

THE QUESTION OF CREDIBILITY IN MODERNITY

1. First, savoring Jesus' 'outrageous' claim: "*I am the Truth, the Way, and the Life.*"

2. After religious debates of the Reformation, the Enlightenment sought to produce a universal religion, and focused on "epistemology" (i.e., effected an anthropological turn):

The confessional controversies and the disenchantment of the world cooperate to bring about the abrupt turn to a purely human and predominately ethical religion (p. 32). For example:

[John Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695)]

[John Toland's *Christianity not Mysterious* (1696)]

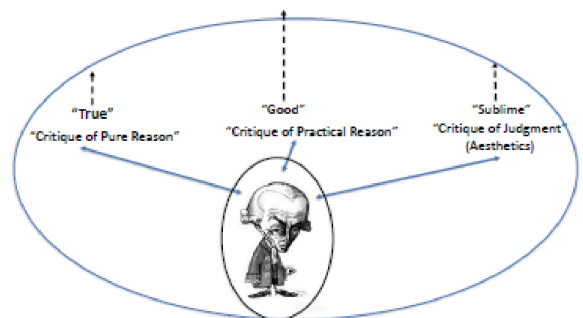
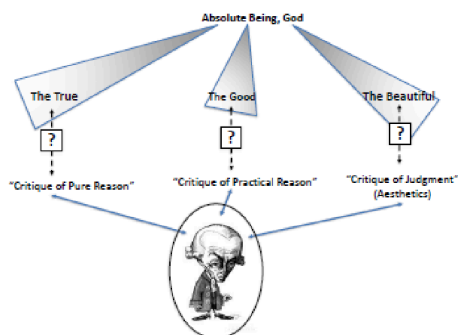
[Matthew Tindal's *Christianity as Old as Creation* (1730)]

[Lessing's *On the Proof of the Spirit and of Power* (1777)]

[Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781)]

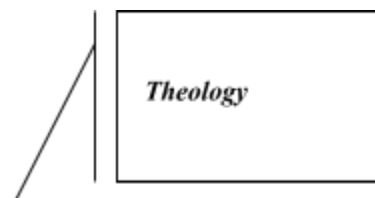
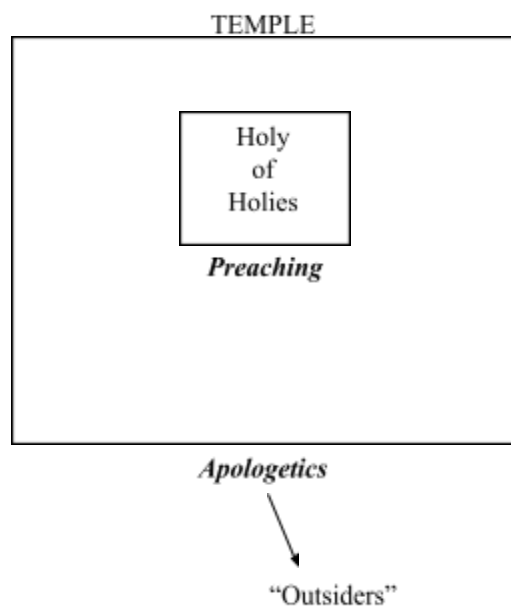
[Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason; Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (1807)]

For a religion that has been reduced to such dimensions, Christ becomes a teacher of pure truth and an example of pure living (p. 33).



3. How do we deal with these things today? Popular Division of Labor

How do you understand the relationship between: apologetics, preaching, and theology?



What's the unifying *logos*?

- The Magisterium?
- The Pope?
- The Bible?
- What's the question again??

