

angels  
in the  
ARCHITECTURE

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a protestant vision for middle earth

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*Canon Press*

MOSCOW, IDAHO

Douglas Jones and Douglas Wilson  
*Angels in the Architecture: A Protestant Vision for Middle Earth*

© 1998 by Douglas Jones and Douglas Wilson  
Published by Canon Press, P.O. Box 8729, Moscow, ID 83843  
800-488-2034 | [www.canonpress.org](http://www.canonpress.org)

01 00 99 98      9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

Cover design by Paige Atwood.

Printed in the United States of America.

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ISBN: 1-885767-40-4

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“It’s medieval,” I exclaimed; for I still had all the chronological snobbery of my period and used the names of earlier periods as terms of abuse.

C.S. Lewis

# FOREWORD

by George Grant

It is a basic principle of spiritual integrity that only light can incarnate. In fact, according to Thomas Aquinas, only in radiance can truth, beauty, or goodness be known. Light—both physical and moral—was thus a central concern to the men and women living in the medieval age. They attempted to explore its properties in the colors of a stained glass canopy, in the tenor of a brisk saltarello, in the lilt of a jongleur's ballad, in the sweet savor of a banqueting table, in the rhapsody of a well planned garden, indeed, in every arena and discipline of life.

It is therefore more than a little ironic that their culture has commonly been described as the Dark Ages—as if the light of civilization had somehow been unceremoniously snuffed out for a time. It has similarly been dubbed the Middle Ages—as if it were a sort of gaping parenthesis in mankind's long upward march to modernity. It was in fact anything but dark or middling. Perhaps our greatest fault today is that we limit ourselves by a chronological parochialism. It is difficult for us to attribute anything but backwardness to those epochs and cultures that do not share our goals or aspirations.

The medieval period was actually quite remarkable for its many advances—perhaps unparalleled in all of history. It was a true *nascence*, while the epoch that followed was but a *re-nascence*. It was a new and living thing that gave flower to a culture marked by energy and creativity. From the monolithic security of Byzantium's *imperias* in the east to the reckless diversity of

Christendom's fiefs in the west, it was a glorious crazy quilt of human fabrics, textures, and hues.

The titanic innovations medievalism brought forth were legion: it gave birth to all the great universities of the world from Oxford and Cambridge to Leipzig to Mainz; it oversaw the establishment of all the great hospitals of the world from St. Bartholomew's and Bedlam in London to St. Bernard's and Voixanne in Switzerland; it brought forth the world's most celebrated artists from Michelangelo Buonarroti and Albrecht Dürer to Leonardo da Vinci and Jan van Eyck; it gave us the splendor of Gothic architecture—unmatched and unmatchable to this day—from Notre Dame and Chartres to Winchester and Cologne; it thrust out into howling wilderness and storm-tossed seas the most accomplished explorers from Amerigo Vespucci and Marco Polo to Vasco da Gama and John Cabot; it produced some of the greatest minds and most fascinating lives mankind has yet known—were the list not so sterling it might begin to be tedious—Copernicus, Dante, Giotto, Becket, Gutenberg, Chaucer, Charlemagne, Wyclif, Magellan, Botticelli, Donatello, Petrarch, and Aquinas.

But of all the great innovations that medievalism wrought, the greatest of all was spiritual. Medieval culture—both east and west—was first and foremost Christian culture. Its life was shaped almost entirely by Christian concerns. Virtually all of its achievements were submitted to the cause of the Gospel. From great cathedrals and gracious chivalry to bitter crusades and beautiful cloisters, every manifestation of its presence was somehow tied to its utter and complete obeisance to Christ's kingdom and to the pursuit of beauty, truth, and goodness.

