

And lastly, I mentioned the necessity of listening to our social rituals and devotional needs, a restoration of balance is necessary. In this sense we need to look again at our buildings as a place with multi focal spaces, a central space with other areas providing for different moments and moods. This may help us to recover the 'transformative presence' which enables a community to resonate with its past, interact with its present and 'walk humble' with its God.

Reviews

THE ECCLESIOLOGY OF KARL RAHNER by Richard Lennan, Clarendon, Oxford, pp. ix & 289, £32.50

The publication of Richard Lennan's doctoral dissertation on *The Ecclesiology of Karl Rahner* (supervised by George Vass and Edward Yarnold) comes at a timely moment and reflects something of the change in mood which has been occurring in recent Rahner studies.

Ten to fifteen years ago the matter appeared to be settled. In official Roman circles at least Rahner's influence had been on the wane for some time, his receding star being eclipsed by the rival promotion of von Balthasar into the ascendancy. More generally something of a consensus was beginning to prevail, shared to a greater and lesser extent by friend and foe alike, whereby the constructive value of Rahner's work was deemed to have been compromised by the transcendentalising slant of his philosophical-cum-theological mode of procedure. A range of charges held sway: that Rahner started with a generalised account of human experience to the cost of the irreducible particularity of human life on the one hand (Joseph O'Leary) and of Christian faith and the person of Jesus on the other (Bruce Marshall); that the emphasis which he placed upon the individual human subject, a focus which continued in place even as late as the publication of the *Grundkurs*, prevented due recognition being given to the role of the communal and the public (Fergus Kerr) and, related to this, that the overly theoretical thrust of his transcendental method was incapable of giving sufficient weight to the primacy of practice in Christian life (Sobrino, *Segundo et al*).

However, Rahnerian devotees have not been passive in the face of these challenges. Recent years have witnessed a steady trickle of publications and a number of significant doctoral theses which have been written with the express intention of challenging this developing consensus and of promoting a rehabilitation of Rahner's theology that is

cognisant of the criticisms that have been levelled against it (Rahner à la 'seconde naïveté' perhaps?). For example, in face of the limitations supposedly imposed by the systematic infrastructure of Rahner's theological anthropology, Joseph DiNoia has called for a retrieval of the occasionalistic and unsystematic character of Rahner's many writings. Again, William Dych has pointed to the primary rôle that Rahner's life and spirituality played in giving form to his theological work. In a similar vein Philip Endean (*contra* Bruce Marshall) has argued that Rahner's apparently generalising ontology and mode of procedure is throughout subservient to the need to find an intelligible means of articulating the truth about the particular person of Jesus Christ.

Richard Lennan's recent book belongs firmly within the ranks of this latter 'camp'. In the process of presenting a competent historically nuanced exposition of and commentary upon Rahner's many ecclesiological writings (p.9), Lennan subtly attempts to resituate the various aspects of Rahner's better known 'theological anthropology' within the primary context of his ecclesial vision, faith and practice (p.10). The strategy is to by-pass the many critical questions which have been raised about Rahner's ontology and theological method by instead focusing directly upon his ecclesiology and so suggesting that it is the latter that validates the former rather than vice versa.

As such the merit of Richard Lennan's work is two-fold: firstly, he does us the service of reminding us that the importance of Rahner's theological vision and insights, with their characteristic combination of immense creativity and radical faithfulness, is such that their value outstrips whatever questions may be raised about the roadworthiness of the vehicle which he used to convey them (as to how far this point can be pressed will be discussed below); secondly and more pointedly, in focusing upon Rahner's ecclesiological writings, the aspect of Rahner's thought which time may well deem to be of the most enduring importance, Lennan makes a significant contribution to the task of rescuing them from the disregard which is all too frequently their current lot. With these commendatory remarks in view I will now turn to overview the contents of his book in a little more detail.

