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## Hans Urs von Balthasar: on the Cross as a Trinitarian Event

This article presents and analyzes the major topic of systematic theology – the Cross as a Trinitarian event. Author approaches this topic from the perspective of one of the greatest 20<sup>th</sup> century theologians, swiss Hans Urs von Balthasar. For him, it is the Cross of Jesus Christ as his self-offering/kenosis to the Father in free and loving relationship, which is possible through the space that the Holy Spirit gives for this relationship, which makes the Trinitarian life of God the most explicit and visible to the world. Anne Hunt and some other great contemporary theologians provide a handy overview of Balthasar's theology, which at times (in this case of his treatment of Jesus' descent into hell) comes very close in crossing over the safe borders of Church's Magisterium. Moreover, Balthasar develops his theology in the context of liturgical prayer, the *Sacrum Triduum*, which once again allows his readers to appreciate and to understand the true reality they encounter and celebrate during the liturgical prayer.

Šiame straipsnyje pristatomas ir analizuojamas vienas iš pagrindinių sistematinės teologijos objektų – kryžius kaip Trejybės Dievo įvykis. Autorius į šią temą pažvelgia iš vieno garsiausių 20 amžiaus teologų šveicaro Hans Urs von Balthasar perspektyvos. Jo teologijoje, Jėzaus Kristaus kryžius kaip savęs laisvas ir mylintis paaukojimas / kenosis dangiškajam Tėvui, o tai tampa įmanoma Šventajai Dvasiai suteikiant šiam santykiui erdvę, ir yra tas momentas, kuris geriausiai leidžia pasauliui išvysti Trejybės Dievo gyvenimą. Anne Hunt ir kiti žymūs šiuolaikiniai teologai pristato Baltazar teologijos apžvalgą, kuria jis kartais, žvelgiant iš Bažnyčios magisteriumo pozicijų, mąsto plačiau, bet neatmesdamas magisteriumo nuostatų, kaip pavyzdys gali būti pateiktas jo požiūris į Jėzaus nužengimą į pragarus. Svarbu ir tai, kad Balthasar savo teologiją vysto liturginės maldos, šiuo atveju – *Sacrum Triduum* – kontekste, o tai dar kartą padeda geriau įvertinti ir suprasti tą tikrovę, kuri sutinkama ir švenčiama liturginėje maldoje.

### Introduction

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In discussing about the Trinity one undertakes not an easy task. However, for the Christians, especially Roman Catholics, it is a primary doctrine of their faith. As one knows from the history of the Church, it took almost four hundred years after Jesus'

earthly life to solemnly formulate and proclaim this thesis as a fundamental doctrine of faith in the Councils of Nicea (325) and Constantinople (381). At the same time every generation after or before Nicea had to explain this doctrine in their own terms, what do they mean by professing: “I believe in one God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>1</sup> In the twentieth century, one of those who tried to talk about and to explain to others this great mystery was the Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988). This theologian has not been greatly read or studied in Lithuania, mostly because there aren't that many of his works translated in Lithuania.<sup>2</sup> However, he often appears and is quoted as supplementary source in different articles and studies. Gerald O'Collins in his book called “The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity,” summarizes Balthasar's insights and contribution to the contemporary theology on the Trinity:

...reflecting on the history of Good Friday and Holy Saturday, von Balthasar interpreted this history as an inner-Trinitarian drama, but unlike Luther he rooted his interpretation in the Trinity's “prior,” eternal life: even before the incarnation, the eternal generation of the Son already expresses the “kenosis” of the Father's heart.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, the purpose of this article is to look more closely at how Hans Urs von Balthasar sees this Trinitarian drama played out in the event of the Paschal Mystery and on the Cross. Two major texts will be analyzed: Balthasar's “Mysterium Paschale,” and a wonderful summary on this topic by Anne Hunt, along with other great contemporary scholars who share their insights into Balthasar's theological thought.

The aim of this article is to reveal the Cross as an event of the Triune God in the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar.

The object of this research is the Cross as an event of the Triune God.

To achieve the aim of the article, following objectives will be met:

1. To describe the Kenosis of Christ as revealing the inner life of Love in God.
2. To name four key elements of interconnection between the Cross and the Trinity.
3. To demonstrate how the event of the Cross takes on the universal saving dimension in Jesus' descent into hell.

