

Retrieving the Tradition

JOY AND THE CROSS

• Hans Urs von Balthasar •

“Only in virtue of his filial intimacy with the divine Father can Jesus suffer total abandonment by the Father and taste that suffering to the last drop.”

1.

The very word “gospel,” “*eu-angelion*,” shows that Christianity is “glad tidings” and that its whole tenor must be indisputably that of joy. It is “good news of a great joy” and “peace on earth” (Lk 2:10, 14), and peace and joy are often interchangeable terms for the ultimate blessing of salvation (Jn 14:27, 16:33; Rom 14:17; Gal 5:22). Thus it is a heightening of the Old Testament joy of the believer in God in his revealed word,¹ a heightening of the religious cultic joy of Israel²—and we know with what joy Jews celebrate their feasts to this day!—because the “Word” becomes “flesh” and, through his Crucifixion, God’s love for us acquires a perfect, unsurpassable expression (Rom

¹J. Nielsen, “Die Freude am Wort und an der Weisung Gottes im Licht der Psalmen,” in *Leben aus dem Wort* (Patmos, 1962), 36–51.

²Bo Reicke, *Diakonie, Festfreude und Zelos* (Uppsala, 1951). P. Humbert, “‘Laetari et exultare’ dans le vocabulaire religieux de l’Ancien Testament,” *RHPPhR* 22 (1942): 185–214; id., *Opuscales d’un Hébraisant* (Neuchâtel, 1958), 119–145.

8:32ff). So New Testament joy is not to be queried, restricted, or relativized by any other attitude. It is not only a response to the attitude in heaven, where every tear will be wiped away (Rv 7:17, 21:4), but a response to the ultimate attitude of God himself, whose “greater joy” is manifest in pardoning sin and in finding what was lost and gone astray (Lk 15:7, 10³; cf. vv. 24, 32). This passage speaks of the joy of God as Father, and consequently this joy must be manifest in the Son who reveals him; indeed, he “rejoices” at the way the Father reveals himself (Lk 10:21; cf. Rv 2:26, 28). And just as Jesus “rejoiced in the Holy Spirit,” the joy of believers, if it is to be a proper response to God’s joy, can only come about in the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who brings about joy (an eschatological joy, the harbinger of heaven), even as early as the infancy narrative (Lk 1:14, 44–47) and then fully blown after the Lord’s Resurrection (Acts 13:52; cf. 5:41). Insofar as this Christian joy has an eternally transcendent object, that is, the revelation of the love of God that does not cling to itself, it also manifests a subjectively transcendent quality, which is why John will describe it five times as “full” or “complete” joy (15:11, 16:24, 17:13; 1 Jn 1:4; 2 Jn 12). This sense of being totally filled means that we have been brought to eschatological perfection.⁴

However, this renders the problem of joy and the Cross all the more difficult. From what we have already said it is inevitable that we should understand all suffering in God’s definitive, New Testament revelation (both in Christ and in the Christian) as being only a function of joy—and seek to justify it as such. But by doing this we could be breaking off suffering’s ultimate, most painful tip in the way it is deliberately and consciously broken off in Buddhism or Stoicism, for instance, by the notion of *apatheia*. This would mean that suffering would not really be taken seriously in Christianity. If, then, this unacceptable conclusion is to be rejected and Christ’s Cross is to be allowed the absolute seriousness of God-forsakenness—which is essential if Christ was “made to be sin” and “made a curse” for us (2 Cor 5:21; Gal 3:13; cf. Rom 8:3) and “was given up for our sake”;⁵ and if, moreover, the disciple’s “following” of Jesus to the Cross (Jn 21:19)

³In these passages the expressions “heaven” and “angel of God” are reverent circumlocutions for God himself.

⁴Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John* (Oxford, 1971).

⁵Ward Popkes, *Christus traditus. Eine Untersuchung zum Begriff der Dahingabe im Neuen Testament* (Zwingliverlag, 1967).

must at least bring him to the point where the suffering of the Cross is taken seriously as a criterion, how can we still speak of joy?

