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ANALOGY AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF
CATHOLIC THEOLOGY IN HANS URS VON BALTHASAR

*L'ANALOGIA E LO SVILUPPO DELLA TEOLOGIA CATTOLICA
IN HANS URS VON BALTHASAR*

Abstract

Il seguente saggio è un'interpretazione speculativa di *Padri, scolastici e noi stessi* di Hans Urs von Balthasar. L'articolo propone che l'analogia possa essere usata per comprendere le somiglianze e le differenze tra stili teologici in epoche diverse. L'analogia può essere uno strumento euristico per riconoscere la forma strutturale che rimane coerente attraverso i secoli, nonostante le espressioni singole di questa forma secondo la situazione concreta e storica delle persone a cui si rivolge il messaggio del Vangelo. Per affermare ciò, questo saggio traccia un confronto tra il modo in cui si sviluppano la teologia e la dottrina Cattolica. In entrambi i casi, troviamo un paradigma di omogeneità sostanziale all'interno di una differenza proposizionale o stilistica. La differenza non esclude l'unità in un ordine superiore. Diversi stili in teologia sono analogicamente uniti nella forma strutturale generale e immutabile della verità rivelata in Cristo.

The following essay is a tentative interpretation of Hans Urs von Balthasar's Fathers, Scholastics and Ourselves. It proposes that analogy can be used to understand the similarities and differences between theological styles in different epochs. The analogy can be a heuristic tool to recognize the structural form that remains consistent throughout the ages, despite the unique expressions of this form according to the concrete and historical situation of the people being addressed by the message of the Gospel. This essay draws a comparison between the way Catholic theology and doctrine develop. In both cases, we find a paradigm of substantial homogeneity within a propositional or stylistic difference. The difference does not rule out a unity in a higher order. Different styles in theology are analogically united in an overarching and unchanging form of the truth revealed in Christ.



Keywords

Sviluppo della dottrina; teologia cattolica; analogia; Balthasar

Development of Doctrine; Catholic Theology; Analogy; Balthasar

It is important to see here that the Church,
as with every earthly entity, is being led
through a changing series of qualitatively
different situations and moments, the truth
of each one of which is unique and coincides
with the others only analogically.¹

1. *Introduction*

In 1939, the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar wrote an article entitled *Fathers, Scholastics and Ourselves*². This article was published only two years after completing his theological studies, while he was still working at *Stimmen der Zeit* and before finishing his tertianship. Although he had not yet written any major theological work, except his doctoral thesis *Apokalypse der deutschen Seele*, this article is a good example of Balthasar's sophistication, resourcefulness and intuitive power. Balthasar controverts the mentality of scholars that ascribes much less creative power to the thought of the 19th and 20th century compared to previous times of Catholic Theology³ and thus flee to the past and they refer to themselves as patrologists or neo-Thomists⁴. He does not accept such defeatism and renders modern theology not as a work for archaeologists, ge-

¹ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers, Scholastics and Ourselves*, in "Communio: International Catholic Review" 24/2 (1997), p. 370.

² The original title is: H.U. von Balthasar, *Patristik, Scholastik und wir*, in "Theologie der Zeit (Wien)" 3 (1939), pp. 65-104.

³ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers ... cit.*, p. 349.

⁴ He does not name any particular theologian. In fact, the essay stands out for the lack of references to secondary sources.

nealogists and antiquarians of ideas, but as a unique contribution in a continuum from the times of the Apostles to our time (embracing Patristics and Scholasticism). In our interpretation of Balthasar, he portrays the history of Catholic theology as a homogenous development similar to the homogenous development of doctrine. Analogy, as a principle of unity-in-difference, is the key heuristic tool to understand similarities and differences between different theological epochs. The first part of the essay covers the type of development in doctrine. This type of development can be considered analogical since it expresses a substantial unity within a diversity by which doctrine is expressed propositionally. The second part of the essay deals with Balthasar's use of analogy in the development of Catholic Theology. Lastly, the essay briefly explores some cases, both in doctrine and theology, which undergo a corruptive or non-analogical development due to their departure from the structural laws that ensure homogeneity.

2. Analogical Development of Doctrine

The concept of analogy is very rarely used as a paradigmatic concept in discussions on the development of doctrine. In Catholic theology, analogy often expresses the similarity between the being of creatures and the Being of God in the field of metaphysics (*Analogia Entis*)⁵. Following Saint Thomas, analogy means either the similitude between creatures and God corresponding to the relation of creatures and God as effect-to-cause⁶; or the simultaneously valid

⁵ The most important example is Erich Przywara's groundbreaking book *Analogia Entis* which was very influential in Balthasar's own philosophical development: E. Przywara, *Analogia Entis: Metaphysics: Original Structure and Universal Rhythm*, translated by J.B. Betz, D.B. Hart, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids 2014.

⁶ Thomas also says: *in this way all things, insofar as they are beings, are like God (a Deo assimilantur) as the first and universal principle of all being (ST, I, q.4, a.3, corp); or creatures exist only to the degree that they descend from the primary*

and imperfect knowledge of God to which creatures can attain⁷. Even if the names by which we speak about God derive primarily from creaturely perfections, the content of these perfections belongs primarily and absolutely to God and only secondarily and by participation to creatures⁸. In a similar way, creatures participate in being, instead of possessing being essentially. Nonetheless, analogy is also mentioned by various notable thinkers of doctrinal development, albeit not in the above-mentioned metaphysical or theological sense⁹.