4. **Neo-scholastic Model of Revelation (with its implications on apologetics, preaching, and**

5. **Catholic models within the anthropological turn (which Balthasar takes as being an anthropological reduction)**

6. Balthasar's View of Revelation

Benedict XVI on Today's Pastoral Needs and Preaching

“True knowledge is being struck by the arrow of beauty that wounds man: being touched by reality, ‘by the personal presence of Christ himself,’ as [fourteenth-century Byzantine theologian, Nicholas Cabasilas] puts it. Being overcome by the beauty of Christ is a more real, more profound knowledge than mere rational deduction. Of course we must not underestimate the importance of theological reflection, of exact and careful theological thought; it is still absolutely necessary. But to despise, on that account, the impact produced by the heart’s encounter with beauty, or to reject it as a true form of knowledge, would impoverish us and dry up both faith and theology. We must rediscover this form of knowledge—it is an urgent demand of the present hour.

Taking this insight as his point of departure, Hans Urs von Balthasar built his *magnum opus* of theological aesthetics. Many details of it have entered into current theological scholarship, although his fundamental approach, which is actually the essential element of the whole work, has not been widely accepted. [In the footnote, Benedict clarifies: “I refer this connection especially to the first volume of his *The Glory of the Lord*.”]. Of course, this is not only and not even principally a problem for theology; rather it is also a problem for pastoral ministry, which must arrange for people to encounter the beauty of the faith. Arguments so often have no effect, because too many contradictory arguments compete with one another in our world, so that one cannot help thinking of the remark of the medieval theologians that reason has a wax nose: in other words, it can be turned around in any direction, if one is clever enough. It is all so clever, so evident---whom should we trust?

The encounter with beauty can become the wound of the arrow that strikes the soul and thus makes it see clearly, so that henceforth it has criteria, based on what it has experienced, and can now weigh the arguments correctly” (*On the Way to Jesus Christ*. Translated by Michael J. Miller. San Francisco, CA: Ignatius Press, 2005: pp. 36-37).

**BALTHASAR, *LOVE ALONE IS CREDIBLE*, TR. D. C. SCHINDLER (SAN FRANCISCO:
IGNATIUS PRESS, 2004)**

The main claim of the book:

... neither the world as a whole nor man in particular can provide the measure for what God wishes to say to man in Christ; God’s Word is unconditionally theo-logical, or, better, theo-pragmatic: what God wishes to say to man is a deed on his behalf, a deed that interprets itself before man and for his sake (and only therefore to him and in him)” (p. 10).

“What we intend to say about this deed in this book is that it is credible only as love—specifically, as God’s own love, the manifestation of which is the glory of God” (p. 10).

Christian self-understanding (and therefore theology) can be interpreted neither in terms of a wisdom that surpasses the knowledge of the world's religions through a divine utterance ... nor in terms of man's definitive achievement of personal and social fulfillment through revelation and redemption ..., but solely in terms of the self-glorification of divine love." (p. 10).

Essential Definitions

1. What is God's "glory"? God's "glorification"?

"In the Old Testament, this glory (*kabod*) is the presence of Yahweh's radiant majesty; in the New Testament, this sublime glory presents itself as the love of God that descends 'to the end' of the might of death in Christ. This extremity...—which could never have been anticipated from what we know of the world or man—can be welcomed and perceived in its truth only as 'Wholly-Other.'" (p. 10-11).

2. "Theological Aesthetic"

a subjective theory of perception and a theory of objective self-interpretation of the divine glory [that is, the love of God that descends 'to the end' of the might of death in Christ'] (p. 11).

3. "aesthetic":

"this refers to something "properly theological, namely, ... the reception, perceived with the eyes of faith, of the self-interpreting glory of the sovereignly free love of God."

