

Von Balthasar and Journet on the Universal Possibility of Salvation and the Twofold Will of God

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IT IS A matter of agreed historical record that the Augustinian tradition has generated numerous parodies of Christian faith on the subjects of grace, predestination, and salvation. The Magisterium of the Catholic Church has repeatedly opposed, for example, double predestinationist teachings, affirmations that grace is offered only to a select few and is irresistible, and theologies placing limitations on the salvation offered by the Cross of Christ (so-called limited atonement theory).¹ More recently, the idea of damnation due to the contraction of original sin alone is seen as a subject for reconsideration (in the absence of the doctrine of limbo, and due to the modern sensitivity to injustices accrued to the unborn through the phenomena of technological abortion).² And increasingly, against the idea that only those who are visibly and evidently members of the Church can be saved, as well as in contradistinction to an Augustinian theology of selective election, the modern Magisterium has consistently insisted upon the fact that God offers the real possibility of salvation to each human person.³ It is this last thesis

¹ On the first point, see Orange II, in Denz., no. 200; Quiersy, in Denz., no. 316; Valence III, in Denz., nos. 321–22; Trent, in Denz., no. 827. On the second and third, see the condemnations of five errors of Cornelius Jansen, in Denz., nos. 1092–1096.

² *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1261; Pope John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, no. 99.

³ Vatican Council II, *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22: “For since Christ died for all (Rom 8:32), and since all men are in fact called to one and the same destiny, which is

that I wish to examine in this essay. Essentially my argument will be this: God upholds all creatures in being and offers to all human beings (in diverse fashions) the grace that renders possible their salvation. If this grace is effective in them, the primary cause of their salvation is God; if a creature refuses this grace by withdrawing from it (and persisting in this state), it alone is the “cause” of its eternal loss. Aquinas’s theology of the antecedent and consequent will of God as it is appropriated by Charles Journet allows us to speak credibly of this mystery in the terms I have alluded to above. Hans Urs von Balthasar’s rejection of this same distinction causes his thought to tend inevitably toward a doctrine of necessary universal salvation (*apokatastasis panton*).

Introduction to the Question: Can All Come to Salvation?

A theology that wishes to consider the question of the possibility of salvation for every human person, and a corresponding real possibility of eternal loss, must try to keep in balance three theological affirmations. First, God’s grace comes to the aid of each one: There is no selective divine decision to exclude any creature from the possibility of salvation. Second, God is the unique primary cause of the existence, life, and movement of spiritual creatures, whom he sustains in being and governs providentially. Third, “hell” as a definitive state of separation from God has its origins in the spiritual creature insofar as it refuses God’s providential commandments and grace, incurring the judgment of God.⁴ Therefore, this situation (of refusal) is not of God’s own making, but rather of his permission. These affirmations correlate to divine attributes found in God. In sum, to expound the first proposition is to defend the divine goodness and wisdom of God as it has manifested itself in the universal love of Christ on the Cross. The second relates to God’s omnipotence as the creator and sovereign Lord of history who creates and moves all beings. The third

divine, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partners, in a way known to God alone, in the Pascal mystery” (emphasis added). For historical precedents, see already Quiersy in 853 (Denz., no. 318) against Gottschalk’s doctrine. In modernity, the teaching was reaffirmed by Pius IX (Denz., no. 1677), Pius XII (Denz., nos. 3866–3872, with respect to the teaching of Feeney), John Paul II, (in *Redemptoris Missio*, no. 28, and many other texts), and the Catechism, nos. 851, 1037, and 1058. A valuable treatment of these themes can be found in Bernard Sesboüé, *Hors de l’Eglise pas de salut* (Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 2004).

⁴ As noted by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1033, hell is precipitated by an act of *self-exclusion* from communion with God on the part of the creature.

relates to God's innocence with regard to moral evil that proceeds from the spiritual creature in revolt against God. Historical theology may consider various doctrines excessive or defective in some respect with regard to one or more of these positions. So the theology of the later Augustine, it could be argued, was defective with regard to the first attribute; the thought of Molina (Thomists would claim) with respect to the second; Calvin and Jansenism with regard to the third (along with Origenism and the eschatology of Barth in others ways). One of the riches of the perspective of Hans Urs von Balthasar's treatment of this question, meanwhile, is that he attempts to defend in some respect each of these propositions, and to understand them in an integrated way.

However, to say that we must believe that every human person is offered the possibility of being saved (and that we may and should therefore hope and pray for the salvation of each one) is not the same as saying that we must hope for the universal salvation of all persons. Nor is it to say that it is incumbent upon us to believe that an infinite divine love should eventually overcome a finite creature's free refusal of the grace of God ("eventually" in this life or in the perpetuity of the world to come). Least of all is it identical with the claim that if the creation is to be a "successful" expression of God's absolute freedom and infinite love, then all men must be saved. It is in the ambiguous region between such diverse affirmations that Balthasar's expression of an anti-Augustinian theology of salvation lies, and it is this ambiguity that is problematic. Without being either irenic or profoundly unsympathetic, a consideration of Balthasar's protest on the subject of hell can profitably compare (juxtapose) his perspective with that of Charles Journet. Each of them tries to delineate the contours of a Catholic understanding of the possibility of salvation offered to all, but they do so in irreducibly different ways.⁵

In the first part of the essay, then, I will discuss the terms in which both thinkers articulate the conviction that Catholic theology must confess

⁵ For the purposes of this essay I will examine in particular Balthasar's doctrine in the collection of essays titled in English *Dare We Hope "That All Men Be Saved"?* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988), in which his latest and most developed position is achieved. However, I will also refer in particular to *Theo-Drama V* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1998), 269–322, in which Balthasar discusses the same doctrine, to underscore the continuity of his thought in both these important texts. My consideration of Journet's thinking will focus principally, but not uniquely, on his *The Meaning of Grace* (New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1960), *The Meaning of Evil* (New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1963), and sections from *l'Eglise du Verbe Incarné*, vol. 4, *Essai de théologie de l'histoire du salut* (St-Just-La-Pendue: St. Augustin, 2004).

God's universal will for the salvation of all. I will show that each of them attempts to find paths away from some of the conundrums referred to above (stemming from extreme Augustinianism), and that both object most especially to the idea of a restricted election on the part of God. In the second section of the essay, I will show how their reflections hinge on differing points of confrontation with or continuity with the Augustinian tradition. This difference is characterized especially in terms of their reactions to Aquinas's use of Damascene's distinction of the antecedent and consequent will of God. The distinction is not Augustinian in origin, and in fact, as I will point out, offers a remedy to extreme tendencies in Augustinian thought. What I will argue below is that Balthasar's refusal of this distinction paradoxically takes him further toward Augustine on the question of the vanquishing will of God (and more precisely toward Barth's Calvinist inversion of predestination). Whether he wishes it or not, this places him in close proximity to a doctrine of universal restoration (*apokatastasis panton*). Journet's use of the distinction, by contrast, takes him away from Augustine's theodicy of a selective election. According to his view, God's "antecedent" universal will to salvation is an axiomatic prerogative of the divine economy inscribed in the very logic of God's will to create in love and wisdom. Yet God also wills to make this process of salvation "conditional" upon the loving consent of each creature to the initiatives of grace. Journet thus conceives of hell uniquely in light of the "innocence" of God who is in no way a cause of moral evil, but who tolerates and even sustains in being and activity a creature that refuses and rebuffs the prerogatives of grace and love.

In the third section of the essay, I will show how the two thinkers differ on the question of sufficient, resistible grace, itself a corollary to the notion of God's conditional will for the salvation of all. Balthasar's thought is characterized by a refusal to consider the will of God "vanquished" by any creaturely refusal of divine love. Influenced by Barth, he articulates this refusal in "dramatic" terms by means of a theology of Christ's descent into hell. Because Christ takes the place of the sinner in his separation from God, we are permitted to hope that ultimately the infinite love of God may overcome all finite resistances. Meanwhile, Journet focuses on the real possibility of a creaturely refusal of love, and the mystery of God's permission of sin in the finite personal creature. God wills the salvation of all, and hell—as a reality stemming from the refusal of God's wisdom and love—is of angelic and human origin alone, *without divine origin*. Yet it has real consequences and true existence. By his complex but unified perspective, Journet manages more successfully than Balthasar to avoid the excesses of either an Augustinian selective election or an Origenist universalism. His theol-

ogy recognizes simultaneously both the goodness and innocence of God, even in the wake of creaturely evil. He does this, moreover, as I will argue, while fully recognizing the sovereignty of divine omnipotence and the primacy of divine initiative in all the creaturely actions and motions of nature and grace.

I. Balthasar and Journey on the Universal Possibility of Salvation

Von Balthasar Against Augustinian Restrictions on Elective Grace

At the heart of Balthasar's "protest" against a kind of traditional theology of damnation is his opposition to the theology of the late Augustine and his theological heirs. This protest opposes the Latin doctor especially on two points: (1) concerning the idea that "we must affirm with certain knowledge" that some men are in hell, and (2) concerning the idea that God elects to save only some, leaving others to their condemnation due to the prerogatives of a transcendent wisdom and justice. The first idea relates to the way we interpret the prophetic admonitions in the New Testament. The second considers the topic of the scope of God's election.

To reorient theological exegesis in a direction that steers away from Augustine on both of these points, Balthasar insists in multiple places in *Dare We Hope* on the irreducible duality of two sets of texts in the New Testament.⁶ The first set communicates a warning of the real possibility of damnation, while the second communicates a divinely inspired hope for the salvation of all.⁷ The existence of the Christian is left suspended between the two affirmations in an unresolved tension, a salvific tension filled—so we are told—with true evangelical hope. On the one hand, we are warned that "each of us," including myself, is under judgment (thus doing away with any form of unwarranted presumption). On the other hand, we have reason to hope, from the standpoint of God's love and mercy, that everyone may be saved.⁸

⁶ Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 20–2, 29–46, 177, 183–4. For an identical distinction, see *Theo-Drama* V, 269.

⁷ So for example: Mt 5:22, 29f.; 7:23; 10:28; 23:33; 25:30; Mk 9:43, 48, speak of final judgment, eternal punishment, "outer darkness," and the fire of hell. But we are also told that God desires the salvation of all men (I Tim 2:1–6), that Christ will draw all to himself (Jn 12:32), and that "God consigned all men to disobedience that he might have mercy upon all." (Rom 11:32.) See Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 20–21, and esp. 29–46.