The methods to achieve the above objective will be the following: systematic analysis and synthesis.

<sup>1</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Our Sunday Visitor, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> Joseph Ratzinger, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Karl Rathner, *Kodėl šiandien esu krikščionis?* (Aidai, 2008); Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Credo: Apaštaly tikėjimo išpažinimo meditacijos*, trans. Giedrė Sodeikienė (Aidai, 2013); Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Pasaulio širdis*, trans. Giedrė Sodeikienė (Vilnius: Katalikų pasaulio leidiniai, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Gerald O'Collins, *The Tripersonal God: Understanding and Interpreting the Trinity* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1999), 157.

## 1. The Kenosis of Christ Reveals Inner Life of Love in God

It is not difficult to notice, that at the center of his theology Balthasar places Christian Revelation. In other words, he wants to draw and base his theology not on philosophical reasoning or scholastic speculations, but on the factual revelation of God given in and through the person of Jesus Christ, as he himself names it – *the form of Jesus – Gestalt of Jesus*.<sup>4</sup> For Balthasar, the mystery of salvation has *an incarnationally concrete character* and must be approached “without losing to view the Trinitarian background and so the functional aspect of the work of Jesus, which means no less than the relations within the Trinity that define his Person.”<sup>5</sup>

He takes the *Sacrum Triduum* as the central location of his Trinitarian theology, “for it is precisely in the Kenosis of Christ (and nowhere else) that the inner majesty of God’s love appears, of God ‘who is love’ (1 John 4:8) and therefore a trinity.”<sup>6</sup> From now on Balthasar is going to talk about the Holy Trinity as love, which is God’s own being revealed to us through and in the life of Christ. *Love alone is credible* – becomes the leitmotif of his theology. This is not a really new way of speaking of God in Christian tradition (St. Augustine, Richard of St. Victor, St. Bonaventure). However, it is somewhat new in terms of placing this understanding in the liturgical context of the celebrating the Paschal Mystery.

Actually, this last aspect of his theology is one of the most important. For Balthasar the inner processions of the Trinity represents the eternal movement where: “the Father, in generating the Son, does not cling to his divinity but ‘in eternal super-Kenosis’ makes himself ‘destitute’ of all that he is and can be so as to bring forth a consubstantial divinity of the Son.”<sup>7</sup> This reminds St. Athanasius’ famous dictum – *Always Father, always Son*. In the end, precisely because of this Kenosis/separation between Father and Son, God and God, the space for all creation and especially for human freedom is made possible. Balthasar suggests that this inner-Trinitarian drama contains every possible drama between God and the world: “The relations of the three divine persons to each other are so spacious that the whole world has room in them.”<sup>8</sup> As Balthasar himself writes:

We are saying that the ‘emptying’ of the Father’s heart in the begetting of the Son includes and surpasses every possible drama between God and the world, because a world can only have its place within the difference between the Father and the Son which is held open and bridged over by the Spirit.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Anne Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery: A Development in Recent Catholic Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1997), 57.

<sup>5</sup> Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, trans., with Introduction, Aidan Nichols (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

<sup>8</sup> John O’Donnell, “Hans Urs von Balthasar: The Form of His Theology,” *Communio* 16 (1989), 467.

<sup>9</sup> Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, 60.

Therefore, according to this Trinitarian confession the whole salvation event occurs within the eternal divine intersubjectivity. At the same time, it is important not to forget that this kind of divine activity is possible only because God is love: “Divine inner-Trinitarian love, which unites the infinite distances between the divine persons, already contains within it all inner-worldly events, distance, sin, and pain.”<sup>10</sup> Balthasar shares his intuition that, all forms of *kenosis ad extra* are contained within the primal/eternal, *kenosis ad intra*. However, one must not think that this kind of *kenosis ad extra* is necessary for God to be God. Balthasar explicitly rejects any notion of process in God: “God does not need the world and its processes in order to become Godself.”<sup>11</sup> God freely chooses to reveal to us his living mode of being and of acting in order to make us the conscious participants of his glory.

