



Balthasar: A (Very) Critical Introduction (Interventions)

By Karen Kilby



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The enormously prolific Swiss Roman Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988) was marginalized during much of his life, but his reputation over time has only continued to grow. He was said to be the favorite theologian of John Paul II and is held in high esteem by Benedict XVI. It is not uncommon to hear him referred to as *the* great Catholic theologian of the twentieth century.

In *Balthasar: A (Very) Critical Introduction* Karen Kilby argues that although the low regard in which Balthasar was held from the 1950s to 1960s was not justified, neither is the current tendency to lionize him. Instead, she advocates a more balanced approach, particularly in light of a fundamental problem in his writing, namely, his characteristic authorial voice -- an over-reaching "God's eye" point of view that contradicts the content of his theology.



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Editorial Review

Review

David Burrell, C.S.C.

-- University of Notre Dame

"Karen Kilby exposes the plotline of Balthasar's formidable opus and proceeds to offer circumspect criticism of the supremely confident modes of expression his speculation can take. With grammar as a critical tool, she inquires trenchantly what might allow this 'theological novelist' to know his divine characters so well as to spin the story he does."

Tina Beattie

-- University of Roehampton

"This book should be essential reading for anybody interested in contemporary Catholicism and its most flamboyant theologian. Kilby approaches her subject with a lucidity and balance that are rare in studies of Hans Urs von Balthasar. While meticulously careful to avoid gratuitous criticism, she offers a timely caution against the uncritical acceptance of Balthasar's work and its influence on much recent theology and doctrine."

Anglican Theological Review

"This book is an astonishingly deft guide to thorny and difficult issues, and a brief, approachable introduction to Catholic theological issues of recent centuries. It is a terrific piece of theological scholarship and critique and will be most appreciated by advanced theology students, clergy and theologians wanting a solid orientation to Balthasar. As simply one of the best introductions to the life, thought, work, contributions, and limitations of Balthasar available today, it is highly recommended."

Louvain Studies

"In the midst of so much work currently being done on Balthasar, Kilby's (very) critical comments are, in my opinion, much needed signposts along the road toward recovering what is good and worth saving within his oeuvre. There is a great need to strike such a balancing act between critique and recovery in Balthasar's work, and this slim volume contributes greatly toward that highly worthwhile task."

Reviews in Religion & Theology

"Despite its brevity, this book may well take its place as the most essential secondary source on Balthasar's work. What it lacks in comprehensiveness it gains in deep insights into the recurrent patterns of Balthasar's thinking and the influence of his life experience on those patterns."

First Things

"This tough-minded yet irenic essay . . . is extraordinarily helpful to those who want to know what the excitement is about — and what the limits to that excitement ought to be."

About the Author

Karen Kilby holds the Bede Chair in Catholic Theology at Durham University, England.

Users Review

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Roy Brown:

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