Reformed Theology and Visual Culture: The Protestant Imagination from Calvin to Edwards (Book Review)

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Dadosky performs many operations of this sort, and with more precision and expertise than can be illustrated in this brief review. When he does focus on the contribution that Eliade can make to Lonergan studies, he points out that Lonergan's philosophy of God does not draw adequately upon a consideration of religious experience. This point, admittedly a serious one, functions more as a concluding irony than as a fully developed dimension of the study.

Dadosky draws upon a good range of primary and secondary sources for each author. I was surprised, however, to find no mention of Vernon Gregson's *Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions*.

Eliade, because of the way his brilliant insights transcend systematization, might have balked at Dadosky's attempts to corral him. Those unfamiliar with Lonergan should find this to be a good introduction. The book successfully demonstrates the power of Lonergan's thought to analyze, explain and arrange various worlds of experience and thought related to the extraordinarily complex realm of religious experience.

Dadosky, reaching up to the mind of Lonergan, offers some important insights on the respective roles of religious studies and theology in addressing the convergence of world religions, a question of great significance for our times.

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**Reformed Theology and Visual Culture: The Protestant Imagination from Calvin to Edwards**

William Dyrness


While contemporary art lovers shudder at the thought of Europe's most wonderful stained-glass windows or statues being smashed by unforgiving 16th-century peasants, William Dyrness has attempted to search for the *raison d'être* behind these apparently anti-aesthetic acts. Iconoclasm has been a problem in the Christian tradition since its inception, however, beginning with the Jewish fear of idolatry and the early church's controversy over the use of icons. But, like anticlericalism, there are deep religious motives that search for a new freedom of expression once it appears that other paths have become restricted by the official institution. Dyrness offers a fresh approach to this long-debated subject through the use of recent theoretical evaluations in art history, theology and the social sciences. With a clear and well-documented style, this book should be of interest to scholars and students alike.

Dyrness has reconceptualized the iconoclastic phenomenon by probing into the human imagination and showing how it leads to a visual, aesthetic expression. The reformers could agree with their medieval predecessors that any direct appropriation of God was impossible and therefore external images have a place in making the divine present to the limited human capacity. The great difference, however, centres in the direction of this labyrinth pathway. If the medieval perspective had privileged the visual over the aural, then the reformers attempted to reverse the process. They feared that without a guardian framework of biblical revelation the image may fall into idolatry; pure imagination may lead to fancy. Rather, through the Word of God...
revealed in scripture, an inner appropriation of truth gave a framework to external vision. But, Dyrness argues, it was not a simple reversal of aural over visual. Indeed, the medieval lectio suggested that reading be both aural and internally meditative. And the reformers, beginning with the word, relied on the illumination of the spirit to visualize first internally an image of God; this, in turn, encouraged the limited development of external visual images. An active participation in Psalm singing, for example, a tradition which was actively carried on by the reformers, seemed to incorporate the Word, aural repetition, and the meditative reflection as well. With an internal appropriation of God's revelation, the external imaging could be best visualized in several ways.

Martin Bucer articulated his belief in God's activity as "the goodness of God [that] shineth in all his creatures" (92), and because of this the portrait took on an increased importance. Rather than the depiction of saints or angelic beings, images of ordinary people, one's neighbor, were meant to show the imago dei as manifest here on earth. Paintings of architecture also demonstrate human creativity, reflecting the divine impulse; ordinary houses, marketplaces, harbours and churches inhabited by ordinary people at work or play or worship became a way to demonstrate God on earth. Dyrness points out: "For followers of Calvin it is not in the contemplation of an image, nor in an Ignatian meditation on the events of Christ's life, that spiritual 'nurture and godliness are to be found. These spiritual benefits are sought as believers live out—reenact—this life-giving cross in their everyday life" (83). This cultivation of creation demonstrated the work of God's redemptive plan carried out by human hands. Paintings depicting a "delectable garden," a pastoral scene, or civic society pictured God's order on earth. Dyrness summarizes the use of visual expression in this way: "Art here serves religion, but not at all in the medieval sense. It now serves what is to these architects the higher calling of religion, that program of making right a distorted created order. Walking in a "delectable garden," strolling in a well-ordered space, one does not necessarily think of God. But these are spaces that can, to these builders, 'picture' God nevertheless" (112).