⁸ Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 85, 87, 96: "Even if someone could know himself as being in the 'certainty' inherent in Christian hope, he still does not know whether he will not transgress against love and thereby also forfeit the certainty

Much can be said about the theological options and shortcomings of this textual division. Richard Schenk has posed (rightly, it seems to me) questions about the tenability of the decision on Balthasar's part to consider all of the "prophetic" texts of the New Testament concerning hell as "merely" threats, and not as genuine foretelling.⁹ My interest here, however, is simply to note one underlying point at which Balthasar's interests seem to intersect undeniably with the teachings of the modern magisterium: He holds resolutely that God wills the salvation of all human beings. And he rightly identifies an Augustinian doctrine of selective election to be the chief traditional locus of opposition to this theological affirmation.¹⁰ As the former Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger remarks with regard to Balthasar's thought:

In several passages Balthasar expresses the opinion that the tightening vice of the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, *which sets a final limit to the Church's ability to aid and bear the sinner*, is gradually beginning to open up again today. Not that Balthasar, the great scholar and translator of Origen, intends to argue in favor of Origenism in the sense of a doctrine of *apokatastasis*. He is well aware that such a [doctrine] jeopardizes every notion of election. . . . But he teaches us again more plainly to leave to God what is God's and not to take it upon ourselves to fix the decision ahead of time in one direction or another—in Origenian or extreme Augustinian fashion.¹¹

of hope. . . . From being addressed in this way, it follows that I may leave concern for the salvation of others up to divine mercy and must concentrate on my own situation before God. . . . God is primarily merciful and reacts with anger only to the unmercifulness of man." Likewise, see *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 290–4.

⁹ See R. Schenk, "The Epoché of Factual Damnation: On the Costs of Bracketing Out the Likelihood of Final Loss," *Logos* 1 (1997): 122–54.

¹⁰ For what seems to be a doctrine of restricted election, see Augustine's *On the Predestination of the Saints*, I, 8; and *Enchiridion*, no. 103. It is not the case, however, that Balthasar's historical treatment of St. Augustine is always fair. Many of his theses may be more appropriately attributed to certain disciples of Augustine rather than the Latin doctor himself. Furthermore, Balthasar often affirms or implies that one who believes in selective election must necessarily have an ignoble, and even dangerous certitude of his own salvation. (See the censure of Augustine in Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 191.) This is not true of Augustine's spiritual attitude historically, nor is it theoretically defensible. See Schenk, "The Epoché of Factual Damnation," 126–28; and Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 432.

¹¹ Joseph Ratzinger, "Christian Universalism: On Two Collections of Papers by Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Communio International Catholic Review* 22 (1995): 555, emphasis added.

Cardinal Ratzinger's compelling claim here is that Balthasar has rightly identified a problematic theological limitation imposed historically by the doctrine of a restricted offer of salvation only to some. The *sensus fidei* of the Church has progressively perceived in the New Testament a competing, and more fundamentally true claim: that the scope of Catholic hope is universal.¹² It is necessary to insist, then, on the real possibility of salvation for each person, without prejudging the question based upon what are ultimately inconclusive appeals to the biblical text. A corollary to this point is that it is necessary to hold that those who will be lost, presuming such loss is in fact foretold in Scripture, will have refused the genuine graces and initiatives of God that they were offered. The theologically enlivening and theoretically challenging dimension of Balthasar's protest against Augustinianism is located precisely at this point.¹³ How is this universal offer of salvation to be understood in relation to the larger issues of theology surrounding the mystery of grace and God's seeming permissions of human refusal? That is the question. Before I go on to discuss this question, however, I wish to underscore the continuity between *Journet* and Balthasar on this first point.

Journet on the Wisdom and Goodness of God the Redeemer

Three points need to be made here concerning *Journet's* analysis of the gift of salvation, showing how he reinterprets the mystery of predestination so as to exclude the possibility of a "selective election."¹⁴ First of all,

¹² See Jean Miguel Garrigues, "La perseverance de Dieu dans son dessein universel de grace," *Nova et Vetera* (French) 4 (2002): 35–59, on the emergence of this authoritative teaching already in the early debates between Augustinians and semi-Pelagians, but more forcefully against Calvinism and particularly in reaction to the Jansenist tradition. In particular, the Church rejected against the latter (Denz., no. 1291) the Augustinian notion (according to the Latin reading of Rom 5:12) that all sinned mortally in Adam. This led to the eventual doctrinal understanding that God would not choose to deprive some of the possibility of salvation based upon the demerits of Adam's sin alone, irrespective of personal sin. The latter perspective is evidenced by *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22.

¹³ I am also certainly willing to concede to Cardinal Ratzinger (for the sake of argument) as regards Balthasar's *intention* with respect to Origenism. Yet, to have the intention to avoid *apokatastasis* as an axiomatic doctrine is distinct from *effectively* avoiding it as a seemingly *necessary conclusion*. As I will show, Balthasar's theology is problematic in this latter respect, and this is related to the fact that he refuses the twofold distinction as regards God's salvific will. For Joseph Ratzinger's own criticisms of the Origenist theology of the "universal restoration of all," see *Eschatologie—Tod und ewiges Leben* (Regensburg: F. Pustet, 1977), 176.

¹⁴ It is not my intention in this essay to undertake a comprehensive comparison of *Journet's* teaching on predestination, reprobation, and evil and the teaching of

he emphasizes that the omnipotence by which God has created the universe and by which he sustains it in being also identifies with his eternal goodness and wisdom, as well as his justice. How these “dimensions” of God’s eternal life relate to his providential design for human creatures, then, cannot be “known in advance” by calculation derived from natural theology (that is, how his justice relates to his mercy with regard to man), due to God’s transcendence and freedom with respect to our limited understanding. But his providential dispensation can be perceived a posteriori in revelation, and then understood as “congruent” with natural theology and “befitting” in its intrinsic integrity and order as an economic manifestation of the intrinsic wisdom of God. This means, quite simply, that we cannot determine the ambitions of God’s mercy with respect to his fairness or justice (or vice versa) a priori without recourse to revelation and its inner content.¹⁵

Secondly, in light of the first point, Journet draws a conclusion concerning the fact that God seeks to offer the grace of salvation to all: This is revealed to us not as a necessity of something due to rational creatures in justice, but instead as something God *himself necessarily* wishes in conformity with his *own* wisdom and goodness. God as he is *revealed to us in Christ’s redemption* does not contradict in himself this original decision of love and justice initiated by creation. The revelation of God’s wisdom and goodness

Aquinas on these issues (a teaching which itself evolved in disputed ways). In at least one later text (*ST I*, q. 23, a. 3), St. Thomas adopted an Augustinian perspective on restricted election that Journet chooses not to appropriate. Yet, in many ways Aquinas also developed the elements for the solution Journet proposes. I will, therefore, underscore the continuity between Aquinas and Journet on multiple fronts. Diverse, but partially compatible treatments of the historical and theological issues are offered by Joseph Wawrykow, *Grace and Human Action: Merit in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996); and Francois Daguet in his *Théologie du dessein divin chez Thomas d’Aquin: Finis Omnium Ecclesia* (Paris: Vrin, 2003). Also of importance are the historical studies of Bernard Lonergan, *Grace and Freedom* and *Gratia Operans*, in vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of Bernard Lonergan* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), to which I will refer below.

¹⁵ This is a general theme of Journet’s *The Wisdom of Faith* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1952) See 56–57: “When the theologian advances reasons in support of divine decisions which he knows were entirely gratuitous and which could be entirely different or might never have existed at all . . . he does all this under the impulsion of a secret yet forceful instinct that these arguments from suitability are very precious, since, as far as this is possible here below, they justify to us the actual choices that God has made, and since in the light of eternity they will appear to contain more truth than can be proved in our actual state.” Similarly, see *ST I–II*, q. 112, a. 5, where Aquinas affirms that the transcendent will of God (with respect to the work of grace in any man) cannot be known except by revelation.

in the New Testament teaches us that God has created each spiritual creature for a mystery of divine inhabitation, a sharing in divine life by grace, culminating in the beatific vision of the divine essence.¹⁶ He is thus “committed” by the goodness of his own wisdom to give graces which, if not refused, will bring persons to eternal life.¹⁷ It is God’s very desire in creating rational, intellectual creatures to elevate them to the life of beatitude in him, and he cannot forego this desire if he is to be true to *himself* in that dispensation. Like Balthasar, Journet emphasizes the universal love of the crucified Lord, and consequently seeks to understand theologically how his offer of divine life extends to all human persons.¹⁸

Thirdly, in commenting upon the New Testament, Journet draws his own distinction between two kinds of “calling” denoted in the scriptural texts, both of which concern God’s predestination: those that allude to

¹⁶ *Essai de théologie de l’histoire du salut*, 149–52. Cf. ST I, q. 43, a. 3.

¹⁷ Journet, *Grace*, 44: “God is doubtless free to give his children different and unequal graces. . . . But he is not free to deprive any soul of what is necessary to it. He is bound by his justice and love to give each of them those graces which, if not refused, will bring them to the threshold of their heavenly country.”

¹⁸ The universal extension of the life of grace is a major theme in Journet’s work. *Essai de théologie de l’histoire du salut*, in particular considers at length the universal offer of beatitude to angels and men at different stages of the divine economy and in differing modes. Yet, Journet is less consistent on this point than Balthasar, since he considers theologically normative the Church’s traditional doctrine of limbo as a final state of life for unbaptized children who die before the age of reason. (See *Essai de théologie de l’histoire du salut*, 491–95.) Two tendencies in his thought are significant in this respect. First, his reflections on this point emphasize that God’s grace comes to the aid of human beings who are not baptized from the first moment of the development of their rational self-determination, and thereby offers them each the effective possibility of salvation. For Journet the reality of limbo underscores the catastrophic effects of original sin, for which God is guiltless (*Essai de théologie de l’histoire du salut*, 492), but from which God draws a certain good: the realization of a state of purely natural beatitude (*l’Eglise du Verbe Incarné*, vol. 3, *La Structure Interne de l’Eglise et son Unité Catholique* [St-Just-La-Pendue: St. Augustin, 2000], 1286–87). Thus *outside of the boundaries where he feels restricted by this particular doctrine*, Journet insists that salvation is offered to all, and in a repeated way. Secondly, however, the form his teaching takes on this point makes evidently clear that he does not think that the gift of grace is in any way a “right” due to the human person, but stems instead from God’s gratuitous goodness. See in particular *La Structure Interne de l’Eglise et son Unité Catholique*, 1278–87, where, following *De Malo*, q. 5, a. 3, Journet insists on the “natural” if imperfect beatitude of the souls in limbo according to St. Thomas. It is in no way unjust, he insists, that this state exists. For an insightful study on this aspect of Aquinas’s thought with respect to the grace/nature distinction, see Serge Thomas Bonino, “La théorie des limbes et le mystère du surnaturel chez saint Thomas d’Aquin,” *Revue Thomiste* 101 (2001): 131–66.

