</sup> *TD3*: 257-8).

*Logic*, this mission is ‘equally a result of the imparting of [the] Spirit’.<sup>132</sup> In Balthasar, the conferring of mission [*Sendung*], which occurs at a particular historical moment in the life of the one called, is but the starting-point of what will, thereafter, be a constant *being-led by the Holy Spirit*.<sup>133</sup> It is a mission that will only be realized if the Christian truly becomes this form which has been willed and instituted by Christ.<sup>134</sup>

How does authority feature in this context? I believe that this is the advantage of developing a theology of mission over a theology of ministry. The focus of authority is more evidently God, rather than the Church. As Potworowski has said, in Balthasar, mission ‘is received from God as something which corresponds structurally and objectively to my being’.<sup>135</sup> Balthasar maintains that

The mission that each individual receives contains within itself the form of sanctity that has been granted to him and is required of him. In following that mission, he fulfills his appropriate capacity for sanctity. This sanctity is essentially social and outside the arbitrary disposition of any individual. For each Christian, God has an idea that fixes his place within the membership of the Church; this idea is unique and personal, embodying for each his appropriate sanctity.<sup>136</sup>

Once man responds to it, however, it becomes man’s responsibility (*Verantwortung*).<sup>137</sup> Consequently, the authority of the saints, their reliability, trustworthiness and steadfastness is grounded in their resolve to serve God’s mission to the best of their ability, on the existential and dramatic involvement in this mission, and on the recognition by the Church of the divine origin of such a mission.

Something has to be said about the double vocation, or the ‘special union between one to whom [God] reveals his mysteries and one able to interpret them objectively.’ Balthasar claims that God often ‘calls two by two those whom he has chosen so that there are no longer two persons with separate vocations, but [a]

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<sup>132</sup> *TL3*: 291.

<sup>133</sup> *CSL*, p.406.

<sup>134</sup> *TAI*: 28.

<sup>135</sup> Potworowski, p.83.

<sup>136</sup> *TS*, p.20.

<sup>137</sup> Babini, p.222.

“two in one vocation”. Such unions’, he adds, ‘can have the same necessity and urgency as the call itself.’<sup>138</sup> Evidently, Balthasar would include his relationship to Adrienne among these double vocations. As we said earlier, in our introductory chapter, the relationship between them could easily be compared to other such relationships in ecclesial history. The example which inspires Balthasar most is that of Francis and Bonaventure.<sup>139</sup> Balthasar reports on the common mission, and on the complementarity of their work in his *Unser Auftrag* in 1984. One gathers from this that Balthasar is expressing approval towards a relationship that could be compared to a professional collaboration. The saint (particularly the mystic) can thus actualize the potential of the theologian, and the theologian can actualize the potential of the saint. The implication is that, where the theologian is not him or herself a saint, he or she may still produce good theology through a close connection with a saint. However, most scholars have seen something more than a simple collaboration. Johann Roten has written in depth about the common mission of Balthasar and Adrienne, mentioning thirteen themes that reflect Adrienne’s ‘direct influence on von Balthasar’s opus.’<sup>140</sup> In claiming that such vocations are from above, it would seem that Balthasar is using the *auctoritas Dei* to justify his relationship with Adrienne. In fact, Balthasar wants this mission to be judged by the same criteria as those used for other missions, namely on its participation in Christ’s own *Sendung* from the Father, on the resolve of the will to expropriate itself and to serve the mission indicated by God, on the existential and dramatic involvement of the individual in the actual mission, and on the subsequent recognition of the mission by the community.

The doctrine of mission as developed by Balthasar has a lot to say about the authority of the saints. However, for all its attractiveness, I believe that this doctrine poses some serious challenges. For example, Balthasar would say that everyone is called to a mission. As a consequence of this huge quantity of missions, one would have to claim – as he does – that the fulfilment of God’s will

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<sup>138</sup> *CSL*, p.450.

<sup>139</sup> In developing his Christology and Trinitarian theology, Bonaventure the theologian learns from Francis the saint, and Francis has his spiritual vision elucidated by a Bonaventure.

<sup>140</sup> Roten, pp.76-78. Anton Štrukelj has also dedicated a chapter in his book on the unity of their work. See pp.319-343.



entails the pursuit of an ‘individual’ rather than a ‘universal law’.<sup>141</sup> The ethical consequences of such a statement are not to go unnoticed. With such a view, each mission would require its own distinct ethical criteria. Secondly, there is Balthasar’s contention that personhood depends on the accomplishment of one’s mission,<sup>142</sup> an issue that has certainly not been properly tested philosophically. Finally, in claiming that all missions are vital, Balthasar is levelling all ecclesial vocations, our established hierarchy of values, our presuppositions concerning spiritual fruitfulness, and other notions which have traditionally been associated with holiness. Because of all this: I had to concede that Balthasar’s theology of mission could not, on its own, be used to resolve the issue of authority as attributed to the saints. In spite of its potential, using it as the principal doctrine to explain either the *anthropos* or the *hagios* would have been problematic. It will have become clear, therefore, that, in arguing for the theology of the saints, there is no one single doctrine developed by Balthasar that incorporates all the essential aspects. To insist on identifying one central idea is to clutch at straws.

### THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM THE CALL

Some work has been done on Balthasar’s theology of vocation, but to the best of my knowledge, no one has genuinely assessed his work.<sup>143</sup> One would have expected Balthasar to claim that the ‘call’ is only reserved to a few.<sup>144</sup> In fact, he insists that the call is for everybody, just as the mission is. Some may be ‘*more called*’ than others,<sup>145</sup> some may be ‘called later’ rather than now.<sup>146</sup> But everyone is called. Clearly, Balthasar wants to avoid the distinction which one finds in the Syriac *Liber Graduum* between ‘the righteous’ (Christians in the world) and ‘the perfect’ (monks, who have left all things), between the special church and the

<sup>141</sup> *TS*, p.21.

<sup>142</sup> In Balthasar’s theology, the saints, become fully incarnate, fully persons, to the extent that their spiritual mission becomes transparent in them. *TL3*: 193.

<sup>143</sup> See Gill K. Goulding, ‘Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Theology of Vocation’, *The Disciples’ Call: Theologies of Vocation from Scripture to the Present Day*, ed. by Christopher Jamison (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), pp. 115-138. See also Meredith Anne Secomb, *Hearing the Word of God: Toward a Theological Phenomenology of Vocation*, unpublished PhD dissertation (Australian Catholic University, 2010). Accessed 20/11/2014), <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/digitaltheses/public/adt-acuvp266.24022011/02whole.pdf>

<sup>144</sup> In Balthasar, the election and the vocation is the first step (the vertical aspect of the call), whereas the call is the horizontal aspect. *CSL*, pp.410 and 141.

<sup>145</sup> *CSL*, p.428.

<sup>146</sup> *CSL*, pp.411-12.

general church.<sup>147</sup> Balthasar does not wish to create a spiritual hierarchy within the Christian ‘ecclesial life-form’.<sup>148</sup> As part of this same attempt to avoid divisions and hierarchies, Balthasar interprets the evangelical state as normative for all states of life within the church, and at the same time, as a complement to the lay state.<sup>149</sup> Clearly, Balthasar is fascinated by the special vocations but he wants to avoid all elitism.<sup>150</sup> He prefers to write about the demands common to both: about the readiness, the renunciation, the sacrifice of one’s being, the placing of oneself at the disposal of God’s entire will, which is required for the laity as well as for those in religious life.<sup>151</sup>

Where does authority feature where the call is concerned? In Balthasar, the authority of the saints comes from the conviction experienced by the saints that their call has a divine source, that God’s dominion is infinite and should be abided by,<sup>152</sup> and that it is totally undeserved. Using a number of figures as examples – Moses, Jeremiah, Amos, Samuel, Saul, David, Elijah, Balaam and Job – Balthasar emphasizes that there is a spontaneity in God that is unpredictable. ‘God chooses whom he will’.<sup>153</sup> Balthasar insists that the call of God does not depend on ‘determinants inherent in the natural order’ even if it can make use of them.<sup>154</sup> God’s election and vocation is

completely independent of all that is natural in man – neither the existence nor the nature of the new call can be determined or evaluated on purely natural premises. Far from being a necessary precondition for this grace filled call, the creature’s whole nature is, in fact, inconsequential to it.<sup>155</sup>

The authority of the saints also comes from the confirmation of the community, of the Church, perhaps through the Spiritual Director. According to Balthasar, ‘the touchstone of a genuine subjective call is one’s readiness to submit oneself to the objective interpretation and guidance of a director “called” by the Church.’

<sup>147</sup> ‘Obedience in the Light of the Gospel,’ *NE*, 248.

<sup>148</sup> Among the ecclesial life-forms, Balthasar mentions the sacramental, the hierarchical structure, ecclesiastic discipline, the life of the counsels. *TAI*: 600.

<sup>149</sup> *CSL*, pp.19-20. See also pp.210-1.

<sup>150</sup> Lösel (2008), p.43.

<sup>151</sup> *CSL*, p.172.

<sup>152</sup> *CSL*, p.81.

<sup>153</sup> *CSL*, p.398 and pp.414-5.

<sup>154</sup> *CSL*, pp.419-420. He mentions forms of poetic inspiration, and of rapture, that resemble ‘the forms of supernatural inspiration or mystical experience of God within a genuine mission.’

<sup>155</sup> *CSL*, p.396.

Balthasar recognizes the risks involved when the subjective mission is not integrated into the objective mission. When this happens, the call ‘will degenerate’ into a thematization and an aggrandizement of oneself and one’s mission, a state of affairs which Balthasar describes (in his typical overstated manner) as ‘the beginning of all heresy’.<sup>156</sup> In Balthasar, the ‘ecclesiastical mediation’ both ‘precedes and follows’ the act of choice.<sup>157</sup> Balthasar does grant, however, that there can even be ‘charismatic’ vocations, whose official recognition and acceptance in the office are, so to say, compelled by divine evidence.<sup>158</sup>

### **THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM CHARISMS**

Within Christian groups, the concept of charism has mostly been understood ‘as a spectacular personal gift or a miraculous phenomenon’.<sup>159</sup> Extraordinary charisms easily portray an individual as authoritative. In Max Weber’s work, the charismatic ruler is heeded because those who know him believe in him, not necessarily because he has actual power or capabilities, but because his or her followers believe that such power exists. This would require the followers to continue to legitimize the authority of the leader if the leader’s authority is to be maintained.<sup>160</sup> Certainly, Balthasar does not wish to encourage the notion of the personality cult. Balthasar prefers to use the charisms to emphasise the Spirit’s work within the Church, and the Church’s Catholicity, that is, its unity in variety. In this, Balthasar is not too distant from Schillebeeckx. Although Schillebeeckx discusses charisms within the context of his theology of ministry, there is the same emphasis on ‘the solidarity of Christians equipped with different charismata of ministry’.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> *CSL*, p.450.

<sup>157</sup> *CSL*, p.492.

<sup>158</sup> Balthasar suggests that the ordination of Origen to the priesthood may have been one of these. *OP*, p.169.

<sup>159</sup> Thomas F.O’Meara, *Theology of Ministry*, Completely Revised Edition (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1999), p.201

<sup>160</sup> Maximilian Weber, *Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Chapter: ‘The Nature of Charismatic Authority and its Routinization’, trans. by A. R. Anderson and Talcott Parsons (New York: Free Press, 1947).

<sup>161</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, *Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981), p.46.

Balthasar's theology of the charisms<sup>162</sup> is quite comprehensive, in the sense that he distinguishes various combinations. He distinguishes between the ordinary charisms and the 'higher' or less ordinary charisms,<sup>163</sup> between the charisms which 'point outwards', and those which 'point inwards',<sup>164</sup> and between the strictly charismatic charisms,<sup>165</sup> and the 'unmystical' or 'natural charisms'. The latter, the natural charisms may still have 'a role to play within the narrower field of salvation history'.<sup>166</sup> Among the natural gifts, Balthasar includes

the leaders' political ability in Joshua, judicial talent in the judges, artistic gifts in those who made the Ark of the Covenant, economic enterprise (such as Pharaoh praised in Joseph), the art of government (thus Saul, moved by the Spirit, joins in the dancing of the prophets).

On the other hand, among the 'charismatic charisms', Balthasar mentions 'the profound intuitions of great Church Fathers' like Origen, Basil, and Augustine, or the mystical charisms of great 'mystics' like Hildegard of Bingen, the two Mechthilds, and Lady Julian of Norwich.<sup>167</sup> The first question that occurs is: are all charisms equally important? Evidently, they are not. The second question is: what is it that establishes the importance or lack of it? In the *Theo-Logic*, Balthasar claims that what makes some charisms 'great', is the fact that they provide more clarity with respect to Christ, and have a more lasting influence. Balthasar claims that '[p]eople with great charisms, like Augustine, Francis, and Ignatius, can be granted (by the Spirit) glimpses of the very center of revelation, and these glimpses can enrich the Church in the most unexpected and yet permanent way'.<sup>168</sup> The charisms which hold a special place for him are

the charisms of famous founders (such as the world vision of St Benedict, the all-embracing vision of salvation in St Ignatius of Loyola and the experiences of St John of the Cross and St Teresa) which are commonly called "mystical" but which are just as charismatic, being given "for the common good"...of the whole

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<sup>162</sup> For a definition, see 'The Gospel as Norm', *CS*, p.296.

<sup>163</sup> Obedience in the Light of the Gospel, *NE*, p.253.

<sup>164</sup> *TAI*: 410. Balthasar claims that those charisms which point inwards - will 'exert their force, and their effect even without being registered externally', whereas the former will have to 'be recognised as such for them to have an effect'.

<sup>165</sup> A tautology which Balthasar considers it necessary to use.

<sup>166</sup> *TL3*: 425.

<sup>167</sup> *TL3*: 317.

<sup>168</sup> *TL3*: 21.

church and in particular for the benefit of the particular Church family being equipped.<sup>169</sup>

Balthasar thus also expresses support for the idea that charisms attribute authority to those who manifest them because they ‘give their recipients a semi-official function in the community’.<sup>170</sup> The authority of the saints would thus lie not only in the clarity of the saints’ theological charism but also in the appreciation of the worth of the charism by the members of the community. The Church has a ‘high regard for charismatic grace’. Balthasar states categorically, however, that whenever the Church singles out for public honour an individual member, either during his lifetime or posthumously, the authentic charismatic ‘will always look at such a show of honour as a misunderstanding.’ Balthasar’s argument is that ‘grace was not intended at all for this member but for the Church as a whole, through the mediation of his service.’<sup>171</sup> This statement becomes difficult to defend, precisely because the claim that every charism is meant for the community is not the same as the claim that the charism ‘was not intended at all for [the] member’ him or herself.

Balthasar concedes that the Church may not be quick to approve new charisms. New religious communities often have to suffer ‘strong opposition from the Church.’ However, Balthasar maintains that, ‘[w]hen one of these orders succeeds in opening the closed mind of the mind of the Church...the Church recognizes the finger of God *ex post facto* in this work, lets it prosper and in the end praises and approves it.’<sup>172</sup> The alternative, that is, the naïve acceptance of a vision, audition, or stigmatisation, is not at all desirable. Balthasar considers the latter to be an ‘abuse’, and claims that saints such as Augustine and John of the Cross have rightly protested against such a lack of discernment.<sup>173</sup> Balthasar reminds us that Thérèse wanted ‘her illuminations, presentiments and desires tested by the irrevocable standards of the Church.’<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> *TL3*: 317.

<sup>170</sup> *TL3*: 315.

<sup>171</sup> *TAI*: 414. The attribution of the term ‘mediators’ is more properly associated with Rahner. See Patricia Sullivan’s article.

<sup>172</sup> *CSL*, pp.379-80.

<sup>173</sup> *TAI*., 411-2.

<sup>174</sup> *Two Sisters*, 55-6.

In spite of his emphasis on the ecclesial aspect of the charisms, however, Balthasar states quite clearly that, in order for the charismatic ‘spirit’ to be genuine, it does not necessarily have to applaud the Church. Balthasar claims that

it is quite possible for a charismatic ‘spirit’ to be found to be genuine even when it criticizes situations in the Church or when it is charged with introducing something new into the Church in response to the contemporary situation, that is, something that is not immediately obvious to the Church’s office-bearers and is perhaps ahead of its time.<sup>175</sup>

The two examples which Balthasar gives, namely, Mary Ward and Ignatius, reveal a lot of what Balthasar leaves unsaid.

### **THE AUTHORITY OF THE INTERNAL MAGISTERIUM**

We cannot realistically discuss the authority of the saints unless we situate it within the context of the division which emerged after Kant between ‘immanent experience’ and ‘external revelation’. After Kant, the important question became ‘how to deal with the modern, Kantian interest in the subjective, experiential element of faith without losing the objective character of divine revelation.’<sup>176</sup> With Tyrrell, for instance, revelation has the characteristic of immanence, consisting of internal promptings and guidings of the finite by the infinite will, so that revelation becomes an anthropological and subjective matter.

In Balthasar, ‘there is no discrepancy between the one known without and the one who lets himself be known within: he is one and the same.’<sup>177</sup> In the *Aesthetics*, Balthasar tries to reverse the trend of Neo-Thomism<sup>178</sup> by approximating the external teacher to the *Magister interior*. He presents the latter as ‘the theological *a priori* serving as foundation for all other instruction from outside, whether from the sphere of the Church or of history.’ Thus Balthasar fosters a concept of the

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<sup>175</sup> *TL3*: 317-8.

<sup>176</sup> Boersma (2009), pp.36-37.

<sup>177</sup> ‘Does Jesus Shine Through?’, *NE*, 17. This would mean that Balthasar approves of Calvin’s position concerning ‘the strict correlation between word (Scripture) and the inner testimony of the Spirit.’ *TL3*: 146-147.

<sup>178</sup> Neo-Thomism emphasized that the supernatural is extrinsic. Nature is juxtaposed against the supernatural. See Boersma (2007), p.246 and Boersma (2009), p.4.

*Magister interior* as part of the revelation process. It is ‘the *sensorium*, conferred in revelation itself, which perceives what revelation means...in the unique sense of God becoming manifest.’<sup>179</sup> With Balthasar, however, revelation remains a divine initiative and a divine encounter. In *Theo-Logic*, Balthasar underscores yet again that the Spirit’s testimony is itself both an ‘inward and outward testimony’.<sup>180</sup> Here Balthasar follows both the Pauline position which emphasised the Paraclete-Spirit’s role within the teaching authority of the Church; and the Johannine position which attributes to the Paraclete-Spirit the role of a teacher dwelling in each Christian.<sup>181</sup>

Needless to say, an over-emphasis on the internal Magisterium has its problems where authority is concerned. For one thing, to write of an internal authority of the Spirit would require that one explain how the diversity or even incompatibility of beliefs within the Church is to be resolved.<sup>182</sup> Balthasar would have been aware of this predicament. What he does to overcome this objection is: he maintains, for the saints, the position of the Fathers that the *magisterium internum* is not bound by the official *magisterium externum*. In agreement with Möhler and with Newman, Balthasar claims that the individual believer may ‘receive direct illumination from the Spirit concerning a piece of Scripture or of tradition without the intervention of the external “teaching office” [of the Church]’.<sup>183</sup> The Spirit may also ‘guide the individual in his right action without any truth being proclaimed officially.’<sup>184</sup> And yet, the *magisterium internum* is not to be isolated from the *magisterium externum*. Balthasar does not fail to emphasize that the saints are notorious for their acquiescence to the jurisdiction of the external magisterium. For example, writing about Thérèse, Balthasar commends her for not being ‘touched by the temptation to substitute an interior certainty for the

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<sup>179</sup> *TAI*: 162-3.

<sup>180</sup> *TL3*: 223.

<sup>181</sup> Raymond E. Brown, p. 149.

<sup>182</sup> Raymond E. Brown, pp. 121-2.

<sup>183</sup> *TL3*: 328. See Jean Mouroux, *The Christian Experience. An Introduction to a Theology* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955).

