Twitter Thread by john milbank

john milbank
@johnmilbank3

This very short article by Jeremy Cliffe is the best thing I have ever read on Brexit and the EU. It pivots on the contrast between Delors' and Thatcher's authentically provincial Christian visions and suggests the battle in Britain between the two is not over.

> The rupture between Margaret Thatcher and Jacques Delors lives on in Brexit https://t.co/r3YiyPoSFB
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> — john milbank (@johnmilbank3) January 9, 2021

Thatcher: Protestant believer in the totally free market and absolutely sovereign centralised nation state. Delors: Catholic believer in third way personalism, corporatism and federalism. Individualism versus relational love. Heterodoxy versus Orthodoxy.

The article useful gives the lie to the idea that the Catholic vision of the EU has altogether vanished even though it is weakened. Delors wanted a social dimension to the free market and single currency and yet lexiteers laughably insist the EU is more neoliberal than the U.K.!

Subsidiary federalism is a doctrine of democracy and human fraternity. State sovereignty is a doctrine of naked power. It is a face of Antichrist. Leviathan.

Those combined that democracy can only be inside a single state fail to power just how much of private law and evermore so is necessarily international. Thus if political institutions don't extend over borders there can be no democracy.

The first granting of citizenship to all subjects was under empire (edict of Caracalla 212 significantly AD) not under the nation state. In this way federal empire first elevated the person (though in relation) above ethnic attachment. Empire was the cradle of constitutionality.

This link of empire, liberty and human dignity has a prior echo in European law and political history to sovereign state thinking. Thus it is literally insular to think the EU is just artificial. Though certainly it badly lacks a binding ethos, unlike Rome.

Cliffe's piece shows awareness of Continental sensibilities in a way that is almost always lacking in the British media.

It also helps to confirm the degree to which Thatcher-inspired Brexit is unmistakably in a British Protestant lineage, rejecting all the great anti-French Revolution reaction that qualified this in a ‘gothic’ direction. Burke, Coleridge, Pugin, Newman, Ruskin, Tawney etc.

Yet as Cliffe says, if we now want to escape tariffs we may have still to cleave more to Delors’ social market vision. The logic of that is eventually to return and finally embrace the personalist-corporatist-federalist logic. A Catholic logic.

The recent alignments of Catholicism with nationalism strike me as dubious and opportunistic. A truly major thinker like Manent too much falls into this because he oddly fails to understand the logic of Medieval political thinking, wrongly imagining a duality of church and state.

Such alignments risk sliding once more back into fascism. This is a temptation especially where Catholicism is part of national identity as in Eastern Europe.