The Beauty of the Lord is a tour de force in contemporary theological aesthetics. Dr. Jonathan King not only integrates theology and aesthetics in a brilliant way but also offers a compelling and inspiring work that qualitatively expands and enriches our understanding and vision of the God of the Bible. Captivated by his arguments, attention to detail, and logical and theological acuity, I found myself worshiping God as I turned each page. Thank you, Dr. King!

Paul Shockley, Professor of Philosophy, Theology, and Bible at the College of Biblical Studies-Houston and Lecturer of Philosophy, Multidisciplinary Programs, Stephen F. Austin State University

This is the kind of theology that edifies the church. While many theoretical discussions about certain far-flung doctrines may be hard to relate to the everyday life of the Christian, this discussion of God's beauty is different. Sound doctrine is always salutary, but it does not always stir the heart. By way of contrast, this study of the beauty of the Lord aims not only to give the reader right understanding, but also right heartedness: a right perspective on and a passion for the fittingness of God's plan of redemption.

Kevin J. Vanhoozer, Research Professor of Systematic Theology, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois

Truth and goodness are essential, but—in contrast with our forebears—beauty seems to have been marginalized in modern Reformed and evangelical theology. This volume is therefore a serious contribution, filling a lacuna in our systematic theology. Grounded in the triune Beauty, revealed consummately in Christ, and informed by Balthasar and other major interpreters of the catholic tradition, *The Beauty of the Lord* carves out its own unique place in reflection on theological aesthetics. A feast for the soul, this book will transform the way we think about God and his works.

Michael Horton, J. Gresham Machen Professor of Systematic Theology and Apologetics, Westminster Seminary California

How can one not like a book that praises the beauty and glory of God and Christ? Even more, Professor King's thoroughgoing engagement of scriptural beauty—understood as the supreme fittingness of the scriptural "theodrama" for revealing Trinitarian beauty—unites the insights of classic Reformed theologians such as Jonathan Edwards and Herman Bavinck, along with the insights of a wide array of Reformed exegetes and theologians, with classical Catholic voices such as Anselm and Aquinas and contemporary Catholic theologians such as Hans Urs von Balthasar. The result is a display of ecumenical goodwill that, in praising divine beauty as manifested in the works of God, is itself beautiful!

Matthew Levering, James N. and Mary D. Perry Jr.
Chair of Theology, Mundelein Seminary,
University of Saint Mary of the Lake

The beauty of God is an area of theological reflection that has been ignored by theologians for much of the past two hundred and fifty years. It was probably in the mid-eighteenth century when this discussion was last a topic of significant reflection with Jonathan Edwards. In the past twenty years or so, though, the subject has been cropping up in various places, and I was thrilled to read this new work by Jonathan King on God's beauty. It is cogently argued from both Scripture and Church History, and will hopefully become a touchstone for future reflection and thought on this vital subject. Highly recommended.

Michael A. G. Haykin, Professor of Church History &
Director of The Andrew Fuller Center for Baptist Studies,
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary,
Louisville, Kentucky

THE BEAUTY *of the* LORD

Theology as Aesthetics


STUDIES IN HISTORICAL
& SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY
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Theology as Aesthetics

JONATHAN KING

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LEXHAM PRESS

The Beauty of the Lord: Theology as Aesthetics
Studies in Historical and Systematic Theology

Lexham Press, 1313 Commercial St., Bellingham, WA 98225
LexhamPress.com

Print ISBN 978-1-68-359058-3
Digital ISBN 978-1-68-359059-0

Lexham Editorial Team: Todd Hains, Jennifer Edwards, Michael Haykin
Typesetting: Beth Shagene

To my wife, Sharm—the Lord's precious gift to me.