<sup>184</sup> ‘Our Shared Responsibility,’ *E*, p. 143. Even where one’s vocation is concerned, Balthasar acknowledges God’s right of personal access to souls in order that he may work in in them and accomplish in them his good pleasure.’ According to Balthasar, ‘all calls to the personal following of the Lord and, indeed, all great and unique missions within the Church come... purely from God and, psychologically speaking, are made known directly to the one called.’ *CSL*, p. 441.

Church's external authority.'<sup>185</sup> This would mean that, according to Balthasar, this personal 'illumination', although 'direct', never takes place 'in a purely "private" capacity, but with a view to that individual's Christian vocation, which is always related to the Church'.<sup>186</sup>

Does the authority come from the internal certitude of the individual? In the *Aesthetics*, the question of certitude is best answered using Aquinas. Balthasar refers to Aquinas' observation concerning the prophet, namely that he 'has supreme certainty concerning those things which the prophetic Spirit expressly infuses into him, and also concerning the fact that these things are revealed to him by God.'<sup>187</sup> In *Theo-Logic*, Balthasar comes back to the issue: is man able to know whether he is 'moved by his natural inclination or by a supernatural impulsion'?<sup>188</sup> Can there ever be certainty that someone is truly a servant of righteousness? Balthasar argues that Montanism and Messalianism 'forced the Fathers to confront the issue and adopt positions that, while cautious, are not simply a rejection'. He notes that the Reformers and the Council of Trent were at loggerheads on the issue.<sup>189</sup> He also alludes to the reservations which Aquinas held, namely that, 'while it is quite possible for there to be *certitudo* regarding a *fides informis*,<sup>190</sup> this does not yield any certainty about *fides formata caritate*.<sup>191</sup> Balthasar claims that this uncertainty arises 'because of the similarity between natural love and that which is given by grace'.<sup>192</sup> Balthasar also refers to Cardinal Cajetan (1469-1534) and to the Spanish theologian and philosopher, Francisco Suárez (1548-1617) on this issue.<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> *TS*, p.57.

<sup>186</sup> *TL3*: 328.

<sup>187</sup> *TAI*: 308.

<sup>188</sup> This was an important question for the early Fathers as well as in the Middle Ages.

<sup>189</sup> *TL3*: 379-80.

<sup>190</sup> In this case, the individual is certain that he is assenting to the Church's faith.

<sup>191</sup> See 2 Cor 13: 15 and Aquinas' *de Veritate*.

<sup>192</sup> *TL3*: 380-1.

<sup>193</sup> Whereas Cajetan admits 'a *certitudo* regarding the *donum infusum fidei*, but with the restrictions formulated by the Council of Trent', Suarez opposes the assertion of a *certitudo moralis*. He maintains that 'there is no sure sign that would permit an "acquired natural faith" to be distinguished from a supernatural infused faith'. *TL3*: 383.



The kind of certainty which Balthasar accentuates is really the certainty ensuing from ‘a lived life of faith’.<sup>194</sup> Understood in the Pauline and the Thomistic sense, rather than that of the Reformers, the *Magister interior* that is not embodied in a life is no longer an infallible criterion. This means that Balthasar rests on the Pauline and the Johannine sense, namely that evidence that we are in Christ, ‘arises solely from the whole thrust of our believing and surrendered existence.’<sup>195</sup> In the Johannine sense, the ‘knowledge’ given to us by the Spirit ‘is always linked to very concrete conditions of Christian living.’<sup>196</sup> Balthasar uses Jean Mouroux to argue about the concept of Christian experience of the Spirit. He claims that Mouroux’ contribution lies in the fact that he ‘points us toward the total achievement, the total stance of a life.’<sup>197</sup>

Concerning the value of ‘private revelations’, Balthasar quotes Adrienne von Speyr. ‘It may be’, he quotes, “that God is speaking to the Church, through someone’s prayer, in a *language* that is not understood by the Church at that time; perhaps the Church does not want to and cannot accept it.”<sup>198</sup> It is here that the role of the Magisterium and theology is especially important. Balthasar grants that, historically, these revelations sometimes ‘had to be first purified and completed by theologians or the magisterium itself’.<sup>199</sup> He also emphasizes the responsibility of the visionary him or herself, arguing that, whenever these private revelations ‘either did not “succeed” or gained acceptance in a not entirely credible way’, this was because of the self-centredness of ‘the transmitting medium’.<sup>200</sup>

## THE AUTHORITY OF CANONIZATION

Most Christians would ground the authority of the saints within their official recognition through canonization. Matzko states that ‘the practice of naming

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<sup>194</sup> *TL3*: 383.

<sup>195</sup> *TL3*: 381.

<sup>196</sup> *TL3*: 382.

<sup>197</sup> *TL3*: 385.

<sup>198</sup> *TL3*: 376.

<sup>199</sup> *First Glance*, 88-9.

<sup>200</sup> *First Glance*, 88-9.

saints is...a process of naming what social (moral and religious) practices are held to be constitutive of common life'.<sup>201</sup> Jose' Maria Castillo asserts that '[t]he saints whom the Church canonizes or intends to canonize express the type of Church which it wishes to promote and build...' Elizabeth Johnson claims that 'the right to name the community's exemplars reinforces the authority of the one who canonizes'. In Balthasar, there is a pneumatological turn. It is the Spirit who chooses for canonization those who in his judgment express the type of Church He wants.<sup>202</sup>

The issue of canonization is often associated with controversy, particularly when the question of infallibility arises. If the authority of the saints is to be associated with their canonization, the next important question is whether the Church and the pope can err in proposing a particular person as an object for veneration.<sup>203</sup> The best discussion of the issue of inerrancy and canonization, it seems to me, is that provided by Eric Waldram Kemp in the 1940's. In a chapter entitled 'Canonization and Papal Infallibility', Kemp offers a chronological synopsis of the pertinent questions involved, identifies the major figures who contributed to the issue, isolates the most significant documents, as well as provides actual examples. Aquinas had claimed that, hypothetically, both the pope who decides and the human testimony on whom canonization relies, can err in canonizing. However, the Holy Spirit would not allow the Pope to make a wrong judgement, or the Church to be deceived. According to Cesare Carbone, the Church cannot err in venerating saints who are celebrated in Holy Scripture, and cannot err in the canonization of saints *intercedente espresso vel tacita Pontificus approbatione*.<sup>204</sup> On his part, Suarez argued that the pope cannot err in canonization which is *pars quaedam materiae moralis*, and that the pope orders the veneration of a saint *sub praecisa obligatione*. Consequently, that command ought not to be subject to error. Suarez argues that papal infallibility in canonization is not *de fide*, but it is

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<sup>201</sup> Matzko, p.22.

<sup>202</sup> 'The History of Canonization in Christianity: Its Real Meaning', in Maria Clara Bingemer, Andres Torres Queiruga, & Jon Sobrino, (eds), *Saints and Sanctity Today*, Concilium 2013/3, (London: SCM Press), pp.70-77.

<sup>203</sup> Eric Waldram Kemp, *Canonization and Authority in the Western Church* (London: Oxford University Press 1948), p.151.

<sup>204</sup> Kemp, p.158.

‘sufficiently certain for the contrary view to be impious and temerarious.’<sup>205</sup> The issue is considerably complicated. So many questions emerge: whether it is the *papal* approval that makes a canonization infallible, whether the pope is infallible in beatifying as well as in canonizing, whether beatifications which were announced by local bishops, or declarations of sainthood by public acclamation, are valid, whether the popes themselves (as popes, not as theologians) ever put forward any claim to infallibility in canonization, and how one should deal with the saints whose case was examined, but whose canonization was never approved. And what about the canonized saints whose names are themselves unknown? This is not to mention the political and theological reasons that the Magisterium may have for proclaiming particular saints at one stage rather than another.

Balthasar himself seems to have complete trust that the Church does not err in this regard. For instance, in *The Office of Peter*, he refers to the several cases of ‘imposters’, including certain stigmatics, who, he says, ‘were, *of course*, not canonized’ [my italics], although they may have been ‘considered from a distance as being fairly holy’.<sup>206</sup> In Balthasar, ‘it is the prerogative of the Holy Spirit to have his demands and inspirations accepted and followed, [not just by the individual], but by the Church as a whole’.<sup>207</sup> It seems to me, however, that, in Balthasar’s case infallibility does not just mean: The Church cannot be mistaken in presenting this individual as a model for imitation. It could also mean that you would be infallible if you walked in this individual’s footsteps. In the latter case, infallibility is not an attribute of the Church or the Pope who is responsible for approving and canonizing, nor is infallibility an attribute of the saint, but rather an attribute of the individual Christian (the *sensus fidei* as opposed to the *sensus fidelium* of Newman). Perhaps Balthasar is emphasizing all of these aspects: the demands of the Spirit, the responsibility of the Church and the obligation of the individual Christian.

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<sup>205</sup> Quoting *Tratatus de fide theologica*. Kemp, p.159.

<sup>206</sup> *OP*, pp.343-4.

<sup>207</sup> *CSL*, p.442.

The issue of canonization often brings the argument for the authority of the saints to an impasse. How can one attribute an authority to the saints, when the authority of the saints depends on the Magisterial decision for canonization, and therefore on the Magisterium for the official recognition of the authoritativeness of that saint? One quickly realizes that this is the wrong question to ask. The authority of the saints does not depend on the Magisterial decision for canonization, after all. In his essay 'The Gospel as Norm', Balthasar claims that it is the Spirit who carries out the effective 'publicity' for the saints who are canonical in each age (and therefore are to be canonized by the church).<sup>208</sup> This would mean that, in Balthasar, the Spirit will find ways and means of making the saints shine, so that their lives may serve as 'the criterion' for others, and so that their teachings may be considered authoritative. The Spirit is able to draw the Church's attention to the teaching and the life of the saints and to make universal concepts out of them.<sup>209</sup>

## CONCLUSION

As in previous chapters, the initial question for this chapter was: Where did Balthasar ground the authority of the saints? Except that here I contemplated the question from a pneumatological perspective. I started by exploring the authority of the Spirit as Balthasar portrays it, and then went on to demonstrate that the saints' remarkable comprehension and illustration of the Scriptures, their significant grasp of events and involvement in history, their unique vocation and mission, and their charisms serve as a foundation for their authority. I also investigated the authority which Balthasar attributes to the internal magisterium. Finally, I argued that, in the pneumatological domain, the authority of the saints is grounded in the fact that the Spirit himself testifies for the saints, which is were my discussion of canonizations came in.

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<sup>208</sup> 'The Gospel as Norm,' *CS*, pp.293-4.

<sup>209</sup> 'The Gospel as Norm,' *CS*, 292-4. Balthasar claims that a mission may develop after the death of the one to whom it was entrusted, sometimes even long after, as in the case of Angela Merici and Mary Ward.' *CSL*, p.449.

How do I interpret Balthasar in this regard? What do I think he was trying to do? My interpretation is that Balthasar attributes to the saints an authority that is analogous to that of the Magisterium precisely because the work which the Holy Spirit works in them, is similar to the work which we expect the Spirit to work in the Magisterium. In the pneumatological domain, the saint can act as an authority because he or she is someone who is bolstered by the Spirit, who has an inexplicable significance, whom one invokes, and to whom one must submit, in matters requiring discernment. Is this not what we generally associate with the Magisterium? My construal of Balthasar is that he was using the saints to deliberate on contemporary issues, whether exegetical (what authentic biblical interpretation looks like), philosophical (what the meaning of history is), theological (what is the relevance of charisms, missions and vocations) or even ecclesial (the process of canonization) issues, while, in the process, promoting new ways of doing exegesis, of reflecting about history, of going about canonizing, and so on. In this way, he was not just correcting what he believed were incorrect trends in the philosophies and theologies of his times, but also doing two other things, namely: using the saints to teach the official Magisterium, and using the saints to act as a Magisterium.

Having discussed the grounding of the saints within the existential (Chapter 3), the epistemological (Chapter 4) and the pneumatological perspective, I shall now deal with the authority of the saints from the more concrete perspective of the ecclesiological. It is within the Church (sometimes understood – because of its universal mission – as incorporating more than those who are baptized) that the saints are recognized as an authority and that it is within the Church that the saints function as an authority.

## CHAPTER 6

### THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL DIMENSION

#### INTRODUCTION

Whereas in the pneumatological dimension, an authority would be someone who is bolstered by the Spirit – and who, subsequently, acquires significance – someone whom one invokes, and to whom one submits in matters requiring discernment, in the ecclesiological dimension, an authority is someone to whom one appeals, and to whom one submits, when there has been a disagreement on issues of theology or in issues of discipline. In this Chapter, I will want to demonstrate how, in Balthasar, the Church furnishes the saints with ecclesial authority that is analogous to that of the Magisterium, precisely because it is to them that one appeals, and to them that one generally submits, when there has been a disagreement on issues of theology or in issues of discipline. I would also like to establish that the saints function authoritatively from within the Church.

It is best to establish our presuppositions for this Chapter: First of all, in Balthasar, the mediation of human authority is indispensable,<sup>1</sup> and God's power is communicated by Christ to the Church, and above all to Peter, to the twelve and to their successors.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, in attributing authority to the saints, Balthasar does not assume an anthropocentric approach to authority, at the expense of the divine. Balthasar is willing to accept a *propter auctoritatem ecclesiae* because, according to him, ecclesial authority and proclamation pronounces and exacts *the auctoritatem Dei*.<sup>3</sup> Thirdly, in Balthasar, ecclesial authority is not reserved to the hierarchy. Although authority is associated with office, office is not reserved to those who are ordained. There are other offices and other missions which are also

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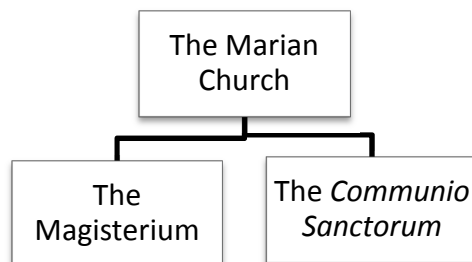
<sup>1</sup> *OP*, p.61. See also 'Obedience in the Light of the Gospel,' *NE*, p.234.

<sup>2</sup> 'Authority', *E*, pp.130-133. See also *OP*, p.197 and *TAI*: 140.

<sup>3</sup> *TAI*: 140-1.

authoritative in the Church. Fourthly, authority in Balthasar may take the form of the *sensus fidelium*, but more often than not, it derives from the concept of the *communio sanctorum*, rather than from the narrower concept of a theological consensus. Finally, it is also important to draw attention to the two elements which Balthasar favors for describing the Church: namely the Marian and the Petrine components. Mary is prior to the Church chronologically, a statement with which Zizoulas disagrees because, in Zizoulas, Christ is corporate from the beginning.<sup>4</sup> Balthasar claims that Mary is the first member of the Church in whom the subjective and the objective elements in the Church become fully unified. Finally, Balthasar also claims that others within the Church can share in this all-rounded holiness of hers.

As we develop our argument, the concept of the Church we shall be working with will mostly be that of the *Communio Sanctorum* as a distinctive group, proceeding alongside the Magisterium. These two groups are equivalent to the two directions



which Balthasar identifies as sources for assistance for the Christian community (the *communio sanctorum*), namely the ‘holy Church’ or the ‘Church of the saints’ and the apostolic succession of the pastoral and magisterial office.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, besides this trend whereby the

Marian principle is expansive enough to include everyone, including the official side, there is evidence, in Balthasar, of a second trend, that of positioning Mary alongside Peter.<sup>6</sup> Both of these descriptive modes will feature in my own discussion, but I hope that clarity will not suffer.

<sup>4</sup> McPartlan, p.282.

<sup>5</sup> *OP*, 228.

<sup>6</sup> *OP*, 221. Because of Balthasar’s double-stance, the Chapter will at times deal with the Marian office as distinct from, and possibly in contrast with, the Petrine, and at times with the Marian office as encompassing the Petrine office.

## THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM ECCLESIAL HOLINESS

Before the issue of authority can be treated, it is best to investigate how Balthasar explains individual holiness vis-à-vis the ecclesial context. *Lumen Gentium* describes the Church as both holy and in need of purification,<sup>7</sup> yet the issue concerning whether one can logically speak about the holiness of an institution remains controversial.<sup>8</sup> Balthasar treats the Church as a person,<sup>9</sup> which makes it possible to speak of its holiness, but this is just as controversial. Catholic leaders, as well as theologians have attempted to resolve the issues surrounding the controversy. Pieter De Witte has argued that, in their attempts to respond to criticism and accusations of hypocrisy, Catholic leaders have failed to convey a credible understanding of the church's holiness. De Witte draws upon the Joint Lutheran-Roman Catholic Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith (JDJF), to point to the need for renewed reflection on the church as *simul justus et peccator*, maintaining that this would help resolve the troubling pattern of the systematic abuse of pastoral authority.<sup>10</sup> Balthasar's own preoccupation with the challenge of combining individual failure with ecclesial holiness is relentless. One of the main issues that confront any reader of Balthasar is his contention that the property of holiness is primarily a mark of the whole community before it is the attribute of an individual.<sup>11</sup> It is the 'collective consecration' which leads to the members of the New Testament church being called 'saints'.<sup>12</sup> This is not the same as attributing holiness to 'the central administration of the Church'.<sup>13</sup> In his view, the Church will never succeed in making her structures 'transparent to

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<sup>7</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Maureen A. Tilley, 'One Wholly Catholic: Saints and Sanctity in the Post-Apostolic Church', CTSA Proceedings, 66 (2011): 1-15. Accessed online 28/11/2014, <http://www.ctsa-online.org/Convention%202011/0001-0015.pdf> and Paul F. Lakeland, 'I Want to Be in That Number: Desire, Inclusivity, and the Church', CTSA Proceedings, 66 (2011). Available online 28/11/2014, <http://digitalcommons.fairfield.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1094&context=religiousstudies-facultypubs>

<sup>9</sup> Stephan Ackermann, 'The Church as Person in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar', *Communio* 29 (2002), 238-249

<sup>10</sup> Pieter De Witte, 'The Church as *simul justus et peccator*? Ecumenical Challenges for Roman Catholic Ecclesiology,' CTSA Proceedings 66 (2011), 96-97 (p.96).

<sup>11</sup> *TS*, 39.

<sup>12</sup> *OP*, 205.

<sup>13</sup> *OP*, 67



Christian love' because of 'the sinfulness of man'.<sup>14</sup> The risks of such ecclesial structures being misused is too great.<sup>15</sup>

Balthasar identifies a series of what he calls ecclesial 'objectivizations' which are intended 'to guide the subjective spirit of believers through the process of self-surrender',<sup>16</sup> namely, the Scriptures, Tradition, the episcopate, the sacraments and canon law.<sup>17</sup> Such 'objectivizations' are always prior to the individual, and they are 'superior to all personal holiness.'<sup>18</sup> Balthasar's approach of prioritizing the objective over the subjective, collective holiness over individual holiness, and holiness over sinfulness is certainly a matter of controversy. Concerning the second of these pairs, Elizabeth Johnson has said that the symbol of the communion of saints 'does not in the first instance refer to paradigmatic figures, those outstanding individuals traditionally called "saints," but rather names the whole community of people graced by the Spirit of God'.<sup>19</sup> The third of these pairs: the prioritizing of holiness over sinfulness would be especially risky if it involved the concealment of sinfulness. The consequences of hiding the sinfulness within the Church can have grave consequences.<sup>20</sup> Writing about the Church in the New Testament, Raymond E. Brown has said that 'an emphasis on the holiness of the Church can be a weakness if it begins to mask faults that exist' and that 'oppression, veniality, and dishonesty...may need to be exposed and spoken against,' because of the harm they do to the Church.<sup>21</sup> O. Davies has accused Balthasar of hiding the sinfulness. Davies claims that the 'critique of the particular narrative tradition from within' is 'substantially lacking in von Balthasar's

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<sup>14</sup> What Balthasar grants is that the structures of the Church 'are more easily permeated' by the sacred than the structures of the world. *EG*, 89.

<sup>15</sup> *EG*, 89. See also *TAI*: 603.

<sup>16</sup> *TL3*: 154. Balthasar describes 'subjective spirit' as 'the individual consciousness, which...gradually...by means of the renunciation of self-surrender...discovers the true dimension of spirit and, hence, the authentic freedom proper to it.' *TL3*: 153.

