

There is much to learn from each of these essays. Three stand out for a special mention. First: Fr Clancy's encyclopaedic study of the pearl, applied as a symbol to the Trinity, the Incarnate Word, and Our Lady, is a substantial contribution to knowledge of the Church's Tradition. 'The beauteous pearl', he concludes, 'is a timely reminder to us of the *nexus mysteriorum*, the interconnectedness of the different mysteries of faith.' He leaves the last word to St Ephrem, poet-theologian and deacon-doctor: 'Blessed is He who compared the Kingdom on high to a pearl' (p. 52). Secondly, Fr Madden opens up what I feel inclined to call St Maximus's 'mystical aesthetic'. One sentence, summing up the Confessor's thought, should be of particular interest to Thomists and Dominicans committed to handing on to others the fruits of contemplation: '*Nous* [intellect], the faculty of the divine, is open to the intelligibility of the world, garnered by *logos* [reason] and *aisthêsis* [perception]. *Aisthêsis* is ennobled by *logos*, so that through *nous*, transformed by *charis* [grace] to being the power of knowing God intimately, the whole universe can be returned to Him in prayer and praise' (p. 217). Thirdly, Fr Kirill Zinkovskiy, a priest-monk of the Russian Orthodox Church, seeks to overcome polemical oppositions between the Greek Patristic and Latin Scholastic traditions by arguing that St Gregory of Nyssa's use of the words *metastoiceioô* and *metapoieô* to describe the change of bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ 'laid down a good part of the foundation for the theory that was later elaborated in the West and called "transubstantiation"' (p. 150f).

The symposiasts of the Eighth of the Maynooth Patristic Conferences, ably served as editor by Dr Rutherford, are to be congratulated on their exploration of what is still mostly uncharted territory, the theological aesthetics of the Fathers.

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**CATHOLIC PROGRESSIVES IN ENGLAND AFTER VATICAN II** by Jay P. Corrin, *University of Notre Dame Press, South Bend, IN, 2013, pp. x + 524, \$ 49.00, pbk*

'In too many churches and chaplaincies our *communal* prayer, the liturgy, remains deformed into a scarcely intelligible *private* devotion. Yet it is the lifeline and inspiration of our task to realize the community of Christ, his mystical body, in society . . . As theological and ecclesial insights develop it should become more apparent that the natural Christian slant is to the communal, i.e. leftwards'. So announced, in early 1964, the maiden issue of *Slant*. Perhaps now best remembered as the journal where the Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton served his theological apprenticeship, *Slant* sought to unite the radical socio-political vision of the 'New Left' with a new (or perhaps, old) model of being Catholic it *seemed* might be emerging out of the Second Vatican Council. While five decades' worth of hindsight offers a tempting vantage from which to judge - recent years have been gentle neither to Marxism nor the 'spirit' of Vatican II, for example - the social, political, cultural, and ecclesial contexts out of which *Slant* could emerge and burn bright undoubtedly deserve serious attention.

And serious attention is precisely what Jay P. Corrin, Professor of Social Sciences at Notre Dame, pays - and not just to *Slant* alone. Though *Catholic Progressives in England after Vatican II* might seem like a title with a narrow remit, it encompasses a rich array of figures and groups within 'the English Catholic Left' of which *Slant* was arguably the most radical, and thereby memorable,

representative. (Incidentally, *New Blackfriars*, and the Order of Preachers in general, feature heavily: Herbert McCabe, quite possibly the greatest English theologian of the twentieth century, warrants an entire chapter to himself. Amusingly one also learns, a fact that will surely surprise few readers of this journal, that: 'The Dominicans in England... had unconventional cultural views' [p. 183]). Corrin's book is thus a valuable and painstaking work of both intellectual and social history, drawing on a huge amount of published and unpublished sources (e.g., the endnotes and bibliography run to well over a hundred pages), shedding a great deal of light on a watershed period for Catholicism in Britain.

In fact, he does such a thorough job in contextualizing his topic, that the book's title is arguably misleading: the reader barely encounters Corrin's 'New Catholic Left' itself until about halfway in, and the first third might have been published in its own right under the title 'Catholic *Not-Very-Progressives Before* Vatican II'. While such detail helps a great deal in understanding what 'the increasingly sophisticated and educated generation of younger Catholics' (p. 57) coming of age in and around the Council were first formed by, then reacted against. Given that the postconciliar radicals are the heroes of the piece - with the *Slant* group given a top billing befitting 'a sort of "intellectual Beatles"' (p. 217) - it is perhaps inevitable that the *before* suffers by comparison with the *after*. All the usual charges against preconciliar Catholicism are aired here: 'authoritarian and paternalistic' (p. 9), 'intransigent separateness from the world' (p. 14), 'the Mass [was] an orphic liturgical ritual inaccessible to lay Catholics [and] a means of asserting hierarchical authority and power' (p. 71). One need not deny all truth to such descriptions (hence, after all, the swift and enthusiastic take-up of reform) to note that whereas Cardinals Hinsley's and Heenan's fondness for Franco's 'dictatorship with a difference' (p. 44!) is rightly called out, the later Catholic Left's lionization of Mao 'as one of the greatest contemporary believers in Man' (p. 235!) is given a free pass. Likewise, whatever its other blindspots in the twenties and thirties, the hierarchy's lack of enthusiasm for Eric Gill's 'experiments in alternative living at Ditchling' (p. 185) looks today both prudent and prophetic.

Several of those whom Corrin counts as 'part of the English Catholic Left' (p. 222) in the sixties continue to enrich Catholic, and the wider Christian, life in this country and beyond. Chief among these are PAX (now Pax Christi), Christian CND, *New Blackfriars* itself. Others scarcely survived into the seventies. Corrin's account of *Slant's* demise is particularly absorbing: among other factors, he cites its increasingly 'ponderous style... loaded with jargon and passwords that generally mystified outsiders' (p. 356), and its grass-roots enthusiasts' growing disillusionment with 'its failure to initiate and provide direction to practical ground-level activities' (p. 380). *Slant's* legacy did not, of course, end there: Eagleton's recent rediscovery of theology (now as then, with a heavily McCabian flavour), provoked by the New Atheists, being a case in point. Corrin himself is willing to go further still. In the book's closing paragraphs he argues, a little unexpectedly, that Pope Benedict's 2009 social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate* - parts of which 'could have been penned by the editors of *Slant*' (p. 387)! - constitutes 'the leadership of the Catholic world catch[ing] up with some of the core arguments put forth by the English Catholic New Left' (p. 386). Whether Corrin is right or not (and at the very least, Benedict is a far more radical social thinker than he is normally given credit for), it is evidently true that *Slant* still has the capacity to surprise - which, for something that began life fifty years ago as an undergraduate journal, is remarkable enough.

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