



## Mary, the Reformation and some Scots! In Memory of John Macquarrie (1919–2007)

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### Abstract

Since Vatican II great progress has been made towards an ecumenical understanding and appreciation of our Blessed Lady, even as there has been a certain development in Catholic understanding. This essay looks briefly at Reformation mariologies, those of Luther, Calvin and Zwingli before moving on to consider three Scots: John Knox, Edwin Muir and John Macquarrie. Arguably, John Macquarrie has shown one of the most careful retrievals of Marian theology, not least in his *Principles of Christian Theology* and *Mary for All Christians*. His final mariological sounding took him back to his Celtic roots, and is summarized here. John Macquarrie died in 2007, and this essay is dedicated to his memory.

### Keywords

Mary, Reformation, Edwin Muir, John Macquarrie.

The widespread assertion that the Reformers ignored the Virgin Mary and had no Mariology is not tenable.

George Tavad.<sup>1</sup>

If Moltmann represents Protestant minimalism (in his *The Way of Jesus Christ*), then Anglican theologian John Macquarrie represents a kind of Protestant maximalism.

Beverly R. Gaventa.<sup>2</sup>

### Mary and Vatican Council II

One of the contributing elements to an appropriation of the place of Mary in the Reformation tradition has been the treatment of Mary

<sup>1</sup> George Tavad, *The Thousand Faces of the Blessed Virgin* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 126.

<sup>2</sup> Beverly R. Gaventa, *Mary, Glimpses of the Mother of Jesus* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 18.

at the Second Vatican Council and subsequently. Three factors have combined to shape mariological reflection in the forty plus years since the end of Vatican Council II: *Lumen Gentium*, ecumenical dialogue, new theological movements. First, *Lumen Gentium*. At the time of the council, there was some interest in developing a separate document on the Mother of God, but the majority of the council fathers wanted reflection on Mary to constitute an integral part of reflection on the church. Thus, the final chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, “The Constitution on the Church,” is given over to “Our Lady.”<sup>3</sup> Mary is hailed “as pre-eminent and as a wholly unique member of the Church, and as its type and outstanding model in faith and charity.”<sup>4</sup> The Constitution goes on to describe the Virgin Mary’s role in the history of salvation, and treats briefly of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption. It insists with the tradition that “there is but one mediator” and that “Mary’s function as mother of men in no way obscures or diminishes this unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows its power.”<sup>5</sup> Finally, after advocating the legitimate cult of the Blessed Virgin, “especially the liturgical cult,” the Constitution ends with Mary as “sign of true hope and comfort for the pilgrim people of God.”<sup>6</sup>

Second, since Vatican II the entry of the Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement has further contributed to a renewal of Mariology. It has been true until the recent Anglican-Catholic dialogue, as claimed by the veteran ecumenical theologian, the Methodist Geoffrey Wainwright, that “Mary has not so far been the subject of sustained treatment in any modern international bilateral or multi-lateral dialogue,” but that does not mean that there had been no ecumenical advance on the subject.<sup>7</sup> The celebrated ecumenical volume, *Mary in the New Testament*, is one of the best examples of this kind of cooperation.<sup>8</sup> The various contributors to this volume establish very clearly “the plurality and ambiguity of biblical portraits of Mary.”<sup>9</sup> The *Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, founded by the late Martin Gillett, is another example of ecumenical progress. This society was born in Brussels in 1966 during

<sup>3</sup> Austin Flannery, O.P., ed., *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents* (New York: Costello Publishing Company, 1975), 413–423.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 53, 414.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 60, 418.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, par. 68, 422.

<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Is the Reformation Over? Catholics and Protestants at the Turn of the Millennia* (Milwaukee, WI: Marquette University Press, 2000), 53.

<sup>8</sup> Raymond E. Brown, S.S., and others, ed., *Mary in the New Testament* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978).

<sup>9</sup> The phrase is Elizabeth Johnson’s in her article, “Mary, Contemporary Issues,” in Wolfgang Beinert and Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, ed., *Handbook of Catholic Theology* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1995), 460.

celebrations of the fortieth anniversary of the completion of the Malines Conversations (1921–1926), unofficial ecumenical exchanges between Anglicans and Catholics. The society held its first official meeting in 1967 in London and has produced various anthologies of essays on Marian theology. The upshot of these ecumenical essays is to extend the understanding of Mary across the ecumenical divide.