God's freedom to elect or reprobate whom he wills for a particular *temporal* mission or *degree* of sanctity, versus those that refer to God's universal will to offer the possibility of *eternal* salvation to *all*.¹⁹ The first kind of elective choice may exclude some: that which provisioned to select groups or individuals a temporal mission or a degree of sanctity in accord with the wisdom of God. The other form of elective choice, however, stems from God's universal will for salvation, and this concerns all.²⁰ The mystery of predestination to eternal life excludes some, therefore, not because of predetermined *selective* choice, but because God knows from all eternity the refusal of some who will not receive the gift of life.²¹

In this sense, Journet, like Balthasar is determined to avoid a reading of Scripture that would identify therein a mystery of exclusive choice on God's

¹⁹ *The Meaning of Grace*, 35–50.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 45–47: So for example, Rom 9: 10–13 (“Jacob I loved but Esau I hated”) can be read *either* as referring to a *selective temporal* election by God: that of the mission of Israel initially, and later that of the gentiles within the Church. Or it can be read as referring to the mystery of eternal salvation, in which case it denotes God's “supreme initiative” of love on behalf of *both* Jacob and Esau, and of the latter's refusal of this love, for which he is subject to judgment.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 36–38: “If any one is not predestined, it is because he refuses the call, and not only once, like the fallen angels, for again and again divine grace returns to, and even importunes, the human heart. . . . So if anyone is not among the predestined, it is in consequence of a refusal for which he bears and always will bear the responsibility. . . . God does not predestine [these. Rather,] God abandons and rejects those who, as he *sees from all eternity*, themselves take the first initiative in the final refusal of his prevenient grace. From eternity, he takes account of their free refusal in the establishment of his immutable and eternal plan.” For a similar teaching in Aquinas, see his commentary on Romans (*In Rom.*, c. 9, lec. 2, no. 764), where he excludes the possibility of a temporally antecedent or consequent reprobation by God, and claims instead that God “foresees” human evil from all eternity, without causing it to be. Thus, God reprobates those who sin due to his foreknowledge of their refusal of love for which they alone are culpable. Bernard Lonergan commenting on this text (*Grace and Freedom*, 116) offers an interpretation of Aquinas that closely resembles that of Journet: “Both predestination and reprobation are eternal. But while predestination gives the elect both their merits and their consequent reward, the reprobate have their sins from themselves alone, and thus sin is a cause of punishment in a way in which merit is not a cause of glory.” He goes on to contrast this with the Bañezian Thomist viewpoint, in which “God's policy of inactivity makes the defect of sin inevitable.” Lonergan insists that even such texts as *ST* I, q. 23, a. 3 (in which St. Thomas, under the weight of the Augustinian heritage, clearly articulates a theology of selective election) should be interpreted in light of the Thomistic affirmation that God is never the cause of the defect of the sinful act, a teaching found in the article itself (ad 2) and further developed in later texts (*ST* I–II, q. 72, a. 1–3; *De Malo*, q. 3, aa. 1–2). See on this Lonergan, *Gratia Operans*, 328–48.

part to save some to the exclusion of others (through non-election). In this, he too is countering the historical tendencies of extreme Augustinianism.

At the conclusion of this first juncture, we can see that these two thinkers stand in close proximity on this point, and seek ways to avoid the pitfalls of an inherited tradition that would claim that some are excluded from the offer of salvation by God's selective choice. However, they part ways on the question of the antecedent and consequent will of God, and its relation to the human capacity for the acceptance or refusal of grace.

II. Balthasar and *Journet* on the Antecedent and Consequent Will of God

Balthasar's Rejection of the Distinction

If we return to the relation between divine attributes mentioned above, we can say that scriptural teaching manifests both a universal will of salvation for all men on the part of God, as well as the threat of (or perhaps prophecy of) real eternal loss or damnation for some. The mystery of God's goodness is revealed alongside the insistence on his just judgment, presumably implying his guiltlessness and the real culpability of human beings. Balthasar is certainly correct, therefore, to insist on a contrasting emphasis in his "two sets" of texts in the New Testament. On the one hand, we are told that God desires the salvation of all, and that Christ has come to redeem the entire world. On the other hand, we are also warned that there will be those who refuse such initiatives, who come under the judgment of God. One evident solution to this textual "dualism" is offered by the distinction between the antecedent and consequent will of God, a solution that arises from within the classical theological tradition. The distinction as it was formulated by Aquinas stems from a text of Damascene who in turn has inherited it from Maximus the Confessor. According to this way of conceiving the divine initiatives of grace, God desires the salvation of all by his antecedent will (that is to say, by his "fundamental" and basic will for creatures). And yet, this will is conditional because he simultaneously desires that this salvation be embraced freely, that is to say, through cooperative consent to the movements of grace effectuated in the souls of personal creatures.

One must bear in mind that God's original wish was that all should be saved and come to his Kingdom. For it was not for punishment that He formed us but to share in his goodness, inasmuch as He is a good God. But inasmuch as He is a just God, his will is that sinners should suffer punishment. The first then is called God's antecedent will and pleasure, and springs from Himself, while the second is called God's consequent

will and permission, and has its origin in us. . . . Of actions that are in our hands the good ones depend on his antecedent goodwill and pleasure, while the wicked ones depend neither on his antecedent nor on his consequent will, but are a concession to free-will.²²

This principle, absent in Augustine, allows one to conceive of God both positing and actively willing a universal election *even while permitting* spiritual creatures to withdraw from and refuse his initiatives of salvation. Furthermore, it is precisely for this purpose that Aquinas at times adopted the distinction, differentiating the vision of universal election it offered from the idea of a “restricted application” of God’s salvific will found in the later works of Augustine.²³

²² John Damascene, *De Fide Orth.*, trans. S. Salmond (Oxford: James Parker, 1899), II, 29. This teaching has its proximate origins in Maximus’s doctrine where it was formulated directly as a response to the problems of Origenist universalism. See *Ambigua* 7, 1069A11–1102C4, and particularly 1085C9–1089D3. In this latter section of the text Maximus clearly affirms that God truly wills the salvation of all but also truly permits the eternal loss of those who refuse his grace. This loss has its origins in the non-consent to God’s design of salvation, and represents a “failure” to cooperate with the economy of salvation, a failure instigated by the creature. See the study of this issue and text by Brian Daley, “Apokatastasis and ‘the Honorable Silence’ in the Eschatology of Maximus the Confessor,” in *Maximus Confessor*, eds. F. Heinzer and C. Schönborn (Fribourg: Fribourg University Press, 1982), 309–39, esp. 327–30. Significantly, in his *Cosmic Liturgy: The Universe according to Maximus the Confessor* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press: 2003), Balthasar forgoes any serious discussion of this theme in Maximus’s thought, and in fact claims that Maximus holds for an implicit but only hinted at doctrine of *apokatastasis panton* (354–58). Daley (“Apokatastasis and ‘the Honorable Silence,’” 318–27) argues convincingly that such a claim is indeed textually ill founded and notes (317, n. 39) the Barth-like interpretation of Maximus at work in Balthasar’s analysis, focused on the “infinitely just, infinitely loving mystery of God,” to the detriment of a transparent recognition of the real existence (according to Maximus) of creatures in whom there is an enduring refusal of grace. Balthasar responds to this article in *Dare We Hope*, 246–47, and *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 318, in a rather minimalist fashion, without refuting sufficiently the formidable textual evidence amassed by Daley for the presence of the antecedent/consequent distinction in Maximus’s thought.

²³ In the *Enchiridion*, no. 103, Augustine seems to claim in an overt way that in fact God does not will the salvation of all. Such a claim was, at any rate, indicative of some trends in later Augustinian theology. See *ST* I, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1, where Aquinas alludes to this text as teaching a “restricted application” of God’s will for salvation. He then contrasts it disfavorably with Damascene’s idea of God’s antecedent universal will for the salvation of all. In his response to objection 3 he goes on to qualify the notion of this will as one that implies conditional permissions. Nothing occurs in the realm of secondary causes that escapes the order of God’s providence, so that even when moral evil occurs, although God

Seen in this light, the one set of texts of Balthasar's *Dare We Hope* points toward the goodness and wisdom of Christ, revealed at the Cross: the desire for the salvation of all. The other set of texts denotes the "innocence" of God with respect to those who refuse the offer of life. The supposedly "irreducible" character of the "two sets" of texts could then be collapsed into a single movement of God's divine economy, undergirded by this twofold dimension of God's will.²⁴ God desires the salvation of all creatures, and Christ came into the world for all sinners, yet God wills that this salvation be embraced in the way that is proper to a rational creature, through deliberative, free actions.²⁵ Part of the mystery of creaturely freedom (continually maintained in existence by God) is the possibility of defecting from the motions of nature and grace that would conduct the creature to glory.²⁶

However, Balthasar readily dismisses this solution in a noteworthy passage.

But what, then, becomes of the statements of the second series, in which God's redemptive work for the sinful world as undertaken by Christ is represented as a complete triumph over all things contrary to God? Here

does not will it, he does will to permit it. In fact, Aquinas contrasted Damascene's doctrine favorably with the teaching of Augustine from an early period. See *I Sent.* d. 46, q. 1, a. 1; d. 47, q. 1, a. 2; *De veritate*, q. 23, a. 2; *In I Tim.*, c. 2, lect. 1; *Metaph.*, VI, lec. 3, and the important study of this issue by L. M. Antoniotti, "La volonté divine antécédente et conséquente selon saint Jean Damascène et saint Thomas d'Aquin" *Revue Thomiste* 65 (1965): 52–77.

²⁴ As Aquinas notes (*ST I*, q. 19, a. 6, ad 1), the will of God in itself has no "before" and "after." The antecedent and consequent distinction refers to what God wills in his effects and signifies that God's will for the salvation of all is *qualified* (*secundum quid*). It wills this salvation *on the condition of* the creature's consent to God's initiatives of grace, and thus signified presumes the absence of a moral deficiency in the creature that places an obstacle to grace. The consequent will of God is the will of God for judgment of the creature, in light of its own moral malice.

²⁵ In *ST I*, q. 19, a. 8, Aquinas notes that human free will and moral deliberation are created and governed by God as "contingent" rather than "necessary" causes, subject to a self-determination and contingency in a way that is proper to the human spirit. This is entirely consistent, for Aquinas, with the fact that God is the primary cause of all that exists in the being and motion of spiritual creatures.

