

EVOLUTION UNDER THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

LEO J. O'DONOVAN, S.J.

Woodstock College

IN THE VIEW of Hans Urs von Balthasar, the essence of Christianity has been the subject of a long and futile debate between two parties, the progressivists and the integralists, neither of which has been able to propose a satisfactory answer to the original question. Although he finds no solution in the integralist approach, the brunt of Balthasar's criticism has been more often directed at the progressivists, among whom he singles out Teilhard de Chardin as the most effective exponent.¹

Teilhard is seen not as a Modernist (on this point Balthasar agrees with Henri de Lubac) but as a progressivist, and this to the extent that a single category of thought is said to underlie all his thought: evolution understood as upward development. In contrast to the classical versions of the analogy of being, represented in our century especially by Erich Przywara, the Teilhardian approach emphasizes the world's becoming, its genetic character, in such a way that it focuses first of all on the divine immanence and envisages transcendence only in function of this immanence—whereas, objects Balthasar, for a truly analogical understanding of the relation between God and the world, as in Przywara, “it is precisely because He is ‘above’ all that He is (as the Lord) also ‘in’ all—and by no means vice versa.”² Balthasar finds Teilhard's emphasis on the harmony between the Creator and His world so insistent that no room can be left for the word of Israel's Lord to break into history. A simple identification, in addition, is said to be carried out between Teilhard's God and the incarnate Son—and this with astonishing con-

¹ The next pages refer especially to Balthasar's commentary on *Le milieu divin* in “Die Spiritualität Teilhards de Chardin,” *Wort und Wahrheit* 18 (1963) 339–50—henceforth abbreviated “Spiritualität.” Balthasar's attitude toward Teilhard appears to have become increasingly critical over the last years; cf. *Verbum Caro* (Einsiedeln, 1960) p. 299 (ET in two volumes: *Word and Revelation* [New York, 1964] and *Word and Redemption* [New York, 1965]; our reference here is to Vol. 2, 174, where, however, the ET is misleading)—henceforth VC (with ET by volume and page); and then *Das Ganze im Fragment* (Einsiedeln, 1963) pp. 201–2 (ET: *A Theological Anthropology* [New York, 1967] pp. 179–80)—henceforth GF. For a comment on the English translation of *Das Ganze im Fragment*, see my review in *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 29 (1968) 783–86.—Footnote references will always be first to the German text and then, in brackets, to the corresponding page in any English translations that were available to me. Where a standard English translation was available, its translation of Balthasar's text has been used, with corrections where necessary; where not, I have made the translation myself.

² “Spiritualität,” p. 342. Cf. Erich Przywara, *Analogia Entis* (2 vols.; Einsiedeln, 1962), and Bernhard Gertz, *Glaubenswelt als Analogie* (Düsseldorf, 1969).

sistency. If this God is to be called the "God of evolution," Balthasar complains, "the infinite Trinitarian freedom of God, beyond all real and possible worlds, the absolute love which cannot be built into and made serviceable for any world plant and which is conceivable only as the inconceivable: such absolute, free love lies beyond this entire world view which announces so much about love."³

Balthasar's primary objection to Teilhard—and contrary to de Lubac he finds it already fundamental to *Le milieu divin*—centers on the supposedly phenomenological observation that "more" follows upon "less" in the cosmos. In fact, argues Balthasar, this phenomenology inevitably becomes systematic, and then "metaphysics is nothing but generalized biology, so that the philosophy of history and finally the theology of history can only be undertaken as 'cosmobiology.'"⁴ But need the fact that "more" follows "less" imply a derivation of the "more" from the "less"? And even if it does, is it not the task of the philosopher rather than the biologist to explain how the "more" was potentially present in the "less" and thus how the discontinuity in evolution is possible? For Balthasar, man is in any case a "more" who is either present or not, whose history begins under God's dominion or does not, but who certainly cannot be said to have "more or less" emerged.

For the question as to what does develop within the human sphere, Balthasar offers Teilhard an unequivocal answer: only the technical moment, the subjection of matter.

Only technology can develop in the history of mankind, the spirit in its central meaning not at all, but only peripherally, insofar as spirit is first of all relieved by technology of secondary concerns in order to devote itself to what is more essential (*if it does that!*) and, secondly, is involved in tasks (of overcoming obstacles) which are more deeply satisfying because of their general usefulness (*if they do not bore the spirit by reason of their mechanized character!*).⁵

We shall return to this point later, but mention it now to indicate how Teilhard's instinctively positive evaluation of the possibilities of technology contrasts with Balthasar's clear concern to highlight its ambiguous character. All in all, as we shall see, the Swiss theologian considers "evolution" an entirely unpropitious category with which to explain anything at all about Christianity: even if one can possibly systematize the evolutionary perspective in such a way that the process of the world is seen as progress, it must remain central to Christian faith that God's action in His Son is one of utter descent, of utmost self-emptying, of ultimate surrender of His creative love into the most sinful heart of His creation. But in Teilhard's progressivism, as Balthasar reads it, there

³ "Spiritualität," p. 342.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 345.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 346.

seems no possible room for a true cross.

EVOLUTION AND APOCALYPSE IN VLADIMIR SOLOVIEV

And yet not all Christian reflection on evolution is considered by Balthasar to be so one-sided. In the Russian philosopher and theologian Vladimir Soloviev he finds a remarkable anticipation of fundamental insights later developed by figures as various as Dilthey, Husserl, Blondel, Scheler, and above all Teilhard.⁶ Soloviev accepts the hominization process of nature in terms both of philosophical speculation and of empirical science—to such an extent that he considers it fruitless to re-examine the question; he views the general process of culture and the history of religion as tending towards the Incarnation; thus he can view the entire evolution of humanity and of the cosmos as “the total becoming-world of God in the mystical body of Christ.”⁷ In the course of his journey from the project of a system of free, universal theocracy integrating philosophy and theology, through his ecumenical efforts for the unity of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Christianity, to his final period of confrontation with apocalyptic history, Soloviev remains, in Balthasar’s interpretation, the heir both of German idealism and also of the Catholic principle of integration. From the former, especially from Hegel, he inherits both the principle of the subject’s dynamism to become truly personal by realizing its objective *universality* (thus surpassing all particularism and subjectivism) and also the concept of *process* as the progressive determination of the undetermined (where determination and universality grow together). Through the latter, Catholic integration in contrast to Protestant dialectic, Soloviev is understood as capable of ordering all partial standpoints and forms of realization into an organic universalism (*Allheit*) for which God’s becoming man is the permanent and central dynamic of the universe and which has its culmination not in the absorption of all things into an absolute spirit but in the resurrection of the dead. The ordering breadth of this vision has as its result that “the whole meaning of world development, even into the future, seems clearly assured: development of humanity and of the universe into the cosmic body of Christ, realization

⁶ A full chapter is devoted to Soloviev in *Herrlichkeit II: Fächer der Stile* (Einsiedeln, 1962) 647–716—henceforth *H. II*. Balthasar cites Soloviev according to the German edition of his principal works published by Verlag Erich Wewel (Freiburg) since 1957 and also according to Harry Köhler’s edition of the selected works (2 vols.; Jena, 1914, 1916). Citations from Soloviev in our text will indicate the major work they come from and where the citation may be found in *H. II*. For a comparison between Soloviev and Teilhard which is less unfavorable to Teilhard, see Karl Vladimir Truhlar, *Teilhard und Solowjew: Dichtung und religiöse Erfahrung* (Freiburg, 1966). Truhlar argues the fundamental similarity of the two men’s thought based on a similarity of their religious experiences.

