

Kevin Wagner, M. Isabell Naumann, Peter John McGregor, and Paul Morrissey, eds. *Mariology at the Beginning of the Third Millennium*. Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick, 2017, 254+ pp.

This volume forms part of the Australian-based series, *Theology at the Beginning of the Third Millennium*, which explores themes in contemporary Catholic theology. In general, the book will please a traditional Catholic readership, because there are several chapters which are deferent to Church documents and, in particular, the legacy of Pope St John Paul II. Mariusz Biliniewicz gives us a respectful overview of the Mariology of Pope St John Paul II; Renée Köhler-Ryan explores the tradition of Mary as the seat of wisdom with John Paul II's *Fides et Ratio* as a major source; Christopher John Wolter considers Mary in the Eucharistic liturgy. There is not much analysis in the book of the more challenging Third Millennium questions of feminism, gender, and sexuality which could arise from the fact Mary is a Christian icon of the feminine and of motherhood.

The opening chapter, by M. Isabell Naumann, in title the same as the book, promises to explore these areas because of some of the sources she cites: feminists like Levine, Johnson, Maeckelberghe, Gebara & Bingemer. However, these are mentioned but not discussed: much of her chapter is more useful as a resource list rather than a fresh analysis. Ultimately, it is von Balthasar who gets the final word, and Naumann restates Vatican II formulations of Mary as the ecclesial icon of faith. Naumann seems to be arguing against the seeping indifference about Mary in some sections of the Church, but whether a restatement of *Lumen Gentium*, *Marialis Cultus*, and *Redemptoris Mater* will be sufficient to convince them, I am not sure. Establishing the relationship of Mary to contemporary questions of culture and society might better stimulate a

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revival; Naumann's treatment of culture is simply a reference to the nuances of Marian imagery in various parts of the world derived from the work of Johann Roten.

On the other hand, the most radical exploration comes from Matthew John Paul Tan, who considers 'Marian epistemology'. Tan wants to remind the Catholic world of its own legacy of uncertain knowing as opposed to dogmatic faith, expressed in the *Lumen Gentium* articulation of the Church as a pilgrim people. Mary, as Tan rightly observes, quoting the ARCIC document *Mary, Grace and Hope in Christ*, is the person regarded in Catholic (and Orthodox) theology as the one closest to Christ, the exemplar of believing in and relating to him. However, in the gospels, Mary—echoing Paul in 1 Corinthians 13—does not know perfectly what is happening, but 'in part'. In Luke, she wonders about the events that are unfolding, and her developing understanding emerges only from living and relating. In this respect, according to Tan, she represents a postmodern view of knowledge as partial and communal, against sections of the Church aligned with 'certain institutions, practices, and premises that embody modern forms of knowing' (196), based on 'bureaucratic or instrumental reason' (195). Tan suggests an engagement with standpoint feminism as a dialogue partner for Mariology, because it relativizes knowledge according to the position of the knower, thus necessitating relationship and community as the way forward to a better knowing. Tan's chapter is thus an example of a radical drawing out of those tendencies in Vatican II which act as insider criticisms of some of the overly dogmatic and hierarchical tendencies of the Church, and he uses the iconic tradition of Mary as Church quite tellingly in making his argument.

Four chapters look at Marian themes in the gospels. Joseph Azize, a Maronite, wants to defend the Gospel of Mark from the recent commonly held view among scholars that it downplays the importance of Mary and the family of Jesus (I wonder if this chapter underwent a substantial late edit, as Azize does not include elements that are promised in the pre-chapter abstract, i.e. post-biblical traditions). The fact that Mark is thought to be the earliest gospel and Mary is only briefly mentioned in it might be seen to be an obstacle to an

argument that Mary was a figure of importance at the very beginning of the Church (as Luke-Acts and John seem to imply). Azize denies this and defends the unity of the gospels on this point; Mark is merely stressing the priority of faith in God above family loyalty. Azize might have made more use of recent scholarship that explores the sidelining of James, the brother of Jesus, in the early Church; this surely has relevance to Mark's view of the family. James' removal from the gospel tradition is at the same time the marginalisation of Jewish Christianity. A post-Holocaust view of Mary, I suggest, should place some emphasis on the fact that she was a believing Jew, but I did not find this perspective in the book.

Peter John McGregor and a second chapter by M. Isabell Naumann focus on Mary as a model of dialogue, based on the gospels of Luke and John. McGregor draws on Joseph Ratzinger's writing on Mary's prayerfulness and her dialogue with Christ at the wedding of Cana. In his chapter, Mary as icon of the Church is related to the Christian participation in the three-fold ministry of Christ: Priest, Prophet, and King. Naumann includes a discussion of the meaning of the Greek word *kecharitomene*, usually translated as 'full of grace' or 'highly favoured', and follows René Laurentin in seeing the divine grace as not merely being in or on Mary, but also transforming her. It refers to her vocation, one which is shared by everyone in the Church.