Method of the Work

It goes without saying that the following essay contains nothing fundamentally new, and that it seeks in particular to stay true to the thought of the great saints of the theological tradition: Augustine, Bernard, Anselm, John of the Cross, Francis de Sales, Thérèse of Lisieux. ... Lovers are the ones who know most about God; the theologian must listen to them.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2

[Chapter 2, "The Anthropological Reduction," is basically Balthasar's way of treating most of the items that we covered in Sections 7 and 8 of our course as reducing God to human proportions through the anthropological turn, and all that it includes. Pages 31-33 trace the origins and development of the anthropological reduction from the end of the Reformation up to Kant. He sees this reduction as culminating in Kant (pgs. 33-34), and he writes regarding Kant, "It is here that all of the pathways of the modern age intersect" (p. 34). The rest of the chapter trace out the different paths in response to Kant that constitute the modern period: the first path, the separation of faith and reason (p. 34-5); the second path, the atheism of Fichte and Feuerbach as "the only logical successor to Kant" (p. 35). The third path of Schleiermacher's development of "intuition and feeling," as a response to Kant, since all "reason" and "morals" have been

abandoned to Kantian philosophy (p. 36-39). The fourth path is that of Catholic “modernism,” which proposed that “every objective proposition must be measured in terms of its suitability to the religious subject, in terms of its positive effects on and capacity to complete and fulfill that subject” (p. 39-40). The fourth path is related to a fifth path in that the Magisterium’s criticism of “Modernism” is concerned with

CHAPTER 3. THE THIRD WAY OF LOVE (PP. 51-60)

1. “Is it possible to perceive Christianity in such a way that ... we could perceive the genuine evidence of the light that breaks forth from revelation without at the same time reducing that light to the measure and laws of human perception?” (p. 52).
2. Analogies/ signs within natural experience:
 - 2.1. *Personalism*: “No I possesses the possibility or the right to master intellectually the freedom of the Thou that comes out to meet him, to deduce and understand ahead of time the way the Thou will act. I can ‘understand’ a love that has been given to me only as a miracle; I cannot understand it through empirical or transcendental analysis, not even in terms of knowledge about the human ‘nature’ that includes us both—for the Thou will always remain an ‘other’ to me” (p. 52). [FN: “The moment I claim to have *understood* the love that another person has for me, i.e., either explaining it on the basis of the laws of human nature or considering myself entitled to it because of my inherent qualities, I have once and for all undermined and falsified that love and thereby cut off the possibility of reciprocation. Genuine love is always inconceivable, and only thus is it a gift” (52).
 - 2.2. *The aesthetics sphere—experiences of extraordinary beauty*: “In the experiences of extraordinary beauty—whether in nature or in art—we are able to grasp a phenomenon in its distinctiveness that otherwise remains veiled. What we encounter in such an experience is as overwhelming as a miracle, something we will never get over. And yet it possess its intelligibility precisely *as* a miracle; it is something that binds and frees at the same time, since it gives itself unambiguously as the ‘self –manifesting freedom’ ... of inner, undemonstrable necessity. ... Such a convergence of what I cannot have invented and yet at the same time what possesses compelling plausibility for me is something we find only in the realm of disinterested beauty” (52-3). “... [T]his sign is valid to the extent that, just as in mutual human love, where the other *as* other is encountered in a freedom that will never be brought under my control, so too in aesthetic perception it is impossible to reduce the appearing form to my own power of imagination. ... [O]nly in the acknowledgement of the pure grace of being loved can the lover also claim to be fulfilled by that love. To dispel the charm [*charis*] of beauty [*kalon*] by reducing its ‘appearance’ into some ‘truth’ lying behind or above it is to eliminate beauty altogether and to show that it was never really perceived in its distinctiveness” (pp. 53-4).
 - 2.3. *The two approaches converge*: “Already in the realm of nature, eros is the chosen place of beauty: whatever we love—no matter how profoundly or superficially we may love it—always appears radiant with glory; and whatever is objectively perceived as

glorious—no matter how profoundly or superficially we experience it—does not penetrate into the onlooker except through the specificity of an eros. □ This “sign” is transcended in Revelation.

