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Review article

Serafino M. Lanzetta, ed., *Co-Redemptrix: The Relevance of a Marian Doctrine for Our Time* (Stabat Mater 1). Portsmouth: Mary House Press, 2024. ISBN 9781068740626 (ch.); ISBN 9781068740602 (pb). 393 pp.

This collection of essays comes from the 2023 inaugural Mariological Conference held by the Marian Franciscans of the United Kingdom at Dundee in Scotland. As both a new Mariological academic initiative and as a genuine example of *sacra doctrina* concerning the Blessed Virgin Mother's role in the order of grace, this volume deserves attention. It should be noted, however, that this volume does not only participate in theological discourse about the Blessed Mother as Co-Redemptrix, but also advocates for a fifth Marian dogma in the Catholic Church (14). Unsurprisingly, it presumes a Catholic viewpoint and concern for doctrine and tradition. Despite this, the book does not read as a solely polemical volume, as if one could only read it if they wished to engage with the definability of Marian co-redemption as such. While the volume consistently deals with this question, or aspects often raised in the context of this question, it is valuable as a collection on the theology of Marian co-redemption and mediation in general.

The volume begins with a welcome speech for the Mariological Conference from Bishop Stephen Robson, Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Dunkeld in Scotland (15–18). While giving a brief overview of co-redemption by means of the Church's Mariological traditions, he places the topic of the Co-Redemptrix in the context of *Lumen Gentium* §§ 56–57 (16–17) and the context of it being defined as a fifth Marian dogma (18).

Father Thomas Crean, a Dominican of the Province of England, gives a paper entitled 'Mary as the New Eve in the Thought of St. Paul' (21–44), which was originally published in the academic journal *New Blackfriars* (vol. 103, iss. 1107 [2022]). Fr. Crean here argues that the concept of the 'New Eve' belongs to Revelation and is found in Saint Paul's epistles, while many other scholars who agree with the former part of this claim would only find the 'New Eve' in the Johannine literature (22). He specifically argues from *1 Corinthians* 11:11–12 (23–29), *Galatians* 4:4 (29–31), *1 Timothy* 2:13–15 (32–37), and *1 Corinthians* 15:20–23 (37–43), variously explaining away difficulties in the exegetical tradition surrounding a detailed reading of the original Greek of these passages and also showing how reading these passages according to an 'implicit "Eve-typology"' and 'Eve-Mary parallel' (23) is most coherent.

With an in-depth study on the antepreparatory *vota* to the Second Vatican Council which mention Marian co-redemption, as well as mediation in general, is Matthew P. Hazell (45–109). In investigating the *vota*'s general desire for a definition of Mary as Co-Redemptrix or Mediatrix (as discussed from 51–74 and 85–93), while also fleshing out the initial ecumenical concerns surrounding these potential dogmas (74–93), Hazell historically demonstrates that the episcopate at the time of Vatican II agreed over the revealed truth of Marian mediation and co-redemption (106–07). The preparatory period, as well, confirmed this, though it also underlines an increasing ecumenical concern over the prudence of a definition (94–105). This ecumenical objection to defining Marian co-redemption and mediation is particularly emphasized by Patriarch Maximos IV Saigh of the Melkite Greek

Catholic Church and Giovanni Battista Cardinal Montini, the future Pope Saint Paul VI (101–05).

Hazell summarizes,

What is perhaps surprising is that the *vota* demonstrate that opinion was quite evenly split about whether further definitions would be positive or negative in this regard. This runs contrary to the standard post-conciliar narrative, which often claims that the ‘theological direction’ of Vatican II in both *Lumen gentium* and *Unitatis redintegratio* is decidedly against any further definitions of Marian doctrine, in part because of supposed ‘ecumenical difficulties’, or even that the Council’s decision to integrate the scheme *De Beata Maria Virgine Matre Dei et Matre Hominum* into *Lumen gentium* signals a preference for what has been termed Marian ‘minimalism’ (106–07).

In conclusion, he adds,

Given this near-unanimous agreement of the Council Fathers on the theological orthodoxy of describing Our Lady as Mediatrix and Co-Redemptrix, even in the midst of disagreement about the appropriateness of these titles or their definition, it is perhaps unfortunate that, in recent years, the faithful have been told by the highest authorities in the Church that these Mariological insights are ‘exaggerations’ of the truth (108).