²⁶ *ST I*, q. 19, a. 9: God causes "natural evils" only in an indirect way insofar as they accrue *per accidens* from the actuation of one good to the detriment of another (such as when a lion eats a stag), and he may will indirectly the "evils" of chastisements and punishments for sin insofar as these accrue from his desire to maintain the order of his goodness, justice, and mercy in the face of human sin. But he in no way wills moral evil either directly or indirectly. The unique "first cause" of moral evil is the perverted will of the spiritual creature who refuses the initiatives of God's grace.

one cannot get by without making distinctions that, while retaining the notion of God's benevolent will, nevertheless allow it to be frustrated by man's wickedness. "God desires all men to be saved . . ." (1 Tim 2:4f.). Permit us, Lord, to make a small distinction in your will: "God wills in advance [*voluntate antecedente*] that all men achieve salvation, but subsequently [*consequenter*] he wills that certain men be damned in accordance with the requirements of his justice" (ST I, q. 9, a. 6, ad 1; *De veritate*, 23:2). One can also speak of God's having an "absolute" and a "conditional" will (I *Sent.* d. 46, q. 1, a. 1, and ad 2). . . . But what about Jesus' triumphant words when he looks forward to the effect of his Passion: "Now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth will draw *all* men to myself" (Jn 12:31f.)? Oh, he will perhaps attempt to draw them all but will not succeed in holding them all. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome *the world*" (Jn 16:33). Unfortunately, only half of it, despite your efforts, Lord. "The grace of God has appeared for the salvation of *all* men" (Tit 2:11)—let us say, more precisely, to offer salvation, since how many will accept it is questionable . . . [and so on with many other examples]. I do not wish to contradict anyone who, as a Christian, cannot be happy without denying the universality of hope to us so that he can be certain of his full hell: that was, after all, the view of a large number of followers of Augustine. But, in return, I would like to request that one be permitted to hope that *God's redemptive work for his creation might succeed* [emphasis added]. Certainty cannot be attained, but hope can be justified.²⁷

This dismissal is extremely significant. What is at stake for the Swiss theologian in his refusal to unify or integrate these two sets of texts into one intelligible theology? Evidently Balthasar's own theological project does not set out first and foremost to justify the use of Thomistic principles. Rather, his evaluation of Aquinas on this point must ultimately be understood within the context of his larger dramatic theory of redemption. While Balthasar's theodramatic conception of salvation is a vast topic that exceeds the scope of this essay, three essential issues should be discussed here insofar as they touch upon this topic.

First, it is necessary to emphasize that Balthasar's goal in *Dare We Hope*, as in *Theo-Drama* V, is to envisage salvation from within the parameters of his own dramatic theology of Trinitarian self-emptying. This portrayal of redemption hinges especially upon Christ's descent into hell on behalf of the salvation of all persons.²⁸ Because such a narrative structures his

²⁷ Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 183–84, 187.

²⁸ For evidence of this theological stance, see for example, *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 247–69. I will return to this point in the following section of the essay. For convincing expository arguments concerning the centrality of this dramatic motif throughout Balthasar's work, particularly with regard to his soteriology and

theology, this same narrative consequently conditions his understanding of the role of human freedom and its final “resolution” in light of the Incarnation and Pascal mystery. Secondly, given the intrinsically *sequential* character of this dramatic perspective on human history, there can be no *final* “resolution” of the problem of human evil before the “last act” of the story.²⁹ The form of Christian hope that Balthasar advocates would be undermined by the affirmation that *we know* that God would permit a creature to persist in the refusal of salvation.³⁰ Such a “premature” affirmation overlooks the “unresolved” character of the ongoing story of salvation. Because this is the case, one may deduce that the distinction between antecedent and consequent willing in God is a threat to the narrative structure of Balthasar’s theology of redemption precisely because *it resolves a key element of the drama prior to the last act*. It tells us precisely that God can and will allow a creature to definitively refuse his offer of grace. Balthasar’s refusal to admit such a conception of the “permissive will” of God, by contrast, allows him to insist in marked fashion upon the *irresolution* of the drama of human freedom as it stands before the infinite freedom of God in Christ. By maintaining this tension without any dissolution, Balthasar prolongs the dramatic possibility that ultimately, due to Christ’s self-emptying and experience of abandonment by God, *it may be that no creature can persist in the refusal of God’s grace*. And likewise, *God’s grace might vanquish all human resistances*.³¹

eschatology, see Margaret M. Turek, “Dare We Hope ‘That All Men Be Saved’ (1 Tim 2:4)?: On von Balthasar’s Trinitarian Grounds for Christian Hope,” *Logos* 1 (1997): 92–121; and Nicolas J. Healy, *The Eschatology of Hans Urs Von Balthasar: Being as Communion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁹ *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 283–84: “The judgment of the Cross is final, but the Lord waits until the Last Day to reveal its complete result . . . thus the mission of the Cross points forward to the conclusion of the mission at the end of the world, where what was accomplished on the Cross interiorly by suffering, must be manifested externally in power.’ If all sins are undercut and under-girded by God’s infinite love, it suggests that sin, evil, *must be finite and must come to an end in the love that envelops it*” (emphasis added). (The citation in the text is from Von Speyr, whose words Balthasar makes his own.)

³⁰ Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 27: “On his earthly pilgrimage, man is, of course, placed between fear and hope, simply because he is *under* judgment and does not know . . . but precisely the knowing (about the ultimate futility of the Cross) renders impossible this state of suspension of those on pilgrimage.”

³¹ *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 311–12: “The Son ‘has used his divine omnipresence in the Incarnation in such a way that, wherever men are pursuing some path, he is there’ . . . In other words, anyone who tries to choose complete forsakenness— in order to prove himself absolute vis-à-vis God— finds himself confronted by the figure of someone even ‘more absolutely’ forsaken than himself. . . . Now there can be no talk of doing violence to freedom if God appears in the loneliness of

Thirdly, this points us toward a deeper presupposition: It is the infinite love of God that must ultimately determine the final ending of the drama of salvation. Given this premise, it is impossible for Balthasar to reconcile the “two sets of texts” of the New Testament (one affirming the real possibility of eternal loss, and the other affirming that the work of God’s salvation embraces all) by recourse to the distinction between the antecedent and consequent will of God. That distinction allows the act of human refusal to put the drama of salvation to an end in a definitively negative way. Instead, both sets of text are to be read in light of the one affirmation of the infinite love and freedom of God, over and against man. The latter set of texts (see *Dare We Hope*, 177) are thus understood as speaking of an effective will of God to convert all by the freedom of his infinite love, while the former set reveals our situation “under judgment” (an incessant refrain of Balthasar) *by that same infinite love*. The *continuity* between the two sets of “irreconcilable” statements is the fact that in each case the situation of man is finally determined *uniquely by the infinite love* of God, as either judge on the one hand or as liberator on the other. It is the infinite love of Christ that will have the “last word” in the drama of salvation.³² Our hope for the salvation of all is *not certain* (against Origenism) precisely because the judgment belongs to the infinite love of God and not to us. Yet, it is *possible* (against Augustinianism) due to the potential efficacy and freedom of such a love.³³

the one who has chosen the total loneliness of living only for himself (or perhaps one should say: who thinks that is how he has chosen) and shows himself to be as the One who is still lonelier than the sinner.” [The citation is from Von Speyr.]

³² *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 295: “Human freedom is not self-constituted: it is appointed by God to operate in its limited area; ultimately it depends on *absolute* freedom and must necessarily transcend itself in that direction. . . . While infinite freedom will respect the decisions of finite freedom, it will not allow itself to be compelled, or restricted in its own freedom, by the latter.” *Dare We Hope*, 15: “Man is under judgment and must choose. The question is whether God, *with respect to his plan of salvation, ultimately depends, and wants to depend, upon man’s choice; or whether his freedom, which wills only salvation and is absolute, might not remain above things human, created, and therefore relative*” (emphasis added).

³³ *Dare We Hope*, 26, 178: “How does [one] know this— that Jesus died on the Cross not only for all sinners, which is dogma, but also because he was incapable of redeeming them, since hell was and will remain stronger than him? . . . I do not know, but I think it is permissible to hope that the light of divine love will ultimately *be able* to penetrate every human darkness and refusal” (emphases added). In the absence of the above-mentioned distinction, the question has become one of the *ability* of God’s will, a truism, since this will is infinite. To fail to hope in this way, Balthasar would seem to imply, is to fail acknowledge the truly infinite character of God’s love.

It is true that these affirmations coexist with an insistent claim on Balthasar's part that man can refuse the love of God and thereby create his own hell. Indeed, the finite freedom of the creature is intrinsically constitutive of all theological drama.³⁴ Consequently, Balthasar can be categorical about the fact that hell (as a result of misused human freedom) is not of divine making, and that if it exists, it leaves God "innocent" of blame. He cites many theological allies who stand beside him on this point.³⁵ Despite these incessant qualifications, however, the basic structure of his thought "displaces" the locus of mystery away from God's permissions of moral evil (and the creature's persistence in such evil) toward the question of our ambivalent status before the twofold dimension of an infinite divine love, as that which can either freely condemn us, or liberate us. The rejection of Damascene's distinction epitomizes this shift of dramatic focus. The only question then becomes: Will God ultimately seek to overcome all finite resistance to his will? He certainly can, but will he choose to? Are we certain that he will not? Are we permitted to hope this of him?

From the above observations, one can draw a preliminary conclusion. Underlying Balthasar's "retelling" of the narrative of salvation, there is a concern about misrepresenting who God is. To posit a conditional will for salvation in God is to misperceive something vital about divine love.³⁶ To hope in the universal salvation of all men over and against their refusals of divine love, by contrast, is precisely to hope in the success of the divine will, and its effectiveness. This is to hope, in short, that God in his freedom and love is not a failure, but will eventually overcome all human resistance. While Balthasar's sarcasm functions at times as an unfortunate substitute for argumentation,³⁷ on a deeper level it denotes a profound conviction:

³⁴ This point is emphasized in many places, but is especially developed in *Theo-Drama*, vol. 2 (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1990): 173–316; and in *Theo-Drama*, vol. 3, 33–40.

³⁵ See Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 53–58, with citations of Schmaus, Martelet, Rahner, C. S. Lewis, and Ratzinger. A similar list is found in *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 278.

³⁶ Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 23: "We might, however, make quite clear to ourselves how outrageous it is to blunt God's triune will for salvation, which is directed at the entire world . . . by describing it as 'conditional' and calling absolute only that divine will in which God allows his total will for salvation to be thwarted by man."

³⁷ The caricatures of scholasticism are unhelpful. See Daguet, *Finis Omnium Ecclesia*, ch. 6, which studies how, for Aquinas, the two titles of antecedent and consequent relate to the ways in which God's will effects a unique plan of salvation within creation, both "anterior" and "posterior" to angelic and human sin. This perspective sidesteps, then, Balthasar's claim that this "scholastic" innovation is a mere projection of human logic onto the simplicity of divine love. On the contrary, the distinction safeguards that simplicity and shows how this one love produces diverse effects in a providential order that allows for but also responds to sinful human beings.

that God's accepting (permitting) his saving graces to be refused by human freedom would constitute a kind of a failure, a failure of Christ himself in his saving work, a failure of the infinite love and freedom of God.

