Schumacher's "A Trinitarian Anthropology: Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar in Dialogue with Thomas Aquinas" (Book Review)

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The book provides both theory and real life scenarios. In this book the authors have achieved what ground school is to flying: they give the reader all the tools and examples so that when they go into a counseling session, while it will be a new experience, the setting will not be alien to them. There are exercises at the end of each chapter to reinforce the main points of the chapter. It also has a website with 17 vignettes so that the reader can see the skills being used.

The book starts by giving the reader a thorough understanding of what it means and what is like to be a counselor. It then moves into the skills needed by a counselor. The third part talks about the various aspects of counseling such as conducting an assessment. It can be used at the undergraduate or graduate level and would make an excellent textbook. It is so well done that there is a possibility a novice will try to use these skills without supervision which is not the intention of the authors. The citations are comprehensive. The book includes samples of forms that the counselor may need as well as two codes of ethics.

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**A Trinitarian Anthropology: Adrienne von Speyr and Hans Urs von Balthasar in Dialogue with Thomas Aquinas,**

*Reviewed by Yvonne Wilber, Manager of Collection Development, Pearson Library, California Lutheran University, Thousand Oaks, CA*

Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (d. 1988) was arguably one of the foremost theologians of the twentieth century. It is well known that his theology was deeply influenced by the Swiss doctor, Adrienne von Speyr (d. 1967), a Catholic convert and spiritual mystic. The two opened a publishing house through which Balthasar published over 60 volumes of von Speyr’s mystical theology which she dictated to him almost in their entirety.

Despite this close relationship, few scholars have addressed the influence of von Speyr on Balthasar’s theology. In this work, independent scholar Michelle Schumacher systematically examines the Trinitarian theological anthropology of von Speyr, and compares it to Balthasar’s anthropology as expressed in his mystery of the “difference-in-unity.” Schumacher’s anthropology discusses how difference-in-unity in the human person expresses certain tensions: between nature and grace; body and spirit; the individual and the church community; as well as man and woman. Before discussing this mystery as it pertains to the human person, Schumacher presents an understanding of difference-in-unity in the Son’s revelation of the Father through obedient surrender and how it reveals the disposition of faith.
Schumacher finally examines the theology of Thomas Aquinas in hopes of initiating a dialog with Thomist scholars who often challenge Balthasar’s theology. She does so in a spirit of Christian unity, playing upon the concept of unity-in-difference within the teachings of Balthasar and Aquinas.

This excellent and highly documented work requires substantial background knowledge of Trinitarian and anthropological theology. It is appropriate for use in graduate and post-graduate studies in theology and philosophy.

Twelve Essential Skills for Great Preaching,
ISBN 9780805432978

Reviewed by Gary R. Averill, Librarian, Spiritual Life Bible College, Minneapolis, MN

This book is a revision of the author’s 1994 book with the same name. He says that it is expanded and revised but the length of the book is not much longer than the original. According to the author, this book was totally revised due to his experiences in teaching this subject, feedback from his family, as well as due to letters and comments he received over the years about the book. He considers this to be a book on how to write an expository sermon, defining expository as exposing “the meaning of a text of scripture.” He breaks the book into four sections: text analysis, theological interpretation, sermon development, and sermon design (each of these sections has an introductory chapter before he introduces the skills). He further breaks down each section of this book into three skills/chapters. The first section is diagramming the text structure, noting the text structure, and asking research questions. Second is naming the text idea, bridging text to sermon, and writing sermon divisions. The third section is balancing persuasive elements, exploring natural analogies, and drawing pictures/telling stories. The last section is touching the human experience, aiming for the faith response, and planning the oral presentation. The book is very technical and is at times hard to understand for the novice. He does not use a sample scriptural text to help the reader understand the author’s process. The reader has to rely on samples of sermons which show each step of the process. So, doing a sermon at the same time the reader is reading this book would be a good idea. As well as questions at the end of each chapter, there is a template for the skill that chapter is teaching. The author states that this book is for the beginning preacher as well as the experienced preacher. This text is based on a class that he taught on the doctoral level, so this is more for the experienced preacher. This book is also available on the Logos Software.