The late Monsignor Arthur Burton Calkins’s contribution, ‘The Truth of Marian Co-Redemption, the Papal Magisterium and the Present Situation’ (111–54), sketches the development of Marian co-redemption from the Pauline Epistles, especially as expounded by the ante-Nicene Fathers, Saint Justin Martyr, Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, and Tertullian, to Pope Saint John Paul II (112–40). He thus locates the germ of co-redemption in the Biblical and Patristic doctrine of the New Eve (112–20), and further fleshes the ‘New Eve’ out in later Magisterial statements (118–20, 123–24). Msgr. Calkins begins his discussion of Mary’s active participation in the work of redemption, in union with Christ, with Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Jucunda Semper* of 1894 (120) and emphasizes a ‘fairly unanimous consensus’ on her true and active participation by the time of 1958 (127). This Marian height was relatively short-lived, however, as Msgr. Calkins recognizes in his description of the historical postconciliar situation (132–34) and the contemporary moment (140–53), though the pontificate of John Paul II was an outlier in this time period (134–40). He particularly charges major ecclesiastical and mariological institutions with a sweeping rejection of Marian co-redemption, and that they ignore the weight of prior Magisterial statements and theological dialogues on the matter (146–153).

Father Alessandro M. Apollonio follows with a major study on Marian co-redemption in Blessed John Duns Scotus’s Christology and Soteriology, which could have almost been published as a stand-alone monograph since it runs for ninety-five pages (155–240). Indeed, its length makes it an odd inclusion in the present conference volume. A few points only will be mentioned here. After discussing the background to the notion of Marian co-redemption,

especially considering common objections to co-redemption and common notions of redemption in Scripture and Bl. John (156–66), Fr. Apollonio points out the importance of a clear doctrine of analogy in understanding the relation that Co-Redemptrix has to Christ the Redeemer (166–71). Ultimately, Fr. Apollonio wishes to defend the fullest sense of co-redemption: where Mary's cooperation in redemption belongs to both objective redemption and subjective redemption, where she formally, actively, proximately, and intrinsically cooperates in objective redemption (182–85, 240), and where her merit is *de condigno relativo* or *de digno* (223–28, 237–40).

The defense of this degree of redemptive action by the Blessed Mother is due to distinctions concerning the relative infinity and finitude of merit and demerit (185–89) and God's ability to fittingly predestine and accept an additional source of merit that is in union with the primacy of Christ's own merit (189–206, 215–23). Fr. Apollonio summarizes this:

- Christ's merits are of infinite value by reason of the hypostatic union . . . but insofar as they are human acts, they are intrinsically finite, and as such, are *per se* augmentable;
- Mary's merits are added to those of Christ, not connumerating with them ('making number with them'), but being dependent on them, subordinate to them, and in a different capacity, namely as Mother of the Redeemer;
- God willed the co-redemption of Mary so that, after Christ, all men would be most obliged to her (218).

It should be noted that Fr. Apollonio also marshals Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Thomistic theologian Father Jean-Hervé Nicolas, OP, to defend parts of this synthesis as well (186, 233).

Returning to the magisterial context, Father Manfred Hauke considers whether the specific doctrine of Marian co-redemption is implicit to *Lumen gentium* from the Second Vatican Council (241–70). He begins by noting that *Lumen gentium* 61 gives a more-or-less self-evident witness to Mary's real cooperation in Christ's redemptive work (241–42). Noting the pre-Vatican II context, Fr. Hauke turns to both the basic rejection of Mary's cooperation in redemption in Martin Luther's work (243), which shows the ecumenical difficulty of this theological position, and that the terminology of co-redemption is directly found since the fifteenth century and implicitly in related terms, such as '*compassio*,' '*coadiutrix redemptionis*,' '*redemptrix*,' and '*reparatrix*,' since the tenth century (245–46). The twentieth century, however, has an accelerated theological discussion on the theology and title of Co-Redemptrix (243–53). It is interesting to note, following upon Fr. Apollonio's Franciscan chapter, that Hauke deploys certain major Thomistic authors to defend co-redemption in the twentieth century, especially Désiré-Joseph Cardinal Mercier (244, 248–49), Father Benoît-Henri Merkelbach, OP (246–47), Father Édouard Hugon, OP (251), and Father Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, OP (269–70). Noting, as Hazell did, the widespread agreement about Marian co-redemption at Vatican II and the ecumenical concerns that pushed consideration

of the position aside (255–57), Fr. Hauke quotes lengthy sections of chapter eight of *Lumen gentium* to display the Council’s clear teaching of Mary’s active and direct cooperation in redemption (258–60) and also cites various theologians who were present at or who deeply studied *Lumen gentium* to reinforce the clarity of the Council’s teaching regarding this position (260–65).