Of course, the medieval church had its share of dangerous and scandalous behavior. It had gross libertines and rank heretics. It had false professors and bold op-

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portunists. It had brutal ascetics and imbalanced tyrants. But then, there was no more of that sort of rank heterodoxy than we have today in our Evangelical and Reformed circle. As a result, medievalism was forever a paradox. It was a romantic riddle. On the one hand it was marked by the greatest virtues of morality, charity, and selflessness; on the other hand it was marred by the flaming vices of perversity, betrayal, and avarice. It was often timid, monkish, and isolated; more often still, it was bold, ostentatious, and adventurous. It was mystical; it was worldly. It was tender-hearted; it was cruel. It was ascetic; it was sensual. It was miserly; it was pretentious. It gripped men with a morbid superstition; it set them free with an untamed inquisitiveness. It exulted in pomp, circumstance, and ceremony; it cowered in poverty, tyranny, and injustice. It united men with faith, hope, and love; it divided them with war, pestilence, and prejudice. It was so unstable it could hardly have been expected to last a week; it was so stable that it actually lasted a millennium.

The contrast with our own culture is stark. And that contrast is really what this remarkable book of essays is about. Exploring various themes of aesthetics, dogmatic theology, sociology, and domesticity. Douglas Wilson and Douglas Jones have thrown into high relief the dramatic differences between the vivid and lively world of medievalism and the dim and dreary world of modernity.

In very practical, though elegant terms, they have afforded us a rare perspective of the Christian worldview. Whenever the subject of worldview comes up, we Protestants—and especially we Reformed Protestants—typically think of philosophy. And that is really too bad. We think of intellectual niggling. We think of theological lint picking. We think of the brief and blinding oblivion of ivory tower speculation, of thickly obscure



comes, and of inscrutable logical complexities. In fact, a worldview is as practical as garden arbors, public manners, whistling at work, dinner-time rituals, and architectural angels. It is less metaphysical than understanding marginal market buying at the stock exchange or legislative initiatives in congress. It is less esoteric than typing a book into a laptop computer or sending a fax across the continent. It is instead, Wilson and Jones assert, as down to earth as inculcating a culture-wide appetite for beauty, truth, and goodness.

In the midst of a world seemingly gone mad, *Angels in the Architecture* demonstrates that this peculiarly biblical worldview has actually been lived out before—however imperfectly, by the medievals who have gone before us. It simultaneously holds out the promise that it may actually be lived out once again. Thus, it gives us a hopeful vision of a once and future age of light. And for that, we can all be thankful.

Homer once sang of his Hellenes and Trojans  
and Vergil composed verse about the descendants  
of Romulus;  
Let us sing about the kindly deeds of the king  
of Heaven  
whom the world never ceases joyously to praise.  
Homer and Vergil took pleasure in speaking about  
the flames that brought  
sudden destruction to Troy and about the struggles  
of their heroes,  
but our delight is to sing of Christ  
drenched in blood after vanquishing the prince of  
this world.  
They were both learned in how to compose  
falsehoods  
with an appearance of truth and how to deceive an  
Arcadian verse;  
we prefer to sing hymns of fine praise  
to the power of the Father and His true wisdom.  
Let us therefore hold the supreme victories of Christ  
as brilliant stars in our minds.  
Behold the four corners of the world are clasped by  
the wooden cross.

*John Scotus* (A.D. 810–877)

## introduction: positively medieval

Modernity or medievalism? That is admittedly an odd choice, and it is the topic of this admittedly odd book. But at our place in history it appears to be the only choice before us. History has shown us all the options—nothing is fresh, and everything “new” either fades away or turns out to be just another shadow of modernity. This book aims to answer the question above by defending the impossible—Christian medievalism.

The colors of the essays to follow may not seem to blend together at first glance. They mix such topics as poetry, predestination, and plowshares, with highlights of justification, wine, and lovemaking. We aim to sketch a vision of a whole life and a whole culture, and such things are always a broad landscape of hues. The trick is to realize how these various issues intermingle quite smoothly. We see them as a warm harmony of color, and if the reader grasps the same, then we’ve accomplished one of our hopes.

Though this sort of effort may appear frivolous to moderns, we will try to show through our trail of essays that such a fleshing out of the Christian gospel is *terribly* central for day-to-day Christian living. Nothing should hold our attention more. Nothing is more practical.

Modernity's empire has dominated the world for only three centuries, even though the soul of the modern vision is that of the meat cleaver's counter: stainless steel—cold and functional and sterile, with efficient smears of blood. Modernity is a busy place, spinning with silicon speed that goes ever faster but never forward, people pressed into cities full of loneliness. "There's got to be an opening somewhere here in front of me / Through this maze of ugliness and greed / I'm so alone, I feel just like somebody else."