Third, various movements in theology have had their own impact on the development of Marian theology, for example, feminism, liberation theology. John Macquarrie notes: “The new interest in the feminine and the belief that God has for too long been presented in exclusively masculine terms is also leading to a new awareness of Mary and a willingness to reconsider her place in theology...”<sup>10</sup> In the former category one might think of Elizabeth Johnson’s recent work, especially her very fine *Friends of God and Prophets, A Feminist Theological Reading of the Communion of Saints*,<sup>11</sup> or Maurice Hamington’s more radical book, *Hail Mary? The Struggle for Ultimate Womanhood in Catholicism*.<sup>12</sup> Such works challenge the received view of Mary informed by what are taken to be androcentric presuppositions, and search for new, liberating understandings of Mary. For liberation theology Leonardo Boff’s *The Maternal Place of God* is an example of a liberationist theology of Mary.<sup>13</sup> Liberation theologians try to see the potential of Mary, not least in the Magnificat, for a non-oppressive and more just approach to social issues in Latin America and Asia especially. John Macquarrie, the late Anglo-Catholic systematic theologian, was no advocate of feminist or liberation theology, though he has acknowledged some of their values. Rather he tended to respond to more traditional doctrinal categories for Mary, and brought out of his treasury new things and old. Before we look at his contribution, however, it may be helpful to situate him broadly within the Reformation tradition of mariological reflection.

### Mary and the Classical Reformers

In *Civilization, a Personal View*, Kenneth Clark made the following observation: “And so Protestantism became destructive, and from the point of view of those who love what they see, was an unmitigated

<sup>10</sup> All of the chapters, with the exception of chapter 4, of John Macquarrie’s *Mary for All Christians* (London: Collins, 1990), began as papers for the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

<sup>11</sup> (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1999).

<sup>12</sup> (New York: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>13</sup> (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1979).

disaster. . . We all know about the destruction of images. . . how commissioners went round to even the humblest parish church and smashed everything of beauty it contained. . . You can see the results in almost every old church and cathedral in England, and a good many in France. For example, in the Lady Chapel at Ely, all the glass was smashed, and as the beautiful series of carvings of the life of the Virgin was in reach they knocked off every head — made a thorough job of it. I suppose the motive wasn't so much religious as an instinct to destroy anything comely, anything that reflected a state of mind that an unevolved man could not share."<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, the ecumenical theologian George Tavard points out that the Reformers did not ignore the Virgin Mary and that they had a Mariology. On the other hand, Lord Clark points up the devastating iconoclasm of the Reformation, perhaps with a degree of acerbity. It is something of a paradox that both are correct. Our concern, however, will be more with Tavard than with Clark.

"Much to the astonishment of many Protestants and Catholics, it is on the topic of the praise of and devotion to Mary that the reformers were most outspoken."<sup>15</sup> Martin Luther's understanding of Mary was very real, was expressed in hymns that he composed, albeit strongly theocentric and christocentric. She is for him the foremost example of the grace of God, and everyone is utterly dependent upon God's grace. "His aim is not to exalt Mary; it is precisely her humility that is emphasized, in order to praise the greatness of the act of God's mercy. It was through grace that she became the Mother of God, not through merit!"<sup>16</sup> "Luther's warmth towards Mary continued to be expressed in his preaching, which remained tied to the liturgical year, because he kept so much more of the calendar than other churches in the Protestant world. Free to choose which he would retain of the festivals associated with Mary, he kept those which could be seen as centering on Christ rather than Mary: the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Purification."<sup>17</sup> Luther also loved the Magnificat, and so the feast of the Visitation was especially important for him.

In somewhat similar fashion, John Calvin affirmed that everything must be understood in the light of the majesty and glory of God. Calvin was mariologically the minimalist among the Reformers. For

<sup>14</sup> Kenneth Clark, *Civilization, a Personal View* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1969), 159.

<sup>15</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, "Ave Maria: Mary, the Reformers and the Protestants," *One in Christ* 13 (1977), 287.

<sup>16</sup> Gottfried Maron, "Mary in Protestant Theology," in Hans Küng and Jürgen Moltmann, ed., *Mary in the Churches* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983), 41.

