

The bulk of the 'Afterword' is devoted to the other issue that continues to encourage speculation, the question of Newman's sexuality. It is only a post-Freudian hermeneutic of suspicion that feels obliged to see a sign of homosexual feelings on Newman's part in his desire to be buried in the same grave as Ambrose St John. The impoverishment of the range of possible friendships between human beings implied in this suspicion is lamentable and Ker rightly argues against it. In fact Newman's desire is complex, originating in his indebtedness to Ambrose St John whose death may have been hastened by the work Newman had asked him to do, in his preference for a simple grave among his colleagues rather than a grand tomb and, most striking of all, in the fact that buried on either side of St John were Joseph Gordon and Edward Caswall. These three were the men Newman described as 'the life and centre of the Oratory', faithful friends and supporters during the years of his conversion and his difficulties within the Catholic Church. To be buried among them, literally, seems like a very fitting way to acknowledge what they had been through together.

There is evidence in Newman's diaries of adolescent struggles with a strong heterosexual attraction. In 1840 he wrote a beautiful reflection on 'the sympathy of a woman's interest', something that is not, and cannot be, his, 'yet not the less do I feel the need of it'. The issue is already considered in the body of Ker's biography, as Paul Parvis pointed out, with its concern to speak up the 'masculine' side of Newman's character against accusations that his over-sensitivity and effeminacy might also be taken as signs of homosexuality. It might just as easily be argued now (where Freud is as likely to be dismissed as anyone else for what he has to say about homosexuality) that all this indicates that Newman was simply a man in touch with his 'feminine'. He was, after all, a poet.

John Henry Newman is one of the most intriguing personalities of the nineteenth century and the concern with his sexuality can distract from even more fascinating tensions in him that Ker's book illustrates at length: his daring openness to foreign things while being deeply fearful of them, his longing to be in the future in order to *remember* his travels rather than simply enjoying them as they happen, the power in his religious convictions that can seem fanatical but from whose implications he did not shrink, his struggle to chart a faithful course between Ultramontanist and liberalism. Newman's thought and Newman cannot be separated: they can only be known and appreciated together. It is the lasting achievement of this biography to have shown this once and for all.

VIVIAN BOLAND OP

**MAURICE BLONDEL, SOCIAL CATHOLICISM, & ACTION FRANÇAISE: THE CLASH OVER THE CHURCH'S ROLE IN SOCIETY DURING THE MODERNIST ERA** by Peter J. Bernardi (*The Catholic University of America Press, Washington DC, 2009*) Pp. xii + 297, £71.95 hbk

The French *Semaines sociales* movement, which was founded in 1904 to promote social reform in the spirit of *Rerum novarum*, soon ran into difficulties as the Modernist crisis intensified during the pontificate of Pius X – difficulties, it might be added, that were to be overcome since the movement is alive and well today. In 1909, two years after the publication of the decree *Lamentabili* and the encyclical *Pascendi*, the *Semaines sociales* president, Henri Lorin, faced sharp criticisms from certain clerical quarters: he was taxed in particular with "sociological modernism" and with confusing the natural order and the Christian supernatural order. Maurice Blondel came to Lorin's defence with a series of articles entitled 'La Semaine sociale de Bordeaux' that were published under the pseudonym of "Testis" in 1909 and 1910 in the *Annales de philosophie*

*chrétienne*, a periodical which by that time was owned by Blondel and edited by Lucien Laberthonnière. It was in the course of these articles that Blondel developed his concept of “extrinsicist monophorism” to denote and denounce the twin ideas that the natural order and supernatural orders lay separately one below the other and that faith, understood in this crude metaphysical framework, was perforce a one-way affair, something adopted by the subject, having been bestowed essentially from outside. Coincidentally, in the second half of 1909, a young Jesuit, Pedro Descoqs, published a series of articles in the periodical *Études* under the title ‘À travers l’œuvre de M. Ch. Maurras: essai critique’; these articles amounted to a qualified apology for the political and social ideas of the agnostic leader of the Action Française movement, who championed a royalist and ferociously anti-Republican (and anti-Semitic) brand of nationalism and who had endeared himself to many Catholics during the worst years of political anti-clericalism (1902–1906) with his defence of the Roman Church as the bastion of civilization and “order”. For the purposes of his argument in ‘La Semaine sociale de Bordeaux’, Blondel seized upon the *Études* articles and added Descoqs to his gallery of “monophorist” miscreants. Indeed, from early 1910, the question of Catholic support for the Action Française displaced the *Semaines sociales* movement as the main focus of Blondel’s attention. Suffering from poor health, he was to tire of the debate by the end of 1910, but Descoqs pursued it unilaterally into 1913, publishing and republishing, eventually in the form of two separate books, his original articles and his riposte to Blondel.