But, as I have stated above, the biblical statements cited by Balthasar need not imply this perspective. The will to save all men translates into an effective offer of the possibility of salvation, but it does not alleviate a mystery of human cooperation. Indeed, according to the Council of Trent, God requires such cooperation from his creatures in the plan of redemption, and correspondingly allows his inspirations of created grace to be resisted and refused.³⁸ It is because of his "hyper-Augustinianism" inherited from Barth that Balthasar refuses the idea of such a permissive will in God as a "dimension" of his antecedent will for the salvation of all. Before I argue for this, however, I will present briefly Journet's use of the differentiation between the antecedent and consequent will of God in order to explain the possibility of the finite creature's persistence in moral evil *despite* the providential will of God (and not because of it).

God's Antecedent and Consequent Will for Salvation According to Journet

Journet's grand division for understanding the mystery of grace and the problem of man's refusal consists in his distinction between the *positive line* of ascent to God through movements of grace and nature (in which God as the primary cause is always the source of being and action in the creature), and the *negative line* of refusal, in which the creature *alone* is the first cause of sin.³⁹ This understanding appeals, in effect, directly to the distinction between the antecedent and consequent will of God. The positive line of growth toward beatitude in the creature springs from the initiatives of God's antecedent will. By the very fact that God has created human beings in his wisdom and goodness, he desires to beatify them. Yet this desire springs from a *conditional* will insofar as it invites creaturely consent to the initiatives of grace. The negative line of refusal arises due to the fact that God permits the creature in its poorly used freedom to

³⁸ *Decree on Justification*, ch. 5; and canons 4, 5, and 17 (Denz., nos. 797, 814, 816, 827). See also the condemnation of C. Jansen's second proposition: that grace is always irresistible (Denz., no. 1093), repeated in a variety of forms against P. Quesnel (Denz., nos. 1359–1382).

³⁹ This conceptual formulation of the problem originates in the thought of Jacques Maritain, *Existence and the Existent* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966) and *God and the Permissions of Evil* (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Co., 1966). It arises in many places in Journet's work. See, for example, *The Meaning of Grace*, 17–34; *The Meaning of Evil*, 152–82; *Essai de théologie de l'histoire du salut*, 207–86.

contradict his will for its salvation and even to persist in this refusal despite his will. His judgment of the sinful person is a manifestation of the consequent will of God.

God wishes to save all men. . . . If they are saved, the glory is his. . . . If we are not saved, the fault is ours. . . . Before moving us with his sovereignly efficacious influence, God subjects us to an influence which we are able to resist. In this case, the whole initiative of refusal comes from us alone: indeed, while God alone can be the first Cause of being and goodness, the creature alone can be the first cause of evil, and can alone take the initiative in doing what is nothingness and reducing to nothing the divine influx. In God's saving intentions, the influence which can be resisted is subordinated to [an] irresistible influence, as the flower to the fruit, as the grain of wheat to the ear; if it is not resisted, it immediately gives way to the saving influence which carries all before it; if it is resisted, the impetus which moves all creatures to act will, through the fault of the free creature, be turned aside towards evil. No angel or adult human being is lost except by having freely refused God's advance. . . . A parallel to the distinction between resistible and irresistible influence can be found in the distinction drawn by theologians between antecedent divine will and consequent divine will, between so called "sufficient" grace and "efficacious" grace.⁴⁰

Three things need to be said here about Journet's understanding of the permissions of evil insofar as they contradict the antecedent will of God. First of all, if God creates spiritual creatures *in statu viatoris* who can accept beatitude as a gift, *by the same token*, he allows these same creatures to misuse this possibility in order to refuse divine life.⁴¹ However, this state of

⁴⁰ Journet, *Evil*, 155–57.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 148–49: "It is of the essence of any free, intelligent creature, by an act of choice, to have the capacity to hold fast to its mysterious and absolutely transcendent supreme law or not. To do away with this capacity and suppose a free creature, man or angel which by nature did not possess the possibility or capacity to sin, would be to suppose a creature which was its own supreme law, a creature which was the Creator. 'If there is free will, the creature must be *able* to hold fast or otherwise to the Cause on which it depends. Now to say that it cannot sin would be to say that it is *unable* not to hold fast to its Cause; from which arises a contradiction.' " The citation is from Aquinas, II Sent. d. 23, q. 1, a. 1. See also ScG III, c. 109; and ST I, q. 63, a. 1. Journet is following Aquinas here in affirming that any spiritual creature by its very *nature* (due to the potency and imperfection of its will) is naturally capable of sinning. As Aquinas states plainly, God cannot even *in his absolute omnipotence* create a free creature that is not *naturally* capable of sin. This would be tantamount to an intrinsic *contradiction*. A state in which sin is impossible, therefore, can only come about through grace for Aquinas (ST I, q. 63, a. 1). See the study by Maritain on this topic, *The Sin of the Angel* (Westminster: Newman Press, 1959).

affairs only exists due to the *permission* of God's will. In allowing creatures to resist his grace, God does indeed allow them to contradict his "ordered will" for the salvation of all, but in doing so they may not violate his "absolute will," that is to say, his omnipotence.⁴²

Secondly, then, the creature who sins depends, even in its very act of sinning, upon the creative activity of God. While God sustains in being even the very action of the creature who sins, he is not the cause of the moral deformation of this act insofar as it is sinful. The creature that refuses grace acts by a movement of will that depends upon God for its existence and mobility. Yet this act stems uniquely from the sinner *insofar as it is disordered* and therefore implies a privation of goodness.⁴³ This can be the case due to the fact that the creature may employ the gift of its being-in-action "parasitically" so as to cling to goods that it *already possesses* in such a way so as to *refuse or withdraw from higher initiatives* of grace. The latter would permit the creature to become "more" than it already is. Yet, a soul may culpably prefer a lesser good to a greater good, and in doing so refuse to

⁴² See Journet, *Evil*, 152–61. On the absolute versus the ordered power of God, see *ST* I, q. 25, a. 5, ad 1. I have alluded already to the fact that God does not will evil, but does will to permit it. Perhaps in his "absolute power," God could create beings in a state of beatific vision such that sin would be impossible. In fact, however, he creates creatures in a state of imperfection, in which sin is possible (*De veritate*, 24, a. 1, ad 16; *ST* I–II, q. 5, a. 7). In *Comp. Theo.*, c. 142, Aquinas explains that God in permitting evils does not detract from his own goodness: "The role of providence is not to condemn the nature of the beings it governs but to save them. . . . If evil were totally excluded from things, *they would not be regulated according to their nature* by the divine providence." Clearly, it is natural for spiritual creatures to welcome beatitude freely and deliberately, moved in will and intellect by God in subordination to and cooperation with God's initiatives of grace. Yet, this also allows for the possibility of sin. As Journet frequently notes, this complex condition is befitting due to the analogy of love between the Creator and creatures: The mystery of God's life is freely offered in love so that it can be freely consented to in love.

⁴³ This is the explicit teaching of Aquinas: *ST* I–II, q. 79, a. 2: "The act of sin is both a being and an act. In both respects it is from God. . . . But sin denotes a being and an action with a defect: and this is from a created cause, namely, the free will, as falling away from the order of the First Agent, namely, God. Consequently, *this defect is not reduced to God as its cause*, but to the free-will, even as the defect of limping is reduced to a crooked leg as its cause, but not to the motive power. . . . Accordingly God is the cause of the act of sin: and yet He is not the cause of sin, because He does not cause the act to have a defect" (emphasis added). See also, *De Malo*, q. 3, a. 1 and 2; and Journet's commentary, *Evil*, 166–67.

refer itself rationally to a higher law of truth and goodness.⁴⁴ In itself, such sin (as contempt for the moral law and the law of God) constitutes a certain privation, and even a kind of nothingness as regards existence, the true, and the good.⁴⁵ In this way creatures who resist initiatives of grace are permitted to diminish (or “negate”) themselves ontologically, in refusing the economic dispensation of God.

Thirdly, therefore, Journey (following both Augustine and Aquinas) affirms that the creature alone is the first “cause” of sin. God is innocent with regard to moral evil and does not will it either directly or indirectly. Yet for all this, he in no way cedes his omnipotence with respect to the creature. Rather, in his tolerance of sin, he wills to permit the creature who depends entirely upon him for its being to directly violate his loving will.⁴⁶ The persistent refusal of God’s grace that leads to perennial separation from him (the state of hell) is therefore a “thorn in the heart of God” not willed by God.⁴⁷ Yet this refusal does not constitute a “failure” of the

⁴⁴ Of course, in performing such evil actions, creatures do not intend a privation as such (for its own sake). Man can only desire the good *per se*. Sin occurs through a deliberate, culpable, disordered attachment to an inferior good that turns the creature away from its true final end. Journey, *The Meaning of Evil*, 71: “That evil only introduces itself into the world hidden beneath something good is true also in the moral order of *voluntary agents*. The sinner does not desire a privation but a particular good, yet he cannot chose it without turning himself away from his final end and laying himself open to disaster. God is desired *per se* and evil *per accidens*.” Likewise, see Aquinas, *I Sent.*, d. 1, q. 1, a. 1, ad 2; and *De Malo*, q. 1, a. 1 and a. 3.

⁴⁵ ScG III, c. 7: “Evil is simply a privation of something which a subject is entitled by its origin to possess and which it ought to have. This is what everyone calls ‘evil.’ Now privation is not an essence; it is, rather, a negation in a substance. Evil therefore is not an essence in things.”

⁴⁶ *I Sent.*, d. 47, q. 1, a. 2, ad 1: “Those who are not with God are, so far as in them lies, *against* God, from the fact that they go against the antecedent divine will.” *ST* I, q. 19, a. 9: “God in no way wills the evil of sin.” *ST* I–II, q. 79, a. 1: “It is impossible that God should be, for himself or for others, the cause of rebellion against the order which is in himself.” *ST* I–II, q. 79, a. 1, ad 3: One who sins is “like a servant who acts *against* his master’s command.” As Journey shows against Calvin (*Evil*, 162), this idea that evil originates from the creature alone and not from the will of God is also taught by Augustine in the *83 Questions*, no. 21, *De libro arbitrio*, I, 1, 2, and maintained even in the later *Contra Julianum*, c. 7, 52, 61, 64. Aquinas and Journey, on this point, are working out of the classical Augustinian position. It is reaffirmed by the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 311.