⁷ *H. II*, 657.

of the eschatological reciprocity between the incarnate Logos and the Wisdom (Sophia) which He finally incarnates (as His body and bride)."⁸ And yet it can be said that the Greek Fathers are Soloviev's most immediate point of contact in the Christian past, especially Maximus the Confessor: "Soloviev added nothing essential to the static structure of this world view except for the dynamic components of German idealism—nature in process towards man, history towards Christ, and the Church towards the fulfilled kingdom of God."⁹

Still, Balthasar disputes the Platonist interpretation of Soloviev, for whom, he insists, the initiative is clearly and biblically displaced from the Platonic eros in search of God to the gracious con-descension of divine love itself, so that it is henceforth God who is given and man who is sought.¹⁰ Soloviev's God is conceived beyond both personalism (God as the free one) and ordinary pantheism (God as all); He is One and All: "God is not exhaustively determined as personality; He is not only one but all, not only a particular individuality but the all-inclusive essence, He is not only existent but being itself."¹¹ He is, further, absolute in two senses, being both unconditioned by what is not Himself and also fully complete, beyond all measure or limit. As the ground of all that is, He is Father; as the content and meaning of each existent, He is Son; as the uniting bond between the two, He is Spirit. The tendency in Soloviev's earlier works to minimize the distinction between the generation of the Son and the free creation of the world is later mitigated; whereas earlier there was a close proximity of matter to the Word through which all the world is created, it is later Wisdom which in a figurative sense can be considered the body of the divine, the materiality of the godhead, Wisdom as the fulness of being in which "the indeterminate multiplicity never existed as such, but was from all eternity subjected and reducible to the absolute unity of being in its three inseparable hypostases."¹²

This Wisdom, which at the beginning of creation is the idea of absolute unity contained in God's pure presence and is meant at the end of creation to be the realized kingdom of God, is distinguished by Soloviev from its vehicle and substratum in the world soul. The Russian theologian conceives the world soul as the subject and carrier of the world process which begins with the creation; here the Wisdom and universal unity (*All-*

⁸ H. II, 650. In a much simplified way, Ansfried Hulsbosch reproduces a good deal of Soloviev's scheme, particularly in its emphasis on the progressive incarnation of Wisdom; see Hulsbosch's *God in Creation and Evolution* (New York, 1965).

⁹ H. II, 655. Cf. Balthasar's own *Kosmische Liturgie: Das Weltbild Maximus des Bekenners* (2nd ed.; Einsiedeln, 1961).

¹⁰ Cf. *Die geistlichen Grundlagen des Lebens* (1882-84) as quoted in H. II, 654.

¹¹ H. II, 654, quoting *Die fünfte Vorlesung über das Gottmenschentum* (1877-81).

¹² H. II, 674, quoting *La Russie et l'église universelle* (1889).

Einheit) of God progressively embody themselves into the unified, inner nature of the world. Soloviev's expressly dualist conception intends to overcome the notion of a creation in which each successive moment is an absolutely new event. He conceives nature as possessed of a blind will, with tendencies both to order and to chaos, and as arriving at its intended free self-consciousness only under the influence of the Creator-Logos: "in man nature passes beyond itself and enters through its consciousness into the region of absolute being."¹³ Since the world soul only comes to itself in man, it should in fact be identified with him, and this identification is central to Soloviev's conviction that only freedom can be a sufficient reason for the strain and effort involved in the course of the universe's history. The world soul and Wisdom, however, can only be identified in the sense that the former has the latter as the ultimate goal of its transformation. "Seen in this way," comments Balthasar, "[Wisdom precisely as becoming] would be about the same as the Augustinian *civitas, Dei (peregrinans)* or as the Church Universal."¹⁴

Balthasar admits that there is an unavoidable paradox, with Gnostic roots, in Soloviev: the ascent of the world soul towards consciousness in man depends as a process on a supratemporal decision of that same reality in its freedom, in its eternal being-man. For Soloviev, this seems to have been the only way to account for the phenomenon of death in nature before the appearance of man. Sin, however, is by no means equated with the Adam Kadmon but is derived from man's free eternal decision, which can therefore be overcome in its temporal consequences only through "the appearance of the new man . . . [as] mid-point of world history."¹⁵ Christ is understood as the original and unique meaning of Christianity, the man in whom God becomes undeniably real, the overflowing summit of God's becoming one with the world. In Christ a reciprocal kenosis and sacrifice takes place: God empties Himself for the sake of the world, man totally abandons himself into the room which God thus makes free for him. Humanity (as Adam Kadmon), which was innocent in God's eternal conception but became estranged from Him as it sought to be real for itself, thus becomes real for both itself and Him through the free historical event of Christ. Soloviev insists, however, that this event cannot be considered apart from the rest of world process. "What was new and never before present was prepared for by everything that preceded it; it represented what all earlier life had wished and striven for and towards which it had been hastening: all of nature strove and gravitated

¹³ H. II, 679, quoting *Die zehnte Vorlesung über das Gottmenschentum*.

¹⁴ H. II, 681.

¹⁵ H. II, 687, quoting *Die geistlichen Grundlagen des Lebens*. Balthasar's own position on this point will be discussed below.

towards man, all of humanity's history was directed towards the God-man."¹⁶

"Soloviev's fundamental conception," summarizes Balthasar, "is that of realization: as the ideal's becoming real, as the descent of heaven to earth, as the liberation of man to God and to himself through the process of God's becoming man."¹⁷ He builds his system always with a view towards the integration of the "universal-unity" (*All-Einheit*) and consistently regards the entirety of mankind as the norm for the empirical fillings of this universalist form. (This is particularly noticeable, notes Balthasar, in the later ethical work *The Justification of the Good* [1897].) In this perspective it can be said that the eschatological kingdom of God is being prepared in history just as was Christ's appearance. If early Christians asked why the Lord came so late in the course of history, Soloviev's question is much more similar to our own: why Christ came so early and why His return seems still so distant.¹⁸ Basically this can only be understood insofar as one sees how much of the "dough of the world" remains still to be leavened by the idea of Christ. (In fact, adds Balthasar, this leavening process is so emphatically attributed to the ideality of the Logos that Soloviev could possibly, but in the end unjustifiably, be interpreted as suggesting the dissolution of the natural order into that of grace.) The form for the process of mankind's integration into the body of Christ is the Church—form understood here by Soloviev as the catholic means to the end-in-itself of the whole expression of Christ in mankind which is the kingdom of God. The Church, with permanent structures which can only continue to live insofar as they develop further, can then be seen as the embryonic process which reaches its term in the birth of the fulfilled kingdom. But "separated from its living form of *becoming*, [reduced] to the forms of expression which have already *become*, the sanctuary of the Church necessarily loses its infinity, becomes veiled and bound by limited and lifeless, . . . already outlived forms which can only weigh as external facts on its living consciousness."¹⁹

While process and the realization of the ideal in the concrete remain the dominant and guiding themes for Soloviev's integrating thought, the failure of his ecumenical efforts between 1883 and 1890 and such other reversals as the intransigent enmity of his former disciple Leontiev gradually led to a darkening of his faith in secular progress and to a much more significant emphasis on the horizon of biblical apocalypse. Within the aesthetic perspective of his earlier work, apocalypse and aesthetic as

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ H. II, 690. Cf. Balthasar's own conception of Christian witness in *Cordula* (Einsiedeln, 1967; ET: *The Moment of Christian Witness* [New York, 1968])—henceforth C.

¹⁸ We shall return later to Balthasar's way of posing this question.

¹⁹ H. II, 699, citing *Der grosse Streit und die christliche Politik* (1883).

final harmony tend to be practically identical,²⁰ but his writings from 1890 until his death a decade later increasingly emphasize the specifically Christian law of death and resurrection. Whereas the earlier emphasis had been on the emergence of the freely self-conscious world soul in man, the later stress, as Balthasar says, is that "the unconscious world-soul is chaotic, but only the free spirit is demonic."²¹ The "kingdom of death" which had previously been all too easily equated with prespiritual nature, the cross which had only seldom appeared and then as "the sign of spiritual power which overcomes all suffering,"²² these become, in the later and more clearly apocalyptic aesthetic perspective, final factors which the philosopher-theologian decisively entrusts for solution not to his system but to his redeeming Lord.

The force of evil in history is particularly thematized in Soloviev's late *Three Conversations* (1899-1900). Here we see with piercing clarity that evil is no mere imperfection or defect of nature, and that the apocalypse of Wisdom is not identical with that of world history. By this time Soloviev had become deeply skeptical of Tolstoy's pacifism and convinced that death sets a null sign upon all cultural progress. While he denies none of his earlier analyses of the world process as such, argues Balthasar, nevertheless he does come to the fundamental, crucial conviction that this process does not so fulfil itself within history that man can comprehend it in terms of criteria such as the unification of the world or the renaissance of a Christian culture. "The harvest of the world is gathered in, not by humanity itself but by Christ, who alone lays the entire kingdom at His Father's feet. He [Christ] is the integration."²³

To what extent does this perspective of Soloviev coincide with Balthasar's own systematic position?

