

## Doctrine of Art and Beauty

1. The subject of beauty is a large topic in Scripture, especially in the Old Testament.
  - *1 Chronicles 16:28 Give unto the Lord, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. 29 Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. 30 Fear before him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved.*
2. The idea of the glory of God is pervasive throughout Scriptures. It refers to His majesty, His worth, and His significance.
3. Closely united to the glory of God is His holiness. The Psalm encourages people to worship God in the “beauty of holiness.’
4. Holiness and glory are united in the concept of beauty.
5. One Hebrew word used frequently for beauty is “tiph’arah (tif-aw-raw’), and means, “ornament (abstractly or concretely, literally or figuratively).
6. Psalm 27 and Psalm 29 tell about the beauty of the Lord.
  - *Psalms 27:4 One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; 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.*
  - *Psalms 29:2 Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.*
7. The clothing of the priestly garments was designed for glory and for beauty.
  - *Exodus 28:2 And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty.*
8. The beauty of God, and the beauty of things associated with God, is largely lost to this generation.
9. Because this is true, there are three dimensions of the Christian life to be concerned about.
  - Good. It has been said that if you want morality, go to the Baptist Church, because they are concerned about their morality.
  - True. If you want truth, go to the Presbyterian Church, because they are concerned about doctrine.

- Beautiful. If you want esthetics, go to the Episcopal Church, or the Catholic Church, for they are concerned about pomp and ceremony, rituals, and rites.
10. Christians must not reduce their concerns to spiritual matters, or to ethical matters, but should be concerned about esthetics as well.
  11. God is the source and foundation of all truth. God is the norm of the truth, the good, and the beautiful.
  12. Many Christians in the arts feel isolated from the church because their vocation is considered too secular.
  13. Historically, the church has produced the greatest artists in literature, music, and religious drama, such as Dante, Milton, Handel, Shakespeare, and others.
  14. The first people in the Bible who were said to be filled with the Holy Spirit, were artisans.
    - *Exodus 28:3 And thou shalt speak unto all that are wise hearted, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments to consecrate him, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office.*
  15. Today, there is not the emphasis on arts that is merited by the Bible, and by redemption.
  16. This is not too surprising because the church has struggled with icons for centuries lest objects of art, designed to enhance worship, become an object of worship.
  17. There is a divine prohibition against worshipping religious objects as a form of idolatry.
    - *Exodus 20:4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.*
  18. There is a hedge put around some forms of art, while other forms of art received the blessings of God.
  19. Part of the crisis of the Reformation involved the use of art in the church. There was a strong reaction to the religious relics, and art, found in the Catholic churches.
  20. A radical Reformation leader, Andreas Karlstadt (1486 – December 24, 1541), led people to set aside Church music, and art. Religious statues, and images, were destroyed and damaged in iconoclastic riots.

***Special Note.***

Karlstadt also rejected infant baptism, and, he denied the physical presence of Christ in communion, but affirmed the spiritual presence of Christ.

21. Erasmus described an incident in a letter.

“They heaped such insults on the images of the saints, and the crucifix itself, that it is quite surprising there was no miracle. ... Not a statue was left either in the churches, or the vestibules, or the porches, or the monasteries. The frescoes were obliterated by means of a coating of lime; whatever would burn was thrown into the fire, and the rest pounded into fragments. Nothing was spared for either love or money” (Erasmus, Epistle MXLVIII to Bilibald).

22. Hearing of the rampage against art work, Luther came from hiding to address the icon issue.

23. In Switzerland, John Calvin disagreed with Luther over art in worship. Calvin wanted simplicity in worship. Calvin moved to eliminate icons, and the trappings of celebrating the sacraments. All attention in worship was to be directed to God, and His Word. No distractions were allowed in worship.

24. The Puritan movement also tried to remove the trappings of art, or even clerical garb, such as a surplice, in order to focus attention on the Word in worship.

25. This reaction by some of the Reformers, and the Puritans, against religious art was a reaction against formalism, externalism, and ritualism.

26. The goal was to keep the corrupting influences of formalism, externalism, and ritualism outside the church in order to promote authentic Christian worship.

27. The Reformers, and the Puritans, could appeal to the prophets in the Old Testament who also opposed the corrupting elements of rituals without any spiritual reality.

- *Isaiah 29:13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men.*

28. Jesus Himself was critical of the Pharisees who were so concerned about keeping the forms, and doing the external trappings of religion, that they forgot the weightier matters of life.

- *Matthew 23:23 Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.*

29. The truth of the matter is that God initially introduced form, ritual, and eternal objects into worship to enhance worship, but men corrupted everything in his heart by adding an “ism” to everything.

***Special Note.***

The suffix, “ism”, indicates an action, process, or result: criticism, terrorism. It indicates a state, or condition, such as paganism, formalism, ritualism, or externalism. The suffix can also indicate a doctrine, system, or body of principles and practices, good or bad, such as Calvinism, Leninism, or spiritualism.

30. When formalism, externalism, and ritualism, become a substitute for the Word of God, then the hearts of people will be directed away from the Lord.
31. One result of an external emphasis in worship, apart from spiritual reality, is that there will be beauty without truth.