<sup>17</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, "Mary and Sixteenth Century Protestants," in R. N. Swanson, ed., *The Church and Mary* (Rochester, NY and Woodbridge, UK: The Boydell Press, 2004), 201.

Calvin Rome had made an idol of Mary and so in Calvin's Geneva all festivals of Mary were suppressed. Nonetheless, he maintains that "the greatest devotion we can give to Mary is if we follow her in discipleship and acknowledge her as our example and teacher."<sup>18</sup>

The third of the classic trio of Reformers, Huldrych Zwingli's Mariology has been thus described: "Mary is an instrument of salvation-history, and a *model* of Christian life, a *sign* and a *witness*, who points to the miracle and mystery of Christ... Zwingli also retains to the last the Marian festivals, but decisively opposes the religious veneration of Mary, and strictly forbids men to worship her, even to call upon her. True honor is done to Mary by caring for the poor."<sup>19</sup> To illustrate Zwingli's position, let us turn to the account of a Franciscan friar from Avignon in France, François Lambert, who had composed a popular devotional work with the title *La Couronne de Notre Seigneur Jésus Christ* about 1520. Though patterned on the rosary, and containing prayers to Mary as well as the angels and saints for their intercession, Lambert had changed the focus from Mary to the mysteries of Christ's life. In 1522 Lambert was in the Fraumünster in Zürich preaching on the intercession of Mary and the Saints. During the sermon he was heckled by Huldrych Zwingli with the words, "Brüder, da irrest du" ("Brother, that's where you're wrong"). The next day he debated with Zwingli. The outcome was Lambert's abandonment of the Franciscan habit and the championing of the cause of the Reformation. The episode witnesses to Zwingli's anti-Marian sentiments, at least to her intercession.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, amongst the Reformers Zwingli was the one who was most socially and politically aware. So, when the question is raised about how properly to praise Mary, this is his response: "Not with candles, incense, hymns and the like. Mary is not poor. She does not need money. She is extremely rich in every respect she does not need us. She does not need treasures, not even special Marian churches. But she needs to be honoured in the women and daughters of the earth. We praise her by spending the money we would otherwise spend on candles, to enhance the dignity of poor daughters and women whose beauty is endangered by poverty."<sup>21</sup> Having taken all of these qualifying comments into consideration, one may still say that, in summary, the Protestant contribution was to prune away excess, to eliminate the medieval mariological axiom "of Mary never enough can be said." That leaves a reduced Mariology, but a Mariology it still is. "Mary must be defended from becoming the product of our pious imagination... The most important fruit of a Protestant contribution

<sup>18</sup> Walter J. Hollenweger, op. cit., 288.

<sup>19</sup> Gottfried Maron, op. cit., 41–42.

<sup>20</sup> Diarmaid MacCulloch, op. cit., 196.

<sup>21</sup> Zwingli is thus paraphrased in Walter J. Hollenweger, op. cit., 288.

might then well be, that behind the rank foliage of a mystical and uncontrolled ‘Mariology’, the real picture of our Lord’s mother would be revealed in a new astringency, simplicity, beauty.”<sup>22</sup>

While iconoclasm was associated especially with the Continental Reformation, it occurred also in England. To take but one example by way of illustration, in May 1549, Archbishop Thomas Cranmer was in St Paul’s Cathedral, London, to preside over the trial of Anabaptist heretics. These Anabaptists had denied the doctrine of the incarnation. The seat of Cranmer as judge at the trial was in fact upon the altar in the Lady Chapel of the cathedral!

### Mary, John Knox and Edwin Muir

In order to get a flavor of Marian theology, and something of its development among some of John Macquarrie’s fellow Scots, we might contrast two Scotsmen who may be said to summarize, at least as a contrast, the place of our Blessed Lady in the Scottish Reformation tradition from the beginnings to the mid-twentieth century: John Knox and Edwin Muir.