Modernity and its natural child postmodernity are pleased with their rejection of truth, beauty, and goodness—the three faces of culture. In their place, they unfold the tired, wrinkled banners of a tedious rationalism and socially-just sentimentalism. But the modern void is a vacuum. Real beauty has no place to sit; Darwin has locked the door. Yet moderns don't give up the game. Their prophets stand stage-tall, throw out law, yet condemn injustice, trashing simple oaths for new, unriden flesh.

Each sharp-eyed generation tires of everything except their joy of rebellion, playing it over and over again, in an endless roll. Everything is boring except their own eternal rebellion. This is their totally "new and different program for the future." This is modernity's barbarism—hollow hearts led about by sterile matter, perversely mocking those with full lives.

This modern, Enlightenment story will be with us for at least another century, crushing and infiltrating and absorbing its opponents. All will fall—Islamic swords, New Age whining, and Roman Catholic hierarchies. Modernity's vision subverts its opponents best by just turning on a television in the midst of an unsuspecting culture; leave it on and soon Muslims and Hindus will come to love Star Trek and Seinfeld more than Allah

and Brahman. And despite postmodernism's annoying little requiem over modernity, it is postmodernism that will be a tiny epicycle within the history of modernism. The relativists and sophists have always shown up for short apocalyptic spasms within the history of philosophy, only to fade out before they could be included in the history books. Sophists, ancient or postmodern, have no staying power because they tell an ugly story, all while using the rationalists' tools. They rarely need refuting; in the end they usually just fade from the stage when their once sexy story produces yawns. That is happening now.

So the future is either with modernity or Christian medievalism. But why medievalism and not just vanilla evangelicalism? Modern evangelicalism is just that—modern—in love with modernity, in love with individualism, egalitarianism, and perfect boxes. Like other moderns, evangelicals have no love of beauty; it is at most optional and indifferent, not the rhythm of life.

Christian medievalism, however, presents us with a view of a whole life, full of truth, beauty, goodness and all their nasty contraries. *The medieval period is the closest thing we have to a maturing Christian culture.* It was a culture unashamed of Christ and one sharply at odds with the values of modernity. Where else can Christians look for a vision of normal life, of Christianity enfleshed? Do we look to the 1950's? Life on the American prairie? To Jefferson's reign? Modernism had already gutted Christian culture long before any of these.

To the Reformation? That period was a crucial outgrowth of medievalism, but it was a period of crass and heroic trauma, of emergency living. It was a time to focus on truth amidst a slaughterhouse—abnormal—but it would be a great mistake to try to make emergencies the model of a culture, as too many in the Reformed community, our community, do—like Cold Warriors

twitching over the launch buttons after the enemy has closed shop. The Reformation was real war, and we dare not give up the victories gained there, but how do we live after the nightly air raids have stopped? That is the vision of *Medieval Protestantism*—a view that picks up the discussion where medievalism was silenced by a tyrannical Rome and a blinding Enlightenment.

Medieval Protestantism is certainly not a longing to live in medieval times and wear their funny hats. It's an attempt to continue that Christian discussion of truth, beauty, and goodness that was cut so short. The medieval period is not the culmination of Christian culture, but it was headed in the right direction. It was telling a wonderful story and headed for great things, triumphing with beauty over its enemies. But it never got to complete the story. Christians need to start thinking more about plotting the rest of that story, preparing for the death of modernity over the next century. It's time to renew our devotion to Christian truth, beauty, and goodness—the good life. But in order to continue that discussion, we need to search out how our medieval forefathers were progressing before they were silenced. We need to learn to scoff at modernity's tired idols and examine the many levels of the medieval Christian vision—"ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16).

When we look into the "old paths" of our medieval fathers to find rest for our souls, it is like finding long lost family, family we've been severed from for centuries. We find them to be brothers, refreshingly Christian and unaddicted to modern idols. We want to kiss them and ask where they have been for such a long time (rather, where have *we* been?). They have their foibles and idols, just as we have ours, but we can learn.