One could attempt to solve the dilemma from two angles. First, Jesus' suffering on the Cross, including his being forsaken by God, could be seen as a paradoxical expression of his joy. Albert Frank-Duquesne ("*Joie de Jésus-Christ*")⁶ once made a very serious attempt⁷ to do this:

In spite of the desolation, the inconceivable, infernal forsakenness of his last hour on the Cross, no heart ever overflowed with such genuine joy as the heart of Jesus. . . . He is shaken with a hidden jubilation. It is as if the "hell" of obscured love—beyond all enjoyment, at the point where self-reflection is no longer possible—actually constitutes the genuine, naked, unveiled reality of love and hence of joy . . . that magnificently bottomless, divinely free and spontaneous joy in obeying, the joy of loving to the point of sacrifice, the joy of self-surrender, a joy that is "placed" entirely in God. . . . Here joy is no longer "psychological" and experienced, and therefore somehow adventitious, contingent, accidental; it has acquired "ontological" reality, grounding being itself, transcendent and divinizing.⁸

⁶In "Ma Joie terrestre où donc es-tu?" *Études Camélitaines* (1947), 23–37. Some words of little Thérèse illustrate what Frank-Duquesne means: "If you only knew how great my joy is to experience no joy in order to give joy to the Lord. It is so sublime a joy (*de la joie raffinée*) although it is not experienced" (*Lettres*, 104). "I cannot suffer any more, for all suffering has become sweet to me" (*Nov. Verba*, 1926, 20f). "I have actually come to a place where I cannot suffer any more, for all suffering has become sweet to me" (*Story of a Soul*, 1947). "The path I am following has no consolation for me, and yet it contains all consolation" (*Lettres*, 165). "Although this trial robs me of every sensible pleasure, I can still cry out, 'Lord, you shower joy upon me in everything you do!'" (*Autobiographical Writings*).

⁷We are deliberately omitting discussion of the Scholastic theory according to which Jesus on the Cross, because of the beatific vision that was always his, only suffered in the inferior powers of his soul. See Thomas, *Summa Theologiae* III, q. 46, a. 7.

⁸Frank-Duquesne, "Ma Joie terrestre où donc es-tu?" 24, 25, 31, 32. In his splendid little book on Claudel, Pierre Ganne takes a similar line: *Claudel. Humour, joie et liberté* (Éditions de l'Epi, 1966). (German translation: *Die Freude ist die Wahrheit. Ein Gang durch das Werk Paul Claudels* [Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1968]).

We may already glimpse the answer to our question in these words, but it is premature: for can we really speak of joy where it is not experienced in any way?

Let us approach the question from the other angle, that of the disciples: “Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name” (Acts 5:41). On this basis, we could attempt to interpret what Paul says about his being “crucified with Christ” (Gal 2:19) in close connection with the extreme physical and spiritual sufferings he enumerates: execration, persecution, slander, being regarded as the refuse of the world and the offscouring of all things (1 Cor 4:10–13); carrying in the body the death of Jesus (2 Cor 4:10); stigmata (however it is to be understood: Gal 6:17)—and we would have to put beside it this sentence, which is the hidden source of it all: “With all our affliction, I am overjoyed” (2 Cor 7:4). In the New Covenant, therefore, affliction and joy are often found together (Mt 5:13 par; Acts 7:55; 1 Thes 1:6).

But have we actually got to the bottom of the question in these two attempts? Jesus says, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death” (Mk 14:34; Mt 26:38). And what does Paul mean by saying that he “despaired of life itself” (2 Cor 1:8)? Do we not render the whole idea of suffering abstract and lifeless if we interpret it on the basis of joy? In fact, we have omitted something here, namely, the dimension of time, the succession of moments that must be filled with diverse and even contrary contents. “There is a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance . . .” (Qo 3:4). Now it will be said that neither Christ nor the Christian lose themselves in these contraries. There is a timeless vantage point, from which they survey them and assess their ultimate significance, namely, the will of God, vocation. That is true. But surely the one who is “sent” is sent “away” from God on his particular mission; he must venture forth into the depths of the time dimension and, precisely as a Christian, must plumb its oppositions and contradictions. Does not the hymn to Christ in his obedience begin with the fact that he does not cling to his divine status but abandons it to the void of time (Phil 2:6–7)? The course set for Christ’s mission points him to the destination of the Cross, which implies being forsaken by God and hence the loss of every joy, to “Death, with Hades at its heels” (Rv 6:8). At such a place all connection with joy—in God’s sense and in the sense of the Kingdom of God—is utterly broken off (Ps 6:5, etc.). The person undergoing the “dark

night” is totally incapable of connecting his experience with the joy that he has (forever!) lost.

