

Daily Bread: Art & Work in the Reign of Quantity

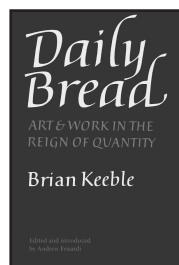
Daily Bread: Art & Work in the Reign of Quantity

By Brian Keeble

Edited and Introduced by Andrew Frisardi

Angelico Press, Ohio, 2015

Reviewed by M. Ali Lakhani



The title of this collection of essays by Brian Keeble about Art and Work in the ‘Reign of Quantity’ provides an important clue as to its perspective. The title phrase *Daily Bread* imports rich Biblical resonances: of the heavenly manna fed to the Israelites in the wilderness (Exodus, 16:4-12; John, 6:31); of the “daily bread” petitioned for in *The Lord’s Prayer*, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew, 6:11), with its echo of Jesus’s response to Satan, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matthew, 4:4; Luke, 4:4; and see Deuteronomy, 8:3); and of the salvific communion bread (Luke, 22: 19-20, 1 Corinthians 10:16) which is the “bread of life” (John, 6:51). From a purely mundane perspective, one’s “daily bread” is one’s livelihood and one’s means of worldly subsistence, but the eternal bread that represents one’s true need or “one thing needful” (Luke, 10:42) is the Logos or “bread of life,” as is implied by the following sentence from the book’s epigraph from passage by Ananda K. Coomaraswamy: “Human needs are the needs of the whole man, who does not live by

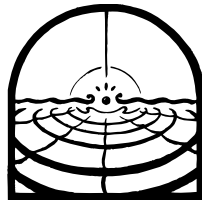
bread alone". This relates to the scriptural theme of "eternal life" and the reminder that the "whole man" and his works must conform to the divine nature and prototype, recalling the passage from Ephesians, 2:8-10,

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

The central theme of this collection of essays is the consideration of Art and Work from the integral perspective that conforms Man ("God's handiwork") and his own handiworks to his God-given Nature (the Logos) whose purpose is "to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do." The book is divided into two parts, the first dealing with the metaphysical framework for this integral view of perennial wisdom or 'Tradition' (in St. Augustine's words, "uncreated Wisdom, the same now, as before, and the same to be for evermore") and contrasting it with the fragmentary perspective of modernism (the perspective of "that which is cut off from the Transcendent, from the immutable principles which in reality govern all things," as Seyyed Hossein Nasr has defined it), while the second part surveys the works of several artists who have been concerned with healing the divisions in the human self-image of Spirit-soul-body, created by the modernist conception of man.

The author of this collection is an accomplished poet (see our review of his book, *Far From the Dawn*, Golgonooza Press, 2014, in the summer 2015 volume of *Temenos Academy Review*) and, as Andrew Frisardi notes in his Introduction, Keeble's own personal history as someone who has reconciled his work with his vocation, his art with utility and beauty, is "a testament to the arguments and claims of this book." He is in fact a part of "the English tradition of radical thought" that he describes in his essay on Eric Gill in this collection of essays, whose antecedents he traces to William Blake through William Cobbett, Carlyle, Ruskin, Morris, and others, including Gill. Blake's influence is evident in the name "Golgonooza Press," the fine press printing and publishing house which Keeble founded in 1974, and in his close association with the renowned Blakean scholar and poet, the late Kathleen Raine, for whom Keeble is the literary executor, and with whom (among others) he co-founded the Temenos Academy, devoted to the 'Arts of the Imagination.' Keeble's own

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