

Reviews

BIBLICAL ART FROM WALES edited by Martin O’Kane and John Morgan-Guy, *Sheffield Phoenix Press*, 2010, pp. 328, £35 hbk and £19.50 pbk

A handsome volume with over six hundred images and containing a DVD-ROM which further develops the material of the book, this work is a monument to the extraordinary relationship between the Bible and art in Welsh culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It chronicles all styles, from the simplicity of the Nonconformist chapel and Jewish synagogue to the more elaborate art forms of the Churches, both Catholic and Established, and the icons of the Orthodox tradition. The volume and the DVD and the supporting on-line database hosted by the National Library of Wales (<http://imagingthebible.llgc.org.uk>) are a fitting tribute to the work of the research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council based at the University of Wales, Lampeter. The DVD-ROM accompanying this volume expands on several topics explored in the book, such as the interplay of art and faith, biblical imagery in a domestic context, and religious military metaphors in war memorials in Welsh churches. The on-line database of images recorded and researched in the course of the research project lists over 3,000 photographs taken as part of the project fieldwork activities. As the Introduction to the book points out: ‘It is intended that all three, this volume, the DVD-ROM and the database should function together to provide a comprehensive resource for those seeking to locate, contextualize and become more familiar with the range and diversity of biblical art in Wales’ (pp. xiv–xv).

After the Introduction, the first three essays in the volume give an exceptional overview to the work as a whole: D. Densil Morgan begins with a brief historical background (pp. 1–10); this is followed by an in-depth scene-setting analysis by John Morgan-Guy (pp. 11–44). In a wide sweep Morgan-Guy considers art in Wales from the early illuminated manuscripts of the eighth century to the imaginative and figurative art of more recent times. The third article (pp. 45–70) by Martin O’Kane provides us with a thought-provoking glimpse of what has been called ‘visual exegesis’. From his own exegetical background O’Kane skilfully exhibits how text and image combine to give substance to the Welsh experience of the prominence of the Bible as the Word of God. One of the later essays in the book (L.J. Kreitzer, ‘Images of the Apostle Paul in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Wales’, pp. 235–252) could be said to belong to this same genre of ‘visual exegesis’. For example, Kreitzer considers the three panels in the 19th century stained glass window in St. Mary’s Church, Lenden Pool, Denbigh: in the first, the shepherds are being urged by the angels to come and see the Child at Bethlehem; in the second John the Baptist is urging his audience to see the Lamb of God, while in the third Paul is preaching to the Athenians (Acts 17:23): ‘In the final panel Paul’s preaching extends to the Athenians what Luke’s angel has already announced to the shepherds and what the evangelist John has proclaimed to his audience through the Baptist’ (p. 240).

The remaining essays can be roughly divided into three categories: a) the art of the various confessions, churches, and religions in Wales; b) the work of individual artists; c) the social milieu. Each article is superbly illustrated with relevant material. a) J. Harvey, ‘The Bible and Art in Wales: A Nonconformist Perspective’ (pp. 71–90); M. Crampin, ‘Biblical Art from Wales: The Mediaeval

Influence' (pp. 121–138); A. Andreopoulos, 'Icons and the Bible: St. Nicholas's Orthodox Church, Cardiff' (pp. 253–270); S. Kadish, 'The Jewish Presence in Wales: Image and Material Reality' (pp. 271–290); b) D. Jasper, 'Pre-Raphaelite Biblical Art in Wales' (pp. 139–154); C. Rowland, 'Images of the Apocalypse: Blair Hughes-Stanton (1902–81) and John Hancock (1899–1918)' (pp. 155–170); H. Dentinger, 'Biblical Imagery in the Engravings of David Jones (1895–1974)' (pp. 171–186); P.E. Esler, 'The Biblical Paintings of Ivor Williams (1908–82)' (pp. 187–204); N. Gordon Bowe, 'Interpreting the Bible through Painted Glass: The Harry Clarke Studios and Wilhelmina Geddes (1887–1955)' (pp. 205–216); A. Smith, 'Light, Colour and the Bible: The Stained Glass Windows of John Petts (1914–91)' (pp. 217–234); c) P. Lord, 'The Bible in the Artisan Tradition of Welsh Visual Culture' (pp. 91–120); O. Fairclough, 'Biblical Imagery in Private and Public Spaces in Wales (1850–1930)' (pp. 291–304).

The final article, C.Lloyd-Morgan, 'Transformation or Decline? Modern Welsh Artists and the Welsh Biblical Heritage' (pp. 305–317), takes an honest look at the present position with regard to biblical art in Wales. Much traditional biblical art depended on religious patronage. This is no longer as readily available to artists, since patronage now comes more and more from secular sources. Going along with this is the decline in religious observance, with the result that scenes from the Bible no longer have the same resonance for present-day Welsh people as they had for their forebears. Lloyd-Morgan asks the question, 'Biblical subjects are certainly rarer among practising artists today than ever before. Now that the younger generations lack the thorough, early grounding in the content of the Bible, has the Bible remained a source of inspiration or has it largely been abandoned?' (p. 308). She concludes that the production of this volume, and the DVD to accompany it, is timely since it preserves the rich heritage of Welsh biblical art before it is attenuated further. This reviewer concurs and thanks the editors and the many researchers involved for a superb production.

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DIALECTIC AND DIALOGUE by Dimitri Nikulin, *Stanford University Press*, Stanford CA, 2010, pp. xiii + 169, \$19.95 pbk, \$19.95 e-bk, £55 hbk

In his seventh letter (if indeed it is his), Plato remarks that he will never write about the deepest matters of philosophy, 'For this knowledge is not something that can be put into words like other sciences; but after long-continued intercourse between teacher and pupil, in joint pursuit of the subject, suddenly, like light flashing forth when a fire is kindled, it is born in the soul and straightway nourishes itself' (341c). This idea, that there are some matters that cannot be expressed or attained to outside of oral dialogue, forms the backdrop to Dimitri Nikulin's book, *Dialectic and Dialogue*, which attempts to provide a philosophical and historical account of the origins, interrelatedness, and significance of dialectic and dialogue.

In the first chapter on the platonic origins of dialogue and dialectic, Nikulin identifies a development that is key to understanding the relation between them: 'dialectic originally was an oral practice established in oral dialogue; written dialogue then appeared as an imitation of oral dialectic; and finally, written dialectic was distilled into a non-dialogical and universal method of reasoning' (p. 2).

In chapter two, 'Dialectic: Via Antiqua', Nikulin looks in more detail at the origins of dialectic. For Plato, the purpose of dialectic is to know the 'what' of a thing (its essence). In Plato's earlier dialogues, Socratic oral dialogue forces its 'interlocutors to recognize that the original description of a thing's essence was