So a second exploration is called for. We shall continue to take holy Scripture as our guide, but this time our method will not be a priori but a posteriori, following the path that starts from the entirely human experience of suffering and leads us step by step deeper into the Christian mystery. Then we shall see whether the Frank-Duquesne theory is substantiated or not.

2.

Joy cannot be defined solely by reference to its object, since on the surface it is a condition and an affect of the subject.⁹ On the other hand, however, it can be equated even less with a state that might be described as a sense of physical well-being or even as a spiritual feeling of happiness. There can be no doubt that the word “blessed” in the Beatitudes refers to some joy, however hidden, but the subject, who is characterized as “poor,” “mourning,” “hungry and thirsty for righteousness,” “persecuted,” and “reviled,” knows neither well-being nor happiness. The Beatitudes are not alone in the world’s religious and philosophical literature; in fact, they are the highest instance of a universal human theme, namely, that at all levels, from the biological to the ethical, suffering and pain have a positive role. This is the case in the natural selection of the race as in the rearing of the individual, not only the rearing of the child by parent and school but in an ongoing way, by mature individuals. The latter only exist as such in the tension created by an ideal that is never completely

⁹Thus we must disagree with E. G. Gulin who, in his *Die Freude im Neuen Testament* (2 vols., Helsinki, 1932–1936) maintains that (at least in John, cf. II, 67–71) joy is only spoken of with regard to its object. Further on the topic of Christian joy: Sarat, *La Joie dans S. Paul* (Lyons: Diss., 1931); W. Keppler, *Mehr Freude* (Freiburg, 1934); G. Feuerer, *Ordnung zum Ewigen* (Regensburg, 1934); U. Holzmeister, *Gaudete in Domino* (VD 22, 1942, 257–262); J. Brosch, *Jesus und die Freude* (M-Gladbach, 1946); *LThK*, 2nd ed., IV 361f (E. Schick, A. Auer). On the dialectic of joy and suffering: P. T. Dehau, *Joie et tristesse* (Paris, 1946); Jean Massin, “Le rire et la croix” in *Études Camélitaines* [1947]: 88–116; M. Carrez, “Souffrance et gloire dans les épîtres pauliniennes,” in *RHPH* 31 (1951): 343–353; A. Brunner, “Das Geheimnis der christlichen Freude,” in *Geist und Leben* (1953): 414–422; W. Nauck, “Freude im Leiden,” in *ZNW* 46 (1955): 68–80.

realized, in going beyond themselves, in subjecting instinct to reason, inclination to duty, or, put less rigoristically, in the “*ethizesthai*” of the inclinations (Aristotle): in ethicizing man’s whole subethical realm. The more exalted a view of man is taken by ethics or religion, the nearer they place him to God and the eternal, the more renunciation they will demand of him, either in the form of asceticism (India), the martyr’s courage (Socrates) or the pitiless imperative that requires all egoistic criteria to be subordinated to universally human and social demands (Kant). In the face of death, a Christian like Boethius can quite rightly draw consolation from philosophy.

The individual and the social points of view go hand in hand. Nietzsche can demand that the individual undergo every pain, every imaginable self-conquest in the interest of self-cultivation, since a “great” man only becomes such in countering opposition. *Ho m’ dareis anthropos ou paideuetai*: spare the rod and spoil the child. And the way out of the Kantian “either/or” between inclination and absolute duty is by no means to be found in a compromise between the two (nor did Schiller ever mean to suggest that it was), but either in the inclinations being assimilated to duty (which calls for continual sacrifice), or in discovering an attraction in duty itself. This can happen in two ways: either by developing in oneself a greater inclination for the general good than for the private good (Hegel, Marx), or where the “categorical imperative” itself inclines toward man as categorically selfless love (as in Christianity).

Let us dwell for a moment on the first possibility. Hegelian philosophy develops such a passion for truth’s completeness (“absolute knowledge”) that it blithely sacrifices not only the individual’s happiness but also his human and eternal existence for the sake of this “highest good.” From philosophers, at least, it demands that this sacrifice be deliberate. It is a “speculative Good Friday” (although Hegel understands this somewhat differently from the way we do here), in which the individual surrenders everything that is distinctive of himself in order to be subsumed into the integration of the Whole—which will appropriate him in any case. But whereas the compulsory expropriation of all that is private for the sake of the common good is characterized by pain and death, its philosophical accompaniment has the quality of an ultimate liberation, satisfaction, and joy. And in Marx’s variation this implies the following: as a dialectical historical process the expropriation of private property in favor of common ownership has a ruthless and indeed catastrophic