These chapters I found to be useful but fairly standard reiterations of Church teaching on Mary. I was more intrigued by the contribution of Robert Tilley on Mary as the Temple drawing on the Gospels of John and Luke. He argues that the modern (and postmodern) world may have lost the sense of how the structure of buildings expresses meaning; there is too much focus on immediacy and function. The Temple's structure, with its Holy of Holies, articulates hierarchy of space, and the Bible too can be read with a hierarchy of meanings (using the pre-modern concept of *Quadriga*). So the crucifixion narrative in John is more central than other passages, and there stands Mary, as anticipated at the wedding of Cana. In Luke, we see the Temple mentioned at the beginning of both the Gospel and Acts, and again there is Mary. Mary is thus an icon of the

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Temple, the locus of God's presence. Tilley's writing conveys a sense of the mystical wonder of scripture and of Mary's place in it.

Bernard Doherty helps us understand Catholicism in the Third Millennium context by looking at some of the divergent cults that have evolved recently around Marian apparitions. His examples are Australian: the 'Magnificent Meal Movement International' and the 'Order of Saint Charbel'. He shows how the groups have reacted against the Church's downplaying of a 'high' Mariology and its perennial caution about private revelations. To these movements, Doherty applies a sociological model: that of Bromley and Bobbitt in 2001. It is refreshing to see an exploration of apparitions that have not been approved, something I have included in my own research, as these can inform us a great deal about contemporary Catholic society and its diversity (for both Doherty and myself, this interest does not necessarily lead to support for the claims of the visionaries involved, as some of these are quite questionable and clearly based on self-promotion).

Kevin Wagner tackles an interesting subject with respect to Mary and motherhood: that of barrenness. He finds patristic theological resources in order to reflect on this condition. Barrenness is a common motif in the scriptures, although usually with the happy resolution of late pregnancy (Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth). Early Christian literature on unresolved barrenness stresses its purifying nature along with the possibility of 'spiritual parenthood', while reminding Christians about the difficulties of actual parenting, the avoidance of which may compensate for the sense of loss. Altogether, this is an interesting and thought-provoking reflection on a neglected subject, although Mary is only tangential in this chapter.

Along with the preface by Paul Morrissey and a couple of other contributions that express some concern about the diminution of the importance of Mary in modern Catholicism, Robin Koning is critical of the replacement of Mary by the Holy Spirit in the Triple Colloquy of the Ignatian Exercises. The rationale for this seems reasonable at first: the Trinitarian logic of this revision and the desire

for an ecumenical approach given that many non-Catholics engage with the Exercises. However, Koning shows that the change is inauthentic when we consider Ignatius' theology and that of his sources. Mary is at the heart of Ignatian spirituality. In the Triple Colloquy, Mary prays to Jesus, Jesus in his humanity prays to the Father, and thus Mary and Jesus are 'two mediators' although different in kind. To replace Mary by the Holy Spirit at this point is to alter the original thinking behind these mediations. Therefore, Koning cogently provides a critique of ecumenical thinking which sloppily overlooks the integral place of Mary in Christian theology.

The Orthodox scholar Mario Baghos' article on the Theotokos as protectress of Constantinople and Rome is the only one from outside the Catholic communion. This chapter contrasts the religious imagery of pre-modern Christian cities with modern and ancient pre-Christian cities, both of which he sees as bastions of the 'cult of the soldier' while the Christian cities exemplified the cult of the saints. This has a romantic, 'golden age' feel to it. Modern cities certainly express a triumphalist sense of national glory and there are numerous grand memorials of military victories (and defeats). That much is true, but should we really accept such a strong contrast with pre-modern Christian citizens, their civic pride and military ambitions? I certainly prefer a medieval chapel with mural of Madonna and Child to a nineteenth century military statue but yet I don't think so. Baghos does offer some caveats, but there is the danger of a simplistic analysis here. The chapter scarcely hides the fact that, really, Baghos wants to teach us about the Theotokos in historical Constantinople and Rome in a volume about Mary in the Third Millennium. At least it will guide the religious tourist around the historical sites in those cities.

Overall, we have a book that is intended to appeal to Catholics and scholars of modern Catholicism. Given the title, I would like to have some more grappling with Third Millennium issues and how Mary speaks to them: as well as gender and sexuality, also Christian-Muslim relations, asylum seeking, climate change, the global economy. The figure of Mary relates to all of these contemporary challenges; Mary most definitely does have a place in Catholic public theology. Yet the book stays mainly within the field of Mariology and the

scriptural Mary inside the safe walls of an inward-looking Roman Catholic thought world. Within those limits, however, it does the job well with plenty of interesting insights and so it will be a valuable addition to the Catholic library.

*Chris Maunder,*

*York St John University and the Centre of Marian Studies*