

Transforming Christian thought in the visual arts

Sheona Beaumont and Madeleine Emerald Thiele (eds.)

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Introduction, pp.1-22

Sheona Beaumont and Madeleine Emerald Thiele

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Dr. Sheona Beaumont is a Visiting Research Fellow at King's College London, and an artist working with photography. Her doctorate on the the Bible in photography was completed at the International Centre for Biblical Interpretation, University of Gloucestershire. She has written for the *Visual Commentary on Scripture*, *History of Photography*, *Religion and the Arts*, and *Art+Christianity*, and her artist books include *Eye See Trinity* (2016) and *Bristol Through the Lens* (2011). She is co-founder of Visual Theology.

Madeleine Emerald Thiele is an art historian whose research examines Tractarian aesthetics and the angelic form within British art c.1840s–1900s. Madeleine has presented papers internationally, taught at the University of Bristol, writes reviews for the *Victorian Web*, and teaches at Marlborough College Summer School. She is also co-founder of *Visual Theology*, and was the Visual Arts Editor for the journal *Harts & Minds* throughout its lifespan.

Chapter 1, pp.25-42

John Harvey

'The hearing ear and the seeing eye': Transformative listening to the biblical image

The chapter contributes to an understanding of the theology of sound and visibility, arguing that exclusively image-driven reception and interpretation of the Bible is a reduction of the imaginative and theological field. In particular, the discussion draws attention to Scripture's sound substrate, and how we may listen for the sonorities of the text in visual representations made after it, such as those depicting the narratives of Samson destroying the temple, Samuel and Eli, Hannah praying, and Moses and the burning bush. Sound in the Bible and the Bible as sound are further explored through Harvey's own sound art practice, which engages an oral presentation of the Bible: Alexander Scourby's *The Talking Bible* (1964). So conceived, the place for audition in processes of reimagining the text is defended as constitutive of its theological 'fabric' and agency.

Professor John Harvey is Professor in the School of Art, Aberystwyth University and a historian of art, visual culture, and sound art, as well as being a sound- and visual-art practitioner. In his art-historical studies he engages the visual imagery of popular piety, supernaturalist traditions, and working-class culture, with publications including *The Bible as Visual Culture* (Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), *Photography & Spirit* (Reaktion, 2007), and *Image of the Invisible: The Visualization of Religion in the Welsh Nonconformist Tradition* (University of Wales Press, 1999). Previous exhibition series of his work include *The Pictorial Bible* (2000–2015) and *The Aural Bible* series of CD releases (2015–2018).

Chapter 2, pp.43-62
Sheona Beaumont

Photography as the Bible's new illumination

Bibles with photographic images included in their production are explored in this essay for theologies of realism. A departure from the centuries-old tradition of manuscripts illuminated with decorative and graphic details, the photograph's modern language of factual, verifiable images offers a particularly rich addition to the Bible's versatility in print. From a study of the first Bible published with photographic illustrations by Francis Frith in 1861 to the art-fashion collaboration produced by *Visionaire* as 'Bible' in 1999, Beaumont asks what theological presuppositions and conceptions are revealed through this particular image-text relationship. Situating her discussion within the cultural and sociological contexts of the nineteenth and twenty-first centuries, she further argues that the physical production and circulation of such objects reveals visual theology as material, discursive, and mediated. Including a consideration of her own photographically produced Bible with the cyanotype process (*Scriptorium*, 2018), Beaumont explores the particular concepts of witnessing and imagination, past and present, as two sides of a photo-biblical lens.

Biography as above.

Chapter 3, pp.63-79
Ben Quash

The Visual Commentary on Scripture: Principles and Possibilities

The creation of an online Visual Commentary on Scripture (launched 2018) has established a new scholarly platform for hosting, disseminating, and sharing interpretations of the Christian Bible. In this chapter, three models for the format of the VCS are discussed. These are (i) the gallery exhibition, (ii) the symposium in ancient Greek and Hellenistic civilisation, and (iii) the composite pages of the Jewish Talmud and of Christian *catenae*. Taken together, these show how both curation and conversation are themselves forms of 'commentary' that present illuminating analogies with traditional biblical commentary. The chapter goes on to argue that (while informed by the latest research in biblical studies and art history) the VCS ultimately has a theological premise, located especially in the doctrines of creation and of the Holy Spirit (or pneumatology), which assert the divinely assured unity and interconnectedness of the texts of Scripture and the contexts of Scripture's interpretation over time, and which license innovative and creative juxtapositions of texts and artworks in the service of new insights into a shared world. Challenging some of the restrictive scholarly positivisms of the modern academy, the VCS claims not just to be 'doing reception history' but to be 'making reception history'.