In his introduction Lennan presents us with the twin images of Cook's memorial and the ruins of Hilda's abbey each watching over the opposing headlands guarding the way to and from Whitby harbour, one symbolising the rewards of audacious endeavour and progress, the other symbolising the need to treasure and to preserve the traditions that make us who we are (p. 1). The tension between these two forces and the need for each to be held in balance by the other forms the golden thread running throughout Lennan's text. He points to the particularly sharp manner in which this tension manifests itself in the Church. On the one hand are those who view the Church as unchangeable by definition on account of its God-given identity (p.2), on the other are those who believe that it is this attitude of complete hostility to change which poses the greater threat to ecclesial identity by allowing an institutional

paralysis to distort the living body of Christ (p.3; c.f. pp.29–30).

It is against this backdrop that Lennan turns to examine the changing shape of the various ways in which Rahner, over a period spanning fifty years, sought to manage the tension between the impulse towards creative change and the need for faithful continuity (p.8). Drawing on Avery Dulles' analysis of ecclesial change (p.5), in turn a development of John O'Malley's work (pp.4–5), Lennan identifies a shift from the 'early' Rahner to the 'later' Rahner (p.9). Where the 'early' Rahner drew upon organic models of development in order to justify the phenomenon of ecclesial change ('the Church changing in the direction of becoming more itself, growing to be what it was always meant to be' p.8; c.f. pp.9, 44), the 'later' Rahner came to think in much more fluid terms of the Church having to be continually reenacted in genuinely new yet authentically ecclesial ways in the everchanging environs of an evolving world (p.9; c.f. pp. 109, 113–114, 125).

This contrast between 'earlier' and 'later' emphases in Rahner's ecclesiology provides Lennan with the organising principle for his work as a whole (p.9). The three chapters comprising the first part of the book are given over to an exposition of 'the foundations of Rahner's approach to the Church' as that appears in his writings of the 1940s and 1950s'. Following this, Lennan turns in the second part of his work to examine Rahner's shift from an organic model of ecclesial change to the belief that 'contemporary social conditions had become the primary force for change in the Church' (p.9). To this end the fourth chapter focuses on what Rahner believed to be the key pressures for ecclesial change exerted by twentieth century life. In the light of this Chapter Five explores Rahner's reflections on the changed ecclesial situation brought into being by Vatican II. In turn Chapter Six examines Rahner's thoughts on the implications for the shape of Catholic belief and authority of the radically pluralistic nature of contemporary life and culture. In the seventh and final chapter Lennan overviews Rahner's proposals for the future shape of the Church.

Throughout the book and particularly so in the final chapter the contours of Rahner's thought emerge with a freshness that is a fitting testimony both to Rahner's vision and to Lennan's lightness of touch. The overriding impression conveyed is that if Rahner's star is indeed currently receding from view this bears no relation to the continuing relevance of his ecclesiological writings, particularly his later ones. More likely it reflects the fact that he was prepared to move out and to chart courses which continue to lie beyond the horizons of currently influential perspectives. The timeliness of Richard Lennan's book consists in the contribution which he makes to ensuring that Rahner's rich, creatively critical yet deeply faithful ecclesial vision is not lost from view. Having said this, however, a few comments of a more critical nature are also in order.

As remarked upon earlier, one of the most notable features of Lennan's work, particularly in the earlier chapters, is the way in which he

subsumes his discussion of Rahner's ontology and theological method within his broader exposition of Rahner's ecclesial vision as and when appropriate. For example, he summarises Rahner's fertile yet difficult teaching on the nature of a symbol whilst pursuing the theme of the Church as sacrament (pp. 18–21). Again, he introduces the concept of the 'supernatural existential' within a discussion of Christ as the 'sacrament of the Father and fullness of humanity' (pp.21–24). Complementing this, Rahner's epistemology and his key concept of the *Vorgriff* is discussed within the context of his theology of revelation rather than vice versa as is more generally the case (pp.48–53). Likewise, human freedom makes its appearance within a discussion of the way in which Rahner viewed the laity as sharing in the charismatic dimension of the church (pp.92–95)

Whilst this manner of proceeding certainly constitutes a refreshing alternative to the tendency to view Rahner's theological anthropology as having been drawn from a generalised philosophical account which was only subsequently applied to the analysis of Christian life and belief in a somewhat secondary fashion, it is not without its own problems. Firstly, my suspicion is that such a tightly integrated exposition of Rahner's ontology and theological methodology along with his key ecclesiological concerns will only serve to increase the difficulties inevitably experienced by those seeking to understand the subtleties of Rahner's thought for the first time.