When we commune with medieval thinking we learn

to see how silly modern project is, and we can start to understand why modernity hates medievalism. It cannot speak about it without going red in the face. Modernity's hatred of all things medieval should be reason enough for Christians to desire it. After all, if modernity hates medievalism so much, there must be something wonderful there. During C.S. Lewis's slow trek out of modernism, he noticed how one Christian professor "was beginning to overthrow [Lewis's] chronological snobbery. Had something really dropped out of our lives? Was the archaic simply the civilized, and the modern simply the barbaric?" Christendom has lost something beautiful. Barbarism has always been with us, yet Christendom once held forth a life full of truth, beauty, and goodness amidst barbarism.

Given the choice between modernism and Medieval Protestantism, how shall we decide? Many strategies have gone before us. But why not judge the respective visions by their beauty? Which vision tells the better story? Which has poetic grace and rich color? Most of us realize the legitimate place of syllogisms and rational grounds. But the rational rarely satisfies even modernists. Pascal explained that "every man is almost always led to believe not through proof, but through that which is attractive. This way is low, unworthy and alien, and so everyone refuses to acknowledge it." All of us are led on by beauty. Pascal thinks that is base, but it seems to be the way God designed us. We can never know enough arguments to be omniscient, but we can judge fruit. And beauty is fruit.

Why are we so confident that beauty isn't a path to truth? More modern lies I suspect. Scripture tells us that God beautifies a people by salvation (Ps. 149:4) and that holiness itself is beautiful (Ps. 29:2). If beauty points us to salvation and holiness, then beauty points

us to truth. Idolatry can never be *truly* beautiful. Non-Christians will dismiss the challenge, but they have to because modernism is so ugly. The more important judgment needs to be made by modern Christians. Compare medievalism to our baptized modernity. Which is more beautiful? This is a key to truth. Or even to lower the standard: wouldn't it be wonderful *if* the medieval vision were true? That is the concern in a discussion of Medieval Protestantism. Of course, we advocates don't pretend to do any justice in describing the beauty of the medieval vision, warped as we are by our own modern upbringing; but we can enjoy the beauty of the vision itself. Modernity and Medieval Protestantism—compare the beauty. Just imagine for a moment that the medieval vision is true. How beautiful life would be! “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Ps. 34:8).

In addition, Pascal's observation should give us hope. If beauty is the deepest persuasive, and a full-fledged Christianity—Medieval Protestantism—is the most beautiful vision of reality, of the good life, then modernity has to fail and medievalism has to triumph in middle earth—“Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us” (Ps. 90:17).

But what about our use of the phrase *middle earth*? In one sense, we are referring to the traditional cosmology of the earth being suspended between heaven and hell. We are using it, however, in another sense too, a sense based on an ancient tie in the history of the two words. Even if we cannot make the etymological case, then we can use it as an etymological illustration. The English word *earth* comes from the same Old English word that gives us *yard*, a tamed piece of ground. In this sense, think of *middle earth* as a cultivated portion of land, surrounded by wilderness. The wilderness is modernity, full



of monsters, and the yard is a small and pleasant shire. While our children are little, we want to imitate our medieval forefathers and tell our children the truths in fairy tales that will keep them out of the woods. When they are grown, they will be able to fight the monsters and expand the fences of middle earth.

What are the features, then, which make up Medieval Protestantism? The best way to grasp them is to immerse oneself in medieval literature. King Alfred and Charlemagne reveal to us magnificent struggles in the high and late middle ages. Consider Boccaccio's *Decameron* (selectively and discerningly) for its enjoyment of life and honor, Dante's *Divine Comedy* for the best poetry, and especially Langland's *Piers Plowman* for a feel of the late medieval loves and worries. Through these and so much more we find all the elements of a Medieval Protestantism, elements we try to lay out in the following pages, namely a love of beauty, an Augustinian appreciation for the sovereignty of God, the chasm between pagan and Christian, the centrality of laughter, the importance of celebration, a covenantal wholeness of family and society, a submissive hierarchicalism, respect for good traditions, sphere sovereignty, anti-papalism, a harmonization of technology and humanity, an agrarian calm, disciplined silence, the glory of a unified Holy Church, a skepticism of novelty, and a triumphant, peaceful hope for the future of Christendom.

