

interpretation is possible due to the Pope's 'concept of human experience and his conviction that the nature of the inspired biblical author and of the contemporary reader is the same' seems to require further unpacking. That said, Kupczak's book is a useful tool for delving into Pope John Paul's significant theological legacy.

PIA MATTHEWS

THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S PRESENCE IN THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH (The Proceedings of the Eighth International Patristic Conference, Maynooth, 2012) edited by Janet Elaine Rutherford, *Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2014, pp. 288, hbk*

God is beauty ever ancient, ever new, as He is first truth and supreme good. Whatever is beautiful in His creatures is a participation and likeness of His beauty, and wherever He is present in them, in either the natural order or the supernatural, we find a finite reflection of His infinite loveliness. Such would seem to be the principle, though it is never stated explicitly, underlying the essays in this new collection on the beauty of God's presence in the Fathers of the Church.

The authors offer an illuminating survey of their theme in the works of a wide range of Fathers and early Christian writers, with the Greeks predominant: St Gregory of Nyssa on the beauty of God's presence in the soul (Miguel Brugarolas), and on the 'transformation' of bread and wine in the Eucharist (Kirill Zinkovskiy); St Cyril of Alexandria on the presence of God in the interpretation of the Psalms (Eirini Artemi); the earlier Alexandrian tradition on 'prayer as a sacrament' (Janet Elaine Rutherford); St Maximus the Confessor on *aisthêsis noera* (Nicholas Madden OCD); and St Simeon the New Theologian on the beauty of the light of God (Karoliina Maria Schauman). The Latin tradition is represented by Tertullian's and Cyprian's praises of the beauty of martyrdom (Marcin Wysocki), and by the poetry of Johannes Scottus Eriugena (Catherine Kavanagh). It is a cause of regret that St Augustine, the Latin Father most preoccupied with the divine beauty, should be mentioned only in passing, but one of pleasure to find Anglo-Saxon and Irish authors of the seventh and early eighth centuries taking their place alongside the Fathers in Susan Cremin's paper on 'St John and the bosom of the Lord in Patristic and Insular tradition'. Finbarr Clancy SJ's essay directs its attention not to one particular Father, but to the pearl as a metaphor, used by many different Fathers, for the beauty of the mysteries of the faith. Juliette Day turns to the literature of early Christian asceticism in her study of the once physically attractive women who after their conversion disfigured their beauty and disguised their femininity. Brendan McConvery CSsR compares Patristic readings of the *Song of Songs* with those of the rabbis. Plotinus is apparently untouched by Christianity, but he represents the high point of Platonism's fascination with the beautiful and marks the minds of, among others, St Gregory of Nyssa and St Augustine, and therefore deserves inclusion in this book for his treatment of the beauty of the divine intellect (Andrew Smith). Peter Brooke, from the perspective of an Orthodox Christian and a painter in the school of Albert Gleizes, considers the contrasting attitudes towards iconography of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, Nicaea II, 787, on the one hand, and of the Council of Frankfurt, 794, on the other. In the final essay, Methody Zinkovskiy presents a speculative and systematic study of the beauty of personhood, in which he draws on the philosophical and theological traditions of Russian Orthodoxy.

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.

JOHN SAWARD

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,