

Sandra L. Glahn, *Nobody's Mother: Artemis of the Ephesians in Antiquity and the New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2023), 190 pp., \$24.00 (paperback).

Christianity was born in and contributed to a cultural climate of intense religious pluralism, and its first writers made no effort to conceal that milieu. According to the New Testament book of Acts, Paul preached a sermon in Athens based on an altar's inscription to *Agnosto Theo*. The same book recounts an episode when Paul and a companion were mistaken for Hermes and Zeus. It also reports a protest in Ephesus, during which opponents of the missionaries took to the streets crying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" In *Nobody's Mother*, Sandra Glahn offers an intriguing portrait of Artemis, the New Testament's greatest Pagan goddess, and argues for her significance in the formation of early Christian teaching.

Glahn exercises her craft in the context of evangelical Christianity and writes principally for academics in that community. A professor at Dallas Theological Seminary, known for its advocacy of dispensational premillennial doctrine, she makes no secret of her presuppositions: a "high view of Scripture" (14), affirmation of Paul's authorship of the disputed New Testament letters mainline scholars have long attributed to others, and belief in a binary anthropology embedded in the Bible and rooted in ultimate reality. Glahn's desire to advance an evangelical apology for women in ministry, avoiding both traditional patriarchy and progressive feminism, drives her to the unlikely topic of Artemis. At the heart of Glahn's inquiry, where Pagan piety and early Christianity intersect, is one of the New Testament's most unusual statements about women: "she shall be saved in childbearing" (1 Timothy 2:15).

Glahn devotes four chapters to Artemis and one to the hermeneutical puzzle of the first epistle to Timothy, one of the New Testament documents assigned by more mainstream scholars to the Deutero-Pauline canon. She examines the goddess in terms of history, geography, literature, and art, emphasizing the "embarrassment of riches" (82) in epigraphic sources too often overlooked by biblical scholars. Dubious claims associating Artemis with fertility, liturgical prostitution, and anti-male antipathy, she says, fall short of

the evidence. So does the sobriquet of *polymaston* or “many-breasted” (40), a Christian misreading of Pagan iconography. What stands out for Glahn is a goddess, Apollo’s twin, beloved for her benevolence toward pregnant women and her patronage of midwifery, though recognized herself as virginal and “nobody’s mother” (80).

Glahn especially finds Artemis’s relationship to Ephesus telling. The site of her glorious temple – one of the seven wonders of the ancient world – Ephesus also became a center for the early Christian movement, one of the seven churches of Asia mentioned in the book of Revelation. Paul may have sojourned there for two years. Timothy, his convert-protégé, served as the community’s inaugural bishop. According to tradition, Mary and John the evangelist migrated there. Eventually Ephesus hosted the third ecumenical council, which declared Mary *Theotokos*, mother of God.

Reading 1 Timothy in such an Ephesian light, Glahn detects the presence of Artemis virtually everywhere. The letter writer’s titles for Jesus, inconsistent with those used elsewhere in the authentic Pauline corpus, mirror the terminology of the Artemis lexicon. The text’s anxiety regarding mythology, magic, marriage, and women’s attire reveals the perceived influence of the goddess’s cult. Glahn even ventures to interpret the letter’s dictate mandating female silence and submission as not an expression of primitive Christian misogyny but a response to women converts who transposed Artemis-inspired agency into a new Christian key. More than anything, the teaching about salvation through childbearing – or “deliverance” (143) through labor, as Glahn suggests – shows the risky genius of the early Christian author borrowing from devotion to Artemis and contributing to the mixture of appropriation and continuity that will characterize the Christian tradition for centuries to come.

Glahn is not interested in the larger questions of interreligious contact and confrontation or what Krister Stendahl called “holy envy.” Nor does she reflect on the rise and fall of pantheons. Her focus is on one mysterious, gendered New Testament text and its dependence on an environment dominated by the great Artemis of the Ephesians. Historians of biblical interpretation will be disappointed that she has not thoroughly reviewed premodern commentaries. New Testament researchers from mainline traditions may find her presuppositions problematic. Scholars in Pagan studies may find her argument curiously defined. Despite its limitations,

*Reviews*

*Nobody's Mother* inspires further exploration of the Pagan roots of Christianity and its scripture's language.

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