The Reformation was in many ways a continuation of a theological discussion of authority, worship, and redemption which had been started in the middle ages, and the early Protestants were far more medieval than modern. Consequently, the Protestant concerns were medieval concerns, and the two fit together organically, naturally. The supreme authority of Scripture and the unspeakable joy of imputed righteousness rest comfortably with the medieval celebration of life, a life full of

beauty, tradition, community, laughter, and celebration. But this still is only a flat list. The discussion sits largely in dusty books in countless libraries.

Medieval Protestantism is not a call to a movement, another one of those tiresome modern constructs of strategies and polemics. It is a call for meditation and living out the good life one family at a time. We so often talk of “worldview thinking” and “applying the Bible to every area of life,” but that is all too often just a skeleton of a theory. The medievals actually lived it; imperfectly, yes, but still much better than anything in modernity. We have no sense of a life carefully crafted by beauty. A devotion to beauty will sculpt everything we do, and the medievals knew that very well. Beauty trains one’s mind to think differently about family, leisure, labor, theology, and the future. Yet we thin-souled moderns are so proud of our rejection of poems and stories and paintings. We lead half-lives and die with less. God has given us so much more, and we slight Him in our meager living. Christendom has lost so much. Christendom has lost Christendom, and we have traded middle earth away for cold and sterile idols.

## a wine dark sea and tumbling sky

*returning to the love of beauty*

Too late came I to love thee, O thou Beauty both so ancient  
and so fresh . . .

—Augustine of Hippo

The holiness of God is not so much a distinct attribute as it is the manifestation of all His attributes in all their splendor. As the color white is not a separate color, but rather all colors together, so the seraphim acknowledge all the attributes of God in their great *triagion*.

When the prophets and apostles turn to describe this holiness, it is remarkable that they do not use phrases like the “kindness of holiness,” or the “goodness of holiness.” When called upon to speak concerning what holiness is like, they overwhelmingly speak of the *beauty* of holiness. Modernity has come to think of beauty as being relative to the individual, whether artist or observer. It is thought to be something which wells up from within each individual in what we are pleased to call the creative process. The artist is one who expresses himself; he is an autonomous font of art and creativity. Instinctively we do know that true beauty proceeds only from Deity. Our problem is that we have deified ourselves and have assumed, contrary to the visible results,

that whatever proceeds from us must be beautiful.

But in a created world, beauty can only be reflected glory. Our world is filled with moons, and there is only one sun. As much as we would like the aesthetic process to be originitive, as much as we would like to be as God and create *ex nihilo*, we are left with the fact that mere man is not much; his breath is in his nostrils. In order to recover a sense of the beautiful, we must come to see it in connection with the two other great questions—“What is true?” and “What is good?” When these are answered in a fashion consistent with the way the created world *is*, we may then with profit consider “What is beauty?”

Theology is seen by us as a dry and dreary pursuit, conducted by scholars who, to use a phrase of Keats, cough in ink. Almost no one thinks of the seraphim as theologians. No one assumes that the twenty-four elders before the throne are an assembly of divines. But when the Apostle Paul finished working through one of the most complex theological arguments in all Scripture, he signified his understanding by bursting into doxological praise: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” A true theologian, he loved beauty.

Sound theology leads always to the love of beauty. When there is no love of beauty, we may say, reasoning *modus tollens*, that there is no sound theology. Now the logic of the thing can also mean that wrangles about theology may certainly lead to wrangles about aesthetics. But this is not our purpose here. We do not seek out ugly disputes about the nature of beauty. Our point is simply that a love for the triune and holy God is the foundation of any true love for beauty. Like the seraphim, we do not see this beauty directly, for our faces, like theirs, are of necessity covered. But the fact that

this beauty is infinitely *there* means that other entities in this created world can reflect it, and we have the privilege to behold the beauty of the Lord in them.

