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Imagining the Revealed God:
Hans Urs von Balthasar,
Eberhard Jüngel, and the
Triduum Mortis

Elizabeth Sharman

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the University of Otago, Dunedin,
New Zealand.

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ABSTRACT

‘Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds.’

Hans Urs von Balthasar and Eberhard Jüngel are profound and imaginative thinkers who unreservedly ground their theologies in revelation as God’s self-disclosure. This thesis asks what resources such revelation-centred authors, from different traditions, may contribute to a theological understanding of the human imagination. Although theology has often been more interested in the constructive capacities of the imagination, it is the responsive quality of the imagination that is of particular interest to this thesis. Can the imagination contribute to a theological understanding which comprehends the action and speech of God as antecedent to human response?

This thesis examines the epistemological issues that are related both to the imagination and to revelation as the self-communication and self-interpretation of God. The imagination is conceived of as essential to perception and understanding; it allows for both recognition and re-cognition. Through the imagination we can rethink the patterns or paradigms that shape our lives. The renewing of the mind can be said to involve the imagination. However, spiritual transformation requires more than a notion of the imagination as a spontaneous mental act which determines its own content. Balthasar and Jüngel, while thinking in lively and narrative ways, are constrained by divine self-disclosure. God’s self-revelation provides the content of the paradigm or pattern by which the Christian believer is to live. The imagination can be said to act as the context or locus of revelation.

This thesis demonstrates that the three days of Easter are central to Balthasar’s and Jüngel’s respective understandings of God. For Balthasar and Jüngel, the triduum mortis is where the self-revelation of God is most apparent; it is here that God is understood to be self-giving love as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. While quite distinct in their approaches, both authors work within trinitarian, and therefore relational, frameworks. This thesis traces the motifs that not only express their understandings of the paschal mystery in relational terms but also ground their respective understandings of renewed existence; for Balthasar, the motifs of

\[\text{Rom 12:2} \]
mission and *kenosis*, and for Jüngel, those of identification and justification. For both Balthasar and Jüngel, the events of the *triduum mortis* can be said to provide the content of, and act as a boundary to, our conception of God. Nonetheless, it is proposed that, within their respective understandings of divine prevenience, Balthasar and Jüngel leave room for the exercise of the imagination. God is mystery; God is not a fixed or completed concept.
Acknowledgements

This study is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Robert and Edna Sharman, and my sister Rachael.

Projects such as this often owe a great deal to others. This is no exception. For financial assistance, my thanks to the University of Otago and the St John’s College Trust. I would like to thank my supervisor, Professor Ivor Davidson for sharing his extensive knowledge and for his patience. Although there are others to whom I owe a debt of gratitude, there are three friends who have made this journey with me and without whom this thesis would never have been completed: Helen Martin, Barbara Nunn and Susan Wilson. For comments on my work and personal encouragement – my thanks.
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Abbreviations

CD Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics

Hans Urs von Balthasar

CW Church and World
El Elucidations
LA Love Alone: The Way of Revelation: A Theological Perspective
MP Mysterium Paschale
MW ‘My Work in Retrospect’
TD: I Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Volume I: Prolegomena
TD: II Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Volume II: The Dramatis Personae: Man in God
TD: III Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Volume II: The Dramatis Personae: The Person in Christ
TD: IV Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Volume II: The Dramatis Personae: The Action
TD: V Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory: Volume II: The Dramatis Personae: The Last Act
TH Theology of History
TKB The Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation
Eberhard Jüngel

CS  ‘The Church as Sacrament?’

DS  ‘The Dogmatic Significance of the Question of the Historical Jesus’

ECW  ‘The Effectiveness of Christ Withdrawn. On the Process of Historical understanding as an Introduction to Christology’

EN  ‘The Emergence of the New’

GBB  God’s Being is in Becoming

GMW  God as the Mystery of the World

HCG  ‘Humanity in Correspondence to God. Remarks on the Image of God as a Basic Concept in Theological Anthropology’

LR  ‘Living Out of Righteousness: God’s Action - Human Agency’

MT  ‘Metaphorical Truth: Reflections on the Theological Relevance of Metaphor as a Contribution to the Hermeneutics of Narrative Theology’

PA  ‘The World as Possibility and Actuality: The Ontology of the Doctrine of Justification’


THM  ‘Toward the Heart of the Matter’

TL  ‘The Truth of Life: Observations on Truth as the Interruption of the Continuity of Life’
INTRODUCTION

"God is not a sealed fortress, to be attacked and seized by our engines of war... but a house full of open doors, through which we are invited to walk."\(^1\)

"Christian understanding lives from the fact that God cannot be managed."\(^2\)

One of the interesting developments in late twentieth-century theology was the emergence of a theology of the imagination. Such a theology can be approached, broadly, from two different directions. The imagination can be used as a means of re-examining the familiar in order to better understand the subject matter of theology; the imagination can also be used explicitly as a foundational alternative to revelation. Much of the discussion of the imagination has been conditioned by the assumption that talk of divine revelation exists in some way or another in tension with the human imagination. The validity of such an assumption depends on how the imagination is defined, hence the importance given to definition in this thesis. It may be that a revelation-centred theology has some substantial things to say to a theological discussion of the imagination. A great deal hinges on whether theology is a self-determined construction anchored in, and expressive of, human possibilities, or a human *response* to the antecedent act and speech of God. This thesis seeks to show how two major theologians of the twentieth century, neither of whom use the language of the imagination explicitly, can illustrate how revelation and the human imagination may operate together in a fruitful way.

This thesis will examine the theologies of the Swiss Roman Catholic, Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) and the German Lutheran, Eberhard Jüngel (b.1934) to assess whether their theologies have implications for a theological discussion of the imagination. This thesis is not a guide to the overall theologies of either Balthasar or Jüngel; such a task

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\(^1\) "God is not a sealed fortress, to be attacked and seized by engines of war (aesthetic practices, meditative techniques, and the like), but a house full of open doors, through which we are invited to walk. In the Castle of the Three-in-One, the plan has always been that we, those who are entirely ‘other’, shall participate in the super-abundant communion of life". Hans Urs von Balthasar, *You Crown the Year with Your Goodness*: *Sermons Through the Liturgical Year* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 188.

would be far too large. The three days of Easter, for both Balthasar and Jüngel, are the heart of the Christian gospel. We will limit our discussion to a consideration of how, in the context of the *triduum mortis*, the imagination might be seen to operate within the bounds determined by divine self-positing as Balthasar and Jüngel perceive it to be. Such a framework determines how speech and thought about God can occur in a process of human thinking and imagining. Both revelation and the imagination are vital elements in this inquiry but it is not an exhaustive study of either the human imagination or revelation *per se*; it is an attempt to see the revelation-centred theologies of these two authors in a new light with a view to the imagination. Within the extensive scholarship about both authors on a range of subjects, little has been written on the role of the human imagination in their respective theologies. Whilst not claiming that either theologian’s work is to be considered as a theology of the imagination, this thesis proposes that, in their work, the *triduum mortis* gives a certain shape to the way in which a theology of the imagination could function.

Philosophical interest in the imagination is largely a post-Kantian agenda, and both Balthasar and Jüngel challenge the assumptions of the Enlightenment. Their respective revelation-centred and strongly trinitarian frameworks are directly based on the events of the *triduum mortis*. This thesis suggests that it is within the imagination that we can both access the concept of Trinity and hold together what appear to be paradoxical or contradictory ideas about God; it is within the imagination that the eternal God can be conceived of in the temporality of the cross. God’s self-disclosure in the dramatic narrative of the *triduum mortis* compels the engagement of our imagination. What we are free to imagine is constrained by the narrative of the three days which both establishes a paradigm and sets boundaries for what can be imagined. The imagination is a pattern-making facility and, as such, it can be said to shape the paradigms within which we live and think. The ‘paradigmatic imagination’ is therefore proposed as the *locus* of revelation. Even though Balthasar’s and Jüngel’s respective unders:andings of divine self-disclosure provide possibilities for the imagination,

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2 The term *triduum mortis* is used by Balthasar. In this thesis it denotes the three days of Easter: Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday.

4 See Chapter Two for the Enlightenment and twentieth-century examples of the philosophical treatment of the imagination.

5 I have in mind a concept of the imagination as *locus* not dissimilar to that espoused by Garrett Green although Green’s interest in the imagination is primarily in the sphere of hermeneutics. See Garrett Green, *Imagining God: Theology and the Religious Imagination* (San Francisco: Harper & Row), 1989; Garrett Green, *Theology, Hermeneutics and Imagination: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity* (Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 2000).
this is not a completely open-ended process. One of the important questions raised is how both theologians combine revelation with the assumption that God remains free in the process of self-disclosure. From the perspective of the human knower such freedom must imply both possibilities and limits to our epistemic access to the divine character.

Particular texts will be examined to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the approaches used by Balthasar and Jüngel. The relational concepts they use in their respective construals of the *triduum mortis* will be evaluated in order to see how these concepts leave room for the imagination. Throughout this reading of their texts we will assume that the human imagination is essential to perception and understanding. Neither Balthasar nor Jüngel speaks of the imagination in this way but, as demonstrated in this thesis, both of them offer a theology that is strongly reflective of a particular view of the human imagination. Although the implications for the imagination are not on the surface of the texts, this thesis shows that legitimate conclusions can still be drawn about the imagination’s role in theology. There is no assumption that a concept of the paradigmatic imagination, or any other understanding of the imagination, is to be imported into the theologies of Balthasar and Jüngel. Balthasar and Jüngel are, however, engaging with revelatory theology in such a way that they effectively allow a place for imaginative thought.

A generation apart and raised in different circles, Balthasar and Jüngel developed their theologies in comparative isolation from each other. Nevertheless, a decisive connection occurs from their respective associations with, and interpretations of, the work of Karl Barth. An enthusiastic reader of the *Church Dogmatics*, Balthasar sees in Barth the breadth and range that he equates with the Catholic view. Jüngel recounts how he found in Barth’s *Church Dogmatics* ‘the thought of someone who truly believed in his subject matter’.

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6 See Chapter Two for how this thesis defines the imagination.

7 The recent resurgence in Barth scholarship has coincided with an increased interest in Balthasar and Jüngel. They have separately been the subject of comparisons with Barth but, if both are mentioned, one or other is usually peripheral to the agenda. John Webster is an eminent example of one who has written about both Jüngel and Balthasar in this way. See John Webster, ‘Balthasar and Karl Barth’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Edward T. Oakes, SJ and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 241-255. See also J.B. Webster, *Eberhard Jüngel: An Introduction to his Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

8 Balthasar claims that Barth displays not only ‘the most thorough and penetrating display of the Protestant view’ but also the ‘closest rapprochement with the Catholic’. (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Theology of Karl Barth* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992), 23).

Notwithstanding the lengths to which they go in presuming the intra-divine life, both Balthasar and Jüngel echo Barth in their determination that neither God nor God's revelation can be possessed. Despite this resolve, both Balthasar and Jüngel combine an insistence on mystery with bold statements about the inner being of God.

Balthasar is a subtle and profound thinker whose wide-ranging insights and deep sense of vocation command respect. His magisterial grasp of the complexities of European literature and culture, coupled with his insistence that beauty must be acknowledged in our perception and contemplation of God, provides a rich vein of theology to explore. His immense *oeuvre* shows him to be a comprehensive and generous theologian whose work thoroughly deserves the scholarly attention it is beginning to receive.

Jüngel’s remarkable academic rigour and passionate commitment to his subject matter is allied to a style which is renowned for both its density and its polemics. His work is frequently contentious and always stimulating. His complex and dense reasoning, combined with a thorough knowledge of classical Protestant dogmatics, yields an exceptionally creative theology which, despite its difficulties, is extraordinarily positive in unexpected ways.

In spite of their differences, the juxtaposition of Roman Catholic and Lutheran viewpoints yields some interesting similarities. Balthasar and Jüngel both see theology as a servant of the church and are very committed to doing theology with pastoral concerns in mind. Each espouses a deeply positive theology, affirming both the positive mystery of God and the possibilities in human life. This is so, not because they conceive of theology as primarily a constructive exercise but because theology, in their eyes, is the human response to the initiative of God. Both Balthasar and Jüngel work in rich and imaginative ways concerning what they perceive to be divine action. In order for a valid connection to be made between the work of Balthasar and/or Jüngel and the imagination, whatever boundaries Balthasar and Jüngel place on their methodologies must be consistent with the boundaries placed on the imagination. This is an important constraint because, as a concept, the human imagination is ambiguous and can be very slippery indeed. Despite this restriction, do these theological accounts offer us an alternative way of conceiving the imagination? If they can, theology can be seen as a positive science in response to divine action, giving rise to human possibilities that are full of colour and excitement, coming as they do from the antecedent act and speech.
of God. It is because God cannot be 'spelt out', as it were, that the human imagination is an appropriate vehicle for conceiving, via God's self-disclosure, of God as mystery. Although Balthasar and Jüngel are not alone in their re-examination of the *triduum mortis*, their particular juxtaposition of the paschal mystery with that of the Trinity as positive mystery yields some useful resources for a particular view of the human imagination.

The divine relations, both *ad intra* and *ad extra*, are at the centre of the *triduum mortis* as Balthasar and Jüngel conceive of them. Both Balthasar and Jüngel, albeit holding differing views on participation in the divine life, ground the economy of salvation in God's being *in se* manifested in the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They ground their theologies in a trinitarian understanding and, in particular, in the way that the trinitarian relations are revealed in the *triduum mortis*. Any claim to begin from human affirmation of religious aspirations would be to cut straight across the conviction, held by both Balthasar and Jüngel, that all 'knowledge' of God begins with God's initiative. For both theologians, the *triduum mortis* is the key to the specificities of God's divine triunity provided that God's inherent mystery is acknowledged and taken into account. Regardless of immediate appearances to the contrary, a starting point in revelation does not preclude mystery, either within the intra-divine relations or within the God-world relation.

This thesis is structured in two parts. The first part, Chapters One and Two, will introduce Balthasar and Jüngel, along with the main texts pertinent to their treatments of the *triduum mortis*. This will be followed with an examination of the epistemological issues related to the imagination and revelation as the self-communication and self-interpretation of God. Chapter One begins with a brief account of the personal histories of, and the major influences on, the lives and careers of Balthasar and Jüngel. This is followed by a survey of the main texts concerning their respective treatments of the *triduum mortis*. Chapter Two explores the relationship between the human imagination and revelation as God's self-disclosure. In the first part of Chapter Two, the relatively detailed survey of the philosophical and historical exploration of the human imagination is necessary in order to

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account for the ambiguity inherent within the use of the concept of the imagination. The second part of Chapter Two considers the revelation-in-encounter-as-event that is epitomized, in somewhat different ways, by Balthasar and Jüngel. Karl Barth is discussed in this regard in order to demonstrate how Balthasar and Jüngel draw on his trinitarian framework. Both Balthasar’s and Jüngel’s interpretations of revelation are outlined, paying particular attention both to an analysis of the correspondence between essence and economy and to the ways they make use of analogy as a means to understand the relation between God and the world. Such an exploration grounds the proposal that God is capable of becoming something of himself, an issue dealt with in Chapter Three. At the conclusion of the first part of this thesis, the issue of legitimate boundaries to both revelation and the imagination is considered in the context of human experience.

The second part of the work, Chapters Three to Five, examines Balthasar’s and Jüngel’s understandings of the triduum mortis with a view to assessing what their basic assumptions might imply about the human imagination. This second part examines how the trinitarian ontologies of Balthasar and Jüngel are expressed in their respective treatments of the three days of Easter. Chapter Three gives an account of the essential concepts that Balthasar and Jüngel use so that Chapter Four can examine how these concepts are worked out in the events of the triduum mortis. Chapter Four will argue that these fundamental concepts give rise to interesting perspectives on revelation if revelation is understood as working in the human imagination by the agency of the Holy Spirit. Chapter Five will explain how these imaginative paradigms are worked out via the work of the Holy Spirit in the renewed existence of the believer and the Church.

In Chapter Three, Balthasar’s motifs of mission and kenosis are compared with Jüngel’s use of identification as a means to demonstrate how the triduum mortis is at the heart of our knowledge of God. For Balthasar, the missions are an ongoing result of the divine processions; therefore there is an inherent and indissoluble link between the triduum mortis and the inner-divine life. Jüngel, who is strongly influenced by Barth’s view of the humanity of God, works out his notions of distance and nearness in his explication of the identification of God with the crucified man Jesus. This identification is such that temporality is taken up into the divine life. Chapter Four examines how, in the triduum mortis, the intra-trinitarian

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11 Regarding masculine pronouns for God, in general, I have kept to the usage of Balthasar and Jüngel for the sake of clarity. This does not imply that I think that God is ontologically male.
differentiation in God becomes a separation between Father and Son which stretches almost to breaking point. Balthasar’s controversial interpretation of the descent into hell is compared with the way Jüngel identifies God with suffering to the extent that God and perishability must be thought together. It is here that the themes of continuity and discontinuity become important if the distinctions within the being of God are not to end in collapse. Balthasar and Jüngel would agree that, only if there are distinctions of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the notion that God is love becomes understandable. By somewhat different methods, they conceive of the Passion as not only a manifestation of divine love but also as a confrontation between divine and human freedom. This question of freedom, so dear to both thinkers, is also crucial to the individual and ecclesial issues considered in Chapter Five. Chapter Five explores the central theme of human personhood as renewed existence in Christ (Rom 12:2) in the light of the outworking of the imagination transformed by the agency of the Holy Spirit. As will become evident, both Balthasar and Jüngel follow their own ecclesial traditions; they are manifestly Roman Catholic and Lutheran respectively. Despite these differences, and controversial aspects in each case, both see transformation as integral to personhood and community. Notwithstanding their differing notions of the being and function of the church, both Balthasar and Jüngel see theology as a responsive exercise which is to be undertaken in an ecclesial context.

This thesis concludes with an evaluation of the richly imaginative ways in which these two theologians explore the complex pattern of the triduum mortis. In explicating the triduum mortis as they do, they can be said to implicitly demonstrate a certain deployment of the imagination in view of revelation. While conceding the task itself to others, this thesis suggests some possible ways forward for a revelation-centred theology which explicitly involves the human imagination.
CHAPTER ONE

Balthasar and Jüngel can be said to formulate their respective theologies, at least in part, in response to one of the basic problems of modern liberal culture: the absolutizing of human creativity and the 'death of God'. The German philosopher and cultural critic Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) posited the demise of not only the God-hypothesis but also any metaphysical substitutes for any such hypothesis. What Nietzsche, Balthasar and Jüngel have in common is the opinion that the crisis in culture stems from the way that the presence or absence of the revery of God changes everything. Nietzsche expresses this in negative terms while Balthasar and Jüngel both bring a positive stance to the issue of the presence and absence of God. Neither Balthasar nor Jüngel wish to deny human creativity but to restore it to its proper place as creaturely response to the initiative of God, hence their particular starting points in the self-disclosure of God in Jesus Christ. The primacy of God is expressed in God's action in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. In the crucifixion of Jesus, negative-seeming events are interpreted in a deeply positive way.

This chapter has three purposes: firstly, to give some idea of the respective backgrounds of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Eberhard Jüngel in order to place them within their personal, theological and ecclesial contexts. The theologies of both Balthasar and Jüngel have been shaped to a considerable extent by their personal or political circumstances. Secondly, to canvas the major theological influences that shaped their theology and thirdly, to make an initial survey of those texts essential to this study.

1 See David L. Schindler, 'The Significance of Hans Urs von Balthasar in the Contemporary Cultural Situation' in Glory, Grace, and Culture: The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 2005), 16-36. For Jüngel's study of Nietzsche, see GMW, 126-8, 146-152, 205-11. According to Jüngel, Nietzsche was not only contesting the thinkability of the metaphysically conceived God but he was also vehemently opposed to thinking God and perishability together in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Jüngel quotes Nietzsche's statement: that '[a] God of the kind created by Paul is a negation of God'. (Eberhard Jüngel, God as the Mystery of the World: On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism (Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd, 1983), 205, citing F. Nietzsche, 'The Antichrist', in The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, trans. A.M. Ludovici, ed. Dr O. Levy (New York: Macmillan, 1911), col. 16 (The Twilight of the Idols), 196, note 47).
1.1 Hans Urs von Balthasar

1.1.1 Background
Within Roman Catholic theology, the First Vatican Council perpetuated the language of Scholasticism; a radical distinction was made between the natural and the supernatural and revelation was deemed to be the communication of supernatural knowledge. The Second Vatican Council emphasized the action of God thereby enabling revelation to be seen as a dynamic and ongoing influence in the Church and throughout history. Two major paradigm shifts occurred with the Second Vatican Council; Catholic thought had to contend with both Reformation and Enlightenment values simultaneously at a time when such values were themselves in crisis. Catholicism had to come to terms with historical modes of thinking which provided an alternative to an essentialist metaphysics. The turn to the subject initiated by Descartes, which had been evident for some years in liberal Protestant theology, became a major force in post-conciliar Roman Catholic theology. Experience, hitherto marginal to the point of exclusion, became a theological force in a new way and elicited new questions. Along with a biblical renaissance in Catholic theology, the new pluralism raised the problem of interpretation and led to a new acceptance of the hermeneutical nature of all theology, including theologies of revelation. Karl Rahner became arguably the most influential contributor to the transition from neo-Scholastic uniformity to post-conciliar pluralism. Balthasar, while similarly moving away from neo-Scholastic uniformity, moved in a direction which left him, until the last years of his life, largely outside the mainstream of Catholic theology.

Hans Urs von Balthasar was a Roman Catholic theologian with a vast theological range and an exceptional grasp of philosophy and literature. Born in Lucerne, Switzerland in 1905 into an upper-middle-class Roman Catholic family with roots in the aristocracy, Balthasar was educated by the Benedictines in Engelberg and the Jesuits at Feldkirch. From 1923 he studied philosophy and German literature in Munich, Vienna, Berlin and Zurich. His doctoral thesis, a study of the foundations and growth of German Idealism was published in three volumes shortly before WWI as *Apokalypse der deutschenSeele*. These early ideas on the place of the eschatological themes in the German imagination led him in later years to

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3 One of the aims of the Roman Catholic Modernist movement at the turn of the twentieth century was to establish human experience as a fundamental constituent of theological reflection, anticipating to some degree some of the changes of Vatican II.
see the ideology of the Third Reich as a perverted form of Christian apocalyptic. This vast examination of the foundations of modernity incorporated the works of many major German dramatists, poets and philosophers of the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Balthasar was a great admirer of Goethe, Schiller and their contemporaries but, while wishing to incorporate their insights into his thinking, he did not wish to formulate an aesthetic theology; his primary concern and starting point was always the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Balthasar continued his studies in philosophy and theology (1929-1937) after joining the Society of Jesus in 1929, the year he received his doctorate. Balthasar was ordained a priest in 1936. After completing his studies, Balthasar worked briefly on the editorial staff of the Jesuit periodical Stimmen der Zeit in Munich before spending time as a student chaplain in Basel (1940-8). During his time in Germany and then from neutral Switzerland, he had ample opportunity to observe the evolution of the Third Reich. It may be surmised that the rise of Hitler in the 1930s and the events of WWII and its aftermath helped to underscore for Balthasar the enormity of sin and the cosmic nature and depth of Christ’s suffering. Balthasar’s insistence that an attitude of service to the object of faith is to be grounded in the initiative of God may well have been accentuated by observing the terrible effects of a corrupt ideology. It was during his time in Basel that he met both Karl Barth and the medical


5 This study of the years 1780-1830 has been described as ‘a testing of the dogmatic affirmation of the First Vatican Council that human beings, through the light of human reason, can develop a sense of God as not only the author but the goal of nature and history’. (Aidan Nichols, OP, The Word Has Been Abroad: A Guide Through Balthasar’s Aesthetics (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), xii. See also, Virgil Nemoianu, ‘Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Traditions of Christian Humanism’ in Glory, Grace, and Culture: The Work of Hans Urs von Balthasar (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 127-149 at 138-140).

6 See below, note 44.


8 Balthasar experienced a dramatic call to the priesthood during a thirty-day retreat in the summer of 1927.

9 Balthasar was given the choice of the position as a professor at the Gregorian University but he chose to go to Basel; pastoral concerns were always at the forefront of his mind.
doctor Adrienne von Speyr, both of whom were to have a lasting influence on his work. It was with von Speyr that Balthasar founded the secular institutes in October 1945, a new form of religious order in which the members remained in their secular professions and occupations while living out a religious vocation in the world.\(^{10}\) It was during his time in Basel that Balthasar wrote *Schleifung der Bastionen* (1952) (ET *Raising the Ramparts*), a call for the church to become open to the world. Balthasar wrote of this piece in 1975, 'which blew the last, impatient trumpet blast calling for a Church no longer barricaded against the world, a trumpet blast that did not die away unheard, but which has subsequently forced the trumpeter himself to pause and reflect'.\(^{11}\)

Although Balthasar is now widely recognized as one of the major theologians of the twentieth century, he was, for a large part of his life, almost isolated from the mainstream of Roman Catholic theology. This was partly due to his association with von Speyr and the founding of the secular institutes. The Society of Jesus would not allow Balthasar to remain a member and continue to develop the institutes so, after a very costly decision, he left the Society of Jesus in 1950, albeit with the permission of his superiors. The Ignatian spirituality of the Jesuits remained a deep source of inspiration throughout Balthasar's life and work.\(^{12}\) After leaving the Society of Jesus, Balthasar became a diocesan priest in eastern Switzerland but he soon moved to Einsiedeln when it became apparent that he could support himself by his writings. Balthasar's comparative isolation from the Roman Catholic theology of his time owes something to the fact that he neither came out of, nor represented, a previous school of thought. While rejecting the dry Scholasticism that he was taught in the seminary he had no interest in following contemporary trends but pursued his central interests as he saw fit, enriched always by his vast knowledge of continental literature. Balthasar never held a university post and was therefore immune to the demands and constraints of academic publishing.\(^{13}\)

\(^{10}\) Henrici comments that Balthasar's mission 'seems to have been in some fashion, a lay one, in spite of his priesthood'. (Henrici, 'Hans Urs von Balthasar', 21).

\(^{11}\) Hans Urs von Balthasar, 'In Retrospect', 196.

\(^{12}\) Balthasar translated the Spiritual Exercises into German and 'had the opportunity of conducting them a hundred times over: here, if anywhere is Christian joy'. (Balthasar, 'In Retrospect', 196). The engagement in mission in the secular world, along with contemplation and a spirituality of descent, are all terms which define Ignatian spirituality. (Henrici, 'Cultural', 22). These terms can also be said to define the heart of Balthasar's theology.

While in what could be termed ecclesiastical isolation, Balthasar wrote several important studies of literary figures and the saints along with the first volumes of his renowned trilogy. Balthasar’s writing, as well as his extensive editing and translation work, reached the public through his own publishing house (the Johannes Verlag, Einsiedeln), but he was largely ignored in official Catholic circles until he was appointed a member of the Papal Theological Commission in 1967. In later years Balthasar was to influence both Pope John Paul II and Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger (the present Pope Benedict XVI) with whom he founded the Roman Catholic periodical Communio in 1972. It was from the time of the Papal Theological Commission onwards that, despite his conviction that the church must not close itself off from the world, Balthasar sounded a warning that the church must not merge with the world to the extent that Christianity loses its distinctive identity and gift to the world. As Balthasar himself wrote, ‘whoever desires greater action needs better contemplation’. John Riches (writing in 1972) makes the point that, in Balthasar’s then recent shorter writings, notably Cordula and Weir ist ein Christ? (1965) (ET Who is a Christian?), Balthasar might mislead his readers into labelling him a ‘reactionary, “anti­progressive” figure’. Balthasar’s desire was rather to remind the church that unless its Christian action develops from contemplation of the central mystery of Christ, no programme of Christian action would remain Christian for any length of time. It was during this period of his life that Balthasar wrote Mysterium Paschale, a treatise on the central mystery of the Passion of Christ. Balthasar’s thought has been preoccupied with this mystery throughout his life. Balthasar was nominated a cardinal in May 1988, by Pope John Paul II but he died on June 26th 1988, three days before the consistory.

14 For example; Thérèse von Lisieux (1950); Elisabeth von Dijon und ihr geistliche Sendung (1952) and Bernanos (1954).
15 Including translations of works by Claudel, Calderón and Péguy.
16 Balthasar was not invited to be present at the Second Vatican Council but was later awarded the Paul VI prize for theology.
1.1.2 Major Theological Influences

1.1.2.1 Adrienne von Speyr
Balthasar met the Protestant physician Adrienne von Speyr when he was a student chaplain in Basel (1940-48). She became a Roman Catholic under Balthasar's direction. His first sustained theological writing, *Das Herz der Welt* (1945), was written under the first impact of his contact with von Speyr. This volume has been called an 'uncanny crystallisation' of von Speyr's vision as Balthasar later wrote of it in his introductory book to her writings, *Erster Blick auf Adrienne von Speyr* (1968) (ET *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*). Balthasar transcribed and published her mystical experiences over several years. These works included commentaries on John's Gospel and other New Testament books along with various theological essays. The level of her influence is disputed by others but by Balthasar's own account, her friendship and visionary experiences were two of the most formative influences on his life and theology. The vision of Holy Saturday that is at the heart of von Speyr's theological vision comes to fruition as the key theme of *Mysterium Paschale* and the five volumes of Balthasar's *Theodramatics*, particularly his exposition of Christ's 'being with the dead' or the descent into hell. There are also major convergences between Balthasar's Marian theology and von Speyr's writings, especially in Balthasar's avowal of a Marian church of love along with the institutional church of Peter. Mary's attitude of receptivity and her Yes to God are central to von Speyr's vision. Balthasar considered the secular institutes that they co-founded to be more important than his own writing.

1.1.2.2 Karl Barth
The relationship between Balthasar and Barth has been characterized as a 'long and mutually but asymmetrically important relationship'. Almost twenty years Balthasar's senior, Barth

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23 Von Speyr develops three fundamental emphases which appear frequently in Balthasar's work: (1) that of obedience and the idea of complete self-oblation as shown in the idea of the vowed life; (2) an awareness of the profound nature of sin and the nakedness of the soul before God and (3) the idea of fruitfulness as a consequence of vowed obedience. (Louth, 'Heart of the World, 161).

was already established as a major voice in Protestant theology by the time of his association with Balthasar, who was yet to publish his magnum opus. While Balthasar was, for Barth, his most longstanding contact with Roman Catholic theology, Barth’s theological direction was already determined at the time of their meeting. It can be said that the theological paths of Barth and Balthasar bear some similarity. Barth’s path was also a somewhat lonely one ‘not singing with the choir, but singing solo in the hope that one day the choir will join him’. It would be fair to say that, although the exchange between the two was a remarkably open one, the younger man was the more receptive of the two. Both in his student reading of the *Church Dogmatics* and personal contact with Barth when he moved to Basel in 1940, Balthasar was receptive to, and influenced by, Barth’s ideas. However, as far as Balthasar’s trilogy is concerned, his assimilation of Barth’s ideas grows less apparent after the completion of *Herrlichkeit* (*ET The Glory of the Lord*). The idea that the content of revelation, including the object of aesthetic form, must determine theological method is to be found in both Barth and Balthasar. In *The Theology of Karl Barth*, Balthasar comments on Barth’s rejection of a strict systematization in theology and Barth’s preference for an ‘open-ended method for a true reflection of the Christian reality’, an influence apparent in Balthasar’s own desire for unified vision without undue systematization. Their most substantial disagreement concerns the *analogia entis*, with Barth asserting that Catholic theology accepted revelation as a fulfilment of a prior structure developed by natural theology. In contrast, Balthasar maintains that, despite the Fall, God’s act in creation sets up a continuous relation between God and humanity although salvation can be achieved only through Jesus Christ. In both cases the disagreement goes back to Erich Przywara. Edward Oakes comments that both Przywara and Barth are accusing each other of ‘subsuming revelation under some broader or overarching concept’ in the use of analogy (Przywara) or

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Edward T. Oakes, SJ and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 241-255 at 241. Their mutual love of Mozart’s music was an extra element in their relationship.

25 The fifteen volume trilogy consisting of *The Glory of the Lord*, the *Theo-dramatics* and the *Theo-logic*.

26 Webster, ‘Balthasar and Karl Barth’, 241. According to Webster, the possible exception would be Barth’s association with Erich Przywara. (Ibid).


29 Balthasar comments; ‘for Barth the religious sphere is aesthetical because it is religious, because it is in itself the most authentic’. (Balthasar, *Karl Barth*, 26). See also, Oakes, *Pattern*, 53.

30 Balthasar, *TKB*, 220. Barth has repeatedly stressed that he has not been trying to build any system at all, not even a theological one, that he was simply trying to trace everything back to the mystery of the God made man’. (Ibid., 220). This can also be said with some truth of Balthasar.

31 See below, Chapter Two.
dialectic (Barth). However, as we will see in due course, both Barth and Balthasar agree that God establishes the relationship between God and humanity.\textsuperscript{32}

1.1.2.3 Erich Przywara
After entering the Society of Jesus, Balthasar came under the influence of Erich Przywara (1889-1972) while studying philosophy in Pullach, near Munich. Przywara’s interpretation of the analogy of being, along with Przywara’s work on Augustine and Ignatius of Loyola, had a foundational influence on Balthasar’s thought. It was during this time that Balthasar formulated his basic philosophical categories and his theological starting point.\textsuperscript{33} Along with Przywara and in contrast to Karl Rahner, Balthasar looks to the whole of reality rather than to human subjectivity to discover unity between God and the world. Przywara concurs with the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), that ‘[a]s great as may be the similarity, so much greater must be the dissimilarity between creator and creature’. The \textit{analogia entis}\textsuperscript{34} thus not only grounds the positivity of the finite (because of the ‘similarity’) as the reflection of the full identity of God but also (because of the ‘dissimilarity’) the distance between creator and creature. Rather than having the same level of importance, the unyielding difference between God and the world is, and remains, greater than any degree of correspondence between the two.\textsuperscript{35} As will become evident, whereas Przywara increasingly places emphasis on the contradiction in a movement toward ‘nothingness’, Balthasar eventually moves in a somewhat different direction.

1.1.2.4 Henri de Lubac and the \textit{Nouvelle Théologie}
Balthasar studied with Henri de Lubac (1896-1991) in the Jesuit scholasticate in Lyons from 1933 to 1937. It was here that he also came into contact with Daniélou, Fessard and the French Catholic poet Paul Claudel. At this time, the \textit{nouvelle théologie}\textsuperscript{36} was centred in Lyons, influencing Balthasar’s exploration of the Thomist doctrine of nature and grace. The position of the \textit{nouvelle théologie} demanded that the sharp distinction between nature and grace be overcome and that grace should not be seen as something added to a human nature which was already complete in itself. Although human beings have a dynamism toward the

\textsuperscript{32} Oakes, \textit{Pattern}, 55-7.
\textsuperscript{33} Medard Kehl claims that the fundamental reason for the crucial difference between Balthasar’s and Rahner’s theology is due to Balthasar’s connection with Przywara, a connection shared by Karl Barth. (Kehl, 17). For a comparison between Balthasar and Rahner, see Karen Kilby, ‘Balthasar and Karl Rahner’ in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar}, ed. Edward T. Oakes, SJ and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 256-268.
\textsuperscript{34} On the \textit{analogia entis}, see Chapter Two.
\textsuperscript{35} Kehl, ‘Introduction’, 20. On Balthasar and analogy, see Chapter Two.
life of grace because of their creation, one finds one's humanity only in accepting God's offer of grace. Balthasar became convinced that humanity is never totally outside the grace of God, linking this position with the view of the Fathers that communion with God and the essence of humanity belong together. It was from de Lubac that Balthasar gained his deep insight and love of the Greek Fathers; they both saw themselves as mediators of the tradition. Balthasar's study of the Church Fathers, particularly Origen, convinced him that the voice of the Fathers should not be lost but should be included in his own mission to the church in the present. He was particularly concerned that the Fathers' intuition of the universal love of God in Christ, as it is related to the whole world, should include the concrete form of the institutional church. Balthasar's thinking on the Fathers also influenced his theological method. It was through such thinking that Balthasar reached his self-understanding of theology, both as 'contemplative exegesis of the Word of God' and as a 'symbolic-wholistic understanding of the salvation-event'. In this view, the whole is always more than the sum of its parts and the connection of, among other 'parts', any doctrine or liturgical form must always be linked to the central mystery of the Christian faith; the love of God in Christ. In Balthasar's understanding, this need not preclude the need for hermeneutical or historico-critical concerns as these matters have a helping function in attaining the overarching shape of revelation against all attempts at relativizing what is held by faith.

1.1.3 Hans Urs von Balthasar: Essential Texts
Given the enormous breadth of Balthasar's writings and our particular context of the triduum mortis, restrictions have been placed on the number of Balthasar's texts to which this thesis refers in a sustained way. Balthasar's first extended treatment of the three days of Easter comes in Mysterium Paschale. In this volume, Balthasar sets out his theology of Holy
Saturday, the heart of the paradigm by which God is revealed as the *Gestalt Christi*. In an intense explication of the *triduum mortis*, Balthasar approaches the revelation of the divine mystery within God by way of the mystery of the divine *kenosis*. By linking the primary *kenosis* of the divine processions with the *kenosis* of the cross, Balthasar relates his notion of mystery to that of divine freedom, both of which are relevant to this thesis. It is Christ's 'being with the dead' which intensifies and illumines this mystery. 'Because the Descent is the final point reached by the Kenosis, and the Kenosis is the supreme expression of the inner-Trinitarian love, the Christ of Holy Saturday is the consummate icon of what God is like'.

Although Balthasar does not express his understanding of the Christ of Holy Saturday in terms of the imagination, we can ask whether his understanding of the Christ of Holy Saturday as the *Gestalt Christi* is comparable with an understanding of the *triduum mortis* as the primary content of the imaginative paradigm of God's costly love. The above themes are treated in greater breadth and depth in Balthasar's vast trilogy on 'the beautiful, the good, and the true'. This thesis is primarily concerned with volumes I and VII of the *Aesthetics* and volumes I to V of the *Theo-drama*. Balthasar maintains that, '[f]rom first to last, the trilogy is keyed to the transcendental qualities of being, in particular to the analogy between their status and form in creaturely being, on the one hand, and in divine Being on the other', thereby demonstrating a 'correspondence between worldly “beauty” and divine “glory” in the Aesthetics and between worldly, finite freedom and divine, infinite freedom in the Drama'.

The first part of Balthasar's trilogy, the seven volumes of *Herrlichkeit* (1961-1969) (ET *The Glory of the Lord*), is a major work in which Balthasar sets out the methodological basis for a theological aesthetics in conversation with the Western literary tradition. Balthasar's study of literature, art and continental philosophy imbues his work with the breadth of vision which is nevertheless, from the beginning of his theological writings, centred on the mystery of the cross, burial, and resurrection. It is this centrality that prevents Balthasar's deep engagement with the German Idealist tradition from leading him into a theological aesthetics rather than an aesthetic theology.

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43 First published as *Herrlichkeit: Eine theologisch Aesthetik*, Band 1, Schau der Gestalt, 1961, 2nd ed. 1967. Citations will be from the English translation.
The main theme of *The Glory of the Lord* is one which informs Balthasar’s whole contemplative theology: the revelation of the divine glory in the form of Jesus Christ. In *The Glory of the Lord, Volume One: Seeing the Form*, Balthasar’s portrayal of Christ as the *Gestalt Christi* is at the centre of his theory of perception. In this first volume, Balthasar outlines how his theological aesthetic is grounded in the divine attribute of beauty through the notion of form.\(^{45}\) For Balthasar, the only legitimate way to a theological aesthetics is for divine revelation to determine its own standards of beauty. While not arguing for aestheticism, Balthasar is interested in the confrontation of beauty and revelation in dogmatic theology. His central concern is to not betray ‘theological substance’ to the ‘current viewpoints of an inner-worldly theory of beauty’.\(^{46}\) Form does not manifest God without content. The first volume of *The Glory of the Lord* has a particular application in this thesis for two reasons: firstly, Balthasar’s notion of concrete form is relevant to the idea of the imagination understood as the synthesis of abstract concepts and the senses; secondly, we need the imagination to understand that Christ is revealed as the form of beauty in the incarnation and that the glory of God is revealed in the crucified Jesus. In the remaining six volumes, rather than expounding a history of philosophy or intellectual thought, Balthasar develops his notion of a theological aesthetics by outlining the vision of being in both ancient and modern metaphysics and demonstrating how the Christian vision of God’s self-revelation relates to this account.

In moving from his theological aesthetics to the second part of the trilogy, the five-volume *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, Balthasar shifts the focus from contemplation to action. His overall aim is to ‘use the categories of drama to illuminate Christian theology’. He claims that ‘picture’, ‘symbols’ and ‘forms’ are insufficient of themselves to interpret revelation in its utterly unique, definitive form. He believes that the dynamic quality of the revelation-event is needed in order to present the whole; in effect, the development of a ‘theodramatic theory’ which is concerned with the good.\(^{47}\) It is the drama of salvation and the mercy and goodness of God which ‘reflects upon the dramatic character of existence in the light of biblical revelation’, the reflections of which are ‘themselves based on this revelation’.\(^{48}\) Balthasar emphasizes not only the dramatic character of the divine/human

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\(^{45}\) In contrast, an aesthetical theology, for Balthasar a negative term, is a ‘theology which takes inner-worldly standards of beauty as the criterion for the beauty of divine revelation’. (John O’Donnell, SJ, *Hans Urs von Balthasar* (Collegeville, USA: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 32, note 3).

\(^{46}\) Balthasar, *GL:1*, 38.


encounter but also the drama of the divine life, thereby providing a basis for speaking of God in dramatic categories. The *Theo-drama* expounds the notion that the cross reveals the intra-divine relations and that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus are grounded in the trinitarian relations. A reading of this text raises the question whether, in Balthasar’s understanding, the events of the three days of Easter constitute a change in God. The first volume sets out Balthasar’s dramatic orientation and dramatic resources. The fourth and fifth volumes of the *Theo-drama* are of particular interest to this thesis in their direct treatment of the *triduum mortis*. The fourth volume sets out Balthasar’s soteriology and the fifth volume focuses on the mystery of God in a trinitarian framework. Balthasar makes it clear that the Trinity and not christology is the ‘last horizon of the revelation of God in himself and his dramatic relationship with the world’. The true *eschaton* is seen from the theocentric and not the anthropocentric perspective.50

While much of Balthasar’s earlier writing comes to fruition in his major trilogy, three additional works are particularly relevant to this thesis. Balthasar’s perceptive study, *Karl Barth. Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie* (1951) (*ET The Theology of Karl Barth*),51 already reflects his concern for an ecumenical dialogue that is based on a thorough investigation of both Roman Catholic and Protestant thought. Balthasar’s examination traces the development of Barth’s thought and provides an invaluable insight into the themes subsequently developed by both Balthasar and Jüngel. In particular, Balthasar’s analysis of what he considers to be Barth’s move from dialectic to analogy has met with further attention and some criticism.52 *Glaubhaft ist nur Liebe* (1963) (*ET Love Alone: The Way of Revelation*), develops the notion that love is the form of revelation, the prime authority for which is ‘the Son interpreting the Father through the Holy Spirit as divine love’.53 Balthasar elaborates his idea of Christ both identifying with and personifying the mission received

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50 Balthasar, *TD: V*, 56. It is in this last volume of *Theo-dramatics*, with its emphasis on eschatology, that Balthasar quotes most extensively from von Speyr.

51 Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Karl Barth. Darstellung und Deutung seiner Theologie* (Cologne/Olten, 1951). This volume resulted from the Basel lectures that Balthasar gave on Barth’s work in late 1948 and early 1949. Citation is henceforth from the ET.


from the Father. An exposition of revelation as the manifestation of the glory of the Lord as the mystery of love, this work epitomizes Balthasar’s frequent theme that the image of divine love is seen in the obedience of Christ. Balthasar himself refers to it as a ‘sketch’ which follows the pattern of Herrlichkeit. As a theological aesthetic ‘in the dual sense of a study of perception, and a study of the objective self-expression of divine glory,’ this small volume is important for the study of both revelation and the imagination. Balthasar maintains that it is this theological approach that is at the heart of theology rather than either a cosmological or anthropological approach. The meditation Der Kreuzweg \(^{55}\) (1964) (ET The Way of the Cross) is of particular note because it deals, in concentrated form, with the themes Balthasar treats discursively elsewhere. A profound and somehow personal telling of the fourteen stations of the cross, it speaks of the ongoing suffering of Christ in his abandonment and forsakenness by God. The complicity of humanity in Christ’s death is compared to the ‘Yes’ of Mary; all these themes inform and predate Balthasar’s vast trilogy.

Balthasar was an extremely prolific writer over a long lifetime and various other sources are referred to in this thesis. While reception of his work varied within his lifetime, Balthasar’s stature as a theologian is still growing. Ironically, his sometime isolation from both academic theology and the institutional hierarchy, coupled with his ability to publish his own works, facilitated rather than inhibited the independent tone of his theology, thus adding to his reputation. In Jüngel’s case, his appointment to a prestigious academic position at an early age may have encouraged the independent and sometimes polemic, tone of his theology.

1.2 Eberhard Jüngel

1.2.1 Background

The ideas and ideals of the Enlightenment challenged the authority of revelation within Protestant theology by making tradition, including scripture, open to critical inquiry in light of the objective universal norms of human reason. The Romantic reaction to the Enlightenment rejected the ideals of the objective and the universal and turned to the particular within subjective experience.\(^{56}\) By the end of the nineteenth century, Protestant

\(^{54}\) Balthasar, LA, 8.


\(^{56}\) For a survey of the historical and philosophical influences in modern Protestant theology, see Paul Avis, ‘Divine Revelation in Modern Protestant Theology’ in Divine Revelation, ed. Paul Avis (London, Darton, Longman & Todd, 1997), 45-66. For the influences in Roman Catholic theology, see Daly, ‘Revelation in the
theology was, to a large extent, locating revelation in human rather than divine possibilities. It was this theological climate that gave rise to the 'dialectical theology' of the early twentieth century and subsequently to Barth's developed theology of the Church Dogmatics. Both Balthasar and Jüngel, following Barth to a large extent, insist that revelation is located in divine possibilities, thus making the involvement of the human imagination a more subtle matter than it is for those theologians who locate revelation in human possibilities.

Eberhard Jüngel's formidable intellect has been a powerful influence in German theology in the later twentieth century. He was born in Magdeburg, Germany in 1934 into a home where his father ridiculed the Christian faith and opposed his son's decision to study theology. The events that followed the Soviet occupation of Magdeburg after WWII were to leave a lasting mark on Jüngel. The German Democratic Republic in the 1940s and 1950s was resolutely atheist and, along with others, Jüngel was interrogated and expelled from school because of his Christian faith. Jüngel's continuing preoccupation with atheism's critique of Christianity, rather than leading him towards apologetics, resulted in his own critique of metaphysical theism and the stance that Christianity can only be true to the gospel if it takes the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ seriously. Jüngel's university studies were undertaken mainly in Berlin under the auspices of the New Testament theologian Ernst Fuchs but he studied with, or was influenced by, several of the great minds of twentieth-century theology, including Rudolf Bultmann, Karl Barth, Heinrich Vogel and Gerhard Ebeling. He also studied Kant intensively with Gerhard Stammler. Jüngel himself comments that he studied under 'noteworthy teachers of very different orientations'. 57 He tells how his teaching career began abruptly when the Berlin Wall was built 58 and only weeks after he received his doctorate. He left what was East Germany in 1966 to take up the position of professor of systematic theology at the University of Zurich. 59 Jüngel held the position of professor of

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57 Jüngel, THM, 231.
58 See Jüngel, THM, 230.
systematic theology and philosophy of religion at the University of Tübingen from 1969 until his retirement in 2003.

Jüngel’s determination to become a theologian was greatly influenced by his youthful experience of the church as the one place in a Stalinist society where truth could be spoken without fear. The church, for him, was an institution of truth and therefore of freedom, hence his conviction that any political activity undertaken by the church should further the cause of truth. This preoccupation with truth, allied to a concern for justice and peace, has remained throughout his career as an academic theologian and as a member of the church. Jüngel himself does not differentiate in his theology between the academy and the church; in his eyes, theological thought is a vocation for the whole of life. In his essay ‘My Theology - A Short Summary’, Jüngel maintains that the phrase ‘my theology’ is best understood as an expression of personal responsibility for appropriate and timely talk about God. Theology is a social event: it is church theology. But precisely as this it is also an expression of my very personal participation in the will and capability of all believers to understand.

Despite its complexity, Jüngel consciously embeds his theology in the context of faith.

In his essay, ‘Toward the Heart of the Matter’, Jüngel speaks of how the collapse of ‘realized socialism’ in the former Eastern bloc affected him. In 1989, he was in America for the first time when the Leipzig demonstrations began, culminating in the end of the partition of Germany. He tells how these events brought back to him the building of the Berlin wall and earlier periods of his life, making him aware of how much they had influenced him. Jüngel was at first wary of the ‘political theology’ put forward by Johann Baptist Metz and Jürgen Moltmann because he feared that a theological adherence to a particular political course might be elevated to a theological principle but he later modified his position on political

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60 See Jüngel, TM, 229.
61 ‘I believe, therefore I speak of the God who has come to the world as a human being and who has for our salvation revealed himself as God in the person of Jesus Christ. I believe, therefore I speak of Jesus Christ as the truth of God that liberates.’ (Eberhard Jüngel, ‘My Theology - A Short Summary’ in Theological Essays II, ed. J.B. Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 1-19 at 4).
62 Jüngel asserts that the total claim to truth and the ‘pressure to deceive oneself along with the public’ is directed against the truth itself as is ‘every claim to truth implemented by violence’. (Jüngel, THM, 229). ‘It is specifically within the spiritual life of the church that the rigour of theological perception belongs’. (Eberhard Jüngel, Christ, Justice and Peace: Toward a Theology of the State, trans. D. Bruce Hamill and Alan J. Torrance (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 7).
64 For Jüngel’s relationship with the church and his decision to study theology, also the way Jüngel perceives himself to have changed over the years, see Jüngel, THM.
activism.\textsuperscript{65} Jüngel has lectured in South Africa and takes the view that liberation theology in the context of third world injustice and South African racism makes it incumbent on the Christian to work against social injustice both in word and action.\textsuperscript{66} Although Jüngel has strong opinions on ethical issues, his tendency has been rather to concentrate on the issues which underlie good praxis. His early preoccupation with the validity of truth claims and a strong belief in the importance of dogmatics have never left him. Jüngel has continued to reflect on the themes that have occupied him since his early teaching days. These have included a preoccupation with the nature of language and how to speak the truth of God in a context shaped by atheism along with questions of how one can overcome godlessness through God and how divine power can express itself in powerlessness. Jüngel is by no means a follower of theological fashion. His reception in English-speaking theological circles has been slow, partly because of a lack of interaction with English-speaking theology and the use of continental sources largely unknown to his English-speaking readers.\textsuperscript{67}

Jüngel has resisted forming a theological 'school', insisting that the teacher can have disciples only in the sense that he or she teaches others how to immerse themselves in scripture in order to ‘find the criteria for the training of their own faculty of judgement’,\textsuperscript{68} an insistence fuelled no doubt by his own early experiences. While moving into present and future concerns in his participation in the ecumenical debate and the life of the church,\textsuperscript{69} he continues to interest himself in the interface between past and present in, among other concerns, the dialogue between Luther and contemporary theology and the ongoing debate on justification.\textsuperscript{70}

\textsuperscript{65} For Jüngel's thoughts in regard to the relation between the imperatives of the gospel and the state in the context of the Barmen Declaration, see Jüngel, \textit{Christ, Justice and Peace}. Jüngel has taken note of the peace movement and ecology in recent years in the way he seeks to clarify what theology means by power and dominion. Dominion is 'only legitimate as dominion over oneself' both in relation to human relations and the nonhuman creation. (Jüngel, THM, 232).


\textsuperscript{68} Jüngel, THM, 231.


1.2.2 Major Theological Influences

1.2.2.1 Martin Luther

During Jüngel’s studies in Zurich, Gerhard Ebeling introduced him to the thought of Martin Luther. Along with Jürgen Moltmann and other theologians of their generation, Jüngel was influenced by the German post-war revival of Luther’s theology of the cross. Luther’s staurocentric approach, validated by Paul’s understanding of the cross of Christ, meets with Jüngel’s approval because it gives serious thought to the implications of the triduum mortis for the Christian understanding of God.71 The drawing of proper distinctions is a characteristic of Jüngel’s theology. Luther’s influence is clear in Jüngel’s contention that the rationale for God’s becoming human in Jesus Christ is that humans become human. ‘What I have seen in Luther’s doctrine of God, in his Christology and his anthropology - if it is even proper to divide in such a fashion - is always the same heartbeat, that is, that drawing of the proper distinction between God and humanity as a distinction for humanity’s good’.72 God’s work (at God’s initiative) builds upon humanity. Jüngel takes from Luther the idea that the human subject is predominantly passive. The notion of human ‘becoming’ is dependent on the idea of humanity as the ‘the creature on whom God is doing construction’.73 Jüngel’s notion of the human creature being made anew ex nihilo has links with Luther’s distinction between the inner and the outer ‘man’ whereby the connections between God, humanity and the world have an irreversible direction. The distinction between the inner and the outer ‘man’ is christologically conditioned; the christological unity between God and humanity in Christ grounds the soteriological unity of Jesus with the ‘inward man’.74 Such an orientation prevents any understanding of the human creature as constituted by his or her own deeds, a point of great importance for both Luther and Jüngel.75

Jüngel associates the cultural death of God with the metaphysical concept of God which leads to atheism. He also follows Luther and Hegel when he speaks of the ontological death of God. Hegel interprets the incarnation on the basis of Luther’s view of the Christ-event as

71 Ivor J. Davidson, ‘Crux Probat Omnia: Eberhard Jüngel and the Theology of the Crucified One’, Scottish Journal of Theology, 50 (1997), 157-190 at 162. Luther’s theologia crucis is a theology of indirect revelation: God is revealed sub contrario. ‘He is not worth calling a theologian who seeks to interpret “the invisible things of God” on the basis of the things which have been created. But he is worth calling a theologian who understands the visible and hinder parts of God to mean the passion and the cross.’ Martin Luther, ‘Disputation held at Heidelberg, April 26th, 1518. WA, 1, 350-365’ in The Library of Christian Classics, Vol. XVI; Luther: Early Theological Works, ed. James Atkinson (London; SCM Press, 1962), theses 19 and 20.
72 Jüngel, Freedom, 25.
73 Jüngel, Freedom, 46.
74 Jüngel, Freedom, 60, 69.
75 See Jüngel, Freedom, 77, 80/1.
the ‘death of the divine’. Jüngel depicts Hegel’s theological achievement as ‘a philosophically conceived theology of the Crucified One as the doctrine of the triune God’ and contends that Hegel has done theology as a ‘theology of the cross.’ Several characteristics of Hegel’s treatment of the death of Jesus are significant for Jüngel. Firstly, Jesus’ death has religious significance only if God is present in this particular existence. Secondly, that which is finite and even negative is not outside of God; death can be negated and thus the negative can become positive. Thirdly, Christ’s crucifixion is viewed ‘not only as the decisive event of his life but also as the criterion for the proper understanding of his being’. For Hegel, the incarnation of God in Christ is the unification of the divine and the human in a particular human person: the universal history of absolute Spirit first becomes actual in a single individual; the turning point in the life of God is the cross. However, Hegel’s thought becomes problematic for Jüngel when, for Hegel, what is actual in Jesus must become universal actuality. For Jüngel, the uniqueness of Jesus is inviolable.

1.2.2.2 Karl Barth
Barth is arguably Jüngel’s most significant twentieth-century influence. Jüngel’s brilliant exposition of Barth in Gottes Sein ist im Werden (ET God’s Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth) first brought him to the attention of English-speaking theology. From Barth, Jüngel learned that the truth to which the Bible bears witness is what enables one to keep faith in the contemporary world. He credits Barth with the challenge to think of God from the event of revelation, that is, the event of God’s advent in the world which signifies that nothing human is foreign to God. It is from Barth’s notion of the humanity of God that Jüngel came to see that God, as God in the person of

76 Jüngel, GMW, 77. ‘It is not this man who dies, but the divine; that is how it becomes man.’ (G.W.F. Hegel, Jenaer Realphilosophie, ed. J. Hoffmeister (Philosophische Bücherei, 67) (Leipzig: F. Meiner Verlag, 1931, 1969), cited by Jüngel, GMW, 77.
77 Jüngel, GMW, 94.
78 Jüngel, 92/3. For the points of view under which Christ’s death is significant to Hegel, see Ibid., 92ff.
79 Hans Küng, The Incarnation of God: An Introduction to Hegel’s Theological Thought as Prolegomena to a Future Christology (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1987), 343.
80 See Jüngel, GMW 97. A ‘permanent difference between the human God and the human man’ is inherent within the contention that God does not desire to come to God without humanity. (Ibid., 97).
82 Despite the fact that both Jüngel and Balthasar deal with many authors not well known in the English speaking world, the translation of their works into English has brought about both a wider readership and an increase in secondary literature in English, especially in the case of Balthasar.
Jesus, is nearer to us than we are to ourselves.\(^{83}\) Barth’s doctrine of God provides a starting point for the way Jüngel conceives of the identity between God in se and God pro nobis. Because of what he learned from Barth, Jüngel is able to portray the paschal mystery of the divine passion and death as the manifestation of the triune life of God.\(^{84}\)

Jüngel writes that, some years after meeting Barth in Basel,\(^{85}\) he went back to a concentrated study of Barth and was challenged to think about God from the event of God’s revelation; from the event of God’s coming into the world. Jüngel contrasts the ‘new frontiers’ mentality’ that he gained from Barth, to the ‘sterile Barth-scholasticism’ then dominating Germany.\(^{86}\) Barth’s influence on Jüngel has been both formative and enduring. It has been said that ‘Jüngel’s theology generally is so compatible with Barth’s that a summary of Barth’s approach to theology can serve practically as an introduction to Jüngel’.\(^{87}\) While this statement may be disputed, Jüngel does follow Barth in three vital dimensions: firstly, revelation as the event of God’s self-disclosure; secondly, the centrality of Jesus Christ and thirdly, the trinitarian nature of God. In agreement with Barth, Jüngel claims that the cross is not constitutive of God’s existence; that God is self-determined.\(^{88}\) From Barth, Jüngel understands God as being ‘verbal in himself’ because God says ‘Yes’ to himself. This ‘Yes’ of God to himself constitutes God’s being as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. It is this ‘Yes’ which constitutes the historicality of God’s being, in which all history has its basis. Revelation ‘makes history’ as event and as such becomes manifest as mystery.\(^{89}\) While Jüngel shares Barth’s distrust of natural theology, he is more open to what philosophy and linguistics has to offer.\(^{90}\) However, like Barth, Jüngel understands God and humanity as complementary, neither God nor humanity is a function of the other.\(^{91}\)

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\(^{83}\) See Jüngel, THM, 231/2.

\(^{84}\) See Webster, Eberhard Jüngel, 22. Barth’s influence on Balthasar and Jüngel will become apparent in Chapter Two.

\(^{85}\) For Jüngel’s personal association with Barth, see Jüngel, THM, 231.

\(^{86}\) Jüngel, THM, 231

\(^{87}\) Zimany, Vehicle for God, 6.

\(^{88}\) A point of difference with Moltmann (for many years Jüngel’s colleague at Tübingen), who leans more towards process theology. Paul Molnar disputes the contention that Barth and Jüngel agree at this point. On this dispute, see Chapter Two.

\(^{89}\) Jüngel, GBB, 96/7. ‘The mystery of the correspondence of his being which takes place in God’s self-affirmation makes revelation as historical event possible, and in this event becomes manifest as mystery.’ (Ibid., 97).

\(^{90}\) See Zimany, Vehicle for God, 6-9.

\(^{91}\) See Webster, Eberhard Jüngel, 4. For Barth in particular this complementarity is manifest in God’s covenant relationship with humanity. However, for both Barth and Jüngel, this relationship is one of initiative and response with the initiative always belonging to God.
takes the identification of God with temporality considerably further than Barth, to the extent that death on the cross is somehow the death of God.

1.2.2.3 Martin Heidegger and Rudolf Bultmann

Jüngel had contact with Martin Heidegger during an ‘illegal’ semester outside the GDR. His thought is similar to that of Heidegger when Jüngel discounts metaphysics in considering the question of Being. In his early writings, Heidegger contended that western philosophy and science since Plato had espoused a notion of Being as static presence. While such a ‘metaphysics of presence’ thinks of being as substance, for Heidegger, being is not a property or essence continuously present in all things. Being must be understood in connection with past, present and future; Being includes presence and absence. Jüngel draws on Heidegger when he acknowledges the reality of nothingness, the developing nature of existence and the notion that truth cannot be under human control. However, Jüngel may be adding a Christian meaning to Heidegger’s thought, thereby demonstrating a relationship between Heidegger’s view and his own without necessarily deriving one from the other.92

Jüngel’s Doktorvater Ernst Fuchs not only encouraged him to read Heidegger but also introduced him to Rudolf Bultmann. An appreciation of Jüngel necessitates an understanding of the polarity brought about by the Barth/Bultmann debate which took place in Jüngel's formative years. Drawing on Heidegger’s existentialist philosophy and language, Bultmann’s existential hermeneutic put the accent on the concerns and anxieties of the human subject and away from what could be said objectively about God.93 Although understanding that it was only in human encounter with God that theology occurs in a responsible fashion, Jüngel essentially follows Barth’s emphasis on the object of faith; God must be spoken about because God has first addressed humanity. However, in contrast to the way that Barth understands Bultmann, Jüngel understands Bultmann’s contention that when we are speaking about God we are speaking about human being.94 As one who recognizes the value of Bultmann’s thought, Jüngel is concerned with the existential reality of God. As one who follows Barth to a large extent, Jüngel wishes to preserve the ‘priority of the self-

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93 In his phenomenological study of Dasein (the Being peculiar to persons) Heidegger asserted that we first become aware of Being through the experience of angst that has no perceivable cause. (Zimany, *Vehicle for God*, 9/10).
94 When reviewing Jüngel’s *Gott als Geheimnis der Welt* (1977), Garrett Green claims that Jüngel has reworked Barth’s centrality of the Christian faith and the analogy of faith into a framework largely derived from the Bultmann school and proponents of the ‘new hermeneutic’. Green considers the book to be an attempt to resolve the Barth/Bultmann debate in ‘basically Bultmannian terms’. (Garrett Green, ‘The Mystery of Eberhard Jüngel: A review of His Theological Program’, *Religious Studies Review* 5, 1 (1979), 34-40 at 38.
bestowing object of theological inquiry'. 95 Jüngel believes that 'confrontation with the truth of one’s own being is the place of theologically responsible talk about God'. 96 Theology is neither the ‘study of one’s own being’ nor the ‘formulation of God in the abstract’. Jüngel claims that theology happens responsibly only when it derives from an existential encounter with God, but he does not intend that the encounter be limited to one’s own individuality or authenticity. 97

1.2.2.4 The New Hermeneutic

The relationship between scriptural exegesis and dogmatics was an issue of particular interest at the time of Jüngel’s theological training under teachers such as Fuchs, Ebeling and Heinrich Vogel. 98 This relationship concerns the unity of theology and it was this issue which led Jüngel to see that all theological disciplines stand in relation to the Word of God. 98 Jüngel’s doctoral dissertation Paulus und Jesus 99 (published 1962) was influenced by Fuchs’ notions of language and temporality and raises many themes which appear in his later work. Jüngel is influenced by Fuchs but, rather than simply reiterating Fuchs’ theory of language, Jüngel uses it within his own anthropology, particularly in his construal of the relationship between language and temporality. 100 Through Fuchs’ hermeneutic of the New Testament Jüngel became interested in the historical Jesus. 101 Because of his perception of the New Testament as a series of ‘speech-events’ (a term taken from Fuchs), Jüngel proposes that New Testament language is not ‘simply an information-bearing sign, but is itself the presence of the realities which it articulates or “brings to speech”’. This is so, not only for the words Jesus spoke during his lifetime, but also for the words Jesus speaks to us now. For Jüngel, the object of thought is what measures the thinking itself. 102 This is an indication of the importance Jüngel later puts on God’s being object pro nobis because of God’s choice.

95 John Webster, ‘Translator’s Introduction’ in God’s Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth. A Paraphrase (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), ix-xxiii at xxx.
97 See Zimany, Vehicle for God, 17.
98 See Webster, Eberhard Jüngel, 26/7.
100 See Webster, Eberhard Jüngel, 7.
102 Webster, Eberhard Jüngel, 7/8. ‘Jüngel has very acutely perceived that both Barth and Fuchs conceive of the object of theology as a Word which both prescribes the manner of its own reception and which cannot be
1.2.3 Eberhard Jüngel: Essential Texts

Jüngel’s widely acclaimed paraphrase of Barth’s doctrine of God, Gottes Sein ist im Werden (1964) (ET God’s Being is in Becoming: The Trinitarian Being of God in the Theology of Karl Barth. A Paraphrase), is of major importance in the context of this thesis for the following reasons. Firstly, it lays the relational basis of the correspondence between the immanent and the economic Trinity along with the notion of God’s becoming what God already is. Jüngel outlines the relational structuring of revelation which expresses the ‘relational structure of God’s being’ which is integral to an explication of the triduum mortis as an expression of divine freedom grounding the salvation and freedom of humanity and also sets Barth’s (and Jüngel’s) thought firmly in a trinitarian framework. It is as Trinity, in perichoretic relationship that the being of God is event. Secondly, Jüngel affirms Barth’s correspondence between essence and economy and applies it to epistemological questions. God’s being is ‘God’s being as revelation’. Because revelation is God’s self-interpretation, what we know in Jesus Christ has implications for God in se. Thirdly, God’s being is portrayed as dynamic rather than static. Jüngel argues that transformation and the capacity for newness are inherent in God therefore God is inherently mysterious.

In the second of his major works, Gott als Geheimnis der Welt (1977) (ET God as the Mystery of the World,), Jüngel draws on previous shorter pieces dealing with christology and the death of God, including ‘Das dunkle Wort vom “Tode Gottes”,’ (1969), ‘Vom Tod des lebendigen Gottes’ (1972), ‘Jesu Wort und Jesus als Wort Gottes’, and ‘Thesen zur

resolved into anything more primitive.’ (Ibid., 10).

103 Jüngel, GBB, 25. On the relational correspondence of essence and economy, see Chapter Two.

104 The reasoning behind Barth’s positioning of the doctrine of the Trinity at the beginning of his Church Dogmatics. A decision which Jüngel says is a ‘hermeneutical decision of the greatest relevance’ because the ‘whole Church Dogmatics finds its hermeneutical foundation here’ and ‘with just this decision the hermeneutics itself finds its own starting point’. (Jüngel, GBB, 5). ‘As the mutual self-giving of the three modes of God’s being, the being of God is event.’ (Ibid., 29).

105 Jüngel, GBB, 1.

106 See Zimony, Vehicle for God, 3. ‘The fact that what is to be known about God’s being is made known to us from God’s being, is based on the fact that God’s being for us is event in Jesus Christ. This event is called revelation and as such is God’s interpretation of himself.’ (Jüngel, GBB, 106). ‘As a happening imparted to men revelation is an historical event.’ (Ibid., 20).

107 Eberhard Jüngel, Gott als Geheimnis der Welt. Zur Begründung der Theologie des Gekreuzigten im teit zwischen Theismus und Atheismus (J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) Tübingen, 1977). Citation is henceforth from the ET.


Grundlegung der Christologie’ (1972).110 In *God as the Mystery of the World*, Jüngel lays a foundation for how we may think and speak of God without reducing God to a fixed or finished concept. He enquires about mystery in both the context of the dispute with atheism and the event of God’s coming to the world. He asks whether, in the problematic relationship between mystery and questions, we ask about God because of our questioning nature as humans or whether God summons the questions. Significantly, Jüngel’s stance is a ‘questioning after God’; the questions must be summoned forth. ‘God is the one who speaks out of himself. To be addressed by God can therefore only and always be an event.’111 In his opinion, this event merits being called mystery only if it is set free from the compulsion to ground itself in its own radical questionableness.112 This is an important aspect for this thesis if the event of address is not to originate in the human self-consciousness or the Christian imagination is not to be grounded in a self-sufficient capacity without any content from outside its own processes. Either of the above would obviate the presence of mystery in the sense that Jüngel uses it. This is an important volume in connection with the *triduum mortis*. For Jüngel, God is love as the mystery of the world in identity with the crucified man Jesus; the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus determine what is possible for God. In Jüngel’s understanding, this identification makes it possible for God to be in union with perishability and to suffer death and yet remain God. In the context of a Christian understanding of the imagination, the importance of Jüngel’s revelation-centred theology lies in both his insistence on the initiative of God and the priority of God’s action and also in his conviction that theology starts and continues with God’s address to humanity rather than humanity’s search for God.

Justification has been a constant theme for Jüngel, culminating in his most recent major work, *Das Evangelium von der Rechtfertigung des Gottlosen als Zentrum des christlichen*


111 Jüngel, *GMW*, 248. Jüngel cites Weischedel as coming very close to his own position in the following quotation. ‘Radical questioning would never start if the mystery, into which it is asking, had not previously announced itself as the impulse to questioning. Thus the mystery as that which precedes all thought is what cannot be preconceived, what is in advance of all thought... The mystery as the unpreconceivable precedes radical questioning and makes it possible. There would be no radical questioning if there were no mystery which attracts it.’ (Ibid., 249, citing W. Weischedel, ‘Die Frage nach Gott in skeptischen Denken’, ed. W. Müller-Lauter. (1976), 28ff.).

112 The event must rather (as a result of an increasing understanding and experience which comes from the event itself), turn itself ever more intensely to that event which initiated the questions. (Jüngel, *GMW*, 249).
Glaubens (1999) (ET Justification: The Heart of the Christian Faith)\textsuperscript{113} in which he states that the task of the doctrine of justification is to ‘demonstrate that God in his freedom remains faithful to himself, in that he remains faithful to human beings, whom he created good’.\textsuperscript{114} In this volume, Jüngel examines how the believer is remade \textit{ex nihilo}, an important idea for this thesis as the notion of transformation can be said to be characteristic of the human imagination when it is surrendered to the Holy Spirit. Jüngel’s treatment of the Holy Spirit is vital here because the event of justification is an event made possible, not by the acts of humanity, but by God’s love.

While Jüngel’s three major works are the main resource for our discussion of Jüngel, the following volume and essays are all relevant to this study because they each deal in some way with the \textit{triduum mortis} as the mystery of divine action. Jüngel describes the small volume, \textit{Tod} (1971) (ET Death: The Riddle and the Mystery) as ‘an attempt to pose the question of death in such a way that an answer from faith is made possible’.\textsuperscript{115} Written in a more popular vein than most of his other work, it serves as a useful background to \textit{God as the Mystery of the World} in that Jüngel speaks specifically of the mystery of death in the death of the sinner which he links to the death of Jesus Christ made sin for us. The death of Christ is, in turn, linked to the death of death, which Jungel explicates as the present life made eternal.

Although reference will be made to other essays, the following three essays are of particular significance in the context of the \textit{triduum mortis}. In his seminal article, ‘Die Welt als Möglichkeit und Wirklichkeit’ (1969) (ET ‘The World as Possibility and Actuality’),\textsuperscript{116} Jüngel wants to dismantle the primacy of actuality as conceived by Aristotle. In conventional metaphysics, being is identified with the actual and only actuality is complete being, whereas the possible has been seen as a not-yet-being, understood as mere potentiality.\textsuperscript{117} For Jüngel, possibility concerns what God’s free love makes possible while actuality concerns that

which makes actual through our acts (on the basis of past and present).\textsuperscript{118} Jüngel maintains that the necessity of this theological dismantling\textsuperscript{119} is christologically grounded and becomes clear in the doctrine of justification.\textsuperscript{120} Once again, definitive distinctions play a vital part in Jüngel’s thought; faith in the word of the cross participates in God’s distinction between the possible and the impossible.\textsuperscript{121} This essay explores how the ‘claim of the possible’ is asserted as a ‘granting of freedom’ which happens when actuality makes space for freedom; ‘a space in which trust in that which is possible can arise’.\textsuperscript{122} For Jüngel, God’s freedom as love makes the possible to be possible,\textsuperscript{123} with the emphasis on God’s making new \textit{ex nihilo}. Both creation \textit{ex nihilo} and the renewing of the believer \textit{ex nihilo} are fundamental to Jüngel’s theology of the cross. The principal significance of the essay, ‘Die Offenbarung der Verborgenheit Gottes’ (1984) (ET ‘The Revelation of the Hiddenness of God’),\textsuperscript{124} is the way that Jüngel construes God’s mystery and God’s revelation, not as mutually exclusive but as deeply congruent concepts. In Jüngel’s understanding, mystery is something other than God’s incomprehensibility. He explicates God’s hiddenness as the ‘first insight which the self-revealing God gives of himself’.\textsuperscript{125} He works yet again with his central concept of correspondence or analogy. The darkness of the crucifixion of Jesus is a ‘particular hiddenness’ which does not mean that God contradicts himself but rather ‘corresponds to himself’ in this hiddenness’. A basic issue for Jüngel (as for Balthasar), is that the contradiction of eternal life and earthly death that God endures without being destroyed is the depth of God’s glory. What, on the surface is seen as one thing is, in fact, something else. Jüngel’s debt to Luther is also demonstrated in the small volume, \textit{Zur Freiheit eines Christenmenschen} (ET \textit{The Freedom of a Christian}), which discusses Luther’s significance

\begin{footnotes}
\item[\textsuperscript{118}] Jüngel, PA, 119. ‘in the face of actuality, faith has to assert what God’s love has made possible.’ (Ibid.).
\item[\textsuperscript{119}] Jüngel claims that in theology, this priority has been unchallenged, except for Fuchs and Moltmann, the former influenced by Heidegger and the latter by Ernst Bloch. (Jüngel, PA, 102).
\item[\textsuperscript{120}] Jüngel, PA, 106. Jüngel draws on Luther’s polemic against Aristotle’s understanding of the righteous person as the one who does ‘righteous deeds. Luther’s contrary assertion is that ‘we only come to act righteously once we become and are righteous’. (Ibid., 106).
\item[\textsuperscript{121}] Jüngel, PA, 115. God distinguishes God from the world by distinguishing the possible from the impossible. It is because God relates to the world by distinguishing himself from it that both God and the world can be understood. The power of the possible is seen in the authority of the gospel in which it gives itself to be understood. (Jüngel, PA, 118).
\item[\textsuperscript{122}] Jüngel, PA, 120. It is speech-events which allow this to happen. (Ibid.).
\item[\textsuperscript{123}] See Jüngel, PA, 113-116.
\item[\textsuperscript{125}] Jüngel, RHG, 125.
\end{footnotes}
for contemporary theology. The question which engages Jungel in the third essay, ‘Das Entstehen von Neuem’ (1988) (ET ‘The Emergence of the New’),\textsuperscript{126} is how one can ‘even speak at all of the new which is the work of God?’ Jungel contends that it is in Jesus Christ that the new takes place which can never be antiquated or surpassed.\textsuperscript{127} The emergence of the new within a trinitarian framework has implications for the imagination and its boundaries. It is in the renewing power of the Holy Spirit that the new which endures is a divine predicate and thus can legitimately be seen to have implications for the being of God.\textsuperscript{128} As well as the implications for ontology, the person and work of the Holy Spirit is critical for the transformation of the human person if spiritual transformation is to be linked with the imagination in a valid way.