<sup>17</sup> *TL3*: 311-2. In Balthasar, the various aspects of objective holiness can be given the title 'holy', although this must not be interpreted as referring to them subjectively. For instance, we may speak of 'Holy' Scripture, of the 'holy' sacraments, of the 'Holy' synods and councils. The expression 'Holy Father', however, does not refer to the person who bears it. It refers to the office which he holds. See also *CSL*, p.141.

<sup>18</sup> *TL3*: 337. This means that, in Balthasar, the underlying concept is ultimately the post-liberal one which emphasizes the individual as the product of the cultural-linguistic notion of religion.

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, p.1.

<sup>20</sup> The paedophilia scandal has made this more evident than ever.

<sup>21</sup> Brown, p. 56.

work.’<sup>22</sup> In my view, this is not entirely correct. I would tend to support Nicholas M.Healy’s position. Having analysed Balthasar’s theodramatic form of ecclesiology, Nicholas M. Healy points out that Balthasar often assesses the tradition and expresses disapproval wherever necessary. Healy claims that Balthasar’s assessment embodies the belief that all people and all institutions, including the Church are sinful.<sup>23</sup> He maintains that the struggle for and against God does not just take place between the world and the Church. It also takes place within the Church.<sup>24</sup> Thus Balthasar acknowledges the paradox of individual sinfulness and the problematics of structure, while still appreciating and maintaining the holiness of the Church.<sup>25</sup> As John McDade has noted, if you omit the sinners from within a communion called to holiness, ‘you create the Church of the righteous elect’, whereas even ‘the presence of Judas requires constant acknowledgment.’<sup>26</sup>

Thus, Balthasar takes the Augustinian view and emphasizes that the Church is one body, but that it is a *corpus permixtum*.<sup>27</sup> It is a thoroughly mixed body (not a divided one).<sup>28</sup> Balthasar goes one step further, he *accepts* a Church where ‘the saints...retain their weaknesses, perhaps even their sins’,<sup>29</sup> where saints ‘are to be taken seriously when they insist on their inadequacy’,<sup>30</sup> where the saint must ‘love’ his or her ‘imperfection and not long to escape from it’,<sup>31</sup> where the liability often rests with the greatness.<sup>32</sup> So there are no clear boundaries between saints and sinners. Balthasar actually presents a Church where not only is the Church a *corpus permixtum*, but each individual is also composite. This could make it difficult to argue about the authority of the saints, since there is no one whose sainthood is unscathed. At the same time, one is at least envisioning the possibility of some kind of grading among the saints, which is crucial if one is to

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<sup>22</sup> Davies (1998), p.15.

<sup>23</sup> Nicholas M.Healy, p. 151.

<sup>24</sup> Nicholas M.Healy, p. 65.

<sup>25</sup> Nicholas M.Healy, pp.107-8.

<sup>26</sup> McDade, p.102.

<sup>27</sup> *City of God*, 1:35.

<sup>28</sup> Nicholas M.Healy, p.55

<sup>29</sup> *TS*, p.38.

<sup>30</sup> *TS*, p.27.

<sup>31</sup> *TS*, p.281. Within the genre of hagiography, ‘a saint who vaunted holiness was not only an imposter but a contradiction in terms’. Weinstein & Bell, p.154.

<sup>32</sup> Howsare, p.166.

argue about the authority of certain saints. D.M.Matzko has said that '[a] devotion to saints requires inequalities among persons in a hierarchy of goodness'.<sup>33</sup> The same can be said about a theology of the authority of the saints: the inequalities would have to be part and parcel of the doctrine. For, how is it possible to maintain the authority of the saints, without drawing attention to the distinctions among human beings?

Could Balthasar be trying to defend the prestige of the institution at the expense of that of the individual? The answer to this is 'no'. In Balthasar, each individual must consciously work towards the holiness of the Church first, and let individual holiness follow, if it will. Balthasar's intention is to embolden individuals to sacrifice their own ideals – even that of sanctity – for the sake of the community.<sup>34</sup> But this is to be understood as a gain rather than a loss. According to Balthasar, 'the individual cannot look only at an individual ideal of himself in God. Rather, together with the others, he has to view the communal ideal of an *ecclesia immaculata* and thus *infallibilis* (Eph 5:27).'<sup>35</sup> Just as with Paul, '[t]he rule that governs what we do and what we do not do' will be 'only what is most beneficial for the community' and what will not 'give scandal to its weaker members', and not 'what is permitted the individual as a private person, what he can allow himself to do on the basis of his own conscience'.<sup>36</sup> In Balthasar, subjective holiness 'is only holy if it...serves as the path and goal of this objective holiness.'<sup>37</sup>

Needless to say, none of the models of Church is as helpful for the understanding of Balthasar's theology of the saints, as that of the *communio sanctorum*, which incorporates the *Communio Sanctorum*, but incorporates so much more. The significance of this doctrine to our subject must be evident, since, according to Balthasar, although '[f]rom outside it may seem that the spread of Christianity has

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<sup>33</sup> Matzko, p.19.

<sup>34</sup> Balthasar gives the example of the Cure' of Ars, 'who lived wholly by the spirit of the religious life without ever entering a religious order, although the thought was always present to him as a temptation to lighten his superhuman ministry.' *CSL*, p.377-8.

<sup>35</sup> *TH*, p.73. See also 'Obedience in the Light of the Gospel,' *NE*, 240.

<sup>36</sup> *CSL*, pp.339.

<sup>37</sup> *TL3*: 311.

been the work of individuals – “apostles,...prophets,...teachers” (1 Cor 12:28) – and not that of communities with their own internal coherence,’ this appearance ‘is illusory.’<sup>38</sup>

In his essay on ‘Foundations of Christian Ethics,’ Marc Ouellet highlights that which distinguishes the theology of the *communio sanctorum* in Balthasar: it is ‘at once divine and human’, and it ‘resembles the Trinitarian communion’ in that, what becomes common property – their very personhood – is more than just what belongs to each one.<sup>39</sup> Ouellet argues that ‘by recovering the essential implication of community in the occurrence of grace,’ Balthasar ‘advances beyond the Protestant individualism of justification by faith and the Catholic individualism of merit.’<sup>40</sup> According to Ratzinger, the model of Church as *Communio* enables Balthasar not only to take the Church’s call to holiness seriously, but also to recognize ‘the consolation of this holiness’, since it takes the form of solace to the weak, of guidance and of nurture.<sup>41</sup>

In my view there are four advantages to using the *communio sanctorum* as a model for the Church. The first of these is that it makes it possible to contemplate the whole while deliberating on the individual, and vice-versa, which is otherwise a real *coincidentia oppositorum*.<sup>42</sup> The second advantage is that the concept of the *communio sanctorum* enables Balthasar to transcend the limitations of Church and the limitations of time. As he says in the *Theo-Logic*, through the supratemporal understanding of the *communio sanctorum*, ‘the elements of tradition – the saints, the Fathers, Doctors of the Church, and so on – maintain a kind of presence and currency that abolishes much of the historical distance between us and them.’<sup>43</sup> The third advantage is that the concept of the *communio sanctorum* makes it possible for Balthasar to develop a proper economic pneumatology and a

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<sup>38</sup> TL3: 410.

<sup>39</sup> Ouellet, pp.238 and 241.

<sup>40</sup> Ouellet, p.241.

<sup>41</sup> Ratzinger, p.141.

<sup>42</sup> See ‘Who is the Church’, in *Spouse of the Word: Explorations in Theology II*, trans. by A.V.Littledale (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1989), pp.143-192. Henceforth referred to as *SW*. The neoplatonic Latin term, attributed to Nicholas of Cusa, is used to describe a revelation of the oneness of things previously believed to be different. See His essay, *De Docta Ignorantia* (1440).

<sup>43</sup> TL3: 327.

Mariology which presents Mary as an exemplar, but not necessarily as a personification of the Church.<sup>44</sup> And finally, it enables Balthasar to allocate an authoritative place to each and every saint, and to each and every mission, since the mission is evaluated within a communal context, rather than individually.

Balthasar does not give a full account of the historical development of the doctrinal symbol of the *communio sanctorum*. Nor does he give a full account of the devotional practice accompanying this doctrine. It would have been good had he written more extensively about it, but we do know that the concept is very important for Balthasar. And we can safely say that we have enough to be able to understand what he means by it.<sup>45</sup> Balthasar simply refuses to describe the communion of saints as ‘a *closed* circle of those who exchange their merits and rewards among themselves’, as it is generally understood. On the contrary, he maintains that it is ‘an *open* circle of those who “give without counting the cost”’ (my emphasis).<sup>46</sup> It is not ‘the “collective understanding, collective will and collective feeling of the community”,’ to which the individual intellect must submit, as it is with Tyrell.<sup>47</sup> It is rather that ‘the self is opened toward the Church and toward the most intimate fellowship of the saints.’<sup>48</sup> In terms of its identity, the *communio sanctorum* incorporates all those who are seeking to praise God’s glory.<sup>49</sup> In terms of its effectiveness, it extends to ‘unbelievers’ as well.<sup>50</sup>

Balthasar writes of a ‘mystical communism’ where ‘individuals receive things which are kept from the rest.’ For Balthasar, the *communio sanctorum* is built up and fostered, ‘not through the levelling-down of privileges (as Protestantism practised on Mary)...but rather by the distinguishing of different vocations, which only in their interconnectedness yield a qualitatively integrated unity.’<sup>51</sup> Balthasar

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<sup>44</sup> Paul McPartlan, ‘Who is the Church? Zizoulas and von Balthasar on the Church’s Identity,’ *Ecclesiology* 4 (2008), 271-288 (p.285)

<sup>45</sup> ‘Catholicism and the Communion of Saints, trans. by Albert K.Wimmer, *Communio* 15 (1988) 163-168; ‘The Communion of Saints’ in *E*, pp.91-100.

<sup>46</sup> ‘The Communion of Saints,’ *E*, p.96.

<sup>47</sup> *OP*, p.112.

<sup>48</sup> *TS*, pp.461-2.

<sup>49</sup> Sicari, p.127.

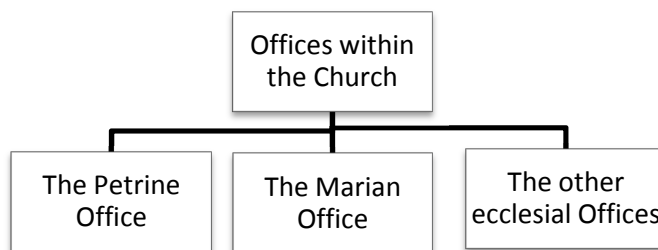
<sup>50</sup> *TS*, p.40. This is a concept which Balthasar owes to De Lubac. See *Catholicism*, p.118. Quoted in *THL*, p.39. See also ‘The Communion of Saints,’ *E*, pp.96 and 99.

<sup>51</sup> *TAL*: 342.

agrees with Aquinas that ‘this spirit which circulates through the organism causes the members not only to care “horizontally” for one another but also...to love the whole more than themselves, the parts.’<sup>52</sup> Balthasar also adds that it is this life-giving spirit that ‘gives every member its form and function and consequently at the same time relates it internally to the whole’.<sup>53</sup> What is the relevance of this apparent digression? The significance of all this is that the authority of the saints develops from the very fact that they are the best ‘protectors and inspirers’ of this *communio*.<sup>54</sup>

### THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM OFFICE

What about the issue of office? The authority that comes from office is probably the most problematic concept with which I have had to deal. The reason is that such an authority could easily be confused with the authority that comes from holiness. There is also another problem. Moreover, it has been difficult to relate



Balthasar’s view of the penitential character of office – where office is understood as one of the consequences of sin, and as a cross for the

community to carry<sup>55</sup> – with his theology of office as a charism. But, before I can delve more deeply into the issue, it is necessary to elicit, in very concise form, the main tenets of Balthasar’s theology of office. First of all, unless otherwise stated, when Balthasar refers to ‘office’, it is generally the priestly or the Petrine office that he intends. Secondly, in Balthasar, as in the official Catholic point of view, office is an aspect within the organism which takes its mission from Christ (*jure divino*).<sup>56</sup> It ‘does not emanate from the community but is instituted in the Church

<sup>52</sup> ‘The Communion of Saints, *E*, p.98.

<sup>53</sup> ‘The Communion of Saints, *E*, p.98.

<sup>54</sup> *TS*, p.40.

<sup>55</sup> *OP*, p.388. See also *CSL*, p.368.

<sup>56</sup> ‘The meaning of the Communion of Saints,’ p.167.

from above.’<sup>57</sup> Thirdly, office is associated with the authority ‘to teach, to consecrate and to shepherd’,<sup>58</sup> ‘to make present sacramentally, to govern legitimately’.<sup>59</sup> Fourthly, office is not merely reserved for those in the priesthood, and the Petrine office is not the only office within the Church.

Now that that has been said, I have to identify the other offices which Balthasar proposes. Besides Peter – who represents the official ministry, the secular priest,<sup>60</sup> - there is John, who represents evangelical life, love, the religious priest, the saints,<sup>61</sup> Paul, who represents the apostolic office,<sup>62</sup> and Mary whose ‘perfect subjective holiness’ is itself an office.<sup>63</sup> Office is fourfold. Moreover, these offices are all authoritative. McDade analyses ‘the Apostolic Foursome’, which includes James.<sup>64</sup> Peter exercises pastoral care.<sup>65</sup> John exercises the office of love, an office exercised by the saints of the Church. James represents the dimension of Tradition and law. Paul represents the dimension of universalism and inculturation. McDade describes how, through these figures, Balthasar develops the foundations for different offices, different ecclesiologies, and different models of authority.<sup>66</sup> I also understand Balthasar as saying that, just as each sacrament has its own grace, so each office has its own special kind of authority. McDade has also pointed out that Balthasar identifies different ways in which each principle – the Johannine, Jamesian and Pauline no less than the Petrine – could go wrong

each principle in the fourfold office can become distorted. Johannine love can weaken into a mere ‘universal humanitarian benevolence’; Pauline flexibility can become a fashionable assimilation to cultural mores; the tradition of James can give rise

<sup>57</sup> ‘Obedience in the Light of the Gospel’, *NE*, pp.244-5. See also *TAI*: 226-7.

<sup>58</sup> ‘The Church as the Presence of Christ,’ *NE*, p.90.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Obedience in the Light of the Gospel,’ *NE*, p.242. One could perhaps explain this emphasis on office as an example of Luce Irigaray’s ‘phallogocentric model’, where ‘only a male body can represent God, in a way which comes close to an idolatry of the masculine?’ Beattie (2005), p.164. I think that the issue ought to be read from within sacramental theology, rather than from the point of view of sexual ethics, if it is to be understood at all.

<sup>60</sup> *CSL*, p.287.

<sup>61</sup> *CSL*, pp.282, 287, 289. *OP*, p.242.

<sup>62</sup> Balthasar considered Paul’s apostolic authority in the Christian communities to be ‘overwhelming’. Scola (1991), p.55.

<sup>63</sup> *TL3*: 314,

<sup>64</sup> McDade, pp.104-5.

<sup>65</sup> *OP*, p.62.

<sup>66</sup> Balthasar uses the various principles not just to answer the question ‘who is the Church?’ but also to provide a more ideal model of the Church.

to an ‘anxiously integralist, reactionary clinging to obsolete forms.’<sup>67</sup>

The office of John is particularly significant to us, because, in Balthasar, the saints are the continuation of the Johannine Church. ‘It is the Johannine principle, the ideal of holiness and unitive love for Christ, towards which the interaction of the other three principles must be directed... The goal of the fourfold office is the holiness of the Church.’<sup>68</sup> This Johannine Church ‘is not a “third”, spiritual Church, supplanting the Petrine and the Pauline, but the one that stands under the Cross in place of Peter and on his behalf receives the Marian Church.’<sup>69</sup> In Balthasar’s theology, the saints are those who fill in for Peter, and receive ‘the Marian Church’. They ‘have, as it were, an unofficial ecclesial mission’, which is also authentic. Thus, according to Balthasar, the saints support both the Marian and the Petrine in the Church, ‘even when this seems to lead nowhere’.<sup>70</sup> The ‘Johannine principle’ also synthesises the Petrine (representing the hierarchical and institutional form of the Church), and the Pauline elements (representing the charismatic-missionary dimension) and combines them. For Balthasar, as for the Fathers of the Church, John is the theologian, not in the sense of being a ‘bold explorer’ or ‘fearless critic’ but in the sense of being a man of the Church.<sup>71</sup>

In his exploration of Church history, Edward Schillebeeckx has referred to the ‘gradual sacerdotalisation of the vocabulary of the Church’s office’.<sup>72</sup> He has also referred to ‘the contemporary and alternative forms of office which are arising everywhere today and which deviate frequently from the valid order in the Church and discover the possible theological value of these ways of exercising office.’<sup>73</sup> He proposed ‘a non-sacral, but nonetheless sacramental meaning of office.’<sup>74</sup> Schillebeeckx even anticipated that practice with regards to office will be

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<sup>67</sup> McDade, p.105.

<sup>68</sup> McDade, p.109.

<sup>69</sup> *OP*, p.242.

<sup>70</sup> *OP*, p.170.

<sup>71</sup> John Saward, ‘Mary and Peter in the Christological Constellation: Balthasar’s Ecclesiology’, in Riches (1986), pp.105-133 (p.131).

<sup>72</sup> Edward Schillebeeckx, ‘The Christian Community and its Office-Bearers,’ in *Concilium* 133, *The Right of a Community to a Priest*, (New York: Seabury Press, 1980), 95-133 (pp.105 and 113).

<sup>73</sup> Schillebeeckx (1980), p.97.

<sup>74</sup> Schillebeeckx (1980), p.117.



‘ultimately sanctioned canonically.’<sup>75</sup> Balthasar does not go this far, but he does, so to speak, *de-sacerdotalize* office. And he associates this broadening of the term with the saints. Balthasar reminds his readers that Thérèse does not hesitate to compare the contemplative vocation to that of the priesthood. She believes that her office is ‘no less dignified than that of the priest.’<sup>76</sup> Elizabeth of the Trinity, also emphasizes the place of office within the monastic framework. Those in monasteries ‘fill an ecclesial office’.<sup>77</sup> Balthasar is amazed by the way in which Elizabeth places her office as a Carmelite nun side by side with that of the priest and permits her office and that of the priest to interpenetrate and complement the other.<sup>78</sup>

In Mary’s regard, Balthasar also writes of holiness as an office.<sup>79</sup> He claims that, as a fruitful charism of the whole body of Christ, [holiness] has, in the economy of that body, a function that is just as much an official ministry as is the official ministry of the priest.<sup>80</sup> Of course, Balthasar is able to say this because his understanding of office is not authoritarian, but ministerial, as in *Lumen Gentium*. ‘For those ministers, who are endowed with sacred power, serve their brethren’.<sup>81</sup> Balthasar maintains that his ‘perfect subjective holiness’ that is found in Mary ‘is of a qualitatively different kind’ from ministerial office, and ‘does not in any way tend toward ministerial office’.<sup>82</sup> In so many words, Balthasar establishes a theology of holiness that incorporates office, but is not of the ‘ministerial office’ type. But it is also a theology of holiness that creates problems, especially because it appears as an alternative, when holiness should be the underlying reality (or the ultimate end) for all other offices.

Where authority is concerned, various questions remain unanswered. First of all, does Balthasar intend the authority which we associate with the office of

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<sup>75</sup> Schillebeeckx (1980), p.98.

<sup>76</sup> *TS*, p.196.

<sup>77</sup> *TS*, p.485.

<sup>78</sup> Balthasar claims that the evangelical state ‘must borrow from the priesthood the concept of ecclesial office, extending it to include also the office of abbot, provincial or other major superior’. *CSL*, p.371.

<sup>79</sup> *TL3*: 314,

<sup>80</sup> *CSL*, p.380.

<sup>81</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, 18.