Moses, the man of God, certainly knew this. He cried out for a restoration of God's people, as do we. We who live at the nether end of modernity, with its sterile and technocratic ugliness, instinctively know this. We also see that, in a futile reaction to the ugliness of modernity, postmodernists have turned to the chaos of full relativism, hoping to recover some sense of humane beauty there. All of it is futile. In our folly, we do not know how to number our days, and we do not know how to apply our hearts to wisdom. The spirit of the age has enveloped the Christian church as well, and we look in vain toward contemporary evangelicalism for any reflection or sense of the beatific vision.

So the work of our hands is singularly unblessed. The Church, compromised by modernity, and in a hollow reaction to it, does little else aesthetically than manufacture pious kitsch. When reformation comes, we may, like Moses, ask God to bless and establish the work of our hands. But Moses knew what we do not—that this blessing would be the direct result of the Lord's efficacious beauty. "And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it" (Ps. 90:17).

When the psalmist comes before the Lord to worship, desiring to dwell in the Lord's house all the days of his life, it is in order that he might behold the beauty of the Lord (Ps. 27). Those who come before Him are to give the glory due His name; they are to come before him in the beauty of holiness (1 Chron. 16:29; Ps. 29:2; 110:3). The garments of Aaron were for glory and for beauty (Ex. 28:2). The beauty of God's holiness is

itself an object of praise (2 Chron. 20:21). God shines from His people, the perfection of beauty (Ps. 50:2). Honor and majesty befit the Lord; strength and beauty adorn His sanctuary (Ps. 96: 6-9). All these references to beauty are related in some fashion to the holiness of God, which in turn describe all that He is. This being the case, the question of beauty should be of much greater concern to us than it is.

But the modern evangelical either says that our aesthetic vision should be borrowed from the world, or in reaction, says that since we must not borrow from the world, we must be content with no beauty at all. We divide between those who say that our beauty must be in accord with contemporary trends and follies and those who say we must not compromise with beauty of any kind. Both positions miss the clear scriptural vision, and both agree to a central lie, which is that the world is the source of aesthetic wisdom and understanding. They do part company in their discussion whether or not to borrow this beauty, but they agree that the world originates what we in the Church do not.

The only possible conclusion is that the Church has forgotten the holiness of her God. He alone is true, and He alone is good. If we understood this, we would understand how beautiful His holiness is, and we could not be kept from writing concertos and building cathedrals. As it is, we are content with thumping on the guitar like a million other aspiring artists headed for Nashville, and we erect crystal cathedrals which look like an upscale gas works.

But the only possible beauty we may have is that of the Lord. The Lord is to be a crown of glory and diadem of beauty (Is. 28:5), and if He is not, then the beauty is not. He and only He is able to give beauty for ashes, with the result being His glory (Is. 61:3). When

Job comes to a right mind, it is in part a humble response to God's sarcastic invitation to try to make his own private moon into a sun. "Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty" (Job 40:10). And Job stopped his mouth, abashed.

When we have remembered who God is, we may then be in a position to remember the beauty of His conquest of history through the victory of Christ. For aeons we have sung of arms and men. The deeds sung were mighty, and the exploits of these masters were great. We have long sung of men like Odysseus and Aeneas, not only because they were clever, or pious, but because of the weight and beauty carried in the words of their chroniclers. But another triumph, another conquest, although accomplished and acknowledged, has not yet been sung as it deserves to be. The epic has not yet been written which tells of the greatest conquest in history, the conquest of history and all it contains, including that which is beautiful. When the devil offered our Lord the kingdoms of this world, *and the glory of them*, the Lord refused him. But this was done, not because He didn't want these kingdoms, but because He did not want them as a gift from the devil. His intention was to bind the strong man and take the beautiful plunder.

The older pagan beauty baffles us. We know that the *pietas* of a pagan was offered to demons, and we wonder to think that any man could be capable of offering such glories to the twisted. But in many cases these ancient men were simply offering back what had been given to them. The source of their aesthetic powers was not something which they sought to hide from us. In their glorious poetry and in all their art, they exhibited their devotion, calling upon the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the Muses, to fill their sails. And so the inspiration came, enrapturing the ancient artists and

enabling them to produce works of unbelievable beauty. It baffles still. The splendor of these powers was imparted to men in the midst of a rebellious squalor. As C.S. Lewis observed, the granite despair of Homer was brought to shine like marble. And the ancient piety of Aeneas was fashioned as a diadem to adorn the head of a beast.

