



Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter

Hans Urs von Balthasar , Aidan Nichols (Introduction)

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This is an account, at once rigorously theological and warmly devotional, of the death and resurrection of Christ, and their significance for the Christian life. Von Balthasar offers sharp insights into some current controversies--for example, the 'bodiliness' of the Resurrection--and spiritual inspiration for the year round. This scholarly reflection of the climax of the Christian year is an established classic of contemporary Catholic theology.

Mysterium Paschale: The Mystery of Easter Details

Date : Published October 1st 2000 by Ignatius Press (first published January 1st 1920)

ISBN : 9780898708042

Author : Hans Urs von Balthasar , Aidan Nichols (Introduction)

Format : Paperback 297 pages

Genre : Religion, Theology, Nonfiction, Christianity, Catholic

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Doug says

Breathtaking Vision of the Life, Death and Resurrection

Von Balthasar's extensive reflections upon the cross in relation to Israel, the church, time and space and the hope of redemption will require me to return again and again to sit with these insights. At the same, they call me again and again to bow before the glory of the Lord and worship Him in His beauty.

Harry Allagree says

Originally, I purchased this work by the noted & respected Catholic theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), out of interest for reading a theological treatment of the liturgy of the sacred Easter Triduum (Good Friday/Holy Saturday/Resurrection Sunday). It turned out to be a whole lot more than that! Here's how von Balthasar describes it in the Preface: "This book appeared for the first time as a constituent chapter of a large-scale dogmatics. Since in that context the doctrine of God as one and triune was treated elsewhere, there was no need to examine in any more fundamental way the delicate problem...of the Kenosis of the Son of God in his Incarnation and, above all, in his Passion. Here, by contrast, it seems incumbent on me to say a word -- no doubt, too condensed -- [sic!!] by way of addressing the root of this mystery..."

The author's "a word", in fact, is an over 250 page dense theological treatise, based on a passage of St. Paul's Letter to the Philippians: Chapter 2:5-11. This is detailed & deep theology, though not entirely understandable. von Balthasar's explication of his theme, though slanted in some parts, is exceedingly rich & enlightening, not only regarding all the events in the life of Jesus of Nazareth leading up to & including the Resurrection, but also regarding the essence & nature of "the Church" as a theological reality. This isn't a book which can be rushed through, and undoubtedly would bear reading multiple times. It's probably the most rigorous "theological workout" I've had since seminary!

Thomas says

"In other words, the renunciation of the 'form of God' and the taking on of the 'form of a slave' with all their consequences do not entail any alienation within the Trinitarian life of God. God is so divine that by way of the Incarnation, death and Resurrection, he can truly and not just in seeming become that which as God he already and always is." (208)

A theology of the cross in Trinitarian perspective, with all the erudition you might expect from Balthasar as he draws from scripture, Church Fathers, and contemporary theologians/exegetes. Barth's influence is felt throughout and Balthasar cites him frequently. The chapter on "Going to the Dead: Holy Saturday" is intriguing, challenging, and creative (too creative? I'm not sure), as is the emphasis on locating kenosis as fundamental to the relations of the immanent Trinity. Would have liked Balthasar to develop in greater detail the implications of his view for his understanding of divine impassibility - we get a hint of it in the preface, and it's entirely possible that within the logic of the book he feels like he deals with the issue, but some more explicit discussion would have clarified things - for me at least.

Robert says

Super hard to read

I don't know Latin. I didn't understand the complicated arguments. I guess this maybe more for the scholar and academic.

Graham says

A bit dry, and unnecessarily long-winded at points, but otherwise and fascinating, and insightful examination of kenosis, incarnation, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. The fact that Balthasar explores the place of Holy Saturday and the incarnation as part of the depiction of the Paschal work of Christ is noteworthy, and helpful.

Kim says

great book

Conor says

This is the hardest Balthasar book I've read -- which is saying something! I didn't do myself any favors by reading this over the course of many months. Still this is the densest of Balthasar's works I've read -- I haven't dipped into his famous Trilogy yet. I found his exegetical discussion of the Resurrection to be a bit disturbing. It seemed to give too much credence to the potential of embellishments and shading by the Gospel writers. The other complaint I have about this edition is that it uses endnotes rather than footnotes. Perhaps this is because Balthasar is prodigious with his notes, but I hated having to flip to the back of the sections to read the notes and by the final part, I simply read them after I'd finished the body of the section.