<sup>82</sup> *TL3*: 314,

subjective holiness to act as an authority in the same way as the authority which we associate with any other ecclesial office? Does the fact that authority is bestowed (from above) with every office make every authority bestowed equally authoritative? And what happens if an ecclesial office is bestowed on someone who already has the office of holiness? Is it the case that the saints who are *in* authoritative roles – whether it is the priesthood, or something else – receive a different authority in addition to the authority that comes from holiness? Is their original authority increased? Does a holy person who is ordained become more holy; whereas a priest who becomes holy becomes more of a priest? And what about the saints who do not have such recognized authoritative roles? Does their office of holiness have to compete with other authoritative roles? There seems to be no evidence that Balthasar made any attempt to analyse these issues.

These questions show a lack of clarity on Balthasar's part concerning at least two matters. Firstly: how we are to understand holiness as an office. Secondly, whether a charism in the form of an office adds anything to the authority that comes from holiness and whether the saints who are *in* authoritative roles – whether it is the priesthood, or something else – have more authority than the saints who do not have such authoritative roles. Though not formulated by Balthasar, these are questions which logically arise out of any attempt to interpret Balthasar's theology of the authority of the saints. To my mind, the best way to explore these issues is to take the priestly office as an example, which is our next step.

### **THE AUTHORITY OF THE PRIESTLY OFFICE**

In the *Theo-Logic*, Balthasar refers to various saints and theologians who instructed on the subject of ordination: John Chrysostom (c.347-407), the French Catholic priest and the founder of the Sulpicians, Jean-Jacques Olier (1608 - 1657), the theologian and mystic Matthias Joseph Scheeben (1835-1888), as well as Möhler, Newman, and others. He emphasizes that the priesthood 'is much more

than a moral duty toward God and men'<sup>83</sup> it 'confers authority in matters of Church leadership',<sup>84</sup> it 'implies an absolute and definitive appointment and authorization for service', it entails 'an automatic and analytic requirement' that this appointment and authorization for service be carried out,<sup>85</sup> and it 'demands a life in accordance with [this service],' and not just a life of service.<sup>86</sup>

Balthasar is not alone to think that there is an authority that is grounded in the (objective) priestly office. Most Catholic theologians would agree that the priestly office is 'the preeminent *situs* of the presence of Christ in the Church'.<sup>87</sup> However, Schillebeeckx has pointed out that office – as originally envisioned – did not depend 'on a private and ontological qualification of the individual person bearing office and is also in no way separate from an ecclesial context.'<sup>88</sup> Schillebeeckx claims that the priesthood has been 'personalised and privatised', and we have, as a consequence, 'the *plenitudo potestatis*' that is, 'authority as a value in itself, isolated from the community'.<sup>89</sup> Raymond E. Brown also discusses the history of the priesthood, claiming that,

Precisely because much of Protestantism ceased to designate Christian ministry as priesthood (on the grounds of biblical silence), Roman Catholic theology buttressed the ordained priesthood. It was emphasized that the one ordained to the priesthood was metaphysically changed and indelibly marked by the sacrament; even Vatican II insisted that the difference of the ordained from the non-ordained was one of kind and not simply of degree.<sup>90</sup>

Balthasar does not acknowledge any oversight in tradition which has led to an inaccurate interpretation of the authority of the priest. What he does is he emphasizes two things. First of all, he emphasizes the distinction between the 'ineradicable character' that is given in priestly ordination and the personal

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<sup>83</sup> *TL3*: 349.

<sup>84</sup> *TL3*: 347.

<sup>85</sup> *TL3*: 348.

<sup>86</sup> *TL3*: 310.

<sup>87</sup> *CSL*, p.369.

<sup>88</sup> Schillebeeckx (1980), p.102.

<sup>89</sup> Schillebeeckx (1980), p.113-4.

<sup>90</sup> Raymond E. Brown, p.80. Brown is writing about 1 Peter.

holiness of the ordained person.’<sup>91</sup> He maintains that one does not necessarily entail the other. Here, Balthasar is in agreement with Walter Kasper’s principle that there “remains a permanent distinction between the objective mission of the priestly office and its subjective realization”.<sup>92</sup> And secondly, Balthasar attributes authority to the priesthood *per se*, not to its subjective realization. Where the priesthood is concerned, it is not that authority ensues from a *pointing to Christ*, but rather that the priest is meant to use his authority to point to Christ. Whereas in the first of these, the authority follows from the pointing to Christ, in the latter, the authority comes first, and the pointing to Christ follows. If we apply the argument to authority, we could say that Balthasar is distinguishing between an authority that follows from authenticity (that is, from the subjective realization of the objective mission), and the authority that is not authenticated, but is an authority just the same (an objective mission that is not yet subjectively realized, or never will be). In the logical order, there is, therefore, the possibility of an authority which comes from ‘priestly ordination’, irrespective of the subjective realization. In the order of the real, this distinction is more difficult to prove. It is difficult to have someone claiming authority as a consequence of the priesthood without in actual fact realizing that authority in terms of holiness. He himself grants that, in the real order, the ecclesial office must also be able ‘to actualize, represent, what it points to’.<sup>93</sup> When the bearer of office in the Church goes ‘about his business in a “purely official” way, his actions will practically have no claim on the authority imparted by such office’.<sup>94</sup> Thus Balthasar would agree that there is an authority that is grounded in the sacrament of ordination itself, that this authority is not the same as the authority that comes from holiness, and that each one can exist without the other. But what does it mean to say that *each one can exist without the other*? It means that perfection is not required before ordination and that the priestly order is not itself a state of perfection.<sup>95</sup> It means that ordination is still valid, even without holiness, that holiness does not require

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<sup>91</sup> TL3: 347.

<sup>92</sup> TL3: 347-8.

<sup>93</sup> ‘Obedience in the Light of the Gospel,’ NE, pp.241-2. See also ‘Authority’, E, p.130.

<sup>94</sup> TL3: 322.

<sup>95</sup> Whereas perfection, is ‘the internal disposition of an individual before God, the state of perfection is ‘an external social state established by canon law’. Only that state is truly a “state of perfection” whose every form of life...has as its only goal the attainment of perfect love.’ *The Christian State of Life*, 301.

ordination. But it does not mean that, with or without holiness, the priesthood remains the same. Whereas it is possible, logically speaking to separate objective and subjective holiness, separating them in the real world ‘would lead to a purely functional or administrative priestly ministry.’<sup>96</sup>

In *The Office of Peter*, Balthasar uses Augustine to argue that the sacrament of ordination is located ‘in the innermost domain of ecclesial holiness, so that even in failure (in a bad priest) the fundamental effectiveness of the office was not allowed to be lost.’<sup>97</sup> Balthasar also emphasizes that any authority that the ordained person exercises is, strictly speaking, a ‘communication’ of the divine, paternal *potestas* of God, and not of their own.<sup>98</sup> In the *Theo-Logic*, however, Balthasar does add that ‘the merely objectivist, merely anti-Donatist priest of the *opus operatum*, the priest who fails to fill this *opus* inwardly with the whole strength of his person, is not the priest he should be’.<sup>99</sup>

Needless to say, an important question would be whether authority is a quality that arises automatically out of holiness (as if simultaneously), or whether it is a quality that is attributed by others to those who are holy (as if subsequently). It would seem to me that, whereas with the office of the priesthood, the authority is attributed from outside, in arguing for the authority of the saints, we would have to claim that authority arises out of internal holiness, and that every saint – whether canonized or not – emits, radiates and displays authority as a consequence of his or her holiness, concurrently, as it were.

## **THE AUTHORITY OF THE EPISCOPATE**

Similar arguments to those above can be made concerning the episcopate. The four main questions in this case are, firstly, does someone who receives the ordination to the episcopate receive the office of holiness along with it? Secondly, if holiness is itself an office, does a charism in the form of the episcopate add

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<sup>96</sup> *TL3*: 348.

<sup>97</sup> *OP*, p.188.

<sup>98</sup> *OP*, p.197.

<sup>99</sup> *TL3*: 305.

anything to the authority that comes from holiness? Thirdly, does a saint who is a bishop have more authority than a saint who does not have such an authoritative role? And finally, when someone who is a bishop subsequently receives the office of holiness, does this add anything to his episcopate?

I should say that although the first question (does someone who receives the ordination to the episcopate receive the office of holiness along with it?), sounds rather simplistic, it is an issue that was hotly debated over the centuries. Balthasar himself refers to the Areopagite and to Aquinas, who had held that the bishop 'is in the "state of perfection" because his office expropriates [him] totally for the service of love to his flock'. Balthasar concurs, but adds that once 'the objective expropriation...has taken place', the one in office then 'has a duty to realize subjectively [this] objective appropriation'.<sup>100</sup> Office already tends towards subjective holiness, and requires it.<sup>101</sup> This is the vision, the ideal. Balthasar does not hold that 'election to the episcopal state' enabled 'the candidate to achieve, simultaneously and *ex opera operato*, the personal perfection necessary for fulfilling his office in a manner befitting that state'.<sup>102</sup> According to him, neither Aquinas, nor the Fathers of the Church ever maintained this. Balthasar prefers Cajetan's interpretation, and distinguishes between the state of perfection of the religious, and that of the bishop. According to him, the former is 'the state of perfection for oneself [*status perfectionis propriae*], whereas the latter is the state of perfection for others [*status perfectionis alienae*].'<sup>103</sup>

With regards to our second question above, an office in the form of the episcopate would add something to the individual in the form of authority, but it does not add more authority to the already existing holiness (which can only be increased the deeper the holiness grows). Balthasar himself distinguishes between the two authorities when he says that the hierarchy is 'the successor to the Apostles with

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<sup>100</sup> *TL3*: 348. See also 'Obedience in the Light of the Gospel', *NE*, p.245.

<sup>101</sup> *TL3*: 314.

<sup>102</sup> *CSL*, p.305.

<sup>103</sup> *CSL*, p.308.

respect to the authority of their office but not with respect to their archetypal role as eyewitnesses.’<sup>104</sup>

Concerning the third question, once again we have to repeat that the authority of office is to be distinguished from the personal holiness, even the personal holiness ‘which is appropriate to such an office.’<sup>105</sup> The saint who becomes a bishop now has an additional authority that is different to the authority that comes from holiness itself. As Francis A.Sullivan has said, bishops are authoritative teachers (*doctores authentici*). They teach authoritatively (*authentice*).<sup>106</sup> In this sense, the saint who is a bishop has more authority than someone who is not in such an authoritative role.

And finally, when someone who is a bishop receives the office of holiness, does this add anything to his episcopate? It does. Holiness bestows on the individual the authority that comes from holiness. Moreover, both logically, and realistically, it can be assumed that with the office of holiness, and particularly, the personal holiness that is appropriate to the episcopate, the authority of the episcopal office will also be increased. On the other hand, according to Augustine, it is possible to have a bad bishop in the real world. Logically speaking, however, his title would be ‘empty’. Such a person [whether a priest or a bishop] may retain the *jus dandi*, and his official acts may be valid, but he is a “sham” (*fictus*).<sup>107</sup> He would be a *contradictio in terminis*.

## **THE AUTHORITY OF THE PETRINE OFFICE**

The modernist approaches focus away from the papacy and from any authority whatsoever. Balthasar will not follow in their wake. On the contrary, as John McDade has pointed out, in *The Office of Peter*, Balthasar presses the Church to examine authority within the Church, and the papacy in particular, and ‘to

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<sup>104</sup> *TAJ*: 337.

<sup>105</sup> *CSL*, p.305.

<sup>106</sup> Francis A.Sullivan, p.27. Quoted in Michael Fahey, p.200.

<sup>107</sup> *OP*, p.190.

examine the bias in its nature against its central focus of authority.’<sup>108</sup> Balthasar rules out Protestantism and Papolatry ‘because they dissolve the differentiated character of the Church’.<sup>109</sup> His stance is that ‘the life of the Church is constituted by different elements or principles involved in a dynamic interchange and tension between the figures who are archetypal dimensions in its ‘individuation’.<sup>110</sup> Consequently, Balthasar insists on two things: first that the office of Peter cannot ‘be treated in isolation’, since ‘in the *mysterium* of the Church...no element makes sense if it is isolated from the whole.’<sup>111</sup> And secondly, that the role of the petrine office is unity, that in the ecclesiological dimension, that Peter alone has ‘the right to demand unity’,<sup>112</sup> and that he alone has the authority that facilitates unity. Balthasar writes,

As shepherd who has to pasture the whole flock, [the Pope] has a right to claim authority (in doctrine and leadership) and to demand unity. This prerogative is his alone. But it does not isolate him from the others who have founding missions and who, in their own way, have no less a continuing life and representation in the Church.<sup>113</sup>

John McDade has justifiably argued that Balthasar’s aim is ‘to restore an ecclesiological balance which an over-judicial, ultramontane approach to papal authority has disturbed’, and that he does this by displacing the Petrine office from the ‘centre’ or ‘top’ of the Church, and placing it within the ‘larger unity’ of the Church, ‘relativising’ it without marginalising it.<sup>114</sup>

There is a lot which Balthasar says that relates specifically to the Petrine office, particularly in *The Office of Peter*. One of the more radical things which he claims, and which is especially significant in our case, is that ‘many representatives of the papal ministry have failed terribly to unite their office and their own lives of discipleship,’ whereas ‘[t]o be a successor of the Good Shepherd in the Spirit of Christ demands harmony between the office and one’s

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<sup>108</sup> McDade, p.97.

<sup>109</sup> McDade, p.98.

<sup>110</sup> McDade, pp.99-100.

<sup>111</sup> *OP*, p.138.

<sup>112</sup> *OP*, pp.167-8.

<sup>113</sup> *OP*, p.158.

<sup>114</sup> McDade, p.104.



personal way of life.’<sup>115</sup> Balthasar is saying that, although ideally the office of holiness and the office of Peter should go together, in reality they often do not, so that the authority of the Pope, unsupported by holiness, has been less effective than it could have been. I have already established that, in Balthasar, the authority of Peter is distinct from the Marian-Johannine kind, which is that of the authority that comes from subjective holiness, and from the Pauline kind, which is that of the authority that comes from ‘deep or specialized theology’.<sup>116</sup> Whether the Pope is personally exemplary and holy, or whether he is theologically outstanding is a distinct charism from the actual Petrine charism to which he is called. The authority that arises out of holiness is distinct from the authority that arises out of the office of the Papal episcopacy, but not separate. In fact, with Balthasar, there is a holiness that is specific to the the office of Peter. As with Christ’s ministerial authority (the ‘high priesthood’), the Petrine ministry consists of the ‘privilege and ability to give [one’s] life for his sheep’.<sup>117</sup> This is a far cry from the understanding of the Petrine ministry as a triumphalist papalism.<sup>118</sup> Balthasar suggests that the best way to understand the office of Peter is to understand it sacramentally and analogically. ‘[L]ike the saints, his whole existence is to be a sign, but,’ he adds, ‘the charism and prerogative of the saints (or of some of them) was not put into his cradle at birth!’.<sup>119</sup> As desirable as it would be that the holder of Petrine authority be a spirit-filled saint, the office of holiness does not always complement the office of Peter. Balthasar claims that it should be obvious that the Pope

will err again and again at this intersection of time and eternity. Either he will betray the eternal for the sake of the temporal by trying to imprison it (putting eternal statements in “infallible statements”) or he will betray the temporal by clinging to illusory formulas that seem to be eternal, thus missing the ongoing reality of his own time.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> *OP*, p.xx.

<sup>116</sup> *OP*, pp.260-1.

<sup>117</sup> *OP*, p.xv.

<sup>118</sup> *OP*, p.134.

<sup>119</sup> *OP*, p.39.

<sup>120</sup> *OP*, pp.385-6.

Still, in Balthasar, it is Peter alone who has ‘the prerogative’ to *claim* authority in doctrine and leadership,<sup>121</sup> irrespective of other charisms he may have received, or not received, even irrespective of his personal holiness. Balthasar does not diminish the authority of Peter due to lack of personal holiness.<sup>122</sup> Neither does he claim that the office of holiness has any entitlement to authority.

*Nouvelle théologie* had reacted against neo-Thomist theology because of ‘its ‘authoritarian ecclesiology’.<sup>123</sup> Balthasar also attributes to the Pope a great deal of authority. Petrine authority is a ‘plenary authority’, including both the proclamation of the word as well as ‘the power of acting’.<sup>124</sup> Balthasar denounces all kinds of heresies: Gallicanism,<sup>125</sup> Jansenism,<sup>126</sup> and integralism.<sup>127</sup> Secondly, Balthasar emphasizes the ministerial authority of Peter (rather than the administrative and the judicial), just as he had emphasized the pastoral office (rather than the teaching office) of the episcopate.<sup>128</sup> Petrine authority is a ministerial authority, like Christ’s, whose ministerial authority (the ‘high priesthood’) consisted of his ‘privilege and ability to give his life for his sheep’.<sup>129</sup> However, Balthasar does restrict Petrine authority by denoting that it is occasional, and that its application is sporadic. He states that ‘the Petrine function asserts itself [or should assert itself] only...when the “unity in love” is imperiled or when people turn for advice or arbitration to [Rome as] the acknowledged center of unity’.<sup>130</sup> Moreover, in Balthasar, the authority of the Petrine office does not lie in the capricious giving of orders, judgments, verdicts, dogmas, and *imprimaturs*.

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<sup>121</sup> *OP*, pp.167-8.

<sup>122</sup> The risks of having a Petrine office that is supreme (that is where everything is ultimately subject to it: the Marian and the Johannine principles, even Scripture and its interpretation, has been articulated by Steffen Lösel. Lösel (2008), p.40.

<sup>123</sup> Boersma (2009), p.20.

<sup>124</sup> *OP*, p.149.

<sup>125</sup> *OP*, p.69. Gallicanism attempts ‘to qualify every papal decision, be it by an appeal to a council or by a stipulation that the directives must be accepted by the whole Church (bishops and flock) to be valid’.

<sup>126</sup> *OP*, p.69. Jansenism supports papal authority only as long as it does not clash with a higher form, e.g. the authority of St Augustine, and he denounces integralism,

<sup>127</sup> *OP*, p.69. Balthasar condemns Integralism, claiming that ‘when a community within the Catholic Church refers to a dictate of its collective conscience against a final papal decision, it has already lost the sense of the Church communion’.

<sup>128</sup> *TL3*: 326. See also *TL3*: 314.

<sup>129</sup> *OP*, p.xv.

<sup>130</sup> *OP*, p.263.

The Petrine office ‘is an indispensable, visible service, mediating unity’.<sup>131</sup>  
Balthasar insists that

as representative of the norm, [Peter] more than all the others has the duty to make his life coincide as closely as possible with his official mission. He has to represent not only formal authority but also a humanly credible authority, not by identifying himself with Christ or with the gospel – the pope is not the successor or representative of Christ, but of Peter – but by pointing to Christ in an existentially convincing manner.<sup>132</sup>

Balthasar insists that, inherent in the nature of discipleship, but particularly in that of the individual exercising the Petrine office, are two elements: the actual following, but also the consequences of that following. In Balthasar, suffering is an integral part of the function of office, and the Cross is the paradigm for the explanation of authority. Not only is office made possible only and entirely by the Cross,<sup>133</sup> it is also ‘modeled’ on the Cross.<sup>134</sup> Authority in itself is a reconfiguration of the individual into the cross. Death on the Cross is therefore an essential part of the exercise of this authority. It is not optional, or superfluous to the function, and it is not private, but ‘essential’, part of the very nature and function of the office.<sup>135</sup> With Paul, Balthasar claims that the ‘state of being crucified’ is required of someone who holds ecclesiastical office.’ With Peter, he claims that the ‘singular participation in Jesus’ authority and responsibility obliges him also to participate specially in Jesus’ spirit of service and his readiness to suffer’.<sup>136</sup> On the part of the holder of the Petrine office, there is ‘a distinctively Petrine effacement of personality’.<sup>137</sup> This is in agreement with what Balthasar says in the *Aesthetics*. Concurrently with the elevation to office, ‘humiliation strikes’. The Petrine form is established upon this ‘simultaneity’ of elevation and humiliation.<sup>138</sup> Balthasar is convinced that ‘the ever-renewed humiliation of the office also contributes to its purification and clarification.’ He repeats that ‘it is God who puts the officeholders in the “last” place; it is not they themselves who

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<sup>131</sup> *OP*, p.245. See also pp.230 and 311.