Professor Ben Quash is Professor of Christianity and the Arts at King's College London. Previously, he was a Fellow of Fitzwilliam College and then of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and lecturer in the Faculty of Divinity at the University of Cambridge. He runs an MA in Christianity and the Arts in association with the National Gallery, London; is a Trustee of *Art+Christianity*; and is Canon Theologian of both Coventry and Bradford Cathedrals. His publications include *Abiding: The Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent Book 2013* (Bloomsbury, 2012) and *Found Theology: History, Imagination and the Holy Spirit* (T&T Clark, 2013), and he has written catalogue essays for exhibitions at Ben Uri Gallery, London; the Inigo Rooms in Somerset House; and the Vatican Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, 2015. He is a frequent broadcaster on BBC radio.

Chapter 4, pp.80-96
Ewan King

The Virgin and the visual artist as theologian: Examining two Marian images by David Jones

The achievement of David Jones in poetry, prose, and visual art constitutes one of the past century's most distinctive and sustained contributions to incarnational Marian theology. Jones' Marianism is here engaged primarily through two images, *Guenever* (1938–1940) and *Aphrodite in Aulis* (1941). Ewan King examines the background of these evocative works and the painterly performance of theology through visual rhythm and representational allusivity. In drawing out the biblical and mythical associations of Mary with suffering, scandal, and erotic freedom, King argues that Jones encourages a visual theology in which the layered and affective experience of culture is accessed indirectly rather than through traditional intellectual articulation. In so doing, King further commends the images' 'mobilising power' in challenging contemporary, divided, ecumenical reception of Mary.

Reverend Ewan King is an ordained minister of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and pastor of Heath Street Baptist Church in Hampstead, London. He is presently a doctoral student at King's College London working on the theology of recognition in Dante's *Commedia*. His research interests are in literature, music, philosophical theology, and patristics.

PRAXIS I: LAVANT, 2018, pp.97-106
Sara Mark

LAVANT took place over the two consecutive days of the Visual Theology conference held in Chichester, October 2018. It offered a participatory 'washing' of an Easter Shroud at the University's Chapel of the Ascension, and was originally made as part of an installation entitled *WAIT* at St James's Piccadilly, London (March 2018). In this reflective photo-essay, the artist remembers its continuing liturgical story.

Sara Mark is an installation artist and place-maker exploring the relationship between the site-specific and the universal. Her practice encompasses object making and craft-collaboration, and is frequently commissioned by poetic instruction and public engagement. She has undertaken residencies in the UK and abroad and was appointed Artist in Residence at All Saints West Dulwich, London, for fifteen months in 2014. Several of her works have been installed at St. James's Piccadilly, London, and she is a winner of the Landmark East Competition (2004) and the Porthleven Prize (2013).

Chapter 5, pp.109-126
Jonathan Koestlé-Cate

'A sacred art of the state': Public commissions for French churches, abbeys and cathedrals

In France, contemporary art commissions for churches, abbeys, and cathedrals receive extensive state patronage. But what happens to the role for theology as a guide to artistic production when conceived through this framework and its politicised background? Does the church become simply another exhibition space to satisfy the demands of a cultural economy, without due regard given to its theological, doctrinal, or liturgical imperatives? This chapter focuses on the examples of Nevers Cathedral and the Church of Saint-Prim, questioning in

different ways the propriety of state-sponsored commissioning for the church where artistic responses to theological or liturgical priorities seem lacking or insensitive. Whilst acknowledging the need for trust and risk from all parties involved, ecclesial voices and concerns can become marginalised and visual theology impoverished.

Dr. Jonathan Koestlé-Cate has a teaching and research post within Libraries & Collections at King's College London. He has written widely and his first monograph, *Art and the Church: A Fractious Embrace*, was published by Routledge in 2016. He is on the editorial board of the journal *Art+Christianity* and was, until recently, a trustee for Art and Sacred Places. He is also a member of AICA (Association Internationale des Critiques d'Art).

