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## BOOK REVIEW

**Devasiachan Mukulathu, *The Mystery of Trinity. The Relevance and Importance of the Most Holy Trinity in the Christian Arena based on the Writings of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, Bengaluru: Dharmaram Publications, 2019. Pages: xviii + 356. ISBN: 978-93-84964-98-6**

This excellent work is the doctoral dissertation of the author Devasiachan Mukulathu, CMI, defended at the Faculty of Theology of Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Benagluru in August 2018. It must have been for him certainly an adventure to take the theme of the most Holy Trinity for his doctoral research, that too based on the works of a profound and difficult theologian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century H.U.v. Balthasar, considering the depth and number of the writings of this eminent Swiss theologian in general and on this topic in particular! As we go through the pages of this dissertation we can only admire the strenuous work of Mukulathu in having elucidated the theme so beautifully and effectively in four chapters! The work has been divided into five chapters in total, of which the first chapter is an elaborate discussion on the significance and the scriptural understanding of the mystery of Trinity in nearly 60 pages. This chapter takes us through some important and relevant thoughts on the Trinitarian images and manifestation in history, human person as the image of the Trinity, the human family, the society, the church, and the world as the symbol of the Trinity, Trinity as the model of any human community, Trinity and interreligious dialogue, Trinity in the holy Scriptures, Trinity and the liturgy, Trinitarian theology of the Fathers of the church, and the theology of the Trinity according to Thomas Aquinas. This chapter itself is a serious exploration and presentation.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the theology of God the Father and the Son according to Balthasar. In eighty pages the author gives us a detailed picture of the theme very clearly and playfully brings out the Theo-Drama of Balthasar. The poetic imagination of Balthasar envisages the Christ-event as the mutual dramatic involvement of the Father and the Son under the direction of the Holy Spirit! This is an aesthetic masterpiece in the field of drama as well as theology, or in other words, Theo-Drama. The theological insights of Balthasar become thus an object of enjoyable reading and visualized screen play! The

creative elements in this presentation are expressed by the Kenosis of the Father and Super Kenosis. Here we have a novel theology of the Holy Saturday as an experience of suffering within Godhead on the one hand and the revelation of the Son's love for humanity on the other. Regarding Jesus Christ, the new understanding is that in him the beauty of God takes form (*Gestalt*). The cross is viewed as the event of Trinitarian surrender. In this context Jesus' cry of abandonment gets primacy over all other words of the Lord from the cross. This abandonment is for Balthasar a modality of the inner Trinitarian act. The cross is at the same time the full achievement of the divine judgement on sin. Mukulathu has also highlighted the mystical aspect of the theology of with Balthasar in reference to the mystery of the Holy Saturday. This is traced back to the influence of the visionary Adrienne von Speyer.

Chapter 3 is on the Trinitarian revelation of God the Holy Spirit. Here we have a profound Pneumatology that has bearing on the mutual indwelling (*perichoresis*) of the divine Persons. The chapter offers a theology of personhood of the Holy Spirit. The role of the Spirit in the Christ-event is splendidly discussed at length in this chapter. This is something marvellous about the whole topic. Balthasar speaks also of a *kenosis* of the Spirit.

The special theological contribution of the author consists in having brought out and illustrated the relevance of the Trinity in ecclesiology and Mariology. This is the theme in chapter 4. Equally informative and significant is the chapter 5 in which the author highlights the importance of the Trinity on certain practical domains, such as religious vocation, vows, prayer, and gender discussion. A very enlightening and inspiring chapter in view of spirituality with practical applications! The General Conclusion gives us a clear picture of the whole thesis in a very systematic manner. The book provides the reader with a detailed bibliography of primary and secondary sources (38 pages) as well as a useful general index (10 pages).

The author Mukulathu deserves all praise and recognition for this achievement! The work is worthy of recommendation to students of theology and spirituality, especially to those who are interested in the theology of the most Holy Trinity and the mystical-poetic-aesthetic theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar. The work is distinguished for its lucid presentation, clear structuring and systematic discussion. It is in this also a model for those who are engaged in theological scientific research work in systematic theology. I sincerely congratulate the author on his contribution and wish the work wide readership.

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