

Dr Rowan Williams: Images, Icons and Idols

Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury, gave the closing lecture of the Cadbury lectures 2012

Duration: 52.14mins

- [Watch the video \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/departments/theologyandreligion/news/2012/williams-lecture.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/departments/theologyandreligion/news/2012/williams-lecture.aspx)
- [More about the Cadbury lecture series \(http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/events/cadburylectures/index.aspx\)](http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/ptr/events/cadburylectures/index.aspx)

Speakers:

S1 - Chancellor, the University of Birmingham

S2 - Archbishop Rowan Williams

S3 - Stephen Pattison

S1 Well good evening everyone and welcome. It's my pleasure as Chancellor to welcome you to this evening's lecturer and to introduce him. He doesn't really need any introduction. I had some notes that were prepared for me to introduce the Archbishop but I listened to the 1 o'clock News and from that, not only did I learn of the Archbishop's future retirement and it's not taking place now, it's taking place only at the end of the year, but then I also heard a little bit about his CV, a Professor of Theology at Oxford in his 30s and I believe we have some other Oxford Professors of Theology and I don't know whether they're current or past, a Bishop at 40 and of course then Archbishop of Wales and then of Canterbury. I think that the piece on the BBC, and I said this to the Archbishop, did pay tribute to him in a number of ways: it said he hadn't been looking to become the Archbishop of Canterbury, it was a case of greatness being thrust upon him. He no doubt achieved greatness in other ways but he also had greatness thrust upon him that the challenges of his period as the Archbishop could not have been greater and that he would be exceptionally hard to replace. I suspect figures like the Archbishop are not always, er, feel that the BBC does them justice but it seemed to me it was a very nice piece, Dr Williams, that I heard and no doubt many many others did.

Of course we know that he is a hugely distinguished academic, apart from the enormously important work that he has done as Leader of the Anglican Church. Beyond that he's published many important works on the Church Fathers and on Russian Theology. Well, when Dr Williams became Archbishop and was ready to make his first visit to Rome to meet the late Pope John Paul II he was asked by the press perhaps a little mischievously what he was going to talk to the Pope about. His reply was 'our common interest in Hans von Balthazar'. Von Balthazar, I should think that the press looking a little bit surprised and wondering what on earth was going to come next. Well, von Balthazar was the Swiss Theologian well known for his seminal work on theological aesthetics and in that reply can be discerned Dr Williams long-standing interest in the kind of topic that he's going to address in a moment.

S1 This evening's lecture concludes the 2012 series of Edward Cadbury lectures. Edward Cadbury was my oldest uncle and he was a very interesting man and a very important figure, certainly in the development of the Cadbury business. He ran the Cadbury business following my grandfather for many years from pretty much the First War to the Second War. So he was somebody though that I knew, I couldn't say well but as a small boy I do remember him pretty well and he was a great disciplinarian and was known in fact to stand outside the factory doors, checking who was coming in late to work in the morning. No doubt this certainly would have struck a little surprise and a certain amount of fear into those that were late, but he was actually a man of great humanity and with many interests that went beyond the business. He was an author and wrote some books on industry in 1912 or thereabouts which I suspect not many businessmen of his era would have written and certainly not the subjects and when you read what he wrote in those days you can tell that he was a man of great humanity. His books were concerned with the experiments industrial organisation, also on women's work and wages.

I don't suppose many businessmen overly concern themselves with whether women's work and wages were properly related in those days. Also a book on sweating, a form of exploiting labour. Now these were all being published before the First World War so he was a man who was very very far-sighted and a great friend of this university, having endowed the First Chair of Theology and of course endowed this series of lectures in his name. He always took a great interest in Christianity and in other faiths and the Selly Oak Colleges were something that he put a great deal of time and interest to and the Mingana Collection which some of you may have seen was also the result of the collection of artefacts, religious artefacts, from the Middle East that he was responsible for. So someone who's been a great friend of the university and I was quite curious when I saw in the book before I came that it was priced at 1 shilling and sixpence. You've got to go back quite a long way before you can find a book that was only costing 1 shilling and sixpence. And in fact the preface was by a Professor Ashley who was the Professor of Commerce at the university so we had the School of Commerce and a Professor of Commerce back before the First War.

