

Reviews

MARIA ALS DRAMATISCHE PERSON BEI HANS URS VON BALTHASAR. ZUM MARIANISCHEN PRINZIP SEINES DENKENS by Hilda Steinhauer, Innsbrück-Vienna, Tyrolia Verlag, 2001 (=Salzburger Theologische Studien, 17). Pp. 579.

This study corresponds to the archetype of German theological scholarship. Conceptually highly ambitious, copiously footnoted, written in a syntactically complex but lucid prose, and leaving nothing to the Day of Judgment. Its particular merits are twofold. First, it contextualises the Mariology of Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) in a wide-ranging survey of Mariological writing both before and after the Second Vatican Council. Secondly, by incorporating all Balthasar's Marian essays or *aperçus* into the framework of his theological dramatics (*Theodramatik* 1973–1983), the coherence of his Mariological work can be established and its ability to fill the lacunae left by other writers' Mariological projects explored.

The justification for this procedure must be that the lion's share of what Balthasar has to say about the Mother of Jesus is in fact found in the dramatics. It is not to be found, that is, in the aesthetics, nor in the logic: those remaining parts of Balthasar's trilogy, his chief contribution to the theological culture of the Catholic Church. By consulting the contents pages of the book under review, students of Balthasar's thought will be able to find his comments on any aspect of Mariology wherever treated in his corpus. But they will find these comments re-ordered via the categories that are proper to the theological dramatics, to—then—a salvation-historical account of how Scripture and Tradition present the divine goodness in action and a metaphysical account of the presuppositions in the freedom of both God and man which the drama of salvation requires and contains.

This might make it sound as though, for her own pedagogical purposes, Hilda Steinhauer has forced this literature down onto a Procrustean bed. That would be a false conclusion to draw. Though Balthasar is probably still best known for his theological aesthetics, the dramatics are the real centre of his thought. The aesthetics are eye-catching prolegomena to the dramatics, the logic a retrospective on the truth-value of their content.

Readers of *Theo-drama* who have persevered through all five volumes will find no surprises in the chief themes: the Marian character of creation as such; the Marian principle in the Church; the

crucial Marian motif of virginal fruitfulness, and the locating of the Mother of God in terms of three polarities: paradise and fallenness, Old Covenant and New, time and the eternal. What they will find more surprising—but, in these pages, persuasively argued—are two wider theses about this choice of themes and its handling.

Balthasar, Steinbauer argues, intended his Mariological work as a response to the shortcomings of both the prevailing 'maximalism' of pre-Conciliar Mariology and the equally striking minimalist character of many of its post-Conciliar successors. (She shows, for instance, his very mixed feelings about the key Mariological passage in the documents of Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* VIII). She also maintains that his theology as a whole has the Marian as its single most 'comprehensive dimension'. The reason is that, without occupying the space opened up by the Mother of the Lord, a Trinitarian theology of the Cross (of the kind Balthasar offers) becomes inaccessible, and solidarity with the redeemed in the community of the Cross (as Balthasar understands this) an impossibility. If this second thesis is true, it is surely owing to the influence on Balthasar of Adrienne von Speyr, his co-worker and mystical counsellor. From that point of view it is a pity—albeit from the angle of literary manageability an understandable one—that Steinbauer laid down a self-denying ordinance: she would not look into Speyr's work. What she *has* given us is, however, of extraordinary doctrinal richness and density.

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A JOURNEY WITH JONAH: The Spirituality of Bewilderment, by Paul Murray OP, *Columba Press, Blackrock 2002, Pp. 69, £4.99, pbk.*

Among the characteristics that can be identified as typical of the dove (as depicted in the Hebrew Scriptures), two in particular stand out. When put to flight it seeks secure refuge in the high ridges, and, secondly, it moans and carries on a sustained lament when it finds itself in distress. No wonder that Paul Murray makes capital out of the fact that the Hebrew word for dove is *jona*!

One might wish to sit-in on a retreat conference given by Paul Murray; or yearn possibly to overhear what a contemporary Catholic preacher makes of the Book of Jonah; then again curiosity might get the better of you when you hear that Murray calls this short biblical text 'the most Irish' page in the Scriptures! If so, this slim book is for you. It is short and witty. But Paul addresses some of modern man's groping about for meaning and for compassion, and helps to direct that search along a Christian path.

A Journey with Jonah is not, of course, a scholarly work of biblical interpretation. (Had it been, the undersigned would certainly