

THE CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS POETS FROM SOUTHWELL TO CRASHAW by Anthony D. Cousins, *Sheed and Ward*, 1991. Pp. xlii + 204. £19.95.

'From Southwell to Crashaw' is the flourished period of English baroque poetry. A remark about Habington's poetry exhibiting affinities with 'mannerism' suggests that Dr Cousins has come to some distinct understanding of 'baroque', but this is never made quite clear for the reader. If, in the end-notes, Dr Cousins declares that he is not putting forward 'a new theory' of the baroque, he is also not re-stating any old theory. Just making use of a few 'topoi' that 'have evolved throughout the long and protean discussion of that term and of the phenomena that it is used to describe'. There are five of these topoi: the theory of a plain style of christian rhetoric, the practice of that style, the practice of Jesuit poetry, and the theory of emblematic rhetoric, together with 'ideas of meditation (again, chiefly Jesuit)'. Dr Cousins gives generalising runsthrough of his topoi in a lengthy first chapter.

Each of these is completed without reference to the works of those poets Dr Cousins is proposing to elucidate. It is curious, for example, that all his talk of Erasmus and the plain style does not lead from 'the rules of Christ' for our oratory set out in Ciceronianus into some consideration of that justification of unplain poetry which Crashaw finds in 'the wealth of one Rich Word' as he makes his address 'To the Name above Every Name'. Dr Cousins does, however, find space to repeat a number of his own ungainly periods, like that on p.6 about Erasmus' version of Augustine: 'he perceives accommodation as a principle for reinterpreting history, not only rhetorical tradition', which reappears on p.7 as 'he sees that twofold principle as reshaping both our understanding of history as well as our understanding of rhetoric'. That further doubling of 'our understanding' and that ungrammatical 'as well as' are typical of the lazy rhetorical tricks in Dr Cousin's writing.

After this survey of 'English and Counter-Reformation traditions', Dr Cousins offers re-considerations of six poets; shortish pieces on Constable, Alabaster, Beaumont, and Habington, are placed between essays on Southwell and Crashaw. Southwell is introduced as 'St Robert', and Beaumont as 'Sir John', but Crashaw is not here allowed to retain his minor canonry. But then, even at Loreto, a few years ago, the cathedral archivist was unable to locate the poor poet's grave for me.

Everything in Dr Cousin's accounts is directed towards the promoting of a decent spirituality, towards what is 'Catholic' and 'Religious'. His remarks about the structure of Southwell's 'Saint Peter's Complaint' for example, are chiefly concerned not with matters of prosody but with the circling movement of the penitent's 'obsessive self-analysis' and the progress achievable when a Catholic makes such an analysis 'in submission to Christ'. Similarly, the images of Alabaster's third sonnet 'Upon the Crucifix', in which the devotee indulges phantasms of what it would be to twine like ivy or honeysuckle about the

crucified Lord 'and climb along his sacred breast', are religiously re-defined by Dr Cousins from their most particular excitements into general expressions of 'fellowship' with Christ and 'the desire to reverence and celebrate him'. After this, it is no surprise that Dr Cousins does not notice what is going on when Habington waits on God: 'Upward to thee I'll force my pen'.

Intending to establish Crashaw as 'the greatest Catholic religious poet of the English Renaissance', Dr Cousins leaves aside just those elements in Crashaw's verse which interested Pope and Coleridge and Swinburne and T.S.Eliot, and which provided paradigms for Shelley's most famous poem. His biggest bother with Crashaw is neither what to do about the notorious 'walking baths' figure for the Magdalen's tearful eyes, which does not rate a mention, nor where to place the insistent sexual puns on 'dying' with Christ in the 'Hymn to St Teresa', where the poet is happy to say of the six years old little girl that 'She can Love & she can Dy' though 'she cannot tell you why'. At this point, Dr Cousins enters a remark about 'her necessary ignorance of theology'. He is much more worried by the 'theological difficulties' of Crashaw's being well aware of a gracious enablement to compose his hymn 'To the Name above Every Name' and yet not venturing in the body of his verses to pronounce the name of Jesus. This, at any rate, does strike him as 'curiously problematic'.

Readers, therefore, who are interested in the ways a sensitive soul may vibrate in Christian harmony with poets whom he supposes to be articulating a Theocentric, Logocentric, Christocentric, appreciation of our being, and Dr Cousins seems often to take those terms to be univocal, should get a deal of pleasure from this book. 'For a contrary view', as Dr Cousins observes, 'see H.Swanston, "The Second Temple", Durham University Journal, 56 (1963), 14-22'.

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THE LOGIC OF SOLIDARITY: COMMENTARIES ON POPE JOHN PAUL II'S ENCYCLICAL 'ON SOCIAL CONCERN'. G. Baum and R. Ellsberg (ed.), Orbis, Maryknoll, New York, 1989.

This book presents the text of the encyclical *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* of 1987, and a number of commentaries by social scientists and theologians. The title stems from the Pope's claim that extensive poverty in the Third World, and in the North, the product of economic, political, cultural and military domination, of the 'logic of blocs' (8), needs to be opposed by the 'logic' of the virtue of solidarity (38). P. Land and P.J. Henriot applaud the continuation of the structural analysis of development of Paul VI's *Populorum Progressio*, whose twentieth anniversary the encyclical commemorates and whose teaching it seeks to deepen. The issues are examined in the light of previous social teaching and in his practical suggestions Pope John Paul II avoids opting for the capitalist or the communist model of development. These authors,

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