Secondly and more substantially, whilst I believe that Lennan is correct to claim that Rahner's adoption of a transcendental ontology and theological methodology must be set within the context of the ecclesial vision which they were meant to serve, it must equally be acknowledged that serious questions remain as to the adequacy of Rahner's transcendental mode of analysis to this task. This point is deserving of further consideration.

The various charges which have been pressed against Rahner's transcendental method (viz. that it distorts the particularity of human life and Christian faith and that it led to Rahner's formally articulated theology being overly centred on the individual and the theoretical) stand whether or not its adoption was in practice subordinate to a prior ecclesiological vision. In spite of this Lennan relegates even acknowledging, let alone actually addressing, such concerns to footnote references to other works and to disarmingly brief discussions in the summary sections which conclude each chapter. This omission serves to weaken Lennan's case for Rahner; the point being that for as long as questions remain outstanding concerning Rahner's adoption of a transcendental method at the level of formal articulation then his underlying ecclesial vision and practice are in danger of being undermined also. It is perhaps no coincidence that many who declare themselves sympathetic to Hans Urs von Balthasar's criticisms of Rahner's theological anthropology are likewise committed to the more conservative ecclesiological vision which von Balthasar represents.

Valuable as Lennan's recontextualisation of Rahner's ontology and theological anthropology is, it is necessary to take one step further than Lennan himself settles for, in this work at least. That is, having extracted Rahner's underlying ecclesial vision from the transcendental matrix in which it is currently set, the attempt must then be made to represent it in less controvertible form. But perhaps this is to ask Lennan to have written two books rather than one?

That being said, the standard of scholarship throughout the book is high. Lennan is thoroughly acquainted with his primary and secondary sources, both the original German texts when appropriate and the standard English language translations. He makes his own translation when none is available and emends standard translations when the need arises. In this regard it is all the more surprising that he rests content to use the Richards translation of the substantially altered second edition of *Hörer*. This is widely regarded as a poor translation of a work that owes as much to the hand of the editor, J. B. Metz, as it does to that of Rahner himself. Had Lennan not wished to conduct his own translation of the first edition he could have turned to Joseph Donceel's translation, the full text of which has been available from Continuum since 1994. On a different point, a lengthier index might have been in order. Barely more than two pages of entries seems a little out of proportion for a work of this nature. More generally, however, as always with works from the Clarendon Press the general quality of publication is high (as also, unfortunately, is the hardback price!).

In conclusion, Richard Lennan puts us in his debt by presenting us with a judicious, timely and systematic exposition of the changing face of Karl Rahner's ecclesiological vision which, as such, makes a significant contribution to the task of reclaiming that vision for the next century. All who teach or participate in courses on ecclesiology or programmes of ministerial formation would benefit from reading this book. Whilst the not inconsiderable price places it well beyond the pocket of students and, indeed, of most lecturers it is a book which all theological libraries should possess. It is to be hoped that Clarendon are able to bring out a paperback edition in time. Until then, those in charge of library acquisitions should take note and order.

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ROBERT PERSONS: THE BIOGRAPHY OF AN ELIZABETHAN JESUIT 1546–1610 by Francis Edwards SJ. *The Institute of Jesuit Sources..* (Casebound): \$42.95 (paper): \$32.95. Illustrated, pp. vii + 413

This year sees the four hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the birth of a remarkable Jesuit controversialist who has a well-founded claim, along with Cardinal William Allen, to be one of the founders of modern English Catholicism. As Father Francis Edwards writes, in *Persons* 'we are dealing with a man not only of rare conviction but of extraordinary intelligence and personal gifts'. He was a formidable controversialist, a