

particular interest to the English reader is Maria Elena Bertoldi's 'Hugo de Evesham: *tracce sulla pietra di un cardinale inglese a Roma (1281–1287)*' (pp. 15–25). A volume so wide-ranging in its perspectives and subject-matter cannot but make a fitting tribute to the wide-ranging influence of one Dominican friar.

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LOST ICONS: REFLECTIONS ON CULTURAL BEREAVEMENT by Rowan Williams *T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 2000. Pp.x+190, £12.50 hbk.*

Despite my great admiration for Archbishop Williams's work, I am not really sure why I was asked to review this particular book. This is cultural criticism from the standpoint of a discreet Christian humanism, expressed somewhat in the postmodern mode. My idea of a theology of culture, entailing as it does a full-blown metaphysics, dogmatics and aesthetics, is something more Baroque. Rowan Williams, as a pastor, spouse and parent, lives in the world of contemporary general culture—exposed, for example, to its mass media in all their forms. As a celibate ascetic, I, without excessive regret, do not. If I can venture a comment on some of the concepts laid out in this study, I am not qualified in the way he is to take the cultural temperature in the Britain of the Jubilee year. Certain symptoms of malaise ('lost icons') have led the Archbishop of Wales to propose a therapy. The circumstantiality of his summings-up of the contemporary scene generates confidence in his capacity as an observer of the problems. His scintillating intellectual analysis of possible solutions bespeaks his unordinariness. To imagine an authorial voice that combines the streetwisdom of a broadsheet columnist with the speculative gift of Hegel would be to get some inkling of the range of abilities these reflections convey.

What, then, do Rowan Williams's 'reflections on cultural bereavement' amount to? What exactly is it that he mourns? What has *died*? Essentially: authentic childhood and learning how to choose responsibly (ch. 1); the enjoyment, through social civility, of goods beyond acquisitive competition (ch. 2); wrong acting as personal dishonour, rather than damage to one's image (ch. 3); and, most compendiously, selfhood as more than 'the reactive, atomised response to situations' (ch. 4).

In the course of making his case that, in modern British culture, these 'icons'—benchmarks of the truly human—have become if not entirely defunct then certainly endangered, Williams does two things. First, he sends shafts of light on a large number of apparently unconnected phenomena, movements, events, all of which, on reflection, perturb. Secondly, he gradually puts in place an anthropology—a doctrine of man—of a kind more philosophical than theological but not for all that without in its conclusion, an evangelical claim.

The 'phenomena, movements, events' Williams touches on are wide-ranging: in ch. 1 ('Childhood and choice'), from modern commerce's habit of treating children as prematurely adult consumers and erotic subjects to the politically correct criticism of socially 'useless' children's literature of the Lewis (both Carroll and C.S.) kind; from modern government's concern with parental choice in schools (which can leave some parents 'free' to choose only the educationally rock-bottom) to a 'pro-choice' feminism which treats

unborn humans as less significant 'others' than (in Williams's examples) veal calves and rain forests. Then again, in ch. 2 ('Charity'), there is the weakening of social bonds in the West, when compared, at any rate, with the ecclesial, sacramental bonding of historic Christendom. Here the ruining of games by commercialised and, in the case of football, violent sport, and the difficulty of creating a common spirit of carnival (one need only advert, though Williams does not do so, to the recent Millennium fiasco) come high on the agenda. The decline of sacral monarchy (with all its admitted ambiguities) belongs here too. The outburst of feeling on the death of the Princess of Wales was a lament for 'a whole mythology of social cohesion around anointed mystery and authority'.

What residual expressions of 'charity' are left? One *my* social location would never have led me to think of is the rave/dance culture of young people—but Williams rejects this candidate as too much the arcane creation of big business. Again, there is the 'new politics' of the under-25s: ecosystems and animal rights—but this too gets the thumbs down for not thinking the related issues through. Worryingly, there is a deficiency in the very language of charity now, and the debate between liberals and communitarians overlooks the alarming fact that on either construal, the social order does not seem any longer to be patently 'there for us'. Williams ends his second chapter, however, on a more positive note, suggesting ways of being charitably collaborative in, among other things, the organising of education and the funding of the arts—though by now the word 'charity' has been redefined as pertaining to a participatory 'conversation'.

