

The Chesterton Review

and all of them will rise with him
in the morning" (p.171).

Woven into the vision narratives of the Book of Revelation is a journey of the human person toward fullness and perfection—that the Greek Fathers called *theosis*. It is our teleological end, but it is a gift. The beatific vision is not our natural state to be retained by gnostic meditation; it is something new, for which we must be transformed by the power of God. This is a concern of the apocalypse because "the ultimate purpose of Christ's union with humanity is to present his people to the Father" (p.98). And the woman of Revelation—who is the Church, who is Sophia, who is Mary—is humanity being perfected. Mary is this redemptive economy perfected in a single person. She is our model for being conformed to Christ. "The goal of our earthly existence is to become in the end, as the Blessed Virgin Mary was from the beginning, 'like him', not by nature but by grace. . . . Mary is, in fact, in her earthly life already Church (and the embodiment of Wisdom) that the rest of us are summoned to become through repentance and purification" (p.101).

Yes, imagine reading the Book of Revelation as a spiritual exer-

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cise, as a companion text to our sacramental life in the mysteries, as both vision of and instruction manual for our final end, which is shared with Mary the obedient one. Caldecott's unique approach to this last book of the Bible makes the unexpected possible.

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*Mary in the Mystery:
The Woman in Whom Divinity
and Humanity Rhyme*
J. Norris
Hyde Park: New City Press, 2012
ISBN-13: 978-1-56548-431-3

Father Thomas Norris is an Irish priest, a professor emeritus at St. Patrick's College, Maynooth, a member of the International Theological Commission and author of several books on various aspects of theology. Here he has written a small book which Léonie Caldecott in the Afterward nicely characterises as "prayer, poetry, and theology" (p. 93). Fr. Norris takes up numerous themes from the life and vocation of our Blessed Lady and draws connections with our Lord's life and mis-

sion on earth, with the mission of the Holy Spirit and with our own Christian vocations. Most of these connections and comparisons are expressed as poetry more than as theological propositions, but as a result they could be very helpful as incentives to meditative prayer. Yet though often formulated as poetical utterances, they are not divorced from theology, but rather often illuminate or suggest theological points with unexpected insight.

In the first chapter the author approaches "the mystery of Christ . . . in the context of humankind's great search" (p. 29). He discusses the ancient pagan cultures as the actual and historical background and setting for God's great innovation, revelation: "Revealed religion is the religion that God gives. It results from the divine initiative taken with Abraham and his children who become the nation of Israel" (pp. 31-32). In focussing specifically on the Blessed Virgin, Father Norris attempts to place her in salvation history and connects her with some of the outstanding women of the Old Testament, showing how she sums up the several themes that can be seen in the lives of these women into one whole, particularly in her relation to the Incarnation, the greatest event of God's work in

this world. "Mary is situated by the Father's most wise design at the axis of so great an event, she is an exceptional witness to the mystery" (p. 49). Then in chapters two and three, he carries forward this theme of her connection with the Incarnation by discussing her role in the Church, the extension in time of the Incarnation, and nicely links up her vocation within the Church to the chief Marian dogmas that have been defined by the Magisterium, dogmas which in the last analysis are about Jesus Christ as much as Mary. "Just as Mary once sheltered and protected the Christ-child from the designs of Herod, so now she sheltered him from the designs of heretics. The doctrine of Mary's divine maternity, in fact, protects and highlights the mysterious union-communication set up by Christ in his incarnation, when God out of love becomes what we are so that we can become by grace what he is" (p. 69).

And as for the Church's mis-

touched upon, from the beginning of salvation history in the Old Testament until the work of the Church as communion and mission, into a composite synthesis of the work and mission of the Mother of God. As I suggested above, this book could be useful for someone's personal meditations. But in addition it could well serve as a suggestive source for any number of fruitful theological investigations which could be developed at greater length.

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*The Pen and the Cross:
Catholicism and English
Literature 1850-2000*
Richard Griffiths
London: Continuum, 2010
ISBN 978-0-8264-9697-3

Richard Griffiths has topped and tailed his career with books

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When I say the latter book tails his career, I by no means imply it is over. He remains a remarkably productive author, despite being in his late 70s, and among his most recent works was a study of entrepreneurial power in the Rhondda Valleys of Wales in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When I also mention that he has published at least two book-length studies on French Renaissance tragedy, as well as several works concerning fascism or anti-Semitism, the reader will gather how rich his scholarship has been.

Unsurprisingly, *The Pen and the Cross* confirms that his writing remains as rich as ever, though it leaves us wondering about some important questions concerning English Catholic literature. This study concerns itself with the high literature of fiction and poetry and not with other forms of writing such as journalism. In a series of well-constructed chapters, it sweeps across the English Catholic literary field of the last 150 years, including an analysis of