THE EPITOME—UNFULFILLED

Balthasar has treated the evolutionary relation between man and nature and their common destiny in God primarily within the perspectives of a theology of history,²⁴ where the evolutionary problematic is frequently addressed in an indirect but significant way. His unifying question here, which he repeatedly specifies as principally theological and not philosophical, is whether in the light of revelation we can affirm a *total sense* for history. He is convinced that a truly biblical view of the relationship

²⁰ Cf. H. II, 704 for a good example, from *Die geistlichen Grundlagen*, of this closeness between apocalypse and glory in Soloviev's earlier work. ²¹ H. II, 705.

²² H. II, 706, quoting *Die geistlichen Grundlagen*. ²³ H. II, 716.

²⁴ Especially in *GF* and *Theologie der Geschichte: Ein Grundriss* (4th ed.; Einsiedeln, 1959; ET: *A Theology of History* [New York, 1963])—henceforth abbreviated *TG*. See also the essays "Wort und Geschichte" (*VC*, pp. 28-47 [Vol. 1, 31-55]) and "Improvisation über Geist und Zukunft," in *Spiritus Creator* (Einsiedeln, 1967) pp. 123-55—henceforth *SC*.

between sacred and secular history cannot countenance such a thoroughly systematized harmony of the two as one finds, for example, in Hegel, but he also considers it mistaken so to emphasize the transcendence of the Incarnation as to remove it from all interdependence with secular history, as Karl Löwith does. Balthasar himself proposes a dramatic relationship between the two aspects of history,²⁵ insisting that the apocalyptic element in the biblical message cannot simply be interpreted away and that the sign of the cross remains both transcendent *and* uniquely factual. Furthermore, reflecting on current trends especially within Roman Catholicism, he is controversially concerned to avoid the two extremes mentioned earlier and thus "to negotiate the narrow path between two forms of titanism. The old one, dating from Constantine, which forced political power into the service of the kingdom of Christ, is today discarded, now that the Church has finally lost this power. The new one, which identifies technical progress with the growth of God's kingdom, is all the more welcomed. Both are, however, . . . simply varieties of the same integralism: the one reactionary, the other progressive; the one clerical, the other secular."²⁶ "Whereas [the former] seeks to occupy the positions of earthly power in order to proclaim from them the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount and the cross, [the latter] makes the positions of the Sermon on the Mount and the cross the inner dynamic for progress in earthly power. Both, ultimately, have reduced the problem of power between God and the world, between grace and nature, to a monastic form which is easy to handle and can be managed by men."²⁷ Against the latter assault in particular Balthasar directs his brilliant exposition of the center of Christian faith, the way of the Lamb.²⁸

Nevertheless, he shares with the "Christian progressivists" many of their views on the place of man in nature.

In the philosophy and mysticism of the ancients, matter was regarded as a place of banishment and servitude from which the spirit had to liberate itself. But nowadays matter assumes another aspect. It becomes a hierarchy of successive and evolving forms of life (though by what means we still do not know) which are inwardly oriented towards the supreme form they attain in man, who ontogenetically recapitulates in himself, crowns and transcends, all the forms of nature. The

²⁵ Cf. Balthasar's *Rechenschaft 1965* (Einsiedeln, 1965) pp. 32-33—henceforth *R*. See also Herbert Vorgrimler, "Hans Urs von Balthasar," in Herbert Vorgrimler and Robert Vander Gucht, eds., *Bilanz der Theologie im 20. Jahrhundert: Bahnbrechende Theologen* (Freiburg, 1970) pp. 122-42.

²⁶ *GF*, p. 11 [vii]. ²⁷ *GF*, pp. 238-39 [215].

²⁸ See *VC*, pp. 172-94 [Vol. 2, 23-48]; *Glaubhaft Ist Nur Liebe* (Einsiedeln, 1963)—henceforth *GL: SC*, pp. 322-44; and especially *Herrlichkeit I: Schau der Gestalt* (Einsiedeln, 1961) pp. 445-505—henceforth *H. I. Cf. H. I.*, 445, where Balthasar summarizes his central position.

lord of creation is no longer a stranger in his kingdom, he is not *merely* installed from above, but is *at the same time* one who has risen from beneath through the successive forms of his ancestors, and is thus in his very being bound up with them, in communion with them.²⁹

Man can therefore see himself as “the sum and perfect image of the cosmos.”³⁰ All animal species are related to him as superseded forms of life in which he can recognize aspects of himself. Balthasar remarks that “even scholastic embryology made the discovery that in his ontogenesis man recapitulates the stages of the natural development from which he emerged, which is confirmed by modern paleontology and biology.”³¹ In this microcosmic way, therefore, modern man would be neither more nor less closely related to the natural universe than was his forebear in antiquity.³²

But if man is a microcosm of nature, he is also far more than that. With his emergence from nature there is simultaneously an origin from matter and an origin of the infinite horizon of spirit. A dialectical relationship thus emerges between spirit and the nature which spirit proposes for itself in order to become conscious of itself. This relation between life and spirit, *bios* and *logos*, instinct and reason, has been understood in various ways. The Platonic conception assigns the real power to the spirit and regards the body and instinct as an arena of execution for spirit’s higher purposes. Max Scheler saw the relation between the two as an antagonism, so that the power of instinct must be harnessed by spirit if it is to achieve its purposes. A third conception, which Balthasar shares and proposes as a balance between the other two, understands spirit as “a qualitatively higher stage of life; hence, it is more powerful. Spirit and body overlap like two spheres of power in which the higher, stronger one dominates the lesser one . . . —but under condition that both spheres are acknowledged as having only a relative power and, hence, a mutual creaturely dependence.”³³

Thus “the vertical dimension of man reaches without a break from the spirit through the soul and the living body down into matter, and ‘soul’ and ‘body’ are the stages and modes in which spirit takes root in matter, and matter blooms into spirit—a single, ultimate, dually moved life: corporalization of the spirit, spiritualization of the body, neither existing without the other.”³⁴ The implications of this human situation are immense, as Balthasar shows with respect to man’s proper use of language

²⁹ *TG*, pp. 105–6 [139]; cf. *R.*, pp. 9–10.

³⁰ *GF*, p. 63 [43].

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² See Balthasar’s *Die Gottesfrage des heutigen Menschen* (Vienna, 1956) pp. 37–39, and cf. pp. 133–35 (ET: *Science, Religion and Christianity* [Westminster, Md., 1958] pp. 20–21, 90)—henceforth abbreviated *GM*.

³³ *GF*, p. 217 [194].

³⁴ *GF*, pp. 249–50 [223]; see also *GM*, pp. 64–77 [39–48].

(which can neglect its "image center" only at its own peril) and, in a still more general way, with respect to the interpretation of what Jaspers called the "axial time," the period when humanity moved "from *mythos* to *logos*." This

can be welcomed as the raising of man's mind out of the mists of animality and of the mythical dreams of prehistory. It can be regretted as the loss of man's connection with maternal nature and his passing into the realm of abstract intellect and, therefore, inevitably and irreversibly into a technical age dominated by a technical image of the world in which man is the master of nature. One can hope and fear and will be right to do both. The fact [whose interpretation is the critical question] stands and cannot be altered that man, in a loneliness he has never experienced before, has to take over the responsibility for the one world.³⁵

Faced with this dialectic of nature and spirit, a dialectic in which nature is meant to be subjected to man,³⁶ it is naive, says Balthasar, simply to consider the breakthrough to *logos* as unalloyed progress. It is another extreme, however, to regard spirit as somehow the sickness of life, as a blind alley which technology renders ever more frustrating. Rather, man would be wiser to seek his true equilibrium in the permanent reciprocity of "body and soul, instinct and spirit, image and idea, art and philosophy. . . . If the mind is rooted in the image depths of nature, that means that it is rooted in the unconscious and the undisposable, which the technical intellect cannot get at. Technical self-forming of man, thus interpreted, would therefore be a contradiction in terms."³⁷ We cannot, in other words, leave the realm of mythic imagery behind and live by abstract reason alone without ceasing to be the delicate synthesis of nature and spirit which the evolution of the universe has finally made possible.