First, John Knox (c.1513–1572), the father of the Scottish Reformation. In August, 1547, one hundred and twenty prisoners sailed in French galleys for the coast of Normandy. Among the prisoners was John Knox, a captive for nineteen months and a galley slave. Knox describes how he and three of his companions were forced by their French captors to do reverence to a statue of our Lady: “Soon after the arrival at Nantes, their great *Salve* was sung, and a glorious painted Lady was brought in to be kissed and amongst others, was presented to one of the Scottishmen then chained. He gently said, ‘Trouble me not; such an idol is accursed; and therefore I will not touch it.’ The Patron and the Arguesyn (Lieutenant), with two officers, having the chief charge of all such matters, said, ‘Thou shalt handle it’; and so they violently thrust it to his face, and put it betwixt his hands; who seeing the extremity, took the idol, and advisedly looking about, he cast it in the river, and said, ‘Let our Lady now save herself: she is light enough; let her learn to swim.’ After that was no Scottish man urged with that idolatry.”<sup>23</sup> This episode in Knox’s life demonstrates the firm rejection of the veneration of Mary in Calvinism/Presbyterianism.

Second is the poet Edwin Muir (1887–1959). Born and brought up in Orkney Muir moved with his family to the slums of Glasgow. It was for him a shattering experience for all kinds of very difficult familial and environmental reasons. In his diary for 1939, he wrote:

<sup>22</sup> Gottfried Maron, *op. cit.*, 46.

<sup>23</sup> P. Hume Brown, *John Knox, A Biography* (London: A. & C. Black, 1895), p. 84.

“Once long ago when I was sitting in a crowded tram-car in Glasgow, I was overcome by the feeling that all the people there were animals; a collection of animals all being borne along in a curious contrivance in a huge city where, far and wide, there was not an immortal soul. I did not believe in immortality at the time, and thought I was happy in my unbelief... But now I know that if you deny people immortality you deny them humanity.”<sup>24</sup> Muir moved in a more “Catholic” direction in his appreciation of the Christian tradition, but it was for him a long and painful process of rediscovery. He knew well a certain reading of Calvinist theology/culture:

The Word made flesh here is made word again,  
 a word made word in flourish and arrogant crook,  
 See here King Calvin with his iron pen,  
 And God three angry letters in a book,  
 And there the logical hook  
 On which the Mystery is impaled and bent  
 Into an ideological instrument.<sup>25</sup>

While in Italy, he had been moved by an image of the Annunciation: “I remember stopping for a long time one day to look at a little plaque in the wall of a house in the Via degli Artisti, representing the Annunciation. An angel and a young girl, their bodies inclined towards each other, their knees bent as if they were overcome by love, ‘*tutto tremante*’, gazed upon each other like Dante’s pair; and that representation of a human love so intense that it could not reach further, seemed the perfect earthly symbol of the love that passes understanding.”<sup>26</sup> This encounter led to his poem, “The Annunciation,” which provides attractive mariological insight:

See, they have come together, see  
 While the destroying minutes flow  
 Each reflects the other’s face  
 Till heaven in hers, and earth in his  
 Shine steady there...

Muir was not a theologian, but his time and his work represent a rediscovery of Mary. His rejection, if such it may be called, of Calvinism, is close to that of John Macquarrie, who also reacted against what he took to be the drab Calvinism of his background.

It was the regnant Calvinism in systematic theology when he was a graduate student at the University of Glasgow that created

<sup>24</sup> Cited in Arthur M. Allchin, *The Joy of All Creation, An Anglican Meditation on the Place of Mary* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1984), 131.

<sup>25</sup> Edwin Muir, *Autobiography* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1954), 228.

<sup>26</sup> P. H. Butter, ed., *Selected Letters of Edwin Muir* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1974), 278.



Macquarrie's initial dislike of systematic theology.<sup>27</sup> Macquarrie reveals his distaste for Calvinism and its work ethic in a somewhat humorous passage in a discussion of art: "Having grown up in Scotland, I was early exposed to a very serious view of life. Even before the gloomy shadow of John Calvin fell over Scotland, the harshness of the climate and the bleakness of the terrain had prepared the ground for the Protestant work ethic and for a God who was far from playful. . . I have never lost my respect for the busy little bee (of the Reformed-Calvinist tradition), but in course of time I have come to prefer butterflies."<sup>28</sup> And too, like Edwin Muir, he discovered a fresh approach to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

### John Macquarrie (1919–2007) and Mary

Macquarrie writes: "No ecumenical theology could afford to ignore (Mariology)."<sup>29</sup> A hymn to our Lady composed in 1966, published originally in *Holy Cross Magazine*, May 1966, "Mother of the Church" witnesses to his Marian devotion around the time of the publication of his *Principles of Christian Theology*. The content of the hymn is essentially this: "What we see in Mary, we ought to see in the Church."<sup>30</sup>

Hail, blest Mary! Church's Mother,  
 Virgin Mother, full of grace!  
 Mother of our elder brother,  
 Mother of our renewed race!  
 You, dear Lady, station keeping  
 At the Cross while Jesus died,  
 Heard his voice amid your weeping,  
 'These your children now!' he cried.  
 With apostles you were praying,  
 Saw the Church in finest hour,  
 Spirit-filled, to men displaying  
 God's regenerating power,  
 Blest at last in your dormition,  
 Jesus called you to his side.  
 All your labours find fruition,  
 You are crowned and glorified!

