GOD'S OBJECTIVE BEAUTY AND ITS SUBJECTIVE APPREHENSION IN

CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY

by

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ABBREVIATIONS

BDAG   Bauer, Danker & Gingrich's *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*.

BDB   *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*.

HALOT   *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

WJEO   *The Works of Jonathan Edwards Online*. Parenthetical references consist of volume numbers and page numbers. For example, (2:76) references *Religious Affections*, page 76, in volume 2 of the Yale edition.

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ABSTRACT

The topic of God's beauty, while receiving attention in theological aesthetics, is not often a focused pursuit in Christian spirituality. The study attempts to answer the question of what the nature would be of an Evangelical Protestant Christian spirituality predicated upon seeking and apprehending God's beauty.

The study establishes the relevance of beauty to Christian spirituality. It then develops a definition of God's beauty from Jonathan Edwards. God's beauty is found to be his love for his own being.

Examining Scripture and Christian history, the study establishes that God's beauty was regarded as an objective reality until the Enlightenment. The focus of the research then turns to the subjective apprehension of beauty, and examines the methodology of pursuing beauty in art, and finds parallels in spirituality. The study considers the epistemological dichotomy of subject and object with reference to beauty, and considers Christian proposals for a form of correspondence theory for transcendentals.

The findings are united in a model of spirituality. Apprehension of God's beauty occurs through the subject possessing a correspondent form of God's love. Findings from the aesthetic and epistemological study are united with theology to suggest that this love can be cultivated through four areas: Christian imagination, an implanted new nature, the exposure to communion with God, and the nurture of spiritual disciplines. Each of these areas is explained and justified as means to cultivate correspondent love. The postures and approaches found in the study of art and epistemology are used for explaining the nature of correspondent love. Evangelical Protestant Christian spirituality predicated upon seeking and finding God's beauty is one which cultivates love for God that corresponds with God's own love.

Key terms: beauty, Christian spirituality, theological aesthetics, subjective-objective dichotomy, ordinate affection, correspondence theory.

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Chapter 1. General Introduction

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. The Return of Beauty

Beauty is experiencing a renaissance in academia in general, and in Christian academia in particular. Beauty has spent a long season in the wilderness, perhaps partly brought about by philosophers such as Kant and Nietzsche (Asproulis, 2012:154), partly due to the effete aestheticism begun in the eighteenth century, or perhaps due to the overall abandonment of God in the Western tradition and the disparagement of the arts derived from that tradition (Moore, 2004:157).

In the past few decades, beauty has made a surprising comeback. Mostly banished from discourse in the twentieth century, it is now returning in Christian and non-Christian circles (de Gruchy, 2001:1). The terminology of beauty is now, curiously, heard often in scientific literature, speaking of the beauty of a mathematical solution, the beauty and elegance of "nature's ways", or the beauty of the cosmos and its laws (Stackhouse, 2002). Hudson (2003:117) notes that beauty is now employed in philosophy, art production, ethics, and science, with an avalanche of books taking beauty as their theme. Indeed, as Nehamas (2000:393) speculates, these may not all be a single phenomenon, but different or even opposing objectives may be uniting under the banner of beauty.

Partly through the attention drawn to it by the Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar, beauty began to re-emerge in the twentieth-century Christian consciousness (Howard, 2011:4). Thiessen (2005:§104) writes that it is only in the last twenty years that the field of theological aesthetics has merited its own reader, referring to her own work, *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader.*

Beauty has now become the specific study of Christian academics labouring in the diverse fields of liturgics, trinitarianism, ethics, Christianity and the arts, and theological

aesthetics (Edgar, 2001:109).

This interest in beauty extends to broader, non-Christian postmodern society, though perhaps more sensually than consciously. Thiessen (2005:§107) points out the aestheticisation of everyday life in postmodern society: through the powerful effect of images in mass media, the ubiquity of popular music, the worship of the body and of youth, the pursuit of instant gratification, and the longing for "religious or quasi-religious experiences". These are all forms of sensuous experience and phenomena, which is to say, they are aesthetic experiences and aesthetic phenomena.

Paradoxically, the increase in attention to the idea of beauty coincides with the sentiment that beauty is fast disappearing (if not absent) from contemporary art. Scruton (2009:176) speaks of the modern flight from beauty in art, with an attendant "cult of ugliness", determined to desecrate and profane. Others regard the concept of beauty as "vague, illusive, and ultimately useless" (Lorand, 1994:399). Some Christians continue to balk at the idea of beauty. The continuing rejection of beauty in some circles requires some explanation.

1.1.2. The Resistance to Beauty

The first reason for resistance to the notion of beauty is a concern with justice. Some regard beauty as hostile to justice. In a world where beautiful images detached from moral value abound, a real risk exists of loving the idea of beauty as a kind of fetish, detached from the perplexity and pain of life (Burton-Christie, 2002:7). When beauty is defined too narrowly, or perhaps too vaguely, it becomes identified with pleasure, with no place for pain, discord, tragedy, and suffering (O'Hear, 2001:177). The reaction to this prettifying of genuine suffering has been the overreaction of rejecting the very idea of beauty.

Similarly, the schools of post-structuralism, deconstruction, semiotics, and cultural studies declared statements about beauty as insensitive to cultural concerns (Edgar,

2001:107). Scarry (1999) has written to answer the objection that beauty makes one inattentive to other objects by fixating one on only one object, which is not good for the object. These objections amount to the assertion that beauty is an unhelpful concept, oblivious to suffering, or ethical obligations (Begbie, 2007:§567).

A second objection to beauty is as a reaction to what Roger Scruton calls the "kitschification" of religion or art. This refers to the preference for sentimentalism over genuine feeling, for the sensuous trappings rather than genuine art, for narcissistic fantasies over the mirror of reality. Here a false beauty obscures the true, and those objecting to kitsch and sentimentalism dispense with beauty altogether. Scruton (2009:192), defending the idea of beauty, suggests that reactions to the "Disneyfication" of art and religion have produced an opposite postmodern desecration, a deliberate pursuit of what is disturbing, grotesque, or obscene. In the attempt to counter what are imagined to be the sweet lies of beauty, these artists and critics prefer to highlight the ugly.

The third form of resistance to beauty is unique to Christians, particularly of the Evangelical kind. These have typically claimed that pragmatic concerns such as evangelism must trump any concern with beauty (Edgar, 2001:108). Groothuis (2000:261) claims that some Evangelicals have been complicit in the decline of beauty since the Enlightenment, viewing art according to simple moral concerns or pragmatic value. Their view of beauty has been judged through sentimental lenses ("God looks at the heart, not at the art") or as unrelated to objective aesthetic standards, repeating the old Roman maxim, "[T]here is no accounting for taste".

Some resistance to beauty's renaissance have to do not with the idea of beauty, but with a vague "aestheticisation" of other disciplines, including hermeneutics. Vanhoozer (1987:55) raises the alarm against aesthetic hermeneutics which treat the author of a text as dead and irrelevant to the interpretive process, and the remaining text as an autonomous object upon which interpreters may project their meanings.

Such resistance to beauty stands in curious antithesis to its revival in other spheres. Beauty's presence, however, forces Christians to grapple with its relationship to their faith.

1.1.3. The Relevance of Beauty to Christian Spirituality

In light of these objections to beauty, should Christians share in the broader enthusiasm for the revived interest in beauty, or should they align with the postmodern resistance to its very idea? Four reasons exist for Christians to pursue the idea of beauty within Christian spirituality. These reasons reflect four ways that beauty relates to Christianity, and give both an external and an internal witness to Christianity.

Externally, beauty provides an apologetic for the Christian faith. When Christian spirituality is saturated with beauty, it will witness to the reality it purports to experience. *Internally*, beauty is fundamental to the lived experience of people knowing God. Beauty is relevant simultaneously to the contemporary non-Christian world needing a Christian witness, and to the Christian world of spirituality, needing an authentic and robust lived-experience of God. Christians desiring both a subjectively satisfying and objectively grounded spirituality should weigh these four statements of Christianity's relationship to beauty carefully. These relate to respectively to the four philosophical categories of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and aesthetics.

1) Beauty and a Christian Metaphysic

First, beauty supports a Christian metaphysic. Beauty is a transcendental, calling for its seekers to find the invisible amidst the visible. Artists have long been linked to seers and prophets, for their works provide moments of transport: of entering another cosmos before returning to one's own. Pope John Paul II wrote of art's affinity to the world of faith, so that even where secularism has alienated most of its citizens from religion, beauty in art remains a kind of "bridge to religious experience". It need not explore only what is pretty; art can consider the tragedy of evil, appealing to mystery and the universal desire for redemption (John Paul II, 1999:9). This answers the objection that beauty trades in

comforting falsehoods. Christian beauty is concerned with reality. It happens to believe that ultimate reality is grounded in God, the source of beauty.

What Rudolf Otto called "the numinous" is the experience of beauty that pushes its observers beyond sheer materialism or naturalism, and towards supernaturalism, transcendentalism, even Christian forms of Platonism. C.S. Lewis's oft-quoted words on desire sum up the metaphysic that beauty suggests: "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world" (Lewis, 2002:136–137). Even non-Christians recognise the experience of beauty transcends mere materialism. O'Hear (2001:191) disavows that beauty teaches any explicit religion, but nevertheless claims that beauty suggests that

> there is a power in the universe which works towards the good and helps achieve it, and that in our conscious experience we can somehow link in to that power. My point is that positive aesthetic experience—the experience above all of beauty— will for many people be a pointer to the existence of such a reality.

The expectation for how convincingly beauty can persuade one of the existence of the transcendent realm must be chastened. God's existence cannot be proved through beauty. God cannot be contained to our immanent experiences of beauty (Edgar, 2001:114). But put simply, beauty witnesses to the supernaturalism and transcendentalism that Christianity's worldview depends upon, and which Christian spirituality assumes as its first principle. Beauty identifies spiritual ideas such as unity and harmony in the created order. The reduction of beauty to mere appearance removes grace from nature, leaving a soulless materialism, with only Nietzsche's will to power remaining. Any recovery of beauty in an era of death and ugliness must surely be spearheaded by those people who claim to know the God who is the origin of beauty (Moore, 2004:169). In short, beauty points to existence and reality beyond physical materialism.

2) Beauty and Christian Epistemology

Besides supporting a Christian metaphysic, beauty encourages a Christian epistemology. As the Enlightenment pursued its dream of epistemological certainty through the subject's "neutrality", thinkers began disparaging the certainty of those elements of knowledge and human experience that could not be verified through empirical means. This was soon to affect the very idea of beauty.

> The aestheticism of the eighteenth century was a corollary of the rationalism of natural religion. It was Kant's stunning achievement to situate aesthetics in the critical architectonic as a form of judgment two small steps away from pure reason (Danto, 2002:16).

This has come to be called the fact/value distinction, which refers to the Enlightenment's sundering of what it saw as clear, demonstrable "facts", and mere human attitudes towards those facts.

Modernity's quest for objective, value-free knowledge discovered by a disinterested, neutral observer has largely been shipwrecked. Postmodernity's intellectuals delighted in pointing out the situatedness of all knowers, of the interpretive bias of all knowledge, of the impossibility of escaping our personal commitments.

Some of Christianity's early reactions to modernity's desire for objective, rational, value-free facts included an apologetic for the faith that all but capitulated to this demand, attempting to defend Christianity on scientific and empirical grounds alone. In so doing, Christians were submitting the faith to a faulty epistemology. Since no lie can be brought into the service of the truth, attempting to validate Christianity by a false standard was doomed to failure.

As the movement broadly known as postmodernity (and now as *postsecularism*) began in the 1960s, the seeds were sown for a broad cultural indifference to supposedly empirically verified truth-claims. According to Turley (2016:n.p.), a post-secular society is

one that no longer subscribes to the two fundamental commitments of secularism: scientific rationalism and personal autonomy or lifestyle values. At a very basic level, post-secular society is about the return of religion and religious values in the public square.

Since scepticism over absolute truth-claims was now gaining momentum, Christians would begin finding within a generation that the demands for a rational, scientific Christianity were dying. A new, sensuous spirituality had gripped the modern consciousness, and a thirst for beauty had returned. Potential church goers were more interested in beautiful architecture, ancient traditions and artistic liturgy than they were in historical evidences for the faith. Many people, as Wooddell (2011:§201) remarks, are simply no longer interested in arguments for Christianity. Those defending the faith by a sole appeal to empirical apologetics found themselves dismissed as irrelevant by a post-secular generation that was hungry for aesthetic spirituality, in any form. A religious apologetic of pure rationalism has had its day.

The Christian response to postmodernity's epistemology has been varied, as the church grappled to understand the shift in outlook. Some retreated back into modernity, claiming a scientific and rational basis for the truth of the Bible. Others embraced the deconstructionism of postmodernism. A religion, however, that denies the reality of any of its metaphysical claims is crippled from the start. An uncritical accommodation of existentialism or deconstructionism implies the unreality of Christianity, except in the internal world of the believer. This is unacceptable for any Christian spirituality which claims a metaphysical basis outside the self.

The response suggested by the concept of beauty is to accept the critique of modernism supplied by postmodernity, but to simultaneously reject postmodernism's nihilism. That is, while one should reject modernism's epistemology, one should simultaneously reject postmodernism's epistemology (existentialism and

deconstructionism) and its solution, which is, at root, Nietzsche's will to power. Instead, having embraced a metaphysical realism, such a belief can comfortably assert that subjective knowledge is not the antithesis of objective knowledge. Along with premoderns, this study posits that such subjective knowledge must be chastened, trained and submitted to experience contact with forms of reality outside the self.

Beauty is the touchstone for an epistemology that concedes both the subjective aspect of human knowledge and an objective basis for that knowledge in reality outside of the subject. Christians have only recently begun scraping off the rust of modernity's epistemology and aesthetic, recognising that the relegation of beauty to nothing more than the preferences and pleasures within a subject is an Enlightenment revision (Treier, Husbands & Lundin, 2007:§25). As truth-claims are met with scepticism, beauty comes to the rescue with its undeniable existence outside of individual subjects, while making demands on subjects that they shape their judgements to perceive and experience it rightly. Beauty provides the link to objective reality through subjective attitudes. Beauty is the merger between objective reality and subjective perception. Beauty calls for correspondence between affection and reality.

For this reason, the epistemology of Jonathan Edwards is particularly important for any Christian in dialogue with postmodernity. As Louie (2013:§6902) points out, since postmodernity recognises the subject's non-rational pre-apprehension of reality, Edwards' description of the world as a sensible metaphor of encounters between God and the human subject will certainly be recognisable, and even palatable to such a mind.

Beauty foregrounds imagination in perception, thereby foregrounding faith as perception. While not dispensing with reason, the aesthetic dimension of man is needed for his broadest, most encompassing grasp of reality. Indeed, the very concept of the aesthetic aids Christian epistemology when it comes to transcendent doctrines, divine mysteries, and theological paradoxes. Once reason and logic have rendered their crucial services to the

project of knowing God, the aesthetic aspect of man can adore, ponder, or be in awe beyond what reason can fathom (Stiles, 1997:208).

For Christian spirituality, the relationship between objective and subjective beauty is particularly important. If God possesses beauty independent of observers, then one of the great quests of spirituality, as the lived experience of God by his people, is understanding how the objective and subjective aspects of God's beauty relate. Specifically, understanding how perceiving subjects can encounter and experience God's beauty is at the heart of Christian spirituality: the experience of God's people encountering and responding to God. That faith and experiential perception are combined in the pursuit of an objective knowledge of God is the clear intersection of beauty and Christian spirituality. Beauty is at the heart of how one knows the world.

3) Beauty and Christian Ethics

Not only does beauty support a Christian metaphysic and a Christian epistemology, but beauty nourishes Christian ethics. The objection that beauty distracts people from justice, or that it anaesthetises them to suffering is false, if beauty is rightly defined. One of the effects of true beauty is to deeply humanise our souls (Hodges, 1995:66). This is because the judgement needed in beauty is needed for ethical judgement. As Scarry (1999:97) argues, beauty is actually distributive, so that an involuntary love of the beauty of one thing makes one deliberately attentive to other things. By teaching people the difference between selfish consumption and disinterested pleasure seeking, beauty identifies idolatry and self-love in contrast to generous, noble love.

De Gruchy (2001:3) warns that a "concern for truth without goodness and beauty lacks the power to attract and convince those whose critical sensitivities are repelled by such dogmatism". On the other hand, he argues that a concern for goodness without truth or beauty becomes nothing more than dead moralism. Both truth and goodness, lacking beauty, do not have the power to convince and save.

Christian spirituality deals with the ethical component of the Christian faith, for it is here that so much of one's experience of God will be fleshed out: in works, as James 2:17–18 puts it. If beauty is a means of deepening this component, it becomes another important intersection with Christian spirituality. Beauty teaches people to love the good.

4) Beauty and Christian Aesthetics and Worship

Beyond metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics, beauty is integral to Christian worship. The neglect of beauty within Christian liturgy and practice in the last century have had visible effects on Christian worship. Concessions to the Enlightenment pursuit of value-free objectivity have produced a less fruitful era for Christian expression in terms of music, poetry, literature, architecture, and the plastic arts. This lopsided emphasis may have contributed to a century that has seen little in music to rival Bach or Mendelssohn, little in poetry to rival George Herbert, Isaac Watts or even Christina Rossetti, little in literature to rival Daniel Defoe, Jane Austen, little in painting to rival Rembrandt.

Edgar (2001:111) remarks that the seeker-friendly church-growth movement is now reconsidering its adaptation to contemporary culture in its worship, finding that its target-market missed "the mysterious, the prophetic, and the beautiful, especially the rich musical heritage of the church of the ages." Similarly, he points to the exodus from Protestant Evangelicalism to Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy is partly due to aesthetics: the perceived barrenness of beauty in the average Evangelical or low-church.

If beauty is indeed a transcendental, and if the human being is made in God's image, a dearth of beauty must produce both a thirst and an eventual demand. If God is the quintessence or source of beauty, beautiful worship is required and fitting.

For the lived experience of Christian spirituality, it is important to add that the perceptive powers needed to recognise beauty are needed in worship. The arts are fundamental to both private and public worship, and without the ability to perceive the beautiful in art, there will be little sensed beauty in worship. To put it another way, lacking

the ability to see beauty in general may hamper the Christian's ability to encounter and experience God.

An embrace of beauty supports Christianity, and particularly Christian spirituality in the areas of metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, and worship. Christian spirituality is concerned with reality, with knowing God, with living rightly, and with communing with God. These four reasons cement the conviction that a pursuit of beauty in Christian spirituality is not only timeous, but necessary.

1.2. Methodology for Defining Beauty

To pursue a spirituality rooted in God's beauty, one must begin by defining, as best as possible, the quality of beauty. Beauty, like truth, has suffered at the hands of those who wished to make it conform to Enlightenment epistemologies. For those of these schools, beauty needed to be empirically verifiable to be real. From this impulse, the very term *aesthetics* was coined in the eighteenth century by Baumgarten (García-Rivera, 2005:357). The second chapter will explore the various competing definitions of beauty and determine the one most plausible for the purposes of this study. This chapter outlines the methodology for determining such a definition.

First, a definition of beauty must be biblical. For Christians, Scripture must have the first and final say regarding definitions of matters ultimate and transcendental. Special revelation grants the interpretation of general revelation, not the other way around. One does not reason from creation to an understanding of God. Rather, God's special revelation provides the interpretive framework to view the world. Beauty found in nature, the arts, or in perceptions of God himself in human experience, must be judged to be beautiful from the aesthetic grid that Scripture provides. This is not to say that Scripture will need to give an explicit definition of beauty. Rather, any definition obtained should be derived from and consonant with the teachings of Scripture. For this reason, chapter six will test the definition with a biblical and historical study.

Second, such a definition should appear within the Christian tradition. Definitions wholly new are seldom true, and definitions wholly true are seldom new. Christians sensitive to the truth that Scripture itself invokes tradition (2 Tim. 2:2)[1]—the handing down of truth from one Christian generation to another—will expect to find a good part of their understanding of beauty within the writings and art of Christians of the past. While one wishes to bring the progress of contemporary knowledge to bear upon the problem, one does not want to be a radical innovator. Readers ought to stand upon the shoulders of those who previously laboured for understanding in this area. Chapter six will also consider the history of the idea of beauty in Christian thought.

Third, the definition must be sensitive to the discussions of philosophy. Beyond the discussion within the Christian tradition, the question of beauty has been a topic of discussion for philosophers dating back to classical Greece. The presence of the common grace of God in human culture means that truth can be found in both believer and unbeliever. Aesthetics as a philosophical specialisation is no more than a few centuries old, but the discussion of the idea of beauty is far older and deserves attention. Chapter eight will study the epistemological considerations of our definition.

Fourth, the definition should be workable in the lives of Christians. A definition so abstract that few minds can grasp it, let alone implement it, is useless to Christians, and especially useless to the daily Christianity of Christian spirituality. A useful definition of beauty can be understood and adapted into worship, discipleship and fellowship within the local church and the lives of ordinary Christians. Chapter seven will consider the experience of beauty in art, while chapter nine will synthesise the cumulative findings into a proposed model of spirituality.

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[1] Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version of the Bible, 1982, Thomas Nelson.

1.3. Conclusion

Beauty has experienced a renaissance, while simultaneously experiencing resistance. This chapter has explained the resistance to beauty in postmodernism, while answering these objections. Four relationships between beauty and Christianity have been explored, which suggest that it is fundamental to a robust Christianity. Metaphysically speaking, beauty supports the Christian idea of ultimate, transcendent reality. Epistemologically speaking, beauty explains in concrete form the Christian idea that ultimate realities are outside the observer, and yet are rightly understood when that observer comes into right relationship with them. This corresponds to what Christian spirituality claims to be: a lived experience of a transcendent reality. Beauty is a hands-on lesson in faith. Ethically speaking, beauty further develops the moral side of our souls. Aesthetically and liturgically speaking, beauty is indispensable both as the goal of worship, and for the tools of worship: art. The ability to perceive beauty in the tools that express worship becomes equivalent to the ability to perceive beauty in the object of worship: God. Beauty is thus integral to a Christian metaphysic, a Christian epistemology, a Christian ethic, and Christian aesthetics. These four aspects of beauty are simultaneously vital to Christian spirituality. Christians would do well to seize the moment for returning the vocabulary of beauty to their faith in general, and to spirituality in particular. The next chapter will define both spirituality and beauty, and describe their intersections.

2. Defining Beauty

2.1. Introduction

A definition of *beauty* or *the beautiful* has eluded the grasp of those who wish a definition with mathematical precision. This more than two-millennia-old discussion remains open, and no definition has satisfied its perennial participants or become the final word. Enough consensus exists to say that beauty describes either a quality in ultimate reality or a phenomenon in secondary (created) reality, but this is as much as saying that beauty points to something or represents an experience—hardly a precise definition.

This dissertation is not concerned with answering this question to the satisfaction of metaphysicians and aestheticians. This study is in pursuit of a *method* of apprehending God's beauty, not a final definition. As Thomas à Kempis put it, "I had rather feel compunction than know the definition thereof" (*Imitation of Christ*, I, i, 3). Far better to discover the means of knowing and loving God's beauty, than to be able to define such an experience with exactness without partaking in it.

Nevertheless, a working definition of beauty, and more particularly, of God's beauty, is essential to the progress of this study. This chapter will outline and group the most prominent definitions or descriptions of beauty, drawing from Christian and non-Christian sources. Chapter six will provide a historical survey of the development of these ideas, particularly in Christian history, while this chapter will compare and contrast the competing and complementing definitions of beauty. Since the goal of this thesis is to understand how the beauty of God can be subjectively apprehended in Christian spirituality, a particularly theological understanding of beauty will be necessary for determining this study's working definition of beauty.

2.2. Definitions of Beauty

2.2.1. Introduction

Definitions of beauty and the beautiful can be broadly classified into four types: classical, transcendental, subjective, and theological definitions. Some definitions attempt combinations of these, though for the purposes of this study, particular definitions will be judged to be primarily allegiant to one category or the other.

2.2.2. Classical Definitions

Classical definitions use some form of what Farley calls "the Great Theory of Beauty" (2001:17), which originated in Pythagoras and was developed by Plato, and later Platonists. Christians influenced by Plato developed similar versions of the same idea.

The Great Theory defines beauty as essentially *proportion*. At the heart of this theory is the idea that the distinctive pleasure of beauty is the harmony of parts to a whole (Farley, 2001:17). Beauty is symmetry between composite parts or elegant relationships between parts that combine to make a unified, whole form. This symmetry is what provokes pleasure in the beholder. Plotinus saw beauty as "that which irradiates symmetry" (Coleman, 1991:213). When the human mind or spirit senses the order and harmony of things, it experiences the pleasure of beauty (Viladesau, 1999:134).

Christians found in this formula a way of linking beauty to God himself. Augustine, channelling Plato, regarded equality as the main principle of beauty, where harmony and unity are reducible to equality (Bychkov, 2008:199). Thomas Aquinas, following Aristotle's expansion of Plato's definition into integrity, harmony, and clarity (Martin, 1990:16), coined what became a standard definition of beauty during the High Middle Ages, stating that beauty includes three conditions: perfection or integrity, proportion or harmony, and brightness or clarity (Louie, 2013:§735). Richard Harries, bishop of Oxford, saw all beauty as characterised by wholeness, harmony and radiance, though differing in its forms (1993:24–25).

Materialist and Darwinian accounts of beauty in symmetry also exist. Goldman (1990:33) suggests that humans find beauty as they spot order within complexity, since the intellect ever seeks patterns of order. Some see beauty as the human recognition of mathematical and geometrical patterns in nature and transposed into art (Newton, 1950:25).

Of course, objections are levelled at both the Christian and non-Christian forms of this definition. Guy Sircello (1990:21) criticises all theories of beauty that are some form of the classical theory as "unitarian" and sees them as destined only to increase the demise of beauty. Calvin Seerveld (2001:160) strongly challenges Christian forms of the classical theory, or the classical idea of metaphysical beauty, saying that Scripture does not bear out this notion, feeling that the core of what is often considered aesthetic is in Scripture "lucidity": "a playfulness, which assumes vital, sensitive formative ability, is at the core of imaginativity".

While classical definitions have never persuaded all, the perennial return to the notions of harmony and symmetry in the discussion of beauty is significant enough to warrant giving this theory some consideration.

2.2.3. Transcendental Definitions

The term "truth, goodness, and beauty", coined by Plato, is well known as the triad of transcendentals. Transcendental definitions of beauty define beauty in relation to the unseen and ultimate qualities of truth and goodness, or as some combination of these. In these definitions, beauty is understood as identical to the good (Viladesau, 1999:134), as a form of moral goodness (Skillen, 2002:15), as the "*radiance* of the true and the good" (Caldecott, 2009:31), or even as the "capacity to proclaim truth and to realize goodness" (Munson and Drake, 2014:§301).

Mortimer Adler claims that beauty is a synthesis of truth and goodness: "like the good in that it pleases us, like the true in that it is not acquisitive desire" (2000:156).

Savile (1989:127) states that Hegel saw art's role to "reveal truth in pleasing, sensible form".

Again, those in Christendom have found this definition useful. Pope John Paul II defined beauty in this way:

> [I]n a certain sense, beauty is the visible form of the good, just as the good is the metaphysical condition of beauty. This was well understood by the Greeks who, by fusing the two concepts, coined a term which embraces both: *kalokagathía*, or beauty-goodness (John Paul II, 1999).

Wainwright (2000:24) conceives of beauty along the lines of divine design: truth reveals the Creator's design, goodness is when creatures act in light of the Creator's purpose, and beauty is the result—when all is shaped according to the divine design.

Bishop Harries distinguished between beauty and glory by saying that "when goodness, truth and beauty are combined we have glory. When boundless goodness, total truth and sublime beauty are combined in supreme degree, we have divine glory" (1993:54).

The transcendental theory has had its critics, too. Cory (1925:395) disputes the equivalence of beauty and truth, saying each requires the other, but they are not forms of one another. Von Hildebrand goes beyond truth and goodness, saying that beauty is the radiance of *every* value: qualitative values, moral values, intellectual values, and aesthetical values (2004:41).

The transcendental theory has the power of explaining why beauty seems to have much to do with fittingness, and excellence. The overlap between goodness, which is to say, what ought to be, and beauty, shows that beauty must have a strong relationship to truth and goodness. The repeated declaration that God saw that the creation was "good" (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) is not primarily a statement about the created order's ethical state, as much as its aesthetics: its excellence, fittingness, and beauty.

2.2.4. Subjective Definitions

Some definitions define beauty almost entirely as its effects or experience within the perceiving subject. These expound beauty in terms of the peculiar aesthetic pleasure, or its ethical effect upon the subject. Such explanations adopt some form of emotional or psychological theory that locates beauty in the response of the perceiver (Lindsey, 1974:121).

Some, such as McMahon (1999:23), see the experience of beauty as the human pleasure of awareness of the process of problem-solving in perception. Perhaps partly borrowing from the classical theory, this definition sees the human mind as experiencing beauty when it recognises relationships of harmony and unity, be these components of a physical object, or concepts within an idea. Kant's idealism saw beauty as the mind's recognising purposiveness, without having an acquisitive interest in the object.

Lorand (1994:402) believes that beauty is a complex concept, best understood by its numerous opposites: ugliness, meaninglessness, boring, kitsch, insignificant, or irrelevant. Though these represent real values, they cannot be united, and therefore beauty is a "high degree of inner order". For others, such as Elaine Scarry (1999:9), beauty cannot be defined as an unattached ideal, but one can point to beautiful objects, and describe their effects: causing one to be deliberative, saving life, and increasing justice. Again, Scarry does not deny the idea of or the presence of beauty, but focuses instead on its effects upon subjects.

To be clear, proponents of this definition do not necessarily deny that objects of beauty have outward qualities that might be construed as beautiful. Rather, their claim is that beauty itself must be defined as the subject's response to these qualities, not as something that exists entirely independently of observation or inherently in the unperceived object.

Some definitions do not regard beauty as an entirely subjective phenomenon. Philosopher Roger Scruton defines beauty as that which pleases, while stating that beauty is nevertheless the subject-matter of a judgement of taste. This judgement of taste is "about the beautiful object, not about the subject's state of mind" (2009:5).

Perhaps one might summarise the valid insight of this definition thus: what is experienced as beauty may exist *separately* from a perceiving subject, but it does not truly exist *without* a perceiving subject. That is, while beauty is not merely the inner experience of perceiving subjects, something's beauty is impossible to speak of without perceiving subjects.

2.2.5. Theological Definitions

Theological definitions take God himself as the foundation of beauty, or as the ultimate instantiation of it. In these definitions, beauty is either an attribute of God, or a way of speaking of God's being or relations. Importantly, theological definitions insist upon defining beauty with God's revelation in Scripture, not primarily with philosophy or aesthetics. De Gruchy (2001:6) warns against attempting to define God's beauty based upon our own definitions of beauty, rather than using the form of beauty revealed in creation and redemption. Revelation, then must be the key for understanding beauty as it relates to God. Asproulis (2012:155) agrees with Hans Urs von Balthasar that beauty's use in theology should be for reflection on revealed Scripture, and not contemplation of any metaphysical or abstract idea. One must not begin with philosophy or even nature, and then reason one's way to God. One must begin with God and his revealed truth.

Understanding beauty as being, and God's being as the ground of all being, makes beauty equivalent to God. Spiegel (1998:42) summarises the idea: "As all being is either God or is derived from God, so all that is beautiful either *is* him or comes *from* him". The idea of beauty as being prevailed in medieval Christendom.

According to Lindsey (1974:127), Karl Barth saw the beauty of God as the more precise designation of the glory of God, "the sum total of the divine perfection in irresistible self-manifestation". Building on Barth, Lindsey (1974:128) defines God's beauty in three ways: the essential reality of his divine being, the eternal reality of his triune being, and the unique reality of his incarnate being. Beauty is here a name for the perfection of God's being (Viladesau, 1999:134).

Wooddell (2011:§1327) ventures that something "is beautiful insofar as it reflects the character, nature, or will of God". Munson and Drake (2014:§245) similarly regard beauty as the forms through which people recognise the nature and ways of God.

Similar to these definitions are those that regard the triune love of God as primordial beauty. Jeremy Begbie (2007:182) insists that God's beauty be defined as dynamic love, not a static structure. Here, proportion, radiance, perfection, and pleasure can be united in light of the reciprocal love of the Godhead. In *The Beauty of the Infinite*, David Hart argues that "true beauty is not the idea of the beautiful, a static archetype in the mind of God, but is an infinite music, drama, art, completed in but never bounded by the termless dynamism of the Trinity's life" (2003:177).

Along these lines, though perhaps differing from Hart in his view of divine simplicity, Robert Jenson has insightfully recognised the dilemma of subject and object, of beholder and beheld in the topic of beauty, and finds its ultimate reconciliation in God himself, that the triune God of Christianity is beautiful, and all that he perceives that reflects his own beauty. "In God there is a genuine I and a confrontation with another, and their harmony in loving beauty is reliable" (1995:152).

Some medieval theologians combined the classical idea of symmetry with the Trinity, seeing beauty in the three persons of the Trinity as equal, that is, mutually related through the common relation of equality (their beauty results from the proportion of equality, parallel to earthly beauty). Other saw God's beauty simply in his excellence,

while some saw it in the relations of procession between the Persons of the Godhead (Bychkov, 2008:212).

Conversely, some writers have rejected metaphysical notions of beauty. Edgar (2001:120) agrees with Calvin Seerveld and Jeremy Begbie that beauty should be thought of as that which alludes to God, and which faithfully represents his attributes and ways.

Since the time of Immanuel Kant, some writers have distinguished the idea of beauty from the idea of the sublime, a modern example being Gilbert-Rolfe (1999). They argue that being awed, humbled and overwhelmed with the dangerous beauty of a storm is qualitatively different from being cheered and delighted by the beauty of a tranquil landscape, calling for distinct words to describe the two: the storm being sublime, and the landscape being beautiful. Such a distinction was inevitable to the Enlightenment, attempting as it did to describe human reason and experience without reference to God. This nuance of the discussion of beauty need not detain the reader, for in the spirituality of Christianity, both will be combined in the experience of God. God's beauty is both "unbounded" in his infinitude, and "bounded" in the creation and the Incarnation, meaning that Kant's or Burke's distinctions are not a problem for the study at hand (García-Rivera, 2005:357).

Theological definitions then insist that beauty is defined derivatively from what God is: his being, attributes, or relations. Beauty cannot be a concept to which God conforms; the very concept must be derived from the perfection within God.

2.3. Analysis of the Various Definitions

Since the goal of this study is to seek a model of Christian spirituality based upon apprehending God's beauty, one cannot be satisfied with a definition of beauty abstracted from God. Beauty must be defined in relation to God. For such a definition, as has been noted, special revelation must show the beauty in general revelation, not the other way around. Beauty in creation, mankind and culture is always secondary and derivative. One

cannot judge beauty perfectly from general revelation. General revelation is where most incarnations of beauty will occur, so a person may be quite developed in seeing and judging beauty in this arena. Nevertheless, Scripture must rule finally on beauty. Special revelation speaks both directly and indirectly on beauty, as chapter six will outline. With this qualification in mind, each of the four definitions of beauty, or their schools of thought will now be examined.

Is beauty equivalent to truth and goodness? If beauty obtains a correspondence between internal appreciation and external realities, then beauty cannot be entirely separated from truth (Jeffrey & Maillet, 2011:§480). Nor can hating what is beautiful to God be considered moral or good, so loving beauty is itself virtuous, or good. Perhaps one might say with Scarry (1999:52) that beauty is allied with truth, but not identical to it. Its nature as some kind of ultimate value must place it into relationship with other ultimate values such as goodness or truth. If ultimate reality is indeed a *uni*verse of facts, then some relationship between beauty, truth, and goodness is plausible.

Nevertheless, defining beauty solely in terms of the abstract transcendentals of truth and goodness (whether one grants them independent existence or not) potentially leaves beauty in the realm of a philosophical construct, rather than an attribute or property to be experienced. It might do to say that apprehending God's beauty is apprehending the truth of God's being and the goodness of God's being, but this only pushes the question one level back. One is still forced to ask, what is the *nature* of that goodness? What is the *experience* of apprehending the true reality of God's being? Having said this, one must conclude that a transcendental definition is only partly adequate.

Is beauty the harmony or proportion so loved by Platonic aestheticians? Its constant refrain in discussions of beauty is certainly indicative of the attractiveness of the idea, and it would be bold to dismiss it out of hand. It certainly explains much, particularly in visual perception, in the beauty of intellectually elegant ideas (in mathematics, for example). For

all that, beauty-as-harmony fails to deal adequately with the phenomenon of unitary beauty, such as light, or colour. The pleasure obtained by beauty cannot be finally reduced to admiration of symmetry, for some beauty is the beauty of the simple, or the sublime, or even the tragic—in which the disharmonious nevertheless attains a beauty in our eyes.

Certainly, the beauty of God's harmony with his own being in the Trinity is unquestionable, and to this theme, the study will return. But it would seem that to make this harmony the very essence of beauty is to make harmony an ideal to which God himself conforms. God's beauty must almost certainly *contain* the qualities of harmony or symmetry, but it will not do to say that it is equivalent to those qualities. Harmony then becomes the ultimate good, perhaps unwittingly displacing other attributes of God, claiming in an unwarranted fashion, to be the supreme good.

What about beauty defined as pleasure in a subject? Beauty may represent a phenomenon in a perceiving subject, but that phenomenon corresponds to something outside the subject. As Hart (2003) points out, the fact that beauty can surprise one shows that beauty is not merely a projection of one's own desires, but an evocation of desire by the object. It may be true that no beauty exists without beholders; it is equally true that beholders do not create beauty out of themselves. One must examine the subjective experience of beauty, but Christians must insist that a real phenomenon exists outside the subject, in recognisable properties in the object. A definition of God's beauty must include the concept of pleasure in another (pushing one inexorably to a Trinitarian view of God's being), but more is needed to sustain a robust view of God's beauty. It appears the remaining option for a working definition of God's beauty is to harmonise these three definitions with the theological definitions of beauty.

Is beauty another name for God's uncompounded, infinite being? Defining beauty as equivalent to God's being creates its own problems. If beauty is God's being simply considered, and God's being is the ground of all being, how does one then explain ugliness

in the order of things? If beauty is to be predicated of God's being, the idea must refer to solely God's being *in himself*, transcendent above immanent reality. For unquestionably, in secondary reality—the created order—God's beauty is not perfectly reflected; indeed, it is often parodied, warped, and distorted.

Moving one step away from God's being simply considered, is God's beauty one of his attributes, or the sum total of his will and ways? Is God's beauty the name for when God's glory is displayed and experienced? A tentative answer may agree that this is a generally safe assumption, since Scripture does link God's beauty with his glory (1 Chr. 16:29; Job 40:10; Ps. 29:2). Yet to say that God's beauty is God's glory is merely to substitute a biblical word for a philosophical one, and merely drives one to define both more explicitly.

What of the idea that the Trinity's life is the essence of God's beauty? Is God's beauty particularly related to the Trinity: the symmetry of relations, the harmony of three who are one, or the relationships of love with one another? If God's beauty represents not merely his essence or being, but the refulgence and pleasurable splendour of this essence, then God's delight in God would be one of the strongest contenders for a working definition of God's beauty.

Jonathan Edwards represents one of the most compelling solutions. The seventeenth-century American theologian's writings on beauty represent a fascinating (though perhaps unintentional) synthesis of our four definitions of beauty, combining harmony, the transcendentals, the subjective, and the varying theological definitions in one.

Edwards' definition of beauty was "being's cordial consent to being in general" (*WJEO*, 8:620). This *consent* is benevolence, union, or love: the benevolence of God toward being in general and specifically toward other benevolent beings (Hodges, 1995:67). Here Edwards defines beauty as God's response to his own ontological being,

agreeing with medievalists that God himself is the ground of beauty, not a concept that could be abstracted from God (Strachan & Sweeney, 2010:§679). Yet God's beauty is not merely his being in some static, abstract sense. The beauty is how God dynamically responds to God's being. God's dynamic benevolence, as inclined and expressed to himself and his works, is beauty. Trinitarian love is at the heart of what God's beauty is. Edwards has perhaps the best theological definition of beauty, combining essence with dynamic response.

Yet Edwards nods to the classical theory in using the term "consent". Consent is Edwards' spiritual and moral equivalent of created or sensible harmony and symmetry. That is, symmetry in the created realm, such as gravity or music or colour, has a higher analogue in the consent of spiritual love and union. The ultimate harmony is loving union with God, and the ultimate form of such harmonious symmetry would be God's love for God, meaning his intra-trinitarian love.

Edwards also assimilates the transcendental definition by combining truth, goodness and beauty in by defining beauty as "true virtue" (or *true goodness*, in modern parlance), which is the beauty of love for that which is most perfect—God himself (Louie, 2013:§3393). Truth and goodness united become beauty.

Finally, Edwards makes room for the subjective definition, for he defines true virtue—subjective love of God's beauty—as the beauty of God, the saints, and the angels. When a moral being finds pleasure in God's beauty, that pleasure and desire constitutes his or her spiritual beauty. God is ultimately beautiful because of what he loves and because of what he is. Holy affections, loving and desiring what God loves, are the subjective analogue to the holy beauty of God.

2.4. A Working Definition of God's Beauty

The previous chapter gave four criteria for a working definition of God's beauty: a useful working definition must be theological, traditional, philosophical, and practical. It remains to formulate a working definition in light of these strictures.

In formulating this definition, the exposure to the various voices on beauty leads to four observations about beauty that are crucial to the working definition of beauty.

First, beauty is personal: it describes something persons recognise with pleasure or something in persons that is pleasurable. With Edwards, one can agree that beauty is not a static property, but a composite experience requiring both subject and object. God acting as both subject and object is possible only in the Christian expression of the Triune God. God's delight in God is not a static property of God, but in the incomprehensibly myriad splendours of his being expressed and given to one another in the Godhead. The refulgence of his given character, and the reciprocal delight in this refulgence, constitute God's beauty. Beauty then, cannot exist outside of persons, for observers and delight are essential to its existence. God's beauty cannot be abstracted from his person, or his personal approbation of beauty.

Second, the properties of God's being or nature regarded as beautiful represent an axiomatic first principle. That which is beautiful in God is beautiful because it is in God. It cannot be referred to a standard outside and above God to which he conforms. God is beautiful because God is the object of God's love and because God is the subject of God's love. He is beautiful for those qualities in himself that merit his love, and he is beautiful because he loves those qualities.

Third, beauty is dynamic: a reciprocal experience of beholding, partaking, and delighting. Beauty cannot exist apart from objects that signify and subjects that parse meaning. Static, unrecognised, unknown beauty does not exist in a universe created by an omnipresent, omniscient, and triune God.

Fourth, one can say further that beautiful minds (those that recognise beauty) are simultaneously truthful and good. Simply put, who or what God is brings delighted pleasure to those pursuing goodness and truth. Beauty is then inescapably moral in nature.

God's beauty, then, describes a personal, dynamic, and moral delight of God in his own excellence. God's beauty is his radiant delight in his uncompounded being.

Created or secondary beauty is all that reflects the excellence of God's being, which beautiful beings will love.

Edwards defines beauty as "being's cordial consent to being in general" (*WJEO*, 8:620). God's beauty is then "the Most Lovely loving the Most Lovely" (this researcher's definition). This definition, combining all four theories, is difficult to improve upon. Such a definition is explicitly theological, traditional in that it grows out of historical Christian thought, philosophical in that it adopts and subsumes concepts such as symmetry, truth, and goodness, and practical in that God's love for God is something Christians may possibly experience and share in (John 17:26).

What could be expanded, or modified, in Edwards' definition, is the meaning of *consent*, particularly since many anti-Christian epistemologies have risen since Edwards wrote. Considering this term as it relates to the *experience* of beauty is crucial for this study, and considering this term in light of Christian history, the discipline of art, and epistemology may yield rich results.

2.5. Conclusion

Beauty has been variously defined. This chapter has explored four schools of thought regarding the meaning of beauty. Both Christians and non-Christians have seen merit in defining it as some form of symmetry or relationship of parts to a whole. Others saw an unmistakable relationship between beauty and truth or goodness. Still others have identified beauty as a phenomenon of pleasure or recognition within a subject. Christians

have added to these definitions by seeing beauty as an expression of God's being, God's attributes, or God's dynamic relationship to himself.

Jonathan Edwards still represents perhaps the best synthesis of these definitions, defining it as being's consent to being, meaning God's love for his own being, simply considered, and all that reflects him. The meaning of "consent" in "being's cordial consent to being in general" (*WJEO*, 8:620) has the potential for expansion and exploration. Drawing on Edwards, God's beauty is defined in this study as the personal, dynamic, and moral give-and-take of pleasure and excellence that God has in relation to his being simply considered: the Most Lovely loving the Most Lovely.

Chapter 3. Literature Review

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will present a survey and review of relevant literature on the topic of the relationship between the objective and subjective elements of God's beauty in Christian spirituality. The aim of this review is not to cover all aspects of the topic of beauty in Christianity, but particularly to consider the relationship between the objective and subjective aspects of God's beauty as it relates to Christian spirituality. In doing so, it will seek to identify the lacunae in the existing scholarship.

The organisation of thought in this literature review will be conceptual, that is, structured around certain ideas relevant to the topic, rather than a historical survey.

First, this review will consider the key trends and developing perspectives relevant to the topic.

Second, it will review the literature that understands the importance of beauty to Christian spirituality.

Third, this review will survey the literature that has considered the topic of God's beauty. This comes in three categories: exegetical or literary, theological, and historical. The review will consider if existing literature has made the case for God's beauty on the exegesis of Hebrew and Greek words, pericopes or themes in Scripture. The next section will consider the work of theologians, both contemporary and historical, who have made the case for, or argued against God's intrinsic, objective beauty. Third, the historical literature will be reviewed, considering books that track the church's approach to God's beauty through the ages. The historical literature will broaden to consider non-Christian philosophers who have contributed to the discussion during the ages.

Fourth, it will evaluate the literature surrounding the subjective/objective dichotomy in epistemology, with particular reference to aesthetics or transcendentals. It will consider the literature following the development of this idea, and its progress through

the Enlightenment era into modernity and postmodernity. It will review the literature that seeks to discuss the subjective/objective dichotomy, particularly forms of correspondence theory. It will survey the literature which considers modern Christian proposals for resolving this dilemma, particularly in regard to knowing truth about God and perceiving His beauty.

Fifth, the review will consider writings on the subjective perception of God's beauty.

Finally, the review will identify the lacunae in the existing literature.

3.2. Key Trends and Perspectives

Within the burgeoning literature on beauty, one finds four trends relevant to this study.

First, as noted in chapter one, a broader interest in the idea of beauty has returned. One sees this in works such as Alexander's *Beauty and Other Forms of Value* (1968), Sircello's *A New Theory of Beauty* (1974), Mothersill's *Beauty Restored* (1984), Gadamer's The *Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays* (1986) Turner's *Beauty: The Value of Values* (1991), Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* (1997), Zemach's *Real Beauty* (1997), Kirwan's *Beauty* (1999), Scarry's *On Beauty and Being Just* (1999), Brand's *Beauty Matters* (2000), Gilbert-Rolfe's *Beauty and the Contemporary Sublime* (2001), Sartwell's *Six Names of Beauty* (2004), Armstrong's *The Secret Power of Beauty* (2005), and Scruton's *Beauty* (2009). These more philosophical discussions on beauty display a renewed interest in the idea, even from those not religiously committed. Indeed, a fairly large number of journal articles and books reference beauty's relationship to science and mathematics.[2] The broader cultural milieu in which Christianity exists has turned its eye back to beauty.

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[2] For example, Colyvan, M, "Mathematics and Aesthetic Considerations in Science", *Mind* 111.441 (January 2001), 69-74; De Regt, H. W., "Beauty in Physical Science circa 2000", *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, 16.1 (March 2002), 95-103; Van Bendegem, J. P., "Beauty in Mathematics: Birkhof Revisited", *Tijdschrift voof Filosofie* 60.1 (March 1998), 106-130; Chandrasekhar, S., 1987, *Truth and Beauty: Aesthetics and Motivations in Science*,

Within Christianity, the last fifty years have seen the development of the discipline of theological aesthetics, probably partly through the influence of Hans Urs von Balthasar. According to the *Cambridge Dictionary of Christian Theology* (Murphy, 2011), "[T]heological aesthetics addresses the place of beauty in Christian life". This field of study explores Christianity's relationship to the arts, and questions of imagination, cultural production, art and liturgy, creativity, and epistemology. While the scholarly output on this topic is too vast to exhaustively survey, the most prominent and prolific writers and philosophers of theological aesthetics include Jeremy Begbie, Frank Burch Brown, Edward Farley, Richard Harries, Paul Finney, Alejandro García-Rivera, John McIntire, John Navone, Aiden Nichols, Karl Rahner, Calvin Seerveld, Patrick Sherry, Paul Tillich, Gerardus van der Leeuw, Richard Viladesau, and Nicolas Wolterstorff. After a long neglect, particularly within Evangelicalism, books and journal articles are appearing seeking to define the role of the arts within Christian liturgy and in broader Christian life.

The last few years have seen a growing interest in the writings of Jonathan Edwards on beauty. Few theologians placed beauty at the centre of their systematic theology like Edwards did. While Delattre's (1968) work shaped much of what was to follow, much has been written in recent years on Edwards' understanding both of the Trinity and of beauty (for example, Erdt, (1980); Lee (1976); Louie (2013); McDermott (2009); McClymond and McDermott (2012); Mitchell (2003); Spohn (1981); Strachan & Sweeney (2010); Venter (2010); Wooddell (2007).

A growing body of literature exists that studies the work of a set of 20th century

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Chicago / London: University of Chicago Press; Engler, G., "Aesthetics in Science and Art", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, 30.1 (January 1990), 24-34; Fischer, E. P., 1999, *Beauty and the Beast: The Aesthetic Moment in Science*, trans. E. Oehlkers, New York / London: Plenum Trade; Flannery, M., "Using Science's Aesthetic Dimension in Teaching Science", *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 26.1 (Spring 1992), 1-15; Marie, G., "Wonder as Source of Philosophy and of Science: A Comparison", *Philosophy of Science*, 6 (1995), 97-128; Heisenberg, W., "Science and the Beautiful", *Alexandria*, 1997 (volume 4), pp. 25-40; Machan, T. R., "Kuhn, Paradigm Choice and the Arbitrariness of Aesthetic Criteria in Science", *Theory and Decision* 8 (October 1977), 361-362; Osborne, H., "Mathematical Beauty and Physical Science", *British Journal of Aesthetics* 24 (1984), 291-300; Parsons, G., "Nature Appreciation, Science, and Positive Aesthetics", *British Journal of Aesthetics* 42.3 (July 2002), 279-295; Valenza, R. J., "Aesthetic Priority in Science and Religion", *Process Studies* 31.1 (Spring/Summer 2002), 49-76; Wechsler, J., (ed.) *On Aesthetics in Science*, Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 1978.

British writers and scholars, who gave answers to rationalistic modernism in distinctive, but related ways. These writers include some of the so-called "Inklings": C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, J.R.R. Tolkien and Owen Barfield. These men, and their predecessors (men such as George MacDonald and G.K. Chesterton) answered the rational scepticism of their day by pointing to older Christian traditions of imagination, intuition, and beauty. The study of their writings has burgeoned, particularly in a post-secular era, seeking answers beyond the anti-supernaturalism of the early Christian modernism, the Scottish common sense realism of Fundamentalism, or the nihilism of postmodernism.

An eclectic group of writings has developed within the postmodern milieu, known collectively as Radical Orthodoxy. These Christians have recognised that the postmodern critique of modernity's failure to achieve perfectly neutral and rational objectivity is a correct one. At the same time, Christians do not want to go where Heidegger, Sartre, Foucault and Meritain went—abandoning all hope for knowing external reality, and embracing despair or Nietzsche's will to power. It holds that theology, particularly creedal theology, must be the lens through which all other branches of human knowledge are critiqued. James Smith (2009:39) defends a liturgical approach to epistemology, viewing life through the eyes of faith and love in worship. *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-Secular Theology* (2004) explains much of the movement's Augustinian presuppositions.

Finally, as has been noted by Venter (2010:185), there is a significant revival of interest in Trinitarian theology. Writers, following Edwards, often consider the Trinity as a possible source for grounding beauty as an absolute quality or for discussing its existence. (Bychkov, 2008; Venter, 2010). Some writers are looking to the Trinity as the source and ground of metaphysical beauty in the created order (Wilson, 2013:71).

3.3. Literature Survey

3.3.1. The Importance of Beauty to Christian Spirituality

Christian spirituality as an academic discipline is a relative newcomer, compared to the established disciplines of church history, dogmatic and systematic theology. While beauty has played a significant role in historical writings on spirituality (such as those of Augustine, Bonaventure, Julian of Norwich, Bernard of Clairvaux, to mention a few), its study as a discrete topic within Christian spirituality is probably in its infancy. *The Blackwell Companion to Christian Spirituality* (Holder, 2005) devotes a chapter to aesthetics, largely concerned with defining beauty and the relationship of Christianity to the arts.

Strobel (n.d.) studies the concept of the beatific vision, Riccardi (2013) sets forth a proposal for spiritual illumination, and Schwanda (2014:62) argues that Evangelicals have both resisted and begun to retrieve the spiritual discipline of contemplation of God's beauty. These may be samples of a wider and perhaps growing phenomenon of seeing beauty as crucial to Christian sanctification and worship.

Demarest (2012), contrasts and discusses the views on spirituality held respectively by Roman Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Mainline Protestant and Evangelicals. Beauty is referenced, particularly by the Orthodox tradition. Evangelicals have been less convinced of the importance of beauty (as are the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics, for perhaps many reasons) not the least of which has been the attempt to argue for the objective truth of the Bible against its rationalist sceptics and postmodern indifferentists. Nevertheless, this modernist approach to beauty is changing in Evangelical literature. Evangelicals are advising one another to re-visit the topic of beauty (Hodges, 1995). The number of titles tackling beauty and spirituality, even in typically Evangelical journals, is growing (for example, see Hodges (1995); Schneiders (2002); Spohn (2003)). Nevertheless, there is a surprising dearth of work detailing the connection between God's beauty and its

experience in Christian spirituality.

3.3.2. Literature on God's Beauty

The tradition of considering God's beauty as a real absolute is both diverse and widespread. This review will consider the literature under three headings: exegetical literature, and systematic theology, and historical theology.

3.3.2.1. Exegetical Literature

Some research has been done on the Hebrew and Greek vocabulary of beauty. Dyrness (1985:422) identifies word groups that speak of beauty and the enjoyment of beauty in the Hebrew Bible. Ferreter (2004) likewise analyses the aesthetic language and categories of the Hebrew Bible. Davidson's (2000) work presents fairly extensive work on both the Hebrew and Greek vocabulary of beauty, as well as the presence of literary forms within Scripture. Loader (2011; 2012) discusses the concepts of beauty in the Hebrew Scriptures. Thomas Schreiner (2013) builds a biblical theology entirely on the concept of seeing and knowing the beauty of the Lord.

3.3.2.2. Systematic Theology

According to Crain (2003:30), no mention of beauty is found in the Evangelical theologies of Louis Berkhof, or Millard Erickson, with only a passing mention in Wayne Grudem. Existentialist theologians, influenced by Kierkegaard, have been more interested in the topic, as seen in the writings of Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr. Hans Urs von Balthasar's monumental seven-volume *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* (Von Balthasar, 1961) reflects a twentieth-century position, seeking to mediate between modernity and the spiritual reality of God's glory.

As mentioned, the discipline of theological aesthetics is now a thriving venture, and its output too voluminous to list. Thiessen (2005) has produced *Theological Aesthetics: A Reader* to sample significant contributions to the topics studied by theological aesthetics.

Some twenty-first century works of theology or apologetics address the beauty of God. David Hart, in *The Beauty of the Infinite* (2003), presents the Christian vision of the Trinity, Creation, Salvation, and the Eschaton as the answer of peace and beauty to the postmodern ontologies of nihilism.

Wooddell (2011:§834) argues that God's beauty is objective enough to become the basis of a postmodern approach to apologetics. As Christians enter an era in which non-Christians would describe themselves simultaneously as "spiritual" and sceptical over truth-claims, the matter of beauty becomes all the more important. New Age spirituality teaches non-believers to distrust historical claims, while longing for mystical experience (Herrick, 2003:34). Wooddell (2011:§1505) claims beauty is the most valuable apologetic for a postmodern generation. One sees this in works such as *Imaginative Apologetics: Theology, Philosophy and the Catholic Tradition* (Davison, 2011), *Theological Perspectives on God and Beauty* (Ward, Milbank & Wyschogrod, 2003), "A Theistic Account of Aesthetic Value" (Williams, 1998), and "Aesthetics: Beauty Avenged, Apologetics Enriched" (Edgar, 2001).

Beauty remains scarcely considered by systematic and dogmatic theologians in the Evangelical tradition. Apologetics seems more cognisant of beauty as a potential strategy for defending and presenting the faith.

3.3.2.3. Historical Theology

The question of beauty's relationship to ultimate questions has a long history. Farley (2001) is one of many competent surveys of its development, as is Louie (2013). Thiessen (2005) has sampled Christian writers on beauty from the early church to the present day. The historical Christian conversation about beauty cannot be separated from the broad conversation about aesthetics as described by various historians of thought, for example Barzun (2001); Cahn & Meskin (2008), Eco (2004); Scruton, (2009), and Tatarkiewicz (1970).

Among them, there is broad consensus. With the growth of thirteenth-century nominalism, Cartesian dualism and Enlightenment scepticism, common views on beauty began to change (Weaver, 1948:3). Subjective taste began to dominate the eighteenth-century conversation around beauty.

Jonathan Edwards perhaps represents a bulwark against Enlightenment revisions, grounding beauty in the nature of God, and grounding perception of that beauty in a relationship of 'consent' (see the comprehensive study of this in Delattre, 1968). Edwards saw both natural and spiritual beauty as real, and the subjective perception of them a matter of correspondence and correct relatedness. The growing literature on Edwards' treatment of beauty has been mentioned already.

Eventually, Kantian notions of idealism supplanted the notion of beauty as a transcendental absolute. Existentialism gained popularity within twentieth-century theology, creating a place for beauty within human existence, while abandoning any metaphysical realism to ground such beauty. Theologians such as Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr were prominent neo-orthodox theologians who combined existentialism with Christian doctrine (Pearcey, 2010:225). Roman Catholicism saw a turn back towards beauty in the works of J. Pohle (1852–1922), F. Diekamp (1864–1943), Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) and J. Berthier (1923–1994) (Lindsey, 1974:126).

Works such as Schaeffer's (2005) argue that the Evangelical wing of the church has suffered from an absorption many of the Enlightenment's revisions. As the church sought to fight attacks on many sides, beauty was often the casualty left behind in the fray.

The literature detailing historical theology on the topic of beauty is large, but each tells more or less the same story: a post-medieval erosion of confidence in the classical position on beauty, leading ultimately to scepticism as to its real existence outside the beholder, with Jonathan Edwards as a prominent exception.

3.3.3. Literature on the Objective/ Subjective Dichotomy

In considering the question of apprehending God's beauty, it is important to understand the dilemma produced by the Cartesian duality of objective and subjective. Gilson (1938:99) argues that the move towards scepticism began when reason began to supplant revelation as the primary source of knowing. Weaver (1948:3) likewise points to William of Occam as the start of a process of scepticism about universals, which includes beauty. Dawson (1948:215) holds that the unravelling of the Christian consensus produced a non-culture, incapable of shaping its participants to sense beauty and make value judgements.

The Cartesian dichotomy of what can be objectively known through reason or, later, through empirical observation, and what is subjectively known, probably reached its Enlightenment conclusion in Hume, where empirical fact and value judgement were placed into completely separate domains of knowledge. Kant both concluded the rise of modernity, and began the ball rolling towards postmodernity, questioning the notion of the perfectly objective knower, and believing that the knower must bring his own sentiments to make sense of sense data (see the summary of 18th century philosophy in Beck, 1966). Beauty, then, was relegated to the realm of the personal preference, the privately held religious opinion, the situational ethic, determined by time, place and culture.