Chapter 6, pp.127-146

John Dickson and Harriet O'Neill

The Chapel at Royal Holloway: Visual theology and women's education

This chapter examines the design and ornament of the late-nineteenth century Chapel at Royal Holloway, in the context of visual theology, women's education and the nineteenth century ornament debates. There is very little scholarship on the Chapel, no doubt owing to the paucity of primary sources on it and as a consequence the authors have analysed the art and sculpture through the lens of their respective expertise: John Dickson is the Catholic Chaplain at Royal Holloway and Harriet O'Neill is an art historian. The authors advance the hypothesis that the decorative elements of the Chapel were essential to securing the 'non-sectarian' understanding of the space, in which schemes relating to Creation and revelation through prayer and scriptural reading are paramount.

Reverend Dr. John Dickson is Catholic Chaplain at Royal Holloway, University of London. He has degrees in Modern History and Economics from the University of Oxford, and Theology from Durham University. His doctorate is in Ecclesiastical History, and he taught History and Theology at both school and university level before taking up his present position at Royal Holloway. He is a National Leader in School Governance.

Dr. Harriet O'Neill is Honorary Research Associate at Royal Holloway, University of London. She has held curatorial positions at the National Gallery, London, and Royal Holloway, and has previously worked as a specialist in nineteenth and twentieth century art at Christie's and Bonhams auctioneers. She has published articles on frames and framing, and is Assistant Director in the Humanities and Social Sciences at the British School at Rome, where she is researching Roman Palace frames and hybrid objects.

Chapter 7, pp.147-163

Marjorie Coughlan

The 'sacred pastoral' as the manifestation of spirituality in the work of Bishop William Giles

Bishop William Giles (1830–1913) left England in 1852 to train for the Roman Catholic priesthood in Rome, which was to become his permanent home first as student, and later as Vice-Rector then Rector of the Venerable English College. A painter and photographer, Giles' preoccupation with the physical manifestation of the spirituality emanating from the landscape is the focus of this essay, in which both classical and Christian layerings contribute to a 'sacred pastoral' reading of his work. If a superficial evaluation of Giles' work pigeon-holes him as a topographical artist, this essay argues that deeper examination of his chosen subject matter

and the visual anchoring of place to the saints and their stories reveals the tracing of a spiritual exercise. Further, the connection of pilgrimage to the sequencing of photographs, as well as his handing down of these journeys and associations to those whose priestly formation he supervised, solicits the continuous reflexivity of such spiritual engagement with/through visual media.

Dr. Marjorie Coughlan is the York Art History Collaborations Administrator at the Department of History of Art, University of York. She is also Administrator of the AHRC-funded research project 'Pantheons: Sculpture at St. Paul's Cathedral' (2019–2022), a partnership between the University of York and St. Paul's researching the history of the Cathedral's monuments. She is currently working on a book on Bishop William Giles and is looking to bring an exhibition of his work to the UK.

PRAXIS II: HS, 2014, pp.165-175

Maciej Urbanek

Maciej Urbanek's installation HS was commissioned in 2014 by Bishop Philip North, then Rector of St Michael's Church in Camden, London. Originally a temporary installation, it has now assumed semi-permanent status, subject to conservation work on the masonry which it covers. Its composite arrangement of flat, matt, paper prints are concealed by the dramatic effect of a reflective three-dimensional image. Here, extracts of the artist's 2007 BA dissertation from Goldsmiths College 'Becoming Truth-Event: In the Search for the Ontological Character of God' have been selected alongside images of the work to evoke its conception.

Maciej Urbanek is an international artist working with photography and new media. Prior to completing his postgraduate studies at the RA Schools, he studied Fine Art and History of Art at Goldsmiths College in London, and Theory and Philosophy of Law at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland. Maciej was awarded the Royal Academy Gold Medal in 2010, and has exhibited internationally as both artist and curator. In 2015 he organised a critically acclaimed series of exhibitions entitled 10 One-Night Stands, and also received the ACE Award for Art in a Religious Context for his installation in St Michael's Church in Camden, London. In 2016, Maciej opened his own gallery URBANEK in South Dulwich, London.

Chapter 8, pp.179-196

Jonathan A. Anderson

Bin bag visions: Theological horizons in Maciej Urbanek's HS

In this essay, Jonathan A. Anderson provides a close reading of Maciej Urbanek's award-winning photographic installation *HS*, examining the ways the work functions theologically within the physical space and liturgical life of St Michael's Camden Town, London. His primary points of reference are provided less by the artist than by the context of this particular church and by the broader historical traditions of Christian visual and spatial theology. He situates the work in relation to several iconographic precedents – including imagery of creation, the baptism of Christ, the sacred name, and eschatological judgement and redemption – arguing that this range of associations opens the work onto significant theological content. In transposing this range of iconographies into the materiality of bin bags and digital photography, *HS* initiates a significant apophatic movement, such that the work productively both offers and withholds thematic representation. Ultimately, Anderson argues that this twofold movement is not only intelligible within Christian visual theology but that *HS* is a fitting contribution to it.

