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The Word In Ecclesial Life: Word And Redemption: Essays in Theology 2

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THE WORD IN ECCLESIAL LIFE

WORD AND REDEMPTION: ESSAYS IN THEOLOGY 2. By Hans Urs von Balthasar. Translated by A. V. Littledale in cooperation with Alexander Dru. New York: Herder and Herder, 1965. 175 pp.

This small book is a translation of seven theological essays of the Swiss theologian whom Fr. de Lubac has called one of the most cultured men of our time. Two essays discuss the general theme of Theology: "The Place of Theology" and "Theology and Sanctity". Two discuss themes of the Theology of the Spiritual life: "Spirituality" and "Action and Contemplation." "Characteristics of Christianity" explains how the Christian approach differs from the natural, and in what sense it incorporates and completes the latter. A rambling essay on "Christian Universalism" discusses the universalism of Karl Barth and his affinity to Origen and ends with a look at the meaning of the *analogia entis* in relation to Christian universalism. A final essay "Some Points on Eschatology", indicates a few directions of theological thought and research in the relatively unexplored area of eschatology.

Balthasar's work is never easy reading, but it is rewarding, perhaps more for his synthetic insights, than for sustained theological exposition. He is a theologian who has been writing in the spirit of Vatican II for many years previous to the council, and the council confirms his orientation. In this volume, the emphasis on the Word of God as the soul and norm of theology, and on the transcendence of revelation in relation to our philosophical and theological categories; the insistence on the necessity of unity between doctrine and life, theology and sanctity; the affirmation of the existential character of truth which we only really possess when we express it in the whole of our being and life; the conviction that Christianity can only bear witness through what is poor, interior, hidden, simple genuine; the realization that the missionary can regard the alien *Weltanschauung* as already touched with the light of Christ; the proclamation of the end of the cosmological epoch and the advent of the anthropological epoch as determining a new orientation of the forms and experiences of natural religion; the insistence that in Christ God is primarily a known God; that through Christ, everything in the created order is enabled to be an expression of God, most of all what we would think to be most remote from Him: the cross, opprobrium, anguish and death; these are a few of the ideas that are familiar in the world of Vatican II, and are to be found in these essays written between 1948 and 1958.

JOSEPH J. SMITH, S.J.