

## **Summary of PhD dissertation submitted to MF School of Theology:**

*Spirit and Truth: A Systematic Reconstruction of Hans Urs von Balthasar's Doctrine of the Spirit of Truth and Its Connections to the Philosophy and Theology of Truth by the Theoretical Framework of Lorenz B. Puntel.* By Gunnar Innerdal.

The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the articulation of a coherent systematic theological interpretation of the ontological and epistemological aspects of the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth. This is accomplished by an analysis of Hans Urs von Balthasar's work centering on *Theo-Logic*, which is discussed through the theoretical framework of Lorenz Bruno Puntel's structural systematic philosophy. Coherence within this framework means relatively maximal intelligibility, consistency (lack of internal contradiction) and interconnectedness between the data that a theory purports to explain.

The dissertation consists of three main "Parts" (summary of each Part in § 8, § 11 and § 18), a "Conclusion" and an "Epilogue" in the form of a prayer. Part I discusses truth in philosophy, Part II unfolds questions important to truth from an explicitly systematic theological perspective, and Part III discusses the issues that pertain most directly to pneumatology. The first part starts by affirming, on the basis of Balthasar's and Puntel's position, that the interrelation of philosophy and theology is an argument for the inclusion of philosophical considerations in the dissertation.

Balthasar's philosophical take on truth is basically phenomenological (§ 6). He underscores the dramatic reciprocal interplay between subject and object in true knowledge, anchored in "the mother's smile": the fact that all human beings come to consciousness through the loving encounter with the other. In such dramatic happenings of truth, truth is really grasped, but always partially because of the limitations of human perspectives. Philosophical thinking consists in integrating as many perspectives as possible into a comprehensive vision. Balthasar also emphasizes the connections between knowledge and love, viz. the call for true life inherent in knowing the truth. Although there are tensions and differences between Puntel's and Balthasar's philosophy of truth, they also have many shared concerns, and their positions can be seen as mutually complementary (§ 7). Puntel contributes by theoretical rigor; Balthasar by phenomenological and life-worldly enfleshment.

The systematic theological discussion of truth is organized around the two central doctrines of Christian faith, namely the incarnation (§ 9) and the Trinity (§ 10). The incarnation, it is argued, provides the possibility for speaking of a universal philosophical-theological concept of truth, where Christ in his person, including both his words and works, is the absolute point of reference for all claims of truth. The incarnation presupposes and grounds the *analogia entis* (analogy of being), understood as the *Ansprechbarkeit* of created being for God. Analogy is determined as katalogical, that is, not as a philosophical procedure from below (*ana*: upwards) that can prescribe theological content, but an event "from above" (*kata*: downwards) that unveils the watermark already present in created being, although not always seen because of human sin and contingency. The doctrine of the Trinity helps determine the inmost truth and highest act of being as love, as well as grounds a positive evaluation of difference and plurality in the concept of truth; ideas which can be used for further

determination and grounding of Puntel's notion of the plurality of theoretical frameworks and moderate relativism.

The relationship between the Spirit and the Son is the theme of § 14. By a fresh use of Irenaeus' metaphor of them as the "two hands of the Father", Balthasar emphasizes the close connection between them in the immanent as well as the economic Trinity. The mission of the Son as "the truth" expressed in the world is dependent on the Holy Spirit who conceived him in Mary. In this event, the Son is actively consenting, while the Spirit is working actively. It is further argued that Balthasar's idea of an "inversion" in the order of the immanent Trinity in the economy has potential as a new way to work out some traditional tensions. However, it must not be absolutized as to mean straightforward change in God from immanence to economy, and it must be remembered that all accounts of the processions and order within the Trinity are metaphorical talk that always has limits. Balthasar's account of the Spirit's experience of humanity and hell through the life and death of Jesus gives fresh insight into biblical texts and provides hope for human loneliness.

The work of the Spirit of truth in the Church is discussed in § 15. Balthasar, by reinterpreting a distinction of Hegel's, sees the work of the Spirit under two aspects: objective (through institutional elements) and subjective (through personal spirituality). While the application of these categories has some peculiarities, they generally give rise to a balanced account of the Spirit-institution issue. Without entering issues of intra-Catholic ecclesiological debate at any length, a section offers a short argument versus the Roman-Catholic doctrine of the office of the pope based on the findings and the framework of this dissertation.

In §16, the focus is on the work of the Spirit of truth in the world. Balthasar's theology on this point is sometimes daring, at other times restrictive. He creatively speaks of *pneuma spermatikon* analogously to *logos spermatikos* in order to describe the universal work of the Spirit of truth. But at the same time, he argues that the theology of creation ought to be placed under the heading of the one God, and that the pneumatology of creation ought to be placed only at the margins compared to the Spirit's work in Christ and Church. A possible reason for this weakness in Balthasar's position may be an over-emphasis on the Johannine entryway in his pneumatology, which is discussed in § 12 and analyzed in performance in § 13. I use impulses from other contemporary pneumatologies to argue for a more explicit and outworked theology of the work of the Spirit of truth in the world. The Spirit is indispensable for the existence of truth, and exercises a hermeneutical-epistemological function regarding all truth. Furthermore, the work of the Spirit in creation does not have to be seen in tension to his redemptive work. A better model is to conceive of his redemptive work as an intensification and a fulfillment of his work in creation.

The conclusion affirms that the work of the Spirit of truth has ontological as well as epistemological aspects concerning both creation and redemption. The Spirit is a condition of any existence, and thus any truth, and plays an indispensable part in the conception of Jesus as the truth in person. Furthermore, he is the Spirit of all recognition of truth, ranging from personal encounters to scientific work, and ultimately in his guidance to Christ and giving of all that belongs to him through the proclamation and sacramental life of the Church.