same “the kids are OK” outcomes. His analysis here continues in that vein, though without so much emphasis on the particular question of homosexual marriage and parenting. Data are still meager in other societies about same-sex couples, so don’t look for much discussion of that in this volume.

Another happy quality is the frequent consideration of whether results showing the relative superiority of outcomes for family members in conjugal families are the result of selection effects or actually caused by the structure itself—the latter being what a Catholic interpretation would suggest. The reader will find good discussions about this, as well as fine reviews of current trends in family research and theory overall. I noted that American scholars are very highly represented in the sources used by all authors.

The book is somewhat rapidly assembled, so it suffers from occasional formatting and printing errors, but the translations into English from Italian and Spanish are quite satisfactory. The book is available from the Vatican publisher, though as of this writing not yet from Amazon. It is worth the slight inconvenience to get a copy.

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The dreams of the late 1960s—of liberation, empowerment, and hope—still leave a commanding legacy, one whose expenditure has been extended into an Indian summer by Pope Francis. Those young at the time find it difficult to believe that times change for them too and that the magical congruence of Vatican II and liberation has slipped so far into memory as to be now the material for historical reflection. In his aptly entitled work, Horn supplies an indispensable account of what he terms “the honeymoon phase of second wave progressive Catholicism,” 1965–1968 (1). It signified a unique pairing of praxis and theological dreams in a melding that led to what is termed the “Spirit of Vatican II.” A vision of its possibilities unfolded in an era of remarkable protest and unrest which marked the late 1960s. That golden month of May 1968 changed culture and politics in ways that still resonate.

Horn undertook this study to rectify “the silences of historiography” (259–60), which left out the contributions Catholics made to these shifts in radical expectation in the late sixties. In filling this gap, Horn is peculiarly
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well qualified for the task. This work builds on his earlier studies of liberation theology in Western Europe, 1924–1950, and The Spirit of '68, where the issue of the denial of any recognition of the Catholic contribution to its genesis arose. Horn is able to handle French, Italian, and Spanish primary material and has an intimate knowledge of the details of social and ecclesial movements before and after the Council. He has produced a highly scholarly work of singular importance, one that is credible, authoritative, and remarkably complete. It requires and deserves to be read carefully. Well sectioned and written (though the index is a bit miserly), Horn’s book supplies highly detailed, impeccably documented accounts of the movements, personages, and events which generated that ephemeral notion of the Spirit of Vatican II.

He commences the study with an excellent background chapter on “Vatican II and Post-conciliar European Theology.” It draws out well the utopian, messianic, and apocalyptic properties of theology which so shaped the Council and the Church afterward. Balducci, Chenu, Metz, Rahner, and Ruiz are the theologians concisely considered. Horn then moves to consider “Red Priests in Working-Class Blue” in chapter 2, the rise of ecclesial communities in Italy in chapter 3, seminarians and student activism in chapter 4 (a bit too mired in detail) and finishes with a convincing chapter 5, admirably entitled “the working class goes to paradise,” which deals with Catholic contributions to trade unions, notably in Italy during the late sixties. What emerges is a unique sense of congruence between a theological vision and demand for engagement in radical forms of action, which led to a collision between both in 1968. Some base communities survived, as Horn indicates, but overall the Catholic contributions to forging the ideals of progress of that era had a short life. Their movement was like a comet, one that burnt out due to exhaustion, factions, and the emigration of many of its advocates to affiliations with the secular world. From the crash of expectations, a runaway Church emerged, one marked by dissension and disillusion as hopes so authoritatively cast were to fade. Unexpectedly, the fruit of the Council fell from its trees onto very stony ground. The deliberations of the Council were launched into an era of unique cultural destabilization.