Modernity is amused by it all. We suppose that ancient and superstitious tomfooleries have been revealed as such by reason and science. But the apostle had a sharper view; he was never one to beat the air. His fight was against principalities, powers, and the wickedness which was everywhere present; the pagan world was *animate*. But still, all these ancient powers have fallen to the ground. Hosea knew the names of the baals would be taken from the mouths of men, to be remembered by name no more. Through the triumph of the Christian faith, all the elder powers and lords have been taken away. "And hear ancestral Muses cry the wine dark sea and tumbling sky."

Our Lord came in order to make His blessings flow as far as the curse could be found. Like a warrior in one of the old stories, He fell upon the adversary. The strong man was bound; his house was sacked like Troy. Only folly would return to that house, thinking to find any treasure there now. The treasure has been taken away and is now numbered among countless trophies in the house of the Lord. We may indeed boast when we remember there was a time when *we* were taken into exile, and all the articles from our Temple were taken away with us, and set up in an unholy city. Our music then was desolate as well, and our harps silent on the willows. Now, in the goodness of God, the situation is turned on itself; back in the sunlight, we may pour our libations to the Most High with golden cups which once were raised idolatrously in the dark places.



When our race was in its nonage, the Lord was pleased to number the sons of men and their nations according to the number of the celestials. When the Most High divided the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God. We were governed, as children often are, by these nurses and tutors. Some of them, like Michael the prince, served the Lord at this station in humility. Others ruled with cruelty and hatred, murderers from the very beginning. The cherub of Tyre once walked on the holy mountain of God until iniquity was found in him. The power of Babylon was once a son of morning until he vaunted himself as God. The prince of Persia withstood the servants of the Lord and was later supplanted by the prince of Greece. The power of Ekron was lord of the flies and grew in power to become the lord of Rome. In the temptation of our Lord, this great devil was willing to give all his kingdoms away if our Lord would only bow down to him. But there was no need to receive as a gift what was soon to be taken as spoil in battle.

While the goodness of all our Lord's adversaries had vanished away with their initial rebellion, their splendor had not. This splendor was imparted by them in various ways to the sons of men, but Christ came in order to take *that* kind of splendor away from us. His purpose in this was to establish another kind of glory in its place, the beauty of holiness.

We may say with gratitude and humility that the purpose of God in history is to redeem the world and to bring mankind up to maturity in Christ. What is man? And yet God has been pleased to set all things under his feet. We were created to make beautiful things—in music, in stone, on canvas, in sculpted gardens, and in wonderful buildings. But because of our rebellion in Adam, we

not only fell away from our appointed task, we also fell under the tutelage of cruel masters. The ground quickly filled with thorns, and the sky was filled with malevolence. And so we were rudely governed, like disobedient children. The splendor of that ancient world was not fully human. The ancient boast that man is the measure of all things was made by those who had an alliance with another realm, and that realm was not a kingdom of *men*.

Our Lord was born as one of us in order to redeem us and topple all these ancient powers. As that great aeon came crashing to a close, the pillars holding that old sky were thrown down; a new heaven and new earth were established. The seed of David came to destroy the one who had the power of death, that is, the devil. When He was lifted up in death, at that moment the ruler of that age was cast down. And when He had triumphed over all these powers, He made a spectacle of them, taunting and humiliating them. The governors of that aeon were overthrown, and in the wisdom of God it was accomplished through their murder of a righteous Man. Clearly, if the rulers of that age had known what they were doing, they would never have crucified our Lord and our glory.