⁴⁷ See *Evil*, 183, where Journey adopts as his own the words of Maritain: “Sin does not only deprive the universe of something good, it also deprives God himself of something which was conditionally but really willed by him. Moral defect affects God, though not in himself, since he is invulnerable, but in the things and effects which he wills and loves. In this, God can be said to be the most vulnerable of beings.”

divine economy, because this refusal is known by God from all eternity (without being in any way caused by him as sin),⁴⁸ and therefore his providence accounts for it by a compensatory good of some kind.⁴⁹

III. Balthasar and Journet on Sufficient Grace

Balthasar's Hope for the Infinite Will of God to Overcome All Human Refusal

As my arguments above have made clear, Balthasar is ill at ease with the notion of a permissive will of God (a conditional will, related to God's tolerance of moral evil). In fact, the corollary of my claim is a second assertion that his vision of the effective character of grace originates from the Augustinian tradition, and even bears some resemblances to certain formulations of Jansenism, or the Protestantism of a Calvin. More to the point, it is seemingly deeply indebted to the inversion of Calvinism that is proper to the thought of Barth.⁵⁰ As students of the Barthian doctrine

⁴⁸ God is obliged in fidelity to himself to assert the goodness of his truth and holiness even to the creature that refuses him, and in this way expresses the mystery of his justice. In this sense he wills the "punitive dimension" of damnation only in an indirect way, as a response to those creaturely evils that are not caused by him but only tolerated. See *Evil*, 179, 184–86; and Aquinas, *ST* I, q. 19, a. 9.

⁴⁹ It should be noted here that in his *Grace and Freedom*, 94–118, Lonergan presents a historical analysis of Aquinas's doctrine that largely concurs with the three points mentioned above. More generally, Journet and Lonergan—while not identical in all respects—agree on the following points in their reading of Aquinas: (1) God wills and knows contingent creaturely action infallibly from all eternity as contingent action, and therefore knows evil actions from all eternity. (2) Moral evil is contrary to God's antecedent will for the salvation of all, but is not contrary to his omnipotence insofar as God wills to permit evil. (3) God creates and sustains actions of evil in being qua action without being in any way a *cause* of the defectiveness of such acts. Rather, creatures alone in the misuse of their liberty are the first cause of moral evil. Therefore predestination occurs prior to foreseen merits while reprobation only occurs in the wake of foreseen demerits. (4) Moral evil contradicts specific goods of the divine government and therefore contradicts the order willed by God, but also is accounted for by God's desire to bring forth greater goods in spite of such evil. (5) Such evil constitutes an absurd "absence" of being and truthfulness which stems not from an absence of initiative on God's part, but from a defect in human liberty. (Lonergan speaks of an "irrational surd" of "objective falsity" present in the deformity of human freedom, while Journet speaks of God having "no divine idea" of moral evil, insofar as it is an ontological privation of goodness and truth.) Both of these latter positions recall the words of Christ in judgment to those who are condemned: "I never knew you. I do not know you" (Mt 7:21–23; 25:12).

⁵⁰ Barth's influence over Balthasar is an immense subject that certainly exceeds the scope of this essay. Yet, it is also a topic that merits further research from theological

of election know, the great Swiss Reformed thinker takes from Calvin the idea that election should direct thinking about the meaning of creation, Christology and dogmatics as a whole. However, he inverts this received schema, so that Calvin's doctrine of "double-predestination" (of some to glory and some to damnation) is rejected.⁵¹ Instead, he insists that Christ alone is designated as reprobate on behalf of all, so that in and through the passion and "descent into hell," all men can in turn become the subjects of election through him.⁵² This election becomes—in Barth's thought—the basis for a hope in favor of the universal effectuation of salvation.⁵³ In

historians. In a letter to Maritain on August 9, 1945, Journet describes a letter he has recently received from the young Jesuit chaplain of Bâle in which the latter describes himself as a student of Barth, and claims that he follows the Swiss Protestant thinker in holding to some version of the doctrine of *apokatastasis*, as reinterpreted in light of the mystery of Holy Saturday. (*Journet-Maritain Correspondance*, vol. 3 [Saint-Augustin: St-Just-La-Pendue, 1998], 336–37.) Does this accurately describe the thought of Balthasar in 1945? In his 1951 work on Barth's theology (published in English as *The Theology of Karl Barth* [San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992], 185–87), Balthasar offers nuanced criticisms of Barth precisely as a proponent of *apokatastasis*. In his 1966 work, *Love Alone: The Way of Revelation* (first published in English in 1968 by Sheed and Ward [London], 78–80), he expresses the idea of universal salvation for all as a hope, rather than a certitude. Yet, he does characterize this hope as one pertaining to the "effective" intervention of God in the lives of all persons, over and above all their finite refusals (79). This "effective" grace Balthasar speaks of is the subject of my considerations in this part of my essay.

⁵¹ On Barth's doctrine of election, as related to Calvinism and his purposeful inversion, see Bruce McCormack, *Karl Barth's Critically Realistic Dialectical Theology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 20–23, 455–63. On the Christological character of Barth's doctrine of election, see his essay "Grace and being: the role of God's gracious election in Karl Barth's theological ontology," in *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth*, ed. John Webster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 92–110. Calvin's own doctrine of Christ's descent into hell on behalf of the faithful can be found in *Institutes of the Christian Religion* II, ch. 16, nos. 10–12. His doctrine of double predestination is discussed in III, ch. 21–24.

⁵² *Church Dogmatics* II, 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1957), n. 35. P. 451: "The Elect both willed to be and was the Rejected as well . . . the rejection merited by all others was his—the only One who did not merit rejection—and therefore no longer theirs." On Christ's acceptance of the state of judgment and separation from God for us, see CD IV, I, no. 59, part 2. Balthasar studies this idea in his *The Theology of Karl Barth*: 174–88. He accepts and develops these themes with some qualifications: see *Theo-Drama*, vol. 4 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1994), 284ff., and *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 272ff.

⁵³ *Church Dogmatics* II, 2, 417–18: "If we are to respect the freedom of divine grace, we cannot venture the statement that it must and will finally be coincident with the world of man as such (as in the doctrine of the so-called *apokatastasis*). . . . But again, in grateful recognition of the grace of the divine freedom, we cannot venture the opposite statement that there cannot and will not be this final opening up and

continuity with the Protestant heritage, Barth himself categorically rejects the notion of a conditional will in God, which would allow its “effects of grace” to be subject to the refusals of human willing. Precisely in his discussion of the grace of election effectuated by the redemption of Christ (and in explicit opposition to Catholic doctrine), he opposes forcefully any notion of a resistible grace or of a “merely sufficient” grace that would not already be somehow effective.⁵⁴

Balthasar’s thought is not identical with that of Barth. Yet, he does retain many elements from this composite of ideas, recasting them in a distinctly “theo-dramatic” fashion. Eluding any form of facile optimism, he emphasizes the reality of man’s true separation from God by sin. Yet this reality of self-exclusion from God is, as it were, taken account of from all eternity by the Trinitarian God through the dramatic movement of a Christological reprobation on our behalf.⁵⁵ Most notably, Balthasar claims that the biblical concept of “hell” takes on a new definition *in light of* Christ’s separation from God on the Cross: All finite separations of sinful human beings must now be understood as encompassed by the “ever-greater” separation of Christ from the Father in his descent into hell.⁵⁶ This separation occurring

enlargement of the circle of election and calling.” Balthasar’s structure of thought is very similar to that of Barth: Man is suspended between the judgment of an omnipotent love, and the freedom of that same love to save all persons.

⁵⁴ *Church Dogmatics* IV, 1, no. 58 (London: Continuum, 2004), 86–88: “Is grace as such ever *sufficiens* without being *efficax*? Is it ever effective objectively without being effective subjectively? . . . Does the fact that man believes he can evade or resist it mean that we can speak of a grace which is not effective? . . . But the grace of the one God and the one Christ, and therefore the objective grace which never comes to man except from God, must always be understood as the one complete grace, which is subjectively strong and effective in its divine objectivity, the grace which does actually reconcile man with God.” For further analysis of this aspect of Barth’s thought, with abundant textual citations, see Alister McGrath, *Justitia Dei*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 177–84.

⁵⁵ See in particular, *Theo-Drama*, vol. 4, 317–50, where this theme is developed in depth.

⁵⁶ *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 277: “Karl Barth is quite right when he says that we must put out of our minds any ‘complete balance’ between God’s elective mercy and his condemnatory righteousness (*Church Dogmatics* II, 2). In fact we can go a step further than Barth; for he conceives (“double”) predestination in such a way that Christ is the One chosen to be solely condemned on behalf of all the condemned. This comprehensive formula is too close, however, to the view that the sufferings of the Cross were a punishment. . . . The Crucified Son does not simply suffer the hell deserved by sinners; he suffers something below and beyond this, namely, being forsaken by God in the pure obedience of love. Only he, as Son, is capable of this, and it is qualitatively deeper than any possible hell. This signifies an even more radical abandonment.”

in Christ in turn allows us to hope that God may overcome the refusal of every human person, precisely in his or her greatest distance from God.⁵⁷

Second, based on this perspective, Balthasar will also follow Barth in casting suspicion upon any notion of a “conditional” offer of grace. The descent into hell is precisely the dramatic sign that God does not will the refusal of the sinner to have a perennial character. As a dramatic concept, it proclaims above all the unconditional love of God, a love that per se is not subject to any human refusal, and which knows no boundaries. Such love is a dimension of the “infinite freedom” of God that I have referred to above. This freedom, which Christ’s mission embodies, should be seen to have the final word in the “last act” of the human and divine drama.⁵⁸ Its “resolution” of the divine economy must not be seen as merely “consequent” to any finite human refusal.

Third, then, (and also in parallel to Barth) the notion of sufficient grace (a resistible grace) is expressly rejected by Balthasar in *Dare We Hope*. Such a notion is problematic precisely because it is seen as falsely portraying both God’s resolution of the divine economy and man’s capacity for refusal of that resolution. It would suggest, rather, a kind of velleity on the part of God. The infinite love of the latter would be subject to human refusal, foreseen in advance to be inefficacious and offered only so that the creature (who inevitably refuses this non-effective movement of the soul) is earmarked as one rightly condemned for having rejected grace. Such “resistible” grace, while classically called “sufficient grace” is therefore of nebulous sufficiency.

Can human defiance really resist to the end the representative assumption of its sins by the incarnate God? . . . [T]hen the theologians will

⁵⁷ See *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 247–69. Compare Balthasar’s citation of Adrienne von Speyr, whose seemingly Calvinistic ruminations echo Barth: “Yet our darkness is not related to his [God’s] light as one absolute to another. Even the darkness of sin does not fall outside God’s power. Therefore it is possible that God graciously overshadows our sinful darkness with his greater darkness [on the Cross].” (Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 80.) The citation is from Von Speyr, *John I* (1949), 61. It is fair to say that for von Speyr as for Barth, the reprobation of Christ (the “darkness of the Cross”) is the condition of our “darkness of sin” being annulled and “overcome” by the totally unequal, infinite power of divine love.