The most important is perhaps Ambroise Gardeil (1859-1931) who bases the possibility of dogmatic formulations in the validity of human analogical language for speaking about God. He concludes that since human words can be used analogically to speak about God, then dogmatic formulations can also display the same analogical rhythm. He argues that once the analogical statement is established as a fixed framework for our knowledge of God, *it is possible to do our part to symbolism and anthropomorphism, to use them to take on the foundations of the building, to flesh it out, and to give it a consistency before the gaze of the imaginative being that we are*¹⁰. In addition to Gardeil, Saint John H. Newman also mentions analogy numerous times in his masterwork on the development of doctrine¹¹. He says that doctrine develops like a butterfly from a cat-

being, and it is called being only because it imitates the first being (Sent, 2, ad 2).

⁷ The statements are analogical, neither univocal nor equivocal. For example, ST. I. q. 13, a. 5 or De Pot. q. 7, a. 7.

⁸ *Analogia proportionalitatis*.

⁹ See also the Canon of St. Vincent of Lerins, which stated *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est* [what has been believed everywhere, always, and by all] in *Commonitorium* 1.2 in *Patrologia Latina*, ed. J.P. Migne, vol. 50 col.640.

¹⁰ A. Gardeil, *Le donné révélé et la théologie*, Édition du Cerf, Paris 1932, p. 135. See also, A. Gardeil, *Le Développement du Dogme*, in "Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques" 3/3 (1909), pp. 447-469 and A. Gardeil, *Introduction à la théologie*, in "Revue des Sciences philosophiques et théologiques" 13/ 4 (1924), pp. 576-590.

¹¹ J.H. Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Doctrine*, James Toovey, London 1846.

erpillar where, despite the obvious physical change in the animal, there is an organic consistency between the two; or the young boy that grows into a man (preserving his identity although changing in status); or like democracy does from republicanism (the principles of democracy are contained in the principles of a Republic)¹². In all these examples, it is never the case that one is totally distinct from the other. Rather than a dichotomy or a dualism, there is a natural and organic progression that Newman called a *unity of type*¹³.

The way analogy has been used in these examples, however, corresponds to the non-technical use of the word analogy in everyday language. When the growth of an animal is compared to the growth of doctrine, no ontological relation between the animal and doctrine is implied. This is because there is no intrinsic proportion between the two analogues, but instead there is a proportion of proportions with a third thing. Thomas refers to this analogy as the analogy of proportionality but both Suarez and Cajetan consider it inadequate (as in Newman's case) because the name (e.g., caterpillar or butterfly) is only properly stated of one analogue and extrinsically or improperly of the other. There is only a similarity between the growth of two analogates as they relate to a principle of inter-consistency in change ($A:C = B:C$)¹⁴. In the final analysis, a caterpillar is to a butterfly as a nascent doctrine is to a clearly defined doctrine, in the domain of growth, but perhaps not in the domain of resemblance, for a fully developed doctrine should not appear to us as a completely different animal. Nonetheless, this everyday use of analogy can be useful for educational purposes. After all, each of these analogical examples contains a truth, albeit a partial and imperfect one. These

¹² For example, J. H. Newman, *An Essay ... cit.*, p. 38. For Newman's use of organic analogies, see A.A. Stephenson, *Cardinal Newman and the Development of Doctrine*, in "Journal of Ecumenical Studies" 3 (1966), pp. 463-468.

¹³ J.H. Newman, *An Essay ... cit.* p. 173.

¹⁴ Thomas writes in *De Veritate*, 2.11: *have a determinate distance between each other or some other relation to each other, like the proportion which the number two has to unity in as far as it is double of unity.*

analogies can also be easily misinterpreted because doctrine does not develop like anything else in the created world. The fragility of this symbolic use of analogy becomes clearer perhaps when we look at the constant disagreement among theologians as to which is the best anthropological analogy. The organic analogy proposed by Newman is rapidly contradicted by Leonce de Grandmaison (1868-1927). He argued that since the life-source of doctrine is supernatural, its development must necessarily be substantially different to the growth of organisms. The main difference is that organisms develop with material that they contain internally, whereas doctrine develops through the external intervention of grace: *but this fruitful comparison is only a comparison: a doctrine does not live quite like a tree, or even like a man, by way of purely formal continuity. The vital action takes place in them*¹⁵. Gardeil also disapproves of the analogy of biological growth. He suggests instead that doctrine develops like the development of a scientific discovery (collectively and under a stable law)¹⁶.

While organic analogies are favored by one group of scholars, characterized by Avery Dulles to propose an organic model of doctrine¹⁷, there is another group of theologians who suggest that doctrine develops in a manner analogous to how finite truth develops. These are often called the *logicists*, as opposed to the *situationalist* or *organicist*¹⁸. One important theologian from this school is perhaps Francisco Marin-Sola (1982-1932) who distinguishes a homogenous development from a transformative development (when development implies a substantial change)¹⁹. He continues the dis-

¹⁵ L. de Grandmaison, *Le Dogme chrétien: Sa nature, ses formules, son développement*, Beauchesne, Paris 1928, p. 267.

¹⁶ A. Gardeil, *Le Doné ... cit.*, p. 155.

¹⁷ A. Dulles, *The Resilient Church: The necessity and limits of Adaptation*, Doubleday, New York 1977, pp. 49-52.

¹⁸ Christopher Karzor makes a convincing analysis of these three types in the thought of Thomas Aquinas in C. Karzor, *Thomas Aquinas on the development of Doctrine*, in "Theological Studies" 68/2 (2001), pp. 283-302.

