

MARY IN CONTEMPORARY AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

- Conveners: Dorian Llywelyn, Loyola Marymount University
 Wendy M. Wright, Creighton University
- Moderator: Dorian Llywelyn, Loyola Marymount University
- Presenters: Aurelie Hagstrom, Providence College
 Kathleen McManus, The University of Portland
 LaReine-Marie Mosely, Loyola University, Chicago.

At this initial meeting of the *Mary in Contemporary and Global Perspective* Interest Group, three shorter papers were presented, with the intention of exploring some contours of what is a polymorphous field that embraces an apparently limitlessly expansive range of kinds of theological endeavor ideological predilections. Aurelie Hagstrom's presentation, "Mary as the Hospitality of God," by way of an introductory exploration of the social location and current state of the drive for a fifth Marian dogma (Mary as Co-Redemptrix), reminded listeners of the sans-pareil influence of devotion in theologies of Mary. However, rather than espousing titles that are either unbiblical or prone to ecumenical misunderstanding, Hagstrom instead proposes hospitality as a prime lens through which Mary's role in the salvific economy may be viewed. Where salvation is envisaged under the overarching metaphor of hospitality (one recently also explored, incidentally, in Cleo McNelly Kearns, *The Virgin Mary, Monotheism and Sacrifice*), this topos which unites alimentary, social and covenantal motifs finds many scriptural echoes, ranging from the hospitality of Abraham at the oak of Mamre, through the Psalms, to the central reality of the Eucharist. In this construal, Mary can be seen to be not only the recipient of the hospitality of God. She also actively participates in and extends that hospitality: Mary's *fiat* signals that in the Incarnation, she makes a place for God that is inseparably and indivisibly body and spirit. Subsequently, at Calvary, Mary becomes a channel of grace and healing, in that she assumes an ecclesially and universally directed "maternity of hospitality" that is, *mutatis mutandis*, equally incarnational. As Mother of the Church as well as Mother of God, Mary participates in, distributes and sustains what flows from the superabundance of divine grace.

The "high" Marian theology of Hagstrom's paper melded dogmatic, scriptural and devotional categories. In its emphasis on Mary's unique role in the economy of salvation and her maternity in respect of the Church, it therefore was complemented by and contrasted with Kathleen McManus's presentation, "Guadalupe and the Gospel." Stressing that the Guadalupe event is rooted in the concrete history of a people, and that there always exists a dynamic tension between particular cultures and the Scriptures, McManus provided a useful overview of some comparatively recent Mariologies. These included Boff's vision of Mary as the maternal face of God, Spretnak's reclaiming of Mary as Queen of Heaven, and Ross's insistence on the potential benefits of high Mariologies, especially to women and subaltern groups. The figure of Guadalupe, McManus holds, is not limited to her role as ethnic or socio-economic palladium. Rather, Guadalupe

has much to offer to emerging cosmologies, including new perspectives on science that challenge the borders of Kantian perceptions of reality. Drawing from Bernard of Clairvaux and Teilhard *inter alia*, McManus proposes a Mary who is fully a companion in the plan of redemption, yet also a woman whose humanity has been completely transfigured (along the lines of the *theosis* central to Eastern Christian spirituality) by her relationship with God. Consequently, Mary images the Creator God more fully than does any other human.

The theme of Mary as companion was taken up in LaReine-Marie Mosely's presentation, "Mary of Nazareth for a Vulnerable World." Mosely's historically focused approach presented Mary as one who accompanies Christians, particularly those who live in situations of socio-economic, political, and ecological vulnerability. Given her own struggle as a poor Jewish peasant struggling to live her life in freedom, Mary serves as moral exemplar of faith and source of inspiration, hope and confidence, especially in those places in our world which share experience oppression as she did in her own time and place, including today's Egypt, Libya, and Yemen. Mary's own articulation of the precise nature of her servanthood in the Magnificat expresses a life that, although marked by suffering, is not completely circumscribed by it. Mosely's presentation referenced the 1987 ecumenical Asian Women Theologians' Conference, which called for "a reversal of the present order," so germane to the spirit of the Magnificat. Among the concerns of some contemporary theologies of Mary are "saving Mariology from the control of Catholic male celibates," given that "the exaltation of Mary has been a source of oppression for women." In response to this, Mosely presents a Mary who is fundamentally sister rather than mother, inspirer rather than intercessor. The Mariology deriving from and shaping this portrayal is firmly based in the Scriptures, the pre-eminent place of encounter with the divine. The historical Mary lived an exemplary openness to God and received salvation through her *fiat*. This Mary, Mosely holds, is more likely to engender hope and confidence, and this-worldly action, especially among the most vulnerable of this world, than an over-spiritualized Mariology and a concomitantly over-spiritualized soteriology.

The second half of the meeting was dedicated to a consideration of the broad theme "whither Mariology?" Given the eschewal of the very term by Elizabeth Johnson and others, as redolent of an outworn, preconiliar Marian theology that concentrate on Mary's unique privileges, this was a potentially controversial question. Extensive discussion, involving almost all attendees, followed the three presentations. Marian theology over the last generation has been greatly energized by particularly by the contribution of women, and it is noteworthy that women far outnumbered men in the session. Consequently, the conversation embraced some concerns of feminist theologies of Mary, along with what could be termed "post-feminist Mariology." The wide-ranging comments suggest that the interest in Marian studies is both intergenerational and interdisciplinary. Contemporary Marian scholarship appears to be moving beyond the potential impasses of "high" vs. "low" Mariologies, towards a theology that takes religious practice and liturgy as a significant datum. In Latin American, Orthodox, and Eastern Catholic

Christianities the figure of Mary occupies a role far greater than she is allotted in much of recent US Catholic academic theology, a contrast which suggests the need for a discussion of the vibrant relationship between dogma and doctrine, Scripture, the praxis of faith and culture.

DORIAN LLYWELYN

Loyola Marymount University

Los Angeles, California