⁵⁸ *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 284: “‘There is nothing partial in Christ’s suffering and dying. And since everyone is created with a view to Christ, God applies to them the measuring rod of Christ’s unconditional life. He chooses and rejects them according to the measure of Christ. In doing so he does justice to what Christ has done for us; and Christ has suffered unconditionally to bring about the totality of redemption.’” (The citation is again from Von Speyr, who Balthasar cites for his own doctrine.)

again have to set up strange distinctions within God's will for grace: there is a "sufficient grace" (*gratia sufficiens*), characterized as something that, from God's view point, would have to be sufficient for converting the sinner yet is rejected by the sinner in such a way that it is actually not sufficient for achieving its purpose; and an "efficacious grace" (*gratia efficax*), which is capable of attaining its goal. . . . But how, then are we to understand the grace that is effected through the representative work of Christ . . . ? Grace is "efficacious" when it presents my freedom with an image of itself so evident that it cannot do other than *freely* seize itself, while grace would be merely "*sufficient*" if this image did not really induce my freedom to affirm itself but left it preferring to persist in its self-contradiction. . . . It would be in God's power to allow the grace that flows into the world from the self-sacrifice of his Son (2 Cor 5:19) to grow powerful enough to become his "efficacious" grace for all sinners. But precisely this is something that we can only hope for.⁵⁹

Behind this criticism lies the presumption that all real work of the infinite, all holy God is necessarily effectual. It stems from an infinite love. Where there is non-acceptance, then, there is non-activity. Shall we believe in a grace "sufficient" for salvation but "resistible"? This would entail the admission that the love of God might somehow fail.

Balthasar's reflections on this last point are significant and revelatory. We have mentioned above that for Balthasar, the biblical texts claiming a possibility of eternal loss and the texts claiming the universal will to salvation stand in a contrast that is irresolvable and can only be lived out by each Christian in non-presumptuous hope for himself and for others. Yet this text cited above alludes to the fact that the possibility of a hell stemming from human sin alone (which Balthasar quite rightly insists upon) is a possibility that is excluded by the presence of effective grace. Therefore, the hope for universal salvation is not a hope that all men may receive the grace of God by which they will be saved if they consent, but that God will chose (in the end: whether in this world or the next) to overcome all human resistances effectively. It is therefore more than a hope that God's grace be offered to all, and that each one have the possibility of salvation (the claim I have evoked sympathetically at the start of this essay). It is in fact also a hope that even if human beings initially refuse grace, God will eventually convert by his effective will the hearts and minds of each person in a way that leaves no ultimate space for damnation, no place for an enduring refusal. This is a *hope*, then, for

⁵⁹ Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 208–10. Despite all the parallels with Barth that are present here, one can observe the distinctly Catholic insistence on intrinsic transformation of the will as a necessary dimension of grace.

apokatastasis panton in the “last act” of the drama of redemption, in spite of the (temporary) permissions of creaturely evil.⁶⁰ Of course Balthasar does not affirm that this state of affairs will take place. On the contrary, he repeatedly mounts criticism of both Origenism and Barth on this point.⁶¹ Instead, Balthasar defends the Catholic’s right not to affirm categorically, but *to live in hope* that this state of affairs will come to pass.⁶² In this sense, he is hoping against the possibility of hell for anyone, due to the will of divine love to overcome all evil. This tendency of thought goes hand in hand with his refusal of the Thomistic distinction mentioned above that would allow for a divine permission of the permanent creaturely refusal of grace. As such, it places his “hope” squarely on a trajectory toward the results obtained in the doctrine of Barth.⁶³

⁶⁰ See the approving citation of W. Kreck in *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 299: “In spite of all the compelling negative evidence I have, it is beyond my abilities and competence to assess to what extent, ultimately, a man is really persisting in, or *can persist in, resistance to Christ*” (emphasis added). Balthasar does affirm in various texts that creatures may freely reject God’s grace: see *Theo-Drama*, vol. 3 (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 33–40; *Theo-Drama*, vol. 4, 350; and esp., *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 285–90, where he cites Von Speyr (288) in claiming that “[i]t is possible for [man] to become so hardened in his freedom that he must pursue to the end the path he has chosen in opposition to God.” As *Dare We Hope* makes clear, however, he is ill at ease with the idea that this rejection could be permanent, and in fact dares to hope precisely that it will be overcome by the grace of Christ’s descent into hell on behalf of all human refusal. See also *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 311–14, where Balthasar questions the possibility of persistence in opposition to God’s will, hoping that ultimately Christ’s “God-forsakenness” in its ever-greater separation from God than that instigated by sin, may overcome definitely all forms of human refusal. Page 311: “But the Son has placed himself in man’s way: even if man has turned his back on God, he still finds the Son in front of him and must go toward him. Thus the sinner can move toward God, albeit unaware or reluctantly.” Resistance to God, therefore, appears as but one “scene” within a larger Trinitarian drama of final reconciliation. The dramatic tension is as yet unresolved, but the Cross points us toward the resolution.

⁶¹ See Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 94, where he claims that Barth’s reserve concerning *apokatastasis panton* is “merely rhetorical” since the doctrine flows naturally from the Reformed theologian’s affirmation of universal election and the sovereign and effective character of the divine will over creatures. He is repeating the position taken in *The Theology of Karl Barth*, 185–86. For Balthasar’s comparison of Barth and Origen in this respect, see “Christlicher Universalismus,” in *Antwort: Karl Barth zum siebenzigsten Geburtstag am 10. Mai 1956* (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1956), 241–45.

⁶² See Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 210; and *Theo-Drama* V, 316–21.

⁶³ Both Emil Brunner (*Dogmatik*, vol. 1, *Die christliche Lehre von Gott* [Zurich: Zwingli-Verlag, 1946], 375–79), and Alister McGrath (*Justitia Dei*, 177–84) have described as “gnostic” the theme in Barth’s Christology by which all that has

Further evidence of this tendency can be found by considering the parallels between Barth's treatment of Calvin and Balthasar's vision of extreme Augustinianism. When Balthasar in *Dare We Hope* criticizes the Reformers and Jansenism for their double predestinationist tendencies, his pattern of thought strongly resembles Barth's criticisms of the Calvinist doctrine of double-predestination.⁶⁴ But like Barth with respect to Calvin, he is himself holding to a perspective about the effectiveness of the divine will virtually identical with that of his adversaries, now conditioned by a universal extension of application, rather than a selective one (a contrary position in the same genre). This idea quite simply is that God's will (or in Balthasar's case, God's love) cannot and will not tolerate resistance, or else it would fail. It is a perspective inherited from the later Augustine, and one which is common to Barth as well as Calvin.⁶⁵ The Jansenists used this idea to ground their refusal of any notion of "sufficient" (that is, resistible) grace,

come to pass in history—including evil that is permitted by God—has as its precondition that which exists in God the Trinity from all eternity. In this case, we encounter in history a divine will that "makes use of" the drama of human sin to unveil the eternal history of God in the cross-event, as election, redemption, and reconciliation. Although it cannot be treated sufficiently here, it is important to note a parallel between Balthasar's rejection of the antecedent and consequent will of God in the doctrine of Maximus, and his non-employment of the distinction between the "rational" and "natural" will of Christ at Gethsemane as developed by the same thinker. In *Mysterium Pascale* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000), 80–82, 105–7, Balthasar envisages Gethsemane as a revelation of the "divine will" of the Son, obedient to the Father, and therefore as expressive of an eternal "intra-Trinitarian" obedience which preexists the creation. Such a perspective seemingly ignores Maximus's understanding of Gethsemane as a mystery of natural human repugnance in the will of Christ to the onslaught of moral evil, an evil that *the man* Jesus knows is permitted but not willed by the Father. In the absence of such distinctions, the economy of sin tends to appear—for Barth and Balthasar alike—not as something that contradicts God's will, but as the *necessary* occasion for the revelation of the intra-Trinitarian life of obedience of the Son with regard to the Father. But is the passion of Christ not first and foremost the revelation of a response by divine love to human sin insofar as the latter *violates* the will of God? And is this not exemplified *in a human way* at Gethsemane by the natural repugnance of Christ's human will to sin, suffering, and death?

⁶⁴ See Balthasar, *Dare We Hope*, 65, 192–97, where Balthasar says as much himself.

⁶⁵ See the *Enchiridion*, no. 103, where Augustine teaches categorically that the omnipotent will of God must be carried out, and that, therefore, all grace given by God is irresistibly effective (in the predestined). This teaching was axiomatic for the Reformers as for the Jansenists. In fact, both Luther (in *The Bondage of the Will*, WA 18, 614–20, 630–39) and Calvin (*Institutes*, III, ch. 23, n. 8 and ch. 24) expressly refuse the distinction between God's will and his permissions. God's will and his grace are always irresistible.

and to claim that an (uniquely) effective grace of salvation is given only to the few elect. Grace is irresistible because it stems from the infallible will of God, and therefore those not in a state of grace simply have not received grace because they are not selected by God's will.⁶⁶ Balthasar seemingly inverts this pattern of thought, and recasts it in a dramatic tone, by insisting that the divine choice of salvation in Christ's descent into hell should be seen as applying to all rather than some. Furthermore, he places primary emphasis on the love of God, rather than divine omnipotence. Yet like these other hyper-Augustinian thinkers, he centers the debate on the "infinite freedom" of God to effectuate what he wills: in this case, the salvation of all creatures.⁶⁷ True, he does maintain the carefully qualified hope (rather than categorical affirmation) that the will of God will triumph over sin (as does Barth as well, in several passages). Yet the gravitational tendency of this thought is toward a conclusion that Christian hope, if it is to be adequate to the mystery of God's infinite freedom in love, should and must aspire to the belief that all will be saved.

Sufficient but Resistible Grace According to Journet

I have argued that a corollary of Balthasar's refusal of the notion of a conditional will of God is his hesitation (at least in his eschatological views) concerning the notion of a sufficient but resistible grace. Journet, by contrast, who embraces the above-mentioned distinction, also embraces its corollary: the notion of a grace that is sufficient for salvation, but which must be consented to freely.⁶⁸ Here I wish to make two points concerning this idea.

⁶⁶ With regard to the problematic presuppositions of Jansenism, see the reflections of Jean Miguel Garrigues, "La perseverance," and "Miséricorde et Justice," *Nova et Vetera* (French) 4 (2004): 9–18.

⁶⁷ *Theo-Drama*, vol. 5, 303–4: "In Christ, the life of the Trinity is bent on reconciling the world to God. In this perspective, therefore, if a man tries to exclude himself from it in order to be his own private hell, he is still embraced by the curve of Christ's being. To that extent he is still determined by its essence and meaning, which aims to communicate to the world the freedom of the absolute good. . . . These remarks are designed to shed light on the internal limitations and difficulties involved in the idea that man has absolute power and freedom to turn his back, totally, on God."

