

A more enduring problem in Irish society is the subject of Joe Liecthy's paper: sectarianism. People in Britain and the Republic are too inclined to see this particular issue as a Northern Ireland problem, but the North suffers from a legacy bequeathed to it by a history that has engulfed all the peoples of these islands. Sectarianism can be and is subtle and pervasive as well as overt and brutal. For sectarianism to endure and thrive in Ireland, it does not require any direct or active response on the part of most of us, it simply requires 'that we do nothing about it' (p. 91).

Coming to terms with his church's sectarian past is the topic fixed on by the Church of Ireland bishop of Meath, Richard Clarke. In a remarkably candid exposition, Clarke admits to the corruptions of his church in the past, accuses it of a garrison mentality tantamount to a paranoid defensiveness (p. 33), and says of the actions of some of its members during the Famine that the church is now 'having to live with an aspect of history that contains much that is unpalatable' (p. 35). In 1999 the Church of Ireland adopted a report in Synod that freely admitted its complacency in and at times promotion of sectarianism. Clarke rightly regards the report's adoption as a turning-point in the church's history. He is, however, in my view, on less secure ground in his assertion that Cardinal Paul Cullen was responsible for the alignment of moderate nationalism with Catholicism and thus made Catholicism and Irishness coterminous in the popular mind. He contends that 'nothing has been more disastrous for either the Roman Catholic Church or for the other churches' than such an identification (p. 36).

There are very many assumptions here, and it would take a great deal more argumentation for Clarke to demonstrate his thesis than space permits him. It took a long time for Irish Protestants to cease regarding them-

selves as merely the English garrison Church. If any single individual identifies the cause of Catholicism with Irishness then that person is surely O'Connell. At the very least Clarke has forgotten Yeats's assertion that Irish Protestants in any confrontation with England soon gave up because they 'lacked hereditary passion'. The hereditary passion exhibited by the country's Catholic population, more than any necessarily conscious act is, in so far as it exists, responsible for the identification of Catholicism with Irishness.

Clarke's essay and the collection in general repay careful reading. There are many excellent points made by various contributors and it would be impossible to do full justice to the volume in a short review. The last word on the contemporary Irish scene might be left to that loyal member of the theological opposition, Gabriel Daly, who neatly summarizes what he sees as the reason for the malaise facing Irish Christianity: 'the sheer rapidity of the revolution from conservative isolation to full membership of the Western capitalist world has left the Christian churches unsure of how to respond' (p. 151).

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BLONDELIAN STUDIES

The Idealist Illusion and Other Essays. By Maurice Blondel. Translated by Fiachra Long and with a Preface by Claude Troisfontaines. Dordrecht/ Boston/ London: Kluwer, 2002. Pp. xv+153. Price €72.50. ISBN 0792366549.

In the last ten years or so there has been a renewal of interest in the thought of the French philosopher Maurice Blondel (1861–1949). Philosophers may understand this against the background of the 'tour-nant théologique' (Janicaud) that is evident in contemporary continental phenomenology. For theologians,

however, it is now apparent that it is Blondel's thought that substantially prepared the theoretical ground for the subsequent revitalization of theological discourse that would eventually lead to Vatican II. He did this, as de Lubac points out, through a decisive assault on a dualistic *Weltanschauung* that was destroying Christian thought.

Against such a backdrop, it is a pleasure to welcome a translation into English of three important articles from Blondel. The original contributions were all formulated amid, and in the aftermath of, the controversy that followed the publication of *L'Action* (1893) and the (in)famous *Lettre* from 1896. As such they are vital resources in clarifying the early Blondelian project and staying those theological and apologetic interpretations that misread the seminal texts along immanentist lines. In *The Idealist Illusion* (1898) Blondel underlines, on the one hand, the phenomenological character of the philosophy of action to counter the rationalist objections from the secular academy and, on the other, the critical realist appetite in his thought in order to meet the criticisms of the neo-thomist theologians. In the densely argued *The Elementary Principle of a Logic of the Moral Life* (1903) – a *mémoire* that was originally presented at the *International Congress of Philosophy* of 1900 – the French philosopher moves beyond the sterility of formal logic to propose an alternative that would synthetically integrate the moral life and even religious practice in a sustained philosophical project. The final article, *The Starting Point of Philosophical Research* (1906), is important in that in it we have the first major reworking of the early philosophy that in hindsight can be seen as a remote preparation for the major works of the mature years. As such it serves as the crucial 'missing link' between the early *L'Action* and the late *La Trilogie* (1934–37).

A thorough register of notes and a long and informative introduction –

that rather surprisingly connects Blondel's project with the Scottish 'common sense' school – accompanies the three articles. Long has done some Trojan work in translating this difficult material, yet given the complexity and the textual nuances of Blondel's thought, it is best to read these translations in conjunction with the original French.

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THEOLOGICAL BIOGRAPHY

John and Donald Baillie: Transatlantic Theology. By George Newlands. Bern: Peter Lang, 2002. Pp. 451. Price \$56.95. ISBN 3-906768-41-4.

Those who facilitated the access of the Glasgow professor of divinity to the letters and papers of John and Donald Baillie of Edinburgh and St Andrews respectively, did well. For George Newlands has produced a book which affords a comprehensive insight into the often intertwined lives of these distinguished brothers. As all too infrequently happens, we are taken behind the scenes of the published writings and are introduced, substantially from original sources, to the cultural milieu from which their work emerged. It is the world of the children of a Calvinistic manse, whose theology underwent change, but for whom the centrality of the experience of God's grace remained. It is the world of classically-educated bright boys with poetic instincts; of university students whose education under such luminaries as A. S. Pringle-Pattison and H. R. Mackintosh was topped off in Germany; of music and, in John's case, amateur dramatics, of bridge and tennis parties; of widely-travelled lecturers and preachers, in and out of whose homes and diaries flit many of the most notable theologians of the day; of two World Wars; and of