face, but the conscious side of it is that, by understanding and affirming the process, one is sacrificing one's personal happiness for the happiness of (future) mankind. And here lies the insoluble paradox of Marxism: the *joy* of self-surrender for this eschatological ideal (which I personally shall not live to enjoy) is actually greater than the envisioned *happiness* of a humanity that will no longer have any need to go beyond itself in such a heroic manner. In the same way, for Hegel, "absolute knowledge" was of less moment than the joy of collaborating, through self-sacrifice, in its discovery. For modern man (as in Homer, the tragic tradition, and Aristotle) it is man, struggling and suffering man, who is more significant than God the spectator; painful yearning for the Absolute is more significant than the painless, self-enclosed "knowledge of knowledge." The difference is that in modern times there is also an awareness of the process itself (evolution). No doubt that is why every day we calmly accept reports of ever-intensifying war and famine, and the threat of total destruction of mankind at all levels, as the inevitable public sacrifice that must be offered to a transcendent ideal that increasingly disappears into the mist. At least, that is the only possible excuse for it. Once we realize, however, that in practical terms this ideal is unattainable, it is a fact that the genuine sacrificial joy that could have sustained us during the early years fades away. It becomes clear, from the secular standpoint, that the path on which we have set out (and there is no other) cannot be followed to its completion.

A miracle needs to take place: the most unyielding categorical imperative of self-transcendence must coincide with the most blissful inclination of love. And this is only possible in Christianity, where God is not "thought thinking itself" and "absolute knowledge" but triune love—a love that comes to us from its origin in the shape of the incarnate Son, taking upon himself, on his Cross, our ultimate failure and hence our loss of joy, and in himself transforming our attempts to go beyond ourselves into new joy through "a hope that does not deceive."

3.

The first biblical steps run parallel to those of individual and social ethics, but infuse a new soul into them in anticipation of the end in view. Thus the father's stern chastisement of the child, which is an

educative blessing springing from love (Prv 13:24),¹⁰ follows the example of God's loving and educative chastisement of Israel (Dt 8:5f; Prv 3:11f)—an idea that is made much of by the Letter to the Hebrews (Heb 12:5–13) and that Paul applies to his own chastising role in the community (1 Cor 11:21–32), a role that is already the sign of the eschatological kindness of the God who exercises judgment (cf. 1 Pet 4:17; Rev 3:19). This presupposes that the meaning and purpose of the process are not evident to the child but to the father, that is, God; for the present, the child only experiences sorrow, pain, and tears. Only in faith and as a result of admonition in faith can Christians understand that such treatment shows them to be sons: "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Heb 12:11). This "seems" (*dokein*) is repeated in the apostle's chastisement of the community. The Christian dialectic is to be found at a deeper level: his letter grieved the Corinthians, "though only for a while," and this grief was a proper, "godly" grief. Insofar as it was "godly" (not insofar as it was "grief"!) It occasioned the apostle joy (2 Cor 7:8–9), and now he expects the community, having understood the joy that lies in his role of admonishment, to share it: "I felt sure of all of you, that my joy would be the joy of you all" (2 Cor 2:3). But this joy can only be reached through the proper sorrow of the one under correction: "For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained?" (2 Cor 2:2). This taking the risk of paining someone in order to harvest (and subsequently sow) joy far exceeds the logic of the Old Testament: it is a thoroughly christological logic of the Cross. It is a reflection of the attitude of Christ, who brings his followers with him to the Cross and expects them to understand it as an "education" ("I am the Way") for joy, motivated by joy, and leading back to it.

However, it is part of this educative process and this joy that an estrangement occurs at the moment when this joy is withdrawn. And whoever is accompanying the disciple—the Lord or his apostle—must make it clear that this estrangement is something unavoidable and normal. "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings" (1 Pt 4:12f). "Count it all joy, my brethren, when

¹⁰Prv 22:15; 23:13, 14; 29:15–17; Job 5:17; Sir 30:1, 8, 12.

