

In its entirety, the book provides a meticulous exposition of the extremely variegated dynamics that the program of Catholic renewal developed in each of these contexts. In how far this need for adaptation was a defining feature of the periphery is less clear – Catholic reformers in the Holy Roman Empire, for example, were similarly forced to modify their tactics in different territories – but Ó hAnnracháin’s comparative view from the margins brings the need for negotiation and compromise, and the frequent clashes between the traditional and the post-Tridentine phenotypes of the faith, into especially sharp focus.

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Alban Hood, *From Repatriation to Revival: Continuity and Change in the English Benedictine Congregation, 1795-1850*, Farnborough: St Michaels Abbey Press, 2015, pp. 270, £24.99, ISBN: 9780907077664

The Early Modern Papacy had a habit of being ‘experimental’ when it came to the question of England. It is now widely accepted amongst the canon of British Catholic historiography that the Papal-Habsburg policies from *Regnans in Excelsis* (1570) to the *Pax Hispanica* (1603) did little to assist ‘native’ Catholics in establishing tolerance in the broad ecclesial framework that was the Elizabethan Settlement. The great English Catholic Diaspora soon built colleges and networks that would ensure the survival of the English Catholic secular priest throughout the hardest times for beleaguered English Catholic communities. The religious orders could fall back on their European networks in maintaining continuity and could appeal to a clientage networks that were often already well established. Several plans for the conversion of England, both initiatives of the Papacy and parts of the clergy, came and went. By the seventeenth century, the bull *Plantata* (1633) provided the English Benedictine Congregation (EBC) with formal re-foundation, corporate and financial autonomy and, subject to the re-conversion of England, the cathedral priories it had possessed before the Reformation.

Dom Alban Hood is a monk of the monastic community of St Edmund, now in Douai Abbey in Upper Woolhampton. He is Prior of the monastery as well as Choir Master, Novice Master, Vocations Director and the co-editor of *The Douai Magazine*. Hood’s *From Repatriation to Revival* is a work of considerable scholarship and great significance. The work covers a period of the EBC’s history which has long been neglected, a period of perceived decline ‘out of time, out of place’ where monastic communities sat between a part-fanciful understanding of the EBC’s medieval antecedents (partly encouraged

by *Plantata*) and an increasingly resurgent laity, bully-boy Vicars Apostolic and, of course, the Jesuits. Yet this is only part of the story. Religious and secular institutions have a habit of promoting conversion narratives—ecclesiastical odysseys of exile, peril, foundation and re-foundation. In ‘Surveying the Landscape’ Hood provides a detailed account of the development of the EBC from the Dissolution through to the ‘Great Escape’ and eventual repatriation. Building upon the work of Bellenger and Scott he skilfully consolidates a vast corpus of historiography in providing a comprehensive study of ‘what had gone before’. Very much in the school of Bossy we see revisionism focusing on interdependence, social cohesion and confessional co-existence. When, to cite one case mentioned, the monks of St Gregory’s Community at Douai disembarked onto English soil, there was no ‘Benedictine free’ English desert to face them. In the Southern Province alone, large and well endowed regional HQs existed in Acton Burnell, Shrewsbury, and the up and coming spa town of Bath where the monks had their mission from at least 1669.

Hood’s second chapter ‘The Monasteries, from Repatriation to Revival’ charts monastic life throughout Europe from 1789. Here we see, perhaps most clearly in the work of Prior James Sharrock of St Gregory’s, the rock and the hard place—to stay in Europe or return to Mother England. The presence of monks in the localities did not go unnoticed. Citing Bellenger ‘their presence led to traditional anti-Catholicism being concealed rather than forgotten’, as we see with Snow and the foundation of St Gregory’s in Stratton-on-the-Fosse, the locals saw that the monks ‘resembled other men without horns or appendages.’ Perhaps this had mellowed from the days of the Gordon Riots that had destroyed the New Chapel at Bath in 1780. Hood provides us with some helpful statistics of the EBC and, from the French Revolution, the half century that it took for the Congregation to recover its numerical strength. The account of the suppression of the often overlooked ‘fourth house’ at Lamspringe is particularly helpful.

‘Prayer and Devotion’ must have been particularly tricky to write. At its heart is, I think, the battle between the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* and ultimately the shadow of David Knowles. Leaving Knowles aside Hood examines the pious devotions and exercise of the *Opus Dei*. ‘Of Rabbits and Hedgehogs: Monks, Bishops and the English Mission’ is particularly fun: thus begins the age of Baines, the ‘Hammer of Downside’. *Plantata* was, if not from its issue, certainly by the time of repatriation a canonical irrelevance. It was not until 1753 with the bull *Apostolicum Ministerium* that the EBC was forced to recognise the jurisdiction of the Vicars Apostolic. Much of the chapter focuses on the battle between Baines and Birdsall which clearly highlights where the Vicar Apostolic model could go so badly wrong. Since the erection of the four Vicariate Apostolic districts by Rome in 1688 the Benedictines had near total hegemony over the Western District. Philip Ellis, a

Benedictine chaplain to James II, was appointed Vicar Apostolic of the Western District in 1688, and, with a few exceptions, the post remained a quasi-hereditary position of the Order.

Hood's treatment of 'Benedictine Imperialism' is masterly and is at the heart of the nineteenth century narrative of the EBC. Polding naturally features highly here, as does the foundation of the Australian Hierarchy, a more solid claim than the Benedictine establishment of the Hierarchy of the USA, the 'Good Sams' and the, often poor, relationships with the Irish. I am not sure whether Hood sees the Enterprise of Australia as a success or indicative of what the EBC should *not* have been doing. At the heart of all this lies the ghost of David Knowles and what the EBC should be. With toleration came freedom, with freedom came acceptance and with acceptance came conformity. No one could safely say that the architects of the Australian mission were conformists as later monks would be and here, once again, we see the crisis of the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa*.

Hood's work is one of diligent comprehensiveness and, I think, some soul searching. Should monks have spent their time as missionaries in far flung fields, should they have been so cosy with the Jacobite cause and should they have taken such a prominent role in clerical hierarchialism, both at home and abroad? Hood provides the answer. Much of what is covered in Hood's opus is related to entrepreneurialism and where that has worked and where it has not. No religious order is safe from inactivity and the constant call of the *Opus Dei* and the life of perpetual conversion. The EBC, today, more than ever, faces many challenges yet also many opportunities; Hood gives some hints as to where to find them.

The English Benedictine Congregation is one of the Church's oldest corporations and, though much of what Hood tells us is a litany of where the EBC has not been at its strongest (and where it has) it is a work that no scholar of British Catholic History should be without. It is a work of great importance to understandings of the English Catholic Diaspora and Pan-European Catholic networks and it is a work that every nun and monk of the EBC should read.

*Downside Abbey*

Simon Johnson

*Receptions of Newman*, ed. Frederick D. Aquino and Benjamin J. King, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 264, £65.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-968758-9.

On the dust-jacket of this volume is a reproduction of a stained-glass window found in the chapel of Oriel College, Oxford, displaying one