The account of the development of the dichotomy between subject and object is traced, from a Christian point of view, in writers such as Schaeffer (1972), Meek (2003), Pearcey (2010), and Farley (2001). The philosophical account of this same development can be seen in authors such as Weaver (1948), Allen & Springsted (1985), Gilson (1938), and Scruton (2002). Again, the story will be told slightly differently, but it will be essentially the same story.

If God's beauty is indeed a transcendental, how should Christians respond to the dualism of subject and object?

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3.3.3.1. Theories of Truth

Various models exist for understanding subjective perception of objective realities, particularly in the realm of aesthetics. Jeffrey and Maillet (2011:§443) suggest three: correspondence theory, coherence theory, and pragmatic theory, seeing correspondence and coherence as reflecting a more consistently Christian worldview.

Correspondence, coherence, and pragmatic theory is covered in many works dealing with Christian epistemology, for example those of Feinberg (2001), Clark (2003), Craig & Moreland (2003) and Dupré (1998), who adds disclosure theory to those three. Postmodern philosophers prefer coherentist models of truth, since they deny mind-independent states of reality. A modified correspondence theory is the most likely contender for a way of apprehending a transcendental such as beauty. A sample of the literature of each follows.

3.3.3.2. Christian proposals for apprehending transcendentals

1) The Augustinian proposal. Augustine's emphasis on loving ordinately as the means to know God is echoed by Pascal. Studies of their approach to knowledge and beauty are found in works produced by Peters (2009), Harrison (1992), Taylor (1998) Meilaender (2006). Others appropriating Augustinian insights include Smith (2004; 2009; 2013; 2014) and Milbank (2003) and Davison, et al (2011).

2) The Edwardsian proposal. Jonathan Edwards' epistemology had much to do with a heart that was tending towards voluntary union with God. Edwards scholarship is now an academic pursuit in its own right, but representative works dealing with Edwards' epistemology include those of Delattre (1968), McClymond & McDermott (2012), Louie (2013), Wainwright (1995), Martin (1975), Lee (1976; 1988), Moody (2005).

3) The British Romantic Realist Proposal. Writers such as G.K Chesterton emphasised imagination and intuition over accumulation of facts. Chesterton asserts this both in his non-fiction, such as *Orthodoxy* (Chesterton, 2009), and in his fiction, such as

The Club of Queer Trades (Chesterton, 2011). George MacDonald similarly emphasised the primacy of imagination. Their influence is seen most visibly in the most articulate proponent of "Romantic Rationalism" (Piper and Mathis, 2014), C.S. Lewis. Markos (2010:13) believes many of Lewis' writings are fundamental for restoring faith in the transcendentals. Lewis' view of imagination and reason has become the subject of much scholarly attention. Representative samples include *Imaginative Apologetics: Theology, Philosophy and the Catholic Tradition* (Davison, 2011); *Restoring Beauty: The Good, the True, and the Beautiful in the Writings of C. S. Lewis (*Markos, 2010*); Reason and Imagination in C. S. Lewis: A Study of Till We Have Faces* (Schakel, 1984); *The Romantic Rationalist: God, Life, and Imagination in the Work of C. S. Lewis* (Piper & Mathis, 2014); "C. S. Lewis's Theory Of Religious Knowledge" (Swedberg, 2010).

Lesser known, but no less profound, was Owen Barfield. Barfield's dense and difficult *Saving the Appearances* (1965) responds to the objective/subjective dichotomy with the view of participative perception. Barfield's works have provoked studies of their own, for example, Smitherman (2001), and Di Fuccia (2016).

4) The Polanyian Proposal. Michael Polanyi, as a trained scientist, argued for the place of intuition, imagination, interpretation, and personal desire in the empirical process. Michael Polanyi's work, particularly *Personal Knowledge* (Polanyi, 1958) is gaining currency as one of the twentieth century's most compelling answers to positivism and objectivist modernism. Polanyi's thought has been studied by, among other Christians, Meek (2003; 2014), Gunton (1985), and Begbie (1991). Other notable voices objecting to the dichotomy between scientific knowledge and other kinds include Stephen Barr (2003), Thomas Kuhn (1962), and John Lukacs (2002), Philip Johnson (2000).

3.3.4. Literature on the Subjective Perception of God's Beauty

Synthesising these Christian responses to positivism and objectivism leads to the questions of the subjective perception of God's beauty. Christian spirituality depends on

apprehending something of the beauty of God.

Two likely sources may assist in formulating a theory of subjective apprehension of beauty. The first is the four proposals listed above. The second is insights from those working in theological aesthetics.

Representative works include *Echoes of Eden: Reflections on Christianity, Literature, and the Arts* (Barrs, 2013); "Christ and the Cultures: Christianity and the Arts" (Begbie, 1997); *Art & Soul: Signposts for Christians in the Arts* (Brand, 2001); *Good Taste, Bad Taste, and Christian Taste: Aesthetics in Religious Life* (Brown, 2000); "Turning the Beast into a Beauty: Towards an Evangelical Theological Aesthetics" (Crain, 2003); *The Christian, the Arts and Truth* (Gaebelein, 1985); *Art and the Beauty of God* (Harries, 1993); *Art and Music: A Student's Guide* (Munson & Drake, 2014); "Christian Aesthetic Bread for the World" (Seerveld, 2001); "Aesthetics and Worship" (Spiegel, 1998); *The Beauty of God: Theology and the Arts* (Treier, Husbands & Lundin, 2007); *Theological Aesthetics: God in Imagination, Beauty, and Art* (Viladesau, 1999); "Toward a Liturgical Aesthetic: An Interdisciplinary Review of Aesthetic Theory" (Witvliet, J.D. 1996); *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Wolterstorff, 1980).

Composers and critics provide aesthetic insights that can be appropriated. Examples would be composers and critics such as Carson Holloway (2001), Julian Johnson (2002), Abraham Kaplan (1966), Leonard Meyer (1956, 1967), and Roger Scruton (2009).

The broader question of how culture and tradition shapes perception is related to this study. Niebuhr (1951:40) famously gave five Christian approaches to culture, though he equivocates on the definition of culture throughout his work (Bauder, 2011). Scruton (2007:14), following T. S. Eliot, describes culture as the "common pursuit of true judgement". A culture provides "background knowledge" that provides broad literacy for functioning in that culture (Hirsch, 1988:10). To be in a culture is to receive its interpretive

grid, receive its judgements of beauty and ugliness, receive its aesthetic vocabulary as one's own. Eliot (1949:27) similarly believes that a culture is the incarnation of a religion, while Machen (2004) sees in a culture the prior conditions of the mind that prepare the heart for faith. Writers such as Barzun (1989), Myers (1989) and Postman (1985) see a general degradation of Western culture's perception of beauty. Scruton (2009:174) similarly argues that a cult of ugliness exists in the West, while the Evangelical Rookmaaker (1994) attempts to describe this progressive loss. If an inward, therapeutic culture has replaced one of contemplation (Rieff, 2006), one would expect to see a loss of aesthetic perception. If the perception of beauty is not an entirely solitary experience, but one received through community and tradition, one can further account for varying perceptions of beauty. Other notable works dealing with Christianity's relationship to culture include those of Aniol (2015), Dawson (1948), Carson (2008), and van Til (1959).

In terms of apprehending God's beauty, the nature of love and emotion must be clarified. Thomas Dixon (2003) has demonstrated that what moderns call "emotions" were considered differently as affections and passions in the past. Recovering a biblical view of "emotion", and understanding it as ordinate desire, or affection is integral to this study. Martin's (2013) work on Edwards' view of the affections demonstrates that modern interpretations of him have often erred. McDermott (1995) also contrasts affections and emotions. Several works on a biblical view of emotions have appeared in recent years, including those of Bray (2012), Cameron (2012), Condie (2012), Jensen (2012), Smith (2012) and Williams (2003). More importantly, understanding how to order and shape our loves and desires is crucial (Naugle, 2008; Schindler, 2011). A right view of God's love is also an important aspect of God's beauty to be considered, as treated by scholars such as Leeman (2010) and Wells (2013).

3.4. Summary and Lacunae

Literature abounds on the topic of God's beauty. Exegetes have found aesthetic

words and themes in Scripture. God's beauty was certainly regarded as an objective reality by most Christians until the Enlightenment. Those modern scholars working in theological aesthetics have related God's beauty to liturgy, creativity, and the making of cultural phenomena.

The question of apprehending transcendentals is also not a new one, nor one without numerous proposals, particularly for the transcendental of truth. The epistemological question of subjective and objective forms of knowledge is a topic of much study.

Nevertheless, little work has been done on relating the meaning and apprehension of God's beauty to Christian spirituality. Theological aesthetics discusses beauty in respect of the use of arts in worship, how Christian artists may fulfil their callings, theories of artistic criticism, how theology and imagination relate, and descriptions of God's beauty. Spirituality, on the other hand, describes the lived experience of God in the lives of Christians. Very little in the extant literature details a methodology for a Christian in pursuit of God's beauty.

The lacunae in the literature appears to lie in detailing the meaning and experience of God's beauty in the life of a Christian in pursuit of this beauty. The wealth of research in the areas of historical theology, theological aesthetics, and epistemology can be combined with an eye to Christian spirituality. Insights from aesthetics and epistemology on subjective apprehension can be adapted into Christian practices, dispositions, and experiences, in order to create a model of the Christian life based upon apprehending God's beauty.

3.5. Conclusion

This survey has considered representative literature related to the topic of God's beauty. Significant work has been done to describe God's beauty from a theological perspective, and to develop a theology of aesthetics. Several writers have accounted for a

biblical theology of beauty and identified the concept of beauty within Scripture.

The Enlightenment split between empirical and transcendental knowledge has been analysed in various ways and Christians have set forth suitable proposals for joining what was split. Theological aesthetics discusses the relationship between theology and the arts, and the place of beauty and creativity in liturgy and broader Christianity.

Few have developed the relationship of God's beauty directly to the experience of Christians. This chapter concluded that the gap in the research lies in combining insights from history, theology, aesthetics, and epistemology, in order to build a model of Christian spirituality based upon apprehending the beauty of God.

Chapter 4. Problem Statement

4.1. Introduction

Having surveyed in the previous chapter a representative sample of the literature related to the apprehension of God's beauty, this chapter will detail the research problem. It will outline the main problem, and state the key questions to be solved. It will then elucidate the problem, by delimiting the study, providing working definitions of key terms, and stating the presuppositions of the researcher. It will then set forth the value of the study, both theologically and practically.

4.2. The Statement of the Problem

4.2.1. The Main Problem

While the concept of God's beauty has enjoyed renewed attention in theological aesthetics, historical studies (particularly of Augustine and Jonathan Edwards), and in the occasional philosophical challenge to positivism or naturalism, little work has been done to explore the relationship of God's beauty to the experience of Christians.

Christian spirituality has agreed that God is beautiful. But few, if any, have sought to describe an approach to Christian spirituality predicated upon seeking God's beauty. It may seem tautologous to speak of seeking God's beauty if God's beauty and his person are identical, for then seeking God's beauty is simply another way of speaking of seeking God. If God's beauty, however, refers to a specific relation in God, or an identifiable mode of being within God, then seeking God's beauty is not necessarily synonymous with the whole Christian life.

Beauty is assumed as a goal in Christian spirituality, but the experience is not often described, nor a corresponding method defined.

What is needed is a study that embraces and describes God's beauty as an objective transcendental, while describing a method that Christians can perceive and know this beauty in all of their spirituality, including, but not restricted to, liturgy and the arts.

Building on Christian responses to modernism, this model should recognise the place of imagination, intuition, and personal knowledge when considering desire.

A theory of Christian spirituality predicated upon apprehending God's beauty is yet to be researched, taking into account work done on aesthetics, epistemology, and theology.

The main research problem can be summarised thus: what would the nature be of an Evangelical Protestant Christian spirituality predicated upon seeking and finding God's beauty, in its priorities, postures, and practices?

4.2.2. The Key Questions

The study answers the question: what would the nature be of an Evangelical Protestant Christian spirituality predicated upon seeking and finding God's beauty? To answer this question, several supporting questions must be asked and answered.

1) Is there biblical precedent for believing in God's beauty as a real, objective quality, and for pursuing it?

2) How has God's beauty been understood and pursued by Christians, from the early church to the present day?

3) How has the idea of beauty developed in the intellectual climate within which Christians have lived, or in the philosophical tradition they have received?

4) Since art is known for its pursuit of beauty, what is its relationship to the Christian religion and Christian spirituality?

5) What are the generally shared experiences and methodologies of those pursuing beauty in the arts, and are there spiritual analogues to these?

6) Since beauty is regarded by many as a mere internal state, with what certainty can the subjective experience of beauty be said to correspond with objective realities?

7) How has the idea of objective and subjective knowledge developed in intellectual climate within which Christians have lived?

8) What Christian proposals exist for connecting transcendent with immanent, objective with subjective?

9) In light of this history and theology, aesthetic theory and epistemology, what kind of spirituality can answer reflect the findings so far discovered? What are its characteristics, and what are its disciplines?

4.3. The Elucidation of the Problem

4.3.1. Delimitations of the Study

A topic such as God's beauty and its apprehension could easily be overwhelmed by attempting to answer questions too large for a limited study. Therefore, the study must be delimited by clarifying what questions will not be answered, or answered in any exhaustive sense.

First, the study is not concerned to decisively and exhaustively tackle the definition of beauty or God's beauty. A definition has already been supplied. The Christian and broader cultural understanding of beauty throughout Christian history will be surveyed, but this study will be content to spend the bulk of its attention on the question of apprehending beauty, not on defining it.

Second, the study is not an exhaustive historical study of how beauty has been referenced in Christian spirituality. That beauty has been referenced by writers on spirituality is not disputed; that a model of spirituality predicated on apprehending God's beauty exists is doubtful. In light of this, it will suffice to mention those writers who give beauty the greatest detail in their writings.

Third, the study is not concerned to duplicate the work of theological aesthetics, exploring in detail the relationship of Christianity to the arts. It will suffice to establish the relationship, to explain the place of imagination in perception, and to harness insights from theological aesthetics. It will not set out to provide a theory of art criticism, except insofar as critical theory could provide analogous practices or procedures for Christian spirituality.

Fourth, the study is not attempting to exhaustively cover the development and intellectual history of Cartesian dualism of objective/subjective knowledge. Once the history is sketched, the focus will be Christian responses to this dualism.

4.3.2. Working Definitions of Key Terms

The terms fundamental to this study are *spirituality*, *beauty*, *subjective* and *objective*.

4.3.2.1. Spirituality

Christian spirituality is the lived experience of Christian faith (Schneiders, 2002:134). Spohn (2003:255) defines spirituality as "the affective, practical and transformative side of religion…Whether taken as a way of life or field of study, spirituality emphasizes experienced knowledge of the sacred". This definition is repeated in various forms by others: "the lived experience of Christian faith and discipleship" (Holder, 2005:5); "the lived experience of Christian faith, the subjective appropriation of faith and living of discipleship in their individual and corporate actualization(s)" (Schneiders, 2005:16). Sheldrake (1988:2) says the term describes how "individually and collectively, we personally appropriate the traditional Christian beliefs about God, humanity and the world, and express them in terms of our basic attitudes, lifestyle and activity". McGrath's (1999:2) definition is "the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith".

Of course, the study of Christian spirituality is equally the study of Christian *spiritualities*, for there are many. The Christian faith, from an Evangelical point of view, is defined by Waltke (1988:9) as love of God and love of man. According to Howard (2012:159), Evangelical spirituality concerns the manner by which believers live in communion with Christ in response to the Spirit in pursuit of holiness resulting in service to others.

The incarnation of that love or knowledge, and the means to experience it, are usually described in the practices of prayer, Scripture reading, journaling, corporate worship and service in the local church. Nevertheless, at root, Evangelical spirituality is, as Lane (2001:1) believes John Calvin thought it to be: "a performance of desire shared by the whole of the universe, a deliberate practice of delight that echoes through every part of the created world".

For the purposes of this study, then, the working definition of Christian spirituality is the experience of knowing and loving the triune God in its public, private, and perpetual manifestations.

4.3.2.2. Beauty

The introductory chapter gave four criteria for a working definition of God's beauty: a useful working definition must be theological, traditional, philosophical, and practical. The second chapter added that beauty was personal, an axiomatic first principle, dynamic, and moral in nature. God's beauty, then, describes the personal, dynamic, and moral love of God for his own being. God's beauty is then "the Most Lovely loving the Most Lovely". God's beauty is his radiant delight in his uncompounded being. Created or secondary beauty is all that is not God that reflects the excellence of God's being, which beautiful beings will love.

4.3.2.3. Subjective and Objective

The terms *objective* and *subjective* are commonly misused. Some take the word "objectivity" as a descriptor of a method of enquiry, describing a supposedly disinterested, neutral and unbiased form of analysis. This misuse suggests that *subjective* refers to what is unreal, or unreliable, while *objective* refers to what is fixed, true and verifiable in some way that exempts itself from human interpretation. Lukacs suggests replacing this use with the word "honesty", which is something else, and more than a mere method of enquiry, and a modicum of humility resides within it (2002:90).

Barzun & Graff (1992:174–175) helpfully clarify:

> "Subjective" and "objective" properly apply not to persons and opinion but to sensations and judgments. Every person, that is, every living subject is necessarily subjective in *all* his sensations. But some of his subjective sensations are *of* objects, others of himself, or "subject."...But objects themselves are known only by subjects —persons—so the distinction is not clear-cut, much less a test of reality.

In other words, rightly used, *subjective* refers to the perceiving subject's judgements and perceptions. *Objective* refers to what is perceived by the subject. The subject may misconstrue or misinterpret the object, or he or she may perceive it as truly as possible. Either way, the subject's knowledge is always, necessarily, subjective. Calling such knowledge *subjective* does not mean it is less true or real, for a subject's judgements may conform to what truly is. All knowledge is interpreted through the mind of the subject, which means it is impossible for a subject to obtain knowledge of an object that is not filtered through his or her own interpretive grid.

4.3.3. Presuppositions of the Researcher

While the academic discipline of Christian spirituality draws on hermeneutics, theology, history, and anthropology, it is ultimately the study of an experience. This makes its pursuit challenging. Studying that which cannot be quantified or subjected to strict empirical tests strains the researcher's own sense of objectivity and subjectivity. This may be a weakness, but it can be a strength. A lack of personal investment in Christian spirituality would, in some senses, be incongruous. Bringing confirmatory insights and experiences from one's own experience may enhance and develop the study of what others have thought and written.

This researcher's theological persuasion is Evangelical Protestant. This entails the at least the following presuppositions:

a) recognising the sixty-six books of the Protestant Bible as Scripture.

b) holding to the divine inspiration and dual-authorship of Scripture, seeing it as the ultimate authority for life and practice.

c) holding to the sum and substance of the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Athanasian Creed, along with the doctrinal understanding of the Reformers and non-Conformists, found in confessions such as the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, or the New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith.

4.4. The Value of the Study

4.4.1. Value to Christian Spirituality

To understand the value of this proposed study to Christian spirituality, the reader should consider six intersections between beauty and spirituality.

First, in some Christian spiritualities, beauty is a synonym for God's glory, or for the encounter with God. This is as much as saying that for these spiritualities, the pursuit of beauty *is* the practice of spirituality. Howard (2011:2) writes that Christian spirituality and spiritual formation begins or ends with the perception of an aim, and this aim is aesthetic; it is perception of beauty. He argues,

> Christian formation is not simply the application of principles to our lives, it is rather the ever-increasing embodiment of Beauty. Hence we must learn to see the aims of our growth in Christ not simply as responsibilities or commands but also as experiments in a beautiful life (2011:8).

Studying the objective and subjective dimensions of God's beauty *is* studying the lived experience of Christian faith.

Second, love is at the heart of both beauty and spirituality. Beauty calls for correspondence between affection and reality: the "good taste" that loves good form in art. In spirituality, God himself becomes the motive for the holy soul to pursue more of him. Beauty comes from and leads to love or benevolence. Elaine Scarry's *Beauty and Being Just* (1999) argues that beauty is distributive, and that the involuntary love of the beauty of

one thing, makes one deliberately attentive of other things. The soul in pursuit of God must similarly become more in love with its neighbour. Beauty has a way of identifying idolatry and self-love, calling people to examine their motives in loving something beautiful. Christian spirituality equally forces one to ask if Christians are loving God as a means or as an end, whether one's pleasure in God is disinterested or acquisitive.

Third, several of the experiences of beauty in art correspond to experiences of Christian spirituality. Pleasure, a sense of the numinous, recognising the invisible through the visible, distinguishing between the sacred and the common, and a contemplative gaze are shared by both those pursuing beauty in nature or art, and those seeking God. The fact that artists and art critics describe the procedure of understanding beauty in art in such similar terms to those who speak of meditating on God is striking. Therefore, to study the experience of beauty alongside the study of Christian spirituality will undoubtedly yield fascinating parallels.

Fourth, several of the practices and skills needed to experience beauty in art correspond to what is needed for Christian spirituality. These include the use of the imagination as a form of perception, the pursuit of disinterested pleasure in the object, the practice of immersion into the object to understand it on its own terms, and careful contemplation. If the skills for recognising beauty overlap with the skills to experience the presence of God, a rich vein of spiritual experience can be mined here. Indeed, it may be that the student of Christian spirituality needs to "de-secularise" technical aesthetic discussions and unite what was divorced during the Enlightenment: art and religion.

Fifth, though the study at hand concerns spirituality in general and not exclusively corporate worship, Christian spirituality and worship requires art. At the very least, music and poetry are commanded (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), and the act of corporate worship cannot be performed without art. This art should be beautiful, and a study of

beauty, and God's beauty in particular, has many practical ramifications. Beauty and Christian spirituality inevitably intersect when the topic is corporate worship.

Finally, beauty, like spirituality, eludes perfect definition, while being understood through encounter. Both the academic or philosophical study of beauty (aesthetics) and the academic study of Christian spirituality are attempting to swim the Tiber: objectively—through academic rigour—define and describe what can only be known subjectively, through immersion in the experience of God and beauty. This apparent disadvantage becomes an advantage when embracing the constraints of the study: simultaneously recognising that an objective study must do its rational work, while urging the affective knowledge gained subjectively to lend its aid. Beauty and spirituality call for the understanding of where objective and subjective realities meet.

These six reasons provide reasonable justification for researching a form of Christian spirituality in pursuit of God's beauty. A study of God's beauty, both as an idea and as an experience, is eminently practical and helpful to the discipline of Christian spirituality.

4.4.2. Practical Value

The first chapter set out several ways that a Christian concern with beauty has practical value. First, a study in apprehending God's beauty not only provides Christians with a sense of assurance of the reality of their faith, but it provides a cogent witness and apologetic to the non-Christian world.

Second, a study in spirituality based on God's beauty can correct a faulty epistemology, and replace it with a correct one. Knowing beauty is more like knowing persons than gathering scientific data, and this can return Christians and non-Christians to ask the right questions when pursuing religious knowledge.

Third, a study in beauty supports the development of Christian ethics and godliness.

Fourth, a study that seeks a method for apprehending God's beauty will necessarily enhance and strengthen the church's corporate worship, by encouraging aesthetic maturity and better understanding of the aesthetic mode of perception.

4.5. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research problem: what would be the nature of an Evangelical Protestant Christian spirituality predicated upon seeking and finding God's beauty? Having done so, it set out nine supporting questions to be answered in this study. The extent of the study was described with four delimitations. The study's key terms, *spirituality*, *beauty*, *objective* and *subjective*, were defined, and the presuppositions of the researcher were set out. The chapter then listed and explained the study's value to spirituality and its practical value to Christianity.

Chapter 5. Research Methodology

5.1. Introduction

This chapter will set forth the methodology, structure, and matters of formatting for this study.

5.2. Research Methodology

5.2.1. Methodologies for Conceptual Argumentation

The study seeks to understand a hypothetical model of spirituality based upon apprehending God's beauty. As the nature of such research is a study of philosophical, theological, and aesthetic matters, the methodology of research will be qualitative.

Since the question is not of an empirical nature, quantitative or scientific methods of research are not appropriate. Instead, extensive reading of scholarly literature on the topics of beauty, spirituality, aesthetics, epistemology, and historical theology, require the qualitative approach.

Several different methodologies will be used in the conceptual argumentation of this study. In some cases, the method will be comparative, as differing views on beauty, aesthetics and epistemology are compared and contrasted. A certain amount of polemical methods will be employed, for atheistic or secularist views often necessarily clash with the presupposed Christian view. A good deal of epistemological discussion will take place, particularly in chapter eight, analysing and critiquing the foundations of knowledge that certain views are built upon.

Primarily, though, the study will be a synthetic one, combining previously related ideas from history, aesthetics, epistemology and theology to form a new model.

5.2.2. Disciplines for Academic Spirituality

The academic study of Christian spirituality has an interdisciplinary character. Schneiders (2005:7) points out that in such a study, two layers of interdisciplinarity are active. First, the *constitutive* disciplines, which necessarily function in relation to the subject. These would be Scripture and Christian history, for these supply the positive data of Christian religious experience. Second, the *problematic* disciplines relate to the particular problem being studied, which could be psychology, sociology, literature, or some other field of study. With these two layers in place, Schneiders suggests that *theology* comes into play, related both to the constitutive and problematic disciplines. These are now described in relation to this study.

5.2.2.1. The Constitutive Disciplines

In this particular study, chapter six will cover the constitutive disciplines of exegesis, biblical theology, and Christian history. An investigation of the Bible's own treatment of beauty will consider an exegesis of certain key words that have to do with the idea of beauty, along with a consideration of literary forms and thematic elements related to beauty. It will engage the literature that covers how God's beauty has been treated by Christian thinkers, both past and present, and more generally, by philosophers of beauty. Primary sources will include the works of theologians and philosophers dealing with beauty. Of particular interest will be Christian thinkers who placed the apprehension of beauty as central to their system.

Chapter six will seek to summarise and compare theologians, philosophers and other relevant writers on the matter of beauty in general, and God's beauty in particular. Secondary sources will be from those writers, historical or contemporary, who assume God's beauty to be a real transcendental quality or property and relate it to aesthetics, liturgics, or the arts.

The broader cultural conversation regarding beauty will be examined, as

Christianity does not exist in a cultural vacuum. The chapter will bring the discussion of beauty into the current era, as the model of Christian spirituality must be lived in the present day.

The conclusion of chapter six should summarise how the Bible and Christian history have understood God's beauty and pursued it in spirituality, and what the broad contemporary consensus on beauty is.

5.2.2.2. The Problematic Disciplines

Chapter seven will be the first of the problematic disciplines, dealing primarily with aesthetics. Here the study will turn from objective to subjective, seeking to understand how beauty has been experienced, particularly in art. Art's relationship to religion will be explored, to justify the examination of aesthetic methodologies in art. Certainly, beauty exists in many other realms, but art's focused attention on beauty, and its inseparability from religion, make it a necessary aspect of this study.

Here the primary sources will be those writers that have compared the experience of beauty in art to that of religion. The writers who have delved into theological aesthetics will be studied. Of particular interest will be understanding this experience from various aspects: the aspect of perception, the aspect of expression, the aspect of interpretation, and the aspect of the evaluation.

Again, a synthesised definition of the subjective experience of beauty will be attempted. The chapter will seek to answer the most outstanding objection to a standard of beauty existing outside the subject, that is widely differing perceptions and tastes in beauty.

The matter of taste in art will be considered. A set of experiences and responses for the perception of beauty that can be applied to Christian spirituality should emerge from chapter.

With both an objective and subjective definition in hand, the relation between the

two will be approached in chapter eight. Here a second problematic discipline will be considered: epistemology.

The division between subject and object plagues the question of beauty. This division will be considered historically. Chapter eight will begin by considering the broader epistemological conversation regarding how objective realities and subjective perceptions relate, beginning with classic and medieval views, going into the Cartesian dichotomy and its development during the Enlightenment, culminating in the impasse presented by secular and post-secular thinkers, where the concept of correspondence between objective and subjective worlds is, for the most part, denied.

The matter of correspondence theory will be considered. The question of correspondence in matters ethical and aesthetical will be considered. Other theories of truth will be examined, and a theory of apprehending transcendentals for Christian spirituality will be set forth. The chapter will consider several Christian responses to the supposed dichotomy between objective and subjective knowledge, namely Augustine, Blaise Pascal, Jonathan Edwards, Owen Barfield, C.S. Lewis and Michael Polanyi. A synthesis of these proposals will be made which will constitute a theory of apprehending beauty in spirituality, and again provide a set of responses and postures for the apprehension of beauty.

5.2.2.3. Theology

Finally, chapter nine will attempt to outline this model by drawing on the findings of the previous three chapters, using Schneider's (2005:10) third interdisciplinary layer, theology. McGrath (1999:32) points out the negative implications for spirituality of a "detached" approach to theology. Conceiving theology in purely informational terms is harmful to the study of spirituality, which rightly understood, is relational.

The research of the previous chapters will be summarised to present the proposal for the apprehension of God's beauty. Once established, a model for shaping such

apprehension will be set forth. Developing Jonathan Edwards' views on "consent" will be particularly helpful here. The theology will be particularly that of the theologians of the affections, whose writings have dealt with rightly ordered desire, as the corresponding response in the subject to God's perceived beauty. Particular attention will be paid to Augustine, Jonathan Edwards, and C. S. Lewis.

Drawing on some of the insights from Radical Orthodoxy, it will recommend certain spiritual disciplines, suggesting how these disciplines may foster the kind of response that corresponds with God's beauty.

The goal will be to produce a description of the experience of Christian spirituality in which God's beauty is pursued, and subjectively experienced, along with the methods and disciplines that constitute it.

5.3. Referencing and Formatting

This study makes use of standard British spelling and punctuation, with two exceptions: the Oxford comma is utilised, and double inverted-commas are used. In-text citation is used, with rare educational footnotes. In-line and bibliographical citation follows the Harvard method, mostly using the "Stellenbosch University" option within Zotero software (Stillman, 2018). Kindle editions without page numbers reference the cited sections using the § symbol. Classical works are cited by their title, book, chapter, and section or question. The consulted editions and their modern date and translation are listed in the bibliography, titled "Works Cited".

The bibliography references all works consulted, while educational footnotes include additional references for the reader's further study. Abbreviations of the titles of books of the Bible follow the *SBL Handbook of Style*. Divine pronouns are not capitalised.

5.4. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and justified the research methodology employed for this study. It has detailed the structure of the study to be followed in succeeding chapters, and explained the formatting to be used.

Chapter 6. Objective Beauty: The Idea of Beauty in Scripture and Christian History

6.1. Introduction

Evangelical Christian spirituality looks to the Bible as the authoritative document defining faith and practice (McGrath, 1999:18). Beyond the Bible, sources of knowledge such as reason, experience, and tradition also play supporting roles. If God's beauty refers to an aspect of God's being or creation (and not merely an inner experience limited to the human consciousness), the idea of God's beauty as a real and objective property should be found in the Scriptures and referenced in the writings of Christians after the apostolic era. This chapter will consider the idea of God's "objective" beauty, from Scripture itself, and in the writing and thinking of Christians.

The chapter will examine beauty in Scripture both exegetically and theologically, by considering words with a semantic range that includes the idea of beauty, and by considering whether beauty is developed as a theme within Scripture.

The study will then survey beauty in the intellectual tradition of Christianity. This will also reveal which Christian spiritualities have held God's beauty as a central concept. The chapter will reference writings of some non-Christians, insofar as they significantly influenced Christian thought or broader societal thinking about beauty.

The goal of the investigation will be to see if the idea of beauty as an "objective" reality beyond subjective pleasure finds support in Scripture and Christian history.

6.2. Beauty in the Bible

Finding the idea of beauty in Scripture requires both the "worm's-eye view" and the "bird's-eye view". The worm's-eye view is the consideration of particular Hebrew and Greek words with the semantic domain of beauty, alongside the literary form of Scripture itself. The bird's-eye view is the broader canonical theology of the Bible that contains the notion of beauty.

Of course, the very selection of these words could be labelled as arbitrary, based as it is on the chosen definition of chapter two. Nevertheless, the chosen definition will be tested against the testimony of Scripture. Simultaneously, the semantic areas associated with beauty will help modify or expand the working definition of beauty if necessary.

The initial problem with a study of beauty in the Bible is that little in Scripture corresponds exactly to classic ideas of beauty, particularly as a philosophical concept of harmony, proportion or as one of the transcendental triad alongside truth and goodness. As Edmund Clowney pointed out, Hebrew writers did not think of God as the Greeks thought of Apollo (Crain, 2003:38).

A second problem is that the English equivalents of Hebrew words can be variable. These include words such as *glory, beauty*, *excellency*, *honour* and *majesty* (Lindsey, 1974:122), so a word-search on the English word *beauty* in English translations of the Bible will not yield illuminating results. Moore (2004:159) adds to this list of English equivalents the words *loveliness*, *comeliness*, *pleasantness*, *delightfulness*, and *excellence*, commenting that "what was regarded as beautiful in the mind of Old Testament writers was what their contemporaries felt drawn to in their affections, what they found pleasant, appealing, or desirable, what they took delight in observing".

In other words, the concept of beauty is more of a categorical concept for biblical writers, encompassing terms such as *"light*, *splendour*, *majesty*, *pleasant*, and *fitting*" (Crain, 2003:38). One might argue that the Hebrews took the experience of beauty for granted, without seeing a need to define it abstractly or conceptually. Beauty is more of an adjective than a noun in Hebrew thought, more a descriptor than an idea considered in itself. The Hebrew mind, given to describing the works of God, was not prone to philosophise on metaphysical concepts.

6.2.1. Exegetically Considered

6.2.1.2. Old Testament

1) Hebrew Words

Dyrness (1985:422) suggests that beauty was not an isolable entity in Hebrew thought, for they regarded it as an aspect of the totality of the meaning of the created order. He nevertheless identifies seven word groups associated with beauty. Bushell, Tan and Weaver (1992) record the frequency of these words, with their various grammatical forms.[3]

1. צְבִי, occurring thirty-one times in thirty verses, with five forms, meaning "honour, outward splendour, meriting admiration" (BDB, 7993), and "ornament, splendour" (HALOT, 7855).

2. פּאר, occurring twenty-one times in twenty verses, with fourteen forms, associated with the ideas of crowning, beautifying, bringing splendour, and glorifying (BDB, 7550). The variant noun תִּפְאֶרֶת is used forty-nine times in forty-eight verses, with 10 forms, meaning beauty, glory, splendour, ornament"(BDB, 7552).

3. חָמַד occurring twenty-seven times in twenty-six verses, with fifteen forms, meaning "desire and try to acquire, crave, covet" (HALOT, 2611); as a noun it means pleasant, lovely, or precious. As a noun, it occurs sixteen times in sixteen verses, in five forms.

4. יָפֶה occurring fifty times in forty-six verses, in fourteen forms; the noun יְפִי is used nineteen times in nineteen verses, with six forms. These words refer to the outward beauty of a person, sometimes God's own presence, the highest natural perfection (BDB, 460).

5. נָאוֶה, occurring ten times in ten verses, in 2 forms; the variant נָאֹה occurs three

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[3] Appendix A provides the precise verse references for all the occurrences of these words.

times in three verses, in two forms, referring to that which is beautiful or lovely, and that which is fitting, becoming, or suitable (HALOT, 5300).

6. נעם, occurring sixteen times in sixteen verses, in eight forms; meaning pleasant, delightful, or lovely (BDB, 6191); the variant נָעִים occurs thirteen times in thirteen verses, in four forms, meaning "agreeable, pleasant, lovely" (HALOT, 5588)

7. הֲדַר, occurring thirty-eight times in thirty-seven verses, in thirteen forms, carrying the ideas of swelling, honour, adorn, glorify (BDB, 2291).

Davidson (2000:199) has a list of fourteen Hebrew words that reference beauty. Omitting the overlaps between her list and Dyrness', she mentions a further five:

8. טוֹב, occurring five hundred and fifty-three times in five hundred verses, with thirty-one forms. This word has a broad semantic range that includes the ideas of good, joyous, pleasing, usable, suitable, lovely, friendly, good in quality, morally good (HALOT, 3016).

9. כָּבֵד, occurring two hundred times in one hundred and eighty-nine verses, in ten forms, is the most common word for glory: weighty, burdensome, impressive in appearance, splendid, magnificent, distinctive, honourable, and glorious (HALOT, 3675). Martin (1990:10) suggests that "glory was a concept intermediate between divine transcendence and those manifestations of divine immanence".

10. נוה, occurring once in Exodus 15:2, meaning to adorn or beautify (BDB, 5955).

11. מַרְאֶה, occurring one hundred and sixteen times in ninety-three verses, with fifteen forms, referring to seeing, outward appearance, sight, vision, and what is good-looking (HALOT, 5035).

12. שָׁפֵר, occurring four times in four verses, in three forms, meaning to be beautiful, fair, comely, or goodliness (BDB, 10285).

Summarising this data, Loader (2011:664) suggests "that the essence of beauty is that

which impresses".

Two observations stand out regarding beauty in the vocabulary of the Hebrew Old Testament. The first is that, in the Hebrew beauty-vocabulary, the ideas of splendour, majesty, honour, and glorious mingle with the ideas of pleasure, desire, attractiveness and enjoyment. Interestingly, this represents a union of what, in Enlightenment thought, would be divided into separate realms of objective qualities and subjective experiences. For the Hebrew mind, no division, it seems, existed between what was lovely and loving it, between the desirable and its desire, between splendour and its admiration.

Second, Hebrew writers are describing a phenomenon, not defining an idea. The phenomenon is that of encountering persons, objects or events of beauty: both what those persons, objects or events are, and the responses they engender or merit in those beholding them. At this stage of pre-speculative intellectual history, no division existed between the experience and considering the experience in the abstract. As Lewis (2014:57) points out, the modern dilemma is

> either to taste and not to know or to know and not to taste—or, more strictly, to lack one kind of knowledge because we are in an experience or to lack another kind because we are outside it. As thinkers we are cut off from what we think about; as tasting, touching, willing, loving, hating, we do not clearly understand. The more lucidly we think, the more we are cut off: the more deeply we enter into reality, the less we can think.

The Hebrews were clearly on the tasting end of the spectrum (Ps. 34:8) and display no consciousness of such a dilemma. They give no hint that they are attempting to abstract the experience into objective, speculative concepts. Consequently, to attempt to define beauty based upon Hebrew descriptions will likely be an elusive exercise. Instead, the Old Testament writers are pointing to a shared value, even an ultimate value, found in creation. Words that mean *attractive*, *splendid*, *precious*, *fitting*, and *lovely* clearly refer to the same

idea summarised in the more Western term *beauty.* The broad overlap of these words, with no effort to single out one word as the true locus of meaning, suggests multiple synonyms for a phenomenon that the Hebrew mind saw no reason to delineate, only one to point to, and to invite participation in. Indeed, as Loader (2011:659) points out, there are many metaphors for beauty, using images from fruit, jewellery, scents, and the like, which do not use any of the words previously listed. Beauty and art in the Hebrew Bible are social and religious phenomena, aesthetics within a religious covenant, "the reflection upon beauty and art of a community that defines itself as the people to whom God has appeared and graciously spoken" (Ferreter, 2004:137). To look for a speculative, abstract notion from a pre-speculative society would be an anachronism. Instead, the lexical evidence is abundant that the Hebrew mind experienced all that moderns connect with beauty, both as an objective value, and as a subjective experience.

2. Old Testament literary forms

In the broadest sense, Scripture not only speaks of beauty, but displays it itself. Form cannot be separated from content, and the Scriptures not only speak of beauty, but speak in beautiful ways. The Bible is given in aesthetic form. Biblical writers chose to use sophisticated literary forms: narrative, poetry, wisdom and other forms that display a high degree of craftsmanship.

Davidson (2000:41) points out literary structures such as parallelism, chiasms (2000:44), and sophisticated narrative structure (2000:113). Robert Alter's *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (1985) examines in detail the forms in which Hebrew parallelism take, the narrativity within biblical poetry, the structures of intensification, indeed, even the powerful use of irony, wit, and humour. Literary structure is even used as a narrative device (Rand, 2002:213).

These literary structures demonstrate implicitly the importance of beauty to the Hebrews. Arranging the actual form of the narrative, poems, prophecies, and wisdom

literature into recognisable literary structures displays the writers' desires to communicate not only accurately, but also beautifully.

3. Significant representative texts

a. "For Aaron's sons you shall make tunics, and you shall make sashes for them. And you shall make hats for them, for glory and beauty" (Exod. 28:40).

The priestly garments were not only made for functional effectiveness, but for sheer attractiveness and winsomeness.

b. "Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendor, and array yourself with glory and beauty" (Job 40:10).

God's challenge to Job included the demand that Job exude beauty, that he possess and display the power to beautify himself in a self-sufficient manner. The clear implication is that Job cannot do so; by contrast, God possesses such beauty and can display it at will.

c. "One thing I have desired of the LORD, That will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD All the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD, And to inquire in His temple" (Ps. 27:4).

David summarized the central longing of his life: to be always in that place where the Shekinah glory manifested, where the Ark dwelt. For David, seeing the beauty of Yahweh was his chief desire.

d. "And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us, And establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands" (Ps. 90:17).

Moses completed his song about the eternity of God and the frailty and mortality of man with a plea: that the beauty of God would adorn and establish the works of God's people. Only God's beauty would provide permanence to the fleeting nature of human life.

e. "Honor and majesty are before Him; Strength and beauty are in His sanctuary…Oh, worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness! Tremble before Him, all the earth" (Ps. 96:6, 9).

The psalmist does not hesitate to ascribe beauty to God. Similarly, holiness itself, which comes from God, is beauty, and God's worshipers are called upon to enter into such a beautiful state and thereby know and love God.

6.2.1.2. New Testament

Though the New Testament writers were far more Hellenised than their Old Testament counterparts, they retained Hebrew ideas of worship and glory.

1. New Testament words

The study is not here concerned with the Septuagint, but only with the twenty-seven books of the Greek New Testament. Taking Davidson's work (2000:196) as the starting point, one can identify six Greek words associated with beauty.[4]

1. ἀστεῖος, occurring two times in two verses (Acts 7:20; Heb. 11:23), in two forms, meaning appropriate, well-bred, handsome (BDAG, 1211).

2. εὐπρέπειά η, occurring one time in one verse (Jas 1:11), in one form, meaning fine appearance or beauty (BDAG, 3278).

3. καλὸς, occurring one hundred and one times in ninety verses, in sixteen forms, this word has a broad semantic range, including the ideas of beautiful, good, useful, free from defects, or fine (BDAG, 3900; Gingrich, 3364). This is Plato's primary word for beauty (Farley, 2001:20).

4. προσφιλής, occurring one time in one verse (Phil 4:8), in one form, defined as "pleasing, agreeable, lovely, amiable" (BDAG, 6351).

5. φαίνομαι, appearing thirty-one times in thirty-one verses, in nineteen forms, "to appear as something"; in some contexts, such as Matthew 23:27–28, "to appear as beautiful" (Gingrich, 6672).

6. ὡραῖος, occurring four times in four verses (Matt. 23:27; Acts 3:2, 10; Rom.

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[4] Again, Bushell, Tan and Weaver (1992) record the frequency of these words, with their various grammatical forms, listed in Appendix A.

10:15), in three forms, with "the broad range of the idea of timeliness, including esp. association with prime periods, such as fruit at its peak and humans in youthful blossoming, readily invites the idea of a valued object as beautiful" (Danker, 6972).

To this list, one can add the following words:

7. μεγαλοπρεποῦς, occurring one time in one verse (2 Pet. 1:17) in one form, meaning magnificent, sublime, majestic (BDAG, 4756).

8. κοσμέω, occurring ten times in ten verses in nine forms, meaning to put in order; "to cause something to have an attractive appearance through decoration, adorn, decorate" (BDAG, 4364).

9. δόξα, occurring one hundred and sixty-eight times in one hundred and fifty-one verses, in five forms, meaning brightness, splendour, radiance, magnificence, glory, honour, fame, recognition, majestic beings (BDAG, 2077).

New Testament writers display continuity with their Old Testament counterparts, describing beauty, rather than defining it. Again, the mixture of the subjective notions of pleasantness to the beholder, and attractiveness in the object display the fact that no such dichotomy seemed to exist in their minds.

2. New Testament literary forms

Aesthetic literary structures are equally abundant in the New Testament. Chiasm is evident in Matthew, Mark, John, 1 Corinthians, Galatians, 2 Timothy, Philemon, Hebrews, Jude, and Revelation (Davidson, 2000:93). The Gospels each display a sophisticated use of selected events, summaries, discourses, travel episodes, interludes, and speeches to paint a portrait with a particular emphasis (2000:128). The intense scrutiny of form criticism applied to the Gospels in the past two centuries has, at the very least, made people aware of the literary structures of the Gospels and given readers methods to understand units within the Gospels (Bock, 2002:187). In summary, New Testament writers remain in

harmony with their Old Testament counterparts, seeking to convey content in an aesthetically pleasing form.

3. Significant representative texts

a. "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ" (Phil. 1:9–10).

Significantly, Paul's prayer asks that the love of the Philippians, once enlarged both in knowledge and wise discrimination, would then perceive those things that are intrinsically excellent. The excellence of those things is present, independent of the Philippians' agreement or lack thereof. When their love reaches a place of maturity, they will perceive the beauty that was there all along.

b. "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).

Among the quality of thoughts that Paul wishes the Philippians to dwell upon is the category of what is true, and the category of what is lovely, or beautiful. If one of these is entirely "subjective", so must the others be. Likewise, if one is objectively real, so must the others be. In a list such as Philippians 4:8, one does not expect the various qualities to be uneven or disparate with regard to their objective or subjective status.

6.2.2. Canonically and thematically considered

Beauty is not treated as a discrete philosophical concept in Scripture, but that is very far from saying it is a minor concept in Scripture. The idea of beauty is present in the first chapters of the Bible, as God creates and then makes the evaluative judgement that it was "good". This clearly is not a judgement of morality or ethics, but an aesthetic judgement (Spiegel, 1998:42). The Bible opens with God creating a cosmos which was aesthetically

pleasing to himself, including man in his own image. Human beauty is a work of divine artistry (Loader, 2011:664).

Immediately, God commits the stewardship of the world to his image-bearers, essentially charging them to bring more order and beauty to the world, and so glorify him (Gen. 1:28). The Creator charges man with sub-creation, bringing the same order and beauty to the world, that God brought out of the formless void of Genesis 1:2. The "aesthetic impulse is built into the created order" (Gordon, 2012:22).

Man's sin introduces complexity, and now some beauty is dark and deceptive (Loader, 2012:348). Man's rebellion demonstrates that, left to itself, the race will not image forth the beauty of God. Genesis 1–11 proves that without intervention, humankind degenerates into savagery (Schreiner, 2013:631).[5] Even in its fallen state, humankind still constructs things of beauty out of creation. Loader (2012:102) lists Scripture's catalogue of man's beautiful sub-creations: artisans' work, mining and jewellery, beautiful music, words, wisdom, and pleasant food.

God selects Abraham to create a nation of kings and priests (Ex. 19:6), who will mediate God's kingdom and beautiful glory on Earth. Israel's history through the periods of the Patriarchs, the Exodus, the Conquest, the Judges, the United and Divided Monarchies, the Exile and the Post-Exile shows that Israel could not keep its covenant obligations. A new and better way was to come in Israel's greatest son—the divine Messiah.

In Jesus Christ comes the glory of God made manifest (John 1:14–18; Heb. 1:3). He is not merely made in God's image as man, but he *is* God's image, being fully God (Letham, 2011:§307). Declaring a kingdom that is in some forms present, and in some form unrealised, he calls men to repentance and belief in him, so that the image of God in

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[5] Scholars disagree over whether the first eleven chapters of Genesis represent narrative, allegory, or a literary framework. Regardless of chosen hermeneutic, most would agree that they represent an attempt to explain humankind's origin and its subsequent fall and descent into violence and evil.

them may be restored, beyond even the glory of the first unfallen Adam. His death and resurrection is then explained in the Epistles as the means to union with God, and entrance into the kingdom.

By union with Christ, a process of beautification has begun in the believer (2 Cor. 3:18), which will consummate at the end of all things (Lindsey, 1974:319). Christ is committed to beautifying his Bride, the Church (Eph. 5:25–27). The church is now an embassy of this glory, displaying the beauty of God to the world (1 Pet. 2:9), witnessing to God's glory through the beauty of their good works (1 Pet. 2:12). As the church acts as ambassadors of the glorious God, and ministers of reconciliation, they spread the glory of God.

The book of Revelation predicts the final judgement that will bring the ugliness of evil, with its curse, to an end (Rev. 21:4), and bring in the perfection of a faultlessly beautiful New Heavens and New Earth, enjoyed by those who have been beautified by God's grace.

Some biblical theologies claim that the dominant theme of Scripture is concerned with the spread of the glory of the Lord, encompassing creation, fall, redemption and the eschaton. For example, biblical theologian James Hamilton (2006:83) argues that a compelling case can be made that no theme is more primal or ultimate in biblical theology than the glory or beauty of God.

6.2.3. Summary

The exegetical data of Old and New Testaments lead one to the conclusion that the phenomenon of beauty was commonplace for biblical writers. Its objective and subjective aspects are combined in an array of descriptive words. The literary forms of Scripture speak to an implicit link in the minds of the biblical writers between truth and beauty— truth is to be communicated beautifully. Accurate propositional content must be clothed in literary forms that indicate the affective response such truth about God deserves. Finally, the motif of God's glory in Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation is unmistakably a

prominent, if not dominant, theme in several literary genres (Loader, 2011:8). Taken together, one can confidently assume that the *idea* of God's beauty (if perhaps not the identical words as used in modern parlance), is strongly rooted in the texts and themes of Scripture. Beauty is a reality in the Scriptures.

6.3. Beauty in Classical and Christian Thought

6.3.1. Introduction

Having considered how beauty is represented by the writers of Scripture, the next logical step is to consider the development of this idea in intellectual history, with particular reference to Christian intellectual history. The Christian era represents the intersection of Hebraic thought with Greek philosophical categories. A competent study of the idea of beauty in Christian intellectual history must begin with classical and pre-Christian views. From there, a survey of writers and thinkers representative of early church, medieval, Reformation, Enlightenment and modern eras will provide a tour of the development of the idea. The chapter will then attempt a synthesis of this data.

6.3.2. Classical and pre-Christian Writers

6.3.2.1. Plato

Though pre-Socratic thinkers spoke about beauty, the classical thinker that most influenced later Christian thinking was Plato. Platonism and neo-Platonism dominates the intellectual landscape of the early church. Platonic thinking would influence that most influential voice of the early church era, Augustine, as Aristotle would influence the heavyweight of the Middle Ages, Aquinas.

According to Farley (2001:19), Plato, the author of the famous "truth, goodness, and beauty" triad, wrote during an era of Hellenic demythologising of older Olympian myths and cosmogonies. In those myths, the great theme was explaining the presence of order amidst chaos, permanence amidst change. Hesiod, the cosmologist of the Homeric age, describes Eros as the most beautiful of the gods, and the one who generates gods and

chaos. Generative power of being is beautiful. Beauty brings about order in the struggle with chaos.

Plato takes up the questions of desire, order and beauty in *Philebus*. He considers what is the proper object of desire and argues that it should be what is highest and best— what is truly real. Here, Plato uses the word ἔρως to describe this desire, no longer the beautiful god who generates being, but the thirsty desire for what is highest and best. Since what is best and most real cannot be temporary, the highest and best must be the constitutive and distinctive form (εἶδος) of things. Clearly, these are Plato's demythologised gods—distinctive Forms that true knowledge apprehends. To apprehend these is to apprehend something that is good—καλός—or *beautiful*. Forms are beautiful, being is beautiful, but all these differentiated forms are ordered under the transcendent Good (Farley, 2001:20). Plato used the term *beauty* interchangeably with the concept of the good (for example, *Phaedrus 246E*), not restricting beauty to sensory or aesthetic matters, but referencing it with respect to ethics, and metaphysics (Tatarkiewicz, 1970:113). John Paul II (1999:3) writes that the Greeks coined a term which embraces both: καλοκαγαθία, or beauty-goodness.

In his earlier writings, Plato seems to have accepted the Socratic and Sophistic definitions of beauty as suitability and pleasure, respectively (*Gorgias*, 474D). As his thinking developed, he rejected the subjectivistic view of beauty as whatever one enjoys. He also saw that suitability for an evil end could not qualify as beauty, since beauty was not evil. In his later writings, Plato accepted a Pythagorean definition and added his own (*Philebus*, 64E). The Pythagorean concept saw beauty as order, measure, proportion, consonance and harmony. Plato's own additional concept was the notion just described— the object of ἔρως—ideal beauty, an eternal, spiritual, ultimate Idea of beauty surpassing understanding (Tatarkiewicz, 1970:115). Beauty is what people desire to contemplate and be connected to, for it is pure, touches truth and creates true virtue (Thiessen, 2005:§219).

As Bychkov (2008:198) points out, from Plato's time, ideas of the divine were associated with the aesthetic notion τὸ καλόν, signifying a high degree of excellence of any kind, including the connotations "awesome" or "magnificent." Stripped of the temporal and sensuous, Plato's idea of the beautiful was much closer to a purely religious experience, in contrast to so much in modern aesthetics (García-Rivera, 2005:347). Indeed, Plato's idea of progression in man's perception of beauty develops from enjoying particular instances of beauty, to general beauty, to non-material beauties to the beauty of knowledge, to knowledge of the Beauty (Louie, 2013:§669). For that matter, Plato believed the one who reached this place of perception becomes "like the form of beauty he loves; he becomes, for example, truly virtuous and immortal, or nearly so" (Sircello, 1990:23).

It was for this reason that Plato was sceptical, or at least cautious, of the role of artists in the city-state (*The Republic*, 605A), for their work imitates nature, which is already an imitation of the ideal Forms (Jantzen, 2002:432). Plato wanted a purely spiritual love of what was ultimately Real.

Plato's position would become one side in the medieval battle between nominalism and realism and would have lasting implications in the understanding of beauty from a Christian point of view. His adoption and expansion of the Pythagorean view of beauty would form the foundation of what Farley (2001:17) calls "the Great Theory of Beauty" that predominated in the Christian West until the Enlightenment. His view of beauty as an ultimate and eternal real value would naturally be adopted by Christians as referring to the very nature of God.

6.3.2.2. Aristotle

Plato's pupil would both build on his master and refute him. Whereas Plato speculated on beauty as an ideal, Aristotle was happy to study the particulars of beauty in art. His occasional and elliptical remarks on beauty must be reconstructed from

fragmentary references. Aristotle seems to have believed beauty is two things: that which is valuable in itself, and that which supplies pleasure (*Rhetoric*, 1366a, ix, 3). Tatarkiewicz (1970:151) summarises his view: "all beauty is goodness, but not all goodness is beauty; all beauty is pleasure, but not all pleasure is beauty; beauty is only that which is both goodness and pleasure." Like Plato, Aristotle saw beauty and moral goodness as fundamentally connected (Skillen, 2002:36).

Within this definition, Aristotle wrote of the three properties of beauty: order, size, and proportion (*Metaphysics*, XIII, 1078a, 31). Order meant a suitable arrangement, or a suitable proportion between the parts. Size similarly referred to suitability: size or dimensions suitable to the given objects. Proportion (*symmetria*) was very closely identified with order. Aristotle also mentioned the importance of limitation: that only objects of a limited size can be perceived and so please us (*Rhetoric*, 1409a, ix, 2). Perceptibility was a condition of unity in art, which provided the greatest satisfaction (Tatarkiewicz, 1970:151).

The classical era bequeathed the church with beauty as a philosophic concept corresponding to excellence, the form of which was found in ever-ascending perfection from the created order to the divine.

6.3.3. The Early Church

6.3.3.1. Ante-Nicene and early post-Nicene Writers

Writers of the first through fourth centuries were not involved in any major controversy regarding divine beauty. Certainly the controversy regarding images and use of icons became a dispute in the seventh through ninth centuries, but this debate does not affect the question of the real or objective nature of beauty, merely the appropriateness of representing God for worship. Louie (2013:§692) summarises four themes related to beauty in these early writers: the best creaturely beauty is the spiritual beauty of the saints, Christ is the manifestation of the beauty of the Father, God is beautiful and the source of

all that is beautiful in the world, and the Holy Spirit is the beautifier of the saints and the mediator of the knowledge of divine beauty. Plotinus (A.D. 204–270), a non-Christian Greek philosopher, influenced many Christian writers with his neo-Platonism, though he challenged the Platonic idea of beauty as harmony and proportion (Farley, 2001:20). Plotinus associated being with beauty (Harrison, 1992:37) and, like Plato, believed that beauty must be resident in the beholder in order to perceive it outside of himself (Sircello, 1990:22).

For the most part, developed thinking about beauty must wait for the post-Nicene writers Pseudo-Dionysius and Augustine. Early writers deal with beauty in passing, or as an understood concept to make other points. Nevertheless, the Platonic ideas about ultimate beauty being manifested in the particular is clearly present in their views on the Incarnation.

Justin Martyr (100–165) was the first to take up the theme of the vision of God, communicated through Christ as the image of God, in *Dialogue with Trypho* (CXXVIII). Origen (185–254) similarly wrote of Christ in *De Principiis* (I, ii, 6–8). Basil the Great (330–379) referenced true spiritual beauty in *On Psalm 29*:

> But beauty, true and most lovely, which can be contemplated by him alone who has purified his mind, is that of the divine and blessed nature. He who gazes steadfastly at the splendour and graces of it, receives some share from it, as if from an immersion, tingeing his own face with a sort of brilliant radiance. Whence Moses also was made resplendent in face by receiving some share of beauty when he held converse with God (*Homily 14,* 221).

Gregory of Nyssa (330–395), in *On Virginity* (X–XI), similarly spoke of the impossibility of perceiving God's infinite beauty, though the approach to heavenly beauty must be made through purifying ourselves. Similar ideas can be found in Irenaeus (130–200), in *Against Heresies* (II, xiii), and in Hilary of Poitiers (315–367) (*The Trinity,* II, 49). At this early

stage of history, these writers' chief concern was to ground beauty in God, explain how Christ images forth God's beauty, and enlarge upon the Platonic idea that only the beautiful can perceive beauty.

6.3.3.2. Augustine

Augustine (354–430), bishop of Hippo, is unquestionably the most influential theological and philosophical figure of the first millennium A.D. Augustine was trained in philosophy and rhetoric, and after a season among the Manicheans, was converted to Christianity. His own struggles with sensuality made the topics of desire, love, and beauty of particular concern to him.

Sadly, Augustine's specific work on beauty has been lost. He nevertheless spoke clearly on beauty in several of his extant works. So important was beauty to Augustine, that he sometimes used Beauty as a name for God (Jantzen, 2002:435).

Augustine was a Christianiser of the Great Theory of Beauty. Numerous times Augustine affirmed that equality is the main principle of beauty. Harmony and unity are reducible to equality (*De Vera Religione*, XXX, 55). Like the classical thinkers, Augustine was happy to affirm that beauty is a matter of ratio, or the relations of the parts of the beautiful object to each other and the whole (Martin 1990:20). It was he who coined the venerable formulation for beauty: form, proportion and number (*De Ordine*, II, xv, 42). Thus, God as Trinity is beautiful because nothing in him is unequal (Bychkov, 2008:199).

Nevertheless, Augustine was ambivalent regarding created beauty. Channelling Plato, his suspicion about creaturely beauty was that while it could lead men to the source of beauty—God—it could also become a distraction (Harrison, 1992:42). Likewise seeing an ascending ladder of beauty from lower beauty to divine beauty, Augustine saw the Incarnation as the manifestation of divine beauty, meant to lead man from the senses to the intellect, from *scientia* to *sapientia*, from incarnate beauty to divine beauty (Harrison, 1992:44). Augustine did not see the body as evil, though he certainly saw physical matter

as a lower form of ultimate beauty. The issue was loving things for God's sake or loving them in isolation from God. Bedford (2012:48) helpfully summarises:

> For Augustine, the problem lies not in the beauty of the world or the pleasure of the senses but in the distortion of that reality in a way that we no longer enjoy it for what it really is (for example, a delicious pear that satiates our hunger) but seek in it the satisfaction of our deepest thirst that only God can satiate. If we believe that "beautiful things" can quench our thirst for the transcendent, our constant disappointment will drive us to continue searching for some other new "beautiful thing" to satisfy us.