\textsuperscript{127} In contrast to the order of creation where the mode of being of the new is for a limited time, ‘the new of the Christ-event is definitive’. (Jungel, EN, 52).

\textsuperscript{128} Jungel, EN, 56.
CHAPTER TWO

This chapter introduces divine revelation and the human imagination. It has two purposes: first, to make clear the way this thesis understands the human imagination and second, to clarify how Balthasar and Jüngel construe revelation as divine self-disclosure. This thesis proposes that Balthasar’s and Jüngel’s concepts and language have a significant contribution to make to a possible interchange between revelation and the imagination. The concepts introduced in this chapter are expanded in Chapter Three and become specific to the *triduum mortis* in Chapter Four. This schema is adopted for two reasons: first, as a means of tracing the particular motifs evident throughout the respective theologies of Balthasar and Jüngel; second, as Chapters Three and Four will demonstrate, these motifs are most explicit in the events of the three days of Easter. These events are central to the particular visions of Balthasar and Jüngel, hence the importance of the *triduum mortis* for this thesis. Theologies which assign a place to the human imagination vary in many respects, as do those theologies which are grounded in revelation. Those differences will be highlighted and followed by a survey of various ways of theorizing about the imagination before the revelation-centred theologies of Balthasar and Jüngel are outlined. The final section of this chapter will examine what may be seen as legitimate boundaries to the imagination in the context of human experience, which is an important issue for the starting point of theology.

Following the Enlightenment, the controversial status of reason and experience combined with the twentieth-century preoccupation with the function of language, engendered an increased interest in the discussion of imagination in philosophy and, more recently, in theology. A notion of the world as an imaginative construal that can be looked at from many perspectives and therefore interpreted in many different ways can lead in several different directions in theology and the life of the church. This thesis examines divine revelation understood as revelation-in-event. While such an interpretation is not commonly linked to the imagination, revelation-centred theologies take several forms and allow for diverse interpretations, some of which take a more explicit interest in the theological use of the imagination than either Balthasar or Jüngel. There are many variants in contemporary theology between those which give priority to divine self-disclosure and those which see the task of the human imagination as primarily or exclusively constructive. These variants may be considered in terms of four broad classifications. Firstly, those theologians who seek to
rehabilitate the imagination as a means of re-examining the familiar in order to better understand how we are to have faith in God. John McIntyre serves as an example of this approach. Paying particular attention to the part played by the imagination in the creation and employment of models, McIntyre sees his central purpose as ‘considering Christianity in its imaginative dimension’. Walter Brueggemann has a similar aim in his approach to homiletics. Garrett Green makes explicit use of the imagination in the context of hermeneutics. Neither Balthasar nor Jüngel uses the imagination explicitly in the way that Green does but, as this thesis will demonstrate, their respective construals of revelation may be seen to provide concepts and motifs suggestive of a critical and regulated use of the imagination. Secondly, there is a linguistic approach which advocates a form of symbolic realism which sees figurative, imaginative language as a suitable vehicle of divine revelation. Locating the creation of meaning in creative language, especially within metaphor and narrative, is an attempt to deal with the verbal dimension of the creative imagination. A prominent example, Paul Tillich, a contemporary of Karl Barth, considered all theological language to be symbolic. Such language preserves the transcendence and mystery of God through a combination of disclosure and concealment, an important theme for both Balthasar and Jüngel. Thirdly, for those who take a correlationist stance, the imagination operates as a contemporary strategy that both allows and demands pluralism while retaining the need for common criteria of meaning a position that is in direct

3 See Green, *Imagining God*. Green is treated in more detail below.
4 For the philosopher Paul Ricoeur, metaphor is part of his project of ‘rehabilitating the creative imagination’. (Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 68).
5 According to Avis, Paul Tillich ‘has more to say than any other Protestant theologian about symbols as the mediating forms of revelation’. (Paul Avis, *Divine Revelation*, 53).
6 In contrast, the revelation-centred, postmetaphysical theology of the French Catholic philosopher Jean-Luc Marion sees God’s revelation as pure gift, as excess. With a predominant interest in the question of Being, Marion rejects any strategy of correlation. In his view, although reason can think Being, reason cannot iconically disclose God except within the boundaries of Being. Revelation is the only possible and necessary foundation for theology; revelation becomes an icon for thought. (David Tracy, ‘Foreword’ in Jean-Luc Marion, *God Without Being*, trans. Thomas A. Carlson (Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), ix–xv at xi). Tracy comments that Marion ‘moves outside all correlational strategies . . . . Reason, for Marion, is capable of thinking Being. But reason is not capable of iconically disclosing God, except within the confines of Being’. (Ibid.). Marion’s proposal of an idol as the point at which the glance freezes and can go no further, is of particular interest to this thesis which, while positing the priority of revelation, insists that God is not a fixed concept. For the function and ambivalence of the idol, see Marion, *God Without Being*, 25-33.
contradiction to those of Balthasar and Jüngel respectively. According to David Tracy, it is the ‘analogue imagination’ which enables the task of systematic theology in the context of a plurality of religious cultures and traditions. Tracy claims that the analogue imagination enables authentic conversation in the contemporary pluralistic environment because understanding between people comes ‘if at all, only through analogy’. For Tracy, there are two sources for theology: either common human experience and language or the Christian tradition as found predominantly in texts. In contrast to both Balthasar and Jüngel, Tracy utilizes the Bible as a secondary source of theology which is equal to human experience and language but is not revelation above any other classic text in any privileged sense.

The final classification is particularly important for this thesis because its method determines the starting point of theology. Several theologians of the later twentieth century have seen the imagination as either primarily or exclusively constructive. For example, Gordon Kaufman uses theological categories to give meaning to existential concerns. In this case, both the god and the criteria for theology are set by humanity. Kaufman insists that a choice must be made between imagination and revelation which, in his understanding, are mutually exclusive. The image/concept “God” is the ‘ultimate reference point’ for human aspirations and has always been a product of the human imagination. In tune with Kaufman’s methodology, Sallie McFague uses the imagination to reformulate the relation between God and the world in what she perceives as a less triumphalist and patriarchal way than has often been the case historically. She starts with contemporary experience and ethical concerns which she then interprets and speaks about theologically. In her view, it is in the body of the world that we meet God. While the world is not equated with God, God’s immanence is universal within the world. Feminist theologian Elizabeth Johnson patterns her method and content after Kaufman and McFague. In Johnson’s interpretation, the

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8 Tracy’s perceived need for the imagination to be related primarily to language rather than perception impinges on issues that are raised by Balthasar and Jüngel. (See Tracy, The Analogical Imagination, 28).
9 Tracy, Analogical Imagination, 445.
13 McFague, Models of God, 184.
constructive ability of the imagination invests the symbol “God” with meaning in terms of a changing social and political agenda. Her interest in the critical analysis of historical oppressions leads her to seek new understandings of the tradition in a dialogue with the lives of women. When God is named and invested with meaning from a particular matrix of experience, the boundaries of that experience act in a similar way to the boundaries placed on the imagination by revelation; the difference lies in the self-referring nature of that experience. When the imagination is seen as exclusively constructive, as for example, in the non-realist position of Don Cupitt, religion rather than any concept of symbol is what matters. In Cupitt’s later work, language about God is not only a social construct but is often conceived as a self-enclosed play of signifiers. Signs are seen as the product of a system of difference. A sign takes its meaning or value from its place in a network of other possible choices; it has its identity from its relationships within the system of signs. There is no meaning outside this network of differences. ‘There is only one world, the world that we have built up around ourselves, the world produced by our language’. With the advent of non-realism, we can know only that which we can create.

Any theological use of the human imagination needs adequate definition if we are to connect it in any way with the revelation-centred theologies of Balthasar and Jüngel. While not exhaustive, the following historical and philosophical survey of theories concerning the human imagination is considered necessary if we are to be clear about how Balthasar and Jüngel may, or may not, allow for the human imagination in the work of theology.

2.1 The Human Imagination: A Survey
Any study of the imagination is concerned with how we perceive reality. Since Aristotle, there has been a mediating role for the imagination between sense and idea, subject and object, the passive and the active. The imagination came to be seen as a patternmaking capacity of the mind long before the term itself was in general use. It is this pattern-making or paradigmatic function which is of particular interest to this thesis. In this study, Kant’s notion of the imagination as the synthesis of abstract concepts and the senses which leads to

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15 Cupitt’s theology has been, as it were, a theology in transit. From an attempt to reformulate how the transcendence of God can be understood in Christ and the Hiddenness of God (1971) and the internalizing of religion in Taking Leave of God (1980), to an outright rejection of realism from 1986 onwards.
experience is employed. Understood in this way, we both perceive and construct images; the imagination mirrors reality as well as constructs it. This is not a critique of individual thinkers; the following survey of the imagination will illustrate two things: the development of imagination in the history of thought and the need to adequately define the concept of imagination if we are to use it in a theologically legitimate way.

An adequate theological use of the imagination must take both concept and symbol into account. The idea of the imagination working through symbols lies at the heart of the Romantic theory of the imagination.\(^{17}\) Despite many positive developments, sometimes exaggerated claims made on behalf of the imagination during the Romantic period\(^ {18}\) may help to explain why imagination was subsequently relegated to the realm of fantasy or became attached to the domain of art and isolated from the concerns of ordinary life. Assertions have been made that there is very little detailed description in most accounts of the imagination and that these accounts give insufficient foundation for the theories built on them. As a consequence, those theories have little or no contact with concrete experience.\(^ {19}\)

It is in connection with the ‘artistic’ and ‘creative’ that the contemporary popular notion of imagination resides. The imaginative is seen largely as the fictional as against the ‘real’ and the notion that the imagination is intrinsic to our percepts, concepts and actions in the world has been lost.\(^ {20}\) The realistic imagination is unlike fantasy because it is a ‘means of knowing facts through images . . . Its images engage in the world . . . Images give shape to the


\(^{18}\) Green declares that ‘[i]f thinkers in this tradition interpret religion as imagination, it is because they understand the imagination as virtually religious’. (Green, Imagining God, 18). Kierkegaard is an example of one who thought tha: the Romantic notion of the imagination made too many extravagant claims. (See Avis, God and the Creative Imagination, 300). Casey declares that ‘imagination’ is ‘a word which has come to promise more than it can possibly deliver’, largely because of its status and use during the Romantic period. (S. Casey, Imagining: A Phenomenological Study (London: Indiana University Press, 1979), 1).

\(^{19}\) Casey maintains that Schelling continually uses the term ‘imagination’ (Einbildungskraft) in his System of Transcendental Idealism but that the term is never soundly anchored in description, with the result that ‘it becomes practically synonymous with an exalted metaphysical insight which is most fully realized in aesthetic experience but which does not correspond in any readily recognizable way to imaginative experience outside the domain of art’. (Casey, Imagining, 9).

relations between the self and the world'.

2.1.1 A Post-Kantian Agenda

For Immanuel Kant, the representational power of imagination, the power to form images, ideas or likenesses in the mind, contributes to our awareness of the world. The synthesis of abstract concepts and the senses leads to experience and this synthesis is a function of the imagination. Kant makes an important distinction between the empirical or 'reproductive' imagination, which depends on the ideas we happen to have but need not have, which in turn are subject to empirical laws or laws of association, and the transcendental or 'productive' imagination (Einbildungskraft) which is said to have a constructive function. Kant conceives of the imagination as prior to knowledge because imagination presents to us objects in the world which then become subjects of knowledge. In these terms, sensations are a given but concepts are structured by the human mind; actual experience in the world combines both elements. It is through our intuitions within time and space that we encounter our experience and Kant claims that experience is not possible without some kind of conceptual apparatus with which to organize that experience. In Kant's theory, the imagination has a double role. Without the imagination we could not see objects as distinct from ourselves with an independent existence, neither could we recognize what we experience in the world as objects of a particular kind. Both functions are carried out by the image-forming power and are necessary for understanding and manipulating the world. If the imagination is seen as an active faculty for synthesis it follows that we cannot experience

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21 Francesca Aran Murphy, *Christ the Form of Beauty: A Study in Theology and Literature* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 7. 'The imagination is both creative and receptive. Its shapings are neither a neutrally objective record, nor simply projections. They lie between the mind and the world, holding the two together'. (Ibid.).


24 'Synthesis in general, as we shall hereafter see, is the mere result of the power of the imagination, a blind but indispensable function of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever, but of which we are scarcely ever conscious. To bring this synthesis to concepts is a function which belongs to the understanding, and it is through this function of the understanding that we first obtain knowledge properly so called'. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd., 1934), A 78, 71. Hereafter cited as CPR.

25 Contra Hume who claims that we gradually build up our conceptual apparatus from our experiences. For Kant, there is no progression from intuition to concepts, 'awareness is always awareness under concepts'. Conceptualizing is therefore 'a mark of mental activity, in contrast to intuitions, which are a mark of mental receptivity. It follows that all knowledge, based as it is on conceptualized intuitions, represents a blend of receptivity and activity'. (Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'Is it Possible and Desirable for Theologians to Recover from Kant?', *Modern Theology*, 14:1(1998), 1-18 at 9/10.

or conceptualize anything without the imagination. If the imagination is necessary for a belief in the continuous existence of objects, without the imagination we could have no concept of the universal.

Where theology is concerned, Kant's distinction between things as objects of experience and things-in-themselves has had a considerable impact on the question of whether it is legitimate to think of the unconditioned. As far as Kant is concerned, we can have no knowledge of God-in-himself: God \textit{in se} is incomprehensible yet God \textit{pro nobis} is a necessary function of morality. In his \textit{Critique of Pure Reason}, Kant states that 'we can therefore have no knowledge of any object as thing in itself, but only in so far as it is an object of sensible intuition, that is, an appearance'.\textsuperscript{27} He goes on to say that 'though we cannot \textit{know} these objects as things in themselves, we must yet be in a position at least to \textit{think} them as things in themselves'.\textsuperscript{28} The object is unable to be taken 'in a twofold sense, namely as appearance and as thing in itself'.\textsuperscript{29} In Kant's distinction between \textit{Denken} (thinking of the unconditioned) and \textit{Erkennen} (thinking of objects), it is because objects are limited by space and time that they are within the limits of empirical knowledge, therefore thinking of the unconditioned is, in an objectifying way, seen as an attempt to make the unconditioned subject to space and time.\textsuperscript{30} The philosopher Paul Ricoeur finds Kant's distinction between \textit{Denken} and \textit{Erkennen} important in that there is 'a legitimate thought of the unconditioned', a thinking 'according to the symbol' which does not come to rest in a finished concept. This is an important issue for this thesis as questions have been asked whether Balthasar and Jüngel say more than is legitimate about the inner being of God. According to Ricoeur, it is because there is a legitimate thought of the unconditioned that it was possible for Hegel to make the attempt to think of the unconditioned (God, self, freedom) in an objectifying manner. It is this limit to knowledge that breaks open the philosophical discourse by refusing the claim of objective knowledge to be able to close it.

\textsuperscript{27} Kant, \textit{CPR}, B xxvi, 20.
\textsuperscript{28} Kant, \textit{CPR}, B xxvi, 20. A distinction germane to Jüngel's notion of 'thinking after being'. See below. Kant is influenced by David Hume, a leading figure of the Scottish Enlightenment who discounts both the possibility of transcendental knowledge and a mechanical explanation of the mind. Hume makes a distinction between impressions and ideas, calling 'impressions' those stimuli which we receive directly from the outside world through our senses, while 'ideas' are the mind's later reproduction of those impressions. If these ideas are identical to their original impressions then they come directly from memory. However, in reproducing impressions as ideas, the imagination may 'transpose, wrench them out of sequence, divide or even fuse them', James Engell, \textit{The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism} (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 53. It is this capacity to transpose and transform that has important theological implications.
\textsuperscript{29} Kant, \textit{CPR}, B xxvii, 21.
\textsuperscript{30} Vanhoozer, \textit{Biblical Narrative}, 40.
off 'at the level of spacio-temporal objects'. It is the denial of 'knowledge' of the unconditioned that makes room for the imagination. If God is to be thought of as 'object', theology must carefully qualify such a premise if God is not to be thought of as merely one object among others. Wherever we place the limit of our knowledge of things-in-themselves, we can have no absolute knowledge of the nature and limits of reality: our 'knowledge' of God cannot end in a completed concept. God is always open to being thought in a multiplicity of ways.

2.1.2 The Rise of Phenomenology
The rise of phenomenology in the twentieth century saw the role of the imagination in perception being questioned at a fundamental level. For the German philosopher Franz Brentano, only two things are to be considered in perception: the perceiving person and the thing he or she perceives. Likewise with imagining – the two things to be considered are the one who imagines and the object of that imagining. There is no need for a third item - the image or mental content: the imagination is excluded from our perceptive awareness of the world. Taking this line of thinking even further, in his notion of imagination, Jean-Paul Sartre maintains that because the conscious being directs its attention to the world and raises questions about the world, expectations are created which may or may not be fulfilled. There is a further point beyond this negation, the notion that the object is not, or not completely, in existence. This power of asserting both what is or is not the case, the power of denial or negation, is important for Sartre because if there is no possibility of something being different from what it is, then there is no freedom to change it. 'For the power to see things in different ways, and to form images about a so far non-existence future, is identical with the power of the imagination'. The attention is not directed on to an image but on to the object itself. The mental image is the

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31 Vanhoozer, Biblical Narrative, 40.
32 Warnock, Imagination, 144. 'There is no gap between concept and object. In seeing, we immediately see an object as initiating a concept'. (Ibid.) Edmund Husserl adopted Brentano's idea of intentional consciousness and, by a system of reduction, bracketed out all questions of truth or reality so that all that remains is content - the unique pure immediacy of experience. Husserl considered that meaning could be discovered 'in that to which we turn our mind'. Meaning is somehow intrinsic to the object. However, as Husserl recognized, this attempt to bracket out all general knowledge of things fails because there is always a general significance in what we actually and immediately perceive and this general content cannot be removed by a process of reduction. (Ibid., 143).
33 In this view, the imagination, as part of human consciousness, must be directed upon an object of some kind; there is no image in the mind as such. See Mary Warnock, 'Introduction' in Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1972), ix-xvii at ix/x.
34 Warnock, 'Introduction', xviii.
relationship of consciousness to its object. Sartre sees the image as an analogue of its object, not clearly distinguished from the object but not the object itself, hence there is a certain ambiguity. 36

When viewed from the phenomenological angle, there is neither an intrinsic standard of truth nor extrinsic evidence to which to appeal; imagination can be believed to be true or false but cannot be falsified or verified by another because it is first person in character. 37 Imagining, in this view, is self-referencing. For phenomenology, 'it is not the content (the “what”) that is determinative in imaginative experience but the activity of imagining per se’. 38 What matters is the immediate present; ‘[i]maginative evidence proper is limited to what can be apprehended at the very moment of imagining, that is, to what a single and unrepeatable experience yields’. 39 If this notion of imagination was used theologically it would be very difficult to talk of truth or even the idea of a ‘faithful imagination’ as Garrett Green does: imagination could be neither faithful nor unfaithful as there would be nothing to measure it against. 40

The autonomous self of the Enlightenment assumed it could know a reality that was both external and a source of universal knowledge but the advent of postmodernity led to a change, not only in how reality is perceived but also whether we can have any notion of reality at all. 41 Because of this denial, questions of truth and illusion have become a central concern for both theology and philosophy. These questions also lie at the heart of this thesis via the commitment to the paradigmatic imagination for which it is not the experience that is paramount but the paradigm or pattern that faithfully expresses the content.

36 Warnock, *Imagination*, xiii. The analogue can be either a physical analogue (e.g. a photograph) or an analogue derived from the mental world. Of whichever type, they have no independent existence. The image has a kind of nothingness because we are aware that the object it represents is in fact absent. Warnock maintains that having images exist 'simply and entirely in order to function as representation or analogy' stops far short of an adequate account of the image. She maintains that 'we may treat the image as a given object of attention' despite the fact that this is what Sartre seems to deny. (Ibid.).

37 Casey, *Imagining*, 96. Casey maintains that, in the Western philosophical tradition, imagination has been seen as both subject to correction (corrigible) and prone to error (in need of correction). Casey portrays imagination as 'non-corrigible' in that it is 'not to be subject to truth or error in the conventional, correspondential sense of these terms. As such, non-corrigibility differs both from corrigibility (which allows for both truth and error) and from incorrigibility (which is concerned exclusively with truth).' (Ibid., 95).

38 Casey, *Imagining*, 89.

39 Casey, *Imagining*, 01.

40 See Green, *Imagining God*, 144f. On Green's notion of the paradigmatic imagination; see below 10ff.

41 For example, for Derrida, reality is a linguistic construction; there is nothing outside the text. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, corrected ed. trans., Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore/London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1997).
2.1.3 The Paradigmatic Imagination

The theological use of imagination can lead to revisionist or reductionist tendencies where response is either peripheral or no longer an issue. In contrast, if we are to look at the imagination along with the revelation-centred theologies of Balthasar and Jüngel, we must recognize that the unique character of theology’s object shapes what can and cannot be stated about the triune God. The imagination enables both a response to revelation as the activity and address of God and the search for self-realization using theological categories. Rather than a vague appeal to the use of imagination as a theological tool, this thesis is interested in the content of the imagination in action. Although emphases always vary, it is important to note the difference between construals of the imagination that depend on either (a) the imagination as process or (b) the content of the imagination. While the imagination always has a certain open-ended character, when viewed from the phenomenological angle (a), there is neither an intrinsic standard of truth nor extrinsic evidence to which to appeal. In contrast, in a notion of the imagination conceived as the locus of revelation, it is not the experience that is paramount but the paradigmatic pattern (b) that faithfully expresses the content. Christian revelation is thus dependent on specific concrete paradigms that give shape and substance to the Christian imagination. In order to evaluate the paradigmatic imagination in connection with Balthasar and Jüngel, we will first examine the notion of the paradigmatic imagination with reference to Thomas Khun and Garrett Green and second, the idea of the imagination as the locus of revelation.

2.1.3.1 Thomas Kuhn

In his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962), Thomas Kuhn suggests that certain scientific works provide a framework of concepts, procedures and results within which subsequent work is structured. Normal science then proceeds within this structure or paradigm and the paradigm becomes unworkable only when sufficient anomalies and stresses cannot be resolved within the framework. When this happens, a scientific revolution occurs and the paradigm changes.42 Kuhn likens the shifts in perception that accompany

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42 Kuhn’s assertion that ‘though the world does not change with a change of paradigm, the scientist afterward works in a different world’. (Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 121). This statement evoked considerable criticism from the scientific community. In the postscript included in the second and third editions of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, he states that what he has in mind is not the acquiring of rules from exemplars and the ability to apply them; it is only after perception that we look for criteria and put them to use. It is only after perception that we engage in interpretation, ‘a deliberate process by which we choose among alternatives’ in a way that we do not in perception itself. (Ibid., 194). In Kuhn’s construal of the paradigmatic imagination, our perception is coloured
paradigm change to a *gestalt* switch, which may make way for further discoveries. He claims that the process of conversion, which he likens to this *gestalt* switch, lies at the heart of the revolutionary process.  

In the transition from one paradigm to another, understandings of presuppositions concerning context, norms and methods may be radically altered or even discarded. What has been seen as an accurate representation of reality gives way when it is no longer seen as representing reality and a new worldview takes its place. The paradigm is always open to change and the agent of that transformation is the paradigmatic imagination. Kuhn’s emphasis on non-scientific factors, such as sociological considerations, has given to religious belief an understanding of how paradigm shifts are discarded. Within theology, Jüngel cites, as examples of paradigm shift in the history of theological knowledge, among others, the theology of Augustine, the thought of Aquinas, the Reformation and the work of Schleiermacher.

2.1.3.2 Garrett Green

The contemporary North American theologian Garrett Green describes three levels to his inquiry into imagination. In the first level, the transcendental imagination is an inquiry into *a priori* preconditions of experience. At this *a priori* level, the imagination selects, integrates and mediates the ‘sensuous preconditions’. The second level of perception entails encapsulating a whole pattern (*Gestalt*) in a single perceptual act. It is the third level of interpretation that Green sees as theologically relevant as it depends on the other two levels; its subject matter is not accessible to direct observation but is ‘mediated by selective and integrating images’ drawn from that experience that is immediately accessible to us. Imagination, for Green, is that human ability which enables us to ‘recognize in accessible exemplars the constitutive organizing patterns of other, less accessible and more complex objects of cognition’. Paradigms are implicit in the perception and become explicit in the interpretation, but interpretation depends on perception and may give rise to new

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by our previous training and experience, which ‘makes one suspect that something like a paradigm is prerequisite to perception itself’. (Ibid., 113).

43 See Kuhn, 117, 204.

44 See Jüngel, EN, 40. See also, Alister E. McGrath, *Science and Religion: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 83/4. Although the notion of paradigm put forward by Kuhn puts another slant on the split between ‘subjective’ religion and ‘objective’ science, the split has not disappeared. The scientific community ‘still have severe problems with Kuhn in particular, and with the nature and function of imagination in general, and these are still far from satisfactory resolution’. (James P. Mackey, ‘James P. Mackey: Introduction’ in *Religious Imagination*, ed. James P. Mackey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1986), 1-25 at 6).


46 Green, *Imagining God*, 65/6.

47 Green, *Imagining God*, 66.
perception. If we imagine the world according to a paradigm, we interpret from that paradigm which then determines in some way the conclusions reached by that interpretation. Green wants to keep this distinction between perceptual and interpretive imagination because it is by recognizing something as like something else that we see it: ‘the paradigmatic imagination is the ability to see one thing as another’. While the form of the imagination is universal, the content of the Christian imagination needs to be seen to be faithful to the Christian gospel. For Green, with his interest in scriptural hermeneutics, the content is epitomized by the canon of scripture. This is relevant for Balthasar and Jüngel in the sense that scripture mediates revelation, but their core concern (in the works cited in this thesis) is to explicate the particular events of the cross, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Green uses the paradigmatic imagination in a way that Balthasar and Jüngel do not. However, given the above, there is a place for using the notion of the paradigmatic imagination in conjunction with the trinitarian theologies of Jüngel and Balthasar. At issue is whether God’s self-revelation in the events of the triduum mortis can be understood as an imaginative paradigm for the Christian imagination.

2.1.4 The Paradigmatic Imagination as the Locus of Revelation
Green advances a construal of the human imagination as the locus of revelation. In his view, the paradigmatic imagination, as the Anknüpfungspunkt or point of contact between God and humanity, is the form of revelation, whereas the material content is dependent on specific concrete paradigms which give shape to each particular embodiment of religious imagination. Green’s thesis that the imagination is the locus of revelation is not without its questions and problems. The primary question is whether, in locating the locus of revelation in a general human ability, the imagination acts as a substitute for the Holy Spirit. Does placing the locus of revelation in the imagination put too much emphasis on the human agency of the person who imagines? Both Balthasar and Jüngel require stronger concepts and language about Word and Spirit than Green demonstrates. For Green, scripture is ‘the concrete paradigm of the Christian imagination in the life of the believing community, the

48 Green, Imagining God, 73. Green discusses this in the context of Wittgenstein’s duck/rabbit figure but presumably means it to have a general application. It can be said that we, in our daily lives, interpret from within a paradigm in the collective sense and, in an individual sense, strengthen or weaken that same paradigm according to our individual experience. For the interpretive capacity of the imagination, see McIntyre, Faith, Theology and Imagination, 161.
49 Green, Imagining God, 66-73.
50 Green, Imagining God, 84.
means by which we are enabled to imagine God. The story of Jesus is the definitive pattern and Christ becomes the paradigm for the theological imagination. According to Green, the imagination may be seen as the matrix into which scripture speaks; revelation works through scripture and theology critically interprets revelation by means of the interpretation of scripture. In Green’s view, scripture, for the Christian, embodies a normative pattern for the shaping of the religious imagination. Scripture is the witness to the paradigmatic pattern and Jesus Christ is the focal point for construing the canon faithfully. This focus on Christ becomes a new Gestalt. Balthasar and Jüngel certainly see Jesus as the new Gestalt, but in more particular terms. In Balthasar’s thought, the Gestalt Christi is the Word incarnate, the ‘One sent’: Jesus Christ whose mission is ultimately fused with his person and becomes ‘identical with him’. For Jüngel, Jesus is a new Gestalt only in his identification with the trinitarian God, an identification which is at its most expressive in the triduum mortis.

Green maintains that, via the scriptures, the imago Dei is impressed upon the imagination of believers, thus conforming them to God. It is here that Green’s overt reliance on the canon of scripture leads him to part company with Balthasar and Jüngel in that, for them, the event of revelation rather than scripture as scripture must shape us anew through the work of the Holy Spirit. In Balthasar’s terms, it is the Gestalt Christi not the form of scripture that is impressed upon the believer. Three problems arise in Green’s construal of the paradigmatic imagination. Firstly, Green views scripture as a coherent whole so that scripture provides a framework within which the imagination of the Christian community works. Green conceives of the unity of scripture as the unity of its imaginative shape but what is internally coherent within a self-related paradigm may or may not bear any resemblance to extra-biblical reality. The question remains whether theology makes assertions to a reality that exists independently of grammar and story. Secondly, while for Green the imagination is simply the locus (the where) that revelation (the what) happens, Green needs a more adequate pneumatology in order to make it crystal clear that the human imagination is

51 Green, Imagining God, 106.
52 Green, Imagining God, 166, note 4.
54 Green, Imagining God, 105. ‘If the imago Dei is the model or paradigm for the renewal of human life, the imagination is the means by which it takes place’. (Ibid., 102). It is because ‘God has im-pressed his image, embodied in Jesus Christ, on the original witnesses, who have in turn ex-pressed that image in certain texts; these writings, which we therefore called sacred, once more im-press their form on us, the modern hearers, reshaping us in the image of God’. (Ibid., 106).
55 See Green, Imagining God, 84.
merely the vehicle of the Holy Spirit who enables revelation. Thirdly, it may be said that, in attending to the receptive traits of the imagination, Green has lost sight of the constructive capabilities of the imagination that Kant identified along with its receptive qualities. The imagination has the ability to both perceive and construct images. As we shall see in Chapter Three, both Balthasar and Jüngel may also be emphasizing the receptive to the detriment of the constructive in their respective theologies. On the other hand, three of the underlying principles outlined by Green are particularly relevant to this thesis and to a perception of the triduum mortis as presenting a paradigm for the Christian faith. Firstly, the natural ability to imagine is not to be seen as a *natural ability to imagine God*. Secondly, the imagination is not the foundation of revelation but rather its *locus*. Thirdly, while revelation occurs as an event within the human imagination, the concept of imagination is not be used in such a way that it constitutes either an ontological or anthropological pre-understanding of revelation.

Despite the above, it must be understood that the imagination is far too complex to be *simplistically* isolated as a function of the mind in which to house revelation. The ensuing section of this chapter examines how Balthasar and Jüngel explicate their respective construals of revelation. In recognition of the importance of Barth’s thought for both Balthasar and Jüngel, this section begins with an outline of Barth’s understanding of revelation-in-event. This will be followed by an appraisal of Balthasar and then of Jüngel, each with a particular accent on three critical issues: the relationship between essence and economy, the way they perceive revelation to be received and their respective treatments of analogy. The final section makes some observations about the place of experience in their revelation-centred theologies.

### 2.2 Revelation as God’s Self-disclosure

Balthasar and Jüngel are overtly revelation-centred theologians. They hold to the view that God discloses God in the events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus; the *triduum mortis* lies at the heart of their respective theologies. They both see revelation as primary; it is something antecedent to the human task of theology. A theology founded on something more primordial than itself is a ‘derivative, responsive, second-order enterprise’. This concept of revelation addresses the connection between knowing and being; the relationship

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between theology's response and what theology responds to. In seeing this connection as theology's response to the given (to revelation, however that is understood), theology is a conscious reflection upon that 'which is logically antecedent to response and thus that which is neither a mode of response nor something generated in response'. 57 Both Balthasar and Jüngel would agree that discourse about the world refers to a reality external to the observing subject: what we understand corresponds in some way to the way the world is. Nonetheless, the consideration of how much is known or left unknown by a particular construal of revelation draws as into the question of mystery and its relation to revelation. Both Balthasar and Jüngel are adamant that God is not open to public scrutiny.58

2.3 Karl Barth

2.3.1 Revelation-in-event

The following examination of Barth's understanding of revelation-in-event is not referring to a model of revelation; it asks, What meaning does revelation have in this particular case? 59 Barth's exposition of revelation-in-event highlights three issues which concern Balthasar and Jüngel in their respective construals of the triduum mortis. The first is the correspondence between God's act and God's being. The second concerns revelation as God's self-

57 Hart, *Unfinished Man*, 37-40. According to Hart, theology is 'the response of mind, the response of cognition or understanding'. (Ibid., 37). It is not only the concept of divine revelation that involves givenness within its basic concept. Colin Gunton insists that there can be no recovery of the doctrine of theological revelation (revelation of God) without recognizing a 'general theory of revelation' (revelation as necessary to what we call knowledge). (Colin E. Gunton, *A Brief Theology of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 32f.). The notion of 'givenness' can be understood in different degrees and forms within science and other disciplines. Although wishing to deny the need for supernatural event, the physicist Paul Davies asserts that '[h]owever successful our scientific explanations may be, they always have certain starting assumptions built in. For example, an explanation of some phenomenon in terms of physics presupposes the validity of the laws of physics, which are taken as given... Sooner or later we all have to accept something as given, whether it is God, or logic, or set of laws, or some other foundation for existence. Thus ultimate questions will always be beyond the scope of empirical science as it is usually defined'. (Paul Davies, *The Mind of God: Science and the Search for Ultimate Meaning* (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 15).

58 If the starting point of the 'problem' is the natural world or human experience then it seems quite in order to use the process of human discovery to find a solution by means of human agency. If a process of deduction is used, the conclusion that is drawn from a set of premises is seen as logically valid if the conclusion follows from the premises themselves. This outworking of the original premises, if applied to a complex set of concepts, can lead to some unexpected conclusions, although such arguments cannot be used to prove anything that is genuinely new. In contrast, inductive reasoning is a process of reasoning that moves from empirical premises to empirical conclusions that are supported by those same premises but not logically deduced by them. Something beyond the premises is inferred as probable which yet needs to be congruent with the premises. A problem with inductive reasoning is that it relies heavily on the way we understand the world to be but is restricted to a small sample of empirical data: nothing is certain. Davies maintains that 'free-ranging imaginative leaps or inspiration' also play their part in scientific advances. (See Davies, *Mind of God*, 25-28).

interpretation and the third examines the dynamic nature of revelation. Barth claims that God enters the human sphere thus making God real in the incarnation of the Word and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. In the incarnation and the work of the Holy Spirit, God comes into our human experience, a point taken up in some detail by Jüngel in his analogy of advent. Barth understands God’s self-revelation as, in effect, God’s self-interpretation. In taking this stance, Barth goes against a whole tradition of modern theology which maintains that it is the human condition which determines how God can be real to us.\(^{60}\) The issue here is who or what is the determining factor - God or humanity. Although Barth understands revelation as both a divine and a human event, it is God alone who establishes the possibility of revelation. Speaking of Barth, McCormack comments, ‘there is no formal conflict between the affirmation of the idea of revelation and the imaginative character of the work which is revelatory’; Barth shows that divine revelation and human imagination may be conjoined.\(^{61}\) In his exposition of God as the subject of revelation Barth is adamant that there must be no appeal to what is external to God; the content of revelation is God, it is God alone, it is wholly God, and God himself.\(^{62}\) It is because Barth considers revelation to be the work of the trinitarian God and not a cooperative work between God and his creatures that he makes so much of this argument in CD I/2. In doing so, he is making a doctrinal issue of something which is usually dealt with in other ways, for example, in theories of human experience or hermeneutics.\(^{63}\) In using the term Deus Dixit\(^{64}\) to denote revelation as God’s speech, Barth makes God the absolute subject who is known only in the freely chosen act of self-revelation. There is therefore no constant, permanent capacity for revelation, either on the part of humanity or the scriptural record. Revelation and scripture are intimately connected but the one does not take on the identity of the other; scripture is not revelation itself but is the witness to revelation. A reliable hermeneutic is thus based on the principle that God can only be known through God; the text can be an instrument of divine speech because God as Trinity is both the content and the agent of revelation.\(^{65}\) Revelation thus provides the fundamental conception through which Barth explicates the being of God as

\(^{60}\) While we can think of God only in human terms, this is not the same as the proposition that it is we who think of God, therefore God becomes real to us under our terms.


\(^{63}\) See John Webster, Karl Barth, Outstanding Christian Thinkers (London/New York: Continuum, 2000), 61.

\(^{64}\) See Karl Barth, Göttingen Dogmatics, 45-68. Barth took the phrase ‘Deus Dixit’ from the Dutch neo-Calvinist, Hermann Bavinck. In its strictest and most original sense, revelation is taken to mean a speaking by God. (See McCormack, Critically Realistic, 338, note 24, also 337-346).

\(^{65}\) Scripture and its canonicity must be apprehended within the economy of salvation. ‘Scripture has its being in its reference to the activity of God’ (Webster, Karl Barth, 30).
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. For Barth, the doctrine of revelation is ‘simply the doctrine of God in its cognitive effect’.  

In Barth’s thinking, the knowability of the Word of God is given in the event of faith which is inherent within the Word of God itself and is independent of inborn or inherited characteristics and possibilities in humanity; all true human knowing of God is gift. It is not a question of a once-and-for-all-time givenness but a continual ekstatic giving on God’s part. Revelation is essentially a living truth rather than a static state of affairs. It is through the gospel that we participate in the truth of God’s self-knowledge as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, a knowledge mediated in and through Jesus Christ. Because knowing and loving God cannot be separated, revelation and fellowship with God are inseparable. The act and purpose of God are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This fulfilment is possible because, for Barth, Jesus Christ is not external to God. In a unique and unrepeatable way, God’s humanity is revealed in Jesus. The constitutive role of Christ is thus preserved; salvation is not reduced to revelation. It is because God initiates revelation that is self-objectifying that possibility ensues from what would have remained an epistemic impossibility. This freedom is God’s own freedom and in ‘all its possibilities and shapes it remains the freedom which consists and is exercised in Jesus Christ’. Because Barth sees God’s freedom as paramount, he sees theology as responsive rather than constructive. Because Barth perceives revelation as essentially trinitarian, the subjective side of revelation is also at God’s initiative. ‘[T]he revelation attested in Holy Scripture is the revelation of the God who, as the Lord, is the Father from whom it proceeds, the Son who fulfils it objectively (for us), and the Holy Spirit who fulfils it subjectively (in us)’. Although Christ is the revealed Word of God in the context of theology, theology itself is a response to the Word in imperfect human words. God is objective because God gives God as object to be known, but, in the sense that God

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66 Webster, Karl Barth, 58.
67 See, Barth, CD I/1, 271.
68 On this point, see Barth, CD I/1, 11/12. See also, John Webster, Karl Barth, 58, 170f.
69 ‘Because truth is a predicate of the living God, our human perception and reception of this truth can only be an ongoing event’. (Hunsinger, How to Read Karl Barth, 67).
70 ‘It is not our knowledge of God, but the knowledge which is and will be present in this man Jesus, that we have described in our description of its reality, its possibility, and now finally its limits ... because He is the eternal Son of God, there is promised to us our own divine sonship, and therefore our fellowship in His knowledge of God’. (Barth, CD II/1, 252). See Hunsinger, Disruptive Grace, 170/1.
71 See Barth, CD II/1, 320/1.
72 In contrast to various degree christologies.
73 Revelation is always linked to salvation and redemption in Barth’s thought.
74 Barth, CD II/1, 320.
75 Barth, CD I/2, 1.
can only be known through faith, God is epistemically subjective. Because God’s Word is always spoken to particular persons, the epistemological question is how the specific person to whom the Word is concretely spoken can know this Word. Only through the creative work of the Holy Spirit can revelation become actual. The Holy Spirit effects communion not only between Father and Son but also between God and humanity. The work of the Holy Spirit spans both the intra-divine relations and the relation between God and the world: both essence and economy.

2.3.2 Correspondence between Essence and Economy

The issue of correspondence between God’s being and God’s act is pivotal for Barth, as it is for Balthasar and Jüngel. If there is no authentic correspondence between the act and being of God, God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ cannot serve as a true foundation for a doctrine of God. If there is no perceived correspondence between the act and being of God then both Balthasar’s motif of mission and Jüngel’s motif of identification would have to be discounted. There could be neither a correspondence between the mission of the Son and the mission of Jesus Christ in the world nor an identification between God and the crucified man Jesus. Although demonstrably employing their own motifs, both Balthasar and Jüngel draw on Barth’s understanding of correspondence, an understanding which depends on both the correspondence between being and act and the idea that God is known in primary and secondary objectivity. Barth holds to a clear distinction, but not separation, between the economic and immanent Trinity. ‘He is not, therefore, who He is only in His works. Yet in Himself he is not another than He is in His works... in His works He is Himself revealed as the One He is’. For Barth, God cannot be known outside God’s own self-disclosure. The issue is not so much the question of how we know God but ‘Who is this God who reveals himself to us?’ In his attempt to answer this question, Barth’s understanding of the

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76 Paul Helm maintains that Barth is epistemically subjective when it comes to human knowledge of God because, for Barth, special revelation is not static. Helm maintains that Barth denies the objectivity of revelation in that he is ontologically objective but epistemically subjective with regard to special revelation. The point of consideration, Helm argues, is the state of mind of the human observer or knower and the effect this has on what has been revealed. Something can be said to be ontologically objective if its existence is not in any way dependent on that state of mind, whereas an object can be said to be epistemically objective if what is known by one person about that object (or concept?) is able to be remembered and passed on to others, who then have that knowledge. For Barth, subjective apprehension of God is through Jesus Christ; that subjective apprehension can be true and we can share in the truth of God’s own trinitarian self-knowledge. As human, we participate in the subjectivity of Jesus Christ. Our subjective apprehension of God does not exist independently but only in Jesus Christ who is the exclusive and singular foundation of our access to God. (See Paul Helm, *The Divine Revelation* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1982), 40ff; Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth* 90-2).

77 See Barth, *CD* I/1, 224.

78 Barth, *CD* II/1, 260.
correspondence between essence and economy is interwoven with, and dependent on, the correspondence between being and act and the correspondence between primary and secondary objectivity. Without these modes of correspondence, any correspondence between essence and economy would be, at best, disputable.

2.3.2.1 Being and act in correspondence
Can God be known from God’s self-revelation in the economy? If Barth’s logic is followed, this is the only way that God can be known.79 God’s Being is in God’s act and it is in God’s act within the economy that we see God as trinitarian, definitively in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. ‘The Word of God is an act that God undertakes’.80 By taking form in the person of Jesus Christ, God becomes a genuine object of human knowledge but, because God involves God in the creaturely sphere (thus becoming apprehensible), God remains hidden in the midst of revelation.81 God veils God in creaturely form in the man Jesus and thus plays out God’s own inner life in a particular human person at a specific time in history. To talk of God’s being in and for himself is therefore not to talk of an abstract order or some entity unrelated to human contingency, instead, it is to say that by being ‘for us’ God is being who God is. If God is not pro nobis because God is first in se, the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity collapses into ‘God only for us’ as, for example, can be seen in the immanentism of Catherine LaCugna and Sally McFague.82 If God is only for us then God would appear to be dependent on history for God’s own constitution, as seems to be the case, for example, in the Hegelian overtones of Jürgen Moltmann’s construal of the God-world relationship.83 In Barth’s understanding, the relation between Creator and created is irreversible therefore any attempt to describe it from the

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79 God acts in revelation as Creator, reconciler and redeemer: God’s action is neither dogma nor a principle. See Barth, CD I/1, 299; Molnar, Divine Freedom, x.
80 Webster, Karl Barth, 55. That the Word of God is God’s act is to be distinguished from mere event because it is also a decision. See Barth, CD I/1, 178.
81 For Barth and the hiddenness of revelation, see Jüngel, RHG, 137ff; Hunsinger, How to Read Karl Barth, 76ff.
82 For McFague, see above. According to LaCugna, ‘as soon as we begin to argue on the basis of such intradivine distinctions, we leave the economy behind’. (Catherine Mowry LaCugna, God For Us: Trinity and Christian Life (San Francisco: Harper, 1973), 227).
vantag e point of history would be to project our experience into God’s inner life thus redefining the immanent Trinity by means of reason and not revelation.\textsuperscript{84}

By stating that, in the relationship between God and the world, God is not subject to mutual conditioning, Barth is in direct contrast to all those who would start their theology in transcendental experience (for example, Karl Rahner) or social construction (for example, Gordon Kaufman).\textsuperscript{85} Barth’s insistence that God is not subject to conditioning by the world is important for three reasons. Firstly, the act of God is always antecedent to human response. Secondly, God is \textit{pro nobis} because God is first \textit{in se} and thirdly, it is God’s free act that is made manifest in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. These premises make it clear that, for Barth at least, God initiates the encounter between God and humanity and God continues to sustain and control that encounter. For Barth, the power of the Word of God is before, and apart from, faith, and is in no way dependent on a human act of faith for its existence. The Word is the power which gives faith its object and therefore its existence; ‘the Word of God has been validated, before we believed and apart from our having believed’.\textsuperscript{86}

\textbf{2.3.2.2 Primary and secondary objectivity}

According to Barth, the criterion by which every putative relationship between God and humanity is to be evaluated is ‘whether it can be understood also as an interpretation of the relationship and fellowship created and sustained in Jesus Christ’.\textsuperscript{87} In Barth’s construal of revelation the two principal aspects of God’s incomprehensibility are God’s freedom to assume creaturely form and the unique content of the Trinity. It is only by faith that God’s hiddenness can be perceived in and with revelation.\textsuperscript{88} It has been said that Barth’s whole argument follows from the idea that ‘God is first and foremost objective to Himself’.\textsuperscript{89} It is the Father who knows the Son and the Son who knows the Father, in the unity of the Holy Spirit (primary objectivity). We share in the trinitarian self-knowledge of God via the mediated revelation of Jesus Christ in the Christ-event (secondary objectivity). The primary

\textsuperscript{84} For Moltmann, God and the world can be mutually conditioned because he does not see this relation as irreversible.

\textsuperscript{85} Balthasar and Jungel are likewise distanced from such methodologies.

\textsuperscript{86} Barth, \textit{CD} I/1, 175

\textsuperscript{87} Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 320.

\textsuperscript{88} See Hunsinger, \textit{How to Read Karl Barth}, 82. The hiddenness of God says something different from the ‘Platonic or Kantian statement, according to which the supreme being is understood as a rational idea withdrawn from all perception and understanding . . . God’s hiddenness . . . is the first word of the knowledge of God instituted by God Himself, which as such cannot be transposed into self-knowledge, or into the statement of a general theory of knowledge. When we say that God is hidden, we are not speaking of ourselves, but, taught by God’s revelation alone, of God’. (Barth, \textit{CD} II/1,183).

\textsuperscript{89} Hunsinger, \textit{How to Read Karl Barth}, 78. See Barth, \textit{CD} II/1, 16.
objectivity belongs to the essence of God whereas the secondary objectivity belongs to the noetic reality. Neither the senses nor the intellect can ‘know’ God in the primary sense. The human imagination, as a synthesis of the senses and abstract concepts, can apprehend God in the secondary sense only. God assumes the secondary form of objectivity in revelation which is distinguished from the primary objectivity, not by a lesser degree of truth, but by its particular form suitable for us, the creature. God is objectively immediate to Himself but to us He is objectively mediate . . . clothed under the sign and veil of other objects different from Himself. His secondary objectivity is fully true, for it has its correspondence and basis in His primary objectivity.90

Barth understands humanity’s share in the self-knowledge of God to be mediated and secondary but not partial. ‘God is who He is, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Creator, Reconciler and Redeemer, supreme, the one true Lord; and He is known in this entirety or He is not known at all’.91

Barth is not arguing that God can be known definitively in God’s essence but that what we know of God in the economy corresponds to God’s essence. By emphasizing that God is primarily objective to himself rather than being objective only in so far as God is an object of human cognition, Barth is attempting to ‘shift the epistemological centre of gravity away from the projective activities of human knowing and on to divine action’: there is no way of getting behind the divine action in order to derive meaning from elsewhere. Barth is here subverting Kant’s negative theology while agreeing that God’s primary objectivity is unavailable to human creatures.92 Barth wishes to counter the notion that the possibility of encounter with God is to be found in human subjectivity. Such a notion, Barth believes, abrogates God’s lordship and leads to humanity usurping the centre that rightfully belongs to God; God is taken on our terms, as the postulate of our experience.93 In opposing this idea, Barth makes it clear that any encounter with God is mediated and given by grace; the objective mediation is through Jesus Christ and comes about by God’s free decision.94 The human race is ontologically present in Jesus Christ because only in Christ is the true reality of humanity to be found. This is not accomplished by faith but faith is the acknowledgement

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90 Barth, CD II/1, 16.
91 Barth, CD II/1, 51.
92 Webster, Barth, 77/8. See Barth, CD I/2, 124.
93 See Barth, CD II/1, 50; Hunsinger, How to Read Karl Barth, 40.
94 ‘For no ideal case and no idea of man can in any way alter the fact that man in himself and as such is not ready for God, and therefore that God is not knowable to him’. (Barth, CD II/1, 150).
of a mysterious incorporation of humanity into Christ which has already been accomplished objectively on humanity’s behalf. Christ is the Word by whom God addresses us and by whom we have our being through this address.

While the preceding discussion is relevant to the theologies of Balthasar and Jüngel, what these two thinkers do, or do not do, with Barth’s understanding of analogy draws out important differences in Balthasar’s and Jüngel’s respective treatments of revelation. Such differences stem largely from their acceptance or rejection of the analogy of being.

2.3.3 Analogy
In Barth’s thought, the correspondence between essence and economy is worked out in the *analogia fidei*. It has been said that, for Barth, the *analogia fidei* is the ‘epistemical alternative to the *analogia entis*’. Jüngel observes that, for Barth,

> [a]nalogy brings the formal activity of theological thought in line with the material activity of the theological object, God . . . which he construed ontologically as the analogy of relationship and theologically as the analogy of faith’.

It is foundational for Barth that apprehension of the Word of God is not an innate human capacity but is given in the event of faith by the grace of God. While Jesus Christ is the objective mediation of encounter with God, subjectively it is the Holy Spirit who mediates between God and humanity. Despite his insistence that faith is not a possibility belonging to humanity and his well-known antipathy toward the *analogia entis* as such, Barth concedes that ‘in faith there takes place a conformity of man with God . . . an adaptation of man to the Word of God’. However, it is always the human person who is brought into

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95 See Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 37-42.
97 Jüngel, *Karl Barth*, 43. See Barth, *CD* I/1, 80. Jüngel claims that, while Barth is somewhat unclear on this point, Barth could confidently utilize the concept of Being once he ‘reconceived it in terms of God’s activity, self-relatedness, and primal history . . . God is God, in that he corresponds to himself and makes human beings correspond to him’. (Jüngel, *Karl Barth*, 43).
98 'Grace elicits faith, and faith corresponds analogically to grace, but no ontological commonality of any kind mediates between them' (Hunsinger, *How to Read Karl Barth*, 283, note 2).
99 See *CD* I/1, x.
100 Barth, *CD* I/1, 273.
correspondence to God, never vice versa: the correspondence between God and humanity is always to be understood as created and sustained by God.  

Barth’s objection to the *analogia entis* is twofold. In his estimation, the analogy of being both subsumes God under the finite and relative and subverts the order of grace. God and the world must not be thought together under a common concept of ‘Being’ as this would result in an inauthentic knowledge of God brought about by a grasping after God. Although Barth declares that the concept of the *imago Dei* puts us into hairbreadth proximity to the Catholic doctrine of the *analogia entis*, he makes it clear that this is

![image]

Rather than a correspondence as such, it is more a conformity between the divine act and decision of grace and the human act and decision of faith. There is neither a change of human essence to divine essence nor a secret identity between divine and human decision. It is essentially between divine and human action that the analogy resides.

According to Balthasar’s account in *The Theology of Karl Barth*, Barth moved, in a decisive turning point, from a dialectical theology to one of analogy. Balthasar maintains this change is evident in Barth’s book on Anselm published in 1931. This claim is disputed by Bruce McCormack who argues that Barth does not cease to be a dialectical theologian and that it is misleading to speak of a decisive change of this nature. Webster argues that Barth never abandoned his dialectical thinking and that Balthasar places Barth’s anthropological interest too late in his development. In Webster’s view, Barth was concerned throughout all his work

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103 *CD* I/1, 27f.

104 Christ is the mediator of faith. ‘[I]t is the Word, it is Christ to whom faith is related, because He gives Himself as object to it, who makes faith into faith, into real experience.’ (*CD* I/1, 263).


106 See McCormack, *Critically Realistic*, 1-23.
to specify the ‘unbridgeable differences between divine and human action’. However, it can be said that Barth moved toward an ever-greater appreciation of the historical nature of God’s revelation in Christ. Despite Barth’s rejection of any philosophical form of the *analogia entis*, he maintains that God’s choice to act in a certain way does not entail hostility towards the creaturely. As we shall see, Balthasar’s acceptance of the analogy of being is a major point of difference between himself, Barth and Jüngel.

### 2.4 Hans Urs von Balthasar

Balthasar draws on Barth with regard to both his trinitarian framework and his christological orientation. For both thinkers, revelation is definitive in Jesus Christ; we know God through historical encounter. However, while it is true that both Barth and Balthasar view revelation christologically, Balthasar extrapolates this christological conception of revelation into his construal of participation in the divine life, a participation which takes into account the fact that revelation is always a divine act. In this regard, the place of human action in relation to divine grace is a critical issue for Balthasar because it impacts on two of his major concerns; the existence or otherwise of an analogy of being between Creator and creature and the related issue of divine and human freedom. We will consider Balthasar’s construal of revelation under three headings: first, the form of God in revelation; second, essence and economy; third, analogy.

#### 2.4.1 The Form of God in Revelation

Balthasar’s linking of revelation with aesthetic form raises three important questions. The first is whether Balthasar makes a clear distinction between revelation and the perception of revelation. The second is how revelation as form can be trinitarian and the third, whether the recognition of God involves more than a natural capability to perceive forms. The concomitant question for this thesis is whether more is needed than the natural human ability

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107 See Webster, ‘Balthasar and Karl Barth’, 246/7. Webster claims that there was never a period in Barth’s thought ‘in which he was not preoccupied with the fellowship between God and humankind which Balthasar considered was only introduced into Barth’s theology with the discovery of analogy’. He maintains that Barth published work on the distinctive Christian humanism of the Reformed tradition from the mid-1920s onwards. (Ibid., 247/8). For an analysis of Balthasar’s account of Barth’s theological development, see Ibid., 244ff; Oakes, *Pattern*, 57ff.

to imagine. Balthasar’s grounding of his theological aesthetic in the divine attribute of beauty influences his construal of revelation, particularly in his seven volume work *The Glory of the Lord*. In the first volume of his *Aesthetics, Seeing the Form*, Balthasar begins with humanity’s encounter with the glory of God. Although the starting point of aesthetics may seem to be an experience of humanity, Balthasar’s reasoning is that the ‘first step is not to master the materials of perception by imposing our own categories on them, but an attitude of service to the object’. For Balthasar, the form of revelation by which the invisible God becomes visible in space and time is the form of Jesus Christ in whose light the beholder is seized by beauty. It is in this light that the believer can ‘learn to see the presence of the divine life in Jesus Christ’.

Faith, for Balthasar, is first of all an act of perception; we behold before we believe. The aesthetic experience of faith, in which the light emerging from the object is nothing less than the grace of God, empowers the believer to see the form of revelation. Although, in one sense, the person ‘learns’, the power of perception is given to the believer. There is an element of discovery in revelation but the ‘given’ is antecedent to the discovery itself. The act of faith is an act of surrender to God of the whole person but it is Christ who impresses his form upon the believer. It is the light from the form which enables perception; the act of faith and the content of faith come together in one aesthetic to form a unity where the light radiating from the form enables the subject to see ‘God in the flesh’. It has been argued that Balthasar appears to suppose a continuous human capacity to perceive the divine form

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109 In contrast, an aesthetical theology (for Balthasar a negative term) is a theology which takes inner-worldly criteria of beauty as the norm for the beauty of divine revelation. It has been argued that the aesthetic dimension was lost at the Reformation with Luther’s notion of the *sub contrario* and a theology of contradiction, along with the breakdown of the mediaeval synthesis of faith and reason that followed Descartes. O’Donnell claims that the desire to recover this aesthetic dimension lies at the heart of Balthasar’s entire theological program. (O’Donnell, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 19). For a comparison of Balthasar’s theological aesthetics and aesthetic theology see Roland Chia, ‘Theological Aesthetics or Aesthetic Theology?: Some Reflections on the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar’, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 49 (1996), 75-95; Oliver Davies, ‘The Theological Aesthetics’, 131-42; Brendan Leathy, ‘Theological Aesthetics’ in *The Beauty of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, ed. Bede McGregor, OP and Thomas Norris (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 23-55.

110 Balthasar, ‘In Retrospect’, 214. Balthasar distances himself from the Christian philosophical aesthetic of the Renaissance (Ficino), that of the Enlightenment (Shaftesbury), Idealism (Schelling, Fries) and the nineteenth-century theological school of the *Vermittlungsstheologie* which attempted to reconcile science and theology (de Wette). (Balthasar, *La*, 9).

111 Balthasar, ‘In Retrospect’, 213. See also *GL*:1, 214-8.

112 On this point, see Anne Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery: A Development in Recent Catholic Theology* (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 57.

of revelation and, consequent upon this uncritical stance, Balthasar makes no clear
distinction between the action of God in revealing and our passive act of perceiving and
therefore gives insufficient attention to the effect of sin on our perception.114 For Balthasar,
it is when reason enters the sphere of faith that ‘sight’ is granted to see God’s revelation for
what it really is. Where the perception of the divine is concerned, the power of synthesis
comes from God and not from the subject; such ‘sight’ is a supernatural act. There is a
formal analogy with the ‘sighting of being’ connected to the great imaginative myths but it is
formal only.115 This revelation, for Balthasar, is objective; the illuminating factor lies in the
Christ-form itself. It is so for two reasons: first, the form of Christ has its own ‘interior
rightness’ and ‘evidential power’; second, the ‘interior rightness’ has, as well as the power to
illuminate, the capacity to transform the perceiving subject.116

For Balthasar, neither the light of faith nor the light of reason is merely a part of the rational
nature of the human person. Our active intellect receives the light of Being and the object
enables its own perception. Analogously, it is the form of revelation which empowers us to
see it for what it is.117 If the object (Christ) enables its own perception, what place does
Balthasar give to the Holy Spirit in the communication of revelation?118 Rahner’s assertion
that men and women are able to apprehend the divine through an inherent spiritual capacity
was a major cause of conflict between Balthasar and Rahner. Balthasar objected to Rahner’s
perceived identification of such an innate spiritual capacity with the life of faith. In
Balthasar’s eyes this would inevitably lead to a blurring of the distinction between
humanity’s apprehension of God and the divine self-revelation.119 Similarly, understanding
the human imagination as the locus of revelation could well place the imaginer’s capacity to
‘imagine God rightly’ too close to a continuous human capacity if there is insufficient
emphasis on the action of the Holy Spirit as the agent of transformation.

115 There is a theological ‘formal similarity’ to other acts of the imagination but, although ‘both the myths and
the Christian revelation are conceived in the human imagination . . . what the eyes of faith see is the opening of
the divine heart in love, the self-disclosure of the Trinitarian God’. (Rahner, ‘Theology: I, 562-570 at 569).
116 Chia, ‘Theological Aesthetics?’, 84/5. ‘Hence, Jesus Christ is the form that in-forms and trans-forms the
Christian . . . The perceiving subject is metamorphosised into the image he beholds’ (Ibid., 85). ‘The order of
this form, imposing itself ever more inexorably, passes judgement on my formless disorder . . . the character
and the impress in us of the only valid image of God’. (Balthasar, G L:1, 485/6).
118 For the work of the Holy Spirit in the believer and in the church, see Chapter Five,
119 For Balthasar’s criticisms of Rahner, see Riches, ‘Hans Urs von Balthasar’, 249/50; Kilby, ‘Balthasar and
Karl Rahner’, 256-268 at 257ff; Rowan Williams, ‘Balthasar and Rahner’ in The Analogy of Beauty: The
According to Balthasar, it is by being drawn out of herself that the subject is able to behold the object of faith. The act of faith is a human act of response that mirrors the trinitarian ekstasis of God. It is this beholding the object of faith that makes contemplation such an important issue for Balthasar. Christ as the form of beauty is, as the revelation of the Father, to be beheld and contemplated for his own sake. For Balthasar, the only legitimate way to a theological aesthetics is for divine revelation to determine its own standards of beauty. It cannot be otherwise if Balthasar’s notion of revelation is to conform to his own conviction that revelation is always the action of God. In accord with Barth, Balthasar conceives of the form and content of revelation as indivisible. ‘The form of revelation does not present itself as an independent image of God standing over against what is imaged, but as a unique hypostatic union between archetype and image’.\(^{120}\) The form reveals the depths of reality, and as such, is the binding union of the ‘real presence of the depths, of the whole of reality, and it is a real pointing beyond itself to these depths’.\(^{121}\) In Balthasar’s construal of revelation, because of the incarnation, form is always material and particular. It can be understood as both appearance and a sign of depth beyond our reach.\(^{122}\) Christ is both the form of God’s glory and points beyond himself to the Father. For Balthasar, the recognition of God involves the form (the particular being) and splendour (the depths of Being behind the form) therefore revelation cannot be abstracted from its christological form.\(^{123}\) Christ, as the particular form in the world, is both identical with, and the divine appearance of, the light of divine love.\(^{124}\) The form of revelation does not appear as the limitation of an ‘infinite non-form’ but as the appearance of an ‘infinitely determined super-form’.\(^{125}\) Revelation is the authentic universal in and through the particularity of divine ‘super form’ as concretely expressed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.\(^{126}\) The basic intuition of Balthasar’s thought is that through the Gestalt Christi, the love which God is shines through to the world. The glory manifested by Christ is the complete involvement of God’s self-revelation as love. The Son’s act of revelation is not his own act but the act of the Father in him.

\(^{120}\) Balthasar, *GL*:I, 432.

\(^{121}\) Balthasar, *GL*:I, 18.

\(^{122}\) See Oliver Davies, ‘Theological Aesthetics’, 134. According to Davies, Balthasar restructures faith by breaking the connection between faith and reason while preserving faith’s cognitive character. (Ibid.).

\(^{123}\) Balthasar maintains that, as for all words applied to Christ and his revelation, the word ‘form’ must be used carefully; ‘its abstract and general conceptual content must be held in suspense in view of the uniqueness of this particular application’. (Balthasar, *GL*:I, 432).

\(^{124}\) See Lösel, ‘Love Divine’, 593.

\(^{125}\) Balthasar, *GL*:I, 432.

of the Father who expresses and glorifies himself in the Son's form and word... This assertion of the identity of nature between Father and Son leads us without fail, if we pursue its personal aspects, to the existential paradox of the Son, in whose servant form is manifested - really manifested - the Father's form of lordship.\(^{127}\)

This is not some 're-duplicating mimicry of the Father' but a reciprocal movement. Jesus bears witness to himself and also the Father bears witness to him (John 8:18). 'He bears witness to himself in so far as every form, by revealing its content, also reveals itself as form'.\(^{128}\)

Balthasar is able to use the concept of form as a key concept in his thought because of his commitment to the incarnation of Christ.\(^{129}\) According to Balthasar, while there is no pure communication between two interiorities, we do have contact with God through the worldly and material creation.\(^{130}\) The spiritual reality is not only mediated through the worldly and material, the temporal is caught up into the eternal. For Balthasar, the divine, trinitarian action within contingent history overcomes the false dialectic between time and eternity.\(^{131}\) This can happen only through the person of Christ as the concrete universal who, as an historical being (as human) yet transcends the historical (as God). It is only in Christ, that the transhistorical does not have to also be ahistorical. The temporal structures of existence can be said to find their completion in the person of Christ. If Christ's person is reduced to his moral teaching only, we lose the particularity of his concrete historical existence that, for Balthasar, is truth. However, if we accept the historical drama of Christ's life, death and resurrection as revelation, we begin to appreciate the centrality of the paschal mystery for Balthasar's theology. The reality of the hypostatic union in Christ means that the drama of Christ's life and death can never be reduced to either temporal history only or an ahistorical abstraction.\(^{132}\)

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\(^{127}\) Balthasar, GL:I, 612.

\(^{128}\) Balthasar, GL:I, 615.

\(^{129}\) While Balthasar's insistence on the concrete results in a realist and objectivist view of God's revelation, his sacramental view of revelation is needed because of the ontological difference between God and the world. (See Chia, 'Theological Aesthetics?', 83).

\(^{130}\) Balthasar, GL:I, 430.

\(^{131}\) Chapp, 'Revelation', 14.

\(^{132}\) Both the propositional and the expressivist models of revelation can be said to disclose a 'fundamentally ahistorical set of hermeneutical assumptions'. The first because it seeks an unchanging foundation in timeless propositions and the second because it seeks to find 'pre-linguistic' structures within human consciousness that are impervious to a historicist critique of the cultural formation of religious consciousness. (See Chapp, 'Revelation', 20/1).
form. It is this expressiveness that we see in the cross, in what at first appears to be the antithesis of beauty. This is rendered possible because Balthasar, rather than seeing his theological aesthetic as a subspecies of the tradition from Plato to Heidegger, sets up an 'analogous order', where, in common with most Christian mystics, the analogy between the divine and the human order does not move from the creature to God (in an ascending line) but regards creation in a divine revealed light (in a descending line).

As Balthasar would have us perceive it, the divine glory has a cruciform shape and pattern. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ in the triduum mortis are pivotal to Balthasar's portrayal of the divine glory and therefore to his exposition of revelation. Balthasar makes it clear that the revelation of the Son's humiliation is the revelation of the Father's glory: the divine glory cannot be separated from the Gestalt in which it is manifested. While agreeing with Barth that a theological aesthetics starts from the cross, Balthasar sees revelation as setting up a new analogy which, instead of separating itself, establishes new norms and criteria for a transcendent aesthetic. Balthasar does not search, in the gnostic sense, beyond the revelatory form; the revelatory form can be perceived and grasped because of the incarnation. Instead of being the exception that they would be in a worldly aesthetic, in this instance, the suffering and death of Christ become the model for Balthasar's theological aesthetic; the divine glory essentially consists in the self-giving kenosis of God's Word.

Revelation, for Balthasar, is not concerned only with epistemology, it also includes the idea of active transformation whereby the temporal structure of human existence is incorporated into the heart of the trinitarian relations. When Balthasar speaks of participation in the divine life he understands this as the being of the world participating in the infinite Being of God.

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133 See Louis Dupré, The Glory of the Lord: Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theological Aesthetic' in Hans Urs von Balthasar: His Life and Work, ed. David L. Schindler (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1991), 183-206 at 185. While not speaking of a direct 'resemblance' between the visible and invisible which the form reveals in Christ and through Christ in all finite forms, Balthasar understands that 'the divine source of the expression in visible form is itself formally structured'. It is not one particular attribute of God or another that is reflected by any given form but God's 'inexhaustible, ever mysterious expressiveness itself'. (Ibid., 186).

134 Dupré, 'Glory of the Lord', 186/7. This orientation 'from above' is a strong link to both Barth and Jüngel.

135 For Balthasar, 'Gestalt itself is the intersection of the horizontal and vertical dimensions, an essential tension between the finite and the infinite. As such, it is not a static entity that may then be set in motion or inserted into a larger movement, but it is rather the 'structurality' of event'. (Schindler, Dramatic Structure, 155).

136 Balthasar takes a firm position that our 'knowledge' of God is mediated through the humanity of Jesus; the Christian approach to God cannot circumvent the senses because God has chosen to reveal God through the incarnation. See O'Donnell, Hans Urs von Balthasar, 25ff.

137 See Riches, 'Theology: 1', 569; Dupré, 'Glory of the Lord', 186/7; Leahy, 'Theological Aesthetics', 26ff. For a discussion of kenosis, see below, 106ff.
analogously. Balthasar’s theological aesthetics sets out to achieve not only a doctrine of ‘seeing the form of Glory’ but also a doctrine of ‘rapture into the glory’. 138 Rather than a passive awe brought about by an overpoweringly beautiful object, the aesthetic rapture engendered by God’s glory is more the ecstatic joy brought about by one’s encounter with the ‘Thou’ at the heart of being.139 Such an interpretation allows for a smooth transition to the dramatic encounter of Balthasar’s theodramatics. Balthasar maintains that revelation in Christ is an objective revelation of the trinitarian God but the subject can know something objectively only if the subject renounces all preconceived or innate ideas of the object. There has to be a capacity to listen for a revelation which is ‘foreign’ and a receptivity for that which is ‘other’ to the subject: there must be a readiness to encounter and receive the new. When it comes to participation in the trinitarian life of God, this exceeds wonder at Being and is ‘something the unaided human spirit could never imagine’.140 Similarly, the unaided human imagination can never imagine God. In Balthasar’s theological aesthetics, the reality is only to be seen in the revelation Gestalt.141

The strength of Balthasar’s position is twofold; on the one hand, there is no confusion of the human spirit and the Holy Spirit and on the other hand, the perception of the otherness of God preserves the autonomy of other human subjects; difference is recognized and respected. Balthasar sees this recognition and respect as necessary for all interpersonal relationships. As he conceives it, such a position is grounded in the inner-trinitarian relationship of love in that the Holy Spirit ‘holds open’ the distance between the Father and the Son as well as bridging it.142 As we shall see in Chapter Three, the freedom of all creaturely relationships is grounded in the sovereign and infinite freedom of the trinitarian relations. Knowledge of the world is not a starting point for a knowledge of God who is mystery; rather God is the ‘ever-greater and, thus, ever-more-hidden God’.143 This hidden God, however, is to be known in some measure through God’s acts in the economy. For

139 Chapp, ‘Revelation’, 15.
140 Thomas G. Dalzell, SM, The Dramatic Encounter of Divine and Human Freedom in the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar (Eerdmans: Peter Lang, 1997), 38. For Balthasar, in the centre of self-consciousness there is an awareness of the underlying difference between the human spirit and God. The human subject is aware of being measured by an infinite measure outside the self-consciousness. (Ibid., 39-41).
141 See Riches, ‘Theology: I’, 569. As a Gestalt, the form is ‘a totality which transcends the variety and diversity of its parts. The form of Christian revelation is nothing less than Jesus Christ’. (O’Donnell, Hans Urs von Balthasar, 21).
142 See Dalzell, Dramatic Encounter, 39-41.
143 Balthasar, GL: I, 449.
Balthasar, the divine glory of revelation is both the object of aesthetic contemplation and of dramatic encounter with God’s infinite freedom. The question arises as to whether the mediation of this knowledge is adequately spelt out in Balthasar’s pneumatology. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that is critical if revelation is not be understood as a creation of general subjectivity. In Balthasar’s understanding, faith is always the gift of God but it operates through human faculties. Although Balthasar emphasizes the act of perception and does not mention the imagination in this regard, if we think of the imagination as a synthesis of the senses and abstract concepts, it is hard to see how the imagination can be excluded. For Balthasar, the glory of God revealed in the economy (in Christ) gives us a glimpse of the God who is love. Nonetheless, we can ask at this point whether Balthasar places too much emphasis on the form of Christ and too little on the work of the Spirit in revealing the glory of God to human persons. Whatever the emphasis, there must be a correspondence between essence and economy if God is to be revealed in the economy.