¹⁹ F. Marin Sola, *La Evolucion Homogenea del Dogma Católico*, La Ciencia

cussion of the Baroque commentators around the theme of the explicit being contained in the implicit, or the conclusion being virtually contained in the premise. Another notable example is Henri D. Simonin. He explains the development of doctrine as analogous to the development from the implicit to the explicit. In his view, that which is explicit is contained in the implicit as the expression of the same, while the implicit is *not contained in the explicit as such, in so far as it is in actuality, but only in so far as it remains, in another respect, in fidelity to the original fullness of God's revelation in Christ*²⁰. Other theologians preferred the relation between theological premise to conclusion. Charles Boyer, for instance, argues that the development of truth must follow necessarily logical processes because dogmas have an intellectual content. Despite acknowledging that the *res* of revelation that the magisterium expresses goes beyond the power of history and reason, he believes that there must be a logical sequence to guarantee the intelligibility and the exercise of theological reasoning. In sum, for the *logicists*, theology receives from God the principles of faith, that correspond to the *depositum* of revelation, but it must examine the intelligibility of the principles and derives logically plausible conclusions from those principles²¹.

Many theologians in the 20th century, including Henri de Lubac and Balthasar, argued against the exclusive use of logical analogies of the development of doctrine for important reasons. The first is the tendency of logical models to overemphasize the rational explanation for the developments at the expense of limiting the vital center of the development of doctrine. Balthasar says: *what is entirely intolerable is the notion that the progress of dogma gradually narrows*

Tomista, Salamanca 1923. Notable studies on his theology include: F.G. Martinez, *Estudios Teologicos: En Torno al Objeto de la Fe y la Evolución del Dogma*, Insituto Francisco Suarez, Oña 1953.

²⁰ H.D. Simonin, "Implicite" et "explicite" dans le developpement du dogme, in "Angelicum" 14/1 (1937), p. 142.

²¹ C. Boyer, *Qu'est ce que la théologie: Réflexions sur une controvers*, in "Gregorianum" 21/2 (1940), p. 259.

down the unexplored area of divine truth, continually allowing less and less space to the free play of thought within the Faith²². Secondly, logical explanations are effective to express some developments such as the formulae of Chalcedon concerning the two natures of Christ. It is implicit in the acknowledgement of the humanity of Jesus that he should have a human nature and thus a human will²³. Also, what occupied many baroque Thomists such as Domingo de Soto: because Jesus has a human nature, he should possess the operations ascribed to that kind of nature. Accordingly, He must have the ability to laugh²⁴. However, there are other instances (such as the Marian dogmas) where the conclusion is not reached through logical elucidations. Marin-Sola argued for a rational theological speculation but also for a *connatural-affective sensus fidei* (*exemplified in the Saints*)²⁵. Balthasar says the following in this regard: *this becomes clear in the unfolding of the mysteries concerning the Mother of God. They do indeed form a unity when once they are visible, but they can hardly be said to follow from one another like ordinary conclusions*²⁶.

²² H.U. von Balthasar, *On Theology of Revelation: A Theology of History*, Sheed & Ward, New York 1963, pp. 102-103.

²³ For a good analysis of baroque commentators' position on analogical development, see J.H. Walgrave, *Unfolding Revelation: The Nature of Doctrinal Development*, Hutchinson, London 1972, pp. 135-175.

²⁴ Domingo de Soto, *In dialecticam Aristotelis 1.2, ad 7*. Salamanca 1574, p. 91: Quoted in, J. H. Walgrave, *Unfolding revelation ... cit.*, p. 137.

²⁵ J.R. Brotherton, *Development (s) in the Theology of Revelation: From Francisco Marin-Sola to Joseph Ratzinger*, in "New Blackfriars" 97/1072 (2016), p. 667. For a discussion on the role of the *sensus fidei*, see Y. Congar, *Tradition and traditions: a Historical and a Theological Essay*, translated by M. Naseby, Burns & Oates, London 1966 (Fayard, Paris), p. 318: *In the Church, the sensus fidei is a faculty for grasping the implications, as yet not elucidated, of a reality which is already in its possession.*

²⁶ H.U. von Balthasar, *Theology of Revelation ... cit.*, p. 103. Rahner also expresses this thought in K. Rahner, *The Development of Dogma, in Theological Investigations*, Vol.1, Seabury Press, New York 1974, p. 57: *further we have learned to see that it takes place in vital contact with that res which is the closed plenitude of revealed reality, in a contact which does indeed include as an intrinsic factor*

The danger of an excessive trust in worldly metaphors to speak of the development of doctrine is that this runs the risk of transposing part of the imperfections of the metaphor into the thing being explained. Logical explanations restrict the way doctrine can develop. Balthasar states that *the genuine tradition of the Church cannot be compared from implicit to explicit – a comparison greatly favored by modernists as it would certainly be wrong to apply the category of subconscious or unconscious to what is a supernatural process*²⁷. In this rejection of the logical-analogical model, Balthasar does not argue that doctrine develops in non-rational ways or that the development of doctrine remains a total mystery to us and that we are unable to notice order and logic. Faith is neither purely rational nor purely experiential. It is a divine mystery expressed both experientially and propositionally. Balthasar points to the fact that the development of doctrine is unique and distinct from other developments in the lower order of creation. Balthasar says: *This does not mean that the laws of logic are suspended, but the logic of any particular field of knowledge is, in the last analysis, determined by its ontology, and bears the stamps of the particular structure that belongs to it*²⁸.