But if "nature was never without spirit in man, just as the human child never ascends up from lower nature to become a spiritual being, but always awakes out of profound mental depths to consciousness and freedom,"³⁸ if the emergence of man was somehow written into nature from the very beginning,³⁹ still this does not mean that both nature and spirit are already fulfilled in him. The paradox is that the world which precisely comes to itself in man, at the same moment opens out infinitely

³⁵ *GF*, pp. 190-91 [167]. Further on the conception of myth, see *Apokalyptik der deutschen Seele 1: Der deutsche Idealismus* (Salzburg, 1937) pp. 3-17; *Apokalyptik der deutschen Seele 3: Die Vergöttlichung des Todes* (Salzburg, 1939) pp. 394-406; *H. I and Herrlichkeit III, 1: Im Raum der Metaphysik* (Einsiedeln, 1965).

³⁶ Gn 9:2; Rom 8:19-21. Cf. *GM*, pp. 67-68 [42].

³⁷ *GF*, p. 192 [168].

³⁸ *GF*, p. 64 [44].

³⁹ Balthasar's conception of man as the compelling entelechy of the whole of nature seems to have been particularly influenced by Edgar Dacqué. See *GM*, pp. 43, 65-68 [24, 40-42].

beyond itself. Man, open to being as such and to the question of the meaning of whatever shares in that being, is at the same time a unique person who must take his particular stand with respect to this question, whether he rejects it as meaningless (as in nominalism or atheism), mythologizes it into being itself the only healing way for his race (as in Heidegger), or struggles to give it dialectically more adequate formulations (as in the classical metaphysicians). Here a tension beyond that of nature and spirit reveals itself, for "the personal is more than being, which is predicable of a multiplicity of things; it is unique. It is that which existentially justifies the unrepeatable finality of exclusive love."⁴⁰ Haunted by the possibility of his own wholeness, by the dream of a conceivable but unattainable integration of his own individual life and that of history as well, man realizes confusedly that

neither the other person as the beloved, chosen one, nor the universe as a place of work and achievement, nor the unattainable totality of all persons answers [his] deepest needs. Ultimately, it is only Absolute Being, itself spiritual and personal, that can do that, beyond the difference between spirit and nature, beyond the even profounder difference between the personal (as absolute uniqueness) and being (as absolute universality and totality). Within the world no transition is possible between the poles of these tensions.⁴¹

The formal possibility of his integration thus appears in an apparently distant mystery, in his relation to God. But how this integration might take place seems irretrievably surrendered into the hands of the mystery itself; the initiative in every possible dialogue remains the Lord's.⁴²

THE FIGURE OF ELECTIVE LOVE

Balthasar suggests three fundamental paths along which man has sought this salvation which he cannot help suspecting on the horizon of his existence and in the depth of its dynamic. These paths "both in their inventive conception (theory) and in their existential living out (prac-

⁴⁰ *GF*, p. 64 [44-45]; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 127, 206-9 [103, 183-86].

⁴¹ *GF*, p. 66 [46]; the last sentence of the ET has been emended.—Broadly speaking, Balthasar treats the perfectibility of man in the second chapter of *GF* (chaps. 2-3 in the ET), the perfectibility of history in the third chapter (chaps. 4-6 in the ET).

⁴² See *GF*, p. 101 [80-81]: "The fact that certain discrepancies became apparent between the anthropology of antiquity and that of the bible—touching the composition of man out of body and soul—is less important than the fact that the basic Greek idea, that man was destined to a salvation which transcended his earthly existence and was to be found only with God, was confirmed and made more profound by Christianity. If one starts from the strength of earthly, mortal existence, this salvation simply is not possible without divine help. Without a self-manifestation and inclining of the divine, man cannot achieve salvation by himself. It lies, moreover, in a 'heavenly' sphere which is closed to earthly existence; in this sense, salvation is 'supernatural.'"

tice) . . . represent the boldest conceptions and most exalted endeavors of the human spirit, borne through history by individuals and peoples prepared to sacrifice their lives for them."⁴³ There is, first, the way of appearance, which harnesses the ecstatic aspect of human existence to propel man's hopes and plans beyond the conflicts of this world to a home in divine and undifferentiated unity; "India has been the most radical exponent of this way and has declared all individuality, all separateness, mere appearance."⁴⁴ A second approach, found in both Greek tragedy and Germanic sagas, is "the way of the tragic conflict," seeking wisdom through experience of the unavoidable furnace of pain and thereby developing an aristocratic, heroic view of man. Only in the third way, however, the way of the Bible and of Christ, is God revealed as using

existence extended in time as the script in which to write for man and the world the sign of a supratemporal eternity. Hence, the man Jesus, whose existence is this sign and word of God to the world, had to live out simultaneously the temporal, tragic separating distance and its conquest through (Augustinian) elective obedience to the choosing will of the Eternal Father, in order to realize mysteriously the essentially irrefragible wholeness within the essentially un-completable fragmentary.⁴⁵

Balthasar's Christology is not our theme here, but some of its salient features are crucial to an understanding of his views on the dialogue between theology and evolutionary thought; for in the figure of Christ he sees the fulness of elective love which is at once the goal and the norm of all history. The essential scheme that can be traced through Scripture with respect to the figure of Christ is said to be that of promise and fulfilment: "the life of Christ appears as the fulfilment of history in the sense that it is lived out individually as the fulness of history, so that history in general (including salvation history) is related to the history of Christ as promise to fulfilment."⁴⁶

There is an ascending, immanent aspect to be noted here:

The summit of history, which, in the Kingdom of Christ, rises above all human situations, is necessarily continuous with its foundations, which cover the full extent of all those situations, with all the historical, sociological and psychological factors on which they are based. The law of the Incarnation requires that the meaning of history should not be imposed from above, from outside. If the christological fact is grasped in isolation, that is what it becomes: something

⁴³ *GF*, p. 74 [53].

⁴⁴ *GF*, p. 75 [55].

⁴⁵ *GF*, p. 84 [63]. Cf. *GL*, pp. 33-39.

⁴⁶ *TG*, pp. 22-23 [21]; and cf. *ibid.*, pp. 51, 66-67, 97-98, 106 [63, 86, 129-30, 139-40]. See also *VC*, pp. 124-26 [Vol. 1, 151-53]; *H. I*, 595-635; *GF*, pp. 221-24 [197-200]. For commentary: Gerard Reedy, "The Christology of Hans Urs von Balthasar," *Thought* 45 (1970) 407-20.

solely from above, from outside. The meaning of history must emerge from the union of what God destines for it with its own interior line of development.⁴⁷

But the descending, transcendent aspect is still more striking:

This struggle of the cosmos for God, and of God for the cosmos . . . would never have been so intense if it were not that, in the utmost intensity of immanent strain and tension, a form is struggling to be born which towers in stature above the whole cosmos. History does indeed have its own immanent *eidōs*, but in descending into hell and then ascending into heaven and sitting on the right hand of the Father, Christ has taken it aloft with him, and ultimately it is only there that history can seek and recover it.⁴⁸

The life of the Son can therefore be seen as "the world of ideas" for the whole of history, and meditation on the mysteries of His life will provide men until the end of time with the deepest penetrations of their own language, their childhood and youth, their maturity, death and promised resurrection, their differences as man and woman, master and slave, Jew and Gentile.⁴⁹ For in each of these spheres "the eternal Word underwent limitation in order to be still the whole within the fragment."⁵⁰

Whereas the philosopher's "open reason" strains forward towards more adequate formulations of a mystery that remains impenetrable, the figure of Christ embodies the elective love which, in free dialogue with the Father, takes its stand not only beyond abstracting reason but also beyond the indifference of freedom of choice, thus offering an integration of both in promise to His fellow men. Whereas man left to himself continually distorts the interaction of the power and the love embedded as potentialities in his being, "all the power that appeared in Christ is the power of God's love,"⁵¹ and thus "the mystery of the weakness of God, that appears in the life and suffering of Jesus (and accordingly in the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church), is actually the mystery of his manifested omnipotence."⁵² Through His obedient life and death it is Christ who

⁴⁷ *TG*, pp. 92-93 [123]; cf. *VC*, p. 297 [Vol. 2, 172].