2.4.2 Essence and Economy

Although Balthasar does not accept Rahner’s axiom that ‘the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity and vice versa’, as it stands, he does agree in principle that ‘it is only on the basis of the economic Trinity that we can have knowledge of the immanent Trinity and dare to make statements about it’. Such a statement is both congruent with, and a vindication of, the principle that the divine Persons cannot be separated from their dramatic action. For Balthasar, revelation as form must be seen in conjunction with revelation as dramatic action; his aesthetics would be incomplete without the theodramatics. The Gestalt Christi cannot be separated from the events of the triduum mortis. Although he adheres to the principle that the only way to the immanent Trinity is through the economic Trinity, Balthasar warns against adducing analogies for the Trinity from outside Christianity because such analogies lack an economic basis. He also cautions that,

145 Avis speaks of the moral and volitional elements in faith but claims that it is the ‘imagination - the aesthetic element - that makes the final leap - but it is not an arbitrary one’. (Paul Avis, God and the Creative Imagination: Metaphor, Symbol and Myth in Religion and Theology (London/New York: Routledge, 1999), 78. See also O’Donnell, Hans Urs von Balthasar, 23/4.
146 ‘[T]he “economic” Trinity is the “immanent” Trinity and the “immanent” Trinity is the “economic” Trinity’. (Rahner, The Trinity (New York: Herder & Herder, 1970), 22.)
148 For the transition from aesthetics to dramatic categories, see Mengrain, Systematic Thought, 190-2.
while according to Christian faith, the economic Trinity assuredly appears as the interpretation of the immanent Trinity, it may not be identified with it, for the latter grounds and supports the former. Otherwise the immanent, eternal Trinity would threaten to dissolve into the economic; in other words, God would be swallowed up in the world process.  

Balthasar endeavours to avoid such an absorption in two ways. Firstly, the distance between God and the world is grounded in the distance between the Father and the Son. Secondly, the otherness of the trinitarian Persons serves as the basis for all otherness, and thus makes sense of the multiplicity of being without thereby becoming involved in a concept of generic subjectivity. For Balthasar, the unity and distance within the Trinity is foundational to the analogous relations of similarity and dissimilarity between Creator and created; without these features, the analogy of being would be impossible. Otherness within the Trinity is, for Balthasar, otherness constituted by reciprocity and surrender between the trinitarian Persons; these motifs run right through Balthasar’s work. Surrender and reciprocity within the immanent Trinity ground the human surrender of faith which is the only context in which God can be known. The movement is not from one form of knowledge to another but from the surrender of the creature to that God who is exterior to, and ‘other-than’, itself. There is no relation to the absolute unless the ‘mystery of Being, which is manifest, invites the creaturely spirit to move away from and beyond itself and entrust and surrender itself to that mystery’.  

As Balthasar sees it, there is no ‘sustaining bridge leading from the meaning of the world to the meaning of God’. Because of sin the voice of God as a revelation of grace is no longer direct but mediated. The voice of God has become an external word: in the Old Testament, the word of the law and the prophets and in the New Testament, the incarnate and ecclesial word. Whereas Balthasar accepts a ‘point of contact’ in prevenient grace and Barth does not, they agree that humanity’s encounter with God is at God’s initiative and that free creaturely response is impossible without this initiative. Both Barth and Balthasar see the word of God as self-authenticating; the theological object itself furnishes the conditions of

149 Balthasar, *TD:III*, 508. At this point, Balthasar footnotes Rahner’s axiom, stating ‘but he was wise to qualify this by saying that the two cannot “be completely distinguished”’. (Ibid., citing Rahner, *Mysterium Salutis II*, 329).
possibility for its knowledge. The possibility of revelation is inherent within God and God’s action, not within the human experience of faith per se. While Balthasar sees the movements and attainments of human inquiry as, at least in principle, more compatible with theology than either Barth or Jüngel, the convergences between Balthasar and Jüngel are centred around the priority of God; the ‘letting God be God’.

Balthasar opposes any blurring of the distinction between the natural searching of human beings for the truth (as a human apprehension of the divine) and the ultimate vision of God which transcends such attempts at apprehension. True Christian belief, for Balthasar, is a response to an encounter with the revelatory Gestalt Christi. Balthasar does not wish to ground his position in a prior understanding of truth and Being but in his belief in the identity of the revealed Word and the Creator. In his eyes, the content of theology is the economic revelation of the immanent Trinity, hence the importance he gives to the transformation of our natural perceptions of the divine in the events of the triduum mortis.

2.4.3 Analogy
As Balthasar sees it, the mystery of the Trinity brings transcendence and immanence together. ‘A purely transcendent God (if there could be such) would be an abstract, purely negative mystery. By contrast, a God who is able to be immanent while remaining transcendent is a concrete and positive mystery’. A viable reading of the relationship between this mysterious God and humanity relies to a large extent on analogy. Analogy depends to some degree on the structure of logical patterns within language; analogy can also serve as an integrating factor for what is connected only in a surface fashion and can also suggest new things to say. All three may be said to happen via the pattern-making facility of the imagination. The imagination can be said to have boundaries. Analogy opens up a new range of possibilities while also exerting a controlling influence on those same possibilities. In certain situations, analogy becomes determinative of what may be said on a certain subject; analogies may acquire a normative function. Balthasar makes the point that if a concept that is fundamental to the Bible has no manner of analogy in the general

156 Balthasar, TD:III, 530.
intellectual sphere and kindles no recognizable echo in the heart of the human being, it would remain completely incomprehensible and would therefore be a matter of indifference to humanity.

It is only when there is an analogy (be it only distant) between the human sense of the divine and divine revelation that the height, the difference and the distance of that which the revelation discloses may be measured in God’s grace.  

However, he maintains that, whatever way the *analogia entis* is to be defined, the terminology employed cannot be traced back to a generic concept. The unique grace of the hypostatic union in Christ can never abolish the difference between the created and uncreated natures: ‘[t]he creature can find no external vantage point from which to compare itself with God’.  

Though Balthasar draws an analogy between human obedience and trinitarian self-donation, he holds to the principle of ‘immeasurable dissimilarity’ between Creator and creature, divine and human, while stipulating a correspondence between the two when perceived in Christ. While Balthasar preserves his starting point in God’s revelation in history, he draws some radical conclusions about the inner being of God which will be critiqued in the second part of this thesis.

Encouraged by Henri de Lubac, Balthasar rejected the neo-Scholastic model of reality which envisioned a drastic division of nature and grace into two separate levels or compartments. Although he is adamant that it is through God that we know God’s *plerosis*, Balthasar allows for a sense of continuity between nature and grace that is disallowed by both Barth and Jüngel. Barth objects to the analogy of being because, in his opinion, it both subsumes God under the finite and relative and subverts the order of grace by demanding that God conforms to our idolatrous notions. Balthasar disagrees with such an evaluation. He maintains that Barth, by positing an infinite qualitative difference between Creator and creature, has nature either in total identity with the Creator or nature separated from the Creator. In contrast to his own reading of Barth, Balthasar argues that nature is not wholly dissimilar to the Creator in that both our thinking and the reality about which we think are created. Unlike Barth, Balthasar accepts an analogy of being but he is in agreement

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162 As Tortorelli remarks, the ‘creation teeters between dissolving into God or into nothingness’. (Tortorelli, ‘Contributions’, 184).
with Barth in that the *analogia entis* is always firmly established in the analogy of faith. Such an analogy treats Christ as the ultimate expression of the true similarity between creatures and God but, for Balthasar, such a manifestation includes a philosophical analogy of being even though it corrects it. The analogy of faith is therefore analogous to, but not identical with, an analogy in the order of creation. While he accepts that grace both presupposes, and is distinct from, the order of creation, Balthasar claims that Barth often reduces everything to the order of grace.163

Two questions are raised by Balthasar’s assertion that the being of the world participates analogously in the Being of the Creator. The first asks whether this inclusion of created being reduces the sovereign freedom of God and the second, whether created being is thereby absorbed by divine Being. According to Balthasar, sovereign love unveils the sovereign freedom which appears as glory.164 This participation depends on Balthasar’s trinitarian framework; he understands the world to be inserted into the ‘distance’ between the Father and the Son. This could be interpreted as the world occupying a negative ‘space’ within God but such an interpretation would be foreign to Balthasar's understanding of ‘distance’ within God. It is the Holy Spirit who bridges the gap without dissolving it. As we shall see in Chapter Three, the ‘distance’ between Father and Son grounds the ‘distance’ between Creator and created. For Balthasar, the inner-trinitarian distance is the greater; the differentiation between the divine Persons is integral to Balthasar’s conception of both intra-divine communion within the Trinity and interpersonal communion within the world. Balthasar’s whole concept of analogy would be obviated if he held to a monist view of the divine Being. While the incarnation can be seen as the means of revelation, what is offered is an ‘engraced participation’ in the divine life.165 Barth and Balthasar have a comprehensive vision; they share an incarnational christocentrism in which everything comes to fruition in relation to the form of revelation which is Christ.

Given our interest in the capacities (innate or otherwise) of the human imagination, a major question for this thesis is whether Balthasar believes humanity to have an unaided capacity

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165 Chapp, ‘Revelation’, 22; Franz-Franks, *Analogia Entis*, 548/9. According to Catholic doctrine, grace is the self-disclosure and self-communication of God in which God no longer possesses his own divine inner life for himself but now bestows it upon the world and thereby gives the creature a share in it’. (Balthasar, *TKB*, 364).
for revelation. If there were such a capacity, Balthasar would have to accept an unqualified version of the *analogia entis*, whereas Balthasar takes the traditional view of the *analogia entis* and reformulates it christologically. He understands creation's proper analogy to God to be damaged by sin therefore 'although only the Son of God is man, his humanity necessarily becomes the expression of the total triune essence of God; only thus can he be the manifestation of absolute Being'. Balthasar defends positive speech about God because, although (as in the classical position), God the Father is incomprehensible, Christ as the Son incarnate is the concrete *analogia entis* who reveals all of God's attributes. Christ himself is the standard by which any philosophical analogy of being is to be measured. By analogy, the humanity of Christ becomes the norm for the humanity of the Christian. This is congruent with both Balthasar's insistence that the only valid way to formulate a theological aesthetics is for divine revelation to determine its own standards of beauty and his claim that all theology should be consistent with the action of God. In the incarnation, God is present to the world in a new way: 'the Incarnation of the Word means the most extreme manifestation within the deepest concealment. It is manifestation because here God explained to man by no means other than himself - not primarily through words and instruction, but by his own being and life'. For Balthasar, the concrete analogy of Christ assumes the form of his cross and resurrection, which helps to explain the importance of the *triduum mortis* for his theology.

We will now turn to Jungel's construal of revelation. Jüngel's treatment of revelation demonstrates how, as a renowned but not uncritical interpreter of Barth, he draws on Barth's theology while also departing from it at certain points or developing it in new directions.

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166 Balthasar, *GL: I*, 458. See also *GL*, I, 468f. 'It is only because the Son in very truth possesses the "form of God"... that he can "empty himself" and take "the form of a servant". The creature cannot do this, for it always comes into being in this state.' (Balthasar, *TD:II*, 268). See Blankenhorne, 'Divine Naming', 250; Franz-Franks, 'Analogia Entis, 539-542.


168 On Christ as norm for humanity, see Chapter Five.

169 Balthasar's objection to Schleiermacher is that, in his dogmatic theology, 'Schleiermacher subsumes Christology under the heading of the consciousness of being saved, as the condition of its possibility'. (Balthasar, *LA*, 31).

2.5 Eberhard Jüngel

God's word of address is both the centre and the starting point of Jüngel's construal of revelation. He follows Barth's understanding of revelation in two crucial ways. In the first, Jüngel accepts Barth's principle of moving from the particular to the general; revelation is never a generalized abstraction but is always the address of God given at a specific time and into a particular situation, in effect, as event. In the second, revelation is both trinitarian and christological; God is to be recognized in the act of his revealing. In Jüngel's construal of revelation, human knowledge of God is mediated through the revelation-in-event that is God's self-revelation in Christ. It is as event that revelation reveals both form and content. 'The distinction between form and content cannot be applied to the biblical concept of revelation. When revelation is an event according to the Bible, there is no second question as to what its content might be'.

In common with Barth, Jüngel insists that the divine subject of revelation can never be identified with a universal reality which is dominated by human cognition. In Jüngel's thinking, revelation becomes definitive in the triduum mortis. He avers that we can only know God by God's action and 'we only know his action on the basis of the revelation of his glory under the antithesis of the cross, thus on the basis of that action which as such is our salvation'.

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Jüngel's staurocentric approach applies to revelation because Jüngel is in agreement with Barth that revelation and redemption belong together. The cross and resurrection of Jesus are, for Jüngel, at the centre of the gospel and Jüngel sees the gospel as...
the heart of his theology. However, if the *triduum mortis* is to tell us anything about the being of God there must be a correspondence between God *in se* (God’s essence) and God *ad extra* (in the economy). The rest of this section will explore three major issues. We will first examine how Jüngel treats the correspondence between essence and economy. This will be followed by an appraisal of Jüngel’s understanding of God’s word of address to humanity. Finally, we will consider how Jüngel’s appreciation of metaphor and analogy impacts upon his construal of revelation.

2.5.1 Essence and Economy
The foundation of Jüngel’s doctrine of the immanent Trinity is the coming of God to the world in Jesus Christ. God’s action in Christ thus takes precedence over a notion of *a priori* metaphysical attributes.\(^{176}\) In his exposition of the relation between the immanent and the economic Trinity, Jüngel wants to achieve two things: first, to account for the historical action of God in the economy and second, to speak about the immanent Trinity without compromising God’s mystery. In Jüngel’s thinking, what we know of God in the economy corresponds to the essence that addresses us. His contention that we may speak of God only if we also speak of God’s distinction from the world is important at this point; we would be unable to talk of a correspondence between the immanent and the economic Trinity if the distinction between God and the world were to collapse. It is not the events *per se* that bring us knowledge of the divine; it is through God acting *ad extra* that God *in se* is revealed. It is through events *within* the world that we learn of God’s relation *with* the world and thus something of who God *is*. This is not to espouse a starting point in general human experience but to acknowledge that the economy is where we encounter God.

Jüngel claims that Rahner’s axiom is an indispensable foundation for the reformulation of trinitarian doctrine in the light of the practical. He also claims that this formulation provides a new foundation for trinitarian teaching because it ‘enables us to establish the trinitarian concept of God through a theology of the Crucified’. Although it is not the trinitarian dogma (any more than any other dogma) that is revealed to us, Jüngel argues that the biblical basis for the Trinity is that God is revealed as trinitarian in the event of the cross.\(^{177}\) He conceives of the Trinity as ‘a mystery of salvation’ which is revealed in the salvation event in the


person of Jesus Christ. In Jüngel’s thinking, mystery and communication are held in tension; they are not mutually exclusive. While it is \textit{as mystery} that the Trinity is communicable to us, its ‘soteriological power lies in its communicability’. By maintaining that the mystery of the Trinity is also the mystery of salvation, Jüngel is, in effect, equating the immanent Trinity to the economic Trinity. He maintains that whatever occurs ‘economically’ in the incarnation must be a ‘real possibility’ within the immanent Trinity. The hypostatic union of divine and human in Christ is not only the chief event of the unity of immanent and economic, it is also the condition for the possibility of incarnation. The revelation of salvation is definitive in that it is the \textit{Logos} who is manifested in revelation.\footnote{Jüngel, ‘Relationship’, 181-3.}

Jüngel is seeking to expound an ontology which is determined neither by \textit{a priori} philosophical judgements and linguistic structures nor some ‘timeless theory of being’. The former would contradict Jüngel’s theological starting point and the latter would be in direct conflict with his exposition of temporality within God. In order to be congruent with the basic tenets of Jüngel’s theology, a \textit{theological} ontology must be driven by those divine attributes that originate in a conception of God as personal agent. In his interpretation of Barth, Jüngel seeks to demonstrate that God’s gracious personal action both presupposes and calls for a preceding inner (immanent) freedom of God. Barth’s trinitarianism makes it possible for Jüngel to conceive of both the relational character of God’s ‘inner’ being and the authentic and unnecessitated relations of God to the world.\footnote{See Gunton, ‘Being and Attributes’, 12. According to Gunton, the content of such an ontology must be developed in ‘continuous confrontation with classical metaphysics and its various historical consequences and inversions’. (Ibid.). Jüngel does this at some length in \textit{God as Mystery of the World}.} While it can be said that, in his doctrine of the immanent Trinity, Jüngel manages to both write ‘the historical action of God into the being of God and maintain a proper distinction between God and the world’,\footnote{Gunton, ‘Being and Attributes’, 20.} it is at this point that Jüngel has attracted criticism. Paul Molnar claims that Jüngel fails to keep a proper distinction between God and the world because of his unconditional acceptance of Rahner’s axiom. Molnar argues that the ‘vice versa’ compromises the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity and that Jüngel’s unqualified acceptance of the axiom affects his understanding of God’s love\footnote{See Molnar, \textit{Divine Freedom}, 262-4.} and leads Jüngel to conflate God’s mystery with that of humanity.
Regarding the former, Molnar’s disagreement with Jüngel hinges on Barth’s determination that the relation of God to humanity is irreversible.¹⁸² He claims that Jüngel introduces mutual conditioning into the being of God because, in his estimation of Jüngel, the immanent Trinity is dependent on humanity’s experience of faith in the crucified Jesus. While it is true that there is some ambiguity in Jüngel’s construal of the relation between the economic and immanent Trinity, it can be said that there is no intention that God be conditioned by human experience.¹⁸³ It is arguable that Jüngel follows Barth in his insistence that God’s Being must not be isolated from God’s act while at the same time subscribing to a strong differentiation between God and the world.

God by no means becomes his goal when he aims toward man. He is adequate to himself. But precisely in that he is adequate to himself, he is overflowing being, and his overflowing being is the expression of his grace, the original image of his covenant with a partner who is not God.¹⁸⁴

Despite the above, Jüngel’s conception of love runs the risk of subsuming otherness in a kind of totality despite his criticism of Hegel in this regard. Jüngel criticizes Hegel for an insufficient differentiation between God and the world and queries whether Hegel, in his attempt to orient his doctrine of God to the crucifixion of Jesus, reinstates the old doctrine that ‘God became a man so that man might be deified’. Jüngel maintains that ‘Hegel’s God needs man, who thereby becomes divine himself’.¹⁸⁵

As far as mystery is concerned, Molnar contends that Jüngel’s failure to make a distinction between God eternally begetting the Son and God’s free decision to create leads Jüngel to the conclusion that humanity, as lover and beloved, ‘corresponds to the God who reveals himself as love and who as love works invisibly. In the event of love, God and man share the

¹⁸³ Jüngel subscribes neither to pantheism nor the panentheism put forward by Jürgen Moltmann. Walter Kasper, in recognition of the axiom’s implication that the immanent Trinity’s existence depends on history, phrases it as follows: ‘in the economic self-communication the inner-trinitarian self-communication is present in the world in a new way, namely, under the veil of historical words, signs and actions, and ultimately in the figure of the man Jesus of Nazareth’. (Walter Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 276). This is the sense in which the axiom is, in practice, accepted by Jüngel. For further discussion of Rahner’s axiom, see Ibid., 273-277.
¹⁸⁴ Jüngel, *GMW*, 384. Jüngel is indebted to Barth for the notion of humanity as God’s covenant partner.
¹⁸⁵ Jüngel, *GMW*, 94ff. David Ford argues that Jüngel’s criticism of Hegel does not go far enough. He suggests that Jüngel could profitably take note of Lévinas’ claim that God and ontology have been too vulnerable to the charge that otherness is absorbed in the same. David F. Ford, ‘Hosting a Dialogue: Jüngel and Lévinas on God, Self and Language’ in *The Possibilities of Theology: Studies in the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel in his Sixtieth Year*, ed. John Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 23-59 at 46-8. See also, Webster, *Eberhard Jüngel*, 71f. For a discussion of Jüngel’s rejection of deification or *theosis*, see Chapter Five.
same mystery'. While Molnar correctly states that the 'mystery of God precedes and the human mystery may follow but they do not arise out of some mysteriousness in common', he concludes that Jüngel unintentionally classifies God and the world together. However, although it can be said that humanity participates in God's trinitarian mystery through Christ, in Jüngel's terms, the human person is neither love nor mystery in the same way as God. Although Molnar rejects Jüngel's idea that, contra Barth, God's love cannot contradict the human idea of love or mystery, Jüngel makes the point that when naming something, we must at least presuppose

a lingual acquaintance with the situation of the thing to be expressed; the relations of the two things to the further thing must be known to us if the naming is not to be meaningless...

If God were fully unknown within the world and its human language, then responsible talk about God on the basis of the pure analogy relation would be impossible.

Another model of analogy must be incorporated that 'permits God to be expressed on the basis of a nameable relation to the world (or to something in it) as the unknown, who in his unknown state relates to the world in a way we know of'. However, the drawing of analogies of any description would be impossible without the imagination as that facility which enables one thing to be seen as another or one situation to be compared with another.

For both Jüngel's conception of the relation between the immanent and the economic Trinity and his treatment of analogy, the encounter between God and humanity always begins at God's initiative with God's word of address to humanity. At this stage in the discussion, two potential problems arise: the first is the perceived passivity of the human agent when revelation is seen as radical interruption from outside the human self and the second, how any explicit employment of the imagination can be prevented from being conceived of as simply a return to the subject. How can the new which is brought to speech by metaphor be seen as something more than simply a new significance for the particular human person?

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187 Molnar, Divine Freedom, 266.
188 'A strict distinction must be maintained between the eternal derivation of God from God and the temporal derivation of man from God in order to recognize the factual relationship which obtains between the two, the factual grace relation between God's eternal becoming and our temporal becoming in faith'. (Jüngel, GMW, 384).
189 Jüngel, GMW, 277.
190 Jüngel, GMW, 277. Jüngel attempts to fulfill this requirement in his 'analogy of advent'. He suggests that 'to the extent to which we put an end to the - metaphysical - mystery of God, we become a riddle to ourselves. The indefinability of God is replaced by the indefinability of humanity.' (Jüngel, HCG, 150).
2.5.2 The Word of Address as Interruption

As God's self-revelation, the event of revelation has a profound effect on our assumptions and the way we see God, ourselves and others. In contrast to Balthasar’s retention of some form of continuity in revelation, Jüngel’s construal of revelation stays closer to that of Barth; there is a profound sense of disruption. As God’s word of address, revelation is a radical interruption of our ordinary patterns of knowing. Humanity is distinctive in that the human person is the being who can be interrupted and enhanced. Jüngel notes that life can be interrupted through the occurrence of beauty and links such an occurrence with human joy. The human person breaks out of herself and expresses the fact that ‘something has intervened’ within her life.191 While Jüngel sees humanity as able to be enhanced in this way, he does not see this as a natural capacity which can be activated by the human person but rather sees such interruption as evidence of God’s wish to draw near to humanity. The human person is ‘chosen and created as the covenant partner of God; as a creature he is set apart from God but as a partner he is drawn near to him’.192 Jüngel maintains that we know ourselves as people addressed by God. He argues that certain statements are not just signals or pieces of information but ‘acts of inclusion’ and, in this case, the person addressed is included in the word event.

The content is not distinct from the word itself. God is not ‘a sort of speechless thing that has to be brought into the language by being named . . . On the contrary, it is here a question of God himself as Word’.194 As Word, God is the one who speaks and expresses God; God is not brought to speech. In speaking, God shares and communicates God.195 It is this sharing

191 Jüngel, TL, 234. Such an interpretation of beauty and joy bears comparison with Balthasar. See above.
192 Jüngel, GMW, 10.
193 Jüngel, GMW, 10/11. For Jüngel, in Paulus und Jesus, the parables of Jesus are a case in point. The Kingdom of God cannot be separated from the linguistic form in which it communicates itself. Jesus’ language, understood as speech-event, may not separate the ‘form’ of what came to speak and his proclamation as the ‘content’ of the ‘form’. Jüngel’s concern is for the relation between the Kingdom’s speech-event and the language of the world. His interest is dogmatic rather than simply linguistic. In Paulus und Jesus, the strong eschatological emphasis led to a perceived neglect of the ordinary and the natural, particularly in his interpretation of the parables of Jesus. His later work, God as the Mystery of the World places more emphasis on the fact that the Kingdom comes to speech in narratives that are comprehensively worldly narratives (See John Webster, ‘Language of Faith’, 256-8).
195 See Jüngel, GMW, 12/3; Eberhard Jüngel, ‘God - As a Word of Our Language: For Helmut Gollwitzer on His Sixtieth Birthday’ in Theology of the Liberating Word, ed. Frederick Herzog (Nashville: Abingdon Press,
which makes fellowship with God possible. God goes outside of God and the addressed person is drawn out of him or herself and is drawn into the event. This event merits being called mystery if it is set free from the compulsion to ground itself in its own radical questionableness, if it, as a result of an increasing understanding and experience which comes from the event, turns itself ever more intensely to that event which initiated the questions.196 When the human person is addressed by God, the person participates in the event; revelation as the self-disclosure of God is not simply knowledge about God but knowledge of God which embraces the mystery which God is.

Jüngel understands address to be an essential function of language; the address character of language is what first makes language humane. An act of speaking is called a language event when it permits a person to be drawn out of him or herself. This language event is, in effect, a summons to that person through the word which addresses him or her.197 What is most important for Jüngel in his early work is the demand that is made by God rather than the human context of language. More than human realities, it is the divine reality that makes speech about God imperative. Because speech about God is not inherent in human language there is a need for interruption. Jüngel’s claim that language is true language when commandeered by God affirms in some measure the humanity of the speech of God but it still runs the risk of the divine speech-act absorbing ordinary human language. If the latter is the case, Jüngel fails in one of his key concerns; a clarification of the distinction between divine and human. In his later work, Jüngel is more concerned with the expansion of language and its modes of reference than with the unsuitability of human language for a divine referent.198 For Jüngel, it is our desire to be closest to ourselves in self-correspondence that makes interruption by God necessary. ‘God is man’s original interruption. He intervenes. For this reason God is, at the same time, the truth of life’.199 In being interrupted by God we are interrupted by truth. God’s self-revelation upsets our

1971), 25-45 at 34. 'In presupposing the language of Christian faith, theology proceeds on the basis of God himself having come equally to the world and to language in the event of his revelation.' (Eberhard Jüngel, Theses on the Revelation of the Existence, Essence and Attributes of God', Toronto Journal of Theology, 17/1 (2001), 55-74 at 55, s.v.1.1).
196 Jüngel, GMW, 245. Jüngel cites Weischedal as coming very close to his own position. 'Radical questioning would never start if the mystery, into which it is asking, had not previously announced itself as the impulse to questioning. Thus the mystery as that which precedes all thought is what cannot be preconceived, what is in advance of all thought . . . . The mystery as the unpreconceivable precedes radical questioning and makes it possible. There would be no radical questioning if there were no mystery which attracts it.' (Ibid., 249, note 6, citing W. Weischedel, 'Die Frage nach Gott in skeptischen Denken', ed. W. Müller-Lauter (1976), 28f).
197 Jüngel, GMW, 12.
198 See Webster, 'Language of Faith', 259-62.
199 Jüngel, TL, 235.
assumptions and transforms our perceptions hence there can be no a priori to God’s revelation.\footnote{It is fundamental to a Christian understanding of God and humanity that we neither advance a view of humanity on the basis of a preconceived understanding of God, nor advance a view of God on the basis of a preconceived understanding of humanity - even if it be humanity’s indefinability.’ (Eberhard Jüngel, ‘Humanity in Correspondence to God: Remarks on the Image of God as a Basic Concept in Theological Anthropology’ in \textit{Theological Essays}, ed. John Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 124-153 at 132. Hereafter cited as HCG.} It is because our continuity or self-correspondence is interrupted that we are able to know at all, that we are able to relate to our own existence.\footnote{He must, as it were, step out of himself without thereby ceasing to be man. It is rather the other way round: to be human is precisely not to be in immediate correspondence with oneself.’ (Jüngel, TL, 232). As humans we can be in the position where our desire to make our self-correspondence secure is so strong that we cannot be interrupted. (Ibid., 234). See Mark 8: 34, 35. On interruption, see Jonathan P. Case, ‘The Death of Jesus and the Truth of the Triune God in Wolfhart Pannenberg and Eberhard Jüngel’, \textit{Journal for Christian Theological Research}, 9 (2004) 1-13 at 7f; John Webster, ‘Who God Is: II, 1217; Zimany, \textit{Vehicle for God}, 55.} Without jeopardizing the distinction between God and humanity, Jüngel understands the human subject to be liberated by grace when he or she is rescued from self-assertion and a life in correspondence to God becomes possible.\footnote{See Zimany, \textit{Vehicle for God}, 79/80.}

For Jüngel, all human thinking and speaking about God is grounded in the address of God. However, it is fundamental to Jüngel’s thinking that revelation is always mediated; it is by listening to human words that faith hears God. It is also a basic tenet of Jüngel’s theology that human words do not determine the revelation of God. It is because God is always coming that thought is taken out of the circle of itself and we can imagine things differently from what they presently are.\footnote{As we shall see in Chapters Three and Five, renewal ex nihilo is a matter of transformed relations.} God can therefore be thought only as something constantly to be thought anew. This constant rethinking is consistent with both the event nature of revelation and Jüngel’s analogy of advent where God continues to come to humanity. This quality in Jüngel’s thought also lends itself to a comparison with the quality of transformation found in the human imagination. The imagination has the ability to take something strange and connect it to the familiar in a new way. While this is so, the human imagination qua imagination cannot speak of God. When we speak of God, transformation is, for Jüngel, \textit{ex nihilo}.\footnote{As we shall see in Chapters Three and Five, renewal \textit{ex nihilo} is a matter of transformed relations.} While God comes to speech in the same manner as worldly being, God nevertheless comes to speech as one who is differentiated from all worldly being, and hence in comparison comes to speech \textit{ex nihilo}. Jüngel is very clear that we must begin with the premise that, for the Christian faith, we may speak of God only if we simultaneously
speak of a fundamental difference between God and the world.\textsuperscript{205} The tension must be preserved between thinking of God as the one who came to the world in Jesus Christ and the one who continues to come to the world. Jüngel argues that if God’s identity with the man Jesus is not understood as the event of his identifying and of his coming to the world, God would be thought of as part, and only as part, of the world. This tension is expressed by Christian faith in that faith confesses ‘Jesus as true God and God as true man’. Language about God is therefore only appropriate if it speaks of a fundamental distinction between God and the world. Because of this fundamental difference, God does not come to speech in continuity with the world but rather interrupts the world.\textsuperscript{206} As the conveyor of this fundamental distinction, language preserves God’s mystery.

For Jüngel, speech about God as mystery is not without boundaries because revelation, in effect, sets boundaries to thought; what we know of God cannot be separated from the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such boundaries are intrinsic to both Jüngel’s treatment of the person of Jesus Christ and his methodological principles. In Jesus Christ, Jüngel is concerned with a unique individual living in a particular time in history who is both man and God. When we come to think about God, we are not to start with what Jüngel calls ‘a general anthropological presupposition for the thought of God’.\textsuperscript{207} The question must be summoned forth; the human person is addressed by God and out of God’s address he or she starts to question. If we think of Jüngel’s position as a ‘questioning after God’, this is not a general human capacity grounded in the human consciousness. This, of course, rules out the human imagination operating in a solely human way. For Jüngel, thought is a ‘thinking after being’; thoughts are formed by, or are responsive to, an antecedent reality. What we think is the result of what has already happened; thought is a response to the address of God.\textsuperscript{208} It is a dynamic interaction that extends beyond what has already been established in conventional understanding. Proper usage of the word ‘God’ depends on whether human speech allows

\textsuperscript{205} Eberhard Jüngel, ‘Metaphorical Truth: Reflections on the theological relevance of metaphor as a contribution to the hermeneutics of narrative theology’ in \textit{Theological Essays}, ed. J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T & T Clark), 16-71 at 38/9. Hereafter cited as \textit{MT}. God is not to be brought to speech as ‘an ideal, perfect world, as, that is, the world’s double’. (Ibid., 59).


\textsuperscript{207} Jüngel, \textit{GMW}, 155.

\textsuperscript{208} Borrowing from Heidegger, Jüngel progresses from Being to thought to words to reflections on Being, which is the principle at work in divine revelation.
God to be the subject of the speaking. We start with the one who speaks and proceed to human thought and speech about that One.\textsuperscript{209} Revelation is not fixed. Although we can only think about God with human language, God is not brought to language by human beings in that we cannot construct statements that coincide with the truth of God. The fullness of God cannot be captured by human words; we can neither capture nor control mystery. Although Jüngel acknowledges that there are definite limits on human language, he claims that it is valid to speak of ‘the mystery of God because the mystery has addressed us and therefore can be thought.

It may be instructive at this juncture to consider a theologian whose presuppositions and methodology have a different starting point from Jüngel and move in another direction. Gordon Kaufman illustrates a use of the imagination which is quite contrary to Jüngel’s understanding of human capacity. In his An Essay on Theological Method, Kaufman outlines three basic methodological steps. The first is that of phenomenological description. He attempts to connect varieties of contemporary experience together into a concept of the world as a whole: he constructs a world-view. The second is a work of imaginative construction of the concept of God which authorizes the introduction of theological terms and concepts. The third step seeks to interpret the world and speak theologically about it. According to Kaufman, ‘the first two moments, therefore, provide the indispensable grounding for any theological work at the third moment’.\textsuperscript{210} As we have noted, Jüngel sees thought as a ‘thinking after’ Being. While this notion comes directly from Jüngel, in comparison, Kaufman’s scheme of imaginative construction can be construed as ‘thinking before’. The progression is from material drawn from human experience of this world (potential symbol) to thought to symbol seen as symbol, followed by words and reflection on the symbol. In contrast to Jüngel, we have ‘God’ seen as symbol after thought because that symbol is an overt construction and therefore a product of that thought.\textsuperscript{211} For Kaufman, the imaginative construction of ‘God’ is the result of a predetermined worldview. It is the symbol seen as symbol that legitimates human words as theological words. Reflection on the symbol can be interpreted theologically only after thought has constructed the symbol. For Kaufman, the symbol ‘God’ is a legitimate symbol for devotion but is at the same time a

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\bibitem{209} Although Jüngel talks of speech about God as thinking after Being in terms of God’s address, he does not equate God with Being.
\bibitem{210} Gordon Kaufman, Essays, 77.
\bibitem{211} For Kaufman, God is both proper name and symbol and it is this dialectic between naming and symbolizing that grounds his work in a complex fashion. See Katherine Sonderegger, ‘Gordon Kaufman: An Attempt to Understand Him’, Scottish Journal of Theology, 50 (1997), 337/8.
\end{thebibliography}
necessary function for humanity that has its genesis within human consciousness. Kaufman is quite clear that what he calls our image/concept of God is there to meet the needs of humanity at a particular time and, if it does not, we are at liberty to change not only the form but also the content of that image/concept. Given the boundaries to revelation that Jüngel espouses, there is no way that he could see the importance of Jesus as 'the appearance of a new communal ethos in history, rather than a metaphysically unique individual' as Kaufman does. 212 When thinking of Jüngel’s construal of revelation in conjunction with the human imagination, it seems imperative that we acknowledge that both revelation and the imagination have boundaries and those boundaries, for Jüngel, and for this thesis, would have to uphold the person and work of Jesus Christ.

2.5.3 Language: Metaphor and Analogy
In his wish to maintain the reality of both God and humanity, Jüngel can be said to theologize in rich and lively narrative ways through his creative use of language. Rather than engaging in a discussion of language as such, this section asks two things; first, how Jüngel’s use of metaphorical language may connect to, or detract from, his treatment of the triduum mortis and second, what connections, either explicit or implicit, can be made between metaphor and the human imagination. As we have already noted, Jüngel wants to use language in a particular way when speaking of the word of address. In his estimation, statements reduce a multitude of possible meanings to that which is most defined: definition is that which seeks to fix words. Jüngel maintains that, while possibility is reduced to actuality213 by such a process, the depiction of language as address resists such a reduction. The language of address wishes to establish the power of the possible over against the actual without dispensing with the actual altogether.214 Jüngel understands Being to include both possibility and actuality, hence language is able to go beyond the literal. Something new is gained by the juxtaposition of words (and worlds) without losing the words themselves.215 God cannot be defined but can be spoken of metaphorically.

212 Gordon Kaufman, Face of Mystery, 325.
213 Jüngel rejects the priority of actuality as espoused by Aristotle. The significance of possibility and actuality is discussed more fully in Chapter Five in conjunction with Jüngel’s notion of justification and divine grace.
214 Jüngel, MT, 48.
2.5.3.1 Metaphor

Rather than as a peripheral linguistic phenomenon, Jüngel sees metaphor as a process that is fundamental to language. A theological theory of language is therefore to understand metaphorical speech, not as 'merely rhetorical', but as a 'dogmatically fundamental and therefore hermeneutically decisive function'. In a similar fashion to the way that the human person is interrupted by the Word of address, metaphor disturbs the dominance of literal speech. By showing that literal speech does not mark out the limits of language, Jüngel seeks to demonstrate that metaphor is both ontologically and cognitively weighted. Because possibility comes to speech in language, possibility can break the pattern of reference to actuality; possibility refers to more than actuality. Because a word gains new meaning through its metaphorical use, Jüngel argues that new being is brought to speech through metaphor.

He goes so far as to say that Christian faith, in order to speak the truth, must speak about God. In doing so, Christian faith both claims to make judgements about actuality and to speak of the acts of a divine being. For Jüngel, the language of Christian faith gets to grips with actuality only by going beyond it and thereby implying the presupposition that actuality is not, of itself, enough. Because Christian faith understands such possibilities as something given, possibility itself is seen as a gift. In the judgement of faith, 'actuality lives by such gifts of possibility, however much this escapes our attention as our minds fasten onto actuality. The language of faith presupposes revelation'. By calling into question what is self-evident, revelation calls into question the actuality of the world.

By being called into question in this way, actuality is not thereby abolished but demonstrates its historicality. Although Jüngel is not establishing the general availability of the knowledge of God apart from faith, he does suggest that theological affirmations have some validity apart from faith. In metaphor, there is a possibility for the natural order to become more than it is at present. Jüngel sees the language of parables and metaphor as the most appropriate

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216 Jüngel, MT, 22/3. 'Metaphor and parable are anything but inauthentic ways of speaking. The assumption that language was originally completely metaphorical and parabolic is probably closer to the mark.' (Jüngel, GMW, 290, note 17).

217 See Webster, 'Language of Faith', 60-2.

218 Christian faith 'has to say more than the actuality of the world is able to say'. (Jüngel, MT, 16/17). For the link between actuality, possibility and the renewal of the person ex nihilo, see Chapter Five.

219 Jüngel considers that divinely engendered faith provides its own evidence; additional evidence is not required to prove its truth. Knowledge of God is impossible without the revelation brought about by the spirit of Christ. For Jüngel and natural theology, see Roland Spjuth, Creation, Contingency and Divine Presence in the Theologies of Thomas F. Torrance and Eberhard Jüngel (Lund, Sweden: Lund University Press, 1995), 89; Zimany, 30ff. 'The statement "God exists" does not do justice to the being of God if it is asserted as the concluding proposition of a proof for God that claims to prove the existence of God remoto deo revelato'. (Eberhard Jüngel, 'Theses', 56, s.v. 1.4.2).
language to express the new occurrence of possibility in the world. He understands Jesus as a parable of God and the resurrection of Jesus as the supreme event that witnesses to the power of the possible over the actual. The use of unfamiliar words to bring new understanding is regarded by Jungel as an essential attribute of metaphor and therefore of language itself. However, it is not always clear what Jungel is claiming on behalf of Christian faith and what he sees as inherent within metaphor. Whilst Jungel sees metaphor as an articulation of truth, metaphors are also part of the ambiguity of language, something they have in common with the imagination. Neither the imagination nor metaphor per se can be seen as unambiguous purveyors of truth.

The according of certain possibilities to actuality, Jungel believes, is intrinsic to the being of religious language. Speaking of the unfamiliar is the problem of religious language in general. Metaphor unites linguistic freedom on the one hand and a semantic sense of actuality on the other. Metaphorical language harmonizes in the most exact way the creative potential of language and strict conceptual necessity, bringing together the surprise of linguistic novelty and the familiarity of that which is already known. In this way a gain is always made through metaphor. The horizon of being is expanded in language. And so metaphor is a particular form of the way in which in language we have dealings with that which is. But just because of this, metaphor presupposes a particular sense for that which is, a sense of correspondences.

Jungel maintains that we are grasped by analogy, by the ‘correspondence which mediates between the unknown and the already known, the foreign and the customary, the far away and the near, the new and the old. Analogy grips us. It causes the character of address found

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221 For metaphor as the event of truth, see Green, Imagining God, 128ff. Green links Jüngel to McFague, claiming they both cepend on foundational arguments. Green is not disputing the centrality of metaphor in religious language but claims that they mistake the function of metaphor. (Ibid., 133). On Green’s criticism of Jüngel in regard to experience, see below.
222 Despite this ambiguity, Webster claims that there are ‘significant areas of common ground between recent theological attempts to reinstate the heuristic function of the imagination and the kind of semantic studies offered by Jüngel.’ (Webster, ‘Language of Faith’, 266).
223 Jüngel, MT, 16f. ‘For all its uniqueness, the language of the Christian faith shares this characteristic of religious language: religious language can only be true religious language when it goes beyond actuality without talking around it.’ (Ibid., 16).
224 Jüngel, MT, 40. ‘What grips us is that correspondence which mediates between the unknown and the already known, the foreign and the customary, the far away and the near, the new and the old. Analogy grips us. It causes the character of address found in metaphor and parable.’ (Jüngel, GMW, 290).
in metaphor and parable. If however, linguistic meaning comes from the relations between the signs themselves and their positions within a system of signifiers, rather than being derived from any correspondence with reality outside this system then language can be said to be self-enclosed. In his use of figurative language, Jüngel is stating the case for indirect reference rather than advocating either a theory of self-enclosed signifiers or a theory of direct correspondence between name and object. We can say that, while metaphor uses language in unfamiliar ways to make new connections, it is within the imagination that these connections occur. To be addressed by metaphor means to unite two worlds, as it were, while retaining the distinction between them. This joining together results in a tension; it is within this tension that something new is gained. It can be argued that what we have operating here is the imagination’s ability to both juxtapose the strange and the familiar and to hold in tension what might appear to be paradoxical or contradictory. On these terms, metaphor is ideally suited to speak about God in identity with the crucified man Jesus. Language is where God allows God to be discovered, both as One who comes to the world and as One who is distinct from the world. Christian faith lives from the fact that God establishes familiarity with God. Because God’s differentiation from the world can be viewed by Jüngel as a ‘positive state of affairs’, such positivity enables a trust in God which presupposes both a word of address and the presumption of a freedom that allows humanity to trust in God. As address, metaphor is distinguished from statements of definition which only say what is the case. Metaphor carries within it the possibility of transformation; metaphor is concerned with the new. Jüngel takes from Luther the idea that, in Christ, words are given an ‘eschatologically new context’ which ‘stands over against all other contexts in which words have hitherto been used; words used in this context necessarily acquire a new meaning’. Jüngel argues that, in this eschatologically new context, words need to function as metaphors; the language of faith is constituted by metaphor. Despite the advantages of

225 Jüngel, GMW, 290.
226 See Jüngel, MT, 61. Jüngel uses the example of the sentence ‘Achilles is a lion’ when the world of Achilles and the world of the lion are placed in tension. ‘The is in the sentence ‘Achilles is a lion’ does not indicate an identification of Achilles and the lion, but nevertheless says something about the being of Achilles, something essential’. (Ibid.). Something new is gained by the juxtaposition of words without losing the words themselves.
227 This freedom also presupposes the freedom to refuse what is offered.
228 Jüngel, MT, 62/3.
229 Jüngel, MT, 22/3. By acquiring a new meaning, metaphorical language helps us to understand reality in a new way. Jüngel notes that Luther had a highly particular understanding of language and fought against Zwingli’s understanding of metaphor as a non-literal mode of speech. (Ibid., 22, note 7).
230 Jüngel, MT, 24. The traditional understanding of metaphor was as a ‘rhetorical figurative expression to signify a state of affairs’. In such a system the existence of metaphor relies upon the fact that there are non-metaphorical words. (Ibid., 32/3). Jüngel demonstrates how Nietzsche’s understanding of metaphor goes beyond this. See Ibid., 28-33. For Aristotle, see 33ff.
metaphorical language, Jüngel has been criticized for reducing the possibilities of language by reducing the pluriformity of language to the metaphorical and analogical.  

Jüngel maintains that, in the proper formation of theological metaphors, the crucial element is the event in which God once for all came to the world and ‘came to speech as the one who addresses us’. This event is that of the ‘life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ; the event of the justification of sinners. In this event, free choice of theological metaphors has both its ground and its limits’. Comparable to the way that Balthasar construes the beauty of Christ as distinct from worldly standards of beauty, Jüngel disallows worldly standards in the choice of theological metaphors. This means that we must include, as expressive of God, those things which may appear to contradict God. It is as the God who comes to the world, the God with a history, that God is to be brought to speech. Jüngel sees the freedom of metaphorical speech as a ‘freedom for the word, set free by the history in which the cross is the distinguishing feature, and thus not an arbitrary freedom’. Any understanding, if it is truly to express God, must not orient itself by criteria abstracted from the history of Jesus. It is because God corresponds to God, even in contradiction, that ‘the cross of Jesus Christ is the ground and measure of the formation of metaphors which are appropriate to God. Every theological metaphor must be compatible with the cross of Jesus Christ’. Such a use of language is unavoidable if Jüngel is to be true to his conviction that God is in identity with the crucified man Jesus. As there is a boundary to the theological use of the imagination, there is, for Jüngel, a boundary to the theological choice of metaphors.

According to Jüngel’s account, the root metaphor of the salvation narrative is the ‘identification of the risen one with the crucified man Jesus’. When this root metaphor is interpreted through additional christological and theological metaphors, God reveals God, in the context of the world, as the world’s mystery. ‘For God is the mystery of the world in that he has overcome the non-being of the world as the one who comes to it’. The biblical texts

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231 Jüngel has been criticized for using the category of ‘speech-event’ in too generalized a way and for the way he allegedly narrows the diversity of New Testament language. Webster claims that although Jüngel’s ‘sensitivity towards “non-literal” or “imaginative” language is the strength of his case . . . his work tends to elevate metaphor, parable and analogy to a position where they become the only appropriate modes of Christian speech’. (Webster, ‘Language of Faith’, 266); Green, Imagining God, 128-130.

232 Jüngel, MT, 64. For Jüngel, the doctrine of justification points to language as the place where created being is determined and constituted by God. (See Roland Spjuth, ‘Redemption Without Actuality: A Critical Interrelation Between Eberhard Jüngel’s and John Millbank’s Ontological Endeavours’, Modern Theology, 14 (1998), 505-522 at 508).

233 Jüngel, MT, 65.

234 Jüngel, MT, 65.
can claim to speak this mystery because, in the world and with the world, theological metaphor creates space for God. Metaphor can also be said to create space for the human reader of those texts, to both interpret the text and perform subsequent action. Metaphor brings together the old and the new, resulting in new possibilities for speech, thought and action. Jüngel claims that if the cross is the foundation and gauge of metaphorical language about God, then metaphorical language itself brings about a change of direction because the cross is the turning-point of the world (Wende der Welt). Jüngel’s view of divine address as interruptive of our ordinary patterns of knowing is echoed by his use of metaphorical language which disturbs literal speech. God is the saviour who turns the world around. Although the language of faith, as the Word of the cross, is the word which liberates, this word is also a confronting word. Jüngel maintains that theological metaphor enters the actuality of the world (insofar as the world assumes the metaphorical quality of being predicated of God) in such a way that the world is confronted with the possibility of its own non-being, from which alone new being can arise. One who speaks about God speaks to the hearer of the fact that the non-being of both the hearer and the world is the possibility overcome by God alone.

The risen and crucified One becomes the paradigm for the new creation in which the future arises from outside and *ex nihilo*.

**2.5.3.2 Analogy**

In Jüngel’s view, ‘[t]here can be no responsible talk about God without analogy. Every spoken announcement which corresponds to God is made within the context of what analogy makes possible’. Jüngel is trying to use analogy theologically in such a way that it may accurately be said of human words that they correspond to God. In grounding revelation in an analogy of relations, Jüngel both interprets and draws on Barth’s relational trinitarianism. God’s being is a being ‘structured as a relationship. The relational structuring of God’s being showed itself in the phenomenon of revelation, which as such is also structured as a relation’. In holding to Barth’s analogy of relation, Jüngel seeks to offer an alternative doctrine of God from the classical tradition. This involves finding a way to unite an authentic

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235 Jüngel, MT, 67.
236 Jüngel, MT, 66. Jüngel sees humanity in this present time as particularly aware of this confrontation with non-being.
237 Jüngel, GMW, 282.
238 Jüngel, GBB, 37. ‘Only as modes of being distinguished from one another through their mutual relations and formally marked out by their respective particular features, can one derive the ‘Trinity in unity’ of God’s being from the concept of revelation’. (Ibid., 38).
identification of God with the world with a critique of divine impassibility, while also retaining a proper distinction between God and the world. Jüngel’s solution is to be found in his trinitarian construal of the divine mystery. Human language, for Jüngel, must do two things: it should emphasize the priority of God’s action and it must preserve the differentiation between God and humanity. Jüngel considers metaphor and analogy to be apt ways to speak of correspondence between God and humanity because they preserve both these requirements along with a profound sense of the positive view of mystery. It is the action of God toward humanity as ‘dynamically eternal triune being’ that corresponds to God’s eternal being in se.  

Only in the sense of an *analogia relationis* and *attributionis extrinsicae* do the modes of God’s being, revealed in their (economic-Trinitarian) reality correspond to the revelation of their (immanent-Trinitarian) capacity. Jüngel, like Barth, is against an understanding of the *analogia entis* that separates God’s being from God’s action, thus presuming to produce a knowledge of God gained apart from revelation.  

Jüngel’s particular view of analogy as relation experienced as event is the basis for his hermeneutical thesis that ‘within a great dissimilarity between God and humanity is an even greater similarity’. Such a thesis turns around Przywara’s understanding of the *analogia entis* which follows the Fourth Lateran Council in declaring the ‘greater similarity in so great a likeness’. The similarity espoused by Jüngel expresses the possibility that language which refers to human reality may also convey divine reality. However, it is only by God’s coming to us as human persons that this similarity is possible; left to ourselves it is impossible. By treating relation as event, it is possible for God to come to humanity in relationship. Jüngel’s ‘analogy of advent’ compares relations with relations rather than things with things. It is because relations are not predetermined definitions or configurations that they are open to new interpretations. As it is for the imagination, there is a capacity for the new. The possibility for such an analogy of relations between God and humanity lies in the ekstatic nature of God; God is not introverted. Such an analogy of relations is deeply rooted in the incarnation; the Word became flesh (John 1:14) and thus brings God to human language.

240 Jüngel, GBB, 26.
Jüngel can speak about God coming to humanity in Jesus in the way that he does because of his espousal of the doctrine of the humanity of God. In his analogy of advent, God and the world are compared indirectly not in order to denigrate the world but to give it its rightful place. By doing this, Jüngel brings to our attention the distinction between the humanity that is proper to God (as Creator) and that which is proper to humanity (as creature). The divine and human are neither to be confused nor absorbed the one within the other. In attempting to understand the gospel as the human word which corresponds to the divine mystery, Jüngel seeks to formulate a doctrine of analogy which is appropriate to the gospel. In his conception of analogy Jüngel takes note of both Luther and Barth. While drawing on Luther’s doctrine of justification and the distinction Luther makes between person and works, he inherits from Barth a greater focus on the human person as active agent. Jüngel does not use analogy to move from worldly realities to God, but is rather interested in the prevenience of God’s action.244 Such a concern is compatible with his complementary understandings of the event nature of revelation and God’s word of address as interruption. In Jüngel’s opinion the Protestant criticism of the *analogia entis* is ‘directed against the very thing against which this doctrine itself is directed’. Protestant theology has objected to a perceived grasping after God; an understanding of analogy which understands God on the basis of the ordering of creation; of humanity understood as a simile of God which then understands God, conversely, as the image of the creature.245 Jüngel maintains that Barth’s understanding of the matter has been misunderstood, particularly the change in Barth’s thinking which was caused by his discovery of the analogy of faith as the ‘precondition for the possibility of proper talk about God’. Jüngel claims that the fear of the ‘late’ Barth was that ‘the so-called *analogia entis* would not do justice to the difference between God and man by overlooking the nearness of God’.246 Contrary to what he sees as the prevailing Protestant perception, Jüngel understands the *analogia entis* to both prevent all deductive and inductive derivations of the Creator from the created and prevent the mediation of Creator and creature by a ‘reconciling Third Entity’.247 The way that the relationship between the Creator and the creature is understood inevitably impacts upon the subsequent understanding of the place of human experience in that relationship. The present chapter has examined the action of God

244 Webster warns against making too much of the contrast between Luther and Barth, stressing the commonalities of the priority of the grace of God, the dependence of human action upon a source outside itself and the givenness of the moral order. See Webster, ‘Justification, Analogy and Action’, 126-130.
in revelation but has left the connection between revelation and experience virtually untouched. The final section of this chapter examines the relation between human experience and the imagination with particular reference, in the case of Balthasar, to the relation between faith and experience and, in that of Jüngel, his somewhat disputed notion of 'experience with experience'.

2.6 Legitimate Boundaries to the Imagination
As was noted earlier, the imagination can be seen as either a spontaneous mental act which determines its own content or as an imaginative paradigm, the content of which is supplied from outside the imaginative process itself.\(^{248}\) The former will be seen as self-generating within the context of human experience (a methodological starting point in self-transcendence). The latter involves external input; if the source is regarded as divine address (God is the object of faith), it is theologically termed revelation. If revelation does not connect in any way with human experience it is questionable whether revelation can be said to be either meaningful in human terms or linked to the imagination in any way. For both Balthasar and Jüngel, it is because God speaks that we respond. Our response to God, which includes our imagination, is therefore governed by God's speech; God's revelation places boundaries around the imaginative process. Despite the fact that, in any construal based on revelation-in-event, human experience cannot of itself be revelatory, revelation is only revelation for us when it is understood or experienced as such. Both Balthasar and Jüngel understand the giving of revelation to be in the present tense; revelation happens as an event over and over again - it is not a static deposit in permanent textual form. In consequence, the Word of address, as the origin of our relatedness to God, makes us both the subject that hears and the object of God's act. When a response to revelation is required, the assimilation of revelation is both passive and active. In terms of this study, the imagination (as the locus of revelation) operates in both the active and the passive mode in the assimilation of revelation into human experience. Unless this assimilation occurs, then revelation cannot truly be said to be revelation in any transformative sense. While revelation is not to be understood in terms of external categories or prior knowledge, we cannot understand revelatory utterance in isolation from our experience. It is in its formal sense that the Christian imagination is continuous with human processes while its content is discontinuous. If we think of the imagination as that which synthesizes abstract concepts and the senses, as involved in the

\(^{248}\) See above.
construction of experience, then the imagination is integral to both thought and experience. God's self-revelation places us into a relatedness to God which is then worked out in both thought and experience, mediated by faith. Despite differences between them, for Balthasar and Jüngel, faith has to come, as it were, with the word of address in order for that Word to be recognized as a word from God.

It has been said that there are no unique forms of construction, intention, derivation or dialectic involved in religious experience; there is no religious experience per se but only a religious dimension to all experience.249 Theology must examine what is meant by experience in general terms. Considering that, despite their differing views of the *analogia entis*, neither Balthasar nor Jüngel conceives of revelation as founded in a general theory of human nature, the distinction between the 'interruptive character of experience' (the agency of the transcendent) and the 'organic and continuous nature of experience' may prove useful. This distinction leads to the conclusion that God's act of self-revelation is to be understood as God's self-revealing initiative (as interruption from outside human experience) understood within human experience (as continuous).250 That initiative becomes revelation via the work of the Holy Spirit in the human person's imagination. While taking a starting point in revelation has at times led to accusations of fideism, if we appeal to experience to justify a certain way of thinking then we are also committing ourselves to function in a certain way. If, as has been suggested, the imagination is the locus or context of revelation, revelation then occurs within the imagination which can be seen as that which synthesizes the various aspects of our experience. The imagination makes possible the integration of revelation, thought, and experience in a human life related to God, provided that neither thought nor experience is taken as self-grounding and faith is considered as gift. If, in contrast, we see interruptive experience as *experience interrupting itself*, then God's act is reduced to just another phenomenon within human experience. In the first view, revelation is

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249 George P. Schner, SJ, 'The Appeal to Experience', *Theological Studies* 53 (1992), 40-59 at 50. Green stipulates that the religious imagination has the same structure as all imagination; there is no religious imagination. The philosopher George Schner defines experience as 'the conscious apprehension of inner or outer reality through senses and mind; as active participation in specific events and the knowledge gained by such participation; as the undergoing of life and the accumulation of knowledge thereby; as experimentation, testing or trial'. (Ibid., 49).

250 Schner suggests that Christianity needs a balance between these two forms of experience. An emphasis on the former may moderate the latter but, while often leading to radical change, such change sometimes happens in a divisive way. In contrast, a stress upon the continuous nature of experience may lead to radical content merely being absorbed into tradition without any real transformation. (Schner, 'Appeal', 55)
not under the control of the human agent, whereas in the second, human experience itself is in some sense revelatory, thereby making experience foundational.

The imagination is not totally free to fantasize but operates within certain boundaries. Kant understands the imagination as producing images that ‘belong’ to a concept, the creative activity of the imagination is, in effect, controlled by ‘the concept which it is schematizing’.251 For Kant, thought which works with pure concepts cannot of itself carry out the synthesis of the manifold of intuitions.252 Because the imagination involves the synthesis of abstract concepts and the senses, we can resist the temptation to pit concepts against imagination within our experience of phenomena within the world. The image is, in effect, controlled by the understanding and cannot be separated from the concept.253 Within a theological context, McIntyre illustrates this idea of imaginative activity by Jesus’ use of parables, which he sees as the clue to the way religious thought and expression operate. He is not thinking of the parable as simply reduced to a form of analogy but as ‘the way in which the parabolic imagination proliferates the images in a series, always under the control and prescription of the religious concept’, in this case, the concept of the Kingdom.254 In such a view, concept and symbol are not mutually exclusive; the symbol may go beyond the concept, at least in the sense of ‘finished’ concept, but it cannot be cut adrift altogether.

2.6.1 Hans Urs von Balthasar
Balthasar poses the question whether Christian faith can be an object of experience. His answer is determined by his particular understanding of faith. For Balthasar, the question of experience is ‘incispensable when faith is understood as the encounter of the whole person with God’.255 In presenting us with the Gestalt Christi, Balthasar is showing us how a full relation to God is experienced by the God-man.

Christ, the full and perfect man, has in his own totality the experience of what God is. He is, with body and soul, the embodiment of this experience. And, as God-become-man who

252 There has to be ‘a third thing which must be both intellectual and sensible, something which performs the service of making pure concepts applicable to appearance in time and space’. The transcendental schema (the product of the imagination) is the agent that brings it about. (McIntyre, ‘New Help’, 106). ‘Imagination is the medium through which the understanding operates in conjunction with the senses to produce the kind of world that we experience.’ (Ibid., 110).
253 Jüngel makes this point in regard to metaphorical language. ‘The freedom of metaphorical language in no way excludes the desire for a conceptual language in which this freedom is controlled and which makes it possible to articulate the correspondence of discovery and that which is discovered.’ (Jüngel, MT, 70).
254 McIntyre, ‘New Help’, 114/5.
reveals God to man, Christ, even as God, has the experience of what man is . . . who does not present to man an unreachable and eccentric possibility of being human, but, rather, the very measure whereby God measures man.256

Because faith is not to be seen as a possession but rather as the experience of a movement of ekstasis, Balthasar understands Christian experience to be the ‘progressive growth of one’s own existence into Christ’s existence’ until Christ has taken shape in the Christian believer. 257 He maintains that this experience takes shape not only within the human sphere; it is the initiation of a life (and therefore an experience) into a supernatural form within the realm of God’s own reality and finally becomes the process by which this reality ‘takes shape in the believer’. The ‘rightness of the form of revelation’ which is from the outset ‘seen’ in faith is the form to which the believer surrenders and assigns herself and is hence ‘confirmed’ within this existence or self-surrender as being true and correct, and this gives the believer a new form of Christian certitude which can be called ‘Christian experience’.258 Balthasar calls this letting go of the self an ‘uninterrupted flight to the goal where the person is impelled by the Spirit (Rom.8:14)’.259 This experience cannot be acquired in any other way other than by having it and only then by surrendering oneself to the movement of the journey.260 Christianity thus becomes comprehensible in itself and to the world through the Christian’s existential transparency.261

Two questions are raised by this close connection between faith and experience. The first is whether such an interpretation of faith is simply that of a subjective experience which could be interpreted in terms of the imaginative process alone. This is certainly not Balthasar’s intention. He calls this experience a ‘dogmatic’ rather than a psychological experience because ‘the witness which the Spirit speaks to us in our interior can never be interpreted as a soliloquy on the part of the child of God . . . we could never have delivered ourselves’. As will become apparent, we are constituted as persons through receiving our mission from God, a mission which is grounded in the mission of Christ which has its foundation in the

256 Balthasar, GL:1, 394.
258 Balthasar, GL:1, 224/5. 2 Cor 13: 3-9.
259 Balthasar, GL:1, 227. ‘The goal of salvation is grasped in flight, because the flight can be understood only through its goal; but it is grasped only in flight and not in itself, and, therefore, it cannot be translated into a static “certainty of salvation” . . . it is a certainty in flight, guaranteed by the Holy Spirit who buoyed up the flyer because the latter, as a pneumatic, has entrusted and delivered himself over to the Spirit.’ (Ibid., 228).
260 This does not mean that the human person loses herself. The Holy Spirit is a ‘Spirit of revelation which illuminates the human spirit, in which it is immanent’, by telling human persons who they really are. (Balthasar, GL:1, 239/1).
261 Balthasar, GL:1, 229.
trinitarian missions. Balthasar contrasts the person who exists as a believer by actualizing his or her faith by making room for the Spirit (the ‘pneumatic’) and the person who has the Spirit only ‘theoretically’ but not actually (the ‘psychic’). The second questions whether such an interpretation leads to a confusion of the divine Spirit with the human spirit. Balthasar himself poses the possibility that his interpretation of experience may too closely resemble the Hegelian dialectic between finite and infinite spirit. He refutes such a prospect by insisting on ‘our dependency on the historical Christ, dead and risen’. Balthasar would have us return always to the Gestalt Christi where we experience the splendour of God as enraptured and are conformed to the shape of Christ crucified and risen; it is the Christ of the triduum mortis who determines both faith and experience. It is the light from the object of contemplation (the form of Christ) which grounds the experience of rapture. Within this experience, the one who contemplates is seized by beauty and is drawn into its radiance. If we consider the imagination as merely the locus and not the agent of revelation, we are then seized within the imagination by the Holy Spirit.

2.6.2 Eberhard Jüngel

Jüngel’s understanding of human experience includes that of an experience with the possibility of non-being, an experience he sees as particular to our present context. ‘In the language of Christian faith, the function of theological metaphor is to address the hearer in such a way that he or she is able to bring together the context of his or her experience and the possibility of non-being’. Green claims that it is here that Jüngel’s theology is at its most ambiguous. He maintains that Jüngel’s ‘experience of experience’ acts as the anthropological point where it becomes possible to speak of God. According to Green, it functions in the same way as Schleiermacher’s feeling of utter dependence on God and thus derives from a universal human experience abstracted from any particular christological consideration.

262 Balthasar, GL:1, 228. For Balthasar, the Saints are the exemplars of this apologetic function. (Ibid., 229).
263 Balthasar, GL:1, 231.
264 Enrapture includes the experience of wonder. For Balthasar, wonder ’is not a mere fact to be talked about from without; it is a ‘wonder’ to be contemplated from within, even while this wonder always has an object that is not reducible to the experience of that object . . . wonder is not a merely subjective experience, but it is rather the objectively adequate response to the reality of being. Likewise, since it is the nature of being to cause wonder, being cannot be perceived as it is except from within this experience’. (Schindler, Dramatic Structure, 32).
266 Jüngel, MT, 71.
267 Green translates it as ‘experience of experience’. See Green, ‘Mystery’, 38/9. Webster disagrees with Green at this point, commenting that Green’s interpretation is ‘only half correct, for the whole thrust of the notion of ‘experience with experience’ is to preserve a critical distance between faith and experience of self and the
Two further criticisms are closely connected to this assertion. The first is that while Jüngel attempts to reconcile Barth and Bultmann, he in fact preserves the ‘very chasm’ that separates their theological methods; the second is that Jüngel tries to safeguard ‘both a christological concentration and a general equation of the “experience of experience” with experience of God’.\(^\text{268}\) According to Green, this notion of experience is the ‘cornerstone’ of Jüngel’s endeavor to supply a grounding for human speech and thought about God. He intimates that Jüngel locates a critical aspect of human consciousness and uses it as the ‘starting-point and basic datum for theological reflection’. Because Jüngel claims that we cannot think of God outside of faith, Green takes Jüngel to mean that faith is to be equated with revelation.\(^\text{269}\) However, three crucial ideas of Jüngel’s militate against a starting point in general human experience. Firstly, revelation, for Jüngel, is not to be found in either experience or history but in language; a notion reminiscent of both Fuchs’ linguistic suppositions and Barth’s theology of the Word of God.\(^\text{270}\) Possibility comes to speech in language not in general human experience: it is language which goes beyond the actual. Secondly, for Jüngel, the human person is constituted as one who is addressed from outside the self and thirdly, the experience of non-being with which experience has experience is one where non-being has been ‘overcome once and for all by God in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. From this comes an experience with experience which must be made credible in the context of previous experiences as a gain to being’.\(^\text{271}\) It is this gain to being with which Christian language about God has a particular difficulty: God does not belong to the being of the world and yet it is as distinct from the world that God comes to the world. Jüngel claims that a theological metaphor can only speak of the renewal of the world because of the ‘renewing power of the Spirit of God’.\(^\text{272}\) In consequence, this ‘experience with experience’ cannot be generated solely by means of human experience.

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\(^{268}\) Green, ‘Mystery of Eberhard Jüngel’, 39.

\(^{269}\) DeHart makes the point that, for Jüngel, ‘“faith” in the Christian sense is simply not a general human possibility’. There is therefore no sense that a capacity for faith can be actualized at will or that faith is part of the ordinary structure of human existence and human interaction. ‘It is a response to the concrete occurrence of the word from God, which is dependent on God’s coming to the world.’ (Paul DeHart, ‘Eberhard Jüngel on the Structure of Theology’, Theological Studies, 57: 1 (1996), 46-64 at 48).

\(^{270}\) See Green, Imagining God, 39; John Webster, ‘Jesus’ Speech, God’s Word: An Introduction to Eberhard Jüngel (I), The Christian Century, 112 (Dec. 1995), 1174-1178 at 1175.


\(^{272}\) Jüngel, MT, 71.
The eschatological 'experience with experience' is not one experience among other experiences; it neither creates new facts in the world nor discards human experience as such. It is, a qualitatively new experience of our previous experiences that gives a new Gestalt or vision of how everything hangs together in a new meaningful pattern, and thus, it means a completely new manner of experiencing and of existing within this world.273

Such an experience is, in effect, a working out within the paradigmatic or pattern-making imagination of a new Gestalt. As we will see in the ensuing chapters, this Gestalt, for the Christian, is shaped by the Christ we see in the events of the triduum mortis. However, questions remain as to the nature of the transformation brought about within the human imagination. If this 'experience with experience' is simply a new way of experiencing what is actually in the world, this may point to any new possibilities being confined to an interior existential transformation only. God's interruptive coming to the world could not be considered as anything more than a change in an individual's interpretation of the world. However, this thesis proposes that the agency of the Holy Spirit takes transformation into the realm where it effects change. It remains to be seen whether Jüngel's pneumatology allows for this.

This chapter has expounded two major aspects of this thesis: the way this study understands the human imagination and the respective ways that Balthasar and Jüngel understand revelation-in-event. In the second part of this thesis, it will be argued that the imagination of both the Christian believer and the church is shaped by the Christ of the triduum mortis. Chapters Three and Four seek to build on Chapter Two by exploring how the trinitarian ontologies of Balthasar and Jüngel are expressed in their treatment of the triduum mortis, paying particular attention to those concepts which may impinge upon a particular view of the imagination. Chapter Five examines how Balthasar's and Jüngel's respective construals of the triduum mortis impact upon the renewed existence of the believer and the church.

273 Spjuth, 'Redemption', 509.
CHAPTER THREE: The Mystery of Relations

The second part of this thesis examines Balthasar’s and Jüngel’s construals of the *triduum mortis* in order to see how they might, even in a provisional way, be expressive of a certain deployment of the theological imagination in the life of the believer and the church. As was noted in Chapter Two, the pattern-making or paradigmatic imagination, conceived of as the *locus* of revelation, allows for particular concrete paradigms which give shape and content to the Christian imagination. The human imagination is not an isolated faculty of the mind, but the spiritual transformation of the imagination has an important part to play in what Paul, in his letter to the Romans, calls the renewing of the mind.¹ As Balthasar expresses it, we are to be conformed to the *Gestalt Christi*; for Jüngel, we are to be renewed *ex nihilo*. The patterns of this world are to be replaced by the pattern displayed by the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Chapter Three will introduce the fundamental understandings that underlie Balthasar’s and Jüngel’s respective portrayals of God’s relationality in the *triduum mortis*. Chapter Four will demonstrate how these insights are worked out in the events of the three days and Chapter Five will show how Balthasar and Jüngel apply these insights to the life of the believer and the life of the church.

Chapter Three will examine how both Balthasar and Jungel understand the being of God as *ekstasis* and yet employ different motifs in order to express their convictions about the relationality of God. Balthasar expresses God’s ekstatic character in terms of mission and *kenosis* while Jüngel’s primary motif is that of God’s identification with the crucified man Jesus. The first part of the chapter will examine how Balthasar views God’s differentiation and unity within the trinitarian relations and how he sees these relations worked out in the mission of Christ, God’s self-giving *kenosis* and the idea that God is free to both be and ‘become’. In the second part, we will explore how Jüngel understands God as relational in both differentiation and unity and how he builds on Barth’s idea of the humanity of God. Jüngel’s understanding of God’s being and becoming is more explicit than Balthasar’s; it underpins the notion of temporality within God which is so important for Jüngel’s elucidation of the *triduum mortis*. For Balthasar and Jüngel, the gospel is most explicitly demonstrated in the *triduum mortis*. It is ‘the knowledge of God’s mystery, that is, Christ

¹ Rom 12:2.
himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge'.

We may assume, with perhaps some reservations, that the following can be said of both Balthasar and Jüngel. Firstly, their respective theologies see the person of Christ crucified and risen as central, not only to their understandings of mystery, but also to their respective conceptions of the distinction between the immanent and economic Trinity. Secondly, revelation-as-event is grounded in the action of God as Trinity; our knowledge of God ad intra is dependent upon the action of God ad extra. Thirdly, God’s relations in se are not reduced to God’s relations with humanity.

3.1 Hans Urs von Balthasar: God, Christ and Kenosis

Balthasar’s theology is based on the premise that the content of theology is the economic revelation of the immanent Trinity. The event of God’s self-disclosure and encounter with humanity in Christ lies at the heart of what we can say about God. According to Balthasar, the Cappadocians were able to hold the paradox between God’s mystery and God’s revelation. On the one hand, God cannot be grasped by concepts and on the other hand, God can be ‘imaged by his Word, his Son, in whom the Father has eternally expressed himself’. While Chapter Two has spoken mainly of the form of God in revelation (the Aesthetics), the mystery of the intra-divine relations are expressed as event; hence their dramatic nature (the Theo-drama). The events themselves are, for Balthasar, primarily manifestations of God’s glory. In accordance with Balthasar’s dramatic theory, ‘the unveiling of the “heart of God” which alone really shows us who he is, can only take place through the course of his history with mankind’. It is through the revelation of God’s action in the world that we are to discern God’s triune being as a positive mystery. In line with the event character of revelation, the main concern behind Balthasar’s theo-dramatic theory is with ‘acting and the ability to act’ rather than speculation and evaluation. Balthasar sees the Theo-drama as the

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2 Col 2:2-3.
‘dramatic character of existence in the light of biblical revelation’. The central issue of the *Theo-drama* is that God appears on the world stage as the *centre* of the dramatic action thereby making his own the ‘tragic situation of human existence’. Balthasar’s account of the trinitarian relations is foundational to two central themes within his theology: the relation between divine and human freedom and the associated issue of the active and the passive modes of divine and human mission. Throughout the rest of this thesis, we must ask how successfully Balthasar makes the connection between the time/space economy and eternal relationality.

### 3.1.1 Trinitarian Relations: Differentiation and Unity

In whatever way we look at Balthasar’s theology it must always be seen through a trinitarian lens. ‘[F]rom the perspective of the New Covenant we must say that the revelation of God that takes place in Jesus Christ is primarily a trinitarian one: Jesus does not speak about God in general but shows us the Father and gives us the Holy Spirit’. God as absolute love, reaches out to the Other; the Son who is equal in substance and eternity with the Father. God can be perfect self-giving because God has control over God’s own existence whereas the creature does not. As far as Balthasar is concerned, any concept of a unity without the Other cannot affirm the Christian idea of God as absolute love because a unity in this sense would be self-sufficient and therefore could not be communicated. It is this question of communicability which calls for dramatic action. The dramatic elements are inherent in revelation; drama is a reflected image of existence, an ‘inner dramatic dimension of revelation’. While Balthasar understands that God is triune, it is only in the events of Christ’s life, death and resurrection that the Trinity is made accessible; the economic Trinity allows us, in some measure, to make statements about the immanent Trinity. The question to be asked throughout the study is whether the measure that Balthasar allows is too great. Does Balthasar say too much about the inner being of God?

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8 Balthasar, *TD*:V, 82.  
Balthasar understands the eternal relationship of mutual surrender within the Trinity to be the basic presupposition for the incarnation of the Son. This mutual surrender is possible only because the divine Persons are distinct hypostases within an essential unity.