When we study the homogenous development of doctrine, the logical model identifies the principle of unity in the rational order of divine revelation. The organic model expresses this consubstantial development by pointing to worldly metaphors. However, Balthasar seeks to identify the point of unity in dogmatic development by taking into account the ontology of doctrine. Since doctrine develops in the realm of faith, we can say that each expression is analogically, that is according to a supernatural proportion, contained in the One center of Dogma, that is Christ. We can express this with the Catholic doctrine of the *analogy of faith*²⁹, that unlike the previous

an objective givenness of the res in propositions and the possibility of their logical expansions, but is not simply exhausted therein.

²⁷ H.U. von Balthasar, *Theology of Revelation* ... cit., pp. 102-103.

²⁸ Ivi, pp. 103-104.

²⁹ The analogy of faith is different to the analogy of faith described by Karl

examples of analogy, allows for an ontological relation between individual dogmas and the Dogma. Gottlieb Söhngen proposes several uses of the analogy of faith: the unity of Scripture and the sense of Scripture, the unity of the words of Scripture and Church Proclamation, the unity and enigmatic coherence of the mysteries of the faith, the unity of nature and natural knowing with obedience of grace and faith³⁰. The third category proposed by Söhngen conveniently allows us to understand the pattern of unity and difference in doctrinal developments³¹. It allows us to return to the center of doctrine in order to express an analogical development, that is, according to the analogy of faith³².

Newman identified a *Christian idea* that remains essentially consistent and unchanged throughout history with the addition of foreign elements that contribute to the understanding of the Gospel³³. With greater theological precision, de Lubac argued that the mystery of Christ is the total object of revelation. It unifies all dogma, and it is the final expression of all propositions. This center is not something abstract and impersonal, but it is the Gospel of our salvation that we encounter: *In Jesus Christ the Son of God become man, the fullness of divine revelation has appeared*³⁴. In Healey's interpretation of this: *before dogma is something the Church formulates, dogma is something Christ Himself is, dogma is first and*

Barth. Balthasar takes the meaning given by Przywara in E. Przywara, *Alter und Neuer Bund: Theologie der Stunde*, Herlod-Verlag, Munich 1956, p. 10.

³⁰ Gottlieb Söhngen, *The Analogy of Faith: Unity in the Science of Faith*, translated by K. Oakes, in "Pro Ecclesia" 21/2 (2012), p. 170.

³¹ Balthasar proposes something similar in theology and the analogy of the sciences: U. von Balthasar, *Convergences: To the Source of the Christian Mystery*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1983, p. 50.

³² This is remotely hinted at in T.J. White, *The Analogia Fidei in Catholic Theology*, in "International Journal of Systematic Theology" 22/4 (2020), p. 529.

³³ J.H. Newman, *An Essay ... cit.*, p. 29.

³⁴ A. Nichols, *From Newman to Congar: the idea of doctrinal development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh 1990, p. 212.

foremost Christ himself as incarnate word and en-fleshed truth³⁵. Balthasar follows this line of argument and identifies the center of doctrinal development, and thus the center of unity, in the mystery of Christ and the mystery of God's love in his Revelation. He insists that this does not destroy the use of propositions that develop new formulations or those propositions that condemn heresy. Balthasar defines dogma as *a proposition that whether it is positive (affirming things against rational negations), or negative (distinguishing itself from false position), says that God's love extends to this maximus. Every dogma contains within itself the one, entire mystery*³⁶. The centrality of love in dogma is important for Balthasar to account for the mysterious ways in which the doctrine can develop, but most importantly, to express the universal, and on principle accessible to all, reality of Dogma: *God is love ... he is not simply love because he loves, he is love himself, he is unimaginable, eternal self-giving and self-exchanging*. Although intellectual knowledge of the divine mysteries is useful and advised, Balthasar believes it is not always indispensable: *Dogma is understood by the simple because they see the mystery in the words and take the words as pointing to it*³⁷.

The formal analysis of the development of doctrine serves as a fitting introduction to the concrete case of the development of Catholic Truth. The two develop according to analogy according to the bond of theology and Revelation. Balthasar often speaks of the Christian Form to represent the unique revelation of the living God that transcends any historical or critical reason and explanation. This Form remains unchanged and transcends the contingencies and the particularities of the world spirits. The identity of this form is *God's*

³⁵ N. Healey, *Henri de Lubac on the Development of Doctrine*, in "Communio: International Catholic Review" 44/Winter (2007), p. 680.

³⁶ H.U. von Balthasar, *Theology of Revelation ... cit.*, pp. 102-103. See also, H.U. von Balthasar, *In the Fullness of Faith: On the Centrality of the Distinctively Catholic*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1988, p. 105: *Fundamentally there is only one single dogma, just as the human being is a single unity in spite of his many organs, conditions and views.*

³⁷ H.U. von Balthasar, *Truth is Symphonic ... cit.*, pp. 67-68.

*own and conclusive Word to the world*³⁸. However, even if the Form must remain the same and unchanged as it corresponds to the unique revelation of God to the world and history, it is also expressed in various languages. Not because the Truth needs these languages to be communicated but in order that *its living core is to be understood by all other succeeding generations*³⁹. The norm of the Gospel, which in the case of the development of Catholic Theology will be expressed according to two structural laws, remains unchanged every time Christianity addresses a particular socio-historical situation: *In this process in history, the Church adds nothing new (non-nova) to the Gospel, but she constantly renews (noviter) the newness of Christ*⁴⁰.

