

## TOWARD A SCRIPTURAL AESTHETIC

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### *Introduction*

Theologians and philosophers grapple with the meaning of Truth and Goodness. However, theology, unlike philosophy, has neglected a serious study of Beauty or Aesthetics within Scripture. Frank Gaebelein comments that most of the work done on Aesthetics in Christianity is accomplished within Roman and Anglo-Catholic thought. However, the roots of this discipline are found to be largely extrabiblical. Therefore, he notes, there is a pressing need for not only a scriptural “foundation for an authentic Christian aesthetic but also the corrective for artistic theory derived from other sources, however, excellent these may be.”<sup>1</sup>

There are, however, reasons why Aesthetics has been neglected, especially within the Protestant/evangelical tradition. First, a concern for those in poverty leads some to view the concept of Aesthetics as objectionable. The luxury of Beauty is not appropriate when many are in desperate need of food, shelter, and justice. Others suggest that the urgency of Christian eschatology does not allow for unnecessary or peripheral aesthetic considerations, because “neither the old Testament nor the New Testament has any theory of the beautiful.”<sup>2</sup> Peter Forsyth argues that the second commandment simultaneously killed both idolatry and “plastic imagination,” or “at least it placed it under such a disadvantage that it could hardly live and certainly could not grow.”<sup>3</sup> Additionally, aesthetics is sometimes regarded as part of Greek philosophy, and thus, is not a theological concern. Finally, with the dominance of critical theological studies and the development of postmodernity in contemporary society, seeking for *any* fundamentals, e.g., Truth, Goodness, Beauty, becomes impossible for some theologians.

In spite of objections to the contrary, there remains, however, a need to develop an Aesthetic of Scripture. Gerhard von Rad insightfully remarks that “no aesthetic of the Old Testament has yet been written.”<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Frank E. Gaebelein, *The Arts and Truth: Regaining the Vision of Greatness* (Portland: OR: Multnomah, 1985), 56.

<sup>2</sup>George A. Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1962), s.v. “Beauty.”

<sup>3</sup>Peter Taylor Forsyth, *Christ on Parnassus* (London: Independent Press, 1959), 43.

<sup>4</sup>Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (New York: Harper

The same observation can also be made for the NT and theological studies.<sup>5</sup> Yet, a survey of Scripture demonstrates the importance of aesthetic detail. For instance, nearly 40 percent of the OT uses poetic language. Furthermore, Israel's artistic genius was expended in religious architecture and decorations. Nearly 50 chapters in the Pentateuch alone detail God's directions for the construction of a lavish sanctuary, while several more chapters in the historical books describe the architectural design of Solomon's temple. In addition, Ezekiel devotes several chapters to the glories of a "third" temple. In the NT, the Apocalypse also contains much language that is highly aesthetic.

### *God's Aesthetic Nature*

God is described in Scripture as having various attributes including Father (Matt 6:9; 1 Chron 20:10f.; Isa 9:6; Mal 1:6; 2:10), Judge (Gen 18:25; 1 Sam 2:10; Ps 51:6; Isa 11:3-5; Dan 12:2; 2 Tim 4:1, 8; Heb 12:23), and Warrior (Gen 3:15; Exod 15:3; Col 2:13-15; Rev 12; 19:6-11).

However, God also has an aesthetical nature. For example, he is portrayed as a potter: "But now, O Lord . . . [,] we are the clay, and You our potter; And all we are the work of Your hand" (Isa 64:8; see also Jer 18:6; Rom 9:20-24). Furthermore, God is also involved in the creation of human artworks. He commissions lavish works of art, such as the sanctuary, providing both the architectural blueprints and the instructions for its furnishings (1 Chron 28:10-13; 29:1). Even the garments of the officiating priests were specifically designed for aesthetic appeal. Besides manifesting glory, the priestly vestments were to be made "*for beauty*" (Exod 28:2, 40), suggesting that beauty is perceived as an end in itself.<sup>6</sup>

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& Row, 1962), 1:364.