## 2. The Cross and the Trinity: Four Key Elements of Interconnection

Speaking about the interconnection between the Cross and the Trinity in Balthasar’s theological interpretation, Anne Hunt identifies four key elements: 1) Jesus’ death is the turning point where divine love and justice coincide; 2) the Cross is an event of Trinitarian surrender; 3) Jesus’ obedience is a key to his hypostatic identity; and 4) Jesus’ mission is identical to his person.

The first key element deals with God’s attitude towards sin, which in a classic understanding is an *offence against God*. For Balthasar, God who is love must hate sin, but he does it in a manner of handing over his Son to bear our sins and that way in the agony of the cross the Son becomes a “vicarious, expiatory substitution for sinners without, however, any cooperation in sin.”<sup>12</sup> Death on the cross by the innocent loving person, becomes a turning point where God’s justice and love coincide: “the death of Jesus was no accident but was the inevitable outcome of the clash between God’s love and sinful humanity’s refusal to accept that love.”<sup>13</sup> You cannot go any further with sin or with love. We know that God’s love wins a battle, but at the expense of a total self-surrender of the Son. And this brings us to a second point.

Second key element in Balthasar’s interpretation of the Cross is that of *surrender* or *delivering up*. According to him, the whole Paschal Mystery is an event of Triune surrender, of mutual self giving and self-yielding love. Moreover, Jesus’ experience of abandonment on the cross is the highest worldly revelation of that *event* of difference between the Father and the Son in the Spirit and in their eternal inner-Trinitarian life. In other words: “the abandonment on the cross is thus understood as the economic

<sup>10</sup> Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, 61.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid*, 63.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, 64.

<sup>13</sup> O’Donnell, “Hans Urs von Balthasar...” , 463.

form, a modality, of the difference-in-unity constitutive of the triune God.”<sup>14</sup> This process of self-surrender is also seen as the act where Jesus „takes on the restlessness and rootlessness that characterize the sinner.”<sup>15</sup> Such self-surrender of the Son and thus, constitutive movement toward the interpersonal identity in the inner-trinitarian life is only possible because of the obedience of Jesus: who „humbled himself, becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross” (Phil. 2:8).

Here we come to the third key element. For Balthasar, this kind of obedience of Jesus is not, some additional feature of the hypostatic identity of the Son but is precisely the expression in creation of Jesus’ identity as the Incarnate Son and his relationship to the Father. Such obedience constitutes who Jesus is as divine person in relation to the life of the whole Trinity. However, this obedience in no way can be seen as some kind of subordination of the Son to the Father. Balthasar cites the gospel of John where Jesus tells his disciples:

For this reason the Father loves me because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father“ (John 10:17–18).

Here Jesus’ death is seen as the supreme act of his freedom. It is also an act of true love: “greater love has no man than this that he lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Christ’s obedience expresses his love for the Father and the unity of love between them, “that he who sends and he who obeys act by virtue of the same divine liberty of love.”<sup>16</sup> This loving act is eternal and has only been translated in the economy of salvation.

The identity of Jesus’ mission and his person is the fourth key element Hunt describes when she studies Balthasar’s interpretation of the Cross as a trinitarian event. And from what one could gather from other sources,<sup>17</sup> it is one of the most important, if not the most important insights in Balthasar’s theological reflection. The mission of Jesus is not given to him accidentally but as a modality of his eternal personal being. Hunt points out that here Balthasar assumes Thomas Aquinas’ understanding of „the missions as the processions with a temporal effects but presses to an understanding that in Christ mission and person are identical.”<sup>18</sup>

Humans, too, get his or her own mission to be fulfilled and that eventually makes them the distinct persons in the midst of other human beings. However, in the Trinity there is no “becoming” a person, in a chronological sense, because the appropriate

<sup>14</sup> Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, 65.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 65.

<sup>16</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 208–209.

<sup>17</sup> Edvard T. Oakes, *Pattern of Redemption: The Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar* (New York, NY: Continuum, 1997).

<sup>18</sup> Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, 67.

mission of each divine person is eternal and constitutive of the person's identity. Therefore, to know Jesus' mission in this "ontological trinitarian sense is to know who he is, whence he comes, his role, his person, and through him the other two persons, their relations and roles."<sup>19</sup> Finally, one could say, as Balthasar "presses from mission to procession to the person, mission emerges as a vital trinitarian category in his theology,"<sup>20</sup> which will be picked up and greatly used by his contemporaries and theologians of our time.

