

relativism. His positive contribution is in suggesting a different approach to philosophical problems an approach we apparently learn from the reading of 'honest' philosophers like Wittgenstein and Dewey. As a programme for progress it could be considered somewhat vague. However, if *Renewing Philosophy* provides us with no more than a starting point, an intimation of a correct attitude towards philosophical problems, its value remains as a correction to misreadings of Wittgenstein and its powerful criticisms of currently fashionable philosophies.

GILLIAN MCKINNON

THE LATERAN IN 1600: CHRISTIAN CONCORD IN COUNTER-REFORMATION ROME by Jack Freiberg, *Cambridge University Press*, 1995. Pp. xvi + 333, £50.

Sometimes, we can grasp an epoch from a detail. When next in the Lateran basilica in Rome, look at the sequence of marble angels in the transept and notice how they become more agitated and activated the nearer they are to the tabernacle. In this one detail we catch the Counter-Reformation's twin emphasis on devotion to the Blessed Sacrament and on a spirituality of activism. We also begin to understand Pope Clement VIII.

Freiberg's book is a massively learned reconstruction of the efforts made by Clement VIII (1592-1605) to restore to the Lateran basilica its ancient glory and dignity as the *Mater et caput* of all churches. Freiberg has ended the neglect by scholars of the Clementine transept of the Lateran, and shown it to be an eloquent and pivotal statement of Counter-Reformation theology and policy. This is an endlessly fascinating book.

The task Freiberg set himself was to understand how the painted, sculpted and architectural components of the Clementine project emphasised the Lateran's venerable history, honoured the Blessed Sacrament, and celebrated the 1600 Holy Year. With a wealth of detail, numerous photographs and lengthy footnotes he has argued a most plausible case, including the intimate involvement of Clement himself with the whole project. Some conjecture is the inevitable substitute for the lack, or loss, of a written programme of work to be carried out.

The location of the transept could hardly have been in a more important site than the Lateran area: in the pope's own church as bishop of Rome, associated with the emperor Constantine, and for something like a thousand years the administrative and spiritual centre of the Catholic Church. Both the early Franciscans and the Dominicans identified their respective founders as that religious who had appeared to Innocent III in a dream to support the tottering Lateran. The state of the Lateran was, of course, also a metaphor for the general state of the Church.

Clement VIII was definitely not content just to dream idly of

restoration, either of the Lateran buildings or of the standing of the Roman church in the world. In the transept, the frequently recurring motif of the phoenix has multiple meanings (Eucharistic, paradisaic, imperial), and also expresses the political and spiritual achievements of Clement. The Roman emperors had used the phoenix as an image for the transmission of power, eternity of empire and cosmic regeneration, and with Constantine and his sons it expressed the renewal of the world in Christ. According to legend, when the phoenix renewed itself a new age of justice and peace would begin. 1600 was a glorious year in Rome, and vast crowds came to celebrate.

There were many strands to the Lateran's claimed pre-eminence for Clement to build on; biblical, ecclesiological, imperial, Judaic. The last element may not be so obvious to us. In the Lateran area there were (and are) to be found the Holy Stairs (*Scafa Santa*), venerated as relics of Christ's Passion transported from the Holy Land, and the so-called *Sancta Sanctorum*, that is the papal chapel associated with the sanctuary of the Ark of the Covenant. Thanks to Sixtus V, the Stairs are placed so as to bring the pilgrim who has made the laborious ascent on his knees directly to face the Holy of Holies. Since the summer of 1995, a lucky few can now enter to marvel at the just-restored splendours of the chapel itself. Contemporaries were struck by how Clement would not allow his infirmities to prevent him from going up the Holy Stairs on his knees. The use of bronze on the spectacular sacrament altar carried a double reference to the Jewish Temple and to the *glory of ancient Rome*, now brought into concord. Images of the phoenix abound at the sacrament altar.

The structure and decoration of Clement's transept, which includes its highly symbolic organ, neglected none of the strands that gave the Lateran its pre-eminence. It is regrettable that Freiberg does not indicate which arguments in favour of the Lateran's claims were adopted by the crucial legal judgment of 1568 on which Pius V based his definitive bull.

The transept proclaims (a more muted word will not do) an imperial legacy combined with a glorious Judeo-Christian heritage. The fresco cycle in its choice of subject matter and disposition in the transept space according to liturgical directions provide an honorific frame for the sacrament altar. Impressions of real physical presence were combined with theatrical techniques to sustain the experience of an intangible reality. But this was no whimsical antiquarianism. The resources of the past were being projected into the future as an active and potent force. Freiberg is also good at showing the link between Clement's very name, the climate of reconciliation that surrounded the Holy Year, and that Pope's active interest in peace and concord in the Church and in the world.

Yet there is an undercurrent in this narrative that pulls away from the Lateran; St Peter's asserted its own ancient claims, and perhaps the Clementine renaissance came too late. The attempt to assign to the Lateran the dignity of the Temple of Jerusalem could be turned against it,

as in the medieval invective composed by partisans of St Peter's denigrating those who believed that the old synagogue could be head of the church. Papal policy, including that of Clement himself, oscillated and there were those who wanted the Vatican area to be a kind of ideal city centred on the person and ceremonial of the pope. Two papal bulls concerning its primacy might be cut in marble and installed in the Lateran, but both in life and in death the popes were increasingly located in St Peter's. The future belonged to it.

ROBERT OMBRES OP

CATHERINE MCAULEY AND THE TRADITION OF MERCY by Mary C. Sullivan, RSM, *Four Courts Press, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 1995, 420pp, £25.* (A North American edition is published by the *University of Notre Dame Press*).

This is an excellent book, elegantly produced. Mary C. Sullivan (a Sister of Mercy in Rochester, New York, and Professor of Language and Literature at Rochester Institute of Technology) has gathered together all the primary manuscripts on which any life of Catherine McAuley, founder of the Sisters of Mercy, must be based. She has prefaced the documents with a clear chronology of Catherine McAuley's life-story and provided a helpful General Introduction to the manuscripts themselves as well as a brief biographical note on each of the women who wrote down her own lively recollections of the founder herself. Many "Lives" of Catherine McAuley have been written since the first two (Harnett, 1864 and Carroll 1866) which appeared just over twenty years after Catherine's death, but this new collection of original documents is far more interesting than any of them. In Mary C. Sullivan's collection, we hear each individual voice speaking direct. No one has picked over the documents to select a favourite paragraph or to emphasize a chosen theme. We are free to come to our own conclusions about Catherine McAuley and to listen in turn to a series of remarkable women speaking about her, quoting her words, recalling their own vivid memories or passing on oral traditions. These early manuscripts were often copied by hand, lent to others, and copied again. Some are now fragile and hard to decipher. Tracing their history, their overlappings, their contradictions, their different points of view, is not unlike the fascinating task of unravelling the three synoptic Gospels.

Catherine McAuley, as one of her early friends insists, "was never a Protestant" but her mind was undoubtedly formed in a Protestant world. Her father had been a devout Catholic and wished to bring his children up in that faith but he died when Catherine was only five years old. From then onwards, she and her younger brother and sister lived with their mother (whose Catholicism wavered) and later with their mother's close relations, many of whom belonged to the Church of Ireland. When Catherine was twenty, her mother died. After five more years with her