⁴⁸ *TG*, p. 106 [140]. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 84 [112]: "It is only if a genuinely creaturely *eidōs* is there already, as an idea, that God's condescension to the plane of creatures can involve that *kenōsis* which it is described as being; and only then does he, by his descent, raise up that *eidōs*, with himself, without destroying it, into the haven of eternal life." Again, *ibid.*, p. 86, n. 1 [148, n. 1]: "If we miss out the level at which creation has a content proper to itself, then everything dissolves into pan-Christism, reducing the grace-given event of God's becoming man to the dead level of a cosmological, gnostic process."

⁴⁹ These various limitations of the human condition which the Word took upon Himself in becoming man and thereby fulfilled form the themes for Balthasar's meditation in Part 4 of *GF*, "Gathering in the Word" (chaps. 7-10 in the *ET*). See also his "Mysterium Paschale," in *Mysterium Salutis* 3, 2 (Einsiedeln, 1969) pp. 133-326 (also separately published as *Theologie der drei Tage* [Einsiedeln, 1969]).

⁵⁰ *GF*, p. 327 [306].

⁵¹ *GF*, p. 232 [208].

⁵² *GF*, pp. 233-34 [210].

resolves the fundamental contradictions of human nature left to itself: first, the imperfectibility of a spirit which surpasses nature but can neither leave it behind nor alone fulfil it; second, the still profounder, sinful incapacity for love which reveals itself most clearly in the contradiction of death.⁵³ The idea of man, therefore, must be said to have its true foundation in the eternal Idea of the Word Himself; “even before man’s original decision to exist in and for himself (as temporal mortal ‘nature’), instead of for God and in his grace, comes God’s original decision ‘before the foundation of the world’ to love and choose us in his beloved Son, so that we may stand holy and blameless before his face forever (Eph 1:4–5).”⁵⁴

The transcendence or verticality of this divine intention so dominates Balthasar’s approach to the theology of history that only from this perspective, seemingly, can one appreciate the meanings he distinguishes for the analogous layers of qualitative theological time—creation time, sinful time, revelation time, and Church time—over all of which Christ rules.⁵⁵ Only by their inclusion within the original intention of fulfilment in Christ can these various aspects of theological time avoid the appearance of mythology on the one hand or rationalistic projection on the other. Within the framework of this eternal, vertical dominance of God’s intention for the world (which reveals itself not “now” but only in the biblical “today” or *kairos*), Balthasar even proposes a conception of the fall of man as a metaphysical negative decision of man toward God. He suggests that we could thus

move away from the idea that the Fall affecting the whole temporal condition of the cosmos took place demonstrably at one particular point in the history of the universe . . . [towards an idea such as we find in] Gregory of Nyssa, according to whom God, foreseeing human sin, gave man his biological (sexual) concupiscence. This would mean that man’s [metaphysical] negative decision flowed into the process of hominisation which, from the temporal viewpoint, precedes man himself. True freedom can surely never be the *mere* result of an unfree process; thus, human freedom must have been involved as God’s partner at some undemonstrable point in the primordial decision of the Creator.⁵⁶

This “guilty disturbance” between man and God within the framework of the Creator’s one plan for the world would then take effect historically

⁵³ Cf. *GF*, pp. 63–71, 83–87 [43–51, 62–67].

⁵⁴ *GF*, pp. 113–14 [93].

⁵⁵ In brief, these aspects are distinguished as follows: creation time is time as it moves out from God, fashioned by God; sinful time is time wandering away from God, fashioned by sinful man for himself; revelation time is the redeeming offer to temporal creatures of God eternally coming and present, a reversal of the direction of sinful time in conversion; Church time is the invisible growth of God’s kingdom.

⁵⁶ *GF*, pp. 111–12 [90–91]; the ET has been corrected in two places at p. 91.—Note: Balthasar himself refers here to his interpretation of Soloviev along similar lines.

in the "personal sin" of the individual, who cannot rise above the condition of his race as a whole but is hereditarily dependent on that race for "the awakening power of love"⁵⁷ which alone can call him forth into truly personal existence. The race as a whole awaits the figure who perfectly embodies this awakening power of love and thus promises true fulfilment. Accordingly, mankind's failure in its dialogue with God need not be conceived only as guilt and punishment for an original sin, but may also be seen as exercise and education for the divine and human love actually to be granted in Jesus Christ.⁵⁸

THE QUESTION OF PROGRESS

It is the figure of Christ, then, which must also be the norm for the theological question of progress. In his *Theologie der Geschichte* Balthasar had emphasized the impossibility of interpreting man apart from the concept of progress. This had already been made clear by the paradigmatic figures in Greek philosophy: "Plato makes earthly progress start from an original, tragic egress from the heavenly home to which we belong by birth, but thus leaves no room for 'evolution'; whereas Aristotle holds fast to the notion of evolution in the complex tension between potency and the act into which it emerges, but thus lets go of the riddle involved in the starting-point."⁵⁹ Yet for both interpretations, the one more vertical (and mystic-religious), the other more horizontal (and "scientific"), there remains a fundamental ambiguity in the meaning of progress. Only with the biblical experience is the problem of the true axis of meaning resolved, for there "the vertical interpretation [is swung over] so as to coincide with the horizontal; hitherto the divine pole had always lain exclusively above; from now on it will equally, and essentially, lie in the future, in time. God is awaited in history. He will come and hold judgment on earth, and all that is ambiguous will become plain."⁶⁰

The history of the people in which this occurs is unique because it is the prehistory of a Messiah who is unique. But it is still to be noted that "the 'education of the human race' which God undertakes primarily in the case of Israel does, for all its uniqueness, *make use of* ordinary 'evolution' *as a vehicle*—literally, as something that is already in motion and

⁵⁷ *GF*, p. 109 [88]. See *SC*, "Bewegung zu Gott," pp. 13-50 (the same essay appears in *Mysterium Salutis* 2 [Einsiedeln, 1967] 15-45).

⁵⁸ On the whole question of hereditary guilt, see *GF*, pp. 88-89, 107-14, 228-31, 261-63 [67-68, 87-93, 205-7, 234-36]; also *GL*, pp. 40-48, and *Herrlichkeit* III, 2: *Theologie, Teil II: Neuer Bund* (Einsiedeln, 1969) pp. 438-50—henceforth abbreviated *H. III, 2/2*. With Gaston Fessard, Balthasar also proposes a transcendental, eschatological understanding of the conversion of Israel; see *GF*, pp. 173-78 [147-53].

⁵⁹ *TG*, p. 93 [124].

⁶⁰ *TG*, p. 95 [126]. See also Balthasar's *Zuerst Gottes Reich* (Einsiedeln, 1966) pp. 30-41—henceforth abbreviated *ZG*.

on its way up—in order to attain its own wholly different goal”⁶¹ in Christ and His brethren. There is a progressive inward appropriation of the revealing God as man moves toward that moment, the *kairos* of the Incarnation when “the ultimate indivisibility of sacred and secular history [will be guaranteed]—even though it cannot be seen to be so, in the case of the history of the nations, until the last Judgment.”⁶² And so we can say that as nature is related to man, and the history of nature to the history of man, so there is also an analogous relation between Old Testament history and the appearance of Christ: “In each case there is a slow approach and then, at the end, a leap. And in each case the *dynamis* of the progress flows from the ideal *energeia* which is to be reached.”⁶³ As nature was moved toward man under the power of man’s form, so man was moved toward Christ and His kingdom under the power of God’s eternal grace. The dynamic is always that of the higher reality, but it requires historical extension in which to take effect. In terms of evolutionary science

the early prehistory of man, has, indeed, assumed such vast proportions that by comparison the Christ-event appears even more markedly as a conclusion. But on the other hand history in the developed sense only begins to get under way with the breakthrough which came during the last few millennia before Christ; and in that light Christ appears as the beginning and foundation of that spiritual battle of decision which is what fills history, whereas the brief history of Israel seems hardly more than his family chronicle in the narrowest sense.⁶⁴

At any rate, that God makes use of historical progress to arrive at His wholly different purpose (where history as a whole has salvation meaning), this constitutes the mysterious limit of a theology of history, according to Balthasar; for the fulness of time achieved in Christ is not an empirical fact but one that can only be interpreted in Christ’s Church “from a time for a time”—by charismatic prophecy reading the “signs of the time,” or by a more apocalyptic prophecy assuring men that “no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him.”⁶⁵

It is the nonempirical, transcendent character of the fulness achieved in Christ and universalized by His Spirit that Balthasar develops in *Das Ganze im Fragment* against the background of world history.⁶⁶ The basic argument is that whatever one might want to add to Augustine’s theology of history by stressing the importance of the world’s development, as Soloviev did, still “the ultimate meaning of history is to be found

⁶¹ *TG*, p. 99 [132]; emphasis in original. Cf. *VC*, pp. 42–47, 66–72 [Vol. 1, 48–55, 79–86].