<sup>132</sup> ‘Obedience in the Light of the Gospel,’ *NE*, p.242.

<sup>133</sup> *OP*, p.191.

<sup>134</sup> *OP*, p.386.

<sup>135</sup> *OP*, pp.382, 386.

<sup>136</sup> *OP*, pp.xv and 150.

<sup>137</sup> *OP*, p.316.

<sup>138</sup> *TAI*: 566.

voluntarily take it, nor does the community have any mandate to put them there'.<sup>139</sup>

These thoughts are repeated in Balthasar's essay on obedience. Balthasar states that Peter is given two things 'at his installation in office: the command "follow me" (containing the grace needed for following) and the rich promise of "the kind of death by which he would glorify God". Balthasar thus emphasizes that it is 'crucifixion' that draws 'the ecclesial office into the Lord's most primordial authority.'<sup>140</sup> How is one to explain this? Is Balthasar saying that one's authority originates in one's suffering? Is he claiming that only that authority which has the *forma Christi* (including the Cross) is authentic authority? Is he saying that authority should be attributed to those who suffer? Or even that the more a Pope suffers, the more authoritative he becomes? So what does Balthasar really mean when he associates authority with suffering? As I understand it, what Balthasar means to say is that once an office is bestowed upon someone, a process begins (led by the Spirit), whereby that individual is transformed into an authentic form of that office. Since office is modelled on Christ and has his form, suffering is part and parcel of this process. There is also a sense in which the higher the office, the more Christ-like it is, so that one is obliged to do three things: to prepare oneself for the objective sanctity to which he has been called, to conform oneself to this objective sanctity,<sup>141</sup> and also to accept the depths of suffering that are related to that objective sanctity, just as one assumes the authority that is implied in it. Unfortunately, this has begun to sound very much like the scholastic nit-picking that Balthasar himself loathed. Still the alternative would be to accept Balthasar's statements at face value, and to ignore what sometimes seem like marked contradictions. It is now time to direct my attention to the more important aspect of ecclesial authority for my study, namely, the authority of the individual Christian.

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<sup>139</sup> *OP*, p.388.

<sup>140</sup> 'Obedience in the Light of the Gospel,' *NE*, p.246.

<sup>141</sup> *TS*, p.19.

## THE AUTHORITY THAT COMES FROM SUBJECTIVE HOLINESS

Despite the ‘absolute demand for subjective holiness’,<sup>142</sup> at no point does Balthasar claim that the authoritative role that ecclesial office has can be attributed ‘to the superiority of [one’s] own personal qualifications or “perfection” over those of others.’<sup>143</sup> Neither does Balthasar claim that one commanding ought to ‘measure the authenticity of his claim to authority’ by his own personal holiness. According to Balthasar, one can never institutionalize ‘[t]he synthesis of authority and witness’. Likewise, ‘ecclesial obedience cannot depend on the degree of this synthesis’.<sup>144</sup> What is Balthasar trying to do? First of all, he is claiming that the authority that comes from holiness is a different authority to that which comes with ecclesial office, and not to be confused with it. Secondly, he is emphasizing the ‘important absoluteness of the subjective commitment [*das Sollen*]’, alongside the absoluteness of objective ministry [*das Sein*].<sup>145</sup> Thirdly, he is fostering his theology of nature and grace. Already, in *Two Sisters*, Balthasar had made the distinction between what one *should* do and what one *can* do (with the aid of grace). Balthasar recognized the danger of thinking that the two were the same.<sup>146</sup>

In fact, you could say that Balthasar uses three doctrines – the doctrine of grace, the doctrine of surrender and the theological metaphor of fruitfulness – to deliberate on the kind of authority that personal discipleship has,<sup>147</sup> on the authority which ecclesial office has, and on the kind of authority that subjective holiness adds to the individual who holds ecclesial office (please note: adds to the individual, not to the ecclesial office itself).<sup>148</sup> In *The Christian State of Life*, Balthasar grants that

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<sup>142</sup> *TL3*: 348.

<sup>143</sup> *CSL*, p.365.

<sup>144</sup> ‘Obedience in the light of the Gospel’, *NE*, 246-7.

<sup>145</sup> *CSL*, pp.371-2. See also p.277.

<sup>146</sup> *TS*, p.382.

<sup>147</sup> Personal discipleship is described as ‘a real participation in the official redemptive act of Christ’. *CSL*, pp.371-2. See also p.277.

<sup>148</sup> Balthasar does not consider the other issue, namely, the kind of authority that ecclesial office adds to the individual who has the office of holiness.

a good priest transmits more grace than a bad one, not only because a bad priest causes scandal and turns the faithful away from the path of salvation, but also because, in the very nature of things, a priest in the state of grace receives more grace than one who is not.<sup>149</sup>

In the *Theo-Logic*, Balthasar claims that the distinction between the *opus operatum* and the *opus operantis*, is only ‘necessary as a result of sin’. He claims that ‘from the perspective of God’s redemptive plan’ (and here he is possibly playing God!) such a distinction ought not to be made, in the real world. ‘It *does* exist, in an anti-Donatist sense, for the benefit of those who receive grace through it; but it remains fruitless for the unprepared sinner who distributes or receives it’.<sup>150</sup> This quote requires much more analysis than I am prepared to give it here. I just want to use it to argue that, according to Balthasar, in a sinful world, to equate the authority that comes from office with the authority that comes from subjective holiness would be a mistake, because, at least with the priest, ‘the contrast between office and person is dominant to the end – a static dualism that no existential effort can overcome or weaken.’ Thérèse’s ‘period as novice mistress teaches her what every priest learns in the exercise of his office’, namely, ‘the complete discrepancy between his office and his achievement’.<sup>151</sup>

Because we live in a sinful world, the authority – ‘to teach, to consecrate and to shepherd’ – ‘is independent of the worthiness or unworthiness of the one who exercises it.’<sup>152</sup> Balthasar comes back to this argument over and over again in his work. Against Tertullian, the Donatists and ‘spirituals’ like Jean-Jacques Olier (1608-1657) and others, and along with Cyprian and Augustine, Balthasar maintains that the basis of office is not ‘personal holiness’ as the Donatists would have said, but ‘primordial love’.<sup>153</sup>

If – as the Montanists, the Messalians, the Donatists, the Spiritualists, and many contemporary Pentecostals hold – only a man who has the Holy Spirit were able to bestow it, and then only

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<sup>149</sup> *CSL*, p.277.

<sup>150</sup> *TL3*: 310.

<sup>151</sup> *TS*, p.172.

<sup>152</sup> ‘The Church as the Presence of Christ’, *NE*, p.90.

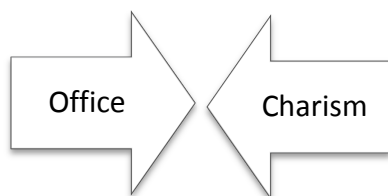
<sup>153</sup> *OP*, p.287. Ultimately, what Balthasar is saying is what Nicholas M.Healy said, namely that it would not be Good news if the truth of the gospel ‘depend[ed] upon our righteousness’. Nicholas M., Healy, p.14.

in the measure that he himself has the Spirit, Jesus' presence would be dependent on the person's degree of holiness, and we would have no certainty at all that this presence was being transmitted to us pure and intact.<sup>154</sup>

Therefore, in Balthasar, there is a specific authority, influence, credibility, that is grounded in each of the two: in 'objective ministry' and in 'subjective commitment'. This would suggest that there would be 'more' authority when both were present in the same individual. But there is no reason why such a dual authority should justify the imbalance that there has been in canonizations, which traditionally favoured the ordained and the religious.<sup>155</sup> The two authorities are different.

### OFFICE AND CHARISM

In Balthasar, the relationship between 'objective ministry' and 'subjective commitment' is closely related to that between office and charism. David



J. Stagaman makes a distinction between 'charismatic, or *an* authority' and 'official or *in* authority'.<sup>156</sup> He has pointed out that the conflict 'office-versus-charism' is not peculiar to religion. It pervades other institutions besides

the churches.<sup>157</sup> Stagaman also writes of a 'paradigm shift' which has occurred in the Catholic Church since the Second World War, from 'an almost total preoccupation with official authority', or 'status' to 'a recognition of the necessary role charismatic authorities play in the Church.'<sup>158</sup> He claims that the two authorities 'justify their actions and themselves according to quite different and sometimes conflicting logics', but that both are needed if the Church is to function healthily.<sup>159</sup>

<sup>154</sup> 'The Church as the Presence of Christ', *NE*, p.90. See also *TL3*: 313 and 348.

<sup>155</sup> See the 'Statistical Profiles of Saints', in Weinstein and Bell, especially the Occupational Category in Table 3, p.129.

<sup>156</sup> Stagaman, p.xv.

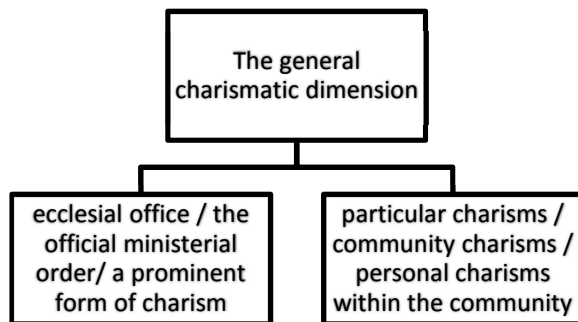
<sup>157</sup> Stagaman, p.5.

<sup>158</sup> Stagaman, pp.xv and 3.

<sup>159</sup> Stagaman, p.xv.

The doctrine of office and the doctrine of the charisms were already a concern for Balthasar in the 1950's. Already in his writings on Thérèse and on Elisabeth, office and *charisma* are intimately linked, and not only in the Pauline sense of 'apostles and prophets' both being necessary for the Church, but also on a personal level, with the emphasis that 'office should not be without *charisma*' and that the office-bearer is also to seek 'charisma' because of his proximity to the Church.<sup>160</sup> In Balthasar, '[f]ar from being opposites, office and charism actually coincide.'<sup>161</sup> 'Every office is a charisma and every charisma is an office.'<sup>162</sup>

Balthasar's efforts to unite charism with office is laudable, considering that '[m]ost charisms are not interactive with Church office and are not meant to be. They are given by God to be exercised in and for the world'.<sup>163</sup> Yet Balthasar avoids the simple opposition between the institutional and the charismatic. In the



*Theo-Logic*, Balthasar struggles with the same issues. However, whereas in his early work, Balthasar would have argued that '[e]very charism in the Church is an office' and vice-versa,<sup>164</sup> in the *Theo-Logic*, he claims that there is a 'general charismatic dimension'

to Christian existence under which 'both office and particular charisms are subsumed'.<sup>165</sup> The ordinary Christian life is charismatic in itself, even anterior to the distinction between 'office' and 'charism' in the narrower sense.<sup>166</sup> Office and charism are two effects of the one Spirit.<sup>167</sup>

<sup>160</sup> See *TE*, pp.63-5.

<sup>161</sup> *TS*, p.484. They would coincide in an ideal world, but not in a sinful world.

<sup>162</sup> *TS*, p.484.

<sup>163</sup> (John C.Haughey, 'Charisms: An Ecclesiological Exploration', *Retrieving Charisms for the Twenty-First Century*, Doris Donnelly, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999), pp.1-16 (p.8).

<sup>164</sup> *TS*, p.484.

<sup>165</sup> *TL3*: 316.

<sup>166</sup> *TL3*: 316.

<sup>167</sup> *TL3*: 315.



Whichever Balthasar you consider (whether the early Balthasar or the late one) Balthasar's intention is clearly one of reconciliation and integration of office and charism,<sup>168</sup> but not of confusion between the two. In *The Office of Peter*, he even expresses frustration at the fact that this seems to be an unexplored field. He raises the question as to

who has taken the trouble to look at great personal sanctity (the charism that is unique and a gift but that has to be genuinely accepted and lived) in its theological tension with the principle of ecclesiastical office? Who has looked at it, not polemically, but constructively, so as to integrate it into the total theology of the Catholic Church?<sup>169</sup>

We have already mentioned the various distinctions which Balthasar makes concerning charisms, but we have not emphasized the distinction which he makes between the official ministerial order and community charisms (or personal charisms within the community), claiming that the Spirit is 'in and above' both of them.<sup>170</sup> The Spirit is 'in' the official ministerial order

insofar as he completes and ratifies the official ministerial orders that Christ began; he is "above" insofar as his divine order (which is beyond our grasp) is continually shattering our purely human order that tends to ossify, in order to refashion it after his own free vision.<sup>171</sup>

On the other hand, the Spirit is 'in' the community charisms

insofar as he genuinely bestows them upon individuals for their use, giving them the spiritual qualities necessary; he is "above" them insofar as no member of the Body of Christ can stubbornly insist on his own charisma and try to wield it against the comprehensive ecclesial order of the Body.<sup>172</sup>

How do the saints fit into the picture? Balthasar claims that he would have liked someone to analyze constructively (not polemically), and integrate into the total theology of the Catholic Church the theological tension that there is between 'great personal sanctity (the charism that is unique and a gift but that has to be

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<sup>168</sup> *OP*, pp.19, 27.

<sup>169</sup> *OP*, p. 20. This comment alone is enough to justify my own endeavour.

<sup>170</sup> *TL3*: 248.

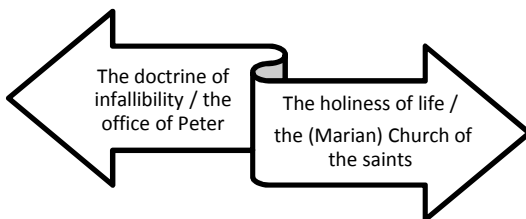
<sup>171</sup> *TL3*: 248.

<sup>172</sup> *TL3*: 248.

genuinely accepted and lived) and the principle of ecclesiastical office'.<sup>173</sup> The question is not just: what would such an analysis contribute to the theology of the authority of the saints? But, more importantly, why does Balthasar himself not pursue the issue further? One could perhaps explain it by saying that he did pursue it, but only in his 'radiating manner', which is always difficult to analyse. Certainly, the rendering of holiness as an office is a significant attempt – however imperfect – especially since it puts holiness at least on a par with other offices, enabling the reader to correlate authority with holiness, and to avoid a situation where the ecclesial offices benefit from positive prejudice.

### THE AUTHORITY OF THE EXTERNAL MAGISTERIUM

We have already established that holiness itself attributes to the individual an



authority, and that this authority is different from that which other ecclesial offices bestow, although analogous to it. Having also established that there is an authority that comes

from ecclesial holiness, the question now arises as to what happens when there is a conflict between the saints and the Church, or the saints and the Magisterium, or even when the Magisterium is in crisis. Does Balthasar give the saints a *higher* authority? A second issue is, what kind of balance does Balthasar provide with regards to the internal and the external Magisterium? These two issues will be the subject of this section.

In the *Aesthetics*, the office of Peter and the holiness of life within the (Marian) Church of the saints are 'intimately bound up with one another' and 'continually oriented toward and pointing to one another', with Balthasar insisting that 'neither of them can replace the other and claim solely for itself the re-presentation of the whole Christ.'<sup>174</sup> In this sense, the office of Peter and the Magisterium does not, on its own, re-present Christ. But neither do the saints on their own. Both require

<sup>173</sup> *OP*, p. 20. This comment alone is enough to justify my own endeavour.

<sup>174</sup> *TAI*: 212-3.

each other. This means that Balthasar gives neither of them the *higher* authority. The whole issue is best viewed within the context of Balthasar's theology of revelation, where the concept of authority which Balthasar works with has a 'penitential' character. Balthasar argues that '[m]ankind is 'constrained to submit its authentic or alleged interior inspirations to the authority of an external inspiration.' He claims that the *locutio interna* was first, but that this *locutio interna* had to become a *locutio externa* 'because of man's deafness'. It had to become a 'word from God which is spoken to man from outside.'<sup>175</sup> With Balthasar, the implication is that a return to a God who has exteriorised Himself should itself require an external authority. Consequently, with Balthasar, missions and experiences, even the special archetypal ones will submit to Peter who is to judge their authenticity or their lack of it.<sup>176</sup> In this light, the 'authentic apostolic authority' does not just have a say on 'external things and regulations'. Its authority also extends to the consciences of individuals.<sup>177</sup> It can even intervene 'in internal operations.'<sup>178</sup> Needless to say, one could criticize Balthasar heavily for subordinating so much to the Church's teaching office, even the *foro interno*. Balthasar seems to be challenging the supremacy of conscience, which is almost unthinkable nowadays. However, Balthasar does not ignore the primacy of conscience,<sup>179</sup> but rather attributes to conscience a more social nature.

Balthasar insists that the reason why we ought to listen to the Magisterium, is that only the Church can give the 'sublime buoyant certainty that we are not straying from the right path and are not subject to the risks and dangers that threaten lonely seekers'.<sup>180</sup> Balthasar maintains that the Magisterium is not only 'rooted in Scripture and tradition, but also in the Church community, which it must consult with regard to its faith'.<sup>181</sup> The Magisterium itself feels the need to consult the communal conscience, the *sensus fidelium*. At time when the Magisterium has

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<sup>175</sup> *TAI*: 452.

<sup>176</sup> *TAI*: 355.

<sup>177</sup> *TAI*: 590.

<sup>178</sup> *TAI*: 255-6.

<sup>179</sup> Balthasar asserts that, although 'the teaching Church can set forth the truth; she cannot force believers to accept it in their hearts...the individual is free to obey or not to obey'. *TAI*: 212-3.

<sup>180</sup> *OP*, p.12.

<sup>181</sup> *OP*, p.255. Balthasar reminds his readers that Vatican I itself had emphasized this (DS 3069) and that Bishop Gasser had underlined it even more explicitly.

forgotten its rootedness in Scripture and Tradition, saints have arisen to revoke the balance of authority. In his essay on ‘Shared Responsibility’, Balthasar maintains that God’s presence accompanies the Church not only from above... but from within,<sup>182</sup> and he provides examples from the history of the Church of extreme situations, when either the hierarchy or the laity were responsible for upholding the faith.<sup>183</sup> The office of Peter is full of examples of saints who strengthened the Popes:<sup>184</sup> Athanasius, Ambrose or Maximus Confessor.<sup>185</sup> Balthasar mentions Catherine of Siena’s protest against Avignon and her appeal to Gregory XI,<sup>186</sup> John of Chrysostom’s opposition to the infringements of the ‘divine Christian Empire’, Peter Damian’s protestations against the simony and unchastity of the clergy, Ignatius of Loyola’s struggle against the excesses of the Inquisition, Bishop Georges Darboy of Paris’ admonition of the pope, Francis of Assisi’s chastisement of the Pope with his silent example.<sup>187</sup> We also have a reference to the ‘predictions and threats of St Hildegard and St Brigid against the Roman abuses.’<sup>188</sup> One could interpret such balance-of-power-situations in one of two ways. It could be said that the saints have served the Magisterium for the good of the Church. It could also be said that that the Magisterium has served the saints for the good of the Church.

So does Balthasar then resolve the issue concerning the *higher* authority, whether it is the Magisterium or the saints who act as the higher authority in the case of conflict? Moreover, what kind of balance does Balthasar provide with regards to the internal and the external Magisterium? The discussion continues in *The Christian State of Life*. Here, what Balthasar says about internal and external revelation, and in particular about the call can act as an analogy for understanding the relationship between the internal and the external Magisterium. Balthasar reminds us that ‘the Church has recognized the finger of God’ in various calls,

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<sup>182</sup> ‘Our Shared Responsibility’, *E*, p.149. See also ‘Tradition’, *E*, pp.116-7.

<sup>183</sup> He quotes Newman’s Rambler affair as a moment in history when it was the people who upheld the faith, and he mentions Athanasius and Maximus as saints who suffered martyrdom because they were misunderstood by the authorities ‘Our Shared Responsibility’, *E*, p.149.

<sup>184</sup> Needless to say, the authority of the saints has mostly been revealed in the absence of effective leadership.