### 3. The Cross and the Descent of Jesus Into Hell

The next major step in Balthasar's theology of the Cross is the descent of Jesus into hell. It is the experience of the Holy Saturday, where, Jesus' *kenosis* reaches its utmost limits and his mission reaches its fullness. In his treatment of this idea Balthasar is "arguably at his most imaginative and perhaps also at his most controversial."<sup>21</sup> Again, in unfolding this great theme it would be good to follow the road paved by Anne Hunt where she briefly summarizes this interpretation of the descent under another five points.

The first point for her unfolds as follows: "far from being active, the descent is instead an utterly passive sinking down and first of all it reveals Jesus solidarity in human death."<sup>22</sup> In some sense this passivity on the Holy Saturday is a way to balance the active self-surrender of God during the Good Friday. This passivity is the passivity of every human being in the moment of death. It is not just a moment of the radical powerlessness and helplessness, but also, a moment of radical solitude, like the one Jesus experiences on the cross. But from now on neither Jesus nor we are alone at the moment of sin or death. O'Donnell describes it in following words: "in the Cross, God comes in love to disturb the solitude of the hardened sinner turned in upon himself."<sup>23</sup> He says even more, that:

God does not violate the sinner's freedom but God's presence with the sinner in his abandonment disturbs his narcissistic solitude; the sinner finds himself in hell to be sure, but no longer absolutely alone, his solitude has become co-solitude.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, if Cross is such an event, as Balthasar tells us, no one is alone at all times and in all places, even in hell. And that brings us to a second point for Hunt, which is, that in the descent Jesus' solidarity extends to those who are dead in a theological

<sup>19</sup> Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, 68.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

<sup>23</sup> John O'Donnell, "Hans Urs von Balthasar..." , 465.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 465.

sense, which means, that in the utter defenselessness of love God enters into the loneliness and desolation of the sinner. However, after such a movement from God toward the sinner, in his most intimate area and experience, the question of human freedom to accept this “co-solitude” or to reject it becomes questionable. One may ask, is it possible that human being does not possess that kind of freedom anymore?

The third point tries to answer precisely this question. Balthasar himself is aware of such question when he writes:

One would still be able to say that God gives human beings the capacity to perform what seems for human beings to be a definite (negative) choice against God, but that does not need to be judged/evaluated/assessed by God as definite. And not in such a way that the human person’s choice is called into question from outside – which would amount to a disregard of the freedom bestowed on it – but rather in such a way that God with his own divine choice accompanies the human person into the most extreme situation of his (negative) choice. This happens in the passion of Jesus.<sup>25</sup>

Here, the subtle idea suggested by Balthasar is that even hell is understood as a “sphere” in God. In other words, there is a place for hell in the inner-trinitarian life of love, which is a necessary feature for us humans to experience our freedom. Moreover, Balthasar pushes further by asking “may we not hope that even the most hardened sinner, in the moment of his death, will be brought face to face with the crucified Christ and so be converted from selfishness to love?”<sup>26</sup>

If that is the case, then what is the reality of sin? The fourth point answers this question: Identifying himself with all that is opposed to God and brought about by humans in the exercise of their freedom, Jesus experiences what Balthasar, calls a *vision of death*, or a *second vision*. What exactly he is trying to say here? It seems that he sees sin to be a concrete reality: “sheer sin as such, no longer sin as attaching to particular human being, sin incarnate in living existences, but abstracted from that individuation, contemplated in its bare reality as such.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, mainly, because sin is a reality Jesus in his *vision of death* is able to enter in it, as saint Paul puts it “he was made sin” (2 Cor. 5:21).

Such understanding of sin as a concrete reality different from any other created reality opposes the classical understanding of sin as an *absence of being*. However, it helps to support Balthasar in his theological reasoning about God as love allowing him to distinguish between a sinner and a sin. The sin is judged while the sinner is loved beyond imagining, lovingly accompanied in his or her choice. This suggests a larger consideration of the social dimension of sin, where the human person

<sup>25</sup> Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, 72–73.

<sup>26</sup> O’Donnell, “Hans Urs von Balthasar...”, 465.