3. REVELATION

- 3.1. “Both reciprocally related poles are transcended in the realm of revelation, wherein God’s kenotically condescending Logos expresses himself as Love, *Agapē*, and thus as Glory” (p. 54).
- 3.2. “The Logos reveals himself as ‘gracious love’ (χάρις), and thereby as ‘glory’ (the ‘divinely beautiful,’ δόξα), and precisely for this reason as the ‘truth’ (ἀληθεία; Jn 1:14). It therefore becomes possible to arrive at an intelligibility that illuminates the pure facticity of the historical as a necessity, and at the same time an intelligibility that cannot be reduced to that which the human being demands or (for whatever reason) anticipates)” (55).
- 3.3. But if the fundamental word is not only ‘love’ but ‘*divine* love,’ then the fundamental aesthetic word ‘glory’ must accompany it, since this word preserves the distance of the Wholly-Other within God’s self-manifestation as love, and absolutely prevents us from confusing this love with any other (even personal) love that claims to be absolute. The plausibility of God’s love does not become apparent through any comparative reduction to what man has always already understood as love; rather, it is illuminated only by the self-interpreting revelation-form of love itself. And this form is so majestic that we are led to adore it from a reverent distance whenever we perceive it, even if it does not explicitly command us to do so” (55-6).
4. The majesty of absolute love, which is the most fundamental phenomenon of revelation is the source of any authority human mediators may possess. ... The sole authority is the Son, who interprets the Father in the Holy Spirit as divine Love. For it is only here, at the source of revelation, that authority (or majesty) and love can—and necessarily do—coincide. ... Divine Love can appear in such an overwhelming way that its glorious majesty throws one on the ground; it shines out as the last word and leaves one no choice but to respond in the mode of pure, blind obedience. Nevertheless, both the word and the response acquire their meaning only through a gift from the eternal Person to the finite person, a gift that includes the ability to respond as a finite creature to the infinite, and whose heart and essence is love.” (56-7)
5. “The majesty of absolute Love that approaches man in revelation goes out to meet him, invites him, elevates him to an inconceivable intimacy. It allows the finite spirit to understand for the first time what it really means to say that God is the Wholly-Other, that he is ‘in reality and in essence, distinct from the world, supremely happy in himself and from himself, and inexpressibly loftier than anything besides himself which either exists or can be imagined.” (57-8).

Chapter 4. The Failures of Love

1. “When man encounters the love of God in Christ, not only does he experience what genuine love is, but he is also confronted with the undeniable fact that he, a selfish sinner, does not himself possess true love. He experiences two things at once: the finitude of the creature’s love and its sinful frigidity. To be sure, he does possess something of an ‘anticipation’ of what love is; if he did not, he would not be able to make any sense of the sign of Jesus Christ. ... All the same, man cannot come to a recognition of this sign on the basis of his ‘anticipation’ without a radical conversion—a conversion not only of the heart, which must in the face of this love confess that it has failed to love until now, but also a conversion of thought, which must relearn what love after all really is” (61).

2. Implications of finitude and of sin:

2.1. *Implication of finitude:* We see love in nature and in human existence (61-2). But even with this, we see other equally strong, or stronger, powers that set a limit to love’s movement: the fight for one’s place under the sun; the terrible stifling of the individual by surrounding relations, etc.; the struggle of natural selection, for which nature itself provides the strength and the arms; the laws of time’s decay; etc. (62-3) ... The sphere of ordinary existence, the place where people interact, contains at best a middle position in which love and self-interest, love and nonlover, temper one another (64). Finally, human love shares in the insoluble contradiction of an existence that is at once mortal and spiritual: personal love, which lovers swear to one another in exalted moments, means a definitiveness that outlasts death; but ‘eternal love’ ‘for a time’ is an unliveable contradiction. And yet, nothing in the economy of visible nature ensures a continuation of human existence (understood as a whole and not only in relation to the soul), while it is precisely this whole existence, and not a free-floating and inconceivable soul, which was intended by love. (65-6) ... Thus the heart remains a mystery to itself. The exalted moment of love is always full of promise: it is not closed in on itself, but open; we see its natural fruitfulness revealed in the child, even if its spiritual fruitfulness remains hidden. Human love, in its purely creaturely dimension, is a hieroglyph; in grammatical terms, it is always an inchoative, which never allows itself properly to be translated into the indicative mood” (66).