Perhaps Augustine's most helpful statement on beauty, is one where he made it clear that beauty is real and exists apart from the observer, and has an "objective" existence, to use the contemporary parlance. "If I were to ask first whether things are beautiful because they give pleasure, or give pleasure because they are beautiful, I have no doubt that I will be given the answer that they give pleasure because they are beautiful" (*De Vera Religione*, XXXII, 59). Beauty is not beauty because it gives pleasure, but beauty is what gives pleasure to those with beauty within them. For Augustine, this beauty in the Christian that can perceive God's beauty, is God's love. It is in Christ's love that his beauty lies, and only love in the beholder is able to see this beauty (Harrison, 1992:235). Faith in revealed beauty is inseparable from love.

By imitating Christ, in faith and love, man receives Christ's form or beauty. By loving, people are made beautiful (Harries, 1993:61). This important insight will recur later in the work of Jonathan Edwards, and will be a significant tool in answering Cartesian dualism. Beauty has an independent character, but it is recognised as beautiful by an analogue of beauty in the beholder.

6.3.3.3. Pseudo-Dionysius (c. 500)

Pseudo-Dionysius, so named because his sixth-century work is written under the pseudonym of Dionysius the Areopagite of Acts 17:34, was the first to establish a kind of theological aesthetics seeking a synthesis between Christian doctrine and Neo-Platonism (Thiessen 2005:§600).

Dionysius believed that beauty has an independent existence, because it is a fundamental name for God. God is the source and cause of all things; therefore Beauty himself is what makes things beautiful (Bondi, 2001:5). So deeply did Dionysius develop the concept of beauty as a perfection of the divine being that later ages accused him of heterodoxy or even heresy (Lindsey, 1974:125). Like Augustine, Dionysius taught that to perceive the beauty of God, believers need to be transformed by it, purified, illuminated and brought into transfiguring union (Louth 2004:69).

Continuing the ideas of Christian Platonism, Dionysius saw a ladder of participation in the beauty, or light, of God, from the lowest creation, all the way up to God himself (García-Rivera, 2005:354). Invisible beauty is communicated through the hierarchies of visible beauty (*De Coelesti Hierarchia*, III). Beauty is the source of all things, and the goal of all things. All things conscious and inanimate are constantly returning to God, even as they proceed from God (Louie, 2013:§714).

Dionysius' theology was apophatic and mystical, but his *The Divine Names* did provide a synthesis between biblical, patristic and Neo-Platonic thought, centred around the idea of beauty (Thiessen, 2005:§280).

Perhaps what is most remarkable about the first Christian millennium, at least from a contemporary perspective, is how little the idea of beauty is challenged. Beauty's real and independent existence is simply assumed, and naturally reasoned to be an attribute of God or God himself. The Great Theory of Beauty is personified in the Triune God, Platonic ideas of lower and higher beauty are explained in terms of the Incarnation

mediating beauty to humankind. Beauty and celebration characterises Byzantine spirituality through the sixth to eighth centuries (Louth, 2004:76). This settled sense of God as beauty would come to some of its most beautiful expressions in the Middle Ages.

6.3.4. The Medieval Church

While theological conservatives often associate the Middle Ages with a period of theological stagnation, others view the medieval church as the nearest thing to a fully Christian culture. Wilson and Jones (1998:§83) suggest that the medieval period is the closest one has to a maturing Christian culture, and it was deeply characterised by a love of beauty. Indeed, what was unchallenged in the medieval worldview, before the ferment of nominalism, was the idea that the transcendentals of truth, goodness and beauty were real. For medieval Christendom, reality was not reducible to material reality; it was profoundly and essentially moral. Created reality was an analogue of eternal and permanent realities. No voice captures the medieval consensus as clearly as that of Thomas Aquinas.

6.3.4.1. Thomas Aquinas (1224–1274)

Aquinas was the leading voice of the medieval church on the matter of beauty. Appropriating Platonic thought, but more especially Aristotelian thinking, Aquinas is the closest to a developed theory of beauty in the Middle Ages. Aquinas did not deviate from the Great Theory, but developed it.

For Aquinas, beauty is comprised of three criteria: *integritas* (perfection of form), *claritas* (the splendour of proportioned form) and *consonantia* (harmony of proportioned form) (*Summa Theologica*, I, xxxix, 8). Integrity refers to the ideal form of something, when it corresponds to the form of an object as a whole. Clarity is probably Aquinas' attempt to reconcile the classical ideas of proportion with the medieval fascination with light. In some ways, Aquinas' idea of clarity is similar to the biblical idea of glory (Martin, 1990:25). An object's clarity is the communicability of its form, particularly if it can

communicate its ontological form beyond its physical appearance (Louie, 2013:§768). Most important to Aquinas is proportion (*consonantia*) for it refers to a fitness and harmony in all of reality. His idea goes beyond static ratios or proportions and includes any harmony in a dynamic sense: an ear that can hear music, an eye that can see colour, a mind that can understand reality.

Aquinas believed it is particularly appropriate to associate beauty with the Son: "wholeness, because he truly possesses the nature of the Father, who is perfection itself; right proportion, because he is the express image of the Father; and radiance, because he is the Word, the resplendent light of understanding" (Sherry, 2007:8).

Aquinas saw beauty as a real transcendental, almost identical with the Good. In the *Summa Theologica* (I, v, 5), he writes,

Beauty and goodness in a thing are identical fundamentally; for they are based upon the same thing, namely, the form; and consequently goodness is praised as beauty. But they differ logically, for goodness properly relates to the appetite (goodness being what all things desire); and therefore it has the aspect of an end (the appetite being a kind of movement towards a thing). On the other hand, beauty relates to the cognitive faculty; for beautiful things are those which please when seen. Hence beauty consists in due proportion; for the senses delight in things duly proportioned, as in what is after their own kind—because even sense is a sort of reason, just as is every cognitive faculty.

His distinction between beauty and goodness is that goodness is an object's desirability and relates to the appetitive part of man (that which desires), while beauty is an object's form, and relates to the cognitive aspect of man (that which perceives). Beauty then becomes inseparable to the human's cognitive perception of an object's super-sensual form (Louie, 2013:§778). Aquinas still regards beauty as an objective value, but has moved the idea of beauty one step closer to the modern view of the subjectivity of beauty.

6.3.4.2. Bonaventure (1221–1274)

Lesser known than Aquinas, the Italian Franciscan theologian Bonaventure likewise upheld Platonic ideas about beauty. In his work *In Reductio Artium in Theologiam*, Bonaventure made it clear that he shared the Pseudo-Dionysian notion of a hierarchy of beauty (Viladesau, 1999:113). In *The Journey of the Mind Into God*, he wrote,

> If, then, delight is the conjunction of the harmonious, and the likeness of God alone is the most highly beautiful, pleasant, and wholesome, and if it is united in truth and in inwardness and in plenitude which employs our entire capacity, obviously it can be seen that in God alone is the original and true delight, and that we are led back to seeking it from all other delights (II, viii).

Other medieval theologians who touch on beauty are worth mentioning in passing. For Julian of Norwich (1342–1416), ἔρως is a desire for union, which characterises man and God. It is what stirs God to seek man in redemption, and it is what stirs man to seek God (Ahlgren, 2005:38).

Medieval theologians in general took a more positive view of the created order than their early church counterparts, though they do not depart from Platonism. Nicolas of Cusa continued the Pseudo-Dionysian tradition.

If anything, the medieval church represents a development of the Christianised version of the Great Theory of Beauty. Existence, or being itself, is beauty; therefore, God's being is ultimate beauty. Platonic ideas are retained, Trinitarian concepts are elucidated in relation to beauty, and ideas of light are connected to beauty.

Farley (2001:22) points out four inconsistencies in medieval thinking. *First*, if beauty was at the heart of being, why did beauty not extend to all other Christian doctrine? *Second*, if all objects possess some beauty, why did asceticism have such power during this era? *Third*, how does beauty, if imagined as proportion, relate to dynamic change? *Fourth*, if God, who is not composed of parts, is beauty, how can beauty be proportion or

symmetry? Particularly the third and fourth questions would come back to affect and challenge Christian thinking about beauty during the Enlightenment.

A greater change was at work in medieval thought, one which will occupy the focused attention of chapter eight. Aristotelian thought was provoking a move away from a focus on universals and towards particulars. William of Occam's nominalism would lead ultimately to doubt over transcendentals, which would lead directly to the epistemological scepticism of Descartes, Bacon, and Hume. Nicolas of Cusa's mystical bent moved the focus from the Platonic ladder to the human soul, hastening the advent of humanistic thinking (Garcia-Rivera, 2005:355). The humanist's motto, *Man the measure of all things*, was to influence thinking about art and beauty. Some of this would be corrected in the Reformation, but not all.

6.3.5. The Reformation Period

The Protestant Reformation did not take aim at beauty. Martin Luther was concerned with the relationship of faith and works, and so wrote no theology of beauty. He did not oppose the use of images, as Ulrych Zwingli did. Luther's love of music is well known, but Luther attempted no detailed discussion of beauty.

John Calvin had more to say. As Calvin understood it, the contemplation of God's beauty on the great stage of nature is a performance that absorbs the whole of creation (Lane, 2001:1). In beholding the beauty in creation and redemption, believers see the glory of the Creator. More important than created beauty is the ethical life—the life of service to God and man. One's service then points to God, but the world and work is no longer sacramental, in Calvin's vision, enchanted with God's presence (Louie, 2013:§832).

Schaeffer (2005:82) believes the Reformation began ridding the church of humanistic distortions that had infiltrated it from the time of the early church through the Middle Ages. This included equating the authority of the church with the authority of the Bible, adding human works to Christ's work, and synthesising biblical teaching and pagan

thought. At the same time, nominalism gained a boost in the thinking of some of the Reformers, notably Luther.

The Reformation did not greatly affect the Christian conversation about beauty, concerned as it was with matters related to faith, works, grace, penal substitution and the church. With its favourable approach to the idea of vocation, it arguably contributed to one of the greatest blooms of Christian beauty in music, art and poetry that would come to flower in the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries. It is that period, the period of the Early Enlightenment and the Puritans, to which the chapter now turns.

6.3.6. The Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

The period from 1600 to 1750 is significant for the Christian idea of beauty for two reasons. First, Cartesian rationalism, British empiricism and other epistemologies came to affect the conversation about beauty and moved the focus from beauty as an objective value to beauty as a subjective experience. Second, it was during this era that Jonathan Edwards, America's premier philosopher-theologian, wrote his treatises on beauty. Edwards represents the high-point in Protestant writing on beauty, and perhaps remains unsurpassed in his thinking on this topic. For this reason, it is fitting to devote considerable space to this era, and to Edwards in particular.

6.3.6.1. Intellectual Milieu of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

The Enlightenment's shift away from classical ideas about beauty can be seen in the ideas of several men. Renaissance suspicion of metaphysics began to find temporary refuge in rationalism. Rene Descartes (1596–1650)**,** enamoured by the successes of an application of Newtonian principles to the natural realm, believed that beauty in music could be reduced to ratios. His *Compendium Musicae* (1618) suggested that ratios of duration and rations of intensity explain which music pleases. Early Enlightenment figures were not ready to give up the Great Theory, but wanted principles by which the human consciousness could verify it was perceiving beauty. Similarly, Nicolas Boileau (1636–

1711) attempted to lay down rules for the language of poetry, by writing them in verse in *L'Art Poétique*.

A move away from this approach is seen in Dominique Bouhours (1628–1702). In *The Art of Criticism* (1705), Bouhours argued that the judgment of beauty was not to be considered the same kind of mental exercise as that of working out mathematical questions. Jean-Baptiste Dubos (1670–1742), influenced by John Locke, argued in *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music* (1748) for an enjoyment of art based on its affective qualities, rather than through rational reflection. The French naturalism of the *philosophes* was seen in Denis Diderot (1713–1784) who believed that observers judge things to be beautiful for utilitarian reasons: the beautiful thing nearly perfectly fulfilled its role. Joseph Addison (1672–1719) located beauty within the human psyche, as one of the pleasures of imagination, as did Thomas Hobbes, who saw beauty as the object of a distinctive human appetite (Farley, 2001:33). Frances Hutcheson (1694–1746) wrote *An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue* (1725) and taught that beauty is a universal sense in mankind, even seeing pleasure in beauty as a theistic proof (Louie, 2013:§1337). Hutcheson defined beauty as uniformity amidst variety, but rejected the idea that beauty is a matter of correspondence (Scruton 2009:46). For Hutcheson, beauty was the combination of an idea, and a sense perception, which meant that beauty was located within the human being (Farley, 2001:34).

David Hume (1711–1776) took subjectivism to its logical end. Hume taught that sentiment had reference to nothing beyond itself, and therefore had no moral quality. Sentiment towards art or beauty reflected the internal state of the person perceiving, not any objective qualities in the thing perceived (Scruton, 2002:133). Hume did not abandon the Great Theory entirely, agreeing that the experience of beauty within human passions is evoked by objects that have an order or construction of parts. However, Hume argued that it was utility that made these seem beautiful (Farley, 2001:35).

This growing empirical subjectivism was to meet some opposition in Anthony Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury (1671–1713) particularly in his popular work on beauty, *Characteristics* (1711). Shaftesbury saw beauty as a judgement of reason (Louie, 2013:§1065). Shaftesbury emphasised the disinterested attitude of the judge: attending to the thing of beauty itself, to protect the purity of the form from its effect on the observer (Scruton, 2009:26). Shaftesbury thus moved the focus to the artistic process itself, away from the object (in Cartesian rationalism) and the subject (in empiricism).

All this push towards beauty as an aspect of human psychology meant the conversation about beauty moved away from a discussion of harmony, proportion, or unity and towards the motif of taste. In fact, at this early stage, the attention to taste as a theme in the discussion of beauty was an attempt to prevent the complete subjectivisation of beauty, and to retain some level of objectivity by defining standards of taste. Even Hume argued for refined taste: the ability to perceive objects fitted to evoke such pleasure (Farley, 2001:36). "In many orders of beauty, particularly those of the finer arts", Hume writes in his *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, "it is requisite to employ much reasoning in order to feel the proper sentiment; and a false relish may frequently be corrected by argument and reflection" (Danto, 2002:41).

Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten (1714–1762) seems to have coined the term *aesthetics*. Baumgarten used the term to refer to judgement of good and bad taste, defining taste in his *Metaphysica* (1739) as the ability to judge using the senses and not the intellect. For Baumgarten, beauty was nothing less than perfect sense knowledge (Thiessen, 2005:§2574).

Thus the Enlightenment departed from the classical and traditional Christian notions of beauty as being or as a property of God. Notions of symmetry and harmony were challenged by discoveries in the natural sciences that revealed the particularity and complexity of the physical universe. A growing sense of the individual's subjective

consciousness and a growing awareness of cultural diversity further challenged simplistic ideas of equality, symmetry and harmony (Treier, Husbands & Lundin, 2007:§35). Cartesian, mathematical approach to beauty had been scorned by the naturalism of the *philosophes*. Hume's work had created a scepticism that aesthetic judgements were anything more than inner dispositions. Shaftesbury and Hutcheson suggested beauty was external to the observer, but denied any transcendental basis for such beauty. Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, and Joseph Addison substantially agreed that the observer of beauty would exhibit disinterestedness (Stolnitz, 1961:141). An increasingly secularized intellectual world was now struggling to account for *taste* apart from any theological moorings. The newly-coined term *aesthetics* was to become a distinct discipline within philosophy, focused mostly on the *beaux arts*, rather than a basis for ethics, or as one of three transcendentals that explained immanent reality. This was the philosophic environment that confronted Jonathan Edwards by the time he penned *The Nature of True Virtue* in 1756.

6.3.6.2. Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758)

Edwards' view of beauty was fundamental to much of his theology. Farley (2001:43) goes as far as to say that in Edwards' interpretation of philosophical and religious themes,

> beauty is more central and more pervasive than in any other text in the history of Christian theology. Edwards does not just theologize about beauty: beauty (loveliness, sweetness) is the fundamental motif through which he understands the world, God, virtue and 'divine things'.

Similarly, McClymond and McDermott (2012:§1116) write:

> Beauty is fundamental to Edwards's understanding of being. It is the first principle of being, the inner, structural principle of being-itself. This stress on beauty set Edwards apart from other Protestant authors...One might interpret the whole of

Edwards's theology as the gradual, complex outworking of a primal vision of

God's beauty that came to him in the wake of his conversion experience.

Edwards regarded God's beauty as his most distinguishing attribute. Writing in *Religious Affections*, Edwards stated, "God is God, and distinguished from all other beings, and exalted above 'em, chiefly by his divine beauty. They therefore that see the stamp of this glory in divine things...see that in them wherein the truest idea of divinity does consist" (*WJEO*, 2:298).

Edwards' views on beauty are understood within the context of the subjectivist turn of the mid-eighteenth century, which "experienced a crucial shift in the history of aesthetics from beauty as being to beauty as human self-transcendence", from an external property to a human sensibility (Venter, 2010:187). Edwards sought to avoid the objective/subjective dichotomy inherent in some forms of British empiricism and other epistemologies (Martin, 1975:113). What set Edwards apart from his contemporaries, and what makes him so relevant to the contemporary discussion, was his ability to combine subjective and objective aspects of beauty in a theory grounded in God's beauty. Moody (2005:105) states that beauty appealed to Edwards because it seemed to be a way to form a concept of objectivity that could be subjectively channelled.

Edwards' discussed beauty in many of his writings. His work *The Mind* gives one of the clearest explications of his vocabulary of beauty. Here Edwards presented a classical or neoclassical ideal of beauty (McClymond & McDermott, 2012:§1176). In *A Dissertation Concerning The Nature of True Virtue* (1749), Edwards argued for God's beauty being the ground of all other forms of beauty (Spiegel, 1998:41). Its companion work, *A Dissertation Concerning the End For Which God Created the World* continues the thesis that the ground of being is God's own happiness, not the creature's.

In *The Mind*, Edwards defended his own form of the Great Theory of Beauty: beauty consists in a relatedness between entities. The relatedness may be an exact

correspondence, such as one finds in geometry, or a more sophisticated proportionality, such as one finds in music (McClymond & McDermott, 2012:§1173). Having said that, Edwards embraced the idea that beauty could include disproportion as well as proportion. "What seems to be disproportionate in a narrow context might appear proportionate in a broader context" (§1173). An opposite situation occurs when something appears to be beautiful when taken in a narrow context, and yet appears disproportionate, or even ugly, when considered in a larger context (§1186). When things disproportionate, unequal or irregular are harmonised, it intensifies the beauty of the whole. In Edwards' sermon "The Excellency of Christ", he demonstrates how apparently opposing attributes in the person of Christ make him as beautiful as he is (Mitchell, 2007:41).

Mitchell (2007:37) explains: "Edwards calls the beauty of exact correspondence *simple beauty*. He calls the beauty of proportionality *complex beauty*. These kinds of beauty fit into a larger classification called *secondary beauty*". Secondary beauty applies to physical things as well as abstract concepts or immaterial matters. A well-ordered society can be beautiful. A harmonious community can be beautiful. Well-executed justice can be beautiful.

At this point, it is vital to point out that for Edwards, beauty was not a concept one could divorce from God (Strachan & Sweeney, 2010:§679). Edwards is distinct in this respect. While other writers "claim that aesthetic experience points to the goodness of God, Edwards claims that true aesthetic experience is inseparable from the perception of God" (Louie, 2013§1522). The aesthetic experience is not merely a gift from God; he is the very essence of the aesthetic experience (§1520).

Thus, for Edwards, *primary beauty* is the relatedness between persons, and Edwards traces beauty back to the first and primary person: God himself. Edwards laid stress in his writings on this kind of beauty. In Edwards' thinking, the usual concepts of beauty, such as abstract proportionality or harmony in created forms of beauty, were really

to be understood only as symbolic counterpoints to a higher kind of correspondence, that of wills in persons. Correspondence or symmetry, or harmony between persons—intellectual or volitional beings—was what Edwards called "consent": a term that suggested volition, affection, and love to God's and to one another (McClymond & McDermott, 2012:§1137). Directional activity tending toward union was, to Edwards, found in nature—a stone "consents" to the law of gravity, but this is only a type of love in the spiritual world. Reality, in its most basic form, is relational and dispositional, not static, self-contained substances (Venter, 2010:186).

Thus, at the fundamental level, beauty is *being's consent to being*. God's benevolence toward being in general and toward other benevolent beings is the essence of beauty (Hodges, 1995:66). God's relatedness to himself and to his creatures is primary beauty. Edwards was not claiming that beauty and existence are essentially the same. Existence is fundamental to *agreement*, and agreement is at the heart of beauty. Parting from the ancients and some medievals, Edwards said that being, or existence, is fundamental to beauty, but it is not beauty itself. Beauty is consent, and primary beauty is being's consent to being. The greater the scale of being, the higher the potential for agreement, and therefore for beauty. Beauty is harmonious benevolence. Being is the ground of beauty.

Edwards anticipated the objection to grounding beauty in God himself. Complete simplicity cannot be beautiful, for it has no relations of proportionality. Similarly, in primary beauty, a solitary person cannot display this consent, of loving union with himself or herself. In order for God to be beautiful, God must have proportionality and consent in God's being (Mitchell, 2007:38). Edwards solved this problem elegantly, by putting forward the relatedness of the three Persons in the Godhead as the essence of primary beauty. The Trinity is the ground of proportionality and consent to Being. Edwards explained in *The Mind*:

As to God's excellence, it is evident it consists in the love of himself…But he exerts himself towards himself no other way than in infinitely loving and delighting in himself, in the mutual love of the Father and the Son. This makes the third, the personal Holy Spirit or the holiness of God, which is his infinite beauty, and this is God's infinite consent to being in general (*WJEO*, 6:364).

He goes on to say: "Tis peculiar to God that he has beauty within himself, consisting in being's consenting with his own being, or the love of himself in his own Holy Spirit whereas the excellence of others is in loving others, in loving God, and in the communications of his Spirit" (*WJEO*, 6:365). Louie (2013:§3143) writes that for Edwards, God is beautiful only because God is triune. Unlike many other writers, for Edwards beauty is not one of many attributes of the simple divine essence, but a "moral perfection of God, which is embodied in the triune life of God" (§3143). God's love for God is God's beauty and his chief glory.

With this theocentric view of beauty, Edwards explained all other forms of beauty, which he termed *secondary beauty*. Beauty in the universe is essentially an enlargement and overflowing of the divine life (Delattre, 2003:281). It is essentially the beauty of harmony or proportion, and in Edwards' mind, can be manifested in several ways.

The believer himself is a special recipient of God's beauty. Beauty is what genuine religion looks like (Mitchell, 1975:42). Virtue within a believer is those qualities of heart which combine to love God or express benevolence to being in general, and even love for his creation (Wooddell, 2007:86). A believer's beauty is simply a reflection of God's beauty. To love God is to love what he loves, which is to becomes as he is, and to reflect his beauty (Wooddell, 2011:§2018). At the societal level, a perfectly harmonious society wherein active and mutually supportive social consent takes place would be an example of secondary beauty (Martin, 1975:112).

Edwards thus developed a sound philosophical system that could ground beauty in God, while finding a way to explain how such a transcendent beauty could be manifest in immanent reality. In so doing, he was both maintaining the classical notions of transcendent beauty, upholding a Christian view of God as the ground of beauty, while responding to the *philosophes* and others who had doubted beauty's objectivity on the very grounds of its manifest variety. Edwards turns the argument around: the large varieties of beauty are emanations of God's beauty. Secondary beauty is an analogy for primary beauty. All secondary beauty ultimately points back to the ground of beauty: being's consent to being.

When Edwards turned to deal with the subjectivity of beauty in the experience of observers, he again formulated a theocentric response to the eighteenth-century discussion of "taste", in his use of the term *sensibility*. Delattre (1968:3) suggests that beauty and sensibility are the "objective and subjective components of the spiritual life" in Edwards' writings. Martin (2013:138) identifies two word groups used interchangeably throughout Edwards' works: an "affections group" (affections, consent, love, will, pleasure, inclination, and disposition) that describe the action of an intelligent being toward other intelligent beings (the actions of the subject); and a "beauty group" (beauty, glory, holiness, proportion, and excellency) that describe both the object of consent and the result of mutual consent.

Balancing objective and subjective sides of beauty so that neither eclipsed the other was what Edwards' intricate theory of sensibility and "sense of the heart" attempted to do (McClymond & McDermott, 2012:§1194). Some of Edwards' work on sensibility was a response to Enlightenment thinkers such as Locke, Shaftesbury, and Hutcheson. In *The Nature of True Virtue*, Edwards referred to Hutcheson by name three times (Aldridge, 1951:35). Martin (1990:28) believes that Edwards was a "Platonic empiricist". But he was by no means a parrot of popular philosophy.

For Edwards the "sense of the heart" was an appreciation of beauty that is given to a person by God. In his *Treatise on Grace*, Edwards writes that "the first effect of the power of God in the heart in regeneration, is to give the heart a divine taste or sense, to cause it to have a relish of the loveliness and sweetness of the supreme excellency of the divine nature" (*WJEO*, 21:174). Edwards believed that beauty is definitely something subjectively experienced, in *On the Nature of True Virtue* sounding like one of the earlier *philosophes*:

> It is evident therefore by this, that the way we come by the idea or sensation of beauty, is by immediate sensation of the gratefulness of the idea called "beautiful"; and not by finding out by argumentation any consequences, or other things that it stands connected with; any more than tasting the sweetness of honey, or perceiving the harmony of a tune, is by argumentation on connections and consequences. (*WJEO*, 8:619).

Edwards, however, went beyond Locke's view that the mind is merely passive in the process of perception. Edwards believed that the organ that sensed beauty was the "habit of mind", where sense-ideas received through regular physical channels are ordered in their true relational context by the mind, and then delighted in by the mind (Lee, 1976:390). Edwards believed the imagination is before the inclination: the imagination reveals the relations between ideas; the inclination takes pleasure in them (Lee, 1988:156).

But at the heart of this, was the work of regeneration. Edwards sought to explain the ordering activity of the mind and its predisposition toward one thing and not another, in terms of its regenerate or unregenerate state. Regenerate hearts are given a new inclination, and with it, the ability to see as beautiful what could not be seen before. A human being, once given a new habit of mind, could experience the transcendent beauty that is God. Equally so, an unregenerate person may well perceive other forms of secondary beauty, but lacking the God-given sense of the heart, may yet fail to see the

primary beauty that is God. Edwards believed that the Scriptural word "spirit" referred to the affections of the mind. If a person obtains new affections, these are part of one's essence, and if one's essence has changed, one also has a new nature. Such a one participates in the divine nature, which explains the consequent love for divine beauty. By partaking of God's love for God, one now has a sensibility for primary beauty (Louie, 2013:§2627).

In this way, by referring to sensibility, habit of mind, or the *affections* as the faculty that perceives or fails to perceive beauty, Edwards placed the blame for failing to see God's beauty at the door of the unbelieving, hard heart, while upholding the truth that God is beautiful to the heart ready to see him. Put simply, just hearts have increasingly just sentiments. Indeed, for Edwards, the essence of true virtue is "benevolence to being in general". When a human being showed the same "consent" towards God, which could be variously understood as faith, belief, hope, obedience, or love, he or she was displaying true virtue, or spiritual beauty (McClymond & McDermott, 2012:§6424). God's love for God manifest in a believer was the believer's relish for God's beauty.

By grounding all beauty in God's loving relatedness to himself, and developing that definition to encompass all forms of beauty, Edwards could ground beauty in ultimate reality while acknowledging the diversity in the experience of beauty. Diversity in aesthetic taste is satisfactorily explained by the habit of the mind, be it regenerate or unregenerate. Therefore, for Edwards, the *philosophes* were correct to say that much beauty is known by experience, but wrong to deny that any ontological structure of beauty existed. The perception of beauty lay not merely in some neutral innate sense, but in inclinations of the heart, which could be regenerate or unregenerate. Thus, only believers could sense and enjoy the primary beauty of God and, having done so, would be even more capable of sensing and enjoying secondary beauty.

As mentioned in chapter two, Edwards managed to draw from several theories of beauty and harmonise them by modifying them all. Beauty as being, beauty as an attribute of God, beauty as one of three transcendentals, beauty as a subject's pleasure came together in the nature of true virtue: being's cordial consent to being in general.

Edwards also managed to undermine and transcend the conventional duality of subject and object. For Edwards, beauty is not a property; it is a disposition. It is objective in the sense that it is an actual state of affairs—the way God relates to himself and his world—but it is subjective in that it is a heartfelt disposition: relation and consent on the part of God. Beauty is simultaneously objective and subjective (Farley, 2001:47).

On the one hand, the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century launched a deeper consciousness of the meaning of beauty in art criticism and taste, while on the other it sowed the seeds for beauty's eventual demise in Western aesthetics (Farley, 2001:38). Coming as he did in the era when thinking about beauty wrestled with this duality and began siding with subjectivism, Jonathan Edwards is a watermark in the history of Christian thinking about beauty. Unfortunately, though Edwards provided a compelling answer to the subjectivist trend, the successors of the early Enlightenment thinkers would take subjectivism in beauty to its logical end.

6.3.7. The Late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

The philosophical discussion of beauty in the Enlightenment period after 1750 took a decidedly secular turn. Few Christian voices make a significant contribution in this period, and one is obliged to survey the non-Christian voices that came to shape the conversation. Aesthetics became more interested on the meaning or experience of knowing the beautiful, rather than in experiencing God's beauty, more concerned with locating the spiritual dimension of beauty in the psychology of the human mind. This is most clearly seen in this period's most prominent voices on beauty, Immanuel Kant and Georg Hegel (García-Rivera, 2005:357).

6.3.7.1. Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)

Immanuel Kant sought to stabilise the growing subjectivisation of knowledge by categorising which domains of human knowledge and experience could be judged empirically or rationally, and which could not. He desired to show that humans are not reducible to external cause explanation, but exhibit a kind of self-transcendence in their experience. Kant, in his three *Critiques*, sought to prove that reason and sense experience are necessarily severed, and the human being is divided into separate and "non-communicating faculties of reason, will, and emotion" (Davidson, 2000:235). Kant juxtaposed judgments of taste to instrumental and moral judgements (Lorand, 1994:400). Human reason was incapable of knowing anything beyond the natural world investigated by empirical science, such as religion, morality, or metaphysics (Pearcey, 2010:§1767).

Kant's *Critique of Judgement* suggests that the aesthetic experience has nothing to do with the object per se but exists wholly in the mind of the subject (Markos, 2010:§1428). Kant, unlike Jonathan Edwards, does not see beauty as a manifestation of God's nature. Rather, it is the human vocation to impose "self-legislated lawfulness" upon the sensible world (Louie, 2013:§6795). The human mind does not, as Locke had suggested, passively receive sense impressions through the senses, but actively orders and arranges those impressions, imposing order upon the world. Reality as one perceives it is a world structured by human consciousness (Pearcey, 2010:§1840). Beauty, morality, and religion are part of the inner order that the human mind places upon its perceptions. Although these things are "impossible to know", they are "morally necessary to suppose" [6] (Pearcey, 2010:§1817).

For that reason, Kant set about describing a basis for making judgements about beauty. Kant would not recognise or endorse the relativism or nihilism found in modern discussions about beauty. His intention was nearly the opposite: to provide a stable and

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[6] Cited from Kant's 1885 *Introduction to Logic*, London: Longmans, Green, & Company, IX, 60.

universally valid form of judgement for beauty. In his *Critique of Judgement* he asserted that while aesthetic judgements are subjective, yet they can claim universal validity (Thiessen, 2005:§2598).

In his third *Critique*, Kant gives aesthetics its own *a priori* principle. Morality or utility cannot help one judge beauty. Instead, one must judge based on its "purposiveness without purpose": perceiving order in a thing of beauty, which serves no particular utilitarian purpose. The mind is imposing order on what would otherwise appear disorganised, and herein is the pleasure of beauty.

For Kant, the pleasure in beauty is an "entirely disinterested satisfaction," pleasure bereft of desire (Nehamas, 2000:393). Aesthetic judgement is one in which the subject is not seeking to use the object as a means for personal interests but is able to enjoy it for itself (Scruton, 2009:27). Aesthetic judgement is thus disinterested, universal (in intent) and noncognitive (based on direct personal experience) (O'Hear, 2011:179).

Some of Kant's concern with self-transcendence is seen in his treatment of the topic of the sublime. Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) was the most influential work on this subject. The sublime referred to that way in which human emotions are gripped by an order of things which they cannot master, predict, or fully comprehend. This experience was to be differentiated from beauty, which was understood always to be pleasurable (Farley, 2001:37). Kant regarded distinguishing the two as fundamental to understanding the judgements of taste. He saw the experience of the sublime as a valuable moment of human self-transcendence, being conscious of the vastness of nature, but affirming one's willingness to obey the moral law in spite of it. Sublimity can therefore rise above mere need or appetite (Scruton, 2009:73).

6.3.7.2. Lesser Lights and the Romantics

Romanticism was another reaction to the early Enlightenment's overemphasis on objective knowledge. Stressing the importance of beauty, feeling, intuition, and imagination, it in some ways hastened the division between fact and value, object and subject. Theologians such as Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834) stressed that religion was a matter of intuition and feeling, while beauty was increasingly expressed in pantheistic terms (Thiessen, 2005:§2615). Friedrich von Schiller (1759–1805) argued that man is most himself in the aesthetic dimension of his life (Vanhoozer, 1987:33). Space precludes a detailed examination of other lesser lights of this period, such as Friedrich von Schlegel (1772–1829), and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling (1759–1805) (Martin, 1990:55). A similar concern with self-transcendence is seen in Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860). He wrote on how grasping an idea of something, beyond its utility, allows humans to transcend their self-interest. The act of pure contemplation allows a person to become absorbed entirely in its object (Farley, 2001:61). Beauty is the quality of the object that facilitates knowledge of its idea.

Self-transcendence continues to be a theme in philosophy during this period, but not always with reference to beauty. Farley (2001:56) demonstrates that Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) and Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) illustrate a strand of Western philosophy in which self-transcendence is discussed with little or no place for beauty.

The Romantics' desire to preserve beauty through endorsing Kant's division became more reason for secularists to relegate it to the margins of life. It was Georg Hegel who predicted this demise.

6.3.7.3. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831)

Hegel's aesthetic theory was perhaps the most comprehensive in modernity. Hegel did not expend much space on what constitutes beauty. He was more interested in in a work of art's meaning and purpose. For Hegel, art expressed a culture's outlook and

worldview. A culture's idea about reality is given sensuous form in its artworks. These manifestations are that culture's self-expression. The most beautiful work of art is the one which best and most fully expresses the idea, and not whether it corresponds to some universal criterion of beauty. Art's aim is to reveal truth in pleasing, sensible form (Savile, 1989:127).

Hegel saw the peril of subjectivity. The emphasis on the experience of the subject meant that art no longer expressed religion, or satisfied human spiritual needs, as it once had. Art was increasingly produced for art's sake. The most important aspects of life in modern culture were now expressed by reflective thought, and through the sciences instead of the fine arts. The history of art had, in some ways come to an end. Romantic, realist and impressionist art were a long way off from the spiritual-aesthetic heights of religious arts in earlier periods (Thiessen, 2005:§2616).

The eighteenth century had become acutely aware of human consciousness, and its relation to knowledge. Both the earlier rationalism and the later empiricism of the seventeenth century had now been found inadequate to later thinkers. The transcendental idealism of Kant and Hegel came to own the epistemological day. Kant had divided life into the phenomenal world (the world which can be empirically measured) and the noumenal world (concerned with value and meaning), and had attempted to bridge these through his three *Critiques* (Schaeffer, 2005:160). Unfortunately, he did not succeed in unifying these two areas of human experience. Instead, he managed to sow the seeds of the eventual demise of modernism's obsession with pure objectivity (Bauder, 2011). With this demise would come a growing scepticism that beauty represented anything outside the beholder, or anything within being itself. Beauty was increasingly associated with art, and not ethics or religion, and the experience of beauty was understood as an inner experience of finding order in external phenomena.

Romanticism actually borrowed from Kant and entrenched the division between noumenal and phenomenal. While attempting to protect beauty, intuition, and emotion, Romanticism actually opened the door for what would become existentialism, and later, postmodernism.

Hegel's speculations about culture increased the sense that beauty was relative to each culture. His predictions of art's declining role in an increasingly technologically-driven culture were correct, and perhaps hastened the relegation of art to a specialisation irrelevant to answering the concrete questions of reality asked by a materialist culture. Beauty was increasingly passé, a concept connected to medieval speculative metaphysics, inner preference, religion, or effete arts. Though few today are thoroughgoing Kantians, Kant's central insight—that human consciousness constructs and orders sense perception—would come to dominate most thinking about beauty. It is in the nineteenth century that the first occurrence of the phrase "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" is found, in the book *Molly Bawn* (1878) by Margaret Wolfe Hungerford. Lundin summarises concisely:

> By the end of the eighteenth century, then, a new and powerful understanding of beauty and the arts had planted its flag on the Western intellectual landscape and staked its claim to a sizeable plot of cultural ground. The aesthetic realm was governed by a set of interlocking assumptions that had at their base the belief that science disclosed a cosmos governed by law and necessity, while the spirit's inner drama played itself out in oppositional freedom...The creation of an aesthetic domain and the elaboration of a doctrine of the fine arts were meant to establish the epistemological authority of sensory perception and to secure the spiritual rights of beauty. To that end the eighteenth century placed the arts side by side with the sciences in a setting in which each was to become increasingly impervious, even incomprehensible, to the other" (2007:§1892).

After Edwards, the vocabulary of beauty in Christianity falls nearly silent until the twentieth century. A tidal wave of Enlightenment epistemologies almost overwhelms what had been a several millennia-long consensus on beauty as a real property. After Edwards, few theologies speak of God as beautiful, or beauty as a real transcendental.

6.3.8. The Twentieth Century and the Contemporary Era

As the loss of shared ultimate values took its toll, the twentieth century came to be marked by pluralism, and ultimately, nihilism. Optimism about human progress through science received a grievous wound in World War One; after the Holocaust and Hiroshima, such optimism was mostly dead. The work of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche turned into the existentialism of men such as Jean-Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, and Gabriel Marcel. Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) saw nothing of beauty in nature or even in the transcendent self, seeing it rooted in the will to power and writing that "nothing is so conditional, let us say circumscribed, as our feeling for the beautiful" (Lundin, 2007:§2022).

Existentialism would come to influence the schools of structuralism and post-structuralism, represented by men such as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Arthur Danto (2002:37) writes that by 1965 "reference to the creation of beauty was omitted from the enabling language for the National Endowment for the Arts, presumably because beauty had largely disappeared from the artistic agenda".

Strangely, or perhaps fittingly, it was in this aesthetically arid period that the vocabulary of beauty returned to theology. Roman Catholic theology returned to the concept of the beauty of God in this period with such writers as J. Pohle (1852–1922), F. Diekamp (1864–1943), Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) and J. Berthier (1923–1994) (Lindsey, 1974:126).

Protestant and Evangelical theologians were slower to appropriate their Edwardsian heritage. Theologians such as Anders Nygren, Jaroslav Pelikan, Gerhard

Nebel, and Eberhard Jungel tended to be hostile to classical ideas of beauty, and essentially anti-aesthetic in approach (Farley, 2001:68). Crain (2003:30) notes that within Evangelicalism no mention of beauty is found in the theologies of Louis Berkhof or Millard Erickson, and only a passing mention in Wayne Grudem. An entire school of existentialist theology would develop, known as Neo-orthodoxy, including men such as Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, Reinhold and Richard Niebuhr (Pearcey, 2010:225). These men, drawing from their Kierkegaardian roots, were more prone to consider beauty. Karl Barth is the leading name among them.

6.3.8.1. Karl Barth (1886–1968)

Barth wrote several times on the beauty of God, but avoided beauty as a dominant aspect in his view of God. Barth identified the beauty of God as the manifestation of the glory of God: the sum total of the divine perfection in irresistible self-manifestation (Lindsey, 1974:127). Barth wanted to keep theology Christologically centred, and therefore wanted beauty to refer to the form in which God's beauty is revealed in Christ. Barth even objected to representing this beauty in art, since the beauty of God revealed in Christ is "an alien beauty which judges all other forms of beauty" (de Gruchy, 2001:6). Barth eschewed formal definitions of beauty, fearing they will lead to aestheticism. Instead, "for Barth, to say that God is beautiful is to say that God's self-revelation is totally pleasant and enjoyable to human beings" (Louie 2013:§4440).

For all this, Barth continued the dichotomy between reason and perception of beauty, maintaining the two-storey view of reality brought about by Kant and Kierkegaard. Religious experience (and therefore aesthetic experience) can take place apart from reason or fact (Schaeffer, 2005:176). This would deny any correspondence between being and beauty.

Among other Protestant theologians, William Dean, spoke positively of beauty, though he did so from the perspective of A.N. Whitehead's process philosophy (Farley,

2001:74). He argued for the inadequacy of the concepts of "the true", "the good" and "the holy", and sought to show that only the experience of "the beautiful" is intrinsically valuable (Lindsey, 1974:129).

Roman Catholic theologians do not struggle with the same antithesis between Christianity and the classical tradition, felt by so many Protestant theologians. Western and Eastern Catholicisms developed by way of engagement with the heritage of ancient Greece, and do not wrestle with the same anti-Hellenic posture. Of all the twentieth century Catholic theologians, Hans Urs von Balthasar is the most prominent voice on theological aesthetics.

6.3.8.2. Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988)

After a silence of two hundred years since Edwards, a silence only barely interrupted by some twentieth-century voices, in 1961 Swiss Catholic theologian published the first volume of his seven-volume magnum opus, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics* (Howard, 2011:4). Von Balthasar advocated *theological aesthetics*, not *aesthetic theology*. Theology must determine the aesthetic categories from the data of revelation—the touchstone and source of truth—rather than resorting to the extra-theological categories of a worldly philosophical aesthetic (Crain, 2003:34). Balthasar, like Barth, does not see beauty as a divine attribute, and is wary of its power to control theology. He does, however criticise both Catholicism and Protestantism for eliminating the aesthetic from theology.

In these first seven volumes, the focus is on the contrast between worldly beauty and divine glory, between τὸ καλόν of Plato and God's כבאד in the Old Testament. Both beauty and glory are enrapturing, but glory results in mission in Israel, whereas Platonic beauty tends to terminate in static contemplation (Oakes, 2007:§2177).

Beauty is the study of God's glory made manifest. To contemplate beauty is to contemplate divine trinitarian love, revealed in Christ. On this point, Balthasar sounds like

Barth, yet he departs from Barth by returning to a theory of form, similar to Aquinas' concept of clarity. "When this form is perceived by people, they recognize it as the beauty of the world" (Louie, 2013:§6813).

While Balthasar's contribution to the discussion is voluminous, it appears to remain arcane for all but dedicated students of Von Balthasar. Jonathan Edwards remains peerless as a theologian of beauty whose theory was coherent, intelligible and accessible to the serious reader.

Other significant theologians of beauty in the twentieth century include Patrick Sherry, John Navone, Paul Evdokimov, Richard Viladesau, and Nicolas Wolterstoff, some of whom are quoted in this study.

In summary, the twentieth-century Christian contribution to the idea of beauty included considering the relationship between theology and beauty: whether beauty arose from trinitarianism, theology proper, creation, or soteriology, and whether a theocentric or anthropocentric theological method should shape the definition. Theological aesthetics also considered whether Christianity could comfortably assimilate older Hellenic views on beauty, or whether these views should be opposed, whether noetic sin had made beauty a feature only of the eschaton, or something part of the created order even its current state (Farley, 2001:79). Some theologians wrote copiously on the relationship between Christianity and the arts, with Karl Rahner, Paul Tillich, and Hans Küng being the most prominent earlier voices on this topic. It did not seriously tackle Kantian dualism, existentialism or structuralism. Indeed, its most prominent voices (the Neo-orthodox school), perpetuated existentialism, while others returned to Thomistic categories (Jacques Maritain), or, as in Von Balthasar's case, were too eclectic to categorise.

6.3.8.3. The Postmodern Anti-Aesthetic

Chapter one described the postmodern attitudes towards beauty, including a hostility toward beauty, and its stated reasons. Philosophically speaking, postmodernism's

roots lie in the existentialism of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, which was taken further by Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Karl Jaspers. Vanhoozer (1987:37) suggests that Jacques Derrida is where Western metaphysics essentially comes to an end. "What began with Kant positing an autonomous realm of beauty (that is, aesthetic objects and aesthetic judgments) has now expanded to include all of life" (1987:39). Chapter eight will give further attention to the epistemology of postmodernism. Since the focus here is the history of beauty in Christian thought, the chapter's concern is to understand the aesthetic of the period broadly defined as postmodern.

Farley (2001:1) asserts that beauty is simply no longer a category that postmodern Western societies use for self-understanding. Worship, politics, education and even the arts are largely conducted without that notion. Nevertheless, as mentioned in chapter one, beauty has experienced a renewed interest. Though the ideas of postmodernism dominate the academic, political and media conversation, many of the working population still hold to the older traditional ideas about beauty (Farley, 2001:4).

Primarily, postmodernism is an orientation toward the modern. On the one hand, it is an attitude of social resistance to certain modes of thought that it deems oppressive, making it a form of idealism. On the other, it is a radical critique which eschews discourses of reference, value, reality, depth, presence and meaning (Farley, 2001:3). In this alienation from meaning, the result is a cynical culture of narcissism: essentially an anti-aesthetic. Beauty becomes the enemy: a throwback to systems of thought that posit ultimate values, transcendentals, and realist metaphysics. Beauty is a mask that oppressors use to cover the ugliness of life and disguise their modes of oppression.

Nevertheless, beauty as a deep value still survives in traditionalist, antiquarian and religious strands of culture, even though the powerful institutions and leaders of dominant discourse have eschewed beauty. What militates against beauty among the masses is the sensibilities inculcated by such a society: pervasive marketing, consumerism, and the

elevation of titillating and salacious entertainment. Contemporary society lives with a paradox: an aestheticisation of life seen in society's continual immersion in popular music and media images, alongside a hostility towards beauty itself by the cultural elite. Popular art gluts itself on the loud, garish and kitsch, while simultaneously high art has created a cult of the ugly. Perhaps it is less of a paradox and more of a cause-and-effect: despising of one thing must create a vacuum for another. This philosophical anti-aesthetic combined with the popular hunger for kitsch and sentimentalism bleeds into contemporary Christian thinking, as chapter two demonstrated.

The twentieth century's failure to re-establish beauty at the heart of worship and spirituality is seen in the anti-aesthetic of the postmodern era, and the Christian forms of the same. While the explosion of interest in theological aesthetics appears heartening, it must be grounded in biblical epistemologies if such interest is to reverse the anti-aesthetic trends of the postmodern.

6.4. Summary of Historical Study

Christian thinking about beauty developed from the pre-speculative acceptance of the phenomenon in the Hebrew Scriptures, to the assimilation of Platonic ideas about beauty as harmony and proportion. For the first fifteen centuries of the Christian era, beauty was identified with being, and with God's being as the essence and ground of all being. Beauty as a property outside the beholder and as a phenomenon recognised pleasurably within the beholder was virtually unchallenged from the penning of the Old Testament through to the Reformation period. What is most remarkable, from the modern point of view, is how the unity of beauty's subject and object is assumed for most of this period, where Cartesian or Kantian dualisms are yet unknown. It is also noteworthy that very early in the Christian conversation about beauty, a subject's moral fitness is seen as a prerequisite for rightly perceiving beauty.

The classical and medieval consensus regarding beauty began to break up as

humanism and nominalism made their way into philosophy. The pursuit of epistemological certainty apart from divine revelation, alongside the growing sense of the interior consciousness of the human subject and her perceptions led to the secularising intellectual currents of the eighteenth century. Beauty suffered alongside religion, relegated to that which is impossible to know but necessary to suppose. At first, this emphasis would lead to the discussion of taste, but ultimately it would relegate beauty to an entirely inward experience within the human consciousness (Stolnitz, 1961:194). Jonathan Edwards provided a compelling answer to rationalism, empiricism and eighteenth-century epistemologies, but like his contemporary J. S. Bach, his value seems to have been most appreciated after his lifetime.

The twentieth century brought something of a renaissance of beauty in theology, but much of it remained grounded in existentialism, and little work was done to overcome the Kantian dualism that still prevailed in epistemology. The postmodern anti-aesthetic attitude continues to be the cultural norm, relegating beauty to isolated strands of nostalgic, traditionalist or antiquarian sub-cultures.

6.5. Conclusion

In this chapter's study of Scripture and history, one can observe a unanimity on the topic of beauty that ran from the authors of the Old Testament until the time of John Calvin. This consensus was that beauty was real, and either the essence of being, or a property of being. Beauty was to be identified with God. Subject and object were two inseparable parts of one phenomenon: beauty-pleasure, though only beautiful souls would recognise beauty.

As the West embraced nominalism over realism, confidence in transcendentals weakened. An obsession with rationality, epistemological certainty, logic, and human psychology grew. By the end of the eighteenth century, a division existed between

perceiving subjects and perceived objects, between values and facts, between the noumenal and phenomenal, between mind and matter.

Looking back, one must determine if this break with an older consensus represented an advance towards a better and truer knowledge of the world, or a regression. If it represented progress, one must conclude that the abandonment of beauty as a property of being or the created order was a needed change.

Were one to combine the testimony of Scripture and the consensus of all Christians convinced by some form of metaphysical realism, one would see it as a regression. The Enlightenment recognition that the human mind contributes to the perception of reality was a helpful insight, but relegating all "noumenal" knowledge to an internal ordering propensity in the human mind was fatal to belief in beauty beyond the beholder.

Identifying standards of taste was necessary once the differences in perceptions and kinds of beauty amongst subjects and cultures were recognised. Regarding taste as both an imposed order upon reality and simultaneously as a universally binding judgement was, however, speaking out of both sides of one's mouth. Once some form of idealism, existentialism or deconstructionism had been embraced, beauty as a real property of God or the world could not be rescued. Theological aesthetics built upon these foundations must eventually face the same fate as their secular philosophical parents.

How has the working definition of beauty proposed by this study held up under the findings of this chapter? Chapter two defined beauty in its essential form as God's relation to himself and his works: a dynamic, relational and moral unity of pleasure and excellence in the Trinity and the created order.

First, the study of Scripture has verified that as far as the writers of the Old and New Testaments were concerned, the phenomenon of beauty is a real property of God, persons and the world.

Second, the historical survey showed that nearly all premodern Christians grounded beauty in God's being. Until the seventeenth century, a consensus existed that beauty can be said to be "objectively" real, to use the modern connotation. For premoderns, beauty is essential to being, and since humans are part of being, no tension is felt between object and subject.

This approach received a blow during the Enlightenment. Enlightenment philosophers' obsession with finding epistemic certainty apart from divine revelation appears misguided to a Christian, but the positive contribution of this period was to distinguish the knower and the known, the beholder and the beheld in far more self-conscious terms. Ancient and medieval Christianity was too content to define beauty as a static property in Platonic terms. The Enlightenment confronted the church with questions of change, questions of varying perceptions, questions of subject and object. Jonathan Edwards' response provided a way for beauty to be both objective and subjective, to be both related to being and to have a dynamic relationship to being. Beauty, for Edwards, is a real property in objects, perceivable when the perceivers meet certain conditions. Edwards verifies and nuances the working definition of beauty as personal, moral and dynamic: God's relationship of pleasure in his own excellence.

After Edwards, no theologian provided so comprehensive and cohesive a view on beauty, in this researcher's opinion. Jonathan Edwards is, to many, the pinnacle of Protestant thinking on beauty. Having said that, Edwards died in 1758. His work must be considered in relation to Kant, existentialism, structuralism, post-structuralism, and deconstructionism. In particular, some compelling answers need to be made to the question of Kant's "two-storey" epistemology, as well as postmodernism's simultaneous aestheticisation of life and celebration of the cult of the ugly. One's understanding of apprehending beauty will need to include these developments to be a theory relevant to contemporary times, and useful for this study's model of spirituality.

Having established the Scriptural and historical basis for viewing God's beauty as an "objective" phenomenon worthy of pursuit, attention must now shift to the "subjective" side of beauty. Understanding the experience of beauty in art, and relating art to religion may shape the understanding of apprehending God's beauty, and will prepare the ground for this study's proposals regarding a model of spirituality that incorporates both.

Chapter 7. Subjective Beauty: The Pursuit of God's Beauty and Aesthetic Experience

7.1. Introduction

Having established that the beauty of God has been regarded as a real and "objective" quality by the majority of Christians in history, a study in Christian spirituality must necessarily turn from the notion of objective beauty to the subjective pursuit and apprehension of beauty. Since Christian spirituality is concerned with the experience of Christians seeking God, a crucial link in this study is to consider the broader human experience of pursuing beauty, and to find parallels to such a pursuit in Christian spirituality. What is the human subject's experience of seeking and finding beauty? Further, if God's beauty is more than an intellectual concept to be known purely through mental cognition, what mode of perception and method of pursuit should one adopt to discover this beauty?

The partner in this study will naturally be that area of human life that has pursued beauty both within religion, and apart from it: art. Art is certainly not the only domain of life in which beauty is found. Human relationships, nature, mathematics and the sciences could all be mined as sources of beauty. Art does, however, provide a *studied methodology* of pursuing beauty. This methodology will be useful to this study.

Art and Christianity have experienced a fractious relationship—sometimes inseparable, sometimes hostile, but never irrelevant to the other. At various points, purist supporters of the one have suspected the other of corrupting its integrity. Nevertheless, both have needed the other: Christianity has needed tangible expressions of divine beauty (or of the worshipper's expression of apprehending it), and art has needed an ideal greater than itself. Indeed, Emil Brunner (1937:499) stated, "It is our duty to reflect on this remarkable relation between art and religion".

If art and religion are deeply—perhaps inseparably—related, then the pursuit of

one will inform the pursuit of the other. Specifically, one of the aims of art has been the pursuit and incarnation of beauty. One may then find in art certain modes of approach, methods of understanding, and postures of perception that will inform a pursuit of beauty in Christian spirituality. While artistic theories on what constitutes beauty are legion, what is of more interest to this study are the *methods* art supplies for the subjective aspect of pursuing beauty, and its record of the *experience* of apprehending beauty. What does a seeker of beauty do and experience when seeking and finding beauty?

The relevant material on aesthetics, art and religion, and theological aesthetics is too vast to competently cover if the focus of this chapter is not properly qualified. Three qualifications are in order. First, this chapter will not attempt to define and critique the field of theological aesthetics. The findings and insights of various scholars in these fields will be instructive, but no attempt will be made to define or develop a distinct theological aesthetic. Second, this chapter will not explore the relationship between art and religion in any serious historical and sociological sense. It will suffice to establish the parallels and similarities between both. Third, no attempt will be made to develop or defend a particular theory of art criticism, but the chapter will draw out the salient features of the aesthetic experience.

This chapter will aim to establish art and religion as partners in the pursuit of beauty, describing the differences, similarities and tensions. It will then consider the nature of the aesthetic experience in four stages. Once again, the aesthetic experience in art is chosen to demonstrate a *methodology* of pursuing and experiencing beauty that may find close parallels in Christian spirituality. These parallels will then be drawn out and studied, as the basis for a method of apprehending God's beauty in Christian spirituality.

7.2. Art and Christian Spirituality

7.2.1. The Similarities Between Art and Religion

Though the link between art and religion should be self-evident, a secularised age

has separated the two, creating artless religion and non-religious art. Dupré (2000:69) reminds readers that for most of human history, what is now restrictively called "art" provided the symbols and forms for what people now refer to as "religion". These two were indistinguishable, for all of life was religious, and art expressed life in its totality. The Enlightenment severed this union, and centuries later, the Enlightenment's descendants see no self-evident link between the two. Therefore, a justification of the relationship of art to religion, and specifically to Christian spirituality, is in order. Seven statements can be given that demonstrate the overlapping relationship of these two domains of human experience.

1) Art and religion both deal with ultimate realities.

Art and religion are sourced in, and aim at, an explanation of ultimate reality. The term *ultimate reality* refers to reality beyond matter and empirical verification: the regions of truth, morality and beauty. Both art and religion are concerned with these questions. Brown (2000:§1354), citing Clive Bell, writes that both religion and art are expressions of the "emotional significance" of the universe. Pope John Paul II (1999:9) wrote of the connections of both to ultimate reality:

> Even beyond its typically religious expressions, true art has a close affinity with the world of faith, so that, even in situations where culture and the Church are far apart, art remains a kind of bridge to religious experience. In so far as it seeks the beautiful, fruit of an imagination which rises above the everyday, art is by its nature a kind of appeal to the mystery. Even when they explore the darkest depths of the soul or the most unsettling aspects of evil, artists give voice in a way to the universal desire for redemption.

Julian Johnson (2002:49) suggests that art is concerned with the extraordinary, the "outer limits of our experience", and that it expresses a human longing to realise ourselves as something greater than we are. Indeed, Karl Rahner (1982:27) concludes that some

"'religious art' may be well intended and painted by pious people, but it is not genuine religious art because it does not touch those depths of existence where genuine religious experience takes place". Hendricks (1988:109) agrees that both religion and the arts seek the "world beyond this world yet hidden within it". He goes on to list and compare religious categories for describing ultimate reality with artistic ones:

> Religious categories for describing this ultimate reality are: *mysterium tremendum*, *numen* (Otto), *sacer* (historians of religion) *ens realissimus* (Medieval philosophy) Universal spirit (Hegel), *Urgrund* (romantic idealism via Tillich). Aesthetic categories for expressing this 'world beyond' the world that is conveyed through worldly experience are: *Dasein* (Heidegger in *Poetry, Language, Thought*); inexhaustibility (Stephen David Ross); the knowledge of being related to being (Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor*), a deeper unspoken order, the fact that order exists (Michael Foucault in *The Order of Things*).

Ultimate, transcendent reality, and its relationship to the everyday and mundane, has sometimes been described with the terms *sacred* and *profane*. Mircea Eliade wrote voluminously on this topic, explaining that the sacred in religious societies is something set apart from the profane space outside, and so provides access to that which is higher, eternal, and ultimately real. The profane is an experience of fragmentation, disorientation, and chaos (Brown, 2000:§3266–3273). This experience of what is higher, ultimate, and real, is unavoidably fleshed out in art.

Tillich (1990:317–329) enumerates various types of religious experience: the sacramental or numinous realism, mystical religion, prophet-protesting, religious humanism, and ecstatic-spiritual. These all encounter transcendent reality, and all use symbolism and sacramentalism to varying degrees, making art essential to the expression of this experience.

The reverse, or corollary is equally true: If the idea of God includes ultimate reality, all art that expresses ultimate reality expresses God, whether it intends to do so or not. Art can at points take the form of religion, and religion the form of art, to speak to ultimate things. Art can communicate religious significance, even if it operates outsides institutional religion (Brown, 1989:111). Wherever art turns to the absolute, to the "wholly other", it intersects with religion (Van der Leeuw, 1932:332–337).

Religion and the arts both pursue meaning, meaning that explicates ultimate reality. *2) Art and religion both seek to incarnate transcendent realities.*

Beyond pursuing ultimate realities, both religion and the arts seek to give perceptible expressions to these ultimate realities, that would remain otherwise invisible. This is particularly important for Christianity as an incarnational religion (Gaebelein, 1985:62). Art, when used by Christians, should not seek to fabricate a non-existent reality. Imagination, intangibles, and the nonverbal in art should still correspond to a genuine, ultimate reality (p. 83). Harries (1993:43) states that Christianity's special insight, in contradistinction to Platonism, is that "the divine beauty is to be seen in and through the particular, of which the Incarnation is the supreme expression".