<sup>27</sup> See Owen F. Cummings, *John Macquarrie, A Master of Theology* (New York-Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2002), 8.

<sup>28</sup> John Macquarrie, *In Search of Humanity* (London: SCM Press, 1982), 188.

<sup>29</sup> John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Scribner's, 1977), 393. A helpful situating of Macquarrie on the map of ecumenical Mariology may be found in Donal Flanagan, "Mary and the Unremembered Past," *Doctrine and Life* 43 (1993), 259–266.

<sup>30</sup> John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, 395.



In his ecumenical Marian theology, Fr. George H. Tavard has a fine chapter entitled "Mary in Anglicanism," in which he traces the development of Marian teaching from Thomas Cranmer to the present. Tavard's essay is not intended to be comprehensive and so, while he maintains that it would be "an exaggeration to speak of a Marian movement in contemporary Anglicanism," nonetheless significant contributions have been made in recent times by such different theologians as, for example, Donald Allchin, John Macquarrie and Norman Pittenger.<sup>31</sup> These three Anglican theologians make an interesting contrast. Allchin has a particularly strong ecumenical sense and an equally strong sense of the development of the Anglican tradition of theology and spirituality.<sup>32</sup> *The Joy of All Creation: An Anglican Meditation on the Place of Mary* is an outstanding example of Allchin's ability to read the Anglican tradition, drawing out its richness for today. He is at his best in this kind of fruitful historical probing. His mining of the seventeenth century Anglican divines' teaching about Mary stands on its own. This kind of historical investigation is not in the forefront of Macquarrie's theological strengths. Macquarrie probably stands closer to Pittenger in theological methodology, but without espousing the latter's tendency towards reductionism.

In *Principles of Christian Theology* Macquarrie treats of Mary in the chapter devoted to ecclesiology. He recognizes right away that his inclusion of this topic in a book on systematics may stir a negative reaction among those of a Protestant background, and so immediately he reassures by saying that his treatment will be roundly based on Holy Scripture, respecting the *solā scriptura* emphasis of the Reformation tradition.<sup>33</sup>

If one begins with Scripture one sees that the discovery of the "historical Mary" is even more fraught with problems and difficulties than the "historical Jesus." In the gospel records as we now have them the narrative is a mixture of historical and legendary material. The data presented offer us truths of faith, not raw historical fact, and perhaps are best designated as "mysteries."<sup>34</sup> Macquarrie considers three of these Marian mysteries: the annunciation, the visitation and the station at the cross. The annunciation, emphasizing the initiative of God, reveals the Incarnation taking place through the action of the Holy Spirit. It has also a contemporary meaning in that something

<sup>31</sup> George H. Tavard, op. cit., 134–152. For a resumé of Norman Pittenger, see Owen F. Cummings, "A Critical Note on Norman Pittenger's Mariology," *New Blackfriars* 78 (1997), 336–339.

<sup>32</sup> See his *The Joy of All Creation, An Anglican Meditation on the Place of Mary* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1985).

<sup>33</sup> John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, 392.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 393. For an approach to the historical Mary, see Owen F. Cummings, "The Real Mary of Nazareth," *The Priest* 48 (1992), 14–17.