In the later chapters Dyrness demonstrates how the Reformed imagination found expression in the new world among the Puritans. If iconoclasm characterized the Reformation, the limited use of visual images with plainness and economy characterized New England Puritan art. Despite their lack of public paintings they valued portraiture, and the Puritans envisioned their entire settlement as a visual demonstration of God's order in a Christian commonwealth, and in their minds a resurrection of the biblical paradigm. This was a direct expression of God's activity on earth. If anything, Puritan society, Dyrness reminds the reader, was a sermon culture and the preaching of God's word allowed a lively imagination to flourish, if one could pay attention to the many hours of preaching. One result of this aural culture was the new hymnody and poetry that set itself free from the "elaborate metaphoric strictures" that traditionally accompanied it. Dyrness uses the example of the verse by George Herbert: "Is it no verse, except enchanted groves /And sudden arbours shadow coarse-spunne lines? /... / [rather] Shepherds are honest people /let them sing; /... / Who plainly say, 'My God, my King'" (153). The great Puritan divine William Ames addressed the place of visual images: "while Christ was still to appear, all things were more outward and carnal, afterwards more inward and spiritual" (159). Therefore, the Reformed visual culture was based on the concept of a new covenant, and with the aid of the Spirit of God the Christian would not need external aids to believe, but
through a quickened imagination or rational reflection would eventually give some visual expression to an internal reality.

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**Dialogues avec un musulman**
Pierre Grelot
Parole présente

Pierre Grelot, professeur d’Écriture sainte, qui enseigne à l’Institut catholique de Paris, entame ici un dialogue avec un jeune étudiant musulman marocain. D’emblée on constate le très grand déséquilibre de ce dialogue. Il s’agit, en effet, d’un entretien entre un père catholique, qui détient un doctorat et une connaissance approfondie de sa foi, et un jeune étudiant musulman, qui a une connaissance élémentaire et pratique de sa religion. C’est donc un livre dans lequel on trouve davantage le point de vue chrétien que le point de vue de l’islam.

D’après le Qur’ân, les gens n’ont ni tué, ni crucifié Jésus, mais ce dernier a été élevé vers Dieu. Grelot à ce propos explique « que le Qur’ân fait écho, en cet endroit, à une légende qui a couru, au IIe siècle, chez des hérétiques qui voyaient dans le corps de Jésus une simple apparence. Je puis te citer ici des textes de cette époque. Un évêque d’Antioche, Ignace, écrivait aux chrétiens de la ville de Smyrne pour les combattre : “C’est réellement que le Christ a souffert, comme c’est réellement qu’il s’est ressuscité lui-même, et sa passion n’a pas été une simple apparence, comme le prétendent certains incrédules [… ]” (Lettre aux Smyrniotes, II). Je pourrais citer d’autres textes venus du IIe siècle. Il est dommage que le Qur’ân fasse écho à cette tradition inexacte » (22). Dans notre monde moderne actuel, il est inacceptable de cataloguer certains groupes minoritaires comme étant « hérétiques ». Un musulman qui croit à l’authenticité absolue du Qur’ân interprètera, justement, que son Livre sacré corrobore la vérité véhiculée par ce groupe minoritaire.

Les deux commandements des Évangiles « d’aimer Dieu de tout son cœur » et « d’aimer son prochain comme soi-même » n’entrent pas en contradiction avec les principes de la foi musulmane. Le Qur’ân n’a pas été révélé pour répéter uniquement tout le contenu des révélations antérieures (Torah, Évangiles), comme les Évangiles ne sont pas des répétitions de l’Ancien Testament. Les enseignements de la Torah et des Évangiles qui ne contredisent pas la vérité quir’âniqne doivent, en principe, être acceptés par les musulmans. Le Qur’ân distingue entre deux niveaux de foi : le niveau spirituel du simple musulman (muslim) qui se soumet à la volonté divine et celui du croyant (mu’min) qui a la foi. Ce dernier a implicitement développé une relation personnelle d’amour avec Dieu. C’est pourquoi la notion d’amour est centrale chez les shi’ites et les sufis. Si Allâh est le Clément et le Miséricordieux, c’est aussi parce qu’il est Amour (68).

Le Qur’ân confirme que Jésus est le Verbe d’Allâh (Kalimat Allâh), mais les chrétiens considèrent que Jésus est aussi une manifestation divine (69). Cette dernière idée rejoint un concept développé chez les shi’ites, pour qui l’Imâm (Guide spirituel), Successeur du Prophète Muhammad, est le lieu d’apparition d’Allâh (mazhar-i Allâh).