<sup>5</sup>For example, Millard J. Erikson's massive 1,247-page *Christian Theology* includes only one paragraph regarding the aesthetics of Scripture. He writes: "Beyond the logical or rational character of theology, there is also its aesthetic character," which may be found in "the great compass and interrelatedness of the doctrines," in "the organic character of theology," in its "form of symmetry, comprehensiveness, and coherence" ([Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989], 1245-1246). However, Erikson makes no mention of the extensive display of finely crafted poetry and narratives nor of literary structures, all of which von Rad, 1:364, is sensitive to: "[Israel's] most intensive encounter with beauty was in the religious sphere, in the contemplation of Jahweh's revelation and action; and because of this concentration of the experience of beauty upon the *credenda*, Israel occupies a special place in the history of aesthetics."

<sup>6</sup>Francis A. Schaeffer notes that "the temple was covered with precious stones for beauty. There was no pragmatic reason for the precious stones. They had no utilitarian purpose. God simply wanted beauty in the temple. God is interested in beauty. . . . And beauty has a place in the worship of God" (*Art and the Bible* [Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1976], 15).

*God-inspired Architectural Design*

Constructing the divinely commissioned sanctuary required advanced artistic techniques. The book of Exodus (35:30-35) records God's commission of Bezalel "to design artistic works, to work in gold and silver and bronze, in cutting jewels for setting, in carving wood, and to work in all manner of artistic workmanship." Bezalel was able to accomplish this task because God "put in his heart the ability to teach . . . [and] filled [him] with skill to do all manner of work." Gene Edward Veith Jr. outlines several important principles concerning the divine perspective on aesthetic value in this passage:<sup>7</sup>

1. *Art is within God's will.* The tabernacle contained artistic designs. God was not to be worshiped in a bare, unfurnished tent. Rather, the Israelites were instructed by God to "make [a] Tabernacle with ten curtains of finely twisted linen and blue, purple and scarlet yarn, with cherubim worked into them by a skilled craftsman" (Exod 26:1). The furnishings were to be constructed of pure gold, delicately carved wood, elegant tapestries, bronze, and precious stones (Exod 25). God not only provided precise instructions to the Israelites concerning sacred architecture and furnishings, but he also gave instructions to record these details.

2. *Artistry as vocation.* Exodus 35:30 states that God "called" Bezalel for the work of constructing and furnishing the tabernacle; thus Bezalel was specifically called by God to be an artist.

3. *Artistic ability is God's gift.* Not only did God call Bezalel to be an artist, but he gave him the ability to accomplish this task (Exod 36:2). Artistic talent is not merely innate human skill nor the accomplishment of individual genius, but rather it is a gift of God.<sup>8</sup>

The first gift given to Bezalel was that of the Spirit of God (Exod 35:31). The ministry of the Holy Spirit is not generally linked to artistic talent. But here it was the *initial* gift given to him. Bezalel is the first person recorded in Scripture to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. He is neither a priest nor a prophet, but an artist.<sup>9</sup> The implication is that the works of Bezalel expressed the will of God through the medium and language of art.

4. *God inspired Bezalel to teach.* Not only was he given the gifts necessary to construct and adorn the tabernacle, but he was further empowered to instruct others.

<sup>7</sup>The following material on Bezalel is adapted from Gene Edward Veith Jr., *State of the Arts: From Bezalel to Mapplethorpe* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1991), 103-116.

<sup>8</sup>The NT echoes the same sentiment: "Every good and perfect gift is from above" (Jas 1:17).

<sup>9</sup>It could be argued that artistic skill is a "spiritual gift."

### *God-inspired Liturgy*

Just as Israel's sacred architecture and decoration were inspired by God, so also was its liturgy given by divine inspiration.

The book of Psalms played an important role in Israelite worship and liturgy. Phrases such as "sing praises unto the Lord" or "I will sing unto the Lord" occur multiple times. Elsewhere in the OT, whenever Israelite worship is recounted, music is evident and impressive. For example, 1 Chron 23:1-5 records that "four thousand praised the Lord with musical instruments." Later, when Hezekiah restored temple worship, he "stationed the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with stringed instruments, and with harps, . . . for thus was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets." While it may be argued that aesthetic dimensions are found in the sacred worship of nations throughout history, Israel insists that its God designed every detail of his worship, including architecture, furnishings, priestly attire, and liturgy.