Religion, which by definition deals with more than merely material reality, must grapple with how its ultimate realities will be fleshed out. Brown (2000:§2018–2032) suggests four categories of how the invisible and visible meet in religion*: negative transcendence* where God appears only as the Absent One, signified only by the depth of the artfully expressed yearning; *radical transcendence*, where God is the infinitely distant One whom humankind cannot approach, though that Other can approach them; *proximate transcendence*, which is sacramental; and *immanent transcendence*, where the sacred is altogether immersed in the ordinary. Each of these will vary in the degree to which the transcendent is mediated and expressed in the immanent, that is, material realities.

Art seeks to make perceptible the "world of the spirit, of the invisible, of God", giving form and meaning to what is otherwise ineffable (John Paul II, 1999:10). Art is a kind of mediation of transcendence using immanent creation. Begbie (1991:228) concurs that art is an engagement with the physical world involving one's tangible acts of sensation as much as one's non-physical faculties.

Art reproduces the world's rhythms, sounds, colours and shapes, and so calls into existence a "duplication of beauty as being" (Farley, 2001:111). Thus, art incarnates a worldview (Pearcey, 2010:§208). Richard Weaver (1948:19) defined a developed culture as "a way of looking at the world through an aggregation of symbols, so that empirical facts take on significance and man feels that he is acting in a drama".

According to Brunner (1937:499–503), this incarnational ability does not only make the invisible visible, it functions as a unifier of the body and the spirit, where the spirit is corporealised, and the body is spiritualised, re-uniting what has sometimes been sundered in Christianity. A Platonic element in Christianity has been suspicious of materiality and physicality. For example, Augustine is often accused of having a deep suspicion of the body. Bedford (2012:48) argues that Augustine had no problem with the beauty of the world or the pleasure of the senses but was concerned about using beautiful things to quench a thirst that only God can satisfy. Still, Christianity has at times struggled with a tension between the spiritual and the sensuous, contributing to a suspicion of art.

Christian spirituality pursues communion with God, and this communion can be mediated by "aesthetic structures which create, facilitate or sometimes even require a triune meeting between the work of literary art, the spiritually awakened human person, and the divine life of God revealed by faith and reason" (Jeffrey & Maillet, 2011:§916–918). O'Meara (1988:214) claims that the forms of art are not objects of perception, but media, and similarly in religion the text, the law, the liturgy, and the church building are not the object but the media. Both use the sensuous to mediate the spiritual, the immanent

to communicate the transcendent.

3) Art and religion both point to another cosmos.

Emil Brunner (1937:499–503) noted that art does not lie in the perception of something which is present in this world, but in the desire to go beyond that which already exists, because that which is present does not satisfy man. Man seeks a better world, a world of perfection—a redeemed world. Both art and faith call one to seek another world: perfected, idealised, or merely different. Art uses symbolic meaning that transports its audience beyond its material nature, recreating the world (Johnson, 2002:70). Religion, too, while using words, books, food, or music, points to a world beyond this one. Symbols enable humans to engage distant, future or even merely possible states of affairs (Scruton, 2007:12).

When one experiences a work of great art, one knows more about self, others, this world, or the next (Barzun, 1974:75).

The imagination calls us to leave our personalities behind and temporarily to inhabit another's experience, looking at the world with new eyes. Art invites us to meet the Other—whether that be our neighbor or the infinite otherness of God – and to achieve a new wholeness of spirit (Wolfe, 2011:22).

Brown (1989:109) suggests it is because humans are embodied, thinking and feeling beings that they must be engaged through forms that "imaginatively encompass and orient us within something like a world". As one inhabits such a world religiously, such worlds actually reveal the realities to do with religion and the soul.

4) Art and religion both seek a similar form of knowledge.

Since the Enlightenment, and particularly since Immanuel Kant, knowledge of ethics, beauty and religion have been considered, in Kant's words, "impossible to know, but morally necessary to suppose". Such agnosticism comes from the view that beauty and

goodness possess no form of empirical verification. Chapter eight will consider the appropriate epistemology for beauty and religious truth, but it is sufficient to say at this point that art and religion pursue very similar, if not overlapping, kinds of knowledge, the kind unobtainable by rational deduction or empirical investigation.

Packer puts it well:

I question the adequacy of conceptualizing the subject-matter of systematic theology as simply revealed truths about God, and I challenge the assumption that has usually accompanied this form of statement, that the material, like other scientific data, is best studied in cool and clinical detachment. Detachment from what, you ask? Why, from the relational activity of trusting, loving, worshipping, obeying, serving and glorifying God: the activity that results from realizing that one is actually in God's presence, actually being addressed by him every time one opens the Bible or reflects on any divine truth whatsoever (1990:6).

McGrath (1996:107) agrees, disputing the idea that God's revelation is the mere transmission of facts and affirming that it is rather God's self-revelation and involvement in human history, supremely through the Incarnation of Christ. God's revelation is knowledge of a person, and personal knowledge is moral knowledge or knowledge of beauty.

Stiles (1997:208) avers that the aesthetic provides a means for teaching transcendent ideas, "reaffirming divine mystery, and validating the sense of awe that God inspires in the faithful". Whereas logic has limits, knowledge of an aesthetic kind can accept, ponder and even revel in the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, or any other theological paradox or mystery. To be made in God's image is to have radical openness to the transcendent, and a receptivity to what God reveals, personally or symbolically (Viladesau, 1999:70–71).

The knowledge that art and religion provide is the broadest and most foundational: the very frame of perception, the locus of value. This knowledge provides the lens through which a society does its thinking and explanatory work. As Martland (1981:12) puts it, "Art and religion come first; the sciences follow. The first declares or determines what is, perhaps secondarily declaring or determining what needs to be done; the second responds, and does".

5) Art and religion are both concerned with creation.

Christianity gives an explanation of existence or being that is essentially an explanation of creation. Understanding the world to be made by God, Christianity explains the nature of humankind, its purpose, and the future of the created order in light of this. Redemption is inextricably linked to creation, for redemption's ultimate effects include redeeming creation itself (Rom. 8:18–25).

The arts, as material (sound, paint, words) are necessarily part of creation. Artistic work is an act of sub-creation, not creating *ex nihilo* as only God can, but creating by using creation. Gaebelein (1985:73) suggests that the arts find their deepest sanction in the creative aspect of God. Munson & Drake (2014:§458–519) remind one that art and music function with general revelation the way preachers teach from special revelation, their "text" being creation itself, and their sermon being the work of art produced. Revelation through creation maintains a literacy with God's works, and therefore with God's being.

Indeed, humankind made in God's image includes naming the animals, which was giving further form to what had been created (Dyrness, 1972:164–165). Humankind was to till the ground, subdue and order the creation, extending the goodness of God's creation from the perfect Garden to the entire Earth, making an Eden of the whole world. This is nothing less than the task of artfully beautifying the world, shaping creation into meaningful beauty that would more clearly reflect the Creator. Creation already sings God's praise, as the Psalms make clear. Begbie (1997:109) sees the arts as part of the

calling to "voice creation's praise, to extend and elaborate the praise which creation already sings to God".

6) Art and religion are both concerned with transformation.

In giving explanations of ultimate reality, both art and religion call for a response. Both speak in ways akin to that of a prophet, calling for some kind of change **(**Brown**,** 1989:111). Because both deal with what is ultimate, both ought to be reverential in attitude toward things. Since both give value and serenity, both are "profoundly regenerative" (Martin, 1972:69). Hans Gadamer argues that a particular experience of a work of art transforms people, in a way that defies a dogmatic or discursive description of that experience. Such knowledge is participative, and necessarily transformative (Cole, 1999:362).

In presenting one with other worlds, art becomes prophetic, showing what is ugly, unjust, or untrue in this world, and how the recipient should respond (Brown, 1989:110). One is drawn out of oneself, corrected of provincialism and selfishness, and enters a richer world created by another (Lewis, 1961:138–139). Through entering the world described by the artist (or by Revelation), one is returned to one's own world, transformed in some way.

7) Art and religion both depend on the other.

Scripture is the final authority for Christians, and Scripture is itself a work of art: a work of literature that contains poetry, epistles, Gospels, wisdom, narrative, apocalyptic and other genres (Loader, 2004:265). The Bible being used liturgically is itself an act of aesthetic reception. Scripture commands the use of at least two forms of art: poetry (psalms, hymns and spiritual songs) and music (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Christian worship therefore requires art, even if restricted only to the art of the Bible, such as the exclusive use of psalmody.

Art similarly requires religion, even if it borrows the themes and questions that religion claims to answer. When art fails to deal with transcendent matters, it withers into kitsch and sentimentalism or self-referential trivialities, and fails as art.

Religion without art lacks the power to attract and must rely on a dry dogmatism (De Gruchy, 2001:3). Art without religion lacks a moral centre or a cohesive transcendent vision on which to pattern itself.

In summary, art and religion were inseparable for most of history, and even in a secularised age, continue to require one another. Both search for transcendent meaning; both incarnate that meaning visibly; both point to other worlds; both seek the same kind of knowledge; both are concerned with creation; both seek transformation, and both require the other. They use similar vocabulary; they are viewed as analogous by various disciplines; they have analogous experiences; they serve a similar end (Hendricks, 1988:111). What one finds to be true of the one will, at the very least, find parallels in the other. A search for a Christian spirituality in pursuit of beauty will be well served by considering the pursuit of beauty in art.

Having said this, not all art will serve this purpose, precisely because, since the Enlightenment, a form of art that is divorced from religion has emerged. This kind of art must be identified, and its dangers enumerated.

7.3. The Tensions of Between Religion and Art

Though a suspicion of the arts has been present in Christianity since the earliest centuries, the wedge between art and faith is a relatively recent phenomenon. The circumstances and effects of this divorce are now considered.

7.3.1. The Divorce of Art and Religion

As chapter six showed, man has philosophised about beauty for centuries. The concept of beauty as a discrete discipline within the study of philosophy, however, came about only in the eighteenth century (Lundin, 2007:§1819–1823). It was in this period that

Alexander Baumgarten coined the term *aesthetics*, and elaborate explanations of taste and the form of the arts were developed. In an attempt to define all forms of human knowledge without reference to tradition or religion, thinkers began classifying the "fine arts" as those human artefacts that exist primarily for the sake of their beauty (Brown, 2000:§117). Until that point, "aesthetic" art had not been distinguished in any way from the "liberal arts" (such as grammar or mathematics) or from the "mechanical arts" (such as manufacture, various crafts or forms of artisanship) (Brown, 2000:§1094). Now a special category of art without any utilitarian purpose was developed. Art increasingly became museum art instead of everyday objects that were artistically made (Barrs, 2013:§478).

This non-religious aesthetic form of art was soon to become valued for itself, creating "art for art's sake". Art was now on its way to becoming an autonomous entity, divorced from worship, ethics, or religiously useful effects on the head and heart. Instead, these works of art were valued as badges of social status, goods to be marketed or components of a "growing culture industry" (Barzun, 1989:6).

Indeed, the *avant-garde* averred that taste for this new form of autonomous art would be contaminated by religious or moral interests. As Brown (2000:§239) puts it, "The taste for art was in principle divorced, therefore, from the spiritual taste that had been spoken of by scholastics, mystics, and Puritans alike".

A Christian who believes in God's creating of the world *ex nihilo* could never grant some kind of autonomy or self-sufficiency to created beauty. Autonomous art is ruled out in any theistic worldview (Asproulis, 2012:156). Therefore, art emerging from this areligious, autonomous, and self-contained aesthetic will be of limited value to a Christian spirituality seeking paths to God's beauty.

In fact, the more art becomes inward and entirely concerned with self-expression, the more inaccessible it becomes to others, because if art if simply an expression of the artist, it fails as communication to others.

7.3.2. Art as a Surrogate Religion

At the same time that art became valued for itself, certain thinkers were looking to art as a surrogate or substitute religion for the Christian faith, a faith that was then under attack during the Enlightenment. Rousseau led the way to Romanticism, which was a kind of reconstruction after the hard scepticism of rationalism and empiricism. The Romantics did not abandon reason, but demanded a complement in the form of the "religion of art" (Barzun, 1974:26). Witvliet (1996:61) believes art as a surrogate religion came through Romantics such as Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) and Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854). Other notable Romantic voices were William Blake (1757–1827), Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) and Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882). Art was looked to as a substitute form of spirituality, providing parallel senses or tastes for the infinite, as Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) described it (Brown, 2000:224). For those for whom the old religions had lost their hold, art was a "gateway to the realm of spirit" (Barzun, 1974:30).

The idea of art as a religion must be rejected by Christians. De Gruchy (2001:10–11) remarks that art can enhance faith, but it is not a replacement for faith. Art may draw people in, but the ethical commitment contained in faith is not identical to the aesthetic experience. Art cannot redeem humankind. Brunner (1937:499–503) agrees that the danger of art is

> taking the reflection for the reality, or at any rate of resting content with it. Thus art becomes a substitute for faith, which is sought because it does not demand decision, as faith does, but merely the attitude of a spectator, or of one who is swayed hither and thither by the artistic influences around him; that is, it is not a real devotion, it is merely aesthetic.

The aesthetic has a seductive allure, in which the enjoyment of art can be corrupted into an enjoyment of freedom from responsibility (Brown, 2000:§3632).

Indeed, beauty has the power to allure one into creating and worshipping false gods. And as Jacques Barzun (1974:92) points out, once it becomes clear that autonomous art has

> no unity, no eternity, no theology, no myth, no minister, its cult can only fall into a worship of the instrument—idolatry. And to say idolatry is to say failure, for what is wrong with idolatry is that it is a dead stop along the way to the transcendent.

Art for art's sake, and art as a surrogate religion will not assist in the pursuit of a spirituality rooted in seeking God's beauty, precisely because they are atheistic or irreligious at heart. While they may still possess insights, one will be better served by considering voices not entrenched in either of these positions.

With an understanding of the many parallels between art and faith in place, and recognising the dangers, the next logical step is to consider the components of the aesthetic experience or the mode of aesthetic perception.

7.4. The Aesthetic Experience

Witvliet (1996:36–38) helpfully summarises the components of the appropriation of aesthetic and art forms as occurring in four stages: 1) perception, 2) immediate response, 3) interpretation, and 4) evaluation. These four will serve as the structure for describing the aesthetic experience and its parallels in Christian spirituality.

7.4.1. Perception

Perception is the initial encounter between a human subject and the aesthetic object or experience. Visual, audio and other sensory forms of perception bring the object or experience into focus, and the subject begins experiencing its attributes. Although perception is an obvious feature of aesthetics (the Greek term αιστηϵτικος meant "perceptible"), a more critical consideration of perception will be helpful for seeing the parallels with spirituality.

Two areas of perception interest the one pursuing a method of apprehending God's beauty: first, the notion of receptivity long held by artists and worshippers alike; and second, the matter of "disinterested pleasure" held since the eighteenth century as necessary to purely apprehending beauty.

7.4.1.1. Receptivity

Several Christian thinkers have written of the importance of *receiving* an artwork as opposed to *using* it. C.S. Lewis wrote incisively of this in *An Experiment in Criticism* (1961). Lewis suggested that to receive a work, the subject must exert his or her senses to conform to the pattern created by the artist. Conversely, *using* a work of art is treating it as a mere aid to selfish activities. When art is used, it cannot introduce one to new worlds or transform; it can only brighten, relieve, or palliate one's life (1961:88). When one uses art for one's own ends, a work of art has no chance to work on a person, meaning one meets only oneself in the work (p. 85). Consumers of art do not lay themselves open to what the work in its totality might do to them; they merely treat it as a means to their own selfish ends (p. 16).

True receptivity begins by laying aside individual preconceptions, interests, and associations. Positively, one must then look, listen, read, or feel, as the case may be. The seeker must go on perceiving until he or she has perceived what is there. This is essentially a form of surrender. Lewis writes, "Look. Listen. Receive. Get yourself out of the way. (There is no good asking first whether the work before you deserves such a surrender, for until you have surrendered you cannot possibly find out)" (1961:19). Johnson (2002:128) echoes this sentiment, suggesting that the value of music as art only appears when the listeners set aside their subjective demands and priorities, and quiet their own thoughts, for then the music can begin to exert its demands on them. Hodges (1995:71) similarly advises the receptive listener to listen humbly, that is, "without an agenda of finding a melody to

hum or a rhythm to tap your foot to", and to resist the temptation to invent stories regarding what the music is about.

This kind of perception is *contemplation*, and must be distinguished sharply from *distraction*. Johnson (2002:122) points out that distraction is "entertainment functioning as avoidance", while contemplation is

> engagement and a deeper involvement. It's no coincidence that the term 'contemplation' is shared by art and religion: the contemplative attitude points to a way of being that is essentially open to the encounter with an Other.

Distraction is another term for amusement and entertainment. Scruton (2009:101) distinguishes the true work of art from the false by distinguishing the experience of the one from the other. In the true work of art, it is not one's own reactions that are interesting, but the meaning and content of the work. Entertainment is not interested in cause, but only in effect—whether the work had pleasant effects on oneself. Though true art also entertains, it does so by creating a distance between oneself and what it portrays, allowing a disinterested sympathy for its subject matter, rather than evoking vicarious emotions of one's own (p. 102). This distance is what enables receptivity and contemplation. "The purpose of this distance is not to prevent emotion, but to focus in it, by directing attention towards the imaginary other, rather than the present self" (p. 104).

Pieper (1952:7) even distinguishes contemplation from *observation*, which he sees as a tense activity:

> To contemplate, on the other hand, to 'look' in this sense, means to open one's eyes receptively to whatever offers itself to one's vision, and the things seen enter into us, so to speak, without calling for any effort or strain on our part to possess them.

The act of active contemplation is a kind of art itself. It is the learning and practice of "ways of approaching art—modes of perception, ways of being open, receptive, patient,

humble, and nonliteral" (Johnson, 2002:125). These are ways less known in a culture devoted to consumerism, and the commodification of art and religion. When art or religion is just one more product to be used for one's own ends, the active perception of latent beauty will elude one. The nature of the beautiful object—be it a human work or God himself—determines the mode of approach. Johnson (2002:125) describes the problem:

> Approaching music differently means living differently. Our contemporary object-use of music is a product of our lifestyle. Ironically, we think our standard of living so high and advanced compared to that of others around the world and that of our ancestors, yet we have no time to properly contemplate anything at all. A contemplative mode of being is essentially denied to our generation.

Contemporary culture has come a long way from the days of Joseph Addison, who wrote in *Pleasures of the Imagination* (1712),

> One of the Final Causes of our Delight, in any thing that is great, may be this. The Supreme Author of our Being has so formed the Soul of Man, that nothing but himself can be its last, adequate, and proper Happiness. Because, therefore, a great Part of our Happiness must arise from the Contemplation of his Being, that he might give our Souls a just Relish of such a Contemplation, he has made them naturally delight in the Apprehension of what is Great or Unlimited. Our Admiration, which is a very pleasing Motion of the Mind, immediately rises at the Consideration of any Object that takes up a great deal of Room in the Fancy, and by Consequence, will improve into the highest Pitch of Astonishment and Devotion when we contemplate his Nature, that is neither circumscribed by Time nor Place, nor to be comprehended by the largest Capacity of a Created Being" (p. 9).

Contemplation is an act of attention that receives the artwork as a gift, not an object to be used, but as something to be meditated upon and lived with (Brown, 2000:§1958). Attentiveness of this kind has even been likened to prayer (Saliers, 2002:185). Beauty

requires that one be both giving up oneself to the work and receiving it (Milbank, 2003:6).

The matter of receptivity is open to misinterpretation. One misinterpretation is an overemphasis on the notion of "disinterested pleasure".

7.4.1.2. Contemplation and Disinterested Pleasure

Immanuel Kant blazed the trail for considering beauty in a disinterested fashion. By this, Kant meant that to perceive beauty, one must be detached from any moral, practical, or religious interests attached to the beautiful object. Any enjoyment of beauty must be entirely for the sake of the object's beauty, and not for any utilitarian function that the beauty may serve. As noted in the previous chapter, "purposiveness without purpose" was Kant's guide to beauty.

Some define disinterested pleasure as a suspension of egotism, which allows the kind of perception spoken of in the last section. This type of reflection is sympathetic, rather than objectifying (Nichols, 1980:98–100). It involves being both attached and detached, though these may not necessarily be simultaneous (Newton, 1950:21). Scruton (2009:26) writes that "[W]e call something beautiful when we gain pleasure from contemplating it as an individual object, for its own sake, and in its presented form".

Pieper sees disinterested pleasure as an extension of the division between liberal and servile arts: the liberal arts being those forms of human activity that are an end in themselves, the servile arts those that have some practical or utilitarian end beyond themselves (1952:19).

The idea of disinterested pleasure has come under fire. Zemach (1997:33–34) criticises this approach as disingenuous: it claims that every interest that motivates self-serving action is "interested" and then "discovering" that the aesthetic interest alone is disinterested.

If you listen to music for its own sake, that does not mean that you do not listen to it for your sake, for by listening to it you satisfy yourself, not the music!...To

engage in an activity for its own sake is to be genuinely interested in it, not the opposite, as Kant has it.

Begbie (1991:191–197) notes seven problems associated with Kant's synthesis of Enlightenment aesthetics: 1) One gravitates away from the physical world toward the mind. 2) Art is divorced from action. 3) Form and order are created and imposed on the plurality of the world by the human mind, not discovered. 4) A work of art is isolated from the particularities of life. 5) A distinction is made between aesthetic knowledge and knowledge inherited from ancestors. 6) One fails to provide a convincing account of the universal validity of aesthetic judgements. 7) One turns toward the solitary thinking self as the centre of existence and meaning.

With these seven concerns in mind, Begbie believes that "the notion of disinterested contemplation in the arts—with its sharp split between subject and object—" is ultimately Descartes' rationalism and scepticism transported into the arts (1997:110). Indeed, why would one need to be completely disinterested, except to provide some equivalent of detached rational or empirical investigation, only now with reference to the arts? Elaine Scarry (1999) points out that only a masochist would insist that only aversive contemplation is the right kind.

Wolterstoff (1980:193–99) regards the Western idea of high art as a profoundly secularized institution. He criticises the idea of disinterested contemplation and disinterested pleasure. From the Christian viewpoint, he sees three problems with disinterested contemplation. First, art is not to be divorced from responsibility, and participation in art should be an active use of responsibility. Second, art as disinterested pleasure seems to seal off art hermetically from the rest of life, which is a violation of integrity and wholeness of life under Christ. Third, the claims of ultimacy made by art must be resisted by Christians. Wolterstoff believes the church should repent of the elitism that sees the best use of art as pure perceptual contemplation, and seek again an art that

expresses the community's worship.

How does one reconcile these contrary approaches to disinterestedness in contemplation? To the degree that disinterested pleasure represents a restating of the notion of receptive perception, it is a helpful idea: protecting an object of beauty from being "used" for selfish ends, thereby obscuring its qualities. To the degree that disinterested pleasure represents an Enlightenment extension of the religion of art by seeking a pure, detached appropriation of aesthetic qualities removed from all other considerations, it represents a faulty, and perhaps conceited, epistemology. It creates artificial distinctions between art and worship, and introduces an ultimately self-defeating approach to beauty.

How does this view of receptivity inform a Christian spirituality in pursuit of God's beauty? The study now considers the religious equivalent of aesthetic receptivity.

7.4.1.3. Christian Spirituality Equivalents

From the point of view of Christian spirituality, receptivity has a recognisable biblical term: *humility*. Humility is the soul's denial of pre-eminence, taking its rightful place as a creature, a child, and a servant. Humility is a posture of surrender to reality, admitting that life is not about pleasing and glorifying oneself (Ps. 115:1).

God is not an object to be used for humankind's own ends. God does not have instrumental value for some higher or other end. He possesses absolute value, and unless those that seek him desire him for himself, they cannot apprehend him. God must be loved for himself. God's beauty must not be loved as a means to some other end. Contemplation of God is complete surrender to the being God is, laying aside one's own preconceptions, interests, and associations. The encounter with God is one of surrender to his revelation of himself. Anything less is latent idolatry: desiring to find ourselves, or an image of God convenient to ourselves, in the encounter with God.

Seeking God must be sharply distinguished from amusement and entertainment, where ephemeral feelings and whimsical passions are the goal and measure of success. If God is to be contemplated, one's eyes cannot be upon individual or private comfort with the experience, but upon the qualities and attributes of God, however comfortable or threatening they may be.

Similarly, in Christian spirituality, a response of pleasure in God, but not primarily *in oneself finding pleasure in God*, represents an extension of humility, which is joy, gratitude, and adoration. This is merely enjoyment of God for who he is, not as an instrument to some other end.

Conversely, a response of detached "worship" of God, where supposedly all personal pleasure is to be shunned and never sought, represents a species of pride. When this happens, the worshipper begins to change places with God, from beneficiary to benefactor. This misguided patronising of God is what the author mocks in Psalm 50:8–14, reminding Israel that the commanded sacrifices were not to meet a need in God. Worship that avoids a shallow narcissism can veer into the opposite ditch: pride in how stoically and joylessly it offers God worship.

A valid aesthetic mode begins with receptive perception. One can tentatively suggest that a valid pursuit of God's beauty likewise begins with a humble and teachable perception of God.

7.4.2. Immediate Response

Witvliet (1996:36) describes the next stage of the aesthetic experience, immediate response, as "immediate, unpremeditated, almost instinctive". A response to what is perceived is essential to the aesthetic experience. Art is not an object but an activity, "an engagement between the affective consciousness and self-contained, significantly structured objects" (Johnson, 2002:126).

This response is usually an affective response before it is a rational one. Beauty, or sublimity, has immediate psychological effects, such as awe, reverence, and a feeling of one's significance in the cosmos, according to Stiles (1997:197). Art can project an affective world corresponding to some region of human experience (Wynn, 2000:323). The art points towards the sacred, echoing what one would feel in the world of the artist while one is still in one's own, allowing one to participate in it before one is there (p. 325).

This immediate response is not the final judgement of the soul upon what it is encountering, only its initial reaction. To take this superficial reaction as determinative of something's beauty or value is the mistake of the immature, untrained, or even obtuse. As a later section will demonstrate, some of a person's preferences need to be re-formed, so that future encounters with similar beauty will produce a more fitting immediate reaction. This ability to recognise excellence is seemingly what Paul has in mind when he prayed for the Philippians:

> And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God (1:9–11)

Immediate responses are not carefully planned responses, and are therefore indicative of the already-formed character. When Christlike character is present, the more or less immediate responses are those that love what God loves and hate what God hates.

After perception and immediate response, the process of interpretation begins.

7.4.3. Interpretation

A work of art communicates meaning, and meaning is to must be interpreted. Meaningful art explains aspects of the world, and the experience of being human. Dorter (1990:37) believes art expresses truth at four levels of experience: 1) emotions, 2) cultural values, 3) sensory experience, and 4) the elusive significance of one's experience.

Art embodies meaning by using materials that can be perceived by the senses. Nichols (1980:98–100) claims it does this through two means. First, it uses an iconology, a pattern of symbols analogous to a language. Second, this iconology possesses a "singular affective quality". If rightly approached, the artwork will express these affections. The ability to decode and rightly interpret this symbolism is sometimes called the faculty of *imagination*.

Imagination has the current popular association of unreal flights of fancy. Chesterton (2012:78) helps clarify the full meaning of the word:

> But imaginative does not mean imaginary. It does not follow that it is all what the moderns call subjective, when they mean false. Every true artist does feel, consciously or unconsciously, that he is touching transcendental truths; that his images are shadows of things seen through the veil. In other words, the natural mystic does know that there is something there; something behind the clouds or within the trees; but he believes that the pursuit of beauty is the way to find it; that imagination is a sort of incantation that can call it up.

Imagination is then the form of interpretation that is noticeably active during the aesthetic experience and is in fact active at other times. At least two interpretive functions of imagination are apparent: cognitive interpretation and symbolic seeing.

7.4.3.1. Imagination as Interpretive Cognition.

In the first place, imagination is the interpretive lens of all intelligent perception. Moral imagination is the tool by which people perceive reality concretely. Since there is no such thing as a brute fact, the imagination is that faculty

> which gives form to thought—not necessarily uttered form, but form capable of being uttered in shape or in sound, or in any mode upon which the senses can lay hold. It is, therefore, that faculty in man which is likest to the prime operation of

the power of God, and has, therefore, been called the creative faculty, and its exercise creation (MacDonald, 1895:2).

By imagination humans make something: they make sense of the world. Imagination is not restricted to the aesthetic realm, but is operative in every sphere of human activity (MacDonald, 1895:6). Enlightenment epistemology *teaches* that man is a *tabula rasa*, recording sensory experiences in a more or less direct fashion. Those who reject such a view understand imagination as both creative and receptive: receiving sensory impressions from the world, and creatively synthesising and assigning them meaning. Wegener explains:

> What is given in sensation and association is shaped, ordered by complex operations of selection, discrimination, extension, interpolation, and the like into something perceived. So habitual, so pervasive, and normally so successful are these functions of discriminating and synthesising attention that it is only rarely that we may find the world dissolved momentarily into a congeries of minimally organised elements which we referred to as visual fields, auditory stimuli, or streams of images—and even these are already to some extent discriminated (1992:40).

In other words, interpretation through imagination happens so habitually that it is often confused with perception. In light of this, one should not think of the four stages of the aesthetic experience as four discrete moments in time; instead, perception, immediate expression, and imaginative interpretation happen almost simultaneously, while retaining a logical order.

McIntyre (1987:159–166) explains that the imagination is the whole mind working in certain ways. He suggests some of the ways that imagination is a form of interpretation of all reality. The imagination selects from the mass of material with which the mind is ordinarily confronted and concentrates upon the salient and significant features.

Imagination synopsises and integrates all it selects. It creatively and constructively puts together diverse elements into unitary form.

In other words, interpretation is fundamental to any perception and comprehension of reality. A brute fact is a mute fact. All facts are interpreted. Weaver (1948:20) argues that a rational being's goal should be to arrive at "an imaginative picture of what is otherwise a brute empirical fact", giving significance to the sound and fury of his life. A larger, integrated, interpretive understanding of the world is what imagination supplies.

Edmund Burke described imagination thus:

The mind of man possesses a sort of creative power of its own; either in representing at pleasure the images of things in the order and manner in which they were received by the senses, or in combining those images in a new manner, and according to a different order (*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, 17).

Imagination can, while remaining entirely rational, unite phenomena and noumena (Milbank, 2011:44).

Other prominent Christians have thought this way. Ward (2011:62) claims that C. S. Lewis saw imagination as the "organ of meaning" and the "prius of truth". Jonathan Edwards saw the aesthetic sense or the imagination as being not a separate faculty, but the active tendency of the entire self that determines the direction of all the functions of the human person (Lee, 1988:150). He saw the imagination as functioning before the inclinations or affections—the imagination reveals the relations between ideas; the inclination takes pleasure in them (p. 156).

In summary, imagination is that act of the human being that can filter, integrate, synthesise, and give meaningful cognitive shape to all that is perceived. Without interpretation, raw sensory data would remain a meaningless welter of impressions.

Imagination is then not unique to the aesthetic experience, though perception of art makes one more conscious of its workings.

7.4.3.2. Imagination as Symbolic Seer

More than simply cognitive interpretation of empirical data, imagination is the capacity to see beyond and behind the sensory data. Imagination is perceptive of aspects of reality hidden from the unimaginative (McIntyre, 1987:159–66). Imagination may well be a form, or perhaps the essence of, what it is to be made in the image of God, for imagination can recognise all of creation as a work of art and symbol, the visible revealing the invisible (Milbank, 2011:34). It can see analogues of transcendent truths in immanent reality. In so doing, the imagination awakens a "homesickness for the absolute" (2011:44). MacDonald explains why this is possible:

> For the world is—allow us the homely figure—the human being turned inside out.
> All that moves in the mind is symbolized in Nature. Or, to use another more philosophical, and certainly not less poetic figure, the world is a sensuous analysis of humanity, and hence an inexhaustible wardrobe for the clothing of human thought. Take any word expressive of emotion—take the word emotion itself—and you will find that its primary meaning is of the outer world. In the swaying of the woods, in the unrest of the "wavy plain," the imagination saw the picture of a well-known condition of the human mind; and hence the word *emotion* (1895:9).

Imagination does this through analogy. Analogies provide bridges from the known to the unknown. "This is like that", says the analogy. Analogy is fundamental to aesthetic experience and is basic to one's knowledge of God (Clowney, 1993:249). Whether it is the system of signs contained within music, poetry, painting, sculpture, or whether it is the word pictures of Scripture, analogy enables the subject to see beyond and behind material experience.

Several "invisible" worlds open up to the imaginative seer. First, the world described by the artist, with its experiences and affections, is a mini-cosmos that a subject may enter and experience. Second, the worlds of the past and future can be seen and experienced through imagination—seeing what was, and what may be, though it is not visible in the present. Third, the worlds of what is absent to us: what is happening to others in other places, other places on Earth, or in the universe. Imagination enables understanding the landscape of Antarctica, the terrain of Mars, or the state of one's relatives in another city. Fourth, worlds that are not but may be or should be: perfect worlds, fantastic worlds, transformed worlds, the world as it might be (McIntyre, 1987:159–66). Change, hope, longing, and desire are all impossible without this seeing function of imagination.

In light of these two descriptions of imagination, it should be clear why imagination is fundamental to the aesthetic experience. Art is both a sensory experience needing interpretation and synthesis, and a set of analogies needing decoding. Imagination enables not only the recognition of what is being experienced, but an understanding of symbolic significance that transports beyond the work of art itself. If art and religion are deeply linked, one should then find in Christian spirituality an equivalent for imagination.

7.4.3.3. Christian Spirituality Equivalents

If imagination interprets and lays hold of reality, whether seen or unseen, the corresponding biblical trait would be faith. Faith is the "substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). Faith understands reality in a certain way, and believes in unseen realities that shape what is seen. Faith is not restricted to believers, though unbelievers may eschew the term. Without faith, the human mind cannot enter into existence at all, even at the most elementary point (Lynch, 1973:60).

Of course, when it comes to spiritual realities, imagination is indispensable. Faith seeks to understand the divine harmony that integrates and explains all of reality

(MacDonald, 1895:35). Faith is not so much a one-time burst of belief, as it is the pervasive way of looking at the world, the interpretive lens that refers all sensory and intellectual data to the revelation of Scripture. As God reveals himself to the individual, the imagination or faith is shaped, so as to continue to understand God, the world and self in a particular way. Green explains:

> God does not appear, on this interpretation, to address the intellect, the feelings, or the conscience separately; and it does not require a subsequent theory to relate the various human faculties to each other and to revelation. Imagination is not so much a particular faculty as the integration in human experience of the various human abilities and potentialities (1989:151).

The world of God's beauty, which is real and yet not immediately apparent, opens up to the eye of faith and imagination: the world of heaven, the accounts of the past and future in Scripture, the world of God's work in other places besides one's immediate surroundings, the world as it might be if God's will were done on Earth as it is in Heaven.

If God as Beautiful is to be pursued, the faculty or posture of faith, understood at least in part as imagination, must be used. God's beauty must be considered, not as some kind of direct sensory experience, but as an integrative, synoptic, interpretive understanding of what God reveals about himself and the world. Imagination is not creative flights of fancy, but a correct interpretation of both general revelation and special revelation, both of which are analogous in nature. God's use of symbols, both in Scripture, and in the created order, function as analogies to "see" God's unseen beauty.

A Christian spirituality that pursues God's beauty will recognise that faith is far more than mental assent to propositional statements. Faith is a whole-soul embrace of truth that both sees and enables the observing of God's beauty in the Word and the world.

Interpretation leads to the fourth and most complex aspect of the aesthetic experience: evaluation.

7.4.4. Evaluation

Once an artwork has been interpreted, it is inevitable that one forms a judgement about the work. Everyone makes aesthetic judgements; some are more conscious of this process, and art critics make a living from doing so (Witvliet, 1996:38).

To understand the matter of evaluation and judgement, several themes must be considered. First, in a culture of aesthetic relativism, the importance of judgement must be established. Second, a suggested method of evaluating the beauty of an artwork should be set forth. Third, the question of good and bad taste in people's judgements must be examined, and reasons suggested for widely differing tastes.

7.4.4.1. The Importance of Judgement

Judgement is necessary once one has interpreted the meaning of an artwork. Since meaning is always present, an interpretation of meaning must necessarily lead to an evaluation. Is it true? It is false? Is it trivial? Is it banal? Is it misleading? Is it manipulative? Is it ennobling? Is it transformative? In short, is it good and beautiful?

To refer to an object as beautiful or ugly is to refer to the quality of the object, while also expressing a positive or negative response to it and suggesting that others ought to respond in the same way. Such an evaluation expresses a threefold judgement: a judgement on the object's form, a judgement on its pleasurability, and a judgement that others should judge similarly (Goldman, 1990:23).

Judgement is important to a Christian because it is sin that prefers the epistemological, moral and aesthetic relativism that nullifies judgement. "Sins like sloth, lust, and pride may play a part, but most fundamentally our attraction to aesthetic relativism suggests an aversion to God's glory" (Munson & Drake, 2014:§337–338). If humans are indeed fallen, then they may be prone to deceive themselves about pleasure. Humans may like what they should not like, and hate what they should love. Munson and Drake state that postmoderns dislike beauty and want to conflate it with preference so that

they do not have to think about what their pleasures mean or signify (2014:§266).

Eliot (1964:233) reminds those desirous of good literary judgement that they need to be acutely aware of two things at once: "what we like," and "what we *ought* to like". These two levels of evaluation are crucial to distinguish. The first level has to do with a subject's preferences. The second level has to do with the merits of a work. It is not inherently elitist to believe that some aesthetic judgements are better than others. Indeed, every artist, in striving for excellence, makes that assumption. An honest evaluation may recognise that a work of art is good, even though the subject finds no personal pleasure in it. This honest assessment allows those experiencing art to admit where their own preferences are perhaps immature or deformed, where a work appeals to parts of people that are underdeveloped in them. Horton (2017:8) states: "Whereas the immature approve of what they like and disapprove of what they dislike, the mature are able to approve what they dislike and disapprove what they like, or are inclined to like". Distinguishing these two levels of evaluation is both extremely difficult to consistently maintain, and necessary for any informed discussion over the beauty or merit of art (Witvliet, 1996:39).

Once this distinction is made, it follows that aesthetic discernment is something that can be learnt through diligent study, and even repentance. Just as no one is born wise, so no one is naturally aesthetically wise (Munson & Drake, 2014:§314). Failing to see the necessity of growth in aesthetic discernment will keep people intractably committed to personal preferences, defending their likes and dislikes as if they are essential to their very identities. This explains why so many Christians have taught on the need for receptive perception, as discussed in a previous section. Without surrender to an artwork, one cannot see its merits; one sees only oneself and one's own reactions. If those reactions are immature, one may prevent oneself from moving towards greater and more profound beauties, confusing superficial responses with the intrinsic truth, goodness, or beauty of a work (or lack thereof).

7.4.4.2. The Process of Judgement

How does the judgement of beauty proceed? Aesthetic judgement cannot always be fully expressed in words. More often, the process of judgement can be demonstrated, or pointed out, through repeated acts of comparative looking and listening (Brown, 2000:§3955). Often the attraction to beauty is "ineffable and escapes analysis" (Milbank, 2003:1). Nevertheless, several Christian authors give helpful evaluative questions.

Barrs (2013:§778–918) suggests eleven criteria to determine whether an work of art represents God's truth, goodness and beauty.

- First, we need to ask whether giftedness from God is evident in the work.

- Second, we should look for the dedicated development of the artist's gift.

- Third, we should find a commitment by the artist to use his gifts for others as well as for his own fulfilment.

- Fourth, there will be humble submission to the rules of one's discipline, respect for its traditions, and a readiness to find freedom of expression within these forms and within the forms of God's created order.

- Fifth, one must ask, is this work of art true, true to the moral realities of the world, as understood by Christians?

- Sixth, one needs to bring any work of art before the bar of moral criteria.

- Seventh, one must ask questions about appropriate continuity between the form and the content of a given work of art.

- Eighth, in art as in any other area of human endeavour, one needs to look for technical excellence.

- Ninth, one should have a concern for how well a work of art reflects the integrity of the artist.

- Tenth, one should expect to see integrity in the work itself.

- Eleventh, one should be aware that simple entertainment is fine in almost all art forms, for God has created us to enjoy his gifts and to enjoy one another's gifts.

Caldecott (2009:32) writes that Christopher Alexander trained people to test the level of their response to objects by asking the following six questions:

1. Which is the more attractive of these two objects?

2. Why do you like that which you like best?

3. Which gives you the most wholesome feeling?

4. Which of them better represents your whole self?

5. If you had a choice, which would you spend eternity with?

6. Which of them would you be happier to offer to God?

Christian judgement of art should be able to find its justification in Scripture. Yount (1995:86–87) gives four Scriptures as principles to evaluate music in worship:

Principle 1: "You shall have no other gods before Me" (Exod. 20:3).

Principle 2: "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40).

Principle 3: "I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding" (1 Cor. 14:15).

Principle 4: "Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ" (Col. 2:8).

Hodges (1995:73–74) suggests three principles of evaluating an object of art. First, it must be understood that Aquinas' proposed qualities of beauty (unity, proportion, clarity) describe the object, not the listener. Second, to understand how these three relate to an art form, the listener must have some understanding of the art form. Third, understanding

beauty as something beyond one's own preferences helps one see what is good even when one is not pleased by it.

These suggestions by no means exhaust the various approaches to evaluating a work of art. They sample the ways that humans have wrestled with the difficult task of separating beauty from personal preference, and provide suggested principles that allow beholders to go beyond themselves to see what is there.

It would be wishful thinking to believe that, should these evaluative criteria be applied, Christians would obtain universal consensus on what is beautiful, good, or true. Instead, the debate over beauty represents vastly differing judgements of beauty. In art, these differing judgements are sometimes considered under the term "taste".

7.4.4.3. The Question of Taste

Although the term *taste* is today associated with elitist aestheticism, the topic of taste was a primary one for aesthetic theory in the eighteenth century among writers such as Hume, Hutcheson, Shaftesbury, and Immanuel Kant.

In the same century, Edmund Burke defined taste in *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful* as a complex of three factors: sensory perception, the pleasures of imagination, and the conclusions of the reasoning faculty (*Philosophical Enquiry*, 24). Taste attends to "the formal, expressive, and imaginative qualities of the aesthetic object, which please in the very process of being perceived" (Brown, 2000:§1126–1127). Taste is the ability to rightly discern and respond to aesthetic qualities. "[I]t has three elements or facets: perceiving, enjoying, and judging" (2000:§58–59).

If this is true, it is possible for taste to be better or worse, more discerning or less, acute or dull. Moore (2004:170) suggests that "aesthetic taste is a spiritual gift and a discipline that must be cultivated like any other if it is to serve the purposes of God's beauty in our lives". Taste goes beyond preference, for to call something beautiful is to say

more than just, "I like it", but to "make the claim public in some way" (Brown, 2000:§2814–2817).

Taste may even be sinful. Brown (1989:152–154) suggests four forms of sinful taste. First, there is the Aesthete, who glories in creation, but not in the Creator. Second, one finds the Philistine, who cannot appreciate anything artistic or aesthetic, things which "cannot be translated into practical, moral or religious terms". Third, one meets the Intolerant, who elevates his own standards to the level of absolutes. Fourth, there is the Indiscriminate, whose radical aesthetic relativism embraces all aesthetic phenomenon without discriminating between the superficially appealing and that which has lasting value.

A difference in taste is more than a difference in preference. A difference in preference represents the symptom of differing taste, not its very essence. Differing taste produces differing preferences, but those preferences are not the sum and substance of differing taste. Differing tastes may, in the end, "correspond to the difference between two sorts of beauty which themselves differ in kind" (Newton, 1950:18). That is, bad taste is a taste for bad things, the love of what ought not to be loved.

This judgement is highly controversial in a postmodern age so some caveats are in order. First, taste is rooted in a broader cultural context, and cultures are not universal. Second, judgements of taste do not function like logical theorems, valid scientific inferences or valid moral claims. Taste can, contra the Roman maxim, be a matter of legitimate dispute. An element of freedom is built into the pursuit of beauty (Scruton, 2009:141).

With all that said, some form of consensus should be sought, otherwise no discussions of beauty could take place. How does one explain differing tastes in beauty? Four explanations are offered below.

1) Aesthetic Maturity

A common view is that art is a matter of spontaneous pleasure and immediate delight. The idea that one's ability to discern beauty is a discipline that can be practised is unfamiliar to many Christians. This has not always been the case. Brown writes:

> Christian theologians were once well acquainted with the idea that the best art often delights only with difficulty, and through difficulty. Jonathan Edwards wrote, "Hidden beauties are commonly by far the greatest, because the more complex a beauty is, the more hidden is it." Augustine, likewise, in *The Trinity* and *On Christian Teaching*, celebrated the aesthetic rewards of difficult art, including sacred allegory and scripture, whose veiled meanings in the harder passages both ward off the undisciplined and attract the devoted (2000:§3981–3984).

The idea that art should be immediately accessible, familiar, and gratifying partly comes from enculturation in an age of commodified entertainment and pervasive amusements. Such enculturation, however, does not change reality: beauty is to be discerned, and discernment can be developed.

Even David Hume, as radical a critic as he was of moral or aesthetic theory not grounded in empiricism, spoke of the need for qualified critics who could find general principals of approbation or blame (Witvliet, 1996:46). Hume writes in *Of the Standard of Taste* (1757) that,

> though the principles of taste be universal, and, nearly, if not entirely the same in all men; yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty (#23).

What kind of person is "qualified"? Hume answers,

> Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true

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standard of taste and beauty" (*Of the Standard*, #23).

Of course, only people with good taste could recognise judges of good taste, so how does one escape circularity? Hume suggested that such people "are easily to be distinguished in society, by the soundness of their understanding and the superiority of their faculties" (*Of the Standard*, #27). Of course, Hume meant the polite, literate, civilized, and financially at ease of his day. But even the views of the aesthetic elite must be corroborated by a group of peers; their verdicts must be joint (*Of the Standard*, #23). All this shows that even an empiricist such as Hume recognised that much in the debate over taste came down to expertise, not mere preference.

Edmund Burke saw the cause of bad taste as a defect of judgment due to lack of natural intelligence, or a lack of training and exercise in judgement. He added that ignorance, inattention, prejudice, rashness, levity, obstinacy, and all other passions that pervert the judgement, will pervert the ability to perceive beauty (*Philosophical Enquiry,* 24). Taste, according to Burke, improves as judgement improves, by growth in knowledge, and better attention to the object, and by frequent exercise (*Philosophical Enquiry*, 27).

These writers take it for granted that taste can be developed, improved, and refined. By frequent practice, regular comparison, and by hearing the views of critics, one can grow in aesthetic sensitivity, and thereby mature aesthetically. This growth produces the very circularity that Hume speaks of. Beauty is "what the reliable critic discerns, and the reliable critic is the one who discerns what is beautiful" (Scruton, 2009:146).

Taste engages much of the human soul. It perceives, appreciates, and appraises. Because it requires "thought and imagination, sense and sensibility, it is an integral part of our humanness, our loves, our existence as embodied and living souls" (Brown, 2000:§2899–2904). If so, aesthetic maturity must be closely related to other dimensions of morality and maturity, including responsiveness, wisdom, love, and discernment. An

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overall maturity of character is related to aesthetic maturity, and the corollary is that aesthetic immaturity is a defect in one's overall maturity.

Some differences in taste can be ascribed to the aesthetic maturity or immaturity of the subjects who are viewing the objects of art. If, as the Greeks said, *Beautiful things are hard* (*Republic*, IV, 435c), one would expect the mature to be able to patiently and carefully discern such beauties, whereas the immature and impatient will pass them over.

2) The Narcissism of Sentimentalism and Kitsch

A second reason for differing taste is explained by the allure of sentimentalism in art. Since art provokes an affective response, some art manipulates and attempts to overwhelm with a gross manipulation of the emotions. Art that trades in sentimentalism is sometimes called *kitsch*, for it cheapens the aesthetic experience by giving a shallow substitute.

Milan Kundera, author of *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*, wrote this much-cited description of kitsch:

> Kitsch causes two tears to flow in quick succession. The first tear says: how nice to see children running on the grass! The second tear says: How nice to be moved, together with all mankind, by children running on the grass! It is the second tear that makes kitsch kitsch (as quoted by Begbie, 2007:§475–477).

When in the grip of sentimentalism, people are not moved by the beauty of the object, people are moved by how moved they are. They feel deeply the depth of their feelings; they fall in love with their love. The art becomes merely something used to obtain what seems to them a moving experience. The only way this is possible is when the qualities of the object perceived possess only superficial schemas of beauty that are instantly recognisable and provoke familiar emotions. Objects of true beauty resist this treatment; they insist on one's submission to them; they insist on honest scrutiny. But as Scruton

(2009:191) shows

> Kitsch, the case of Disney reminds us, is not an excess of feeling but a deficiency. The world of kitsch is in a certain measure a heartless world, in which emotion is directed away from its proper target towards sugary stereotypes, permitting us to pay passing tribute to love and sorrow without the trouble of feeling them.

Sentimental art evades or trivialises evil, presenting a fiction of an unfallen present world, and so allows its viewers to wallow in pleasant feelings. The sentimentalist is emotionally self-indulgent (Begbie, 2007:§437), loving, grieving, hating, pitying, not for the sake of another, but for the sake of enjoying love, grief, hate, and pity. Sentimental art denies the need for sacrifice in approaching beauty, but in so doing deprives feeling of depth and reality.

Sayers (1964:17) terms such art "amusement art" and notes that what people get from it "is the enjoyment of the emotions which usually accompany experience without us having had the experience". Nothing in such an aesthetic experience reveals people to themselves; it merely enhances and inflates an image of themselves as they fancy themselves to be.

Kaplan (1966) gives one of the more extensive treatments of this kind of art in his article "The Aesthetics of the Popular Arts". Kaplan identifies at least four serious problems with sentimental art. These will become important in distinguishing true worship from the false.

First, sentimental art trades in familiarity for the sake of ease. In sentimental art, the forms are stereotyped. What is a stereotype? It is not a true form, but merely a blueprint, an index, a digest. Since the consumer of sentimental art wants recognisable fare, sentimental art omits whatever is outside the limited horizon of what one knows already. It reduces what actually is into what the consumer would pre-judge it to be. It

crystallizes the consumer's prejudices: reducing life not into a reflection of what is, but into what he or she already believes it to be (1966:354).

In short, sentimental art is *simple* in the sense of being easy. One cannot look to it for a fresh vision, or turn to it for new directions, or find unexplored meanings. Kitsch entertains by trading in familiarity and by trafficking in familiar emotion. It does not need to be excellent in itself; it simply needs to be effective in bringing certain feelings to mind, evoking past satisfactions, producing nostalgia, and in providing occasions for reliving experiences. In other words, the emotions one feels with sentimental art are not expressed by the particular song, painting or poem; they are merely associated with them. Consumers of sentimental art lose themselves, not in the work itself, but in pools of memory (1966:357).

Second, the consumers of sentimental art have no demands placed on them. They look only for outcomes, and are impatient with development or unfolding. They are tracing mere shapes, apprehending the work in a second-hand sense, but not receiving the work for itself.. Form in good art is precisely what invites true participation, creative perception, and diligent interpretation. Good form places demands on its recipients. Its form even arouses a certain amount of fear and tension: one must accept ambiguity and plunge in, exposing oneself to the possibility of change. One will emerge from an encounter with good art somewhat changed, with one's views adjusted, one's understanding broadened, one's desires shaped (p. 356).

Kaplan argues that this is precisely the encounter that humans want to avoid, and which popular art enables this avoidance.. Instead of perception, there is mere recognition (p. 355). Discrimination is cut off, as consumers instantly recognise the stereotype. Since they instantly recognise the materials, the materials of popular art are only instrumental, and without inherent value.

Third, sentimental art provides an emotional experience without perspective (p. 358). The consumers of such art feel, but they feel without understanding. They have little perspective on their feelings; they merely wallow in them. Serious art deepens feeling, giving it content and meaning, providing a mirror for the mind. One's own emotions become meaningful as one sees their details, and as one understands the interconnections that give them meaning. Sayers (1964:15) explains that art reveals a certain "mental or spiritual experience—sin, grief, joy, sorrow, worship". Because the experience is now more carefully articulated, the subject more fully understands his own experience. The subject now truly recognises the expression: it is no longer something happening to him, but something happening in him. Sayers sees in this creative act a trinity: "Experience, expression and recognition; the unknowable reality in the experience; the Image of that reality known in its expression; and power in the recognition; the whole making up the single and indivisible act of creative mind" (1964:15).

Kaplan says, "Popular art wallows in emotion while art transcends it, giving us understanding and thereby mastery of our feelings" (1966:358). Sentimental art is, once again, narcissistic, making one's feelings the subject matter, and indeed the goal of the aesthetic experience. Consumers of sentimental art are not drawn out of themselves, but driven deeper into loneliness. They love what they know; therefore they love what is familiar. Popular art is always familiar, always reminds them of what they already know, and is therefore deeply attractive to the laziest parts of their souls.

Serious art has depth, while kitsch is correspondingly shallow. It leaves human feelings just as it finds them, formless and immature. It evokes them so quickly that they have no root in themselves. Kaplan writes, "They are so lightly triggered that there is no chance to build up a significant emotional discharge" (1966:359). Sayers likewise says that such art "dissipates the energies of the audience and pours them down the drain" (1964:11). This is what Kaplan says is most distinctive of sentimental art. Sentimentality

has a deficiency of feeling, words without weight, promises without fulfilment. Paradoxically, sentimentality is also excessive, abandoning emotional restraint. Kaplan writes, "Sensibility becomes sentimental when there is some disproportion between the response and its object, when the response is indiscriminate and uncontrolled…Sentimentality is loving something more than God does" (1966:360).

Art is sentimental not when it calls for intense feeling, but when it calls for more than the artist or the audience can understand or apply significantly to the object. There is simply not enough to be understood, and this vacuity of meaning is intentional. The "tear-jerker" elicits tears, but why one weeps is outside the occasion and beyond one's perception.

Sentimentality moves in a closed circle around the self (Kaplan, 1966:360). Such art only has significance in light of the viewer. He sees himself in its materials, with the art providing easily recognizable prototypes to project himself upon. While good art calls one to empathise and give oneself to the aesthetic experience, it rewards one by transforming the self. Sentimental art takes people as they are and leaves them the same, with the illusion of having been deeply affected. In truth, they have felt deeply, but only in orbit around themselves, drawing out of them what they already know and love.

Sentimental art's self-centeredness hollows and flattens people, emptying them of perspective on their own feelings. In essence, in becoming emptier people, they are becoming more bored through the medium that was supposed to alleviate their boredom.

Fourth, sentimental art provides a childish escape. All art is "escapist". That is, all art enables a temporary escape from reality. Serious art is different to sentimental art in how it enables this escape, and for what reason. Real art may show the world that is, or even the world as it might be. Sentimental art simply shows the world as consumers would have it. Sentimental art may be said to suffer from too little fantasy as from too much: it simply does not do enough with its materials (1966:362). Instead of working far enough to

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confer reality on its products, it stops short, letting its prettified depictions of life-as-we'd-like-it-to-be substitute for the real.

The difference between real art and effects can also be spoken of as the difference between imagination and fantasy. Whereas real art appeals to the imagination, effects elicit mere fantasy. "Both fantasy and imagination concern unrealities; but while the unrealities of fantasy penetrate and pollute this world", the unrealities of the "imagination exist in a world of their own, a world in which [people] wander freely and in a condition of sympathetic detachment" (Scruton, 2009:104).

Real art helps its participants to escape, not from reality itself but from their own unimaginative experience of it. They are returned more aware, more alive to the profundity of life in God's world. Popular art simply gives pleasure with the illusion of true imagination. Its consumers do not escape to reality, for no reality is even depicted. The line between fantasy and reality is blurred.

Real art gives those who receive it a kind of objectification, in which they are able to see themselves in perspective. The self and the world are understood rightly. They see people as God sees them, with divine objectivity. Sentimental art is all-too human, and ultimately childish. Its consumers want pleasure without change, an escape from pain and ugliness without altering a thing within. And so they escape into non-existent worlds where they are already experiencing pleasured and existing as beautiful. Sentimental art turns its back on a world it has never known (Kaplan, 1966:363).

The problem is not the symbolism in popular art, for all art makes use of the symbolic. Instead, popular art attractively packages the world by glossing and varnishing it. It prettifies, delighting with sound, shape and colour in overpoweringly sweet doses. The escape comes through shutting out the reality, and then envisaging a world in which its consumers are the heroes, the overcomers, the desired lovers, the powerful, beautiful people. It is a world of man's own making, where everything is selected and placed in

one's own interest. Defects are polished and characters flattened, lest they evoke pity instead of soothing sentimentality. One quickly recognises the stereotypes and fills them with the feelings one knows he or she is supposed to have.

Once again, sentimental art is an exercise in narcissism. It assures that prejudged values are correct, and that very narrow perspectives are the correct ones. All art is illusory, but serious art aims to return one to reality, being illusory without being deceptive. Sentimental art is a "tissue of falsehoods" (Kaplan, 1966:361).

In summary, sentimental art appeals to human vanity, self-centredness, and egotism. Popular art is where humans go to indulge the love of self, and to escape into worlds of their own making. Popular art trades in the familiar, the easy, the shallow, and the childish, because these appeal to what is most selfish in all.

Sentimentalism is then worse than an aesthetic *faux pas*, it trades in falsehoods. It distorts the realities to which it claims to allude. It cannot generate action appropriate to what it claims to represent, for it falsifies the experience from the start, giving instead a placebo emotion.

For this reason, sentimentality is a form of art hostile to what Christianity purports to teach: a denial of self, so as to worship the glory of Another. Harries (1993:60) goes as far as saying that "Kitsch, in whatever form, is an enemy of the Christian faith and must be exposed as such". Kitsch is not only an aesthetic failure, but a moral and spiritual failure, too. Christ's beauty is not a sentimental prettiness, and therefore sentimental art has the potential of leading into idolatry. Scruton similarly claims that kitsch is not primarily an artistic phenomenon, but a disease of faith (2009:191).

Differences in taste are explained not only by differing levels of aesthetic maturity, but by the human propensity to prefer what is easy, familiar, and flattering. Here the difference is not mere preference, but whether art will be used selfishly or sacrificially, whether it will be an act of learning or an act of narcissism, whether it will be a childish

encounter with ourselves or a receptive encounter with reality. Since Scripture describes man's propensity for self-deception, and his inclination towards self-worship, it is no surprise that sentimental art is popular and that unreflective people consider it their preference.

3) Cultural Formation and Deformation

Taste is never shaped in isolation. Art occurs within a community, within a tradition (Witvliet, 1996:26). T. S. Eliot's essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) demonstrates that artistic creation does not take place in a vacuum. Artists inherit forms and conventions from the past upon which they build, or from which they depart. If a tradition is thought of as a culture stretched over time, then artists are dependent upon culture for their artistic creations, whether they perpetuate or innovate.

Taste is no different. Taste is "culturally shaped, and likewise evolves in relation to living traditions" (Brown, 2000:§364).

Culture can be defined as T. S. Eliot suggested, "the incarnation of a religion" (1949:27). At the heart of any culture is Richard Weaver's "metaphysical dream", its unspoken but ever dominant vision of ultimate reality. From this vision, it creates worship, art, jurisprudence, custom, and social order. Faulkner (1996:206) agrees that "culture is perhaps best defined as the collective behaviour (together with the resulting artefacts) of a society engaged in acting out (symbolizing) its most deeply held and cherished shared beliefs and convictions". Understood this way, culture is formative. As the composer, Julian Johnson, puts it,

> Culture is not something you choose: it confronts you with an objective force. To be sure, it is a composite product of individual consciousness and is amenable to our own work upon it, but it is far from being a matter of choice. Culture is no more a matter of choice than having two legs or being subject to gravity is; one can no more reject culture than reject electricity or weather (2002:117).

If culture is formative, one would expect most of human judgement to be shaped by example and exposure. A community of shared taste is the norming norm for aesthetic perception (Brown, 2000:§381–382). Tastes are first received before they are scrutinised or even challenged. People begin their lives as members of a culture and identify with its loves and hates; it is only later that they begin to question if they wish to continue to own all that the culture holds dear.