⁶² *TG*, p. 101 [133]. ⁶³ *TG*, p. 106 [139–40]. ⁶⁴ *TG*, p. 102 [135]. Cf. *GM*, p. 207 [144].

⁶⁵ 1 Cor 2:9 Cf. *TG* 100–101 [133]; *GF*, pp. 167–70, 193–94 [142–44, 169–70]; *SC*, p. 139.

⁶⁶ Cf. *R.*, pp. 15–16.

where Augustine sought it";⁶⁷ for "the extended structure of time can only be dissolved *vertically*, by being re-enfolded in the freedom of transcending love."⁶⁸ For Christian faith this vertical resolution of time has taken place once and for all:

Through Christ "Jerusalem" itself has also come down into time. He is himself essentially this Jerusalem: he, with his bride whom he lets pass out from within him, and who cleaves to him through grace; he as the Head and she the Body, the Head in heaven and the Body on its earthly pilgrimage. . . . It is a pilgrimage because the time up to death is the vessel of salvation time. But time up to death cannot be dammed up, and the kingdom of God "grows" through this void, not visibly, but through removing treasure and laying it up in the kingdom above, away from moth, rust, and thief. Therefore, it is impossible to apply to the kingdom and the Church the idea of a temporal evolution. The kingdom is built up in the vertical and the essentially invisible, and the whole ethics of Christ and the apostles is a training in enduring patience, which, through all earthly doings and workings, knows the profound necessity of such removals.⁶⁹

The "leap" (cf. Wis 18:14-16) between Christ and humanity which we previously considered in *Theologie der Geschichte* is here extended to its universal dimensions and argued to be gracious fact totally transcending the realm of evolutionary possibility. Balthasar rejects the linear conception of salvation history, though admitting that it has qualified significance for the time of the Old Testament revelation. But "should we not," once Christ has come, "rather speak of a continuance in an eternity latently present under time which flows toward and away from [eternity]?"⁷⁰ True religious time, and Christian revelation time together with it, is not linear but vertical, and Augustine's concept of *distentio animae* is its exact anthropological pole. "The cyclic time- and world-form of egress and regress which is common to all religions and does not imply in itself anything pantheistic is also the time- and world-form of the bible."⁷¹ It is in this time that the Church exists as the missionary medium⁷² of the eternal fulness of its Lord, and Balthasar does not tire of repeating that accordingly "an evolution of the Church in time becomes an irrelevant and quite improbable idea,"⁷³ just as much an affront to Christian consciousness as the idea that the dialectic of the cross of Christ could somehow be superseded by some further evolution of mankind.⁷⁴

⁶⁷ *GE*, p. 14 [x]. ⁶⁸ *GF*, pp. 35-36 [19]. ⁶⁹ *GF*, p. 57 [38]. ⁷⁰ *GF*, p. 132 [108].

⁷¹ *GF*, p. 133 [109]. For other terms which state this reality about religious time, see *GF*, pp. 141-42 [116].

⁷² See "Wer ist die Kirche?" in *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln, 1960) pp. 148-202—henceforth abbreviated *SV*; also "Das Medium der Kirche," *H. I*, 535-81.

⁷³ *GF*, p. 156 [131]; cf. *GF*, p. 282 [257].

⁷⁴ Cf. *GF*, pp. 122, 174 [100, 149]; *CS*, pp. 128-30, 137-40, 146-52.

DEVELOPMENT OF NATURE, DIALECTIC OF THE CROSS

There is indeed progress in the growth of the Church, but it cannot be verified according to any criteria available to human reason.⁷⁵ The life of the Church therefore appears as "walking in place," a journey in the darkness of faith;⁷⁶ it is the expectation of a hidden harvest⁷⁷ and a building from God,⁷⁸ the daily dedication of passing from law to gospel, from letter to spirit, from the appearance of mere form to the showing forth of its true content.⁷⁹ It is acceptance of the seed of God's word,⁸⁰ growth in His Spirit,⁸¹ life according to the logic of resurrection,⁸² "faith, hope, and charity [moving] through a fragmentary existence towards an unforeseeable perfection."⁸³ In short, "the Church, transcending history but acting as its content and its nucleus, is the ultimate gift of the Creator to human history, given to bring it to its own realization from within."⁸⁴

When development is spoken of in the realm of the Church and the Spirit, therefore, it can only be with reference to the unfolding of "all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge."⁸⁵ The paradox is that Church and Spirit create history without being history themselves; "they are more than history: the presence of fulfilled eternity in time."⁸⁶ Balthasar considers the Church as a visible institution to be relatively unhistorical, because its effects in history are not of the essence of its calling. The growth of faith, hope, and love is the truly effective aspect of the Church in history—and this is precisely what cannot be measured. Church time is the time neither of revelation's growth (as in the Old Testament) nor of its final event (in Christ), but "time in which the unsurpassable fulness of revelation establishes and expresses itself."⁸⁷ For this phenomenon the model of organic or psychic development (from the implicit to the explicit) is of only very limited value. "It would be better to say that the deposit of faith has been entrusted to the Church, and that the Holy Spirit takes care in every age to disclose to her enough of the essential meaning of Revelation to ensure that the truth of God is presented to man 'unadulterated' (2 Cor 4:2)."⁸⁸ Whatever is new here must be the newly appropriate awareness of the old, whatever develops

⁷⁵ *GF*, pp. 166, 178, 193–94 [140, 152–53, 169–70].

⁷⁶ *GF*, p. 57 [38].

⁷⁷ *GF*, pp. 58, 162–67, 330 [39, 136–41, 309]. ⁷⁸ *GF*, p. 120 [99]. ⁷⁹ *GF*, p. 156 [131].

⁸⁰ *GF*, p. 330 [309]. Cf. *TG*, p. 89 [118]: "The outpouring of the 'seed of God' (1 Jn 3:9) into the womb of the world is what happens in the innermost chamber of history."

⁸¹ *GF*, pp. 117–18, 316–18 [96–97, 293–95]; *SC*, p. 154.

⁸² *GF*, pp. 84–85, 308–14 [64, 285–91].

⁸³ *GF*, p. 116 [95].

⁸⁴ *TG*, p. 104 [137].

⁸⁵ Col 2:3; cf. *TG*, p. 103 [136].

⁸⁶ *GF*, pp. 139–40 [114].

⁸⁷ *GF*, p. 143 [118]. On the "continuity within a greater discontinuity" between the time of Jesus and the time of the Church, see *H*, III, 2/2, 150–74.

