

counts not only for the Athanasian Creed, but for the Creed of Pope Pius, is no fault of those who adopt it. No one has power over the issues of his principles; we cannot manage our argument, and have as much of it as we please and no more. An argument is needed, unless Christianity is to abandon the province of argument; and those who find fault with the explanation here offered of its historical phenomena will find it their duty to provide one for themselves.

And as no special aim at Roman Catholic doctrine need be supposed to have given a direction to the inquiry, so neither can a reception of that doctrine be immediately based on its results. It would be the work of a life to apply the theory of developments so carefully to the writings of the Fathers, and to the history of controversies and councils, as thereby to vindicate the reasonableness of every decision of Rome; much less can such an undertaking be imagined by one who, in the middle of his days, is beginning life again. Thus much, however, might be gained even from an essay like the present, an explanation of so many of the reputed corruptions, doctrinal and practical, of Rome, as might serve as a fair ground for trusting her in parallel cases where the investigation had not been pursued.* □

Christian universalism: On two collections of papers by Hans Urs von Balthasar

Joseph Ratzinger

The life of the counsels is not a matter for specialists, but the spirit of the whole.

The great issue of controversial theology between the Wars was the *analogia entis*, which Erich Przywara had interpreted as the guiding thread of Catholic thought, whereas for Karl Barth it was the only serious reason not to become a Catholic and a true invention of the Antichrist. As his *Church Dogmatics* progressed, Barth rapidly outgrew the formal dispute over *analogia entis* versus *analogia fidei*, over the question whether being itself already contains a likeness to God, or whether Godlikeness derives from faith alone. Christology increasingly assumed the central role in place of the abstract formal principle of the analogy of faith. At the same time, it made possible a rediscovery of creation in the light of Christ and, by this means, a theology of creation which now permitted the whole wealth of reality to pour into Barth's thought. A few years ago, Hans Urs von Balthasar masterfully traced the trajectory of this maturation of Barth's work in his book *The Theology of Karl Barth*, while at the same time demonstrating that the decisive opportunity for an encounter with Catholic theology lay in the latter's christological understanding of creation. However, Balthasar still found it necessary to note the presence of a "christological reduction" in Barth's writings, that is, of a rigorous construction from above which continued to prevent the incorporation of the human basis, of the

* From John Henry Newman, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, VII-VIII, 3-32. © 1989 by University of Notre Dame Press.

dimensions of history and of man as such, in the christological transformation of Barth's thought. It is here that Balthasar's own thinking has tirelessly moved ahead in the last decade. The question of the unity of everything human with the Christian reality—which in the event of the Cross thwarts, dismisses and pronounces this entire *humanum* to be foolish and of no account, while nevertheless embracing and renewing it—is one of the fundamental questions which repeatedly recur in Balthasar's collected papers, now out in two volumes, which in the main make available works (including some hitherto unpublished pieces) written in the last few years.¹ If it still seems quite abstract and arcane to begin framing this question in terms of the above mentioned controversy over the problem of the two analogies, Balthasar's subsequent penetration of the topic nonetheless releases extremely concrete and vital questions of Christian existence from the narrow bonds of specialist concern: is there such a thing as Christian humanism, and what does it look like? Thus, do the phenomena which typically accompany the reality of man, such as beauty and art, exist in the Christian scheme, and is their existence in it justified, or is the nakedness of the Cross the sheer negation of all these things? Is there a Christian dialogue with the major world religions, in particular with those of Asia, or is rigid exclusiveness, the same absolute no, perhaps the sole response in this field as well? And if this is the case, what sense are we to make of the fact that a sizeable portion of the history of religion is to be found in the Bible, at least in its early parts?

Starting precisely from this last point, which at least since the Bible-Babylon dispute has been one of the most serious concerns of theology, Balthasar sets about developing his solution and shows how this very circumstance leads in the direction of Catholic thought—thus resolving two problems in one. God speaks as man—this is the reality which we encounter in the Bible, and which reaches its apogee in Jesus Christ. In him God has entered into the "schema" of man (Phil 2:7), thereby embracing human nature within the unity of the God-man. "It cer-

¹[Ratzinger is referring to Balthasar's *Skizzen zur Theologie*, which at the time of this review essay (1961) numbered only two volumes. The English titles of these two works are: *Explorations in Theology I: The Word Made Flesh* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989); and *Explorations in Theology II: Spouse of the Word* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1991). Throughout this review article they are referred to as I and II, respectively.—Tr.]