Without this personal distance in the circumincessio of the Persons it would be impossible to understand either the creature’s distance from God or the Son’s “economic” distance from the Father - a distance that goes to the limit of forsakenness.\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{TD:V}, 98.}

This distance is a free expression of God’s unity; the Father is always himself in generating the Son and the Son is always himself in allowing himself to be generated, by permitting the Father to do with him as the Father pleases. This is echoed in the incarnation; if there was no distance between God and the incarnate Son, Jesus would be unable to pray. The Holy Spirit is ‘always himself by understanding the “I” as the “We” of Father and Son... in God’s self-proclamation in Jesus Christ the more blessed mystery is revealed, namely, that love - self-surrender - is part of this bliss of absolute freedom’. For this to be so, each of the divine hypostases require their ‘own areas of infinite freedom which are already there’. God does not need to ‘first, go out, in trinitarian procession, in order to gain himself” (Idealism), nor does the Father (the One) always exist for himself before generating the Son (Arianism).\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{TD:II}, 256. According to Angelo Scola, Balthasar examines anthropology from both below and from above \textit{in naturalibus} and from within revelation’ while always remaining true to a ‘single Christocentric perspective’. Finite freedom is constituted by two features: (1) the experience of self-possession and (2) a universal openness which entails a recognition of the co-existence of human persons and things. In virtue of the first pole, freedom is the capacity for self-movement, for responsibility, and for choice; by virtue of the second it is the capacity for assent, for acceptance, and for obedience’. The first pole (self-possession) is characterized by autonomy and the second pole (freedom) is constituted by a relationship with others. The structure of human freedom reveals the fact that, unlike God, humanity is finite. (Angelo Scola, \textit{Hans Urs von Balthasar: A Theological Style} (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 84-86).}

God cannot be absolute love unless the mutual surrender within God is a free act.

Giving is impossible without the receptive ‘letting be’ of the Son (and in the Spirit through Father and Son).\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{TD:V}, 86.} Although the Father is the ‘Primal Source’ of all things, each of the divine Persons is ‘codetermined by both the \textit{ordo processionis} and the Trinitarian unity’ and
each is as sovereignly free as the others.\textsuperscript{15} The trinitarian Persons do not gain their infinite freedom from elsewhere.

In Balthasar’s understanding, the trinitarian relations are characterized by mutual surrender but God does not lose God in the act of self-giving. The self-giving of God is eternal, but in that act of giving, two things must be held simultaneously and their identity affirmed: both the act of giving which involves the whole Person of the one who gives and the remaining constant of the eternal being who gives. The condition of the ‘active actio’ is the ‘passive actio’: ‘the Son’s antecedent consent to be begotten and the Spirit’s antecedent consent to proceed from Father and Son’.\textsuperscript{16} Balthasar posits a ‘passive generative potentiality’ in the Son which predisposes the Son to be begotten. A position which, Balthasar argues, allows us to speak of an ‘active and passive mission’ with regard to the Son and the Spirit.\textsuperscript{17} Because the divine hypostases eternally proceed from one another, they are not interchangeable. In consequence, the divine exchange or dialogue always includes two things: ‘the partners are perfectly transparent one to another, and they possess a kind of impenetrable “personal” mystery’.\textsuperscript{18}

\textquote[Balthasar, TD:II, 258/9.]{[T]he divine nature is defined through and through by the modes of divine being . . . the fullness of blessedness lies in both giving and receiving both the gift and the giver. Since these acts are eternal, there is no end to their newness, no end to being surprised and overwhelmed by what is essentially immeasurable. The fundamental philosophical act, wonder, need not be banished from the realm of the Absolute.\textsuperscript{19}}

Balthasar avers that within the unity of mutual surrender the diversity of the hypostases is not lost. One point here deserves closer attention. Although the notion of mutual surrender and consent within God is congruent with the concept of intra-divine freedom, it is difficult to understand Balthasar’s portrayal of the Son’s antecedent consent to be begotten and the antecedent consent of the Spirit to proceed from Father and Son when there is no ‘before’ to what, in spite of the Father being the ‘primal source’ of all things, Balthasar sees as the eternal processions. This suggests a certain ambiguity or, more problematically, a God ‘behind’ or ‘before’ the God who is Trinity. In contrast, what Balthasar sees as the Son’s antecedent consent to the incarnation is less problematic, as the earthly mission of Christ has

\textsuperscript{15} Balthasar, TD:II, 258/9.
\textsuperscript{16} Balthasar, TD:V, 86.
\textsuperscript{17} Balthasar, TD:V, 85, citing Bonaventure, d.7 (I, 145f.).
\textsuperscript{18} Balthasar, TD:II, 258.
\textsuperscript{19} Balthasar, TD:II, 258. On divine freedom and the possibility of surprise in God, see Balthasar, TD:V, 90; Dalzell, Dramatic Encounter, 186 -193. See below, 130/1.
a definite beginning. This may be a place where Balthasar seeks to say more of the inner being of God than is warranted by the biblical revelation.

Because the giving and receiving of distance within the unity of the Trinity is not in opposition to the divine nearness of *circumincessio* in the one divine nature, Balthasar concludes that the life of the *communio*, of fellowship, can develop only when something like infinite ‘duration’ and infinite ‘space’ are attributed to the acts of reciprocal love. There is ‘reciprocal petition’ because each *hypostasis* in God possesses the same freedom. He sees the imagery of ‘space’ as integral to the dynamic form of the Trinity and distance as constitutive of divine and human freedom. According to Balthasar, the primal origin of space in the Trinity consists in

the way in which the Persons of the Trinity “make room” (“space”) for one another, granting each other freedom of being and action. Thus the Giver detaches himself from the One on whom he bestows this gift, and the latter receives himself from the Giver in genuine freedom and so distinguishes himself from him . . . It is an essential aspect of the love of the Persons in God that they mutually grant each other freedom.

This distancing within the Trinity is deemed necessary by Balthasar both because of the personal distinction between the divine Persons in their being and acting and as a fundamental expression of the inner-divine freedom. Without this differentiation it would not be possible to establish a foundation within the Trinity for ‘the possibility of a distance that goes as far as the Son’s abandonment on the Cross’, an abandonment that is an integral part of Christ’s mission. Two things will be critical when we come to consider Balthasar’s understanding of *kenosis* in the context of the *triduum mortis*. Firstly, the divine self-emptying is never to be seen as a necessity; this would undermine its essential nature as self-giving. Secondly, the incarnation of the Son is not to be understood apart from the *kenosis* of the three divine Persons.

### 3.1.2 The Mission of Christ

As we have seen, the events of the economic Trinity are contained within, and presupposed by, the eternal processions. Balthasar follows Aquinas in understanding the extra-divine

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20 See below, 103.
21 Balthasar, *TD*: V, 94.
missions and the intra-divine processes as one and the same for the divine Persons. The Son’s mission (Sendung) is the economic form of the Son’s eternal procession from the Father.\textsuperscript{25} As the Word incarnate, Jesus Christ is the ‘One sent’; it is for the sake of his mission that Jesus is this particular human being.\textsuperscript{26} Jesus defines his earthly mission (Luke 4:43, Matt 15:24), Jesus is the one who comes (Matt 20:28, John 5:43, 8:42, 16:28). It is important for Balthasar that this ‘coming’ is understood to have God as its point of departure;\textsuperscript{27} it is essentially a sending from the Father. Balthasar’s interpretation is primarily Johannine. In John’s Gospel there is a twofold uniqueness to Jesus’ person; ‘his Trinitarian relationship to the Father and the soteriological goal of his mission . . . the intimate relationship between the one sent and the One who sends him takes the form of obedience within the Father’s act of surrender’.\textsuperscript{28} The Son both receives infinite freedom from the Father and is infinite freedom as God. The Son is

the first to receive totally from the Father . . . Insofar as he is God, he is eternal, infinite freedom; insofar as he is the Son of the Father, he is this freedom in the mode ("tropos") of readiness, receptivity, obedience and hence of appropriate response: that is, he is the Father’s Word, image and expression.\textsuperscript{29}

Christ’s ‘overt function’ presupposes his ‘covert being’ but, in Jesus, ‘we are presented with Someone who never was, and never could have been, anyone other than the One sent [der je schon Gesendete]’. Christ’s mission is ‘ultimately fused’ with his person and becomes ‘identical with him’. Balthasar maintains that the question ‘Who is Christ?’ asks primarily about Christ’s function. The answers to this question are always concerned with both the person of Christ and his work. By asking the question of his work we imply the question of his person.\textsuperscript{30} Only Christ, as the God-man, fully identifies his person with his role.\textsuperscript{31}


\textsuperscript{26} Balthasar, \textit{TD:III}, 66-8. Because it would seem essential that both Jesus’ self-consciousness is awakened by a ‘thou’ and that he is initiated into spiritual tradition, it is Mary (as mother) who initiates this ‘I-thou’ relationship for Jesus (as child) for the first time. (Aidan Nichols, OP, \textit{No Bloodless Myth: A Guide Through Balthasar’s Dramatics} (Edinburgh/Washington: T &T Clark Ltd./The Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 102). The primary word in this encounter is love because it is within this initial experience of love that the child is given the insight that infinite love is possible. For Balthasar, this intuition remains even when the child becomes aware that the mother’s love is finite. (O’Donnell, ‘Form of von Balthasar’s Theology’, 207). On the importance of the mother/child relationship for Balthasar, see Ibid.

\textsuperscript{27} This is an important issue for both Balthasar and Jüngel as their respective theologies begin with God’s address to humanity at God’s initiative.

\textsuperscript{28} Balthasar, \textit{TD:III}, 153.

\textsuperscript{29} Balthasar, \textit{TD:II}, 257.

\textsuperscript{30} Balthasar, \textit{TD:III}, 149/50.

\textsuperscript{31} Balthasar, \textit{TD:II}, 3. See also \textit{TD:I}, 646. Jesus’ mission is qualitatively different from the mission of the prophets who preceded him (Rom 8: 3-4). (See, \textit{TD:III}, 150).
In Balthasar's trinitarian vision, the mission of Jesus is grounded in the mission of the incarnate Son. The identity in Jesus between his

I-consciousness and his mission-consciousness . . . points back to a mysteriously supratemporal event that can be nothing but the unanimous salvific decision on the part of the Trinity, according to which it was resolved to send the Son "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom 8:3).32

In this decision, the Son's self-offering, and that of the Spirit, is equally original to that of the Father. This 'absolute, free consent between Jesus and the Father is the economic form of their common spiration of the Spirit'.33 It is at the 'point of distinction between the Father's purpose and the Son's obedience' that an essential communication is discerned between Father and Son which Balthasar sees as the operation of the Holy Spirit. The Son does not become obedient at the incarnation. The Son is already obedient as he entrusts himself to the Spirit's activity in accordance with the Father's will. Balthasar manages to avoid the suggestion that the human obedience of Jesus is subsumed by eternal necessity. This handing over of the Son to the Father within the activity of the Spirit is a form of action rather than mere passivity. It is the Spirit, in and over Christ, who makes Christ's obedience possible 'by the way in which, in his economic form, he mediates the Father's will to the Son'.34 Although the free obedience of the Son to the Father is brought about by the Holy Spirit, this relationship on the part of Jesus, requires, humanly speaking, both initiative and action.35

In his earthly life, Jesus of Nazareth is in communion with his Father because it is from the Father, through the Holy Spirit, that he receives his mission.36 It is the Holy Spirit who leads and sends the earthly Jesus at various points in his mission (Matt 4:1). The Holy Spirit, as the 'presenter of the Father's commission', leads Jesus to use his temporal human freedom to endorse and keep hold of the eternal, divine free act in which he has assented to the Father's choice to save.37 For Balthasar, the two decisions are not separated in time, one decision as

34 Balthasar, TD:III, 186/7.
36 Balthasar, TD:II, 199.
37 Nichols, No Bloodless Myth, 103. '[I]t is his receptivity to everything that comes to him from the Father that is the basis of time and temporality as these terms apply to the Son in his creaturely form of existence.' (Balthasar, TH, 28/9).
God in eternity and another as man in time, rather the latter expresses the former. While Balthasar’s theology of redemption is founded in the concrete and the particular, Balthasar follows Barth in his understanding that it is not the humanity of Jesus *per se* that is the revealer. Balthasar’s language here is reminiscent of Barth’s language of primal decision; it is God’s prevenient decision to be God in this way, that is, incarnate in Christ. (See Barth, *CD* II/2, 76. See also, Webster, *Barth*, 91; Bruce McCormack, ‘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), 92-110 at 64-7).

As we shall see in Chapter Four, the trinitarian origin of the mission of Jesus comes to fruition in the drama of the trinitarian relations in the *triduum mortis*. But how is a theodramatic theory to be based on such a ‘missiocentric theology’ of Christ’s consciousness? In Balthasar’s thinking, it is, in effect, the identity of Jesus’ person and mission that shows what is meant by a dramatic character; one who, by carrying out a role,

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38 See Balthasar, *TD*:II, 199; ‘[T]he form of his human self-awareness is the *expression*, in terms of this world, of his eternal consciousness as Son.’ (Balthasar, *TH*, 28).
39 See Barth, *CD* I/2, 155.
40 Balthasar *TD*:III, 199. Balthasar’s language here is reminiscent of Barth’s language of primal decision; it is God’s prevenient decision to be God in this way, that is, incarnate in Christ. (See Barth, *CD* II/2, 76. See also, Webster, *Barth*, 91; Bruce McCormack, ‘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), 92-110 at 64-7).
43 See Balthasar, *TD*:II, 177/8; *TH*, 26/7.
shows his ‘true face’. Balthasar’s christology is expressed in a personal, existential way because he is not thinking in terms of fixed essence but of free personal existence. By responding to the Father from his personal mode of existence, Jesus ‘portrays a human nature, yet a human nature transposed in its entirety to another mode of existence’. Thus the relationship of divine and human in Jesus becomes less of an intellectual conundrum and more the case that Jesus’ life is distinguished by a continually unfolding awareness of ‘how to be the Son of the Father’ in every situation. In moving from essentialist to actualist terms, Balthasar, like Barth, is emphasizing the event character of Jesus’ existence.

Underlying Balthasar’s approach to the incarnation is Christ as the ‘divine Word existing humanly’. The personal identity of Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal son of God. In going beyond Chalcedon, Balthasar does not claim that its teaching is incorrect. He seeks to go beyond the Council’s historically limited content and function in order to more adequately present the mystery for a contemporary context.

It is by emphasizing the incarnation as a particular ‘divine pattern of activity which takes place in analogical human terms in Christ’ that Balthasar’s christology stays anchored in the Trinity. Balthasar maintains that it is the ‘activity of perfect sonship’ that is transformed into the human terms of Jesus’ life and death, not the essence of God per se. In his construal of the mission of Jesus, there is a sense of historical development and fulfilment in Jesus’ growing surrender: towards God and neighbour. Balthasar holds that the ekstatic structure of the self-giving of Jesus is demonstrated in Jesus’ life as well as reaching its climax in the resurrection, ascension and sending of the Spirit. This is also demonstrated in Jesus’ life.

Christ’s human nature stands out – ecstatically - in relation to his divine person, from which he draws his human existence; the mission he receives from the Father forms not only his office and destiny as Redeemer, but the essential traits of his individual nature.
By setting the divine-human activities of sonship in the framework of an Ignatian concept of mission, Balthasar includes the historical mission of Jesus within the eternal filial relationship of loving response and obedience to the Father. Because he holds that the eternal Son is this activity, Balthasar is able to shift from a Chalcedonian union of divine and human essences in Christ to that of the union of 'divine and human activity in Christ'. While being aware of the formal scope of his mission, Jesus is uncertain of its content. The Father guides him by the Spirit; Jesus totally abandons himself to the Father in whom he has absolute trust. Balthasar can be said to dramatize the hypostatic union, a union which is essentially self-giving love. Although he draws an analogy between human obedience and trinitarian self-donation, Balthasar holds the principle of 'immeasurable dissimilarity' between Creator and creature, divine and human, while stipulating a correspondence between the two when found in Christ.

Despite the inner coherence of Balthasar's portrayal of the Father/Son relation, one wonders whether the human obedience of Jesus is so well contained within the Son's filial response and obedience that we lose sight of the human altogether. Does Balthasar, in effect, depict a docetic Christ? If the self-offering of the Son is eternal, what does this mean for the ability of Jesus to make decisions in his earthly life and what are the wider implications for the God/world relation? Are the events of Jesus' life, and by extension the lives of all humanity, pre-determined? Any possible answers to the above questions are to be sought in the way that Balthasar views the work of the Holy Spirit within the trinitarian relations including his explication of a notion of 'becoming' in God which stops short of development.

3.1.3 Kenosis: the Mystery of Self-giving

Kenosis functions in two ways for Balthasar: firstly, it serves as a way of expanding the idea of God's self-giving and secondly, it connects the eternal 'event' of the divine processions

53 McIntosh, Christology from Within, 5. Maximus draws from trinitarian theology and applies to christology the idea that 'the eternal Son possesses the divine essence according to his particular mode of existence as the Son'. By both adopting and radicalizing this idea, Balthasar is able to speak of 'the eternal Word as the expression of a particular filial dynamic within the divine life, and of the human being Jesus as perfectly enacting this very same pattern of sonship in human terms'. (Ibid., 5-7). '[I]t is on the basis of the idea of the mission of Jesus that Balthasar will construct, in a most original way, his doctrine of the person of Christ'. (Nichols, No Bloodless Myth, 97).

54 Quash, 'Theo-drama', 150/1. While being aware of the formal scope of his mission, Jesus is uncertain of its content. Instead, he utterly abandons himself to the Father who guides him by the Spirit and in whom he has complete trust'. (Ibid., 150).

55 A criticism levelled at Barth as well as a question asked of Balthasar.

56 See below, 16 ff.
with the events of the cross and resurrection. _Kenosis_ is both founded in, and expresses, the
love that God is: _kenosis_ is essentially the self-giving of God. As such, the concept of
_kenosis_ is integral to Balthasar’s aesthetic theology; _kenosis_ is the form that God’s glory
takes in the world. _Kenosis_ is also integral to Balthasar’s dramatic theology as it is in the
concrete events of the incarnation and Passion that God’s kenotic love is revealed. Christ is
inextricably included in the inner-divine drama that encompasses the Father’s generation of
the Son, the events of the cross and resurrection and beyond. It is this chain of connections
that, in part, both illumines and constitutes the mystery of trinitarian relations within God.

### 3.1.3.1 Primary and secondary _kenosis_

In Balthasar’s construal, _kenosis_ is not a univocal concept; it occurs in a primary and a
secondary sense which correspond to each other.\(^58\) The Father’s generation of the Son is the
primary divine _kenosis_ that underpins everything else. The action of the Father which
generates the Son is the action ‘whereby the Father utters and bestows his whole Godhead,
an action he both “does” and “is”’.\(^59\) This action is eternal; ‘[t]he Father is not to be thought
to exist “prior” to this self-surrender (in an Arian sense); he _is_ this movement of self-giving
that holds nothing back’.\(^60\) Consequent upon all other acts of _kenosis_ being contained in the
primary _kenosis_, God has no need to ‘change’ when he makes a reality of the wonders of his charity, wonders
which include the Incarnation and, more particularly, the Passion of Christ . . . All the
contingent ‘abasements’ of God in the economy of salvation are forever included and
outstripped in the eternal event of Love.\(^61\)

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\(^57\) Despite his extensive use of the concept of _kenosis_, Balthasar distances himself from much of nineteenth-
century German kenoticism, which he sees as unduly influenced by Hegel. His complaint against Hegel lies in
the notion within speculative Idealism that the Logos loses himself in the processes of world history so that the
Trinity may become itself. (TD:IV, 326). Balthasar also disagrees with Gottfried Thomasius (1802-1875) who
thought that the Son voluntarily abdicated certain metaphysical properties such as omnipotence and
omniscience during the earthly life of Jesus. According to Thomasius, these properties were to be seen as latent
in the humiliation of the crucified Jesus but were reactivalised at the resurrection. For Balthasar’s accounts of
Thomasius, Anglican theology (1890-1910), P. Althaus and others, see Balthasar, _Mysterium Paschale_, 31-36.
See also, O’Hanlon, _The Immutability of God_, 16ff.

\(^58\) It is clear that, for Balthasar, God’s essence does not become ‘itself (univocally) ‘kenotic’, such that a single
concept could include both the divine foundation of the possibility of Kenosis and the Kenosis itself’.
(Balthasar, _MP_, 29).

\(^59\) Balthasar, _TD: IV_, 324. ‘God the Father can give his divinity away in such a manner that it is not merely
“lent” to the Son: the Son’s possession of it is “equally substantial”’. (Ibid., 325).

\(^60\) Balthasar, _TD: IV_, 323.

\(^61\) Balthasar, _MP_, ix. There is a similarity here with Thomas Aquinas where all God’s acts are included in the
actus purus which is God. Thomas Weinandy is an example of a contemporary theologian who, following
Aquinas, believes God to be immutable because God’s nature is ‘to be’, that is he is _ipsam esse_ (to-be-itself)
and thus _actus purus_ (pure act). See Thomas G. Weinandy, OFM, Cap., _Does God Suffer?_ (Notre Dame,
Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2000), 120ff.
The eternal thanksgiving and obedience of the Son, which includes the cross, corresponds to, and is already contained within, this first kenosis.\(^{62}\) The self-emptying love of the Son corresponds to that of the Father; obedience is not foreign to God.\(^{63}\) Balthasar maintains that it is by way of the divine processions that we should approach the ‘mystery of the divine ‘essence’’. In this self-surrender of kenosis, God is the whole divine essence.\(^{64}\) God cannot be God in any other way than in this kenosis within the Godhead itself. For Balthasar, the Son is and possesses the absolute nature of God in the mode of receptivity in which he receives the unity of omnipotence and powerlessness from the Father. It is within this receptivity that the self-givenness of the Son and the Son’s filial thanksgiving is simultaneously included. The Son is ‘infinitely Other’ while also being ‘infinitely Other of the Father’. The mission of the Son grounds the mission of the incarnate Christ. The Son ‘grounds and surpasses’ all that is meant by separation (including pain and alienation) in the world and all that can be envisaged of self-giving and interpersonal relationship.\(^{65}\)

3.1.3.2 The freedom and obedience of divine decision

Love is at its most extreme and most itself in the descent into hell and the resurrection; all else is interpreted from this central focus.\(^{66}\) It is in the powerlessness of the incarnate and crucified one that God’s omnipotence is manifest.\(^{67}\) While ‘[t]he ultimate presupposition of the kenosis is the ‘selflessness’ of the Persons (when considered as pure relationships) in the inner-Trinitarian life of love’,\(^{68}\) the incarnation itself is the existential basis for such thinking. It is only in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus that God is revealed as absolute love rather than absolute power.\(^{69}\) The humiliation of the Son is not something done to the

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\(^{62}\) The thanksgiving of the Son is the ‘eternal Yes to the gift of consubstantial divinity (that is, a divinity that is equally absolute)’. Such thanksgiving is ‘a Yes to the primal kenosis of the Father in the unity of omnipotence and powerlessness: omnipotence, since he can give all; powerlessness, since nothing is as truly powerful as the gift’. (Balthasar, *TD*: IV, 326).

\(^{63}\) The correspondence between the Father’s self-giving (expressed in generation) and the Son’s thanksgiving and readiness bridges ‘the gulf of the Divine Persons’ total distinctness’. (Balthasar, *TD*: IV, 326). See also, O’Hanlon, *Immutability of God*, 10f.

\(^{64}\) Balthasar *TD*: IV, 325. It is this essence which is ‘forever ‘given’ in the self-gift of the Father, ‘rendered’ in the thanksgiving of the Son, and ‘represented’ in its character as absolute love by the Holy Spirit’. (Balthasar, *MP*, preface to 2nd ed., viii).


\(^{66}\) The cross and the descent into hell will be the focus of Chapter Four.

\(^{67}\) Balthasar follows St Paul in linking together the kenosis of the incarnation and that of the cross. On the links between incarnation and crucifixion, see O’Donnell, ‘Form of von Balthasar’s Theology’, 211.

\(^{68}\) Balthasar, *MP*, 34/5.

\(^{69}\) There is no question of the Son being unable to ‘master the highest degree of glory without undergoing incarnation . . . his sovereignty manifests itself not in holding on to what is its own but in its abandonment’. (Balthasar, *MP*, 28).
Son by the Father but, in his renunciation, the Son reveals that which is common to both Father and Son: the freedom intrinsic to *kenosis*. The trinitarian dimension is vital in that the exteriorization of the Son in the incarnation is contained within the exteriorization of the Father in the generation of the Son and the Holy Spirit is the gift of them both. Balthasar understands the taking on of a servant-existence as a trinitarian affair in that the one who lowers himself to the state of a servant is the *divine* Son, therefore his obedience remains the expression of his divine freedom, in unanimous accord with the Father. . . . the obedience which determines that whole existence of his is not simply a function of what he has become . . . It is also a function of what, in his self-emptying and self-abasement, he willed to become.

It is a letting go of the divine self-disposal (the ‘form of God’) in an obedience which translates, via *kenosis*, the eternal love of the Son for the Father. Balthasar does not see the cross as the Father imposing his will on the Son. The Son’s obedience is already there in incarnation and the giving up of divine ‘form’. The apparent dialectic between ‘being Lord’ and ‘being a servant’ is surmounted ‘already and always’ in the existence of Christ, therefore there is no need to retroject a post-Easter understanding of Christ onto the time before Easter. Nevertheless, the succession of events is still important as Balthasar wishes to safeguard the genuine temporality of events and the genuineness of Christ’s humanity and incarnation. Balthasar is not saying that, from the beginning, the whole existence of Jesus was ‘interiorly identical with the Cross’. The condition of abasement achieved by the primary *kenosis* does not coincide with the historic event of the cross. Balthasar claims that Jesus commits himself to the task given him by God to the point where he identifies his life (and death) with that task, until it becomes clear that he in his whole being has become the statement of God. But he could only become this if, regardless of the process of becoming, he had been so from the start.

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70 See Balthasar, *MP*, 28f. ‘The exteriorisation of God (in the Incarnation) has its ontic condition of possibility in the eternal exteriorisation of God - that is, in his tripersonal self gift.’ (Ibid., 28).
71 Balthasar, *MP*, 90. ‘That Jesus thus became what he already was, both before the world’s foundation and during his earthly ministry: this must be taken with absolute seriousness by every Christology’. (Ibid., 207).
73 See Balthasar, *MP*, 94. Hence the need to clarify the question of Balthasar’s talk of the ‘lamb slain before the foundation of the world’. See below.
74 Balthasar, *Elucidations*, trans. John Riches (London: SPCK, 1975), 41. There is no suggestion in Balthasar’s thought that the Trinity is constituted by the cross as there is in the theology of Jürgen Moltmann.
There is no question, in Balthasar’s thinking, that the glory of God becomes a limited glory at the cross. He maintains that the paradox must be retained in that the full glory and power of God are present to us in Jesus’ full humanity. It is through the divine kenosis, both pre-mundane and incarnational, that we are enabled to see the triune majesty in the ‘divine Gestalt of the incarnate, crucified Lord’. Balthasar is not averse to tackling the subject of being, hence his insistence on the primacy of the object. He is adamant that the whole is to be seen as a whole, in its specific character, as it really is. This form is relational in that it is the activity ‘of the Father who expresses and glorifies himself in the Son’s form and word’. It is in this relationship that ‘the only appropriate term is the Johannine key-word ‘love’.

This is a love that originates in the Father’s deed of surrender for the world and is expressed in the Son’s deed of surrender, of the outpouring of his life for the life of the world. In the Son’s deed of self-outpouring it is no longer only the love of the Father which is expressed (a love at whose disposal the Son obediently puts himself); nor is it only the love of the Son which is expressed (of the Son who alone became man and who alone can die). What is expressed is the indivisible essential love of God himself.

The kenosis and mission of the Son are enfolded in the kenosis and mission of the Trinity.

A feminist response to Balthasar’s work is important because it highlights some of the ambiguities and cultural influences within his thinking. The human imagination is characterized by imprecision and ambiguity, particularly when operating without boundaries to its content. No theology is engendered in a cultural vacuum but if Balthasar was to make his views on gender the primary source for his construal of the trinitarian relations this would cast doubt on his whole trinitarian framework. It would also call into question any imaginative paradigm his theology might suggest. Balthasar’s treatment of kenosis is open to

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78 Riches, ‘Afterword’, 181. According to D. C. Schindler, ‘Balthasar’s philosophy in general is a refusal to separate particular issues from the whole that comprehends them, to the extent that this relation to the whole brings out certain dimensions in the particular issue that would otherwise have remained hidden’. (Schindler, *Dramatic Structure of Truth*, 262).
79 Balthasar, *GL*: 1, 615.
80 Balthasar, *GL*: 1, 616.
a feminist critique on two fronts. The first is partly historical and the second concerns the
gendered nature of Balthasar’s theology. Although, according to Aristotle Papanikolau,⁸¹
Balthasar’s understanding of *kenosis* as the event of the communion of Persons is compatible
with the feminist concern with relationality and mutuality, the notion of *kenosis* has attracted
criticism from feminist theologians because of the negative history of *kenosis* as obedience,
humility and self sacrifice, a history which has often been used to legitimize the oppression
of women. While some, for example Daphne Hampson, have rejected *kenosis* because of
this, others, for example Sarah Coakley, have sought to retrieve an interpretation of *kenosis*
that adequately reflects the experience of women.⁸² Balthasar’s kenotic understanding
influences his trinitarian theology and his anthropology; both are affected by the two key
elements of receptivity and obedience. His understanding of divine and human action is
fundamentally gendered. The female is portrayed as primarily receptive and the male as
active, but the human person *per se* is receptive with regard to God. On the positive side,
receptivity and obedience are seen as indicative of the all-embracing love that God is. The
image of the human is that of vulnerability and loving connection to the ‘other’. On a more
negative note, Balthasar’s notions of receptivity and action are implicated in the ambiguities
of his complementary theology of the sexes. Balthasar has been criticized for working within
an essentialist paradigm when speaking of gender; he ignores the dynamic nature of
sexuality and employs a very narrow model of the nature of men and women. While
Balthasar takes the embodied nature of human existence seriously, his notion of gender
relationships remains hierarchical.⁸³ Despite his starting point in revelation, Balthasar is not
immune to the influences of his own milieu.

3.1.4 The Freedom to Be and ‘Become’?
Although less explicit than it is for Jüngel, the notion of ‘becoming’ in God is, for Balthasar,
an important element in his portrayal of God as event, of God as capable of surprise,
happening and movement. God’s ‘becoming’ is contained within God’s being as the

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⁸¹ For an exploration of Balthasar’s construal of *kenosis* in connection with abuse, see Aristotle Papanikolau,
Theology* 19 (2004), 41-65.

⁸² For feminist responses to Balthasar’s theology, see Michelle A. Gonzalez, ‘Hans Urs von Balthasar and
Contemporary Feminist Theology’, *Theological Studies*, 65 (2004), 566-595 at 572-77. Instead of
understanding vulnerability as opposed to power and thus leading to victimhood, Coakley defines vulnerability
in terms of transformation and openness to receive and give’. (Ibid., 589). For the debate between Coakley and
Hampson see Papanikolau, 42-6.

⁸³ See Gonzalez, 581-5, 590/1. For the gendered split between the mystical and the theological, see Ibid., 592.
trinitarian relationship of love which grounds the becoming of the world. It has been contended that Balthasar modifies the classical notion of immutability in order, not to declare God mutable, but to produce a more adequate notion of immutability. He attempts to do this by grounding the ontological difference between God and the creature in a metaphysics of love. In contrast to the metaphysical tradition, Balthasar’s metaphysic develops more personal and relational categories with the result that ‘the perfection of the trinitarian God includes elements of analogous becoming and receptivity . . . the category of event is reconciled with that of state’. 84 Although rejecting the priority of process expressed in some late twentieth-century theology, Balthasar acknowledges that the concept of process or procession cannot be avoided in the context of the life of the Trinity. He maintains that this concept is ‘the link between creature and Creator, between being and becoming’. 85 God’s being can thus be said to become in the manner of the self-giving of the processions. Consequently, being and becoming cannot be split apart: they belong together because God’s self-giving is eternal.

While Balthasar states that the ‘eternal life that God is, and that remains: “ineffable”, cannot be described as a becoming’, 87 he also states that the Son and the Spirit place themselves ‘at the disposal of their generation in a process of becoming which always exhibits all the qualities of being’. 88 This self-giving is the unity of love which, because of the differentiation of the Persons, is capable of creativity and surprise. Balthasar declares that ‘the unanimity of the decision expresses the unity of the love that is vital and creative’. 89

This unity of love carries forward into the way that Balthasar speaks of the element of ‘surprise’ in God which allows God to be ‘ever-greater’ even to God. 90 While both the act of begetting by the Father and the receptivity of the Son are ‘event’, neither is an event in

84 O’Hanlon, _Immutability of God_, 135.
85 Balthasar, _TD:V_, 77.
87 Balthasar, _TD:V_, 77.
88 Balthasar, _TD:V_, 87.
89 Balthasar, _TD:V_, 89. ‘Each Person surprises and surpasses the Others by coming up with a “divine ever greater”, a divine “heightening” and “exuberance”’. (Ibid.).
90 See Balthasar, _TD:V_, 78ff.
isolation. Balthasar maintains that 'in the eternal process of being begotten, the Son eternally receives himself from the Father in a presence that includes both his always-having-been and also his eternal future (his eternal “coming”) from the Father’. This event brings together the Son’s receptive presence and the event of the Father’s loving begetting as an event which is ‘the coming about of something that has always been, it is also the overfulfilment of an expectation, something transcendent, something “ever-more”’.\(^91\) In Balthasar’s thinking of the divine being and ‘becoming’, the inner-divine freedom is operative at more than one level. Firstly, it operates in the relationship between the Persons. The Son is the primal expectation of the Father as well as the Father’s primal fulfilment. For all eternity the Son ‘remains what he was and is: expectation and fulfilment’. The same exuberance and expectation is at work in the procession of the Holy Spirit; ‘Father and Son see their reciprocal love surpassed as it proceeds from them as a Third Person’.\(^92\) The Persons remain who they are while surpassing the expectations of the Persons who are ‘other’ to themselves. Secondly, the inner-divine love acts as a prototype for what is best in the realm of creaturely love.\(^93\) Thirdly, because each Person is distinguished from the others, they can grant each other ‘space’. The motivation for such a gift is always the same; they grant each other the freedom of being and action because of the love that they are.

While the freedom of the Persons is firmly grounded in the unity of trinitarian love,\(^94\) this love is not expressed in a univocal manner. Although Balthasar rejects theopaschitism as such, he also rejects divine immutability as it has been traditionally defined. The Father and the Holy Spirit are affected by the humanity of the Son. There is a change in relations within God; kenosis is ontological.\(^95\) Although Balthasar does not use the motif of identification in the way that Jüngel does, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus reflects or expresses the ‘happening’ that is intrinsic to God; the ‘event’ of Jesus is identified with the ‘event’ of God.

\(^{91}\) Balthasar, *TD*: V, 92. Whether one stresses the distinction between Jesus and the eschatological Son of Man, and so underlines the element of becoming . . . or whether, with Matt 10, 33, one affirms their identity, and so emphasises the element of being, neither aspect must be isolated from the other.’ (Balthasar, *MP*, 207/8).


\(^{94}\) ‘It is an essential aspect of the love of the Persons in God that they mutually grant each other freedom’. (Balthasar, *TD*: V, 93/4).

Balthasar envisages the eternal Trinity in terms of ‘intense emotion and interaction’. The eternal processions within the Godhead cannot be excluded from consideration of the divine essence because the divine life is fullness of life and, as rest, is not inert but is eternally ‘happening’. 

Christian theology has to hold on unswervingly to the fact that the God who manifests himself in Jesus Christ exists in himself as an eternal essence (or Being), which is an equally eternal (that is, not temporal) “happening”. Thus it is on the basis of Jesus’ trinitarian relationship with God that we should construct a picture of the divine “essence” and “being”; for the latter manifests itself, in the historical “happening” of Jesus himself, as an eternal “happening”. 

‘Becoming’ may be said to be expressive of ‘being’: the Trinity is a relation that happens; that ‘becomes’, but not something other than what that relation already is. All elements in this ‘becoming’ are at the initiative, and within the control, of God as Trinity.

Thomas Weinandy maintains that Balthasar (and in his view, possibly Barth) deem God to be immutable and impassible in himself, yet in their own distinctive ways, ‘they feel obliged to argue that, in his freely constituted relationship with humankind, he is indeed possible’. For Weinandy, the immutability and impassibility of God are the ‘absolute presuppositions and prolegomena for ensuring that he is perfectly loving’. In his view, God can be said to be loving because God is immutable and impassible. Weinandy quite rightly asserts that ‘God need not ‘re-fashion’ himself in order to interact with us’ but he argues that Balthasar places a ‘highly dubious’ distinction between God in se and God pro nobis and places a breach between the two. Weinandy claims that this is not only ‘philosophically unwarranted’ but also ‘theologically detrimental to both biblical revelation and the Christian tradition’. He insists on God’s immutability because he believes that any change within God necessarily means a lack of perfection in God. The notion of possibility that Weinandy seeks to refute is ‘that God experiences inner emotional changes of state, either of comfort or discomfort, whether freely from within or by being acted upon from without’. He argues that if God suffered, God would have to continually adapt and re-adapt to outside situations and would thus be ‘seen to be perpetually entangled in an unending eternal emotional whirligig’.
This is to suppose that God's state is constituted by historical circumstances outside and apart from the trinitarian being of God. This view presupposes that God lives in time the same way that humanity does, in a progressive way. This is not Balthasar's understanding of the matter as, for him, all things are grounded in the trinitarian Being of God. According to Balthasar,

we have no right to regard the Trinity one-sidedly as the "play" of an absolute "blessedness" that abstracts from concrete pain and lacks the "seriousness" of separation and death. Such a view would lead necessarily to a Hegelian process theology...hell is only possible given the absolute and real separation of Father and Son.102

It is clear that, in the context of Balthasar's dramatic portrayal of the intra-divine relations, kenosis within God is always a self-limitation. Because he sees God as 'the whole divine essence' in self-surrender, Balthasar acknowledges the infinite power and the powerlessness of God.103

In Balthasar's estimation, the temporal created world has no power to limit God, it is not humanity that draws God into the drama.

[I]t is the drama of the "emptying" of the Father's heart, in the generation of the Son, that contains and surpasses all possible drama between God and the world...the Father was never without the Son, nor were Father and Son ever without the Spirit. Everything temporal takes place within the embrace of the eternal action and as its consequence.104

It has been suggested that Balthasar is too quick to solve the problem of how the dynamic between Creator and creature relates to the eternal drama between the Father and the Son, with the result that the Son's pre-existing obedience tends to 'substitute itself for the Godman relation rather than integrating it into itself'.105 Although both time and space are positive aspects of creaturely existence which, for Balthasar, have their origin in the


103 Balthasar, *TD:JV*, 325. God goes to the 'very extreme of selflessness' with the result that the Son is and possesses 'the absolute nature of God in the mode of receptivity: he receives this unity of omnipotence and powerlessness from the Father'. (Ibid., 326). According to MacKinnon, *kenosis* is a 'more inclusive concept than self-emptying'. (MacKinnon, 'Some Reflections', 168). On limitation in the experience of Jesus, see O'Donnell, *Hans Urs von Balthasar*, 47ff.


'coming-to-be of the divine processions', the question whether temporality is, in effect, subsumed within the eternal demonstrates the risk inherent within Balthasar's notion of the supra-temporal. Balthasar argues that we have to interact seriously with the Christian claim that Christ's history, occurring at a particular point on the horizontal level of time is also at the same time 'standing in a vertical relationship to the whole course of time' and is itself the 'very ground of the whole process' which anchors it simultaneously in the 'embracing freedom of the triune God'. By claiming that the event of Christ gives to humanity's open future an ultimate meaning and purpose, Balthasar claims that the future is no longer an 'abyss of empty possibility'. Christ journeys with us and has 'already both reached the end and also fulfilled the prophetic vision in all its aspects'. Christ is both Alpha and Omega (Rev 22:13). In the human life, it is the incarnation of God in Christ (the vertical) that forbids escape from the 'here and now' (the horizontal), the attempt to live as one moulded by the event of Christ in the present. The intersection of these two forms of time 'makes the human form of time, without in any way devaluing it, transparent to the trinitarian supra-temporal time'. Because the world has its place only within the Father/Son distinction which is maintained and bridged by the Holy Spirit, it is within the eternal action that the temporal takes place. Balthasar intentionally dissociates himself from any univocal attribution of change to God when he speaks of the supra-temporal. He uses the term 'event' analogously; in no way does he ascribe any created event to the eternal God.

By naming the possibility of distinguishing God who needs nothing and a world which needs God as the 'fundamental mystery', Balthasar insists that the field must be kept free for 'this ever-greater' God if the possibility of the theo-dramatic dimension is to be guaranteed. This mystery 'grounds everything that comes after, while not being deducible from anything'. Balthasar is careful to distinguish God's relationship to humanity from pantheism or theopanism which dissolves God into the world or the world into God, thus 'dissolving the

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107 Balthasar, *El*, 53/4. 'Since eternity is life, God created time "without in any way affecting the substance of eternity. He did not cut time out of eternity. On the one hand, there is a transitory time; on the other, there is an intact eternity." But they are involved in "a living relationship between heaven and earth."' (Balthasar, *TD: V*, 512, citing von Speyr, T, 34-35).
109 For Balthasar, the Christian is shaped by the *Gestalt Christi* which incorporates the event of Christ, hence the *aesthetics and the dramatics*. 'Gestalt itself is the intersection of the horizontal and vertical dimensions, an essential tension between the finite in the infinite. For Balthasar, the concept of Gestalt seeks to 'reconcile the 'vertical' plane of being with the 'horizontal' plane of history'. (Schindler, *Dramatic Structure*, 15/6).
111 For the analogous nature of 'event' see Hunt, *Trinity*, 63; O'Hanlon, *Immutability of God*, 20.
interplay of divine and created freedoms’ and abolishing the theo-drama. Because there is a dynamic relationship between Creator and creature and ‘becoming is rooted in absolute Being’, for Balthasar the ‘two apparently contradictory concepts’ of eternal or absolute Being and ‘happening’ must be seen as a unity.

This “happening” is not a becoming in the earthly sense: it is the coming-to-be, not of something that once was not . . . but . . . of something that grounds the idea, the inner possibility and reality of a becoming. All earthly becoming is a reflection of the eternal “happening” in God, which . . . is per se identical with the eternal Being or essence.

In effect, God is a ‘happening’. The ‘sublime transactions between the Persons of the Trinity’ are the origin of the ‘world’s becoming’. It is Christ who embodies humanity’s complete dramatic situation in humanity’s relationship to itself and to God. Only when death is conquered, and Christ’s mission fulfilled, can he give to the Father the kingdom so that the Father can be all in all (1 Cor 15-24ff.). Where his construal of God’s being and ‘becoming’ is concerned, Balthasar makes a threefold assertion. Firstly, the trinitarian relation ‘happens’; it is characterized by a giving and receiving that is capable of an ‘ever more’ in God. Secondly, each Person of the Trinity genuinely and actively gives all that they are while simultaneously remaining constant in their eternal Being. Thirdly, God’s power and powerlessness are demonstrated in the self-giving kenosis that God is. That God exhibits both power and powerlessness in the act of kenosis may highlight the ability of the imagination to hold two seemingly contradictory concepts in tension without the necessary collapse of either concept. In Chapter Four, we shall examine how Balthasar’s motifs of mission and kenosis are worked out in the events of the triduum mortis and whether there is any suggestion that those events could provide some content for an imaginative paradigm for the Christian imagination.

### 3.2 Eberhard Jüngel: God in Identity with the Crucified Man Jesus

Jüngel’s perception of God’s identity with the crucified man Jesus is central to his theology and, in particular, his construal of the Easter events. As we saw in Chapter Two, God comes

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113 Balthasar, *TD*: V, 118/9. The relationship between God and the world is also to be distinguished from ‘every form of pure dualism, which either isolates God’s divinity from the world and closes it in on itself (Deism) or isolates the world’s secularity from God . . . the possibility of distinguishing between God – who “is all” . . . and thus needs nothing - and a world of finite beings who need God remains the fundamental mystery. (Ibid., 118/9).


to humanity in God's Word that addresses us as revelation. It is within the internal dynamics of the trinitarian relations that God comes to God; it is this God who is revealed in the word of address. Because God is inherently relational, otherness has a positive value in Jüngel's trinitarian thought; without distinction, there would be no positive relation either ad intra or ad extra. Without distinction within unity, God would be unable to suffer death and remain God; God could not be in identity with the crucified man Jesus. Before dealing with the alienation and forsakeness of the cross in Chapter Four, we turn to Jüngel's construal of the inner-trinitarian relations, which, for Jüngel, act as a foundation for the relation between God and the world. Two important issues are addressed in this section: first, the relationship between God and the human Jesus (given the christological stance within Jüngel's trinitarian theology) and second, the importance of the immanent Trinity in Jüngel's view of this relationship. An important question is whether Jüngel's treatment of relations within God implies that the concept of God as event becomes an abstraction.

3.2.1 Differentiation in Unity: God as Relational

In Jüngel's understanding, the christological concept of identification functions as a methodological principle as well as performing a dogmatic function. It is significant for the definition of God and humanity as well as for the person of Christ. Jüngel considers his christocentrism to be 'normative and regulative' for all Christian theology.116 Before looking at the concept of identification in terms of the cross, we need to understand how Jüngel conceives differentiation within God. As previously noted, Jüngel maintains that the economy is where we encounter God and revelation is grounded in the self-regulatory agency of God which is itself relational. Events in the economy reveal God in the differentiation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Revelation is treated as event and as such is always open to new interpretation. Jüngel shares with Barth the conviction that nothing can be known of God outside of Jesus Christ: 'the knowledge of God whose subject is God the Father and God the Son through the Holy Spirit'. This knowledge of God is 'an event enclosed in the mystery of the divine Trinity'.117 They both hold to the principle that Jesus Christ cannot be understood outside of a strong trinitarian theology.

The self-giving in which God is already ours in advance is the self-giving in which he belongs to himself. This self-giving is the self-relatedness of God's being within the

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116 Webster, Eberhard Jüngel, 36. For Jüngel, as for Barth, the doctrine of the person of Christ takes the place of the doctrine of revelation. (Ibid.).
117 Barth, CD: II/1, 131.
differentiated modes of being of the Father, the Son and the Spirit. In the self-relatedness of God's being the relational structuring of this being occurs. As the mutual self-giving of the three modes of God's being, God's being is event. Because God's being as threehood is self-giving (love), this being may not be conceived as something abstract.\textsuperscript{118}

Jüngel takes from Barth the notion that the doctrine of the Trinity prevents the being of God being understood as a human construction.

3.2.1.1 Perichoresis and appropriation

Jüngel works with the premise that God is in perichoretic relationship: there is no way that we can think of God outside relationship. By affirming Barth's position that God is relational and is love prior to any dealings with humanity, Jüngel can be confident that God in no way becomes love through the relation between Creator and created. God's being is pure event and, as such, is to be grounded in nothing apart from itself; '[t]he being of God is thus a being which is differentiated in itself and so related in its differentiations, so that the relation constitutes the distinction'.\textsuperscript{119} Because this is an intra-divine distinction, it is not the same as saying that God is constituted by the relationship between Creator and creature. In Jüngel's terms, God can be self-interpreted because God is self-related. 'God reveals himself as Father, Son and Spirit because he is God as Father, Son and Spirit'.\textsuperscript{120} Jüngel declares that the mutual relations (of Father, Son and Spirit) in Barth's doctrine of the Trinity are to be understood as the 'self-relatedness of the divine being', as 'differentiated from one another in the same measure that they are to be thought of as related to one another'.\textsuperscript{121} Jüngel is not in total agreement at this point. If, for Jüngel, God is differentiated 'in the same measure' as God is united, the contention that 'the relationship constitutes the distinction', involves a suggestion of cause and effect which is somewhat problematic as it is difficult to see how relationship can exist without a simultaneous distinction because God only relates to God as Father as Son and as Spirit.

In order to prevent the notion of God as event becoming a mere abstraction, God's being in God's self-relatedness must be formulated as concrete being. It has to be determined to what extent the differentiation of the three modes of being remains a concrete differentiation in this concrete oneness. Jüngel acknowledges the difficulty of this position but puts forward

\textsuperscript{118} Jüngel, \textit{GBB}, 41.
\textsuperscript{119} Jüngel, \textit{GBB}, 39.
\textsuperscript{120} Jüngel, \textit{GBB}, 42.
\textsuperscript{121} Jüngel, \textit{GBB}, 42.
Jüngel is careful to point out Barth’s concern for the unity of God’s reality.125

In line with his contention that God is revealed as God is, Jüngel asks how the unity of the divine modes of being is able to ‘express itself in God’s work without surrendering its differentiation’.126 He explains that appropriation is

a hermeneutical process127 for defining the being of God, through which particular attributes and operations of the Trinity (in the unity of its modes of being) are ascribed to one particular mode of being . . . the unity of the three modes of God’s being proves itself as concrete unity when it preserves the differentiation of the three modes of being as concrete differentiation on . . . Thus harmony grounds the fact that, in the unity and differentiation of his modes of being, God not only is but also expresses himself.128
God corresponds to God in that God assigns his own being. Appropriation is not to be understood as ‘a supplementary happening which is added to the distinction between the original-relationships in God’. 129

God is above all, self-determined. If the divine differentiation were in name only, there could be no real reciprocity within God. In no sense could God be ‘other’ to God and love between the divine persons would be an abstraction. If the latter were the case, although our understanding of God comes via God’s acts in the economy, we would be forced to reduce our understanding of God in se to God in his acts ad extra. If the latter reduction occurs, we run the risk of ceasing to think of the immanent Trinity per se.130 When theology ceases to think of the immanent Trinity as such, theological categories are often used from a starting point in human aspirations and experience. The crux of the matter is ‘how to think together God’s being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The divine persons are relationally ad alium and ontically identified as God in se’.131 This is important if we are then to say that it is God in identity with the crucified Jesus. It is not to say that Jesus is in identity with the Person of the Father but with the Person of the Son while also being in identity with the essence of God. Differentiation as such does not guarantee either relationship or integration. However, if we conceive the essence or ousia, not as an abstraction, but as the integrated expression of the God who named himself as ‘I Am’, we have both the ‘Am’ of Being and the ‘I’ that is personal. The ‘we’ of the hypostases does not become the ‘I’ of the ousia - the ‘we’ is intrinsically within the ‘I’. What we have is both a hypostatic union and a unity of relations. The self-revelation of God is that of the God who is Father of the Son and sender of the Spirit.

3.2.1.2 God and the ekstasis of creation
Although he does not identify God with either being or language, Jüngel understands language as the location where God shapes and constitutes the world. As humans, we are ontologically connected to God through both creation and redemption. For Jüngel, this is

129 Jüngel, GBB, 51. ‘God brings himself to speech as the one (as object) who (as subject) in the concrete unanimity of his being has brought himself to correspondence (in that he assigned his own being to himself)’. (Ibid). For a comparison between Barth and Rahner on appropriation, see GBB, 52, note 151.
130 See Jüngel, GBB, 38ff.
131 Ralph Del Colle, ‘Person’ and Being’ in John Zizioulas' Trinitarian Theology: Conversations with Thomas Torrance and Thomas Aquinas', Scottish Journal of Theology, 54 (2001), 70-86 at 84. Jüngel states that he understands God as a ‘community of mutual otherness’ which could be used as a model for ‘earthly being-together, vestigia trinitatis, as it were, in which creatures would be enabled to exist in communities of mutual otherness (this could also be relevant for political ethics)’. (Jüngel, THM, 233).
true whether we are aware of it or not. It is through the Word that God creates and sustains the world. The event of justification has ontological as well as soteriological implications which are to be understood through the notion of creatio ex nihilo. The ekstasis of creation, for Jüngel, applies not only to the original creation but also to the recreation of the whole of reality. Being is always and continuously addressed by God and therefore is always in coming. For Jüngel, there is a place for creative newness because being is determined in terms of a struggle between being and non-being. Creation therefore depends upon a decision between being and non-being, a decision between 'what will be and what will not be'.

For Jüngel, it is because Jesus, as the God-man, is included in both the creative activity of God and the eternal transcendence of God that Jesus is intrinsic to the unique identity of God. Jüngel perceives the pre-existent Christ as participating in the work of creation. In order for Christ to do this, he must be in identity with God because the work of creation is seen to be the work of God alone. While Jüngel sees God (as Creator) to be intensely and lovingly related to creation, creation is very definitely creatio ex nihilo. 'God, who is love, creates for himself, from nothing, his own other, so that the love revealed in Jesus Christ and experienced through the Spirit is the inner reason for the creation of man'. In an ontological sense, existence 'always had the original meaning of togetherness with God'. Any togetherness of the creation with the creation is grounded in the mutual togetherness and affirmation of the divine Persons. As we shall see in chapters Four and Five, the doctrine of creatio ex nihilo is closely connected to Jüngel's understandings of both temporality and justification. The triduum mortis is where God is engaged in a struggle between being and non-being. Jüngel understands nothingness as the tendency not to be; in a
sense, *creatio ex nihilo* may thus be seen as the struggle between God and nothingness in its original positive mode. This raises the question of how the humanity that God creates (as creature) is included within the humanity of *God* in Jesus Christ and in what sense humanity may be said to be transformed.

### 3.2.2 The Humanity of God

As we saw in Chapter Two, a prime concern of Jüngel’s analogy of advent is to ensure that God and the world are distinguished in such a way that they cannot be confused. While there is a humanity proper to God as Creator, the humanity proper to the creature ensures its rightful place in the world as *creature*. Jesus as the God-man brings the two together: if God (as the Son) can be said to be within the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, God can be said to be in identity with *this* crucified man. For Jüngel, the incarnation brings God to human language. It is via the incarnation that we know God as not ‘totally Other’: the word became flesh (John 1:14). For Jüngel, ‘God is thinkable as God solely on the basis of his self-sharing of his being, which has taken place’. God is not only event but also *self-communication as event*. The humanity of God is thus located in the ‘word which corresponds to God’. One must say that, in the material sense, ‘God has entered as man into the temporality of human history . . . and in so doing has changed that history in a way in which it could not change itself’. In the formal sense, the human word must both proclaim and confess ‘the history of Jesus Christ as the time of God’s humanity which has come once and for all’. This statement is coherent with Jüngel’s overall intention if it means that, in Jesus, God comes in Jesus’ humanity (as the incarnate Son) and not that God is in some way constituted by the humanity of Jesus. In speaking of the humanity of God, neither Barth nor Jüngel speak of the identification of God with man in the generic sense but ‘the identification of God with the one man Jesus for the sake of all men’. For both Jüngel and Barth, a category of event in abstraction from Jesus Christ is unacceptable. In this, Jüngel is careful to differentiate himself from Hegel; the particular death of Jesus cannot become

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138 Jüngel, *GMW*, 299.
139 Jüngel, *GMW*, 300/1.
140 Jüngel, *GMW*, 299.
141 This would also be unacceptable to Balthasar. German high culture from the mid eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth century was influenced by Kant and Hegel. This influence resulted in a radically revised Christian belief in redemption couched in general terms. Kant cuts ties to Jesus in that the unique redeemer becomes the idea of perfection and the moral archetype which is found in human reason. (See Bruce Marshall, *Christology in Conflict: The Identity of a Saviour in Rahner and Barth* (Oxford/New York: Basil Blackwell, 1987), 5, 106).
merely the particular example of a process greater than the example itself. In Jüngel’s estimation, Hegel endangers the distinction between God and humanity by the transformation of divine and human nature into a universal. Jüngel appropriates Barth’s notion of the ‘humanity of God’ in order to think of ‘God himself as the union of death and life for the sake of life’ which is a means of ‘defining the essence of love’. In consequence, we have to ‘think God as love together with the christologically understood humanity of God’. Jüngel’s motif of identification appropriates Barth’s conviction that ‘God is the ultimate subject of Jesus’ history’. While Jüngel makes it clear that the unity of God and humanity in Jesus is revealed in authentic human history, Jesus is the unique redeemer because he is to be distinguished from all other persons.

In the incarnation, ‘God became human, in order to distinguish so strictly between God and humanity that they might be able to be together without restriction’. If Jesus, as a psychosomatic unity, is to be identified with God, the distinction between God and all other reality becomes a vital issue. This distinction is crucial to Jüngel’s theology, particularly in his controversial contention that temporality belongs within God. If we use the category of divine identity as the key to understanding New Testament christology, Jesus cannot carry out the functions of divine lordship and not be ontologically divine. The relation of the historical Jesus to God and the relation of God to Jesus is ‘constitutive of the personal being of Jesus Christ . . . God has identified himself with this human person and through this

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143 Jüngel, GMW, 299.
144 Marshall, Christology in Conflict, 16.
145 Marshall, Christology in Conflict, 144, 168. Barth maintains that an ‘indissoluble bond’ between God and Jesus Christ is mutually necessary. See Ibid., 166-176; Davidson, ‘Crux Probat Omnia’, 174.
146 Jüngel, DS, 118. Jüngel claims that attempts such as Barth’s doctrine of reconciliation and Friedrich Gogarten’s christology of the sonship of Jesus, emphasize the ‘reciprocity of the humanity of Jesus Christ and the divinity of Jesus Christ, according to which the true distinction between God and humanity is first revealed by the power of the union of divinity and humanity in the person of Jesus Christ’ (Ibid.).
147 See Chapter Four.
148 See Richard Bauckham, God Crucified: Monotheism and Christology in the New Testament (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 41. Jüngel affirms the Chalcedonian creed; in ‘one and the same person Jesus Christ, the divine and human essences are indivisibly and inseparably united, they are to be so strictly distinguished from each other that they relate to each other inconfusedly and unchangeably’, with the soteriological effect that ‘God and humanity - are to be distinguished in such a way that God and humanity can be together in an unrestricted way’. (Jüngel, DS, 117). It is sin which hinders the unrestricted togetherness of God and humanity. Sin misses the ‘true difference of God and humanity. Usurped nearness makes true nearness impossible . . . Wanting to be like God distances the human person from God’. (Ibid.).
identification has made possible new fellowship between himself and all humanity'. In Jüngel’s understanding, when the Word became flesh (John 1:14), it was a complete event but the Word did not cease to be Word. In this, Jüngel (and Barth) follows the doctrine of anhypostasis which speaks of the man Jesus as having no separate mode of being as a man. Because Jüngel sees the identity of Jesus Christ in terms of relation, personal being is to be understood as being in relation. He also assumes that 'the relations in which a person exists...are the life of the person'.

[J]he divine sonship of Jesus revealed in the event of Easter is nothing other than the very conceptualization, that is, the naming, of what Jesus in his earthly life was: one who ek-sisted totally and completely from his heavenly Father and who in-sisted directly on God’s fatherly will. Precisely in his humanity he is therefore the Son of God. Precisely in wanting to be, and being, nothing other than the human person in correspondence to God, he is truly the Son of God.

Jüngel insists that divine sonship is not to be understood as some kind of addition to the humanity of Jesus. He maintains that the doctrine of the two natures espoused by the early Church is open to this kind of misunderstanding, with the danger of producing an overemphasis on either the divinity or humanity of Jesus. Theology is not to think of the divinity and humanity of Jesus as quantities which, in some fashion, supplement each other. The issue must be thought through in relational categories.

We must think God in his relation to this human person, and think this relation itself as divine being: specifically, as the being of the Son of God...The person of the Son of God is the person of this human being, in so far as this relation occurs in this person in the form of a history beginning from God and going to God...Yet in whatever way, what is interesting is not the duality of the divine and human nature of Jesus Christ, but rather the identity of the person of Jesus Christ as a relational identity, by which the human Jesus...is the Son of God.

In portraying the concepts of hypostasis, enhypostasis and anhypostasis as relational concepts, Jüngel intends that we should think of these relations historically. While avoiding discussion of the two natures, Jüngel speaks of the ‘anhypostasis as the selflessness of Jesus’ earthly devotion to the work of God’s kingdom, and the enhypostasis as the grace which

149 Jüngel, DS, 119.
150 ‘While it is unsatisfactory to say simply that the human nature of Christ has no hypostasis of its own, we may say, in specifying the grounding of his concrete personality, that his humanity is hypostatic in union with the divine Logos’. (Davidson, ‘Crux Probat Omnia’, 165).
151 Jüngel, DS, 112.
152 Jüngel, DS, 114.
153 Jüngel, DS, 114.
154 Jüngel, DS, 115/6.
makes such existence possible.\footnote{Ivor Davidson, ‘Theologizing the Human Jesus: An Ancient (and Modern) Approach to Christology Reassessed’, \textit{International Journal of Systematic Theology}, 3 (2003), 129-153 at 147/8.} Webster claims that, in Jüngel’s construal, ‘[t]he being of Jesus Christ is, on the one hand, God’s self relation as relation to the humanity of the man Jesus and, on the other hand, the self relation of the man Jesus as relation to God’.\footnote{Webster, ‘Jesus’, 56, citing Eberhard Jüngel, ‘Thesen zur Grundlegung der Christologie’ in \textit{Unterwegs zur Sache}, 277 thesis A 5.3.} Webster queries whether this strategy works, not because of any failure in the hypostasis language,\footnote{Webster maintains that Jüngel has some success in showing that hermeneutical ontological analysis and history need not be in conflict. (Webster, ‘Jesus’, 57).} but because of the minimalism of Jüngel’s portrayal of Jesus as a personal agent. Does Jüngel place such an accent on God within the hypostatic union that Jesus becomes relegated to something less than a human person so that the humanity of God is somehow lost? Jüngel may be convinced that ‘the dogmatic significance of the historical Jesus consists in the fact that he is the \textit{human person in correspondence to God} and as such is the \textit{Son of God}’,\footnote{Jüngel, DS, 119. According to Hans Frei, ‘the entire focusing of Jesus as a formal human being in manifest identity’ becomes more obvious as the gospel narrative draws to its climax. Jesus moves from being portrayed as a representative figure (of Israel) to an individual ‘more nearly identified in terms of the Kingdom of God’ to where he emerges ‘fully as the one un substitutable Jesus of Nazareth’ in the Passion and resurrection. (Hans Frei, \textit{The Identity of Jesus Christ: The Hermeneutical Bases of Dogmatic Theology} (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 136). In the Gospel story, it is in the resurrection, where his identity is most fully focused, that Jesus of Nazareth becomes most fully himself. (Ibid., 49). Davidson maintains that, for Jüngel, it is only in the perspective of a post-Easter faith that the darkness of Calvary is recognized as ‘the good news of divine identification with this man’. (Davidson, ‘Theologizing’, 149).} but, although Jesus is the undisputed centre of Jüngel’s thought, his rendering of Jesus’ identity is not a robust presentation of the person of Jesus. Despite his interest in Barth’s view of the mutual grounding of the doctrine in Trinity and incarnation, Jüngel seems to be less interested in Barth’s emphasis on the concreteness of Jesus’ life or Barth’s theology of the risen presence and activity of Jesus. He lacks Barth’s attention to the details of Jesus’ life as the central figure of the Gospels.\footnote{On whether Jüngel portrays a somewhat docetic Jesus, see Davidson, ‘\textit{Crux Probat Omnia}’, 174; Davidson, ‘Theologizing’, 130ff; Webster, ‘Jesus’, 45. In Jüngel’s doctoral dissertation, \textit{Paulus und Jesus}, Jüngel’s eschatology looks almost exclusively to the future and the preaching of Jesus receives so much attention that his person and activity recede into the background. Jesus is an eschatological figure somewhat divorced from ordinary human life. (Webster, Ibid., 48). While Webster comments that Jüngel portrays a ‘suspicion of the discordant’ and is inclined to generalize, paying insufficient attention to concrete examples he makes an exception in the concrete history of Jesus which is in no way reduced to an instantiation of a general idea. (Webster, Eberhard Jüngel, 117).} Does Jüngel give a positive theological role to the human existence of Jesus?\footnote{See Webster, ‘Jesus’, 48/9. Although commenting on Jüngel’s early work, Webster makes the point that, while Jüngel has not published a christological treatise as such, ‘what he has to say has remained remarkably consistent’. (Ibid., 50/1).} If he does not, there is little scope for the story of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus (as the
incarnate Son), to provide an imaginatively paradigm for the Christian life. Jüngel is aware of the problem to the extent that ‘dogmatics must certainly also inquire about the historical Jesus, if faith is not to be exposed to the charge of replacing historical reality with mythology or ideology’. He goes beyond the ‘that’ of faith found in Bultmann; all dogmatic judgements are related back to historical knowledge because ‘God has revealed himself in the medium of historical events. And faith in God is itself always an historical event and as such accessible to historical knowledge.’ Despite these qualifications, the word of proclamation appears to bring about faith in Jesus rather than faith in the risen Jesus being manifested in the power of the Holy Spirit. More could be made of the relationship between the past history of Jesus and the experience of Jesus as contemporary, an instance where a stronger pneumatology would be helpful.

Two issues are of particular concern if we are to ask how Jüngel’s understanding of the humanity of God impacts upon the human imagination and its role in the transformation of our assumptions about God. The first is how Jüngel treats the eschatological change of the ages consequent upon the triduum mortis. The second is how Jüngel’s notion of narrative is connected to his thought on the humanity of God.

3.2.2.1 The event of the new
Because Jüngel deems the contrast between the old and the new to be theologically fundamental in understanding the new, he makes two proposals. Firstly, in order to speak of the new there has to be a reaching back to the old traditions. Secondly, the new is ‘that which has never been; it is that which brings what has been to an end, that which annihilates’. However, that which has never been can only be announced ‘by an analogy to what has been and which it brings to an end’. The significance of the incarnation is not limited to either its historical context or the present age. In Jüngel’s terms, the humanity of God is announced as a new age which transforms the self-understanding of the world as ‘the

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161 Jüngel, DS, 82.
162 Jüngel, DS, 83/4. For Jüngel’s comments on Bultmann and Barth and those that followed them, see Ibid., 86/7.
163 Webster, ‘Jesus’, 53. ‘[F]or Jüngel the relation of the moment of Jesus’ earthly history to our present remains a problem, in a way which it would not be for a Christology more confident that these different moments can be seen as events within a complex yet unified drama with a plot and a living person as its continuous subject and agent’ (Ibid.). A fruitful comparison may be made with Hans Urs von Balthasar’s Theodrama.
164 See Jüngel, EN, 35.
165 Jüngel, EN, 45.
announcement of a *change of the ages* and a *turning point in history*.

What constitutes the ‘real problem of language about the new at the level of the biblical tradition’ is the ‘analogy of the new to the old, which is formulated through a vacuum, through absolute zero, through nothingness’. In such a perspective, there is a ‘fundamental strangeness’ between the new and the old.

It is the new that comes to the world in the *form of the word* and then, on the basis of this new word spoken not by the prophet but rather through the prophets by God himself, *becomes* something new in *history*. The new is thus that from which an analogy is drawn, through which what has gone before is made into the analogate.

While the new, as it were, brings its own meaning with it, the old retains its significance in that it attains for itself new and enduring significance through the new. Whether what occurs in time has merely a temporal future or an eternal future is determined by the *eschaton*.

Not even the old can be taken for granted and possessed: ‘[f]or the new which God works makes itself similar to the old, and thereby makes the old into a parable of the new’. That which is capable of being a parable of the new cannot return to the category of the old itself: it ‘cannot become antiquated’. Something does not become obsolete simply through the passage of time but by virtue of its lack of being. It ‘remains new’ and as such, it is distinguished from all worldly innovations and revolutions.

At this point there has already been a shift from the ‘level of the biblical tradition to the level of the new to which it bears witness’. In both Old Testament prophecy and the New Testament writings, the new is

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166 Jungel, *GMW*, 302. Such a turning point makes itself known historically but also ‘addresses every future present age in the *world*’. (Ibid.).

167 Jungel, EN, 45.

168 Jungel, EN, 46. This is not a continuation of the history of the earlier event. (Ibid.).

169 In this context, the *eschaton* does three things, it (1) determines and judges, (2) generates what it determines and (3) effects the judgement which it presents. (Jungel, EN, 55).

170 Jungel, EN, 446f. The 'new of the future' announced by the prophets, announces, not only a breach in tradition, but also 'a critical distinction within that which has been'. However, 'not everything that has been is obviously worthy or capable of being a parable of the new ... at every time'. (Ibid., 46f).

171 Jungel sees sin as 'that which is antiquated from the outset'. The new which God introduces is necessary in order to recognize sin for what it is. (Jungel, EN, 48).

172 In the field of scientific knowledge, the new grows out of the *aporia* of the old, 'it makes the old obsolete, and thereby introduces a paradigm shift'. This shift is dependent on an 'accumulation of dissonant experiences which clears the way for a new paradigm'. Such 'radical events' fundamentally alter the kinds of questions which a science asks'. (Jungel, EN, 38). Jungel cites Hegel as making the comparison with the break in a growth process, 'a qualitative change' when a baby is born and his own epoch as 'a birth-time, a period of transition'. Jungel makes the link between the 'birth of a new world of the spirit' and, in Kuhn's terminology a 'scientific paradigm shift'. According to Jungel, this can happen in the field of theological knowledge. He mentions Augustine, the Reformation and the Second Vatican Council among other examples. (Ibid., 39/40, citing G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. Baillie (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 75).
announced with the help of the old. The new is ‘brought to speech with the help of tradition’. Although there is no path from the old to the new,

from the new which is to come there is certainly a path which leads to the old traditions and to the history which is witnessed therein. It comes to speech and to the world as that which is strange. But in its strangeness it makes itself familiar.

Jüngel argues that the ‘the analogy of a becoming familiar which arises from such utter strangeness’ is an analogy which (in this respect) completely reverses Erich Przywara’s formulation of the analogy of entis, stated as ‘[t]he analogy of a greater likeness in the midst of such a great dissimilarity between new and old’. The fact that there is this ‘fundamental strangeness’ between the new and the old suggests that the imagination may be at work here.

In Jüngel’s thought, while the incarnation expresses the humanity of God rather than constitutes it, the expressed humanity of God is not only formal but ontological. God may be said to constantly ‘come anew’, both ad intra and ad extra. God comes anew in Jesus, in continuity with his identity as the Son; differentiated from, yet united with, the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Christian faith, which knows no salvation outside Christ, can neither say who Jesus Christ is without understanding him as God, nor understand who God is without declaring his identity with Jesus. This dogmatic situation is inseparable from faith, and is knowable only as mystery.

Jüngel is not speaking of human possibilities as such but God coming to the world in Jesus. God comes out of himself, from himself, in the world to the world. The self-movement of God which corresponds to the movement of speech is the word that corresponds to God. This correspondence is the location of the humanity of God; God is ‘human in his divinity’. In the final analysis, for Jüngel, human possibilities do not dictate the being of

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173 Jüngel, EN, 48. Jüngel distinguishes between the level of the biblical tradition and ‘that about which the traditions speak and to which they testify’ (the action of God summed up by theology in the ‘general concept of revelation’). (Ibid., 35-43).
174 In agreement with Barth’s insistence that the story of Jesus is strange; that it cannot be appropriated. See (Webster, Grand Narrative, 47).
175 Jüngel, EN, 467.
176 Jüngel, EN, 467. See also, GMW, 282ff.
177 Eberhard Jüngel, ‘Relationship’, 181.
178 Jüngel, GMW, 295-300.
God. Although Jüngel states that for 'responsible Christian usage of the word "God", the Crucified One is virtually the real definition of what is meant with the word "God"', he would claim that Trinity is ontologically prior to the events of the cross.

3.2.2.2 Narrative and the new
Jüngel’s understanding of the humanity of God grounds his notion of narrative. He maintains that, as a language form, narrative is structurally suited to correspond to the humanity of God as it unites the characteristics of language and time.

> God’s humanity introduces itself into the world as a story to be told...no theology of the Crucified One can or may do without the narration of the life and suffering of Jesus, as a life in the act of the word which tells of God’s humanity.

God’s humanity is expressed in Jesus. This history is not simply in the past. God’s humanity is a story that has not only happened but a story which is happening now; ‘it is the power of the Holy Spirit in which God’s humanity constantly encounters human reason as a story to be told anew, although it cannot be captured once and for all in the act of perception. God’s being remains a being which is coming.’ God’s humanity cannot be taken hostage by the imagination in a phenomenological sense. Jüngel understands the Holy Spirit to be the agent of the always new narrative which is the story of God’s dealings with humanity. It can be said that Holy Spirit operates as agent within the human imagination in order to bring this about. Because the imagination is the locus rather than the agent of revelation, such a view does not contradict Jüngel’s contention that God is the subject of God’s own story.

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179 Jüngel, GMW, 304. The humanity of God is an event 'which turns human history around and which became reality not out of this history and its possibilities but solely out of the 'alien power' (potentia aliena) of the God who comes to the world'. (Ibid.).

180 Contra Moltmann who states that 'it is the cross that is the beginning of the trinitarian history of God'. (Jürgen Moltmann, The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology (London: SCM Press, 1974), 236). If this means the immanent Trinity as well as the trinitarian history in the world, Moltmann is, in effect, claiming that God’s history and the world’s history are equivalent, as they are for Hegel. Although Jüngel is influenced by Hegel, in Jüngel’s view, God is independent of everything outside God.