### *Aesthetic Elements in Scripture*

God's involvement in Israel's architecture and liturgy is not the only evidence of his aesthetic nature. Nor was Israel's artistry restricted to the representational arts. There is also recognition that "the supreme expression of Israel's capacity for beauty is in her gift of language."<sup>10</sup>

1. *Hebrew poetry.* The poetry of the OT is highly extolled in both biblical and secular studies.

a. *Psalms.* The Psalms are generally classified as hymns and prayers to God, and simultaneously, God's word to humanity: "the Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was on my tongue" (2 Sam 23:1-2). The Psalter is divided into five books. Some have suggested a correspondence between the books of the Psalms and the Pentateuch.<sup>11</sup> Thus, it is not a random collection of songs and prayers, but a carefully ordered structure of key words and themes.

b. *Prophets.* The prophets also spoke in poetic language. Alice L. Laffey observes that "literary considerations are indispensable to any adequate study of the prophets. . . . The messages were intended not to inform minds but to change hearts. It is therefore necessary to pay attention to the ways the poets spoke, the forms and techniques they used in their efforts to make their word as effective as possible."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>Buttrick, 1:372.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Alice L. Laffey, *An Introduction to the Old Testament: A Feminist Perspective* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 149.

2. *Music.* There are close ties between prophecy and music. In 1 Sam 10:5, the prophet informs Saul after anointing him: “[When] you come to the hill of God where the Philistine garrison is . . . you will meet a group of prophets coming down from the high place with a stringed instrument, a tambourine, a flute, and a harp before them; and they will be prophesying.” In 2 Kgs 3:14-15, Jehoshaphat inquires of Elisha for counsel from God. Elisha’s response is “Bring me a musician.” “When the musician played, then the hand of the Lord came upon him, and he prophesied.”

3. *Nature.* Though God appointed the great beauty of both the desert sanctuary and the Jerusalem temple, he also insisted that the exquisite lily from his own hand is still more beautiful than the greatest artworks commissioned for Solomon’s temple (Luke 12:27). The Psalter, especially, is filled with praise for the Creator and his created world. Therefore, the study of the natural world is an aid to lift the mind to the Master Artist (Job 38:47). The Scriptures play an important role in the proper interpretation of the natural order. “Utility is not the reason behind creation: not everything that exists was made to be useful to human beings, and therefore their true meaning can never be fathomed within an anthropocentric world-view.”<sup>13</sup>

4. *Biblical narrative.* Meir Sternberg suggests that the literary nature of the biblical narratives can help to substantiate the validity of Scripture: “The empirical evidence, historical and sociocultural as well as compositional, leaves no doubt about his [the biblical narrator’s] inspired standing.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the narratives seem to have been carefully woven together in a calculated sequence. Literary scholars have begun to appreciate why, for example, the narrative of Judah and Tamar is placed within the narratives of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis.<sup>15</sup> Through such careful placement and structuring, the narrative linkages themselves reveal theological content.<sup>16</sup>

5. *Parables.* The Messiah often employed the literary genre of parables. Calvin M. Johansson notes that the parable “is a literary form akin to the fable but taken from the familiar areas of common life. To understand properly what Jesus has to say through this literary genre, the parable must be seen as

<sup>13</sup>Vinoth Ramachandra, *Gods That Fail: Modern Idolatry and Christian Mission* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 12; see also Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 110. Paul also draws attention to the power of nature (though fallen) to instruct about God (Rom 1:20).

<sup>14</sup>Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), 77.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 3.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

a genuine art form and, as such, creative imagination is necessary in getting to the parable's intent."<sup>17</sup> For example, when asked to define "who is my neighbor," Jesus, rather than providing an abstract definition, recounted the parable of the Good Samaritan.

6. *Theological Discourse.* The Pauline materials contain profound theological discourse and doxology. Paul's Epistle to the Romans works through several chapters of "analysis and argument" that "give way to adoration. Like a traveller who has reached the summit of a high mountain, the apostle views the vast panorama of salvation history and bursts into praise. . . . Before Paul goes on to outline the practical implications of the gospel, he falls down before God in worship, chanting his doxology in poetic strains."<sup>18</sup>

7. *Apocalypse.* Stark warnings and curses underscore the profound importance of the Apocalypse. The entire book displays an imposing mosaic of drama, architecture, and vivid panoramas in which God displays his perspective on salvation history. The book of Revelation is a complex tapestry of language and images borrowed from the OT and woven together into a carefully sequenced aesthetic display.