3. Analogical Development of Catholic Theology

In any analogical development there must be a principle of unity and difference. The principle of unity in the development of Catholic theology corresponds to the fundamental laws which remain unchanged with the passage of time. This can be thought of as the fundamental narrative of the history of salvation describing the movement of the human being in his original state to the fulfillment of the creature's supernatural destiny in Christ. The principle of difference designates the way in which this *philosophia* and *theologia perennis: to remain alive it changes, in the same way that the entelechy of every living thing must change and develop in order to remain true to itself, its idea and essence*⁴¹. Because it must address

³⁸ H.U. von Balthasar, *Explorations in Theology, vol. 4: Spirit and Institution*. Ignatius Press. San Francisco 1995, p. 43.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ International Theological Commission, *The Interpretation of Dogma*, Vatican 1989, p. 12.

⁴¹ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers ... cit.*, p. 370. For his treatment of a Christian philosophy, see H.U. von Balthasar, *On the Task of Catholic Theology in Our Time*, in "Communio: International Catholic Review" 20/Spring (1993).

the Gospel to a historical situation, the Church must understand the particular contexts and cultural imagination of any given period. Although we can say to some extent that the truth preached in each one of these contexts is *unique and coincides with others only analogically*⁴². He continues: *the truths that come into prominence can never contradict the old, but nevertheless the Spirit can in every age blow where he will, and in every age can bring to the fore entirely new aspects of divine revelation*⁴³. For Balthasar, this is partly due to the supernatural intervention in the development of Tradition: *we would not dream of denying that a supernatural guidance and intervention has been continually operative in the history of the Church: in all ages, past and present*⁴⁴.

3.1. *Principle of Unity*

Balthasar summarizes the principle of unity of Catholic Theology in two structural laws that subsist in the all-embracing norm of the Gospel (cf. 1 Cor 15). These two laws correspond to the analogy between creatures and God in the original state (the universal state of finite being) fulfilled in the Christian state when a finite being is elevated to live in Christ in the Church (cf. 2 Pet 1:4): Law of Being in Christ and Law of Being in the Church⁴⁵. These structural

⁴² H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers* ... cit., p. 370.

⁴³ H.U. von Balthasar, *Theology of Revelation* ... cit., pp. 102-3. M. Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation: The Mediation of the Gospel through Church and Scripture*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapid 2014, p. 211: *The Spirit ensures that the Church's faith fully* "perpetuates and transmits to every generation all that she herself is, all that she believes".

⁴⁴ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers* ... cit., p. 351.

⁴⁵ The law of being in Christ represents the fulfillment of the original purpose of finite being to the supernatural life in the revelation of God in Christ though which creatures enjoy a justification and participation in God. The law of the Church simply expresses the fact that the participation of the Christian in Christ happens ordinally in the Church.

laws remain latent in the expression of particular types of Catholic Theology.

There is a similarity and a dissimilarity between God and creatures, even in the original state of creatures. The creature contains a vocation to love that is placed in the interior of his being, but which cannot be fulfilled by his own efforts⁴⁶. What de Lubac expressed through the paradoxical relation between nature and grace⁴⁷, is expressed by Balthasar in his definition of the analogy of being: *the creature is radically ordered to God, who does not need the creature in order to be, and the creature gives its assent to God and to whatever God, in his freedom, may make out of it*⁴⁸. The doctrine of Original Sin is a reminder of that. The creature must accept the way things are for him. He is not God. The sin of Original Sin is to seek to break the covenant and to sin against God and against the formal outline of finite beings. It is an attempt to bypass the fact that creatures are not independent and self-subsistent beings, but that they are created and dependent upon God⁴⁹. The creature wants to be like God in an immediate way without realizing that in order to be like God, he must first accept that he is other than God. Christianity stands diametrically opposed to the temptation of the Original Sin. As Przywara explains: *God's becoming man as opposed to the Original Sin of man wanting to become God; redemption on the Cross against the Original Sin of man wanting to prevail in eternal life on his own terms*⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Christian State of Life*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1983.

⁴⁷ See H. de Lubac, *Surnaturel: études historiques*, Desclée de Brouwer, Paris, 1991; H. de Lubac, *The Mystery of the Supernatural*, Crossroad, New York 1998; H. de Lubac, *A Brief Catechism on Nature and Grace*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1984.

⁴⁸ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: Theological Aesthetics, vol 1: Seeing the Form*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2009, p. 245.

⁴⁹ See H.U. von Balthasar, *Prometheus Studien zur Geschichte des deutschen Idealismus*, Heidelberg Kerle, Heidelberg 1947.

⁵⁰ E. Przywara, *Reichweite der Analogie als katholischer Grundform*, in

The broken relationship between creatures and God is restored thanks to the event of the Incarnation. Through the mission of Christ, creatures share in the life of grace and become like God. But even in the state of this *communion* the difference between creatures and God never vanishes. Beatitude cannot consist in a merging or fusion with God that eliminates the autonomy of the creature. Even in the state of highest union, the creature remains wholly *other*⁵¹ than God. He is closest to God when he adopts the model of a servant and steward. To live in Christ is actually to share in his exact movement from God to humanity and from humanity to God. The Son is sent by the Father and He lives not as a friend to the Father but as a servant. That is to say, the *exact imitation of Christ's movement* as it is made ever present in his Church. The Church worships the Head as she derives her authority based on that perpetual act of self-surrender: *In this sense the Church is the consummation of Christ's descending movement into the world*⁵². The same way that Christ fulfills the will of the Father by becoming man, the Church fulfills the will of her Head by continuing the mission of God in the world. She does this visibly through the sacraments, offices, states of life, hierarchy and liturgy; and of course, theology. The Church has a mission, a mandate, *to preach the salvation of the world, to mediate it sacramentally and visibly, to present the invisible presence through her presence, but without ever mistaking herself for a moment with the source of this salvation*⁵³.

