

they heard, which made them notably more sympathetic: intriguing evidence suggests that the translation into Latin of Aristotle's *Ethics* was driven in part by the need to learn how to give wise, sympathetic and moderate advice in the confessional. Murray then studies the attempt of Archbishop Federigo Visconti of Pisa to put the reforms of the Lateran Council into practice. He did this in particular with the aid of the new orders of friars, for the bishop needed nothing more than plentiful, well educated, zealous, and cheap pastors, preachers and confessors. The volume ends with an account of the development of excommunication from its role as a ferocious policeman protecting the abbeys when law and order were weak, to the time when secular law took over that role and a pope would be left free to explore the subtleties and perplexities of an ordinary woman's claim for an annulment.

The heroes of Murray's story are no longer household names: men such as the archdeacon Anselm of Laon, who initiated the new wave of biblical pastoral theology, Pope Innocent III, who learned this in the schools of Paris and used his reforming council to spread it across the Church, the scholar-bishop Robert Grosseteste, who helped to provide the intellectual resources for it, Thomas of Cantimpré OP who preached it, and wrote for men who preached it, in the parishes. Such people get no mention in Sorabji's pages, but they are able to give us a rich feel for how consciences, and reflection on the idea of conscience, actually develop. They also suggest the kind of soil in which they might flourish: Murray repeatedly notes the combination of the academic, the monastic and the pastoral. All are needed: the mind to reflect on ideas; silence to allow us to listen both to our own inner voices, rational and non-rational, and to the voices of others; community to give us guidance born of collective experience; and charity to inspire us to encourage each other to aim at goodness.

MARGARET ATKINS CRSA

PICTURING THE APOCALYPSE: THE BOOK OF REVELATION IN THE ARTS OVER TWO MILLENNIA by Natasha O'Hear and Anthony O'Hear, *Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015, pp. xxi + 333, £20.00, hbk*

The bible and its theology lie at the heart of the Western artistic tradition. Of all its books *Revelation* in particular lends itself to visualization. The highly visual character of the text is the result of its self-description as based on the visionary experience of its author, John of Patmos. It uses a great variety of symbols, animate and inanimate: human, animal, demonic and numerical, many of them horrifying, and which are so clearly depicted that they can easily be transferred from the literary to the graphic mode of presentation. As the authors of this book clearly

show it has proved to be a fertile source of imaginative stimulus for artists working across a range of media, including music, for the last two thousand years up to and including the present day. They are particularly concerned to emphasise how the book of *Revelation* and its concept of interpretative unveiling have resonated in visual art, especially in its expression within the popular imagination. Hence they choose the broader word, apocalypse, rather than the narrower name for their title.

By means of a set of examples carefully and skillfully chosen from the immense number available, for their lasting significance and innovatory nature, the authors construct a theological and visual history of the text. Since the logic of *Revelation* is not that of history as linear, but of history as episodic narrative, the authors' construction of their own text follows a similar pattern.

After an introduction which provides a good summary of the book and its interpretations, they move into a series of ten concise and thematic chapters, each commenting on one of the great and most famous images from *Revelation*, and offering a survey of the different approaches to the given image in the arts and popular culture. These approaches in turn explain the artistic reception of the text of *Revelation* and its theological and historical relevance in particular periods. The history of the theology runs in parallel with the art-historical discussion. A concluding chapter draws their findings together, and discusses the nature of visual exegesis and its contemporary relevance. Inevitably this structure means that the book has to suffer some degree of repetition, not only because in the biblical text the images are interlinked, but also because the initial choice of illustrative representations, particularly those of the manuscripts, tend to recur in each case. However this repetition is a small price to pay for its great readability and its remarkably accessible style, which sometimes verges on the didactic, given that the research and scholarship on display are immense. The text is accompanied by a wealth of illustrations with a generous number of beautiful coloured plates. It culminates in what is perhaps its most interesting and important contribution: the way the imagery functions in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, in a culture which is almost entirely secular and divorced from any notion of the dominion and action of God in history, the main force after all of what is the last book of the bible.

Revelation is a book about God and Christ not symbols. Yet it is the symbolism, not the text and its theology, which endures. This is a most interesting example of the secularization of scripture: the idea that it is possible in modern thinking to divorce the theological elements from the sacred texts while retaining an interpretation of history or ethics afforded by them. The theology of *Revelation* has of course become the subject of an immense bibliography in modern biblical studies, but though not antithetical to 'academic analysis' the authors are anxious to distance themselves from it, in that their desire is to show that the reception of the imagery is itself a theological enterprise. Besides being what must

be almost the final word on the art history of the book of *Revelation*, this book is also a contribution to the newly fashionable area of biblical studies called reception history; and the authors further succeed in their stated aim of showing the continuing importance of the images of *Revelation* as symbolizing fundamental aspects of human existence and experience. While it is true that due to their immediacy images have the power to provide a more accessible and arresting way of making theological and ethical nuances, and the book shows well how they can serve as an interpretative and exegetical tool, nevertheless *Revelation* is a special case. It is the only visionary text in the New Testament and as such obviously lends itself to this kind of treatment. A new stage in the discussion of the problem of theology and imagery would be to consider theologically what is the theological relationship between word and image, particularly with regard to the normative status of the Word of God, and in view of the fact that the Oxford lexicographers have recently declared that the emoji, an image, is actually a word.

MARY CHARLES-MURRAY SND

A CULTURAL STUDY OF MARY AND THE ANNUNCIATION: FROM LUKE TO THE ENLIGHTENMENT by Gary Waller, *Pickering & Chatto*, London, 2015, pp. xi + 219, £60.00, hbk

In 1973 Gerhard Richter made a series of canvases of the *Annunciation after Titian*. They are based on a postcard of Titian's *Annunciation* in Venice's *Scuola Grande di San Rocco*. In the series Richter blurs and abstracts the form and colour of the postcard of Titian's painting, creating works with many echoes. To anyone who has an interest in the cultural presence of religious iconography and images one meaning leaps out. Richter's series of paintings is about the blurring and disappearance of the sacred. This series illustrates Max Weber's well-known tale of the disenchantment of the modern world. But as Gary Waller points out in this fascinating book Richter never *erases* Titian's *Annunciation*. It is still there. Weber's story is one about the decisive collapse of the enchanted cosmos and the coming of rational modernity, but as Richter's series can be taken to show maybe the sacred continues to haunt.

To some degree Waller's book takes up the question asked by Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*. Taylor wants to know how it can be that it is no longer possible to believe in the sacred universe which was simply taken as given in 1500. But whereas Taylor writes at the level of the grand narrative, Waller focuses on the specificity of the Annunciation and how its transforming meanings and weightings over the past five hundred years or so cast light on changing 'structures of feeling'. In other words, Waller's concern is to examine how Mary and the Annunciation's central