Ch. 3 ('Remorse') takes in: governmental non-accountability and corruption; the decline of shame as a regulating factor in public life; the sophisticated energy put into 'repackaging' people; the hate-inducing exploitation of the rhetoric of victimhood, and, in relating to the past, its stark alternative, amnesia; media communication as just one flickering image after another. Finally, ch. 4 ('Lost souls') draws together many of these observations into a dispiriting portrait of the modern self: impatient of learning through time and intolerant of any restrictions on the ego's demands.

It is largely in this concluding chapter that Williams sets out the anthropology which underlines his positive prescriptions for the ailments he has diagnosed. It is the rediscovery of the soul not as the immortal aspect of the human being, or even that which needs to be Christianity redeemed, but, rather, as a *desirable condition of the self*. For Williams, self-hood comes about only through an unending process of frequently agonising questioning about the meaning of a temporal life that is shared socially—yet often conflictually—with others. In this corporative Kierkegaardianism, as we might call it, we need a sense that our limited perspectives, and the interests they serve, are held within the wider, and in that sense transcendent, and non-competitive, and in that sense objective, regard of a perfect other. For the non-theist, that is only what Kant would have called a 'regulative' notion, an inescapable (once we have analysed the matter) desideratum of thinking. But, Williams suggests (and this is, in effect, his proof of, or at least suasion to, God's existence) such experiences as psychoanalysis and romantic love will collapse in upon themselves if this 'other'—the 'regard without desire'—is *only* a rule for thinking and not an

actual reality. It is the God who is sheer gratuity who alone makes possible the inhabiting of the world as gift, and thus the 'social miracle' of charity. The conviction of pre-modern societies that some truths of human life, though they be at once culturally transmitted and impervious to logical demonstration, are nonetheless *givens* points to this ultimate truth: the giftedness of our being.

This is a satisfying conclusion, but by no means a complete one. Even allowing for Williams's decision to address himself to a largely secular audience, it is dismaying that the Incarnation which, if it really is *saving*, must have power to address the multiform wastage of human substance these chapters describe, puts in an appearance only as a demonstration of the notion of non-competitiveness of divine and human. I find myself wondering if this lacuna may not be connected to the preceding account of the self—which, it appears, achieves authenticity, and in that sense salvation, by a continual psycho-social death and resurrection, an existential paschal mystery of its own. The 'charitable conversation' of properly socialised humanity would seem to render superfluous the charitable communion of the Church. Archbishop Williams tells us, indeed, that 'much more would need to be said about how these religious conceptualities [Trinity and Incarnation] relate to what has been addressed in this book'. I hope that, in more dogmatically meaty fashion, he will feed elsewhere the curiosity in the reader he has thus aroused. It is not a promising start, however, that by apparent denial of the *soul's* immortality, he seems to have erected a 'no go' sign on one *crucial* highway: the influx into human being of the life everlasting.

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ON THE FORMAL CAUSE OF SUBSTANCE: METAPHYSICAL DISPUTATION XV (Medieval Philosophical Texts in Translation, No.36) by Francis Suarez, tr. by John Kronen & Jeremiah Reedy, intro. and notes by John Kronen *Marquette University Press, Milwaukee, 2000, Pp. 217, \$25.00 hbk.*

Suarez (1548–1617), introducing *Metaphysical Disputations* (1597), says he was forced back to metaphysics after commenting in detail on Aquinas's treatment of the incarnation in the *Tertia Pars* of the *Summa*, and that he aims in the *Disputations* to examine in detail the metaphysical underpinnings of theologians' theology.

In Disputation 15, translated here, he treats 'form', but 'only as informed or received in matter' (p.17); leaving aside the (platonic) Forms/exemplars (which Christian theologians had already been given to identifying ontologically with the divine nature), and 'separated' forms (angels, or the intelligences of the spheres). In other words he is concerned here with what it is that makes ordinary physical things to be things of precisely the kind they are. If it is, as he argues, in virtue of instantiating a 'substantial form', then he can exclude *inter alia* that 1*) they are products of mere necessity, and that 2*) they can be said to be the things we may take them to be, merely because we choose to deem things so. 1*) had been canvassed by ancient atomists, and would soon be revived in a different mode by Hobbes (b.1588). 2*) had had something