The literary manifestation of Scripture also includes the artful construction of sentences, verses, chapters, and entire books with extensive usage of inclusios, chiasms, panels, and parallel writing. G. C. Caird, contra Rudolf Bultmann's position that the Bible writers were "mythopoeic" and "prescientific," believes that "there is, then, an accumulation of evidence that the biblical writers were not only skillful handlers of words (which is obvious) but were also well aware of the nature of their tools." Thus, "unitary perception is, to be sure, a well-attested phenomenon, but it is characteristic not of the primitive but of the creative mind in all ages."<sup>19</sup>

### *Implications*

The nature of God's revelation is regularly expressed through artistic manifestation as opposed to analytical treatises and logical discourse.<sup>20</sup> Hans

<sup>17</sup>Calvin M. Johansson, *Music and Ministry: A Biblical Counterpoint* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988), 79.

<sup>18</sup>John Stott, *Romans: God's Good News For the World* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1994), 309; see also James Bailey and Lyle Vander Broek, *Literary Forms in the New Testament: A Handbook* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 75.

<sup>19</sup>G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 193, 197; see also Rudolph Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1953), 1:3ff.

<sup>20</sup>James I. Packer, "An Introduction to Systematic Spirituality," *Crux* 26 (1990): 6; see

Urs von Balthasar opines that theology should abandon “the extra-theological categories of a worldly philosophical aesthetics (above all poetry)” and develop its own “theory of beauty from the data of revelation itself.”<sup>21</sup> T. R. Wright comments cogently that “it sometimes seems that there are two different ways of thinking: one that assumes literary forms, whether narrative, poetic, or dramatic, and another that argues ‘systematically’ in terms of concepts. Many theologians certainly have fallen into this second category but my thesis is that theology need not be confined to this; it is possible and even necessary to talk about God in the form of stories, poems and plays.”<sup>22</sup> Laurence W. Wood notes the negative results of this type of thinking: “Especially since the rise of modern philosophy and modern science, we have been largely inattentive to the realities of the unseen, the intuitive, the affective, and the feeling depths of reality. Consequently the intuitive mode of consciousness has been denigrated and subordinated to the rational mode of consciousness.”<sup>23</sup>

### *Aesthetics as a Means of Experiential Intensification*

It has been suggested that for a person sensitive to artistic dimensions, aesthetic expression can intensify experience. Harold Hannum writes: “Aesthetic pleasure and a sensitiveness to beauty does [*sic*] not contradict religion, nor is it [*sic*] a frill or unnecessary adornment. A true appreciation of beauty is a deeper experience which will enhance all spiritual values.”<sup>24</sup> This aesthetic intensification could arguably be an important facet of the divine intent. But beyond this, literary devices may be the superior medium to express theological truth, as Wright hints: “The whole point of reading literature, its importance as a human discipline, beyond that of giving pleasure (which is by no means unimportant), is that it says something about life which cannot be said in any other way. . . . They have the capacity to generate new meaning by

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also Alister McGrath, *A Passion for Truth: The Intellectual Conference of Evangelicalism* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1996), 107.

<sup>21</sup>Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Seeing the Form*, vol. 1, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* (San Francisco: Ignatius, 1983), 9. However, in spite of his intentions to do otherwise, von Balthasar is not entirely successful in extricating himself from philosophical discussion.

<sup>22</sup>Wright, 2.

<sup>23</sup>Laurence W. Wood, “Recent Brain Research and the Mind-Body Dilemma,” *AsTJ* 41 (1986): 50.