2.2. *Implication of sin:* Even though human beings, at a deeper level, are aware of our heart’s paralysis, fallenness, and frigidity (67), it is only when we look the Crucified One in the eye that we recognize



the abyss of selfishness—even of that which we are accustomed to call love. When the question is most seriously put to us, we say No where Christ, out of love, said Yes, and in our nonlover, we say Yes without a second thought to Jesus' bearing of our sins: How can we have a problem with it, if it is something he wants to do? But this is precisely why God does not ask the sinner to agree to the Cross; he seeks consent to the most terrible death of the beloved only from those that love (Jn 12:7; cf. Lk. 1:38; Jn. 20:17). The event of the Passion exposes the truth of humanity As the mask is mercilessly torn away, 'every mouth falls silent,' and 'every man' who speaks of love provides himself 'a liar': 'None is righteous, no, not one; ... all have turned aside, no one seeks for God, ... the way of peace they do not know, there is no fear of God before their eyes (Rom 3:4-19, *passim*).

3. We can thus already see that Christianity, as a genuine revealed religion, cannot be a communication of knowledge, a 'teaching,' in the first place, but only secondarily. It must be in the first place an action that God undertakes, the playing out of the drama that God began with mankind in the Old Covenant. The content of this action cannot in any essential way be derived from or anticipated [beforehand] on the basis of created nature, because it arises from the Other *as* Other in unfathomable freedom toward his other; no preliminary bride of understanding can be built on similarity or, for that matter, on identity. The key to understanding the action lies solely in God's presentation of himself to human being on the stage of human nature, by virtue of the identity of the divine 'Author,' the divine and human 'Actor,' and the divine Spirit, who exists identically in both and who interprets the action for those whom the Actor has brought into the drama" (70).
4. "Just because God's Covenant is his battle of love *with* sinful man does not mean that this battle of love can be understood and assessed *by* man. Indeed, the fact that God's love transforms him, converting him or hardening his heart, expresses not the essence of that love, but its effect. It would be a peculiar lover who sought to measure the love of his bride by how much her love benefited or injured him. God's action on man's behalf is, instead, 'intelligible,' only insofar as it is *not* understood and justified in terms of incomplete anthropological and cosmological fragments; in the light of such standards, it cannot but appear as 'foolishness' and 'madness'" (70-1).
5. "... unless he blindly takes offense at the offense, he can interpret this 'trap' (*scandalum*) that God has set for him only as God's love, a love that runs after him, pulls him out of the pit, casts aside his chains and places him in the freedom of divine and now even human love. Because of his dim 'pre-understanding' of love, he can prick up his ears at the sound of the message of absolute love and perceive the image to which this message points. Stumbling into the trap, however, first makes it clear to him that neither the existence nor the essence of the love offering itself to him belongs to him by nature. The scandal is here to draw his eye to the uniqueness of the love that manifests itself and, in its light, to reveal his own inchoate, creaturely love quite concretely for the nonlover that it is" (72-3).

