

spiritual writers, Dame Gertrude More and Dom Augustine Baker, link the resurgent English Benedictines with mediaeval English mysticism.

The editors are at pains to show that the eighteenth century was not, after all, such an age of obfuscation as Newman suggested, for English Catholics did write publicly and boldly. Familiar names like Dryden and Pope are matched with other worthwhile poets, the acerbic Thomas Ward, and the gentle Jane Barker. Her lament on her brother's death ranks with Augustine, Bernard, and Auden (p. 288). The end of the eighteenth century saw fierce controversy, as Cisalpine and Ultramontane battled for England's soul: we hear from Berington and Butler and their great opponent Bishop Milner, who would certainly object to including the former as Catholics in good standing! (The Modernists a century later were rigorously excluded, even von Hügel.)

The 'Second Spring' brought a vigorous affirmation of the Catholic Church's rightful place in English life: the mediaeval romanticism of Pugin, the Baroque exuberance of Wiseman, the Yorkshire common sense of Ullathorne. Meanwhile the careful historians Dodd and Lingard had prepared for our modern re-appraisal of England's Catholic past. Newman has to be represented, and the hymns of Faber and Caswall – but there is now such a wealth of Catholic writers that it is hard to select. The eccentric wanderers Francis Thompson and John Bradburne are rightly represented – though I miss the spine-tingling last stanza of the *Hound of Heaven* – and Chesterton's unexpected turns of phrase range from prosaic to fantastical. But that triumphal time came to an abrupt end with the 'cultural revolution', mentioned only in a letter of David Jones; 'I feel bloody sorry for the hierarchy actually, for whatever they decide they will be blamed by both parties' (p. 658).

Letters are incongruous anyway, in a selection of printed works. Few were intended for publication, and those of David Jones and J.R.R. Tolkien (pp. 645–8) would never have seen print had it not been for the reputation of their other writings, but inconsistencies are inevitable in any selection.

It is not quite clear for whom the book is intended. Little is suitable for the *prie-dieu*. The volume is far too heavy and the print too small for a bed-side anthology. (Incidentally O.U.P. could have done better in the production: the pages seem grey, and the illustrations muddy. And the ugly sans font used for the editorial material is a blemish.) Perhaps it is most valuable to reassure us that we were not, after all, merely a *gens lucifuga*, a foreign mission to immigrants, a rabble of workers and peasants, but that we belonged then, and belong now, to the mainstream of English society, a society which we brought to the Faith in the seventh century, again in the tenth, again in the nineteenth, and shall do again as we prepare for what, counting carefully, will be our *Fourth Spring*.

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**LOST IN WONDER** by Aidan Nichols OP, *Ashgate*, Farnham, 2011, pp. viii + 184, £45.00, hbk.

The present volume is a collection of essays on sacred aesthetics, the second by this author to be published by Ashgate; the first was *Redeeming Beauty* in 2007. I had thought that that first volume had concentrated almost exclusively on the visual arts such that, despite being subtitled 'Soundings in Sacral Aesthetics', it barely made any sound concerning the non-visual arts, such as music. Hence, I was pleased to see that what I felt was missing in that volume has now been addressed in *Lost in Wonder – Essays on Liturgy and the Arts*, which encompasses a theology of the liturgy, sacred architecture, iconography, art, music, literature and poetry. Here, the expanse of aesthetics is well represented, and I think it

is rare to find a single author attending to such a range of aesthetic disciplines with such impressive insight and accomplishment. What unites these essays and holds them together is the author's faith in the incarnation – God made flesh and visibly manifest among us. All art flows from this fundamental truth. Hence, Fr Aidan cites the poet Charles Williams: 'the Incarnation, had it not been necessary to man's redemption, would have been necessary to his art' (p. 175).

This concern for the incarnation as the basis for art – especially the visual arts – is a constant in the author's many writings on the subject beginning with *The Art of God Incarnate* in 1980. It underlies his plea, sounded repeatedly in this volume, for the Church's return to an iconic art in the service of the liturgy which discloses the Incarnate One among us. For Fr Aidan is right to insist that art is at the service of objective truth and beauty, which is most excellently made known to us in the incarnation of Christ, and who continues to reveal himself incarnationally in the liturgy. As the German liturgist Michael Kunzler says: 'What happened once for all in the Incarnation and redemptive work of Christ comes to pass daily in the liturgical actions of the Church' (p. 18).

Artists today often claim still to explore truth and beauty, except that, as in modern philosophy, so too in the arts, there has been an inward turn towards the subject. Art thus becomes an expression of subjective truth. As the British 'artist' Damien Hirst once said: 'Art goes on in your head... Art comes from everywhere. It's *your* response to your surroundings'. Claudel, on the other hand, would agree that art is a response, but it is a response to God, who is beauty and truth itself (see p. 112). Hence so-called art that is blind to beauty and the transcendent, closed to the mystery of the Other who is 'Beauty's self' (as Hopkins put it), is not genuine art. As Pope Blessed John Paul II said in his *Letter to Artists* (1999): 'Even beyond its typically religious expressions, true art has a close affinity with the world of faith, so that, even in situations where culture and the Church are far apart, art remains a kind of bridge to religious experience. In so far as it seeks the beautiful, fruit of an imagination which rises above the everyday, art is by its nature a kind of appeal to the mystery'.