Were humans all still living in isolated folk cultures in which they were united by religion, language, and geographical region, this study would have to consider how different folk cultures have approached beauty, and how taste should be related cross-culturally. Even if folk culture were still predominant, Scruton (2009:142) reminds one that cultural variation does not imply the absence of cross-cultural universals, nor that those universals are not rooted in human nature, nor that they do not feed into human rational interests at a very fundamental level.

The peculiar difficulty faced by the Christian world in the current era is the fact that folk cultures are mostly extinct, and that mass culture has infiltrated nearly every place in the world. Dawson (1948:214) says of mass culture,

> [T]he new scientific culture is devoid of all positive spiritual content. It is an immense complex of techniques and specialisms without a guiding spirit, with no basis of common moral values, with no unifying spiritual aim…A culture of this kind is no culture at all in the traditional sense—that is to say it is not an order which integrates every side of human life in a living spiritual community.

This mass culture is driven by the commodification of all things, including religious and artistic artefacts, so that they become prostituted into the service of commerce. Faulkner (1996:206) sees the two most deeply held and cherished shared beliefs and values of mass culture transposed directly into the art forms of popular or sentimental art to be as follows:

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1. A belief in the individual's right to pursue self-satisfaction, self-fulfilment, and self-gratification.

2. Confidence in the potential of modern science to create for us an ever improving quality of life, coupled with a fascination with the technology that is the result of modem science.

The kind of art that most clearly corresponds to the first belief is what we disparagingly call *kitsch* (art that makes us feel good about feeling). The art most properly aligned with the second belief centres on, in the words of Calvin Johansson, "media, presentation and image".

To Faulkner's second point, Neil Postman (1985:10) adds that the medium is more like a metaphor, working by unobtrusive but powerful implication. A culture given over to popular taste will be one that emphasises what is more entertaining, such as exciting images, rather than text. When image dominates in a culture, a religion of the Word suffers.

In such a culture, taste is necessarily deformed, and such deformity reinforced. Indeed, only the mentality of the marketplace would define art as entirely a matter of individual choice, like products to be purchased and consumed. Only a member of mass culture would see an eclectic selection of cultural products as "personal style". "The equating of cultural choice with personal style signals the end of an understanding of culture as something related to objective spirit" (Johnson, 2002:117).

Mass culture does not, and perhaps cannot, communicate transcendent ideals. Its art forms, made as they are to sustain narcissistic interest, are not capable of sustaining the Christian vision of a holy, glorious, and beautiful God (Myers, 1989:182). A culture of easy listening and easy living leads to the atrophy of imagination, to simplistic sentiment, and to despairing sentiment (Vanhoozer, 2001:149).

When people are dominated by the sensibilities of mass or popular culture, it

deforms taste in all the directions that Christian aestheticians have warned against: using art instead of receiving it, taking immediate responses as the "truth" of the work, promoting aesthetic relativism, and creating an appetite for narcissistic art.

Differences in taste can certainly be credited to the shaping force of culture. To what extent a person is embedded in in mass culture will have a proportionate shaping influence on such a one's aesthetic taste.

4) Natural Preference

A fourth reason for differences in taste is simply the natural and differing preferences of individuals. Having accounted for aesthetic maturity, propensities to prefer what is selfishly easy and self-affirming, and the shaping influence of culture, what remains is the differing inclinations and interests of people. As Harries (1993:24–25) points out, "[T]here are many kinds of beauty and whilst all forms will be characterised by wholeness, harmony and radiance, they will have these attributes in different ways". If one then imagines a spectrum of truly beautiful things, one may still expect aesthetically mature people to find differing preferences within that spectrum.

Two caveats are in order. First, such differences are not put down to "personal style", a term which usually refers to an eclectic menagerie of beautiful and ugly, one which is supposedly immune from criticism simply because such a collection represents an individual's choice. Second, aesthetically mature people will be able to recognise why another object of beauty, while not one's own preference, has merit and should be judged to be beautiful, or conversely, disdain an object as unworthy, in spite of the fact that it may be preferred by oneself or a close companion. The focus is not on freedom to choose; the focus ought to be on supplying plausible justification for one's choices, giving warrant for one's loves, not expecting the fact that one loves something to be justification in itself for that love.

In summary, the question of good taste is not a simple one. Aesthetic maturity is needed, but relativism rules the day in our postmodern world. Narcissism, sentimentalism and kitsch provides an alluring and deforming effect on good taste. This bad taste is widely promoted through the media and structures of mass culture. Preference plays a role in explaining discrepancies over good taste, but preference has a far smaller role than aesthetic immaturity, loyalty to sentimental art, and cultural deformation.

How does this discussion of judging with good taste relate to Christian spirituality?

7.4.4.4. Christian Spirituality Equivalents

The fourth and final aspect of the aesthetic experience must be compared to the Christian virtue of discernment.

Christian love is itself an act of discernment or judgement. Love is a statement of worth, because it attaches desire and admiration to objects or persons and expresses pleasure in them. Love is to be purified by growth in knowledge, and in discerning judgement. Paul says so explicitly in Philippians 1:9–10: "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ".

Before and after Christians love something, they judge its value, and their pleasure in something declares their love of it. Psalm 29:2 describes worship as declaring God's value: "Give unto the LORD the glory due to His name; Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness".

Scripture calls upon Christians to first consider the qualities of something before attaching their love to it. "Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5:21–22). Knowledge and understanding combine to produce wisdom: discerning judgement. This evaluative pursuit of what is intrinsically good is precisely what true evaluation is after. Separating what one loves from what one ought to love is as

important in the Christian life as in art. In pursuing God's beauty, both in the Word and the world, a Christian is to be evaluating whether something reveals or distorts that beauty.

The question of taste is to be compared to discernment. Paul prays that when the Philippians' love is grown in knowledge and discernment, it will enable them to approve the things that are excellent. While the context may be dealing with relationships, the principle can certainly be extended. In other words, they will love what they ought to love, approve of what they ought to approve. They will be aesthetically mature. The writer of Hebrews describes the very same powers of discernment as the mark of the mature

> But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of
>
> use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:14).

Rightly ordered loves enable further good judgement and the love of the beautiful. One is reminded of Jonathan Edwards' idea that those with holy affections will love what is holy; those with a sensibility for God's beauty will perceive God's beauty, those beautified with holy affections will love God's beauty.

In short, the four explanations for differences over aesthetic taste correspond to differences in discernment.

First, the less aesthetically mature have less discernment. Aesthetic maturity is equivalent to other forms. As Brown (2000:§320–321) put it, "[T]aste at its most encompassing is no less crucial to religious life and faith than is intellectual understanding and moral commitment". One of the most unfortunate divisions brought about by Enlightenment's secularisation of beauty is that aesthetic sensibility need bear no relation to spiritual maturity. Loving God's beauty will grow in proportion to overall spiritual growth in Christlikeness and godly wisdom.

Second, sentimentalism and narcissism destroy the ability to judge wisely. As sentimentalism destroys taste, it also destroys wise and discerning love. Narcissism, shallowness, laziness and vanity are condemned in Scripture as sins, and all sins mar

fellowship with God (Prov. 26:12–16; 27:4; 1 Cor. 13:4–6; Phil. 2:1–4, 21; 2 Tim. 3:2–4). The same attitude that produces and consumes sentimental art will warp desire for God, for it will nurse infantile, and possibly idolatrous, notions of God. Sentimental love will love God as a means, and not as the end, and as an instrument for one's own feelings. Sentimental love will love its own love, will covet the feeling of its own worshipful feelings. Wisdom and discernment will recognise the allure of idolatrous self-love and of worship forms that make a graven image of its own emotions. Pursing God's beauty will mean eschewing selfish, narcissistic and shallow forms and methods of pursuing God, and the desire to know God through sacrifice and receptive teachability.

Third, as culture shapes taste, so wisdom is shaped in communities of wisdom. The fear of the Lord can be taught (Ps. 34:11). Likewise, Proverbs emphasises the importance of choosing wise company. "He who walks with wise men will be wise, But the companion of fools will be destroyed" (Prov. 13:20). "Evil company corrupts good habits" (1 Cor. 15:33) Christians are shaped by example and exposure as much as anyone else. Discernment within a community of reverence becomes a kind of catechism for discernment. "Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Heb. 13:7). Negatively, Christians are told to limit their exposure to the world system, by not loving it (1 John 2:15–17) or befriending it (Jas. 4:4). To the degree that mass culture represents forms of what God frowns upon, Christians should limit their exposure and participation in it. Paul counsels Christians to avoid being squeezed into the world's mould, and rather to be transformed by the renewing of their minds (Rom. 12:2). Christians cannot avoid mass culture, but they can avoid deeply identifying with its idols and sensibilities. Pursuing God's beauty will mean identifying with communities of wise judgement, and limiting exposure to that which dulls one to the glory of God.

Fourth, wise discernment will still be shaped by individual conscience. Two Christians committed to loving rightly, may choose differing convictions on certain doubtful matters.

> One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks" (Rom. 14:5–6).

Mature, self-denying, sober believers will still exercise preference, and will understand how differing preferences within a spectrum of what is good can still be pleasing to God. Pursuing God's beauty will mean acting from an informed conscience consecrated to God.

Christians are to evaluate beauty. Their evaluation is their love acting with discrimination, with self-denying humility, shaped by examples of ordinate love, and informed by conscience. This is the spiritual equivalent of aesthetic "good taste".

The methodology of art supplies Christian spirituality with a recognisable approach to apprehending God's beauty: humbly seeking God in self-denying surrender, interpreting God's analogies in his Word, and wisely judging what is truly excellent.

7.5. Conclusion

This chapter has considered the subjective aspect of God's beauty, the pursuing and experiencing of the beauty of God. To do so, it turned to that part of human life intimately concerned with a *methodology* of pursuing beauty: art. To find if this was a plausible association, seven ways that art and religion are overlapping pursuits were considered.

Christians borrowing from art's understanding of the aesthetic experience should not do so uncritically. Some post-Enlightenment art has postured as a surrogate religion, causing it to become either museum or concert-hall art, removed from worship and faith,

or to be looked to as that which will provide salvation, redemption and transcendent fulfilment. Such art, and its associated approaches, can have only passing interest for Christians in pursuit of God's beauty.

With those qualifications in place, the chapter considered the four aspects of the aesthetic experience: perception, immediate response, interpretation, and evaluation, and related them to Christian spirituality.

Perception is the initial encounter with the art object. Various Christian and non-Christian voices called for a receptive form of perception, for getting oneself out the way so as to receive the work for its merits. The notion of disinterested pleasure, if rightly understood, is merely an extension of this. The chapter considered that this receptivity is akin to humility. Pursuing God begins with self-denial, with the willingness to focus on God as the end and not as a means to be used.

Immediate response refers to the more or less spontaneous responses to a work of art, particularly in one's affections.

Interpretation was understood to be the act of understanding, synthesising, and comparing so as to understand what is being perceived through the imagination. Imagination was then compared to faith: the act by which a believer understands analogies in both special revelation and general revelation.

Evaluation was considered as the moment of judgement: judging both if one loves the object of art, and if one *ought* to love it. The chapter considered the importance of judgement, and it tackled the question of taste, seeing taste as necessary to evaluate good from bad. Four reasons for differing taste were given.

The analogue in Christian spirituality for this aesthetic evaluation is wise discernment. Wise discernment is developed in the same way that taste is developed: as Christian maturity grows, as selfish and childish ways are identified and abandoned, as

worldliness is eschewed and fellowship among likeminded Christians is fostered, and as conscience is informed and respected.

One of the unfortunate fruits of the Enlightenment is the tendency to regard the aesthetic experience as one separate from faith. In fact, if this chapter has demonstrated anything, it has shown that the aesthetic experience has a religious character, and the religious experience is aesthetic. Art requires humility, faith, and wisdom, just as Christian spirituality requires receptivity, imagination, and good judgement. These are not disparate experiences, except if one subscribes to the notions of non-religious art or artless religion.

Indeed, the aesthetic experience is actually the mode of perceiving the broadest and most universal things in life: beauty, values, persons, and ethics. As the next chapter will show, it may be the proper mode to receive any truth at all. Eliot (1949:29) wrote,

> Esthetic sensibility must be extended into spiritual perception, and spiritual perception must be extended into esthetic sensibility and disciplined taste before we are qualified to pass judgment upon decadence or diabolism or nihilism in art. To judge a work of art by artistic or by religious standards, to judge a religion by religious or artistic standards should come in the end to the same thing.

Pursuing God's beauty does not require the adoption of an unfamiliar or secular aesthetic mode of approach. It merely requires that one unite what is unjustifiably sundered by Enlightenment secularism. The Christian in pursuit of understanding God's beauty should abandon the Enlightenment's view of autonomous human knowledge in the pursuit of beauty, understanding that persons, beauty, and goodness cannot be discovered through mere reason, or through empirical investigation and experimentation. One need only understand that in authentic moments of worship, one has been in the "aesthetic mode" all along: humbly receptive, faithfully interpreting, and discerningly judging.

Having considered both objective and subjective aspects of beauty, it becomes necessary to consider how even a valid subjective methodology may be considered

successful in apprehending the objective reality of God's beauty. Given the still widely-believed Cartesian division between subject and object, what is a Christian epistemology that can unite subject and object, and assure one that beauty's truth has been apprehended? The next chapter will consider this question.

Chapter 8. The Epistemology of Beauty: Christian Proposals for Reconciling "Subjective" Perception and "Objective" Transcendentals

8.1. Introduction

A Christian spirituality based on a pursuit of God's beauty could be criticised as pursuing nothing more than a "subjective" value. Beauty is widely considered to be *subjective knowledge*: inward experience known only to a perceiving subject, and therefore questionable as to its objective reality. Defined thus, subjective knowledge has no necessary correspondence to the outside world. Thinkers in the modernist tradition still hold that some forms of knowledge can be known objectively, while transcendental values such as beauty, cannot. A spirituality in pursuit of God's beauty would, to them, be confusing private or individual preference with religious devotion.

Conversely, those in the postmodern tradition take subjectivism to its logical conclusion. According to them, whatever is outside the consciousness of the subject cannot be known independently or separately of that subject; indeed, any claim to "objective" knowledge would once again originate from within a subject, meaning the claim would be circular or incoherent. A claim to know anything comes from a subject; how then could any subject claim access to a knowledge independent of his or her own cognition? For postmodern philosophers, to speak of beauty as a reality in both subject and object is meaningless; the only reality that can be understood is the inner reality of pleasure or displeasure.

Christian spirituality as an academic discipline does not commonly take up this question. God's beauty is assumed to be independently real, but no correspondence between perceiver and Perceived is sought. Subjectivism and the existential experience of the spiritual often dominates, with little thought of establishing real contact between subject and object.

Discussing this epistemological aspect of beauty cannot be indefinitely deferred or altogether shelved. If no contact or correspondence between God's actual beauty and a Christian's perception of such is possible or describable, Christian spirituality that speaks of God's beauty may justly be accused of creating comfortable or useful fictions. Dismissing altogether the need to secure some form of epistemological correspondence between objective realities and subjective perception may seem nobly fideistic to some, but it also appears suspiciously postmodernistic, insisting that the only important reality is the internal one humans impose upon their experience.

Conversely, simply assuming that God's beauty exists, but making no effort to reconcile perception with reality may be an experiential form of begging the question, merely assuming what one is required to prove. Some kind of correspondence theory of beauty is worth investigating.

Seeking correspondence between subject and object is not necessarily a pursuit of some modernistic vision of empirical verification. The Enlightenment project of seeking "objective" verification in hopes of obtaining epistemological certainty has surely failed, as this chapter will show. The Enlightenment's failed project does not mean Christians are forced to choose between postmodernism's pure subjectivism or modernism's rationalism, empiricism or idealism. Christians convinced of a realist metaphysic do not have to uncritically and completely embrace a premodern epistemology, acting as if they are deaf to the epistemological critiques and objections of the last five hundred years.

This chapter will seek to examine several Christian proposals for establishing reasonable correspondence or contact between objective and subjective realities in regard to God's beauty. In so doing, it will examine the form of knowledge and the methods necessary for a spirituality that wishes to make correspondence between a subject's perception and an object's beauty.

Epistemology, as a philosophical discipline, has not typically studied the knowledge of beauty. Aesthetics has taken up the question of judging beauty, and chapter seven gave itself to that study. Epistemology proper, however, has considered the epistemology of transcendentals, such as morality, ethics, truth, and God. Beauty is one of the transcendentals, and in studying a broader epistemology of transcendentals, one is studying an epistemology of beauty.

To frame the problem, this chapter begins with an overview of the history of thought on the question of relating subject to object from premodern thought through to the present day. The study then turns to the question of correspondence in matters ethical and aesthetical, and describes four models of truth, and considers if any could function as a model for beauty. Once an appropriate model is selected, the study then considers four suitable Christian realist proposals on this matter. The differences and similarities are then summarised into an epistemological model for a Christian spirituality in pursuit of God's beauty.

8.2. The History of the Subjective-Objective Dichotomy

8.2.1. The Problem Stated

The subject-object dualism present in contemporary thought has not always been a fixture of philosophy. The current form of the debate developed only during the Enlightenment, and the terms have now taken on meanings quite distinct from their original use. Markos (2010:132) writes of the "divided house analogy" used by Francis Schaeffer. Man lives in an epistemological world divided between two worlds. A fully "objective" downstairs is the realm of science and the empirically verifiable "real world". Here man is rational but not free, for all is mechanically determined. The fully "subjective" upstairs is the realm of religion and the arts, where man is free but irrational, for nothing is rationally verifiable or historically grounded. Man may live on one of the floors, but cannot dwell in both at once (Schaeffer, 1972:39).

In this scheme, "subjective" refers to experiences, beliefs, or values that may be felt by the subject as inner realities, but have no necessary correspondence to a reality without outside the subject. Barzun and Graff write: "In loose speech 'subjective' has come to mean 'one person's opinion,' usually off or false; whereas 'objective' is taken to mean 'what everybody agrees on,' or correct opinion...." (1992:174–175). On the other hand, the meaning of "objective" has also been distorted. Lukacs (2002:88) describes the "antiquated" notion of objectivity held by some: "an absolute and antiseptic separation of the observer from the subject or object of his observation".

Beauty falls victim to such divided-house analogies, and to such definitions of subject and object. In such a philosophic milieu, to speak of God's beauty can have no meaningful referent outside the subject; such speech refers merely to a subject's pleasure in certain ideas.

Such a sharp division between inner and outer worlds, interpretation and perception, mind and matter, and facts and values, is a result of an epistemological discussion in Western philosophy. That discussion is now traced in very broad terms in three sections: premodern, modern, and postmodern.

8.2.2. Premodern Views of Subject and Object

It may be surprising for a contemporary observer to learn that premoderns did not wrestle with the question of the conflict between subjective and objective knowledge. At the risk of too broad a generalisation, it appears ancients understood themselves as participants in reality, and [they understood that] sense perceptions of the world outside the observer were appearances. The appearance was a kind of conjunction between reality and the perceiver. For example, the phenomenon of a rainbow is real and is perceived as such by a subject, but it does not represent a concrete object with independent existence outside of the observer. It requires a subject to perceive the phenomenon of a rainbow. And yet the phenomenon is not merely a psychological one; it represents something real in

the world. Subject and object combine. Premoderns saw all appearances like the rainbow. Bauder (2011) comments,

> By this, they did not suppose that no world existed externally to and independently of their awareness. They were quite sure that it did. What they lacked, however, was a direct means of encountering that external reality. The enterprise of philosophy arose (at least in part) because of the desire to find ways of working past perceptions to a knowledge of things as they really were.

For premoderns, the world was a cosmos that functioned as a set of signs that pointed beyond itself, beyond nature to super-nature (Smith, 2014:27).

The ancients' concept of participation in reality is mentioned by Owen Barfield (1965) in his thoughts on the subject-object dichotomy. In studying primitive society, Barfield found that as far back as one can go, human consciousness does not merely perceive objective, inert matter, but perceives immaterial realities "expressed by, or within, the material" (Di Fuccia, 2016:168–169). Similarly, Lukacs (2002:27) believes that before the eighteenth century became consciously aware of the notion of imagination, the much older idea was that of *inspiration*, recognising that the observer is inseparable from what he or she observes.

One form of this was the ancient Greek belief in universals. Plato understood that knowledge of the external world is verified through access to permanent, unchanging universals. In other words, certainty is not obtained through an interrogation of particular phenomena, but by knowing to what ideal form or essence the material phenomena correspond (Meek, 2003:28). Objects are like the primitive subject, and subjects are themselves very complex objects. A sharing takes place between them, so that it is not possible to say that the subject has a kind of "ontic priority" (Di Fuccia, 2016:117).

Here, beauty cannot be thought of as one person's private experience. Beauty is a real universal and instantiated in the material world in various forms. Perceivers

participate in reality and experience the essence of beauty as they rightly respond to its incarnations in material reality. The appearances of beauty combine both subject and object, material and immaterial.

Augustine represents a Christianised neo-Platonism, with his own contributions. He distinguishes subject and object, without seeing them as dichotomous. Augustine distinguishes the human mind, its power to know, and oneself as the object of knowledge. There must be a subject that can know and love; there must be an object to know and love. Augustine used this distinction for his theory of the Trinity (Allen & Springsted, 1985:73).

In the Middle Ages, understanding was divided between *ratio* and *intellectus*. *Ratio* is the more discursive, rational thought that can examine, define, reason, and perform abstractions. *Intellectus* is the simple, contemplative vision of reality, that receives truth (Pieper, 1952:9). Faith was understood as the correct posture to receive knowledge of the world. The world was a true cosmos, an undivided whole that someone could rightly parse if rightly related to it. At the heart of it, knowledge of the world was still participatory, and the belief in universals allowed individuals to understand the meaning of the phenomena or appearances, as they encountered them.

During the Middle Ages, universals came to be seen as an impediment to the advance of knowledge. Weaver (1948:3) believes the defeat of logical realism by nominalism in the Middle Ages was the crucial event in Western culture, and its turning point. For thinkers such as Caldecott (2009:123), philosophical nominalism is the source of secular modernity, modern individualism, and a disenchanted world. Nominalism reduced the natural order to a "realm of valueless, formless individuals" (Peters, 2009:16).

William of Occam (1300–1349) is most associated with the doctrine of nominalism, which denied the existence of universals. According to nominalism, universals such as beauty, truth, or goodness were simply names that humans use to explain concepts, but these do not have real or independent existence. Gordon (2012:16)

explains that "Within a Nominalist framework, there is no beauty within Reality itself; 'beauty' is a mere name employed to impose meaningful structure onto a Reality that has none".

Charles Taylor believes nominalism was actually sourced in an attempt to protect God's sovereignty and power. Nominalists like Scotus saw a problem in making God conform to a notion of "goodness" higher than or above him. To keep God free, essences and independent "natures" were to be done away with (Smith, 2014:42).

Whatever the original motives for its creation, nominalism ultimately banishes the reality perceived by the intellect, and posits as reality only that which is perceived by the senses. In doing so, nominalism severed faith from reason. Religious truth might rest upon divine authority and find evidence from internal experience, but reason was no longer the concomitant support of faith. Now reason rested upon a supposed harmony between mind and nature (Dupré, 1998:25).

Realism believes reality is in itself meaningful and that meaning is more or less discoverable, while nominalism denies or is agnostic regarding meaning in reality and restricts its discussion to how meanings developed in language or culture. Nominalism regards names as convenient labels. In God's case, however, naming precedes creating: God spoke, naming the creation, and it came to be. Meaning or naming preceded the existence of the thing; the name is not a mere interpretation after the fact.

> For Christian Theistic Realism, by contrast, there is naming/meaning before there
> is created reality, and naming/meaning after there is created reality. Furthermore, in
> the case of God, the two namings, and the reality they name, correspond. There is a
> true correspondence, such Realism would say, between naming and nature"
> (Gordon, 2012:18).

By the fourteenth century, William of Occam's influence progressively invaded Oxford, Paris and practically all European universities. The late Middle Ages then saw the final

divorce of reason and Revelation (Gilson, 1938:87–88).

Early forms of this divorce are also seen in Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274). Aquinas wrote before William of Occam, but a shift was already noticeable. Aquinas moved from the faith position of Augustine and Anselm to a position that allows for reason to verify Revelation (Gilson, 1938:81–82). For Aquinas, natural reason is common to pagan and Christian alike; human reason can attain to the truth. Aquinas was attempting to steer a middle path between realism and nominalism. But this was simply the precursor to a full flowering of nominalistic ideas in the form of autonomous human reason in the Enlightenment and Modern era. The unity of subject and object were about to be severed.

8.2.3. Enlightenment and Modern Views of Subject and Object

The nominalist turn at the end of the Middle Ages allowed for a rejection of scholasticism and its increasingly humanistic view of reason. The Enlightenment really began in the thought of men like Francis Bacon (1561–1626) and Rene Descartes (1596–1650) (Gunton, 1985:3). Francis Bacon sought a kind of mathematical certainty for all branches of human knowledge (Gilson, 1938:29). Descartes was willing to defer to no intellectual authority higher than the "light of natural reason" (Scruton, 2002:29). He used doubt to find certainty, seeking a "common, neutral, indisputable rational foundation" for indisputable knowledge (Hughes, 2011:5). Descartes reduced epistemological certainty to his famous *Cogito ergo sum*. Mind was divided from—if not imprisoned within—matter, and matter would soon become inert and sterile.

Scepticism about the reliability of the senses leads to the idea that perception and reason are entirely different. Here, the mind is passive when relating to the material world, but active when interpreting its experience in the rational form of language (Gunton, 1985:12–13). According to Taylor (1998:93), the Cartesian view is one of the great disintegrating philosophies of all time, setting the mind against the sensory and the intuitive. Participation is all but dead: objects exist without observers, subjects perceive

passively and then choose to interpret these perceptions.

Descartes' ideas, followed by rationalist and empiricist versions of epistemology, introduced the notion that knowledge involves a subject-object division. The human consciousness assumed the role of judging what is true of reality (Feinberg, 2001:56). Beauty was not yet denied, but it was in a precarious position. With the mind now taking the leading role, beauty was no longer an essence to be participated in, as much as it was an objective pattern to be observed.

Smith (2014:70–71) writes that Charles Taylor captures the shift from "imagining our cosmic environment as an ordered, layered, hierarchical, shepherded place to spontaneously imagining our cosmic environment as an infinite, cavernous, anonymous space".

Meaning is moved from the world to the mind. Meaning no longer inheres in things, it becomes a property of minds who perceive or judge meaning internally. External objects may be a catalyst for perceiving meaning, but the meanings are self-generated by the subject. Later on, Kant will say that the meanings are imposed upon things by the mind (Smith, 2014:28–29).

Cartesian ideas would develop into rationalism and empiricism. Whereas Descartes saw the mind holding innate ideas, John Locke (1632–1704) saw the mind obtaining all its contents from without (Gunton, 1985:18). The mind is a *tabula rasa*, and ideas of beauty are ideas gained from experience and sense perception (Scruton, 2002:87). Once beauty had become a kind of property or pattern found in objects, the focus had to shift towards methods that allow a subject to recognise that pattern. It is not surprising, then, to see the discussion of taste and sensibility develop in the eighteenth century. The growing subjectivisation of what cannot be proven with autonomous human reason or empirical observation must lead to "rules" for recognising patterns of beauty.

There were voices of protest against this hard subject-object dualism. Bishop

Berkeley (1685–1783) denied the existence of mind-independent objects, to secure the primacy of intelligent, rational perception, by the mind of God first and then by God's image-bearer. Often misunderstood, Berkeley was overturning the idea of perception as a passive process, pointing out that perception is a rational process (Gunton, 1985:27).

David Hume (1711–1776) took empiricism to its logical end. Hume accepted the idea of passive perception and active reason, and went on to show the impotence of such reason to truly penetrate the surface of the sensory world (Gunton, 1985:21). Morality, truth, beauty, and the existence of God are not ideas that can be demonstrated either logically or empirically. Hume's law is sometimes taken to be that no *ought* can be inferred from an *is*; values cannot be deduced from facts (Scruton, 2002:131). Although Hume gave place to the importance of custom and tradition, his theories were the true derivations of Cartesian doubt. Common-sense claims to objective knowledge are systematically broken down, until all that is left is subjective experience. Incoherently though, Hume's theory left no space for the unity of identity of the subject himself. Pure objectivism led to subjectivism, which ended up wiping out the subject.

Common sense realism, developed by Thomas Reid (1719–1796), was a response to the scepticism of David Hume. Reid argued that all people had commonly held concepts: effects have causes; the material world is real; good and evil exist. Reid held that the universal concepts are necessary for functioning in the real world. Theoretical philosophy may deny them, but practice renders them, in Reid's thought, self-evident (Pearcey, 2010:170–171). Common sense realism provided a third way through the dichotomies of materialism and rationalism (Dixon, 2003:101). Reid's ideas found some support in antebellum American philosophy (McConnel, 2003:650), but did not gain much currency in the wider philosophical world.

The dead ends of Cartesian rationalism and Humean empiricism were to be harmonised by Immanuel Kant's (1724–1804) idealism. Kant essentially taught that

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sensory experience and human reason are severed. The human will, while rational, is focused on moral or ethical reality, while the emotions responds to aesthetic matters (Davidson, 2000:235).

Kant simply assumed that Locke's pattern was correct: for knowledge to be worthy of the name, it must be certain (Gunton, 1985:5). But the realm of knowledge needed to be divided, between those matters that can be empirically and rationally proved, and those that cannot. Things-as-they-appear-to-us, those objects of rational or empirical inquiry, Kant named *phenomena*. Things-in-themselves, those values and transcendentals, are not objects of human knowledge, and Kant named them *noumena* (Feinberg, 2001:56). This is not to say Kant remained agnostic on noumena. On the contrary, *Critique of Judgement* is his work dedicated to how noumena may be parsed. Ironically, Kant insisted that subjective judgements could have universal validity. He was no modern relativist. His dualism nevertheless opened a Pandora's box that led to modern relativism (Markos, 2010:102).

For all this, Kant was a child of the Enlightenment. Knowledge is exclusively discursive in Kant, as opposed to the receptive and contemplative view of premoderns. Knowing, in Kant is *work*, according to Pieper (1952:8). Kant posits a priority of the rational understanding, with the mind supplying what it cannot discern (Gunton, 1985:24). Kant's phenomenology and later existentialism are descendant of Descartes, for they all begin with the mind as the starting point of reality; they all use doubt as a method of procedure to gain certainty; they all distrust the idea that one's inner and outer senses are integrated with the will and intellect and have a cognitive power in themselves (Taylor, 1998:105).

Allen and Springsted (1985:170) summarise:

Thus Kant, instead of helping, has driven an even larger wedge between ourselves as knowers and what it is we seek to know. In his attempt to restore objective

connections between the things we are aware of, Kant has indeed brought together

the subject or knower and the object. But the subject and object are phenomena

only, so that we are utterly cut off from any knowledge whatsoever of ourselves

and of objects.

Kant's division between phenomena and noumena would create what one might call

adherents of those two respective realms. Positivists were willing to go beyond Kant to

abandon the concept of the noumenal altogether. Whatever cannot be verified by empirical

means may be, for all practical purposes, non-existent. This then applies to morals, God,

and beauty (Feinberg, 2001:58).

Similarly, foundationalism is the theory of knowledge which posits that beliefs are

justified when justified by other beliefs which are self-evidently true. Beliefs which need

no justification become then the foundation of all other beliefs. These beliefs are

sometimes called "properly basic beliefs" (Feinberg, 2001:57). When a belief cannot be so

grounded, the Enlightenment saw it as irrational to hold such a belief.

On the other hand, some Romantics felt that science had discredited Christianity

and saw Kantian noumena as the epistemological way out. Kant's upper story of the

noumenal could be safely protected from the lower story of empiricism, rationalism and

materialism. Spirit, freedom, meaning and beauty could be cultivated in the separate space

allocated for transcendentals (Pearcey, 2010:181). Milbank (2011:33) sees some forms of

Romanticism as more than an attempt to restore the role of imagination, but as an attempt

to regard and experience material and spiritual objects beyond the self as truly real.

Romanticism tended to isolate the imagination and to forget that poetic knowledge is also

cognitive (Taylor, 1998:117).

Georg Hegel's (1770–1831) idealism attempted to deal with the problem by

suggesting that reality is a continuum. Subjects and objects are different from one another,

but not wholly unrelated or alien: the known object is the "subject's object" (Allen &

Springsted, 1985:175). Hegel's close associate, Friedrich Schelling (1775–1854), "proposed an 'absolute identity' as the absolute whose indifference is both subjectivity and objectivity" (p. 171).

Another German idealist who took up the problem was Schopenhauer (1788–1860). He is known for his anti-dualism of subject and object, but his was more an existential concern than an epistemological one. His thesis was that participative knowledge, knowledge of something for itself (not for merely utilitarian uses or theoretical reasoning), allowed one to transcend self-preoccupation. In this state of pure contemplation, being absorbed entirely in the object, subjectivity recedes. This very experience is a form of beauty for Schopenhauer: "the quality of the object that facilitates knowledge of its idea" (Farley, 2001:60–61).

Idealism and phenomenology were attempts at retaining both subjective and objective forms of knowledge. But having accepted dualism as a basic premise, they were doomed to wrestle with the basic Cartesian premises of doubt or mind-matter duality.

Existentialism began as another way of responding to Kant's dualism. The objective realm of nature was severed from the subjective realm of human consciousness. Kierkegaard (1813–1855) could be mistaken as a Romanticist, but he criticised it for taking too easy a view of the problems of human existence (Ramm, 1962:50). Instead, Kierkegaard was the father of existentialism. For Kierkegaard, God is Subject and never Object. God cannot be known as objects are known, but only as a person is known. Thus God cannot be proven by objective means (Ramm, 1962:53). Christianity is a personal, religious, existential truth, and so the supreme test is inwardness or subjectivity. Knowing is opposed to believing. Knowing is accepting on rational grounds, while believing is to risk all on objective uncertainty (Ramm, 1962:63). Existentialism would develop into the postmodern philosophies of the twentieth century.

Rationalism, empiricism, idealism, romanticism, common sense realism and

existentialism were the fragmented wrestlings of Western philosophy after the collapse of the medieval consensus. The denial of essences and the mind-matter division had produced anything but the epistemological certainty that Western philosophy had hoped for when it jettisoned religious authority. Meek (2003:34) critiques the Enlightenment's desire for certainty as self-refuting:

> What of the ideal of certainty itself? If I must accept as true only those claims of which I am certain, what about the claim that I must accept as true only those claims of which I am certain? Am I certain of it? What reasons would I use to prove it? The ideal does not even meet its own standard. It is a claim of which I cannot be certain. We might say that it is an expression of faith.

Berkeley represents the triumph of the subject, where the existence of objects independent of a subject is denied. Kant represents objects known as "things-as-they-appear", while "things-in-themselves" are utterly unknowable. Hume reduces objects to sense qualities, and reduces the self to sense qualities. Overemphasise the subject, and objects tend to be lost (as in Berkeley). Overemphasise the object, and the subject is lost (as in Hume). It is doubtful if many today would assert that the Enlightenment had succeeded in solving the problem it had created.

The result of the Enlightenment was a two-storey view of truth: an objective category for matter, subject to empiricism's exacting methods; and a subjective category for mind and transcendentals, subject to an increasingly existential outlook. By the late nineteenth century, the philosopher George Santayana could assert that intellectual judgements are judgements of fact, while aesthetic and moral judgements are judgements of value (Pearcey, 2010:99)

Beauty had gone from a real universal, to a property of objects understood by the mind, to a relational property sensed by those with taste, to a construct of the mind imposed upon objects. Kant's early transcendental idealism would blossom into the

existentialism of postmodernism: a full blown subjectivism and an anti-aesthetic.

Modernism's trust in autonomous reason would collapse during the twentieth century, and with it, the last vestiges of holding to a doctrine of real transcendentals. As will be shown in the next section, existentialism, phenomenology, subjectivism, pluralism, relativism, and deconstructionism would come to characterise postmodernism.

8.2.4. Postmodern and Post-Secular Views of Subject and Object

The hunger for a perfect source of knowledge that would provide objective certainty was broadly typical of the Enlightenment. The postmodern rejection of this is what Clark (2003:121) calls the rejection of "source-foundationalism".

Pearcey (2010:237) believes that European thinkers who had suffered under totalitarian regimes during World War II began teaching that totalitarianism was sourced in "totalising" metanarratives. A "totalising" metanarrative is any account of reality that focuses on a single dimension of human experience in order to explain much or all of life, elevating its own explanation to an absolute.

Alongside this, the continental school of postmodern philosophy had been pursuing space for human freedom within a deterministic world. If the nature of reality is essentially materialistic, the transcendentals of freedom, rationality and ethics require an artificial space. Scientism, positivism, and materialism have imposed a kind of tyrannical reductionism on epistemology, as Hume demonstrated. Therefore, room is made for human consciousness, even if the basis for that consciousness cannot be traced to a structure in reality (Pearcey, 2010:227).

Husserl's (1859–1938) *intentionality of consciousness* is a concept in postmodernism which asserts that the subject-object dualism is a fiction. Objects are always objects of consciousness, and consciousness is always the consciousness of objects. No noumena, things-in-themselves or transcendentals unrelated to human awareness actually exist (Allen & Springsted, 1985:199). In reality, the subject-object dichotomy has

not been solved by Husserl: objects have simply been merged into the subject. Subjectivism has triumphed.

Schaeffer (1972:41) sees postmodern existentialism in the three forms, that of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980), Heidegger (1889–1976), and Jaspers (1883–1969). Sartre's premise was basically "existence precedes essence". No God exists, no human nature exists and essence as intellectual constructions vanish with the mind that conceived them (Scruton, 2002:275). For Sartre, the desire for an objective moral order is a loss of freedom (p. 278). Positivism died and was replaced with linguistic analysis, represented by Wittgenstein (1889–1951). Wittgenstein represents nominalism taken to its extreme point: one cannot look outside linguistic practice for the thing that governs it. Indeed, Wittgenstein represents a final demolition of Descartes' only certainty: first-person existence. Kant and Hegel's desire to remove the self from enquiry, has been reached in Wittgenstein (p. 294).

Craig and Moreland (2003:§3577–3696) describe postmodern epistemology as anti-realist, regarding reality as a socio-linguistic construction. Postmodern epistemology is characterised by several rejections: rejecting correspondence theories of truth, rejecting rationality as objective, rejecting foundationalism, rejecting meta-narratives, and rejecting the referential character of language. Feinberg (2001:65–66) believes that postmodernism is an "anti-worldview": it destroys elements necessary for a worldview, such as God, purpose, meaning, and a correspondence view of truth. Postmoderns typically adopt a coherentist model of knowledge, in place of correspondence or any form of foundationalism (Feinberg, 2001:67).

Johnson (2002:26) points out the unwitting disservice that society does to itself when it denies the possibility of objective judgements. Individual judgements are only meaningful by virtue of the possibility of there being a goal of a correct judgement. When such a goal is denied, it not only devalues the judgements of individuals, but the very

notion of individuals themselves.

Peters (2009:214) believes postmodernism fails to grasp the inseparability of two forms of humility: acknowledging humankind's limits as epistemological interpreters and their dependence as metaphysical seekers. Ironically then, postmodernism succumbs to the same weakness of modernism: faith in human autonomy.

8.2.5. Summary

From this survey of epistemology, the reader can see what has been lost and gained. The concept of beauty as a real essence was lost through nominalism. Participation of subject with object was replaced by the Cartesian idea of a subject's consciousness being separate from the existence of the object, and the need to perfect some method of rational or empirical neutrality so as to rightly perceive an object's true properties. Hume began to show the impossibility of knowing transcendentals, while Kant's transcendental idealism became the method for retaining noumena: impossible to prove, but morally necessary to suppose as patterns imposed upon reality by the mind. The division of subject and object reaches its apex following Kant. Positivism carries Kant's empirical approach to phenomena to its logical end, while existentialism becomes the necessary outworking of his idealism applied to noumena. Postmodernism takes subjectivism into relativism and deconstructionism, denying any totalising narrative of beauty, while restoring the active place of the subject to perception.

Postmodernism has done Christianity a favour in dismantling positivism and destroying the idea of objective certainty and the neutrality of the observer. It has actually echoed something said by Augustine: reason cannot function autonomously, for the observer's disposition affects interpretation (Peters, 2009:157). Indeed, postmodernism's critique of pure and perfect objectivity has been affirmed by those who may not agree with the conclusions and epistemologies of the leading postmodern philosophers. Lukacs, for

example, after recognising that quantum physics itself was challenging the idea of "Mechanically-Causal or Mathematical Certitude", wrote:

> There was no longer any Duality. There was no longer any absolute separation of Mind and Matter. The world no longer consisted of Objects and Subjects. There was no Science without Scientists. There was—there is—only one kind of human knowledge" (2002:150).

On the other hand, postmodernism has harmed Christianity by claiming universals are ontologies of violence: totalising meta-narratives imposed by one group upon another. Beauty becomes nothing more than another example of will to power. Transcendentals are impossible to know; all that matters are internally coherent, personal systems of order. Truth is no longer what corresponds to reality; truth is merely the internally coherent and practically useful understanding of a single human consciousness.

The current post-secular milieu has dealt Christianity a decent hand in rightly recognising the active role of the subject in perception, while harming it by continuing to deny the very possibility of a subject accessing knowledge of a transcendental such as truth, goodness or beauty. The question of how transcendentals may be apprehended is where this study now turns.

8.3. Epistemological Models for Apprehending Transcendentals

8.3.1. Introduction

Relating a subject's perception to the realities of a transcendental object is difficult. Dupré (1998:29) writes that "philosophy has found nothing but insoluble problems in such a neat division between a purely 'mental' concept and a purely 'real' object". Attempting to find perfect harmony between the mind and world was what led Kant to radically reverse the correspondence theory.

For all this, Christian spirituality assumes that some relationship is possible. "The lived experience of God by his people", as a definition of spirituality combines subject and

object in one unitary expression.

Clark (2003:349) defines truth as "constituted by correspondence of linguistic utterances to mind-independent states of affairs". Is it legitimate to pursue correspondence for transcendentals?

8.3.2. Correspondence and Transcendental Truth

Naturalism and positivism have held sway over popular opinion, claiming that truth, as found in correspondence models, belongs only to the empirically verifiable realms of human experience. Similarly, existentialism has cut the root of any pursuit of correspondence between existential realities and external realities.

Naturalism (a close cousin of positivism) is a form of religion, and in the opinion of Johnson (2000:§1401–1404), an extremely dogmatic one. Naturalism holds some basic convictions about the nature of reality (that it is material) or that knowledge comes ultimately through the senses and scientific investigation, and these convictions are held by a kind of faith. This kind of positivism has hardened into an ideology. Berlinski (2009:56–57) writes that the ideology of naturalism and positivism is that only the sciences are true, and thus becomes the very worst of "totalising" narratives:

> If by means of this argument it also follows that neither mathematics, the law, nor the greater part of ordinary human discourse have a claim on our epistemological allegiance, they must be accepted as casualties of war.

But more than one kind of truth exists. Aesthetic truth can be an instance of truth if it represents something real, something existent in reality. Begbie (1991:228) believes that art is able to disclose truth, truth beyond and outside the subjective experiences of the artist. The artist's subjective experience is by no means the primary or even vital source of knowledge surrounding a work of art. This kind of aesthetic truth is amenable to certain forms of evaluation. To suggest that truth is only that form of knowledge obtained through empirical verification is to beg the question. History, experience, and Scripture all show

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that truth is what corresponds to reality, and reality consists of more than material phenomena. Beauty, morality, reason, and personhood are as much real features of reality as material phenomena are.

Sherry (2005:§5832–5833) writes, "Beauty is indeed subjective, in the sense that it is a matter of our reactions to the perceived properties of things, and people may disagree about this as about so many other matters. But it does not follow that these properties are unreal or our perceptions illusory".

Objects of beauty, such as art, are classified as "cultural artefacts". Barzun (1989:14) reminds one that these objects of culture are not analysable, nor "graspable by the geometrical mind". Art by nature is a synthesis of the world, fusing form and content; to use upon art those forms of empirical analysis that separate objects into their component parts is to misunderstand the very way art communicates.

Further, to live in a culture is to submit to broadly agreed-upon conventions that have validity beyond individual interpretations. A purely subjective, individually-defined meaning has nothing to do with the idea of culture (Johnson, 2002:76). Though objects of beauty do not submit to scientific tests for truth, their presence in culture calls for a shared conversation as to their meaning and truth.

De Gruchy (2001:1) remarks that aesthetics deals with more than the arts. Instead, he sees it as an attempt to perceive reality in ways other than "rational enquiry and moral endeavour". The realities communicated by beauty deal with dimensions of human existence necessary for a full-orbed human existence, and yet not articulable in the languages of maths and science.

According to Sommerville (2006:41), even respected voices such as Harvard philosopher Hilary Putnam and Nobel economist Amartya Sen, are challenging the fact/value dichotomy. They point out that the definition or perception of facts depends on concepts, and concepts are always subject to criticism and value judgements. Even

scientific hypothesis selection often depends on non-scientific values, such as beauty, coherence, or simplicity.

Cole, following Gadamer, believes that the truth encountered in aesthetics is a "contingent truth", a truth in which the horizons of an observer are fused and mingled with the horizons of the work of art, leading to a new understanding (1999:350–351).

Such truth is not immediately transparent. Scruton (2009:140–147) encourages a circumspect and modest approach in pursuing some kind of objectivity in aesthetic judgements. He notes that taste is rooted in the broader cultural context, that taste is not a logical deductive argument, and that an attempt to lay down fixed, objective standards will threaten the creativity of art. Having made those provisos, he asserts that cross-cultural universals exist, and that objectivity in the aesthetic realm is not the same as the pursuit of universal acclaim. One aims to persuade, not prove, whether or not one's interlocutor embraces the object as beautiful. Finally, he argues that rules of taste exist, which are no guarantee of unanimity, but they provide guides for honest critics. Adler (2000:159) speaks of taste as a kind of "proportion between the complexity of the object and our capacity for apprehending it intuitively". Such statements do not lend weight to the mangling of the term "subjective" into meaning "biased" or "unreliable" or "a personal preference with no purchase on the judgements of others". These statements simply report a reality already known: some forms of truth require more critical, nuanced forms of judgement.

This all argues for the possibility of some kind of apprehension of the truth or reality of the object of beauty by a perceiving beholder. Chapter six showed that premodern believers took this reality for granted. Myers (1989:98) points out that Philippians 4:8 calls on believers to reflect on what *is* excellent, not merely on what they *feel* is excellent. Pure subjectivism is excluded by Scripture: reality includes that which is excellent, and God commands believers to find it and reflect upon it. Wooddell

(2011:§1350–1351) asserts, "Beauty, like ethics, has to do with value, and value is objective, grounded in the nature of God".

If transcendentals are a legitimate pursuit of veridical pursuits, how might that pursuit take place? Four theories of truth are commonly put forward in philosophical discussions. These four are now defined in turn.

8.3.3. Correspondence Theory

A correspondence theory of truth states that true statements correspond to reality. That is, they adequately depict "aspects of a mind-independent world" (Clark, 2003:322). Correspondence theory holds that there can be a more or less exact correspondence between linguistic propositions and the realities to which they refer.

Moderns and positivists have held to some form of correspondence theory of truth, though only for their preferred domain of material phenomena. Typically, a human's sensory or rational faculties can be used to find what is true of the material world (Feinberg, 2001:59). Positivism teaches a kind of correspondence between statements and material reality.

Many Christians, too, have held to some kind of correspondence theory, seeing the propositions of Scripture referring to realities, either using language that is univocal, equivocal, or analogical. As Dupré (1998:30) puts it, "Still religious truth must submit to the rules of correspondence. For truth in religion claims to correspond to what ultimately *is*".

8.3.4. Coherence Theory

The coherentist theory of truth, advanced by Brand Blanshard, is that truth is a fully coherent set of beliefs (Clark, 2003:333). Dupré (1998:31) defines it as "an internal articulation [that] organically integrates the separate elements into a unity of meaning".

Coherence models of truth are favoured by postmodern philosophers. Since no external, mind-independent states are accessible to the postmodern philosopher, truth is

essentially an internally harmonious interpretation of reality.

8.3.5. Praxis Theory

The pragmatic theory of truth redefines truth in terms of its usefulness. Charles Sanders Pierce, William James, and John Dewey are the thinkers mainly responsible for the pragmatic theory. Clark (2003:334) gives the formalized statement of the theory: "The proposition p is true if and only if p is useful or pays off".

According to Jeffrey and Maillet (2011:§547–548), Richard Rorty, believes that "(1) there are degrees of truth, and (2) what is true for one person or group may not be true for another, to the degree that the truth of a proposition may not in fact be determined or even clarified by testing and debate".

8.3.6. Disclosure Theory

Dupré (1998:38) writes, "[R]eligious disclosure is truth that, in its essentials, refuses to submit to external criteria". Truth is disclosed to the religious subject through participation and illumination. Disclosure theory does not possess an universally accessible or unbiased quality which empirical philosophy demands, but instead requires an personal involvement and commitment. The critic must himself be in some way acquainted with the experience of religious truth. Aesthetic experience falls under the same restrictions (Dupré, 1998:37).

8.3.7. Evaluation of the Models

These four theories of truth provide four options for overcoming the severed relationship between subject and transcendental object, present since the rise of modernism and postmodernism. Each of these options is now considered in turn.

The coherence theory of truth cannot account for the most strongly held claim of religious truth, that such truth originate outside of its own system of truth (Dupré, 1998:33). Coherence theory is cut off from the world, since by its own definition, truth is a "function of a belief's relations within one's system of other beliefs with no reference

whatsoever to a reality outside the system" (Craig & Moreland, 2003:§3538–3542). In so doing, coherence theory suffers from an imprecise definition of coherence (§3517–3518).

Praxis theories of truth suffer from a confusion of means and ends. To argue for truth-claims being verified if they are useful or pay off only raises more questions: What is useful and to whom? Useful for what end—productivity, freedom, health, wealth, knowledge, power? Why should one of those ends be regarded as more useful than another? If means are justified by the ends they achieve, the onus is on the pragmatist to explain why the end should be sought as an absolute good. One might ask the pragmatist the first question of the Westminster Confession: what is the chief end of man? It seems praxis theories can only survive within coherence theories, or else they are forced to become correspondence theories that grapple with ultimate ends.

Correspondence theory holds out more promise. A correspondence theory is criticised on the grounds that the correspondence relation is too mysterious to admit into one's view of reality (Craig & Moreland, 2003:§3434–3436). Christians need not feel the force of this objection, since they presuppose the existence of mystery and invisible realities. Postmodern philosopher Richard Rorty sees the correspondence theory of truth as a muddled, unhelpful and sterile distinction between appearance and reality (Peters, 2009:213). Cory (1925:397) regards as "unsophisticated" a definition of truth which regards truth as "the agreement or correspondence of our judgments with the realities to which they refer". He nevertheless believes that what is desirable is

> some highly refined and dynamic correspondence theory...elaborated by men like Bertrand Russell, Whitehead, and Broad, among whom an incomplete but a fair degree of agreement prevails. At the moment of verification a judgment which has been working must do more; it must correspond in some way with the objects to which it refers and it must be independent, as true, from all our likes and dislikes (p. 400).

Meek (2003:136) critiques the idea of exact linguistic correspondence as leading to sterility. Statements cannot exhaust the reality of what they state or describe, since the acts of knowing include dimensions that defy verbalization.

However, for all these objections, correspondence theory provides a clear analogue between subject and object. Correspondence is what any realist metaphysic would expect: perceived and interpreted reality has some correspondence with the external world as made by God.

Disclosure models recognise an aspect of epistemology celebrated by Christians from Augustine to Calvin: truth is God's prerogative to communicate. Delio (2008:150) sees theology as a form of practical knowledge that must involve the perceiving subject in the spiritual realities perceived. Participation in the spiritual life is fundamental to this kind of knowledge, which Delio calls "a *habitus affectivus*, a disposition midway between the speculative and the practical whose goal is wisdom". This sounds much like the participative knowledge seen in the premoderns. The danger in disclosure theory, however, is that religious experience may claim self-authentication, which smacks of Kierkegaardian existentialism.

Of these models, a modified correspondence theory that incorporates the subject's participation in perception, combined with a form of disclosure theory holds out the best promise for apprehending the reality of God's beauty. Correspondence theory need not subscribe to simplistic notions of absolute, precise correspondence between statements and the extra-mental world (Clark, 2003:350). Meek (2003:137) suggests,

> Instead of correspondence, let us speak of *contact*. We lay hold of an aspect of the real. I think we also need to replace the term *certainty*. When we speak of epistemic success, truth claims that engage the real, the notion of an exhaustive certainty or justification is not only impossible, it is unwanted. It doesn't do justice to the rich fabric of human experience, rooted as it is in our bodies and connecting

us to a three-dimensional world, and all of it a motion through time oriented toward the future. I suggest that a better term is *confidence*.

Whether one follows Meek's terminology or not, the point is taken. The kind of correspondence with God's beauty that Christian spirituality pursues is not the kind that could quantify it or speak of it in univocal language. Nor would such a spirituality summit a kind of epistemological Everest, exhausting the meaning of God's beauty. Such a model would genuinely make contact with the beauty that is God's and speak of such contact with humble confidence.

Such a modified model of correspondence would incorporate the unity of subject and object that was unnaturally severed by the Enlightenment, while also including the rejection of autonomous reason provided by postmodernists. It would recognise the role of interpretation that the subject has, while maintaining a stance of Metaphysical Realism.

Portions of such a model have already been proposed in partial forms by different individuals at different times. The study now turns to the works of six Christians, grouped into four approaches to apprehending transcendental truth. These six do not exhaust the possibilities for modified correspondence theories for truth or beauty. They do meet the criteria suggested: all are Christians, all are philosophical Realists, all recognise the participation of the subject in the act of perception, and all reject autonomous reason and Enlightenment dualism.

8.4. Christian Realist Proposals

8.4.1. Introduction

No one lives in an intellectual vacuum. The philosophy of the day may begin among intellectual elites, but it makes its way into the websites, the newspapers, the schools, the films, the social media, the songs and the advertisements of a society. The average person does not study epistemology; instead, categories of knowledge find their way into the popular vocabulary. It is not unusual to hear a blue-collar worker calling

certain judgements "very subjective", or to hear a high school student speak of "objective analysis". If so, Christians are not immune to this process either. They may wish to believe that their philosophy is purely "biblical". In reality, such Christians merely smuggle in their philosophy and consider it biblical. The Bible has no categories of subjective and objective, but one routinely hears preachers using the terms. As theologians point out, the Trinitarian categories of *ousia* or *essentia*, and *hypostases* or *personae*, were not biblical words, but categories were borrowed from philosophy as helpful constructs to explain the biblical data. Philosophy affects Christian thought.

What remedy is there for Christians who have unwittingly accepted Enlightenment epistemologies, but now consider them self-evidently true, or at least coherently plausible within their grid of Christian doctrine and practice? Lewis suggests an answer:

Every age has its own outlook. It is specially good at seeing certain truths and specially liable to make certain mistakes. We all, therefore, need the books that will correct the characteristic mistakes of our own period. And that means the old books. All contemporary writers share to some extent the contemporary outlook – even those, like myself, who seem most opposed to it...None of us can fully escape this blindness, but we shall certainly increase it, and weaken our guard against it, if we read only modern books. Where they are true they will give us truths which we half knew already. Where they are false they will aggravate the error with which we are already dangerously ill. The only palliative is to keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books. Not, of course, that there is any magic about the past. People were no cleverer then than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the same mistakes. They will not flatter us in the errors we are already committing; and their own errors, being now open and palpable, will not endanger us (2014:219–220).

Lewis's advice is well-taken. Hearing from Christians of varying eras, Christians who did not accepted subject-object dualism, or Cartesian scepticism, or Husserl's intentionality of consciousness may remind Christians of epistemologies long abandoned or forgotten. They may bring fresh insight and solutions for impasses that were not present in their time.

Of the six Christians surveyed, one is premodern, two wrote during the Enlightenment, and three were twentieth-century authors. This spread gives the advantage of perspective from each era.

8.4.2. Augustine and Pascal: Loving Intuition

Augustine of Hippo (354–430) and Blaise Pascal (1623–1662) are separated by more than a millennium, but are philosophically very close to one another. Augustine and Pascal held to a kind of affective rationality: the idea that right loves will correctly shape reason and further cognition. A recent work on Pascal and Augustine, *The Logic of the Heart* (Peters, 2009:10), contends that

> human reasoning on ultimate issues of human life is inextricably bound up with
> those affections and feelings that reveal to us our proper place in creation. Reason
> can function properly only when reason is informed by the intuitions of the heart,
> as nurtured by historically constituted traditions of belief and practice.

Augustine, rescued from a life of debauchery, gave much attention to the question of desire and love. Love, in turn, affects cognition, rationality, and interpretation. Love is what inspires man's search for knowledge (Harrison, 1992:148). Reason depends on the heart, on a proper, ordered love, *caritas*, for it to fulfil its purpose. From the Augustinian point of view, both believer and unbeliever must demonstrate a humble and loving attitude toward the message of God's grace to grasp its rationality (Peters, 2009:157).

For Augustine, knowledge of a thing required possession of it, and people are not in possession of it until they love it. Augustine's expression "delightful contemplation" combined both rationality and desire, intuitive knowledge and delight (Taylor, 1998:29–

30). Augustine called the effort to contemplate God by faith, to passionately investigate Revelation through reason *intellectus*. This understanding is human reason using loving faith to reach the light of the beautific vision (Gilson, 1938:18–19). God's love is his beauty, and only love in the beholder is able to see this beauty.

In other words, human beings are primarily beings of love and desire. *Contra* the Enlightenment, people are not thinking machines. The human will is the seat of love and the faculty of choice. Rightly ordered love informs faith, for faith engages the whole human being: intellect and desire (Peters, 2009:66). To have faith is to trust God, to love him or yearn to love him as one's greatest good (p. 69).

Augustine held to the ancients' view of participative knowledge, but added to this his doctrine of illumination. Augustine's major innovation was to emphasise an interior quality of religious truth. God teaches each individual soul, though this teaching is always in agreement with the testimony of Scripture and tradition (Dupré, 1998:22). Whether secular truth or sacred, whether it be the saint or the sinner, perception of truth is by illumination (Ramm, 1962:155).

What this meant is that Augustine could explain right perception of essences such as beauty or truth through right relationship to God. Faith in God places the perceiver in a posture to receive illumination, and to fully participate in and understand the world. For Augustine, faith precedes reason. There is only one sense in which reason precedes faith, and that is that revelation can only come to a rational soul (Ramm, 1962:158). Loving, trusting desire for God is at the heart of right reason and understanding about the world.

One can summarise Augustine's view of knowing transcendentals by saying that faith, working through love, is prerequisite to knowing and understanding. Pieper concurs, stating that philosophy only truly possesses its object in the act of lovingly searching for it (1952:113).

Blaise Pascal, a Jansenist philosopher-theologian, mathematician, physicist, and inventor gave the world his uneven but brilliant *Pensées*. Pascal took up intellectual arms against Cartesianism by continuing the Augustinian approach to knowledge.

Pascal divided the cognition of humans into the heart and the Geometric Mind. The heart is the intuitional centre of knowing, also called by him "sentiment", "Instinct" or "Inspiration" (Ramm, 1962:41). Intuition is the spontaneous awareness of reality, "a nondiscursive act of the intellect that grasps first principles without the aid of proof by demonstration" (Taylor, 1998:61–62). Pascal saw the heart as the intuitive centre of the human being which sees things synoptically (Ramm, 1962:39). Like Augustine, Pascal believed that knowing God entails loving God, which means affirming God is the ultimate good in life, and surrendering one's autonomous being to his authority.

Pascal saw the heart as the unity of cognition and will (Peters, 2009:172). It is from the heart that man can know the truth. "We know the truth not only through our reason but also through our heart. It is through the latter that we know first principles, and reason which has nothing to do with it, tries in vain to refute them" (*Pensées*, Frg 110).

This is tantamount to saying that faith is the first principle. Pascal, however, was not a pure fideist. The knowledge of God through Christ is the supreme first principle for knowing the nature of self and of the world (Peters, 2009:172). For Pascal, faith is rational, even though it goes beyond reason. Faith provides the best explanation of the human condition (Peters, 2009:94).