S1 Well, enough about Edward but he has been a great friend of the university and I wanted to mention him. The endowment for the lectures was to bring the best of international scholarship on History, Theology and Culture of Christianity to the people of the Midlands and beyond. The theme of the lectures this year has been 'Seeing and Believing in Modern Christianity' and Professor David Morgan who is among us this evening has outlined some of the ways in which images and culture have interacted in Christianity in the recent past. Associated with the lectures the university has just concluded a conference on the sense of the sacred in contemporary China, with Dr Williams taking part in dialogue with Chinese artists and academics. It seems a fitting conclusion therefore that we now ask Dr Williams to conclude this series of lectures and events with his own lecture, 'Idols, Images and Icons'. Thank you Dr Williams.

[applause]

S2 Chancellor, ladies and gentlemen, it's a great honour to be invited to deliver one of the Cadbury lectures this year and a great personal pleasure to back in the University of Birmingham. As you've heard, we've had a most stimulating and energising day of discussion and so stimulating and energising has it been that I have managed, in spite of all temptations, to keep my mind on it rather than on other things in the news today. The Hebrew language is well known for its fondness for neologisms. Again and again in the Hebrew scriptures we find pairs and triplets of words slightly different in their associations and their resonances where we might be tempted to use only one. And one such pair of closely related words appears right at the beginning of scripture when we are told that God created human beings in the image and likeness of God. The two different words used that we translate as image and likeness gave great scope for imaginative interpreters of the Bible for many centuries. Some of the early Greek theologians of the Church tried to draw out a distinction between the image, which was something given, and the likeness into which we were allowed to grow. But the distinction in Hebrew is of a rather different kind and the two words used are well worth looking at in the context of a general reflection on images and idols and icons. The two words in question are *selem* and *demut*. The word *selem*, which we translate as image is related to a root '*sel*' which means 'shadow'. And the word *selem* itself can also mean something insubstantial, something that is nothing in particular, something that is impermanent. And that root sense of shadow suggests very strongly that the notion of imaging that is implied here takes for granted that at the heart of the image there is an absence, something less than real.

Representing is embodying an absence and that may help us to understand why in so much of the Hebrew scriptures in other places we find idolatry depicted as devotion to what is not there. Idolatry is directing your adoration to an unreality and if you turn to the central chapters of the Prophecy of Isaiah, the section usually known as Deutero-Isaiah, you find repeated polemic against idolatry couched in these terms. The image, the idol, sometimes referred to as *selem*, sometimes by words relating to the root *fasal* which is about engraving or moulding. Images and idols are empty things. They cannot act and in the prophet's mind they cannot even be the channels of activity. They're the result of human activity. These are things that we have made. We engage in making an image we set it there outside ourselves and then we bow down before this alienated part of ourselves. The implication is that we are in some sense worshipping ourselves. We cannot create a presence, a numinous presence, so all that we can do is to externalise what is in our own minds and hearts, yet by externalising it we make ourselves absent from the work that is made. We are subject to stand over against an object which we imagine, or decide to imagine, to be something that is not us. It is and it isn't us; it's part of our imagining and yet we have put it

there are ourselves. What is going on here is something other than human action, human projection, we let go of what we make and so we make it lifeless and that kind of language about the lifelessness, the emptiness, of images and idols, that polemic about bowing down to the work of our hands, the result of our imagination, is of course a common currency, a very great deal of a polemic of the prophets of Hebrew scripture against what they understand to be the religious practices of the nations around them.

S2 Image is a shadow. The image embodies not a presence but an absence. The image is what is already in us yet something we arbitrarily decide to treat as if it were other. The tradition continues in some parts of early Christian theology so that in the second Christian century you'll find Tertullian speaking about idolatry and noting that the Greek word 'idolon' can mean 'a phantom'. If that's where you begin, it is of course perfectly intelligible that you should be suspicious of representation itself in some way. This is not only a religious but a cultural issue. If all art is a matter of shadow and impermanence to go back to the root meanings behind the word *selim* then all art is potentially both deceitful and self-referential. It does not take you beyond yourself, it does not heal, it does not save. It's against that background that we can perhaps better understand the largely aniconic non-representational character, not only of Jewish religion but largely of Jewish culture. The raw material of decoration and imagination is the written word, not the image.