Hence, art must remain focussed on objective beauty, and ultimately on the truth of God; art is at the service of divine truth and beauty, above all in the liturgy. For as Fr Aidan says, 'the beauty of God has made itself known not only in creation, but, above all, in the work of salvation, centred as this is on the Cross and Resurrection of the incarnate Word, and in the consummation of creation to which the work of salvation points the way' and 'the Liturgy of the Church is the principal act of celebrating the divine beauty' (*Preface*, vii). Therefore, the liturgy needs and indeed, deserves, genuine art which makes manifest to the human senses the incarnate God who dwells among us for our salvation. It is he who is the 'principal Liturgist' (p. 17). Thus, the liturgy is not to be subjectivised but rather 'in the celebration of the sacraments... the level of objectivity of what is taking place is raised to a higher pitch' (p. 17). It is our privilege as Christians to participate in the liturgy, and so, to thereby encounter redeeming beauty, the person of Jesus Christ himself.

Often, talk of beauty and art in the liturgy can degenerate into aestheticism, a phenomenon that Von Hildebrand deplored in his *Trojan Horse in the City of God* (1967). But Fr Aidan never allows the exploration of sacred aesthetics to become an issue of taste and 'dilettantism' (p. 178). Rather, these essays are explorations of the wondrous truth of the incarnation, of the dread beauty of the Passion, and of our being wounded by the arrow of beauty (as Ratzinger has said) so that our graced lives might reflect the loveliness of Christ Crucified and Risen. Hence, these essays have an ascetic quality combined with a true pastoral sensitivity, concerned with the proper end of Liturgy which is the glory of God and the sanctification of his people. So, for example, Fr Aidan praises Gregorian chant for its poverty, chastity and obedience (p. 125ff) – those keynotes of the

vowed religious life, but at the same time, much as he loves plainsong, he notes that ‘many people will need music with more obvious warmth and richness . . . so as to awaken a liturgical sensibility’ (p. 128), and he points a way forward in the writings of Pope Benedict XVI.

Dostoevsky famously said that “beauty will save the world”. How and why this is so, Fr Aidan explicates in this collection of essays.

LAWRENCE LEW OP

**THE DOMINICAN WAY** edited by Lucette Verboven, *Continuum*, London and New York, 2011, pp. x + 221, £10.99, pbk

This is a collection of interviews with 16 Dominicans: Sisters, Brothers, one Lay Dominican and Nuns. One of those interviewed is Timothy Radcliffe, who writes an Introduction and whose three interviews provide a kind of commentary on the whole exercise.

The individuals chosen for interview are remarkable and far from run-of-the-mill. Indeed the book may be described as high-class journalism, which is not to belittle it but simply to distinguish it from, say, a work of sociology or systematic theology. Each individual is given the opportunity to speak for themselves by means of a series of questions, some of which are tailored to the individual, while some have a touch of slightly wide-eyed surprise, such as ‘You are cloistered: aren’t you fleeing from the world?’, or ‘Isn’t it strange for a religious person to be involved in physics?’ (asked of Katarina Pajchel, a Sister born in Warsaw, brought up in Norway, working as a physicist in one of the teams associated with the CERN project in Geneva).

Some of those interviewed are:

- James MacMillan, the composer who is a Lay Dominican and a trenchant critic of aspects of Scottish culture. I found his interview theologically the richest in the book; there is no interview with a ‘pure’ academic theologian, though Helen Alford, as Dean of the faculty of Social Sciences at the ‘Angelicum’ (Rome), is a specialist in Catholic Social Teaching, and Timothy Radcliffe operates as a kind of theological Greek chorus throughout the book.
- Two women who live painfully conflicted lives as minority Christians in a Muslim environment: Maria Hanna in Iraq, and Faustina Jimoh in Northern Nigeria. They struggle on with amazing courage because where they are is where they belong; they would not take an optimistic view of the possibilities of fruitful Christian-Muslim dialogue, and are impressive for their perseverance in desperately bleak situations. Two men, Jean-Jacques Pérennès and Emilio Platti, work explicitly in the field of dialogue in the context of IDEO, the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies in Cairo, which is more conducive to such an exercise.
- Kim En Joong, the South Korean painter, some of whose painting is on glass, to be seen in various Dominican churches around the world. His own description of his work and vocation is: ‘Light is love. I have always wanted to create a non-polluted world, a world that hints at another life, the life of the mystery’. Like another interviewee, the Japanese Vincent Shigeto Oshida, now deceased, he sees no contradiction between Buddhism as a Way and faith in Christ.

And what more should I say? For time would fail me to tell of Brian Pierce the contemplative friend of poor Latin Americans, of Henri Burin des Roziers