tainly follows that the acts of Christ—being acts of his human nature, and therefore insofar as the man Christ manifests his *religio* towards the Father in adoration and obedience during his agony in the garden—are truly acts of natural religion. They are not merely natural religion, but this is no reason for denying that they are *also* natural religion; it does mean that we have both the right and the duty to affirm natural religion as necessarily implied in christology" (I, 58). God speaks as man—this means that God also assumes the manifold self-transcendence of the human word, which as human is embedded as much in man's history as in his nature. God's word, which is pronounced as a word of man, "passes necessarily beyond itself into a total human word" and thus by definition carries with it the cargo of human history (I, 86). "The word of God takes hold of the people of Israel in its historical place as bound up with a general evolution, not only in its political situation between the great powers to the east of it . . . , but on the deeper level of philosophy of life, wisdom, metaphysics and religion" (I, 87). The religions of Canaan, Babylon and Egypt, the political and cultural influence of the Near East: all of this is truly present in the human word which God speaks; not merely, let us add, in an external fashion, but as a modality of the word itself, which cannot exist as a human word at all without such implications. Balthasar rightly draws attention to the fact that it is not sufficient to speak in this connection merely of literary genres, "as if . . . God could have used equally well any other appropriate form. One might then say that God could just as well have been incarnated in Paul or Augustine as in Christ. It would be overlooking the essential truth that God does not take man's word out of his mouth and put it into his own, but rather makes the whole man the word of God" (I, 89, n. 11).

However—the word of God which is pronounced as a human word in this way never consists simply in the prolongation of man's own words. This relationship has an analogue in the relation of the human word to natural language: man's spiritual language presupposes the language of nature, yet is something altogether new in comparison which cannot be derived from it. So too God's word: it presupposes man's word, yet brings about its death and undoing in order to adapt it by this very means into a fit instrument of God's speech. This brief outline necessarily falls far short of the wealth and vitality of what Balthasar, drawing on a masterfully sketched philosophy of language, says a *propos* of the theology of the word. However-

er, it may at least convey some sense of how the debate over the problem of the *analogia entis* all but unexpectedly opens up a path between the extremes of liberalism, which dissolves Christianity into the history of religions, representing it as one, even if especially elevated, form of religion among many, and of a radical dialectic which denies the dimension of natural religion altogether. Such a dialectic can never dispose once and for all with the biblical phenomenon mentioned above; "Such a theology must attempt to relegate it to the forecourts of philology and archeology, *tamen usque redibit*" (I, 67f.). The dogged persistence of this biblical problem proves to be a much needed guidepost for theology, which—wary of the dispute over principles—now unexpectedly stumbles quite concretely on the humanity of God, on man in the Bible, on the *analogia entis* in the *analogia fidei*.

In this way, however, there is a straight path in Balthasar's work from the theology of the word to the theology of silence, that is, to a comparative dialogue with the history of religion, whose supreme "word" is to transcend the word and its positiveness by abandoning all words in the negation of the worldly and the earthly. A theology whose initial framework of inquiry is dictated by the strictest biblicism thus enters directly into the broad expanse of a genuine universalism. The history of religion is present in the Bible itself. Since this is so, to what extent is a rapprochement with the major religions possible for Christianity?—such is the question which we face here. One cannot say that as fully developed and clear a solution emerges on this point as on the preceding one (perhaps such a solution is impossible in this matter). The problem is stated in sharp and unequivocal terms: "There comes a time for the Christian when he wearies of all that is positive and concrete. He finds himself enchained by words and facts, without hope of liberation. In all other religions the finite is seen sooner or later to point beyond itself, to be an intermediary . . . For the Christian, however, the positive and concrete persist to the end, and isolate him from the rest of mankind" (I, 128). "Missionaries of other religions have their books which they propagate and expound, and it is a source of humiliation for the Christian missionary, not only that he has to begin with a book but that . . . he can never lay it aside as finished with" (I, 129). If my reading is correct, we can discern three directions in which Balthasar approaches dialogue with the Far Eastern religions, which transcend the word in a radical *theologia negativa*.