“Scholastik” 15/3 (1940), p. 527: quoted in H.U. von Balthasar, *Theology of Karl Barth: Exposition and Interpretation*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1992.

⁵¹ Balthasar will explain extensively that the distance between creatures and God is a necessary separation for love to be able to happen. Unless the respective freedoms of the lovers are respected, love, as a gratuitous act of self-giving, is impossible. For example, H.U. von Balthasar, *Love Alone is Credible*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2016.

⁵² H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers* ... cit., p. 362.

⁵³ Ivi, p. 364.

3.2. *Principle of Difference*

The next stage of Balthasar's argument is to trace the course of this development epoch by epoch, in order to find once more that living wellspring that lies behind all these cultural forms of expression⁵⁴. To do this, he tentatively proposes three periods: Patristics, Scholasticism and the pre-modern (from the 16th century to his time). The principle of unity is this norm of the Gospel that is expressed in structural laws. The principle of diversity is the particular condition in time and space of each epoch. The diversity of these theologies is distinct only analogically: within the principle of unity described above.

The Patristics are marked by the pagan context to which the Gospel is preached and by the energy, effervescence and enthusiasm of youth that seeks to passionately *assert herself against the world and win it for Christ*⁵⁵. They believed that the pagan world prepared the way to Christ prophetically (*logos spermatikos*). They spoke with confidence and adopted the language of the time, primarily Neoplatonic. *Hellenism might have been the means of expression, the clothing, the body of the Gospel, but its soul was not touched*⁵⁶. Neoplatonism did not respect the principle of the analogy of being. It recognized a likeness of being with God but a relation of an essential participation⁵⁷. Neoplatonists described an egression in the being of

⁵⁴ Ivi, p. 348.

⁵⁵ Ivi, p. 371.

⁵⁶ Ivi, p. 373.

⁵⁷ Balthasar sees in Maximus the Confessor an attempt to correct the patristic excess of union. For example, in his article of Evagrius Pontius, Balthasar says: *Essential differences of the created spirits disappear into the divine monad and it remains only the one nature in three hypostases ... The identity of all created spirits in God is here*: H.U. von Balthasar, *Metaphysik und Mystik des Evagrius Pontikus*, in "Zeitschrift für Askese und Mystik" (1939), p. 38. Instead, he often adopts Maximus' proposal of a *union without confusion the preservative synthesis*: H.U. von Balthasar, *Cosmic Liturgy: the universe according to Maximus the Confessor*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2003, p. 233.

God which follows a strict process of depotentiation of being: *A series of steps in potencies of Being characterizes this progressive egression of God from Himself*⁵⁸. This depotentiation goes against the Trinitarian principles of Christianity. It is as if the Godhead is the primal God, the Son is kind of like a Second God representing the Ideas, and the Spirit is third God uniting the world and God. They saw the first phase of emanation followed by a parallel reversal of finite beings re-uniting in God. Creatures are reabsorbed and fused back into God and the unbridgeable abyss between the two is simply overturned, thus merging Creator and creature in a manner untenable to Christianity. To solve this dilemma, the Church Fathers had to reinstall the law of being in Christ.

In some ways, the Church Fathers adopted the platonic scheme of participation and explained it primarily through the categories of matter and spirit. This ascension from the bodily to the spiritual is the image used to express the ascension of creatures to God. The human pneuma is a space of communion with the Divine pneuma. Unlike the Neoplatonists, the Church Fathers protected the analogy of creatures and God. They were aware that divinization is only a participation in grace and never a fusion of nature. No matter how one's life can be transfigured in the blazing fire of the spirit, no matter how high the natural spirit through the gift of grace can reach the gracious realm of God; the abyss of difference is preserved. One need only analyze their recourse to apophatic theology: *the corrective of a feeling of worshipping distance and the sharp sense for what grace means is precisely what the great Church Fathers like Athanasius, the Cappadocians, Cyril and Dionysus gave to us all time in so exemplary way*⁵⁹. For example, in his monograph on Gregory of Nyssa, Balthasar highlights: *This abyss that separates the two forms of being is the fact of creation, which in and of itself surrounds that which is created with a magic circle, which it will nev-*

⁵⁸ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers ... cit.*, p. 373.

⁵⁹ Ivi, p. 377.

er escape⁶⁰. On the contrary, this epoch of theology also contained some temptations of excess, notably, the tendency to separate the Trinitarian mystery and the Christian life. No matter how orthodox and with what intellectual precision they defended the divinity of the one *ousia* and three *hypostases*, according to Balthasar, they still rarely applied the Trinity to the Christian life⁶¹. The second danger of this period was the platonic tendency to supernaturalism or the spiritualization of nature. In extreme cases, it can reject the analogy in the opposite direction, that is, as an excessive dissimilarity. This constituted the rejection of a positive concept of nature and of an escape from the natural and embodied constitution of human beings. The exemplar platonic relation must be counter-balanced and brought to a *holy sobriety* in the Middle Ages with the influence of Aristotelian philosophy.

