

Giblin emphasises that 'No apocalyptic writing ... can fail to be eschatological in some real sense.' Eschatology is 'the understanding of the final and definitive stage of religious experience and ... of religious history.' Further on the matter of literary forms Giblin makes the interesting and fruitful observation that the 'genre' of gospel in the NT is not limited to the four story-form gospels, although there is only one Gospel. John's contribution to the genre of "apocalypse" is innovatively to include in its very fabric another "genre", the Gospel of Jesus Christ.' (The reader may reflect that the story-gospels for their part include both 'little apocalypses' and wisdom sayings cast in apocalyptic form.)

It is remarkable that in so condensed a book so many insights occur. They are so numerous that for any further comment we must be content to choose the observation that 'Apocalyptic writing makes much of *series of visions*.' This is indeed the case, and of these visions there is a merging, a dissolution and re-presenting of pictures: cinematic technique is as it were anticipated. As Giblin says, 'John's clarifications are progressive.' The same might be said of his own work. In devoting himself to making *Revelation* intelligible he has unobtrusively given to the reader real insight also into the whole NT and its Gospel.

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TERESA OF AVILA by Rowan Williams. 'Outstanding Christian Thinkers' *Geoffrey Chapman* 1991 Pp. xiii + 177 £16.95 (hbk), £7.95 (pbk)

There have been rather a lot of books of late on St Teresa of Avila, but this one is rather different. It takes Teresa seriously as a thinker, and provides a justification for the title bestowed on her in 1970 of 'Doctor of the Church'. Teresa herself would be surprised: she never thought of herself as much of a thinker. It is not, of course, as any kind of academic theologian that Professor Rowan Williams presents her: rather he draws attention to her attempts to understand, both for her own sake and for others', what it means to be drawn to God in prayer and to surrender to that drawing. In this Williams detects a fearless questioning and a talent for making a great deal of a very little formal theology, that reminds one of Julian of Norwich, and indeed of a quality of intelligence not infrequently found behind convent walls.

This is not a life: after the briefest of biographical chapters, we embark on a study of Teresa's theology. It is a contextual study: the first chapter paints Teresa's social world and places her 'in' it, as a 'displaced person', a woman, the granddaughter of a *converso*, with a fragile—and marginal—place in society. Williams brings out the importance of racial purity and honour in that society, and sees Teresa's emphasis on friendship with God as the basis of her understanding of the Christian life, and therefore the religious life, as undermining the concept of honour. The Carmelite reform, initiated by Teresa, is thus seen as a risky venture, calling in question the cherished principles of 16th-century

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Spanish society. A promising context for theology (though not a necessary one, as the brilliance of this study, written from the heart of the Anglican establishment, demonstrates!). Three chapters then focus on Teresa's *Life*, her *Way of Perfection*, and the *Mansions* or *Interior Castle*. Williams' stress on development enables him to present a much more coherent picture of Teresa's understanding of spiritual progress, and what is more, a picture that emerges from Teresa's own words rather than one borrowed from her younger contemporary, St John of the Cross. Interestingly, however, Williams is able to show very marked convergence between the two Carmelite saints (his illuminating parallels with John of the Cross, especially in the chapter on the *Mansions*, suggest that he has the germ of another, equally fascinating book on the Carmelite friar). A final chapter raises the question of 'mysticism': Teresa is evidently a 'mystic', but what is a mystic, and especially, a *Christian* mystic? Williams attempts—much too briefly—to justify the notion of a mystic as one who seeks to re-enact in his or her life the fundamental form of encounter with God (or the sacred) that lies at the heart of the religious tradition to which he or she belongs. There are, then, 'mystics' belonging to the different religious traditions, but there is no common 'mystical core'; also, while the mystic in some way endorses his religious tradition, he (and especially she) is likely to be seen as a threat.

Professor Williams perhaps tries to make too much of a modern heroine of Teresa in his discussion of her rejection of the concept of honour. Someone who habitually refers to God as 'Su Majestad' has hardly rejected the notion: there is an ambivalence here that Williams fails to explore. Nor is Teresa's rejection of human honour quite as remote from our notions as Williams represents it. For 'honour' read 'reputation': something the more insidious in that we build up a reputation and thus personally invest in it. Teresa undermines that too. Several times Williams draws parallels and contrasts with the 'Eastern Christian' tradition. But one major contrast escapes him. The Orthodox tradition knows little of an understanding of prayer that progresses from something *purely* human to something *purely* divine. Nor did the West until the 12th century, when the idea of the ascent of the soul was fitted into a dichotomy between nature and grace, based on a bastard Augustinianism. But the idea of any kind of Christian prayer as purely human is bizarre; as is the idea that our deepest communion with God is purely divine (deification is about transformation, not displacement). For Williams' Teresa, union with God makes us 'truly human': but this runs counter to the traditional Western categories that she accepts, categories not explicitly questioned by Williams.

But this is a fine book: original and full of insights, surely much the best book on St Teresa of Jesus to have appeared in English for a long time.

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