Horn cites a Dutch theologian who asserted that Gaudium et Spes “is the document of the Second Vatican Council” (15). It laid down an imperative to read the signs of the times, one derived from the encyclical of John XXIII, Pacem in Terris, 1963 (13). But that aspiration was laden with risk, for, as one critic noted, no means were offered “to distinguish the choice of God from any other misleading voice” (27). Horn is brilliant at capturing the overlap between the visions of a radical theology and the movements its proponents endorsed. As a result, utopian visions treated
as eschatological were given unique endorsements in ways that amplified a sense of the Spirit of Vatican II unfolding. The outcome was mandatory and irresistible. Clerical culture, niceties of liturgy and traditions, were swept aside as the sacred was desacralized, collective memory was radically readjusted, and the focus of salvation was shifted from the afterlife to this world, but not in ways Weber could ever have envisaged. Many of the movements Horn chronicles became extra-mural in ecclesiastical terms, so that demands of unionization, communal rights, and protest were radical imperatives with higher claims than those to be found in the Church. In retrospect, the zealots of the Spirit of Vatican II were innocent of the realization of the secularizing outcomes of what they proclaimed, and few could have envisaged the “aggressive secularization” to come which so unsettled Benedict XVI. Somehow, these progressives managed to dismantle the spiritual capital of Catholicism and to impair the prospects of its reproduction in Western Europe. To some sociologists, the Spirit of Vatican II was spectral rather than angelic.

Far from being partners in dialogue to read the signs of the times, those few sociologists, all prominent, who responded to the Council and the Spirit which came after, such as Berger, Bourdieu, and Turner were appalled. Reflecting on the aftermath of Vatican II, Berger observed acidly that Catholic conservatives had the better sociological noses. A fatal collision with modernity in Western Europe occurred after the Council, where the whole edifice of Catholicism became subject to spectacular forms of Durkheim’s anomie (the absence of rules or norms to realize structures), a consequence of which was ironical: that the laity, in whose name the reforms were instigated, abandoned the ecclesial ship that seemed to drift rudderless on the sea of faith. Its buoy markers had been capriciously removed so that the weak hit the rocks.

Horn only briefly touches on the singularity of the outcome of 1968. Countries such as Holland and Belgium, where Catholicism was pervasive, as judged by mass attendance and vocations, found religious affiliations dispensable. Ironically, a similar paradigm switch occurred in Sweden, which had very high Church membership that collapsed after 1968. Many who had been involved in the progressive movements in these countries were interviewed for the study. It would have been interesting for Horn to have explored further their responses to the aftereffects of that honeymoon period of the Catholic Left and also how they conceive the world as having changed since that era; but then that might be another study.

It is doubtful that the basis of this study could be replicated, for few are likely to be so immersed in the detail of the source material and its nuances as Horn, who seems to have a total grasp of the archives, the
personalities, and sequences of events. He seems so steeped in his project that no nuance escapes his forensic attention. Chapter 3 exemplifies his historical gifts well. All the uniqueness of what came to pass in that second wave comes to the fore, not least the debts to Marx and Mao—but also to Bloch—which so underpinned the shaping of that sense of the Spirit of Vatican II. These figures have long gone into history and this jettisoning becomes all too apparent in the study. In assessing the figures of emulation who supplied reference points for progressive Catholics, a matter of curiosity pertaining to the sociology of knowledge arises.

The longer history since Vatican II, as viewed from within sociology, generates issues of contingency, but also of conjecture. That whole history is characterized by “near misses” between conceptual advances and reappraisals of its founding fathers, notably of Durkheim and Weber in the 1990s, as made within sociology, and the assumptions utilized within liberal theology for grounding the reproduction of faith on the fields of culture. As a consequence, wonder arises over the issue of which discipline best reads the signs of the times and how different the Spirit of Vatican II might have been if these sociological prophets had been the source of reference for engagement with the modern world. While he does not deal with such issues, the whole tenor of this important work by Horn opens out that matter for reflection. Rightly, he indicates that this “second wave Left Catholicism was a sign of the times” (262) but, as he shows, the long sixties left a legacy which is now fading. He also notes that no third wave came; the movement expired.

The best way of appraising this work is to treat it as the definitive benchmark for understanding the rise and fall of progressive Catholicism in the countries selected for study. In a sense, Horn chronicles a tragedy: that progressive Catholics never did gain secular approbation for their contribution to the shaping of radical politics in the late 1960s; neither did they gain any appreciation from Catholics left to pick up the debris resulting from their naive pursuit of utopian fantasies wrapped in theological edicts, which turned out in later times to be unfit for them. This scholarly work stands in completeness and even if it peters out at the end, it is highly stimulating and worthwhile in what it sculpts of that strange brief era of meteoritic rise and fall. It is as if the prophets of progressivism saw the Promised Land on earth, only to find two decades later that the fogs of postmodernity had obscured its view. The map of modernity for reading the signs of the times had become unreadable.

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