

David Lyle Jeffrey. *In the Beauty of Holiness: Art and the Bible in Western Culture*. Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2017. 448 pages. \$49.

In *In the Beauty of Holiness: Art and the Bible in Western Culture*, David Lyle Jeffrey makes significant contributions to an interdisciplinary dialogue between art, the Bible and aesthetics. The author's concern about how art is related to theology is shown through the book's focus on Christian art inspired by biblical narratives. Yet this book is not merely a history of Christian art; it illuminates a fundamental theological and spiritual trajectory for visual art in the West. Jeffrey examines how artists and their biblical imaginations guide viewers to receive all beauty as a gift from the Giver. Our experiences of beauty in forms of gratitude that give back to the Source are themselves beautiful. Jeffrey argues that this "giving beauty back" to God—beauty's self and beauty's Giver—has created some of the most beautiful art in Western culture.

Jeffrey provides clear examples of the historical development of frescos in the thirteenth century. These examples support his argument that beauty and holiness witnessed in the artworks contribute to the service of worship and life of devotion. In discussing the wall paintings of Giotto and Fra Angelico, and the stylistic evolution from two-dimensional depiction to a more naturalistic form of representation, Jeffrey recognizes this shift as not merely a technical experimentation, but much deeper. Jeffrey shows the readers that one cannot understand well the realistic depiction of the biblical paintings of this period except by reference to the cultural impact upon the spirituality of lay Christians.

This book has two parts. In his first part, Jeffrey focuses on examining ideas of beauty in the arts and how they relate to worship before 1500, drawing materials from ancient Hebrew scriptures, Augustine, and Aquinas. Using sources from modern philosophers of art such as Schleiermacher and Kant in his second part, "Art and Bible after 1500," Jeffrey articulates the gradual dislocation of the ideal beauty reviewed in the first part of the book. The author leads the readers to examine a clear divorce of beauty from transcendence seen through post-Reformation, modern and contemporary art works. The discussion about how modern art becomes a substitute for religion illuminates the diverse approaches through which some contemporary artists are weaving their faith perspectives into their art. The way Jeffrey considers the recovery of the beauty of holiness proves to be fundamentally transformative in works of modern artists of religion. The artist's engagement with the Christian story as giving beauty back to God is a central concern in Jeffrey's book. This raises the question of how we as viewers respond to the art of beauty and divine.

As a lecturer teaching art courses in seminary setting, I found that Jeffrey's *In the Beauty of Holiness* successfully offers a clear educational methodology in his account of Christian art by drawing from multiple resources—the Bible, literature, philosophy, and theology—that constitute human life in the world. I found Jeffrey's argument convincing and his structure coherent, as well. The 146 illustrations of masterpieces of the West can be a valuable resource for those studying both religious and secular art. However, the selection of masterpieces of art has its limitations. A reader with art background would desire to see more works of indirect biblical subject matter analyzed. Jeffrey's book also offers many new insights to theological and biblical scholars by using art and literature as texts that can complement further research.

Overall, Jeffrey's *In the Beauty of Holiness* serves as a ground-breaking exercise in studying artistic creativity as instructive for the Bible and spirituality. Jeffrey's account of art

gives rich characterization as to how much research on theology and the arts—research which should be open to history and multiple meanings inspired by the Holy Spirit—is still to be done.

Suchi Lin, Taiwan Graduate School of Theology, Taipei, Taiwan