181 Jüngel, GMW, 302.

182 Jüngel, GMW, 304.

183 Jüngel understands biblical narration and Christian proclamation as not only a 'telling after the fact' but also a 'pre-telling'. (Jüngel, GMW, 310). He cites biblical prophecies as an example of pre-telling in that they can be viewed as 'rough sketches in story form of actions which have not yet taken place'. Those actions are then told along with the pre-told prophecy. 'The reason for this is that trust in the God who speaks out of himself assigns to possibility an ontological priority over reality, so that reality stands totally at the service of the possibilities which condition it and which are also conditioned by it.' (Ibid.).
While the humanity of God in Jesus Christ is told narratively in the Gospel, it is only by constantly telling the story anew that humanity can correspond in its language to the humanity of God. The church continues to exist only because it continues to retell the ‘dangerous story of God’. However, ‘God’s being as history can be implied through stories but not totally comprehended by them’: all is not known through narrative. Taking his cue from Barth as he does, Jüngel cannot be characterized simply as a narrative theologian.\(^{184}\) Jüngel insists that this retelling is not an uncritical narrative but a retelling which acknowledges the necessity of reflection, of a second naïveté which follows dogmatic thought.\(^{185}\) Despite this qualification, Jüngel argues that, in the case of the new that revolutionises trusted procedure, a ‘decisive limitation’ has to be established. The biblical paradigm itself cannot be ignored.\(^{186}\) In the scriptural narrative of the New Testament, God’s identity is specified in Jesus: in the text, Jesus does not become other than what he always is.\(^{187}\) For Jüngel, the Bible is the Word of God only insofar as it is the ‘vehicle for God’s own language’, when, through the Holy Spirit, God speaks through the scriptures. Jüngel is concerned that an adequate notion of interpretation allows the text to speak what is new; the idea of mystery within God precludes the understanding of God as a finished concept. Along with Heidegger and the deconstructionists, Jüngel rejects the traditional Western understanding of language in which language is a system of signs, each representing something with a fixed meaning (or group of meanings) which is based on conventional use and tied to judgements of truth or falsehood according to the correspondence theory of truth. In this theory, truth is seen as agreement between our perception and what may be termed objective reality.\(^{188}\) Jüngel makes it clear that we cannot experience God directly; there is no possibility of direct reference to God. Linguistically, as in all other ways, our knowledge of God comes by an indirect route. This does not mean that speech about God is impossible but that we are able to speak about God only because God has addressed us.\(^{189}\)


\(^{185}\) Jüngel, *GMW*, 312.

\(^{186}\) Jüngel, EN, 40/1. The ‘biblical paradigm’ is described by Jüngel as an ‘ancient and comprehensive paradigm’ which ‘embraces every theological paradigm shift’. (Ibid., 41).

\(^{187}\) Bauckman, *God Crucified*, viii. Bauckham proposes a theology of ‘divine identity’ as a way of moving beyond ‘functional’ and ‘ontic’ Christology; a distinction which, in his opinion, does not correspond to early Jewish thinking about God and has ‘seriously distorted our understanding of New Testament Christology’. (Ibid.).

\(^{188}\) See Zimany, *Vehicle for God*, 50. The sign (word) is thus a sign of something which has little fluidity of meaning. (Ibid.).

\(^{189}\) Kevin Hart argues that because of the Fall, God is an absent presence and therefore any theology must be a semiology. (Kevin Hart, *The Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy* Cambridge:
As far as the imagination is concerned, it is important that the imagination itself is seen as the *locus* of revelation and not the agent of revelation. A starting point in revelation would be compromised if the human imagination were to be seen as the agent of revelation. The activity of the Holy Spirit must be understood as the activity of *God* if we are to retain the notion of mystery within God. Jüngel’s use of figurative language allows for a more open-ended interpretation. ‘Signs lead...to thinking...Signs provide that which is signified for our thinking in that they allow it to penetrate via the senses into consciousness. The consciousness imagines what the signs present to it, that which they represent.’ If this is so, the imagination (in Jüngel’s thinking) can be said to be a synthesis of the senses and abstract concepts. God eternally ‘comes’ to humanity as mystery, not as either a static ideal or a developmental process. While Jüngel’s attitude to the biblical record is not straightforward because of the way he shifts between conventional and metaphorical language, the dynamism he sees in the biblical record is fully consonant with his affirmation of *God as event*. Jüngel sees human language as the *locus* of thought about God. The imagination, (as a pattern-making facility), is involved in the recognition of patterns within language. It is suggested that metaphorical language (which allows for space and mystery) fits well with a concept of the imagination which allows for both recognition and construction. Jüngel maintains that metaphors and parable represent a ‘lingual renewal’ because they depart from customary language. He describes this language as the ‘absolutely new way of dealing with what exists’. Metaphor brings out the possibilities of language because it goes beyond the actual. If metaphorical language is an expression of God’s coming to humanity in new ways and the coming of God in Christ is the coming of God’s humanity into history, how are we to reconcile God’s ‘coming’ with God’s eternity?

Cambridge University Press, 1989, 7). If this is the case, the question becomes how we are to know that a particular semiology is speaking of *God*?

191 See Zimany, *Vehicle for God*, 138-141. Zimany maintains that Jüngel’s arguments are often ‘interpretations or paraphrases in nonbiblical categories of biblical narratives or symbols’ whose ultimate warrant relies on faith in the biblical material and in the God of whom the material speaks. According to Zimany, although Jüngel uses the language of culture and philosophy in his ‘Heideggerian mode’ he ultimately asserts the Christian *kerygma* because he does not believe that culture and philosophy provide the ‘answers’ he seeks. (Ibid., 138/9).
3.2.3 Being and Becoming: Continuity in God?

How is it possible to think of the eternal God as anything but continuous? As previously mentioned, in Jüngel’s construal of God as event, as mystery, God is to be constantly thought anew. The question arises whether God is continually coming anew in the Holy Spirit or whether Jüngel means that God constantly occurs anew in an ontological sense. Considering that, for Jüngel, God cannot be thought other than as event, the latter interpretation would suggest that God ‘exists’ only in action, making God in some sense intermittent. Jüngel could usefully develop the notions of ‘mission’ and ‘role’ in order to give adequate expression to his commitment to Jesus Christ being absolutely central to Christian theology. If the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity are identical as Jüngel contends, God and revelation cannot be separated. This could mean that either God is tied to revelation and is therefore intermittent (‘existing’ only in the event of revelation), or simply that revelation, as God’s self-disclosure, cannot be conceived as God plus revelation: there is no hidden God. Is God’s continuity compromised if the distinction between essence and economy is not adequately preserved? Despite criticism to the contrary, Jüngel is adamant that maintaining the unity of immanent and economic Trinity is theologically legitimate, with the proviso that the ‘freedom and unmerited grace of God’s self-bestowal’ does not become unthinkable. He considers that the only way to uphold the genuine identity between immanent and economic Trinity as mystery is to retain the distinction of reason between the immanent and economic Trinity in theology. If this is the case, the Father and the Son are ‘united in love and realize themselves as lovingly receiving each other, so that each of them experiences himself by experiencing the other’, with the Holy Spirit as the vehicle of this communication between Father and Son. This interpretation has two consequences. Firstly, the concept of the divine nature can no longer be thought of in abstraction from the dynamism of God’s trinitarian being and secondly, teaching about the Trinity cannot be treated as an isolated theme but must affect the whole of theology. As a result, any concept of continuity within God must be both trinitarian and congruent with God’s freedom and revelation.

193 Webster notes Jüngel’s ‘ties to existentialism and its spasmodic Christology’, which can seem more a collection of occurrences or speech-acts than something that happens in the concrete historical world. (See Webster, ‘Jesus’, 70; Zimany, Vehicle for God, 142-145).
194 See Webster, ‘Jesus’, 70f; Zimany, Vehicle for God, 142-5.
195 As Jüngel has explicitly stated. See GMW, 369-371.
196 It is the vice versa that is the key to Molnar’s criticism. See above, Chapter Two, 72ff.
197 Jüngel, ‘Relationship’, 184.
In that the human being's radical finitude is addressed by God's self-revelation, Jüngel is attempting to think God within a horizon of 'radical historicity'; he seeks to 'hear God's Word as addressed to being and time'.\textsuperscript{198} For Jüngel, possibility concerns what God's free love makes possible. He understands change within God as a becoming which is a fulfilment of possibility. This constant 'newness' within God is the ontologically positive element of possibility which is the capacity to become.\textsuperscript{199} In his acclaimed commentary on Barth, \textit{God's Being is in Becoming}, God is God as being-in-becoming, the mode in which God chooses to be. This historicity and therefore possibility is voluntary: God's chosen goal is God's entry into history.\textsuperscript{200}

If revelation as God's being for us is to be taken seriously, then in Jesus Christ God's being must become visible and be able to become visible . . . both this becoming and this capacity to become must be understood from God's being itself, if indeed it is really true that God has revealed himself . . . God's being must be thought with regard to this becoming and capacity if it is true that God has revealed himself. Thus we must in any event formulate God's historicity.\textsuperscript{201}

It must be remembered that the impetus for Jüngel's explication of God's being-in-becoming is christological rather than metaphysical. In contrast to process theology, 'becoming' is not a general ontological category. God's being neither increases nor decreases. God's attributes are peculiar to God: becoming is a capacity that belongs to God; God is not in thrall to becoming.\textsuperscript{202} Taken in this sense, becoming cannot be open to Thomas Weinandy's criticism that all change in God is an increase or decrease in God and thus makes null God's


\textsuperscript{199} For Jüngel's notion of the priority of possibility over actuality, see Jüngel, PA.

\textsuperscript{200} See Webster, \textit{Eberhard Jüngel}, 21. Jüngel does not operate within a theory of being which excludes time. Accepting that God is indeed God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ, history is inextricably linked to a knowledge of God. Jüngel develops his conviction that the dichotomy between history and metaphysics is no longer defensible within the context of 1950s and 1960s German theology. At that time, theology was attempting, post-Bultmann, to reclaim the significance of history in the wake of the collapse of a rational dismissal of history as capable of truth-disclosure.

\textsuperscript{201} Jüngel, \textit{GBB}, 109.

\textsuperscript{202} See Webster, \textit{Eberhard Jüngel} (1986), 20/1; O'Donnell, \textit{Trinity and Temporality}, 733-8. Process theology sees the building blocks of reality not as substances but as events. Reality is ultimately an endless series of creative experiential events or 'becoming'. Jüngel could never see God as one object or entity among others. Despite his preoccupation with event, Jüngel has not entered into dialogue with twentieth-century process theology.
perfection. Given the above, it is clear that divine becoming does not ‘make the being of
God into a mere instance of a more general ontology of flux’. God’s being is in becoming:
God’s becoming is that which takes place as God.

Jüngel agrees with Barth that God’s being is ‘self-moving’. Jüngel takes from this that ‘the
freedom of decision belongs to the being of God as event . . . as event God’s being is his own
decision’. While it can be said that God’s primal decision is realized in our history, it is
vital for Jüngel that God is not to be thought as either constituted by human action, history,
or a something to be possessed. Jüngel thus differs from Hegel, for whom history is the
process of Absolute Spirit coming to self-awareness. For Jüngel, God is already self-
aware as Trinity: God is who God becomes in perichoretic relationship. While keeping the
concept of ‘becoming’ in God, Jüngel changes his terminology in God as Mystery of the
World. In his analogy of advent, God’s being is in coming. God comes to us (into time)
from God. ‘Nothing other than God himself can be regarded as God’s origin. Neither being,
nor nothingness . . . God lives, and he lives totally out of himself.’

The following points are important if we are to understand Jüngel’s notion of God’s coming
to God. Firstly, God’s being is the event of God’s coming to God. This event is what
tradition has termed eternity: eternity is not to be distinguished from God because ‘God is
everly coming to himself’. Secondly, the notion that God comes from God to God is
conceived by the doctrine of the Trinity as a history of the divine being. Thirdly, the
theologically new can be seen as the predicate of divine agency. ‘In the judgement of
theology, the concept of being must be subordinated to the concept of God: being cannot be

203 Weinandy follows Aquinas in understanding God as pure esse, the actuality of all acts, therefore perfection
of all perfections. ‘God is then perfect not because he has perfected all his potential, but, being ipsum esse, he is
perfection itself’. (See Weinandy, Does God Suffer? 122/3).
204 Webster, Eberhard Jüngel (1986), 20.
205 Jüngel, GBB, 66. See also Barth, CD. II/1, 268. In the event that God is, God’s being cannot be separated
from God’s being-in-act: God’s being is moved being ‘in the act of his revelation’. God’s being is ‘in motion
from eternity’. (Jüngel GBB, 2/3).
206 On Hegel’s notion of process, see Stanley J. Grenz, and Roger E. Olson, 20th Century Theology: God and
207 While introducing new concepts in God as the Mystery of the World, Jüngel does not reject the notion of
God’s being-in-becoming. God’s being remains in a process of becoming: going into nothingness and yet
always, at the same time, coming from himself.’ (Jüngel, GMW, 224, 215ff.).
208 Jüngel, GMW, 381. Jüngel takes the word ‘come’ seriously ‘to the extent that it interprets God’s being as an
event from God to God, an event in which God is not only his own derivation but also his future’. (Ibid., 36).
209 Jüngel, GMW, 380.
210 God is God’s own mediation: ‘God came in the event of self-identification with the man Jesus from God the
Father. And God came to Jesus as his beloved Son . . . And yet God remained totally in the process of coming,
as God the Holy Spirit’. (Jüngel, GMW, 380/1).
regarded as the origin of God'. Jüngel claims that the advantage of this particular thesis is that it ‘distinguishes between God and being in favor of God’. He finds the traditional rendering unacceptable because it made it impossible to speak about God in a positive fashion but expressed God only as the ‘one who is actually unspeakable and unthinkable’. He insists that we must think of God as the one who both comes from God and speaks of God as it is only because God is God’s own origin that there is being at all.\footnote{Jüngel, \textit{GMW}, 381.}

### 3.3. Balthasar, Jüngel, and the Imagination

Both Balthasar and Jüngel steer a course between metaphysical theism and process theology. Balthasar describes such a course as walking on ‘a knife edge’.\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{TD:IV}, 324.} Jüngel’s view of God’s being as a movement of God’s self towards the world where God’s movement requires a history, is similarly placed although Jüngel himself appears more prescriptive in his views.\footnote{See O’Donnell, \textit{Trinity and Temporality}, 87/8; Webster, ‘Jesus’ Speech (I)’, 1174.} Both Balthasar and Jüngel are preoccupied with the issue of divine and human freedom, expressive of their concern that God’s initiative is always seen as prior to human response. The imagination is inevitably involved whenever a human response to God is called for. The imagination’s ability to see one thing \emph{as} another is important in two areas that we have discussed. Firstly, the imagination has to be able to understand the human (in the particular person of Jesus) \emph{as} God and God manifest \emph{as} human. If the depiction of Christ fails to do justice to both the humanity and the divinity of Jesus, the significance of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the action of God will be lost. Secondly, we need the imagination in order to understand the motifs that are so important in the theologies of Balthasar and Jüngel. For Balthasar, we need to understand Christ’s mission as the economic form of the Son’s eternal procession from the Father and the kenotic love of the human Jesus as the \textit{kenosis} of God. For Jüngel, the motif of identification is at the heart of the relationship between God and the human Jesus. We need to understand this relationship as God in unity with perishability. Given the view of this thesis that the Holy Spirit must be at work within the human imagination if the imagination is to be, in any sense, transformed, the place of the Holy Spirit in the \textit{triduum mortis} is of particular import. Neither Balthasar nor Jüngel could sustain their respective positions without the strong trinitarian framework which they inherited from Barth. The different ways in which they extrapolate this inheritance become
most evident in their construals of the three days of Easter to which we will turn in Chapter Four.
CHAPTER FOUR: The Mystery of Death as the Mystery of Love

Chapter Three introduced several issues of prime importance for Balthasar’s and Jüngel’s treatment of the *triduum mortis*. As was noted in Chapter Three, the love that God *is* is the mystery of relations both within the Trinity and in *ekstasis* toward the world. The self-giving spelt out in the doctrines of *kenosis* and mission, on the part of Balthasar, and identity, on the part of Jüngel, is the self-giving of God which reaches new depths in the cross, burial and resurrection of Jesus. With regard to both theologians, we have noted that: (1) God is intrinsically relational and it is *as relation* that God is self-revealed. Differentiation and unity are inherent within God. (2) There is an authentic correspondence between the act and being of God; it is in the economy that we encounter God. Both Balthasar and Jüngel seek to provide a robust account of the immanent Trinity. Neither wishes to compromise the divine freedom and mystery by allowing a collapse of the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity. Such a collapse would mean that there is nothing *but* what is seen in the economy, a result which would go against the whole tenor of their respective theologies. (3) Nuanced ideas of being and ‘becoming’ are present in the thought of both Balthasar and Jüngel. (4) God is the origin of God; God is defined and constituted by God, not by history nor by the world. (5) The God-man Jesus is God’s language to humanity. The union of humanity and divinity cannot be conceived in abstraction but only in their union in the particular person of Jesus Christ.

Chapter Four continues to trace the motifs that are so important for Balthasar and Jüngel, noting how they come to fruition in the events of the *triduum mortis*. The respective steps taken by Balthasar and Jüngel to safeguard the genuine temporality of events and the authenticity of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection will be examined. The first part of the chapter considers firstly, Balthasar’s treatment of *kenosis* and suffering. Secondly, God’s initiative and human response in terms of what Balthasar calls God’s Yes and the human No and thirdly, Balthasar’s explication of Holy Saturday and the resurrection. The second part explores how Jüngel regards God and temporality, an issue which leads into Jüngel’s assertion that God must be thought in connection with perishability. Jüngel’s portrayal of God’s choice to enter the struggle between being and non-being on the cross is examined, followed by Jüngel’s understanding of the transforming power of resurrection. The *triduum*
mortis is particularly important in regard to the imagination because these events show how our assumptions about God can be shattered by God. It is because Balthasar and Jüngel have a starting point in revelation that, within the events of the triduum mortis, the freedom and mystery of God challenge our suppositions. Because of these events, our ideas of who God is and how God acts are shattered and transformed. The differences between Balthasar and Jüngel are perhaps most evident in these events. Balthasar’s understanding of Christ’s descent into hell and Jüngel’s inclusion of nothingness in the divine life are among the more controversial and imaginative aspects of their respective theologies. Given Balthasar’s depiction of Christ’s ‘being with the dead’ and Jüngel’s claim that God must be thought in unity with perishability, the question of boundaries to the imagination will become increasingly important. Both Balthasar and Jüngel are richly imaginative thinkers but do either Balthasar or Jüngel go beyond the biblical images and the gospel narrative in an unwarranted fashion or are they simply allowing space for the Holy Spirit to work with those images within the human imagination? If we understand the human imagination to be the locus of revelation, do Balthasar and/or Jüngel provide any resources for understanding the triduum mortis as a legitimate paradigm for the Christian imagination? In considering these issues we must remember that, if we understand the imagination to be an imaginative faculty for synthesis, it follows that we cannot experience or conceptualize anything without the imagination.

4.1 Hans Urs von Balthasar: The Forgotten Burial
Balthasar seeks to communicate a vision of the Christian mystery which has its foundation in the language and imagery of the Bible and is influenced by church tradition and the meditations of Adrienne von Speyr. It is the central mystery of the cross which pulls such a rich heritage together.1 For Balthasar, this central mystery is first and foremost a divine drama, an act of God, in God, for us. The triduum mortis is the hermeneutical key to envisaging that God is love. Despite the twentieth-century revival of trinitarian theology and a consequent attention to a ‘theology of the cross’, we can still speak of a largely ‘forgotten burial’.2 Balthasar rectifies this situation with his construal of the ‘descent into hell’ but his interpretation remains controversial. It is here that the motifs of continuity and discontinuity

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1 John Riches, ‘Hans Urs von Balthasar’, 252.
2 In terms of church practice, these churches which have no tradition of Holy Week have tended to move straight into Easter Sunday although a strong doctrine of atonement via the death of Christ is also present. Even in more liturgical traditions, Good Friday has been prominent but less has been made of the ‘time between’ the crucifixion and resurrection and what it might mean.
become crucial for our view of the divine life. For Balthasar, the flow of the Easter events is anything but seamless; God is involved with hiatus, a ‘being with the dead’.  

4.1.1 The Way of the Cross: Kenosis and Suffering

The discussion of kenosis in Chapter Three made three things apparent. Firstly, kenosis is essentially the self-giving of God which includes receptivity and thanksgiving. Secondly, the Father’s generation of the Son (primary kenosis) underpins and corresponds to the kenosis expressed by the eternal thanksgiving and obedience of the Son (which includes the cross). Thirdly, kenosis is ontological; there is a change in relations within God. By positing a doctrine of kenosis, Balthasar examines what it means for God to become incarnate. God is event; Christ is God made flesh as a particular person living and dying in a specific period in history. Not only the human Jesus is involved in the cross; it is in the giving and receiving of the trinitarian relations that God is both love and mystery. ‘Only as the acting of the triune God does the scandal of the Cross become tolerable to the believer, and even become that one unique scandal in which the believer can glory (Galatians 6,14).’ 4 Balthasar attempts to avoid two extremes: God being ‘above’ the abandonment of the cross and continuing to enjoy the beatific vision, or God becoming ‘entangled in sin as in process theology’. 5 He asserts that, while negative limits are established by eliminating the two extremes mentioned above, the mystery of the kenosis is not itself eliminated in the process. The kenosis ‘remains God’s very own secret’ whereby God reveals and communicates his own nature to the world . . . if Jesus can be forsaken by the Father, the conditions for this “forsaking” must lie within the Trinity, in the absolute distance/distinction between the Hypostasis who surrenders the Godhead and the Hypostasis who receives it. And while the distance/distinction between the two is eternally confirmed and maintained (“kept open”) by the Hypostasis who proceeds from them, it is transcended in the Godhead that is the absolute gift they have in common. 6

Balthasar’s understanding of kenosis as self-giving relies on the distance/distinction between the divine hypostases. This distance/distinction is seen at its most extreme in the abandonment on the cross.

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3 Balthasar prefers the term ‘being with the dead’ to that of the ‘descent into hell’.
4 Balthasar, MP, 136.
5 Balthasar, TD:IV, 333. Balthasar believes that Hegel and Moltmann failed to avoid these two extremes with the risk that theology becomes ‘part of a mythology or cosmic tragedy’. (Ibid.).
6 Balthasar, TD:IV, 333.
The motif of *kenosis* is central to Balthasar’s theological enterprise and the *triduum mortis* is where he sees the drama of salvation being acted out. As a consequence, for Balthasar’s construal to be successful, there must be a viable connection between his portrayal of *kenosis* and the drama of Christ suffering for the sins of the world. Given the vast difference between the sinful human response to God and the response of the Son to the Father, is such an attempt successful? Balthasar’s notion of suffering within God is dependent on the divine self-giving. To this end, Balthasar posits a ‘recklessness’ in God:

there is something in God that can develop into suffering. This suffering occurs when the recklessness with which the Father gives away himself (and *all* that is his) encounters a freedom that, instead of responding in kind to this magnanimity, changes into a calculating, cautious self-preservation. This contrasts with the essentially divine recklessness of the Son, who allows himself to be squandered, and of the Spirit who accompanies him.7

It is God alone who can forgive sins and therefore ‘bear’ sins and the God who does this is made manifest in the mystery of the cross. For Balthasar, ‘[a]ll meaning hangs on the fact that, in Jesus, the God who “cannot suffer” is able to experience death and futility, without ceasing to be himself’.8 If God is not intimately involved in the cross, suffering remains a human affair and the *triduum mortis* has little value for speech either about the being of God or the human condition.

As Balthasar understands it, Christ’s suffering and death and, in Christ, our suffering and death, are grounded in the kenotic self-giving of the trinitarian relations.9 By this he does not mean simply the giving up or limiting of divine attributes. He is not putting forward what Weinandy calls a ‘truncated and lesser ‘humanized’ form of divinity’ which ‘now exists as man’.10 While his notions of limitation have met with criticism,11 Balthasar is clear that the *kenosis* of the Son is more than a taking on of creaturely limitation for the earthly existence of Jesus; it is the embracing of humanity’s fate which ‘stands under the curse of the first and

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8 Balthasar, *TD II*, 120. Balthasar makes it clear that the way in which Christ ‘bears’ sin ‘cannot be discovered through speculation but must be presented, for our belief, in the mystery of the Cross’. (Ibid.).
9 ‘The Trinity establishes the ground for the incarnate Son’s bearing the world’s sin to the extreme of being abandoned and forsaken by the Father’. (David Lauber, *Barth on the Descent into Hell: God, Atonement and the Christian Life*. Barth Studies (Aldershot/Burlington: Ashgate, 2004), 60).
10 Weinandy, *Does God Suffer?* 35. In Weinandy’s view, “[k]enotic christology always proposes that someone less than fully God exists as man and not that God, in all his wholly otherness, exists as man”. (Ibid.).
11 MacKinnon comments that, despite the fact that the motifs of mission and *kenosis* are pivotal for Balthasar, he makes little use of the concept of limitation. See MacKinnon, ‘Some Reflections’, 168, 170. See above, Chapter Three, 7, note 3.
second death'. This is much more than a solidarity with humanity as humanity’s representative. Christ bears the fate of humanity in order to bear the sins of the world once and for all; humanity’s fate is transformed. This may be so, but does Balthasar’s emphasis on the triduum mortis tend towards a remythologization of the gospel? Riches declares that it is here that Balthasar’s theology is ‘strangely at its most mythological and at its most concrete’. Riches suggests that, rather than mythology, it may be the most effective way of giving expression to the concrete reality of death, betrayal and the result of sin, and at the same time drawing out the trinitarian implications of the death of the Son. He claims that, although language of kenotic christology is ‘irreducibly mythological... only such language will do justice to the uniqueness of the redemption wrought in Christ’. It has also been claimed however, that, despite Balthasar’s insistence on the analogical and metaphorical function of theological language, his usage of such language as ‘primal kenosis’, ‘separation’ and ‘distance’ is potentially speculative and may undermine his construal of the perichoretic relationship and the unity of God.

Although the events of the triduum mortis are both particular and dramatic, Balthasar does not confuse the immanent Trinity with the fate of the world. The cross is not simply an ongoing manifestation of a general reconciliation of God and the world as always part of the given. It is through the events of the triduum mortis that God, ‘desiring to reconcile the world to himself (and hence himself to the world), acts dramatically in the Son’s Cross and Resurrection’. Balthasar categorically states that the ‘unholy distance of the world’s sin’ can only be transposed into, and conquered by, the ‘Son’s eternal, holy distance from the Father, in the Spirit’ because this ‘dramatic aspect does not entangle the immanent Trinity in the world’s fate... but it does lift the latter’s fate to the level of the economic Trinity, which always presupposes the immanent’. In Balthasar’s conception, without this prior and fundamental distance, there would be no space for the world to be taken up into God. Contra Jüngel, he appears to assume that too close an identification between the immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity would lead to such an involvement. Balthasar wishes to make it clear that the dramatic aspect is grounded in the trinitarian differentiation. However,

15 Lauber, Descent, 601.
it could be said that we can conceive of such a differentiation only through the drama of the *triduum mortis*.

Two problems impact upon the drama of the *triduum mortis* at this point. One is Balthasar’s handling of the dramatic tension between eternal being and eternal event. The other is how he portrays the relationship between divine time and human time. As was noted in Chapter Three, the question is raised whether, for Balthasar, the temporal is absorbed into either the ‘supra-temporal’ or his idea of the ‘supra-temporal eternity’. Balthasar argues for ‘eternal being in terms of eternal event’. It is time that ‘makes room’ for existing being . . . it creates an acting area in which it can realize itself as event, hence the dramatic tension. Balthasar maintains that, while there is no ‘development’ in the eternal life of God, there is the ‘ever greater’ of love, ‘love’s constant element of surprise’. Consequently, ‘[r]eceptivity presupposes an active potentiality for suffering, whereas activity presupposes a locus into which such action can be introduced’. The incarnate Christ cannot mediate the presence of God to humanity if his humanity is not itself genuine but instead lends itself to a gnostic downgrading of the temporal. Such a relegation would result in a lack of genuine drama in the events of the *triduum mortis*. Balthasar explores this in terms of the God-man whose existence ‘is not exclusively creaturely but as such always expresses something of the Trinity as well’. While there is no possibility of Jesus as man obeying himself as God, there is no suggestion that he obeys the Trinity. It is in the Holy Spirit that, as man, he obeys the Father. As the man Jesus, ‘he is the eternal Son dwelling in time. The event by which he consents to be transferred from the form of God into the ‘form of a servant’ and ‘the likeness of men’ (Phil 2:6f.) affects him as the eternal Son’.

Although the events of the *triduum mortis* are both particular and dramatic, Balthasar does not confuse the immanent Trinity with the fate of the world. The cross is not simply an ongoing manifestation of a general reconciliation of God and the world as always part of the given. But is this simply an exercise in semantics? The notion of the cross ‘enriching’ the

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17 See above, Chapter Three, 115f.
18 Balthasar, *TD: V*, 50. At this juncture, Balthasar is comparing activity with receptivity rather than with passivity.
20 Balthasar, *TD: III*, 228. This does not mean that Christ’s renunciation of the ‘form of God’, and his acceptance of the ‘form of a slave’, with all its effects, entails any ‘alienation within the Trinitarian life of God. God is so divine that by way of the Incarnation, death and Resurrection, he can truly and not just in seeming become that which as God he already and always is.’ (Balthasar, *MP*, 208).
Trinity is distinctive to Balthasar whereas Balthasar’s contention that the cross reveals the Trinity as its ground and his refusal to have the cross constitute the Trinity, are not. This ‘enrichment’ has been seen as Balthasar’s way of addressing contemporary concerns within the framework of ancient dogmatics whereby Balthasar seeks to show how the world matters to God by allowing the world to affect God, thus allowing God to be seen as different because of finite freedom. The divine Persons are continually ‘enriched’ by one another within the immanent Trinity and in the economy via the missions. Balthasar retains the ancient framework in order to claim that the enrichment is not a process ‘from potency to act’ but a ‘supraworldly Trinitarian “event”’. It is not a becoming in an earthly sense. Balthasar predicates the ‘enrichment’ of the Persons rather than the divinity; it is a ‘gratuitous’ enrichment, a ‘contingent means’ by which the divine Persons glorify one another within an ‘eternal conversation’, an enrichment that would take place whether or not the world existed. Balthasar wants to retain the divine freedom and independence from the world while at the same time positing a genuine dynamism and enrichment within the Trinity. He seeks to consolidate his position by contending that such an enrichment, even if contributed by contingent means, is embraced by, and enfolded within, the trinitarian relations. While Balthasar holds to a distinction rather than a separation between the immanent and economic attributes of God, the offering of the Son to the Father is a manifestation of the relations between the Father and the Son in the economic mode or extension to this relation. In these terms, the cross manifests the Trinity rather than determines it; the risk is that the events of the triduum mortis are themselves so determined that, in effect, human freedom has no viable place. By grounding the possibility of human freedom in a participation in the divine life, Balthasar seeks to expound a genuine relationship between God and humanity. However, questions must be asked whether such an ontology is open to the danger of either overlooking the requirements of metaphysics or being reduced to mythology. Dalzell speaks of Balthasar’s ‘razor’s edge method’ which manages to avoid ‘literal talk about the inner life of God’ and yet says something positive about plurality in God. He suspects that Balthasar sometimes stretches the ‘law of analogy’, but he avers that, in general, Balthasar stays faithful to the ‘metaphysical corrective built into

22 On gratuitousness, see Balthasar, TD:V, 506ff.
his approach'. Both concept and metaphor are deemed to be necessary, an approach which allows for a full use of the imagination understood as a synthesis of abstract concepts and the senses.

MacKinnon argues that Balthasar is able to integrate the dramatic dimension of the Theodramatics with the ‘ontological styles’ of older and more traditional theology through the concept of mission and that, while retaining the dramatic in his construal, Balthasar allows for drama passing into ontology at the cross. The cross is, as it were, the locus of God’s love where the mystery of love and death coincide. But does the way that Balthasar uses the ‘supraworldly’ as a category applying to the relations between temporal and eternal simply fudge the issue? In his treatment of the relation between the eternal and transient existence of the Son, Balthasar appears to accent the particular drama of the triduum mortis and at the same time to posit this drama in a timeframe which transcends the boundaries of the historical as we know it. As Balthasar sees it, to be a trinitarian event means the usual space/time boundaries are fluid in the extreme. He insists on genuine human freedom in the sphere of the world and God’s freedom to act and work out God’s purposes in the world.

The death, descent and resurrection of the Son of God is the ‘all-embracing event which establishes the possibility of human freedom and history’, envisaged, not as a boundary imposed from without but rather as an opening up from within in which God shares in the working out of human freedom. Balthasar is adamant that the action of the economic Trinity in the drama means that the temporal acts of the Christ-event (and therefore the story of salvation) cannot be reduced to ‘philosophical or timelessly abstract principles’. Balthasar both reaffirms and radicalizes the trinitarian nature of this drama. As it is fundamentally a trinitarian event, Balthasar sees the triduum mortis as the ‘event within history which a priori transcends the furthest attainable boundaries of historical future’. Is this relationship between divine and human freedom sustainable given Balthasar’s understanding of the a priori nature of trinitarian decisions? While Balthasar is in no danger

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25 Dalzell, Dramatic Encounter, 288/9. In Dalzell’s opinion, Balthasar manages to take characteristics taken from human experience and attribute them to God without compromising God’s perfection or the unity of God demanded by philosophy and tradition. (Ibid.).
27 Balthasar, El, 53. Balthasar understands perfection ‘in terms of the eternally complete drama of love which opens up for the benefit of the world’. (Dalzell, Dramatic Encounter, 288).
28 Balthasar, TD: IV, 36.
30 Balthasar, El, 53.
of identifying God apart from Jesus Christ, does he, in effect, tend towards ‘timelessly abstract principles’ in his treatment of boundaries?

4.1.2 God’s Yes and the Human No

In considering Balthasar’s treatment of God’s Yes and the human No, we are again confronted with important issues involving God’s initiative and human response. These issues include the response of God to humanity’s refusal to accept its own finitude and the question of what can be attributed to trinitarian decision or to the outworking of human sin. To be true to his views on divine and human freedom, Balthasar must envisage the world’s No and its relation to the coming of Jesus in such a way that it allows for both divine and human freedom. We have noted that the eternal relations are played out in the drama of historical event and that what grounds everything is the mutual surrender of Father and Son and their relationship in the Spirit. For Balthasar, if humanity is to be really free, the Yes of humanity must echo the surrender of the Son to the Father,31 with a proviso that this receptivity is ultimately dependent on divine grace. The Passion, for Balthasar, is the confrontation between divine and human freedom; Christ as the God-man is the only one who can, with his Yes of obedience, confront humanity’s No of rejection. With the incarnation and Passion, the confrontation between divine and human freedom has reached a new intensity and the contest between the two has moved into the centre of the ‘problem of existence’.32 Because, for Balthasar, there is nothing outside God,33 the only possible locus of the world is within the distinction between the hypostases, therefore the world’s ‘sinful alienation from God . . . can only be solved at this locus. The creature’s No resounds at the “place” of distinction within the Godhead’.34 The place of greatest differentiation within the greatest unity is the cross, where God’s Yes is also most apparent.

Balthasar sees the cross as the result of God’s acceptance of humanity’s ““ever-greater”, (ever-increasing) resistance to God”.35 He indicates that God must have had an ‘impossible possibility’ in mind when God endowed human beings with freedom, thereby giving them the option to prefer existing for self rather than for God. This ‘impossible possibility’

31 Balthasar, TD:IV, 328. The way that human freedom ‘participates in the divine autonomy, both when it says Yes and when it says No’, is analogous to ‘the way in which the Son receives the autonomy of the divine nature in the mode of receptivity . . . (Jn 5:26)’. (Ibid.).
32 Balthasar, TD:I, 50.
33 See Balthasar, TD:II, 260ff.
34 Balthasar, TD:IV, 333.
35 Balthasar, TD:V, 55.
allowed God to ‘follow human beings into the extreme consequences of their freedom, there
to undergird with a deeper Yes the suffering which is the form of humanity’s No’. The
coming of Jesus is the event that arouses the ‘world's slumbering No’; the No of sin refuses
to be taken up into loving relation with God. For Balthasar, the human No is grounded in
humanity’s refusal to accept its own finitude; its existence as creature and all that involves
in relation to God.

Man’s refusal reveals that abyss in the creature whereby it contradicts its own character as
analogy and image, a character that arises necessarily from its position within the trinitarian
relations . . . Man’s refusal was possible because of the trinitarian “recklessness” of divine
love, which, in its self-giving, observed no limits and had no regard for itself. In this, it
showed both its power and its powerlessness and fundamental vulnerability (the two are
inseparable).37

We have the paradox of God enduring humanity’s refusal because of the defencelessness of
absolute love and, simultaneously, God being unable and unwilling to suffer it because of the
omnipotence of that same love.38 The cross, burial and resurrection of Jesus is, for Balthasar,
the event which presents the paradox, but does he offer too easy a resolution?

Balthasar does not identify the crucified Christ with the ‘actual No of sin itself’ because
Jesus is always a complete and flawless loving Yes to the Father; Jesus’ vicarious experience
of sin cannot be the same as that of sinners who hate God. Christ as the God-man
experiences sin more severely than the guilty human person because sin is strange to him
and he sees sin for what it really is. Balthasar understands Christ as identifying himself with
sinful humanity, as ‘suffering sin not as committing it’.39

It is a miracle of transfiguration that the world’s darkness can be taken into the inner light of
the Trinity; so the estrangement of the sinful No is overtaken and encompassed by the free-
will, obedient estrangement of the divine Yes. God’s anger at the rejection of divine love
encounters a divine love (the Son’s) that exposes itself to this anger, disarms it and literally
deprives it of its object.40

38 Balthasar, TD:IV, 329.
39 John Sayward, The Mysteries of March: Hans Urs Von Balthasar on the Incarnation and Easter (London:
Collins, 1990), 44/5. Christ in no sense hates God but the death that he dies is the consequence of sin. Christ is,
as it were, clothed in the human No. Balthasar does not agree with Luther that Christ becomes one of the
dammed.
40 Balthasar, TD:IV, 349.
However, there is the problem of how Christ’s work on humanity’s behalf (representation) affects the sinner. Balthasar himself recognizes that this formulation is problematic. What he sees as the more sombre problem is the possibility that the sinner might so identify himself with his No to God that even trinitarian love cannot ‘loosen the resultant snarl, with the result that the fiery torrent of the eternal love that flows around and through him would remain a torrent of eternal wrath ... (Heb 10:31). In such a case, the creature, in effect, refuses its status as creature and therefore refuses the love it is offered as creature. In Balthasar’s view, this would need to be an active rather than a merely passive refusal. The creature must be able to identify itself with its own refusal.

Balthasar understands the world’s sin as ‘finally concentrated in the crucified Son ... on the Cross, God’s final judgement is pronounced upon this sin, which the Son now embodies’. God’s trinitarian love is revealed in Jesus Christ and it is this particular revelation that allows us to perceive the ‘necessary unity of love and anger’ displayed by God. Balthasar is adamant that the outpouring of wrath upon the ‘Lamb of God’ on the cross is in essential unity with the Father’s love for the world, wrath for the sake of mercy. In Balthasar’s treatment of the wrath of God we are not to see Christ’s work as something removed from the darkness of sin, something that overthrows sin through pure merit ... Nor, on the other hand, can it be interpreted as an identification of the Crucified with the actual No of sin itself ... Jesus does experience the darkness of the sinful state, not in the same way as the (God-hating) sinner experiences it ... but nonetheless in a deeper and darker experience. This is because it takes place in the profound depths of the relations between the divine Hypostases - which are inaccessible to any creature.

This experience could not be situated in the relation between the hypostases if the cross was simply a matter of Jesus as a communal scapegoat or of Jesus as an exemplar or of Jesus in

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42 See Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 350. Balthasar’s ‘hope that all might be saved’ has attracted considerable controversy. Balthasar’s stance on universalism is similar to Barth’s but more explicit. For Barth and universalism, see Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace*, 242-248.
47 See Hans Urs von Balthasar, “You Crown the Year” Year, 82-86. ‘Christ is not a scapegoat, because in his mission from the Father he has the power to take sin upon himself efficaciously “once and for all”: his suffering is a free act, and it is victorious only because he is God’s Son’. (Hans Urs von Balthasar, ‘Christ: Alpha and Omega’, *Communio* 23 (1996), 465-471 at 471).
solidarity with humanity only. The wrath poured out on the crucified Christ is not merely a human response to the provocation of Jesus although that plays its part.48

Despite his insistence on the reality of God’s wrath, Balthasar is not advocating ‘penal substitution’ per se. Balthasar is in agreement with Barth that Christ’s death does not offer satisfaction to this wrath; God is not turned from wrath to love by the event of the cross.49 Balthasar would also agree with Calvin’s understanding that, while Christ subjectively experiences God’s wrath and judgement, such wrath and judgement are not to be seen as objective.50 Neither Balthasar nor Barth conceives of God’s wrath and God’s love in tension but rather view wrath as a function of love whereby the Passion of Christ is a divine action motivated by God’s love.51 Divine love uses divine wrath as a means to accomplish reconciliation between God and humanity.52 Christ’s bearing the sins of the world is at God’s initiative but Balthasar sees it as the result of human enmity against God rather than God’s enmity against humanity. Humanity must be reconciled to God, not vice versa; it is humanity that needs to be transformed. In Balthasar’s biblical and ecclesial soteriology, the admirabile commercium is to be interpreted in such a way that a middle position is taken between a God who is immutable and impassable and a God who, of necessity, is drawn into the world process.53 Balthasar conceives the ‘exchange of places’ as ultimately grounded in the immanent Trinity.54 Balthasar sees Jesus’ death as salvific because Jesus bears the outpouring of God’s wrath and in so doing, bears the sins of the world.55 Jesus and humanity ‘change places’; the Son, in effect, experiences the wrath of God. In Balthasar’s ‘trinitarian inversion’, instead of the Son (in his procession) moving toward the Father in receptivity and
gratitude, in his mission he moves away from the Father towards and into the ultimate darkness of the world. In actual fact, the Son, in his obedience, is moving towards the Father but experiences this movement, for the present, as estrangement. Balthasar speaks of an ‘absolute paradox’ where the Father and the Son suffer extreme separation and yet are united in the Holy Spirit. He maintains that this ‘absolute paradox’ is necessary to make it credible that the Father ‘does not leave the Son for a moment, even in the final abandonment’. The distance caused by the opposition between God and the sinner is surpassed by an even greater distance (the distance within unity of Father and Son) where the former distance is contained and made neutral within the latter.

Balthasar understands that, just as Christ’s death is a ‘mode of his life’ and his suffering is a ‘mode of his bliss’, the God-forsakenness of the Son during His Passion was also a mode of his profound bond with the Father in the Holy Spirit. Somehow, within this bond, the God-forsakenness of the Son is drawn into the relationship of love within the Trinity. Because of human sin, the differentiation between the hypostases becomes separation between Father and Son. Although the trinitarian explication of the cross (as differentiation within unity) makes this logically possible, it is less clear how the God-forsakenness of the Son becomes part of the divine life after the cross when Balthasar lays such stress on the ‘lamb slain before the foundation of the world’. While Balthasar advocates neither, there is a danger that either the cross becomes constitutive in some way or that all is seen as predetermined. The question of predetermination is unavoidable in that, notwithstanding what God suffers in consequence of the human No, Balthasar insists that humanity’s ability to say No to God does not limit God’s omnipotence. But how and why does God’s omnipotence remain intact? Balthasar is critical of Aquinas’ view that the hypostatic union, as for every relation between the created and the Uncreated, ‘exists really in the human nature but in God “only according to reason (secundum rationem tantum)”’. For Balthasar,

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56 Balthasar, *TD: IV*, 356. Balthasar sees a connection between this withdrawal and Jesus’ withdrawal from his mother Mary at the foot of the cross. (Ibid.).

57 Balthasar, *TD: V*, 263, citing von Speyr, *Jo*, 119 (GT). The Son is ‘at the same time united more and more to the Father in this separation, until he is nothing more on the Cross than the revelation of the will of the Father’. ‘What is Two here can be shown only in unity: what is One here can be shown only in duality.’ (Ibid.).

58 The economic drama can take place ‘only within the personal transactions already and eternally actualized in the Trinity’. (Mansini, ‘Enrichment’, 504/5).

59 As a mode of the profound bond which has always been there, going back to the trinitarian decision of surrender and obedience.


Christ's bearing of the sin of the world is dependent on the hypostatic union being a real union; Christ's mission can be salvific only because he is the incarnate Son of God. While he does not relegate the effects of the *kenosis* of the Son to the human nature of Christ as traditional dogmatics has done, Balthasar has a more ambiguous stance concerning divine immutability than either the older dogmatics (God is immutable) or some contemporary theologies (God unequivocally suffers). Balthasar rejects the positions of both Anselm (Jesus' death as that of an innocent and pure human being) and Rahner (an exemplary death of self-surrender to God). He maintains that we must approach the mystery of the divine 'essence' from that 'supra-temporal yet ever actual event'.

While the Passion is the 'centre of gravity' of Jesus' mission, the 'hour' towards which he travels, the acceptance of both the wider mission and the particular events of the *triduum mortis* is a trinitarian acceptance, not simply Jesus' acceptance of his particular 'hour'. If this were not the case, Balthasar's understanding of the 'lamb slain before the foundation of the world' would be unacceptably ambiguous. If the events of the *triduum mortis* are predetermined, this must surely create the possibility that the continuity of the inner-divine life remains uninterrupted (in any but a formal sense) by the events of the cross, burial and resurrection of Jesus. This is demonstrably not Balthasar's intention. While Balthasar insists that the divine drama does not *become* drama by passing through the world process, sin, the cross or hell, the divine drama is neither static nor abstract. Although Balthasar sees Christ's mission as ultimately emanating from a trinitarian decision, Jesus continues to consent to that decision at each point of his mission, including the decision to set his face towards Jerusalem and crucifixion. However, Balthasar's avowal that it is 'the drama of the Father's heart in the generation of the Son that contains and surpasses all possible drama between God and the world', raises the question whether any rift or rupture in the continuity of the inner-divine life is experiential rather than ontological. We now turn to the question of continuity and discontinuity in Balthasar's treatment of Holy Saturday.

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63 See Balthasar, *MP*, viii. See also O'Hanlon, *Immutability of God*, 19-21. In his wish to avoid both Nestorianism and Monophysitism, Balthasar seeks a way which 'relates the event of the Kenosis of the Son of God to what one can, by analogy, designate as the eternal 'event' of the divine processions'. (Ibid.).

64 Balthasar, *TD*:IV, 234.

65 Balthasar comments that, in the New Testament, the idea is present that 'he is both the (sacrificial) "Lamb" who is "given up" (Jn 1:29) and the (sacrificial) Priest who surrendered himself (Heb 2:14ff.); he is both at the same time (Heb 9:14f.). (Balthasar, *TD*:IV, 241). His treatment of the motif of the lamb is still questionable if the enfolding of the temporal within the eternal, so characteristic of Balthasar, is seen as unacceptable. See also, Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Life out of Death: Meditations on the Easter Mystery* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 39.

4.1.3 Holy Saturday: Being With the Dead

Balthasar describes death as the last enemy\textsuperscript{67} to be destroyed (1 Cor 15:26) because 'death itself is the universal, radical annihilator'. It is only in death that, 'in its deep darkness', the 'final dramatic (and theodramatic) dénouement' takes place.\textsuperscript{68} Balthasar distinguishes seven aspects of death,\textsuperscript{69} the three main aspects of which are: (1) Death as destiny which always threatens humanity from the outside and is both uncertain and certain. (2) Death which is immanent in every phase of life and gives significance or meaninglessness to the whole of a lived life. (3) Death as a 'final deed' which is 'related to, or identical with absolute love, which ultimately calls for the suspension of the isolated self'. As such it can be perceived as atonement or as representative. Death, 'as a fact, draws out the consequences of the way a man has seen and appreciated it as something that is both within him, as an existentiale, immanent in his life, and ahead of him, as an ineluctable destiny'.\textsuperscript{70} According to Balthasar, if death (as fate) is to be overcome, it has to be vanquished by something deadlier than itself; death can then be "swallowed" up in the more all-embracing reality'. This can be seen as a duel between life and death or as a duel between two forms of death, the more intensive and radical form vanquishing the other and taking it over.\textsuperscript{71}

Balthasar sees the death and burial of Jesus as a continuation of his life; death is not simply an external accident. In its hostility to the sense of life, death is not comprehensible as a 'constituent element of being'. In its effects, death appears to 'reveal a whole gradient in life that falls away in the opposite direction from wholeness'.\textsuperscript{72} In stressing the continuity of Jesus' life and death, Balthasar is not saying either that death is a simple reversal of life or that death in itself is a continuation of life. A full answer to the wholeness of humanity is only to be found in the 'way of revelation'.\textsuperscript{73} What Balthasar is affirming is that both Jesus' life and his death are a direct result of the Son's obedience to the Father.\textsuperscript{74} When the 'hour'
loads guilt upon Jesus and he accepts it, he does not take it upon himself; he must bear it in obedience to the Father’s will.

If this obedience is to be different from that of any dying man who accepts his inevitable fate, it must be the fundamental mode of Jesus’ entire life... He must become man in free obedience if his death is to overcome death... his death becomes the legitimate interpreter of his whole existence.75

In Balthasar’s overall vision the death of Jesus becomes the legitimate interpreter of human existence per se.76 He maintains that, if the ‘once-for-all drama of Christ is to be exalted as the norm of the entire dramatic dimension of human life’, two things need to happen simultaneously. The ‘abyss of all tragedy’ must be plumbed to its depths and, within this or transcending it, ‘we must discern the element of gracious destiny that genuinely touches human existence’.77 Christ’s being must be such that he can descend into all that is tragic. In order for this to happen, both of the following must be true: ‘the tragic overstretching of his person must be absolute, that is, divine’ and the element of grace must be able to assert itself. These two postulates lead to the ‘absolute christological paradox’; it is in the world’s forsakenness by God that grace and reconciliation are at work.78 The Son’s obedience to the Father and his entering the ‘doomed predicament of human existence’ are one and the same. For Balthasar, while all norms are thus in Christ, this does not narrow or overwhelm human freedom because ‘everyone is already within the norm that is to appear definitively in Christ’.79 The question is why, if we are within the norm, we can still act against it.

As Balthasar says, ‘the terrifying question is: how can God bear in himself that which is godless and yet which is a possible final consequence of human freedom?’80 His reply is that Jesus as the Son of the living God reveals the mystery of the triune love from within the absolute freedom of the Creator God by descending into the God-forsakenness of hell. This solution is possible only if God as the God of love is able to assume this lostness into the being of God. God must deal with the rebelliousness and lostness of humanity from the inside; God is love and it is love which deals with the problem.81 Given that Balthasar

75 Balthasar, *TD:* IV, 494. Balthasar places more emphasis than does Jüngel on the life of Jesus as human life. In Balthasar, there is a greater sense of continuity between Jesus’ life and his death.
76 For a discussion of Balthasar’s notion of human existence and personhood see Chapter Five.
78 Balthasar, *TD:* II, 84.
79 Balthasar, *TD:* II, 84/5.
understands Christ’s earthly mission to be grounded in the generation of the Son, Jesus’
death in abandonment is the expression of his eternal life in the Trinity. Balthasar (citing von
Speyr), declares that,

both life and death are images of God . . . one cannot say that death, as an end, is in any
sense in God, since his eternal life is unending. But if death is understood to mean the
sacrifice of life, then the original image of that sacrifice is in God as the gift of life flowing
between Father and Son in the Spirit.82

If death as an end cannot be taken up into God, how does Balthasar include the
Godforsakenness of Christ in the inner-divine life? Balthasar contrasts ‘living death’ with the
‘death of sin’, calling them absolute opposites. The ‘death of sin’ is where the human subject
‘closes himself to self-surrender and hence to eternal life’. The essence of the Son’s mission
was to take ‘sinful death’ up into his death of self-surrender, which meant that his death
involved abandonment by God.83 What remains constant on the cross is the relationship
between Father and Son.

On the Cross, the constant relationship between them has assumed the modality of
“forsakenness” by the Father and hence of irremediable “lostness” on the part of the Son; as
a result, the Son experiences the loss of a horizon of meaning and being such as no ordinary
creature can either possess or lose.84

In this instance, Balthasar appears to see death, but not death as an ‘end’, as belonging within
God because nothing can end God’s eternal life. Balthasar presents us with a double
problem: that of how Christ’s particular death can be seen as the same kind of death that is
suffered by all of humanity and yet retain its particularity.

Within the triduum mortis death is, as it were, a hiatus between the life and resurrection of
Jesus. This hiatus comes during the Passion, in the ‘hour when he will no longer be in charge
of his mission, for it will have taken charge of him at a level where human power no longer
avails’.85 For Balthasar, the question of continuity and discontinuity is closely allied to the
activity and passivity of Jesus. While, from Gethsemane to the cross, Christ actively accepts
the consequences of bearing the world’s sin, Holy Saturday involves no activity on Christ’s

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82 Balthasar, *TD:* V, 251, citing Adrienne von Speyr, 1 Jo, 42/3.
84 Balthasar, *TD:* IV, 496.
part. Rather, in total solidarity with the dead, Christ sinks into passivity, a ‘being with the
dead’.  

Into this finality (of death) the dead Son descends, no longer acting in any way, but stripped
by the cross of every power and initiative of his own, as one purely to be used, debased to
mere matter, with a fully indifferent (corpse) obedience, incapable of any active act of
solidarity - only thus is he right for any “sermon” to the dead.  

Christ’s active obedience to the Father becomes passive obedience; something changes yet it
is still obedience. The Son’s passivity reaches new depths; the result is the complete
abandonment by God. Only Christ, who knew unparalleled communion with the Father,
could know what that abandonment really meant. Balthasar is positing Christ’s suffering, not
only as physical and psychological (such as would be suffered by any one in crucifixion), but
also deep within the intra-divine relationship (as only the incarnate Son could suffer). It is, as
such, a relational suffering; the hiatus of burial must therefore be an hiatus in relationship.
The idea that the ‘constant relationship’ between Father and Son assumes certain modes
lends weight to the idea that the hiatus of burial is not necessarily permanent in the case of
Jesus. This does not mean that, in any sense, the cross is a worldly category

that once discovered provides the key to all forms of worldly being; or that the Cross is a sort
of dialectical law of ‘eternal dying and becoming’ (‘ewigen Stirb und Werd’), what Hegel
called a ‘speculative Good Friday’, which empowers reason to take over and administer the
word of God and incorporate death as a factor of life - so that reason appears as a sort of
dialectical movement, for ever crucifying itself, and like the phoenix, recalling itself to life.  

Balthasar alleges that, if this was the case, the cross would be turned into a law which reason
could grasp and administer, thus becoming once again a law (in the Pauline sense) with the
result that ‘absolute love is displaced and set aside by knowledge’. He argues that this would

86 See Lauber, Descert, 69.
87 Balthasar, Reader, 153. See also Hans Urs von Balthasar, The Way of the Cross, trans. Rodelinde Albrecht
and Maureen Sullivan (New York: Herder & Herder, 1969), 30. Balthasar seems to be saying that it is in this state of utter passivity that Christ can be said to make a
proclamation to the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:19) or to the dead (1 Peter 4:6). Christ is in solidarity ‘in the
period of non time with those who have lost their way from God’. (Ibid.).
88 Reformed theology makes a differentiation between active and passive obedience. Christ acquired
righteousness and eternal life by his active obedience and freed sinners from the curse of the law by his passive
or suffering obedience. However, Christ’s active and passive obedience ‘are not to be thought of as separate or
distinctive manifestations in the life of the Lord. On the contrary both are set in mutual unity in the same Lord,
since the active obedience by which Christ subjected himself to the law for sinners only was an actio passiva
and his life and death a real action, a passio activa . . . They do not differ in time; both extend from the
beginning of the incarnation to the death . . . So far as the suffering of penalty is receiving, it is called passive
obedience; so far as it is the testimony of utter love, it may be termed active’. (Heinrich Heppe, Reformed
89 Balthasar, LA, 113.
mean God's sovereign freedom is 'judged before the court of human reason', the opposite of what Balthasar would wish. However, he is quick to indicate that this line of reasoning does not point towards the opposite view that 'knowledge' is to be given over to the world by Christianity in order to become the domain of philosophy and science, thus leaving humanity's encounter with the Word of God (theology) to become the exclusive province of faith.90

There is both continuity and discontinuity in the life and death of Jesus; 'the existence of Jesus unites two things: it is the approach to a climax and the presence of this climax at all intermediate points'.91 For Balthasar, the death of Jesus not only gives ultimate meaning to Jesus' life; his very existence rests on a keno tic act of obedience, the final goal of which was the particular death of Jesus. *This* death was 'designed to outstrip and "conquer" death itself. Death, therefore, is uniquely immanent in this act of self emptying and what flows from it, in his creaturely existence before the Father'.92 The death of Jesus is not 'added' to his life but is 'present' from the start - in Balthasar's terms, within the pre-existence of the Son as the 'lamb slain before the foundation of the world'. The motif of the 'lamb' is most comprehensible when the death of Jesus is seen as a mode of his life. In contrast to Barth, Balthasar sees the hiatus of burial and Christ's 'being with the dead' as distinct from the cross.93 The descent into hell is interpreted by Balthasar as an experience of the 'second death' with the consequent distinction (but not separation) between the cross and Holy Saturday.94 This is not to say that the sacrifice of the cross is inadequate or incomplete; in

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93 For Barth, the descent into hell refers to the ultimate limit of suffering on the cross rather than suffering post-crucifixion. Barth does not have a specific theology of Holy Saturday although he sees the descent as a means of describing Christ's death on the cross as 'eternal' or as a 'second death'. Barth perceives the states of humiliation and exaltation as simultaneous; the descent into hell is also a victory. (See Lauber, *Descent*, 40). Calvin also rejects a sequential interpretation that locates the 'event' between the crucifixion and the resurrection. Christ's experience of hell (the second or eternal death) is an interpretation of the cry of dereliction. The descent into hell describes an interior experience where Christ undergoes 'the severity of God's vengeance, to appease his wrath and satisfy his judgement'. (Calvin, *Institutes* II, xvi.10, 51, cited by Lauber, *Descent*, 11). Reformed theology follows Calvin in seeing the descent into hell as signifying Christ's suffering, beginning in Gethsemane and continuing with his crucifixion and death. In contrast to the prevalent Lutheran view that the descent belongs to the state of exaltation, Reformed theology contends that the descent into hell belongs to the state of humiliation. (Lauber, *Descent*, 11/2). See Luther, *Disputation*, s.v. 44.; *Westminster Larger Catechism*, s.v. 46, 49 and 50.
94 One sense of the 'second death' as used by Balthasar is where it refers to Christ's experience of sin separated from the sinner; hell is a vision of sin per se. Balthasar, profoundly aware of the power of evil, 'describes the ultimate solidarity of the Son with the consequences of the second death that is human sin and hell is reinterpreted not as an active, triumphant leading back of the waiting just but rather as the entirely passive
Balthasar’s portrayal, both the cross and the descent into hell belong to Christ’s Passion. In this sense, they are continuous.

But can the hiatus, as conceived by Balthasar, be viewed as a radical interruption in the life of God? If we take ‘hiatus’ to mean an interval during which continuity is suspended, what does that suspension of continuity entail and what is the continuity thus interrupted? For Balthasar, it is the continuity of both relation and revelation interrupted by the extremity of death. The sending of the Son in mission means both the taking on of flesh and entry into the condition of the sinner in order that Christ might bear in himself the hiatus between God and humanity. The paschal mystery involves a progressive isolation; beginning from Gethsemane where Christ confronts the reality of sin, on to the cry of abandonment on the cross, then to the ‘being with the dead’ which is the deepest point of Christ’s surrender in obedience to the Father.\(^{95}\) When he asks the question whether the Son of God became incarnate ‘in order to act or to die’, Balthasar is questioning the meaning of life and death. It is because ‘his entire earthly action from the beginning resulted in total self-surrender to his heavenly Father and this self-surrender reached its zenith and thereby also its full impact in the cross’, that Christ’s life and death have such a formative effect.\(^{96}\) If the pre-mundane, trinitarian decision is that the Son exists as human in his incarnate existence, as human he is subject to the limitation of finitude, of which the most final limitation is death.\(^{97}\) In that it is the Father who, through the Spirit, raises Jesus from the dead, God as Trinity has the horizon of resurrection, but if we take the kenosis of the incarnation seriously, Jesus must have experienced the thought of death as final. Jesus died as if death was the final boundary from which there was no return. We can say that Jesus’ human imagination was involved in the way he saw his approaching death.

As was explained in Chapter Three, the intra-trinitarian acts, operations or personal properties of any one of the three Persons cannot be attributed to the other two Persons; they are non-communicable. The unity of the three Persons is always a differentiated unity that is

\(^{95}\) O’Donnell, Hans Urs von Balthasar, 79-81.

\(^{96}\) Balthasar, Life Out of Death, 25.

\(^{97}\) Jesus, as a Jew in first-century Palestine, would have been aware of Sheol as the place of the dead. In Sheol there is no praise of God and there is no communication with the living (Psalm 6: 5-6). Balthasar asserts that ‘before’ Christ (meant in an ontological rather than a chronological sense) ‘there can be neither Hell nor Purgatory . . . but only that Hades . . . whence Christ willed to deliver ‘us’ by his solidarity with those who were (physically and spiritually) dead’. (Balthasar, MP, 177).
held in tension with the *emperichoresis* of the trinitarian Persons. In Balthasar’s construal of the intra-divine relations, the Son enjoyed space and unity within the divine life. At the cross, this space threatens to stretch to the point of total rupture; space becomes abandonment in the experience of Jesus hence the cry from the cross. The question is, who abandons whom? Balthasar has Jesus as the ‘true protagonist’ in the drama in that, while there is an active disposal of himself, he let himself be disposed of (Gal 2: 20). Balthasar states that

death, entering the world ‘through sin’ (Romans 5, 12), tears apart the being of man as God envisaged it . . . The shattered image can only be restored by God, the Second Adam who is ‘from heaven’. The midpoint of this restorative action is necessarily the place of the original rupture: death, Hades, lostness far from God.

As divine and human, Christ lives on both sides of the boundary between finite and infinite, time and eternity. As such, he is the only one who can heal the rupture between humanity and God. Christ is the only one who can give up his life and yet respond faithfully to the claim of being given up. ‘Thanks to his intimate experience of the world, as the Incarnate One who knows experientially every dimension of the world’s being down to the abyss of Hell, God now becomes the measure of man’. Redemption has its decisive completion not with the incarnation but with the hiatus of death.

The hiatus of death is a hiatus in revelation. In the tomb, Jesus, as well as being in solidarity with the living, was in solidarity with the dead thus excluding any communication on his part as subject.

In the same way that a man who undergoes death and burial is mute, no longer communicating or transmitting anything, so it is with this man Jesus, who was the Speech, the Communication and the Mediation of God. He dies, and what it was about his life that made it revelation breaks off.

Balthasar speaks of ‘non-time’ and of one who has become ‘non-word’. He states explicitly, ‘this day exists, when the Son is dead, and the Father, accordingly inaccessible’.

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100 Balthasar, *MP*, 12.
102 Balthasar, *MP*, 149.
103 Balthasar, *MP*, 50.
has taken on the Godlessness of humanity and God has become silent. While Balthasar holds that the revelation of relationship is discontinued, Balthasar stops short of declaring the death of God. He is, however, adamant that the death and burial are not a mythical

turning away from bleak historical reality . . . no, reality is the place and the material within which the living God appears . . . It must also be evident that in the tragic, expiatory suffering and death of the one man who at once was man and God, God himself goes into death.105

It must be said that Balthasar is somewhat ambiguous at this point. On the one hand, he speaks in explicit terms of a rupture in revelation but the Holy Spirit is somehow understood to prevent the ‘rupture’ from becoming a dissolution of the bond between Father and Son in an ontological sense. On the other hand, God goes into death but it is not the death of God. In this respect, Balthasar is more tentative than Jüngel.

Balthasar’s theology of Holy Saturday accentuates his acceptance of paradox. He uses his theology of Holy Saturday as a link between soteriology and the trinitarian life.106 He argues that we can speak only in paradoxes if ‘finite death expresses infinite love’ in the two aspects of love for the Father and love for sinners. It is only in a joint mission that the life of the Father and the life of the Son are visible. ‘This inseparability of Father and Son will be made clear to them at the moment when the separation of the two will apparently be total. This is the absolute paradox’.107 In connection with the death and burial of Jesus, this sense of paradox is apparent in Balthasar’s attitude towards joy. Balthasar points out that the Evangelists all maintain that it is only on the basis of the events of Easter that the life and death of Jesus could be interpreted.108 In the context of Jesus’ experience of the surrendering of his earthly life to heaven, ‘Jesus’ death, even his most bitter death in abandonment, is the pure expression of his eternally trinitarian life’.109 Balthasar avers that, in principle, this implies that ‘his whole suffering - suffering that goes to the utter limits - follows from and actually expresses his eternally, triune joy’.110 While Balthasar is not suggesting that the Son

108 Balthasar, MP, 226.
110 Balthasar, TD:V, 252. MacKinnon claims that ‘the disciplined interpenetration of the ontological and the dramatic dimensions of his subject enables the reader to glimpse within the Father’s abandonment of his Son, made concrete in the desperately human passion of Jesus, the ultimate joy of the Trinitarian processions as in themselves really and objectively present in ‘the hour of darkness’. (MacKinnon, ‘Some Reflections’, 176). While Balthasar’s christology is grounded in his understanding of the trinitarian being of God, the Trinity is
actually feels this glory, this joy, while he bears sin, joy is 'the consistent presupposition for all experience of forsakenness. On the Cross, the lived reality of death, objectively, is life; so extreme suffering, objectively, is joy'. This cannot mean that suffering is joy in experiential terms even in anticipation of the resurrection as Balthasar makes it clear that, for Jesus on the cross, death is the immediate horizon. More understandably, the joy is because of the self-surrender involved in the trinitarian relationship manifest even at this extremity. Balthasar reminds us how easy it is to forget that 'a Divine Person, even in the Incarnation and in the vicissitudes of his human 'I', is nevertheless pure relation and that God's blessedness consists in his being self-surrender'. Consequently, '[w]hen the Son accepts dying in the agony of God-forsakenness, it is for him (and the other Divine Persons) not only an "external work" undertaken out of absolute love and joy but also the expression of his very own, his very specific life'. It is Christ's perfect self-surrender which is his joy; a self-surrender manifested in suffering and death. On the Cross, the Father is veiled.

The dead Son “therefore accepts the mystery of darkness just as the Father offers it to him: in the turning away of the Father himself.” . . . On Holy Saturday, at the end of the mission, before God turns back once again to the world, he turns away from the Son in love, in order to allow him to share in his mystery”: no longer a mystery of wrath, but a mystery of love.

This mystery is soteriological in that it is this mystery of love which humanity is able to share because of the sharing of the Son in the death of Jesus. It is because the Father, in the power of Holy Spirit, raises Jesus from the dead that humanity has the hope of resurrection. It is to the mystery of the resurrection that we now turn.

4.1.4 The Mystery of Resurrection
As explained above, death is the major limitation of the state of finitude. In terms of Balthasar's understanding of Jesus' death we may say that this death is both the expression of his eternally trinitarian life and the basis of his saving work. Any attempt to analyze Balthasar's understanding of the resurrection must deal with the following three issues: first, the place of the resurrection in Balthasar's dramatic schema; second, how the resurrection fits into Balthasar's idea of a 'supra-temporal eternity'; third, the implications of the resurrection for human life. For the purposes of this thesis, we must ask how the resurrection

always totally engaged in the incarnate life of Christ. It is here, MacKinnon maintains, that Balthasar's 'unique sense of the interpenetration of the central moments of the Christian mystery is crucially significant'. (Ibid., 178).

111 Balthasar, TD: V, 255.
112 Balthasar, TD: V, 268, citing von Speyr, 4 Jo, 155.
(as an unrepeatable act of God) impacts on our view of the imagination. In order to comprehend Balthasar’s depiction of the resurrection, we must remember that Balthasar sees the cross and the grave as a ‘crisis’, a ‘turning point between the old aeon and the new’. The death of Jesus, as the turning point in salvation history, is where God’s justice and God’s love coincide. By taking the hiatus up into his own continuity, Jesus becomes, in his person, the bridge across the hiatus which expresses his eternally trinitarian life. This is a trinitarian ‘taking up’ in that it is the Holy Spirit who ensures that the love between Father and Son can bridge this hiatus and lead to the dramatic vindication of the resurrection. It is the doctrine of God’s triune life which ‘remains the doctrine of God’s absolute act by which henceforth God will see the world’s sin in the light of the undergirding death of his Son’. Because Balthasar sees the crucified Christ as the resurrected Christ, this ‘absolute act’ must include the resurrection. Their imagination allowed the disciples to see the crucified Christ (as, in a sense, familiar) as the resurrected Christ (as unutterably strange). To use the imagination in this way is not to say that the resurrection is in any sense ‘unreal’ or a product of fantasy. However, because of the extraordinary and unrepeatable nature of the resurrection and because we are speaking of divine action, the imagination, as a natural capacity, cannot achieve this unaided. The resurrection of Jesus points out, in an unprecedented manner, not only the action of the Father through the Holy Spirit but also the action of the Holy Spirit within the human imagination.

For Balthasar, the cross is seen as the concrete way in which God has chosen to open up and keep open the ‘acting area between God and man’. It is around death that the central acting area of dramatic decision takes place. Central to the drama is ‘God’s overcoming and revaluation of man’s dying, as a result of the kenosis of the incarnate Word of God’. Balthasar accordingly understands the cross to be a ‘lasting framework and horizon’ for the dramatic action as a whole. If this is so, and the Christ of scripture is portrayed as both

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113 Balthasar, MP, 56.
114 God’s ‘fundamental properties of justice and love neither fall together in an undifferentiated way nor get separated unrelatedly, but, in a most sublime drama, are shown to be correlated, and finally identical’. (Balthasar, Reader, 151). See also, Hunt, Trinity, 64.
117 For Balthasar, there is an ‘inseparable unity of the death of the Cross and the Resurrection’. (Balthasar, MP, 203).
118 Balthasar, TD:III, 47.
crucified and risen, how are we to perceive the significance of the resurrection? The answer, for Balthasar, lies once again in a trinitarian conception.

[I]t is clear that the Trinity, and not Christology, is the last horizon of the revelation of God in himself and in his dramatic relationship with the world . . . we may only discuss the anthropological eschata - traditionally man’s death, judgement and final destiny - within the framework of a theocentric eschatology.120

In scriptural terms, the ‘anthropological eschata’ is grounded in the resurrection of Christ. While Balthasar sees the resurrection as relevant to all humanity, he also sees the resurrection as the transcending of humanity’s horizon by the action of God which takes place in the individual Jesus.121

Balthasar considers resurrection as a ‘new aeon embodied in Christ’. As such, Balthasar admits that any translation of ‘such a unique meeting of the aeons in the world of images and concepts’ is ‘a priori problematic’. It only occurs by way of ‘approximations’ and ‘tentative evocations’.122 When Jesus meets his disciples post-resurrection, their recognition of him is possible because of his identity with the crucified Christ but Balthasar maintains we must ‘make a certain allowance for the imagination here’.123 This seems to indicate that Balthasar considers the imagination to be a faculty that comes into play under unusual circumstances. Balthasar’s theology of Holy Saturday accentuates his acceptance of paradox. Balthasar is not advocating an attempt to harmonize the various images as such; the various images need to be considered in their ‘relatively autonomous affirmatory value’ and any attempt at harmony must come from a reference to their common transcendent source. It is a kind of truth that has happened, not some kind of poetic truth totally divorced from history.124 It has been argued that Balthasar often uses technical terms in a ‘non-technical poetic way which combines apparently irreconcilable meanings and seem to contradict their original meaning’.125 The issue at stake is the status of such language and whether it can be justified.

For Balthasar, anthropomorphic speech in a differentiated sense is acceptable in a theology which acknowledges mystery. Balthasar argues that his linguistic approach works through

120 Balthasar, TD: V, 56.
121 Balthasar, TD: II, 53-5.
122 Balthasar, MP, 229. It is to be noted here that Balthasar speaks of images and concepts.
123 Balthasar, MP, 209.
124 See Balthasar, MP, 247-9.
125 O’Hanlon, Immutability of God, 137.
paradox rather than dialectic and that using imagery and metaphor in a controlled way leads in a direction that is true to the scriptural revelation. Balthasar’s theology is notable for the way he works within the full continuum of human speech about God. Such language ranges from the metaphorical and the highly imaginative to the thoroughly abstract and strictly analogical; a breadth of language that is controlled by the ontological framework that Balthasar establishes. Although she does not link Balthasar explicitly with the imagination, Hunt makes two points about Balthasar's language that are relevant to a study of the imagination, particularly with reference to the resurrection. Firstly, Balthasar uses a linguistic approach which involves a controlled use of imagery and metaphor that is faithful to the biblical data. Secondly, Balthasar uses a mutually corrective combination of concept and metaphor. He recognizes these two levels of discourse and uses them in a complementary and cooperative way. Although these two levels of discourse are systematically irreconcilable and unavoidably imprecise they yet have a positive function in that they point to the transcendent mystery. Hunt is careful to point out that imprecision and ambiguity are problematic. This is so when Balthasar moves towards the metaphorical end of the speech continuum but it is most apparent when his metaphors are ‘transposed out of the context in which they are used and in which they take their meaning, and outside of the ontology that supports and controls them’. Hunt indicates that, for Balthasar, ontology places boundaries around the use of metaphor. It may be said that, given the connection between metaphor and the imagination, ontology places boundaries around the use of the human imagination. If we are to listen to Balthasar and Jüngel, the events of the triduum mortis must have a central place in, and indeed are determinative of, any imaginative paradigm that is valid for the Christian imagination.

