

The Ecclesial Relationship between the Theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Mystic Adrienne von Speyr

by
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Sponsored by St. John's University Department of Theology and Religious Studies and the St. John's Chapter of the National Honor Society in Theology and Religious Studies—Theta Alpha Kappa (TAK)

Outline of Presentation

Introduction: What is the relationship between Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr?

Thesis: Paul's theology of charism, particularly dealing with double mission charisms, will help us understand correctly the ecclesial relationship between the theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar and Adrienne von Speyr.

I. Who are they?

- Balthasar before 1940
- Speyr before 1940
- The Meeting and Conversion of 1940
- The Collaboration after 1940

II. What is at stake?

- phase 1: Balthasar's statements
- phase 2: Balthasar's first interpreters
- phase 3: Balthasar's next generation interpreters

III. What is the answer?

-Paul's theology of double charism helps us answer the question and fits the evidence

IV. Some Conclusion Remarks

V. Discussion

Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905 – 1988)

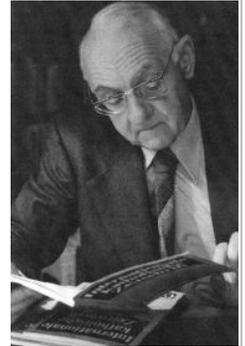
Born August 12, 1905 in Lucerne, Switzerland, Hans Urs von Balthasar was a Catholic Jesuit theologian, student chaplain, writer, editor, and, as his teacher, Henri de Lubac said, "the most cultured man in Europe."

After completing his dissertation in Germanistik, he had a conversion experience in the Black Forest while preparing to enter the Jesuit order. His Jesuit education continued under theologians of *la nouvelle theologie*. When his Jesuit studies were complete he did not pursue a professorship at the Gregorian in Rome. Instead, he became a student chaplain at the University of Basel.

In 1940, he helped Adrienne von Speyr in her conversion. He worked with her in many ways including the co-founding of a secular institute, *Johannesgemeinschaft* (Community of St. John).

Among the many writings, his masterwork trilogy of 15 volumes re-constructs a new eschatology founded upon the transcendentals Beauty, Goodness, and Truth Itself.

He died on June 26, 1988, two days before he would have been made a cardinal.



Adrienne von Speyr (1902 – 1967)

Born September 20, 1902 in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, Adrienne von Speyr was a laywoman, wife, medical doctor, spiritual writer, and Catholic mystic.

Originally a Reformed Protestant, she converted to Catholicism on the Feast of All Saints, November 1, 1940 under the spiritual direction of the famous Jesuit theologian, Hans Urs von Balthasar.

After her conversion, von Speyr began to have many mystical experiences of the Trinity and the saints. While in a state of

contemplative, mystical prayer, she dictated to von Balthasar almost 70 books, including commentaries on the Bible and various theological topics.

With von Balthasar, she co-founded a secular institute, *Johannesgemeinschaft* (Community of St. John).

Her mystical experiences grew in frequency until her death in Basel, Switzerland on September 17, 1967.

She was buried on her sixty-fifth birthday, September 20, 1967, in Basel.





"Her work and mine are neither psychologically nor philologically to be separated: two halves of a single whole, which has as its center a unique foundation" (Balthasar, *My Works*, 89).

Probably the top ten von Speyr books in English:

1. *Handmaid of the Lord*
2. *Confession*
3. *John: The Word became Flesh: Meditations on John 1-5*
4. *The Passion from Within*
5. *My Early Years*
6. *Book of All Saints*
7. *They Followed His Call*
8. *The Cross: Word and Sacrament*
9. *The Christian State of Life*
10. *The World of Prayer*

Balthasar on his Collaboration Speyr

"Without these pioneers [de Lubac, Przywara, Daniélou, Claudel, Irenaeus, Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor], I would have been incapable of understanding and communicating, with any reasonable degree of competence, the dictated works of Adrienne von Speyr in the exactness of their insights and the almost immeasurable variety of their theological opinion" (Balthasar, *Our Task*, 39).

"All I attempted to do was gather it [von Speyr's works] and embed it in space, such as the theology of the Fathers, that of the Middle Ages and the modern age. ... My contribution consisted in providing a comprehensive theological horizon, so that all that was new and valid in her thought would not be watered down or falsified, but be given space to unfold" (Balthasar, *Test Everything*, 88).

"Through my literary, philosophical and theological education a means was provided for assimilating the fullness of her theological insights and given them appropriate express" (Balthasar, *Our Task*, 44).

"On the whole, I received far more from her, theologically, than she from me, though, of course, the exact proportion can never be calculated" (Balthasar, *First Glance*, 13).

"Today, after her death, her work appears far more important than mine. ... the publication of her still unpublished writings [*Die Nachlassbände*] takes precedence over all personal work of my own" (Balthasar, *First Glance*, 13).