The main innovation of Scholasticism on the theme of the analogy between creatures and God is perhaps a correction of the patristics' excess towards the depotentialization of God in the scheme of emanation and a super-naturalization of the creature in the schema of participation. Either way, the similarity within a far greater dissimilarity is put at risk⁶². In Scholasticism, the analogy of creatures and God is no longer understood under the theme of the Platonic all-encompassing participation but the *schema of effect-to-cause*⁶³. This epoch emphasizes the self-subsistence, sovereignty and free-

⁶⁰ H.U. von Balthasar *Presence and Thought: Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 1995.

⁶¹ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers* ... cit., p. 375. This is not entirely true. For an example in which the doctrine of the Trinity and the Christian life intersect, see C.A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008.

⁶² 4th Lateran Council: *one cannot note any similarity between creature and God, however great, without being compelled to note an ever-greater dissimilarity between them* (Denz, 432); P. Hünermann, H. Hoping, R.L. Fastiggi, A.E. Nash, and H. Denzinger. *Compendium of Creeds, Definitions, and Declarations on Matters of Faith and Morals*. Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2012, p. 806. For Erich Przywara and the Fourth Lateran Council see: Przywara, *Analogia Entis* ... cit., p. 235.

⁶³ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers* ... cit., p. 381.

dom of nature as it becomes evident in the doctrine of the secondary causality of Thomas. God grants the creature such a degree of freedom that the creature is able even to reject God. Paradoxically, despite this autonomy, the closer the finite will imitates the divine will in grace, the freer is the creature. Balthasar explains: *nature as the self-subsistence of created being that is presupposed before any gracious and unmerited participation in God can take place and in fact is the basis by which this participation can take place*⁶⁴. The analogy of being is thus not interpreted as a negative limitation in the creature, but the *ever-greater-difference suffices to support and make possible the highest unity*⁶⁵. The grace of God is not in stark opposition with the finite being in his composition of form and matter. There is no hostility towards the natural, the natural laws, the world of the senses, and so on: *all participation in a unification with God can be viewed from now on as a simultaneous perfection and crowning of the naturalness of nature*⁶⁶.

Nature and its capacities are greatly emphasized to the extent that Thomas speaks of a natural desire for the supernatural. In the over-emphasis of the *natural*, the temptation of the Patristics is inverted from super-naturalizing nature to naturalizing grace. The scholastic theological worldview that understands things as they are related and ordered to God becomes in the hand of modern scholastics *an immanent and purely philosophical system of logical stringency*⁶⁷. Balthasar associates traces of this in Thomas with a Platonism still present in Scholastic thought, for example, the arguments of convenience⁶⁸. In contrast, the scholastics argued for an openness of similarity between creatures and God not only in the doctrine of secondary causes (freedom and will) or the real distinction between essence and existence (in metaphysics) but also too in the

⁶⁴ Ivi, p. 381.

⁶⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁶ Ivi, p. 382.

⁶⁷ Ivi, p. 383.

⁶⁸ Ivi, p. 384.

realm of truth⁶⁹. The formal outline of the human nature is defined as a constant readiness and openness to the divine in the doctrine of the *oboedientia potentialis*. The temptation is to deny the material separation of nature and grace despite their *de facto* unity in the history of salvation⁷⁰.

Balthasar believes that it is not until the modern period with Ignatius of Loyola that the openness of the finite being is fully understood in its openness to praise, service and surrender. Thus, the law of Being in Christ is knitted into the law of the Church. The patristic theme of *God in all* is expressed more consistently and accurately. It is no longer a *dying to the world* that rejects completely the positivity of the world at the cost of becoming a form of escapism. It is *a world affirming dying to the world*⁷¹. In the modern period, the emphasis on the individual rational nature develops into a more personalistic and actualist shape. The *whole realm of the objective, logical and ontological connections on those that express and objectify the ultimate act determined the moment of the person's freedom*⁷². The analogy between creatures and God is now rephrased not just as the similarity between the created and the Creator, but as the dependence of the individual finite being on the *unfathomable will, good pleasure and love of a majestic and sovereign Person*⁷³. Subjectivity is emphasized against the tendencies of objectivity of the hierarchical divisions of Scholasticism. It is not the *suppositum* of nature that participates in the analogy between God and creatures, but the *individuum* itself. Subjectivity possesses a power to express the total representation between creatures and God. As Balthasar writes: *the change in meaning of the concept of Christian Love as the basic fact of revelation and of the ultimate demand of Christian existence is*

⁶⁹ See H.U. von Balthasar, *Theological Logic: The Truth of the World*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2000.

⁷⁰ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers ... cit.*, p. 384.

⁷¹ Ivi, p. 392.

⁷² Ivi, p. 387.

⁷³ *Ibidem*.

significant, and it may summarize for us in conclusion the meaning of our daily activities⁷⁴.

This love is not exclusively a kind of purely human experience of God. It is more precisely grounded in the expression of love in Christ's descent into the world. By extension, this kenotic expression in the mission of Christ has its foundation in God's trinitarian life. Balthasar encounters in Ignatius the balance between the personal sovereignty and freedom, and the Christocentric fulfillment of the analogy between creatures and God⁷⁵. He summarizes: *the statement that God is all in all bears the marks of an openness to the world in the manner of Ignatius hallar Dios en todas las cosas, not by a luxurious swallowing in personal relationships, but by strictly following Christ's mission*⁷⁶. This following of the mission of Christ perfects the obediential openness of finite being to God so that the meaning of the obedience of Christ in the total abandonment of his own will to become the *servant of the Lord in Cross and death* in love and in friendship are the Christian fulfillment of the ground of nature⁷⁷. Ultimately, the Christian participates in the kenotic movement of Christ by sharing in the movement of the Church (the Law of Being in the Church):

*The Christian helps to bring about this self-emptying of Christ and does so in a galling service for the redemption of the world. But in this annihilation (which is only to be discharged by the law of conversion) the annihilation of self and the depersonalization of the patristic ideal of love has been overtaken.*⁷⁸

⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁵ Balthasar speaks of Christ as the concrete Analogy of Being. For example, H.U. von Balthasar, *Theology of Revelation* ... cit., pp. 69-70.