First of all, Balthasar thinks through what it means for the structure of Christian revelation that it defines the letter as death-dealing and that it aims to lead from the letter to the spirit; what it means, in other words, that Paul binds the Gentiles not to the letter, but to the spirit and "that the Christian mission to the world today is not one of subjecting the nations to the letter but to the spirit" (I, 141). Balthasar points out that "spirit, water and blood" (1 Jn 5:8) are the world-historical witnesses to the truth of God in Jesus Christ. He recalls that in the books of the Bible the same history is constantly being reelaborated. And it is clear that "it is not in this instance so much a question of the exact nature of historical events as of the overall 'right' expression for the essential, revelatory event embodied in that history" (I, 138). Above all, however, it also becomes apparent that it is the *one* Word which resounds ever more simply and indubitably through the events which give it form in worldly history, as, for example, when Deuteronomy ultimately focuses everything on the act of faithful belief in the faithful God, an act which must always be performed here and now. "This singleness of purpose is what Jesus in fulfilling carried over into the eternal covenant. It is what Paul pointed to . . ." (I, 140). This simplification—and this is the second motif which Balthasar develops in this context—attains its fulfillment in the Resurrection: the Risen One, by virtue of his own spiritual existence (2 Cor 3:16), "took away the veil" which lay over all the words and narratives of the Old . . . Testament" (I, 149; cf. Lk 24:44). "This is why Paul was able to bring out the central doctrines of Christianity, with a truly astonishing freedom, without citing a single word of the gospel. It explains too how it was that he could make himself responsible for dispensing the gentiles from the tradition contained in the word and history, insofar as this tradition was not in its essence the spirit of God who revealed himself in history" (I, 140).

An important corollary follows almost self-evidently in turn, that is, the insight that in regard to the sacred books the question of historical truth must not be posed in the spirit of a narrow historicism, but must be set free from false scruples, as is obvious, for example, in the case of Melchizedek—"And why should it not also apply to Abraham, although admittedly not quite a parallel case?" (I, 139). The Resurrection, in fact, has set a limit to every historical positivism; not, however in favor of a spirit which man could attain with his own powers using some

technique of mystical absorption, but of the Spirit whom only that God can give who by grace raises up with Christ those who have been crucified with him. "Thus, God takes false concerns away from us, and at the same time the work of transformation, to the extent that we cooperate in this, can be a work of all who love and not only a work of a small elite, like advanced Oriental contemplation" (II, 358). This is where the immovable boundary separates Christian faith and Asiatic mysticism, and yet it is precisely here that Balthasar picks up the thread of the dialogue with the third theme—the question to what extent there can be true unity between Christian contemplation and pre- and extra-Christian mysticism. The reader will find it necessary to say, however, that there still remains a certain indecision and lack of clarity on this point. This phenomenon is most likely due to the fact that, while clearly seeing that in Christianity mystical ascent is limited by the descent of the Word and the unmanipulability of the God who freely gives himself, Balthasar brings to the discussion a sympathy for and openness to the full range of mystical concern stemming from a long familiarity with Greek monastic mysticism, as indeed with the entire Christian mystical tradition. Perhaps the unification of the divergent lines is most successful where, commenting on the Letter to the Hebrews (12:2), Balthasar speaks of the faith of Jesus Christ, understood as an attitude of abandonment to God which remains in eternity—in the man Jesus Christ and in all those who believe with and in Christ. In such faith Balthasar likewise sees the "dark night," the culminating point of the mysticism of John of the Cross, for whom it is, in its deepest core, not something provisional, but the superabundance of a self-entrustment to God which is greater than all knowledge.²

At the same time, the subject of mysticism forms the link to the third principal group of questions discussed in the present work: the debate over Christian "spirituality" (clergy and laity, secular state and consecrated state, office and charisma, the concrete realization of Christian life in today's world). Once again it is altogether impossible, in view of the brevity demanded here, to convey even an approximate idea of the wealth

²Here I would like to refer to the outstanding study of R.C. Zaehner, *Zwei Strömungen der muslimischen Mystik* (Kairo, 1959), 92-99, which, in critical dialogue with Asiatic and Muslim mysticism, elaborates the same insight from the heart of that mysticism itself.

of insights which Balthasar presents regarding this set of issues which is the center of so much discussion today. Balthasar begins by objecting with refreshing frankness to the unfortunately all too prevalent obsession with specialized spirituality: "Every little association (the more exclusive, the better) tries to incubate its own particular 'spirit,' around which it knocks up some kind of structure, as if engaged in creating a work of art" (I, 221). In opposition to this Balthasar observes: "After all, we can hardly imagine Francis, for instance, preoccupied with 'Franciscanism' instead of with the poverty of Christ, in the light of which all the graces and gifts of the Holy Spirit were imparted to him" (I, 219). Even more to the point: "What is special in Mary's spirituality is the radical renunciation of any special spirituality other than the overshadowing of the Most High and the indwelling of the divine Word . . . The idea of making out of Marian spirituality one among others is, therefore, a distortion, as dangerous as attempting to claim for one's own particular way the status of the 'spirituality of the Church'" (I, 218f.).