<sup>185</sup> *OP*, p.272.

<sup>186</sup> *OP*, p.66.

<sup>187</sup> *OP*, pp.343-4.

<sup>188</sup> *OP*, p.66. Balthasar quotes Döllinger’s work.

including ‘the founding of all great religious orders.’ The Church ‘has also, after appropriate testing...recognized the existence and right of a subjective vocation that stems, not from the Church, but from God.’<sup>189</sup> Thus, according to Balthasar, God’s call comes from within, but it does not ‘come to an individual *only* from within’. It also comes from without so that it cannot ‘be carried out apart from or even against the Church’.<sup>190</sup> If God ‘calls both exteriorly and interiorly’, as Aquinas says, then it is his will that these two aspects work together to establish unity between vocation and mission.<sup>191</sup> Balthasar agrees with Aquinas that God himself cannot permit an ineradicable contradiction between the Church and one’s personal mission, for we ‘must be convinced that in Christ our Lord...only one Spirit holds sway’.<sup>192</sup> Still, Balthasar does grant the possibility

that a personal call may not be immediately recognized as such by the Church and that one called will, in consequence, be obliged to carry out his mission against strong opposition even though he seeks to the best of his ability to do so in accordance with the mind of the Church. Despite the Church’s resistance, such a mission will be as truly an ecclesiastical one as were the missions of those called to initiate great reforms within the Church, for they, too, had to overcome harsh opposition with the help of God’s grace before at last – whether during their lifetime or after it – receiving ecclesiastical recognition.<sup>193</sup>

In the *Theo-Logic*, Balthasar emphasises the public nature of any personal inspiration. He asserts that, although ‘[t]he individual believer could receive ‘direct illumination from the Spirit concerning a piece of Scripture or of tradition without the intervention of the external “teaching office”,’<sup>194</sup> this ‘direct illumination’ never takes place ‘in a purely “private” capacity, but with a view to that individual’s Christian vocation, which is always related to the Church’.<sup>195</sup> Such an emphasis on the social nature of Christian experience is emblematic in Balthasar. Everything has to be evaluated within its social context: whether it is vocation or mission, or even obedience and disputation. According to Balthasar,

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<sup>189</sup> *CSL*, p.448.

<sup>190</sup> *CSL*, p.439.

<sup>191</sup> *CSL*, p.442. In Balthasar, the two authorities: the external ‘proclamation and the internal spirit’, ‘must ring out together, must complement one another, must point to each other.’ See ‘Shared Responsibility’, *E*, p.143.

<sup>192</sup> *CSL*, p.448.

<sup>193</sup> *CSL*, p.439. See also p.441.

<sup>194</sup> *TL3*: 328.

<sup>195</sup> *TL3*: 328.

the right to ‘contest’ issues within the Church grows, ‘the more [the individual] allows the Spirit of holiness to hold sway within him.’<sup>196</sup> Elsewhere, Balthasar modifies the *right* to contest into an *obligation* to contest, or rather, an obligation ‘to admonish and advise’, claiming that both priest and laity may be called to this.<sup>197</sup>

In his essay on obedience Balthasar sets down the criteria for disputation. Here, he describes a situation where someone who is meant to obey sees a disparity between a directive given by the authorities and the gospel norm. According to Balthasar, ‘if the command prescribed something culpably deviating from the gospel norm,’ then the disagreement is justified. There is no justification for such contesting, however, when it is simply a case of the authority prescribing ‘something less good than what I conceive on my own’.<sup>198</sup> Balthasar grants that ‘the acceptance of the hierarchy’s decisions...(*réception*)’ is a ‘delicate problem’.<sup>199</sup> Truth cannot be imposed, and neither should the individual follow blindly. Because, as Austin has said, ‘to exercise authority is to be acknowledged as one who has authority’,<sup>200</sup> the fruitful exercise of authority cannot take place unless the pope is ‘recognized and loved in a truly ecclesial way, even in the midst of *paraklesis* or dispute.’<sup>201</sup> What a properly exercised external Church authority does is it ‘recall[s] the individual to that which he from the very depths of his heart has always “known”’.<sup>202</sup> This focus on the heart takes us back to what Cardinal Newman once said, namely, that ‘[t]ruth has the gift of overcoming the human heart, whether by persuasion or compulsion; and, if what we preach be truth, it must be natural, it must be popular, it will make itself popular.’<sup>203</sup> The implication, inspired by his image of the aesthetic work, is that truth is its own authority, and has its own supremacy, so that it demands the compliance of the

<sup>196</sup> *OP*, pp.434-5.

<sup>197</sup> *CSL*, p.340. In his essays, Balthasar also proposes practical means that could draw the two sides together, such as dialogue and obedience. See ‘Our Shared Responsibility’, *E*, p.146 and ‘Obedience in the Light of the Gospel,’ *NE*, pp.243-4.

<sup>198</sup> ‘Obedience in the Light of the Gospel,’ *NE*, p.243. Balthasar could actually be repeating Rev 2:26 and the maxims of various saints which describe the benefits of obedience. See, for instance, the maxims of St Philip Neri, <http://www.liturgicalatina.org/oratorian/maxims.htm>

<sup>199</sup> ‘Are there Lay People in the Church?’, *NE*, p.182.

<sup>200</sup> Austin, p.21.

<sup>201</sup> *OP*, p.343.

<sup>202</sup> ‘Authority’, *E*, p.139.

<sup>203</sup> Card. Newman, Preface to the Third Edition, 1:4, {xxiv} p.15

heart without violence. In this regard, Balthasar can be situated within the shift which Stagaman has identified, namely from imposition on the part of Church officials, and obligation to accept on the part of the members, to persuasion on the part of the officials and ratification on the part of the members and humanity generally.<sup>204</sup> Balthasar describes it in pneumatological terms. Whenever the Spirit himself wants the external Magisterium to propagate a truth, there is actually a double operation that is taking place simultaneously: within (through the internal Magisterium), and without (through the external Magisterium). So Balthasar resolves the issue concerning the internal and the external Magisterium by emphasizing that the two cooperate together to propagate the truth.

But what happens with regards to the other issue concerning the *higher* authority, namely, whether it is the Magisterium or the saints who act as the higher authority in the case of conflict? The answer is to be found in his essay on authority. Here, Balthasar refers to the analogy between the authority of the *laos hagios* and the authority of those in the hierarchy. According to Balthasar, in this analogy, ‘the presence of the authority of God in Christ is made concrete (incarnate) for the people in their differentiation’. Analogically, therefore, it is possible to speak of a ‘double’ concrete presence of God’s authority: one pertaining to the hierarchy, and one pertaining to the holy people.<sup>205</sup> McDade writes about how the hierarchy and the laity can balance each other.

A sense that the core of the Church is lay holiness, which precedes hierarchical structuring, is a corrective to any exaggerated estimate of papal authority, and should condition how the papacy conducts itself in the Church. If Petrine authority is to avoid destructive patterns of authoritarian isolation, it must acknowledge other, equally valid dimensions of the Church, and serve them and listen to them with respect.<sup>206</sup>

In *The Office of Peter*. Balthasar even discusses the issue of how truth is NOT determined within the Church. The Church, he says, does not determine truth either by questioning ‘the *sensus fidelium*, followed by an authoritative decision

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<sup>204</sup> Stagaman, p.3. Stagaman claims that this is a shift which occurred after the second world war.

<sup>205</sup> ‘Authority’, *E*, p.134. See also p.135.

<sup>206</sup> McDade, p.113.

of the Church leadership'. Nor does it determine the truth by taking 'a poll to find the truth by majority vote.'<sup>207</sup> If this were the case, he says, 'the place of the ruling hierarchical authority would be taken by the authority of the expert', and obedience would only be 'rendered to a "superior"...insofar as he is able to show his competence'. Balthasar expresses disapproval at such an approach, claiming that, if this were to become the norm, then one 'particular consequence...would be the downgrading of the mystery of faith to the level of rational-theological comprehensibility.' Balthasar fears that, if this were to occur, 'the differences in theological opinion would be negotiated between the so-called "ecclesiastical teaching office" and the theological profession,' something that Balthasar would reject.<sup>208</sup>

In spite of the fact that the works of Lucien Laberthonnière (1860-1932) were prohibited under Pius X, according to Balthasar, it was Laberthonnière who 'came up with the most profound and prophetic insights' on the question of authority within the Church.<sup>209</sup> Laberthonnière claims that, 'in the Church of God authority can never instruct, "from outside", nor can it impose the truth on anyone; and neither should the Christian submit himself to be led and instructed purely passively'.<sup>210</sup> Especially significant is the question which Laberthonnière seems to have asked, namely "How should people like us act, so that, spiritually deepened by the acceptance of authority, we can contribute to the spiritual deepening of authority itself?"<sup>211</sup> This question shows very clearly how much spiritually dependent are those who command on those who obey, and the other way round. Those who obey are spiritually deepened by the acceptance of authority, and those who are in authority are, in turn, spiritually deepened by those who, having obeyed, are holier than before. Thus, in the same way that 'the same obedience in

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<sup>207</sup> *OP*, p.31. Along with Newman, Balthasar attributes 'indefectibility in faith' to the *sensus fidelium*, understanding it as 'a consensus', but only in its original meaning, i.e. a 'feeling with', a being of the same-mind'. However, Balthasar thinks that the *sensus fidelium* may not always be helpful. This is because 'the opinion that one really possesses this *sensus fidelium* can likewise be subject to all sorts of illusions, traditional or progressive'. 'Obedience in the Light of the Gospel', *NE*, p.244.

<sup>208</sup> Here, 'the extent and degree of this competence [would be] determined by one who is to obey: the pastor's by the parish community, the pope's by the community of the faithful.' *OP*, p.31.

<sup>209</sup> *OP*, p.282.

<sup>210</sup> Lucien Laberthonnière, *La notion chrétienne de l'autorité : contribution au rétablissement de l'unanimité chrétienne*. p.79, quoted in *OP*, p.283.

<sup>211</sup> *OP*, p.286.



faith to the Divine Word is demanded from both the one who commands and the one who obeys', not just from those who obey,<sup>212</sup> so it is with ecclesial authority.<sup>213</sup>

## THE THEOLOGIAN AND THE AUTHORITY OF ROME

We have already established that, in Balthasar, the Petrine and the Pauline offices are distinct, but that they serve each other. In spite of it all, the relationship of the theologian with the Magisterium remains a central issue.<sup>214</sup> However, it is not always as straightforward as it may seem. Francis Sullivan has pointed out, the clear distinction made by Aquinas between the *Magisterium cathedrae pastoralis* of pope and bishops and the *Magisterium cathedrae magistralis* of the doctors (i.e. the university professors of theology) only appeared with the rise of the universities.<sup>215</sup> Avery Dulles has described the dialectic, even the 'mutual assistance' between the institutional authority of the Magisterium and the non-institutional authority of the individual theologian.<sup>216</sup> You could say that Balthasar agrees with most of what Dulles says. According to Balthasar, the theological activity is an ecclesial office and mission, but theology 'cannot claim divine authority', or presume infallibility.<sup>217</sup> Balthasar does acknowledge that the infallibility of theologians 'often seems to be a more stubborn sickness than the defined infallibility of the papacy,' which he says 'is applied with incomparably greater discretion' than the former.<sup>218</sup> The fact is that, although it may not be the role of the Magisterium to follow the guidance of theologians, but, surely, the same cannot be said of the Magisterium vis-à-vis the theologian saints.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> *OP*, p.42.

<sup>213</sup> *OP*, p.61.

<sup>214</sup> Balthasar attributed the title 'theologian' to one who was 'a doctor of the Church whose office and mission consist in explaining revelation in its fullness and completeness and thus in considering dogmatics as the central point of his activity.' *Verbum Caro* (Italian edition). Quoted in Antonio Sicari, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar: Theology and Holiness', in *Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work*, ed. by David L. Schindler (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991), pp.121-132 (p.122).

<sup>215</sup> Francis A.Sullivan, p.181.

<sup>216</sup> Avery Dulles, 'Teaching Authority in the Church' (Spring 1989), printed in *Church and Society: the Laurence J.McGinley Lectures, 1988-2007* (New York Province of the Society of Jesus: 2008), pp.16-26 (p.21).

<sup>217</sup> *OP*, p.115.

<sup>218</sup> *OP*, p.286.

<sup>219</sup> See Dulles (1989), p.20.

Before we can provide any answers, let us first investigate the significance of Peter (ecclesial office) and Paul (the gifted theological writer). As Raymond E. Brown affirms, Paul's role is not one of doctrinal authority'. His role is that of a 'missionary witness.'<sup>220</sup> In Balthasar, Peter's attitude to Paul is 'not unfriendly', but it is a 'reserved official attitude'.<sup>221</sup> According to Balthasar, Peter alone has 'the prerogative' to claim authority in doctrine and leadership, and the right to demand unity.<sup>222</sup> Balthasar would therefore insist that the Magisterium and the theologians 'differ in the quality of the authority with which they carry out their tasks', without denying that both have authority. This means that he would have agreed with Thesis 6 of the Statement of the International Theological Commission published in 1975, which recognizes that 'the authority that belongs to theology in the Church' is 'a genuinely ecclesial authority, inserted into the order of authorities that derive from the Word of God and are confirmed by canonical mission'.<sup>223</sup>

Balthasar refers to the 'long list of unnecessary human tragedies' which reflect 'the uneasy and unclarified relationship between theology and the Magisterium', calling it a 'sickness [that] had three crises': the first was around the time of the "Syllabus" (1866), the longest and most important was that of Modernism, which outwardly was put down by the encyclical *Pascendi* (1907); and finally, the false alarm concerning the *nouvelle théologie* to which *Humani generis* (1950) intended to put an end.<sup>224</sup> Still, Balthasar is impatient with contemporary theologians who moan about the sufferings undergone by theologians in the past.<sup>225</sup>

Writing about what he terms the 'fateful' Modernist period, Balthasar argues that 'what stands out most is perhaps the limited nature of the Petrine charism of leadership.' He argues that 'it could deliver hard blows to those who departed from the center line but was unable to contribute much that was constructive

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<sup>220</sup> Raymond E. Brown, p. 61.

<sup>221</sup> *OP*, p.171.

<sup>222</sup> *OP*, pp.167-8.

<sup>223</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti\\_documents/rc\\_cti\\_1975\\_magistero-teologia\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/cti_documents/rc_cti_1975_magistero-teologia_en.html)

<sup>224</sup> *OP*, p.280.

<sup>225</sup> *OP*, p.286.

toward solving the problems presented by the times.’ But having said that, Balthasar goes on to say that ‘things could be very different now.’ He also cites ‘the great positive impulses that have come from several strong encyclicals of Leo XIII and Paul VI, which were themselves products of collaboration.’<sup>226</sup>

Balthasar is adamant in his claim that Rome’s pronouncements remain unsurpassed, in spite of accusations concerning its slow progress. He writes,

We might be inclined to think that Rome...was always behind the times in its interventions, which were all the more embarrassing, the more they were presented with the weight of authority; but the astonishing thing is that these interventions (which were by no means frequent initially) prove the very opposite: Rome’s responses, although they refer back to the faith handed down, regularly point beyond the ecclesial horizon of the “committed” and “speculative” theologians.<sup>227</sup>

In fact, Balthasar envisages the Magisterium supporting the theologian. But he also envisages the theologian-saints supporting the Magisterium. He gives examples of instances when the theologian-saints fed the Magisterium, and where the Magisterium claimed for itself the conclusions of the theologians. One example is that of Maximus. At Constantinople, in 681, Maximus the Confessor’s Chalcedonian Christology was declared to be identical with the faith of the Catholic Church.<sup>228</sup>

## CONCLUSION

So, what I argued in this Chapter is that, in the ecclesiological domain, Balthasar thinks that affiliation with the Church furnishes the individual saint with authority, both within the Church and outside it. The authority of the saints is grounded in the holy communism which transpires within the *communio sanctorum*. I also argued that Balthasar made sure that both subjective and objective holiness featured in his theology, and that both of them conceded an authority that was distinct from that of the other. I also inferred that, in Balthasar, there is an

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<sup>226</sup> *OP*, pp.281-2.

<sup>227</sup> *OP*, p.264.

<sup>228</sup> *DS* 553-59.

authority that is specifically associated with office, that office within the Church carries with it an authority suited to that office, that office was not just reserved to the priestly and the episcopal office, and also that each office demanded a subjective holiness that suited that particular office, so that authority within the Church was not just reserved to the members of the Magisterium, and there were other members of the Church who acquired authority, although they were not themselves members of the Magisterium.

In the process it was also established that, although one can detect some development in Balthasar's theology of office and of charisma there is no doubt that Balthasar wanted to associate the saints' authoritative function within the Church both to the official and to the charismatic dimension of their existence. My interpretation is that, among other things, Balthasar has tried to overcome the simplistic interpretation that associates the saints with the charismatic element within the Church, while associating the Magisterium with the official element. In my reflections on Balthasar's external Magisterium, I maintained that, in Balthasar, the authority of the external Magisterium is not to be separated from that of the internal Magisterium. The two have the same source, so that, in Balthasar's reading, the probability is that an authentic external Magisterium, would be in syntony with an authentic internal Magisterium.

Steffen Lösel has accused Balthasar of placing the Magisterium above Scripture and tradition.<sup>229</sup> Part of Balthasar's contribution lies in the fact that what could be reduced to a struggle for power becomes a collaboration of the holy among each other. For one thing, for Balthasar, it is the saints who make up Tradition. Secondly, for Balthasar, the Magisterium incorporates more than just the uppermost ecclesiastical officials. The Magisterium is the teaching authority of the Church, and the teaching authority is not reserved purely to the official Magisterium. In Balthasar, the saints are also directly involved in teaching, and therefore, we can deduce, that the Magisterium also includes the saints, or rather, there is also a Magisterium of the saints.

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<sup>229</sup> Lösel (2008), pp.26 and 39.

At one point, I also discussed the relationship between the theologian and Rome as Balthasar sees it. I have deduced that, ultimately, the authority of any noteworthy theologian is not just grounded in his literary gift of writing theology. It is also grounded in his involvement with the Church, and therefore in ecclesial holiness, as well as in his receptivity to the Lord, which leads to personal holiness.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

It is now time to start the process of closure. My intention is to conclude with a double critique. The first of these concerns the inconsistencies which are evident in Balthasar's attribution of authority to the saints. I want to demonstrate that Balthasar's emphasis on unity and on the equality of the saints within the *communio sanctorum* is often inconsistent with, and even counter-productive to his emphasis on the exceptional character of the individual saints who are part of the *Communio Sanctorum*.<sup>1</sup> I want to demonstrate that, in Balthasar, it is difficult to harmonize the portrayal of the individual saints as outstanding individuals and his own vision of the Church as a community of equals, just as it is difficult to harmonize his portrayal of the Church as a conversing community with his emphasis on the Magisterium as the teaching and governing body *par excellence*. I will also provide some reasons why I believe these inconsistencies exist, and why, in my opinion, Balthasar fails to argue overtly for the authority of the saints. It will be determined that, inspite of it all, no doubt can be cast on the fact that, *de facto*, Balthasar gives to the saints an extraordinary prominence in his own theology, and that he not only recommends the saints as a resource for theology and for the Church, but attributes to them an authority that is analogical to that generally attributed to the Magisterium. The second critique will deal with the authority of the saints in general and the consequences for the Church of attributing – or not attributing – such authority to the saints.

## RESUMÉ

Before we can present our critique, it is best to provide a resumé of what has been argued so far. This dissertation began with an emphasis on Balthasar's remarkable sensibility to the theology of the saints (that is, the theology for which they were responsible), both individually and *en masse*. It was stated that, from what

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas G. Dalzell has argued that Balthasar is more concerned with the individual subject, than with the social aspect. He comes to this conclusion because of Balthasar's emphasis on the freedom of the individual and on his or her mission. Dalzell, p.285. My argument has been that the emphasis on the *communio sanctorum* serves to balance this prominence on the individual, but also to justify it.