Roberto de Mattei’s contribution focuses on the potential contemporary importance of a fifth Marian dogma in light of the private revelation of the message of Fatima (271–86). This is the volume’s only contribution to focus on private revelation and Marian apparitions. De Mattei’s chapter, however, is more clearly polemical than the other authors’, particularly regarding recent and current events that are not directly related to the question of the Co-Redemptrix and a fifth Marian dogma. In this way, to give two examples, he singles out the 2016 book *Chi sono io per giudicare?* by the late Pope Francis for its formula “Who am I to judge?” (274) and Víctor Manuel Cardinal Fernández’s views on the charism of doctrinal infallibility (276–77). Despite this polemical tone, De Mattei’s contribution gives a clear theology of dogma, expressing its importance in the life of the Church (272–79), especially how clear doctrinal teaching actually confirms the faithful in their Christian lives—whether this be in their knowledge of the true faith expressed in the *sensus fidei* (277), as a bulwark against relativism (272–73, 279–80), or how doctrine can sum up spiritual truth (284–86). This latter point is why De Mattei focuses on Fatima, alongside the spiritual theology of Saint Louis-Marie Grignion de Montfort, as both a warning against evil and a proclamation of Mary’s queenship (283–85). This is why he ends the chapter with two imperatives: the definition of Marian co-redemption and mediation, as well as proclaiming St. Louis-Marie a doctor of the Church (285–86).

It should be noted, however, that De Mattei makes some odd theological claims. ‘No dogma, no truth of faith is possible without the presence of the Pope to proclaim it’ (274). While Catholic dogmas are canonical defined truths of faith, which require the Pope to have some canonical relation to their definition, truths of faith in general pre-exist Papal activity since they belong to the deposit of faith. He also says, ‘The message of Fatima has a profound doctrinal content and constitutes the most important chapter of Mariology in modern times’ (283). Without desiring to minimize the apparitions of the Blessed Mother at Fatima, to elevate a point of private revelation over the two newly defined dogmas (which belong to public revelation) of the Immaculate Conception and Assumption in the modern era is decidedly odd.

Father Malcolm Hutchinson turns to Patristics in ‘Mary as the New Eve in the Church Fathers’ (287–309), following Saint John Henry Newman’s recognition of the importance of Mary as New Eve (289–92), especially with regard to the development of doctrine regarding Mary’s active participation in Redemption. ‘As Newman himself hints at it, the title Second Eve, as he puts it, or New Eve no less lies at the fundament of title Co-Redemptrix. It implies Mary’s role as a “voluntary agent in the actual process of Redemption”’ (291). Fr. Hutchinson

recapitulates Saint Justin Martyr's (292–96) and Saint Irenaeus of Lyons's (297–302) contributions to this doctrine of New Eve and her active cooperation in the undoing of the first Eve's disobedience. He then turns to the Latin Fathers—locating the earliest mention of the doctrine of the New Eve in Tertullian (302–03), though Saint Ambrose of Milan (303–07) and Saint Jerome of Stridon (307–08) also deploy this doctrine. Fr. Hutchinson notes that these authors and the Latin theological milieu focused more on 'the parallel of virginity and motherhood between the blessed Virgin and Eve' when discussing the New Eve (304), and that the weight of these writings eventually made the Eve-Mary parallel 'axiomatic' (307), including its indication of Mary's active co-operation in redemption.

Next is the first contribution of Father Serafino M. Lanzetta, the editor of this volume (311–34). He takes up the soteriological theme of Our Lady's sacrifice. Fr. Lanzetta is clear that this theme 'presupposes the mystery of her active and direct participation in our Redemption, which should be precisely formulated as co-redemption, whilst its very centre,' i.e., the very centre of the question of Mary's participation in Christ's sacrifice, 'lies in Mary's Compassion' (311). He thus sets up a theological proportion between these topics, that the Blessed Mother's compassion is to co-redemption what Christ's Passion is to redemption (312). Fr. Lanzetta discusses the general nature of sacrifice (313–15) before turning to a pointed discussion about Mary's own role in her Son's sacrifice (315–32), particularly by locating the antiquity of the idea of her 'active compassion' relative to Christ's work of redemption in the Byzantine author, John Geometres (ca. 935–ca. 1000) (317–20), and in two Latin Medieval authors, Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) and Arnold of Chartres (d. 1156) (321–22). This discussion also covers the modern Magisterium from Pope Blessed Pius IX (though he is not himself cited) to Pope Benedict XVI (325), which Fr. Lanzetta claims is highly supportive of Mary's unique active participation in Christ's sacrifice (324–32).

Fr. Lanzetta's discussion on how Mary participates in Christ's sacrifice in a priestly fashion is especially enlightening. For example, he says,

Certainly, she does not share in the ordained priesthood, but neither could she solely share in the common priesthood of all the faithful, even if in a typical manner. Her priestly role is unique and of its own genre, for the fact that She had the privilege of being present and active in the objective or *in actu primo* Redemption. Her unique maternal priesthood is *above* its participation in the Church and *precedent* to its double form, as ministerial and baptismal. For all these reasons, Our Lady could not have merely presented the matter of the sacrifice by giving her human nature to the Divine Word, but she also participated in the sacrifice of the Victim to the Father with a singular action, by associating herself with a maternal spirit to its immolation and oblation (323).

