

## **New Scholars**

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### **The Abstract of the Thesis: 'Mary as Dramatic Person', A Marian Foundation of Moral Life Based on the Theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar**

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Catholic moral theology has undergone a renewal during the last twenty years. A rediscovery of the theological dimensions of the moral life was the most important consequence of this renewal. The main emphasis of this theological investigation was in relation to the anthropological, ecclesial and above all to the Christological roots of morality. Along with this, the attention to the Marian dimension is a recent development in Christian moral theology. This aspect was largely ignored in the pre-conciliar manuals of moral theology. The missing consideration was regained by the Second Vatican Council. It presents Mary as the model of virtue and as archetype of the Church (LG, 53, 63, 65). But even after such positive signs and proposals, the post-conciliar period proved to be incapable of expressing the real significance of the figure of Mary in the ecclesial and personal configuration of Christian morality. Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905-1988), in his account on the theo-dramatic role of the Blessed Virgin Mary, gives a new impetus to the emergence postulated by the Council. He presents Marian existence as 'dramatic' and her *fiat* as 'the paradigm for the faith response of the entire Church'.

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## 1. A Résumé of the Research

The key to this research is theo-drama: the drama opened by the God-man, Jesus Christ, in which each one is invited to participate by one's very birth. Mary is involved in the plan of salvation through her election from the very beginning and through her whole-hearted cooperation. Balthasar shows how Mary, in her person and her life, insofar as she is closely united with Christ, can in some sense be considered as foundation of Christian morality.

The failure of modern ethics results from replacing the dialogical principle of Christian faith with the monological principle (pure reason, ethical autonomy). Faced with such deviated forms of moral perspectives, every moral discourse ends up with uncertainty. In order to overcome such difficulties Balthasar stood for a theological ethics. According to this, moral life should primarily respond to this ontological beginning i.e., human creation in Christ and the call to be sons and daughters in Christ. It is only here that one's freedom is opened to the divine freedom and the dignity of the human person is respected in all levels. The **first part** of the thesis thus offers a theological foundation to the moral thinking and an ontological relationship of Mary to the humanity. Based on the Christian revelation Balthasar calls for a Christocentric ethics. According to him moral life is not striving for unity of 'what one is' and 'what one should be', for it is already realized in Jesus. Through the incarnation, all dichotomies are resolved in Jesus and only by participating in Christ, the *Universal Concretum*, human person can find fulfilment. Mary, being the person completely united to Christ (as Mother and Bride), shows that one cannot 'relativise' the truth or be indifferent to the events, rather attests that the particular choices are possible without violating the universal ones.

The second part of the thesis (3 and 4 chapters) mainly concentrates on Mary's exemplar existence. Her exemplarity is not something comprised in her Trinitarian origin or Immaculate Conception alone, but in her free and loving response in the concrete living situations. For her *fiat* was not an answer to the riddle but a way of life. Thus Blessed Virgin Mary proves that Christian moral life is the fruit of mature freedom and co-operation to the grace of God. Balthasar begins the treatise on Mary by presenting her role as woman. It is precisely as a woman that she has co-operated in redemption. Thus, Balthasar emphasises the importance of the femininity and masculinity and the dignity of each person in human history. Whatever may be one's state of life, the realization comes from the

fulfilling of our highest vocation, the call to love.

Another great concern of humanity is in the realization of person's existence. The **third part** of the thesis (5th chapter) shows that there is an essential unity and distinction between the heaven and earth. It also recalls the different poles of human life. The genuine answer to the enigmas of human existence (Spirit-body, man-woman, individual-community), does not consist in the mere resignation to the fate in which one is born or in the negation of the other pole, but in the reciprocity. Only through this reciprocity one can attain fulfilment. Mary, being faithful and truthful to her existence manifests that these different poles are not obstacles for co-existence but enhance it. Following the supreme example of Jesus, the Marian *fiat* shows the real nature of freedom as obedience to supreme truth.

For Balthasar, the greatness of Mary can be summarised in her theo-dramatic existence. This theo-dramatic existence depends upon her Christocentric existence. The Blessed Virgin Mary shows that the theo-dramatic challenge of each person is to follow Christ in his poverty and perfect obedience. The Marian foundation of ethics enables the Christians to overcome the difficulties they face, both in the moral and ethical realms. This adequately answers the dichotomies (natural vs. supernatural, divine vs. human, autonomous vs. heteronomous, etc.) that make the Christian ethics in a dilemma. Thus it calls for a moral life which is more positive because the merit consists not in conformity to the laws but in doing the will of the Lord. From a Marian perspective, morality is understood not as a set of rules but rather as 'a privilege' to serve God and others as the child of God. Our study which began with the exploration of the foundations of Balthasarian ethics, then proceeded to examine the role of Mary in the theology of Balthasar and her exemplar existence with its contents as love and *sequela Christi* is culminated in the *telos* of human action i.e., the original Trinitarian communion.