<sup>24</sup>Harold Byron Hannum, *The Christian Search For Beauty* (Nashville: Southern Publishing, 1975), 39.

stretching language beyond its ordinary uses."<sup>25</sup>

T. R. Marland agrees that there is more involved in the aesthetic expression of theology than intensification: "Art and religion do not so much express fundamental feelings common to mankind as determine these feelings. . . . Art and religion provide the patterns of meaning, the frames of perception, by which society interprets its experiences and from which it makes conclusions about the nature of its world. They tell us what is; they do not respond to what is."<sup>26</sup>

However, the Christian church rarely acknowledges the extensive aesthetic manifestation of God in Scripture when constructing theological argument. Instead, it persistently orders its theological thinking along philosophical lines, relegating aesthetic value, even if only implicitly, to the emotional needs of the believer. However, this is in noticeable contrast to God's means of scriptural revelation, where he affirms the wholistic nature of each human being by communicating through aesthetic manifestations. While the mind is an important aspect of human nature, God does not limit his communication to abstract reasoning or systematic discourse. Larry Crabb notes that "biblical metaphors—*panting* after God, *tasting* God, *drinking* living water, *eating* bread from heaven—make it clear that finding God is not merely academic. We are to do more than understand truth about God; we are to encounter him, as a bride encounters her husband on their wedding night. Finding God is a sensual experience" (emphasis original).<sup>27</sup>

There is in Scripture no emphasis on the mental cognitive powers as the sole receptor of truth. Indeed, aesthetic value appears to be a primary avenue for truth-teaching. Neither is there any instruction to escape a "bodily prison" in order to gain a closer proximity to the mind of God. Rather in both the OT and NT, divine truth is regularly conveyed to the human being through primarily aesthetic value,<sup>28</sup> through the wholistic use of mind and body.

### *Potential Dangers of Emphasizing Aesthetic Values*

God established an elaborate system of corporate worship. However, the internal condition of the participant is explicitly targeted, rather than an

<sup>25</sup>T. R. Wright, *Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), 4.

<sup>26</sup>T. R. Marland, *Religion As Art: An Interpretation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 12. Van Meter Ames suggests a similar idea: "Art remains itself a timeless present of realization amid the incompleteness of existence" ("Expression and Aesthetic Expression," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 6 [1974]: 175).

<sup>27</sup>Larry Crabb Jr., *Finding God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 181; see also Robin Skelton, *Poetic Truth* (London: Heinemann, 1978), 120.

<sup>28</sup>It can be argued, contra the Greek philosophical position, that the human body is capable of, indeed necessary for, the reception of divine truth and is not merely a "prison" to be escaped.

outward, aesthetically perfect worship that may camouflage inner motivation. This position is noticeably different from that of Greek philosophy and some modern thinking, in which aesthetic beauty is viewed as salvific in itself. God repeatedly warns against a glorious worship that is used to disguise a degenerate life (Amos 5:23-24; Prov 28:9; Jer 6:20; Ezek 7:20; 30:30-33). Aesthetic values, though extensive and prominent in Scripture, are never salvific.

Another inherent danger is that an emphasis on aesthetic appeal can promote a superficial religion, supplanting the true faith it is supposed to convey. Calvin Johansson notes that

idolatry, whether it be a homemade religion of positive thinking or a comfortable aestheticism, can thus offer a sort of domesticated spirituality. Our human need for transcendence, for meaning, for value, can be met to a degree, in, for example, a majestic symphony without the pain of repentance and the cost of discipleship. . . . Properly, the sense of transcendence in a symphony . . . can and should make us mindful of the transcendent realm of the infinite Lord. Yet it need not. Many people are satisfied with the "richness of life" offered by aesthetic stimulation, which by its nature can make few self-consuming demands.<sup>29</sup>

Thus, "art, like religion, expresses the spiritual capacities of our human nature; we judge them as similar in their intent since they constitute our most salutary refuges from transient and contingent, from the practical and the pedestrian."<sup>30</sup>

### *Evaluation and Judgment of Aesthetic Expression*

There are indicators in Scripture that aesthetic expression can be evaluated and judged, e.g., the Golden Calf experience, following the giving of the law at Sinai. Having both experienced for himself the effects of idolatrous ceremony as the son of the king's daughter, and having been warned by God about what was currently taking place, Moses was able to assess the situation immediately.