Balthasar has said about the theology for which the saints were responsible, it is possible to elicit a theology *about* the saints, from Balthasar's perspective. It was argued that Balthasar considered this theology of the saints (the theology for which they were responsible), authoritative for him on a personal level and as a theologian, but also recommended that their theology be considered authoritative to theology in general. He did this by developing a theology *about* the saints, claiming that this theology was mandatory for theologians and for the building up of the Church, and by continually pointing to the theology *of* the saints (that is, the theology produced by them). It was determined that Balthasar does not evoke the memory of the saints by mentioning supernatural evidence, miracles, and visions. On the contrary, he avoids the more supernatural, and rather vain aspects, and things like 'worldly power' and 'miraculous intercession' are absent from Balthasar's list.<sup>2</sup> Balthasar depicts the saints as authoritative by incorporating the saints as an integral part of his theology, and by using them to substantiate his claims, to address particular theological issues, or for other theological reasons mentioned earlier. He establishes their authority by making them known, by actively providing new translations and new anthologies of their works, by dedicating whole monographs to them. He establishes their authority by bringing their ideas to life, by continually discoursing with them, by involving them in his discussions, by amplifying their voice, so to speak.

I also referred to what Balthasar calls, the 'various degrees and holders of authority in the Church',<sup>3</sup> and to the various forms which ecclesial authority takes in Balthasar: from governing, to commanding, creating laws, imposing sanctions on those who fail to obey.<sup>4</sup> It was noted that some of these authoritative practices are, generally speaking, only associated with those in office, and are only required from those 'saints' who hold authoritative positions, but who may not necessarily be holy in the narrow sense of the word. I then inferred that, in Balthasar, irrespective of their state, role or function within the Church, the 'true' saints,

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<sup>2</sup> According to '[t]he official procedures for canonization established by Pope Urban VIII in the early seventeenth century, all the candidates except martyrs must satisfy three general requirements: doctrinal purity, heroic virtue, and miraculous intercession after death.' Weinstein & Bell, p.141.

<sup>3</sup> 'Obedience in the Light of the Gospel', *NE*, p.244.

<sup>4</sup> *CSL*, p.264.

those who are holy, are authoritative, precisely because of what holiness entails, and how it is perceived by others, and that this authority is analogical to that of the Magisterium, both in its nature and in its consequences, because it makes the saints credible, reliable, worth considering, their memory worth preserving, just as, traditionally, the Magisterium has been perceived. Consequently, the saints trigger esteem, even veneration, in those who encounter them. It was therefore ascertained quite early in our argument that, according to Balthasar, the saints' life and work is not just useful, but authoritative, and that it demands a response. In Chapters 3 to 6, I then focused on four dimensions which helped to elucidate the issue of the grounding of the saints. In these chapters, I dealt with the different settings in which the saints function authoritatively, as well as with the *why* it is that the saints are so authoritative, so useful, credible, persuasive and demanding of a response. I maintained that it is Balthasar himself who generates this focus on the *grounding* of the authority of the saints, choosing to focus – in contrast with the postmoderns – on the more hidden causes of this authority, rather than on the external expressions of it, or on the evident response of others to it. It was determined that the saints have existential, epistemological, pneumatological and ecclesial authority precisely because they are saints, and that there is something about holiness, or characteristics that accompany holiness, that makes the saints authoritative, influential, in all of these dimensions, so that the saints are deemed (or, perhaps, to be deemed) an authority for theology and for the Church.

I also argued that the authority of the saints denotes different things in different dimensions, but that it is always, in some way or other, analogous to that of the Magisterium. Whereas in the existential dimension (Chapter 3), the saint is an authority because he or she exemplifies the essence of existence, and because he or she is someone whom one consults on existential issues, in the epistemological dimension (Chapter 4), the saint is an authority because others invoke him or her when there has been a failure to know, and because others submit to them in the process of learning. In the pneumatological dimension (Chapter 5), the saint is an authority because he or she is bolstered by the Spirit, has an extensive significance, as well as is someone whom one invokes, and to whom one must



submit, in matters requiring discernment. Finally, in the ecclesiological dimension (Chapter 6), the saint is an authority because he or she is in-formed by the Church and esteemed within the Church, and because he or she is someone to whom one appeals, perhaps even to whom one submits in obedience, when there has been a disagreement on issues of theology or discipline. The analogy between the authority that is attributed to the saints, and that which is attributed to the Magisterium is very clear. Clearly, Balthasar wanted to repair the flawed assumption that only the official Magisterium has access to the truth, and that it is sufficient on its own and requires no assistance. On the contrary, Balthasar uses the saints, not only to teach other theologians but also to teach the official Magisterium, and thus handling the saints as if they were themselves a Magisterium.

## **CRITIQUE 1**

At the beginning of this Chapter, I promised to provide two critiques. The first critique was to focus on the inconsistencies which are evident in Balthasar's attribution of authority to the saints.

The first point I would like to make is that, because of his tremendous preoccupation with the unity of the Church, Balthasar downplays the distinctions that one finds within the Church – something that is required if one is to argue for the authority of some, not all – and thus fails to argue explicitly for the authority of the *Communio Sanctorum*. My argument is that there is a contradiction in the way in which Balthasar *de facto* uses the saints (the *Communio Sanctorum*) as the experts and the real *connoisseurs*, in the way he recommends them to theologians and to the Church as a whole, in the way he attributes an authority to them, but then *de jure*, when it most matters – in his discussions of authority within the Church – emphasises and underscores the authority of the priestly office, and the authority of the official Magisterium, rather than emphasizes the authoritative contribution of the saints. My critique thus focuses on the fact that Balthasar does not make the next step and argue overtly for the authority of the saints. I attribute

this contradiction, not to Balthasar's aversion to having the centrality of Christ being contested (and therefore to his scaling down of the saints) – although it could be argued that this is also a cause – but to Balthasar's preoccupation with ecclesial unity. I believe that Balthasar wanted his theology of the saints to support his emphasis on unity, rather than to work against it, and he is not willing to argue for the authority of the few (the *Communio Sanctorum*) out of fear of dividing the Church. Balthasar does not approve any of the dialectical divisions of the Church of the past. For example, he radically disapproves of Tyconius.<sup>5</sup> He says that this 'creates a kind of structural fracture in the body of the Church', which is painful for the Church (*gemitus columbae*) and for Christ.<sup>6</sup>

The second point I would like to make is that Balthasar's maturity of the theology of the saints may have been cut short because of the Second Vatican Council. There is some evidence of development in Balthasar, particularly where office is concerned. Before the Vatican Council, he was more willing to downplay the differences, to widen the significance of office and to argue for the office of holiness. But he was less willing to do that after the Council. In his *The Christian State of Life*, which is Post-Vatican II, Balthasar criticizes all attempts to remove the distinction between laity and clergy by a continual interchange of services, ministries and even 'offices' and 'functions', claiming that it was 'unbiblical' to remove this distinction.<sup>7</sup> And he affirms that '[t]he dogmatic, theoretical form of Christian truth belongs in a special way to the serving offices, that is, the "apostles", "prophets", "evangelists", "shepherds", "teachers".'<sup>8</sup> In the late Balthasar, authority, in terms of leadership, but also of teaching, is generally reserved to the apostolic succession. In the third volume of the *Theo-Logic*, Balthasar insists that the mission to preach and interpret the mystery 'cannot be divorced from ecclesial office, which comes explicitly from Christ's command.'<sup>9</sup> This means that he contradicts his earlier work, insisting, in his later work, that it is ultimately the Magisterium that carries the responsibility, as well as the

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<sup>5</sup> For Tyconius, the church was simply a bipartite body, consisting of a body of saints and a body of sinners.

<sup>6</sup> *OP*, p.191.

<sup>7</sup> *CSL*, p.16.

<sup>8</sup> See Eph 4:11.

<sup>9</sup> *TL3*: 326. Balthasar quotes Clement of Rome, Ignatius, and Irenaeus.

institution which claims the right to lead and to teach. This brings with it yet another risk, as Raymond E. Brown has said, which is that of having holiness attributed to the ordained.

In relation to the equality of Christians as disciples, it is especially difficult for the ordained priesthood to be kept in the category of service (to God and to the community), for the ordained will frequently be assumed to be more important and automatically more holy.<sup>10</sup>

In this regard, I believe that it would have been so much more helpful had Balthasar been more clear about the teaching and leadership roles of the different offices and functions within the Church, rather than focusing so much on the apostolic roles. On his part, Avery Dulles distinguishes three kinds of succession, corresponding to the Pauline functions singled out in the first letter to the Corinthians: namely, the apostles, the prophets, and the teachers (1Cor.12:28).<sup>11</sup> All of these are types of leadership, and therefore authoritative. According to Dulles, those who succeed the apostles enter into the leadership functions of the Twelve. The prophets, on the other hand, are not attached to any office or to particular skills, and they teach ‘by proclamation and example’, rather than by ‘juridically binding decisions’ or by ‘probative arguments’.<sup>12</sup> The teachers are the theologians and the scholars who teach through ‘reasoned argument’.<sup>13</sup>

Why am I saying all this? What relevance does this have for us? For one thing, in spite of everything, authority has still kept its narrow significance of leadership, and is still mainly attributed to the Magisterium. In over-emphasizing the hierarchy, Balthasar could be interpreted as canonizing the members of the hierarchy, rather than setting the ‘real’ saints as the standard to be followed. In this respect, the authority of the authentic saints has been undermined. In fact, some of Balthasar’s statements concerning the authority of the ordained priesthood are especially distasteful to members of the laity.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Raymond E. Brown, p.100.

<sup>11</sup> Avery Dulles, ‘*Successio apostolorum – Successio prophetarum – Successio doctorum*’, *Concilium*, ‘Who has the Say in the Church?’, 148, 8/1981, 61-67.

<sup>12</sup> Dulles (1981), p.62.

<sup>13</sup> Dulles (1981), p.63.

<sup>14</sup> See, for example, *CSL*, pp.260 and 270.

The third point I would like to make concerns the issue of gender. Needless to say, the issue of gender is very relevant, both where Balthasar is concerned, and where the saints are concerned. The greatest difficulty arises when one attempts to associate women with some kind of official authority. Charismatic authority is less problematic. Unmistakably, ‘many women in the history of the church have exercised a charismatic authority because of their recognized holiness.’ The spiritual life has enabled various women saints to exercise a prophetic power that violently challenged the higher circles of the Church.<sup>15</sup> So long as Balthasar associated office with authority, extended office to include women, and argued for an office of holiness, Balthasar could hardly be criticized. In the 1950’s, Balthasar refers to Thérèse’s assumption of the office of teacher and director in the case of the priest-brothers, how she consoles them, advises them, encourages them, and so on.<sup>16</sup> More than twenty years later, Balthasar states that ‘a woman called to the religious life suffers no loss because she is not admitted to the priesthood. According to him, she shares just as much as – if not more than – men do in the existential priesthood of Christ.’<sup>17</sup> Likewise, Balthasar maintains that God calls every woman, just as he calls every man, to imitate Christ in a thoroughly unique way.<sup>18</sup>

In this respect, Balthasar’s circumvention of the issue of division between males and females is laudable. However, in the process, his theology obscures the wider reality within the Church concerning women, as well as disregards the overall impression which his own theology leaves on feminist readers. Concerning the first of these, evidence shows that women in the Church have received less recognition than men. As Steffen Lösel has said, in Balthasar, it is ‘the masculine Church’ that ‘is invested with exclusive jurisdictional and teaching authority.’ on the contrary, women are offered a very ‘restricted’ and ‘unattainable’ ecclesial life

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<sup>15</sup> See Lawrence Cunningham, ‘Saints’, in Komonchak, (Ed), *The New Dictionary of Theology*, p.928. This is a subject that Feminist theologians have to come back to.

<sup>16</sup> *TS*, p.234.

<sup>17</sup> *CSL*, p.374.

<sup>18</sup> *CSL*, p.374.

script.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the reception of holy women has often been problematic, and the depiction from a feminist perspective<sup>20</sup> would be different to the explanation which, for example, Balthasar gives of Mary. From a feminist perspective, the interpretation by a male of a female's mystical experiences necessarily involves some injustice.<sup>21</sup> One has to accede that many more males than women have historically been pronounced holy,<sup>22</sup> that male saints were often members of the Church hierarchy,<sup>23</sup> and were consequently considered more authoritative than women, that depictions of holy women are generally male-authored, and that they often 'reveal more about men's idealized notions of female sanctity and its embodiment in women's lives than they reveal about the female saints themselves',<sup>24</sup> and so on and so forth. One can indicate at least one instance where Balthasar may have made an additional effort to make the voice of the women mystics sound more authoritative than that of the more established masculine saints.<sup>25</sup> This was in the book *Dare We Hope "That All Men be Saved?"*. But except for his references to Adrienne, such instances are not very common. Historically, many female mystics had to depend on male confessors in order to make their work public. Adrienne herself is an example of a woman who required a man (Balthasar himself) to thrust her forward, to transcribe, publish and publicize her work. Furthermore, various feminist scholars have judged Balthasar's representation of women as insufficient, if not unjust.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, for him to be arguing for the authoritativeness of female saints – or rather, for me to be contending that Balthasar argues for an authority of the female saints – may be considered spurious. Despite all that has been written by feminist theologians – some of which I would agree with – Balthasar's theology can still be interpreted

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<sup>19</sup> Lösel (2008), p.41.

<sup>20</sup> In interesting book to read in this regard is *Medieval Holy Women in the Christian Tradition c.1100-c.1500*, edited by A.Minnis and R.Voaden.

<sup>21</sup> See, for instance, Dillon, Janette, 'Holy Women and their Confessors or Confessors and their Holy Women? Margery Kempe and Continental Tradition' in Rosalynn Voaden (ed), *Prophets Abroad: The Reception of Continental Holy Women in Late-Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S.Brewer, 1996) pp.115-140.

<sup>22</sup> See, e.g.the Chapter on 'Men and Women', in Weinstein & Bell, pp.220-238.

<sup>23</sup> See 'the Occupational category by Gender' provided by Weinstein & Bell, p.221.

<sup>24</sup> Mooney, p.3.

<sup>25</sup> *DWH*.

<sup>26</sup> Some examples could be Tina Beattie, 'Sex, Death and Melodrama: A Feminist Critique of Hans Urs von Balthasar', *The Way*, 44/4 (October 2005), 160-176 and Danielle Nussberger, *Horizons*, p.95. See also Steffen Lösel's criticism of Balthasar's interpretation of Mary. Lösel (2008), p.40.

as arguing for the authority of the female saints, as much as for the male. Tina Beattie has accused Balthasar of taking ‘a non-gendered view of humanity’. According to her, this shows, either that Balthasar finds reference to gender unnecessary, or that for Balthasar, *Mensch* is equivalent to *Mann*.<sup>27</sup> With reference to discourse about sanctification, Balthasar finds reference to gender unnecessary. Hopefully, this is not because, for him, sexual difference is not significant, or because he wants to eradicate the female body, as Beattie claims,<sup>28</sup> but rather because Balthasar appreciates that the authority that comes from holiness transcends sexual difference.

The fourth inconsistency which is evident in Balthasar’s attribution of authority to the saints concerns the comparison of the baptized Christians to the individual extraordinary saints. Balthasar did not consistently emphasise the differences, and did not sufficiently and effectively explain how it is that the *Communio Sanctorum* has more authority than the baptized Christians in general. Balthasar emphasizes that the Holy Spirit dwells in *all* the members of the Church.<sup>29</sup> In his *Theo-Logic*, he leaves no doubt that all Christians are equal ‘on the basis of their human dignity’ and ‘in virtue of their rebirth.’ They are also equal in their ‘activity’, since all are called to ‘cooperate in the building up of the Body of Christ in accord with each one’s own condition and function.’<sup>30</sup> He claims that the ascetic is as much of a witness as the martyr. Those who were later called ‘martyrs’ are not more important than those whose whole life is a daily mortification.<sup>31</sup> He insists that all believers receive their spiritual authority in baptism (and the other sacraments). Consequently, they are all ‘children of God’, ‘infallibly heard’ by God, endowed with the ‘mind of Christ’, able to judge correctly.<sup>32</sup> On his part, Balthasar insists that, in the Eucharist, *all* Christ’s disciples,

receive a share in his authority...they *all* receive the Holy Spirit who sanctifies them and sends them out into the world (Acts 2:17); from *all* is demanded the witness of their life (to the point of

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<sup>27</sup> Beattie (2005), pp.161-162.

<sup>28</sup> Beattie (2005), p.170.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Our Shared Responsibility’, *E*, p.143.

<sup>30</sup> *TL3*: 355. Balthasar claims that the ‘the functional does not jeopardise or abolish the personal, but rather perfects it’ (*TA1*: 341). He gives Mary as the ‘perfect example of the application of this principle’ (*TA1*: 341).

<sup>31</sup> *TL3*: 409.

<sup>32</sup> *TL3*: 402.

martyrdom);<sup>33</sup> *all* must expressly or at least in their disposition preach Christ; *all* have not only the right but, as Christians, a strict duty...to forgive their neighbor his sins; *all* can in principle baptize, husbands and wives can give to each other the sacramental blessing of marriage, *all* are authorized to share in the celebration of the Eucharist, and so on' (my italics).<sup>34</sup>

The problem here is: How is one to integrate this appreciation for the general with the fact that Balthasar is so scrupulous in his appreciation, praise and recommendation of some saints more than others? In this regard, we can only say that there is some evidence of contradiction in Balthasar's work.

If we were to provide a chronological depiction of the development in Balthasar's thought, we would notice that the early Balthasar distinguishes quite clearly between two types of sanctity: 'customary' sanctity (by which the Christian fulfills his vocation through the normal, unspectacular round of the Church's life) and 'a special kind of sanctity (by which God singles out some individual for the good of the Church and the community as a model of sanctity).'<sup>35</sup> This would be the 'representative' sanctity, 'which is much less directly imitable'.<sup>36</sup> The latter are, as he describes them, God's great gifts to the Christian community, they are 'the great warm centers of light and consolation sunk into the heart of the Church by God'.<sup>37</sup> They are the 'cornerstones of the Church', the 'living interpretations of the Gospel'.<sup>38</sup> In his first volume of the *Aesthetics*, Balthasar confirms that 'the Catholic Church does not abolish genuine esotericism'.<sup>39</sup> He distinguishes between the 'simple Christians who need material crutches' and 'the advanced and the perfect'.<sup>40</sup> He maintains that the boundary be drawn between, those who, as qualified witnesses, are mystics by vocation, and, the rest of believers.<sup>41</sup> Balthasar grants that some things may only be 'for those who are practiced and

<sup>33</sup> '[t]he disciple of Jesus is never asked to do more than give witness.' *TL3*: 404.

<sup>34</sup> 'Authority', *E*, 133-4.

<sup>35</sup> *TS*, 24.

<sup>36</sup> *TS*, pp.23 and 25.

<sup>37</sup> *TS*, 25. See also, *A Theology of History*, 105. One could compare these 'representative saints' to Rahner's concept of the saint as 'sacrament', as 'icon', and as symbol, and to David Tracy's concept of the saint as a 'classic' See Patricia Sullivan, pp.6 and 9 and *The Analogical Imagination* (1981).

<sup>38</sup> *TS*, p.24.

<sup>39</sup> *TAL*: 33-4.

<sup>40</sup> *TAL*: 437-8. Just to clarify, in Balthasar, 'it is precisely this word of God remaining in eternity which has become flesh.' *C*, pp.121-2.

<sup>41</sup> *TAL*: 299.

experienced in faith and in love's renunciation', and 'not be for beginners, nor for those who hesitate in their uncertainty.'<sup>42</sup> In his *Explorations*, the saints are the 'pillars of the Church' upon which 'everything that has universal validity is built up'.<sup>43</sup> In *Engagement with God*, in 1971, the saints are 'specially chosen individuals',<sup>44</sup> 'individuals who tower above the rest,' 'the chosen'.<sup>45</sup> Even among them he acknowledges some differences. The saints 'do not all turn out equally well'.<sup>46</sup>

Later on, Balthasar becomes dissatisfied with some of his early terminology. He still calls some missions 'special',<sup>47</sup> but he claims that he would rather not use the term.<sup>48</sup> Once again, how is one to fuse these two 'Balthasars' together? This ambiguity concerning terminology and categorization – which we believe is instigated by Balthasar's desire on one hand to commend the saints as authorities, and on the other to preserve the unity of the Church – hinders Balthasar from developing a proper doctrine.