In agreement with Barth and contra Bultmann, Balthasar sees the resurrection as a specific divine act. Schleiermacher, Hermann and Bultmann advocate the disappearance of the objective perspective in favour of the existential relationship with the believing ‘I’ but Balthasar rejects this. He conceives of the resurrection both as the completion of christology and simultaneously as the fulfilment of the act of creation. Because he believes that the Word became flesh to reveal God’s faithfulness to the world, Balthasar sees the

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127 Hunt cites his employment of the terms ‘immutability’ and ‘supra-mutability’ as an example of Balthasar’s ‘combined conceptual and metaphorical approach’. (Hunt, *Trinity*, 88).
resurrection as both the glorification of the Word before the world and the acceptance of Christ’s sacrificial death for the world. As he understands it, the resurrection of the Son is also the revelation of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{130} The Father raises the Son by the Spirit but ‘the Spirit is not only the instrument of the Resurrection. He is also the milieu in which the Resurrection takes place’. Rather than being strange to Christ, this milieu is an inheritance that belongs to him as ‘second Adam’.\textsuperscript{131} Is this a seamless continuation from death, through burial and on to resurrection? Balthasar does not understand it as such. He sees the change that takes place at Easter to be as ‘abrupt as it is organic’.\textsuperscript{132} While God transcends history, God also acts in Jesus within history. The resurrection of the dead, although in Balthasar’s terms offering a solution to the anthropological problem, is not to be understood as either a ‘superreligion’ or a ‘superphilosophy’ but as ‘a pure act of God’s grace’. Christ is not simply a ‘spirit’ which continues to have an impact through time; ‘the “spirit” in the case of this man is so much alive that it testifies to his total mental-physical reality being alive and present’.\textsuperscript{133} The resurrection is not the dead man living again as has happened elsewhere in the Bible; the meaning of the resurrection lies in ‘Jesus’ passage to a form of resistance which has left death behind it once for all (Romans 6, 10), and has gone beyond, once for all, the limitations of this aeon in God (Hebrews 9, 26; I Peter 3, 18)’.\textsuperscript{134} In raising Jesus, the Father returns the Spirit to him as personally his own but ‘who is henceforth also the divine Spirit, identical with \textit{dynamis} and \textit{doxa} and now made known openly to the world (Romans 1,4)’.\textsuperscript{135} It may be surmised that the Holy Spirit is therefore not only the instrument and milieu of the Father’s agency and that of the Son but can also be termed, post-resurrection, a \textit{divine} agent so that speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit implies some kind of ‘autonomy’ within the mutual love and receptivity of the \textit{hypostases}.

For Balthasar, Christ, through his resurrection, leaves the limits of finitude behind but he always remains the crucified as well as the resurrected Christ. Through Christ’s resurrection,

\textsuperscript{130} Balthasar, \textit{MP}, 210.
\textsuperscript{131} Balthasar, \textit{MP}, 211. In the context of the resurrection, it is “in the power of the Spirit” - the Spirit as instrument and medium, not as agent (Romans 1:4; 8-11) - that the Father raises Christ from the dead (\textit{MP}, 203-17). (Geoffrey Wainwright, ‘Eschatology’ in \textit{The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar}, ed. Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 113-127 at 116).
\textsuperscript{132} Balthasar, \textit{TD:IV}, 361. ‘It is not to be wondered at, but rather considered normal, that the theological synthesis which gathers around the mid-point of the Resurrection was only realised in stages’. (Balthasar, \textit{MP}, 200).
\textsuperscript{133} Balthasar, ‘Perfectibility’, 103/4.
\textsuperscript{134} Balthasar, \textit{MP}, 194. Balthasar is not saying that the humanistic religions have no fragmentary value but that ‘none were able to place the finitude and temporality of historical Man in the lap of God’s eternity’; this is possible only through Christ’s resurrection from the dead. (Balthasar, ‘Perfectibility’, 103).
\textsuperscript{135} Balthasar, \textit{MP}, 212.
the Spirit reveals the meaning of the theo-drama ‘retrospectively, from the end, and at the same time proclaims its universal scope forward, into an ever-new future’.

It is a future that retains the marks of the past (John 20: 27). The Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit, returns to the Son (who has died and been buried) his corporality. ‘When the Son takes his life back explicitly at the command of the Father, it means that he receives himself back from the eternal Father in filial obedience as one living in the body.’ In Balthasar’s understanding,

the act of dying remains as the dying of one who loves, and it is co-glorified into the life of the Risen Christ . . . as a form in which the living love can manifest itself “up to the end” (John 13:1) . . . [the living Lamb] takes along his mode of being dead as part of his past and thus enduringly affecting him into his eternal life . . . he possessed death in himself as something he has gone through and overcome through the self-giving of love.

It appears that the lamb ‘slain from the foundation of the world’ remains, in a sense, slain even after the resurrection and yet remains the living lamb.

The resurrection, in effect, reveals who Jesus Christ in reality is. Christ is vindicated by being raised by the Father in the power of the Spirit. Because the redemptive relationship to God occurs in history, we are to see signs of eternity in time. Jesus Christ is the definitive sign of God’s work in the world. Balthasar’s christological orientation means that historical existence is neither devalued as mere appearance nor is it repudiated; it has been placed in the ‘movement of returning to God’. The man Jesus is this ‘sign and word of God to the world’ who must ‘realize mysteriously the essentially irrefrangible wholeness within the uncompleteable fragmentary’. Balthasar claims that the ‘christological synthesis here achieved is fundamentally different from any synthesis of the mythical imagination; its force and effectiveness [lies] - beyond all expectation and imagination - in the resurrection of the dead’. He insists that it is only in its trinitarian dimension that the resurrection can be spoken of as ‘pro nobis and pro mundo’. If resurrection is indeed ‘beyond all expectation and imagination’ how are we to imagine the one who is both crucified and risen? In Jesus, the fragility of the human being operating in time is God’s sign to the world that there is

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138 Balthasar, ‘Swallowed Up’, 54. Balthasar maintains that this is not to be understood ‘in the sense of a Hegelian dialectic according to which the negative appears as an intrinsic element of eternal life’. (Ibid.).
141 Balthasar, MP, 203.
more to God’s mystery than what first appears. Jesus is himself (as crucified and risen) the sign of the supra-temporal eternity in the world. Christ, as the answering Word of God, immersed himself in finitude and transitoriness (‘flesh’), took on himself our death and endows ‘the finite with full, eternal significance’; by doing so he affects the whole human race. It is through the cross that ‘judgement falls on all eloquence, rhetoric, mimesis and the endless deferral of meaning in signs ... a new word appears, ‘his utmost word’, on the far side of the death’s profound passio’.

The ‘utmost word’ is the resurrected Christ. The revelation of God has been immersed in death and love and, as a result, the death of this resurrected man has been revalued and seen as a voluntary death out of love.

Balthasar understands Jesus’ resurrection from the dead to be the presupposition for the transformation of the Christian. If we are to see the imagination as the human locus of transformation, how does this work when considering an event which Balthasar claims is ‘beyond all expectation and imagination’? Although Balthasar does not see the resurrection in these terms, is it possible for us to think of the imagination as the locus where we can begin to comprehend the resurrection? On one hand, how are we to imagine an unrepeatable event, and on the other hand, how can we think of such an event without the imagination? Balthasar envisages the mystery of the resurrection as a unique collection of images. The mystery is not a construct but the images surround an inaccessible mid-point ... And if the images cannot be added together to form of themselves an objective unity, no more ... do the subjective experiences of the witnesses come together to constitute the content of their testimony in a fully integrated way.

The life and activity of Jesus had to be rethought in light of the resurrection. Balthasar thinks of the locus of the world within the distinctions between the hypostases as the place where the alienation of sin is solved; the cross is the locus of God’s love. We have noted his

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142 Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 132. The ‘absolute Logos’ is present in and through history’. There is no ‘abiding mystery of transcendence behind the “categorical” that is accessible to reason’. (Ibid., 433).
145 See above, 121. ‘This event is, as has rightly been said time and again, without analogy’. (Balthasar, *MP*, 194).
contention that ‘activity presupposes a *locus* into which such action can be introduced’. Would Balthasar agree with our reasoning that the imagination is the *locus* of the Holy Spirit’s action? This is not to say that the Holy Spirit uses the imagination exclusively as an isolated faculty but rather to say that the imagination *cannot not be excluded* from the work of the Holy Spirit. Although, in his treatment of the *triduum mortis*, Balthasar does not seem to have a positive view of the imagination, he is not thinking negatively of the imagination as an unavoidable aspect of human functioning responsible for both recognition and re cognition. Although the action of God transcends humanity’s horizon, the cross, burial and resurrection of Jesus is the ‘place’ above all others where our assumptions with and about God are shattered. It is here that the most radical rethinking possible has taken place, a re-cognition that takes place in the human imagination.

To summarize, the following four elements are essential to Balthasar’s interpretation of the *triduum mortis* if we are to connect, in a preliminary way, his thought to a particular understanding of the human imagination. (1) Balthasar communicates his vision of the Christian mystery in a wide range of language. His subtle and imaginative blend of metaphorical, abstract, and strictly analogical language combines the use of imagery and concepts in a way that allows for paradox. (2) Balthasar’s linguistic approach is not totally open-ended; his language use is controlled by his ontology. (3) Christ is understood as the crucified and resurrected Christ. (4) Balthasar’s treatment of the *triduum mortis* allows for, and indeed necessitates, the action of the Holy Spirit. This thesis suggests that the Holy Spirit works within the human imagination; the Holy Spirit can therefore be seen as the *locus* of revelation. This is not to intimate that the work of the Holy Spirit is only at an epistemic level. There is to be no suggestion that the events of the *triduum mortis* are any less than fully ontological. Such an indication would lead us in a direction quite foreign to Balthasar’s theology.

In common with Balthasar, Jüngel’s treatment of the *triduum mortis* is influenced by his understandings of language and ontology. The next section will consider how Jüngel’s

148 At this point, Balthasar seems to be thinking of the imagination more in terms of fantasy.

149 Balthasar maintains that in the event of the resurrection ‘all previous schemata come to their fulfilment and suffer their breakdown at one and the same time... each is powerless to contribute more than a fragment to a totality of a transcendent kind... For the assured self-understanding of the Church new schemata had first to be created’. (Balthasar, *MP*, 198).
construal of the *triduum mortis* requires us to imagine God in union with temporality and death.

4.2. Eberhard Jüngel: Imagining God and Death Together

In Chapter Two, we understood God's Word of address as a radical interruption of our ordinary patterns of knowing; God's self-revelation has the potential to upset our assumptions and transform our conceptions of God.150 Chapter Three demonstrated that we cannot think of God in abstraction from Jesus Christ and that any human knowledge of God must acknowledge God as mystery. If, as Jüngel proposes, God's essence and God's act cannot be separated, how does he work this out in his conception of the *triduum mortis*? Jüngel's construal of revelation demands two things: first, that God's being is viewed as historical from within a trinitarian framework and second, that his treatment of the intra-divine relations in the *triduum mortis* must be congruent with his view of temporality. It is possible that Jüngel's construal of the *triduum mortis* suggests ways towards understanding God's self-revelation in these events as an imaginative paradigm for the Christian imagination. Jüngel understands the cross and resurrection to be the heart of the Christian gospel and the gospel to be the human word which corresponds to the *divine* mystery. In this chapter we will examine how, if we are to follow Jüngel's train of thought, we are to imagine God in conjunction with temporality and death.

4.2.1 God and Temporality

As we have noted, God comes anew in Jesus who reveals what God is like; Jesus (as the God-man) is God's language to humanity. Given that the new, for Jüngel, is always at God's initiative, we might say that, within history, Jesus is the new form of language as well as being his own content. It is through time and speech that God enters human existence definitively in Jesus. Although Jüngel maintains that language has 'ontological priority' over history, he is adament that the temporality of historical reality must be taken seriously; 'time includes the experience of perishing', which is based on the experience of being present.151 Time does not exist for its own sake, it is the servant of humanity in that it enables a human

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150 'It is part of the very core of all religious experience that the holy God does not appear in the context of human reality without fundamentally shaking this same context.' (Jüngel, "What Does it Mean?", 294).

151 Jüngel, *GMW*, 189. Jüngel sees language as the 'inner ground of history' whereas history is the 'outer ground of language'. It is through the 'addressing word' that 'the community of subjects come to be, and within it that kind of ego-intensity which makes history'. (Jüngel, *GMW*, 190)
being to fulfil his or her history; ‘this means that time is the formal ontological structure of
the historicity of human existence’. Jüngel’s contention that the historicity of God’s
being is the presupposition of revelation which includes the death of Jesus. But how can God
be both present and perishing? It is within the dimension of historical reality that the word
interrupts the life context of existence of an individual or community ‘in such a way that
presentness is described as present (and thus as the arriving future) but is also experienced as
constantly perishing’. According to Jüngel, the present is defined by not only the self-
presentation of the future but also by a working through of the past. Jüngel holds that ‘[i]n
the word, that which is separated in history is ontologically together: present, future, and
past’. However, although every word is spoken ontically within the historical sequence and
therefore has ‘its time’ which is ontically defined by history, the word (as the place where
God can be thought) is the ‘word which enables faith’. Faith refers back to the crucified
Jesus; faith ‘allows God as the absent one to be present’. The word which enables faith
‘unites within itself a high degree of perishability with the most intensive power of
becoming’. God came to humanity in the concretely definable past, in the life and death of
Jesus. There is both a past in which God came and the future out of which God is coming.
The word is simultaneously perishable and creative. Even if God is present in time (as past,
present, and future) ontologically, God is present to us ontically within a historical sequence.
It is therefore within our notion of time that God interrupts us by means of the word that
enables faith. But does this mean that it is faith that allows this intensive power of becoming
to operate within worldly history? Such an interpretation remains true to Jüngel’s overall
vision only in light of his insistence that faith is the gift of God.

Jüngel admits that the ‘eternal truth is as such historical’ and is therefore problematic.

Two questions are posed by Jüngel’s understanding of temporality. The first asks whether
Jüngel differentiates sufficiently between God as Word and the general use of language and
the second, whether Jüngel has exaggerated his thesis of the origin of history in language. If,
as Jüngel avows, language is in some way prior to history, this can mean either that the

152 Jüngel, DRM, 118.
153 Jüngel, GMW, 185/90.
154 ‘To work through the past in some way or other means to work on the future.’ (Jüngel, ECW, 222).
155 Jüngel, GMW, 133/4. The imagination allows an absent object or event to be present to the human
consciousness.
156 Jüngel, GMW, 196.
157 Jüngel, GMW, 182-4.
158 Jüngel, ECW, 217. Jüngel is saying this in the context of whether eternal truth can become obsolete.
Word of God (as preexistent) is prior to the Christ-event or that language per se ‘exists’ prior to history. Jüngel understands thought as following language - not language-in-general but the particular things which have to do with God’s historical revelation in Jesus Christ. It is Christ who makes God thinkable in human terms: speech about God must coincide with the crucified and risen Christ.\(^{159}\) God is the only one who can adequately speak about God so thought about God is only possible through a language-event in which God’s own reality is made known by God. God comes from God and, because of Jüngel’s dependence on existential hermeneutics, for him, language is the context for God’s coming.\(^{160}\) God’s advent is in language and it is faith that allows the correspondence to God of our true selves. Faith is addressed by God and corresponds to that address. God’s identification with the crucified man Jesus is the event which tells us how speech that corresponds to God is possible; Jesus is the human person who corresponds to God.\(^{161}\) We must remember that, for Jüngel, although God and people are brought together through language, it is not simply the linguistic character of humanity that brings this about. Language about God does not automatically mean the coming together of God and human persons. Such a coming together is neither as a result of such language nor every time language about God is used but only when God chooses to make God known by means of language. God does something here that history cannot offer of itself and that is not an inherent human capacity.\(^{162}\) Such revelation is by the grace of God. The Word was with God from the beginning as the subject of the historical predicate which is Jesus of Nazareth. Jüngel insists that we are not to think of history as revelation or history as God’s becoming. God’s being is to be thought as historical being ‘already in itself’; God does not become God because of history.\(^{163}\) Jüngel argues that ‘God’s being must be historical in a more original way than historical predicates are historical’.\(^{164}\) Nevertheless, Jüngel’s claims for the origin of history in language have


\(^{160}\) Drawing on both Barth and Bultmann, the latter also through the work of Gerhard Ebeling and Ernst Fuchs. On letting God be present through human speech, see Jüngel, GMW, 226, 349; Zimany, Vehicle for God, 81/2; Derek Nelson, ‘The Indicative of Grace and the Imperative of Freedom: An Invitation to the Theology of Eberhard Jüngel’. Dialog: A Journal of Theology 44, (2005): 164-180 at 166/7; Ford, ‘Hosting a Dialogue’, 52ff.

\(^{161}\) Jüngel, GMW, 231.

\(^{162}\) See Zimany, Vehicle for God, 82/3. As Zimany phrases it, the ‘word is the instrumentality for capturing reality’. (Ibid., 82).

\(^{163}\) Jüngel, GBB, 110, note 140.

\(^{164}\) Jüngel, GBB, 94/5. Jüngel’s interpretation of Barth understands God’s being as ‘capable of possessing historical predicates, which, in themselves, are not capable of ‘predicating the being of God’. (Ibid., 95). ‘With his teaching of the being of the man Jesus in the beginning with God, Barth has taught us to understand the relation of the historicality of God’s being to the historical predicates Christologically’. (Ibid., 97/8).
met with the counterclaim that his position contains a basic ambiguity even if understood on
his own terms. O'Donovan argues that, in Jüngel's thesis, on the one hand, the Word 'gives
rise to all of history' but, on the other hand, the Word seemingly redeems only a distinct part
of that same history. The appearance of God's saving truth is linked uniquely to the history
of Jesus. For Jüngel, God's self-communication in Jesus constitutes both the ontological
and noetic ground of human existence. Jüngel has been seen to recognize the universalist
implications of revelation but fails to connect them to the presence of God outside
Christianity.

Jüngel's assertion that temporality belongs within the being of God raises two opposing
difficulties. The criticism levelled at Barth and, with less severity Balthasar, is that
everything is predetermined within God and merely unfolds in historical time. Does Jüngel
lay himself open to this critique or its opposite, that God is somehow absorbed in
temporality? Two considerations may mitigate such charges. The first is that God is
intrinsically mysterious and the second is the christological concentration of Jüngel's
thought. For Jüngel, the truth of historical existence is always more than can be observed but
this does not necessarily mean that the truth of history is predetermined. It is the potentiality
of actuality that can be meaningful beyond its actuality. The loss of the reality of the past
does not mean the loss of its possibility. According to Jüngel, memory (memoria) 'preserves
the possibility of past reality'. While the presence of the Holy Spirit brings to believers
the effective presence of Christ, the two are not to be conflated. This thesis suggests that the
human imagination, in both its reproductive and productive senses, is the faculty used by the
Holy Spirit to bring to mind the past in which possibility remains within the space created by
trust in God. While the past can never be mastered by the human subject, the totality of
the past is not lost to God. The significance of a past event, even in human terms, does not
necessarily cease with the passing of the event itself. It is here that the question of identity is
once again important for Jüngel. In the Gospels, Jesus is identified as the one 'who makes

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165 See O'Donovan, SJ, 'The Mystery of God', 268/9. The understanding of Christian truth is constituted by the
identification of truth with the person of Jesus Christ. See Jüngel, 'Gelegentliche Thesen zum Problem der
natürlichen', 199, s.v. 4.
166 Jüngel, GMW, 215/6. For our relation to the past, both in general and in the person of Jesus Christ, see
Jüngel, ECW, 215ff.
167 'Disclosed presentness insists not only on that which is real, but also exists out of the possible, and toward
the possible.' (Jüngel, GMW, 213).
168 See Jüngel, ECW, 224-7. 'The past as a totality is always being lost - to us, though not to God the
reconciler.' (Ibid., 227).
possible salvation or fellowship with God. In God’s historical revelation in Jesus Christ, God comes to speech in Christ who makes God thinkable in human terms; God is in Christ as the Word of address to human beings. In Jüngel’s understanding, language precedes thought. Since thought is transitory and occurs in a transitory setting, if God is in, and identified with, the transitory, then God can be thought. It is a perspective that is grounded in the particular history of Jesus Christ. Jüngel understands history as the unfolding of a reality whose potential is already there in the being of God. It is because Jüngel believes that Jesus is God as the incarnate Son that he is able to speak of both the humanity and the temporality of God as realities within the being of God. As love, God is the mystery of the world so God as love must be evident within history. Jüngel understands God to be definitively present in the person of Jesus Christ who, as the God-man, manifests the depths of God’s love in the events of the triduum mortis. Jüngel’s understanding of God as the ultimate subject of Jesus’ history means that the Person of the Son of God is intimately involved in the historical event of the death of Jesus. God can be thought in unity with the changing world rather than in contrast to it.

4.2.2 Thinking God as Perishable
If we accept that revelation is relational and that God is identified with the crucified man Jesus, we must also accept that God’s self-disclosure occurring in history includes death and resurrection as well as incarnational life. We must then ask what happens to the intra-divine relations during the events of the triduum mortis. Jüngel’s exploration of this issue centres around the possibility of thinking God and perishability together. Jüngel expounds the threefold relationship between God, thought and perishability as an unresolved problem in the historical context of modern thought. He argues that we either think the metaphysically conceived God and perishability together, thereby relegating such thought to the past and ending in atheism, or recognize that both God and perishability have been thought inadequately and need to be thought again. It is the second option that Jüngel sees as oriented to the word of the cross. If, as Jüngel intends, God is to be thought ‘after’ the cross, then ‘God and faith do not belong together in another “world” but rather in perishability’. Jüngel avers that God and faith belong together in perishability. He maintains that the theology formed by the Reformation thought God and perishability together by, on the one

169 Jüngel, ECW, 228.
170 See Zimany, Vehicle for God, 82-4.
hand, thinking God and the man Jesus together and on the other hand, thinking human faith and God together. The intimate connection between God and Jesus (verified in the death and resurrection of Jesus) is the actual foundation for the intimate connection of God and faith. God and faith belong together in the sense that they are both subjected in the same way to the perishability of the world.\textsuperscript{172} Jüngel sees two consequences of thinking God and perishability together: firstly, the metaphysically conceived thought of God is set aside and secondly, the word of the cross opposes the ontological rejection of that which is perishable. The cross opposes it in a way that takes death with the utmost seriousness. In the first option, the ‘basic ontological structure’ of perishability is that of annihilation; the metaphysical evaluation of possibility is negative. In the second, Jüngel argues that the word of the cross unites perishability and the power of becoming within itself, ‘the ability to perish is also positive’.\textsuperscript{173} In accepting this latter option, Jüngel maintains that we must question the exclusively negative metaphysical qualification of perishability and perishing.\textsuperscript{174} In contrast to Descartes’ notion of the human ego securing itself, he declares that ‘God is near to us as the one who has withdrawn himself’. The certainty of faith is certainty of God which is, as such, the ‘de-securing of self-certainty’.\textsuperscript{175} Trust can therefore be defined accurately as ‘certainty which removes security’.\textsuperscript{176} The certainty of faith is not self-founding but God is to be thought for God’s own sake. Jüngel understands joy, rather than necessity as Descartes conceives it, to be the origin of the thought of God.\textsuperscript{177}

By positing a positive as well as a negative meaning to perishability, Jüngel is allowing for possibility in the being of God. Possibility is integral to the capacity for becoming which is so important for Jüngel. As the capacity to become, possibility is not a category of deficiency but a capacity of promise.\textsuperscript{178} Jüngel understands the negative aspect of the transitory as a tendency towards nothingness - an incapacity to become - whereas possibility is that which is ‘ontologically positive about perishability’.\textsuperscript{179} At the cross, God is present in

\textsuperscript{172} Jüngel, \textit{GMW}, 202.
\textsuperscript{173} Jüngel, \textit{GMW}, 203/4.
\textsuperscript{174} See Jüngel, \textit{GMW}, 210.
\textsuperscript{175} Jüngel, \textit{GMW}, 184.
\textsuperscript{176} Jüngel, \textit{GMW}, 196.
\textsuperscript{177} Jüngel, \textit{GMW}, 192. See also, Jüngel, TL, 234.
\textsuperscript{178} Jüngel, \textit{GMW}, 217. \textit{Contre} Aristotle who, in maintaining the ontological priority of actuality, divined the possible only in reference to the actual (fully realized being). (Jüngel, PA, 97-100). In contrast, Weinandy claims there can be no possibility in God of any kind because God is fully in act; God is totally realized. There must be no actualizing potential because, in Weinandy's terms that would allow change into the being of God, which he sees as a lack of perfection. On perfection in God, see Weinandy, \textit{Does God Suffer? 157/8.}
\textsuperscript{179} Jüngel, \textit{GMW}, 213.
unity with perishability. In the struggle between being and non-being which ensues, that which is affirmative in perishability (the ontological primacy of possibility) predominates. Jüngel calls this the 'union of death and life for the sake of life'. In the context of perishability the capacity to become remains because of possibility, the supreme instance of which is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. By maintaining that perishability can be both negative and affirmative, Jüngel is affirming perishing as something other than annihilation; within annihilation, what was is no longer permitted to be possible. 'Then what has been becomes as such impossible'. Nothingness cannot become something out of itself but in its incapacity it is 'something like the power which renders impossible, the despotism of the nothing'. Perishing is an ontological simile for the tendency towards nothingness (the tendency not to be); the simile of nothingness which encounters humanity in life is called death. If this is accepted, for God to overcome perishing and the tendency towards non-being, God must encounter and overcome death. By God being involved with that which is affirmative of perishability, the possibility exists of 'death' being able to function as an 'ontologically positive attribute of God'. God can be said to define God's deity in the event of the cross because God involves God in nothingness not in spite of it. This act of God which localizes nothingness within the divine being is an act of self-determination.

This raises the question of whether perishing naturally turns toward nothingness. If nothingness is not part of a natural process but resembles a negative force, is nothingness ontologically real in any sense? God’s unity with perishability is Jüngel’s presupposition for the identity of God and the crucified man Jesus. Jüngel argues that if God is thought apart from Jesus, God’s freedom is then conceived of ‘without his concrete self-determination’. Because God’s being is love, it is also ‘God’s being to be related to nothingness’. For Jüngel, this dialectic of being and non-being (life and death) is called love; God is self-determined within the transitory as love. ‘Love is the motive not only of divine action but also of divine

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180 Jüngel, GMW, 299, 317. A phrase which Jüngel says is 'a way of defining the essence of love'. (Ibid., 299).
181 Jüngel, GMW, 210, 215/6.
182 Jüngel, GMW, 216. In contrast to God who is capable of self-determination: God comes from God to God as God.
183 Jüngel, GMW, 211.
184 Jüngel, GMW, 216.
185 Jüngel, GMW, 219.
186 Jüngel, GMW, 367. 'Freedom understood without the goal of determinateness would be an impermissible abstraction. The will to determination is what makes self-determination, makes freedom something concrete... God determines himself. Only as one who is determined on the basis of his self-determination is God a concrete reality'. (Ibid.).
being’. \(^{187}\) Jüngel understands God as defining his own deity in the event of the cross. \(^{188}\) ‘God both defines himself as identical with himself for his own sake and as God who exists for others; as ‘the one who suffers endlessly’. \(^{189}\) This self-determination is a matter of God’s choice. \(^{190}\) God is self-determined as love on the cross of Jesus; the act of love and the being of God cannot be conceived as separate. \(^{191}\) This identification of God with the crucified Jesus means that death is included in the revelation of God’s eternal being as a special and unique event. By becoming incarnate God enters the realm of the transitory and perishable. God enters most fully into the struggle with nothingness (that Jüngel sees as the struggle between being and non-being) on the cross. In God’s identification with the crucified Jesus, ‘God’s life does not exclude death but includes it’. \(^{192}\) At the cross, in Jesus Christ, there is both the possibility of becoming and the threat of being drawn by nothingness into annihilation.

God struggles against nothingness by showing it where its place is . . . God gives nothingness a place within being by taking it on himself. In that God identified himself with the dead Jesus, he located nothingness within the divine life . . . God is that one who can bear and does bear, can suffer and does suffer, in his being the annihilating power of nothingness, even the negation of death, without being annihilated by it. In God nothingness loses its negative attraction and thus its annihilating effect. \(^{193}\)

By identifying with the dead man Jesus, God (as love) both locates nothingness within the divine life and makes it possible for humanity to share in God’s life. The struggle between possibility and nothingness is inherent within the being of the perishable but in the struggle between being and non-being within historical reality there is also the possibility that ‘God loves the creature through death to eternal life’. \(^{194}\)

The risk remains that, by drawing nothingness into the divine life, Jüngel is, in effect, affirming nothingness and giving nothingness power over God. Jüngel is careful to make the

\(^{187}\) Jüngel, *GMW*, 22C.

\(^{188}\) ‘God defined himself as love on the cross of Jesus, God is love (1 John 4:8)’. (Jüngel, *GMW*, 220).

\(^{189}\) Jüngel, *GMW*, 215. ‘Being for others he is identical with himself.’ (Ibid.).

\(^{190}\) Freedom is a ‘constitutive moment in love’. (Jüngel, *GMW*, 221). In Hegel’s dialectic, the essence of absolute Spirit is that, as subject, it reveals and manifests itself, that it ‘shows itself in and for what is other and so becomes objective to itself’. (Kasper, *God of Jesus Christ* 192). In contrast, Jüngel understands God as a *a priori* objective to God and God as objective to humanity from God’s free choice.

\(^{191}\) Jüngel, *GMW*, 22C-22.

\(^{192}\) Jüngel, *GMW*, 220. ‘Perishability as the struggle between possibility and nothingness, the struggle between the capacity of the possible and the undertow toward nothingness’. (Ibid., 217).


\(^{194}\) O’Donovan, ‘Mystery of God’, 264. ‘If God is to be thought as present in this struggle, then we are to set our hopes in good faith on the outcome of the struggle in favor of that which is truly affirmative in perishability.’ (Jünger, *GMW*, 225).
following points. Firstly, although God submits to perishability because God involves God in nothingness, God’s being does not first become love in order to counter nothingness. Secondly, the difference between God and nothingness is constituted by God. Nothingness is not ‘equally original with God’, thus does not become a ‘counter-God’. Thirdly, the difference between being and non-being is a ‘struggle within being’ which can only be decided by God’s involvement in the struggle ‘in such a way that he is present in unity with perishability’. To be in the struggle between nothingness and possibility does not contradict God’s deity but corresponds to it. God exists in the struggle between nothingness and possibility. God is perishable in the sense of capacity and promise. Despite these qualifications, it has been claimed that Jüngel refuses to begin his theology with Jesus Christ as the norm for truth and gives nothingness a reality it does not have. In his essay ‘The Revelation of the Hiddenness of God’, Jüngel, while considering Barth’s handling of the problem of evil to be the best on offer, still finds Barth’s doctrine of nothingness unsatisfying because, in his opinion, it involves an inherent contradiction. As far as Barth is concerned, God does not work in or with nothingness, God works against it. Nothingness is consigned to the past through the death and resurrection of Jesus and awaits destruction at the end of the age. Jüngel asks ‘how can something occur under the control of God which is nevertheless directed against his order?’ Jüngel agrees with Barth that ‘one can begin to understand evil theologically only when one recognizes it as that which has been negated, repudiated, and doomed to be defeated by God’s “Yes” to his creation’. Despite this, Jüngel asks how such a contradiction can be sustained given Barth’s notion that nothingness is what it is by God’s non-willing (and is therefore empty).

The claim has been made that to allow suffering and tragedy into the divine life is to ‘affirm [suffering and tragedy], and so to deny the central character of Christianity as a religion of

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195 Jüngel, GMW, 222-224.
196 Jüngel, GMW, 216/7.
197 See Molnar, Divine Freedom, 264. Against Jüngel, Molnar affirms Barth’s refusal to accept any suggestion that non-being can belong to the essence of God because darkness and nothingness can have no existence in the light of Christ. (Ibid., 264).
198 Jüngel, RHD, 138-40.
199 Jüngel, RHD, 139.
200 Barth, CD. III/1, 289, cited by Jüngel, RHD, 138. See also, CD. II/3, 351,362; CD. IV/1, 409. On Jüngel’s explication of the nature of evil, see Jüngel, Justification, 103-110.
201 Jüngel, RHD, 138/9. Barth attempts to make the contradiction understandable with the assistance of Luther’s distinction between God’s opus alienum and God’s opus proprium which is nothingness having form and space only as the object of God’s opus alienum. (Ibid., 139).
redemption'. In response to such criticism, Jüngel argues that nothingness is conquered at the cross and as such is incorporated into the divine life. Jüngel is not affirming nothingness per se but the disarming of nothingness at the cross. Nothingness does not necessarily have to imply annihilation but may be seen as both negative and positive. Following Luther, Jüngel understands the death of Christ as 'the death of death.' But does this address the problem of how nothingness is taken up into the divine life? Although it is clear that nothingness does not necessarily mean annihilation and is conquered at the cross, is it also affirmed in the process of being incorporated into the divine life? According to Jüngel, nothingness is not destroyed but is drawn into God’s history. ‘Once it is taken up into God’s being, it creatively sets for itself a new function. It receives its own determination and thus loses its abstract emptiness and its phantomly attraction.’ Jüngel sees the localizing of nothingness within the divine being as an act of divine self-determination. How does God’s self-determination as love connect with nothingness receiving its own determination? Jüngel sees the determination of nothingness as ‘nothing other than concrete negation... In its determination as concrete negation, nothingness receives the new function of raising the possibilities of being to a new level of power.’ Presumably this means that nothingness becomes part of the ‘becoming’ intrinsic to God. Is nothingness, as it were, absorbed or does it participate in the divine life and if so, what effect does it have? As far as humanity is concerned, the victory over death (as the ‘object of faith’s hope’) is based on God’s identification with the death of Jesus. The question remains whether nothingness (as the inability to become) achieves a neutral status or is incorporated into the divine ‘becoming’ which, in Jüngel’s understanding, is inherent within God’s being. The latter option seems to be inevitable if God’s life includes death.

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202 Colin E. Gunton, The Promise of Trinitarian Theology, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), xxi. In this instance, Gunton is not referring to Jüngel but to Peter Hodgson. However, such a statement could be applied to Jüngel as, in Jüngel’s analysis, nothingness is definitely taken up into the divine life.

203 Jüngel, DRM, 116. The phrase ‘death of death’ is used by both Luther and Hegel. In Hegel’s schema, divine Being, understood as Absolute Spirit, posits its opposite in its own essential being. Hegel posits an internal movement of differentiation which posits its own opposite (as non hostile), which is followed by an external movement which creates a space between the finite and the infinite (as alien negativity), which is then followed by a return which negates the negation: ‘In the death of Jesus Christ “this death of death... the negative of the negative” takes place’. (Jüngel, GMW, 93, citing Hegel, Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion, III, 93). For Jüngel’s interpretation of Hegel’s understanding of death, see GMW, 92ff. See also, Paul S. Fiddes, The Creative Suffering of God (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 233ff.

204 Jüngel, GMW, 219.

205 Jüngel, GMW, 219.

206 It is the ‘transformation of death through its reception into that life which is called eternal life’. Jüngel calls the turning around of death on the cross of Christ a ‘Phenomenon of God’. (Jüngel, GMW, 364). See also, Jüngel, ‘Vom Tod des lebendigen Gottes’, 123f.
4.2.3 Godlessness, Suffering and Reconciliation

Jüngel’s understanding of reconciliation is deeply relational. The cross and resurrection are an event because of the differentiation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is through the relation of the three divine Persons that God is love in the three days of Easter. God chooses to enter a state of relationlessness in order to reconcile the fractured relationship between God and humanity which is caused by sin.207 Sin is relationlessness because humanity and God are in contradiction; human existence is characterized by opposition to God,208 resulting in a lack of relation. According to Jüngel, assuming the relationlessness of death is the greatest act of God’s revelation as love. Because Jüngel equates sin with relationlessness, on the cross, God in Christ takes on the condition of sin as he takes on the condition of death. By identifying himself with the dead Jesus, God exposed himself to the alienating power of death thus exposing his own divinity to the power of negation. By taking the godlessness and guilt of humanity upon himself he both opposes and contradicts them.209 In God’s movement towards humanity, God in Jesus Christ subjects himself to this contradiction and overcomes it on the cross. This is possible only within a trinitarian framework; without the concept of differentiation within unity the cross cannot happen within the being of God. Jüngel makes it clear that we are not dealing with the instantiation of a particular idea, thus making the cross into a particular instance only of the suffering of God, rather, it is an event in history whereby God overcomes sin and evil.210 The justification of the godless by God takes place as a specific event: in a particular history.211

Because God identifies God with the dying and dead Jesus, the cross and resurrection must be seen as an event of relation. Jüngel’s Lutheran view insists that the unity of the two natures in the person of Jesus Christ must not remain abstracted from ‘a real event happening between the divine and human nature’. The personal unity is to be understood as the ‘differentiated unity of one event’.212 Contra Hegel, Jüngel insists that this unity is restricted...
to the person of Jesus Christ. The accent is therefore on the action of the three divine Persons rather than Jüngel’s conception of how the divine and human can be unified in Jesus. God is involved in the particular event of the cross. By taking finitude (and therefore death) up into his own being, God makes the cross the ontological location of God’s being. As Alan Lewis phrases it, the cross and grave are God’s own loci. This affirmation becomes contentious if a construal of the triduum mortis lends itself to an interpretation of the cross as determining the identity of God. Given that Lewis seems to push this point even further than Jüngel, the question becomes whether this is all God is. Both Jüngel and Lewis draw on Barth but Lewis also follows Moltmann in a direction that Jüngel declines to take. While Jüngel may agree that the cross and grave are God’s own loci in that the deity of God is revealed in the cross and grave and even defined by it (this is who God is), he would assert that the trinitarian God determines the cross and resurrection. Despite Molnar’s strictures, the immanent Trinity, in effect, has priority over the economic Trinity. However, it could also be said that, as Jüngel understands nothingness (a simile for death) to be taken up into the divine life, God becomes the locus of the cross and grave as a consequence of the triduum mortis.

Jüngel demonstrates that the subject of Christ’s suffering, death and burial, is divine; the cross and grave are a trinitarian affair. But is Jüngel’s notion of identity adequate to the task that Jüngel gives it? On the one hand, Jüngel states in Death: The Riddle and the Mystery that ‘[i]t is this paradoxical identity between the living God and the dead Jesus...’ Hegel’s view that through the incarnation and death of God there comes the resurrection of an absolute spirit which transforms the unity of divine and human nature into a universal must be disputed by theology as a threat to the concrete being of Jesus Christ and to the proper distinction between God and man’. (Jüngel, GMW, 97).


215 Weinandy comments in a particularly scathing review of Lewis’ magnum opus that Lewis sees the events of the cross as residing within the Trinity and ‘formative of its own divine life’. (Thomas Weinandy, ‘Easter Saturday and the Suffering of God: The Theology of Alan E. Lewis’, International Journal of Systematic Theology, 5 (2003), 62-76 at 64). While Lewis draws on Jüngel in his own theology of the cross, Lewis has God shaped by the cross in a way that Jüngel does not. Weinandy is critical of Jüngel also. Weinandy’s own view is that the events of the cross and burial happen within Christ’s human nature only. (See, Ibid., 66). 216 Lewis cites Moltmann as inheriting but transcending Barth’s conceptuality. According to Lewis, while for Barth, ‘eternity makes space for time, for Moltmann, conversely, the temporal adds to and enriches the eternal... through historical involvement the divine life experiences increments of Godhood; greater glory, deeper joy, fuller being’. (Lewis, Between Cross and Resurrection, 216). While Lewis is approving of such sentiments, Jüngel does not have this sense of developmental increase; God becomes what God already is. Cf. Balthasar’s notion of enrichment.

217 See above, 72ff.

218 ‘For this man Jesus is the essence of suffering human-kind... In his history we recognize who God is because God has identified himself with this man. Whoever sees him thus sees God.’ (Jüngel, ‘Christian Understanding’, 9).
which brings God himself into contact with death. In this meeting with death God himself
did not die'. 219 Soon after, in the same volume, he declares that ‘God, through love shares
the pain of death . . . God’s becoming man implies that God shares with man the misery of
death’. He goes on to say that we cannot speak of the resurrection without proclaiming
Christ’s death as the ‘event of salvation’. 220 For Jüngel, in order for the event to be salvific,
God has to be involved at the lowest point of Christ’s suffering. 221 However, it is not totally
clear whether this means that the Son shares this misery with Jesus (as the historical
predicate of the Logos) and thus takes on the risk inherent within finitude while God the
Father risks the pain of separation in a different way. It is also unclear how the Holy Spirit
enters into this risk and misery. Jüngel’s somewhat underdeveloped construal of the Holy
Spirit as divine Person becomes apparent at this juncture. The risk is that the Holy Spirit
becomes simply a principle of unity rather than a divine Person. Alan Torrance asks why
suffering should not relate to some common ground that can be predicated of both the divine
and the human natures of Christ, such as love. 222 Jüngel does attribute love to the divine and
human natures of Christ. Love is, for Jüngel, not simply one of God’s attributes, but what
God is in both essence and existence. God’s act and being are bound together by the one
concept. However, this bonding of the divine and human in love has led to the criticism that
the concepts of love and selflessness drive God. According to Molnar, both Jüngel and
Lewis ‘allow selflessness, abstractly considered, to define God’s free selfless love for us
exercised in Christ and the Spirit’. 223 This stricture may have some justification but the fact
that Jüngel’s understanding of love is tied so closely to the notion of event (the act of God in
Christ within history) means that the triadum mortis cannot descend into mythology or mere
abstraction.

In Jüngel’s construal of Christ’s suffering, God identifies with temporality and perishing and
yet remains God throughout. In Lewis’ estimation, Barth hesitates before the ‘ontological

219 Jüngel, DRM, 108. Jüngel claims that, in order to be theologically responsible, speech about the death of
God must not be abstracted from speech about the living God. (See Jüngel, ‘Vom Tod des lebendigen Gottes,’
94). The proper basis for speech about God is God’s unity with perishability. (See Jüngel, GMW, 184f.). Cf.
Gekeuzigten’, Evangelische Theologie Nov/Dec. 1978, 510-517 at 517, s.v. 12.4; ‘Vom Tod des lebendigen
Gottes’, 104.
220 Jüngel, DRM, 110
221 In this, Jüngel is in agreement with Balthasar.
222 Alan Torrance, ‘Does God Suffer? Incarnation and Impassibility’ in Christ in Our Place: The Humanity of
God in Christ for the Reconciliation of the World, ed. Trevor Hart and Daniel Thimell (Exeter: Paternoster
223 Molnar, Divine Freedom, 270.
implications of Christ’s grave as signifying death for God'. Jüngel, it seems, is more willing to let perishability and disruption into God’s own triune life but what happens to the perichoretic relationship? Gunton argues that the priority of redemption is undermined if there is, by any ‘breach of perichoresis; any suggestion that there is a rift in God’. He argues that if the perichoresis is genuine and is ‘grounded in the economy of God’s action’, it is within this act that the Father ‘must be seen both to command and to suffer his Son’s total identification with man under judgement’. There can be neither contradiction nor rupture in the trinitarian relations. As far as Gunton is concerned, Jüngel’s talk of radical interruption goes too far; the divine freedom is at risk and God becomes too vulnerable. Gunton sees the cry of dereliction, not as a rupture of relations between God and God but the ‘climax of the Son’s obedience’, a view which bears some similarity to Balthasar’s idea that the cross and burial are the deepest point of surrender and therefore joy within the Trinity.

Jüngel is effectively saying that, on the cross, God has an experience of relationlessness without the collapse of the intra-divine relations. He maintains that

in the death of Jesus, the eternal God is, in fact, perishing. But... God does not alienate himself from himself... Rather, God alienates death and perishing... God’s being continues to come while in the midst of perishing... God thus remains related to himself as origin and goal, as Father and as Son and thus does not cease to come from God to God... that is the third mode of being of God, God the Holy Spirit.

The power to ‘become’ or come is the positive thing about perishing; it remains, as it were, a point of solidarity and unity within the Trinity which stands against annihilation. The relationlessness of death is not absolute. Does this mean that the source of God’s coming to God as God (the source of unity) is the Father (as origin) or the Holy Spirit? Jüngel intimates that the trinitarian relations remain operative through the Holy Spirit even in the event of perishing. God continues to come because of the power of the Holy Spirit which could be

224 Lewis, Cross and Resurrection, 214.
225 Gunton, Act and Being, 130. Gunton understands God’s impassibility as the indefectibility of God’s purposes for the perfection of God’s creation.
226 Gunton, Act and Being, 129. Gunton makes the point that the relation between Father and Son is, and remains, mediated by the Spirit, while the relation between the Son and the world is distorted by sin and evil. In Gunton’s understanding, it is the Spirit who enables Jesus’ suffering to be redemptive and brings about the eschatological significance of Jesus suffering and ‘therefore truly the Father’s sovereign action’. (Ibid., 129/30).
227 Gunton, Act and Being, 127.
228 See above, 158.
229 Jüngel, GMW, 387/8.
termed the power of the possible. However, Webster argues that, in God as Mystery of the World, Jüngel attributes relationship, coming and history to the divine Persons in 'a rather easy way', along with what Webster terms an 'evasive treatment' of what makes the Holy Spirit a third divine Person.230

A potential difficulty suggests itself at this point. In his emphasis on the trinitarian relations, does Jüngel depict God as constituted by a principle of relationality? Does such a principle (expressed as love) take precedence over God’s triune being as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Molnar is concerned that, in Jüngel’s theology, relationality may be seen to define God, resulting in a general principle of relationality driving theology rather than a doctrine of the triune God.231 If this were the case, it would be logical to assume that such a principle of relationality could be expressed outside the trinitarian framework232 a framework which, for Jüngel, is most powerfully expressed in the cross of Jesus. If a God-centred relationality is presupposed and a theology of the cross is mandatory (as it is for Jüngel) then we cannot be dealing with a general principle of relationality but a particular expression of what is intrinsic to God. Jüngel insists that the statement that ‘God is love’ is irreversible in that one cannot then say ‘love is God’.233 It is God who must initiate love ‘because he alone can begin to love without any reason, and always has begun to love’. It is in the sending and surrender of the Son that ‘God demonstrates that he is love itself . . . In an irremovable differentiation within himself, he is lover and beloved. In Johannine language, he is God the Father and God the Son’.234 However, ‘God is not only a loving I and a beloved Thou. God is rather the radiant event of love itself’. Jüngel speaks of God as Spirit in the event of a separation of Father and Son in which God remains the living God. He insists that ‘[o]nly in this threefold differentiation of the being of God does the statement that God is love become

230 John Webster, 'Eberhard Jüngel: God as the Mystery of the World. On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism', review of God as the Mystery of the World. On the Foundation of the Theology of the Crucified One in the Dispute between Theism and Atheism' Scottish Journal of Theology, 39 (1986), 551-556 at 555. In Webster's opinion 'the notions of selfhood and agency are notoriously difficult to apply here'. He maintains that Jüngel is apt to 'assume that 'person' means roughly the same as in the case of intentional human agents, some kind of (albeit qualified) combination of self, will and 'experience'”. (Ibid.)

231 See Molnar, Divine Freedom, 126/7.

232 Jüngel cites Regin Prenter as saying that 'the love of God can only be expressed in the conceptuality of the trinitarian dogma. For to love God as he himself loves can be done only by God himself'. (Regin Prenter, “Der Gott, der Liebe ist; Das Verhältnis der Gotteslehre zur Christologie,” Theologische Literaturzeitung, 96 (1971), 401, cited by Jüngel, GMW, 316).

233 Jüngel, GMW, 316.

234 Jüngel, GMW, 327. In contrast to Balthasar, Jüngel almost exclusively appeals to the Synoptic Gospels and makes very little use of either Pauline or Johannine christology. (See Webster, ‘Who God is (II)’, 1220).
Rather than a self-enclosed love, this love, through the Spirit, radiates out beyond this threefold relationship to include what is not God. In the crucified Jesus, the Father loves his Son in his identity with humanity; God is seen to be love in identification with the humanity of Jesus. If this identification was between God and humanity per se without the mediation of the God-man, more credence could be given to the criticism that a general principle of relationality drives Jüngel’s theology. The validity of this identification depends on the primacy of God’s initiative. If the immanent Trinity is subsumed into the economic Trinity there is indeed a danger that the general principle of relationality could assume priority in theology. As noted in Chapter Two, Molnar maintains this to be a danger in Jüngel’s theology because of his acceptance of Rahner’s axiom and its obverse.

4.2.4 Resurrection as Transformation
Jüngel’s comprehension of continuity and discontinuity in the trinitarian relations and his understanding of resurrection shape each other. Despite his construal of revelation as interruptive, Jüngel affirms a sense of continuity between the mystery of God in se and God pro nobis and the mystery of relations within the Trinity. There is also continuity in the fact that God never ceases to be love. While God comes as event, it is always as God. Is the resurrection itself an interruptive event or is it simply a smoothing out of the interruption of death? In what sense is the resurrection of Jesus a continuation of the life of Jesus? In his understanding of the resurrection, Jüngel posits the following: first, it is the activity of God which reveals the new through the power of the Holy Spirit in the resurrection; second, the resurrection is that becoming new which is in correspondence with who God is; God reveals ‘his very being’ as a ‘being of infinite love’ which gives new life to the dead236; third, as the capability to become, possibility is supremely manifest in the resurrection; fourth, the resurrection affirms God’s identification with the crucified Jesus.

Jüngel’s understanding of the resurrection is informed by how he conceives Jesus Christ as God and as man to be radically involved with nothingness on the cross. The resurrection of Jesus is the supreme demonstration of the ontological primacy of possibility, the result of the transforming power and act of God. The resurrection is not simply a reversal of Jesus’ death on the cross or the reversal of annihilation. The possibility of renewal already exists in

235 Jüngel, GMW, 328/9.
236 Jüngel, DRM, 109/10. Because Jüngel equates sin and death and therefore nothingness with relationlessness, if there is no relation there is no becoming because nothingness is the inability to become.
nothingness as the positive aspect of perishability. This is not to say that Christ failed to face
the full power of nothingness but that God alone can deal with its power. For Jüngel, the
event of resurrection is grounded in the correspondence of God’s essence and God’s
existence. God is capable of becoming something of himself; the resurrection shows the
power of becoming new which is inherent within God’s being. The Holy Spirit, who cannot
be divorced from the crucified and risen Jesus, is the ‘active and transforming presence of
God’. Jüngel claims that, in the resurrection, the issue is not only that of divine action but
‘of the divine being itself’. It is for this reason that ‘this event is sui generis not a worldly
event among others, but rather the “turning point of the world”’. He sees the turning around
of death into life to be the ‘very essence of love’. Love alone can turn death around because
it is love alone which can involve itself in the absolute starkness of death (1 John 3:16).

The significance of the resurrection, for Jüngel, hinges in part on his notion of ‘becoming’ in
God. Its significance also depends on the role that Jüngel gives to the Holy Spirit. Of God’s
becoming man in Jesus Christ and thus, as creature, being exposed to perishing, Jüngel asks
whether God’s being-in-becoming is, in this instance, a being unto death. He avers that the
New Testament itself answers this question with the proclamation of the death and
resurrection of Jesus. It is here, ‘where God’s being-in-becoming was swallowed up in
perishing, the perishing was swallowed up in the becoming . . . With this ‘Yes’ to man God
remains in the event of the death of Jesus Christ true to himself as the triune God’. While
Jüngel describes the Spirit as the ‘constantly new event of love between the Father and the
Son’, he also depicts the Spirit as the eternally new relationship between Father and Son.
This poses the question whether this relationship is new in a different way after the cross.
Jüngel appears to be saying that without the Holy Spirit, the relationlessness of death would
be permanent, even within God. It is the Father, through the Spirit, who raises Jesus from
death; without the Spirit there would be no resurrection. Without both differentiation and
unity within the Trinity, the resurrection would be impossible. There is no suggestion with
Jüngel that the trinitarian relations suffer annihilation; the possibility of life within death is
always there even in the extremity of crucifixion. It is through God’s identification with the

237 Alasdair I.C. Heron, The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the Bible, the History of Christian Thought and
238 Jüngel, GMW, 364, 302f.
239 Jüngel, GMW, 375.
dead Jesus that ‘God’s life does not exclude death but includes it’. Jüngel comprehends identification as an event in which the God who is related within himself, relates himself to, while being distinguished from, the man Jesus. Although Jüngel does not make Christ’s burial a particular issue as does Balthasar, he still sees death as a radical interruption of life that requires more than a mere reversal to right the situation. The Holy Spirit, as the power of the possible, is essential to the capacity to become that belongs within God. The possibility inherent within the Person and action of the Spirit is the possibility of life within death.

And as the Spirit which brings the dead to life, the Holy Spirit of God is the creative power of renewal which reverses the movement from life to death by which earthly existence is defined, and leads from death into life, from non-being into being.

The resurrection is neither a reversal of the crucifixion per se (because the perichoretic relationship does not cease to exist) nor the repair of a collapsed relationship (because the livingness within the being of God is maintained by the Holy Spirit). If either were the case, the resurrection would have little to say to the suggestion that in the death of Jesus (as Son), God ceases to exist. Although Jüngel speaks of the death of God (as the incarnate Son), his trinitarian framework makes it abundantly clear that God is more than the events of the incarnation. Jüngel leaves relatively unexplored the connection between his theology of the cross and the Person and work of Holy Spirit. While he recognizes the activity of the Spirit in the resurrection, there is little overt recognition that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of the cross. In Jüngel’s pneumatology, the accent is on the resurrection and the Spirit’s work in the believer. Jesus was raised from the dead ‘in order to work among us from then on through his Word and Spirit’. However, Jüngel’s pneumatology is crucial to his

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241 Jüngel, EN, 55.
242 ‘For we understood God’s self-love as that event which was consummated in the selflessness of the death of the eternal Son of God’. (Jüngel, GMW, 385). For how Jüngel sees the meaning of the death of God for God, see ‘Vom Tod’, 105f. According to Jüngel, ‘when God does not cease relating to us, even in death, then that means that he contradicts the relationlessness of death with his own being. In this selfless self-involvement of God, he betrays who he is’. (Jüngel, GMW, 220, note 65). See Eberhard Jüngel, ‘Das dunkle Wort’, Evangelische Kommentare, 2:4 (1969), 198-202 at 199f.
244 Jüngel, Justification, 16.
theology of the cross; the ‘union of death and life for the sake of life’ would be impossible without the Holy Spirit maintaining the relationship between Father and Son.245

The resurrection reveals the death of the Crucified One to be the ‘death of death’ as an event of God’s love for the benefit of humanity.246 The resurrection has a strong epistemic force for Jüngel; the resurrection both manifests and vindicates God’s identification with the man Jesus. It is the resurrection which explicitly discloses to faith in Jesus that in this man we see God. It is because the resurrection has such epistemic significance that it can be said to shape the human imagination. Without the presence of the risen Christ to his disciples and, in faith, to Christ’s disciples throughout history, the triduum mortis could not be said to provide a paradigm for the Christian imagination. The imaginative force of the resurrection pervades the whole of Christian life. It is because of the resurrection that the ‘appropriate response to the cross of Jesus Christ is the hymn of praise and thanks, not the lament; it is hope, not resignation’.247 This is because, for Jüngel, the resurrection of Jesus Christ enables our participation in his life and resurrection.248 From the point of view of the resurrection, the cross of Jesus can be seen as a ‘victory over darkness, as the death of death (mors mortis), the cross of Jesus is the justification of the world’. Jüngel declares that, ‘the Easter hymn summarizes it most powerfully and profoundly: If he had not risen, the world would have perished. If you have grasped that, you have grasped the doctrine of justification’.249 We participate in the new beginning that has become a reality in Jesus Christ because of the resurrection. Without the resurrection there would be no justification of the sinner. Jüngel declares that this beginning ‘can only be compared to a new birth or resurrection from the dead. In him there is a genuine being born again, in him the new life, resurrected from the dead, really begins . . . (2 Cor. 5:14f.)’.250 Jüngel claims that the future, ‘with all its eschatological possibilities . . . has already been opened to the believer by the resurrection of

246 Jüngel, GMW, 93
247 Jüngel, GMW, 374.
248 Rom 6: 4
249 Jüngel, Justification, 12/13. Luther claims that without the justification article, the world is nothing but death and darkness. (Ibid., 12). ‘God is the end of our temporal being in the death of Jesus Christ . . . as the alpha, the eternal Son of God is also the omega. Time ends in death. In death, being ceases. In his identity with the dead man Jesus, he eternal Son of God is the end of all time and is the cessation of all being. For in this one death, all dying is collected together and all perishing is integrated.’ (Jüngel, GMW, 385).
250 Jüngel, Justification, 88.
Jesus from the dead'. Jungel sees this solely as an act of God. As God raises Jesus from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit, God brings about this new beginning (new birth) in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament is written from the perspective of resurrection. While for Jungel, the crucified Christ is always the resurrected Christ, the accent is on the crucifixion. Is Jungel’s adoption of the Western tradition of conceiving of the Holy Spirit as the vinculum caritatis, or bond of love, valid in the face of his theology of the cross? It is the Holy Spirit as vinculum caritatis that allows for the identification of God with perishability without the loss of relational unity within the Trinity. In this sense, the resurrection is in continuity with the crucifixion. While Jungel has love as a conceptual abstraction that is used to understand the God who, on the cross, identifies himself with nothingness, Jungel locates the Holy Spirit as love more concretely as a function of the relation between the Father and the Son within the trinitarian dynamic itself. Two potential difficulties remain. Firstly, while Jungel understands Christ as conquering nothingness on the cross, the part taken by the Holy Spirit in this conquest is far from clear. Secondly, is the resurrection part of this conquest or does it simply validate what has already happened? It appears to be the latter but, if the resurrection opens up eschatological possibilities for the believer, is this part of a two-stage process? If this is the case the identification of Christ as crucified and risen is at risk. Jungel does not see the resurrection as temporally consecutive to the death of Jesus; its primary function is to disclose the relation of God to the death of Jesus of Nazareth. Once again, Jungel is concerned with the motif of identification. Resurrection language is ‘a way of talking about Jesus’ death’. If this interpretation is correct it is difficult to see the resurrection as an event which changes the situation of the believer in any way. The resurrection is surely an event of transformation; the same imaginative faculty which allows us to imagine God and death together must lead us to see the resurrection as a genuine transformation into a new form of life. The hope of the believer, for life out of death, rests on the resurrection of Jesus.

With the proviso that we do not forget the christological concentration of Jungel’s thinking and his assertion that God is intrinsically mysterious, the following can be said of Jungel’s

251 Jungel, Justification, 224/5.
252 Badcock, Light of Truth, 188. See Jungel, GMW, 388.
253 Webster goes on to state that the identification of God with Jesus which is disclosed at the resurrection extends back into the life Jesus lived, thus illustrating ‘the continuity between the earthly Jesus and the exalted Lord which Jungel is at pains to stress’. (Webster, Eberhard Jungel, 33/4).
254 Webster, Eberhard Jungel, 88/9.
treatment of the *triduum mortis*. (1) In connection with the past events of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the believer must rethink his or her notion of God in light of God’s identification with Jesus Christ. (2) God is the only one who can authentically speak about God. Human thought follows God’s self-revelation in Jesus Christ, therefore any talk of the imagination must accept the divine revelation in Jesus Christ as a legitimate boundary and control. (3) The imagination *qua* imagination is both reproductive and constructive. For Jüngel, faith refers back to the crucified Jesus thus allowing God as the absent one to be present to the believer. Because Jüngel sees faith as God’s gift, it could only be the work of the Holy Spirit within the imagination enabling the believer to experience the presence of God. (4) Jüngel would have us see the positive within what is outwardly negative; the power of the possible within perishability. Once again, this is a faculty of the imagination which can be applied to the divine only through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Balthasar and Jüngel understand the *triduum mortis* from within a trinitarian framework. Balthasar uses the motifs of mission and *kenosis* to describe how God, in the person of Christ, descends into hell to be ‘with the dead’ in utter passivity. In contrast, Jüngel uses the motif of identification to portray God present in unity with perishability in an active struggle between being and non-being when nothingness is conquered at the cross. It is through the power of the Holy Spirit that God brings about transformation in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. There is no suggestion in the work of either theologian that the unaided imagination could bring about such a transformation. For Balthasar and Jüngel, the relation of God to humanity is demonstrated by initiative on the part of God and response on the part of human beings. For both Balthasar and Jüngel, God is capable of becoming something of himself. If this was not the case, there would be no possibility of resurrection either for Jesus or the believer. In Chapter Five we will continue to trace these motifs in the ways that Balthasar and Jüngel understand the transformed existence of the believer and the renewed community of the church.
Chapter Five: The Renewed Existence of Christian Life and the Church

This thesis has traced the part played by Balthasar’s motifs of mission and kenosis and Jüngel’s motif of identification in their respective understandings of the trinitarian relations and the triduum mortis. These major motifs continue to have a central role in their respective analyses of personhood and renewed existence. As will become apparent later in the chapter, Jüngel’s notion of renewed existence depends to a large extent on one of the major themes of his theology, that of justification. Chapters Three and Four demonstrated the following: (1) both Balthasar and Jüngel see the vision of God as love to be grounded in the trinitarian relations as they are manifested in the economy; as revelation-centred theologians, Balthasar and Jüngel have their theology shaped by that which God has self-disclosed; (2) they both take a trinitarian conception of God revealed in the paschal mystery as their foundation; their theologies take divergent paths while remaining true to their common centre in revelation; (3) the intra-divine relations, that is God’s self-revelation, are most evident in the triduum mortis. The events of the triduum mortis reveal both the Father/Son relation and the Person and function of the Holy Spirit but the former is less problematic than the latter. The imagination, conceived of as a pattern-making or paradigmatic function, can be understood to be the locus of revelation. Understood in this way, any notion of transformation, including that of spiritual transformation, cannot ignore the human imagination. Despite the fact that neither Balthasar nor Jüngel speak of the imagination in this way, it might be that their respective theologies allow for a specific paradigm for the Christian imagination. This thesis suggests that the triduum mortis might provide the content for an imaginative paradigm which shapes the renewed existence of both the believer and the church.

Chapter Five has two main purposes: first, to trace how Balthasar and Jüngel continue to employ their primary motifs in their particular versions of renewed existence in Christ; second, to suggest a possible way to understand the involvement of the human imagination in Balthasar’s and Jüngel’s particular treatments of renewed existence, with special emphasis on their respective construals of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. Both Balthasar and Jüngel affirm the premise that human personhood, that is renewed existence, is grounded in the person of Christ. Whereas Balthasar’s understanding of renewed existence is rooted in his understanding of mission, for Jüngel, renewed existence is grounded in the doctrine of justification. The relation between divine and human life becomes, for Balthasar, a question
of human participation in the inner divine life and, for Jüngel, a question of sharing in God’s righteousness. Throughout this discussion, if the human imagination is to have a meaningful role in the living out of our renewed existence in Christ, then the Person and work of the Holy Spirit is a pivotal issue. The way that Balthasar and Jüngel theorize the Person and work of the Holy Spirit constrains the role that can be given to the imagination in the living out of our renewed existence as human persons individually and in the church.

This chapter proceeds in two parts. The first part discusses Balthasar’s conviction that the renewal of existence is grounded in the person of Christ. This belief is worked out via his understanding of mission, a mission which begins with an encounter with the glory of God. The second part will address Jüngel’s argument that renewed existence is grounded in the person of Christ via the doctrine of justification, a justification which begins with God’s address to humanity. With some nuancing, both Balthasar and Jüngel understand the renewed existence of the Christian to come about at God’s initiative; the role of the human being is that of respondent. Human beings are able to make this response to God’s initiative because of the action of the Holy Spirit. Although neither Balthasar nor Jüngel speak of the Spirit in this way, the Holy Spirit can be understood as the agent of renewal within the human imagination understood to be the locus of revelation.

5.1 Hans Urs von Balthasar: Renewed Existence in Christ

According to Balthasar’s understanding, God has control over God’s own being; God is both perfect self-giving and perfect response within the Trinity. This model of self-giving and response permeates Balthasar’s understanding of the Christian life; it is encapsulated in the concept of mission, a concept which is grounded in the Son’s eternal procession from the Father and is economically worked out in the mission of Jesus. It is for the sake of his mission that Jesus is the particular human being who lives, dies, is buried, and is raised from death. It is by receiving his mission from the Father in the Holy Spirit that Jesus knows his identity as Son. Because the historical mission of Jesus is grounded in the eternal filial relationship, his mission gives a form and structure to Jesus’ life. The same is to be true of believers: they are to be shaped by their God-given mission. While it is only the God-man whose life and mission are fused within his person, the notions of mission and personhood are closely linked in Balthasar’s understanding of the renewed life. It is at this point that
Balthasar's pneumatology becomes critical. His portrayal of the trinitarian relations emphasizes the mutual affirmation of otherness between the three divine Persons. The Holy Spirit, as the mutual love of the Father and the Son, communicates the divine love to humanity; the Holy Spirit enables us to share in God's mission. This connection between the action of the Spirit and the mission of the Son is crucial for Balthasar's depiction of renewal. The Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, is the Spirit of renewal. The events of the triduum mortis are made real and present to the believer through the Holy Spirit. Transformation is the work of both Word and Spirit.

5.1.1 The Encounter with God's Glory: The Spirit as the Ecstasy of God
Transformation into a renewed existence in Christ, for Balthasar, begins with an encounter with God's glory. The encounter with God's glory moves from 'form/expression' to 'word/freedom' and finally to election, where election is a particular decision to change one's life.1 As has been noted in Chapter Two, Balthasar's Aesthetics is concerned with God's epiphany, characterized as the 'manifestation of his kabod (glory).2 From Balthasar's standpoint, the only way that we can 'see' God is by being 'rapt' and 'transported' toward God, by 'being transformed and drawn into his sphere'.3 This 'transport of the soul' must be understood in a stringently theological way; it is not a simple psychological response to something that is beautiful, encountered in the ordinary way through vision. It is a movement of ekstasis toward God through Christ, 'a movement founded on the divine light of grace in the mystery of Christ'.4 This movement toward God takes the form of a personal aesthetic encounter with God. Being discloses itself as the Beautiful, the True and the Good. For Balthasar, this is 'language at a root level'. However, the human person cannot experience this 'language' in a purely 'spiritual' sense; this can be done only through the ability a person has to 'read a form apprehended by his senses';5 hence, Balthasar claims that we can, in some measure, know God through God's creation.6 This refusal to bypass the senses is grounded in the bodily incarnation of Christ and, on an anthropological level, in the

1 Balthasar, TD:II, 30.
4 Balthasar, G.L.I, 121. For Balthasar, 'human existence is essentially ecstatic and kenotic: to stand and be active in God's service (kenotic dimension) one has to be enveloped and raptured by God's glory and love (ecstatic dimension)' (Johann Roten, SM, 'Marian Light on Our Human Mystery' in The Beauty of Christ: An Introduction to the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), 112-139 at 126).
5 Balthasar, TD:II, 26.
6 See Balthasar, TD:II, 26. For Balthasar, nature has a relative and provisional meaning of its own. On this point see Yeago, 'Literature', 92ff.
principle that all knowledge has a sensory base.\(^7\) While such provisos are undoubtedly necessary, how does Balthasar explain how such sensory knowledge is made accessible to the human subject when speaking of God? Although our access to God is mediated through Christ it is not the humanity of Christ per se that mediates God to us. We need the imagination in order to see the crucified Christ as God present in the world. It is here that the agency of the Holy Spirit is vitally important if a theological phenomenology such as Balthasar presents is to be truly theological. However, if the senses were all that we have, we could not see one thing as indicative of something else. Outside of faith, the sensible realities of the world do not necessarily speak of God.

Balthasar is well aware of the dangers inherent in his position. He distinguishes between two aesthetics. One aesthetic is 'first and foremost a theory of perception that understands particular beings as expressions . . . of the self-revealing Ground of Being'. In this aesthetic human beings express themselves by imitating the divine creative activity. The other aesthetic is a wholly anthropological aesthetic which is a 'primary doctrine of man's self-expression'; human creative activity causes what is originally inexplicable and silent to 'begin to speak'.\(^5\) Balthasar maintains that the former was the case in classical aesthetics from Plato to Hegel and that the latter is the case in modern aesthetic theories. He asserts that, while the second option may appear to be the best way to provide a preliminary understanding of the 'theological “appearance” of God [that is] in the final form of his revelation, in Jesus Christ’s dying, forsaken by God’, this would be a mistake. We are not to understand the cross as the ‘nonform’ (Ungestalt) within which we decipher, by faith, the ‘superform’ (Übergestalt) of trinitarian love that has become visible.\(^9\) Balthasar declares that 'after the event of Christ’s Cross, man is presented with a choice: hearing the cry of dereliction, he must “discern” either hidden love (shown in the Father’s surrender of the Son) or the meaningless void'.\(^10\) In order to discern the love of God hidden in the form of a dying man one has to look outside the human consciousness and its own creativity. We must also look within human consciousness and human creativity, in other words, we must consider the imagination. Two opposing dangers must be avoided. Firstly, the imagination as imagination is not enough; the imagination is the locus of revelation. Secondly, the imagination must not overstep its bounds; the imagination is not the agent of revelation.

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These two dangers are addressed by Balthasar in his avowal that form \textit{per se} cannot accomplish the renewal of existence.

Balthasar insists that form is not enough; wherever there is dialogue there must also be word.

The word steps forth from the hidden place where form can be understood as expression... such understanding presupposes freedom... furthermore, it requires a readiness to accept the message imparted by the form, a “faith” in the genuineness of the ground’s expression.\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{TD:II}, 24/5.}

In regarding the transition from ‘form’ to ‘word’, Balthasar claims that, ‘since the world contains so much horror, it would be pure aestheticism to lock ourselves in a realm of beautiful forms’.\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{TD:II}, 27.} He asserts an insight he gained from Barth: that evil and sin must always be taken into account.\footnote{Balthasar cites Barth as having included in Christian beauty ‘even the Cross and everything else which a worldly aesthetics (even of a realistic kind) discards as no longer bearable... it embraces the most abysmal ugliness of sin and hell by virtue of the condescension of divine love’. (Balthasar, \textit{GL:I}, 124).} In his theological aesthetics, Balthasar situates the ‘nonword’ of the cross at the ‘centre of the definitive divine Word’. He draws an analogy between an artist dealing with a form and God dealing with sin. He claims that, in the language of beauty and art, as in the ‘language of the Word-made-flesh - what we have is an already incarnated language of being and of concrete existence’.\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{TD:II}, 27/8.} What happens is that

the form and the word within it awaken and summon us; they awaken our \textit{freedom} and bid us attend to the call that comes to us from the form... the man who is confronted by the Word of God is endowed with freedom through this very encounter and is thus given greater responsibility to enter into the meaning that is being revealed in the Word. Saying No to a work of art has relatively no consequences. But saying No to God’s definitive and meaningful Word can turn into a judgement of the individual who freely ignores it.\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{TD:II}, 28/9.}

It can be said that the imagination is where, in the human being, the meaning is revealed in the word. While encounter is always at God’s initiative, the human being responds by freely choosing to use his or her imagination in a particular way. If renewed existence is to be renewed existence \textit{in Christ} then the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, must be involved.

According to Balthasar, it is not enough to be transformed by being drawn into God’s sphere. We must also live in response to the unique and authentic revelation which is gifted
to us. We are faced with a personal decision to change our life. It is when we pass over into the realm of drama that

a third element, election, must be added: no one is enraptured without returning, from this encounter, with a personal mission. The third element is latent in the first and second: God only shows himself to someone, only enraptures him, in order to commission him . . . Where a thing of beauty is really and radically beheld, freedom too is radically opened up, and decision can take place.  

Balthasar claims that the third element exhibits in the human person the transition from aesthetics to dramatic theory. It is at the centre of biblical revelation (in the ‘theo-dramatic form’ of Christ) that the vocabulary of aesthetics is fused with the language of dramatics. The personal sovereignty of God manifest in Jesus Christ must be understood as a specific act for or toward a particular being at a given time; God’s elective will cannot be discovered by way of human nature. The movement from aesthetics to drama is mirrored in the life of the believer; it is not the decision itself which is important, however, but the personal handing over to the ‘deciding reality’ whereby one lets oneself be marked by the unique encounter that is offered to one. For Balthasar, the ‘deciding reality’ is essentially the addressing God. One’s personal mission is therefore reflective of the surrender and ‘letting be’ within the intra-divine relations.

The communication of grace in the Holy Spirit is grounded in the incarnation of the Word in flesh and is therefore integral to the paschal mystery. In turn, the Johannine theology of the paschal mystery is central to Balthasar’s theology of divine kenosis. What is new in the New Testament is that the glory of God has taken concrete form in Jesus Christ. Christ represents the glory of God because, on the one hand, he is the perfect image of the glory of the Father (therefore, trinitarian glory), and on the other hand, he represents ‘the archetype of

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17 See Nichols, *No Bloodless Myth*, 55. While the drama displayed in revelation cannot be adequately secured by the propositional statements of doctrine, however crucial these are for our understanding, Balthasar also stresses that the drama also goes beyond the biblical texts. (Ibid.).
18 Roten, ‘Marian Light’, 122/3.
20 Through incarnation, the Word taking on flesh, Balthasar believes that the inner telex of God’s covenant with Israel is fulfilled. (Mongrain, *Systematic Thought*, 92). A perspective that is grounded in the biblical texts, particularly in Romans, Galatians and Hebrews. See GL: VI, 404/5; GL: VII, 812/2.
21 Balthasar’s understanding of the incarnation can be seen as a synthesis of Johannine theology and classical aesthetics where the former transfigures the latter. Balthasar ‘constructed a synthesis because for him kenotic theology is the primary engine of the New Testament’s Trinitarian reinterpretation of the Old Testament’s theology of Yahweh’s glory’. (Mongrain, *Systematic Thought*, 91).
all creaturely participation in the glory of God'.

Hence, it is ‘in Christ’ that we participate in God’s glory. God’s grace is an event of transformation that is effected ‘in Christ’ but, given Balthasar’s strongly trinitarian framework, when and how does this transformation occur? In Balthasar’s estimation, Barth transposed the transformative power of grace into an entirely eschatological reality. In contrast to Barth’s accent on the future, Balthasar sees the participation of the believer beginning in this life and extending in the life to come. He maintains that

God’s grace is a participation in his inner divine life. As such it raises the creature above and beyond any claims or longings it might possess. This participation is neither purely forensic nor purely eschatological, but is real, internal and present. It is an event that effects a transformation of the very being of the creature.