Authority was wrested from them and turned over to man. Not man in Adam, and not man under guardians, but man in Christ. Now God's wisdom is exhibited in . . . mere men. The manifold wisdom of God was set before the celestials, and it was set before them in the church—that is, man in Christ. Certainly we do not yet see everything in subjection to man, but we are instructed to see Christ. And as more and more of us see Him, we will also see the cultural fruit of seeing Him. Since the kingdoms of men were first shaken to the ground and replaced with a kingdom that cannot be shaken,

we have seen wonderful things. The advances in theology, architecture, painting, confessions, philosophy, literature, and music have been considerable; as His kingdom continues to grow, we may expect to see what eye has not yet seen. Our wisdom is not from the rulers of that age, who came to nothing. God's ordained wisdom cannot fall to the ground; it was established before the ages for our glory. Eye has not seen and ear has not heard the coming beauty given by grace. Of the increase of His government there will be no end.

As with all other spheres, God governs our progress in aesthetics by degrees. The destruction of the old culture, and the institution of the new, was not accomplished instantaneously. The rock which struck the great king's statue grew to fill the earth. The mustard seed grew; the full-grown tree was not lowered to us from the heavens. Because Jesus is Lord, Christian culture is now established in the earth. But He does not want to do everything for us all at once. The powers fell in an instant, but the cultures they supported took more time to fall. The unbelievers have not been driven out all at once lest the beasts of the field turn on us.

And whenever a great city falls, the dust and rubble must be removed before anything can be done. When the saints overthrew Jericho, the inhabitants were slain, but the treasures preserved. After the Lord's triumph, the rubble of that ancient world took considerable time to remove—and many treasures had to be brought out to be built into the new city—and this slow process still annoys the impatient. But now, as always, in patience we possess our souls.

Many proud moderns still do not like to admit their complete dependence on Christ, and they will certainly resent it when the glory and beauty of culture is attributed to Him. But splendid pagan culture is really no

longer a historical possibility—the Muses are gone. Any culture which desires beauty now must have the beauty of holiness. Christ is Lord of all now; He is certainly the Lord of beauty. When the travesties scattered throughout our modern art museums are set alongside the glories of ancient Greece, the Christian heart should swell with pride. Our Lord has thrown unbelievers down, and they can never recover. Look at what they now do on their own! The modern materialist has truly fallen between two stools—he cannot have the Nike of Samothrace, and he cannot have Bach's Mass in B Minor. He cannot have Vergil and he cannot have Milton. But he can hang a toilet seat on the gallery wall and apply for federal grants—we are all just prisoners here of our own device.

Modern man has not had beauty taken away from him; but in order to have beauty, it must now be borrowed in the context of Christian culture. This means that in repentance he must now turn away from both modernity and postmodernity. Although unbelievers may still produce works of great beauty, they are dependent upon Christian culture as they do so. Turning from our Lord Christ means turning from the only fountainhead of true aesthetic wonder.

The apostle saw in his vision that the kings of the earth would bring their glory into the new Jerusalem. So a glorious future awaits, and a great part of that glory is the glory found in beautiful things. We must consider by faith the beauty that remains yet to be brought into the world, and which, in the centuries to come, will be brought into the Church. Eye has not seen . . . but perhaps the eye of faith can make something out.

Over time the church will continue to mature in Christ and teach the meaning of loveliness to an unbelieving world. Not only so, but she will also exhibit a vision of

loveliness to the world. As the saints are equipped to serve Christ in everything they do, their works will glorify Him. This will, of course, happen in law and auto mechanics, but it will also happen in the library and studio, with the pen and brush. The distance between Odysseus and Beowulf was great, but the distance between Beowulf and the works to come will be greater still. Charlemagne was a lesser king than Darius, but he was also a different sort of king. God has been very kind to us.

Regardless of these great works of Christ, unbelief is always content to walk along, looking at the ground. And admittedly we live in a time when the church has tired of her assigned task of pointing up at the kingdom of heaven—for the last century or so the church has failed to instruct believers on their duty of glorifying God through beauty. We were told to be salt and light for everything men do, including the realm of the arts. But because we are currently occupied in our manufacture of cutesy porcelain figurines, the world has been left to turn aside to aesthetic chaos. They have done so, and so we must take the long view. Disobedience in the church does not take Christ off His throne any more than disobedience anywhere else. Of the increase of His government there will be no end. “Exalt and sing the Lord on high, of wine dark sea and tumbling sky.”

The days to come will be glorious. “And the Lord their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land. For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! Corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids” (Zech. 9:16-17).