The main section of this volume ends with a spiritual reflection (as noted on page 13) by Father Philomeno James M. Gilfoyle entitled 'The Consoler of Christ Thirsts for Consolation: On Co-Redemption and Christian Life' (335–44). This is a high *lectio divina*, as Fr. Lanzetta notes in his introduction (13), but it is also an example of an excessive Marian maximalism.

Moreover, since it is a devotional contribution, it proceeds without citations and little argumentation when making these excessive claims. One example of these extremes from the first page should suffice, in a reflection of Christ's words on the cross, 'I thirst.'

Who is the greatest Lover of God? It is Mary. Christ Thirsts for Mary as both His Mystical Spouse and His Mother. He Thirsts to rest in Her arms as He did as a little babe, nestling His Head on Her Immaculate Breast and Heart. Consider this great mystery. Without Mary's Love at the Foot of the Cross, which perfectly quenches the Thirst of Christ, Christ cannot Redeem the world. She is thus the Co-Redemptrix in Her Perfect Quenching of Christ's Thirst (335).

In these words, Fr. Gilfoyle appears to make Mary's active participation in redemption a *sine qua non* of Christ's sacrifice, which would vitiate the sufficiency and special necessity belonging to the Incarnate Word's own redemptive work. The Co-Redemptrix adds to Christ's sufficiency of merit but does not create what Christ could not do on His own. Fr. Gilfoyle's reflection is thus a reminder that words and careful phrasing matter in theological considerations.

Fr. Lanzetta adds an appendix to this volume on the Marian Vow of the Franciscans of the Immaculate (353–93). He surveys the history of Marian spirituality (354, 372–77), going back to the third century in the prayer *Sub tuum praesidium* (372) and language of consecration to Mary going back to Saint John Damascene (d. 749) (373). Fr. Lanzetta sees the Marian Vow of unlimited consecration to the Immaculate as an organic development of 'slavery' or 'servitude' from Marian consecration (362–86). The language of 'servitude' in the context of this sort of consecration is highlighted in the Middle Ages from the time of the eleventh century to the early modern era, during which time the language of 'slavery' to the Blessed Mother was condemned by the Holy Office (374), and to the times of Saint Louis-Marie Grignon de Montfort and Saint Maximilian M. Kolbe, where the terminology had become more accepted once again (373–77). Fr. Lanzetta then discusses the theological justification for St. Maximilian's development of this Marian Vow and its culmination in the religious charism of the Franciscans of the Immaculate (377–86), to which it should be added that Fr. Lanzetta is clear that the Marian Vow and notion of subjection to the will of the Blessed Mother belong to a specification of the evangelical councils in the specific charism of the Franciscans of the Immaculate (353, 356–62, 382–86). The connection between this Marian Vow and co-redemption comes from the docility required in the vow to Mary as spiritual mother and universal queen, in which are located Mary's universal mediation and co-redemption (358, 371–72, 392–93).

The volume, however, suffers from some of the foibles of small presses. It has a noticeable number of typographical errors scattered throughout the volume, though none of them affect the intelligibility of the various contributions. The academic weight of the various contributions was somewhat uneven—as seen in certain infelicities of De Mattei's approach or the excesses of Fr. Gilfoyle's meditation. The wild differences in length amongst the

academic contributions are also of note—ranging from De Mattei’s fifteen-page contribution to Fr. Apollonio’s ninety-five-page one. Despite these concerns, *Co-Redemptrix: The Relevance of a Marian Doctrine for Our Time* remains a helpful volume and introduction into the theology and development of Marian co-redemption.

Since it is a collection of contributions to a conference, the volume would be most valuable to graduate students already well established in the whole of theology in the Catholic tradition who are interested in learning more about this specific theological topic—especially since they would be more capable of understanding the few polemics and excesses noted in this review. Finally, this volume also begins a new endeavor—Mariological Conferences sponsored by the Marian Franciscans in the United Kingdom, with conference volumes to be published in the *Stabat Mater* series. This series will bear watching for more contributions to Mariology.

Postscript: *Co-Redemptrix: The Relevance of a Marian Doctrine for Our Time*, edited by Fr. Serafino M. Lanzetta, was published in 2024 and was based on a September 14–16, 2023 conference. As such, it well predates the November 4, 2025 document “*Mater Populi Fidelis*: Doctrinal Note on Some Marian Titles Regarding Mary’s Cooperation in the Work of Salvation” from the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. Similarly, this review was written before the publication of “*Mater Populi Fidelis*.”