

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

CHAPTER 6. LOVE AS REVELATION

- Love Alone is Credible in its positive aspect (i.e., how all of Christianity is unified around Love as its central *logos*)
- How the self-surrendering love is the focal point and unity of Jesus' teaching and life (84-86)
- Jesus' obedience to the Father, as self-surrendering love, reveals the Father's love for us *and* reveals God's majesty precisely *in* that self-gift (86-87)

MORE DETAILED OUTLINE

“it is only because the Word has already been expressed and understood as love that the response of love can occur, and in this respect the response can be nothing more than opening up a ‘free pathway’ for the Word...” (83).

(1) Love Alone is Credible (in its positive significance): LOVE

Although Jesus' life initially is presented as a life of teaching (i.e., parables, sermons, spiritual deeds) followed by a life of suffering and death, Jesus' life is only intelligible because his whole life points to the Cross. Both of these aspects of his life must be interpreted “in its relationship to ‘the hour’ that he awaits, to the ‘baptism’ he desires, to the event that opens up his prophetic mission, which is to bring the hold Jewish Covenant to completion in the new sacrificial Covenant, the new blood of the Covenant, the new Covenantal meal” (84). The teaching points to a self-surrender for ‘one’s friends’ (Jn 15:13), for ‘the many’ (Mt 20:28; Mk 10:45), for ‘all’ (Jn 12:32; 17:21); indeed, it points to the decisive form this self-surrender takes in Jesus. This self-surrender on the Cross is the final act of a life that spent itself in ever greater self-effacing service to all men (Lk 22:27; Jn 13:3-17) (85). Jesus proclaims himself with his teaching, he is essentially ‘handed over’ in it; without conditions and without reservations, he aims at a point that lies ‘nowhere’ in the world, into which he casts the whole of his existence, body and soul. And by casting himself, in gratuitous freedom (Jn 10:18) into this unimaginable abyss (death as abandonment by God, Mt 27:46, or as followed by the underworld, Rev 6:8, 1:18, bereft of all hope), he makes himself into an indispensable sacrificial food for all (Jn 6:51: ‘My flesh for the life of the world’; Heb 13:10-12), not in the freedom of creative genius but in straightforward obedience (Jn 10:18).

Obediently identifying himself with his mission, he himself is his mission in person, and therefore, in his kenosis as the ‘servant of God,’ he becomes the manifestation of God’s eternal love for the world. But, for the same reason, he becomes the manifestation of his eternal majesty and kingship, which reveals itself most definitively in the servant’s ultimate humiliation (‘Yes, I am a king’ Jn 18:37). But if the kingship of the God who reveals himself as love comes to light

precisely in the Son's humble obedience to the Father, then it is clear that this obedience to the Father, then it is clear that this obedience is essentially love. It is certainly paradigmatic attitude of love the creature must have before God's majesty, but far more than that, it is the radiant paradigm of divine love itself: precisely in—and *only* in—the kenosis of Christ, the *inner* mystery of God's love comes to light, the mystery of the God who 'is love' (1 Jn 4:8) in himself and therefore is 'triune.'¹ (86-87).

(2) Love Alone is Credible (in its negative significance): HELL OF FORSAKENESS

"The ultimate abysses of man's freedom to oppose God open up at the place where God, in the freedom of his love, makes the decision to descend kenotically all the way into the forsakenness of the world. With his descent, he reveals this forsakenness: to himself, insofar as he wants to experience abandonment by God, and to the world, which only now measures the entire breadth of its own freedom to oppose God against the dimensions of God's love. From this point on, it becomes possible to sound out 'the depths of Satan' (Rev 2:24). From this point on, true, deliberate atheism becomes possible for the very first time, since, prior to this, without a genuine concept of God, there could be no true atheism. (91-2).

