

Lost Icons: Reflections on Cultural Bereavement, Rowan Williams T. & T. Clark 2000 (0-567-08722-0), pp. 190, pbk, £12.50

Rowan Williams has established himself as a leading Anglican thinker and this book addresses issues surrounding the culture within which Christian life is lived. The book, described as a sort of journal of the 1990s, seeks to discover why it is that our culture finds it so difficult to handle certain concepts and images. Williams reflects on the range of human possibilities that have been lost over the past decade. There is a tangible sense of loss both in the content and style of this book as it sensitively investigates the boundaries between the Church and the world.

The book argues that there has been an erosion of certain forms and disciplines of the human self. There is a lament for the possibility of a recovery of these habits of self understanding because of the individualism and consumerism that so shapes our choices and values.

Williams examines the integrity of childhood and points out now our society devalues children by treating them as quasi-adult economic and sexual subjects. Charity is examined in terms of how relationships are abused through competition and rivalry. The result is isolation, fragmentation and serious breakdown in community.

This theological reflection is conducted within the framework of a spirituality of a belief in another - God - who is the generous giver. This gives the book a sense of hope.

The quality of thought demands the reader's careful attention. There are some exciting and counter-cultural possibilities for the ways of being Church in the decade that lies ahead.

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