Paul, speaking in the NT, also suggests that aesthetic expression can be evaluated and judged. In his epistle to the Philippian church, he gives an "aesthetic mandate": "Finally, brethren, whatever things are *true*, whatever things are *noble*, whatever things are *just*, whatever things are *pure*, whatever things are *lovely*, whatever things are of *good report*, if there is any *virtue*, and if there is anything *praiseworthy*—meditate on these things (Phil 4:8, emphasis supplied). It is important to evaluate and

<sup>29</sup>Johansson, 139.

<sup>30</sup>Harry B. Lee, "The Cultural Lag in Aesthetics," *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 6 (1947): 120-121.

discriminate between worthy and less worthy aspects of any culture.<sup>31</sup>

Further, there remains the need for a wholistic approach to the understanding of human nature. Eddy Zemach argues for this position, suggesting that it is the aesthetic qualities that verify scientific theory, rather than empirical data. Thus, aesthetic function is foundational for establishing truth—for evaluation and judgment. He writes: “What I wish to do is prove that *if* you subscribe to any kind of realism, scientific or metaphysical, aesthetic features are a part of it. That is, if *any* predicates correctly describe objective reality, aesthetic predicates are among them” (emphasis original).<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, as Zemach insists, science itself “is a pursuit of beauty, not of truth.”<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, aesthetic value, though rightly studied extensively within philosophy, has been restricted and reduced wrongly to appealing only to the human’s emotional needs, unable to bear the weight of propositional truth.<sup>34</sup> This assumption was based on the idea that aesthetic values are grounded on experience, located only in the affective side of human nature.<sup>35</sup> However, in the perspective observed in Scripture, and further argued by Zemach, this is not adequate. The relationship of beauty to that of truth and goodness is foundational, not peripheral.

From such a perspective, then, one can understand why God employs almost exclusively aesthetic media to communicate truth to humanity. Perhaps the poet Keats was correct after all: “Beauty is truth, truth,

<sup>31</sup>Johansson, 43, 44.

<sup>32</sup>Eddy M. Zemach, *Real Beauty* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 56, 199.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 36. Martin Heidegger also suggests that aesthetic value is the superior revealer of truth: “Truth is the truth of being. Beauty does not occur alongside this truth. When truth sets itself into the work, it appears. Appearance—as this being of truth in the work as work—is beauty” (“The Origin of a Work of Art,” in *Philosophies of Art and Beauty: Selected Readings in Aesthetics from Plato to Heidegger*, ed. Albert Hofstadter and Richard Kuhns [New York: Modern Library Giant, n.d.], 700).

<sup>34</sup>For example, Susanne K. Langer claims that works of art are expressions of human *feeling* in a sensuous form presented for perception and contemplation. Her broad assumptions are similar to theories presented by Croce, Collingwood, and Dewey. Aesthetics is generally related to emotive values. Kenneth Dorter summarizes: “There are at least four levels of experience at which art seems to express a certain kind of truth: those of (1) our emotions, (2) cultural values, (3) sensory experience, and (4) the elusive *significance* of our experience” (“Conceptual Truth and Aesthetic Truth,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48 [1990], 37, emphasis original).

<sup>35</sup>This view prevailed among the British eighteenth-century Empiricists (including Hume) and the German Rationalists (including Leibniz and Baumgarten) (Harold Osborne, “Some Theories of Aesthetic Judgment,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 38 [1979], 135-144).

beauty: that is all ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."<sup>36</sup>

### *Conclusion*

The biblical aesthetic is a holistic discipline, affirming the whole being of a person. The senses, rather than being a peripheral aspect of human nature that is secondary to the mind, are the foundational means for grasping truth and knowledge. The mind and human reason are not extolled as the primary avenue for receiving divine revelation in Scripture. Indeed, this revelation is diffused and filtered through the human being's aesthetic awareness which thereby undergirds and substantiates the identification of truth. Aesthetic pleasure is even offered as one of the rewards of salvation.<sup>37</sup>

Accordingly, of the three main values—Truth, Goodness, and Beauty—it can be argued that Beauty (Aesthetics), though not salvific and though susceptible to misuse, is a fundamentally critical value in the biblical aesthetic.

<sup>36</sup>From John Keats, "Ode to a Grecian Urn," *Lamia, Isabella, The Even of St. Agnes, and Other Poems* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1820).

<sup>37</sup>Cf. Isa 65:17-25 and Rev 21 and 22.