

Ph.D. Dissertation Abstract

The Pontifical John Paul II Institute for Studies on Marriage and Family

Title: "Divine Love as *Event*: A Study in the Trinitarian Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar"

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This dissertation elucidates Balthasar's analogical conception of the Holy Trinity as an eternal *event* of love and demonstrates its importance for his thought and for theology as a whole. **Chapter One** situates his unique use of event in the context of contemporary philosophy and theology. Granting that "event" bespeaks the uniqueness of finite, historical being, Balthasar unveils a fuller, metaphysical sense of event: events are always new and excessive because they entail the reciprocal interaction of what is distinct. The ever-actual love of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is an event in a super-eminent sense. **Chapter Two** studies Balthasar's philosophy in order to provide an analogical basis for this Trinitarian theology. The paradigmatic form of being's eventfulness is the ever-greater unity of love between persons, and God's uncreated actuality is its perfect archetype. Transitioning to theology, **Chapter Three** clarifies the linguistic scheme of Balthasar's Trinitarian Christocentrism. He intermixes analogies for the Trinity with metaphors, drawn from the economy of redemption, in order to convey the eventful unity of the triune Creator and his radically different creation in Christ. "Event" itself proves here to be an analogy, not a metaphor, for the mutual self-giving of Father, Son, and Spirit in the immanent Trinity. The last two chapters then present the heart of our argument. **Chapter Four** elucidates the analogical meaning of event in God by studying Balthasar's description of the Trinitarian essence as an eventful order of love. God the Father's self-giving love always *is* and always *happens* in relation to his beloved Son, and the ever-greater unity of their mutual love is the Holy Spirit. **Chapter Five** shows how the "Theodrama" of salvation, as an event of divine enrichment, recapitulates this eventful love of the immanent Trinity. For Balthasar, the triune Creator freely enriches his ever-actual love by creating the world; redeeming it through the Son's passion; and raising it into his eternity. Eluding the pitfalls of process theology, Balthasar nonetheless shows, in an original manner, how personal interaction, ontological difference, finitude, potency, time, and motion, each represent a positive share in the eternal Trinity's mutual event of love.