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# Maria

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From the editors of *Maria*, Sarah Jane Boss and Chris Maunder

The editors are delighted to be able to relaunch *Maria: A Journal of Marian Studies*, originally discontinued in 2003 after three volumes because of the closure of Sheffield Academic Press. *Maria* is something of a rarity: a peer-reviewed journal dedicated to academic discussion of the study of Mary without any denominational oversight. This means that we are free to welcome papers taking almost any approach to Marian research that is undertaken with scholarly rigour. This new series also has the advantage of being offered on the Centre for Marian Studies website with open access.

We aim to produce an issue twice yearly. This first issue of the relaunched journal contains papers on a number of subjects, but there is a thread: ways in which Christians over the centuries have imagined the life of Mary, including the period from her conception to the Annunciation. The *Protevangelium* (normally reckoned to date from the second century CE) is the topic of one paper and two book reviews, but its importance can be detected elsewhere in this issue. Thomas O'Loughlin's paper considers the considerable influence of the *Protevangelium* on the liturgical calendar, and his evidence is complemented by the content of other papers. William Charlton's translation of the tenth-century poem, *The Life of Mary*, by Hrotsvitha of Gandersheim, shows English readers how important the *Protevangelium* became for imaginative reconstructions of the Virgin's early life; Hrotsvitha treats passages that originated in the *Protevangelium* as authoritative sources.

Although Eadmer's early twelfth-century tract on the conception of Mary, translated here by Tessa Frank and Sarah Jane Boss, does not mention the *Protevangelium*, any speculation on the conception of Mary refers to it implicitly, as it is the earliest source for the story of Mary's parents. Eadmer's argument opens the way for the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, which was established after the intense debate that took place in Catholicism during the Middle Ages.

There are then two papers which take us right away from the *Protevangelium*, and consider instead the Mariology of the period around the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962-5). Sarah Jane Boss's paper examines the Marian theology of Henri de Lubac, drawing attention to its strongly ecclesiological character, and, by the same token, to de Lubac's



understanding of the Marian character of the Church. Sister Theresa Nguyen's paper takes this theme forward, speaking further about Mary as symbol of ecclesial communion—a most important element of Mariology, both east and west. The Mariological debate in Catholicism that was brought into being by Vatican II has much further to run, it appears. Sister Theresa provokingly takes up Orthodox Metropolitan John Zizioulas' question as to whether a 'Vatican III' would be appropriate for discussion of the ontology of communion that he was famous for articulating in the 1990s. Probably, however, she is as aware as the editors that a new council would have the potential not only to resolve, but to exacerbate, the divisions over Mary that arose in the Church in the 1960s!

Both editors, and the Director of the Centre for Marian Studies, Catherine O'Brien, have contributed a book review. Our aim is that this first issue will trigger many other contributions, both articles and book reviews, by a range of people from a variety of sub-disciplines of Marian Studies, and from a number of different countries. The Centre for Marian Studies is based in the U.K., but its associates, including the editorial and advisory boards of the journal, represent an international community of scholars. Finally, we would like to thank everyone who has contributed to writing and peer reviewing the material for this first issue of the new series. We hope you agree that the outcome of this work has been more than worthwhile.