

Dryden, not only stigmatized Catholic — and for that matter Lutheran — beliefs as idolatrous, but also aligned the Church of England clearly with the heretical beliefs of Zwingli, and Wycliffe before him, as well as with groups who had in earlier years shown themselves to be more relentless foes of that Church than Catholics had been.

Gardiner splendidly achieves what she set out to do, and I recommend this book unreservedly to those interested in John Dryden, Restoration Literature, English Catholicism, or Anglicanism. I also recommend Dryden's poem, which has not wholly lost its topicality, as witness the use of lines from the poem as epigraphs to the chapters of Fr. Aidan Nichols's book *The Panther and the Hind: A Theological History of Anglicanism* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993), as well, of course, as the adaptation of Dryden's title as the title of Nicholas's book (which was reviewed in the Oct. 1993 NOR). ■

## **briefly reviewed**

**The Idea of Culture.** By Terry Eagleton. Blackwell (England). 156 pages. \$19.95.

"Culture" is a word and a concept that has grown more prominent throughout the last fifty years. Although, in certain contexts, "culture" is still taken to mean the fine arts, museums,

concerts, and the like, the sense that culture denotes the total way of life of a people has become more widely accepted. Writers such as a Christopher Dawson, Hilaire Belloc, and T.S. Eliot have fruitfully used this notion of culture to examine Christian culture.

Terry Eagleton, Warton Professor of English Literature at Ox-

ford University, critically examines the different senses of the word, and their permutations and interactions, especially during the last fifty years. Although Eagleton makes reference to 19th-century thinkers such as Matthew Arnold and John Ruskin, and spends nearly half a chapter on T.S. Eliot's *Notes Toward the Definition of*

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*Culture*, his book takes part in an ongoing discussion between Marxists, anthropologists, and postmodernists about the significance of culture both as word and thing.

In the first chapter, and part of the second, Eagleton discusses the different senses of "culture," chiefly "culture as an organic way of life" and "culture as perfection, sweetness and light." He points out that culture is sometimes a matter of description, sometimes of evaluation (thus, as regards the latter, multiculturalists celebrate all cultures equally, though non-Western cultures are considered more equal). Eagleton finds both approaches to culture lacking in some respects, but does not clearly formulate any definition of his own, simply examining various concepts and connotations associated with culture.

Eagleton takes frequent jibes at those with whom he disagrees or whose outlook he finds wanting, including postmodernists, Protestants, Americans, reductionists, and others. For the most part he writes without jargon, though it is sometimes difficult to discover exactly what the point of his argument is or where it is going. He does, however, make a number of accurate observations, along with some that seem unfair, contradictory, or ridiculous.

Eagleton's best chapter is titled "Culture and Nature," wherein he attacks the claims of those, mostly postmodernists, who say that human existence is *purely* cultural, that human nature is merely a cultural construct.

But it is not until his final chapter, "Towards a Common Culture," that Eagleton really

shows his hand. Eagleton is a Marxist, and he is chiefly exasperated by postmodernists, who have retreated from a leftist political agenda into a preoccupation with nonpolitical cultural questions. "The counter-culture of the 1960s...modulated into postmodernism" — a postmodernism obsessively concerned with "identity politics," one that represents "a kind of group individualism which reflects the dominant social ethos as much as it dissents from it." Thus Eagleton's real concern, and the entire *raison d'être* of his book, is to protest what postmodernists have made of culture, and to suggest what its proper role should be — more modest but still important. (Although a Marxist, Eagleton does not subscribe to the crude Marxism that sees culture as simply a product of material economic forces.)

Whatever merits *The Idea of Culture* has lie less in its argument and thesis (which are not entirely without value) than in its laying out some of the important questions that need to be considered in constructing a correct philosophy of culture: the relation of culture to human nature, of culture to religion, of high to low culture, etc. These are all important questions that bear more than we might think on our political and social situation. But it is principally with such Christian authors as Dawson, Belloc, and Eliot that we must begin our investigations. Whatever credit Eagleton deserves for raising these issues, he does not, however, provide the answers we are looking for.

Thomas Storck

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**The Autobiography of a Hunted Priest.** By Fr. John Gerard, S.J. *Four Faces Press (P.O. Box 834, Springfield VA 22150).* 290 pages. \$13.95.

**Bamboo Swaying in the Wind: A Survivor's Story of Faith and Imprisonment in Communist China.** By Claudia Devaux and Fr. George Bernard Wong, S.J. *Loyola University Press.* 214 pages. \$21.95.

One comes away from these two memoirs by Jesuit priests of different eras and cultures with a better understanding of why Catholics once referred to the Church on earth as the "Church militant."

Both books testify to the virtue of perseverance and are marked by a heroism that their authors would deny on the grounds that many of their associates were more heroic than they themselves. Fr. Gerard, who worked among the English in Elizabethan times, speaks highly of Nicholas Owen, a man known for his craftsmanship and reliability as "chief designer and builder of hiding places [for Catholic priests] in England" before his own death by torture at the hands of Protestants. Four centuries later, Fr. Wong draws similar inspiration from the memory of Beda Tsang, the first Chinese Jesuit killed by Communists.

Fr. Gerard and Fr. Wong both make liberal use of the spiritual patrimony left to the Society of Jesus by St. Ignatius of Loyola. For Fr. Gerard the *Spiritual Exer-*