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Book Review: Apologia Pro Beata Maria Virgine: John Henry Newman's Defence of the Virgin Mary in Catholic Doctrine and Piety

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Apologia Pro Beata Maria Virgine: John Henry Newman's Defence of the Virgin Mary in Catholic Doctrine and Piety. By Robert M. Andrews. Washington: Academic Press, 2017. Pp 130. Price \$76.95 (pbk). ISBN 9781680530384

Robert Andrews argues compellingly that Blessed Cardinal John Henry Newman's status as a Marian theologian is sadly under-appreciated. This is a double tragedy, given his influence on the contemporary Church, especially through Vatican II.

Situating "defence" in the title of this book is important because it indicates the climate in which Newman wrote. Newman had to defend Marian theology and devotion not only against Anglican aversion to Mary, but also Continental Catholic excesses in devotion. Thus, by offering an account of Newman's Marian theology as an apologetic, which defended Mary both from without and from within, Newman's theology and Andrews' account of it are of significant ecumenical import.

Collaterally, by explaining Newman's criticism of "exaggerated Catholicism," this book highlights Newman's considerable personal fortitude and courage. That is, even though he was in the vulnerable position of a convert, Newman was not intimidated into silence against the excesses of the Ultramontanes of his time.

Andrews' book explains clearly how Newman developed in his appreciation of Mary. This gave his Mariology a personal and an apologetic concern. It is easy to see in this work how Mariology for Newman was not just an abstract theological issue, but an essential part of his spirituality.

Accordingly, Newman's Mariology is analogous with his faith journey in relation to the Church of England. That is, just as with Newman's personal faith, was the Church of England

Protestant or Catholic? From another perspective, Mariology was vital to the question of whether the Church of England had Catholic credentials. Thus, this book explains well how its approach to Mary served as a litmus test for the Church of England's claim to represent authentic Anglo-Catholicism.

While answering those questions, the book simultaneously explains the history of the development of Marian theology and devotion in England and, through the person of John Henry Newman, clarifies much of Marian theology in today's Catholic Anglosphere.

The book's first chapter explains the context of Anglican suspicion of Mariolatry. Most certainly, Marian devotion was manifestly absent until Catholic emancipation. Even then, Catholics would "filter" perceived Continental Marian excesses, which seemed to be both excessively "Catholic" and signs of Catholic disloyalty to England.

Newman experienced his faith journey in this context. Beginning with Calvinist- Evangelical influence, he moved into the High Church, which was more 'catholic' but still anti-Marian. Yet, Newman found himself in the High Church having reverence for Mary's virtue or transcendent purity. In that context, he was able to embrace Mary's sinlessness by 1840. But what drove Newman to this developed Mariology was ultimately not a difficulty with Anglican doctrine, but the challenge of remaining within the Anglican system. So, if Newman's increasing faith in Mary accompanied a declining faith in Anglicanism, this book raises an interesting historical question. What would have been Newman's theological development, exemplified in his Mariology, had he been not so disillusioned by the Anglican Church?

The second chapter provides some helpful information and clarifications with regard to the development of doctrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Newman's reflection on Mary's "pondering these things in her heart" is a model for the development of doctrine in the

Church. Mary's "pondering," relied on the same revelation being realised and better understood through time. At the same time, Newman's theology highlights the importance of Mary as the exemplar of the Church, which was so important for Vatican II. Thus, for Newman, Mary is the first Christian not only in the chronological sense of being "the Second Eve," but also in the sense of her pre-eminence in the Church.

Those points relate to Newman's manifest conviction that that authentic Mariology is ultimately Christology. Just as Ephesus' affirmation of *Theotokos* is an affirmation of Christ's divinity, Newman posts that all Mariology points to truths about Christ.

The third chapter clarifies Newman's argument that Marian devotion is rooted in Patristic teaching, a point so important for reconciling the Anglican and Catholic positions. This chapter also deals well with Newman's Mariology as a defence against extremes. The Ultramontanes are identified as "forceful and florid" while he declares the religion of the multitude to always be vulgar and abnormal. While such a statement may seem elitist to readers today, it situates Newman as a "radical moderate," one who goes to the very foundations of Christianity and who is, in his own self, the *via media* sought by so many Anglicans and Catholics.

In conclusion, this very helpful and clearly written book focusses on Newman's theological development. Yet it also reveals Newman's parallel devotional development, which would be a most fruitful topic for later study.

This book demonstrates convincingly five crucial points. First, that there is continuity in Newman's thought. He developed with authenticity from his home denomination, to become both Anglican and Catholic, thus being a "fulfilled Anglican." So this book is a useful resource for those trying to reconcile the Anglican and Roman traditions. Secondly, the book explains how Newman eschewed continental excess, without necessarily condemning it. He

thus foreshadowed the cultural pluralism that would be more common after Vatican II.

Thirdly, Andrews clarifies Newman's distinction of faith from devotion. Fourthly, this book highlights Newman's grounding of Mariology firmly in the patristic tradition, something that is as important now to ecumenism as it was to Anglican-Catholic relations in Newman's time. Fifthly, the book explains Newman's thoughts on Mariology as a model for the development of doctrine. This point is most important for those interested in Newman's theology on the development of doctrine. Andrews' book shows not only *that* Newman theologised on the development of doctrine but the book shows *how* he did it with respect to Mary.

The ultimate question for which Newman had an answer, and which Andrews covers very well, is whether Mary is understood in herself, which is worship; or venerated in relation to Christ and the Church? The way that Andrews covers Newman's answer is an important contribution not only to Newman scholarship but also ecumenical theology.

For the reasons above, this book is highly recommended to those interested in Newman, in Mariology and in Catholic relations with other churches.

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