He wrote *Our Task* with "one chief aim; to prevent any attempt being made after my death to separate my work from that of Adrienne von Speyr" (Balthasar, *Our Task*, 13).

Reading Adrienne von Speyr

If you would like to know more about Adrienne von Speyr, I could recommend a few things.

First, you could look at the list to the left of the most popular von Speyr books and *tolle lege*. Try perhaps *Handmaid of the Lord* or the first volume of her commentary on the Gospel of John, *The Word Became Flesh*.

Second, von Balthasar's book, *First Glance at Adrienne von Speyr*, is also a good place to begin, but it can be a difficult entry if you are not used to von Balthasar.

Third, I entered into reading Adrienne von Speyr through her autobiography, *My Early Years*. It is really a delightful story of her childhood and her early adult life.

Enjoy the entrance into world of von Speyr and perhaps visit my website, www.vonspeyr.net.

Special Interest Story Headline

Inside Story Headline

The purpose of a newsletter is to provide specialized information to a targeted audience. Newsletters can be a great way to market your product or service, and also to create credibility and build your organization's identity among peers, members, employees, or vendors.

First, determine the audience of the newsletter. This could be anyone who might benefit from the information it contains, for example, employees or people interested in purchasing a product or in requesting your service.

You can compile a mailing list from business reply cards, customer information sheets, business cards collected at trade shows, or membership lists. You might consider purchasing a mailing list from a company.

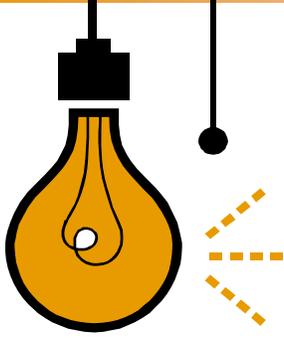
Next, establish how much time and money you can

spend on your newsletter. These factors will help determine how frequently you publish your newsletter and its length. You should publish your newsletter at least quarterly so that it's considered a consistent source of information. Your customers or employees will look forward to its arrival.

Your headlines are an important part of the newsletter and should be considered carefully.

In a few words, the headline should accurately represent the contents of the story and draw readers into the story





Inside Story Headline

You can also research articles or find “filler” articles by accessing the World Wide Web. You can write about a variety of topics, but try to keep your articles short.

Much of the content you put in your newsletter can also be used for your Web site. Microsoft Word offers a simple way to convert your newsletter to a Web publication. So, when

you’re finished writing your newsletter, convert it to a Web site and post it.

The subject matter that appears in newsletters is virtually endless. You can include stories that focus on current technologies or innovations in your field.

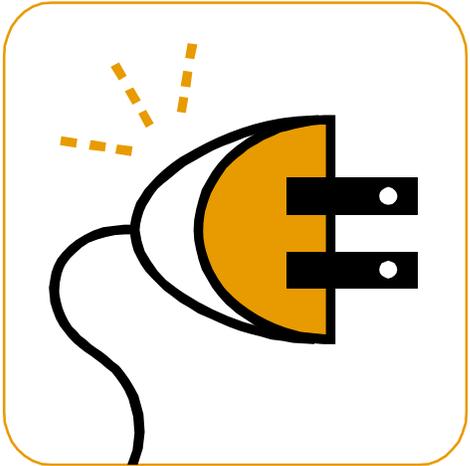
You may also want to note business or economic trends, or make predictions for your customers or clients.

If the newsletter is distributed internally, you might comment upon new procedures or improvements to the business. Sales figures or earnings will show how your business is growing.

Some newsletters include a column that is updated every issue, for instance, an advice column, a book review, a letter from the president, or an editorial. You can also profile new employees or top customers or vendors.

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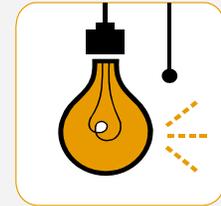
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Examples of possible

headlines include Product Wins Industry Award, New Product Can Save You Time, Membership Drive Exceeds Goals, and New Office Opens Near You.

One benefit of using your newsletter as a promotional tool is that you can reuse content from other

marketing materials, such as press releases and market studies.

While your main goal of distributing a newsletter might be to sell your product or services, the key to a successful newsletter is making it useful to your reader.

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Company Name

Street Address
Address 2
City, ST ZIP Code

Phone

(503) 555-0125

Fax

(503) 555-0127

E-mail

someone@example.com

Your Tagline here.

Back Page Story Headline

In a few words, it should accurately represent the contents of the story and draw readers into the story. Develop the headline before you write the story. This way, the headline will help you keep the story focused.

Examples of possible headlines include Product

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About Our Organization

Think about your article and ask yourself if the picture supports or enhances the message you're trying to convey. Avoid selecting images that appear to be out of context.

Microsoft includes thousands of clip art images from which you can choose, and you can import them into your newsletter. There are also several tools you can use to draw shapes and symbols.

Once you have chosen an image, place it close to the article. Be sure to place the caption for the image near the image, too.

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