⁷⁶ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers* ... cit., p. 395.

⁷⁷ *Ivi*, p. 396.

⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

4. Analogical or Non-Analogical Developments

The Catholic Truth, as defined by the structural laws of being in Christ and being in the Church, remains consistent and homogeneous in different historical periods. In each period the structural laws are expressed under the laws of time and space and finiteness. With their differences in cultures, ages, temperaments, etc. the Gospel confronts them without destroying their natural autonomy. Balthasar writes: *this analogical character of this fulfillment (of the structural law in each period of Church history) is given first of all with the law of space and time*⁷⁹. At the same time, the particularity of each of these periods can only be understood analogically:

*It is important to see here that the Church, as with every earthly entity, is being led through a changing series of qualitatively different situations and moments, the truth of each one of which is unique and coincides with the others only analogically.*⁸⁰

In a similar way, in the development of doctrine we can identify some transformative models that claim that there are ruptures or corruptions in the river of Tradition. Matthew Levering examines the case of John Noonan who, because of the internal contradictions on particular teachings such as slavery, claims that the development of moral teaching in the Church's tradition appears to follow no particular rule⁸¹. In the case of theology, the ground-form hereby described, maintains the essential consistency of Catholic Theology. But there can be situations where these laws are not respected either partially or radically. In each case, whether the law of being in Christ and Church are not respected, we can speak of heresy:

⁷⁹ Ivi, p. 352.

⁸⁰ Ivi, p. 370.

⁸¹ M. Levering, *Engaging the Doctrine of Revelation ...* cit., pp. 185-188. In response to J.T. Noonan, *Church That Can and Cannot Change: The Development of Catholic Moral Teaching*, Notre Dame University Press, Indiana 2020, p. 221.

*but none of them [heresies] see that every act of approaching God directly always runs right up against the law of the incarnation, which has established the emphatic difference between God and creatures as the place and stage of union and has determined nature to be the basis and measure of grace-and the Cross and the tomb the place of the resurrection.*⁸²

Lastly, Balthasar makes the bold claim that *heresy is an analogical concept*⁸³. By this he means that every heresy is similar to one another in the rejection of the principles of Truth. One example of heresy that Balthasar studies is Joachimism. Joachim of Fiore argued that the unity of the Trinitarian relations could be located in the persons and not in the substance of the Trinity. As a result, the Fourth Lateran Council condemned his theology because it tended to destroy the distance between God and creatures (i.e., analogy of being). The Council affirmed that no matter how great the similarity between creatures and God there is also a far greater dissimilarity. It is not difficult to see the similarity with other heresies that make God in the image of man. Docetism (which denied the real existence of Christ's human body), the various forms of Pelagianism (which denied the necessity of grace to attain to God), and Arianism (which claims that the Son is inferior to the Father), or Protestant spiritualism (which denies natural theology). All suffer from this error, but the last one is perhaps the most significant since it reflects Balthasar's ecumenical project. Balthasar engaged in extensive dialogue with Karl Barth over his criticism of the Catholic analogy of being, as formulated by Erich Przywara. In an effort to preserve the sovereignty of God, Barth denied the possibility of a natural theology or any connaturality between creatures and God that could in anyway make a claim and condition divine freedom⁸⁴. Balthasar

⁸² H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers* ... cit., p. 360.

⁸³ Ivi, p. 369.

⁸⁴ For example, T.R. Wittman. *God and Creation in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2018. See also my review of this book in E. Martinez, *Book Review: God and Creation in the*

responded that despite the absolute sovereignty of God and grace, God builds upon the original state of creatures (analogy of being) to elevate them to a supernatural life. Rather than denying the wounds of Original Sin, this reaffirms the distinctive Christian dispensation *most clearly expressed in the formula: gratia non destruit, sed perficit naturam*, against the law of Original Sin: *Man really is the one who destruit [goes against his nature] by trying to climb up out of his nature into a spiritual existence*⁸⁵.

5. Conclusion

Analogy can be used to understand the principle of substantial unity with a diversity of expression in the larger context of the analogy of faith, both in the development of doctrine and in the concrete case of the development of Catholic theology. Analogy is thus a heuristic tool that allows us to understand the differences and historical particularities of Catholic theologies while simultaneously preserving the homogeneity of faith. The theological style and approach must thus be different in each historical period in order to adapt to the receivers of the Word of God and address their lives in their own historical and creaturely concreteness. Each unique theological expression relates analogically to the rest if it is a valid and adequate expression of the Christian Truth. Each provides an account of finite being acknowledging its openness to the divine, but never dismissing the non-identity between creatures and God (analogy of being). Instead, orthodoxy argues that a finite spirit must accept the precarity of his metaphysical constitution and assent to the invitation to live in Christ, through the life of the Church. Other expressions of faith which excessively naturalize God or supernaturalize man, or deny the entire reality of Christ, Head and Body, fall away from the homogenous analogical development of the analogy of faith.

Theology of Thomas Aquinas and Karl Barth, in “Irish Theological Quarterly”, February (2020).

⁸⁵ H.U. von Balthasar, *The Fathers ... cit.*, p. 360.