you meet various trials” (Jas 1:2). This first passage asserts that the motivation for going through the “fire” is that of sharing Christ’s sufferings, which will enable those who do so to share his glory in joy and jubilation (at the *parousia*); but it goes on to point to that attitude in suffering that—inwardly assimilating the attitude of Christ—provides the transition from endurance to joy: “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator” (1 Pt 4:19). The passage from James indicates the same transition, by referring to the “testing of your faith” in suffering, which produces steadfastness that in turn leads to the *eschaton* (cf. Mt 10:22, 24:13). Paul even rejoices “in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Rom 5:3–5). In Paul, “rejoice,” “glory,” “boast,” often mean the same thing: it is something he can do even when afflicted, because the chain of inner dispositions he describes not only reaches to the “hope of glory” (v. 2) but actually renders this glory present in the Spirit. Thus, “though now for a little while you may have to suffer various trials,” it is for two purposes: to test the genuineness of faith and to purify it (and make it more genuine). This is already a cause for “rejoicing” in anticipation¹¹ “with unutterable and exalted joy” (1 Pt 1:6–8). In all these related trains of thought it is precisely the alienating aspect of suffering that is the pledge, and even the hidden presence, of eschatological joy. It is this hidden presence that enables Paul to qualify even the most acute suffering—insofar as it is a suffering with Christ—as “*quasi*”: *quasi tristes, sempter autem gaudentes* (2 Cor 6:10; cf. Heb 12:11: *videtur non esse gaudii*). For all pain and grief belong essentially to the dimension of time, which, measured against the “eternal weight of glory,” is a “slight, momentary affliction” (2 Cor 4:17).

However, “testing” and “purifying” are insufficient to constitute what is specifically Christian; they exist already in the Old Covenant.¹² If grief and trials are to be Christian and a participation in Christ, they themselves must be destined to be handed on to others.

¹¹Since *angaliasthe* in verse 8 refers to the faith which does not see, the same word in verse 6 should also be understood in a present, not a future sense [as, e.g., Luther’s German Bible—*Trans.*].

¹²Gn 22:1; Prv 17:3; 27:21; Jer 11:20f; Mal 3:3.

Experience of suffering cannot be evaluated privately but only within the communion of saints, both in terms of making Christian suffering available for others and of imparting a soothing consolation to them in their suffering. For Paul “shares abundantly in Christ’s sufferings,” and it is this that simultaneously promotes both pain and consolation in him (2 Cor 1:4–7). This is a law, and as such cannot be limited to the apostle in his mediating relationship between Christ and the community: it must be the expression of a general principle that continues to apply in post-apostolic times insofar as all participation in the Lord’s suffering is designed to be passed on. And just as suffering and consolation are inextricably intertwined in the believer who has a share in Christ, it is essential that what is imparted to the Church and the world shall not be a one-sided “consolation” (for example, in the sense of sparing it suffering) but also a handing on of participation in suffering in the Church, “for the sake of his body, that is, the Church” (Col 1:24). At this point, we must refer to the most magnificent example of this dialectic in the early Church, namely, Ignatius of Antioch. Pursuing his painful path to martyrdom, he not only overflowed himself with the consolation of Christ, he also strengthened the churches by carrying them with him into his sharing of Christ’s suffering and consolation.

Nor is this all. Suffering that is consoled is not ultimate suffering, it is not the Cross. Our topic is not “joy and suffering” but “joy and the Cross.” It is not Paul, but John, who lifts the last veil here. Paul always thinks of the Cross from the standpoint of the Resurrection, in accordance with his vision on the Damascus road. But John accompanies his Master along his path into suffering. Paul can rejoice at the accomplished fact that “the love of Christ”¹³ has demonstrated itself in the ultimate surrender, in becoming sin and a curse. John’s love must have caused him to assent from the outset to this terrible decision on the part of his Master and friend. John’s deepest, most excruciating suffering ultimately consists in the fact that he must let him suffer without making any objection, without being able to call a halt. The dark shadow of the Cross falls over John 12–17 right from the start: just as Jesus himself is “troubled” (12:21; cf. 11:33, 12:27), he speaks to those who are “troubled” with him (14:1): a troubled Jesus consoles those who are likewise troubled by pointing out, as Paul

¹³Rom 8:35, 37; 2 Cor 5:14; Gal 2:20; Eph 3:19; 5:2, 25. This love on the part of Christ manifests the love of God the Father: Rom 5:8; 8:39.