Finally, another inconsistency which is evident in Balthasar's attribution of authority to the saints is his concentration on the past, rather than on the future, despite the exhortatory nature of his theology of the saints. Balthasar provides examples indicating how, in the past, some saints have acted as authorities (e.g. Maximus, Catherine of Siena, and so on), providing support to the Magisterium, challenging the Magisterium or correcting the Magisterium. But Balthasar fails to provide recommendations for the future, directives as to how saints can and ought to behave in times of crisis vis-à-vis the Magisterium, and how the community ought to respond to the saints. As a consequence, Balthasar's reflections often remain vague historical records, rather than clear directives for the future.

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<sup>42</sup> *TAI*: 258-9. He refers here to those who take the *ekstasis* of love seriously.

<sup>43</sup> *The Gospel as Norm*, CS,294.

<sup>44</sup> *EG*, p.19.

<sup>45</sup> *EG*, p.20.

<sup>46</sup> *A Verse of Matthias Claudius*, *E*, p.17; *FG*, pp.72-73.

<sup>47</sup> *CSL*, p.465.

<sup>48</sup> *CSL*, p.12.



The above contradictions and incongruities may seem to sometimes dissipate and sometimes sustain what I have been trying to argue, namely that Balthasar attributes authority to the saints within the Church. It is imperative to note, however, that, although Balthasar can be accused of a lack of clarity, of ambiguity, of inconsistency, but my interpretation that Balthasar trusts the saints, and attributes authority to them, though perhaps shaken, still stands. The role of the saints is not restricted to being an inspiration to Balthasar as theologian. The saints have an authoritative function, and the authority that is attributed to them has huge similarities to that of the Magisterium.

## **CRITIQUE 2:**

The second critique will deal with the attribution of authority to the saints and with the consequences for the Church of attributing such an authority. My assumption is that even among those who agree with my reading of Balthasar, there may still be some who disagree with the concept itself, that is, with the attribution of authority to the saints. Drawing out and depicting their reasons against such a theology is no easy matter. Perhaps they are afraid that such a theology would lead to division within the Church, just as Tertullian's differentiation between 'the hierarchical-legal Church of the bishops (*Ecclesia numerus episcoporum*)...and the Church of spiritual men' would have done.<sup>49</sup> More than once, Balthasar refers to this chasm which Tertullian saw. Here, the *Ecclesia numerus episcoporum* succeed the apostles in their governmental function. The latter succeed the apostles as 'true followers'. On his part, Balthasar avoids the distinction found in Tertullian,<sup>50</sup> but which continued to exist in 'heretical circles', or 'in circles close to heresy' particularly among the Spirituals, also called the Messalians.<sup>51</sup> Balthasar claims that it is also to be found in 'those sects professing to be the "true unspotted Church"', who 'arrogate to themselves

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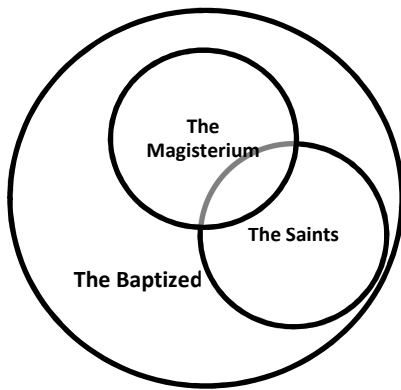
<sup>49</sup> *OP*, p.287.

<sup>50</sup> *OP*, p.187. See also *TD4*: 453ff.

<sup>51</sup> With the spiritualistic movement, in the beginning of the second millennium, there is an 'open break [between] the hierarchical Church that celebrates the liturgy and administers the sacraments' and the person who is genuinely spiritual. There is also a conflict between the spiritual authority and 'the countless evangelical and charismatic reform movements that were making themselves felt 'from below'. *OP*, p.275.

the Church's quality of holiness'.<sup>52</sup> Balthasar himself never supported a 'double Church.' And yet, those who disagree with the attribution of authority to the saints probably fear division and triumphalism just as Balthasar did.

Others may disagree with the concept of attributing authority to the saints for



more fundamental reasons. Partly because of the influence of Postmodern depictions of the saints, they simply cannot envision how the saints can be distinguished from the non-saints, how the saints are to be recognized as different. Or perhaps they cannot envision how the category of the saints is to incorporate also the living saints, without peril. Perhaps they cannot foresee how the Magisterium and the

saints can conference together, except through written theological debates, and how anybody but the Magisterium can take the final decisions in case of conflict. Among those who disagree with the concept of attributing authority to the saints there will be those because they are aware that there are saints among the members of the Magisterium, just as there are saints among the baptized, and that the two cannot simply be juxtaposed. This can make the suggestion that one listen to the saints, rather than the Magisterium, a *contradictio terminis*. Since many of my statements are based on Balthasar's *de facto* practice, and since many of my statements are an expansion of what Balthasar said about the Christian life in general, the details concerning actual processes of consultation, that is, what form such an authority should take if it were approved doctrinally, is not something we can deduce from Balthasar. The suggestion that there could ever be a consultation between the *Communio Sanctorum* and the Magisterium may even seem outrageous to some. What I can say is that, in spite of the perspicacity in some places, where the authenticity and authoritativeness of the saints' being and discourse is concerned, there are still many black holes, and the outcome of what he insinuates could easily verge on the bizarre.

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<sup>52</sup> EG, p.96.

Others could disagree with the concept of attributing authority to the saints because they simply cannot envision how the saints can ever speak infallibly, and unless they can do that, they are unnecessary, since they would just be another voice among many. The idea is that, unless we agree that saints can command and can demand obedience, it can be very difficult to argue for their authority. In this regard the distinction which Francis A.Sullivan made between the ‘*competence* to speak with *authority*’, and the ‘*claim* to speak with *infallibility*’ (my emphasis)<sup>53</sup> is useful. The authority that Balthasar would attribute to the saints would be of the first type, but *de facto*, he takes Adrienne’s words to verge on the infallible, and I would not be surprised if many of us were to set the Old Testament Prophets’ predictions among the second as well. Still, in theory, Balthasar claims that no one ‘is bound in conscience to have a devotion to some particular saint or believe in certain miracles or private revelations; nor are we bound to accept the words or doctrine of some saint as the authentic interpretation of God’s revelation.’<sup>54</sup>

Strictly speaking, this issue about not being ‘bound in conscience’ cannot really be used as an argument against attributing authority to the saints. Today, we are not ‘bound’ to do anything or to follow anyone. The Spanish Inquisition is long gone, excommunication is out of fashion and, since the development of the doctrine of the Right to Religious Liberty, conscience has taken priority over the Magisterium, so that not even the Magisterium has the right to enforce its beliefs. Take the *Humanae Vitae* as one example. The saints have no power to impose their words or their doctrine as the authentic interpretation of God’s revelation. Their authority is thus limited. They cannot make decisions for others, and they cannot presume that others would obey. In this regard, there are two texts which could prove to be helpful. The first one is about the *Pater Pneumatikos* from the *Aesthetics*, and the second concerns the distinction between counsel and command from *The Christian State of Life*.

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<sup>53</sup> Francis A.Sullivan: Readings in Church Authority, 107.

<sup>54</sup> *TS*, p.25.

What Balthasar writes about the tradition of the *pater pneumatikos*, is critical.<sup>55</sup> Here, it would have been justified for a man to ‘give an unconditional command in the name of God, ‘in an extreme instance’, and ‘on the basis of a personal authority accepted by the disciple who has entrusted himself freely to his master’.<sup>56</sup> In this context ‘there is a personal relationship well founded in human nature’. Here, ‘the one who obeys can review, judge, ratify or renounce this relationship.’ In this case, ‘his judgment is definitely part of his obedience...he is obeying his own judgment, at least partly, even when something difficult or unexpected is commanded’.<sup>57</sup> Here, Balthasar claims something that is very important: the authority is present both in the *pater pneumatikos*, but also in his disciple.<sup>58</sup>

The second text provides an equation between counsels and commandments. Balthasar insists that only someone who takes justice as his ‘standpoint’ rather than love distinguishes between the two.<sup>59</sup> According to Balthasar, counsels should have been enough, and commands are only necessary because men ‘no longer possess love.’<sup>60</sup> Here, Balthasar portrays commands and laws as a consequence of sin. He also implies that authority came in after original sin, and that we would no longer need authority if there were no sin. On the other hand, he claims that, with pure love, ‘obligation’ is always a ‘choice’.<sup>61</sup> In Balthasar’s words, love ‘needs no other law than itself; all the laws are subsumed, fulfilled, transcended in the one law of love.’<sup>62</sup> Counsels may therefore be just as demanding as commands, while the demands made by commands remain a choice. Two implications arise from this. The first is that the individual Christian, and the Magisterium in particular (when orders are about to be given, decisions are about to be made, and obedience is about to be enforced), ought *always* (as if

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<sup>55</sup> *OP*, p.61-2.

<sup>56</sup> *OP*, p.62.

<sup>57</sup> *OP*, p.61-2.

<sup>58</sup> The authority of the Spiritual Director in the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises, and Balthasar’s role as Adrienne’s spiritual director, also permit the use of commands. The objective is to remain as unnoticeable as possible, in order that God may be allowed to shine through.

<sup>59</sup> *CSL*, p.51. In speaking of love it is meaningless to distinguish between commandment and counsel. See also 49. Balthasar was referring to the evangelical counsels, but the knowledge that Balthasar equates counsels with commands has consequences for our study.

<sup>60</sup> *CSL*, p.49.

<sup>61</sup> *CSL*, p.28.

<sup>62</sup> *CSL*, p.29.

it were a command) to *take into consideration* what the saints do /did and what they say/said, even if – strictly speaking – it is not obligatory to do so. Secondly, neither the saints nor the Magisterium have any advantage one over the other. The authority of both depends on the response of those with whom they come in contact. Ultimately, although Balthasar may not be willing to state that the authority of the saints is binding, he does claim their authority in other ways. For example, he says, that the ‘theological manifestation’ which arises out of the ‘sheer existence’ of the saints must ‘not be neglected’ by any of the members of the Church.<sup>63</sup> He thus accepts that the saints’ teaching is essential and authoritative, even imperative.

This brings us to the issue of what form our recognition of the authority of the saints is to take. How is this authority which we concede to the saints to become evident? How are the saints to function authoritatively? In medieval times, the authority of the saints would have taken the form of devotion, public honour, and the dedication to them of feasts, shrines, reliquaries, processions bearing their relics, iconography, elaborated tombs, statues, frescoes serving a didactic purpose for the laity. Authoritative saints would have had their name included in the litany of saints, their memory commemorated at the mass or monastic office, their names adopted as patrons by Confraternities, or for ‘special’ situations, elaborate feasts dedicated in their honour, vernacular hagiography reproduced for the use of the Christian. Nowadays, I would expect the authority of the saints to become more evident through a more explicit dependence on their teaching by theologians, through the Church’s explicit recognition of their contribution, through a deeper appreciation in all Christians for all charisms present both within the Church and in the world, both past and present, through a stronger effort to receive the saints and use ‘them to fertilize her sanctity’,<sup>64</sup> to endeavor to provide a generic theology concerning the authority of the saints. Through what he says about the *Pater Pneumatikos*, Balthasar provides the answer in one word: discipleship, which is more like a *consequence* that comes from attributing authority to the saints, rather than simply an indication that we attribute authority

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<sup>63</sup> *TS*, p.25.

<sup>64</sup> *TS*, p.24.

to the saints. We have to remember that, in Balthasar, the commitment of one's own existence to the following of a person is not against the form of that existence. Balthasar finds nothing inappropriate and incomprehensible in committing oneself to someone, or to the teaching of someone, who appears 'to be transparent to God.' He insists, however, that 'the analogy', or doctrine, only applies 'in the real sense...to the nature of the saint...who, as such, becomes for his disciples a kind of sacrament.'<sup>65</sup>

A few others could disagree with the concept of attributing authority to the saints because they simply cannot envisage the saints struggling against the Magisterium. The fact is that, within Balthasar's scheme of things, this will never happen. In Balthasar, the saint is not a rebel. Balthasar condemns the tendency to 'glorify the saints in the history of the Church as 'avowed nonconformists' and 'potential dissidents'.<sup>66</sup> Not only does he argue that the authentic saints refused to take a stand against the Church, he also claims that they 'would refuse to allow anyone to take a stand on their behalf against the Church'.<sup>67</sup> While most committed Christians would interpret this as loyalty and commitment, it feeds the imagination of those who see the Church as an oppressive and manipulative institution, as patriarchal and dominant, and would easily interpret Balthasar of using the saints to reserve the *status quo*. However, Balthasar is not against *ressourcement* or even *aggiornamento*.<sup>68</sup> In Balthasar's theology, the authority of the saints is grounded in their role of reforming and reanimating the Church, but that this reanimation rarely originates from the hierarchy. It generally comes from the ranks of the nonofficial believers, or from priests 'afire with the Spirit.'<sup>69</sup> And it is 'totally different from skillful organization.' For this reason, Balthasar is inclined to suspect 'that the great movements and reforms of the Church in the present and the future, will not be initiated by...panels and boards but by saints, the ever-unique and solitary ones who, struck by God's lightning, ignite a blaze

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<sup>65</sup> *TAI*: 185.

<sup>66</sup> *OP*, p.29.

<sup>67</sup> *OP*, p.42.

<sup>68</sup> I do not intend to use these two terms to mean discontinuity or continuity, as was done in post-conciliar interpretation, in which case they are irreconcilable. In *Razing the Bastions*, Balthasar shows himself to be for *aggiornamento* as well.

<sup>69</sup> *TL3*: 318.

all around them.’<sup>70</sup> Balthasar goes on to say that, on its part, the hierarchy is to do all it can to reanimate the Church, sometimes simply by approving and encouraging others within the Church. He writes,

the charism of great popes and bishops extends to the reanimation...of the Church or the diocese as a whole, and for this task they are equipped with the relevant charisms, such as “wisdom”, “knowledge”, “exhortation”, “leadership”, and “prophecy”. It is mostly not their business to found special “families” yet there are famous instances where Spirit-inspired communities have been used by them for the great sanctifying and missionary work of the whole Church.<sup>71</sup>

## FINAL REMARKS

As has already been said, the authority of the saints already exists *de facto* in Balthasar’s work, and probably also in the mind of most Christians and most theologians, even though it does not exist, *de iure*, in the canon law, or in theology generally. Steffen Lösel has said that ‘while current canon law calls and compels the laity to obey the hierarchy, the hierarchy is advised but not required to listen to the laity’.<sup>72</sup> My view is that what Lösel has said about the laity, should at least apply to the saints. At the same time, we have to acknowledge that the saints *already* have authority, their authority is presupposed. Early on, I quoted Michael Polanyi, stating that ‘we have no clear knowledge of what our presuppositions are and when we try to formulate them they appear quite unconvincing.’<sup>73</sup> Balthasar himself may have been aware of this, when he emphasised the expertise of the saints, but did not develop a full argument for their authority. Likewise, the Church constantly refers to the writings of the saints. However, there are no official doctrines, no clear theology, no laws, concerning the authority of the saints. This is probably why this study of the authority of the saints seems outlandish and provocative, if not useless and ineffectual. Because we are dealing with a presupposition. In a sense, our dissertation deals with what

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<sup>70</sup> *OP*, p.40. It is significant that, in Balthasar, ‘[e]verything which deserves to be called reform again and again in the epochs of Church History has been active, effective exhortation to turn back from the periphery to the centre.’ *C*, p.106.

<sup>71</sup> *TL3*: 318.

<sup>72</sup> Lösel (2008) p.43.

<sup>73</sup> Polanyi, p.62.

Balthasar has said about an authority that *should be* attributed, an authority that is deserved, an authority that – although not deliberately demanded in a mandatory way by the saints themselves – is kindled and provoked (unconsciously) by them, as well as promoted and invoked by us. The authority of the saints (the ‘Magisterium of the saints’) is an authority that should be explicitly explored, approved and defined. It is yet to be explored, approved and defined.

Although, within the limits required of me, I have tried to provide an argument that is plausible and comprehensive, this study has certainly not been able to answer all the questions. I would agree with Karen Kilby that ‘[w]e have not come to the end of exploring what [Balthasar’s] work makes possible, of receiving what he has to give, of thinking through where the lines of thought he begins should lead.’<sup>74</sup> As Kilby has said, attention to Balthasar ‘needs to continue.’<sup>75</sup> Further research is required on the concept of authority in Balthasar. A more interdisciplinary analysis of Balthasar’s use of the saints would also be helpful. Also useful would be studies that would enable us to assess the influence of particular saints on Balthasar. One could also compare the *Gegen-Gestalten* (the anti-figures) whom Balthasar used, such as Péguy<sup>76</sup> and Nietzsche, whose thought no Christian can follow,<sup>77</sup> to the saints as depicted in more recent postmodern literature. Also useful would be a comparison of Balthasar’s theology of the saints with that of Cardinal Newman, as well as with that of Adrienne von Speyr.

I hope that the implications of my study for theology and for the Church will have become clear throughout this dissertation. Vatican II affirmed that, in the saints, God ‘vividly manifests His presence and His face to men. He speaks to us in them.’<sup>78</sup> In his interview with Angelo Scola, Balthasar confirms the authority of the saint by stating that

Nobody will convert to Christ because of a Magisterium, sacraments, a clergy, canon law, apostolic nunciatures or a gigantic

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<sup>74</sup> Kilby, p.167.

<sup>75</sup> Kilby, p.167.

<sup>76</sup> Kerr (1999), p.4.

<sup>77</sup> Henrici, ‘The Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar’, p.159.

<sup>78</sup> *Lumen Gentium*, Dogmatic Constitution On The Church, Solemnly Promulgated By His Holiness Pope Paul VI, November 21, 1964, par.50.



ecclesiastical machinery. Conversion will occur when a person encounters a Catholic who communicates the Christian message by his life and thus testifies that there exists not *a* but *the* believable imitation of Christ within the Catholic sphere.<sup>79</sup>

In my introductory Chapter, I claimed that there was an important question underlying my argument: does Balthasar merely interpret the saints as a resource for theologians and for the Magisterium? Or should we rather interpret Balthasar as saying that the saints are the real authority and that theology and the Magisterium are the mouthpiece of the saints? I have interpreted Balthasar as saying that the saints are more than just a resource. They are the real witnesses whose testimony requires dynamic paraphrase and vigorous rendition, and that theology and the Magisterium are primarily there to serve them, whereas the saints, aware of their own authority, acknowledge the authority of the Magisterium.<sup>80</sup> Theology and the Church must now (more than ever) concentrate more on the saints, seek out the saints, recognise them as the authentic authority which they are, listen to them more, and direct others to them, or rather, be alert to how the Spirit is himself universalizing and publicising them.

Have I misrepresented Balthasar's emphasis on the saints? Overstated the concept of authority in Balthasar? Have I misconstrued Balthasar's use of the saints? Have I developed a doctrine of the authority of the saints where there was none? Am I wrong in having interpreted Balthasar's grounding of the authority of the saints where I did? Evidently, there will always be some difference between how Balthasar meant his texts to be received and how I myself, as the reader, received his texts. It is up to the readers of this dissertation to judge whether Balthasar should be interpreted differently. On my part, I have argued, firstly, for the plausibility of my own analysis of the grounding of the authority of the saints as evident in Balthasar's work, secondly, for the credibility of the assessment of Balthasar vis-à-vis the importance of the saints, thirdly, for the need to use different dimensions in order to analyse the grounding of the authoritativeness of the saints in Balthasar.

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<sup>79</sup> *TE*, p.18.

<sup>80</sup> See Scola (1989), p.55.

Is Balthasar's own theology concerning the authority of the saints flawless? I do not believe that it is flawless, however, I do believe that what I have interpreted as Balthasar's attribution of authority to the saints has immense consequences for theology in general, and for our understanding of the Church and of the *communio sanctorum*.

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