similar happens in and to the church: “. . . for just as (Mary) was the bearer of the Christ, so the church, his body, brings christhood into the world. . . through the action of the Holy Spirit. . .”<sup>35</sup> The visitation of Mary to Elizabeth was the occasion for the great canticle of the Magnificat. The key word in the canticle is “Blessed.” Blessed among women, according to Elizabeth’s greeting and blessed by all generations, Mary is indeed the blessed one. Her blessedness, however, “adumbrates the blessedness of the church — no earthly happiness, but a ‘likeness to God’ which means a participation in God’s self-giving love. . .”<sup>36</sup> Mary’s blessedness in the visitation mystery is a type also of the blessedness of the church. It expresses something of the church’s vocation. The third mystery, Mary’s station at the cross, too contains an ecclesial aspect. Relying on an insight of the Danish theologian-philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard, Macquarrie points out that Mary’s suffering is not to be understood “as only a natural grief at the sight of Jesus’ death, but as a sharing in his self-emptying, as if Mary were experiencing something of what Christ expressed in his cry of dereliction; and Mary’s suffering is experienced in turn by every disciple. . .”<sup>37</sup> In these three mysteries Mary is closely linked to the church, and this is where, according to Macquarrie, she is best understood.

The best clue to the scriptural understanding of Mary is the title given to her by Pope Paul VI, “Mother of the Church,” essentially the substance of Macquarrie’s 1966 hymn to Mary. This title, Macquarrie believes, provides an opening on which Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants may agree. It is an ecumenically accessible title for Mary. Its scriptural basis may be found on the lips of Jesus on the cross, “Woman behold your son. . . Behold your mother!” (John 19.26). Behind the title there lie two meanings. First, it accords to Mary “a certain priority in the church, as one who played an indispensable role in the Christian drama of incarnation and salvation.”<sup>38</sup> The second meaning behind the title is Mary as the prototype of the church: “What we see in Mary, we ought to see in the church.”<sup>39</sup>

### The Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of Mary

Macquarrie turns his attention in a particularly fruitful way to the two Marian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption

<sup>35</sup> John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, 395.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 396.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 394; John Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians*, 46–47.

<sup>39</sup> John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, 395.

of Mary into heaven. "When purged of mythological elements, (they) can be interpreted as implications of more central Christian teaching."<sup>40</sup> Here too for Macquarrie there is a connection between Mary and the church.

He finds the language of Pope Pius IX's 1854 constitution promulgating the immaculate conception, *Ineffabilis Deus*, unhelpful: "We declare... that the most blessed Virgin Mary in the first moment of her conception was, by the unique grace and privilege of God, in view of the merits of Jesus Christ the Saviour of the human race, preserved intact from all stain of original sin." The language is unhelpful in that the image of sin as "stain" is too impersonal, and the emphasis on Mary's being "preserved" from original sin is too negative.<sup>41</sup> A fresh approach to the dogma needs to be found. One might go beyond the quasi-physical understanding of sin as stain by suggesting sin as alienation or estrangement. A person "preserved" from original sin, then, would be one whose life "has not been stunted and distorted by the alienation of the race."<sup>42</sup> But there is more to it than that. The Immaculate Conception affirms that the "original righteousness" of humankind was not totally wiped out by "original sin." There is grace in creation, a grace nurtured and strengthened in Israel and reaching its high point in the receptivity of Mary to the gift of the incarnation. "The moment had come when alienation was at an end, when mankind had been brought to the condition of being *capax Dei*, capable of receiving God in the gift of the incarnation."<sup>43</sup>

The assumption into heaven shows Mary, "the perfect type of the church," taken up by Christ to share his heavenly existence.<sup>44</sup> Macquarrie indicates that the assumption of Mary is dependent upon the ascension of Christ, and not simply its parallel: "The assumption of the blessed Virgin is dependent upon the ascension of Jesus Christ; it is indeed a corollary of it because of the glorification of human nature in him."<sup>45</sup> Or, as put by Karl Rahner, S.J., "The (ascended Jesus Christ) did not go to a ready-made heaven that was awaiting him, rather he created heaven, understood as a nexus of personal relations."<sup>46</sup> Primary place in this heaven belongs to the woman whose assent became the vehicle for the consummation of God's graceful plan for humankind. The assumption is the transformation of Mary from her familiar earthly state to a new mode of being in which she enjoys a perfected and immediate relation to God. Since

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 397.

<sup>41</sup> John Macquarrie, *Christian Unity and Christian Diversity*, 93.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 94; John Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians*, 66–67.

<sup>44</sup> John Macquarrie, *Principles of Christian Theology*, 398.