Moreover, these statements already indicate the method with which Balthasar tackles the general problem of the states of Christian life and of their correlative spiritual attitudes. This method is far removed from today's fashionable optimism about the retrieval of the world; it also refuses to think in terms of an opposition between the secular state and the consecrated state, as if, for instance, temporal existence and its tasks for the kingdom of God were assigned to the secular state, whereas the new aeon and eschatology were the special province of the consecrated state. Rather, Balthasar considers that this sort of thinking in terms of oppositions actually misconceives the problem and amounts to cleavage within the Church. There is, in the end, only a single Christian form, which as such is beyond the distinction of laity and clergy (II, 139). Every Christian is summoned to "eschatological existence," and Christianity as a whole is ordered to the new aeon. Balthasar rightly calls attention here to the reason that the state of the counsels is not an eighth sacrament: it is the entrance into the being of the Church as such, which is the fundamental sacrament prior to all the individual sacraments. It is, in other words, the center of the Church's embodiment of itself and thus indicates the form of the whole (II, 319). The life of the counsels is not a matter for specialists, but the spirit of the whole: "Whatever there is about it that may be considered special exists only to serve its availability to the

whole . . . To say it in the shortest possible formula, the life of the counsels is the *particular instance of the general*" (II, 435).

Balthasar therefore does not see sharp boundaries between the single forms of Christian existence—consecrated state-secular state, priesthood-laity—as if it were a question of three altogether diverse possibilities within Christianity. On the contrary, everywhere he discerns fluid transitions and an inner penetration and mutual enfolding which reach far into the properly sacramental sphere. This is true not only in the case of the "sacraments of the laity," baptism and marriage, but also in connection with sacraments as bound up with ministerial office as penance and the Eucharist (esp. II, 311, 322ff., 387-91). Balthasar thus says a resolute no to a certain theology of the laity which to a large extent has already become a catchword of the day, yet threatens to compromise its own intention by the superficiality with which it treats its subject.

We truly ought to listen with the most serious attention when Balthasar points out the absurdity of the multiplying clamor for a more extensive juridical status for the laity and of the complaint that the Church's code of canon law has almost nothing to say about the layman: the dignity of the layman in the Church does not, after all, hinge on the number of canons by which he is represented in the code. These canons, in fact, lay down norms for the purely functional aspect of the Church in order to serve the authentic essence of the Church, and this is something which is wholly impossible to formulate in a code: it is to be in the body of Christ and to be immediately related to him in love. The layman who wants to interpret and understand himself in the horizon of Church law therefore fails to appreciate his own dignity, indeed, he diminishes it, "and the laymen who claim 'more rights' in the Church do not know precisely what they want. What they call their 'right' (that which they are permitted to be vis-a-vis Christ) is neither strengthened nor improved by being written down in the code of canon law. Compared with this mighty 'law,' the small participation in the clerical function of ordering (and it cannot be more than a small share, if they wish to remain laymen and not become members of the clergy) would be virtually a microscopic speck" (II, 409). One can only agree. Doubtless Balthasar's ideas concerning this series of issues are not yet fully developed in every point of detail; occasionally the effort to portray the transitions from one individual form of Christian life to another as seamlessly as possible is probably somewhat exaggerated. However, it is safe to

affirm that the overall message quite definitely conforms to the data of the New Testament and of the Christian tradition; it is both a summons to awake which our confused and secularized generation very much needs to hear and a testimony to the deep religious seriousness and the true theological stature of Balthasar's work.