S2 Clearly however, in using the word *selim* for the image of God in humanity, the writers of Genesis were not trying to say something primarily negative. They may have had on the edge of their minds and imaginations that sense of shadowiness, the phantom character of representation but they balance it with another and very different word, *demut*. Here the root *dem* is to be like, to resemble. To resemble, as in a comparison we might make in speech, even a parable. This is a representation that takes for granted continuity rather than absence. It's a way of saying not all representation is empty or arbitrary. There is some kind of being in the other, some kind of bridge between sameness and otherness and the way in which a comparison in ordinary speech, a parable or a metaphor, may work reminds us that when you've talked about shadowiness and phantoms, you haven't said all there is to say about representation. And once again, in that Jewish culture which is wary about visual images, there is an abundance of metaphor of verbal play and of parable.

S2 The Genesis vocabulary in other words sets up a basic tension about the character of representation. To represent something in something else is to say something's missing, something can't be reproduced. This is a shadow, not the substance. You don't have to go to Plato's Republic to find that kind of point being made. At the same time, a representation literally embodies something of the object it represents. It is like something else. It translates into another medium, another form of words, however you want to put it. And those two words, the clusters of meanings behind them, take religious cultures off into very different directions; sometimes of course at exactly the same time. I do wonder in passing what kind of theology we might develop were we to translate those words in Genesis by saying that God created humanity as God's shadow and God's parable. Elements are taken off in different directions and by the time we come to Christian scripture, a rather different agenda is beginning to come into play. The Greek word *icon* doesn't have those negative connotations about shadowiness or impermanence. Sometimes the word is used as in the beginning of the Letter to the Colossians to talk about the visible sign of the invisible, a token of what can't be seen, a word for what can't be spoken about, yet something which gives assurance about what is absent, invisible and in some mysterious sense makes it there, allows it to be active.

The image here bridges absence and presence. Behind that at least in part lies the development of philosophy, metaphysics, in the pre-Christian world outside the strict limits of Jewish thought. Mediation has become more of a problem both in Greek and in Hebrew thinking in the immediate pre-Christian period. God's relationship to the world is coming to be seen neither as plain absence, nor unqualified presence, and both in the Jewish and the Hebraic – both in the Jewish and the Greek worlds – in those immediate pre-Christian generations, quite complicated structures have been imagined and discussed, explaining how God could be both radically different from the world and radically involved in it. One of the classic places to look for this is a work long attributed to Aristotle 'De Mundo' which speaks about a distinction between God as God is and God's actions which are present in the world whereas the essence of God is absent from the world.

S2 But what seems to have crystallised this vague metaphysical anxiety about how you build bridges is the application to Jesus of Nazareth of some of his language about imaging and mediation. When Jesus was described as the 'image of the invisible God' we are seeing an attempt to make sense of the history and person of Jesus in terms precisely of that mysterious coincidence of absence and presence. Jesus of Nazareth is actually irreducibly a human being. He is not God in the straightforward sense and yet what Jesus of Nazareth does is what God does and where Jesus of Nazareth is, is where God is. The image is a presence. The image is, as I put it earlier, something which gives assurance of what is not tangibly there. I avoid the phrase 'dynamic equivalence' here, sometimes used in translation theory as one which has caused far more trouble than it's worth, yet it carries something of what this application of a certain kind of language that Jesus is meant to convey. The concept of imaging is held fairly firmly in that area which we can designate as continuity and participation between image and prototype. Jesus' image is carrying a presence because what he is and who he is, is as we might say, saturated with the divine action, to such a degree that this history and this person interrupts, overturns and reconstructs our ordinary categories, our habitual expectations. This is a reality which first silences us and then drives us to an almost chaotic exploration of ideas and metaphors such as we find in the letters of Paul and the Johanne literature. Image is being taken very definitively away from the area of shadows and phantoms because in speaking of Jesus as the image of God we are not, in terms of Christian scripture, deciding to treat Jesus as a token for the absent God, we are recognising the interruption of our categories and our language that occurs through this narrative and in so recognising, accepting that here is a presence acting upon us without limitation or qualification.