<sup>27</sup> Balthasar, *Mysterium Paschale*, 173.

appears not only as agent, but also as a victim of sin. Some theologians conclude that here Balthasar comes within a hair's breadth of the notion of universal salvation so called, *apokatastasis*, but it is not mechanical Origenist universalism.<sup>28</sup> We saw that when discussing the question of human and divine freedoms. However, this is an important issue and eventually worth more attention and analysis.<sup>29</sup> Hunt notices one more aspect of this new understanding of sin as a concrete reality. She thinks that it, "allows von Balthasar in effect to contrast the infinity of God's love, with the finitude of sin."<sup>30</sup> By no means dismissed, sin is recognized and judged for its horror and power, but at the same time to understand that all creation is incorporated into God's trinitarian love, that love alone is credible, that this mystery is the mystery of inexhaustible love.

The fifth and the last point of Balthasar's interpretation of the descent into hell speaks explicitly of it as a trinitarian event. The descent is only possible because God is triune. In other words:

because God is triune, with both difference and unity guaranteed by the Holy Spirit, the inner-trinitarian differences between Father and the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit can accommodate all created differences including the death and the descent.<sup>31</sup>

According to Balthasar, the Holy Spirit is the unity between the Father and the Son in person – as the third person of the Trinity, he both allows the other two persons to remain distinct and joins them together in an unbreakable bond of love. That is why and only why the abandonment on the cross and the descent into hell, as well as solidarity with the sinners and our redemption is possible, because God is the community of love. Different persons defining relations in the life of the Trinity are possible solely because of love, which implies a plurality of persons.<sup>32</sup> Thus, creation and redemption are nothing else, but God's free choice to pour out and to share his abundance of love and life and to reveal who he always is – "God is Love" (1 John 4:8).

<sup>28</sup> Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, 73. Also see: Jean-Miguel Garrigues, *Mūsų mirties valandą: priimti amžinąjį gyvenimą* (Vox altera: Kaunas, 2019), 85, and Robert Barron, "The Christian: Missionary of Hope", *Chicago Studies* 33:2 (1994), 138–151.

<sup>29</sup> See [www.petersnet.net](http://www.petersnet.net) search "David Walt" – for an essay critical of Balthasar's theory, also "James T. O'Connor".

<sup>30</sup> Hunt, *The Trinity and the Paschal Mystery*, 74.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 75.

<sup>32</sup> John O'Donnell, "The Trinity as Divine Community: A Critical Reflection upon Recent Theological Developments", *Gregorianum* 69 (1988), 8.



## Conclusions

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The Kenosis of Christ does reveal the inner life of Love in God, since it is precisely in the inner-trinitarian drama, that the space for human freedom and thus, for a loving response to God's love occurs. All external *kenosis*, which is observed in the life of Christ Jesus and especially in his death on the cross, is possible because of the inner *kenosis* which happens in the life of the Trinity. God freely chooses to reveal his inner being and life to us, in order to make us participants of his eternal glory.

Anne Hunt's analysis of Balthasar's theology help us to describe this interconnection between the Cross and the Trinity in the following four key elements. First of all, Jesus' death is the turning point where the divine love and justice coincide. Secondly, the Cross is an event of Trinitarian surrender. Thirdly, Jesus' obedience is a key to his hypostatic identity. And lastly, Jesus' mission is identical to his person. In a similar way, the mission given to each and every human being makes them in a sense distinct from each other, however, remaining closely inter-connected.

The descent of Jesus into hell demonstrates and provides for the universality of God's saving act, since even hell is understood as a *sphere* in God. The analysis of Jesus' descent according to Hunt can be described under following five points. First of all, the descent is not active, but a passive sinking down, which reveals Jesus' solidarity in human death. Secondly, such solidarity is a solidarity that allows God's love to enter into the loneliness and desolation of a sinner. Thirdly, Balthasar states, that there is a place for hell in the inner-trinitarian life of love, which is a necessary feature for humans to experience their freedom. The fourth point is, that since sin is a concrete reality humans enter into, Christ entered that reality to, not by sinning, but by bringing the final choice of love to the declining human freedom. Finally, the last point is, that the descent is only possible because God is Triune.

Therefore, all Christians, indeed present an irreplaceable element of this mystery, called to become an active part of it, through the sacrament of Baptism, joining the Body of Christ, united in his love, entering into celebration of the Paschal Mystery, which is nothing else, but the life of the trinitarian community of self-giving Love.