There are theologians who are contemporary because they are attuned to "what is in the air," what is in keeping with the *zeitgeist*. They cease to be contemporary as soon as another *zeitgeist* comes along, and they deserve no better. But there are also theologians who are contemporary because their inquiry is directed solely towards the truth, from which they refuse to be deterred either by the habit of scholastic tradition or by the wishes of the age. This is the attitude which inspires Balthasar's thinking—otherwise he would not be capable of writing a sentence such as the following, which is so "out of tune with the times," and yet so centrally formulates the task of Christianity in this and in every era: "It is not through Catholic 'action' that the world will be redeemed but through poverty and obedience and an exclusive orientation to God. And it would be in keeping with our advanced age if Catholics were to learn better to understand that responsibility for the world goes well with obedience, disposition over the world goes well with poverty, experience of the world goes well with virginity—indeed, that the ultimate fruitfulness, even in the realm that is most truly that of the laity, can be expected precisely from this source" (II, 331).

Very closely connected with the debate over the spirituality of the Christian states of life is another range of issues having to do with the Church. An extensive piece entitled "Casta meretrix" rehearses the historical attempt to come to grips with the problem of holiness and sin in the Church (II, 193-288); the essay "Who is the Church?" tries to give an objective answer to the questions posed by that history (II, 143-91). In this regard, the formulation "*who* is the Church?," as opposed to the usual statement of the question, "*what* is the Church?," already indicates the particular problem and the particular solution which Balthasar has in view. He begins by noting the fact that the understanding of the Church as Bride of Christ, which portrays it as a subject with its own identity in relation to the Lord, has increasingly receded into the background as compared with the term Body of Christ, which does not express this quality of being a subject. Now, since the eucharistic and mystical bodies

of the Lord are reciprocal causes, so that at its core the image of the body is based on the eucharistic event, "the doctrine of the *corpus mysticum* reacts powerfully on the conception of the hierarchical Church, giving it an added strength, and depth of meaning" (II, 154). The main emphasis in the idea of the Church falls on the sacramental-institutional aspect, on the objective dimension, on the structure which precedes the individual. In addition, the living men who are the members of the Church appear more as the bare material in which this structure actively deploys itself, but which is not the "Church" in the proper and primary sense.

In contrast to this tendency toward objectivism inherent in the image of the body, Balthasar discovers in the image of the bride the corrective which allows the other side of the whole to receive its due. If the Church is not only "body" but also "bride," then it is not merely a "what," but also a "who"—the objective spirit embodied in the structures of the Church presupposes a subjective spirit as a receptive vessel: it presupposes faith as the womb in which the seed of the Word of God can first fructify. "It follows that the Church is most fully present where faith, hope and love, selflessness, and tolerance of others are found in the highest degree" (II, 172). The objective structures of ecclesiastical office do not in themselves create the presence of the Church, which requires the believing womb of the word, that is, the active faith, hope and love of those who precisely in this way are truly the Church. Both the Fathers and the theologians of the Middle Ages knew this. According to them, the Church becomes a reality to the extent that "sanctity and love are realized" (II, 176). It was above all the apostles who were regarded as the heart of this true Church "without spot or wrinkle": next were their successors, then the martyrs and doctors of the Church, and finally, since the Middle Ages, Mary, the pure womb of the Word, in whom the holy Church is prototypically represented and who thus becomes the personal center and full realization of the idea of the Church.

In this manner the question "who is the Church" can at last be answered with precision. Only real subjects can respond satisfactorily to this question, not a mere collective, which ultimately remains a fiction. "Real subjects, then, but only such as participate through divine grace in a normative subject and its consciousness . . . ; the supreme subject demanded by the question posed can only be the Divine itself. Mankind gains participation in it through Christ and the sphere that is his . . . : the

Church. Finally, insofar as the one grace streams through her, this grace makes all spirits, in all their personal varieties of missions and spiritual ways, converge in a single consciousness, opening in Mary to Christ, and through Christ to the Holy Spirit of the three-personal God" (II, 179f.). The import of such considerations will surely lie not least of all in the fact that they free Mariology from a certain isolation in sentimental devotion and insert it in the larger context of meaning framed by a scriptural theology. Embedded in this context, the Marian idea points the way towards, and is the deepest realization of, an understanding of the Church which, moving beyond a narrow objectivism, restores to its central place the personal realization of the Church's being. This understanding implies a renewed recognition of the seriousness of the Church's call to holiness—inasmuch as the Church, "the more properly she is the Church, the more stainless, the more conformed to Christ she is, the more Marial" (II, 179)—as well as the consolation of this holiness, which is a self-giving, supportive, helping holiness. Hence, the Church of the saints not only represents the Church of the sinners, but also "carries them and is responsible for them before God. With Christ it empties itself, so as, in weakness and shame, to bring in the least member" (II, 169).