<sup>45</sup> John Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians*, 81–82.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 84.

that perfected state is the hope of all Christians, what Mary enjoys through the assumption is the hope for each and every Christian: "It is not just a personal dogma about Mary (though it is that) but a dogma about the church, the whole body of the faithful of whom Mary is the type. Mary's glorious assumption, we may say, is the first moment in the glorious assumption of the church."<sup>47</sup>

The Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission in 2005 produced in Seattle an agreed statement on Mary, entitled *Mary: Grace and Hope in Christ*. The statement traverses well trodden ecumenical ground on the Blessed Virgin Mary, but it also engages the two Marian dogmas of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption. This is what the agreed statement says about these dogmas: "That the teaching about Mary in the two definitions of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception, understood within the biblical pattern of the economy of hope and grace, can be said to be consonant with the teaching of the Scriptures and the ancient common traditions."<sup>48</sup> It could be said in the light of the above that John Macquarrie had anticipated this statement. Macquarrie consistently refuses to sever the connection between Mary and the church, so that virtually everything that is said of Mary may be said of the church, and, therefore, of the individuals who constitute the church. Mariology in that precise sense is not a discrete theological discipline, but interfaces with Christology, anthropology, ecclesiology.

### The Celtic Mary

The final theological reflections on Mary to come from the pen of John Macquarrie focus on the Celtic Mary. This may have at least in part been due to his son, Alan Macquarrie, a distinguished ecclesiastical historian, specializing in early Scottish church history.<sup>49</sup> Though Macquarrie's interest in Celtic spirituality and theology undoubtedly goes back a long way, it seems to be his son's interest and research that has further sparked the father's.

John Macquarrie finds in Celtic theology an anticipation of his own version of God's immanence, discussed in an earlier chapter. In reality, Macquarrie would see his theology of God and of God's presence on a continuum with his Celtic forebears. Thus, describing Celtic religious thought, he says: "God was conceived not so much as a distant power in the heavens but as a circumambient and inescapable

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>48</sup> Donald Bolen and Gregory Cameron, ed., *Mary, Grace and Hope* (The Seattle Statement of the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission, The Text with Commentaries and Study Guide), (New York and London: Continuum, 2006), 85.

<sup>49</sup> See especially Alan Macquarrie, *The Saints of Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1997).

presence here on earth.”<sup>50</sup> This circumambient and inescapable presence of God did not stand in contestation with God’s transcendence. Rather, this fundamental conviction invited “a tremendous sense of intimacy with God,” and an intimacy that found expression in poetry and daily prayers. One example will illustrate the theme:

With God will I lie down this night,  
 And God will be lying with me.  
 With Christ will I lie down this night,  
 And Christ will be lying with me.  
 With Spirit will I lie down this night,  
 The Spirit will lie down with me.  
 God, and Christ and Spirit. Three,  
 Be they all down-lying with me.<sup>51</sup>

This closeness to and intimacy with God extended also to the angels, the saints and especially to our Blessed Lady. The Celts had a very strong corporate sense of church. The communion of saints was a daily experiential reality for them. In the vernacular Gaelic poetry and prayers, Mary becomes a daily experiential reality, in line with the immanence of God. This is how Macquarrie expresses it: “Mary does not appear as she does in a church, in a statue, let us say, or in a stained-glass window. She is one of the community, sharing the home and the work-place. . . . So Mary is in the kitchen, at the bedside of the sick, among the farm animals, comforting the dying. . . . The Celt spoke of her with an affectionate intimacy.”<sup>52</sup> Macquarrie provides an illustration:

Who keeps the night-watch now and over mine?  
 Who but the Lord Christ of the poor is there,  
 And the milk-white Bride, the Maiden of the kine,  
 The milk-white Mary of the curling hair.<sup>53</sup>

### Alistair Kee and Mariology

In the 2006 festschrift, *In Search of Humanity and Deity*, Macquarrie’s former student, Alistair Kee (1937-), takes a very different approach to the Blessed Virgin Mary than his teacher. It has been described in these terms: “It is a splendid bare knuckle attack on the doctrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary, which Macquarrie had

<sup>50</sup> John Macquarrie, “Mary and the Saints in Early Scottish Poetry,” in William McLoughlin and Jill Pinnock, ed., *Mary for Earth and Heaven, Essays on Mary and Ecumenism* (Leominster, UK: Gracewing, 2002), 380.