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## HANS URS VON BALTHASAR: ON THE CROSS AS A TRINITARIAN EVENT

### S u m m a r y

The purpose of this article is to reveal Cross as an event of the Triune God in the theology of Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar. The two major texts which are used for analysis are: Balthasar's own book *Mysterium Paschale* and an informative summary on this topic by Anne Hunt, along with other great contemporary scholars who share their insights on Balthasar's theology.

Balthasar takes the Sacred Triduum as the central location of his Trinitarian theology, for it is in this *Kenosis* of Christ that the inner majesty of God's love appears. The moment of such Self-giving is the Cross, therefore Anne Hunt in her analysis of this theme identifies four key elements of interconnection between the Cross and the Trinity: 1) Jesus' death is the turning point where divine love and justice coincide; 2) the Cross is an event of Trinitarian surrender; 3) Jesus' obedience is a key to his hypostatic identity; and 4) Jesus' mission is identical to his person.

The next major step in Balthasar's theology of the Cross is the descent of Jesus into hell. It is the experience of the Holy Saturday, which Hunt summarizes under five points. Amongst these points the question of the reality of sin is discussed, which in turn following the thought of Balthasar is a reality that exist on its own. This suggests the larger consideration of the social dimension of sin, where the human person appears not only as agent, but also as a victim. For some here Balthasar comes very close, in this case of his treatment of Jesus' descent into hell, to the crossing of the safe borders of Church's Magisterium. However, Balthasar develops his theology in the context of liturgical prayer, the *Sacrum Triduum*, which once again helps us to appreciate and to understand the true reality we encounter and celebrate during the liturgy, which is participating in the Love life of the Holy Trinity.

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## HANS URS VON BALTHASAR APIE KRYŽIŲ KAIP TREJYBINIO DIEVO ĮVYKĮ

### S a n t r a u k a

Šio straipsnio tikslas yra pristatyti nukryžiuvimą kaip Trejybinio Dievo apsisireikimą šveicarų teologo Hans Urs von Balthasar darbuose. Temos analizei naudojami du pagrindiniai tekstai, vienas iš jų – paties Balthasar knyga „Mysterium Paschale“ ir informatyvi Anne Hunt šios temos santrauka. Pasinaudojama ir kitų šiuolaikinių teologų išvalgomis apie Balthasar teologiją.

Balthasar regi Velykų Tridienį kaip centrinę savo trinitologijos vietą, nes būtent čia per Kristaus *kenosis* apsisireikia Dievo meilės didybė. Pats tikriausias tokio savęs dovanojimo momentas yra kryžius, todėl Anne Hunt savo analizėje išskiria keturis pamatinius elementus, kurie rodo Kryžiaus ir Trejybės tarpusavio susietumą: 1) Jėzaus mirtis yra tas momentas, kuriame dieviškoji meilė ir teisingumas susitinka; 2) kryžius yra Trejybinio Dievo atsidavimo įvykis; 3) Jėzaus klusnumas yra raktas į jo hipostatinę tapatybę; 4) Jėzaus misija sutampa su jo asmeniu.

Kitas svarbus žingsnis aptariant Balthasar kryžiaus teologiją – Jėzaus nužengimas į pragarus. Tai Didžiojo Šeštadienio patirtis, kurią Hunt aptaria išskirdama penkias pagrindines idėjas. Viena jų – idėja apie nuodėmės tikrovę, kuri, anot Balthasar, yra savita tikrovės apraiška. Toks nuodėmės supratimas praplečia jos įtaką, kaip jos veikimo padarinys žmogus pasirodo ne tik kaip nuodėmės agentas, bet ir kaip auka. Taip mąstydamas, kai kurių teologų manymu, Balthasar priartėja prie saugių Bažnyčios magisteriumo sienų peržengimo. Vis dėlto, Balthasar savo teologiją vysto liturginės maldos *Sacrum Triduum* kontekste, leidžiančiame geriau įvertinti ir suprasti, kokią iš tiesų tikrovę sutinkame ir švenčiame liturgijoje – Švč. Trejybės meilės gyvenimą.

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KEY WORDS: Hans Urs von Baltasar, Triune God, *kenosis*, theology of the Cross, social aspect of sin, liturgy of Pachal Triduum.

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