Balthasar understands faith as an acceptance and surrender which results in a transformation of one’s life. To exercise faith is to change from undertaking our own work to ‘allowing oneself to be worked upon’. This dynamic belongs in the centre of the believer’s life in the here and now. Redemption thus allows room for a continual change in the character of the disciple. The act of faith and the content of faith come together in unity. Faith is not only a matter of aesthetics; faith is also dramatic because it is part of the ongoing drama of the believer’s life. Transformation is ultimately the work of God. It is through faith in the Son that, ultimately, we are given the attitude that the Son has vis-à-vis the Father. Faith has its proper setting in life as ‘a movement of the entire person, leading away from himself through vision towards the invisible God’. A movement of the whole person must include his or her imagination. Balthasar is trying to counteract a restricted intellectualism that sees faith as primarily a ‘believing that’. Faith cannot be detached from obedience.

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23 See Balthasar, Karl Barth, 377/8.
24 See Balthasar, TKB, 356f. Oakes contends that Balthasar does not object to Barth’s christological focus per se but only to the way that Barth ‘exaggerates the communication between Christ and believer so that it really only goes in one direction and true mutuality is lost. Because of this exaggeration, Barth has a hard time explaining how the life from the vine enters into the innermost depths of the believer with a transformative power’. (Oakes, Pattern of Redemption, 678). Balthasar sees the doctrine of the bride of Christ as portraying true mutuality. The bride has the autonomy to say Yes on her own. (Ibid., 69).
26 Balthasar, GL:VII, 150. ‘In all its freedom, this faith is ‘the work of God’ himself . . . as such, it makes possible the interior participation in the life of the Trinity’. (Ibid., 385).
27 See Balthasar, TKB, 377/8
29 Balthasar, GL: I, 121.
30 O’Donnell, Hans Urs von Balthasar, 22. For Balthasar, ‘the act of faith is rational in that the data points one in the direction of seeing the form. But the power of synthesis comes not from the subject but from God’.
Faith ‘in Christ’ is possible because of the events of the triduum mortis. In Balthasar’s portrayal of the triduum mortis, neither being enraptured by God’s glory nor receiving one’s personal mission is divorced from either the exigencies of the triduum mortis or the demands of present reality. This commitment to historical realism includes the concreteness of Christ’s life, death and burial within the divine mystery that enraptures the human person. In consequence, Balthasar cannot be accused of making suffering and tragedy either illusory or something to be avoided at all costs. One of Balthasar’s strengths is his insistence that the darker side of existence must be treated with due seriousness. Because he recognizes that one’s commission by God includes the notion of suffering with Christ and one’s neighbour, he makes it clear that the way of the master must also be the way of the disciple. The believer is renewed ‘in Christ’ and is called to follow in his footsteps; what is true of the triduum mortis is not to be contradicted in the life of the disciple. The elements of crucifixion and resurrection are part of the believer’s renewed existence because the Spirit is the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ. The vision of divine glory which, for Balthasar, is centred on the mystery of the cross, burial, and resurrection of Jesus becomes for the believer a renewal which goes beyond a simple imitatio Christi. Only the Holy Spirit can make the connections between the triduum mortis and God’s glory. This thesis maintains that the imagination is the locus where these connections are made.

5.1.2 Renewed in Christ through the Spirit

It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that the believer participates in the divine life ‘in Christ’. Balthasar makes it clear that there is no point on Christ’s journey where the Spirit is deemed to be absent. It is fundamental to Balthasar’s interpretation of the Christian life that the Spirit given to believers embraces the totality of Christ. The Holy Spirit, as the Spirit of Christ, is the Spirit of renewal. The place and work of the Holy Spirit is integral to the mission of Jesus as an eschatological and universal mission, a mission which cannot be accomplished without the Father and the Spirit. The Spirit lays hold of the human person in a supernatural

(Ibid., 23). See above Chapter Two, 58ff. On faith and reason, see Chapp, ‘Revelation’, 22/3; Oakes, Pattern of Redemption, 27-33.

31 By an involvement with ‘eucharistic christocentrism’, what is tragic or painful is to be included in the totality which, for Balthasar, is a ‘trinitarian metanarrative of history’. (Mongrain, Systematic Thought, 68).

32 See Balthasar, TD:IV, 366/7.

33 ‘Balthasar’s notion of the dramatic totality not only allows but also calls for the recognition of apophasis. He wants us to accept in advance the possibility that there will be pools of mystery we cannot drain’. (Nicol, No Bloodless Myth, 61).
act, thus enabling him or her to grow in their life of faith.\textsuperscript{34} In Balthasar’s terms, the missionary synergy of the Son and the Spirit makes known all that has been achieved ‘in Christ’: the representation (interpretation) of God to humanity and that of humanity to God. As Balthasar understands it, only in the mystery of the incarnation may we find ‘the universal reality of the Totality in the most concrete singular, Jesus of Nazareth’.\textsuperscript{35} We cannot ignore the ‘scandal of particularity’ but neither can we ignore the question of how this ‘concrete singular’ is present anew in each age. Balthasar avers that the task of the Holy Spirit is to ‘universalize the drama of Christ’.\textsuperscript{36} This raises the question of how the concrete and singular becomes universally present. While succession is part of our historical existence, the most important thing for Balthasar is the ‘unity and integrity of the Spirit of Christ, simultaneously bearing death and Resurrection within him’. For Balthasar, the transfiguration demonstrates that Jesus had the potential for resurrection life within him at all times ‘by way of anticipation’.\textsuperscript{37} Only if Christ is seen in this way can the believer’s participation ‘in Christ’ be truly transformative. While the complete fulfilment of glory remains an eschatological hope belonging to Christ’s parousia, the effects of Christ’s risen and heavenly life are manifested in the centre of mortal existence (2 Cor 4:10).\textsuperscript{38} A fellowship of suffering and resurrection is created through grace which ‘only has meaning if the pro nobis is extended to the participants’.\textsuperscript{39} Though the fullness of resurrection for believers is eschatological, for Balthasar, the Christian ‘is in principle someone who has risen and ascended into heaven (Eph 2:6; Col 3:1-4)’.\textsuperscript{40}

Balthasar understands Christ’s mission, integrally linked to that of the Spirit, as the presupposition of the believer’s mission.\textsuperscript{41} The believer is indwelt by both Word and Spirit

\textsuperscript{34} Riches, ‘Theology: I’, 568. ‘The life of faith is a growing into the divine glory as we contemplate it in the Spirit’. (Ibid.).

\textsuperscript{35} O’Donnell, \textit{Hans Urs von Balthasar}, 52. ‘[I]t is precisely in this uniqueness that his essential, normative character lives . . . His word cannot be interpreted in terms of the universally human, because its content simply does not derive from the universally human . . . God wills to maintain his relation to the world only with Jesus Christ as a centre of that relationship, the content and fulfilment of the eternal Covenant. Thus theology in the strict sense of the word cannot do any abstracting at all; all it can do is to display the normative content shining out from the irreducible fact.’ (Balthasar, \textit{TH}, 16/7).

\textsuperscript{36} Balthasar, \textit{TH:IV}, 96.

\textsuperscript{37} Balthasar, \textit{TH:IV}, 385.

\textsuperscript{38} Balthasar, \textit{TH:IV}, 384/5.

\textsuperscript{39} Balthasar, \textit{TH:IV}, 388.

\textsuperscript{40} Balthasar, \textit{TH:IV}, 386.

\textsuperscript{41} ‘[I]n a trinitarian sense missio is the economic form of the eternal processio that constitutes the person of the Son and of the Spirit in God’. (Hans Urs von Balthasar, ‘On the Concept of Person’, \textit{Communio} 13 (1986), 18-26 at 25). See also, \textit{TH:III}, 509ff.
and is thereby transformed.\textsuperscript{42} Because of the resurrection, Christ can impart the Spirit to the players in the drama so that they too, in an analogous way, can be seen to be unique. According to Balthasar, there is an alternative to the paradoxical status we have as unredeemed beings. Such a status can be transformed into one of redemption. By making Christ the centre of redemption, Balthasar does not give an inferior role to the Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit is the means by which we share in the ‘holy intimacy’ between Father and Son.\textsuperscript{43} The incarnation manifests the divine love and it is only in the Holy Spirit that we can learn of the specifically trinitarian nature of God. The Holy Spirit can be said to work within the human imagination in order to achieve this. For Balthasar, it is as free persons that we are able to participate in the divine life. This suggests that, while the imagination has boundaries, these boundaries are not a general limit to imaginative thought but rather a result of the cruciform shape of the Christian life.

\subsection{5.1.3 Personhood in Christ}

The notion of personhood is of particular importance for Balthasar as it is allied to his understanding of human participation in the divine life. Two interconnected questions are raised by Balthasar’s notion of personhood. The first concerns how one becomes a person within the divine freedom without being absorbed into that freedom and thereby losing one’s freedom as a creature. The second asks whether the interplay between absolute and created freedom meets with undue restriction because of the prior determination of events. Balthasar works with the christological principle that one’s personhood is ‘in Christ’. Christ is the protagonist who opens up the acting area whereby human subjects become co-actors with Christ as persons. Christ opens up the acting area rather than restricts it. It is within this acting area that ‘created conscious subjects can become persons of theological relevance, co-actors in theo-drama’.\textsuperscript{44} These co-actors however, can neither admit themselves to the acting area nor, once there, can they decide on their own theological role. Although there is no identity of person and role for the human being as there is for Christ, Balthasar firmly

\textsuperscript{42} Balthasar, \textit{TD:IV}, 371. The Farewell Discourses in John’s Gospel speak of the indwelling of Son and Father in the believer (John 14:23) but they also tell of the indwelling of the Spirit “who, from within, will lead believers “into all truth” (16:13). (TD:V, 427).


\textsuperscript{44} Balthasar, \textit{TD:III}, 20-22; 263. In Balthasar’s understanding, an effective relationship with God cannot be seen as a direct ‘return’ to the absolute; it must always occur as a participation in the Son’s return to the Father. (See Dalzell, \textit{Dramatic Encounter}, 221).
believes that it is 'in Christ' that the human subject becomes a person. To be fully human is to be 'in Christ' which is impossible without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The human person is for himself or herself and yet owes his or her being to God and must therefore allow room for other finitely free beings. As Johann Roten describes it, '[i]n ecstasis we are decentred by God’s loving glory, only to be re-centred in the mission of the kenotic Christ'. The human person is, in effect, a new creature; a personal commission from God constitutes the person as such. The question remains whether, if the person is constituted from outside themselves, their subsequent actions are predetermined.

Balthasar declares that the acting area is what, through Christ, 'creates and maintains freedom in God'. The right response to God’s offer of grace is freely to affirm and accept God’s election, vocation and mission, which is offered by God in sovereign freedom. Consequent on such a response, the human subject discovers himself or herself as a person (the ‘most intimate idea of his own self’) that would otherwise have remained undiscovered. As Christ’s understanding of his identity is linked to his reception of his mission from the Father, so our identity as renewed persons is linked to the mission we receive from God. The human subject becomes a person through his or her God-given mission. Balthasar contends that the call to vocation can be a totally unexpected event; ‘man is not what he thinks himself to be but what God appoints him to be’. But does such an appointment abrogate human freedom? Not according to Balthasar; we are, in effect, invited into God’s freedom as the persons we really are. If, in theo-dramatic terms, ‘the heart of our personal being is our personal mission’, the result of one’s acceptance of mission is a genuine enhancement of the self. For Balthasar, a genuine response to God’s love in Christ never results in the annihilation of the self; there is no sense of becoming a nonperson or of being absorbed by a greater reality. One becomes a new self by participating in Christ’s journey from death to

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47 Balthasar affirmingly quotes de Rougement as saying; ‘Person, act, vocation become for me virtually synonymous. The act is concrete obedience to a transcendent vocation: the vocation brings forth the person in the *individuum*. Hence this new definition: the *individuum* is the natural man; the person is the new creature’. Balthasar declares that ‘[w]hat de Rougement calls “vocation” I have named “mission”’. (Balthasar, ‘Concept of Person’, 25, referring to a letter of de Rougement’s quoted by Roger Benjamin, *Notion de Personne et Personnalisme chrétien* (Paris/The Hague: Mouton, 1971), 11).
49 On election, see Roten, ‘Marian Light’, 122/3.
50 Balthasar, *TD:III*, 263-7. This seems to have been Balthasar’s personal experience.
The extent to which the human self is absorbed by the divine decision has many facets. The creature is endowed with the ‘irrevocable gift’ of freedom by the divine freedom. Nonetheless, this freedom, which is given to all the redeemed, has boundaries. Because creaturely freedom is oriented to the triune God as the prototype and origin of all freedom, the creature is bound to ‘assimilate itself’ to those decisions uttered by the triune God. Balthasar argues that the divine freedom does not override or contravene each individual’s creaturely mystery because the ‘all-encompassing’ divine freedom makes room for countless aspects of truth within its single truth. In a reciprocal movement that echoes the movement of divine self-giving and the freedom within the Trinity, ‘the harmony of all freedoms, the freedom of each individual retains its own timbre’. Balthasar seems to be saying that each human person retains his or her individuality within the harmony and freedom of the intra-divine relations. Does such a view lend itself to individualism rather than a social conception? It has been said that Balthasar’s ‘accent lies on the singular’ but although Balthasar places his main emphasis on the freedom of the individual even in his portrayal of the inner divine life, Balthasar’s conception of personhood rules out using his understanding of the Trinity as a basis for individualism in the world. It is more that Balthasar’s interest lies in the ‘free “yes” of the individual subject to what God wants him or her to be in the world’.

By offering the grace of selfhood in God as a way towards human freedom, Balthasar presents the human self with a choice. It appears that, by creating a ‘space’ for humanity in the divine perichoresis, the offer of participation in the divine life depends on a radical notion of differentiation in God which gives humanity room for diversity. In the triduum mortis, God

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52 See Balthasar, GL I, 556ff. The ‘response to God’s love in Christ is one in which the creature qua creature receives grace and is transformed into a Christ-like radiant image of God by it. In the process the human self undergoes a paradoxical rebirth-through-death in which its true personal identity emerges through becoming transparent and being irradiated by God’. (Mongrain, Systematic Thought, 65).

53 For Balthasar, the one freedom of the divine essence is possessed by each of the hypostases in its own particular way. The unity of the divine will is the outcome of an ‘integration of the intentions’ of the hypostases.

54 Balthasar, TD: V, 485.


56 Dalzell, ‘Social Drama’, 469.
simultaneously opens up the greatest possible intimacy and the greatest possible distance (in Christ's dereliction on the Cross) between God and man . . . He does not decide the course of the play in advance but gives man an otherwise unheard-of freedom to decide for or against the God who has so committed himself. The final judgement regarding each individual remains open and cannot be anticipated by any ready-made theological theory.\footnote{Balthasar, \textit{TD:III}, 21.}

In the matter of free choice, Balthasar points our attention back to the attitude of Christ. Christ is still the one sent by the Father to whom he is obedient until, after fulfilling his mission, Christ sends the Spirit upon the church. Balthasar is constantly referring back to the intra-divine relations; the action in the economy refers back to the mystery of free absolute love in God. It is the attitude of obedient service which is to be seen in the disciples of Christ and which is to bear fruit in the world. Balthasar categorically states that what makes the drama possible is the fact that the drama is grounded in Christ. The incarnation manifests the divine love and it is in the Holy Spirit that we learn of the specifically trinitarian nature of God. This thesis suggests that the Holy Spirit initiates this learning within the human imagination where the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus can be seen as that of the incarnate Son.

Despite his language of participation, Balthasar is clear that we do not share in the unique nature of God. In receiving one's personhood from God as gift, one is transformed into a unique new \textit{creature}. To be a human person means to be a creature determined by God. As so determined, we have access to the divine life through the Holy Spirit. It is as renewed and transformed human \textit{persons} that we participate in God's own life. Balthasar draws on his constant themes of surrender, obedience and reciprocity when considering the motif of participation. There is a backward and forward movement between the intra-divine and the divine/human in the sense that the intra-divine relations are revealed in the economy which then points us back to a conception of the inner divine life. It is by obedient acceptance of our God-given mission that we are connected to the mission of Jesus Christ and by that mission to the trinitarian mission of the Son. It is only through participating personally in the paschal mystery of Christ that finite creatures have access to the glory of God's eternal love. As Balthasar understands it, the 'in Christ Jesus' must give us, \textit{a priori}, the utmost opportunity and the widest possible framework for the interplay of both divine and human freedom, an interplay which is the precondition for all theological drama. Such a \textit{schema} depends on the infinite divine will being given ultimate concrete form in the definitive
human figure of Jesus Christ. This mystery, as a sacramental mystery, carries its own internal logic through the revelation of the Trinity which freely opens itself to creation and draws it into the ‘inner divine sphere of self-giving’.

Balthasar’s conception of the role of the Holy Spirit in respect to the divine freedom is not without its critics. In contrast to Balthasar’s portrayal of the relationship between the Father and the Son, his portrayal of the Holy Spirit as the personification of God’s freedom gives little sense of the Holy Spirit as Person. Within the immanent Trinity, the exercise of the eternal Son’s freedom as answering love is seen by Balthasar as most important. It is true that, for Balthasar, it is only through personal participation in the paschal mystery that finite creatures can have access to the eternal divine love. While the activity of the believer is always in response to the activity of God, it can be said that that, in Balthasar’s interpretation of the inner divine life, the explicit action seems to occur between the Son and the Father. For Balthasar, while the Spirit is recognized as a trinitarian Person, there is an ‘implied anonymity of the Holy Spirit’, with the implication that the Person of the Spirit is somehow less differentiated than the other two persons of the Trinity. This may impact upon any view of the Holy Spirit working as agent within the imagination. However, in this case, the personhood and anonymity of the Holy Spirit are not seen as contradictory by Balthasar but as ‘two aspects of the same reality’.

5.1.4 Participation through Contemplation
One of Balthasar’s considerable strengths is the way in which any implications for a renewed life are firmly based in his trinitarian theology. His understanding of life as centred in mission is no exception. Action unfolds from a beginning in the contemplation of God’s glory in the face of Christ. Our actions are to have their source in the mutual surrender and receptivity within the Trinity, the free movement of ekstasis from God to the world and the crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The centre of Balthasar’s theology is the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the heart of contemplation is the triduum mortis.

60 See Dalzell, Dramatic Encounter, 277/8. In the case of Dalzell, this critique stems from his belief that Balthasar uses an ‘interpersonal’ model of the Trinity rather than a ‘social’ model. He maintains that there is a certain ‘Christological restriction’ which results to some extent in a neglect of the Holy Spirit. The term ‘Christological restriction’ is one that Balthasar uses with reference to Barth’s christocentric analogy of faith. (Ibid., 277).
61 See Dalzell, Dramatic Encounter, 283; Dalzell, ‘Social Drama’, 473.
A contemplation of the *triduum mortis* is a contemplation of the cross conceived within a contemplation of the resurrection. ‘The Christian is both crucified with the Lord and risen with him: both these *existentiales* stamp his existence simultaneously and inseparably’. The pattern-making facility of the imagination, if it is to serve rather than master the Christian life, must conform to a pattern or paradigm that is cruciform in character. One sees oneself and the world as they really are when one contemplates the cross. In contemplation, according to Balthasar, ‘one’s own and the world’s sin finds its true place’. Prayer and contemplation are necessary for Balthasar because he sees the essence of sin as falsehood, a ‘darkening of the inner sight’. The existence of such falsehood and the inherent ambiguity of the human imagination make it doubly necessary that the Holy Spirit is seen as the *agent* of revelation while the imagination *per se* is merely its *locus*.

In Balthasar’s estimation, contemplation is neither an end in itself nor is it without its dangers. There are problems as well as benefits in the practice of contemplation. Contemplation helps us see our true situation before God because contemplation is objective as well as subjective. If contemplation is merely subjective, there is the risk that there is nothing more than *Gestalt*. In such a case, we are victims of self-deception. Balthasar claims that Protestants are so centred upon hearing the word of scripture that their reflection often fails to become true contemplation and vision. In contrast, Catholics may pay too little attention to the scriptures, which, for Balthasar, contain and narrate ‘a pattern of history and events’ which become the source of the historical and ‘eventful’ character of the Christian life. He concedes that, in practice, Catholics may restrict themselves to the ‘actual possession of grace as assured to them by the Church and the sacraments’ whereas his theology of contemplation demands that the word of scripture is heard as the ‘spiritual communication of revelation’. He allows that even the best contemplative tradition may move from hearing to a

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63 It was an ‘inherently absurd and offensive move on the part of early Christians, Paul included, to make a crucified political criminal and his Cross... the focus of devotion and the paradigm for life in this world’. (Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 5).
66 According to Mongrain, Balthasar maintains that ‘subjectivity correlates personal, interior religious experience with the objective revelation of God’s glory in Christ. This explains why positive revelation is not simply a supplement to the human self’s inner religious experience of mystery. God’s historical revelation in Christ is the origin of this inner experience’. The objectivity of the evidence that Christ’s possesses is ‘aesthetic and contemplative not scientific and analytical’. (Mongrain, *Systematic Thought*, 63. See GL:1, 464 and 140).
Perceiving the pattern is not enough; contemplation demands a listening and receptive attitude.

Balthasar argues for a contemplative foundation to every Christian life because, for him, inner contemplation is the 'existential dimension of faith' without which there can be no external action. As far as he is concerned, '[a]nyone who is not prepared to listen to God in the first place has nothing to say to the world'. This is borne out by Balthasar's own life; the secular institutes were the practical result of his concern that the church should have something to say to the world without the church being a captive of that same world. In his view, those who lead a contemplative life are thereby guarded against becoming a captive of the world. Relationship with God relies on God's prior address that makes both hearing and listening possible. The human partner must first listen to God's word and then, 'through that word, learn how to answer . . . and come closer to him . . . God's word is ultimately, himself'. The Word made flesh is sent by the Father to bring the world back to God. The Christian lives on earth with a view to heaven but it is for the Word to decide how such a life is to be lived. It is imperative for Balthasar that we refuse to anticipate God's will and that we are willing to live out our mission-existence within history.

Balthasar speaks of three interconnected ways through which the believer may be shown the entrance to God's Word through the incarnation. While each presupposes the others, each points towards the other and away from itself. Firstly, regarding human existence, the contemplation of Jesus' human life is seen as the entrance of the incarnate Word into a changing world and also the tensions inherent within it. Secondly, contemplation of the transformation from death to resurrection is a foretaste of our own renewal. Both of these open the way for the third transformation: the Holy Spirit distributes the fullness of Christ within history and the church. For Balthasar, it is in the third form that 'God's truth in Christ' becomes fruitful for the Christian community. We are to learn that God manifests God as love. God in Christ gave his life for us and we are invited to give our lives for God.

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68 Balthasar, Who is a Christian? 75.
69 Balthasar, Who is a Christian? 78. Both seeing and hearing are deemed to be necessary. "Hearing" is present only implicitly in the reference to the 'Word' become man, just as 'believing' is implied in that what is seen is the mystery that points to the invisible God'. (Balthasar, GL:1, 120).
70 Balthasar, Prayer, 12.
71 See Balthasar, Prayer, 246.
72 See Dalzell, Dramatic Encounter, 285. Dalzell maintains that Balthasar's emphasis on the freedom of the individual was first given a conceptual structure by the analogy of being. (Ibid.).
and our neighbour. While it is here that the Holy Spirit comes to the fore, in Balthasar's understanding, this is a truth mediated by the church. Does contemplation then, for Balthasar, become a reflection on the teaching of the church rather than a reflection on the glory of God? Balthasar is adamant that contemplation and prayer are not about disconnected truths but about the truth of the Son who is the Word. Such truth can never be pinned down but is always new. Contemplation is a 'watchful waiting', an 'active readiness', it is the 'wet clay in which alone the Christ-form can become impressed'. It is an attitude that does not intrude its own plans; to be contemplative is to move towards God in 'open expectation of meeting him'. Balthasar understands the contemplative attitude to be essential to receiving the form of Christ. In order to have a contemplative attitude one must engage one's imagination. It is the 'indispensable prerequisite of human matters (which here include all active powers of the spirit, the will, and the imagination) truly . . . [to be] . . . able to receive the image of the form'. Contemplation, as an attitude of creaturely and Christian obedience to the Lord, is to be marked, like the Trinity, by a surrender, obedience and consent which is active as well as passive. Because human freedom is characterized by the service we owe to God's grace in Christ, to live a life in the service of God is to live a life marked by a personal vocation. If one's life is marked in this way, one's imagination, along with all else, serves the pattern of life that God has presented to us, a pattern Balthasar sees exemplified in the lives of Mary and the saints.

5.2 Hans Urs von Balthasar: The Church as Eucharistic Community
That Balthasar is demonstrably Roman Catholic is nowhere more evident than in his portrayal of the place of the church in the world. It is in his understanding of the church that Balthasar's central motif of mission finds its fulfilment. He understands the generation of the church to stem from the cross, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; the Son's creation of the church both fulfils, and is presupposed by, the Father's creation of the world. The mission of the church is likewise presupposed by the mission of the Son. As has been noted, the attitude

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73 Balthasar, Prayer, 160.
74 Balthasar, Prayer, 15.
75 See Balthasar, Prayer, 20/1. 'The Christian stands and falls with prayer; faith has only one content: that God has loved and continues to love him, her, and everyone - not just everyone anonymously but also him or her as a particular individual'. (Balthasar, Reader, 525). On the Holy Spirit and prayer, see TD:II, 300, 302
76 Balthasar, GL:1, 563/4.
78 Balthasar, GL:1, 564.
of contemplation as active hearing and listening, has its foundation in an encounter with God’s glory. For Balthasar, the eucharist, above any other event, is where we encounter the glory of God. Because of this, the suggestion that the Holy Spirit works within the human imagination makes a valuable contribution at this point.

Christ can be understood as made present in our imagination by the power of the Holy Spirit. It can be said that, within an encounter with God’s glory, we need the imagination if we are to see the crucified Christ as God. In a particularly powerful way, this applies to the eucharist. Balthasar portrays the church as eucharistic community, a community where the Holy Spirit is at work. Although Balthasar does not link the imagination and the Holy Spirit explicitly, both the eucharist as event and the church as eucharistic community can be seen to work within an imaginative paradigm that has Christ at its centre. Before looking specifically at the eucharist we will examine how Balthasar understands the church to bear the form of Christ.

5.2.1 The Church: Bearing the Form of Christ

For Balthasar, the church is ‘in Christ’ just as the person is renewed ‘in Christ’ by the Holy Spirit. Given that human persons are constituted by the discovery of their personal mission, it must be asked what part Balthasar’s central motif of mission plays in the life of the church. Balthasar’s vision of the church is reminiscent of the early Church Fathers’ accent on intellectual reflection, contemplation, and moral action, an emphasis prominent in Balthasar’s establishment of the secular institutes. He critiques aesthetic theology for its exclusively theoretical mode of reflection. In his own thought, the church bears the form of Christ and, like Christ, the church has to mediate between God and the world. It is the Holy Spirit who facilitates the transposition of the situation of Jesus into the situation of the church. Balthasar understands the reality of the church to be sacramentally mediated but he acknowledges the inevitable problems with such a transposition into an historically-determined situation. The church must be transparent to God as Christ is transparent to the

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80 An unsurprising development considering his early study of the Fathers.
81 See Mongrain, Systematic Thought, 68. According to Mongrain, Balthasar’s theology is prevented from falling into fideism by a ‘sacramental unification of contemplation, moral action, and intellectual reflection’. (Ibid.).
82 See Balthasar, GL: VII, 354/5.
83 Balthasar, GL: VII, 154/5. Balthasar sees the ‘sacred (Canon) law’ coming from the authority of Jesus and as having an eschatological character that shares in the judging of Jesus. (Ibid., 155).
Father and also ‘transparent to the world for God’. Balthasar sees the danger of a gnostic reinterpretation of Christ as a spiritual and formless idea brought to remembrance by the figure of Jesus. He critiques Bultmann on this point, claiming that Bultmann separates the Christ of the church and the historical Christ while correlating the ecclesial kerygma with personal faith. While Balthasar’s accent on contemplation does not conflict, in theory, with his equally important emphasis on the ecclesial community, one suspects that, in practice, the institutional church is less contemplative than Balthasar would have wished.

While Balthasar’s emphasis on beauty as form constantly allows for seeing the incarnation as the divine appropriation of a specific material existence, it does so in such a way that it simultaneously allows for a human response which is neither contrary nor external to God’s initiative. The human response is identifiably human but it ‘has something of the character of the divine exegesis or exegesis of the divine’. Although Balthasar sees the human person as in some way inherently able to respond, such a response is ultimately made possible by the Holy Spirit; it is the divine Spirit who ‘en-thuses and in-spires man to collaboration’. While it is the imagination which allows for the strange to be seen in terms of the familiar, the imagination qua imagination cannot see the incarnation as a divine appropriation. If the work of the Holy Spirit within the imagination allows the significance of the incarnation to be ‘understood’, Balthasar’s identification of an inherent capacity does not conflict with the necessity for the Holy Spirit’s action. Balthasar is adamant that nothing in the church, nor even the church herself, can lay claim to an autonomous form that would either compete with the Christ-form or replace it. As the ‘fundamental figure of grace’, Christ is the form in which all sacramental forms are grounded in the most concrete sense. The ecclesial and social shape of the eucharist must therefore be conformed to the fundamental form which is Christ. The aspects of communicated grace and eschatological orientation which are formless and imageless are drawn into the form. Balthasar conceives of the sacraments as sacramentally realized events which mediate as form between Christ and humanity. The form is seen as an objective, ecclesial reality which is established by Christ the archetype.

84 Balthasar, GL:1, 560.
85 Mongrain, Systematic Thought, 121.
88 Balthasar, GL:1, 576.
The image's symbolic content, while universally intelligible, is only a pointer to the corporeal and spiritual gesture of Christ. Christ's gesture is to be understood by the believer because the earthly image points to Christ and because of the symbolic power that Christ possesses because of his status as God and man.\(^{89}\)

The church acts as a context for the presentation of the Christ-form to believers for both faithful contemplation and faithful response. Contemplation of the Christ-form is meant to lead into acts of dialogue, cooperation and justice with and for one's neighbour. It must always be remembered that the Christ-form is that of the crucified as well as risen Christ. For Balthasar, it is only in eucharistic christocentrism that Christian theology can assimilate that which is ugly and humiliating without reduction.\(^{90}\) The positive otherness within the Trinity is reflected in Christian love which is 'christologically formed' when it 'bears the other precisely as other'.\(^{91}\) The divine movement from the 'vertical' to the 'horizontal' in the incarnation shows that we cannot divorce the theological presupposition of trinitarian love from our love of neighbour. This love is expressed by our participation in the divine movement, a movement which is essentially ekstatic.\(^{92}\) While assertions of a neglect of the temporal and historical dimensions of existence in Balthasar's theology have been made, it cannot be said that the 'horizontal' plane of existence is without theological interest for Balthasar.\(^{93}\) This presupposition of trinitarian love is pre-eminent in Balthasar's treatment of the eucharist. For Balthasar, the eucharist is both a participation in God's life and a symbol of God's glory.\(^{94}\)

5.2.2 The Eucharist as participation in the divine life and as social act

In line with Balthasar's construal of renewed existence, the presence of Christ in the eucharist is that of Christ crucified and risen; the eucharist can be said to be an acting out of the paradigm of renewal brought about by the Passion and resurrection. The church's eucharistic sacrifice refers to Christ's 'eternal gesture' where, 'in the context of the Cross, his

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89 Balthasar, GL.I, 579. Balthasar acknowledges in GL.I that the baptism of infants does not conform to this model for a sacramental event. See Ibid., 579f.
90 Mongrain, Systematic Thought, 124, 68.
91 Balthasar, GL.VII, 447.
92 Balthasar, GL.I, 576.
93 See Dalzell, Dramatic Encounter, 285.
whole existence can be understood as a perpetual, eternal self-offering to the Father on behalf of mankind'. The eucharist is the Son’s act of praise and thanksgiving (eucharistia) to the Father into which all creation is gathered in order to share in the divine life. The church’s attitude of gratitude and response is not to be understood as her own independent action but as a ‘joining in with the Son’s eucharistia and confessio to the Father in their common Spirit’. In the community of spiration, the participation of the Father is evident in the whole work of building up the church. The ekstasis of the trinitarian life is evident in the kenosis of the death and resurrection of God’s incarnate Word. For Balthasar, the eucharist is linked to the idea that the world was created ‘in Christ’ (Col 1:15). For him, the eucharist is the heart of the church’s mission.

It is in Balthasar’s understanding of the eucharist that the work of the Holy Spirit in the church becomes most evident. Balthasar sees the eucharist both as an event ‘in Christ’ and as a participation in the divine life. The eucharist is a gift to humanity from the Father; Christ takes the believer up into his sacrifice thereby causing us to be sacrificed with him. By ‘dying within the paradigm of Christ’s death’ and being purified in the fire of Christ’s love, the self-centred human ‘I’ shatters, is brought into the sacrifice and takes on a ‘eucharistic and trinitarian form’. This does not mean, however, that there is any levelling of the dissimilarity between the originating Archetype and its outcome in those that participate in the eucharist. The eucharist is, in effect, a dying with Christ that takes place within the paradigm of Christ’s death. This ‘dying with’ Christ, as part of not only the eucharist but the whole of the Christian life, de-centres the self (John 12:24). It is the mission of the mature Christian to live in tune with the divine decision. This process of discernment on the part of the believer involves the hearing and listening which Balthasar sees as part of true

95 Balthasar, TD:IV, 392. This self-offering includes Christ’s act of dying. ‘This death was in every respect - both toward the world and toward God - a function of self-giving love . . . he takes along his mode of being dead as part of his past and thus enduringly affecting him into his eternal life . . . nor is this to be taken in the sense of a Hegelian dialectic according to which the negative appears as an intrinsic element of eternal life.’ (Balthasar, ‘Swallowed up by Life’, 54).
96 Healey and Schindler, ‘Life of the World’, 52. The heart of Balthasar’s theology of the church is the ‘intersection of the mystery of the Eucharist and the original purpose of the created world . . . the Eucharist as a reciprocal communion between Christ and the Church, and ultimately between the Trinity and the entire cosmos’. (Ibid., 51). See Balthasar, TD:IV, 400.
97 Balthasar, CW, 23.
98 Balthasar, CW, 163.
100 ‘To truly receive the Eucharist, means to enter into the entire temporal history as the incarnate Son. All of Christ’s temporal life is therefore available for the renewal of the Church. (Healey and Schindler, ‘Life of the World’, 58).
contemplation. If the imagination is involved in this process then it must be seen as the locus of the Holy Spirit’s work in making known the revelation of God.

Balthasar understands the eucharist as the Son’s ultimate self-giving. The love of the triune God is expressed in the self-giving of the Son which is itself expressed in the eucharist. For Balthasar, all three integrating elements are essential to the full meaning of the cross. Both covenant and creation are made possible by the Son’s ‘eucharistic’ response to the Father. Covenant and creation are ‘surpassed’ by this response because they can only become reality within the encirclement of the Son’s response. The eucharist is grounded in the Trinity in that ‘the mystery of the Eucharist begins as it proceeds from the Trinity . . . ; behind the sacrifice of the Son stands the consubstantial loving surrender of the Father as the source of the Eucharist’. The believer is incorporated into the eucharist that, ‘in the Spirit, Christ makes to the Father’. The fiat or obedient response of the believer may seem to originate in the self but is effected by the power of Christ’s obedience. Balthasar sees the fiat of faith as the acceptance of the truth rather than as the creation of the truth. The truth has, in principle, dealt with human refusal from the beginning as Christ died for all sins. However, the believer is not completely passive. Within the drama of the eucharist, there is an ‘interplay’ between the ‘priority of the divine action and man’s subsequent “letting be”, which is both active and free’. The eucharistic action of the Church echoes God’s prior action of grace. It is not the action of ‘works’; faith is privileged to act because it is the action, through the Son, of the triune God. By being drawn into the work of Christ, the believer is given a share, in a secondary way, in Christ’s pro nobis. The church is understood to be the sphere of answering truth which includes the individual. By being drawn into the whole Church, the individual believer ‘appropriates’ to him or herself the total self-giving of God and is thus able to make an adequate response. Baptism, for Balthasar, appears to be a sacramental participation in the divine life whereby the believer,

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102 Balthasar, TD: V, 484.  
103 Balthasar, TD: IV, 330.  
104 Balthasar, TD: V, 483, citing von Speyr, 4 Jo, 381. (GT).  
106 The fact that we are not alienated from ourselves is because ‘we arrive precisely at the place that was already predestined for us beforehand ‘before the foundation of the world’(Eph. 1:4f), so little alienated from ourselves that it is by entry into the absolute love that we first find ourselves’. (GL: VII, 404/5).  
108 ‘As a believer, he does not remain passive: in his baptism, he is admitted into the sphere of the Spirit of God and of the Church, and he declares himself in agreement with this Spirit and makes him his own’. (GL: VII, 405).
through the office of the church, is deemed able to make a response which is embraced by
the loving response of the Son to the Father. 109

The eucharist has not only a ‘vertical’ dimension but also ‘horizontal’ one: as well as a
participation in the divine life, the eucharist is also a human act. Balthasar’s understanding of
the eucharist is in tune with a thoroughly incarnational faith. Balthasar comprehends the
eucharistic meal to be a social act in that it occurs ‘not only to the transitory sphere, but
really in it’. 110 The Last Supper is included in the ‘hour’ for which Jesus had come (John
12:27ff.); the content of the cross is inserted into the form of the supper. The form (the meal)
is ‘a social act intended to constitute the interior form itself of the Church’. The social reality
of the church thus arises from Jesus’ outpouring of self. While the supper is a memorial it
also ‘consciously establishes contemporaneity with the act whereby the Church becomes
herself’. It is mortal human beings who receive the eucharist and it is a ‘visible earthly
Church that Christ the Bridegroom purifies through Cross and Baptism and presents to
himself as his Bride’. Balthasar insists that neither the image of the bridegroom nor the bride
would have meaning if there were no true reciprocity in the gift. This reciprocity is manifest
not only in heaven, as beyond history, but also in the present through the operation of the
Holy Spirit. 111 It is both the remembering of a past event and a meal that looks to the future
because Christ is risen and will come again to transform what has been a memorial of death
into the ‘eternal banquet of joy’. 112 Because all Jesus’ earthly activity has been made present
in the risen Christ, what has been done once and for all time can be experienced as eternally
present. The human imagination has the capacity to make that which is absent to be present.
However, the imagination cannot of itself convey the presence of the divine. It is only by the
power of the Holy Spirit within the imagination that past and future can come together in a
truly transformative way.

Balthasar wishes us to believe that the constitution of the person is a real transformation.
Given Balthasar’s accent on human participation in the divine life and his tendency toward
universalism, does he espouse a form of divinization? Balthasar acknowledges that the

109 The idea of the church as sacrament became more important after Vatican II. Less weight was given to the
idea of the church militant and more emphasis was placed on the notion of the everyday life as enlivened by
God.
110 Balthasar, TD: V, 478.
111 Balthasar, TD: V, 478.
112 1 Cor 11:26; Luke 22:18; Matt 26:29.
‘making present’ of the Lord is ‘a mystery that is not fully accessible to our reason’.113 There is an identification between Jesus’ meal of suffering, the Last Supper and the eschatological meal which is ‘sacramentally veiled’. As Balthasar comprehends it, there is an encounter within the eucharist between a primary act of Christ himself in which ‘he comes to be and makes himself present’ and a ‘secondary act of the Church, which is taken up into this act of Christ’. In its remembering, celebrating, and obeying, the Church recalls and presents to itself the Lord Christ made present in her midst. There is a trinitarian encounter within the eucharist: in encountering Christ, we (in Christ) encounter the Father in the Holy Spirit.114 As Balthasar sees it, if our participation in the divine life were not grounded in the trinitarian relations and the incarnation, either of two things could result. Either the coming of the human person to be himself or herself would be reduced to their directly becoming God, an idea which is always refuted by their finitude, or it would mean a ‘tragic absolutisation’ of their finitude which Balthasar contends would result in their being separated from absolute love by an abyss.115

Renewed existence is inextricably woven into the work of the Holy Spirit. It is as the exalted one that Christ can confer on his friends a share in his Spirit for now ‘he possesses the Spirit in himself’. He can also give them a share in ‘the Spirit’s freedom, the Spirit’s direct access to God’.116 It is those who have been endowed with the Spirit who may enter ‘the milieu of absolute freedom’. The Risen One gives the ‘Spirit of Sonship and of new birth from God (Jn 1:13)’ to those who belong to him.117 Balthasar sees this freedom as stemming from the Son’s obedience at the cross. Because of his filial obedience, the risen Christ is able to give to his disciples of every era, ‘a share in his drama. He draws them into his destiny by communicating his Spirit to them; by doing this ... he gives himself eucharistically’.118 As Balthasar understands it, we are given a share in the Spirit for the sake of our mission, a mission that is worked out within the mission of the church.

113 Balthasar, TD:IV, 392.
114 Balthasar, GL:I, 571-3. Balthasar includes Mary’s Yes in the eucharist; that ‘existentially perfect and exemplary gesture that is implanted into the Church and handed on down the centuries’. (Balthasar, TD:IV, 395).
115 Balthasar, GL:VII, 405. When we become sons of God and cry ‘Abba, Father’ Balthasar sees the dialogue to be between ‘our spirit, borne by the Pneuma of the Son, in whom we have come to share in sonship’. (Ibid., 405).
116 Balthasar, TD:IV, 365. 2 Cor 3:17.
118 Balthasar, TD:IV, 364.
5.2.3 The Mission of the Church

For Balthasar, the mission of the church is enabled by both Word and Spirit. Easter as well as Pentecost is the birth of the church; the crucified and risen Lord is the Lord of the Church. The ecclesial mystery is bound up with the Spirit ‘who wills to be continually breathed forth from a principle which is both Trinitarian and Christological’.\(^{119}\) Balthasar is careful to say that the church is ‘penetrated through and through by the Spirit’. The Spirit is always the Spirit of the Church and, for Balthasar, the individual has a participation in the Spirit through the Church.\(^ {120}\) It is as members of Christ’s body, the church, that we are equipped by the Spirit with our personal mission, a mission which itself can be nothing but a participation in Christ’s all-embracing mission. It is the task of the Holy Spirit to guarantee Christ’s presence to the community. According to Balthasar’s conception of the church, this happens through the sacraments, scripture, the ordained ministry and the teaching office. However, the reality of the Holy Spirit is not exhausted by these institutional expressions because the Holy Spirit is always the Spirit of freedom. History continues in the time following the resurrection and ascension of Christ; the Spirit, ‘with a never-ending and unpredictable creativity’, interprets the Christ-event to the world.\(^ {121}\) Thus the Holy Spirit gives rein to this unpredictable creativity within the human imagination. This unpredictability of the Spirit, along with the ambiguity of the human imagination, makes it imperative that spiritual discernment is exercised with due care. Balthasar would maintain that, for spiritual discernment, one needs the resources of scripture, the sacraments, the ordained ministry and the teaching office.

As Balthasar views it, the church cannot exist as authentic church unless she echoes the ekstasis of the Trinity.\(^ {122}\) This ‘reciprocal openness of the redeemed’ provides the final and heavenly shape of the communio sanctorum within the mystery of the Trinity. It is also within the divine freedom of this mystery that the diversity and spontaneity of human freedom is allowed to flourish. The eternal blessedness does not mean only the contemplation of the beatific vision but involves genuine creative activity, a creativity which, Balthasar maintains, will always be the ‘offspring of personal freedom’.\(^ {123}\) There is


\(^{120}\) Balthasar, *CW*, 37.


\(^{122}\) The church, like every believer, loses herself when she tries to make her life secure (Matt 10:39).

reason to believe that the inclusion of the renewed imagination within this creative activity could carry on beyond death because the imagination is an integral part of our personhood. The proviso is, of course, that this is the renewed and transformed imagination. However, it must be conceded that this may cause difficulty when put beside Balthasar’s belief that when Christ rose bodily from the dead he ‘has already taken the world with him to God’. In the cross, ‘the world’s No is taken up and overcome in God’s absolute Yes’; this is the basis of Balthasar’s hope that all will be saved. It is clear that the Holy Spirit is vitally involved with the renewal of the Christian but, although Balthasar asserts the human right to say No to God’s Yes, the actual consequences of this refusal to reflect the loving Yes of the Trinity are uncertain. On the one hand, Balthasar advocates the action of the Holy Spirit as inspiring a form of partnership between God and humanity and, on the other hand, he seems to make any form of cooperation unnecessary.

Balthasar is a theologian whose thought is shaped by God’s self-disclosure. The paradigm of the triduum mortis shapes the ideas of self-giving, mutual otherness, receptivity and surrender which are threaded right through his theology. These same threads are apparent in his interpretation of renewed existence and have their foundation, according to Balthasar, in the self revelation of God. However, there are points in Balthasar’s thought where either his extrapolations from God’s self-disclosure go too far or where he reads implications back into ontology from a different foundation. Two areas in particular will be discussed: Balthasar’s understanding of the saints as exemplars and his theology of the sexes.

Balthasar’s earlier concern that the church was closed off from the world became, in later years, a concern that the church’s action was becoming divorced from its centre in the contemplation of God, from which all action should proceed. He thought that the church was threatened by a perceived split between theology and sanctity, between the academy and spirituality. For Balthasar, revelation is prolonged in history through the good news of the gospel transforming lives. Balthasar believes that the saints set before the church in every generation a fresh interpretation of revelation in both objective and subjective terms. He

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sees the lives of the saints as the key to understanding the history of the gospel as the prolongation of revelation. The mission of the saints, like that of every believer, is grounded in the mission of Christ; the importance of the saints resides in the singularity of their mission rather than their person. Balthasar uses language about the saints in such a way that it is analogous to the language he uses for the Trinity and incarnation. More contentiously, Balthasar reads implications back into ontology from the lives of the saints. For example, he takes descriptions of the ‘dark night of the soul’ and uses them to plumb the depths of the cry of dereliction. In this way the individual lives of the saints are made to inform dogmatics. In a sense, he does the same thing with the visions that Adrienne von Speyr experienced every Easter for many years. He reads her experiences of the suffering of Christ back into his understanding of the triduum mortis. While both of these may contribute to the perplexity his readers may feel at the ‘undeniable risk of his ‘creative invention’’, there is much to be gained from the way he sees the saints as exemplars of the lived unity of knowledge and life. Balthasar understands the saints as gifts who are sent from the inner life of God as an interruption of the life of the church. The saints show the church the way by demonstrating in their lives a new interpretation of revelation which is in line with the ‘being-for-one-another’, the obedience, and the fruitfulness which characterize the Trinity and Christ. The saints are exemplars of the lived unity of knowledge and life which, Balthasar believes, should characterize the life of both the believer and the church as the body of Christ. The church owes its being to God; the church should exemplify the unity in difference that marks the Trinity and, in Balthasar’s opinion, the lives of the saints.

Balthasar perceives the outworking of faith in the lives of the saints, and in particular, in the life of Mary. While he sees the saints as the true image of Christ, he understands Mary to be the epitome of fruitfulness. Mary is ‘the primordial image (Urbild) of the church’ because her response to God acts as the pattern for the creature’s response to the fruitfulness of sanctity being threatened from several directions including that of the ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ where psychology was inclined to see sanctity as a concealed psychopathology or as a play for power. (Ibid., 80).

127 See Moss, ‘Saints’, 92.
129 Moss, ‘Saints’, 79.
130 Moss, ‘Saints,’ 80-90. The saints are, for Balthasar, more than models of the holy life for imitation. ‘They are the irruption of the personological/eschatological core of Scripture and Church into full historical view and are, therefore, part of the revelatory address from God calling us to decision’. (Chapp, ‘Revelation’, 23). The saints give a new interpretation of the gospel for their own time. (See Schindler, ‘Significance’, 17/18).
God.\textsuperscript{131} For Balthasar, fruitfulness is both the discriminating mark of the saints and the only measure of authentic sanctity.\textsuperscript{132} The saints teach the church that the grand themes of the church and theology can only be understood and can only be spoken from within the perspective of faith. In his preoccupation with the saints, Balthasar points to the necessity of both contemplation and action. It is in their \textit{practice} that ‘the Saints stand as a sign and signal to theology of its own mission’. Balthasar’s explication of the place of the saints as exemplars for the church is in line with the concrete and sensory basis of his theology. By showing both the form and content of revelation as it appears in them, they are, for Balthasar, the \textit{Gestalt} of theological existence.\textsuperscript{133} The saints can be seen as those who, through contemplation and action, have allowed the Holy Spirit to work in their imaginations to the extent that their decisions are aligned with the triune decision. The function of the imagination is thus for the glory of God and is to lead to a transformation of character.

Balthasar’s use of exemplars, in particular those of Mary and the saints, raises two questions. First, how much cooperation does Balthasar allow between Creator and creature? Second, how does this cooperation affect the renewed existence of the believer? These questions, in turn, raise the issue of the sort of society that Balthasar advocates. Balthasar designates the cooperation between Creator and creature as a ‘mystery’ that is both possible and necessary. He contends that Christ’s image never becomes impressed on the believer as the result of his or her own power. He also maintains that ‘equally it never occurs without the person’s will and co-operation’. While finite creatures have access to the eternal divine life \textit{as creatures}, there is nowhere that God and humanity ‘work on the same plane’.\textsuperscript{134} Balthasar defines what he means by human nature (as creature) with the help of a distinct theology of sexual difference. He expounds a quasi-sexuality in the Trinity but it is difficult to know whether this determines his stereotype of the masculine and feminine or, as seems more likely, the same stereotypes are imposed on the immanent Trinity. Either interpretation is problematic. While his construal of sexual difference permeates his whole theology, it is most apparent in Balthasar’s ecclesiology.

\textsuperscript{131} It is arguable that Balthasar sees Mary, at least in a secondary way, as the paradigm for human life.
\textsuperscript{132} Moss, ‘Saints’, 90.
\textsuperscript{133} Moss, ‘Saints’, 81. Balthasar takes care to distance himself from popular Marian theology and what he sees as its excesses. While the saints reflect in their lives the events of the \textit{triduum mortis}, do they, in popular piety, take the place of Christ in some measure?
\textsuperscript{134} Balthasar, \textit{GL:1}, 579.
It has been contended that Balthasar’s view of God’s inner life means that the Trinity, rather than being a model for human community or society, is the ‘supreme model for interpersonal relationship in the finite realm’.  

Balthasar accentuates the individual’s Yes to the ‘other’ as the climax of his or her free subjectivity. This interpersonal relationship is both an interpersonal relationship with God and an interpersonal relationship in God. In Balthasar’s conception of the divine relations, the Father as origin is masculine. The incarnate Son, as representative of the Father, is male by necessity but the Son is also characterized as feminine in his response to being begotten. Representation is conceived as a masculine trait and therefore as a male task. Although the mutual surrender of the Father and the Son is a lynchpin in Balthasar’s view of the Trinity, receptivity is understood as a feminine trait. This is not used to argue for the masculine and feminine in God. Balthasar has a firm belief in the polarity of the sexes. He maintains that the clarity between the opposition of the sexes develops the expression of the relationship and interdependence between them. This is in line with his overall theology in that unity in difference lies at the heart of his trinitarianism.

Balthasar’s intention is to expound an equality of the sexes which, nevertheless, has an inbuilt hierarchy. Whatever his intention, the primacy is given to the masculine (as origin) and the feminine is unabashedly secondary. Balthasar places considerable emphasis on Genesis 2. Woman is taken from man’s side and is depicted as the man’s fulness. While the feminine is seen to provide something that the masculine lacks, the sexes are not truly complementary. Balthasar uses the analogy of the conjugal act in his portrayal of the male as active and the female as receptive by nature. It is at this point that one wonders if Balthasar is overly influenced by his conservative Swiss context. The man is unlike God in that he needs fulfilment through the woman but the woman does not seem to exist fully as an

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135 Dalzell, Dramatic Encounter, 285.
136 Dalzell, Dramatic Encounter, 290/1. This emphasis on the interpersonal leads, in Dalzell’s opinion, to Balthasar being suspicious of theologies which major in the socio-political transformation rather than the transformation of the heart. (Ibid.). According to Dalzell, Balthasar plays less than adequate attention to the social side of drama. See Dalzell, ‘Social Drama’, 457-475. For how the theo-dramatic approach might illumine the political nature of theology, see Frederick Christian Baurerschmidt, ‘Theo-Drama and Political Theology’, Communio 25 (1998), 532-552.
137 Balthasar, El, 67.
138 According to Balthasar, ‘the man’s (persisting) priority is located within an equality of man and woman’. (Balthasar, TD:II, 373).
139 Balthasar, TD:III, 284-7. See also, Balthasar, El, 67f.
independent subject.\textsuperscript{140} The woman is seen as man’s answer; her gaze is toward him while he looks about him.\textsuperscript{141} This is reminiscent of Marion’s idea of the fixed gaze as idolatry; the gaze is fixed on something other than God thereby creating an idol.\textsuperscript{142}

As against the Creator, the creature \textit{per se} is understood as ‘secondary, responsive, ‘feminine’ vis-à-vis God’. Balthasar does not in any way intend to equate the Creator with Adam,\textsuperscript{143} but whatever his intention, he seems to equate the woman with the creature and the man as representing God. Balthasar claims that the ‘intramundane aspect (man-woman)’ and the ‘supramundane aspect (God-world)’ come together in Jesus Christ. He understands Christ as representing the Father (masculine) and responding to the Father (feminine). As such, Christ is the archetypal image of God. Balthasar envisages humanity as existing in the polarities of spirit/body, man/woman, and individual/community. Living with the tensions they engender, humanity is therefore ‘obliged to engage in reciprocity, always seeking complementarity and peace in the other pole’. Balthasar argues that, because of this, humanity is ‘pointed beyond his whole polar structure’ toward the transcendent.\textsuperscript{144} Balthasar has been accused of both monism and dualism and thus going against his best intentions in either case. It has also been asserted that such analyses either overlook or fail to understand Balthasar’s core theological commitments.\textsuperscript{145} The man/woman polarity means that we always exist in the presence of the ‘other’. Balthasar sees this polarity as totally clear cut, an interpretation which is medically and sociologically debatable. During Balthasar’s working life, along with the events reverberating in the Catholic Church, secular society’s view of gender roles was changing rapidly, the fact of which Balthasar was well aware. He feared that a blurring of gender roles and relations between the sexes would lead to a ‘standardization’ in society and an unhealthy increase in the role of technology which he saw as masculine.\textsuperscript{146} The idea that we always exist in the presence of the ‘other’ is important to

\textsuperscript{140} ‘[W]hereas the man represents a single principle (word, seed), the woman represents a double principle: she is the “answer” and the common “fruit” of both of them’. (Balthasar, \textit{TD:III}, 287). Although Balthasar sees the woman as ‘not only “second” (“answer”) but “dual” (dyad)’, he is careful to distance himself from the Greek subordination of the female dyad to the male monad. (Ibid., 290).

\textsuperscript{141} Such ideas make it difficult not to see the Victorian ideal of the woman as the ‘keeper of the morals’. The woman provides a restful and secure home environment for the man to come home to before venturing back out into the world. In such a view she is both protected and put on a pedestal while being denied any empowerment of her own.

\textsuperscript{142} See Marion, \textit{God Without Being}, 11ff.

\textsuperscript{143} See Balthasar, \textit{TD:III}, 287.

\textsuperscript{144} Balthasar, \textit{TD:II}, 355. See also, \textit{TD:IV}, 222.

\textsuperscript{145} Mongrain, \textit{Systematic Thought}, 14/5, 210.

\textsuperscript{146} Balthasar, \textit{El}, 72. It must be conceded, whether one agrees with his stance or not, that some of his predictions have proved correct.
Balthasar as a safeguard of the fruitfulness of human nature both physical and spiritual. However, there is a certain ambiguity in the notion that each sex is incomplete without the other.\textsuperscript{147}

How does the high degree of interpersonal cooperation between the sexes, that Balthasar is advocating, affect his theology of renewed existence in Christ? For Balthasar, although the feminine is definitely secondary, the entirety of existence is to be conceptualized within an incarnational framework. This helps to explain the importance of Mary for his theology.\textsuperscript{148}

Not only is Mary the mother of Christ but, ‘as prototype of the Church, is rightly called the bride of the incarnate Word’. Balthasar is careful to portray the latter relationship, not as a repetition of the sex-relationship, but as its ‘prototypical realization between God and man’.\textsuperscript{149}

St Paul depicts the church as the bride of Christ\textsuperscript{150} and Balthasar extends this interpretation to the figure of Mary.\textsuperscript{151} The church is both body and bride of Christ so her consciousness cannot be simply contrasted with that of Christ her Head; ‘inasmuch as she has her own existence, she stands open to him, to serve as handmaid’.\textsuperscript{152} Balthasar believes that Mary is given as a prototype so that the church will not forget the trinitarian dimension of the ‘nuptial mystery’ between Christ and the church. The notion of nuptiality refers to the relationship between Creator and creature as well as the relationship between Christ and the church.\textsuperscript{153} Balthasar sees the church as receptive to her Head, thereby acting out the feminine role. The opposition between Christ as bridegroom and church as bride is subsumed in the identity of the one Christ (Head and body) in a seal of unity ‘until it reaches that most fundamental opposition which rejects identity, because in it the dissimilarity is ever greater than the similarity - the opposition, that is, of God and creature’.\textsuperscript{154}


\textsuperscript{148} See Lucy Gardner, ‘Balthasar and the figure of Mary’ in The Cambridge Companion to Hans Urs von Balthasar, ed. Edward T. Oakes and David Moss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 64-78 at 67. This framework of the Word made flesh has led to Balthasar’s reading of Mary as ‘thoroughly typological’. (Ibid.).

\textsuperscript{149} Balthasar, CW, 133/4.

\textsuperscript{150} 2.Cor 11:2.

\textsuperscript{151} ‘God, known and received in this intimate fashion, can only be the God in three Persons. Mary receives the Son as seed of the Father through the realizing act of the Holy Spirit of Father and Son.’ (Balthasar, CW, 133/4) Balthasar maintains that, in the sphere of the church and for the same reason, ‘the actualizing of the sacraments is the work of the Holy Spirit, who places the Father’s Word in the womb of the soul for it to generate and give birth’. (Ibid., 133).

\textsuperscript{152} Balthasar, CW, 156. There is no analogy for what ‘revelation calls the bride of Christ’. (Ibid., 159).

\textsuperscript{153} Balthasar, CW, 133. Balthasar follows the tradition of Mary as the new or second Eve to the second Adam of Christ. (See Gardner, ‘Figure of Mary’, 68).

\textsuperscript{154} Balthasar, CW, 161.
Balthasar understands Mary’s life to be the prototype of the human life which both bears the impress of Christ and offers no resistance to God. In his view, the faith of the church is to be nourished by the archetypal Yes of Mary. The ‘inchoate act of the community’ is already fulfilled in Mary’s consent in that Mary’s Yes gives birth to ecclesial faith and is also its pattern. Balthasar could be said to include Mary’s receptive Yes in the paradigm that shapes the imagination of the believer. More controversially, Balthasar understands that, insofar as Mary’s assent is one of the presuppositions of the Son’s incarnation, ‘it can be, beneath the Cross, a constituent part of his sacrifice’. Balthasar sees Mary as the archetype of the entire faith of the church in that ‘Mary allows the Cross to take place’.

One interpretation of the statement is that Mary allows the suffering of seeing her son die to ‘take place’ in her own heart. Another interpretation raises the possibility of Mary as co-redemptrix. There is some ambiguity here; on the one hand, objectively, the cross is neither at her initiative nor within her control and on the other hand, Mary’s responsive Yes was critical to the incarnation.

Balthasar’s Marian theology is linked to both his theology of the sexes and his understanding of the church as institution. Mary’s ‘womanly openness to the divine’ is ‘co-extensive with the masculine principle, embedded in the Church, of office and sacrament’. Mary is both the archetype of correct creaturely response and her response is qualitatively different from the response of the church. The Marian response of faith, as ‘fruitful womb of the Word’, is elevated to the status of principle and exemplar of the church’s response. Mary does archetypically what the Church must do. She must let the Head of the church take flesh in her. Balthasar’s view of the institutional church depends on the Apostolic authority vested in Peter. Peter’s identification with the institutional church parallels the Marian church of love; both are given the ability to follow Christ and ‘image him to the world’. The inclusion of Mary and Peter as ‘images’ of Christ would entail, for Balthasar, their inclusion, at least

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156 Balthasar, *TD.IV*, 395. An interpretation that Jüngel would see as violating the principle of ‘Christ alone’.
158 For Balthasar, the faith of Mary is privileged; it proceeds from the immaculate conception. Mary is ‘preserved from original sin by the grace of Christ’s Cross’. (Balthasar, *CW*, 133). Mary, unlike the Petrine institutional church which needs constant purification, is personally immaculate and thus the church, in her, is also ‘personally immaculate, and beyond the tensions between reality and ideal’. (Ibid.). Balthasar’s understanding of the place of Mary depends on her continuing virginity. ‘The exclusive character of love, which virginity involves, is in each the condition for bearing the fruit of God’. (Balthasar, *CW*, 135). Mary and the church are conceived as fruitful because they are virginal; the church is so because she has been purified by Christ.
in a secondary way, in any paradigm of the *triduum mortis* that is to shape the imagination of the church.

According to Balthasar, the ‘existential perfection’ of Mary’s Yes of consent is the precondition of the church. However, this feminine Yes of consent ‘can never take the place of the official offering in the name of Jesus himself’. Balthasar maintains that the Marian church cannot speak the words of the eucharist on her own account because ‘it is of the essence of the spiritual office to be thus set in the place of Christ’. In Balthasar’s understanding, the Marian church, as the church of love, has primacy over the liturgical actions of the church but ‘Mary’s existential gesture coincides with the official gesture of the celebrating priest at the altar’. While Mary is the matrix and archetype of ‘the “General priesthood” of the faithful’, she both forms the background to the ministerial priesthood and is the condition which makes such a priesthood possible. It is within the feminine modality of the church and her Marian faith that the function of representing Christ is reserved for the man as the one who can represent Christ.

Balthasar’s construal of sexual differentiation contains several ambiguities. It is not quite clear why searching for complementarity in the sexually other should necessarily draw one beyond those boundaries in search of the transcendent. Such a portrayal also downplays the fact that, regardless of sex and gender, the ‘other’ is irreducibly other to the beholder. Any relationship between two persons is an ‘I-Thou’ relationship. A serious doubt is whether Balthasar is, in effect, imposing a general anthropology of the sexes onto his theology despite this not being his intention. He does not seem sufficiently aware of the social effects of gender on what are, to a considerable extent, socially constructed stereotypes. It can be said that there is an implicit doctrine of essentialism underlying Balthasar’s theology that may erase the real diversity among both men and women. Unfortunately, Balthasar’s notion of hierarchy within equality does not help the situation. Equality and hierarchy are generally incompatible. This is always so when, hierarchy, as it is for Balthasar, is functional.

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159 Balthasar, *CW*, 399.
160 Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 403/4. The unofficial Church has a ‘mediatorial and transitory form which is necessary if ‘Christ is to become bodily present in transubstantiation’ (Ibid., 400).
161 Balthasar, *TD:IV*, 398. ‘For the Church was already present in her before men were set in office’. (Balthasar, *El*, 72).
163 See Crammer, ‘One Sex or Two?’ 102/3.
Balthasar’s way of speaking of two modes of the church, the Marian and the Petrine, is also problematic because it depends so heavily on a particular explanation of the respective roles of the sexes. It is possible to see the two modes as belonging to the same indivisible church simultaneously without using a theology of the sexes to justify such a view. Balthasar grounds his view of the church in the mutual otherness of the Trinity which expresses itself in surrender and receptivity. Although Balthasar understands the Marian Church and the Petrine Church as complementary, his portrayal of the Marian Church as the church of love and powerlessness gives the impression that it is within the institutional church of Peter that the power lies. This is unfortunate because it gives a neutral concept of power an institutional and perhaps negative connotation. The Spirit of Jesus gives to the church nothing but the Spirit of Jesus who empowers the church to act.164 It is the Holy Spirit, as the love between the Father and the Son, that is understood as ‘the eternal fruit in God’ and therefore endlessly fruitful in the world.165 Whatever role the church plays, and whatever modes it takes, the church is dependent on the Holy Spirit for the creative new beginnings in which Balthasar believes. Unless the work of the Holy Spirit is the major emphasis in a theology which makes so much of the ‘images’ of Mary and Peter, the place of the Spirit may be usurped instead of glorified. There could be a similar outcome if the place of the Holy Spirit is usurped by a concept of imagination that strays outside its legitimate boundaries. This thesis suggests that the human imagination is merely a vehicle for the action of the Spirit. Whereas Balthasar’s christology is firmly rooted in the triduum mortis, his ecclesiology, and therefore to some extent his pneumatology, is restricted by his theology of the sexes. Consequently, there is a suggestion that the imaginative paradigm he gives us in the triduum mortis differs in some important respects from his ecclesial paradigm.

Balthasar’s notion of renewed existence is rooted in the motifs of kenosis and mission. Up to this point in our study, identification has been the principal motif in Jüngel’s treatment of the triduum mortis. At this juncture the centrality of justification comes to the fore and we consider the way that the motif of justification is embedded in Jüngel’s trinitarian framework.

164 Balthasar, CW, 14
165 The love and fruitfulness between Father and Son has an analogy in the fruitfulness in conjugal love which is the child. It is unclear how far this analogy applies to the Spirit. ‘[T]he Spirit, the fruit of their love, proceeds from their union - as their essence, their product, their testimony, their matrix - but he does not become an independent and separate instance, founding new generations himself’. (Balthasar, TD:III, 287).
5.3 Eberhard Jüngel: The Justification of Believers

For Jüngel, the doctrine of justification is situated at the central point of the Christian faith. Accordingly, we cannot hope to understand his concept of renewal outside of this doctrine. Jüngel’s trinitarian framework is crucial for his understanding of justification. Righteousness has to do with right relations; the righteousness of God echoes the trinitarian relations of mutual otherness. Jüngel’s notion of renewed existence is essentially a theology of gift: everything to do with the renewal of human life is at God’s initiative therefore human existence, of itself, has no potential for righteousness or faith. Likewise, the human imagination, of itself, cannot bring about spiritual transformation. Because, for Jüngel, the starting point of theology is the address of God, the transformation of the human subject comes about through the righteousness of God. Beginning with God’s address, Jüngel shows how the human being is placed in relationship with God and becomes a new creature ex nihilo by being made righteous. A critical issue is whether this process of transformation results in the participation of humanity within the divine life. Jüngel wishes to reject any notion of participation in the divine nature or being. However, as we shall see, there are signs that Jüngel does allow for participation in the divine life albeit in a nuanced and limited way. Two major issues are at stake here: the distinction between divine and human action and how that distinction is expressed in the life of the believer and the life of the church. According to Jüngel, the ‘differentiation of Creator and creature finds material expression in the article of justification’. He insists, along with Luther, that justification is the work of God alone.\(^{166}\) This avowal permeates his interpretation of the doctrine of justification and its outworking in the believer and the church.

5.3.1 Right relations: God is righteous and we are made righteous

Jüngel considers trinitarian differentiation to be vital to the event of justification because the mutual affirmation of respective otherness leads to intimate fellowship within the Godhead. God is rich in self-relation as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the trinitarian community of mutual difference; God corresponds with God in such a way that difference is not excluded but rather affirmed in God. The Father and the Son (whose otherness on the cross is extreme) are creatively linked into this mutual otherness by the Holy Spirit.\(^{167}\) God is in agreement

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\(^{166}\) For a comparison between Luther and Barth on the subject of human passivity, see Jüngel, Karl Barth, 123ff.

\(^{167}\) An otherness which Jüngel calls ‘the contrast between life and death’. (Jüngel, Justification, 83. See also, 82-5).
with God and is therefore righteous; because the righteousness of God is grounded in the
being of God, God is consistent with himself.

God's righteousness is the title of an event, something that happens. And in this very event
God is totally consistent with himself. He is consistent when he gives himself to the other and
fundamentally affirms that other's otherness.168

It is this fellowship within God which is externalized to the creature by grace. God actualizes
God's righteousness by externalizing the 'community of mutual difference' that God is as
Trinity.169 That God corresponds to himself in a way that affirms God's mutual difference is,
in Jüngel's opinion, the core of righteousness: 'he is just in Himself. This is the backbone of
justification'.170 For Jüngel, the justification of the believer depends on right or 'well-
ordered'171 relations being established between God and humanity. Such relations demand
that a clear distinction be made between the divine and the human, between God and
creatures.172 If Molnar's critique of Jüngel's treatment of essence and economy is right, and
divine and human are not sufficiently distinguished, it is difficult to see how Jüngel could
speak effectively about the righteousness of God which makes human beings righteous.173

Renewed (righteous) existence begins for Jüngel in the address of God as an event of the
Word. The God who justifies is the God who speaks; God's Word of address initiates God's
encounter with humanity. In the incarnation, God comes to humanity in Jesus. It is in Christ
that we are made righteous and the gospel (expressed formally) is where the revelation of
God's righteousness is accomplished (Rom 1:16-17). The gospel (expressed materially) is
the message of the cross in that the resurrected Christ is manifest as 'the one crucified for
us'. Although the righteousness that is revealed is God's righteousness and not our own, this
righteousness is manifestly 'for us'.174 The gospel addresses us with a new possibility which

168 Jüngel, Justification, 78.
169 Jüngel, Justification, 82/3. Such acts of divine grace include creation, the election of Israel and with them,
the election of humanity; whereby demonstrating God's faithfulness. (Jüngel, LR, 251).
170 Barth, CD IV/I, 531, cited by Jüngel, LR, 250.
171 Jüngel, LR, 247. Righteousness is not to be seized for oneself; 'righteousness is that ordering of the diverse
relations of personal beings who are distinct, yet who exist with one another and must rely on one another'.
(Ibid., 247/8). See also John Webster, 'Introduction' in Eberhard Jüngel, Justification: The Heart of the
172 It was critical for the later Barth that the distinctiveness between the divine and the human should be
acknowledged without depriving each of their proper agencies. This question has been of equal concern for
Jüngel. (See Mark C. Mattes, The Role of Justification in Contemporary Theology (Michigan/Cambridge:
173 For Molnar's critique see above, 72ff.
174 Jüngel, Justification, 68.
is granted as a reality by that same gospel. Jungel maintains that the Christian faith understands humanity eschatologically; such a faith opens up for each person the possibility of an eschatological understanding of the self. Such a self-understanding is concerned with a new being, the making new of which cannot be attributed to ourselves. The gospel is the power of God for salvation and as such makes things new. Jungel sees the gospel as both a 'creative address' and an 'eschatological announcement' that the new age has broken in. As Jungel describes it, God's righteousness is a salvific concept which elicits faith only when it is revealed in the gospel. He claims that this insight was Luther's real discovery at the time of the Reformation; as the revelation of God, the gospel defines the meaning of the righteousness of God. An important part of this discovery, for Jungel, is that it gives due weight to the gospel as the place of the revelation of God's righteousness. Jungel follows both Luther and Barth in his declaration that our faith is always in the God who is gracious to us in Jesus Christ, that is, the Jesus of the Gospels; the gospel, as the revelation of God, 'constrains' the meaning of the righteousness of God. This boundary to the meaning of the righteousness of God (the meaning of the gospel) is similar to the idea of the gospel creating boundaries to the imaginative paradigm that grounds the Christian life. We may say that an imaginative paradigm grounds the Christian life only in the sense of Barth's contention that 'the Holy Spirit is absolutely and alone the umpire with reference to what is or is not Christian life'. We are in line with this comment if renewal/transformation is the work of Word and Spirit within the human imagination.

Jungel's portrayal of renewed existence is strongly influenced by his conviction that the address of God to us occurs at the initiative of God and God alone. He claims that, if any discussion of the 'gracious renewal of the inner person' is to be countenanced by Protestant theology, it cannot be seen 'as complementary, as an alternative or as completing the extrinsetist view of justification'. It is the creative Word which both addresses us and

175 Jungel, *Justification*, 68/9. This new possibility is a result of God's intervention where God, as the truth of life, interrupts our self-continuity. For Jungel God is humanity's 'original interruption'. Jungel links this interruption to the event of the cross where God allows 'the continuity of his own life to be interrupted through the death of Jesus Christ'. There is a twofold interruption; the 'crucified and risen Christ is this twofold interruption which, in the mode of the Holy Spirit, is given concrete form as the enhancement of the continuity of the life that is interrupted'. (See Jungel, TL, 235/6).
176 Jungel, HCG, 124/5. For a discussion of the new in contrast to the old, see above, 128f.
177 Jungel, *Justification*, 69. For a discussion of Luther's exegetical insights from a Reformation perspective, see ibid., 70ff.
178 Jungel, *Justification*, 212. The volume *Justification* is a response to *The Joint Declaration on Justification* worked out by the Lutheran World Federation and the Vatican. In his preface to the third edition, Jungel states that his underlying intention for the book was to 'help Christians and the church towards a self-understanding
grants us God's righteousness from outside ourselves; the justifying Word of God is an external Word. One wonders whether the external nature of this Word means, in effect, that there is no internal transformation within the believer. However, in Jungel's estimation, this Word that is brought to us by the righteousness of God never remains 'external' to those who are thus addressed; 'it touches us so greatly that it touches us more closely than we can touch ourselves. It becomes to us something more inward than our most being'. In Jungel's understanding, those who are 'in concord with God' must 'come out of themselves in order to come to themselves'. This external Word addresses us from outside ourselves and renews the inner person by granting us God's righteousness. Jungel characterizes the desire to come to ourselves by our own efforts (a form of inversion) as sin. The 'drive to oneself' characterizes unrighteous works whereas the grounding of good works in faith entails liberation from the burden of self-realization and emancipation for the joyful task of giving thanks to God and service to one's neighbour. The proper understanding of the doctrine of justification means, for Jungel, that human work is strictly excluded from the economy of salvation. This principle both derives from, and points to, the 'Christ alone', 'word alone', 'grace alone' and 'faith alone' that Jungel places at the centre of theology. These exclusive premises and their insistence on the divine initiative are at the root of Jungel's rejection of any human involvement in justification. It is difficult to see this passivity as total. It can be said that, within Jungel's framework in which faith itself is God's gift, faith responds to the initiative of the divine love. This is not to say that we make

in keeping with the gospel'. In this and the previous two prefaces he outlines some of the responses to this document. (See Jungel, *Justification*, xxv-xxxvii).