S2 So as we move from the language of Hebrew scripture into the language used by Paul in his epistles by the Deutero-Paulines, by the Johanne corpus or writings, we are invited to think of imaging representing very much in terms of a continuity of action. An action so radically disturbing that we can't come to the end of it in our words, or our concepts; an action which we therefore have to speak of as divine within the Christian community. And yet the language of image remains ambiguous. In the early Christian centuries there is debate about how far calling Jesus the image of God is adequate to what Christians finally want to say about him. In the 4th Century there was much debate over this. Many people on both sides of the great doctrinal debates of that age were content to describe Jesus as the image of God, sometimes as the complete or unqualified or unmodified *apartoc* image of God. But the more aggressive and keenly minded of the theologians' history was to be described as Orthodox became more and more suspicious of this language, precisely because it was a language around which people of different convictions can gather. Sadly, one of the main drivers of the definitions of Orthodoxy in the 4th Century was the urge to find formulae that your opponents could in no circumstances sign up to. And image came to be seen as a term uneasily sitting with an affirmation of the equality between the divinity that was in Jesus and the divinity that was in the Father of All Things. A doctrine of the consubstantiality of Jesus, or rather of the Word of God, with the Father. Does the language of image do justice to that radical identification between God and God's mediator, the Everlasting Word? Throughout the 4th Century there is a gradually developing suspicion of this image in language of giving away too much to those who wanted to emphasise a gap between the saviour and the Eternal Father.

S2 But that being said, it was that settlement of doctrine around the person of Christ in the 4th Century which in due course began to provide a rationale for the most sophisticated exploration yet of the nature of the sacred image within the Christian framework. That is the theology that emerged around the iconoclast controversy. The great debates about the use of sacred images which tore apart the Byzantine Empire between the late 7th and the 9th Centuries. On two different occasions, Byzantine emperors attempted to do away with representational images in churches and the theology that was developed in reaction to this was a theology which insisted that the sacred image was allowable in church and in the liturgy, precisely because of what the church said about Jesus Christ. Of course, the Holy Image was something created by human skill, by human art, and yet it was something open to the same presence that was in Jesus and his mother and the saints because the skill, the art, of the artist was subordinated to prayer and openness to grace on the one hand, and on the other because the reality, the historical reality of Jesus showed that the material stuff of this world could be suffused, saturated, with divine action and divine presence. Matter could be transfigured so there was a rationale for the Holy Image in church. It was created in prayer for the purpose of liturgical worship. It was made in prayer and used in prayer and because of the context in which it was set, it could be a vehicle of active divine grace.

S2 So the Eastern Christian theology of the icon, the Holy Image, becomes probably the most powerful statement of presence in the image at one of the spectrum, at the other end of which stands the idea of image as shadow. So moving from idol to image to icon, is moving from a representation of which we are suspicious because it is simply a reflection of what is already in us, through a sense of what is in some sense continuous with the subject that it points to, to fully fledged theological doctrine of an image in which presence and action are unequivocally at work. And to look at the history of Christian attitudes to imagery, to visual imagery in church and out of church is to look at attitudes which belong somewhere along that spectrum of concern. In the Reformation period what we see in the reaction against holy images in this country and elsewhere is a reversion to the conviction that the image is always primarily severed – shadow, phantom, nothing in itself, something which invites inappropriate reverence which commands an attention or suggests attention that is in fact due only to the Holy in itself, to God and to God's word. And on the other side of the Reformation divide, what do we see not so much theorised theologies and philosophies of art and expressed in practice, what we see is an attempt to recapture something of the by then largely lost sense of the image's presence. Western Christianity had long since turned its back on the Eastern theology of the icon.

Indeed it was the theologians at the Emperor Charlemagne's Court in the 9th Century who were most critical of the theories coming out of Byzantium. Some of their works could have been, and indeed some of them were quoted by anti-image enthusiasts in the Reformation debates. But what then happened on the other side of that

Reformation split was a movement to re-align religious art with something essentially excessive and extravaganant. As art moves into the era of the Baroque and the Rococo, moves beyond mere mannerism in the 16th Century, it moves towards an art which does not seek in any sense to be representational. Look up at a painted ceiling of the 17th or 18th Century in Rome or indeed in Austria and the one thing you are not likely to think is that it represents what things look like. The excessiveness, the playfulness and extravagance of Baroque and Rococo art is one way of saying we are not trying to show you what things look like, we are trying in this experience of excess to give you a sense of what cannot be said or represented. This is a representation of what goes beyond imaging. This is deliberately ridiculous. It is sometimes liberating to know that you can call some kinds of Rococo art ridiculous in a perfectly positive sense. They are meant to be. It's a curious attempt to re-enthroned the sacred, to justify the sacred image by presenting it as something which could have no conceivable claim to accuracy and yet which in its tone of excess makes a demand, an appropriate demand, to take you beyond.