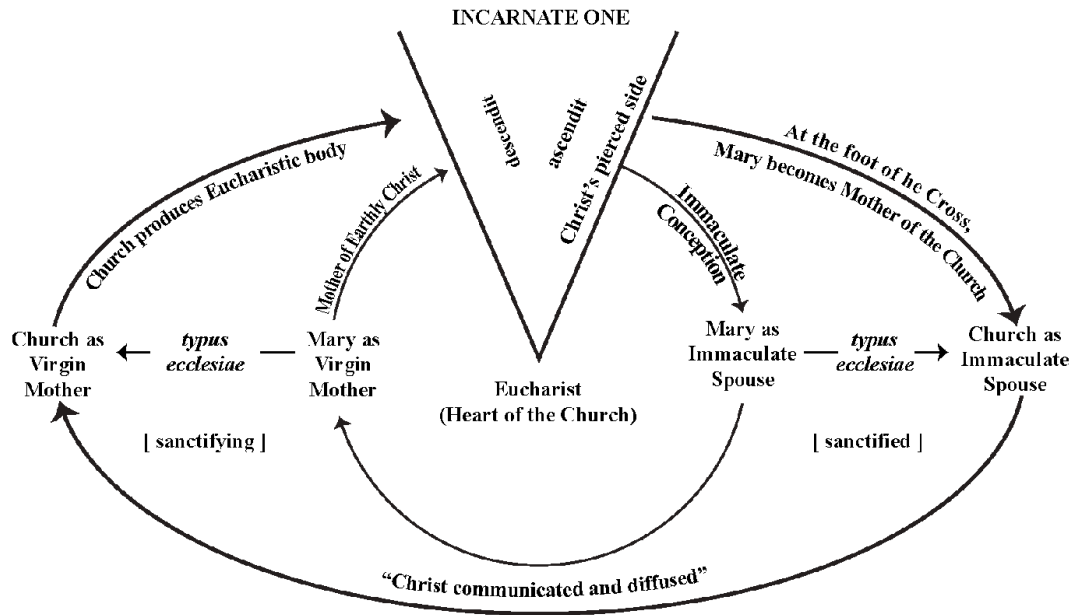
Chapter 5. Love Must Be Perceived.

1. “If God wishes to reveal the love that he harbors for the world, this love has to be something that the world can recognize, in spite of, or in fact *in*, its being wholly other. The inner reality of love can be recognized only by love. In order for a selfish beloved to understand the selfless love of the lover (not only as something he can use, which happens to serve better than other things, but rather as what it truly is), he must already have some glimmer of love, some initial sense of what it is. ... This preparation of the subject, which raises him up to the revealed object and tunes him to it, is for the individual person the disposition we could call the threefold unity of faith, hope, and love, a disposition that must already be present at least in an inchoative way in the very first genuine encounter. **And it can be thus present because the love of God, which is of course grace, necessarily includes in itself its own conditions of recognizability and therefore brings this possibility with it and communicates it” (75).**

- 1.1. CONDITIONS OF RECOGNIZABILITY #1: “After a mother has smiled at her child for many days and weeks, she finally receives her child’s smile in response. She has awakened love in the heart of her child, and as the child awakens to love, it also awakens to knowledge: the initially empty-sense impressions gather meaningfully around the core of the Thou. Knowledge (with its whole complex of intuition and concept) comes into play, because the play of love has already begun beforehand, initiated by the mother, the transcendent. God interprets himself to man as love in the same way: he radiates love, which kindles the light of love in the heart of man, and it is precisely this light that allows man to perceive this, the absolute Love: ‘For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ’ (2 Cor 4:6). In this face, the primal foundation of being smiles at us as a mother and as a father. Insofar as we are his creatures, the seed of love lies dormant within us as the image of God (*imago*). But just as no child can be awakened to love without being loved, so too no human heart can come to an understanding of God without the free gift of his grace—in the image of his Son” (76).

1.2. CONDITIONS OF RECOGNIZABILITY #2:

1.2.1. Mary as the first fruit of God's self-outpouring into the night of vanity.



1.3. THUS, THE CONDITIONS ARE PROVIDED FROM WITHIN THE GIFT ITSELF:

1.3.1. The Church as the spotless Bride in her core

1.3.2. Mary, the Mother-Bride, as the locus, at the heart of the Church, where the fiat of the response and the reception is real

1.3.3. The Bible, which as spirit (-witness) can be nothing other than the Word of God bound together in an indissoluble unity with the response of faith

1.3.4. The Bride and Mother, who is the archetype of faith, must proclaim this Word, in a living way, to the individual as the living Word of God; and the function of preaching (as a 'holy and serving office'), like the Church herself and even Scripture, must be implanted by the revelation of God himself, as an answer to that revelation, as it is illuminated by the relationship between the Church and the Bible.