⁸⁸ *TG*, p. 80 [102].

structurally is meant to serve development in one and the same Spirit. Mary is, for Balthasar, not only the archetypal figure for understanding how history is most truly made by man before God;⁸⁹ the last century's dogmatic formulations on her role in God's plan manifest also "perhaps the strongest feeling of development and renewal that can be expected in the Church."⁹⁰ Walter Dirck's conception of great saints and new religious movements as charismatic answers of the spirit to urgent issues of secular history also has its place here.⁹¹ But, however many the convergent lines which seem to lead in God's wisdom to one intended (theological) sense of history, it will never be possible to sketch more than a fragment of the infinite significance in question, or to ascertain the precise periods of its progress, or to show a convergence of this core of history with empirically observable secular history. The Church establishes and expresses itself not in the sense of becoming institutionally self-sufficient but in the sense that, beyond all human reckoning, "the Spirit leads it in the process of time through the cycle of its own possible forms... [through] a temporal revealing of its own ground."⁹²

Development, therefore, and evolution in particular, are categories primarily applicable to world history. While the idea of development in world history current since the Enlightenment has often been seen as a secularization of the biblical dynamic from the Old Testament to Christ, it is perhaps more accurate to see its justification in new acquisitions of secular knowledge. In that case "the idea of development could be originally a category of world history and only secondarily one of salvation history, insofar as a development in salvation history is growth chiefly because it depends on historical, cultural development in order to reach its goal in Christ."⁹³ Furthermore, as we have seen Balthasar emphasize before, such development cannot simply be identified with progress. "Measurable progress, not only in the technological, but also in the cultural and social fields, can, of its nature, take place only within the natural order of humanity, whereas the personal depth of the individual, with its home in eternity, contradicts being reduced in any way to an instrumental status within the race."⁹⁴ There is a common sphere open to technical mastery, to the facilitation of work, and to the partial elimination of pain, but this is not yet the sphere of innermost personal decision,

⁸⁹ *GF*, p. 258 [231-32].

⁹⁰ *GF*, p. 147 [122].

⁹¹ Cf. *TG*, pp. 103-4 [136-37]; *GF*, p. 150 [124-25]; and, in addition to Balthasar's various books on outstanding Christian personalities, also such essays as "Philosophie, Christentum, Mönchtum," *SV*, pp. 349-87.

⁹² *GF*, pp. 151-52 [126]; cf. *GF*, p. 197 [173], and n. 81 above.

⁹³ *GF*, pp. 161-62 [136].

⁹⁴ *GF*, p. 71 [51]; the latter half of the ET has been emended. Cf. also *CS*, pp. 126-27.

where the struggle for man's soul is waged, and where its liberation, as we have seen, can only come through the free word of God's grace.⁹⁵

Rather than justifying the thesis of secular history's inner irreversibility (its external irreversibility seems almost a commonplace now), man's natural development is thus seen by Balthasar as heightening the dramatic tension written into our situation from the beginning.⁹⁶ As secular reason and its historical embodiments develop, it inevitably projects schemes of its own total integration which involve the (tolerant?) relativization of Christianity's claims. For the progressive concentration and unification of the world's power cannot remain neutral with respect to the Christian fact and to the idea of a covenant with God, but leads to that confrontation which is described in the apocalyptic pages of the Bible, as also in Soloviev's story of the Antichrist. The presence of Christianity itself paradoxically enables the "self-reflection of the noosphere" to place itself under the sign of the Antichrist; it is this same reflection of mankind upon itself which can be expected to make it not easier but increasingly more difficult to be a Christian.⁹⁷ Balthasar had emphasized Christ's struggle for His Church in *Theologie der Geschichte* ("This struggle is the ultimate truth of history"⁹⁸); in *Das Ganze im Fragment*, in view of the broader scope and background of the work and also its more controversial intent, he argues the inevitable dialectic of two spirits in world history, the spirit of the world and the Spirit of God. Rather than compromise or easy synthesis between the two, the Christian should expect and prepare himself for increasingly dramatic confrontation. "There will be more and more substitutes for true Christianity,"⁹⁹ and the man who lovingly puts his faith and hope not only in the world but in its Lord stands forewarned. "Is the cross an energy factor for the evolution of the world?"¹⁰⁰ No, the cross means readiness for total powerlessness, for the abandonment experienced on Olivet and outside the city gates, for betrayal and the depths of death, for surrendering the fabric of faith,

⁹⁵ Cf. *GF*, p. 230 [206].

⁹⁶ See especially *GF*, pp. 214-16, 237-41 [191-93, 213-17]; also *TG*, pp. 106-12 [140-49].

⁹⁷ *GF*, pp. 214-15 [191-92]. Cf. *ZG*, pp. 41-47. On this continuing intensification of the struggle between light and darkness, see Karl Rahner, "Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschichte," *Schriften zur Theologie* 5 (Einsiedeln, 1964) 131-32 (ET: *Theological Investigations* 5 [Baltimore, 1966] 111-12). See also Alfons Auer's remark on an intervention by Rahner during the redaction of *Gaudium et spes*: "K. Rahner also criticized Text 4 severely. According to him it does not show that the Christian theology of history teaches that conflict is inevitable between the world entangled in evil and Christ's followers, and that this conflict becomes more intense the farther time advances" (*Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. 5, 198).

⁹⁸ *TG*, p. 110 [144].

⁹⁹ *GF*, p. 215 [192].

¹⁰⁰ *GF*, p. 239 [215].

hope, and love out of which one had previously woven a fragile life. "The will to all that is the direct purpose of the life of the Redeemer. Whoever wants to follow this life must at least wait in patient expectancy to see whether God will not ask the same of him."¹⁰¹

THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN THEOLOGIANS AND EVOLUTIONISTS

In the complex of questions which center on history and evolution, we may say in summary that Balthasar's thought proposes two fundamental theses; these he repeatedly approaches from various perspectives in order to reveal them more effectively in the light of the central revelation from which they derive their cogency. In the first place, posing the question as to a possible total sense for history, he maintains, negatively, that no philosophy can satisfactorily affirm such a sense, even though it may elucidate innumerable indications of it; positively, he argues, Christian belief does project such a unified meaning in God's "total goal: universal salvation at the end of history"¹⁰²—the subject for this whole history being "Christ and the Church, and through them, integrated in them, both the consciousness of mankind as a whole and at different epochs (with the cosmic 'powers' in the background) and the personal consciousness of the individual."¹⁰³ Second, though granting that the development of the world itself is intrinsic to God's total plan and that this development will always bear the signs of having been the vessel for God's more comprehensive purposes, he maintains that the true core of history is to be found in a dialogue between God and the human spirit which transcends all natural development and which experiences its qualitatively unique turning point in the figure of Christ, through whom the ultimate outcome of the world's history is decided. Still more briefly: Christian faith assures us that a resolution of time is indeed intended (thesis 1), but it can only be vertically achieved through union with the incarnate Word who is present until the end of time in the Church which is His body and bride (thesis 2).

Balthasar's interest in the contribution of evolutionary thought to deeper reflection on these issues can be detected as early as his first major work, where he devoted a critical chapter to Henri Bergson (interpreted as proposing an unsuccessful philosophy of life).¹⁰⁴ A decade later, in his phenomenology of truth, he developed an analogical concep-

¹⁰¹ *Loc. cit.* See *GF*, p. 200 [175] and the literature referred to in n. 49 above; also the summarizing statement in *SC*, p. 155. Cf. also J. B. Metz, *Zur Theologie der Welt* (Mainz, 1968) pp. 27-28.

¹⁰² *GF*, p. 348 [327]. Among other relevant essays, see "Christlicher Universalismus," in *VC*, pp. 260-75 [Vol. 2, 127-46].

¹⁰³ *TG*, p. 112 [147].

¹⁰⁴ *Apokalypse der deutschen Seele 2: Im Zeichen Nietzsches* (Salzburg, 1939) 19-62.

tion of the interiority of being which graduates from its lowest level in lifeless matter to its highest in conscious spirit.¹⁰⁵ Here there was clear preparation for later and still more emphatic statements on the unity between nature's history and man's, as also for the anthropological perspective in philosophy and theology which he stated perhaps most forcefully in 1956 (though to his own dissatisfaction) in his book on the religious situation of modern man. Since that time, as we have seen, he has developed his position controversially and in depth, especially by concentrating on its apocalyptic and eschatological dimension.