⁶⁸ As Bernard Lonergan has shown in his doctoral thesis, the notion of grace as "sufficient" and "efficient" in Aquinas pertains not to two distinct *kinds* of grace, but to the same grace considered as sufficient for salvation and effective when it is not refused. See Lonergan, *Gratia Operans*, 333, 441. However, the notion of a distinct form of grace that can be refused versus a grace that is irresistible was developed in the post-Tridentine period by Thomists to oppose Jansenism and Protestantism on the one hand, and Molinism on the other. Journet takes up *their*

First, such grace, according to Journet, is “sufficient” for salvation insofar as it constitutes a genuine “movement” of the will, a positive influx of natural being and grace, that will lead a creature to justification, sanctification, and eternal life. These fruits of grace (which may take on an eventually “infallibly efficacious” character) are offered by the very first instigations of the Holy Spirit in the human heart.⁶⁹ This operative character of the grace God gives can become cooperative (that is to say, can be participated in by the inner life of the heart) if the will does not withdraw from its activity. This is, however, an instinct of the human heart that must be embraced freely, and which, therefore, may also be resisted, as well as refused.⁷⁰

use of the terms “sufficient” and “efficient” for these two forms of grace. I have preferred to use the terms “resistible” versus “irresistible” so as to avoid confusion. Aquinas, at any rate, most certainly teaches throughout his theological corpus that grace is (at least much of the time) capable of being refused, or “resistible.” For a clear example, see *ScG* III, c. 159–60.

⁶⁹ Pascal’s mockeries of the notion of a sufficient grace that is not truly sufficient, because it does not move the human will, are reasonable, according to Journet, if such grace constitutes only a “power to act,” but not a genuine inclination and movement that the human will can resist. See *The Meaning of Grace*, 28–29. A view resembling that criticized by Journet is in fact explicated by R. Garrigou-Lagrange in *Grace* (New York: B. Herder, 1957), 218–19, 231.

⁷⁰ Journet’s affirmation (following Jacques Maritain) that the creature alone is the first cause of moral evil by its refusal of grace, independently of an “anterior permissive decree” on the part of the will of God, has recently been criticized by Steven Long (“Providence, liberté et loi naturelle,” *Revue Thomiste* 102 [2002]: 355–406) and Gilles Emery (“The Question of Evil and the Mystery of God in Charles Journet,” *Nova et Vetera* (English) 4 [2006]). Their criticisms are informed by the Thomist commentary tradition (Cajetan, Bañez, John of St. Thomas) concerning God’s “antecedent permissive will” as regards evil, which tends to affirm a selective election of the predestined on the part of God. (This tradition was “adjudicated” by Popes Benedict XIII and XIV in wake of the *De auxiliis* controversy, such that it enjoys the right of being considered a permissible theological opinion for Catholic theologians.) Their objections to Journet’s thesis are largely based on a metaphysical argument. The idea of a creature that commits evil without being previously abandoned by God’s movements of nature and grace constitutes an ontological absurdity, they claim, since this would render God relative to creatures in their temporal acts, as a mere being among beings. For Journet, they argue, all would be elected antecedently, but God would be dependent upon the free reactions of those offered grace to confer this election, and therefore would relate to creatures as does another creature, in expectancy and waiting, rather than in his omnipotence. This is absurd because it amounts to a denial of God’s causality as creator. While much of what I have written above suggests that I think the claims these authors make on this topic should be rejected, a prolonged treatment of their position exceeds the scope of this essay. Two brief points can be made in this context, however. First, Long’s interpretation runs the risk of identifying moral evil with natural evil. A

Secondly, Journet claims that such “resistible” movements of grace are not only sufficient for conversion, but also constitute the *ordinary* way of human salvation.⁷¹ There is a miraculous process by which God converts the will “infallibly” from the first instant of his activity in the soul. Yet the

sinful act, he claims, is like a “decaying animal cadaver” that tends toward disgregation and non-existence because it lacks the needed resources of a life-principle. This lack, which inhabits sinful action, is the inevitable result of a tendency of the will toward privation, due to the natural “entropy” of created being which tends toward nothingness. (Long appeals here to *ST* I–II, q. 109, a. 2, ad 2, as his base text.) Because of this tendency, sin occurs necessarily in the wake of God’s *inactivity* (that is, his permissive will to *not* aid the creature who will otherwise sin), rather than by a moral deformation resulting from the creature’s *refusal* of the inspired movements of natural and supernatural goodness. In this case, the human act of sin is interpreted primarily as an act lacking the necessary stimulus from God such that sin would be avoidable. Both Maritain and Lonergan have argued cogently that this position seems to make God more a cause of moral deficiency than the creature itself, since God chooses to withhold resources from certain creatures *such they must necessarily* choose evil. (See in particular, Lonergan, *Gratia Operans*, 339–45.) Secondly, one may consider sin as a negation of being and goodness that comes from the creature *alone* as a “first cause” without this implying any ontological autonomy on the part of the creature. The reason for this is that sinful acts involve a form of negation that is parasitical upon created being. It is because God maintains a moral agent in existence with stable possession of a certain number of “lower” goods that it can prefer these goods to those of a “higher” order. In this way, the creature can negate the coming-into-being (in itself or others) of a higher order (of grace or nature) by refusing the offer of this order, willing instead (wrongly and absurdly) to cling to a lower good or goods (such the love of its own autonomy), in preference to the wisdom and will of God. For Aquinas, as I have noted above, this can occur even while the creature remains ontically dependent upon God for its being-in-action. A helpful theological reflection that criticizes the position of Long and Emery can be found in the essay of Jean-Hervé Nicolas, “La volonté salvifique de Dieu contrariée par le péché,” *Revue Thomiste* 92 (1992): 177–96, where the author retracts his earlier position (which Long and Emery adhere to) and argues in favor of a similar version of the viewpoint adopted by Maritain and Journet on this question, also rejoining many of the insights of Lonergan.

⁷¹ Journet, *Evil*, 158. On this point Journet’s thought contrasts importantly with that of Garrigou-Lagrange who (in *Grace*, 230–31) rejects—against Marin-Sola—the idea that “sufficient” resistible grace might be a more ordinary form of sanctifying grace than that which is intrinsically efficient. However, in reaction to the condemnations of Jansenism, Garrigou-Lagrange’s thought at times resembles in certain respects Journet’s position on God’s universal will of salvation. See *The One God* (St. Louis and London: B. Herder, 1943), 554–56, 683–88; and *Predestination* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books, 1998), 175–77. His perspective here is self-consciously indebted to René Billuart (*Summa Summae S. Thomae*, vol. I, d. 7, a. 3–7; d. 9, a. 5, 6), in contrast to the perspectives of commentators such as Bañez and John of St. Thomas.

process of invitation and “enticement” by a grace that requires consent *typifies* the way in which grace and sanctification take place for members of the human race.⁷² The reason for this is that God’s economy places great emphasis on the mystery of mutual, consenting love.⁷³

The consequences of this position are clear: God offers salvation to all creatures, but this salvation may truly be definitively rejected by some. This rejection is not due to an absence of assistance by God, but stems from the creature’s free refusal. On the last day, the creature who has chosen a life apart from God, in opposition to the truth about itself before God, will stand without excuse before the history of initiatives taken by God in Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

Having freely rejected God as their supernatural end, they have also freely rejected him as a natural end. They detest him through a free act in which they are set, and *prefer* the false beatitude they have chosen, their pride, to their true beatitude. That is the ultimate end they desire above all, even at the price of all sorts of suffering and privation—their beatitude is to be gods by their own strength. They cannot take back this choice, because this has to do with their last end and has been made in the full light of the mind, fixing the will in it in such a way that all subsequent acts of will can only be effected in virtue of that act. And so there is remorse but no repentance, they ask no forgiveness and would refuse it if it were given them—they *wish* to continue in this state.⁷⁴

Conclusion

Why should we not fully embrace Balthasar’s “hope for the salvation of all”? Balthasar’s perspective presents a profound meditation on the theological problem of hell, and offers necessary corrections to an extremist Augustinianism that would deny to some the possibility of salvation. Yet, as appealing as this point of view is in many respects, it is seriously prob-

⁷² Journet, *Evil*, 157: “This is the *ordinary* way in which the subordinated divine will acts. In it grace is given to free creatures *while taking into account* the treatment required by the nature of free creatures, which, being in themselves fallible, are able not to turn to God.” Aquinas has an analysis of God’s simultaneous offer of grace to all and man’s capacity to impede the process of salvation in *ScG III*, c. 159–60; In *ScG III*, c. 161, he goes on to describe an activity of grace which is irresistible—but expressly compares such grace to the “miraculous” as something exceptional, rather than the norm.

⁷³ *Essai de théologie de l’histoire du salut*, 153: Journet develops the idea that God in the wisdom of his love created spiritual beings in a state of imperfection so that they could, by grace, exercise a free, deliberate love of preference for him over all creatures. Compare *De veritate*, q. 24, a. 1, ad 16.

⁷⁴ Jacques Maritain, *Nine Lessons in Moral Philosophy*, as cited by Journet, *Evil*, 206–7.

lematic in at least two ways. Firstly, it fails to take seriously the reality of moral evil as a phenomenon directed against the will of God, for which creatures are responsible over and against the initiatives of divine wisdom and goodness. Evil occurs “outside” the scope of God’s universal will for salvation (without, of course, being “outside” the realm of his omnipotence and omniscience, which tolerate sin). It is therefore something violent with regard to the divine economy, and irreducible to God’s basic desire for beatitude in all spiritual creatures (even if God’s economy of redemption draws greater goods even out of human events of sinfulness).

Secondly, and most seriously, Balthasar’s thought can be seen as clearly intimating that a world in which hell exists is a world in which the love of God has failed. This touches on the heart of the issue. Who exactly has failed when moral evil occurs, and when the spiritual creature “perseveres” in resistance to the divine good? Is it God or the creature? If, following Damascene and Aquinas, we adopt the distinction between the antecedent and consequent will of God, we can say clearly that it is the creature. By refusing the instigations and movements of nature and grace that would rectify his or her use of free will, the human person (or angel) *alone* is to be seen at the *origins* of the mystery of hell. Balthasar seeks at many points to vindicate God against any blame for this condition, yet his theology is fragile at this juncture. He has defended the universal extension of God’s goodness as it is revealed in Christ, but does he defend sufficiently his innocence in the wake of the human refusal of love? In fact, this limitation springs from his Augustinianism. In refusing to appropriate the above-mentioned distinction, he rejects along with it an authentic reception of the Catholic Tradition’s teaching on the “resistible” character of saving grace, and the corresponding reality of God’s permissive will of evil. Consequently, persisting moral evil must necessarily be seen as a reality engendered by the *absence of the divine initiative* toward the heart of the creature who “stands under judgment” by an infinite love. We are confronted, then, with the possibility of either a restricted election or of a universal restoration. Neither can do justice to the teaching of the Gospel. **N V**