Jonathan A. Anderson is Associate Professor of Art at Biola University, Los Angeles. He is an artist, art critic, and theologian, whose writing includes *Modern Art and the Life of a Culture: The Religious Impulses of Modernism*, co-authored with William Dyrness (IVP Academic, 2016), and articles for *Religion and the Arts*, *Christian Scholar's Review*, *Art+Christianity*, and *Themelios*. He has previously received research fellowships from the Center for Christian Thought and the Nagel Institute, and is on the Board of the Association of Scholars of Christianity in the History of Art.

Chapter 9, pp.197-218

Martin Poole and Stephen B. Roberts

Public liturgical theology through community and public art

This chapter explores creative events curated by *Beyond*, a church-based group exploring spirituality through the arts in Brighton and Hove, Sussex. The authors – the founder of *Beyond* and a public theologian with an interest in liturgy and the arts – consider *Beyond*'s approaches to the Christian festivals of Christmas and Easter, in which the focus lies on public interaction outside church buildings. Beach front and shop window 'stations', and the idea of a liturgical celebration where the congregation sacramentally 'break light' with glow sticks, are a focus for conversational and non-verbal theological engagement. In them, the authors argue, are spaces in which doctrine is explored experientially through visual media, their inflections and juxtapositions offering non-linear cultural connectivity to the bigger themes of the festivals such as good and evil, or light. Such a connectivity can be critically understood to shape a distinctively generative and developmental liturgy. From this, it is argued, theology emerges *as*, as well as *through*, encounters experienced in the public sphere: *Beyond* is generating public liturgical theology through its artistic engagement.

Reverend Martin Poole is the founder and leader of *Beyond* and the vicar of St. Luke's Church, Prestonville, Brighton. Prior to taking up the post at St. Luke's in 2010, he was a self-supporting minister working in design, branding, and promotion for television channels and networks. His work included the creation of a number of BBC2 'idents', the network identity of Sky television, ITV, TV4 in Sweden and ORT1 in Russia, and the launch of Al Jazeera as well as work with Disney and many other television channels, programmes, and networks.

Reverend Dr. Stephen B. Roberts is Tutor in Practical Theology and Mission at the South Wales Baptist College and Honorary Lecturer at Cardiff University. He has worked as a parish priest and university chaplain in London and was Vice Principal of St Michael's College, Llandaff (Cardiff). Before taking up his current post in 2019 he was Senior Lecturer in Modern Theology at the University of Chichester. His research has been primarily in the area of inter-religious dialogue and the public sphere, but as an amateur jazz musician he is currently exploring the intersection between music and public theology.

Chapter 10, pp.219-237

Lucy Newman Cleeve

***Stations of the Cross* and *Stations of the Resurrection*: Interdisciplinary art practice and its implications for visual theology**

This chapter explores the potential of interdisciplinary art practice as a locus and generator for new models of visual theology, discussing the author's curation and involvement in two church-based projects realised in London, in 2017: *Stations of the Cross* at St. Stephen Walbrook, and *Stations of the Resurrection* at St. Paul's Cathedral, with artist Mark Dean and

Lizzi Kew Ross & Co. In this essay, the author considers the artworks' modalities of juxtaposition, simultaneity, and parataxis (with reference to theologian Jeremy Begbie), in order to illuminate a new kind of liturgical 'staging' for the commemoration of Easter. Newman Cleeve draws parallels between interdisciplinary art practice and the practice of scriptural reasoning, common to interfaith discourse, and argues that 'held difference' can promote aesthetically sensitive theological engagement. She also considers the possibility of interdisciplinarity as an ethical strategy, asking whether there is a particular set of aesthetic considerations that relate to inclusive religious expression.

Lucy Newman Cleeve is currently engaged as Curatorial Consultant to The Faith Museum at The Auckland Project in the North East of England, and is undertaking doctoral research at King's College London where she is exploring contemporary art and curation as public theology. She is a curator and consultant with twenty years' experience across the visual arts and cultural sector, working with organisations such as Tate Britain, British Council, Creative & Cultural Skills, Arts Council England, and DCMS. She was also the founding director of Man&Eve Gallery.