"It is not at all the case, as the evolutionists thought, that in view of the 'fact' of a universal evolution Christianity with its absolute claim is inevitably relativized and thus can be dismissed."¹⁰⁶ Against this misconception Balthasar has tried to highlight the contradictory, sphinx-like character of the human situation to which a unique answer is offered in the elective obedience and love of Christ. "Nor, on the other hand, is it true, as Christians sometimes claim, in an oversimplification, that the idea of evolution is nothing but secularized theology, and therefore there is no need for any dialogue with it."¹⁰⁷ For the idea represents both a singularly influential advance in our knowledge of the universe and also a remarkably difficult challenge to man's understanding of himself: Is he the meaning and epitome of all that preceded him or merely a concomitant phenomenon? "Nor is it sufficient to dismiss such a theology [the idea of evolution as 'secularized theology'] by pointing to human nature which is still the same in its sinfulness, which still needs the same salvation—which from a Christian point of view is undisputable—and by declaring every human advance in history *a priori* as unimportant from a Christian point of view."¹⁰⁸ For man would then, from a theological point of view, appear to be only accidentally a historical product of our actual universe. Rejecting each of these simplifications, Balthasar reasserts the necessity and importance of the dialogue in question.¹⁰⁹

Note, however, how Balthasar understands "universal evolution" in this context: "the development in time and space of the one world logos in the different world cultures, a qualitative fanning out (as e.g., Herder demonstrates with his 'ideas'), which does not necessarily involve a

¹⁰⁵ *Wahrheit 1: Wahrheit der Welt* (Einsiedeln, 1947). See pp. 84–85: "The characteristic intimacy of being, which reaches perfection in conscious spirit, has its beginnings in unconscious nature. There is no existent which does not have at its disposal a rudimentary, even if only intimated interiority. For what is living, this may be generally admitted; but it holds true no less for the lowest level of being: for the nonliving."

¹⁰⁶ *GF*, p. 192 [168].

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 192–93 [168–69].

¹⁰⁹ See also *R.*, pp. 9–10; *H.* II, 93. And cf. Karl Rahner, "Theologische Bemerkungen zum Zeitbegriff," in *Schriften zur Theologie* 9 (Einsiedeln, 1970) 302.

higher development through time and, thus, places evolutionism in a narrower sense in a wider intellectual context."¹¹⁰ Here the evolution of cosmos, nature, and man seems intended in the global sense used by Soloviev, with God's purposes being sought both within and beyond world process. But it is unclear how the correlation between the concepts of evolution, development, and history is more exactly effected. What is the relation between evolution in the narrower and evolution in the more general sense? Is an essential difference between evolution and development presupposed, or is it considered unimportant? (In certain passages the German word *Entwicklung* is used within quotation marks, a difficulty compounded in the English version when the translator uses the word "evolution," also in quotation marks.¹¹¹)

Uneasiness with some of these key concepts in Balthasar's system grows when one recalls how globally and unproblematically he has asserted the recapitulation of phylogeny in ontogeny,¹¹² or, at an analogical theological level, how emphatically he agrees with the patristic theologoumenon on the correspondence between individual and world history, between the structure of individual justification and salvation history.¹¹³ The intention and context may be clear enough: to affirm, from nature's perspective, the central position of man in the universe, and, from that of grace, the unity of all men in Christ, the intermingling of all our fates, the profound indissolubility of our individual and general judgment before Him.¹¹⁴ But is the structure of the conception clear enough? Is the pivotal concept of "history," which nature develops into and which grace transforms, given in fact an *eidos* of its own, or does it not tend subtly to be more an occasion for God's new creation of a partner for eternal dialogue? Man's fall is interpreted as occurring "before history," the Church exists "above history," Israel's conversion is promised "beyond history." What, then, of theological importance actually happens *in* history?

More specifically with regard to the concept of evolution, Balthasar asserts repeatedly that nature was always directed towards man, that it was "never without him" as its ideal fulfilment. He often adverts to science's relatively limited knowledge of the mechanism of what he, like Soloviev, considers the evolutionary fact. He would apparently leave reflection on the philosophical presuppositions for an understanding of the mechanism to a "philosophy of evolution."¹¹⁵ Theology would thus not concern itself with how nature in fact intends man as its epitome,

¹¹⁰ *GF*, p. 192, n. 1 [177, n. 11].

¹¹¹ E.g., the quotations in nn. 59 and 61 above.

¹¹² See the section above, on "The Epitome—Unfulfilled."

¹¹³ *GF*, pp. 165, 267 [139, 153, n. 19; 242, 273, n. 2]; cf. *CS*, p. 129.

¹¹⁴ See especially *GM*, pp. 174–223 [129–55]; *H*, III, 2/2, 405–54.

¹¹⁵ *R*, p. 11.

but would simply assume the unity of cosmic, organic, and historical evolution. But is this consistent with Balthasar's much more central insight that the entire process was from the beginning intended by the Creator in and through His Word? It seems rather that the question, how God may be thought to effect the unfolding of the process in view of His Son, must remain theologically legitimate. Does not Balthasar himself admit as much by saying that the process occurs through the *dynamis* of the Son and with the at least ideal possibility of converging towards and being co-ordinated with God's kingdom?¹¹⁶ Is it not more a postponement than a solution of the real issue to argue that whatever convergence may take place between the world's becoming and Christianity's becoming remains hidden in the mystery of God's loving purposes for us? Does not the very generality of this indisputable statement cut short rather than clarify the discussion between Christian faith and evolutionary theory?

Ultimately, of course, how God will unify the orders of creation and redemption, how He will finally bring to fulfilment the kingdom inaugurated by His Son, remains a mystery. But the mystery does not absolve us from living out both aspects of the Christian dialectic between expectation of the *eschaton* and human construction of an evolutionary world: not only the relativization which the transcendence of God's kingdom effects for every purportedly "final scheme" of man, but also the radicalization of human effort to which the immanence of the kingdom in the universe challenges us.¹¹⁷ In Balthasar's treatment of evolution, history, and eschatology, however, there seems to be a one-sided emphasis on the transcendence of the kingdom and the loss of power which the cross implies.¹¹⁸ Thus he is inclined, in the final analysis, to oversimplify the inner affinity of an evolutionary world view and faith's statement that "On this earth that kingdom is already present in mystery."¹¹⁹

In Balthasar's presentation, then, there is an underlying ambiguity, an unresolved tension between his sense of the *Deus semper major* whose purposes we can never "systematically summarize" and his desire to discern the signs of the times and to confront those radical views of man's situation which challenge the authentic gospel. The former accounts for his literary method, with its rich allusiveness and mystagogic power, and

¹¹⁶ See especially the text quoted in n. 101.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Edward Schillebeeckx, "Foi chrétienne et attente terrestre," in *L'Eglise dans le monde de ce temps* (Paris, 1967) pp. 117-58, esp. pp. 151-58. In this connection Henri de Lubac speaks of "une recherche à effectuer" (*Athéisme et sens de l'homme* [Paris, 1968] p. 124).

¹¹⁸ Cf. "Spiritualität," p. 349.

¹¹⁹ *Gaudium et spes*, no. 39. Cf. Alfons Auer's commentary in *Commentary on the Documents of Vatican II*, Vol. 5, 197-201.

provides the climate for his emphasis on transcendence and verticality. The latter seems to involve a mingling of prophetic and systematic statements; and while their unity is of course an ideal in theology, it is also a precarious venture, posing problems of language and oversimplification. It is at a more symbolic than systematic level that Balthasar understands the function of the evolutionary process as it yields a humanity destined for eternal communion with the Lord of this process. Furthermore, he seemingly finds relative autonomies to be not of relative interest (which they should only be) but of secondary interest (which they may be, but with the danger of what Guardini called "the religious short circuit").¹²⁰ The world, which indeed has symbolic character, all too easily appears to be only symbolic, a vessel which is used but then disappears in the light of eternity, a polymorphous process which in the end evanesces into spirit which is acceptable to God. One should not minimize Balthasar's emphasis on the resurrection of the body as the core of the message embodied in Christ, but neither does this final statement of our faith prevent us from reflecting on how a body worthy of resurrection may be built up over the centuries. Reflection on our roots in the evolutionary process may influence our understanding of ourselves in both our unity with and our distinction from nature, in the clarity and obscurity of our language, in the interplay between our instinct and our free reason. But this same reflection, as Balthasar has emphasized, should also deepen our understanding of our Christian selves before the Lord who intended us in His Son from the beginning of time—the time in which He creates our evolving world.

¹²⁰ Cf. *ZG*; *H.* III, 2/2, 173-74; *SC*, p. 148.