Indeed, faith as a first principle is by no means unheard of, epistemologically speaking. Frame (1987:§4471–4474) suggests that the attempt to build up human knowledge from pure experience or from reason alone cannot succeed, for they rebel against one's creatureliness. Therefore, beginning with faith is not a betrayal of the epistemological enterprise.

The problem, as Pascal saw it, is man's pride. Until sin is removed, man is not

admitting his intuitions, which will warp his reason (Ramm, 1962:43). Pascal's strategy was not to appeal to a set of indubitable premises. Instead, Pascal's hearer must become a certain kind of person—one who honestly and humbly acknowledges his or her own inadequacy to perceive the truth. Humankind, therefore, only knows itself through the heart (Peters, 2009:94). For Augustine and Pascal, epistemological certainty is more of a "spiritual and ethical certainty rooted in faith" and developed by participation within a historical community of fellow believers (Peters, 2009:35).

In summary, when the subject approaches reality with the commensurate humility-faith-love, he or she will perceive what is there. Humble, believing love is the necessary posture to encounter reality and to reason rightly about it. Maritain (1952:23) agrees that a true form of knowledge exists which is not rational, but is knowledge through union or inclination, where the intellect is at play with affective inclinations and dispositions of the will and is being guided and directed by them. Taylor (1998:52–53) calls emotional knowledge "poetic knowledge", where the "subject-object, juxtaposed like metaphor, produces the third thing, the immaterial idea of the thing, and possession (love-knowledge) of the universal concept".

Subjects cannot know objects unless they are rightly related to those objects by loving them correctly. One cannot know how to love a single object without relating it to the universe of objects. One cannot know the correct ordering and relationship of all objects in the universe unless one loves the Author and Creator of all objects and loves objects for his sake. Humble, believing love toward God, in the right order, and to the right degree, is the basis of all progress in knowledge.

8.4.3. Jonathan Edwards: Consenting Sensibility

This study has spent considerable space on Jonathan Edwards' views on beauty. Edwards again rewards in the area of epistemology. Edwards sought to avoid and overcome the objective/subjective dichotomy. Beauty, for Edwards, has both objective and

subjective aspects (Venter, 2010:189). "Beauty had an effect, and the effect was an affect (i.e., feeling)" (McClymond & McDermott, 2012:§1196).

Edwards, on first appearance, placed beauty within the subject, since he defined it as the heartfelt benevolent consent to being in general. This makes beauty a function of persons willing and loving, not an abstract quality of essence. But this does not make beauty merely subjective. Benevolence, for Edwards is not a mere feeling, sensation, or pleasurable sensibility. Beauty is agreement, consent, and an active form of benevolence.

Conversely, beauty is not purely "objective", if what is meant by that term is a mere property of independent existence. Edwards did, however, see beauty as objective in that it reflects a real state of affairs. Louie (2013:§6787–6790) points out that Edwards did not see beauty or sublimity as an object. Rather, it is a perception of a reality: the reality of God's relationships. Natural objects are sublime when they serve as metaphors or analogies for God's sublimity. In Edwards' ontology, beauty is not an accidental attribute of reality; beauty is the world's very essence. Beauty would, on the one hand, be present in its order, proportions and consent, even if humans were not there to see it. On the other hand, such beauty would be meaningless without human perception, like communication without an audience (§2348–2353). Subject and object are here combining. The sublime as experienced in space and time as some sort of phenomenon may be an interpretation of the human subject, but it has "universal validity because it is based on divine interpretation. God intends those phenomena to be a metaphor of himself" (Louie, 2013§7194–7196).

Farley summarises:

Edwards' analysis (metaphysics) has thus undermined and transcended the conventional duality of the subject and the object. In primary beauty the deepest objective constitution of God and human beings coincides with a self-transcending disposition. Beauty is at the same time subjective and objective, both being and sensibility (2001:47).

For Edwards, beauty provided a way to explain a structure of existence that is objectively real, and yet may not be perceived equally by all (Moody, 2005:104). With the idea of beauty, Edwards could explain what is real and true, regardless of varying perceptions, while explaining why saints and angels have a sensibility towards recognising beauty. Souls that have been and are being beautified have the consenting disposition to see as beautiful God's own consenting disposition. One's frame of mind, or disposition enabled the apprehension of the beautiful; but that frame of mind is itself an instance of beauty (Martin, 1975:113).

Edwards echoed Augustine and Pascal in his view of how the affections shape reason. Edwards saw reason as crucial for evaluating the validity of Christianity's truth-claims, but believed that the evidence could only be accurately assessed by those who "possess the proper moral and spiritual qualifications" (Wainwright, 1995:3). Edwards believed there is a causal connection between spiritual perception and rational persuasion (p. 39). "The mind *infers* the truth and reality of the things the gospel contains from its *perception* of their spiritual beauty" (p. 31). The qualification is the right frame of mind, the sense of the heart, the consenting disposition. The sense of the heart involves the will and inclination because when the mind is sensible of spiritual beauty "that implies a sensibleness of sweetness and delight in the presence of the idea of it" (*WJEO*, 2:272).

Edwards believed that being by nature drives towards union, and love willingly consents to that union and actively seeks it (McClymond & McDermott, 2012:§6455–6457). For Edwards, reality was grounded in consent and beauty (Martin, 2013:192). If the very essence of reality is a dynamic love, then only those who harmonise with that love by loving it are acting according to the nature of things.

In *The Nature of True Virtue*, Edwards attempted to show that benevolence, or love is the mechanism that underlies the spiritual sense. If benevolence is founded upon the

nature of reality, then benevolence is the key to understanding and perceiving reality. Wainwright (1995:34–37) identifies four arguments Edwards makes for this. First, Edwards showed that love or benevolence agrees with the nature of things. The ground of reality is God with his infinite and omnipotent love. Human love is a fitting response to reality. Second, delighting in benevolence also agrees with reality. Third, delighting in benevolence is the same as perceiving its beauty. Fourth, this spiritual perception of the redeemed is veridical, and coincides with reality.

"Infused benevolence is the basis of a new epistemic principle; a sense of the heart that tastes, relishes, and perceives the beauty of holiness (i.e. benevolence)" (Wainwright, 1995:42). Again, like Pascal, Edwards saw sin as the distorter of right reasoning. Sin distorts reasoning: immersion in temporal concerns distract people from attending to ideas; sensory dependence causes man to substitute words and signs for ideas, and "disordered loves make it difficult for us to appreciate natural goods and evils" (p. 48). Why would intelligent critics reject plausible, relevant evidence for God? Edwards argues that man's sinful inclinations distort man's thinking about God (p. 148).

Edwards agreed with Pascal and Augustine in saying that humble, believing love is the basis of right perception. Yet he went beyond them in stating that such love is the creaturely mirror of the love God has for himself and his works. Beauty and the sense of beauty are not divided, as Descartes would have it. The perceiver is fundamental to recognising God's beauty, but the perceiver must have been brought into a loving state in relationship to God. God's beauty is "objectively" real, but only perceivable by the one beautified with the consenting disposition.

Edwards clearly saw love as fundamental to understanding:

[T]he Father understands because the Son, who is the divine understanding, is in him. The Father loves because the Holy Ghost is in him. So the Son loves because

the Holy Spirit is in him and proceeds from him. So the Holy Ghost, or the divine essence subsisting in divine love, understands because the Son, the divine idea, is in him. Understanding may be predicated of this love, because it is the love of the understanding both objectively and subjectively. God loves the understanding and the understanding also flows out in love, so that the divine understanding is in the Deity subsisting in love. It is not a blind love. Even in creatures there is consciousness included in the very nature of the will or act of the soul; and though perhaps not so that it can be so properly be said that it is a seeing or understanding will, yet it may truly and properly [be] said so in God by reason of God's infinitely more perfect manner of acting, so that the whole divine essence flows out and subsists in this act" (*WJEO,* 21:133–34).

Further, Edwards' view of love pushes one beyond desire and delight into the concept of union. "Consent" is not simply pleasure, but the desire for compete conformity, for total union of wills and desires. Beholding beauty cannot be separated from becoming part of that beauty.

8.4.4. Owen Barfield and C.S. Lewis: Imaginative Rationalism

Owen Barfield (1898–1997) and C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) were British intellectuals of the twentieth century. The two were close friends, and both were members of the informal Inklings group, a society of literary comparison and enjoyment. Barfield was instrumental in the conversion of Lewis from atheism to theism and eventually to Christianity, though Lewis never embraced Barfield's Anthroposophy.

Both Barfield and Lewis challenged the prevailing positivism, naturalism, and materialism of their day. What marks Lewis and Barfield out as exceptional is that they did not do so by appealing to existentialist epistemology, as their contemporary Karl Barth did. Both were inveterate realists, who saw the value of reason and evidence. Instead, both appealed to imagination as an organ of meaning and proper interpretation of reality.

The imagination, for Barfield, was the organ of perceptive interpretation that mediated between object and subject. Di Fuccia (2016:5) describes Barfield's approach to subject and object. Both exist in a kind of "polar tension", neither completely independent, nor dependent on their polar opposite. Subjective knowledge is not wholly found or sourced in the subject's mind, or as a passive recipient of phenomena. Instead, the subject participates in the object. The subject is neither wholly passive, nor wholly active. Meaning is not entirely immanent, but is known by participation in being's transcendent source. Barfield saw phenomena neither as wholly the inner perception of subject, nor wholly something without that forces itself on man's senses, but something between the two (p. 49).

Barfield wrote in *Speaker's Meaning*: "[T]he concept of an object without a subject is as abstract as the concept of a surface without a depth and as futile as that of a back without a front" (Barfield, 1967:115).

Nature, for Barfield, is what the ancients thought it was: symbolic. The imagination is what is needed to perceive and interpret the appearances of phenomena. The imagination merges objective and subjective realms. It is reason at its most exalted, apprehending things as they are, the best vehicle to truth (Di Fuccia, 2016:83–84).

Barfield agreed with Kant's active role of the subject, but challenged Kant's nominalism. Instead, drawing from Coleridge, Barfield saw the active imagination playing a crucial role in perception, unveiling and understanding the symbolic nature of reality (Di Fuccia, 2016:84). Milbank sees this as a poeticising of reality, where everything is revealed as a work of art and a symbol (2011:34). Coleridge's view of imagination influenced Barfield greatly.

According to Milbank (2011:35), Coleridge saw the imagination as "the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception". Using imagination is a form of sub-creation or re-creation by which humans seek meaning and unity in what they experience,

dissolving phenomena and then re-creating them. Coleridge was influenced by idealism, but also by German romanticism. Barfield was more deeply influenced by Coleridge's Platonism, seeing reality as symbolic (Di Fuccia, 2016:71–72). Coleridge argued that there is a use of imagination that is not merely fanciful, but which mediates between passive sense and active intellect (Gunton, 1985:32).

Barfield took special aim at scientism. Scientism is to be distinguished from science. Science may employ the empirical method, whereas scientism becomes an ideology, insisting that the empirical method is the only valid way of knowing anything. As a result, positivist notions of reality insist on a kind of "verificationist" notion of truth, imagining that one can obtain *direct* access to one's primordial way of being. This kind of correspondence sees imagination and metaphor as escapism or as sheer fantasy. Those who understand the imagination as the organ of perception and interpretation see metaphor as foundational to understanding the world (Bryant, 1989:97).

Barfield was not against science, but against scientism, with its rejection of imagination. For Barfield, the fatal flaw of science is that it actually eliminates the object of its enquiry or study, for by eliminating imagination, one cannot properly understand the whole or the unity of the object (Di Fuccia, 2016:167). He appreciated the work of quantum scientist David Bohm, who suggested that particles are not dead objects moved by forces, but contain their own qualities, such as inertia. Similarly, Barfield saw the role of the subject as an active participant in the observational system. If objects "know" they are being observed, then the subject shapes the outcome of an experiment. Pure, neutral objectivity is impossible (Di Fuccia, 2016:187).

Barfield's epistemology might be summarised thus: pure objectivity is non-existent. Perception or observation is not mere passive sense impressions. The perceiving consciousness regulates and interprets what is seen through imagination. But Barfield

diverges from Kant, who would said that ideas are merely in men's minds, but not real (regulative, but not constitutive). Barfield believed what is real—the true essences—are mediated to people through what they perceive. Perception is itself the work of imagination, interpreting synoptically what it receives through the senses (p. 81). Instead of dividing subject and object, Barfield believed human subjects participate with objects to create the interpretation that the imagination construes.

C. S. Lewis was as much a realist as Barfield was. Indeed, Lewis argued vehemently for moral realities. *The Control of Language: A Critical Approach to Reading and Writing*, was published in 1939 as a textbook for upperform students in British schools. Alex King and Martin Ketley, the authors, could hardly have known that their work would stir the ire of Oxford don and Christian apologist Lewis. But ignite his indignation it did, and the result was one of Lewis' most important books, *The Abolition of Man.*

In his first chapter, "Men Without Chests", Lewis graciously gave King and Ketley the pseudonyms Gaius and Titius, and to *The Control of Language* he gave the title *The Green Book*. But beyond his civility towards their persons, Lewis gave no quarter when it came to his criticism of their book. For within the book, Lewis found an error that was pernicious and destructive, and one with the power to subvert young minds. King and Ketley commented on Coleridge's experience of hearing two tourists see a waterfall, one describing it as "sublime", the other calling it "pretty". Coleridge endorsed the former and was disgusted at the latter. King and Ketley wanted their readers to see this valuation through modernist eyes. They wrote: "When the man said *This is sublime*, he appeared to be making a remark about the waterfall…Actually…he was not making a remark about the waterfall, but a remark about his own feelings. What he was saying was really *I have feelings associated in my mind with the word "Sublime"*, or shortly, *I have sublime feelings'"* (Lewis, 2001:2)*. And here Lewis released his truth bloodhounds. Beauty, or

sublimity according to King and Ketley, is not a real attribute of persons, places, things or ideas in the universe. Beauty is not something that can be predicated of another with any coherent meaning. Instead, beauty simply refers to pleasure in the subject. Beauty is the happy approval of observers. From there, a logical connection is quietly made: people are not to make judgements of value about the world, calling things true, good or beautiful. To make value judgements about the world would be to assume a meaningful universe that can be judged for meaning—including its beauty. Here was existentialism mangled and mixed with a clumsy positivism. The result was the denial of moral reality, or at least of the possibility of making value judgements about it.

Lewis knew that this view was an Enlightenment revision, and an anti-Christian one. He wrote,

> Until quite modern times all teachers and even all men believed the universe to be such that certain emotional reactions on our part could be either congruous or incongruous to it—believed, in fact, that objects did not merely receive, but could *merit*, our approval or disapproval, our reverence or our contempt (Lewis, 2001:14–15).

"Debunking" the world of objective beauty or morality has a disastrous effect, in Lewis' view. Once the world is emptied of objective value, and such is transferred to the internal consciousness of the subject, soon the same process begins with the subject. The subject is emptied, as the mind itself is explained away, until "the Subject is as empty as the Object" (Kilby, 1964:103).

Indeed, this is the meaning of the title *The Abolition of Man*. If there is no God, and no foundation for value judgements, then man himself is abolished. Man's thoughts and judgements are no more significant than leaves rustling or a pond rippling (Piper, 2014:131).

Lewis pointed out that the critic of objective aesthetic or moral values is caught in the dilemma of self-refutation, for in the very act of rejecting objective values, the author proved his or her belief in a non-subjective value, namely, his or her own. To pontificate on the non-existence of values is a value judgement itself, and one to which the author feels everyone should subscribe (Kilby, 1964:101). Lewis would not live long enough to see the most stringent forms of postmodernism, but his prophetic anticipation of and refutation it are present in *The Abolition of Man* in embryonic form. The one claiming that no transcendental truth exists is making that claim for more than oneself, and thereby is giving one's negative statement a claim of universal validity. But if universal validity is impossible, then such a claim is self-refuting.

In his essay, "The Poison of Subjectivism", Lewis (1967:73) defended moral realities. In his view, humans can no more invent value judgements than they could invent a new primary colour. Even debating over whether a certain moral or rule is good or bad assumes that there is an ultimate standard to which one can compare moral rules. This points to the permanence of morality, and its presence as a universal essence, not as a pragmatic utility.

Lewis, like Barfield, believed the imagination was primary for perceiving moral realities. Lewis was an inveterate realist. Piper (2014:138) believes that Lewis used imagination because it could reveal dimensions of reality more deeply than reason. Lewis' *Chronicles of Narnia* may have had an equal or greater effect in proselytising Christianity than any of his works of Christian apologetics. McGrath (2014:130) states that Lewis' imaginative reason bridges the chasm between modernity and postmodernity. By giving both imagination and reason a place in his arguments, Lewis testified that both were part of a greater whole.

Ward (2011:62) explains that Lewis defined *reason* as "the natural organ of truth", *imagination* as "the organ of meaning", and *meaning* itself is "the antecedent condition of

both truth and falsehood". Imagination is therefore, for Lewis, "the prius of truth": before something can be either true or false, it must mean". Lewis saw human reason as inert unless it were first supplied material to reason about. Imagination supplied those materials (pp. 60–61). Lewis saw reason and imagination existing in a collaborative, not competitive relationship (McGrath, 2014:128). In Lewis' thought, reason is the faculty of analysis that seeks objectivity, inspects matters, and breaks them into their constituent parts, whereas imagination tastes and participates in what it perceives (Vanhoozer, 2014:93).

The imagination is a synthetic, synoptic power that allows one to fit things together into meaningful forms. The imagination engages mind, will and emotion, not merely the discursive mode of analysis or logic (Vanhoozer, 2014:99). Scruton (2007:12) describes this synoptic power of imagination as a unity of experience and thought, a coming together of sensory and the intellectual. Scruton believes that this places the meaning of aesthetic experience outside the reach of science. Beauty communicates meaning in immediate, sensory form.

Again, Chesterton:

> But imaginative does not mean imaginary. It does not follow that it is all what the moderns call subjective, when they mean false. Every true artist does feel, consciously or unconsciously, that he is touching transcendental truths; that his images are shadows of things seen through the veil. In other words, the natural mystic does know that there is something there; something behind the clouds or within the trees; but he believes that the pursuit of beauty is the way to find it; that imagination is a sort of incantation that can call it up (2012:§1482–1487).

Lewis told T. S. Eliot that he believed in the kind of imagination that was "a truth-bearing faculty" (Ward, 2011:76–77). Swedberg (2010:82) believes that Lewis was a fideist:

> not in the sense that faith is contrary to reason, but in the sense that it is only through faith that one can know Christianity is true. Things such as reason, the

imagination and the search for joy play important roles, but they cannot produce

certainty. Only faith can do that—faith defined as the voluntary surrender of the

individual's will to the person of God and complete trust in him.

Lewis and Barfield can then both be called imaginative rationalists, for both saw the place

of reason (and used it persuasively), but both saw reason functioning only when in the

service of a greater organ of truth: imagination. Perception is not passive, but an active

construal into a "grid", which is the imagination. Lewis and Barfield understood that this

grid of pre-apprehension is fundamental to reason functioning properly.

Dupré (1998:29) reminds the reader that no facts are perceivable without a "screen

of interpretation that converts data into objects or facts". Some forms of Christian

epistemology, such as presuppositionalism in the tradition of Cornelius van Til (1969),

point out that uninterpreted facts do not lead to knowledge, since facts only make sense

once interpreted (Clark, 2003:276–27). In other words, facts only make sense within a

particular perspective, which requires gaining that perspective before the interpretive

process begins. Indeed, ultimate questions or worldviews are incapable of proof. Whatever

one uses to "prove" a worldview, becomes more ultimate in authority than what is being

proved. Furthermore, what counts as proof or evidence comes from within the worldview.

Worldviews are hermeneutical matters of interpretation (Hughes, 2011:7).

Imagination, understood as the active lens of the interpretive perception of reality,

is fundamental to knowledge. This lens is to be shaped by those forms that appeal to

imagination, as studied in chapter seven. When the Christian imagination is in place—

understanding the universe as God has revealed it to be—it will participate in that moral

universe with ordinate affection towards it, and so rightly judge its truth, goodness, and

beauty.

8.4.5. Michael Polanyi: Personal Knowledge and Indwelling

Michael Polanyi (1891–1976) was a Hungarian-British physicist and philosopher. Considered to be a polymath, Polanyi's philosophical works *Personal Knowledge* and *Tacit Knowing* have been widely hailed by Christians and non-Christians alike for their postmodern reply to positivism, without succumbing to the utter subjectivism of Derrida, Foucault, and Jaspers.

Schaeffer believes that Polanyi successfully deconstructed positivism, but was left with pure cynicism in epistemology (1972:48). This surely goes too far. Polanyi was by no means agnostic about contacting reality. Polanyi taught that people can know the world, not infallibly or with omniscience, because they are both part of the world and are able to transcend it through perception, imagination, and reason (Gunton, 1985:48).

Polanyi argued that the dichotomy between the natural sciences and everything else undermines all forms of human knowing, including the natural sciences (Gunton, 1985:38). As a scientist himself, Polanyi noticed that the scientific endeavour was not an action of pure, antiseptic neutrality on the part of the scientist. After all, the scientist's choice of research interest did not come through pure objectivity. The exclusion of certain facts, a particular focus on others, and moments of insight within the process of research all point to a very different kind of knowing than that asserted by positivism or naturalism. Polanyi was here similar to Thomas Kuhn in arguing that science does not operate with pristine objectivity (Feinberg, 2001:68).

As seen with Barfield's interest in Bohm, much science undermines the subject-object duality. Pearcey (2010:231) points to the discoveries in particle physics that have partly collapsed the distinction between subject and object. A particle under one set of conditions, functions as a wave, while it functions as a particle under different conditions. She writes, "The wave/ particle duality seems to destroy the ideal of scientific objectivity".

Polanyi's epistemology involved the ideas of *focal* and *subsidiary awareness*,

personal knowledge and *indwelling*.

Polanyi distinguished between focal awareness and subsidiary awareness. Focal awareness is what the perceiving mind focuses upon, while subsidiary awareness refers to those peripheral, complementary but still necessary parts of knowledge that the mind is using without being focally aware of them. Once an object has become part of subsidiary awareness, it is part of *tacit knowledge*. For example, a pianist has focal awareness on the music, but tacit awareness of the keys (Gunton, 1985:39–40). Subsidiary awareness and focal awareness are mutually exclusive (Polanyi, 1958:57).

Meek (2003:84) describes the process:

On the way to achieving a pattern, before we ever reach it, and if we are ever to reach it, we begin to rely subsidiarily on the particulars that previously we were simply looking at. We must struggle past looking at them to get inside them in a way that defies verbal expression. It has to happen that we start relating to them in this alternative way for our act of knowing ever to be achieved.

Knowing is never a matter of passively absorbing sensory data. Knowing involves perceiving patterns, and consciously interpreting them. As one integrates focal awareness with subsidiary awareness, one comes to contact reality. The profundity of the integrated pattern and the richness of its pattern then suggests that one has contacted reality (Meek, 2003:135).

Polanyi also spoke much of personal knowledge. By this he meant that human knowing is always an exercise of personal responsibility. Instead of Enlightenment philosophy's notion of minimising or even eliminating the personal responsibility of the knower (by calling it "objectivity"), Polanyi insisted the knower must submit to reality as a responsible knower (Meek, 2003:147).

Consider how persons know one another. A friendship relationship involves two people seeking to know one another through mutual, voluntary disclosures. These

disclosures occur as trust is extended, as a devotion to one another is demonstrated. If a man became interested in a woman and sought to learn of her by seeking to "objectively" gather facts about her by hiring a private investigator, following her discreetly and taking notes, and interviewing her associates, she would not be flattered. His "objective" approach would feel intrusive, even criminal, for by treating her as an object, he would have diminished his capacity to treat her as a subject. Knowing persons requires commitment and earned trust.

Polanyi argued that all knowing is like that. A knower is a person, and what is known is personlike in its responsiveness to the ways of the knower. Quantum indeterminacy has shown that what was assumed to be dead, inert "matter" is responsive to human observation. The "object" appears to have a form of mind and mystery of its own. The knower is half of the knowing process, and must be willing to approach reality as a responsible, submissive knower if knowing is to truly occur (Meek, 2003:177).

Of course, this presupposes that reality is what the Bible says it is: a cosmos created by a personal God. Therefore, reality itself is a gift. Gunton (1985:50) writes,

What I want to suggest is that what Berkeley took to be self-evidently true, we should take as a proposal for consideration. According to him, we know the world because God gives it to people to be known. Polanyi believed that, too.

If, as Edwards believed, the heart of being is God's dynamic love within the Trinity, and creation is an extension of that love, then the appropriate response to a gift is a highly personal form of knowing. Knowing is an act of responding to the gift of reality, to the gesture of love by God. In order to know, one must love. Love, rather than interrogating matter for information, is the way one should relate to the world (Meek, 2014:17). To be human is fundamentally to be open to an "outside", be that outside "benevolent or malevolent" (Smith, 2014:29).

This leads to Polanyi's notion of *indwelling*. In this scheme, the senses are not

passive, but act upon the world so as to receive its meaning. Since matter is not foreign to the human being, one can indwell the world in an active and loving engagement with it. Polanyi assumes the possibility of success of knowing the real world, whereas the Enlightenment assumed the fallibility of the senses and the possibility of delusion. In contrast to the safety fences erected by the Enlightenment, Polanyi takes the risk of personal commitment as the only possible route to contacting reality (Gunton, 1985:41).

Indwelling is loving in order to know. By empathetically putting oneself inside the thing one wants to know, and taking it inside, one extends welcome, trust, and caring attentiveness (Meek, 2014:48). The moment of mutual indwelling in which one person gives himself or herself and receives another is a moment of communion with the object of the knowing quest. Meek describes it thus:

> Our love invited the real; the real comes into our love and flourishes there. The relationship we have with it is invested, compassionate, connected. It's not a mercenary help-yourself. We didn't invite it by exhibiting that attitude. Now it stands before us in our delight and wonder. Now it stands before us in mutual consent (2014:101).

One cannot help hearing echoes of Jonathan Edwards: consent, union, and mutual indwelling. The language is unmistakably Trinitarian, the ideas hearken back to the Greek church fathers' idea of perichoresis: the mutual indwelling and love of the three persons of the Trinity. Renard (1948:71) writes that "knowledge is *union,* an immaterial or *intentional* union, between the knowing subject and the known object".

Polanyi forces the choice between two very different theories of knowledge. One theory sees knowledge as a form of information collection to gain power and domination, a tool to conquer and control. The other sees knowledge as the path to communion: the loving relationship of joy, peace, and fruitfulness (Meek, 2014:93). One might argue that Francis Bacon's approach to knowledge has brought great power, and great mastery over

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nature.[7] Indeed, it has, and with it has come modern man's profound alienation, insecurity, and terrifying hostility to himself and the created order.

Loving, personal indwelling is much of what the Bible calls *faith*. Faith is a necessary ingredient of all knowledge, for it is the act of personal submission to the pattern of reality. Faith does not oppose reason; it sustains reason (Meek, 2003:173–174). Polanyi (1958:312) calls this the "fiduciary rootedness of all rationality". Here one cannot help hearing echoes of Augustine and Pascal.

How has Polanyi helped the project of overcoming subject-object dualism? He has opposed the Kantian division of separate categories for different kinds of knowledge. He has demonstrated that all knowledge requires personal commitment. He has carried through the implications of the universe being a gift: that it ought to be received and known with love and submission, not interrogated and observed with coldness. He has shown that the perceiving human is already part of the created order, and so is in union with it, but has the kind of consciousness that can transcend it. Humankind must use these faculties to lovingly indwell objects of knowledge, to discover their given meaning. Humans must exercise faith that the focal and subsidiary patterns will coalesce into an integrated pattern as they pursue God-given meaning and contact with reality.

8.4.6. Summary and Implications for Christian Epistemology and Beauty

The six individuals and four proposals surveyed have presented a wealth of insights. Furthermore, in important ways, the four models have agreed and harmonised with one another. Four repeated themes are now summarised.

1) *The primacy of faith-love*. Pascal, Augustine, Edwards, Lewis, and Polanyi are unanimous on the point that faith and love are fundamental and prerequisite to right knowledge. The nature of reality is itself a form of love. The universe is a gift. The ground

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[7] Though the phrase "knowledge is power" does not occur in Bacon's writings, the phrase *ipsa scientia potestas est"* ("knowledge itself is power") occurs in Bacon's *Meditationes Sacrae* (1597).

of being is the dynamic love of the Trinity. Unless a human's epistemological posture harmonises with this ontology, all hope of correct perception and interpretation is lost. The human's sin will not only warp his or her cognitive faculties, it will destroy the receptiveness necessary to indwell and participate with created reality. Augustine calls it *caritas*; Edwards calls it *consent*: Polanyi calls it *indwelling*. All point to the same notion: humans, as creatures, must harmonise with their Creator and his creation by assuming the posture of trust, grateful love, and submission. Scripture suggests the very same thing, saying that the affection of reverential trust, submission and love is foundational to any further knowledge or love:

> "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7).

> "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Prov. 9:10).

God's beauty can only be seen by those willing to receive this beauty, not by those who "objectively" study it. As Navone (1996:79) puts it:

> God is not an object to be known among other objects. No object/creature is self-explanatory. God is known as the transcendent explanation for all objects/ creatures. Similarly, nothing makes sense out of context. God is the Ultimate Context in and from which all objects/creation make sense or has sense/meaning/purpose. Being Itself, the One/True/Good/Beautiful Itself, is the measure of all created reality which possesses existence and its transcendental qualities by participation. Apart from its Ultimate Context, all creation is ultimately absurd or meaningless.

John Calvin saw the act of praise as combining subjective and objective. In prayer, one is shaped by what one desires. At the same time, the objective aspect of religious devotion emerges as the worshipper projects an ontological reality onto its object of worship (Lane,

2001:16). Faith-love erases the subject-object dichotomy when it comes to God's beauty, by submitting both one's perception and ability to receive knowledge to him, lovingly waiting upon him to grant illumination, and enable one to see. As Charles Spurgeon (n.d:142) puts it,

> The blessed man has God already, and for this reason he seeks him. This may seem a contradiction: it is only a paradox. God is not truly sought by the cold researches of the brain: we must seek him with the heart. Love reveals itself to love: God manifests his heart to the heart of his people.

2) *The importance of imagination*. Participative knowledge is at the heart of Christian realism. Knowledge of reality is mediated through the imagination, which might be thought of as faith's architectonic. An entire structure of understood reality is furnished through the mind's perception and interpretation. If this "metaphysical dream" is shaped by Christian revelation, its analogies and metaphors will convey meaning that corresponds to what is real. If the imagination is shaped by wrong metaphors, it will fail to interpret sensory data correctly. For example, if the imagination is primarily Cartesian, objects will be dead, inert and lifeless things, to be passively inspected and reflected upon. If the imagination is Kantian, objects are similarly dead, but ready to receive the imposition of humanly constructed ideas of beauty. If the imagination is positivist, matter is primary and mind secondary: objects exist in their own right, and minds (which are self-conscious objects) attempt to describe them. If the imagination is postmodern, there are no objects, only one's own consciousness, meaning objects in the consciousness may be manipulated at will. A Christian imagination is conversely profoundly trinitarian, creational and redemptional. It views reality as the work of the Triune Creator, and therefore invested with meaning. Creation functions symbolically to teach. As creatures, humans are part of this meaning-saturated order; but they are simultaneously sub-creators, who are made in God's image. One's imaginative perception is a creaturely act of sub-creation: creatures

submitting and indwelling creation to receive their Creator's message. The Christian imagination is redemptive too, for creation is understood as cursed and groaning for renewal, one's own perceptions are marred by sin and needing grace, and the story of creation itself is only properly understood as a redeemed gift from Father to Son and Son to Father. Nature (creation) and grace (redemption) are deeply wedded and prominent in the Christian imagination. Without this, perception will be skewed.

3) *The necessity of ontological and dispositional union*. All four proposals understand that true knowledge only comes from "possessing the object in love" (Augustine), "consent to being" (Edwards), "participation" (Barfield) and "indwelling" (Polanyi). These are all different ways of saying the same thing: union. To know something, a person must somehow be a part of it, and it a part of that person. The degree to which one severs this union and treats an object of knowledge as completely distinct from self, is the degree to which one limits his or her true understanding of it. This union is to be both an actual, ontological union and second, a union of disposition: consenting to another's existence by desiring to love it. The six writers this section has examined all see an existent ontological union between subjects and other objects in the universe because humans are part of the creation. Schaeffer (1972:60) writes,

> The same reasonable God made both things, namely, the known and the knower, the subject and the object, and he put them together. So it is not surprising if there is a correlation between these things.

This ontological union needs to be acted out experientially. In essence, no object should be "objectified"; all should be "subjectivised". Taylor (1998:73) clarifies that truth which is subjective "is truth that one has made one's own—the observer is now engaged in the thing through connatural knowledge, and one has, through sympathy, *participated* in the reality".

Union is the only model that can adequately explain how both subject and object are involved when beauty is both present and beheld. Jenson (1995:151) sees this in its theological context:

> Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, but vanishes if it is not the assertive quality of the thing perceived. Beauty is also the objective harmony of things, which yet is not given if it is not given for a subject. On this polarity of what is and what is perceived to be, Western reflection has foundered ever and again. Which is to say that Western reflection has foundered ever and again on God, who is God because what he is and what he perceives himself to be are neither confused nor separated.

4) The need for illumination. Beginning with Augustine, each of the writers examined saw the essentiality of God's gracious work of enlightenment. Edwards included illumination in his view of the sense of the heart, the regenerated capacity to understand and love the things of God. C. S. Lewis saw illumination as vital, as seen in his oft-quoted remark: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else" (1996:106). Polanyi (1958:129) similarly said, "'Illumination' is then the leap by which the logical gap is crossed. It is the plunge by which we gain a foothold at another shore of reality".

All of these recognise that the presence of grace mingled with nature is necessary if true knowledge is to result. Truth is not sterile information to be extracted (note the contemporary term "data-mined") but knowledge to be voluntarily revealed. This disclosure comes at God's own pleasure, and no method of invasive "study" will obtain it without divine permission.

How then should faith-love, imagination, union, and illumination be integrated into a modified correspondence-disclosure model for apprehending the beauty of God?

First, faith and love must be present to understand and apprehend God's beauty. If God's beauty is largely his love towards his own glories, then only love for what God

loves can unlock this beauty. The reader must take seriously the Pascalian, Augustinian and Edwardsian warnings about how sin will affect perception. Love must be cultivated—not merely the love that one might like, but the love that corresponds to God's love.

Second, one must understand that God is not an object to be studied. His beauty is not an amusement or pleasure to be pursued for selfish ends. Instead, one must submissively participate with God in all perception, allowing the imaginative faculties he has given and the imaginative, analogical way he has revealed himself in the Word and the world to shape one's perception of his beauty. Humankind has been delegated the faculty of sub-creation (imagination), but it must be shaped by reverent submission to the imaginative forms revealed in the Word and shaped by the historical communities of believers, not by secular or atheistic forms. Only then will these properly function to "re-create" the appearances of objects as God would have Christians see them. More to the point, the right functioning of imagination will enable Christians to apprehend the beauty of God.

Third, one must embrace and pursue union with God. Scripturally, union with God through Christ is a major theme of Paul's writings. The means of this union ontologically, both in creation and redemption, must be understood. Beyond the positional union of the believer, Christian spirituality must then pursue practical, experiential union. This may take the form of beholding God in his Word and works, of conforming to God's nature, and of sharing God's delight. In acts of practical and experiential consent, Christians practise their position, they become what they are, and it is in this place of experiential union that they can expect to understand and apprehend the beauty of God.

Fourth, one must ask for and wait for illumination. One can no more independently know God than one could independently will oneself into existence. The right mode of seeking can no more automatically bring the knowledge of the beauty of God than a suitor following a set of procedures could automatically win the one he is pursuing. A voluntary

disclosure and "consent" is necessary in human relationships; Scripture teaches that God is only known through his own choice to reveal himself (Matt. 11:27). Imagination, as Augustine would remind one, cannot function without illumination. Again, only through submissive participation with God in the means of his self-disclosure, will such illumination bring the truth of God's beauty.

8.5. Conclusion

In pursuit of finding real contact between the "object" (God's beauty) and the "subject" (the Christian perceiver) this chapter turned to the philosophical discipline of epistemology, with special focus on subject-object dualism. It began by justifying this approach: Christian spirituality claims to be dealing with reality, not pleasant fictions. If God's beauty is a reality, and Scripture encourages the act of beholding it, a Christian spirituality in pursuit of God's beauty should be able to explain what method it employs for assuring the subjects that their experience of God's beauty is not a self-generated illusion. The idea that some kind of correspondence between beholder and beauty is possible remains highly controversial.

To understand the controversy, the chapter explained the current popular definitions: *subjective* is viewed as the highly personal and probably unreliable form of private judgement, while *objective* is defined as independently existent, and empirically verifiable facts. The chapter then rehearsed the history of this dualism.

Premoderns were found to be largely exempt from subject-object dualism. Nominalism, originally an intra-scholastic theological debate, denied the existence of universals and loosed upon the world a steady scepticism about faith. Human reason came to gain priority over faith. This introduced a dualism between mind and matter, between subjects and objects. It also changed the nature of perception from participation to passive absorption followed by internal, rational investigation. Kant held that the ideas of beauty

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were human constructs or patterns that subjects imposed upon perceived objects. Kant's two-storey approach to knowledge was a crucial turning point in Western philosophy.

Romantics sought to maintain a place for noumena with appeals to imagination, though sometimes at the expense of sacrificing the ultimate reality of noumenal experience. Existentialism grew out of this soil. By the end of the twentieth century, beauty was a totalising meta-narrative, an ontology of violence, and correspondence theory was naïve and deluded.

The study then turned to consider if perhaps the Enlightenment took a wrong turn, and if the premodern world was correct in seeing moral realities, essences, and universals. Several contemporary authors affirmed that truth does not belong solely to the hard sciences, but other forms of truth exist: affective truth, moral truth, aesthetic truth.

Next, the matter of apprehending these forms of truth was studied. Four models of truth were described: correspondence theory, coherence theory, praxis theory, and disclosure theory. Coherence theory was found to be lacking in its own definition, and useless for pursuing realities outside of an artificial system. Praxis theory suffered from a narrow focus on means without defining ends in light of human nature and purpose. Correspondence theory held out the most promise for the purposes of the study, since it asserts that ideas or propositions in a subject can correspond to the nature of things outside the subject. Disclosure theory echoes Augustine's recognition that illumination was needed for all knowledge. A modified correspondence-disclosure model that incorporates participation was suggested.

The study then turned to four Christian realist proposals to provide such a model. Augustine and Pascal demonstrated the need for a loving disposition of the heart. Loving faith combined with illumination is necessary to know God and know truth.

Jonathan Edwards showed that a disposition of benevolence, or "consent" was fundamental to living in harmony with the nature of reality. The disposition towards loving union is fundamental to knowledge.

Owen Barfield and C. S. Lewis separately showed the importance of imagination to perception. The imagination is a kind of mediator between subject and object, construing sense impressions into an interpreted whole.

Michael Polanyi showed the personal nature of all knowing. Apart from personal commitment, investment, and submission, reality cannot be parsed. Knowing is never passive cognition, but an active and receptive process of integrating focal and subsidiary awareness.

These four proposals delivered four distinctives necessary to a Christian realist correspondence model for beauty. First, the need for faith-love in one's approach to God. Second, the necessity of a Christian imagination: a faith-filled architectonic that views reality primarily as a creation by a Triune Creator parsed by creatures who are sub-creators. Third, the essentiality of union: an ontological and a dispositional union with the object of knowledge is necessary to properly love, know and understand it. Fourth, the requisite of illumination. God's voluntary self-disclosure and enlightenment of the heart and mind is fundamental to understanding God's beauty.

The chapter has shown that the subject-object division is most unfortunate. Objects do not exist, in their fullest sense, without the sub-creators who are perceiving subjects. Perceiving subjects do not make their own reality, but make contact with and apprehend an already-existent one, but one that requires correct interpretation. The premodern vision was much closer to the idea of reality presented in Scripture and in much of Christian philosophy.

One cannot turn back the clock. One can retrace one's steps, though, and find where thinkers took a wrong turn. In this writer's view, that wrong turn was nominalism,

followed by Cartesian dualism and its philosophical offspring. The dilemma for Christians pursuing God's beauty is that they cannot simply adopt a premodern imagination, as if they were changing garments. Nor should they do so, were they able to, since some of the insights brought about by the conversation in Western philosophy, such as the importance of the perceiver's interpretation, are not hostile to Christianity, but harmonise with what Scripture has always affirmed. Instead, by using the insights of Augustine, Pascal, Edwards, Barfield, Lewis, and Polanyi, Christians may tentatively hold forth a model of perception that answers to the twenty-first century, but returns them to a biblical model of a moral universe in which they participate.

It now remains to synthesise the findings from Scripture, historical theology, aesthetics, and epistemology into a model of Christian spirituality that apprehends the beauty of God. This will be the project aim of the next chapter.

Chapter 9. A Proposed Model of Spirituality for Pursuing and Apprehending God's Beauty

9.1. Introduction

The various streams of this study must now coalesce into its stated goal: to suggest a model of Christian spirituality based upon apprehending God's beauty. Schneiders (2005:7) states that academic Christian spirituality conducts its research through an interdisciplinary approach: constitutive disciplines, problematic disciplines, and theology.

As pointed out in chapter five, the *constitutive* disciplines, which necessarily function in relation to the subject, are Scripture and Christian history. This constituted the research of chapter six.

The *problematic* disciplines relate to the particular problem being studied, and in the case of this study, were aesthetics and epistemology. Chapters seven and eight considered aesthetics and epistemology in light of the particular problem at hand: apprehending God's beauty.

Finally, theology must come into play, as it relates to both disciplines. Chapter nine will attempt to marry the findings of chapters six, seven, and eight with theology, so as to suggest a model of spirituality built upon and around the idea of apprehending God's beauty.

The chapter begins by summarising and combining the disciplines researched thus far. It initially summarises two sets of findings within the constitutive disciplines: the *nature* of God's beauty from Scripture and history, and the *perception* of God's beauty from aesthetics and epistemology. A definition, or more likely, a description of the nature of God's beauty is distilled from the research, particularly that of chapter two, which aids in the model of spirituality. Findings from the biblical and historical study, the aesthetic study, and the epistemological study regarding the apprehension of beauty are then summarised. A conclusion will be drawn regarding the key to perception of God's beauty:

correspondent love is fundamental to apprehending God's beauty. The idea of correspondent love is then tested against and developed through philosophy, Scripture, Christian history, and aesthetics, with theology dominating.

The study then moves to the proposed model of spirituality, which is a model of the shaping of correspondent love. After justifying the approach, the model is considered as five theological constructs: the pattern of correspondent love, the position for correspondent love, the process of correspondent love, the posture of correspondent love, and the practices of correspondent love. In each of these, findings from earlier chapters are harmonised with Scripture, with Scripture providing the regulative principle. The model is then summarised.

9.2. Summary of Constitutive and Problematic Disciplines

9.2.1. Introduction

Christian historical and systematic theology, aesthetics, and epistemology are very different fields of study. The various findings of this thesis may seem disparate and eclectic unless they are distilled and harmonised. To do so, the findings are now summarised topically as the *nature* of God's beauty and the *apprehension* of God's beauty. This will aid the reader in understanding the proposed model of spirituality set forth in this chapter.

9.2.2. Summary of Findings Regarding the Nature of God's Beauty

The study suggested that the beauty vocabulary found in Scripture, the beauty of Scripture's literary forms, and the biblical theme of God's glory all demonstrate that the idea of God's beauty is very much present in Scripture. Scripture sees the experience of beauty as beautiful in itself and teaches that righteous ones delight in what is delightful. Unlike the Cartesian idea of neutral observation, Scripture insists that the moral qualities of the observer affect whether one regards the truly beautiful as beautiful (Tit. 1:15). Augustine represents the most developed premodern Christian thinking on beauty, seeing

the importance of sanctified loves in the beholder in order to perceive God's beauty.

Four theories of beauty and their derivatives were examined: the transcendental theories, the classical theories, the subjective theories, and the theological theories.

Jonathan Edwards' theory was found to be the best: "being's cordial consent to being in general" (*WJEO*, 8:620). Edwards combined insights from each of the theories, while being primarily theological. His theory was different from his Christian forbearers, though. Instead of resting on the medieval idea that God's beauty was equivalent to his being, Edwards insisted that the beauty of God is God's *interaction* with his being. Beauty is not a static property: it is God's dynamic, give-and-take of pleasure and excellence in himself and all that reflects him.

Of course, for Edwards, God's consent is not grounded on consent, for that would lead to infinite regress. God's consent rests not on beauty, but on being itself. God's being "simply considered" is what virtuous benevolence consents to (Spohn, 1981:403). God delights in his own being in its undivided, infinite essence. Jenson (1995:147) writes that "the specifically triune God is beautiful, and whatever he perceives on the pattern of his own self". Necessarily, God's undivided essence includes God's love. But God's beauty is God's "godness" in dynamic self-appraisal. Love and delight are the glory that illuminates them, as white light gives colour to objects. God's beauty is then "the Most Lovely loving the Most Lovely". When God delights in his being, and celebrates and radiates pleasure, this is his beauty. God's essence irradiated in delighted self-communication is God's beauty and God's love.

What does a Christian spirituality based upon apprehending God's beauty pursue? It pursues the experience of God's love for God, found in the Holy Spirit. Is pursuing God's beauty then loving God's love? No, it is seeking to appropriate that love in a correspondent form by delighting in God's being, simply considered. Certainly, to love someone's love and to love that person is inseparable. Loving someone's love is loving the

deepest part of that person. But the ground of this delight is God's being, simply considered. In sum, a spirituality that pursues the apprehending of God's beauty is one in which the subject experiences and participates in God's delight in God and all that reflects him. Loving God as God does is pursuing God's beauty.

How is this experience or participation obtained?

9.2.3. Summary of Findings Regarding the Apprehension of God's Beauty

Jonathan Edwards' theory of beauty not only gave a compelling definition of beauty (see above), but ably reconciled subjective perception and objective existence by using the idea of spiritual sensibility. God gives the regenerate believer new inclinations—holy affections—that can understand and delight in God's beauty. This concept of "consent", "true virtue", or "holy affections" is the bridge or point of contact between subject and object. Both the study in aesthetics and epistemology revealed ways that beauty can be apprehended and experienced, which find parallels in Christian spirituality.

9.2.3.1. Findings from Aesthetical Study

Chapter seven pursued the question of beauty's perception in art, not because other forms of beauty found in nature, science, human relationships, or other realms of human life are irrelevant to the question at hand, but because the discipline of aesthetics describes *methodologies* for perceiving beauty. Aesthetic methodology was then considered, after justifying the kinship between art and religion.

The aesthetic experience was found to be composed of four elements: perception, immediate response, interpretation, and evaluation. These were examined and found to have very direct equivalents in spirituality: humility, faith, and discerning love.

9.2.3.3. Findings from Epistemological Study

The epistemological question of relating subjective perception to objective transcendental qualities was taken up in chapter eight. Four models of truth were considered for perceiving transcendentals: correspondence theory, coherence theory,

praxis theory, and disclosure theory. It was found that a modified correspondence theory, combined with some form of disclosure theory, best accommodates the notion of perceiving real transcendentals. Six Christian realists were surveyed for contributions to such a model.

The epistemological study found that the perception of transcendent beauty requires a complex of humility-faith-love, a Christian imagination shaped by creation and redemption, union with the beauty both ontologically and dispositionally, and a dependence upon divine illumination.

9.2.3.4. Summary of Apprehension

The research from chapters six, seven, and eight have some very noticeable similarities and overlaps.

Scripture and Christian history showed that God's beauty is a reality, but perceived by those whose hearts are righteous. Those with *caritas* (Augustine) or holy affections (Edwards) would be able to perceive God's beauty.

Aesthetics echoed this idea, showing that unselfish receptivity (humility), imagination in interpretation (faith), and good taste (wise discernment) are necessary to see beauty.

Epistemology showed that for correspondence between a perceiver and beauty, the perceiver needed to exhibit humility, imaginative perception and participation, benevolence and submission toward the object.

One can see the repetitive refrain here. Perceiving God's beauty requires humility and receptiveness. Perceiving God's beauty requires Scripture-saturated faith, which is the related to the aesthetic notion of imagination. Perceiving God's beauty requires a disposition of loving union, while remaining dependent upon God for illumination. Jenson (1995:152) summarises well: "We must share God's perception of things to truly perceive beauty. This is done through His Spirit".

9.2.4. Conclusions for a Model of Spirituality

Combining the conclusions on the definition of beauty with those regarding the perception of beauty brings into focus what the proposed model of spirituality must revolve around.

1) God's beauty is his own consent, love, or affection for his holy being.

2) Loving this beauty, and necessarily, its object—God's being simply considered—is the means of perceiving this beauty. Loving God is the analogue of God's beauty in the creature: a creature participates and shares (and thereby perceives) God's beauty, when loving it and God as God does.

3) The kind of love that perceives this beauty is of a particular kind: containing humility, faith, discernment, benevolence, submission, and union.

The heart of this study is, then, a simple proposal: a certain kind of love for God will enable, and is identical to, the apprehension of God's beauty. Loving God and his cosmos as God does, is both beholding beauty, and becoming beautiful. The perception of God's beauty is an experience known through participative love.

The constitutive and problematic disciplines studied have already revealed that this love must be carefully defined and qualified. This love must be humbly receptive and teachable. It must rightly imagine God as revealed in Scripture. It must guard against self-love, narcissism, and sentimentalism. It must possess sound judgement and exhibit maturity, having been shaped by the best in Christian culture. It must exist within an ontological and dispositional union with God. In other words, not merely any love for God will result in perceiving God's beauty.

A term for distinguishing this love from counterfeit forms is the term *correspondent love*. Here, the word *correspondent* is used adjectivally, to describe and modify the noun *love*. Correspondent love refers to love for God that corresponds in

degree and kind to God's own love. As correspondence theory (see section 8.3.2) allows transcendentals to be known, so a correspondent love is the means to know God's beauty.

Carson (2000:23) cautions that intra-trinitarian love is not a perfect analogue for the believer's love for God. The perfect love of God for God is unique and infinite.

Though the creature cannot love infinitely as God does, creaturely love may still be rightly ordered, in terms of its hierarchy of loves and in terms of the nature of the love, to be conformed to the kind of love that perceives God's beauty through submissive participation. When it is rightly ordered (or *ordinate*, to use the archaic term), it will correspond to God's own love, in creaturely fashion. The degree or *quantity*, and the kind or *quality* of the love must be rooted in the nature of things: in this case, the being of God and his own love for himself.

If correspondent love of God is the link between God's objective beauty and one's subjective perception of it, then the remainder of the study must take up the question of correspondent love for God: its definition, and its cultivation.

9.3. The Idea of Correspondent Love

The concept of correspondent love is not well understood today. Leeman (2010:41–53) points out that a prevalent cultural narcissism has led to a deformed view of love. Among the warped cultural understandings of love are deep-seated individualism, Romantic views of self-expression and self-fulfilment, consumeristic tendencies, and anti-authoritarian ideas of freedom. Section 7.4.4.3 detailed how sentimentalism in art, fostered by mass culture, has deformed the idea of love. This sentimentalism has replaced a biblical idea of love with an idol. To recover a right view of love, correspondent love must be understood. The study moves to examining love philosophically, whether it is an involuntary feeling or a voluntary desire that corresponds to an object. It then considers the biblical evidence: is love commanded, and is its order and nature ever commanded? The section considers what Christians in history have written on the idea of correspondent love.

Finally, aesthetics is again enlisted to address this topic.

9.3.1. Correspondent Love Considered Philosophically

To rightly understand what correspondent love is, some philosophical reflection on the nature of love is necessary. Perhaps the biggest obstacle to the idea that love may be appropriate or inappropriate, moral or immoral, rightly or wrongly ordered, is the notion that love is primarily an emotion, an involuntary feeling, that cannot be judged for its morality or correctness.

Thomas Dixon (2003) has documented the history of the term "emotion". He suggests that what was originally a moral category in Christian thought, named *affections* or *passions*, defining the inclination of the will or the presence of appetites, became a psychological category defining bodily or neurological responses. According to Dixon, the Christian tradition distinguished between the higher, volitional part of the soul that was rightly moved in its voluntary acts as it expressed love in the form of affections (2003:54), and the lower part of the soul (the involuntary or irrational part) which did so in the form of passions (2003:58). In this view, every passion and affection had two forms, an active and a passive, the former being acceptable, the latter, often not (2003:55). In other words, love was primarily the will moved in the direction of desire.

One sees this thinking very early. For example, Augustine united desire (*cupiditas*), fear (*timor*), joy (*laetitia*), and sorrow (*tristitia*) under the single principle of love (*amor*). A right will (*voluntas recta*) or a good love (*bonus amor*) would issue forth in appropriate affections, but a wrong will or bad love would produce sinful affections (*City of God*, IX, iv).

Augustine helps clarify that the important matter in judging the morality of a desire is its chosen and willed object. "In our ethics, we do not so much inquire whether a pious soul is angry, as why he is angry; not whether he is sad, but what is the cause of his sadness; not whether he fears, but what he fears" (*City of God,* IX, v). In other words, the

object of desire determines the moral quality of the love. Love, according to Augustine, is a matter of inclination towards desired objects. Love is a moral response of positive inclination towards an object. Therefore, the kind of love may vary significantly when the objects desired vary significantly. Put simply, the love *corresponds* to its object.

Thomas Aquinas similarly saw love as the direction or inclination of the will towards an object, not as an irrational psychological feeling:

> There is no other passion of the soul that does not presuppose love of some kind. The reason is that every other passion of the soul implies either movement towards something, or rest in something. Now every movement towards something, or rest in something, arises from some kinship or aptness to that thing; and in this does love consist" (*Summa Theologica* II, xxvii, Art. IV).

Aquinas saw all "emotions" as love of some form:

> Hence love is naturally the first act of the will and appetite; for which reason all the other appetite movements presuppose love, as their root and origin. For nobody desires anything nor rejoices in anything, except as a good that is loved: nor is anything an object of hate except as opposed to the object of love (*Summa Theologica*, I, xx, Art. I).

According to Dixon (2003:75), for Jonathan Edwards, "affections" were movements of the will informed by the understanding:

> The affections and passions are frequently spoken of as the same; and yet in the more common use of speech, there is in some respect a difference; and affection is a word that in its ordinary signification, seems to be something more extensive than passion, being used for all vigorous lively actings of the will or inclination; but passion for those that are more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more overpowered, and less in its own command.

(*WJEO*, 2:98).[8]

In the premodern Christian tradition, love, as an affection could therefore be appropriate or inappropriate, since love could be rightly or wrongly directed. The object of desire determined if it was right to desire such a thing, and necessarily dictated the moral quality of the love.

In eighteenth-century Germany, a third faculty of the soul, in addition to understanding and will, was introduced—that of *feeling*. This was endorsed in works by Kant and Schopenhauer, in whose works irrational and involuntary feelings were spoken of and endorsed as real (Dixon, 2003:70–71). British moralists of the same period began departing from a will-centred affective psychology and tacitly introduced a three-faculty psychology (understanding, will, and feelings) rather than a two-faculty one (understanding and will) (2003:93). Thomas Brown (1778–1820) baptised the term *emotion* in his 1820 *Lectures on the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (Dixon, 2003:101). For Brown, only intellectual states were active, while emotions were mere feelings that were passively experienced. In the traditional Christian understanding, the will was active and the intellect passive. Conversely, Brown saw the will as simply the name for prevailing passions or emotions. This concept would then be co-opted by influential writers such as Thomas Chalmers, and later materialists, such as Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and Alexander Bain, culminating in its use by William James in 1884, which corresponds somewhat to its use today (Dixon, 2003:201–203).

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[8] Edwards showed that affections are found in God, who is a spirit, whereas passions are not. This furthers the case that Christians are to love God correspondingly, as God loves himself. "Such seems to be our nature, and such the laws of the union of soul and body, that there never is in any case whatsoever, any lively and vigorous exercise of the will or inclination of the soul, without some effect upon the body, in some alteration of the motion of its fluids, and especially of the animal spirits. And, on the other hand, from the same laws of the union of the soul and body, the constitution of the body, and the motion of its fluids, may promote the exercise of the affections. But yet it is not the body, but the mind only, that is the proper seat of the affections. The body of man is no more capable of being really the subject of love or hatred, joy or sorrow, fear or hope, than the body of a tree, or than the same body of man is capable of thinking and understanding. As it is the soul only that has ideas, so it is the soul only that is pleased or displeased with its ideas. As it is the soul only that thinks, so it is the soul only that loves or hates, rejoices or is grieved at what it thinks of. Nor are these motions of the animal spirits, and fluids of the body, anything properly belonging to the nature of the affections, though they always accompany them, in the present state; but are only effects or concomitants of the affections that are entirely distinct from the affections themselves, and no way essential to them; so that an unbodied spirit may be as capable of love and hatred, joy or sorrow, hope or fear, or other affections, as one that is united to a body" (*WJEO*, 2:98).

Contemporary Evangelicals tend to conflate the concepts of affection and emotion. Williams (2003:59) distinguishes them, but nevertheless groups feelings, emotions, and affections as overlapping and related ideas. McDermott (1995:40-41) distinguishes affections and emotions. According to him, affections are long-lasting, deep, consistent with one's beliefs, involve the mind, will, and feelings, and always result in action. Emotions, by contrast, are fleeting, superficial, sometimes overpowering, (often) disconnected from the mind and will, and they often fail to produce action.

While there is some continuity between affections and emotions, it seems better to move away from the term *emotion*, particularly when defining correspondent love. Explaining the distinction between voluntary and involuntary feelings, between desires of the will and desires of the body, and between the premodern distinction of affections and passions is a worthy goal for Christians intent on precision in this issue (Martin, 2013:296).

How then should one understand correspondent love, philosophically speaking? Premodern Christianity understood love as a voluntary, rational inclination of the soul towards what it sees as beautiful. On this definition, love may include feelings, but it *is not itself* an involuntary feeling. Love is rational desire that moves towards union.[9] Love is moved by beauty. When the soul is pure, it loves what is beautiful; when otherwise, it loves what is base. The love corresponds to the object.

Henry Scougal (1650–1678) put it this way: "The worth and excellency of a soul is to be measured by the object of its love" (*The Life of God*, 70). Lewis, in *Surprised By Joy*, (2012:256) similarly writes, "The form of the desired is in the desire. It is the object which

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[9] This should not be misunderstood as suggesting that love is stoic or merely cerebral. Edwards himself wrote, "T]rue religion consists in a great measure, in vigorous and lively actings of the inclination and will of the soul, or the fervent exercises of the heart" (*WJEO*, 2:99). Similarly, he said, "If we be not in good earnest in religion, and our wills and inclinations be not strongly exercised, we are nothing. The things of religion are so great, that there can be no suitableness in the exercises of our hearts, to their nature and importance, unless they be lively and powerful. In nothing is vigor in the actings of our inclinations so requisite, as in religion; and in nothing is lukewarmness so odious" (Ibid., 99–100).

makes the desire harsh or sweet, coarse or choice, 'high' or 'low.' It is the object that makes the desire itself desirable or hateful". In other words, love is appropriate and correspondent to the degree that its object is truly God, and his beauty is properly seen and understood.

Love is rational desire towards what a person sees as good and beautiful. What does love desire in the beauty seen? As creatures, humans may go toward the object of their love either in the form of need or in the form of gift. Lewis (1960:17) classifies these as *Need-loves* and *Gift-loves*. Need-love looks to the good or beautiful in the Beloved to meet a need in oneself; gift-love seeks to enjoy the good or beautiful in the Beloved for itself, or to beautify it further. In the case of perfection, *beautify* does not mean *improve*; it means simply *display*, *magnify*, *communicate* that perfection so that it is more widely shown.