"But in truth, the opening of the flaming abyss of God's wrath depends on the opening of the fiery abyss of divine love, which poured itself out in the Heart that hung broken on the Cross and in the descent into the shadows on Holy Saturday. The supreme threat—coming from God the Father, who as it were gives sinners his supreme love, God the Son—swathes the broken heart like a sheltering cloak; it is a threat not to abuse this supreme gift, because, behind it, there is no greater love to call upon and to turn to (Heb 6:4-8; 10:26-31). And once again, the Spirit cannot teach the Cross to the world in any other way than by disclosing the full depths of the guilt that the world bears, a guilt that come sot light on the Cross and is the only thing that makes the Cross intelligible. Indeed, it is in the God-forsakenness of the Crucified One that we come to see what we have been redeemed and saved from: the definitive loss of God, a loss we could never have been spared ourselves through any of our efforts outside of grace. (93)

But the insight we gain through the Cross never bring us beyond the Cross: the moment we see our sins objectified before us on the Cross, it becomes all the more impossible to leave the One who died for us to his fate; so loveless a thought reveals our whole evil heart to us, love awakens fear in us, and the terrifying reality of being left behind by God (which is timeless as far as the one abandoned is concerned) shows us vividly that hell is no pedagogical threat, it is no mere 'possibility.' Instead, it is the reality that the God-forsaken one experienced in an eminent way because no one can even approximately experience the abandonment by God as horribly as the Son, who shares the same essence with the Father for all eternity (93-4)

"As Christians, we know that the sins committed in the face of acknowledged love weigh imponderably more heavily than those committed in ignorance; this is why every standard of measurement for our attempts at loving God has been taken away, every systematic oversight over the outcome of our judgment, as well as the judgement of our neighbor and of the world. In

¹ 'For he decided, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, to show the world the glory of his omnipotence *in no other way than through his death*,' Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo*, 1:9 (Schmitt, II 62, 23-25).

the place of any such system ... the Christian is entrusted with something far more valuable: Christian hope.” (94-5).

We are therefore not required to bring a systematically conceived hell into harmony with the love of God and make it credible, or indeed to justify it conceptually as love. ... We are required only not to let go of love, the love that believes and hopes and through both is suspended in the air so that its Christian wings may grow. Soaring in the air, I also necessarily experience the abyss below, which is only part of my own flight. Similarly, I can speak of hell only in relation to myself, precisely because I can never imagine the possible damnation of another as more likely than my own.

CHAPTER 7. LOVE AS JUSTIFICATION AND FAITH

- The meaning of justification for us (99-101)
- The meaning of faith and the basis of faith (101-103)
- The meaning of sanctification (103-104)
- The meaning and place/context of dogmas (105-106)

MORE DETAILED OUTLINE:

The sign of Christ is legible only if we read his human love and self-gift unto death as the manifestation of absolute love. (99).

“Christ’s act of creating space in himself for God is not self-mastery, but is itself already obedience, an obedience willing to take on whatever task the ‘ever greater Father’ gives. The task, however, consists in letting the sins of the world into the same space he had allowed the Father to fill, and to do so out of the love that God also fills, as the ‘Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world’ (Jn 1:29), and therefore takes away mine.” (99-100).

“For it is precisely here, in this deed, that genuine divine love begins and ends, a love that overwhelms us and exceeds all capacity to think it—and thereby becomes completely evident *as* love. Ultimately, there can be absolute faith *only* in this deed, because only such a deed, *if* it should happen, is absolute love, love as *the* absolute, as the ungraspable epitome of the wholly-other God: ‘We believe the love God has for us’ (1 Jn 4:16).

If this is true, then ‘the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved *me* and gave himself to *me*’ (Gal 2:20). Faith, in this case, means the fundamental response to the love that has offered itself up for me. A response that always comes too late because the deed God carried out in Christ, the bearing away of my sins, has already taken place, before any response was possible, before a response could even be considered. Occurring thus in pure gratuity, the deed demonstrates pure and absolute love: ‘God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. ... While we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son’ (Rom 5:8, 10).” (100-101).

“Love alone is credible; nothing else ought to be believed. This is the achievement, the ‘work’ of faith: to recognize this absolute *prius*, which nothing else can surpass; to believe that there is such a thing as love, absolute love, and that there is nothing higher or greater than it; to believe against the evidence of experience ..., against every ‘rational’ conception of God, which thinks of him in terms of pure impassibility, or, at best, totally pure goodness, but not in terms of this inconceivable and senseless act of love” (101-102).