S2 But perhaps the most important thing about the debates along this spectrum in Christian history, the most important thing and one that is often neglected in discussion is precisely the point that theologians of icon painting in the 8th and 9th Centuries insisted upon and which the Christian East has gone on taking with deep seriousness. We understand the difference between idol, image and icon, not by features that are intrinsic to them so that you know immediately what is an idol and what is an icon. The distinctions come as we examine and think about the practices in which images are embedded. How are these images made and how are they used? Are these images which are meant simply to express what is going on in my mind, in my psyche, in my heart? Are these images intended to open us up to something else? And that of course affects how we think about the making of images. The icon painter undergoes a formidable experience of spiritual preparation and askesis. There are prayers that have to be said if you want to paint a genuine icon and when it is painted of course, it is not hung in the gallery, it may be hung on the wall of a private home, but it's essential usage is in church. It is a presence in a church, a member of the gathering in church. It is often said that the icon screen in an Orthodox church reminds you that however many people there are in the church, the holy figures represented on screen are there with you and indeed they're there when you're not.

S2 So how is an image made and for what is it to be used? Is it essentially decorative? Is it liturgical? If liturgical are we taking seriously the fact that like all aspects of liturgy it intends to transform the person who sees it and reflects upon it and if it is intended to transform then the production of that image has to have something to do with a transformed practice and a transformed person. Now that may suggest an unduly austere picture of what authentic religious art is like, painted as it were, or sculpted, for saints and by saints. That is prima facie a rather unlikely definition of religious art, even if we are exceptionally generous to the qualities of religious artists. Yet there is something serious in that account of how we distinguish between image, icon and idol. Something to do with particular qualities of individual and community in which and for which representation works. A representation that works properly, effectively, responsibly we might say within the religious context is one which walks precisely that tightrope between presence and absence with which I began. The tension implicit in the two Hebrew words which I reflected upon at the beginning of these remarks. And if a work is to embody that tension between presence and absence, it must come from the imagination of someone who understands whether or not they go through the esthetical processes of the Eastern icon painter who understands something of the difference between divine presence and divine absence.

Something of the difference between a divine presence that shakes, challenges and transforms, and a divine presence that is intended to give us comfortable religious feelings or to reflect what we would like to hear and see. And such an image is not one of course which can simply be looked at casually. It is something which because of its embodying of attention between presence and absence, we are bound to spend time with and perhaps one of the most important definitions of an image that claims to be, that plausibly claims to be sacred, is that it is something which demands time, something which cannot be assimilated, taken in, in one glance. The icon of the classical traditions of Greece and Russia is certainly a work that takes time. You are meant to spend time following its lines, its contours, to understand that you are being drawn in by an action not yours. But in spite of the Eastern Christian suspicion of sculpture, it's also possibly true that a three dimensional sculpture can have something of the same sacred quality in that you are never going to be able to see all of it at once. It demands to be walked around, to be viewed from a whole range of angles. In viewing and absorbing a sculpture of that quality you recognise that you are never going to find an optimal place from which to see it or a final version of what it is which you can capture.

But however we express or embody that imperative to take time, the point is the same. In claiming attention the image claims time. Claiming time it claims our readiness to set aside the urge to contain and absorb the image. And in evoking that readiness it warns us that in this process we are not the sole agents in control of what happens to us. We must open ourselves to be seen as well as see. If you're familiar with Rilke's famous poem of an archaic statue you will remember the climax of that extraordinary work. There is no place that goes unseen. You must change your life. And that perhaps encapsulates something of what the icon, however we particularly wish to define it, the icon of the Sacred Image embodies and compels. And if we reasonably clear about that, it's possible for us to develop because we have to develop, a continuing and radical Christian critique of idolatry. Idolatry is perhaps the major concern of great parts of the Hebrew scriptures and great parts of Christian scripture and tradition. We need, forgive the jargon, a phenomenology of idolatry. We need to be able to identify those representations which rather than opening us to an alien and challenging activity, simply reflect back what we consciously or not want to see and hear. We need to be aware that there are representations that are intrinsically shadowing and shadowed, insubstantial, impermanent, dangerous for our spiritual and psychic health. Empty images surround us in a culture often obsessed with visual imaging of various kinds. And empty imagining is part of what goes on in that remarkable sub-culture that we call contemporary economics. If we want to distinguish between virtual reality and reality itself we shall need a theology of idols, a theology of shadows. We shall need to know that what we are talking about is absence; absence that can become poisonous.