does, that the suffering will only last a “little while” (16:16)—though for him, genuinely forsaken by God, it will be a suffering that is timeless. He compares this “little while” to a woman’s pains in childbirth, in which the joy of before and after are submerged under the pain of the now. Here, therefore, there is no longer any talk of a Pauline “*quasi*”; in fact, things are completely reversed: “Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice.” And only then comes the change: “but your sorrow will turn into joy,” that is, it will be in the past, just as a woman forgets her fear once the child arrives. With the prospect of the Cross before him, casting its shadow in advance, Jesus—almost unbelievably—demands that his loving disciples embrace his coming Passion with joy: “If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I go to the Father” (14:28), that is, via the path chosen by the Father, which leads through the Cross.¹⁴

That is why John brings together the three (female) representatives of the loving Church in the events of the Passion and Resurrection: Mary of Bethany, who lovingly anoints the Lord for his burial (that is, anoints him as the suffering Messiah); Mary the Mother, who has to perfect her consent under the Cross, including her being sent away to a new son; and Mary Magdalen, who, on Easter morning, has to consent to the Son’s returning to the Father and accept that she cannot hold him—and she is sent to his brethren instead. The demands made on the man Jesus by the Cross, the drama of the world’s sin, are simply excessive; the demand made of the loving Church is no less excessive, in that she is required to consent to this nameless suffering on the part of her Beloved. Even more excessive is the fact that the loving Church is expected to affirm—with rejoicing! (Jn 14:28)—that Jesus’ entire soul (and not merely the “lower parts of the soul”) was forsaken by God and that he descended into hell (and not merely into some antechamber of hell that was still illuminated by faith, love, and hope!)—and that it is expected to accompany him thither.

Now, in the “Church between the times,” the paradox between Cross and joy reaches its full dimensions, because the Church can never see the Cross as something that lies behind it as an accomplished fact in past historical time, any more than it can regard its sinfulness as a closed issue in the past. It can never establish itself so

¹⁴On what follows cf. the author’s “Ist die Messe ein Opfer der Kirche?” in *Spiritus Creator* (1967), 166–217.

completely in the Easter event—and hence in Easter joy—that it no longer needs to be continually accompanying Jesus on the way to the Cross. For the Church is not only the sinner who rejoices that she will soon be freed from her sins but also the lover who sees clearly what a price the Beloved will have to pay for this redemption. Has Protestantism given sufficient reflection to this?

It is due to this strange paradox that Christian joy has a uniquely burning and consuming quality. When Paul is writing words of consolation to his suffering fellow Christians he can encourage them in terms of a pure and peaceful joy—just as Jesus speaks a pure, peaceful joy to his disciples in his farewell discourses—but as far as his own personal joy is concerned, a gale is always blowing through it, constantly fanning the flames: “For the love of Christ has totally seized possession of us,¹⁵ because we are convinced [after adequate reflection: *krinantes*, since it is a case of making a *krina*, a decision] that one has died for all; therefore all have died” (2 Cor 5:14f). In any case, it is a joy that can never settle down anywhere to enjoy worldly goods; even in genuine pleasure, it keeps its gaze on the love of Christ as it is expressed in the Church (cf. Phil 4:10–19; 1 Cor 10:31). We cannot do justice to New Testament theology simply by relating earthly goods (in our enjoyment of them) to eternal goods. Nor is it a case of a simple alternation of joy and suffering (for instance, according to the seasons of the Church’s year), for everything is evaluated and ordered from a single eschatological standpoint. Nor can there be any question of relativizing the Cross as a result of Easter joy, for the Christian’s discipleship can enter the dark night of the Spirit, not only mystically but in the many kinds of *desolatio*, as long as man is subject to the law of temporal existence. Nor can the Church’s vantage point be simply described as essentially post-Easter and the Christian’s cast of mind be deduced from it, undialectically. In fact, life in the Church remains in the unfathomable “between the times” mystery. Indeed, it lies deeper still: the Church’s understanding of the relationship between Cross and joy is to be found in the realm of the mystery of Jesus’ Cross: only

¹⁵*Sunechein* means more than simply “constraineth” (AV) or “controls” (RSV)—in view of the two poles given in the preceding verse, i.e., being “beside ourselves” and being “in our right mind”—it goes beyond both these states, thus: “totally takes possession of.” The element of pressure, of spurring on, is also present here, rightly translated by the Vulgate’s *caritas enim Christi urget nos*.

in virtue of his filial intimacy with the divine Father can Jesus suffer total abandonment by the Father and taste that suffering to the last drop.—*Translated by Graham Harrison.*

HANS URS VON BALTHASAR (1905–1988) was a co-founder of *Communio*.

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