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Review: 'Unresting Transformation: The Theology and Spirituality of Maude Petre'

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As a theologian, Alphonsus allowed both his studies and experiences to shape his understanding of God and his participation in Christ's mission. This is evidenced in his writings. His work in moral theology, which profoundly influenced the church, was grounded in his transformed image of God as loving and forgiving and not the god of the Jansenists of his day. His theology permeated his writings on prayer and spirituality, and spoke to the hearts of a vast spectrum of people, including both the sophisticated and Neapolitan peasants who were the focus of his personal and congregational ministry.

Throughout this work, Jones portrays Alphonsus as one consumed by a deep spiritual search for which he willingly paid any price. His single-hearted desire compelled him to invite others to seek God with a similar sense of passion and urgency. He challenged religious, priests, bishops, and those in his pastoral care to a constant, conscious awareness of God's unconditional love, and to fashion their lives in response to this love. This is illustrated consistently in Alphonsus' writings, both devotional and didactic, and in the example of his own prayer, ascetical practices, preaching, his art and music, and the formation of the Redemptorist congregation.

Jones' biographical sketch of Alphonsus, in both his holiness and his humanity, is a poignant reminder that "the church canonises human beings." Alphonsus' zeal for union of himself and all others with God in the midst of cultural upheaval and transition serves as a sign of hope to all who desire the same even now, three centuries later and an ocean apart.

*Servants of the Immaculate Heart
of Mary, Monroe, Michigan*

CHRISTINE DOBROWOLSKI, I.H.M.

Unresting Transformation: The Theology and Spirituality of Maude Petre. By Ellen Leonard, C.S.J. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1991. viii + 244 pages. \$26.50 (paper).

Ellen Leonard states in her introduction that this work "is not a biography but an account of a spiritual journey and of the theology that was developed on that journey." The author combines biography, cultural study, and theological analysis in this explicitly feminist project of taking the story of a woman who has been treated strictly as supporting cast in the Catholic modernist movement and reconfiguring that story with her as main character. The result is an enlightening and sensitive account of Maude Petre as a modernist in her own right, not simply as one who stood in the shadows of Tyrrell and von Hügel.

Leonard claims neither Petre was a great thinker/writer nor that her work has had any sizable influence on the modern scene. She is thus able to demonstrate well her modest claims that Petre was a consistent thinker of great integrity; that her thought reflected her life; that many of her positions did anticipate both Vatican II and the positions of contemporary theologians, especially feminist ones; and that she had some original insights, in particular concerning authority and obedience, that are worth considering today.

Of special interest is Leonard's delicate treatment of Petre's opposition to women's suffrage and her support for the appropriateness of separate, com-

plementary spheres for women and men. Leonard explores Petre's feminism against the background of her Victorian milieu. She presents her as a strongly independent woman who recognized that real feminism goes much deeper than any single issue such as the vote. Drawing upon categories from Beverly Harrison and Rosemary Radford Ruether, Leonard describes Petre's feminism as "soft" and as "reformist romanticism." With cultural differences taken into account, Leonard views Petre's life and thought as representing a nascent version of contemporary feminism. Leonard does a credible job of this, but the reader may still be left with questions concerning why, if the cultural differences were not emphasized, Petre's ideas would sound less supportive of contemporary feminism than of John Paul II's *Mulieris Dignitatem* with its romantic stress on complementarity.

This is an interesting and at times touching study that illustrates how a variety of historical and analytical approaches can yield a feel for the texture of events that might be lost in a more conventionally focused study concentrating solely on biography, social history or theological analysis. The book could be used as a reading in graduate or specialized undergraduate courses dealing with Catholic women's studies, modernism, or early twentieth-century Catholicism. Libraries with strengths in these areas or in Roman Catholic studies in general would do well to purchase it.

University of Dayton

DENNIS M. DOYLE

"Church and Age Unite!": The Modernist Impulse in American Catholicism. By R. Scott Appleby. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992. viii + 296 pages. \$29.95.

Appleby's deft examination of the skirmish between "modernism" and American Catholic intellectual life at the turn of the century ends with a sketch of current altercations between the Vatican and American Catholic theologians as "a reprise of the turn-of-the-century confrontation between defenders of scholastic thought and advocates of pluralism in theological method" (243). The attempt to find contemporary parallels is, in its present shortform (5 pages), a bit of a reach, and not necessary. The real import of Appleby's book is its comprehensive and compassionate gathering of the strands of Catholic intellectual history from 1895-1910. If America at the turn of the century—with a bully president and a swaggering step—seemed prepared to take on the rest of the world, perhaps it was because it *was* the rest of the world. The immigrant mix and vastness of the American imagination stimulated a whole new set of questions, not the least of which demanded that religious thinkers reduce "the tension between the requirements of American citizenship and those of religious faith" (238).

In this situation, a handful of American Catholic priests with a variety of good intentions attempted to translate the best thought of the old world into the argot of the new. William Sullivan (a Paulist in the line of Hecker), John Slattery (a Mill Hill priest with a ministry to Black Catholics), James Driscoll (and other Sulpician priest-professors at St. Joseph's Seminary, Dunwoodie), along with John Zahm (a notable Holy Cross priest-scientist at Notre Dame)