Finally, the idea that the Church carries the sinner suggests yet another series of reflections which deserves a brief mention at the conclusion of this survey, inasmuch as it promises to reopen to theology a dimension of dialogue which has long been closed to it. In several passages Balthasar expresses the opinion that the tightening vice of the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, which sets a final limit to the Church's ability to aid and bear the sinner, is gradually beginning to open up again today. Not that Balthasar, the great scholar and translator of Origen, intends to argue in favor of Origenism in the sense of a doctrine of *apocatastasis*. He is well aware that such a move jeopardizes every notion of election and he is absolutely resolute in his objection to "a certain exhilaration at being redeemed" (I, 250).

But he teaches us again more plainly to leave to God what is God's and not to take it upon ourselves to fix the decision ahead of time in one direction or another—in Origenian or extreme Augustinian fashion. And above all he reminds us that when God acts historically to reject or to elect, as Holy Scripture records in relating the stories of Isaac and Ishmael, of Jacob and Esau, of Moses and Pharaoh and finally of the whole of Israel, what is at stake is not the eternal salvation and damnation of

these figures, but, quite simply, action belonging to salvation history executed in this world. But this discovery puts the subject of Israel in a new light for Christians. Israel not only is and continues to be the root whose sap gives life to the Church, which is not itself without the Old Testament—that Old Testament whose “inspiration developed and came to completion in the heart of the Israel that fought, prayed and suffered untold pain” (II, 298)—but, beyond this, it remains true that Israel’s rejection in the order of salvation history points to an eschatological salvation which it shares with the Church and in which rejection and election are equalized (II, 295f.). There are, thankfully, many mutual gestures and dialogues between Jews and Christians today, but often enough they bog down in more or less superficial humanistic declarations which lack the power to grasp the true historical burden of the separation. Balthasar ventures here (as he has already done once before in his short book *Einsame Zwiesprache*) a truly theological dialogue. Only such dialogue can penetrate to the true depth of this division, which reaches down inexorably into the theological domain. It follows that only this dialogue can show the way to that “peace” which, according to the Letter to the Ephesians, is the work of the crucified Christ (Eph 2:11-18).

If one had to try to find a title which sums up the character of the many-faceted and far-ranging thought represented in these two volumes, one could probably do no better than resort to the title which Balthasar gave to his paper for the festschrift presented to Karl Barth on the occasion of the latter’s seventieth birthday: “Christian Universalism” (cf., I, 241-54). Balthasar’s thought is an open thought which grows in dialogue and risks dialogue in all directions: with the severe Protestantism of a Karl Barth, as well as with the contemporary spirit, and its alienation from Christ, with the major world religions, with Israel, with the witnesses of Christian history. But above all, Balthasar is in dialogue with the “Word” itself, the Word of God in Scripture, which—the reader notices it again and again—the author has penetrated by personal contemplation, read and loved even in its most hidden recesses. Everywhere one is conscious of this firm rootedness in the Word, a rootedness which is unafraid of the hard data of philology and history, which does not seek refuge in a meditative idyll, yet which is not swamped by philology, but is able to hear in the word of man the God who is speaking. And everywhere one also perceives a truly Church-minded attitude, not in the sense of a false servility to traditional

opinions which wrongfully label themselves as especially representative of the Church, much rather in the sense of a life truly lived by the spirit and the faith of the Church; out of a true love for the Church, a love, that is, which is honest, and only by its honesty becomes fully love. That Balthasar’s theology, for all its breadth and openness, is a truly devout theology gives it its special dignity and claim on our attention. Of course, much of what is said in this theology remains a provisional first sketch which requires further debate and inquiry. But can man’s mind live at all except by questioning, through which alone he lays hold of new truth, and, even having done so, remains unfinished with his quest and is thus summoned to new questioning? Balthasar’s work is a true gift to contemporary theology and, thanks to the uncompromising radicalness with which it totally engages both faith and thought, with which it never fails to accept both the world of faith and the world of today with unre-served honesty, an encouraging sign that faith—the whole faith, not merely a watered-down makeshift—can also be thought, lived and loved in the world of today.*—*Translated by Adrian Walker* □

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