Retrospectively, this debate assumed a new significance in December 1926 when Pius XI condemned Maurras and the Action Française. But Peter Bernardi’s main interest has lain elsewhere. He has been primarily concerned with the intellectual substance of the differences between Blondel and Descoqs, rather than with how their debate might be seen to have had a clear winner from an ecclesiastical standpoint a decade and a half later. It was a debate of calibre inasmuch as it pitched the author of *L’Action: essai d’une critique de la vie et d’une science de la pratique* (1893) – which became a seminal work for philosopher-theologians already before the First World War (notably Pierre Rousselot and Joseph Maréchal) – against a philosopher and theologian, who, if much less well known, proved nonetheless, in the words of the late Emerich Coreth, to be “the last great representative of the Suarezian tradition”. Bernardi’s book, the fruit of a doctoral thesis prepared at the Catholic University of America under the supervision of Joseph Komonchak, provides an excellent analysis of the theological issues at stake, centring on the question of the proper understanding of the nature-supernatural relationship. He has combined, moreover, theological acumen with detailed background knowledge derived from much archival research. As to his conclusions, Bernardi effectively allows Descoqs’s claim that he was misrepresented by Blondel on the “neuralgic” issue of the relation between the natural order and the supernatural end (here the French Jesuit’s appeal to the concept of “obediential potency”, following Suárez and Ripalda, is elucidated); and questioned by Bernardi is whether what he terms the “supernaturalized” reality in Blondel’s philosophy was conceptually imbalanced. On the other hand, he argues that Blondel’s philosophical approach led to a better insight of the fundamentally anti-Christian character of Maurras’s ideas. If there is an overall conclusion, it is that “neither disputant can claim a total victory” and that “each had important insights that were corrective of the other’s position” (p. 268). The final chapter is enriched by pages in which the debate is related to different understandings of the nature-supernatural relationship on the part of such theologians as John Courtney Murray, Gregory Baum, Charles Davis, David Schindler, and John Milbank.

Given the precise focus of Bernardi’s book, the considerable role played by Laberthonnière in the debate with Descoqs over Maurras and his nationalist movement is, necessarily, largely overlooked. In 1910 and 1911, Laberthonnière

backed Blondel by launching a blistering attack on both Descoqs and the Action Française, first in the *Annales de philosophie chrétienne* and then in the book *Positivismisme et catholicisme à propos de l'Action française*. Like Blondel, he took Maurras to task for his predilection for the ideas of Auguste Comte. With his Suarezian concept of the (relative) autonomy of the natural order, Descoqs had been less bothered. Whether there could be some accommodation between Catholicism and a view of the world associated with Comte's positivism was, indeed, a key issue in the debate. Yet, on a point of detail, Bernardi is wrong to say that "it would be hard to overestimate [Auguste Comte's] intellectual sway in *fin de siècle* France" (p. 73n). The government-blessed inauguration of Comte's bust in the Place de la Sorbonne in 1902, mentioned by Bernardi, was out of phase with the direction of philosophy in academic circles; Henri Bergson's star was on the rise in the first decade of the new century and the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* was already established.

The book's scholarly apparatus (footnotes, selected bibliography, and index) is of high quality. Missing, however, is any reference in the bibliography to the current *Œuvres complètes* editions of Maurice Blondel's philosophical writings, whose publication by Presses Universitaires de France started in 1995 and whose first two mammoth volumes cover the period up to 1913.

*Maurice Blondel, Social Catholicism, & Action Française* represents a significant contribution to the history of French Catholic philosophy and theology in the twentieth century. It will, for instance, be of keen interest to scholars looking at the development of Henri de Lubac's thought. De Lubac and others of that brilliant generation of French Jesuits (for example, Gaston Fessard and Yves de Montcheuil) not only dissented from the Suarezianism taught to them by Descoqs in the 1920s at the French Jesuit philosophy scholasticate on the island of Jersey, but their very dissent and their related appreciation of Blondel's philosophy served as a huge spur for their own thinking (for de Lubac and Descoqs, see the second volume of Georges Chantraine's monumental biography *Henri de Lubac*, subtitled *Les années de formation*, published by Les Éditions du Cerf in 2009). More generally, Peter Bernardi has illuminated a debate whose core issues have not lost their relevance for theological reflection after the passage of a hundred years.

MICHAEL SUTTON

**RECEPTIVE ECUMENISM AND THE CALL TO CATHOLIC LEARNING: EXPLORING A WAY FOR CONTEMPORARY ECUMENISM**, edited by Paul D. Murray (Oxford University Press, 2008) Pp. xxxv + 534, £50 hbk

Anyone wishing to learn what has happened to ecumenism over the past forty-odd years will find answers and explanations in this book. And anyone wishing to learn how the disappointments and setbacks previously encountered might be avoided and the different Christian churches drawn closer together in the future will also find answers and practical direction here. This is an excellent volume, one that should be required reading for anyone seriously interested in engaging in ecumenical activity from now on: thirty-two different contributions from well qualified contributors, most but by no means all British/Irish, eliciting from one continental participant the flattering observation on the "English" Roman Catholic scene: "a minority church overflowing with intellectual and theological talents" showing "greater vitality" than many of its continental majority sisters! The editor has left no stone unturned in his efforts to ensure not only that theological ideas and principles are clearly aired but also that the practical difficulties of converting ideas into practice are confronted and overcome. Topics covered