“Once a person learns to read the signs of love and thus to believe it, love leads him into the open field wherein he himself can love. If the prodigal son had not believed that the father’s love was already there waiting for him, he would not have been able to make the journey home—even if his father’s love welcomes him in a way he never would have dreamed of. The decisive thing is that the sinner has heard of a love that could be, and really is, there for him; he is not the one who has to bring himself into line with God; God has always seen in him, the loveless sinner, a beloved child and has looked upon him and conferred the dignity upon him in the light of this love” (103).

[sanctification, 103-104; place/context of dogma, 105-106]

CHAPTER 8. LOVE AS DEED

“Love desires no recompense other than to be loved in return; and thus God desires nothing in return for his love for us other than our love. ‘Let us not love in word or speech, but in deed and in truth’ (1 Jn 3:18). (107) ... Indeed, we must love absolute love and direct our love to the Lover, setting aside all other relative and competing objects of love. To the extent that we do not remain absolutely faithful to the absolute love, these objects turn into idols (107).”

- The response of love is the only recompense that God desires for his love for us (107)
 - Meaning of Worship and Thanksgiving (108)
 - Prayer & Eucharist (109-110)
 - Christian action as a being taken up into God’s action through grace, being taken up into God’s love so that one can love with him (110-118)
 - Our relationship to the Church as the condition for Christian action (118-119), by handing ourselves over to the fruitful love of the Redeemer, and thus as intercessors and chosen helpers in God’s plan of salvation for the world (119-120)
- **THE SOLE CREDIBILITY OF THE CHURCH CHRIST FOUNDED LIES IN THE SAINTS, THAT IS, IN THOSE WHO SOUGHT TO SET ALL THINGS ON THE LOVE OF CHRIST ALONE (121-123).**

CHAPTER 9. LOVE AS FORM

- What makes a Christian *Christian*? What's the Christian 'distinction'? – Love (125).
- But if love appears formless, then how do we live as Christians? What does that mean?
--- It is to precisely endure this formlessness as a total self-gift (125-126)
- God's has a threefold determination and form: the Father's "will" (etc), in which the Son's mission takes form, then informs the Church's mission, which, in turn, informs the Christian's mission (125-127).
- The form of the Son (127) passed on to the form of the Church and the form of the Christian in baptism (127-128)
- Love as form-giving (128-130)
- Thus, the form of love as total self-surrender to the will of the Father, sharing in the mission of Christ, and enlivening the mission of the Church, is not integralism (130), not the absolutization of social justice (130-131), nor is it merely living the natural virtues very effectively (131-134). Christianity is its own form which perfects *and* surpasses all other forms, with an ever-greater-difference (133-134).

- **THE CENTRALITY OF LOVE: WE DO NOT POSSESS IT, BUT IT POSSESS US (134-135)**
- **EVANGELIZATION: SENT OUT INTO THE WORLD AND PUT ON THE PATH WITH AUTHORITY AND THE POWERS TO CONVINCE, BUT THESE POWERS REFER ONLY TO THE LORD WHO IS PROCLAIMED (135).**

Comment: The Word made flesh is the supreme instance of preaching. It is the kenosis, the self-emptying, of the Incarnation that reveals God's true greatness. The subsequent economy of preaching is only a continuation of the original Incarnational economy. It is itself an embodiment of God's mercy and love. That the proclamation of the love of God in Christ is entrusted to human beings is simply a continuation of the love and mercy revealed in the Incarnation, a continuation of the kenosis of the Incarnation.

- The *form of Christian life* is indivisible, since it is the form of love given to us in the Cross. As such, it must be the basis of the different states (married and celibate) (136), the counsels (136-137); we are called, all of us, to be the Christian grain of wheat, which possesses a genuine formative fruitfulness (137-8); the Christian grain of wheat, in imitation of the Founder's archetype squanders itself and offers itself up as a particular form—without being afraid of the dread of being abandoned and of letting go of oneself (138).

CHAPTER 10. LOVE AS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

- Christian love is not what the world says about itself, but what God says about himself and the world (139).
- Hope in Jesus Christ cannot become a construction on the basis of the world (139-141) nor is it reducible to science, knowledge, or a political project.
- To have faith does not exclude knowledge, but rather means that you look at the world through the love that God has manifested (141-142)
- Only through love do we see the true meaning of creation (143-144)
- Only through love do we see the true meaning of human beings, of yourself (145-146).