

# Comment

The previous editor of *New Blackfriars*, Herbert McCabe, once remarked in a sermon preached at the clothing of a Dominican novice, "No English Dominican has ever been known to admire any other English Dominican; you might think highly of someone, you might be enthusiastic about something he's done, but admiration just isn't on. We know each other too well." That McCabe way of putting things roughly echoes that bit in the Rule of St Augustine, which Dominicans follow and used to have read to them during meals on Fridays, warning us that the brethren's concern should be about "their own good fortune in having the company of their poor brethren. Nor may they give themselves airs and graces because they have contributed of their abundance to the common life." Nevertheless, while trying to avoid as far as possible the unseemly excesses of admiration, the new editor feels compelled in his first Comment to speak 'highly' of Herbert McCabe, and to express even 'enthusiasm' but above all thanks for all he did while editor of *New Blackfriars*.

In his first editorial, way back in 1964, he characterised *New Blackfriars*'s predecessor *Blackfriars* as retaining "a sturdy confidence that truth could be known and should be commended". In the nature of things such a lofty standard could not always be sustained and it would simply be silly to claim that all the writing in NB gripped, excited and inspired – for some reason the example that comes to most people's minds of such was that baffling series we had on P. G. Wodehouse. But in general that same concern for seeking and commending the truth characterised Herbert's long reign as editor.

But the truth can be harsh in the telling. As he said in the Comment of July 1966, "It is the special claim of a journal like *New Blackfriars* that when it points to defects in the current life of the Church it tries to do so in the name of an authentic catholicism", and it was defending authentic catholicism against the damaging strictures of Charles Davis when he left the Church in 1967 that led to Herbert's suspension; an action which seemed at the time, and even more so in retrospect, to have been panicky and lamentably stupid.

Happily Herbert bounced back into the editorial chair in October 1970 to declare with typical rumbustious humour, "As I was saying before I was so oddly interrupted, ecclesiastical authorities can behave in some fairly bizarre ways."

However, before all this starts to sound alarmingly like admiration, or, even worse, an obituary notice, let us simply note that we hope very much that Herbert McCabe will continue writing for us

but in a more expansive way than was possible in editorial comment. Many of the problems NB has concerned itself with are unhappily still with us, and will continue to be examined in this journal in the light of the Gospel. For, in the words of the late Ian Hislop O.P. "The primary work of the Order is the theological analysis of contemporary experience," which means "thinking about our anxieties and preoccupations in the light of Revelation." Problems of a divided Church; the particular problems of the Catholic Church trying to consolidate and develop the initiatives and insights of the Second Vatican Council; world problems of poverty and social justice; domestic problems stemming from a Conservative Government which seems set on pushing back this country's standards of social care and compassion to those which obtained before the Second World War.

We hope we can rely on the help of our many friends to carry through this Gospel task.

Alban Weston O. P

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# Multiple Echo

*Cornelius Ernst o.p.*

This book contains some of the major writings of the late Cornelius Ernst O.P., not previously published in book form, selected and edited by Fergus Kerr O.P., and Timothy Radcliffe O.P., who have also written an introduction and a biographical note.

'Ultimately, I cannot accept the framework of experience demanded and presupposed by the orthodox ecclesiastical tradition. I think I must face this, with consequences I can't foretell. I have another tradition to which I am almost equally respectful – in some ways more so – the tradition of the human heart: novels, art, music, tragedy.'

So wrote Cornelius Ernst in a notebook of 1972. The words provide a key to the author's contention that it is only in terms of a philosophy of meaning that we can be loyal to the multiplicity of ways in which man today attempts to make sense of himself and his world. £8.95

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