179 Jungel, *Justification*, 212. Jungel maintains that this is the element of truth in Tuomo Mannema's interpretation of Luther. Even though Jungel's understanding of God's relation to humanity as 'nearness' is often imprecise, his 'analogy of advent' successfully images God's relation to the world because 'coming' encompasses both distance and proximity. God is neither simply within the world nor remote from it: God comes to the world in unceasing self-giving. On the nearness of God see, Jungel, TL, 235; Jungel, *GMW*, 288, 324.; Webster, 'Who God is II', 1215/6.

180 Such an exposition would risk a strong Hegelian overtone if Jungel was less careful to distinguish between God and the world. 'When revelation occurs, we are able to reflect on it. Because we are addressed, we can respond. Inasmuch as we have been addressed, we recognize ourselves as by nature address-able. Thus...the categories of word and revelation remain central'. (O'Donovan, 'Mystery of God', 255).


182 For Jungel, the relationship between the 'Christ alone' and the other three exclusive statements is the chief cause of the disagreement between Protestants and Roman Catholics. On the relation between these exclusive statements, see Jungel, *Justification*: Christ alone, 149ff; grace alone, 171ff; word alone, 178ff; faith alone, 236ff; Webster, 'Introduction' in *Justification*, xii.

183 Barth makes the point that while 'faith can only be understood as the work of the Holy Spirit, and in the secrecy of faith is characterized as repentance and trust, it is still our own faith'. (Barth, *Holy Spirit*, 32). 'That faith has action alongside itself means...that faith is active. And just this being active takes place in the Holy Spirit - in the judgement and in the justification of the Holy Spirit'. (Ibid., 33).
ourselves righteous. What touches us most deeply is brought to us by the righteousness of God.

5.3.2 Recognized and affirmed by God

Jüngel’s contention that human persons are defined by faith alone rather than by works of the law suggests that the address of God begins the process whereby ‘we know ourselves to be recognized by God and thereby recognized irrevocably as human’. Jüngel’s argument implies that we cannot recognize ourselves as human outside of God's recognition of us; to be a person is to be recognized by God. Perhaps the only way we can understand God’s recognition as divine recognition (for Jüngel, God in identification with the crucified Jesus) is by the Holy Spirit working within the imagination. In the empirical world, the imagination has both the power of recognition and the ability to transpose ideas but this capacity cannot be translated into the realm of the divine without the agency of the Holy Spirit. Such a view is, of course, open to the same critique that any appeal to the Holy Spirit attracts. Nevertheless, such a position provides a connection between divine initiative and human response without jeopardizing Jüngel’s reasoning.

By positing the establishment of a right relation between God and humanity through the renewal of the inner person by the external Word, Jüngel contends that we become whole (renewed) not from within our own resources but from outside ourselves. ‘If we wish to experience ourselves as whole persons, we must experience more than ourselves.’ While this ‘more than ourselves’ emphatically does not imply divinization or theosis, restoring lost wholeness is more than reversing a particular state. In order to discover ourselves as new people constituted by God we must be remade ex nihilo. Christian existence is ‘existence out of the creative power of God who justifies’. This new existence is not conceived of as a participation in the being of God but rather as a participation in the love of God.

Jesus’ resurrection from the dead promises that we shall be made anew out of the nothingness of relationlessness, remade ex nihilo, if through faith in the creative Word of

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186 Jüngel, HCG, 127.
187 Jüngel, PA, 108. On being renewed ex nihilo, see below, 236ff.
188 This is a trifle problematic given Jüngel’s repeated assertion that God is love.
God we allow ourselves to participate in the love of God which occurs as the death of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{189}

There is agreement between Jüngel and Balthasar here in the sense that such a participation is, in effect, a dying and rising with Christ, a participation in the paschal mystery. For Jüngel, we are justified by being brought by the Word into relationship with Christ. We are brought out of death into new life, grounded in, and expressed by, the resurrection of Jesus. Human existence is made new by relating humanity to Jesus Christ in line with Jüngel’s espousal of an analogy of relations rather than an analogy of being.\textsuperscript{190} We are given a role in Jesus’ death (Rom 6:3f) in order to bring into being a new person (Rom 6:5; 2 Cor 5:17). Rather than being like God, we are simultaneously righteous and sinners; we exist before God who justifies us and we exist also before our own selves.\textsuperscript{191} Jüngel’s unwavering conviction is that this is not only accomplished by ‘Christ alone’ (in common with the consensus of Roman Catholic doctrine) but also by ‘grace alone’, ‘Word alone’ and ‘faith alone’. Restoring the lost wholeness of being is the function of salvation which is the work of God.\textsuperscript{192} It is God who makes faith possible and the human Yes is, by God’s grace, in response to an affirmation that has already been made. Unfortunately, Jüngel does not spell out the role of the Spirit in the ‘faith alone’ and ‘grace alone’ of the renewal of the justified person. The Holy Spirit always works in relationship with the Father and the Son and neither faith nor grace can be said to operate without the Spirit. Although it may be said that Jüngel’s soteriology is somewhat circumscribed by his central emphasis on justification, it is equally true that the motif of justification is more the centre around which other soteriological themes can be situated rather than an actual exclusion of other aspects.\textsuperscript{193}

\textsuperscript{189} Jüngel, PA, 108.
\textsuperscript{190} See above, 85ff.
\textsuperscript{191} Jüngel, Justification, 213-5. In this, Jüngel follows Barth (against Balthasar) agreeing with the Reformers that the Christian is simultaneously sinner and righteous. (See Karl Barth, The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life : The Theological Basis of Ethics, trans. R. Birch Hoyle (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 30f. This, for Jüngel, precludes the believer from being seen in any way to be as God.
\textsuperscript{192} Jüngel, Justification, 166. A wholeness which is ‘more than the sum of its parts and thus deserves to be called salvation’. To acknowledge and delight in Christ’s atoning sacrifice ‘means to be justified by faith and as a consequence to have peace’. (Ibid.). Jüngel draws attention to the connection between righteousness and peace in the biblical understanding; ‘the connection between peace and righteousness is so close that they are mutually determinative’. (Jüngel, LR, 249).
\textsuperscript{193} Webster comments that Jüngel’s focus on justification to the detriment of sacrifice may lead him to place too much emphasis on human passivity. (See Webster ‘Introduction’ in Justification, xv). Jüngel does not reduce justification to a strictly forensic interpretation. It is always included within a christological and trinitarian framework.
It remains to be seen how God can affirm humanity when humanity is essentially sinful. Jüngel understands sin and evil as theological concepts which emerge from humanity's relationship with God. Sinners are in a state of self-contradiction, contra God who is in essential agreement with himself. Jüngel perceives sin as the 'lying Yes', the 'false Yes', which 'gives birth to the destructive No' which is contrary to the truth. Untruth is not simply an individual matter; the emptiness of sin is destructive of the 'complex web of relationships' which makes up creation and being itself. Sin is therefore destructive of community because sin may be saying Yes in an unloving way. Sin is the urge towards relationlessness, the end result of which is death. Speechlessness before God is the passive dimension of this active urge towards relationlessness. With the inability to speak before God comes a lack of substance and an insecurity because of sin. Sin as a lie has no shape; it 'assumes the form of truth and goodness' and 'robs them of their form'. If sin can be described as formlessness, can 'making righteous' be perceived, in a sense, as 'giving shape' to those who, left to themselves, are unformed? If this were the case then, given Jüngel's insistence that God is in identity with the crucified man Jesus (in the world we see God in the shape or form of Jesus Christ), surely we are shaped, in our imagination, by the narrative of the triduum mortis which reveals the essentials of the gospel. There are several potential problems in such a proposal. First, unless carefully delimited, the imagination could falsely assume the 'form of truth and goodness'. Second, as Jüngel contends, God must not be instrumentalized; God is interesting for God's own sake. Third, if the first two provisos are not kept in mind there is a risk that the imagination, if not fully under the control of the Holy Spirit, can lead to a fixing of the gaze on something other than God, which is idolatry.

194 Jüngel, Justification, 92. Evil has two aspects; the evil we do and the evil whose power we suffer. Salvation is from 'sin as deed' and 'sin as power'. (Ibid.). The sinner is both a perpetrator and a slave to sin. (See Ibid., 115-117).

195 Jüngel, Justification, 107-9. Sin is the 'enemy of God's creative loving Yes which forms the basis of all existence'. (Ibid., 109).

196 Jüngel, Justification, 113. Jüngel sees sin as the 'presumptuousness of man to be able to deal with nothingness himself, to justify himself as coming from nothingness (instead of being created from it) ... man, then, insists on nothingness as his origin and source, which he has now vanquished'. Instead of being called forth from nothingness, man claims that he comes from nothingness and keeps God out of the struggle. (Jüngel, GMW, 225, note 73).

197 Jüngel, Justification, 145.

198 Jüngel, Justification, 114.

199 See Jüngel, LR, 243/4.

200 See Marion, God Without Being, 11ff. Such a fixing of the gaze can occur even within a religious context. 'By lending itself the appearance of religion and piety, it distorts God into an idol.' (Jüngel, Justification, 114). Jüngel links idolatry with the notion of self-actualization whereby one's relationship to God is subordinated or even sacrificed to the relationship with oneself. 'Idols are then worshipped, which are idols for the reason that people can use them for their own advantage. Idols are never interesting for their own sake. But God is
It is because Jüngel has such a strong emphasis on the *triduum mortis* that he can acknowledge the weight of sin and yet affirm humanitity. In the event of the cross God expresses sin’s disfigurement and conquers it. Sin is condemned to destruction; sinners are identified, judged and forgiven. It is by grace alone that God declares and makes the sinner righteous. In Jüngel’s estimation it is only from this presupposition, rather than from the misleading idea that God tempers justice with grace, that the message of justification is able to be understood. According to Jüngel, the seeming contradiction that God justifies the unrighteous and the ungodly is not be understood by using the concepts in a normal way. We know what God is like ‘only on the basis of his justifying the ungodly’; grace and judgement are not alternatives. Grace does not bypass judgement; judgement was passed on the world at the cross. For Jüngel, God is righteous in his contact with sinners and ‘he is faithful to himself in his grace’; God gives himself but does not lose anything by forgiving humanity. In practising grace, God shares his righteousness. For Jüngel, as for Luther, the prime agent in good works is God. It is in God’s identification with the crucified Jesus, who was ‘accursed for the unrighteousness of all people’, that God affirms himself as divine in his humanity; ‘the subject of the doctrine of justification is the human God’.

5.3.3 The human person in correspondence to God

In explicating the doctrine of justification in the way he does, Jüngel is both affirming the humanity of God and denying the divinity of humanity. He wishes to keep divine and human action separate so both the affirmation and the denial are important to him. Jüngel understands humanity’s new being as humanity in correspondence to God. The task of a theological anthropology is thus ‘denying the divinity of humanity’. In Jüngel’s conception the necessity of such a denial comes from the human desire to be as God and the human...
inability to let God be God. There is also a need to distinguish divine and human freedom from each other. God is always the primary acting subject. Human freedom is not self-created; we cannot build our own identity. Jüngel avers that the idea of being Christ to others, which contemporary theology often presents as an anthropological principle, results from an inaccurate interpretation of Luther. Rather than interpreting this as the call to be Christ to others, human persons are to remain ‘human among others’ and to ‘let God be God’. The reason for Jüngel’s objection is his desire to keep divine and human acts separate. In his opinion, any continuum between the two would turn the gospel into a new law.

The possibility of denying the divinity of humanity follows from the humanity of God as it took place in Jesus Christ. To let God be human in Jesus Christ, and for this very reason not to let humanity become God: this is the anthropological task which the Christian faith demands of thinking. Denying the divinity of humanity on the basis of the humanity of God would be the most rigorous interpretation of our humanity.

Jüngel is adamant that the human person (believer or unbeliever) cannot participate in the nature or being of God. However, he does not rule out all notion of participation in the divine life. What he does is interpret this participation through the qualification of ‘Christ alone’. This qualification operates in two related ways: we share in the glory of God in the face of Christ and Christ, as the image of God, draws us into his being through the word of the cross. Jüngel maintains that Christ alone is the archetypical human being because he corresponds to God the Lord in a unique way. Christ alone manifests the glory of God therefore we are given a share of God’s glory in the face of Christ.

It is ‘in Christ’ that we have a share in the glory of God. This sharing is something which

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208 Jüngel, HCG, 152/3.

209 In this, Jüngel follows Luther. ‘When there is to be discussion concerning Christian righteousness, the person is to be thrown out right way. For if I attach it to the person, or say of it that it comes from the person, willy-nilly, it is placed under the law of works’. (Luther, Gal., Erl.Ed., 1;243), cited by Barth, Holy Spirit, 42, note 28. On the relationship between gospel and law in Luther and Barth see Jüngel, Karl Barth, 105-126. Jüngel traces the political impact of Barth’s theology to Barth’s subordination of ethics to dogmatics, a subordination which was based on Barth’s understanding of gospel and law. Jüngel maintains that this impact was because of its dogmatic character and because ‘its doctrine of the law honoured the God of gospel, the God of grace’. (Ibid., 126).

210 Jüngel, HCG, 152. On Jüngel’s understanding of the humanity of God see above, Chapter Three, 123ff.

211 Jüngel, HCG, 140. Jüngel could make more of the connection between Christ and the Holy Spirit at this juncture. Without the action of the Holy Spirit within the believer, the believer would be unable to share in God’s glory or respond in any way. Philip Rosato’s comment on Barth’s pneumatology is also pertinent for Jüngel at this point. ‘That man can know the immanent nature of God as the mystery which coincides with the economic activity of God on man’s behalf is the work of the Holy Spirit. As God’s own openness to man, He is both in God Himmel: and in the Christian the mediator between God’s mystery and the mystery of man’s participation in God.” (Philip Rosato, SI, The Spirit as Lord: The pneumatology of Karl Barth (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1981), 57).
happens linguistically, through address. Just as Jesus Christ is God’s image, in that he has God’s glory, so through proclamation he gives to those who believe a share in God’s glory, by drawing us into his being in the image of God through the event of the word of the cross. The imago Dei, which is Jesus Christ, here comes into consideration as the word-event happening to us.\(^{212}\) The whole tenor of Jüngel’s theology demonstrates his belief that there is an intrinsic connection between faith and language. What concerns us at this point in the discussion is Jüngel’s assertion that language which ‘brings God to speech’ uses words in new and different ways by applying them to new referents. This is not a misuse of words; a catachretic use of language facilitates our understanding of the ‘relationship between language and what is the case’.\(^{213}\) The imagination is inextricably involved with what is, and what is not, the case. The recognition of old patterns and the forming of new patterns, including those of language, is facilitated by the imagination. It is within the imagination that we can see Jesus Christ as the imago Dei. The imagination qua imagination, can see one thing as another but it is only by the agency of the Holy Spirit that we can see God’s glory in the human face of Jesus. It is only in the transformed imagination that renewed patterns form a paradigm that is cruciform. ‘The Mystery of the World’ is, as Spjuth phrases it, ‘that the truth of our being is found in the divine love that is radically different from normal patterns of evaluating our existence’.\(^{214}\)

The image of Jesus as proclaimer dominates Jüngel’s presentation of Jesus but the relation between Jesus’ word and the ongoing circumstances of his human existence seem to be somewhat unconvincing. The conditions of Jesus’ life affected him, as the proclaimer, as well as the recipients of his proclamation.\(^{215}\) Jüngel continues to be influenced by his early contact with the work of Bultmann\(^{216}\) but Mark Mattes contends that Jüngel’s approach to justification is overridingly Barthian, resulting in a ‘highly personalistic’ construal of justification by faith. According to Mattes, Jüngel tends to existentialize with respect to

\(^{212}\) Jüngel, HCG, 140. For Jüngel, there can be no such sharing unless we also share in the ‘specific Christian dialectic of Lord and slave, which is indeed grounded in the being of Jesus Christ himself’. (Ibid., 141). The idea of sharing God’s glory through the event of proclamation demonstrates Jüngel’s indebtedness to Bultmann and Fuchs.

\(^{213}\) Webster, ‘Language of Faith’, 254/5. On metaphor and analogical speech about God, see above, 80ff.

\(^{214}\) Spjuth, ‘Redemption’, 56.

\(^{215}\) Davidson, ‘Theologizing’, 148. Davidson also claims that in his otherwise admirable account of God’s presence-in-absence at Calvary, Jüngel appears to ‘abstract the death of the finite Jesus somewhat from the previous life of obedience which he lived’. (Ibid.).

\(^{216}\) In regard to God as the Mystery of the World, Garrett Green goes so far as to say that in Jüngel’s ‘appeal to the subjective assurance of ‘language-events’, Jüngel is merely offering a ‘warmed-over existentialist hermeneutics’, a view not shared by this thesis. (Green, ‘Mystery of Eberhard Jüngel’, 34, 39).
theological method and to theorize with respect to theological content, thereby attempting to interpret the inner life of God.\textsuperscript{217} Jüngel does not see his method as demonstrating the thinkability of God on the basis of general anthropological definitions. Jüngel does, however, see his method as demonstrating the thinkability of both God and humanity on the basis of the event of God's self-disclosure. For Jüngel, it is God's self-revelation which demonstrates that the Christian truth is 'universally valid on the basis of its inner power'.\textsuperscript{218}

Regarding the proclamation of the gospel, Mattes claims that, for Jüngel, 'God is not properly in the world . . . but solely in a word that evokes a particular meta-experience'. Mattes concludes that 'Jüngel's relating of God to word is done in opposition to the world'.\textsuperscript{219} It is true that Jüngel does not subscribe to an \textit{analogia entis} and opposes the dominance of actuality but this does not mean that he categorically opposes the world. Ironically, he is often accused of bringing the temporality of the world too close to God. It is at the cross (in the world) where the justification of the godless takes place.

Although Jüngel may be said to speak a great deal about God's presence in history at the time of Jesus, he has much less to say about the ongoing presence of Christ in the world through the Holy Spirit. Jüngel conceives of the 'analogy of advent' as an interruption of the world that alone allows authentic speech and thought about \textit{God}.\textsuperscript{220} But how much speech about God is allowed? Mattes claims that to 'say that God is self-defining and that our access to this definition is solely through the Incarnation is to say more of God than faith allows';\textsuperscript{221} he charges Jüngel with attempting to walk by sight, and not faith.\textsuperscript{222} Mattes seems to think that Jüngel, by theorizing about the inner life of God, says too much about God. Mattes questions whether defining the proper relationship of the human to God is more important than 'delivering \textit{the words} of law and promise that actually establish the right relationship of fear, love, and trust'.\textsuperscript{223} For Jüngel, however, preaching cannot establish right relationships; right relations come from being \textit{made} righteous. Righteousness is then \textit{expressed} in the

\textsuperscript{217} Mattes, \textit{Role of Justification}, 37.
\textsuperscript{218} Jüngel contrasts his own method with that of Wolfhart Pannenberg. Jüngel says of his own work that his thinking 'pursues the path which, one might say, goes from the inside toward the outside, from the specifically Christian faith experience to a concept of God which claims universal validity'. (Jüngel, \textit{GMW}, viii).
\textsuperscript{219} Mattes, \textit{Role of Justification}, 37.
\textsuperscript{220} '[I]t is not even contested that there are still other words of God outside of this one Word of God that is Jesus Christ in person, or even that there can be something like a natural recognition of God . . . . What is disputed, accordingly, is that one may listen to other words of this type within the church, so as to claim them in like manner as sources of that which the church must affirm and proclaim'. (Jüngel, \textit{Christ, Justice and Peace}, 24).
\textsuperscript{221} Mattes, \textit{Role of Justification}, 41.
\textsuperscript{222} Mattes, \textit{Role of Justification}, 47.
\textsuperscript{223} Mattes, \textit{Role of Justification}, 45.
Christian life, a life which includes preaching the word. Jüngel wishes to exclude any ‘active participation’ of sinners in their own justification; it is by ‘grace alone’ that the sinner is justified. In their respective treatments of Mary, the contrast between Jüngel and Balthasar is clearly obvious. In seeing Mary as a sinner like other sinners, Jüngel is true to his Lutheran confession. However, Jüngel does concede that ‘there is simply no objection to saying that we, like Mary, are present and must be present with our faith and obedience, when our salvation is at stake’. While acknowledging that Mary can be honoured as the model of the believer, he insists that neither the believer nor Mary can be seen as a cause of salvation.

O’Donovan asks why Jüngel places such an emphasis on the humanity of God, thus allowing human beings to become more human, but rejects the possibility that communion with God points to divinization or a share in what God is. Jüngel could usefully look to the Orthodox tradition in order to look again at the sacramentality of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation as a process where the Spirit draws the believer into communion with God. Jüngel differentiates his own view from the Eastern Orthodox notion of deification or theosis. The Eastern tradition speaks of the event of God in Christ, which makes the assent of humanity to God a possibility; humanity’s true destiny is to remain human in nature and activity but to be in active communion with God through God’s energies. If justification in the Lutheran tradition has ontological implications as is posited by Tuomo Mannermaa and the Finnish school, Luther scholarship has more in common with the doctrine of theosis than has been supposed or that Jüngel would acknowledge. In fact, according to Mannermaa’s interpretation of Luther, ‘in Christ, the Christian possesses all of the names, treasures, and goods of the divine nature’.

While the Finnish interpretation does convey a community of being between God and

224 Jüngel, Justification, 179.
225 O'Donovan, 'Mystery of God', 268.
227 In the Eastern view, deification or theosis does not mean absorption into the essence of God. As maintained by the contemporary Greek Orthodox theologian Panayiotis Nellas, there is an ‘essential gulf’ between divine and human nature. According to Orthodox theology, this gulf is bridged by the uncreated divine energies which sustain and conserve the created order and guide the world to its perfection. (Panayiotis Nellas, Deification in Christ: The Nature of the Human Person (New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1987), 31).
humanity, this union does not mean a change of substance. However, it is more than the union of will between God and humanity (Luther Renaissance theology) or the 'community of deed or of act in revelation (dialectical theology)'. In the Finnish view, to exercise faith means to participate in the being of God and thus in the properties of God. According to Mannermaa, 'the doctrine of the participation of the believer in the divine life of Christ is the core of the doctrine of theosis, or divinization'. On this interpretation, faith involves a real union with Christ as the divine Person, therefore the believer is said to participate in the divine life.

For Jüngel, Jesus Christ defines both what it means to be human and what it means to be God. We are set free by grace from a life of self-assertion in order to live a life in correspondence to God. Because such a life cannot happen as a result of the efforts, in the form of human works, of the self-realizing subject, Jüngel turns to Luther's teaching on justification and its emphasis on the passivity of faith. He shares Luther's desire for a specifically Christian doctrine of God emphasizing God's self-giving in Christ, and a specifically Christian anthropology which is based on reception and response. According to Jüngel, the Reformation distinguished between law and gospel and Barth subordinated the law to the gospel.

On the one side, Luther's understanding of the gospel requires human passivity and receptivity - a highly intensive and creative passivity...which can then issue spontaneously in human activity and good works. But these good works can never arise apart from that prior passivity... On the other side, Barth's anthropology has an entirely different orientation. The human is understood by definition to be constituted by action and self-determination. Barth's anthropology therefore permits the gospel to be transformed immediately into the form of the law which demands human action.

Jüngel's notion of renewal has both negative and positive origins: he wants to refute the idea that being is realized in action and he wants to assert the power of the possible to make new

229 Mannermaa, 'Luther', 11/12.
230 Mannermaa, 'Luther', 16.
232 See Mannermaa, 'Justification', 32.
233 Webster, 'Who God is (II)', 1217.
234 Jüngel, Karl Barth, 123/4. For Barth, the 'indicative of the gospel creates a (new) being for a person only by permitting him to act, so that he may come to a "human decision which corresponds to the divine decision." Barth's version of the relationship of gospel and law is, in the final analysis, concerned with this correspondence, this analogy between God and humanity, an already ontological correspondence between the existence of God as pure act and the existence of the human person who is self defined in action.' (Ibid., citing Barth, CD, II/2, 511 [revised]).
in Jesus Christ. It is only if he or she is remade ex nihilo that the human subject is truly free from the bondage of their own actions. If Jüngel’s notion of renewal ex nihilo is to have anything to say to a theological use of the imagination then the role of the Holy Spirit as agent must be paramount. It is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that the human imagination can be involved in the renewing of our minds (Rom 12:2).

5.3.4 Persons Remade Ex Nihilo

Jüngel contends that we are to grasp the ontological implications of the event of justification from the notion of creatio ex nihilo. Out of the event of justification, God is to be thought as ‘the one who in the very act of distinguishing himself from the world relates himself to it’. Jüngel seeks to arrive at an understanding of both God and the world by starting with the distinction between them. It is God who, by the act of distinguishing between them, determines what is possible and what is impossible. The fact that God is righteous because he justifies makes the doctrine of justification important for both Jüngel’s doctrine of God and his anthropology. God is gracious and just because God affirms his creatures. God’s Yes is the ‘first divine word of existence’ to which all existence owes its origin. It is crucial for Jüngel that God’s creative Yes forms the basis of all existence and that the Yes of affirmation from the human side always follows God’s own affirmation. This is not to say that human freedom is abrogated but that the capacity to say Yes is given, and is defined by relationship. Our creaturely existence is defined by our being joined in covenant with God; the fellowship of divine existence is true of creation only by way of analogy. Jüngel is thereby advocating an analogia relationis rather than an analogy of being.

Jüngel’s understanding of the human subject being remade ex nihilo depends, to some extent, on his analysis of the relation between possibility and actuality. He wants to call into question the Aristotelian view of how a person becomes righteous. Jüngel states that, for Aristotle, ‘[t]he human person realizes his or her actuality, and in so doing is actual . . . We

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235 Jüngel, PA, 112.
236 Jüngel, Justification, 84/5.
237 Jüngel, Justification, 103-9.
238 See O’Donovan, 258. Because of the history of consciousness and the experience of faith since Aristotle, Jüngel sees a twofold necessity to reevaluate how the relation between actuality and possibility has been understood. (Ibid).
are what we make of ourselves'\textsuperscript{239}. Jüngel turns to the doctrine of justification and to Luther’s polemic against Aristotle’s understanding of the righteous person as one who becomes righteous by doing that which is righteous. For Luther, a person \textit{becomes} righteous prior to that person’s deeds: a ‘change of being’ is necessary. Jüngel’s rejection of the primacy of actuality is influenced from two directions. The primary stimulus is a Lutheran view of justification which is christologically grounded in a theology of the cross.\textsuperscript{240} It is out of the word of the cross that God makes the possible to be possible and the impossible to be impossible.\textsuperscript{241} For Jüngel, the distinction between the possible and the impossible is more fundamental than that between the actual and the non-actual because here we are concerned with truth rather than actuality.\textsuperscript{242} The second direction of influence is from Heidegger’s ontology which gives precedence to possibility over actuality. Most of all, Jüngel attempts to stay faithful to the biblical account in that God creates new possibilities by raising the dead.\textsuperscript{243} Despite this declared preference for possibility over actuality, Jüngel makes it clear that, unless possibility is to remain an abstraction from the actual, future possibility must address the actual. It is the ‘event of the word’ which is the ‘indispensable concretion of the possible’.\textsuperscript{244} It is this event which is the ‘ultimate concern of actuality’ because it is an event which ‘God’s love makes possible from outside, and not from a future which arises out of the past’.\textsuperscript{245} God’s grace must be free to act without being determined by actuality. Possibility is the work of God, a work the Holy Spirit makes real for us. The power of the possible is seen in the authority of the gospel in which it gives itself to be understood. It is in the face of actuality that faith in the word of the cross has to assert what God’s love has made possible.\textsuperscript{246}

\textsuperscript{239} Jüngel, PA, 106. See also, Eberhard Jüngel, ‘Living Out of Righteousness: God’s Action - Human Agency’ in J. B. Webster, ed., Theological Essays II (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 241-263 at 247ff.

\textsuperscript{240} Luther’s \textit{Heidelberg Disputation} includes both an attack on Aristotle and his objections to the Scholastic philosophy which was heavily influenced by Aristotle. See Luther, ‘Disputation’ 278-80. Luther sees Aristotle’s influence on the Scholastics as responsible for scholasticism’s theology of glory in which God could not be seen in the weakness and suffering of the cross. See John Webster, \textit{Barth’s Moral Theology: Human Action in Barth’s Thought} (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 164.

\textsuperscript{241} Beyond this distinction, ‘God himself is equiprimordially both, or, to say the same thing, God \textit{is} and his being is in becoming’. (Jüngel, PA, 112).

\textsuperscript{242} Jüngel maintains that it would be better to speak of an ‘impossible actuality’ rather than Barth’s definition of sin as the ‘impossible possibility’. (Ibid., note 51).

\textsuperscript{243} On the influence of Heidegger, see Mattes, 31; Zimany, \textit{Vehicle for God}, 9-12.

\textsuperscript{244} Jüngel, PA, 117. A point of agreement with Barth. ‘Where God is known He is also in some way or other knowable; where the actuality exists there is also the corresponding possibility. The question cannot then be posed \textit{in abstracto} but only \textit{in concreto}’. (Barth, \textit{CD II/1}, 5, quoted in part by Jüngel in GBB/2, 33). Spjuth questions whether Jüngel differentiates the realm of possibility from the realm of actuality to the extent that ‘God’s redemptive newness might lack concrete content when being applied to reality’. (Spjuth, \textit{Creation}, 93).

\textsuperscript{245} Jüngel, PA, 117.

\textsuperscript{246} Jüngel, PA, 118/9.
Possibility, as the work of God, arises from the divine distinction between the possible and the impossible, a distinction which makes the creation of the world possible ex nihilo.\textsuperscript{247} It is the same pattern which Jüngel perceives in the believer who is remade ex nihilo, a pattern, that is perhaps perceived by the imagination but is put into effect by the Holy Spirit. As the ultimate concern of actuality, possibility must remain a real concern without forfeiting its freedom from determination by actuality: God’s freedom to work within the believer must not be compromised.\textsuperscript{248} Critique is warranted at this point. While Jüngel lays the foundation for the freedom of the Holy Spirit, he gives little exposition of the ways in which the power of the possible in the work of the Spirit is worked out. It is unclear how the Holy Spirit acts in the life of one who has been renewed. In Jüngel’s understanding, justification is all about relation: the ‘justifying Word remakes our human existence anew by relating us to Jesus Christ’.\textsuperscript{249} Jüngel takes from Luther the idea that the Christian takes on the shape of the Word, an idea similar to the notion that the Christian imagination is shaped by the paradigm of the triduum mortis. Jüngel’s motif of identification is at work here; in faith the Christian identifies with the fate of Jesus. There is identification in that the Christian dies and is raised with him,\textsuperscript{250} but it is not a transfer of identity by the agency of faith itself.\textsuperscript{251} Jesus was raised by the Father in the Spirit. This dying and rising with can only be by the agency of the Holy Spirit (as love); human agency is completely ruled out. Renewal (as possibility) is a form of becoming that is not bound by the past. ‘As future, possibility is the concrete way in which the world is determined by nothingness, out of which God’s creative love lets being become’.\textsuperscript{252} It is the divine creativity which brings new possibilities into being ex nihilo. Jüngel seems to place actuality and human activity on one side of a divide and possibility, human passivity and divine creativity ex nihilo on the other. The connotation is that the former is to be seen in a negative light and the latter is primarily positive. As we might expect, Jüngel’s understanding of the passive and the active is more nuanced than this.

\textsuperscript{247} On creation ex nihilo, see above, 26ff.
\textsuperscript{248} The ‘claim of the possible can only be asserted as a granting of freedom. The authority of the possible is the authority of given freedom.’ Jüngel maintains that Luther interprets Christ’s lordship in such a non-authoritarian way. (Jüngel, PA, 119, note 63).
\textsuperscript{249} Jüngel, Justification, 213.
\textsuperscript{250} Jüngel, Justification, 163.
\textsuperscript{251} There is some ambiguity here. Although Jüngel states that ‘faith is now the transfer of identity by which the individuals so identify themselves with the fate of Jesus that they know they have died and been raised from the dead with him’, he claims that ‘God also acts in human beings by awakening faith and thereby granting believers their new identity as saints – we can also say: as Christians. In the act of salvation at the Cross and when he awakens faith, God acts alone’. (Jüngel, Justification, 163/4). The latter statement is consonant with his stance on justification.
\textsuperscript{252} Jüngel, PA, 116/7.
If Jüngel’s thought is in any way to apply to the imagination, the imagination must not be seen to be active simply in its own right because, for Jüngel, the world depends on what God gives to the world. It is God’s prevenient grace that allows for our action; the human Yes is therefore a creative word only in a secondary sense, that is, as a response, never ex nihilo. While human response is an act related to the entire existence of the person and involves both knowledge and will as essentially related moments, this renewal by the power of the possible ex nihilo is both different to, and greater than, the transformation achieved by the imagination per se. Jüngel distinguishes transformation in the merely human sense (which occurs from making actuality out of that which is actual) and that which makes the future by the Creator allowing possibility to move towards actuality. A similar distinction can be made between the imagination, as form, and the material content of the paradigmatic imagination, the narrative of the triduum mortis and its significance. The resurrection of Jesus is more than the imagination, as form, could ever convey. It is because God’s being remains a being which is coming and cannot be encapsulated once and for all in the act of perception, that the resurrection even: is not ‘seen’ through the imagination in a strictly phenomenological sense; there is much more to the resurrection than the perceiving person and the object he or she perceives. The meaning is not intrinsic to the object as perceived and significance is more than the immediate contours of the event. In the case of the resurrection, it is the significance of the event that gives birth to the gospel and indeed the Christian faith.

A potential interpretation of the resurrection reads as follows: the significance of the resurrection is revealed in the imagination (as locus) through the Holy Spirit (as agent) who enables its significance to be ‘understood’ by the believer in faith. Jungel’s notion of the Holy Spirit as the power of the possible may be applied to the imagination if the following provisos are recognized. Firstly, the imagination shapes the understanding of the believer within the boundaries intrinsic to the biblical account. Secondly, the Holy Spirit, not the

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253 On human response see, DeHart, ‘Structure of Theology’, 48/9.; Nelson, ‘Indicative of Grace’, 171/2. As DeHart phrases it, the ‘capacity for faith is not “built-in” to the structure of human existence, at least not in the sense that it could be actualized at will, or in the course of normal human interaction’. (DeHart, Structure of Theology, 48).

254 There is no perception of the resurrection event in the empirical sense; perception is not involved until after the resurrection when Mary meets Jesus in the garden and the disciples meet him at Emmaus and in the upper room.

255 For example, in the narrative of the transfiguration, the event involves perception; it involved the senses of the three disciples who were witnesses, but more than the senses. The transfiguration account in Luke’s Gospel, shows Peter as incapable of seeing the full significance of the event, his imagination as imagination failed him. (Luke 9:28-36).
imagination, is understood as the agent of possibility. Thirdly, faith is recognized as a gift from God; faith is not derived directly from the imagination. To be truly in right relation with God we must be renewed ex nihilo. A similarity exists between Jüngel’s notion of right relations and what Green calls the ‘faithful imagination’ where the human person ‘imagines rightly’ because their imagination has been renewed by God. It is the renewal spoken of in Rom 12:2 to which we refer here; the renewing of the mind includes the renewing of the imagination. Such a renewal can be conceived of in terms of both recognition and recognition: our understanding of God is to be rethought in terms of the paradigm of the triduum mortis shaping the imagination. The events of the triduum mortis demonstrate the ekstatic nature of God toward the world. Jüngel’s analysis of the church as justified community is grounded in both this movement of ekstasis and the mutual otherness which he sees as the very being of God.

5.4 Eberhard Jüngel: The Church as Justified Community

In the last section we saw that certain premises shape Jüngel’s construal of justification by faith. These premises remain true of the church as justified community. Firstly, renewed existence begins with the address of God; God’s revelation takes place in the gospel. Secondly, a right relation is established between God and humanity through the renewal of the inner person by the external Word. Thirdly, renewed humanity is humanity in correspondence to God; we are renewed by the power of the possible ex nihilo. In Jüngel’s terms, the doctrine of justification is concerned with ontology as well as anthropology; the event of justification is grounded in the trinitarian community of mutual otherness. The New Testament implication is that, although the work of redemption belongs to Christ alone, the risen Christ is never without his body which is the church. It is this church, with all its faithful members, which is the milieu of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit works to transform the church to the glory of God. Does Jüngel’s view that the humanity of Jesus Christ is definitive of all humanity in an ontological sense mean that the question of human agency is overshadowed by Jüngel’s emphasis on the initiative of God? Does Jüngel’s portrayal of

256 On the ‘faithful imagination’ see Green, Imagining God, 126-52.
257 ‘Ekstasis and hypostasis represent two basic aspects of Personhood, and it is not to be regarded as a mere accident that both of these words have been historically applied to the notion of Person’. (Zizioulas, ‘Human Capacity and Human Incapacity’, 408.
258 See Wainwright, ‘Church’, 105;
the church as justified community, in effect, pay enough attention to the ambiguities of our everyday human existence?

5.4.1 The addressed community: the hearing church

Jüngel’s notion of the addressed church is in direct line with his understanding of the believer as one who is addressed by God. In the same way that the believer owes his or her personhood to a relationship with another prior to a relationship with themselves, the church is not to be seen as self-grounding but constituted by its relationship with Jesus Christ. As the relation of Creator to creature is grounded in the history of the divine advent, so is the relation of God to the church; God continues to come to the world in Jesus. The concept of God’s ‘coming’ is important here. The church as a community of believers is addressed from outside itself; the church, like the individual believer, is first and foremost a recipient of God’s grace. Given Jüngel’s aversion to any hint of theosis, this thoroughly human church must be grounded in something other than human self-realization or else it will go against the character of Jüngel’s whole theology. The speech of God is God’s grace made manifest; if the hearing church is to proclaim anything it must be what it has already heard and understood to be the grace of God. According to Jüngel, this human church is grounded in the humanity of God and mediated by the humanity of the God-man, the only one able to mediate the divinity of God. In the original context of the Gospels, the human life of Jesus is seen as the true mediation of God.

The church is first and foremost the receptive church; like the individual believer, it is constituted from outside itself. The church is constituted as the body of Christ and it is as members of that body that justified believers are the church. There is an ambiguity here: while Jüngel understands the justified person to be brought into correspondence to God, he sees the church more as an aggregate of believers. A major difference between Jüngel and Balthasar is that, for Jüngel, the church is not the Holy Church as a source of holiness for her members. In Jüngel’s understanding, the church must continually pray for her own forgiveness as well as that of her members. He follows Luther in his belief that the Christian is simultaneously justified and a sinner. In consequence, the institutional Church in no way,

as it were, stands behind itself as immaculate. Indeed, it is a little difficult to see how the new possibilities belonging to Jüngel’s anthropology of new being can be said to belong to the church as a whole. For Jüngel, divine reality interrupts what is self-evident in human existence. This must be said to happen to the church as the body of Christ which, in reality, is fragmented. There are two factors behind Jüngel’s major concern that the passive and receptive church should act in a completely human way. Firstly, nothing, apart from Jesus Christ alone, should be seen to be constitutive of salvation and secondly, human action is to be strictly separated from divine action. However, despite Jüngel’s need to keep divine and human action separate, there must be a way that the church, as the addressed church, can be responsive to God’s call on the life of its members. There is little point in being addressed if the church, or its members are unable to respond. Without doubt, Jüngel could say more about the part played by the Holy Spirit in ecclesial response.

5.4.2 A Church Constituted by the Gospel

In Jüngel’s estimation the main task of the church, in keeping with its designation as a ‘hearing’ church, is oriented to the word in the proclamation of the gospel. The church is constituted by the same gospel by which it is addressed. The justified believer is one who is taken beyond him or herself through the creative Word of God. For Jüngel, this is what it means to be fully human, both as an individual and therefore as the church. Jüngel holds to the principle that God’s Word, the Word which comes to us in the gospel, is the sole criterion of right practice. It is as an ‘exercise of the Church’s conscience’ that theology stands under the corrective judgement of the gospel. God’s command to us is already grace as it is God’s command. It is nothing other than the gospel’s claim on us. Time and time again, Jüngel brings us back to God’s initiative as address, an address which generates

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260 See Geoffrey Wainwright, ‘Church’, 102/3. Wainwright notes that this may be true of the church as the ‘chaste harlot’ but the ‘immaculate spouse’ (Eph 5:27) seems to be forgotten. Along with a neglect of the ongoing sanctification of the believer, Jüngel seems to pay little attention to the ongoing sanctification of the church as a whole.

261 A term used by Barth, see CD 1/2, 797.

262 For Jüngel, grace has an ontological status which enables us to go beyond ourselves. This is not the self-actualization which Jüngel equates with sin. It bears comparison with the rejoicing in God which Jüngel sees as ‘eucharistic gladness’. On these points, see Jüngel, ‘Church Unity’; Webster, ‘Introduction’ in *Justification*, xi; Nelson, 171.

263 Webster, ‘Introduction’ in *Justification*, xiii.

264 Eberhard Jüngel, ‘Invocation of God as the Ethical Ground of Christian Action: Introductory Remarks on the Posthumous Fragments of Karl Barth’s Ethics of the Doctrine of Reconciliation’ in *Theological Essays*, ed. J. B. Webster (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), 154-172 at 156. In Jüngel’s reading of Barth, the ethics of the doctrine of reconciliation makes clear that the fact of God’s commanding is already grace, that God’s command is nothing other than the Gospel’s claim upon us and, to that extent, ‘the law of the Gospel’. However, Barth’s ethics of reconciliation is first and foremost an ethics of freedom. (Ibid.).
the response of faith. Jüngel’s unease with any suggestion of a synergism between faith and works lies partly in his anxiety about overdeveloped moralism or sacramentality governing the church. Indeed, Jüngel does not seem to think that the church has a sacramental character. Webster contends that such anxieties should not be a problem if the ‘bond between the christological and the anthropological is a function of the Spirit’s action’.265 From Jüngel’s perspective, the only way in which the sacraments constitute the church is in Jesus Christ; the church is to celebrate Jesus Christ as the ‘one and only sacrament’.266 Once again, it is not only through ‘Christ alone’ but ‘Word alone’, ‘grace alone’ and ‘faith alone’ by which justification is enacted and the church of Christ is to act in the world. Unfortunately, Jüngel has little to say about the role of the Holy Spirit in making the speech of grace understood. This may be one instance where Jüngel’s christological concentration works against his intentions and the basic tenets of his theology. Undeniably, Word, grace, and faith mean very little to the believer or the church outside of the work of the Holy Spirit. A detailed explication of the Spirit’s action, which is missing from Jüngel’s major works, would do much to clarify the difficulties that can be perceived in human agency and action. Does Jüngel’s insistence on the external agency of renewal limit his understanding of the inner transformation of the believer through the agency of the Holy Spirit? Renewal ex nihilo must result in a change of the believer’s being as well as the believer’s action. If the action of the church is to be seen as a totally human action, what does this have to say to the church which is indwelt by the Holy Spirit?267

Jüngel argues that: action belongs either to God or to humanity, never a synergy of both. This is evident in his deep concern about ‘possessing’ grace, a concern shared by Catholic soteriology. Jüngel understands faith as the complete opposite of human activity and as a totally passive action in which we experience ourselves as utterly dependent upon God’s grace. This presents a problem in that we also experience God in the context of faith. In order for this to happen, we are dependent on the action of the Holy Spirit who brings together divine and human action; the primacy is always given to God. Whenever the Spirit of God is at work, there can be no suggestion that the divine action is subordinate to the human. This, of course, is the main proviso when speaking of the Holy Spirit in connection

265 Webster, ‘Introduction’ in Justification, xv.
266 Jüngel, CS, 212.
267 ‘How far may, and indeed must, the church be viewed as the continuing body of Christ in which the Holy Spirit dwells transformatively in such a way that in its very being, as well as in its words and its gestures, the church becomes an active bearer of the gospel by which it is itself constituted?’ (Wainwright, ‘Church’, 103). See 2 Cor 3:18; 4:7.
with the human imagination. If we think of the human imagination as the vehicle, not the source, of the Holy Spirit’s action, we are not thinking of the synergism of equal partners to which Jüngel objects so strongly. Because the Holy Spirit is the prime agent, there is scope for a more active role for the believer within the church. In the Christian life as well as in doctrine, Jüngel understands justification by faith to be the basis of renewal, a renewal which is based on his concept of the sinner remade \textit{ex nihilo}. If the Holy Spirit is indeed the power of the possible, that power can be at work within the human imagination in order to make new (as \textit{made} righteous) according to the paradigm given in the narrative of the gospel. Such an interpretation of the Spirit’s work allows for the christocentrism of Jüngel’s interpretation of justification while giving more scope to the work of the Spirit thereby providing a way for the renewed person to ‘understand’ something of their transformation.

As Jüngel sees it, adhering to the paradigm given us in the gospel narrative of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, draws us into the worship of the church. As he understands it, the reformers saw the liturgical action of the church as a word-event whose criterion was the gospel. Jüngel claims that it is the gospel, not the sacraments of the church, which ‘effects what it signifies’. The ‘word of the gospel is in a strict sense a \textit{signum efficax gratae} (effectual sign of grace). As a \textit{representation} of Christ’s work it is at the same time the \textit{presentation} of that work, and as such a manifestation of the presence of Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit’.\footnote{Jüngel, CS, 204/5.} Jüngel admits that concentrating on the speech-event as the proclamation of the gospel can lead to some of the same blurring of the distinction between divine and human action that he sees in the administration of the sacraments, this time on the level of the word. In his assessment, we come back to the crucial point that the church is the hearing church: ‘[a]s the \textit{ecclesia audens} it preserves the place of God as the primary acting subject’.\footnote{Jüngel, CS, 205.} Jüngel stresses the need to recognize that the self-communication of God is external to the church rather than a continuation (through representation) from within the church.\footnote{Jüngel cites Barth in his attempt to understand the idea of ‘symbolic representation’ in a different way. Rather than rendering effectual Christ’s reality, Barth speaks of the church as “the (provisional) \textit{representation} of the sanctification of the whole of humankind which takes place in Jesus Christ”. (Jüngel, CS, 198). According to Jüngel, “[E]stimony and representation are not alternatives”. (Ibid.,199).} As far as he is concerned, the only function of the church’s action is to ‘\textit{let God perform his work}’. The liturgical action of the church is the opposite of its self-realization. There is an ‘elemental \textit{interruption}’ by God of our achievements in the world which prevents what we effect or make from becoming ‘religious self-realization’. The issue of importance

\footnote{Jüngel, CS, 204/5.}
for Jüngel is that the action of the church (as the human work) does not ‘equate itself with the divine work which it represents’. He contends that the word makes use of a work that does not need to be completed because salvation has already been accomplished once and for all.271

Jüngel argues that the language of sacrament is symptomatic of the church’s encroachment on those areas which, in his opinion, belong to Christ alone. He has difficulty with any suggestion that the church represents Christ in case it is seen as usurping Christ’s priestly office through the identification of Christ’s office with that of the church. In contrast to the Roman Catholic position post Vatican II, the liturgy is not to be understood as an *opus perficiendum* in which Christ’s body, the church, now joins in Christ’s ongoing priestly work.272 For Jüngel, it is partly a case of continuity versus interruption. The church is to be the recipient of God’s interrupting Word rather than the agent that is seen to continue the work of salvation already achieved by Christ. In his essay ‘The Church as Sacrament?’,273 Jüngel voices his dissatisfaction with what he sees as the neglect of the correct notion of sacrament in recent Protestant theology. He wants Christ, not the church, to be conceived of as the ‘sacrament of unity’. In his view, any theology of sacrament must return to the criterion of the New Testament in order to go forward; ‘sacramentum is nothing other than the eschatological mystery of the saving divine decree in favour of sinners which was enacted in the history of Jesus Christ’.274 Jüngel argues that talk of the church as the ‘fundamental sacrament’ is misplaced since the church receives its character from Christ and it should be Christ therefore who is named in this way. He considers such language about the church as a ‘usurpation’. He declares that ‘even Rahner’ initially used the term ‘fundamental sacrament’ of the church and that later the terminological distinction was made in Roman Catholic theology, of Christ as the ‘fundamental sacrament’ and the church as the ‘basic sacrament’.275 Jüngel follows Luther in his estimation that the relation between ‘Word alone’ and ‘faith alone’ preserves the nature of the sacraments as divine action and precludes any misunderstanding and abuse of them as a human action.276 He maintains that Luther valued

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271 Jüngel, CS, 204/5. It is, however, possible that God’s work may be seen to continue within the believer and the Christian Church without *equating* the divine work with the human work.
272 Wainwright, ‘Church’, 96.
273 Published in the original German as ‘De Kirche als Sakrament?’ *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 80 (1983).
274 Jüngel, CS, 191. For the history of such an identification or its lack, see Ibid., 192ff.
275 Jüngel, CS, 193. For a historical view of the term sacrament in Protestant theology, see Ibid., 193/4. For Luther, see 194ff.
276 Jüngel, CS, 195/6.
the ‘self-presentation of Jesus Christ in bread and wine, enacted through the creative power of his word and promise which provokes and strengthens faith’.\(^{277}\) The enactment of the eucharist or Lord’s supper is, for Jüngel, a liturgical act which is to be understood from the gospel. Two elements correspond to one another: the exclusion of any human activity which is to be understood as merit and the ‘sacramental action as it corresponds to the gospel’. The liturgical act is not just a recollection of an event from the past but ‘a kind of remembering that makes something of the past to be present’.\(^{278}\) It is of prime importance for Jüngel that the Lord’s supper is seen to be the self-representation of Jesus Christ; Christ is the ‘subject who represents himself’.\(^{279}\)

In Jüngel’s eyes, the church is constituted by the gospel, therefore the good news of the gospel is to be worked out in the community as an expression of the mission of the church. He declares that, in order to be just, any community must live out of the righteousness of God. To do so is to exist in a new way; it is to exclude every kind of human self-realization and to trust in God while ‘rejoicing in our own being as in a gift’.\(^{280}\) This, in Jüngel’s terms, is to put the doctrine of justification by faith into practice. God’s righteousness is revealed in the gospel, not the law, and it is in the gospel that God draws near to us.\(^{281}\) In order to live in correspondence with God we must live a renewed existence which corresponds to the gospel. This is in contrast to the modern western perspective where, due to the primacy of actuality, self-realization is how we actively determine ourselves. In western society, such a determination has led to a culture where value is determined by activity, usually in terms of economic return. From Jüngel’s perspective, we must stop equating a person’s value with his or her achievements. In order for this to happen, two things have to be acknowledged and put into practice: the first is that human life must be related to worship; such worship is not liturgically constrained because the righteousness of God is intended to be lived out in our everyday lives; the second means that the unconditional precedence of the person must be

\(^{277}\) Jüngel, CS, 195. Jüngel distinguishes between the early Luther (‘a sign, given through the command of God’) and the later Luther (‘an element constituted by the word through the institution of Jesus Christ’). (Ibid.).

\(^{278}\) Jüngel, ‘Church Unity’, 32. ‘As Schleiermacher put it, the action of the community at the Lord’s Supper is an activity of performance and thus to be distinguished precisely from activities that produce or effect something . . . Activity of performance is activity of the Sabbath, by which we are unburdened of ourselves.’ (Ibid., 33). Jüngel considers the Lord’s supper to be the end of the sacrificial cult. ‘Sacrifice now becomes a metaphorical expression for the dedication that characterizes the entire life of the Christian . . . The concept of sacrifice can be related now to every act of our lives with which we Christians serve God.’ (Ibid., 34). On the prospect of unity between Protestant and Roman Catholic on this issue see Ibid., 33/4.

\(^{279}\) Eberhard Jüngel. ‘Tell the World’, 33.

\(^{280}\) Jüngel, LR, 254.

\(^{281}\) Jüngel, LR, 245.
recognized; human life is primarily relational. In practice, these two conditions are interrelated. It is in worship that we acknowledge God and we are recognized as persons by God.

5.4.3 The Worshipping Church
The question of ongoing sanctification is an important one if the church is to be a church that worships and not merely a corporate expression of individual belief. Jüngel's understanding of the church invites us to question in what sense the gathering together of believers transcends individualism. In Jüngel's view, justice, peace and the preservation of creation have their roots in the being and 'letting-be' which is the 'origin of all activities'. He sees this as becoming evident in the 'the Lord's Day' and specifically in the act of worship. It is in worship that 'the actuality of the sinner is interrupted in such an elemental way that the new becomes possible'.

Jüngel links worship to justification in that we ourselves are addressed as persons who are more than the sum of their deeds. In worship we discover ourselves as a community of justified sinners... as those liberated from our own past, who cannot rejoice enough about their liberator and their own freedom.

The word 'discover' is indicative of how such benefits are constituted by God rather than realized by human means. In Jüngel's schema, the concern for human justice must always return to worship because worship 'proclaims the righteousness of God as the justification of the sinner'. Christians are enjoined to pray for the forgiveness of sins because it is from such a request that 'justified sinners gain the freedom... with such action always to begin again'. To pray for the forgiveness of sins is a response to what one perceives as God's goodness; one must believe that God justifies. However, that response is not completely passive; one makes a request to God for forgiveness. In that freedom to begin again is given by God, Jüngel is agreeing with Barth's belief that freedom cannot be earned by human action. According to Barth, human freedom cannot contradict divine freedom because

282 See Jüngel, LR, 254/5. Jüngel maintains that the working week is sustained by the sabbath rest and that it is no coincidence that in Christian practice the resurrection became linked with the idea of sabbath. (See Jüngel, 'Tell the World, 214).

283 Jüngel, LR, 255. On being a community of believers, see Jüngel, 'To Tell the World', 211. Jüngel comments that 'evangelical discourse only takes the individual person seriously if it also takes that person seriously in his or her whole social and cultural context. And in this context the individual is generally always one individual among others'. (Ibid).

284 Jüngel, 'Truly Human', 262/3. Jüngel is agreeing here with Barth’s belief that freedom cannot be earned by human action. Barth sees the freedom of the human person as the ability to choose, decide and determine his or herself in accordance with the freedom of God'.


freedom is the gift of God. In consequence, human freedom has certain limitations. We can only act in ways that are possible for us as creatures; 'whatever man may choose to do with his God-given freedom, it always will have to be carried out within the framework of human possibilities’.  

It sometimes seems that Jüngel is denying human possibilities altogether. Barth’s stronger pneumatology allows for both a route to, and persistence in, a ‘response’ or ‘correspondence’ to the divine act as seen in baptism and subsequent Christian conduct. The recurring idea of ‘interruption’ that is found throughout Jüngel’s writings means that the external word (or Word) operates in a somewhat episodic fashion while there is little evidence of the patient work of the indwelling Spirit in either the believer or the church.  

However, Jüngel makes the point that, in order to be a missionary church and to take evangelism seriously, the church ‘must fill itself inwardly with his breath of the Spirit so that it can constantly build itself up afresh as the church. It does this in a special way in its liturgical worship’. If the church tries ‘to take possession of the Spirit, as it were, they would literally suffocate on this divine gift . . . It cannot exist as the church moved by his Spirit unless it is or once again becomes a missionary, evangelizing church’.  

Despite his concentration on the communication of the gospel, Jüngel pays little or no attention to the element of enacted drama that is found in more symbolic expressions of the gospel message. His excessive concentration on language has unfortunately led to a corresponding neglect of the symbolic character of human life. This may be because the use of symbol is often associated with a more sacramental theology and hence, in Jüngel’s mind, with representation and the continuation of divine act into human acts. Jüngel insists that Jesus Christ is the only sacrament and there must be no hint of representing Christ in the priestly role and no notion that the sacrifice of Christ is still to be completed in the enactment of the Lord’s supper. While from a Protestant point of view this may seem defensible, any sense of enactment is so swallowed up by an exclusivity of the word (in

286 See Wainwright, ‘Church’, 100/1. Nonetheless, Jüngel points out that Sunday, as the Christian form of the sabbath, interrupts our busy and competitive lives so that we cease to be ‘success-conscious people and once more become beings, living beings filled with wonder . . . Sunday is the temporal form of the message of justification, that gospel which tells us that we are more than the sum of our deeds and achievements’. (Jüngel, ‘Tell the World’, 214).  
288 See, O’Donovan, ‘Mystery of God’, 269. The function of language, for Jüngel, is to ‘assist the eyes’. The process of evangelizing ‘means at all events letting something be seen with the help of the Word. Or rather, not just something, but that which is worthwhile to have seen now and for all eternity’. The spoken word causes light to shine in the human heart; the light of the knowledge of Jesus Christ which is the truth that sets us free. (Jüngel, ‘Tell the World’, 208).
gospel proclamation) that the person and drama of the Word is missing. Whereas Jüngel would advocate a ‘whole of life’ celebration of the gospel, there is a curious lack of symbolism in the event of the Lord’s supper; the event itself seems almost exclusively cerebral. This is unfortunate as Jüngel’s theology has a deep sense of joy and passion that may be disguised in some respect by his keeping exclusively to the realm of words. The justification of the sinner brings a freedom that is, for Jüngel, an occasion for joy. This coincides with his convictions that liberation results in worship and that humanity’s alienation from God becomes a call to discipleship. While Jüngel conveys a strong sense of the mystery of God, a stronger accent on the multiple ways in which the Holy Spirit works in multiple situations, including through media other than words, would greatly enrich Jüngel’s already highly productive theology. Jüngel states that, if the eyes of the world are to be opened, ‘missionary imagination is needed’. An understanding of the Holy Spirit working within the human imagination could prove fruitful in ways that use both language and symbol.

While Jüngel speaks of the human being in correspondence with God, he pays less attention to the correspondence between our human acts and God’s acts. The notable exception is his reading of Barth’s perception of prayer as invocation. He claims that the exposition of the Lord’s Prayer ‘sets out in material terms the analogy between divine and human action’. In prayer, the distinction between divine and human action is not defined in an abstract way as ‘a relationless difference of pure dissimilarity’, rather, it is ‘defined concretely as a relation of invocation’. This invocation communicates in a concrete way the distinction between God’s action and our action. It also manifests the fact that ‘we ask God for that which God alone can give’. God, whose being is in act, commands us to pray and we are thereby brought into a life of act which corresponds to God. It is in our relation to God that the possibility of action and the obligation to act resides. Jüngel maintains that it is within ‘Barth’s ‘synergism’ that the idea of a cooperation between God and the human person, in ‘their mutual dealings with one another’, can be found. In Jüngel’s view, it is here that such synergism has found a ‘genuine Protestant, ‘evangelical’ formulation. Cooperation finds its _Sitz im Leben_ in prayer.

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Jüngel has a decided belief that how we worship affects how we think. In his judgement, ordinary human experience is lacking a trinitarian framework. He believes that it is in worship that this ‘lamentable experiential deficiency’ begins. He attempts to remedy this by formulating prayers for congregational worship within a trinitarian form as, for him, it is in the worship of the church that the mystery of the Trinity has its *Sitz im Leben*. He claims that an understanding of the trinitarian structure of the address of the trinitarian God leads to an understanding that ‘the God who is confessed and proclaimed by Christians is in his own internal relationships many-faceted’. In our prayers,

the trinitarian community of mutual otherness is addressed in such a way that the respective particularity of each person of the Trinity, is called to mind. This particularity is remembered so that those who are reminded of it begin to share in the life of the trinitarian God... Christians begin to experience the mystery of the divine Trinity - an experience which, then, has great practical value. For if the human is the image of God, then the human, too, is meant to turn the otherness that distinguishes among people toward community that does not level out such otherness.292

In worship the Holy Spirit ‘draws us into the divine community of mutual difference’ and we learn to relate to God for God’s own sake.293

5.4.4 The Just Community
Jüngel takes from Luther the notion that the truly human person is ‘a complex being remarkably rich in relations’. These relations are what constitutes one’s humanity and are threatened by destruction as the ‘I’ seeks to recognize itself. By seeking one’s own recognition instead of the recognition given by God and by others, one becomes turned in on oneself (*incurvatus in se*) and abuses the wealth of relations around oneself. Jüngel sees this as the antithesis of true community.294 It is also the opposite of the faith by which the Christian is caught up into God and by love descends into his neighbour. Jüngel comments that, for Luther, faith is the interruption of the continuity of the acts and accomplishments of our own life.295 In a just community, all people, regardless of their deeds, are to be recognized as human beings to whom mercy has been given by God and are therefore worthy of mercy from others. If taken seriously, this would mean that no ethnic religious

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293 Jüngel, LR, 255.
294 It is in this way that the reign of death begins in the midst of life because death is the event of complete relationlessness. (Jüngel, ‘Truly Human’, 222).
group could be ‘de-humanized’ and treated as other than fellow human beings. As well as prisoners of the justice system, Jüngel cites the old, the very young and the sick as those who must be seen as blessings rather than as valueless because of their lack of quantifiable deeds. In his view, such protection is not only on the interpersonal level but should be enshrined in social legislation. Jüngel perceptively includes those in power who must still be seen as persons who can be distinguished from their deeds and must accordingly be allowed their dignity.  

While Jüngel makes it clear that we must ask what the ‘divine action that justifies the sinner’ means for human attempts at worldly justice, he also makes it clear that human action is in no sense a direct continuation of divine action. According to Jüngel, human action is subject to the demands of law. This law must be humane, the rights of others must always be considered because divine righteousness is set towards peace and the wholeness of each member of the community; ‘the peaceful wholeness of a good order in which each one seeks the other’s due’. He understands our action, even that taken in obedience to God, to be determined by us while our being is a gift of the gospel which we receive. Divine action in revelation is seen by Jüngel as an interruption of our ordinary patterns of knowing. It seems that divine action is also an interruption of our actions. There is some ambiguity here in that our human actions, as interrupted by God, cannot continue as they were. If our being is remade (made righteous) ex nihilo, how does this affect our subsequent actions? Once again, a clear exposition of the work of the Holy Spirit in ongoing sanctification is missing from Jüngel’s work.

As has been noted, the ecclesiologies of Balthasar and Jüngel highlight their differences. While both theologians ground their trinitarian theologies in the diversity in unity within God, with some reservations, Balthasar may be said to emphasise the unity and Jungel the diversity within their portrayals of the Christian Church. Balthasar conveys a strong feel for the identity of the church as church whereas, for Jungel, a diversity of believers find their identity in the proclamation of the gospel. Balthasar’s motif of kenosis is apparent right
through his theology but it is the notion of mission which provides the strongest connection between the individual believer and the church. Personal vocation finds its expression within the embrace of the church and itself provides one of the links between the church and the world. Although Jüngel’s motif of identification between God and the crucified Jesus finds fulfilment in his interpretation of the doctrine of justification as a sharing in the righteousness of God in Christ, he gives the impression that the church is a collective of disparate Christian believers rather than the body of Christ.

Balthasar and Jüngel have rich and imaginative understandings of the renewal of the human person but do the respective paradigms they give to the believer and the church truly bear a cruciform shape? This thesis suggests that they do but that, in line with their trinitarian frameworks, there needs to be, in both cases, a stronger link between the work of the Word and the work of the Holy Spirit if the potential for a truly liberating theology is to be realized.
Conclusion

This thesis has examined the work of two major theologians of the twentieth century to assess the implications their theologies might have for a theological understanding of the imagination. Hans Urs von Balthasar and Eberhard Jüngel are overtly revelation-centred theologians for whom revelation is preeminently the self-disclosure of God. While not speaking univocally, both Balthasar and Jüngel base their understandings of God on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Both Balthasar and Jüngel work within a trinitarian framework; it is as Trinity that God is revealed in the triduum mortis. This thesis has concentrated on the events of the triduum mortis because these events lie at the heart of their respective theologies. The question was asked how these events can be understood in connection with a theological understanding of the human imagination.

Drawing on Kant's notion of the imagination as the synthesis of abstract concepts and the senses which leads to experience, it was proposed that the human imagination be understood as a pattern-making or paradigmatic function of the mind. Read in this way, the imagination both perceives and constructs images; the imagination has a certain ability to transpose and transform. The task of the imagination goes further than mirroring reality; it not only has the power of recognition but that of re-cognition. It is through the imagination that we can rethink the patterns that we live by. In order for those patterns to be, in any sense, Christian, there must be divine involvement in the way those patterns are re-thought. The human imagination is inherently ambiguous; it has the power to assert both what is and what is not the case. In consequence, a theological view of the imagination cannot envisage the imagination as a process devoid of specific content. In an understanding of the imagination as the locus of revelation, it is revelation which provides the content in the form of a paradigm which shapes the life of the believer and the church. This thesis suggests that, in Balthasar's and Jüngel's respective theologies, the self-revelation of God in the events of the triduum mortis acts as such a paradigm. The imaginative process is the same for all acts of human imagining but Christ (as content) becomes the paradigm for the theological imagination. For Balthasar, it is in the Gestalt Christi that we see both the glory of God and the shape of the Christian life. For Jüngel, Jesus becomes a new Gestalt through his identification with the trinitarian God, the God we see revealed in the triduum mortis.
Balthasar links revelation with aesthetic form in a theological aesthetics which insists that divine revelation must both determine its own standards of beauty and refuse to be abstracted from its christological form. In the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus the divine glory takes on a cruciform shape and pattern. For Balthasar, the incarnation is where we see the divine pattern of activity. This thesis has demonstrated how, for Balthasar, the motifs of mission and *kenosis* enable God to be understood as *ekstatic* self-giving, both within the intra-divine relations and in God’s relation to the world; the incarnation of the Son cannot be understood apart from the *kenosis* of the three divine Persons. This total self-giving of the trinitarian God is expressed in a mutual receptivity and surrender which grounds Balthasar’s vision of human community. Mission and *kenosis* are central to Balthasar’s view of God because they express who God is. Neither motif would be understandable without the trinitarian differentiation in unity which Balthasar articulates. This differentiation in unity is equally important for Jüngel for whom God is both love and mystery, a love and mystery which is expressed in the trinitarian relations both *ad intra* and *ad extra*. His construal of the *triduum mortis* demonstrates that the death and resurrection of Jesus can be understood only if God is both differentiated within God and in identity with the crucified man Jesus. This identification makes the ‘union of death and life for the sake of life’,¹ possible ‘in Christ’. For Jüngel, the doctrine of justification both explicates the distinction between divine and human action and grounds the renewal of human existence.

While neither Balthasar nor Jüngel conceive of God in terms of fixed concepts, they do allow for the notion of boundaries to our knowledge of the divine. Both Balthasar and Jüngel understand human personhood, as renewed existence, to be grounded in the person of Christ. Balthasar’s understanding of renewed existence is to be understood through his construal of mission. As the mutual love between the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit enables the believer to share in the mission of Christ. For Balthasar, the believer is to act within the boundaries of the personal mission that God gives to the believer. For Jüngel, the gospel is the revelation of God’s righteousness in which the believer shares. The meaning of God’s righteousness is conveyed by the gospel. The meaning of the gospel is at its most explicit in the events of the *triduum mortis*. These events can therefore be said to act as a boundary both to our definition of God and the shape of the renewed life of the believer.

¹ Jüngel, *GMW*, 299.
For both Balthasar and Jüngel, the events of the triduum mortis are expressive of the inner being of God. The entire paradigm given to us in these events is trinitarian and therefore inherently relational. Within a trinitarian framework, they both begin their respective theologies with the initiative of God in God’s address to humanity. By beginning with God’s initiative rather than the constructive abilities of the human imagination, both Balthasar and Jüngel allow for the imagination, through revelation, to become the locus of divine action. Romans 12:2 exhorts believers to no longer be conformed to the pattern of this world but to be transformed by the renewing of their minds. The renewing of the mind not only includes the renewing of the imagination but also needs the imagination in order for renewal to take place. The ability to see one thing as another and perceive connections is part of the pattern-making facility of the imagination. Where divine self-disclosure is concerned, the recognition of God involves more than the natural ability to perceive forms or make connections. For the Gestalt of Christ to be perceived, the Holy Spirit must be at work within the human imagination. True spiritual transformation is the work of both Word and Spirit. To ‘walk in the Spirit’ (Gal 5:25) is, as it were, to be ‘in Christ’ (2 Cor 5:17).

For any theology to be truly trinitarian, an adequate pneumatology is required. As is so often the case, it is here that questions may be asked of Balthasar and Jüngel. As well as epitomizing the unity between Father and Son, the Holy Spirit has an epistemic function in that the Spirit makes known the knowledge of the Father through the Son. It can be said of Balthasar that his explication of the Father/Son relationship overshadows his portrayal of the Holy Spirit. It can also be said that this is consonant with the New Testament witness where the Holy Spirit always points towards Christ. While Jüngel portrays the Spirit as the enabler of becoming and the agent of possibility within God, there is little sense of the ongoing sanctification of the believer. Given his emphasis on event, Jüngel could pay more attention to the symbolic enactment of Christian faith.

Neither Balthasar nor Jüngel sees the act of faith as an innate spiritual capacity to apprehend the divine. Divine revelation is the self-interpretation of God, made manifest in the concrete and particular history of Jesus Christ, to which the human act of faith responds. Revelation is the gift of God at God’s initiative. In consequence, the natural ability to imagine cannot be seen as a

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2 The word 'conform' translates the Greek word suxēmatizō (‘to form according to a pattern or mold, form/model after’), W. Baur, W. F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New*
natural ability to imagine God. The imagination is not the foundation of revelation but rather its locus; the human imagination is merely the vehicle of the Holy Spirit who enables revelation. This distinction is crucial if revelation is not to be understood as the creation of a general (mode of) subjectivity. Both Balthasar and Jüngel guard against such a constructivist interpretation of revelation by their respective attitudes of service to the object. A receptivity for that which is ‘other’ to the subject is a fundamental issue for them both. For Balthasar, there is always an ‘ever-more’ in God. For Jüngel, there must be room for the emergence of the new. For Balthasar, divine revelation always determines its own standards of beauty; the divine glory has a cruciform shape and pattern which cannot be detached from the Gestalt made manifest in the triduum mortis. For Jüngel, we know God through God’s action in Christ; revelation becomes definitive in the events of the triduum mortis. Both theologians attempt to speak about the inner being of God without compromising God's mystery. Neither Balthasar nor Jüngel understands God's communication in revelation and God’s inherent mystery as mutually exclusive. Revelation, in effect, sets boundaries to thought by adhering to the vision of God manifest in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Balthasar and Jüngel differ in the degree to which they accept Rahner’s axiom but they would agree that it is on y on the basis of the economic Trinity that we can have ‘knowledge’ of the immanent Trinity. It has been maintained that Balthasar and/or Jüngel say too much about the intra-divine life. This thesis suggests that, in general, the understandings of God that they portray have an inner coherence due to the motifs that can be traced throughout their respective portrayals of the triduum mortis. It can be argued that the christological commitments and the trinitarian frameworks of both Balthasar and Jüngel save them from straying too far from the biblical paradigm but such an argument depends on an acceptance of those particular commitments. It can also be said that Balthasar shows signs of reading into ontology from his Marian orientation, the lives of the saints and the visions of Adrienne von Speyr. Despite the fact that Jüngel allows for theological boundaries to the choice of metaphors, his adherence to language as the locus of revelation coupled with the inherent ambiguity of language cast some doubt on what Jüngel is claiming of behalf of Christian faith and what he sees as intrinsic to metaphor itself. Despite such reservations, in principle, both Balthasar and Jüngel hold to a starting point in revelation. While Balthasar and Jüngel read a great deal into the intra-divine relations from the events of the triduum mortis, they do allow for the notion of boundaries to our

knowledge of the divine. They can be said to furnish a theological sense of the imagination as both recognition and re-cognition while providing a much needed constraint for its constructive abilities.

Although this thesis does not purport either to offer a theology of the imagination or to claim that Balthasar or Jungel do, it has shown that their respective theologies offer possibilities and resources for more work to be done on both the role of the imagination as the locus of revelation and the role of pneumatology in general. There needs to be a more satisfactory explanation of the place of the Holy Spirit in the events of the triduum mortis. A fully articulated doctrine of the freedom of the Holy Spirit is fundamental if the trinitarian mystery of God is not to be seen as under the control of the human imagination. It is here that Balthasar’s and Jungel’s emphasis on the initiative of God and human response is vital.

In their respective explications of the triduum mortis, both Balthasar and Jungel enable the cross of Christ and the joy in God to come together in a way that speaks generously to the inevitable mixture of joy and pain that is human life. Transformation and renewal are seen as available to all the human race not in spite of our deficiencies but because of the initiative of God. Balthasar sees some complementarity in the human response. For Jungel, the initiative of God is always a radical interruption of our human patterns of knowing and being. Both the human imagination and the human heart can be said to be set free by the freedom that grounds the very being of God. By grounding their major motifs, for Balthasar those of kenosis and mission, and, for Jungel, identification and justification, in God and God’s initiative, both Balthasar and Jungel offer colourful and nuanced theologies that speak to the centre of human existence.

This thesis suggests that the rich and imaginative theologies of Balthasar and Jungel provide a way forward for a theological understanding of the imagination. They offer different key motifs that give shape to the way we think about God but their mutual insistence on diversity within the unity of God and the ways they articulate the crucial distinction between God and the world give vital insights into a vision of God which allows for both divine and human freedom. The imagination involves both images and concepts and both are needed for a productive theology. The choice of Balthasar and Jungel has been a fruitful one. In his theological aesthetics, Balthasar offers a view of the triduum mortis that is rich in imagery. On his part, Jungel gives us a densely conceptual theology. Their respective understandings of the triduum mortis can be
said to give us a paradigm for the Christian life. This paradigm allows space for the human imagination understood as the synthesis of abstract concepts and the senses if it is always understood that the Holy Spirit works within the human imagination to effect spiritual transformation. The paradigm is both imaginative and grounded in the message of the gospel. Placing the events of the *triduum mortis* at the centre of human existence, as they do, means that the paradigm of the Christian life takes on a cruciform shape, the form of Christ crucified and risen.
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