S2 So think through some of these issues around the idol, image and the icon. To think through to the point where we understand a little more of what it is to be interrupted, arrested, invited and almost compelled to attentive, contemplative, time taking regard. It's to give ourselves some resources, some tools, for identifying all those areas where images can be manipulated for the control of others, where images present themselves as alien, inviting, enlarging, when in fact they simply represent what is in us already. We may perhaps be able in our openness to be authentic icons, to grow up into being ourselves, image and likeness. Image, shadows of the divine, insubstantial in ourselves, always at risk because of the nothingness at the heart of ourselves and yet mysteriously parables at the same time. Persons' speech and the relation and interaction may be mysteriously transfigurably continuous with the action of God. In our contemplation of the Holy Image, in our understanding of how it is that certain images do open us up to silence, we shall learn what we most need to learn about growing up in a world where we are surrounded by real and potential idols. And for people of faith to learn and practice that discipline is, I suggest, not the least of the gifts of the challenges they have to offer to our culture. Thank you for your patience.

[applause]

S1 That wasn't meant to bring the applause to a stop, Archbishop, my appearance but is an opportunity for me to thank you on behalf the audience for taking the time. I'm sure every day is an incredibly busy day in the Archbishop's life but today with announcements and press and media I'm sure wanting to take his time, to find the time to stay with his commitment to take part in the lectures today and to come and give the lecture here is extraordinarily kind and consistent with everything we know about you as a character, Archbishop. I would like to ask, will Stephen Pattison come up because Stephen is going to say a word or two. So if he would like to join us here this will be an opportunity for him to say something. This is the second time that I have heard the Archbishop speak and I was just thinking how could one say something after an incredibly scholarly talk like that and I think on both occasions that I have heard the Archbishop, I think the word to use is 'challenge', to think very hard while he's talking and the fact that we were so quiet and silent while he talked reflected on the challenge to us to really try to keep up with what is an extraordinary mind and what he brings to his words compels you to pay attention. There were so many things there that struck me but forcing us to take time and to think I thought was one of the things that came through to me. But let me get out of the way and hand over to Stephen.

S3 Thank you Chancellor. After the show, the Head of Department of Theology and the Chair of the Cadbury Committee, it's my great pleasure to be able to thank a number of people. Obviously Rowan Williams, it's been very nice to have him with us here today but David Morgan has been with us for two weeks from America from Duke University, the formalist interpreter of visuality in North America and probably in the world. So we've been lucky to have him with us. We've also been lucky to have a number of artists from China and from this country who've been doing workshops with people of all ages, so over the two weeks we've probably had about four or five hundred people engaged in these lectures and I hope Edward Cadbury would be well pleased that the people of the Midlands and other places have become very involved in what's going on here in Birmingham. I'd like to think the people who've helped to organise this, particularly Caroline Ashton and Edmund Tang from my own department who have made it all mechanically possible. A lot of work has gone into preparing these lectures. And of course I would like to thank you all for coming because without an audience there is no lecturer so the audience and the lecturer make each other and we've been very privileged to have you all here with us this year. Next year we have a series of lectures which will be weekly on Theology and the nature of Theology and studying Theology. We're hoping to have luminaries such as David Ford, a former colleague of ours here, now in Cambridge, and John Milbank, a graduate of our Philosophy Department who has not always seen eye to eye with David Ford and they will be both talking about their visions of Theology. So lots of interesting things to come with Cadbury Lectures in the future and we hope you will all come back next year. In the meanwhile this evening we are very lucky to have the privilege of the gallery above us being open so do take some time after the lecture to wander around the gallery and see the fine collection of pictures and sculptures up there to ponder and be challenged, I hope. And also please stay and have a drink, there is a reception which you are all warmly invited to. That almost concludes my remarks, except on this day of all days, I think this audience I suspect might be sorry if we didn't actually have a chance to say how very much we've appreciated everything that Rowan Williams has done for the Church of England, for this country, for our nation and for

academia and from my point of view, it's wonderful news that he's coming back to academia because the best is yet to come I hope! Had I known he was looking for a job I might have been able to do something about that! But there we are, Birmingham's loss is Cambridge's gain and I hope we will see a great deal more here, but I think we would like to wish you well in your future and thank you so much for coming today to share your thoughts about icons and images with us. We're very grateful.

[applause]

[Privacy](#) | [Legal](#) | [Cookies and cookie policy](#) | [Accessibility](#) | [Site map](#) | [Website feedback](#) | [Charitable information](#)

© University of Birmingham 2015