<sup>51</sup> Cited in John Macquarrie, “Mary and the Saints in Early Scottish Poetry,” 382.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 385.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

defended in *Mary for All Christians*.”<sup>54</sup> “Splendid” seems to me a rather strange adjective to use of Kee’s essay, not least because he shows himself unaware of the progress that has been made in ecumenical discussion concerning the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Kee had been a student of Macquarrie’s at Glasgow University where he had studied economics for his arts degree before moving on to graduate studies in theology. Economics, along with politics, has been a strong interest of his in relation to theology, and he has published/edited several works in the field of liberation theology. His other area of major interest is probably best thought of as the phenomenology of religion, beginning with his first book, *The Way of Transcendence*. It would be fair to say that he has never made systematic theology an area of special interest. It comes, then, as something of a surprise that his contribution to the 2006 Macquarrie Festschrift should be on the Blessed Virgin Mary, “Deconstructing the Blessed Virgin.” It is best described in his own words: “John Macquarrie sees the Marian cult as always directed to the glory of God. If only that were the case. The evolution of the Marian cult is guided by religious assumptions that are contrary to the original catholic tradition. It comes to have a dynamic of its own, apart from and over against the glory of God as revealed in Jesus Christ.” He takes the position that it is not Mary who inspires Marian devotion but rather “certain values, religious and psychological (e.g., vowed celibacy, the superiority of vowed virginity to the married state), which constructs the Blessed Virgin.”<sup>55</sup> It must be readily admitted that there is something in Kee’s critique of the Marian cult, but there is, one suspects, an ideological element, though the degree to which it is conscious and aware is arguable. At the same time, it certainly does not present the whole picture. There is no awareness in Kee of historical-theological studies that have altered perceptions, nor of ecumenical *rapprochement* that attempts with integrity to get beyond the barriers created by the past. In fact, while Kee affirms that he is writing explicitly “from a Reformed perspective,” he seems uninformed about how that perspective is both varied and developing. Let us advert to only three examples. First, Frère Max Thurian (1921–1996), a founder of the ecumenical Taizé community and a Reformed theologian, published in 1963 a comprehensive Mariology,

<sup>54</sup> By Timothy Gorrige, Review: Robert Morgan, ed., *In Search of Humanity and Deity: A Celebration of John Macquarrie’s Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2006), in *The Expository Times* 118 (2007), 562. Compare Kee’s views with the far more ecumenically informed and sensitive position of Cyril S. Rodd, Review: John Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), in *The Expository Times* 113 (2001), 73–74.

<sup>55</sup> Alistair Kee, “Deconstructing the Blessed Virgin,” in Robert Morgan, ed., *In Search of Humanity and Deity, A Celebration of John Macquarrie’s Theology* (London: SCM Press, 2006), 311–313, slightly adapted.

that was both biblical and Reformed and Catholic in emphasis.<sup>56</sup> Second, consider the brief but sensitive treatment of Mary by Methodist theologian Geoffrey Wainwright in his monograph, *Is the Reformation Over?*<sup>57</sup> Wainwright has been engaged in ecumenical dialogue throughout his entire theological career. Wainwright acknowledges Protestant fears about Mariology, especially its excesses, but then proceeds to show clear examples of mariological appreciation, not least in his own Methodist tradition. Third, there is the 2002 symposium *Mary Mother of God*, sponsored by the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology by St. Olaf College, Minnesota, with contributions from distinguished theologians of various ecclesial traditions.<sup>58</sup> These few examples from contemporary ecumenical theology establish that the Reformed tradition has gone significantly beyond Kee's strictures, even as his questions in their own way may remain very much alive.

### Conclusion

Even in a very obviously Catholic discipline like Mariology, John Macquarrie shows a remarkable openness to the broad Catholic tradition. He evinces a concern to retrieve traditional Marian doctrines by presenting them in a fashion that makes them more intelligible to people today, and he has been very successful. Introducing Macquarrie's *Mary for All Christians*, his colleague in the Ecumenical Society of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dom Alberic Stacpoole, O.S.B., stated that "We have been blessed by all our members, not least Oxford's former Lady Margaret Professor."<sup>59</sup> This essay establishes some of the reasons for Dom Alberic's accolade.

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<sup>56</sup> Max Thurian, *Mary, Mother of the Lord, Figure of the Church* (London and Oxford: Mowbray, 1963).

<sup>57</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, op. cit., especially 51–53.

<sup>58</sup> Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, ed., *Mary Mother of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> John Macquarrie, *Mary for All Christians*, xi.