In his essay "The Weight of Glory", Lewis (1996:25–26) objects to the idea that love is primarily the negative ideal of unselfishness. For Lewis, love is positive desire. When accused by Kantians of mercenary motives in such love, Lewis answers that when the reward that a desire seeks is foreign to the activity, the mercenary accusation may be valid. But when the reward is the activity itself in consummation, such as marriage being the sought reward of love, such love cannot be accused of selfishness, except if one is beholden to Stoic or Kantian ideas. Correspondent love pursues the good of all that God is; it pursues the pleasure of God himself. Christians love God because of what God is for them, and because of what God is. They love his need-meeting ability, and they love his excellence.

Samuel Rutherford (1600–1661) helps one find balance:

You object that the truly regenerate should love God for himself: and you fear that you love him more for his benefits, as incitements and motives to love him, than for himself. I answer: to love God himself as the last end, and also for his benefits,

as incitements and motives to love him, may stand well together; as a son loveth his mother, because she is his mother, howbeit she is poor; and he loveth her for an apple also. I hope that you will not say that benefits are the only reason and bottom of your love; it seemeth there is a better foundation for it" (*Letters,* 49/To James Bautie*).*

Correspondent love is then the inclination of the will (or desire) towards God for all that he is, both in himself and for one's good. When God is rightly known and desired, the desire will be correspondingly holy.

9.3.2. Correspondent Love Considered Biblically and Theologically

Is the idea of correspondent love present in Scripture? Does Scripture describe what love for God should be? It would seem so. In terms of degree, Scripture makes a hierarchy of loves very clear. The first of the Ten Commandments is "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod. 20:3). Deuteronomy 6:4–5 was the positive wording of the same commandment. In conversation with a scribe, Jesus explained that the command of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 was the ultimate obligation, followed by a second:

Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments *is*: 'Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This *is* the first commandment. And the second, like *it, is* this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these' (Mark 12:29–31).

It appears that Christ was interpreting the *Shema* to mean that the uniqueness of God demanded an answering form of ultimate love. This statement by Christ can be stated as the first of three biblical definitions of correspondent love.

1) Correspondent love for God loves God ultimately, and all else for his sake.

Only God is to be loved wholeheartedly, which is to say, loved ultimately, as the only God. A god is one in whom a person places ultimate trust and looks to it for ultimate delight. Gods are found at the end of one's chains of value and are not loved as a means to another love (that is, instrumentally), but are loved for themselves (that is, ultimately) (Bauder, 2012:6). God alone is to be loved as an end, and not as a means, for no one else is the true God. God alone deserves to be loved for himself; all other loves should be instrumental to that end (Ps. 73:25–26). Jesus made this clear, when calling for this ultimate love to be given to him, as the Son of God:

> He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me" (Matt. 10:37).
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> If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26).
>
> So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed My lambs' (John 21:15–17).

Similar Scriptures link the command to love or fear God ultimately to man's ultimate obligation: Eccl. 12:13; Deut. 10:12; Prov. 9:10; 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17. Love is repeatedly placed at the head of Christian character (1 Cor. 13:13; 16:14; Col. 3:14;1 Tim. 1:5; 1 Pet. 4:8; 2 Pet. 1:5–7). Loving one's neighbour is also granted a kind of summary status as fulfilment of one's moral obligations in Romans 13:9–10, Galatians 5:14, and James 2:8. Waltke (1988:9) comments that spirituality could even be defined as love of God and love of man.

If God demands ultimate love, what of other loves? The love of neighbour can further be divided into love for Christian brethren (John 13:34), love for family (Eph.

5:22–6:4), love for non-Christian neighbour (Rom. 13:9–10; Gal. 6:10) and love for enemy (Rom. 12:18–20; Matt. 5:4). The fact that love of neighbour is bundled together with love for God implies that the Second Commandment is an application of the First. That is, neighbours are to be loved for God's sake. How so? Three suggestions may suffice. First, when loving one's neighbour, one is loving God by obeying his command to love neighbour, and Jesus said that obedience is a form of love for him (John 14:15). Second, in loving one's neighbour, one is loving the image of God still resident in that neighbour (Gen. 9:6; Jas. 3:9; 1 John 4:12). Third, in loving one's neighbour, one is loving what God himself loves, for God loves all, including his enemies (John 3:16; Matt. 5:44–45). Love for those God loves is counted, in some sense, as love for him (Matt. 25:34–40).

Loving for God's sake may be extended from neighbour to all of creation. All good gifts are to be received thankfully (1 Tim. 4:4; Jas. 1:17). Creation must be contemplated for the way it reveals God and loved accordingly (Ps. 19:1–6; 1 Thes. 5:21; Phil. 4:8). In this way, correspondent love is loving God alone for himself, and loving all else for his sake.

This love is a complete "consent" of will to God, making him the chief end and desire of all. This love finds complete union in God as the chief end of life, heartily making him its desire and delight, reflecting the spirit of Romans 11:36: "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom *be* glory forever".

2) *Correspondent love for God means loving what God loves and hating what God hates.*

Correspondent love in the Bible includes the idea of loving what God loves. "You who love the LORD, hate evil! He preserves the souls of His saints; He delivers them out of the hand of the wicked" (Psa. 97:10).

Paul's prayer for the Philippians (1:9–11) is that their love would grow both in knowledge (of its object) and in discernment (judging its qualities). The result would be

the ability to approve what is *excellent* (διαφέροντα, "that which is worth more", Bauer, Danker, & Gingrich, 1937), which sounds much like the idea of taste, good judgement, and rightly-ordered love. If Paul believes that an appreciation for the excellent is possible, a dullness towards the excellent is equally possible, as is a love for what is ignoble, inferior, and unworthy.

Paul's instructions on what should occupy the Philippians' thinking in chapter 4:8 again suggests a form of love that is holy. Similar prayers are seen in 1 Thessalonians 3:12–13 and Ephesians 3:16–19. Christians are to give love and praise to things apportioned to their worth (Naugle, 2008:§654).

To love what God loves could be a simple definition of the biblical idea of being *righteous* or *just*. To love as God does is to esteem as God does, to value things as God does, both positively and negatively. Rigney (2015:87) writes that this is known as the principle of proportionate regard: that one should "value, esteem, and regard things in proportion to their value, nature, and worth".

Scripture certainly contains the idea that not all loves are of the same kind. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees for their man-pleasing, and the comment of the author is: "for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:43). Here the object of their love shaped the kind of love into something very different from worship. Malachi records a form of "love" for God that lacked all reverence and honour for God, a lack which the priests had not yet sensed:

> A son honors his father, And a servant his master. If then I am the Father, Where is My honor? And if I am a Master, Where is My reverence? Says the LORD of hosts To you priests who despise My name. Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?' (Mal. 1:6).

The priests' low view of God led to a deficient kind of love. One also sees examples of inappropriate, non-corresponding love when syncretism gripped Israel. Even though many

Israelites were worshipping Yahweh on the high places, the form of the devotion did not please God (1 Kgs. 3:2–3). That is, even though God still retained his place as the only God of Israel, the nature of the love offered was warped, being mingled with the Canaanite religious imagination. The degree of love may have still been correct, but the quality or nature of the love was inordinate.

The theme of believers continuing to perform acts of devotion to God while being displeasing to him, is found in several places:

> Therefore the Lord said: 'Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men' (Isa. 29:13).

Similarly, Jesus rebukes the Ephesian church in Revelation 2:1–5, because even though they had all the outward signs of a church that loved Christ, he could see that they had left their first love.

It is even possible for believers to mistake love for themselves as love for God. The Psalmist therefore writes, "Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, But to Your name give glory, Because of Your mercy, Because of Your truth" (Ps. 115:1). Humans may make God into their own image and worship that image (Ps. 50:21).

A simple summary of this is to say that loving what God loves is a holy love. Wells 2013:§1382) even suggests one should hyphenate the two into "holy-love". This desire to love what God loves is the desire to be fully conformed to his image (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:29). It is a delight in God that extends to resembling and reflecting him. Sanctification, Christlikeness, godliness, holiness are aimed at resembling Christ, and the deepest resemblance is found in the form of one's loves and desires. Therefore, when Christians love what God loves, they will likewise learn to love those things as God loves them, with a truthful, holy love. Holy love is a dispositional union with God. His love corresponds with believers'; believers' love corresponds with his.

3) *Correspondent love for God culminates in an expansive fullness of joy in lived communion with God.*

As God is loved ultimately and all things are loved for his sake, as God is loved by loving what he loves, this love is experienced and shed abroad by a holy delight in God. This fulness is mentioned by Jesus as the experience of communion.

> If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and *that* your joy may be full (John 15:10–11). But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves (John 17:13).

This is what appears to be the idea behind one's love "abounding" (2 Cor. 8:7; Phil. 1:9; 1 Thes 3:12; 2 Pet. 1:8) and being "filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19). The experience of communion is metaphorically compared to being "full", "filled", "complete", and "overflowing" (Eph. 5:18; Col. 1:9–10; 2:7; Phil. 1:9–11; 1 John 1:4). The joy is complete and expansive, flowing over onto others. Naugle (2008:§345) suggests that the happy life is "learning to love both God supremely and the world in the right way at the same time". The experience of ontological and dispositional union with God is one of fulness and expansive joy.

R. Kendall Soulen's original and unusual work *The Divine Name(s) and the Holy Trinity* (2011) suggests that a trinitarian form of naming God is found in Scripture, which he terms the *theological*, *christological*, and *pneumatological*. Soulen posits that the *theological* form of naming is closest to the Father's work and highlights the uniqueness of God, often referencing the Tetragrammaton. The *christological* form of naming is most like the Son in that it incarnates and expresses God more explicitly, particularly in the naming of the Father, Son and Spirit. The *pneumatological* form of naming is like the Holy Spirit in that it celebrates God in the form of a variety of metaphors and analogies,

such as Light and Bread, with an emphasis on blessing the Godhead. Soulen (2011:§6083–6141) suggests that these three forms of naming may point to the economic roles within the Trinity: the Father beholding and emphasising the uniqueness of the Godhead, the Son incarnating and expressing the Godhead, and the Spirit celebrating and blessing the Godhead.

It appears that the three descriptions of correspondent love given above are parallel to Soulen's three namings of the Trinity. *Loving God ultimately and all things for his sake* is parallel to the theological naming, loving as the Father does, emphasising the uniqueness of God as end of all things. *Loving what God loves* is similar to the christological naming, loving as the Son does, emphasising the incarnation and expression of God's loves. *Loving in expansive fullness of joy* corresponds to the pneumatological naming, loving as the Spirit does, emphasising the blessing and expansive celebration of God. Jonathan Edwards wrote that "it is in our partaking of the same Holy Spirit that our communion with God consists" (*WJEO,* 21:122).

If so, then one has here a potential way in which a Christian's love for God corresponds to God's own love for God. Correspondent love for God appears to be a creaturely form of trinitarian love.[10] Christ seems to suggest that the love shared between the Godhead would be the same love developed within believers.

> And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare *it*, that the love with
>
> which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them (John 17:26).

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[10] Creaturely love must of necessity be different to the love of an impassible, infinite, immutable, simple being. The discussion of the impassibility of God is beyond the scope of this paper. See for example, Bray (2012). Suffice it to say that a debate exists between those upholding the impassibility of classic theism (Dolezal, 2017), and those asserting a modified theism (such as Feinberg (2001), Frame (1987), Craig & Moreland (2003)), in which impassibility is either denied or modified. Thomas Aquinas remains a helpful guide. Aquinas avers that love can be either an act of the sensitive appetite, which makes it a passion, or an act of the intellective appetite, which does not. Aquinas suggests love in God is the latter. God rejoices and delights in what pleases him, without desiring out of a sense of need. This distinction would maintain God as being an affective being, not a passionate one (*Summa Theologica*, XX, i). Here is another reason to distinguish love from the contemporary category of *emotion*.

God's particular kind of love for himself, both in degree and in kind, is the love this model of spirituality is seeking. Such a love loves God ultimately; it loves what God loves with holy love; it blesses God and others with an expansive, abounding, fulness of joy. This love consents to union with God, inclining towards it with the entire being. To have this love reproduced within one will be to possess and exhibit ordinate love (Rom. 5:5; Gal. 5:22; Eph. 3:16–19). Venter (2015:3) calls this a form of social participative Trinitarian spirituality, in which "the human 'participates' in the divine fellowship of the Father, Son, and Spirit on the basis of the filiation of believers through the work of Christ".

Correspondent love is supported biblically. It is loving God ultimately, loving what God loves, and loving in an expansive fullness of joy. This love, both in degree and nature, corresponds with God's own love for himself.

9.3.3. Correspondent Love Considered Historically

It would be an insurmountable task to gather the collective thought of Christians on the topic of love for God. Suffice it to say, that many Christians have spoken frequently on the degree and nature of rightly ordered love. They have spoken not only on the required order of Christian loves, but on their kind. Correspondent love is not a novel concept. Augustine is best known for speaking of the *ordo amoris*.

> When the miser prefers his gold to justice, it is through no fault of the gold, but of the man; and so with every created thing. For though it be good, it may be loved with an evil as well as with a good love: it is loved rightly when it is loved ordinately; evilly, when inordinately. It is this which someone has briefly said in these verses in praise of the Creator: 'These are Thine, they are good, because Thou art good who didst create them. There is in them nothing of ours, unless the sin we commit when we forget the order of things, and instead of Thee love that which Thou hast made.' But if the Creator is truly loved, that is, if He Himself is loved and not another thing in His stead, He cannot be evilly loved; for love itself

is to be ordinately loved, because we do well to love that which, when we love it, makes us live well and virtuously. So that it seems to me that it is a brief but true definition of virtue to say, it is the order of love; and on this account, in the Canticles, the bride of Christ, the city of God, sings, "Order love within me" (*City of God,* XV*,* xxii).

Similarly, Augustine writes of how love itself is worthy of love.

Because in men who are justly loved, it is rather love itself that is loved; for he is not justly called a good man who knows what is good, but who loves it. Is it not then obvious that we love in ourselves the very love wherewith we love whatever good we love? For there is also a love wherewith we love that which we ought not to love; and this love is hated by him who loves that wherewith he loves what ought to be loved (*City of God*, XII, xviii).

Augustine refers to loving what God loves, to the degree that God does, in *On Christian Doctrine*:

Now he is a man of just and holy life who forms an unprejudiced estimate of things, and keeps his affections also under strict control, so that he neither loves what he ought not to love, nor fails to love what he ought to love, nor loves that more which ought to be loved less, nor loves that equally which ought to be loved either less or more, nor loves that less or more which ought to be loved equally. No sinner is to be loved as a sinner; and every man is to be loved as a man for God's sake; but God is to be loved for His own sake (*On Christian Doctrine,* I, xxvii).

Perhaps best known among his quotes on love is Augustine's saying: "He loves thee too little, who loves anything with thee which he loves not for thy sake" (*Confessions*, IX, xxix).

Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) wrote *On Loving God*. He likewise speaks of loving God for himself: "We are to love God for Himself, because of a twofold reason;

nothing is more reasonable, nothing more profitable" (*On Loving God*, I). Similarly, he writes, "You want me to tell you why God is to be loved and how much. I answer, the reason for loving God is God Himself; and the measure of love due to Him is immeasurable love" (Ibid.).

The anonymous author *of Theologia Germanica*, most likely writing in the late fourteenth century writes,

> And where a creature loveth other creatures for the sake of something that they have, or loveth God, for the sake of something of her own, it is all false Love; and this Love belongeth properly to nature, for nature as nature can feel and know no other love than this; for if ye look narrowly into it, nature as nature loveth nothing beside herself. But true Love is taught and guided by the true Light and Reason, and this true, eternal and divine Light teacheth Love to love nothing but the One true and Perfect Good, and that simply for its own sake, and not for the sake of a reward, or in the hope of obtaining anything, but simply for the Love of Goodness, because it is good and hath a right to be loved (*Theologia Germanica*, XLII).

Thomas Traherne (1636–1674) expresses the idea of ordinate love being the same as Christlikeness.

> Can you accomplish the end for which you were created, unless you be Righteous? Can you then be Righteous, unless you be just in rendering to Things their due esteem? All things were made to be yours; and you were made to prize them according to their value: which is your office and duty, the end for which you were created, and the means whereby you enjoy. The end for which you were created, is that by prizing all that God hath done, you may enjoy yourself and Him in Blessedness...For then we please God when we are most like Him. We are like Him when our minds are in frame. Our minds are in frame when our thoughts are like His. And our thoughts are then like His when we have such conceptions of all

objects as God hath, and prize all things according to their value. For God doth prize all things rightly, which is a Key that opens into the very thoughts of His bosom (*Centuries of Meditations*, First Century, XII).

François Fénelon (1651–1715) comments on ultimate love for God:

Men have a great repugnance to this truth, and consider it to be a very hard saying, because they are lovers of self from self-interest. They understand, in a general and superficial way, that they must love God more than all his creatures, but they have no conception of loving God more than themselves, and loving themselves only for Him. They can utter these great words without difficulty, because they do not enter into their meaning, but they shudder when it is explained to them, that God and his glory are to be preferred before ourselves and everything else to such a degree that we must love his glory more than our own happiness, and must refer the latter to the former, as a subordinate means to an end (*Spiritual Progress*, III).

Brother Lawrence's (1614–1691) collected letters, known as *The Practice of the Presence of God*, describe his attempt to love all things for God's sake. He remarks that he was pleased "when he could take up a straw from the ground for the love of God, seeking Him only, and nothing else, not even His gifts" (*The Practice of the Presence of God,* 2nd Conv., VI).

Jonathan Edwards also differentiates between loving God as a means or as an end.

For if we love him not for his own sake, but for something else, then our love is not terminated on him, but on something else, as its ultimate object. That is no true value for infinite worth, which implies no value for that worthiness in itself considered, but only on the account of something foreign. Our esteem of God is fundamentally defective, if it be not primarily for the excellency of his nature, which is the foundation of all that is valuable in him in any respect. If we love not

God because he is what he is, but only because he is profitable to us, in truth we

love him not at all (*WJEO,* 3:144).

References to inordinate affection, or non-corresponding love abound in Christian thought.

Early church fathers such as Clement, Nemesius of Emesa, and Gregory of Nyssa all

differentiate between evil passions and good (Martin, 2013:46). Puritans such as William

Ames, John Owen, and Richard Sibbes wrote much on right affections as opposed to

inordinate affections (pp. 93–113).

In his greatest work against positivism and subjectivism, *The Abolition of Man*,

Lewis writes:

Until quite modern times all teachers and even all men believed the universe to be

such that certain emotional reactions on our part could be either congruous or

incongruous to it—believed, in fact, that objects did not merely receive, but

could *merit*, our approval or disapproval, our reverence or our contempt. The

reason why Coleridge agreed with the tourist who called the cataract sublime and

disagreed with the one who called it pretty was of course that he believed

inanimate nature to be such that certain responses could be more 'just' or 'ordinate'

or 'appropriate' to it than others (2001:14–15).

Scruton (2009:197) agrees:

for a free being, there is right feeling, right experience and right enjoyment just as

much as right action. The judgement of beauty orders the emotions and desires of

those who make it. It may express their leisure and their taste: but it is pleasure in

what they value and taste for their true ideals.

The so-called "worship wars", whether ancient or modern, largely are debates over what is

appropriate love for God, and what is not. Whether it be the matter of images, the order of

the Mass, the use of an organ, singing in the vernacular, the presence of an altar, the

presence of statues, crucifixes or candles and incense in worship, or priestly vestments,

these all reflect a centuries-old debate regarding appropriate worship, and therefore ordinate or correspondent love.

The idea of correspondent or ordinate love for God has been present in historical Christian thought. Christians have written on the appropriateness or inappropriateness of love. The writers surveyed believed that for love to correspond to God's love, it must be accorded to the right objects according to their value and nature, and thereby be of the right degree and kind.

9.3.4. Correspondent Love Considered Aesthetically

Chapter seven's study in aesthetics revealed that aesthetic taste cannot be divorced from human maturity or good judgement. Art is inextricably bound to religion (see §7.2.1), and the judgement of beauty in art is not a wholly different enterprise from moral discernment or theological imagination (see §7.4.4.4). Brown (2000:§522–523) writes, "At its highest, taste—as seen especially in the sense of beauty and in the sense of sublimity—enters into the sense of God and the sense of good".

Taste is more than a statement of what one likes; it is a reflection of whether one likes what one *ought* to like, as Eliot (1964:233) distinguished. Taste is the state of one's judgement, which is a moral question of wisdom and discernment. Differing tastes correspond to the difference between two sorts of beauty, which themselves differ in kind (Newton, 1950:18). Frank Burch Brown (1989:152–154) recognised that taste can actually be sinful.

If so, the aesthetic faculty commonly called "good taste" is an instance of what is being described with the adjective "correspondent" when one qualifies love. Good taste is good judgement, which is as much as saying that one is valuing what ought to be valued, and loving what ought to be loved.

Similarly, chapter seven demonstrated that good taste has opposites, and accounted for this in terms of aesthetic immaturity, the ubiquity of sentimentality, and deforming

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effect of mass culture (see §7.4.4.3). Sentimentalism and love of kitsch turns out to be a disordered love, one rooted in narcissism. Such taste is actually a taste for one's own depth of feeling. Objects are not loved for intrinsic beauty; they are utilised as icons for nostalgia, as catalysts for familiar and predictable feelings. Again, Kaplan (1966:360) writes on sentimentalism,

> Sensibility becomes sentimental when there is some disproportion between the response and its object, when the response is indiscriminate and uncontrolled…Sentimentality is loving something more than God does.

This stands in obvious contrast to Lewis' remark that until modern times people believed "that objects did not merely receive, but could *merit*, our approval or disapproval, our reverence or our contempt" (2001:14–15).

Sentimentalism is also a form of childish escape from the world, by glossing and varnishing reality and creating one in which we are the heroes. Again, love of self predominates. If sentimentalism, love of kitsch, and bad taste are, as Scruton (2009:191) avers, "a disease of faith", or as Harries (1993:60) suggests, "an enemy of the Christian faith", then bad taste must be equated with disordered, non-corresponding love. Bad taste is loving the wrong things, with the wrong kind of love. It is loving the right things too little or too sweetly. It is loving things of lesser value more than things of greater value. It is exhibiting selfish, narcissistic forms of love. Loving for the sake of self, loving one's own love, loving only what is easy are forms of idolatry, and therefore are inordinate love.

9.3.5. Summary of Correspondent Love

Beauty as defined in this study is God's love for God. The perception and apprehension of this beauty by the believer takes place when this love is shared, and participated in by union. In order for there to be true correspondence between subject and object, the kind of love must correspond with God in appropriate degree and nature. In other words, a correspondent love is necessary to know and experience God's beauty.

The notion of correspondent love is not novel to this study. Four forms of justification have been provided. First, philosophy influenced by Christian thinking has asserted that love is the correspondent desire of the will for what it believes is good. What makes the love or desire correspondent is the object of its desire. Second, Scripture showed that this desire, to be ordinate, must correspond to God's own love in three ways: by desiring God as one's ultimate good or end; by desiring God and all things as God does (with holy desire); and by delighting in God with expansive joy. Third, Christian history reveals several writers who asserted that love for God must correspond to God's nature in degree and kind. Fourth, aesthetics confirmed that good taste is an act of right evaluation of what ought to be loved, which is akin to the concept of correspondent love. Correspondent love eschews self-love disguised as worship, narcissism, sentimentalism, or other forms of pseudo-love.

Correspondent love, as an idea, is supported by philosophy, Scripture, historical theology, and aesthetics. The practice of correspondent love is the key to experiencing God's objective beauty by subjectively approximating this love ourselves.

Having explained the key to apprehending God's beauty—correspondent love— and having defended the premise that such a notion is tenable, the remainder of this chapter will consider how this ordinate love may be cultivated.

9.4. A Proposed Model: Cultivating Correspondent Love for God

9.4.1. The Problem of Cultivating Desire

The difficulty in speaking of choosing correspondent desire is that love is not merely a mental choice between options. One cannot simply choose to love more than one does as a naked act of the will.

As Tozer (1987:10) writes, "[E]very man is as holy and as full of the Spirit as he wants to be. He may not be as full as he wishes he were, but he is most certainly as full as he wants to be". That is, Christians may wish that they loved God more than they do, but

they currently love him with as much inclination as they do. Such a statement is not meant to be deliberately tautologous. It merely affirms what Edwards writes in *The Freedom of the Will* (1754): the strongest inclination is the choice one makes, and that choice is the same as the will. According to Spohn (1981:401), "There is no faculty independent of an attractive object": whatever the mind perceives as the greatest apparent good, the heart chooses.

As has been shown, the Enlightenment introduced a three-faculty view of human psychology. It also began viewing the will as a neutral faculty that allows humans a libertarian freedom in which contrary options can be weighed and then chosen.

In Edwards' view, the human will is not the faculty that decides, *it is the decision itself*. A two-faculty view of human psychology avers that the mind knows the objects of desire, and the heart chooses, or loves what it desires as the greatest good. The greatest motive always prevails as the thing chosen. In other words, what the will chooses is precisely what it loves. This is why it is not strictly correct to speak of "choosing to love", for one is really thereby saying "choosing to choose" or "loving so as to love". Logically, one would be forced to ask, what inclination is leading one to desire such an inclination? The same thing would need to be asked of that inclination, till one has an absurd infinite regress of choices to choose, with apparently no starting point.

The will does not choose *to love*; the will chooses *what it loves*. One's chosen desires reflect what one thinks it *best* to choose. Loves can be formed and shaped, but they cannot simply be willed into being. In a real sense, as has been shown, love *is* the will in the direction of what it sees as good. One may speak of choosing the good or loving what is most beautiful, but not of choosing to love. Such a statement may seek to reflect the rational intentionality of love, but it is unwittingly illogical.

Here then is the problem: if correspondent love is fundamental to apprehending God's beauty, how can his love be experienced, if love cannot simply be willed into

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being? In other words, how is this love to be obtained?

Love cannot be willed. Desires can, however, be cultivated. Five methods of cultivation are now justified.

1) Correspondent love is cultivated through a vision of what is beautiful. According to Smith (2009:53), humans as worshipping animals are intentional beings, who are always inclined towards a vision of something they believe is good. He writes,

> Our ultimate love is oriented by and to a picture of what we think it looks like for us to live well, and that picture then governs, shapes, and motivates our decisions and actions (Ibid., 53).

This picture is not a set of abstract ideas, as much as it is an aesthetic idea, an affective, sensible picture of what reality is really like or should be like. This corresponds to what this study has termed *imagination*. This is not speculative fancy; it is the non-cognitive picture of the deep structure of Reality. Sections 7.4.3.1 and 7.4.3.2 demonstrated that imagination is actually at the root of all cognition. It has both a synoptic ability, and a decoding ability. It synopsises and integrates all of life, while also understanding analogies and truths not present to the senses. Furthermore, section 8.4.4 showed that imagination is basic to construing reality, providing the interpretive grid through which subjects participate with objects.

Therefore, the study has shown that a Christian imagination is absolutely fundamental to cognition, perception, and interpretation. If correspondent love is the key to perceiving God's beauty, and imagination has been shown to be fundamental to perception, it follows that a Christian imagination is fundamental to correspondent love.

This is the *telos* to which the human heart is inclined; it is its treasure, to which one will always find the heart inclined (Matt. 6:21). The first area of cultivating correspondent love will be through the shaping of this imagination or *pattern* of the Christian life, of the world as it is.

2) The study has also revealed that correspondent love cannot be cultivated without a change in spiritual nature. In his *Treatise on Grace*, Edwards writes that

> the first effect of the power of God in the heart in regeneration, is to give the heart a divine taste or sense, to cause it to have a relish of the loveliness and sweetness of the supreme excellency of the divine nature (*WJEO*, 21:174).

Indeed, it may be a form of Pelagianism to assert that the affections can simply be commanded by an act of human thought or willpower (Cameron, 2012:48). That is, an implantation of the divine nature has to be given for the human soul to find relish and inclination toward God.

The epistemological study revealed that knowledge cannot come without some form of union with the object. Section 8.4.6 stated that union was in the thinking of the Christian realists surveyed in that chapter, such as:

- "possessing the object in love" (Augustine)

- "consent to being" (Edwards)

- "participation" (Barfield)

- "indwelling" (Polanyi).

These are all different ways of saying the same thing: union. To know something, one must somehow be a part of it and it a part of one. To the degree that one severs this union, and treats an object of knowledge as completely distinct from self, is the degree to which one limits his or her true understanding of it. Once again, if union is necessary to know and love, then union, or a change in nature or position is necessary to cultivate correspondent love.

The spiritual beauty of the saints is their consent to God's being, but this consent comes only because something of God's being has been created in the human being. Holy love for God cannot come without a new nature. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not

love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:7–8). Ontological union with Christ provides the new nature, the new position from which ordinate love for God can grow. The second area of cultivating correspondent love will be through the presence of a new nature, or position of the Christian life. This new position must be present and remembered.

3) Correspondent love must be developed though exposure. The new nature or position is meant to be fleshed out and experienced. The New Testament's call to Christians is to become what they are, to practice their position, to cause their nature to affect their posture (Rom. 6:10–12; Eph. 4:1). Through this actual exposure to God's love, love is cultivated through the experience of it. Edwards reminds one that beauty is not known in the abstract, but through exposure:

> It is evident therefore by this, that the way we come by the idea or sensation of beauty, is by immediate sensation of the gratefulness of the idea called "beautiful"; and not by finding out by argumentation any consequences, or other things that it stands connected with; any more than tasting the sweetness of honey, or perceiving the harmony of a tune, is by argumentation on connections and consequences (*WJEO*, 8:619).

The aesthetic study showed in §7.4.1.1 the need to truly receive an object in order to know it. Likewise, sections 8.4.2–8.4.5 all showed the essentiality of participation to true knowledge. The subject must love, receive, participate, submit, and indwell what he or she wants to know. Correspondent love must be cultivated through participative experience.

This experience of correspondent love for God is cultivated through an inner disposition. For Edwards, it was what he termed "consent": a continued disposition towards experiential union with God. The study has already revealed the crucial place of humility and faith for the perception of beauty in chapters seven and eight. The continued attitude of consent, a posture of desired conformity and union with God is what will fuel experiential union with God.

The third area of cultivating correspondent love will be through exposure to the beauty of God through experience, which one might term the *process* of the Christian life.

4) Correspondent love for God is cultivated through repeated practice or nurture. Smith (2009:58) proposes that habit is what shapes the heart. Liturgical practices, habitually repeated in acts of private and public worship, give physical form and memorable expression to an idea of ultimate reality. The human heart needs regular nurture in those spiritual practices that give form and expression to correspondent love (Smith, 2009:25). The fifth area of cultivating correspondent love will be through regular spiritual disciplines, which one might term the *practices* of the Christian life.

Correspondent love for God requires new imagination, new nature, new exposure, and new nurture. These four will form the basis for the cultivation of correspondent love, and are summarised below:

a) *The pattern for correspondent love*: the dominant but background Christian imagination of ultimate reality, the *telos* towards which holy desire moves for union.

b) *The position for correspondent love*: ontological union with Christ through the triune work of God in salvation, which reveals God and his presence and gives the answering holy desires.

c) *The process of correspondent love*: the cycle of experiential union, seeking to love God ordinately, and to confess and forsake failures to do so. A disposition of consent or humility-faith-love, must be present, where through which experiential union with God is sought.

d) *The practices for correspondent love*: deliberate habits that illustrate and cultivate these three. Holy desire is taught, shaped, and expressed through these practices.

The order of these four is not strictly hierarchical. One could argue that positional union comes first, making the other three possible. One could likewise begin with the practices,

since they shape and affirm the other three. The process could also be foregrounded, as nearest to the actual performance of the three forms of ordinate love. The point is that they are more cyclical and interdependent than sequential and distinct.

At this point, it will be helpful to summarise the argument in five steps.

Step one: God's beauty is his love for his own being.

Step two: God's beauty is perceived and apprehended by love for God.

Step three: This love must be a correspondent love: one which corresponds with God's love in degree and nature.

Step four: Love is a desire and cannot be willed directly. Correspondent love must be cultivated.

Step five: The study has justified four ways that correspondent love can be cultivated: imagination (the pattern), nature (the position), exposure (the process), and nurture (the practices).

The study now sets out to define and describe each of these four.

9.4.2. The Pattern for Correspondent Love

The pattern for correspondent love refers to what Weaver (1948:18) termed one's "metaphysical dream". The word *dream* reminds one that it is not always a conscious vision, as much as a vision that stands as the background of all conscious choice. The word *metaphysical* suggests that it deals with reality: the understanding of things as they truly are. This is the synoptic vision of the whole of life, that which gives meaning to the parts. This is the great interpretive index, giving moral significance through meaning to all that is encountered. This is the imagination,[11] that aspect of mankind perhaps best described as being "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:26–27). Tozer, in *The Knowledge of the Holy*, (1987:11) insists that "what comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us".

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[11] See sections 7.4.4, and 8.4.3 for how the term *imagination* is used in this study.

What then should inform the Christian imagination that inclines the heart towards union with God and ordinate love? If God's beauty is the ultimate motivator of love, then the Christian life should have the idea of God's beauty at its very core.

The study defined beauty as "the Most Lovely loving the Most Lovely". This came from Edwards' definition of beauty: "being's cordial consent to being in general" (*WJEO*, 8:620). God's loving disposition of union with himself is beauty, and it must be at the very core of a Christian imagination. Unpacking Edwards' definition of beauty leads to at least three observations about a Christian imagination based upon God's beauty.

1) The Christian imagination should be trinitarian.

Edwards writes in *The Miscellanies* (no. 117):

> Again, we have shown that one alone cannot be excellent, inasmuch as, in such case, there can be no consent. Therefore, if God is excellent, there must be a plurality in God; otherwise, there can be no consent in him (*WJEO*:13:284).

God's beauty as God's love is impossible if God is a solitary being. Love within God is only possible if there is a plurality of persons within the one being of God. Viewing God as a plurality of persons in relationship with one another is foundational and fundamental to the Christian worldview. In the words of Packer (1990:7), "Sound spirituality needs to be thoroughly Trinitarian".

This does not mean that Christians are necessarily always conscious of the doctrine of the Trinity. Letham (2004:§310) believes that true Christian experience is fundamentally trinitarian at the level of Polanyi's tacit knowledge. This observation leads to a second implied component of the pattern of the Christian life.

2) The Christian imagination should be personal.

"Being's consent to being" (*WJEO*, 8:620) implies that personal relationship is at the heart of existence. Here the term *personal* refers to viewing reality as fundamentally

composed of volitional persons. As section 6.3.6.2 showed, Edwards believed primary beauty was the relationship between wills and persons, while secondary beauty was what mirrored this in the created order. Venter (2010:186) concurs that for Edwards, reality, in its most basic form, is relational, and not static or composed of inert substances. Waltke (1988:11) insists that Christians know God in an I-Thou personal relationship, and not as an inferred First Cause or as an ideal of beauty.

Pearcey (2010:147) suggests that the ultimate clash between theistic and materialistic worldviews is whether one believes matter created mind, or whether mind created matter. The Christian imagination sees the deepest structure of reality being one that was created by a mind, and continues to be sustained by that same mind (Heb. 1:3). A materialist imagination, which sees the fundamental building-blocks of reality as lifeless self-directed particles of matter or energy, must see reality as fundamentally impersonal. An impersonal universe is only moral or beautiful by artificial human construct, not by nature. If the foundation of reality is the beauty of Trinitarian God, then for the Christian, the pattern of life is fundamentally personal. That is, what is unique to personhood is what is truly fundamental to existence.

Furthermore, since knowing persons is a fundamentally different endeavour than knowing particles, one's approach to the world must be much closer to Polanyi's view of personal knowledge than to a naturalist's or materialist's empirical interrogation of phenomena. Life is experienced through receiving it as a gift, through indwelling it, through knowing and loving the persons of the Godhead (see §8.4.6).

Theologians have wrestled with the question of how the three persons could know and love one another and yet remain one God. One proposed solution is the notion of perichoresis.

Perichoresis is a term which came into general use in the sixth century. It was used to reflect the relationship of mutual indwelling found within the Triune God (McGrath,

1999:50). The three persons maintain individuality, but share in the life of the other two. This principle is found in Scriptures that speak of a mutual penetration of the persons:

> Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works (John 14:10).

> I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me (John 17:23).

Theologians have taken perichoresis as a means of explaining how the three relate as one. Each of the persons fully indwells the other two, so that life and love is shared in the closest and most inexpressible union imaginable.

Perichoresis suggests that the relationship between persons is primarily one of loving delight. Venter (2015:4) remarks that relationality is "the central optic" in a Trinitarian spirituality.

The Father appears to take the role of Beholder, Knower, and Declarer. He beholds and loves his own image in the Son, rejoicing in its perfection. Sayers (1964:13) reminds readers of the theological saying that the "Father is only known to Himself by beholding His image in the Son". The Father delights to declare the glory and uniqueness of the Godhead.

The Son seems to take the role of Beheld, Known, and Displayer, delighting to express and reflect the image of God back to the Father with an answering love to the Beholder.

The Spirit appears to take the role of Beauty, Knowledge, and Diffuser by diffusing and revealing the Father's love for the Son and the Son's love for the Father. He delights to diffuse the display of the Son, so that maximum blessing redounds back to the Godhead. He delights to display the glory of the Godhead, communicating beauty and harmony to

the world (Sherry, 2007:9). The Son is the self-knowledge of God; the Spirit is the self-love of God (Louie, 2013:§3360). This is the Augustinian model of the Trinity, which Edwards mostly embraced, and undergirds his view of consent and beauty.

This concept of personal, relational union is not simply an abstract concept that Christians have to meditate on. Instead, it is an idea of what beauty lies at the heart of things: being's consent to being. In fact, Gifford (2011:2) believes that three forms of perichoresis are found in Scripture: the trinitarian perichoresis, the hypostatic union (in which the two natures of Christ mutually indwell one another), and the believer's union with Christ, in which Christ is in the believer, and the believer is in him. Letham (2004:§10051) agrees with this threefold description of union. This corresponds to God in himself, God in the world (creation, fall, Incarnation, redemption), and God in his people.

If so, then this relational perichoresis or mutual indwelling, is a foundational way of viewing reality. As Edwards suggested, "consent" is found even in the natural world, such as with gravity, where objects are pulled towards others in an apparent symbol of union. The desire for union also pervades marriage and sexuality. Union remains at the heart of Christian fellowship and is celebrated in the church's ordinances or sacraments. Demarest (2012:§2780–2781) views Evangelical spirituality as focused on the "with-God" life, the "manner by which we live in communion with Christ in response to the Spirit". Chesterton (2009:202) suggests that unitarian visions of God have produced cruel followers. A solitary person within God cannot but be severe. Polanyi showed that indwelling is a necessary way of knowing reality (see §8.4.5). A trinitarian and personal view of reality must produce a vision of reality sourced in love. This love finally overflows into the gift of glory to God.

3) *The Christian imagination should be doxological.*

"Being's cordial consent to being in general" (*WJEO*, 8:620) also suggests that at the heart of this relational universe is the idea of gift. Trinitarian reality necessarily implies personal

and relational perichoretic reality. But when three infinite persons relate, the relationship must be one of gratuitous love. Wilson (2013:76) describes it as follows:

> In the life of the Triune God, the Father freely gives himself to the Son, so that he is both fully and eternally the Father and the Son is fully, eternally the Son. Likewise, the Son gives himself freely as the Son to the Father, so that each is fully and eternally Son and Father. Their giving to each other is the life of the Holy Spirit, who in receiving from and giving to the Father and the Son, is fully and eternally the Spirit. Moreover, the Spirit is the very gift that the Spirit gives to the Father and the Son, desiring that the Father and the Son love each other. From this mutuality of giving and receiving, which simply is life, and which may also be named as love, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit give life to something other than God: creation.

The God of Scripture is self-sufficient and without needs (Ps. 50:8–15; Acts 17:24–25). What God does is not done out of an unmet need or to fulfil something in himself. Instead, God acts for his own glory, which is to say, to express and enjoy the radiance of his person. Creation is gratuitous, in the sense that it comes from the freedom of God, and was not imposed upon God by necessity (Sanders, 2010:64).

This radiance, or glory, is enjoyed by the other persons of the Godhead, insomuch as it might accurately be called a gift from the one to the other. Several Scriptures speak of the Father's gifts to the Son:

> All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him (Matt. 11:27).
> The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand (John 3:35).

For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man (John 5:26–27).

Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world (John 17:24).

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name (Phil. 2:9).

God…has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds (Heb. 1:1–2).

Likewise, Scripture reveals the Son's gifts to the Father:

And all Mine are Yours, and Yours are Mine, and I am glorified in them (John 17:10).

Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power (1 Cor. 15:24).

This helps one understand that Creation is primarily a gift of glory from the persons of the Godhead to one another (Reeves, 2012:50). Beyond that, the Fall, Redemption, and Consummation are part of a plan to return the gift increased in value and more reflective of the Godhead than even at its pristine creation.

When the Son is glorified, it glorifies the Father; when the Father is glorified, it glorifies the Son (John 13:31–32; 17:4–5; 1 Cor. 15:28; Phil. 2:9–11), and when either is glorified, the Spirit carries and reflects this glory and the answering love. Glory is a gift the members of the Godhead give one another, and they share equally in its joy. In a sense, the gift that each member of the Trinity gives is himself. The loving union of the Godhead is a self-giving love.

Beauty is trinitarian, relational, and gratuitously doxological. This shapes the Christian imagination to see that life is primarily rooted in beauty and self-giving love. God has always delighted in himself and gifted himself with glory and answering love. The very point of life, the very reason for human existence, is part of this gifting of glory from one Person of the Godhead to the other. Worship, discipleship, fellowship, evangelism, and missions all fall under this purpose. Human cultural life falls under this purpose. The family, the church, human government, and all vocations fall under this purpose. Life is bound up within the happiness of the Trinity, and those who seek union with this purpose align themselves with ultimate happiness.

The pattern for correspondent love is a Christian imagination rooted in "being's cordial consent to being in general" (*WJEO*, 8:620): a trinitarian God within whom the persons mutually indwell one another in a union of self-giving love and delight in each other's glory. This imagination is the backdrop for correspondent love. It is the grand Christian narrative, the Christian Story that is to dominate the background of one's knowledge (Smith, 2013:§3499).

How is this imagination gained? Much of it will come through the practices that will be laid out in section 9.4.5. With that said, no Christian imagination could take place without divine disclosure, and no disclosure is possible with union. This leads to the second aspect of the model: the position of correspondent love.

9.4.3. The Position of Correspondent Love

One's nature determines much of one's desire for God. What is inherited from Adam and from biological ancestors, partly determines what one desires. Unless the human's sin nature is miraculously transformed, he or she is without power to love God ultimately, and without the position or tools to pursue God (Jer. 13:23; Rom 3:10–12; Eph. 2:1–3). Fallen and deformed human nature does not love God's beauty until it is radically corrected. The effect of regeneration upon one's relationship with God and one's

consequent potential to abide in him, is foundational to loving God (1 John 4:7–8; 5:1). *Being* goes before *doing*, though doing influences being. God's change made to a believer's being is fundamental, for it transforms the Christian's state and position before God. Lewis perceived that a change in the sinner's nature was actually the secret to loving God:

> Here is the paradox of Christianity. As practical imperatives for here and now the two great commandments have to be translated "Behave as if you loved God and man." For no man can love because he is told to. Yet obedience on this practical level is not really obedience at all. And if a man really loved God and man, once again this would hardly be obedience; for if he did, he would be unable to help it. Thus the command really says to us, "Ye must be born again." Till then, we have duty, morality, the Law (2012:115).

Scripture's answer to the question, "How does one love God?" is, "by means of God graciously disclosing himself to a new heart" (Exod. 33:13–18; Deut. 30:6; Ezek. 11:19–20; 36:26–27; Matt. 11:25–27; 1 John 4:19). This divine disclosure is often called the "presence of God" (Exod. 33:13–14). For the Old Testament people of God, the presence of God was particularly manifest at the Mercy Seat of the Ark of the Covenant in the Tabernacle and the Temple (Exod. 25:22; Ezek. 10:18). Moreover, with the coming of the Incarnate Son, God's presence was especially manifest on earth (John 1:1–18).

The Upper Room Discourse (John 14–17) is partly given to explain how the disciples are to know the presence of God after Christ's departure. After the ascension of Christ, the revealed presence of God would be known through union with Christ by the indwelling of the Spirit (John 6:56; 14:16–23; 17:23, 26; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 1:3; 3:16–19; Col. 1:27). The Spirit of God illuminates believers to know spiritual realities and to love them (Eph. 1:15–19). In other words, the basis of experiential communion is positional union with Christ (Schwanda, 2014:83).

Union with Christ is the foundation of the Christian life, from which all spiritual blessings flow (Eph. 1:3). Campbell (2012:§9137–9141) states that in the Pauline epistles, virtually every element of Christ's work is connected in some way to union with Christ.[12] Henry Scougal writes,

> True religion is a union of the soul with God, a real participation of the Divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul, or, in the apostle's phrase, 'it is Christ formed within us'. Briefly, I know not how the nature of religion can be more fully expressed, than by calling it a Divine life (*Life of God*, 44).

Taylor (1998:63) suggests that apart from union, no knowledge is possible. Indeed, C. S. Lewis' concepts of need-love and gift-love are reconciled in the idea of union. The desire to be one with the Beloved is both a sense of need until the union is complete, and also a sense of gift: to enjoy the Beloved as an end and not as a means to some other end. At the heart of this willing surrender is a union with God effected by regeneration. Lewis writes of beauty words that could also be said of love for God:

> We do not want merely to see beauty...we want something else which can hardly be put into words—to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it. That is why we have peopled air and earth and water with gods and goddesses, and nymphs and elves (1996:37).

Similarly, Edwards states: "That which men love, they desire to have and to be united to, and possessed of. The beauty which men delight in, they desire to be adorned with. Those acts which men delight in, they necessarily incline to do" (*WJEO*, 2:394).

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[12] Among the burgeoning contemporary materials on union with Christ include R. Letham, *Union With Christ in Scripture, Theology,and History* (2011); Vanhoozer, Campbell & Thate, *In Christ in Paul: Explorations in Paul's Theology of Union and Participation* (2014); J. Billings, *Union with Christ: Reframing Theology and Ministry for the Church* (2011); R. Wilbourne, *Union with Christ: The Way to Know and Enjoy God* (2016); M. Horton, *Covenant and Salvation: Union with Christ* (2007).

Medieval writers such as Julian of Norwich (1342–1430) agreed, seeing love (ερως), as that which draws persons to God, and the corresponding source of the urge to seek union with God and the godly (Ahlgren, 2005:51).

Achieving this union involves a work of all three persons of the Godhead. The Father lovingly chooses believers in Christ before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4–6; 1 Pet. 1:2), and so will never condemn them (Rom. 8:34) or forsake them (Heb. 13:5; John 10:27–29), but rather adopts them into his family (Eph. 1:5) and reserves their inheritance (1 Pet. 1:4). His work prompts believers to worship in his presence.

Through union with Christ (Rom. 6:4–10), the Son's perfect life, death, resurrection, ascension, and high priestly work have propitiated God's wrath at believers' sin (1 John 2:2), forgiven their sins (Col. 2:13–14; Eph. 1:7), justified them (Rom. 5:1; 2 Cor. 5:21), reconciled them with to God (Rom. 5:10; Col. 1:21; 2 Cor. 5:18), regenerated them, given them eternal life (Col. 2:13; John 1:12), sanctified them (1 Cor. 6:11), and seated them with Christ in the heavenlies (Phil. 3:20; Eph. 2:6), making them accepted (Eph. 1:6) and completed (Col. 2:9–10). The Son's work gives believers every permission to worship in his presence (Heb. 10:19–22).

The Spirit draws, sanctifies (1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Thes. 2:13), regenerates (Titus 3:5; John 3:3–9), and then indwells believers (1 Cor. 6:19; Ro. 8:9–10) thereby uniting them with Christ and imparting the very life of Christ and divine nature (though not the divine essence) to them (Gal. 2:20; 1 John 3:24), being the seal and down-payment of their future glorification (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:13–14; 4:30). Since he is God's Spirit, when he indwells their spirits, he reveals the things of God (1 Cor. 2:10–13) using the Word of God, and illuminates Christ's beauty to the seeking heart (John 15:26; 16:14), giving believers both desires and enablement to love God (Phil. 2:13). The Spirit's work gives believers power to worship in his presence. This prompting, permission, and power speaks of internal inclination, not of external constraint. Scougal again:

The love which a pious man bears to God and goodness, is not so much by virtue

of a command enjoining him so to do, as by a new nature instructing and

prompting him to do it; nor doth he pay his devotions as an unavoidable tribute,

only to appease the Divine justice; but those religious exercises are the proper

emanations of the Divine life, the natural employments of the new-born soul (*The*

Life of God, 45).

The work of the Father, Son, and Spirit creates a permanent, ontological union with God in Christ. Through this union, a new nature with new inclinations is imparted. The union is the means of perceiving the revelation of God, of loving the perceived revelation, and of returning love to God.

No love for God is possible without true conversion and regeneration. Love for God requires a new heart, with new relish, new perception. A regenerate believer, through his or her union with Christ, is in the presence of God through the indwelling Spirit, and can now perceive and love the glory of God as revealed in Christ. For this reason, Evangelical spirituality first requires conversion through repentance and belief in the Gospel (Rom. 10:9-10). It then insists on true regeneration, and on believers examining themselves to know if such a union is theirs (2 Cor. 13:5; 1 John 5:10-12). It further disciples believers in the knowledge of their union, explaining their position in Christ, before proclaiming the walk that should emerge from it (Eph. 1:3; 4:1).

In short, correspondent love for God is cultivated through the presence of a true ontological union with God. This position supplies a potential. The new nature must "become what it is". It must actually move towards experiential union with God, which is the process of correspondent love.

9.4.4. The Process of Correspondent Love

Love for God's beauty is known not only by imagination and through changed nature, but also by exposure. The writer of *Theologia Germanica* wrote,

And he who would know before he believeth, cometh never to true knowledge...We speak of a certain Truth which it is possible to know by experience, but which ye must believe in, before that ye know it by experience, else ye will never come to know it truly" (*Theologia Germanica*, XLVIII).

Though the believer is in ontological union with Christ, loving God's beauty is a matter of experientially seeking that union, of *consenting* or desiring to live in experiential union with God. This experiential union with God requires the ontological union, but ontological union with Christ does not automatically lead to experiential union. Instead, believers are commanded to live in God's presence, as seen in Christ's command to "abide" (John 15:1–7).

What does this experiential union look like? Experiential union takes place when a believer seeks the experience of the three forms of correspondent love. A wise option is to investigate the "shape" of corporate worship, since corporate worship is the most distilled and unified form of worship.

Chapell (2009:99) believes that the common pattern of the order of worship in the historical church actually reflects the progress of the gospel in the heart. First, the worshipper recognises who God is in adoration. Once that is realised, it leads to an understanding of self, and therefore to confession. The gospel then assures of pardon, so that the worshipper is led to thanksgiving, petition and more devotion. God provides his Word in response to the desire for aid, and the worshipper heeds the instruction, leaving with the charge to do so and the promise of God's blessing. Chapell sees this pattern as the sequential flow of the gospel in the heart. This is a process that follows a distinguishable order.

This gospel-shaped process can be adapted for the experience of loving God's beauty in all of life. This process necessarily includes public and private worship, but it also includes family life, service, discipleship of other believers, evangelism, one's

vocation, education, avocation, recreation, and entertainment. All of life is to be lived in a love for God (1 Cor. 16:14, 10:31). This study's adaptation of what has been used in corporate worship across the ages is a cycle of communing with God and restoring and returning to communion when it is temporarily lost.[13]

1) *Communion and consecration.* The sought-after state is communion, in which the believer is adoring God in correspondent love: loving God ultimately, loving what God loves, and loving in an expansive fullness of joy. Consecration is an active form of this adoration-communion. Whatever cannot be loved for God's sake should not be loved at all; whatever can be loved for God's sake should be consecrated to him (Phil. 4:8). All of life should be presented as a sacrificial offering (Rom. 12:1), doing all deeds for Christ's sake (Col. 3:17, 23). All things should be done for God's glory (1 Cor. 10:31) and all done in love (1 Cor. 16:14). This life of God-centred, Christ-focused loving sacrifice is performed by depending on God's enabling grace to do so (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 9:8; Col. 1:29).

This state of communion is often experienced as the Spirit of God does his work of illumination. Sections 8.4.2 and 8.4.6 describes the fundamental importance of illumination and divine disclosure to understanding truth. Illumination is the Holy Spirit's work of communicating spiritual realities to a Christian's spiritual eyes by opening the eyes of a believer's affections (Eph. 1:18) to recognise and experience the reality and beauty of truth about God. Riccardi (2013:30) writes that this is at the centre of Christian sanctification, the Spirit's work illuminates

> the glory of Christ to the eyes of our hearts, winning over our affections by the delightfulness and beauty of that glory, and causing our affections to conform our wills, so that we might will and work for His good pleasure.

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[13] This cycle is the researcher's adapted version of a cycle given in a lecture by Dr. Kevin Bauder at Central Theological Baptist Seminary, Plymouth, MN, January 15, 2010. It is adapted and combined with Chapell's insights.

When illuminated, a believer sees spiritual reality, which is to say that the believer sees what ought to be loved, and to what degree. This is the state of being the apostle Paul calls being "filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18) or being "filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:19). The Spirit is himself the communion between Father and Son, and he is the means of experienced union with Christ for regenerate human beings (John 15:26). In the place of illumination, a believer is loving God ultimately, loving what God loves, and loving in expansive joy.

Experiential communion is life lived *coram Deo*, in God's presence or before God's face. Christian mystical writers have spoken of the ideal of unbroken communion with God or practising his presence at every waking moment. Some of these writers have set up an unattainable goal, asserting that such unbroken communion should always be *direct*;[14] that is, a Christian's conscious communion with God should never cease, even when going about work, solving pressing problems, or communing with other human beings. Very few people, however, have the ability to have their inward focus on more than one thing at a time. As Polanyi noted in his epistemology, physical eyes are able to see many things in one's peripheral vision and in the background, but they focus on one object at a time (see §8.4.5) Communion with God may be a focal awareness or a subsidiary awareness. Communion with God does not require that the Christian always be praying, meditating on the Word, or otherwise adoring God directly. Indirect communion with God will include loving what God has made by admiring God's handiwork. Indirect communion includes serving God by focussing on the task at hand, or by focusing on the person one is serving for God's sake. In these circumstances, Christians are actually turning their gaze from direct communion with God to something or someone else, while retaining God in their subsidiary vision. They do their work well, or consider carefully creation, or love another person, while keeping God as the ultimate, though presently indirect, end of all their actions.

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[14] For example, see Kelly, *A Testament of Devotion*, (1941:13).

Richard Baxter said,

> The intending of God's glory or our spiritual good, cannot be distinctly and sensibly re-acted in every particular pleasure we take, or bit we eat, or thing we use: but a sincere Habitual Intention well laid at first in the Heart, will serve to the right use of many particular Means (*Works*, Vol.1, 266).

This means that the process of ordinate love—in which one loves God ultimately, loves what God loves, and lives in expansive fullness of joy—comprehends all of life. This state of experiential union will not be unmixed, for what will follow is the second stage of the process: conviction.

2) Conviction and confession. As explained in Chapell's (2009:99) description of corporate worship, confession naturally follows adoration. Conviction is the work of the Spirit upon the renewed conscience, alerting the believer to ways he or she falls short of the glory of God (John 16:8–11; Heb. 4:12) or fails to love God in ordinate ways. The conscience, being stirred by the Spirit's work, warns the believer before he sins, or accuses the believer after sin (John 8:9; Rom. 2:15). Francis de Sales (1567–1622) understood this well:

> As daylight waxes, we, gazing into a mirror, see more plainly the soils and stains upon our face; and even so as the interior light of the Holy Spirit enlightens our conscience, we see more distinctly the sins, inclinations and imperfections which hinder our progress towards real devotion. And the selfsame light which shows us these blots and stains, kindles in us the desire to be cleansed and purged therefrom (*Introduction to the Devout Life*, I, xxii).

Confession is the obedient response of the believer to this conviction. It is the agreement of the mind and heart with God's work of conviction (1 John 1:9). The mind agrees with the sinfulness of the sin, and accepts the guilt of it (Ps. 51:3–4); the heart agrees it has loved what God hates and hated what God loves, sorrowfully revolting against such

inordinate love (2 Cor. 7:10), forsaking it to embrace the cleansing blood of Christ. A refusal to confess in the believer will lead to a loss of the sense of communion and ordinate love, akin to a leanness of soul and spiritual drought (Ps. 106:15; 32:3–4).

When the believer confesses, it leads to the third stage, as found in Chapell's progress of the Gospel: assurance of pardon, thanksgiving, and deepened devotion (2009:99). This study will use the terms *cleansing* and *conformity* to describe this third stage.

3. *Cleansing and conformity*. Confession leads to God's cleansing of the believer (1 John 1:9). The continual cleansing of the Christian is not the cleansing of judicial guilt through imputed righteousness, but the sanctifying work of practically imparting Christ's righteousness to the soul (John 13:9–10). The conscience is cleansed from a sense of accusation and of the Father's displeasure (Ps. 51:12–15) and is re-sensitized to holiness. The believer is cleansed from moral defilement (2 Cor. 7:1), as he or she flees from sin (1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Tim. 2:22), mortifying its power (Col. 3:5), making no provision for it (Rom. 13:14), and thereby puts off the old man (Eph. 4:22–24).

Conformity is the progressive likeness to Christ in affection, mind, and action that is imparted to the believer who gazes on Christ (2 Cor. 3:18). Through cleansing from disordered loves, the believer is now progressively more like Christ in rightly-ordered correspondent love. This likeness brings nearness: God communicates himself most to the soul that has progressed farthest in Christlikeness (Jas. 4:8; John 14:21; 15:9–10; Eph. 3:16–19). Nicolas of Cusa (1401–1464) said,

> Hence, I must see to it that, as best I can, I be made more and more capable of receiving You. But I know that the capability which conduces to union is only likeness; but incapability results from unlikeness. Therefore, if by every possible means I make myself like unto Your goodness, then according to my degree of likeness thereto I will be capable of receiving truth (*Vision of God*, IV, xxii).

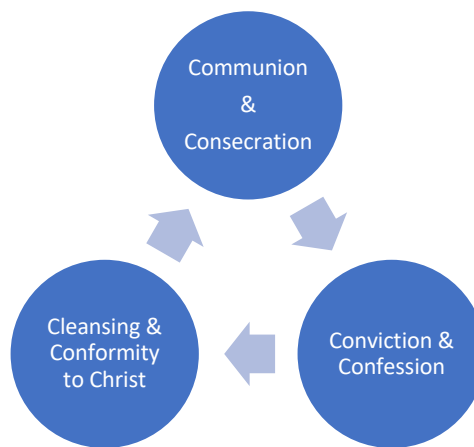This cycle is, then, meant to be a progressive cycle, in which love for God grows as Christlikeness grows.

Figure 1: The Process of Correspondent Love

Jonathan Edwards saw why the cycle would produce greater love for God:

> And 'tis to be considered that the more those divine communications increase in the creature, the more it becomes one with God: for so much the more is it united to God in love, the heart is drawn nearer and nearer to God, and the union with him becomes more firm and close: and at the same time the creature becomes more and more conformed to God. The image is more and more perfect, and so the good that is in the creature comes forever nearer and nearer to an identity with that which is in God. In the view therefore of God, who has a comprehensive prospect of the increasing union and conformity through eternity, it must be an infinitely strict and perfect nearness, conformity, and oneness. For it will forever come nearer and nearer to that strictness and perfection of union which there is between the Father and the Son: so that in the eyes of God, who perfectly sees the whole of it, in its infinite progress and increase, it must come to an eminent fulfillment of Christ's request, in John 17:21, John 17:23: "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us, I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one" (*WJEO,* 8:443*).*

St. John of the Cross (1542–1591) wrote in *The Ascent of Mount Carmel*, "God communicates Himself most to the soul that has progressed farthest in love, meaning that its will is in closest conformity with the will of God" (*The Ascent*, II, v).

Correspondent love is shaped by the experience of loving God, in a gospel-shaped cycle of communion, confession, and conformity to Christ.

This process is undergirded by a posture or disposition that must be continually cultivated. What is this disposition? At the heart of Edwards' view of God's beauty was the notion of "consent". What did Edwards mean by this? In modern parlance, *consent* refers to approval or assent. Its connotations have to do with informed, mature, and voluntary agreement to participate in something or to permit something.

Consent, in the more archaic sense, referred to agreement in opinion and sentiment. The etymology of the word is the Latin word *consentire*: to feel together. Consent was the uniting of affection. McClymond and McDermott (2012:§1139) believe it was a term that implied volition, affection, and love. Edwards believed that one could call this consenting disposition by different names. "When exerted toward a savior, it is called faith or trust; when toward good things promised, it is called hope; when toward excellent persons, love; when toward commands, obedience" (McClymond & McDermott, 2012:§4860–4863). This represents a posture towards experiential union with God that supports and undergirds correspondent love.

Does Scripture employ a concept similar to Edwards' "consent"? In several places, Scripture speaks of a disposition that is foundational or fundamental to living in loving union with God. In some places, it is called humility (Prov. 3:34; Mic. 6:8; Isa. 57:15; Jas. 4:6, 10; 1 Pet. 5:5). In some places, it is called the fear of Yahweh (Deut. 10:12; Ps. 111:10, Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 15:33; 22:4; Eccl. 12:13). The New Testament names *faith* as foundational to pleasing God (Heb. 11:1, 6; Gal. 5:6; 1 Tim. 1:5; Eph. 2:8–9; 2 Pet. 1:5). Jesus uses the term "abide" to capture the ideas of trust, dependence, obedience, and

communion (John 15:4–10). The fear of Yahweh and humility are placed parallel to each other in Proverbs 15:33 and 22:4. Therefore, one could speak of a disposition named "humility-faith-fear-abiding", but such a term is cumbersome and unwieldy.

If this posture can be spoken of as a unitary thing, why does Scripture have multiple terms for it? A possible answer is that the posture is a complex one, composed of different but complementary attitudes, that the Bible treats separately at times, while at other times treating them as virtually synonymous.

A passage like James 4:6–10 suggests this posture is composed of at least three attitudes.

1) *Humility*. This consists of focussing on another, and being childlike before God: "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: 'God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble' (v. 6). "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up" (v. 10).

The first attribute of the posture of consenting to union is the attitude of seeking union with another, in this case, with God. Humility fundamentally denies self (Matt. 16:24; Mark 8:34; Luke 9:23; 14:26), which refers to denying the impulse to seek union with oneself—the fundamental twistedness of sin. Instead, one must go outside oneself to seek joy and life in another. According to Meilaender (2006:§202), Augustine taught that God wills to draw one out of oneself. To worship God requires a measure of self-forgetfulness (§146). Humility pursues glorifying and loving God, not self (Ps. 115:1; 2 Cor. 5:14–15). A life wholly given to God's glory (Rom. 11:36; Eccl. 12:13), or God's pleasure (2 Cor. 5:9) defines the idea of otherness. John the Baptist's words capture it: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). Ordinate love "does not seek its own" (1 Cor. 13:5), because it is "poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3) and longs for the richness of union with another.

Both the study in aesthetics and that of epistemology revealed very similar

dispositions as fundamental to perceiving beauty. Chapter seven revealed the importance of a receptivity that lays itself open to receive the meaning of a work of art, laying aside preconceptions, and surrendering to the work. This was seen as an act of contemplation, seeking no acquisitive pleasure in the object (see §7.4.1.1–7.4.1.2). Likewise, the approaches of Augustine and Pascal called for a reverent, humble approach to knowing (§8.4.2). Rigney (2015:233) writes that at the heart of embracing one's creatureliness is receptivity. "[G]ratitude is the posture of the soul that most readily increases receptivity" (p. 234).

This kind of unselfish focus on the object as an end in itself and not a means to one's own ends is necessary to correspondent love.

2) *Brokenness*. This is composed of the willingness to repent and confess sin. "Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom" (vv. 8–9).

This posture of being willing to be uncovered before God that he might cover the sinner, is fundamental to experiential union. Proverbs 28:13 describes it: "He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy". John's first epistle opens with the contrast between those willing to walk in the light and confess their sins, and those who walk in darkness and claim they have not sinned or do not sin (1 John 1:5–2:2).

The aesthetic study (§7.4.4.3) showed that the nature of good art and its accompanying good taste was to desire truth and reality, not narcissistic, flattering versions of ourselves. People who desire what is stereotyped, predictable, and schematised are not interested in growth or transformation, but only the reinforcement of what is familiar. To truly consent to union with God and to be willing to confess is to embrace the posture of repentance and openness.

3) *Submission and drawing near to God*. This is composed of uniting one's will with God and drawing near to God in communion. "Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (vv. 7–8).

Fundamental to consenting to union is the willingness to unite one's will with another's. Another word for *will* is *desire*, for what a man wills is what he desires. The one who submits to God desires to match his own desires to God's, to bring them under God's, to give God's desires final veto over his own. The posture for experiential union is one of re-moulding one's desires to reflect Christ's. In experiential union with God, the call is to total submission to God's will. The presence of the slave and servant metaphor in Scripture embodies this idea. In the Hebrew culture, the indentured servant could voluntarily forgo his earned freedom with a public declaration of loving servitude to his or her master: "I love my master…I will not go out free" (Exod. 21:5). Submissiveness is the posture of chosen, voluntary subordination of individualistic freedom, so as to unite with another. Jesus taught that submission was one of the marks of love. Jesus himself embodied submissiveness in his ministry on earth, submitting his will to the will of the Father (John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38). He likewise taught on the cruciality of submission (John 14:15, 21; 15:10).

Thomas à Kempis prayed, "Grant that I may always desire and will that which is to Thee most acceptable, and most dear. Let Thy will be mine, and my will ever follow Thine, and agree perfectly with it" (*Imitation of Christ*, III, xv). Similarly, the author of *Theologia Germanica* wrote,

> And therefore it is true to the very letter, that the creature, as creature, hath no worthiness in itself, and no right to anything, and no claim over any one, either over God or over the creature, and that it ought to give itself up to God and submit to him because this is just (*Theologia Germanica*, XXXV).

The pursuit of union is not a half-hearted pursuit. The posture of consent seeks God's

beauty as its chief desire (Ps. 27:4; 63:1–2; Exod. 33:18–19). God is to be sought wholeheartedly (Deut. 4:29; 10:12; 30:10; Jer. 29:13). Jonathan Edwards said, "True religion consists in a great measure, in vigorous and lively actings of the inclination and will of the soul, or the fervent exercises of the heart" (*WJEO*, 2:99). Again:

> If we be not in good earnest in religion, and our wills and inclinations be not strongly exercised, we are nothing. The things of religion are so great, that there can be no suitableness in the exercises of our hearts, to their nature and importance, unless they be lively and powerful. In nothing is vigor in the actings of our inclinations so requisite, as in religion; and in nothing is lukewarmness so odious (*WJEO,* 2:99–100).

Correspondent love is cultivated through actual experience. The experience of communing with God, when illuminated by the Spirit, is that experience. Therein, the believer loves God ultimately, loves what God loves, and love God expansively in fullness of joy, consecrating all things to God. When he or she falls, there exists the option of confession, cleansing, followed by a deeper conformity to Christ. This experience will take place to the degree that the "consenting" posture of humility, brokenness, and submissive drawing near is present.

How is this process to be deepened, and its posture strengthened? The fourth aspect of cultivating correspondent love supplies much of the answer.

9.4.5. The Practices of Correspondent Love

The practices, or disciplines of the Christian life function to *nurture* correspondent love. The disciplines are not themselves the sum and substance of communion with God. Instead, they are the gymnasium, or rather the exercises, that develop and strengthen ordinate love for all of life. The process of experiential communion with God extends to family life, vocation, avocation, recreation, evangelism, and discipleship. It is not merely an exercise in one's private devotions or in corporate worship. One can love God

correspondently in all of life. Nevertheless, the disciplines are concentrated, repetitive forms and practices that nurture that love. The disciplines provide the greenhouse in which desire for God thrives. How so?

First, these disciplines provide the opportunity for communion with God to occur. The spiritual disciplines, rightly used, are the moments when one can give clearest attention to the process of communing with God, confessing sins, and conforming one's life to Christ. It is no wonder that some have mistaken these means as ends, for they provide some of the most concentrated experiences of communion with God.

Second, the spiritual disciplines develop the disposition of consent, with its humility, brokenness, and submissive drawing near. The practices are exercises in humility-faith-reverence, which train one in godliness (1 Tim. 4:7). When the chosen practices of a spirituality are repeated over time, they inculcate virtuous habits (Spohn, 2003:257).

Third, the spiritual disciplines form and shape the Christian imagination, filling the mind with analogies and metaphors by which to understand invisible and ultimate realities. The spiritual disciplines are not simply conveyors of information. They shape the imagination on a non-cognitive level through their form. The pattern of correspondent life is imprinted on the mind. They also create a rhythm of life that shapes the imagination (Deut. 6:6–9).

Fourth, the spiritual disciplines unite the pattern, position, and process of the Christian life in one act. They shape and strengthen the other three pillars of correspondent love. Like those tasks in life that require one to combine and co-ordinate several actions at once, practice is necessary. The concepts of this model of spirituality (the pattern of trinitarian reality, new natures and what they enable, the cycle of communion) will remain inert and abstract ideas unless they are enacted in real life. Practical disciplines give the soul practice at combining these.

9.4.5.1. The Form of the Spiritual Disciplines

In the post-Enlightenment era of positivism and idealism, attention has been given to the propositional content of Christian disciplines, and not to their form. Smith (2009:42) writes at length on the intellectualism of modern Christianity. Naming this a "intellectualist", "cognitivist", and "rationalist" approach, Smith describes modern Christianity's approach of privileging intellectual ideas. He avers that much in evangelical Christianity fails to recognise how desires are shaped by the habitual practices, and by the very form of those practices. Often, the shaping influence of the mood, the gestures, the regularity, the routine, the musical genre, the literary form, or the symbolism within the practice has been ignored, or declared to be a meaning-neutral content holder. Smith (2013:§3610) even suggests the form/content distinction needs to be erased. What can be deduced about the actual form of the spiritual disciplines? Drawing from the historical, aesthetic, and epistemological studies, five characteristics of the form of these disciplines follow.

1) Spiritual disciplines must be repetitive in nature. Smith (2013:§3912) speaks of the importance of repeating spiritual practices. Regular and intentional activities will "reshape a practitioner's dispositions" (Spohn, 2003:260). Perhaps it is superfluous to mention, but a practice is only beneficial when it is a regimen. Only those practices that become regular have a formative, shaping effect. To be trained in godliness (1 Tim. 4:7) suggests a regimen, and Scripture commands a regularity and repetitiveness in the spiritual disciplines (Heb. 10:25). Only when a consciously practiced activity becomes second nature, has its regularity had a formative effect.

At this point the Christian faces a dilemma: the desired familiarity can breed thoughtlessness, a lifeless repetitiveness that can be bereft of intentionality. To avoid this, the Christian must keep the intentionality and meaning of the practices clear. In summary, Correspondent love requires spiritual disciplines that are *repetitive*.

2) Spiritual disciplines must be realised in creational form. Section 7.2.1 listed the ways that art and religion are similar. Two of the crossovers listed were that both art and religion seek to incarnate ultimate realities, and that both art and religion are concerned with creation. Practices that are formative are those that recognise and reflect what a human being is: an embodied soul, or conversely, an ensouled body. Practices that shape make use of the senses of the body and call for the body to respond. Eyes read and take in beauty; tongues and teeth and vocal cords makes musical sounds or prayers; ears hear preaching and praying and music; tongues taste the Lord's Supper; bodies feel the water of baptism. The Platonic view of the body must not hinder Christian practice. The body is good, as is all creation. As creatures, Christians must make use of creation (music, language, poetry, water, bread) to know the Creator.

Practices that assume a disembodied, cerebral Christianity will have far less formative effect than those which assume one's creaturely nature. Murphy (2001:324) points out that one can never be at any distance from the knowledge one needs. Humans must be habituated to the knowledge of the faith by the ritual performance that is worship, for worship is the ultimate form of catechesis (pp. 325, 327). Correspondent love is nurtured through spiritual disciplines that are *realised* in physical, created forms.

3) Spiritual disciplines must be revelational in content and form. Section 8.3.7 demonstrated that in a correspondence model of truth for transcendentals, some form of disclosure theory is necessary. God must reveal himself for any spiritual discipline to be useful in nurturing correspondent love. God reveals himself specifically in Scripture, and generally in nature. If loving God comes through divine disclosure, then the practices that promote and shape love for God should be direct uses of Scripture, or uses of creation guided by Scripture. Those guided by the Regulative Principle of Worship[15] could

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[15] Those who believe in the Regulative Principle of Worship or the Rule of Prescription believe that a worship practice can be admitted to the worship of the church only if such a practice is unequivocally and positively grounded in Scripture (Duncan, 2003:64).

summarise their practice as "[R]ead the Bible, preach the Bible, pray the Bible, sing the Bible and see the Bible" (Duncan, 2003:65). For those practices not commanded for corporate worship, Scripture should still supply the principles that guide its form and content. By command or prohibition, by positive or negative principle, or by the application of sound wisdom, all practices should submit to Scripture. Scripture provides either the clear disclosure of God, or the framework to interpret the created order and interpret the works of God.

Aniol (2015:157) suggests that the poetic and literary forms of Scripture itself are to shape the worship forms of Christians. Innovating new worship forms run the risk of forfeiting those forms that correctly shape the imagination and perception, by mistakenly assuming that the traditional form no longer carries such power (Smith, 2013:§3735).

Correspondent love is nurtured through those spiritual disciplines whose form is *revelational*: shaped by the divine disclosure of Scripture.

4) Spiritual disciplines should have been shaped in their form by historic Christian communities. Section 7.4.4.3 showed the deleterious effect that culture can have on shaping the loves of people. The following section (7.4.4.4) insisted that Christians limit their exposure to mass culture and find their primary social formation among God's people. Similarly, section 8.4.2 showed that Augustine and Pascal saw the cruciality of culture in shaping rightly ordered love. As Peters (2009:35) demonstrates, both Pascal and Augustine thought that wisdom and clarity could come only to those whose sentiments were nurtured through participation in a historical community of faith.

Forms are shaped through a reciprocal relationship between a religion and a culture. As the Word penetrates a culture, it begins reshaping the imagination of that culture. As the culture then worships using the Word, it develops forms commensurate with that imagination. The longer this process goes on, the more one can expect forms that better approximate ordinate love for God. Aniol (2017:100) writes that

Liturgies are developed over long periods of time, at first with very deliberate values in view, and those values are worn into the liturgies through regular use. And when people practice such liturgies, they are shaped by the values that have formed them, whether they recognize it or not.

The Christian culture, and the tradition it passes down, becomes a secondary form of authority. Spiritual practices can be compared to a normative standard of what Christians practiced through the centuries.

Perhaps the Protestant understanding of the canonicity of Scripture is the best explanation of how this phenomenon occurs and functions. Believing that Scripture is self-authenticating, Protestants hold that the church of the first few centuries was able to identify Scripture, because existing Scripture had taught it to do so. Kruger (2012:§4018) suggests that as early Christians recognised the divine qualities of Scripture (beauty, power, and efficacy, and doctrinal, thematic, and structural unity), along with the apostolic testimony, they corporately recognised a particular book as part of the canon of Scripture.

In so doing, the early church recognised a distinction between Scripture as the absolute norm of authority, and other sources as important but secondary sources of theological authority (such as received tradition or the agreement of councils) that could *recognise* Scriptural authority (Clendenin, 1995:401). Christians who lived generations after those of the first four centuries were simultaneously accepting Scripture's authority and the secondary authority of the Christian tradition of the canon. To accept the canon, is at the very least, to accept one post-biblical tradition, and to submit to its authority (Harmon, 2003:591).

In a similar, but not identical way, the process of the formation and acceptance of the canon has taken place with Christian worship forms, liturgical practices, and spiritual disciplines. Where the community understood and practiced the Word, they chose worship and devotional forms that best captured and expressed the Word. These forms of liturgy

and devotional practice have been passed down, and deserve the considered attention of those seeking correspondent love.

Those forms of worship and devotion that have arisen recently, out of a society immersed in the narcissism and sentimentalism of popular culture (Hodges, 1995:77) deserve careful and discerning scrutiny before being adopted. Modern Christians can still reach into the past, before the rise of popular culture, and become familiar with the forms of historic Christian culture. Correspondent love is nurtured through those spiritual disciplines deeply *rooted in historic Christian communities of reverence.*

5) Spiritual disciplines must be reverently responsive to God. Many sections of this study have established the importance of humility, reverence, and self-transcendence for the apprehension of beauty. Section 7.4.1.1 explored the importance of humble receptivity to perceiving beauty. The necessity of unselfish, self-transcending judgement was established in 7.4.4. Sections 8.4.2 through 8.4.6 showed that a Christian epistemology requires humility, faith, benevolence, humble participation, submission, and indwelling. These all speak of reverence and teachable responsiveness. Since Scripture teaches that "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom" (Prov. 9:10) and "the beginning of knowledge" (Prov. 1:7), a posture of humble reverence in response to revelation is required to properly use a spiritual discipline. Some circularity here is inevitable. The practices of correspondent love help nurture, shape, and develop an attitude of consenting, humble reverence, but equally, such an attitude of humble reverence is needed to rightly use the practices of correspondent love.

Both in form and in content, these practices must reflect and reinforce the humble, receptive, and submissive posture of correspondent love. Both the propositional content, and the form used, must teach the attitudes of unselfish surrender, submissive indwelling, and self-transcending evaluation. The intellectual aspect of the discipline, as well as the literary, poetic or musical form of the discipline must teach the disposition of consenting

benevolence, teachable attentiveness, and loving faith: all the attitudes and postures revealed in chapter seven and eight. Necessarily then, the form of the practices must exclude narcissism, sentimentalism, and other idolatries described in 7.4.4.3. Spiritual forms are not enjoyed by man in his natural state (1 Cor. 2:14). If Israel had "naturally" enjoyed all its worship forms, why were they perpetually tempted to embrace Canaanite forms? Why did they mingle Yahweh worship with Canaanite worship on the high places? Perhaps because Canaanite worship, being a religion shaped by man's desires, was accommodating to fleshliness and self-worship.

Put simply, properly chosen disciplines will communicate both who God is, and what he deserves; both what is true of God, and how he is to be loved; what the mind should know, and what the heart should love. Correspondent love is nurtured through those spiritual disciplines whose form is *reverent and lovingly responsive* and obedient to God.

Having described the form of the spiritual disciplines, what can one conclude about the actual categories and types of spiritual disciplines?

9.4.5.2. The Categories of the Spiritual Disciplines

Many spiritual disciplines have been suggested[16]: private prayer, meditation on the Word, memorisation of the Word, wider reading of devotional or theological writers, journaling, silence and solitude, fasting, corporate worship, giving, service of others, evangelism, and so on.

This study suggests three major categories of practices: the prescriptive practices of corporate worship, the derivative practices of private worship, and the formative practices of developmental worship. Why these three? The first two were considered the "means of grace" by the first Puritan generation (Spohn, 2003:261). Christian spirituality has long

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[16] For a sampling of the some of the leading contributors to this discussion, see Foster (1989), Whitney (1991), and Willard (1988).

considered public worship and private worship to be the staple diet of healthy spirituality. The third is derived primarily through the Lutheran and Moravian traditions, as will be shown below. Each category can also be shown to meet the five criteria of form, given in §9.4.5.1 above.

1. The Prescriptive Practices of Corporate Worship

The Regulative Principle of Worship states that only what the Word positively prescribes to be used in corporate worship should be included (Duncan, 2003:64). The prescribed elements of corporate worship are then concluded to be the public reading of Scripture, the preaching of Scripture, public prayer, song, the collection, and the ordinances. This holds for corporate worship, since that is where the consciences of God's people are bound to the shared practice. Corporate worship stands at the head of all practices, because of its powerful shaping influence. Lewis (2012:93) writes in *Reflections on the Psalms*:

> I did not see that it is in the process of being worshipped that God communicates His presence to men. It is not of course the only way. But for many people at many times the "fair beauty of the Lord" is revealed chiefly or only while they worship Him together. Even in Judaism the essence of the sacrifice was not really that men gave bulls and goats to God, but that by their so doing God gave Himself to men; in the central act of our own worship of course this is far clearer—there it is manifestly, even physically, God who gives and we who receive.

Aniol (2017:97) suggests that "spiritual virtue is shaped by the cultivation of inclinations through habitual behavior in community".

The content of corporate worship, should ideally, as Chapell (2009:99) shows, display the shape of the gospel: adoration, confession, pardon, thanksgiving, petition, instruction, charge, and blessing. Inherent in a gospel-shaped liturgy is the teaching of the position of the Christian life: union with God. Eventually, these soteriological ideas point

even higher: to the pattern of the Christian life, where the trinitarian, relational, and doxological nature of God gives an ultimate explanation.

Although the elements of corporate worship have been prescribed, the circumstances have not. The circumstances refer to the form each of these will take: the kind of music, the type of prayers, the length and presentation of the elements, the shape of the liturgy, the architecture of the meeting place, and so on. Both these circumstances and their form must be judged using the criteria given in §9.4.5.1, such as their reverence and rootedness in historic Christian communities. The kind of aesthetic forms that grew in communities that were reverently submitted to Scripture are to be considered weightier when judging appropriateness than those that developed recently in secularised popular culture.

2. The Derivative Practices of Private Worship

Private worship refers to acts of communion performed alone or (where available) in solitude. The prescriptions for corporate worship do not necessarily apply when it comes to private worship, but the practices of private worship are assumed by example (Dan. 6:10; Ps. 1:2; 5:3; Matt. 6:6; Mark 1:35; Eph. 1:16) and commanded in the form of principles (Col. 4:2; 1 Thes. 5:17). Private worship derives its practices from corporate worship: some form of reading Scripture, meditating on Scripture, praying, or singing (which is a form of prayer). Added disciplines such as memorisation of Scripture or journaling are really additional ways of meditating on Scripture. Missing from private worship are those elements that cannot function in solitude: the Lord's Supper, baptism, and the collection.

Private worship is a moment for the believer to focus on communion, confession, and conformity to Christ, as he or she reads and prays. Here the posture of humility, brokenness, and submissive drawing near can be practised.

Again, the content of private worship will, at some point, teach and emphasise the

pattern of correspondent love, as well as the position, revealing the trinitarian, relational, God, and his union with his people.

Similarly, the "circumstances" of private worship are to be judged for their reverence in form and content, using the criteria of §9.4.5.1 above. The use of prayer books, hymns and Christian poems, catechisms and confessions, the length and kind of meditation on Scripture employed, the physical posture adopted, and the use of different kinds of prayers are matters for ordinate, reverent judgement.

3. The Supportive Practices of Developmental Worship

The supportive practices are those practices that aid in developing the skills, judgement, discernment, and aesthetic literacy that support corporate and private worship. This study has placed great emphasis on the importance of art to worship. Section 7.2.1. listed seven similarities between art and religion. Chapter seven concluded with the words of Eliot (1949:29):

> Esthetic sensibility must be extended into spiritual perception, and spiritual perception must be extended into esthetic sensibility and disciplined taste before we are qualified to pass judgment upon decadence or diabolism or nihilism in art. To judge a work of art by artistic or by religious standards, to judge a religion by religious or artistic standards should come in the end to the same thing.

Section 7.4.3 found that the aesthetic mode grasps the whole, not particulars, which makes it fundamental to worldview, faith, and worship. If this is true, then fundamental to the worship forms used in public and private worship is the aesthetic production and literacy of Christians. Christians have not only taught the people they evangelised to read (so as to read and comprehend the Word), they have taught them to sing and make poems ("psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs") and tell their stories. Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 imply that Christians are to make music and poems.

Is this not arbitrarily privileging aesthetics over theology? Not at all, since the propositional content is richly supported in nearly every element of corporate and private worship. Instead, there should be an understanding that the cultivation of correct feeling will actually preserve sound doctrine. Charles Hodge (1829:92), made this remark:

> Whenever a change occurs in the religious opinions of a community, it is always preceded by a change in their religious feelings. The natural expression of the feelings of true piety is the doctrines of the Bible. As long as these feelings are retained, these doctrines will be retained; but should they be lost, the doctrines are either held for form sake or rejected, according to circumstance; and if the feelings again be called into life, the doctrines return as a matter of course.

The arts are not mere embellishments for cognitive and didactic truth; they are formative and substantive (Hendricks, 1988:114). They are a transmission of emotional knowledge (Scruton, 2007:§94), which becomes all the more important during eras of barbarism (p. 107).

Moore (2004:171) asserts, "Love for God, creation, and our fellow human beings requires that Christians take seriously the obligation to cultivate theologically informed aesthetic taste". He continues by insisting that aesthetic taste is a discipline, whose practice involves daily submitting of ourselves to improving this gift and applying it to life (p. 172).

As chapter seven showed, one cannot worship without art, and one cannot then worship intelligently unless some aesthetic literacy is present. Public and private worship are hamstrung without aesthetic literacy. Chapter seven and eight rehearsed the historical reasons for the split between beauty and cognition. No reversal of the situation can take place as long as Christians remain passive consumers of secular aesthetic production, rather than active producers of their own.

The advent of audio and visual recording, and storage and playback technologies

have increasingly turned much of the modern population into art consumers, rather than producers. The dominance of visual media has diminished the role of poetry and literature. A society obsessed with innovation is less interested in history.

What aspects of beauty or art should Christians produce? At least two are suggested by Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16: music and poetry (Bauder, 2012:12). A third can be implied by the dominance of narrative in Scripture: Christian stories and histories. Christians should be hearing, learning, and making music, poetry, and stories that reflect the Christian imagination.

The supportive practices are therefore the repetitive, realised, revelational, historically-rooted, and reverent learning and making of Christian art: in particular, music, poetry, and story (whether true or fictional).

These practices are *supportive* in the sense that they support and shape the prescriptive and descriptive disciplines. They are not themselves prescriptive: it would be tenuous to say that Scripture commands all Christians to cultural production in the same way that corporate worship is commanded. Smith (2012:478) asserts that "[M]usic and singing whilst not of the *esse* (i.e., essence or being) of the church are vital for the *beneesse* (i.e., the health or well-being) of the church".

Some presence of these practices is, however, assumed by Scripture as normative. For example, this kind of artistic production is seen in Scripture. Israel was commanded to recite their own accounts to the generations to come (Exod. 12:26–27; Ps. 78:1–8). Composing songs and poetry was not unusual, but was done in at least the following instances: Moses and Miriam after the Red Sea crossing (Exod. 15:1–21), Moses at the end of his life (Deut. 31:22), Deborah and Barak after victory (Judg. 5:1–31), David after Saul's death (2 Sam. 1:18–27), and Mary after the visitation of Gabriel (Luke 1:46–55), to name a few instances.

Christian history has similar examples of this artistic production. The Lutheran

tradition is one. Martin Luther wrote:

> We must teach music in schools; a schoolmaster ought to have skill in music, or I
> would not regard him. Neither should we ordain young men as preachers, unless
> they have been well exercised in music (*Table Talk*, DCCXCIV).

Luther believed in the doctrine of *ethos*, which said that "devotion to the principles of beauty present in the ontological character of the object directly influences moral or ethical development" (Tarry, 1973:358). This sounds like Caldecott (2009:125), who writes that "[L]iturgy is a way of being in tune with the motions of the stars, the dance of atomic particles, and the harmony of the heavens that resembles a great song".

Luther made sure musical training was present in all three divisions of Lutheran schooling (Tarry, 1973:362). Music was once part of learning in the monastic schools and cathedral schools, a fixed part of the *trivium* and *quadrivium* of classical learning (Faulkner, 1996:84).

Similar to the Lutheran tradition, American Moravians wove musical literacy into the education of their young. At all four levels of instruction, "nurseries, primary schools, academies or seminaries and the 'choir' houses of Single Brethren and Sisters", music was integral (Hall, 1981:226). A letter from a twelve-year-old girl attending Bethlehem Seminary in 1787 to her brother spoke of her learning to sing, play the guitar, spinet, forte-piano, and sometimes the organ. The daily schedule included morning and evening prayers on the guitar, then breakfast, three hours of grammar, followed by chapel and more singing. The afternoon consisted of three hours of needlework, drawing, and music. Suppertime was at six, followed by playing on a musical instrument. Bedtime was at eight, where the girls were serenaded to sleep by one of the ladies with guitar and voice (p. 230).

Where and when these supportive practices have waned, corporate and private worship have suffered. Lacking these practices on a widespread scale, Christians are cut off from a living tradition, and default to the aesthetic production of their surrounding

popular culture. Without these supportive practices, Christians lose aesthetic judgement, and must borrow the judgements of their leaders, who themselves may be aesthetic illiterates. Pieper (1988:35) proposes that the remedy for a diminished capacity to see reality as God sees it is "to be active oneself in artistic creation, producing shapes and forms for the eye to see". Wolfe (2011:46) argues that unless there exists a vibrant Christian humanism—Christians giving themselves to the creation and conservation of those aspects of knowledge called the humanities—it will impoverish the world itself.

As artistic production ceases, the choices for circumstances of worship are cast upon an evil choice: to seek to repristinate fossilised ancient practices, or to attempt to "Christianise" artistic forms foreign to historic Christianity and lacking in reverence.

Christians steeped in these supportive practices develop aesthetic judgement, gaining the skill not only to worship more meaningfully, but better to judge the circumstances of corporate and private worship. When a large groundswell of Christians standing on the shoulders of their tradition are making music and poetry, emerging from the mass will be a few works of high excellence, that enter into the worship of the church universal.

How should Christians determine the "circumstances" of these elements of learning and making music, poetry, and narratives? That is, what should be learned? What has already been established in this study is a good guide:

- whatever Christian art aids humble receptivity (see §7.4.1.1)

- whatever Christian art informs a Christian imagination (see §7.4.3.3).

- whatever Christian art strengthens self-transcending taste (see §7.4.4.4).

By what standard should the art be judged? Some of the standards of 7.4.4.2 could be enlisted. Furthermore, returning to the discussion of parallels with canonicity, Christians shaped by the Word are increasingly adept at recognising Word-shaped art. Christians shaped by the aesthetic qualities of Scripture, incarnated in Christian history are

increasingly adept at recognising and shaping imitative forms of those Scriptural forms. If they are familiar with the Christian tradition, they can better spot continuity and conformity in historical Christian practices to the aesthetics of Scripture. Christians must go beyond a narrow focus on the propositional content of the forms they use and begin parsing the intrinsic meaning of the form chosen, whether it shapes the desires towards order or disorder, moderation or immoderation, reason or passion (Holloway, 2001:162).

The prescribed practices of corporate worship, the derived practices of private worship, and the supportive practices of developmental worship find their support in Scripture and Christian history. When chastened by the five suggested guidelines for form, these practices will nurture and cultivate correspondent love.

This model is now summarised.

9.4.6. The Model Considered Comprehensively

The model of Christian spirituality presented has been one that pursues correspondent love, since correspondent love is the means to perceive the beauty of God, and that reflects such love back to God and others. Since love has been defined in this study as desire, and since desires cannot be willed directly, the model reflects the way that correspondent desire for God can be shaped or cultivated. Cultivating desire was suggested to be a combination of shaping imagination (the pattern), possessing a new nature (the position), experiencing exposure (the process), and continual nurture (the practices) (see the discussion under 9.4.1).
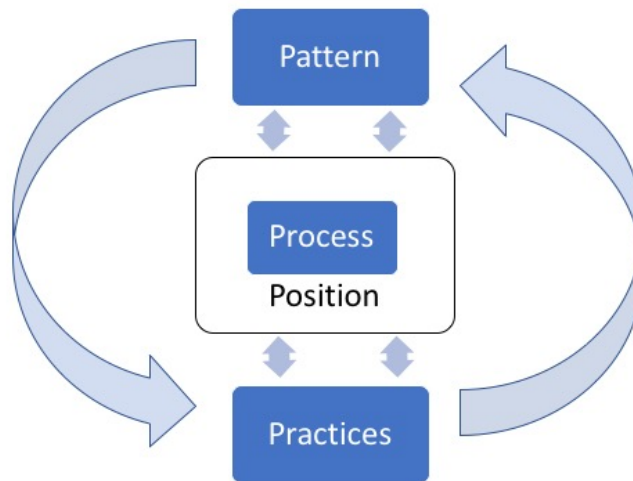
Figure 2: The Model Considered Comprehensively

At the centre of the model is the gospel-shaped process, where communion with God (directly or indirectly) consists of loving God ultimately, loving what God loves, and loving expansively in fullness of joy. When convicted of wrong loves, the believer confesses, is cleansed, and comes to a greater conformity to Christ, which is a greater conformity to God's loves. Hosting this process is the position. The position provides the basis for this process of communion: the believer's union with Christ, and the consequent new heart and spiritual illumination.

Though each element in the model is reciprocally supportive and strengthening of the other, the pattern and the practices stand apart as fundamental for the process taking place, supporting it from below, through nurturing practices, and from above, through the pattern of a Christian imagination. Apart from the correct pattern of reality shaping the Christian's imagination, correspondent love is impossible.

This imagination is shaped primarily through the practices of the Christian life, be they corporate worship, private worship, or the supportive practices of developmental worship. The pattern and the practices, therefore, not only shape each other, but are the twin supports for the process of the correspondent love and its host, the position and the

posture. Each depends on the others, but the model is centred in the process, supported by the position, and is motivated and energised through the pattern and practices.

9.5. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to combine the research of the previous chapters into a model of Christian spirituality, which has perceiving God's beauty at its heart.

It began by reviewing the research on the nature of God's beauty. It found that the best definition of God's beauty was God's own love for himself, his dynamic self-appraisal, and joyful gifting of himself.

The research on perceiving this beauty was then reviewed. The biblical, historical, aesthetic, and epistemological studies revealed that perception of beauty is allied to moral qualities in the perceiver: humility, faith/imagination, and sound judgement. This amounted to the attribute of love: a love that would correspond, in creaturely terms, to God's own love in degree and kind. The term *correspondent love* was used to define and describe this kind of love.

Correspondent love was then examined along four lines. Philosophically, love was distinguished from the contemporary term *emotion*, and found to be the inclination of the will towards union. Biblically, correspondent love was defined as loving God ultimately, loving what God loves, and experiencing an expansive fullness of joy in lived communion with God. Historically, correspondent love was found in several writers. Aesthetically, the opposite notions of good taste and sentimentalism find exact parallels in the idea of correspondent love and its opposite, inordinate, or non-correspondent love. Correspondent love was found to be an established and viable concept. A model of Christian spirituality was then suggested: one that pursues correspondent love in the believer.

The difficulty found in such a model was then faced: love is a desire, and the will is actually a human's strongest desire. It cannot be willed directly; it must be shaped. The research had thus far shown the importance of the imagination to cultivating desire, the

essentiality of a new nature for cultivating desire for God, the necessity of experiential exposure to cultivate desire, and the fundamental importance of habitual practices to in nurturing desire. In light of these, a model was then outlined having four aspects: the pattern of correspondent love, the position of correspondent love, the process of correspondent love, and the practices of correspondent love.

The pattern of correspondent love was suggested to be the Christian metaphysical "dream" or imagination. Drawing on Edwards' view that beauty is being's consent to being, the Christian imagination was identified as an imagination that views reality as trinitarian, personal, and doxological.

The position for correspondent love was found to be one in which the believer is in God's presence and experiences spiritual illumination. This was the position that regeneration grants, as Edwards showed. This position is the believer's positional union with Christ.

The process was understood to be the very experience of loving God correspondently, in which communion with God is experienced through the three forms of love, experienced in any life circumstance. A gospel-shaped cycle of conviction, confession, cleansing, and conformity was suggested as the cycle that takes communion from one degree of closeness to the next.

The practices of ordinate love were described as those repetitive, realised, revelational, historically rooted, and reverently responsive spiritual disciplines that would unite and form the other three aspects of the model. Both in form and content, these practices were asserted to be the concentrated exercises of correspondent love that would shape it for all of life. Three forms were considered: those prescribed for corporate worship, those derived from corporate worship to be used in private worship, and those supportive of developing the Christian imagination and aesthetic forms to be used in corporate worship.

Finally, the model was considered as a whole. The model was summarised as follows: the process lies at the centre, with the position hosting it, while the pattern and practices are what support it from below and sustain it from above.

This completed the presentation of a model of Christian spirituality in which the goal is the perception of God's beauty through ordinate love.

Chapter 10. Conclusion

This study has sought to answer the question, what would the nature be of an Evangelical Protestant Christian spirituality predicated upon seeking and finding God's beauty in the spirituality's priorities, postures, and practices?

It began by pointing to the return of the idea of beauty in academia, alongside an ironic resistance to beauty. The relevance of beauty to Christian spirituality was considered.

A definition of beauty was then sought. Chapter two examined the classical definitions, the transcendental definitions, the subjective definitions, and the theological definitions. Jonathan Edwards' definition was chosen for its ability to harmonise with each of these theories, and yet remain mostly theological. His definition was "being's cordial consent to being in general" (*WJEO*, 8:620), which is to say, God's love for himself and all that reflects him.

A literature survey revealed the lacunae: a model of spirituality predicated upon apprehending God's beauty. The research question was defined in chapter four, and the methodology set out in chapter five.

Chapter six studied God's beauty as an objective notion. Scripture's vocabulary showed the concept of divine beauty to be clearly present in the Bible. Christian intellectual history from premodern times until the Enlightenment demonstrated a belief in God as objectively beautiful. After this period, existentialism began to subjectivise the idea. Again, Edwards' solution seemed the most tenable for reconciling objective and subjective notions of beauty.

Chapter seven considered the subjective apprehension of beauty by considering the methodology employed in art. After establishing art and religion as parallel endeavours, the chapter studied the four parts of the aesthetic experience: perception, immediate

response, interpretation, and evaluation. Spirituality equivalents were found in the ideas of humility, faith, and wise discernment.

The epistemological dichotomy between subject and object was the study of chapter eight. It was found that the dichotomy between subject and object is an Enlightenment innovation. Christians should consider carefully whether using this language is helpful to communicating Christian ideals, or whether it gives credence to false ideas. One might even suggest that the title of this study could alternatively be "God's *Real* Beauty and Its *Participative* Apprehension in Christian Spirituality". Having said that, the terms *subjective* and *objective* are, for the time being, here to stay, and this paper deals with that reality.

After outlining the history of the problem, chapter eight considered models of truth for transcendentals such as beauty. Out of four models, two models (correspondence theory and disclosure theory) provided a method for obtaining contact between perceiving subjects and God's beauty. Four approaches to this metaphysical realism were considered in the works of Augustine and Blaise Pascal, Jonathan Edwards, Owen Barfield and C. S. Lewis, and Michael Polanyi. Again, approaches such as humility, faith, personal commitment, and union were found to be necessary to obtain correspondence between subject and object.

In chapter nine, the insights from the previous chapters were combined in a series of five steps. First, God's beauty as a real property was defined as God's love. Second, the apprehension of this love was found to be in the subject's love. Third, this love was understood to be a love that corresponded to God's love, albeit in creaturely form. As a fourth step, the idea of correspondent love was then examined philosophically, biblically, historically, and aesthetically, and found to be a tenable, justifiable idea. Fifth, since love had been shown to be a desire, the chapter showed that it is necessary that such love be cultivated, since love cannot simply be willed into being.

In pursuit of the cultivation of such correspondent love, the study then drew upon the findings of the previous chapters, along with Scripture. Four areas of cultivation were suggested: imagination, nature, exposure, and nurture.

Imagination, or the pattern of the Christian life, was to be patterned after Edwards' definition of beauty: a trinitarian, personal, and doxological view of God and the world.

Nature, or the position of the Christian life, was shown to be union with Christ, which provided the divine disclosure of God's beauty, and the permission, prompting, and power to love God.

Exposure, or the process of the Christian life, was proposed as a gospel-shaped cycle of communion and consecration, conviction and confession, and cleansing and conformity to Christ. In this communion, the believer loves God ultimately, loves what God loves, and loves expansively in fullness of joy. The dispositions of humility, brokenness, and submissive drawing near were seen fundamental to this experiential union with God.

Nurture, or the practices of the Christian life, were suggested to be the prescriptive practices of corporate worship, the derivative practices of private worship, and the supportive practices of developmental worship. Based upon the research of the previous chapters, it was suggested that the form of these practices ought to be repetitive, realised, revelational, rooted in historic Christianity, and reverently responsive.

These four sections of the model were combined and related to one another as a model for cultivating correspondent love for God.

Further scholarly pursuit of this subject might take up several questions. One, studying Edwards' definition as a unifier and harmoniser of other theories of beauty could be a fruitful question. More extended reflection on disordered love, and particularly on sentimentalism and kitsch within Christian worship, would be helpful. Further work on differentiating love from emotion, and understanding some of the older taxonomies of

affections and passions, may be a fruitful avenue of research. Combining the epistemologies of the six realists of chapter eight, along with similar thinkers, into a sustained postmodern Christian realist epistemology would be an immense but edifying project.

Within spirituality, exploring how a trinitarian imagination could be cultivated would be an important study. Certainly the topic of supportive practices of developmental worship needs more exploration and elaboration. The question of how canonicity relates to the worship tradition is a needed area of research, particularly for Evangelical Protestants.

It is hoped that this study has fruitfully added to the field of Christian spirituality by investigating the nature of God's beauty as a pursuit in Christian spirituality and by positing a model for that pursuit.

God's beauty is God's perfect desire for himself. The spiritual beauty of Christians is their answering desire for God. God's love is his beauty, and love for God is the experience and apprehension of this beauty. This love is developed in four ways: through the implantation of a new nature, the cultivation of a profoundly Christian imagination, the regular practice of direct and indirect communion with God, and the repetitive use of spiritual disciplines that shape and develop the Christian's sense and experience of the other three. This is the nature of an Evangelical Protestant Christian spirituality predicated upon seeking and finding God's beauty.

Appendix A

Verse references follow for the Hebrew and Greek words for beauty in Scripture.

Old Testament

צְבִי, 31 times in 30 verses, 5 forms: Deut. 12:15, 22; 14:5; 15:22; 2 Sam. 1:19; 2:18; 1 Kgs. 5:3; 1 Chr. 12:9; Prov. 6:5; Cant. 2:9, 17; 8:14; Isa. 4:2; 13:14, 19; 23:9; 24:16; 28:1, 4–5; Jer. 3:19; Ezek. 7:20; 20:6, 15; 25:9; 26:20; Dan. 8:9; 11:16, 41, 45.

פאר, 21 times in 20 verses, 14 forms: Exod. 8:5; 39:28; Deut. 24:20; Jdg. 7:2; Ezr. 7:27; Ps. 149:4; Isa. 3:20; 10:15; 44:23; 49:3; 55:5; 60:7, 9, 13, 21; 61:3, 10; Ezek. 24:17, 23; 44:18.

תִּפְאֶרֶת 49 times in 48 verses, 10 forms: Exod. 28:2, 40; Deut. 26:19; Jdg. 4:9; 1 Chr. 22:5; 29:11, 13; 2 Chr. 3:6; Est. 1:4; Ps. 71:8; 78:61; 89:18; 96:6; Prov. 4:9; 16:31; 17:6; 19:11; 20:29; 28:12; Isa. 3:18; 4:2; 10:12; 13:19; 20:5; 28:1, 4; 44:13; 46:13; 52:1; 60:7, 19; 62:3; 63:12, 14–15; 64:10; Jer. 13:11, 18, 20; 33:9; Lam. 2:1; Ezek. 16:12, 17, 39; 23:26, 42; 24:25; Zech. 12:7.

הָמֹד 27 times in 26 verses, 15 forms: Gen. 2:9; 3:6; Exod. 20:17; 34:24; Deut. 5:21; 7:25; Jos. 7:21; Job 20:20; Ps. 19:11; 39:12; 68:17; Prov. 1:22; 6:25; 12:12; 21:20; Cant. 2:3; Isa. 1:29; 27:2; 32:12; 44:9; 53:2; Ezek. 23:6, 12, 23; Amos 5:11; Mic. 2:2.

הֶמֶד (noun) 16 times in 16 verses, 5 forms 1 Sam. 9:20; 2 Chr. 21:20; 32:27; 36:10; Ps. 106:24; Isa. 2:16; Jer. 3:19; 12:10; 25:34; Ezek. 26:12; Dan. 11:8, 37; Hos. 13:15; Nah. 2:10; Hag. 2:7; Zech. 7:14.

יָפֶה, 50 times in 46 verses, 14 forms: Gen. 12:11, 14; 29:17; 39:6; 41:2, 4, 18; Deut. 21:11; 1 Sam. 16:12; 17:42; 25:3; 2 Sam. 13:1; 14:25, 27; 1 Kgs. 1:3–4; Est. 2:7; Job 42:15; Ps. 45:3; 48:3; Prov. 11:22; Eccl. 3:11; 5:17; Cant. 1:8, 15–16; 2:10, 13; 4:1, 7, 10; 5:9; 6:1, 4, 10; 7:2, 7; Jer. 4:30; 10:4; 11:16; Ezek. 16:13; 31:3, 7, 9; 33:32; Amos 8:13.

יֳפִי 19 times in 19 verses, 6 forms: Est. 1:11; Ps. 45:12; 50:2; Prov. 6:25; 31:30; Isa. 3:24; 33:17; Lam. 2:15; Ezek. 16:14–15, 25; 27:3–4, 11; 28:7, 12, 17; 31:8; Zech. 9:17.

נָאוֶה, 10 times in 10 verses, 2 forms: Ps. 33:1; 147:1; Prov. 17:7; 19:10; 26:1; Cant. 1:5; 2:14; 4:3; 6:4; Jer. 6:2.

נאה 3 times in 3 verses, 2 forms: Ps. 93:5; Cant. 1:10; Isa. 52:7.

נעם 16 times in 16 verses, 8 forms: Gen. 49:15; 2 Sam. 1:26; 1 Chr. 4:15; Ps. 27:4; 90:17; 141:6; Prov. 2:10; 3:17; 9:17; 15:26; 16:24; 24:25; Cant. 7:7; Ezek. 32:19; Zech. 11:7, 10.

נָעִים 13 times in 13 verses, 4 forms: 2 Sam. 1:23; 23:1; Job 36:11; Ps. 16:6, 11; 81:3; 133:1; 135:3; 147:1; Prov. 22:18; 23:8; 24:4; Cant. 1:16.

הָדָר, 38 times in 37 verses, 13 forms: Gen. 36:39; Exod. 23:3; Lev. 19:15, 32; 23:40; Deut. 33:17; 1 Chr. 16:27; Job 40:10; Ps. 8:6; 21:6; 29:4; 45:4–5; 90:16; 96:6; 104:1; 110:3; 111:3; 145:5, 12; 149:9; Prov. 20:29; 25:6; 31:25; Isa. 2:10, 19, 21; 5:14; 35:2; 53:2; 63:1; Lam. 1:6; 5:12; Ezek. 16:14; 27:10; Dan. 11:20; Mic. 2:9.

טוֹב, 553 times in 520 verses, 31 forms: Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 2:9, 12, 17–18; 3:5–6, 22; 6:2; 15:15; 16:6; 18:7; 19:8; 20:15; 24:10, 16, 50; 25:8; 26:7, 29; 27:9; 29:19; 30:20; 31:24, 29; 40:16; 41:5, 22, 24, 26, 35; 45:18, 20, 23; 49:15; Exod. 2:2; 3:8; 14:12; 18:17; 33:19; Lev. 27:10, 12, 14, 33; Num. 10:29, 32; 11:18; 13:19; 14:3, 7; 24:1, 5; 36:6; Deut. 1:14, 25, 35, 39; 3:25; 4:21–22; 5:33; 6:10–11, 18, 24; 8:7, 10, 12; 9:6; 10:13; 11:17; 12:28; 15:16; 19:13; 23:17; 26:11; 28:12, 47; 30:9, 15; Jos. 7:21; 9:25; 21:45; 23:13–16; Jdg. 8:2, 32; 9:2, 11; 10:15; 11:3, 5, 25; 15:2; 16:25; 18:9, 19; 19:24; Ruth 2:22; 3:13; 4:15; 1 Sam. 1:8, 23; 2:24, 26; 3:18; 8:14, 16; 9:2, 10; 11:10; 14:36, 40; 15:9, 22, 28; 16:12, 16, 23; 19:4; 20:7, 12; 25:3, 8, 15, 36; 26:16; 27:1; 29:6, 9; 2 Sam. 3:13, 19, 36; 10:6, 8, 12; 11:2; 13:22, 28; 14:17, 32; 15:3, 26; 17:7, 14; 18:3, 27; 19:19, 28, 36, 38–39; 24:22; 1 Kgs. 1:6, 42; 2:18, 32, 38, 42; 3:9; 8:18, 36, 56, 66; 10:7; 12:7; 14:13, 15; 18:24; 19:4; 20:3; 21:2; 22:8, 13, 18; 2 Ki. 2:19; 3:19, 25; 5:12; 8:9; 10:3, 5, 30; 20:3, 13, 19; 1 Chr. 4:40; 13:2; 16:34; 19:13; 21:23; 28:8; 29:28; 2 Chr. 3:5, 8; 5:13; 6:8, 27, 41; 7:3, 10; 10:7; 12:12; 14:1; 18:12, 17; 19:3, 11; 21:13; 30:18, 22; 31:20; Ezr. 3:11; 7:9; 8:18, 27; 9:12; Neh. 2:5, 7–8, 18; 5:9; 9:13, 20, 25, 35–36; Est. 1:10–11, 19; 2:2–3, 7, 9; 3:9, 11; 5:4, 8–9; 7:3, 9; 8:5, 8, 17; 9:13, 19, 22; 10:3; Job 2:10; 7:7; 10:3; 13:9; 20:21; 21:13, 16; 22:18; 30:26; 34:4; 36:11; Ps. 4:7; 14:1, 3; 21:4; 23:6; 25:7–8, 13; 27:13; 31:20; 34:9, 11, 13, 15; 36:5; 37:3, 16, 27; 38:21; 39:3; 45:2; 52:5, 11; 53:2, 4; 54:8; 63:4; 65:5; 69:17; 73:1, 28; 84:11–12; 85:13; 86:5; 92:2; 100:5; 103:5; 104:28; 106:1; 107:1, 9; 109:21; 111:10; 112:5; 118:1, 8–9, 29; 119:39, 65–66, 68, 71–72, 122; 122:9; 125:4; 128:2, 5; 133:1–2; 135:3; 136:1; 143:10; 145:7, 9; 147:1; Prov. 2:9, 20; 3:4, 14, 27; 4:2; 8:11, 19; 11:10, 23, 27; 12:2, 9, 14, 25; 13:2, 15, 21–22; 14:14, 19, 22; 15:3, 15–17, 23, 30; 16:8, 16, 19–20, 29, 32; 17:1, 20, 26; 18:5, 22; 19:1–2, 8, 22; 20:23; 21:9, 19; 22:1, 9; 24:13, 23, 25; 25:7, 24–25, 27; 27:5, 10; 28:6, 10, 21; 31:12, 18; Eccl. 2:1, 3, 24, 26; 3:12–13, 22; 4:3, 6, 9, 13; 5:4, 17; 6:3, 9, 12; 7:1–3, 5, 8, 10–11, 14, 18, 20, 26; 8:12–13, 15; 9:2, 4, 7, 16, 18; 11:6–7; 12:14; Cant. 1:2–3; 4:10; 7:10; Isa. 1:19; 3:10; 5:9, 20; 7:15–16; 38:3; 39:2, 8; 41:7; 52:7; 55:2; 56:5; 63:7; 65:2, 14; Jer. 2:7; 5:25; 6:16, 20; 8:15; 14:19; 15:11; 17:6; 22:15–16; 24:2–3, 5; 26:14; 29:10, 32; 31:12, 14; 32:39; 33:11, 14; 40:4; 42:6; 44:17; Lam. 3:25–27, 38; 4:1, 9; Ezek. 17:8; 18:18; 20:25; 24:4; 31:16; 34:14, 18; 36:31; Dan. 1:4, 15; Hos. 2:9; 3:5; 4:13; 8:3; 10:1, 11; 14:3; Joel 4:5; Amos 5:14–15; 6:2; Jon. 4:3, 8; Mic. 1:12; 3:2; 6:8; 7:4; Nah. 1:7; 3:4; Zech. 1:13, 17; 8:19; 9:17; 11:12; Mal. 2:17.

כָּבֵד, 200 times in 189 verses, 10 forms: Gen. 31:1; 45:13; 49:6; Exod. 16:7, 10; 24:16–17; 28:2, 40; 29:43; 33:18, 22; 40:34–35; Lev. 9:6, 23; Num. 14:10, 21–22; 16:19; 17:7; 20:6; 24:11; Deut. 5:24; Jos. 7:19; 1 Sam. 2:8; 4:21–22; 6:5; 1 Kgs. 3:13; 8:11; 1 Chr. 16:24, 28–29; 17:18; 29:12, 28; 2 Chr. 1:11–12; 5:14; 7:1–3; 17:5; 18:1; 26:18; 32:27, 33; Neh. 9:5; Est. 1:4; 5:11; Job 19:9; 29:20; Ps. 3:4; 4:3; 7:6; 8:6; 16:9; 19:2; 21:6; 24:7–10; 26:8; 29:1–3, 9; 30:13; 49:17–18; 57:6, 9, 12; 62:8; 63:3; 66:2; 72:19; 73:24; 79:9; 84:12; 85:10; 96:3, 7–8; 97:6; 102:16–17; 104:31; 106:20; 108:2, 6; 112:9; 113:4; 115:1; 138:5; 145:5, 11–12; 149:5; Prov. 3:16, 35; 8:18; 11:16; 15:33; 18:12; 20:3; 21:21; 22:4; 25:2, 27; 26:1, 8; 29:23; Eccl. 6:2; 10:1; Isa. 3:8; 4:2, 5; 5:13; 6:3; 8:7; 10:3, 16, 18; 11:10; 14:18; 16:14; 17:3–4; 21:16; 22:18, 23–24; 24:23; 35:2; 40:5; 42:8, 12; 43:7; 48:11; 58:8; 59:19; 60:1–2, 13; 61:6; 62:2; 66:11–12, 18–19; Jer. 2:11; 13:16; 14:21; 17:12; 48:18; Ezek. 1:28; 3:12, 23; 8:4; 9:3; 10:4, 18–19; 11:22–23; 31:18; 39:21; 43:2, 4–5; 44:4; Dan. 11:39; Hos. 4:7; 9:11; 10:5; Mic. 1:15; Nah. 2:10; Hab. 2:14, 16; Hag. 2:3, 7, 9; Zech. 2:9, 12; Mal. 1:6; 2:2.

נָוָה, occurring once in Exodus 15:2.

מַרְאֶה, 116 times in 93 verses, 15 forms: Gen. 2:9; 12:11; 24:16; 26:7; 29:17; 39:6; 41:2–4, 21; 46:2; Exod. 3:3; 24:17; 38:8; Lev. 1:16; 13:3–4, 12, 20, 25, 30–32, 34, 43; 14:37; Num. 8:4; 9:15–16; 12:6, 8; Deut. 28:34, 67; Jos. 22:10; Jdg. 13:6; 1 Sam. 3:15; 16:7; 17:42; 2 Sam. 11:2; 14:27; 23:21; Est. 1:11; 2:2–3, 7; Job 4:16; 41:1; Eccl. 6:9; 11:9; Cant. 2:14; 5:15; Isa. 11:3; 52:14; 53:2; Ezek. 1:1, 5, 13–14, 16, 26–28; 8:2–4; 10:1, 9–10, 22; 11:24; 23:15–16; 40:2–3; 41:21; 42:11; 43:3; Dan. 1:4, 13, 15; 8:15–16, 26–27; 9:23; 10:1, 6–8, 16, 18; Joel 2:4; Nah. 2:5.

שֶׁפֶר, 4 times in 4 verses, in 3 forms: Gen. 49:21; Num. 33:23–24; Ps. 16:6.

New Testament

ἀστεῖος two times in two verses, in two forms: Acts 7:20; Heb. 11:23.

δόξα, occurring one hundred and sixty-eight times in one hundred and fifty-one verses, in five forms: Matt. 4:8; 6:13, 29; 16:27; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31; Mark 8:38; 10:37; 13:26; Luke 2:9, 14, 32; 4:6; 9:26, 31–32; 12:27; 14:10; 17:18; 19:38; 21:27; 24:26; John 1:14; 2:11; 5:41, 44; 7:18; 8:50, 54; 9:24; 11:4, 40; 12:41, 43; 17:5, 22, 24; Acts 7:2, 55; 12:23; 22:11; Rom. 1:23; 2:7, 10; 3:7, 23; 4:20; 5:2; 6:4; 8:18, 21; 9:4, 23; 11:36; 14:26; 15:7; 1 Cor. 2:7–8; 10:31; 11:7, 15; 15:40–41, 43; 2 Cor. 1:20; 3:7–11, 18; 4:4, 6, 15, 17; 6:8; 8:19, 23; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14, 17–18; 3:13, 16, 21; Phil. 1:11; 2:11; 3:19, 21; 4:19–20; Col. 1:11, 27; 3:4; 1 Thess. 2:6, 12, 20; 2 Thess. 1:9; 2:14; 1 Tim. 1:11, 17; 3:16; 2 Tim. 2:10; 4:18; Tit. 2:13; Heb. 1:3; 2:7, 9–10; 3:3; 9:5; 13:21; Jas. 2:1; 1 Pet. 1:7, 11, 21, 24; 4:11, 13–14; 5:1, 4, 10–11; 2 Pet. 1:3, 17; 2:10; 3:18; Jude 1:8, 24–25; Rev. 1:6; 4:9, 11; 5:12–13; 7:12; 11:13; 14:7; 15:8; 16:9; 18:1; 19:1, 7; 21:11, 23–24, 26.

εὐπρέπειά one time in one verse, in one form: Jas. 1:11.

καλὸς one hundred and one times in ninety verses, in sixteen forms: Matt. 3:10; 5:16; 7:17–19; 12:33; 13:8, 23–24, 27, 37–38, 45, 48; 15:26; 17:4; 18:8–9; 26:10, 24; Mark 4:8, 20; 7:27; 9:5, 42–43, 45, 47, 50; 14:6, 21; Luke 3:9; 6:38, 43; 8:15; 9:33; 14:34; 21:5; John 2:10; 10:11, 14, 32–33; Acts 27:8; Rom. 7:16, 18, 21; 12:17; 14:21; 1 Cor. 5:6; 7:1, 8, 26; 9:15; 2 Cor. 8:21; 13:7; Gal. 4:18; 6:9; 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Tim. 1:8, 18; 2:3; 3:1, 7, 13; 4:4, 6; 5:10, 25; 6:12–13, 18–19; 2 Tim. 1:14; 2:3; 4:7; Tit. 2:7, 14; 3:8, 14; Heb. 5:14; 6:5; 10:24; 13:9, 18; Jas. 2:7; 3:13; 4:17; 1 Pet. 2:12; 4:10.

κοσμέω occurring ten times in ten verses, in nine forms: Matt. 12:44; 23:29; 25:7; Luke 11:25; 21:5; 1 Tim. 2:9; Tit. 2:10; 1 Pet. 3:5; Rev. 21:2, 19.

μεγαλοπρεποῦς one time in one verse, in one form: 2 Pet 1:17.

προσφιλής one times in one verse, in one form: Phil 4:8.

φαίνομαι Thirty-one times in thirty-one verses, in nineteen forms: Matt. 1:20; 2:7, 13, 19; 6:5, 16, 18; 9:33; 13:26; 23:27–28; 24:27, 30; Mark 14:64; 16:9; Luke 9:8; 24:11; John 1:5; 5:35; Rom. 7:13; 2 Cor. 13:7; Phil. 2:15; Heb. 11:3; Jas. 4:14; 1 Pet. 4:18; 2 Pet. 1:19; 1 John 2:8; Rev. 1:16; 8:12; 18:23; 21:23.

ὡραῖος occurring four times in four verses, in three forms: Matt. 23:27; Acts 3:2, 10; Rom. 10:15.

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