You are my muse in all things beautiful, but more than that,
the whole of my life with you is incomparably better than
the sum of our lives individually, and that is a dimension
of beauty I am so blessed to experience because of you.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

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Of the three medieval "transcendentals," *beauty* typically takes third place in modern theology, behind *truth* and *goodness*. Many systematic theologies set forth the truth of Scripture; liberation theologies focus on the importance of doing what is good and right, especially pursuing justice, but few have taken up the cause of beauty. Many Christians associate beauty with a concern for aesthetics. And yet, while they would not deny that art and music and perhaps even architecture enhance worship, when the budget gets tough, the arts get cut.

Jonathan King's book is not about the arts. It is not about the beautiful things humans create in a variety of media (i.e., a theology of the arts). It is not about the beauty of the natural world (i.e., a natural theology of beauty). It is not an exercise in theological correlation (i.e., theology and the arts). Rather, it is a dogmatic account of the beauty of the Lord (i.e., it is a proposal about the doctrine of God). Beauty is not merely in the eye of the beholder (this way modern subjectivism lies); rather, beauty is in the being and activity of God, rooted in the divine attributes. Accordingly, King focuses on the beauty of the plan of God, the unified history of redemption recounted in the Scriptures and enacted in the history of Jesus Christ.

The main strength of this book—indeed, its peculiar beauty—lies in the way King unpacks the objective beauty of God in a threefold manner, namely, in terms of (1) God's own immanent triune life, (2) the display of God's own beauty in his external work, the economy of redemption that encompasses creation, salvation, and consummation, and (3) the person, work, and benefits of Jesus Christ, as the climax and coherence of the whole economy.

This work appeals above all to the person and work of Christ as the objective anchor to our understanding of beauty. In particular, King

suggests that "fittingness with the history of Jesus Christ" is the biblical criterion for discerning the beauty of the Triune Lord (Eph 1:10). We know that the cross of Christ defines God's love and wisdom, and the fittingness of Jesus' death suggests that the cross, like everything God does, has its own peculiar beauty as well.

What I most appreciate and admire in this book is the way it unfolds the beauty of the Lord from Genesis (creation) to Revelation (consummation). Indeed, King is most persuasive in showing how protology anticipates eschatology and how eschatology recalls protology. This is a biblical theology of divine beauty that provides a beautiful frame for the portrait of beauty incarnate: the gospel of Jesus Christ. To put it in terms of the Gospel of Luke: "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning the beauty of the Lord."

I also appreciate and admire the way in which King keeps his eye on disciple-making. Though the present book may have started out as a doctoral dissertation, its significance goes far beyond the academic. This is the kind of theology that edifies the church. While many theoretical discussions about certain far-flung doctrines may be hard to relate to the everyday life of the Christian, this discussion of God's beauty is different. Sound doctrine is always salutary, but it does not always stir the heart. By way of contrast, this study of the beauty of the Lord aims not only to give the reader right understanding but also right heartedness: a right perspective on and a passion for the fittingness of God's plan of redemption.

If the church is the temple of God, then edification is not unrelated to beautification. King sees that disciples are called to become little Christs, that is, to embody the truth, goodness, and beauty of Jesus Christ as they conform their spirits to his. The point of focusing on the beauty of the Lord is to inspire readers to live fittingly at all times and places as followers of Jesus Christ, to the glory of God. That is beautiful indeed.

—Kevin J. Vanhoozer

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My initial inspiration to explore the area of theological aesthetics really started as an initial curiosity during my final year and a half at Westminster Seminary California to try to understand how beauty pertains theologically to the core doctrines of the Christian faith. I am grateful to my professors at Westminster, Michael Horton and David VanDrunen, for granting me the latitude to explore the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar in the research papers for my systematic theology courses. My curiosity to better understand beauty from a biblical and theological perspective became the key driving motivation for my pursuing this as the area of my doctoral research.

I am in debt to numerous persons who were so vital to my improving upon this project. I wish to express my deepest thanks to my doctoral advisor and mentor, Kevin Vanhoozer, whose insight, feedback, guidance, and modeling of Christian character and scholarship has been invaluable to me. I am likewise grateful to Graham Cole; I have learned and benefitted from his Christian wisdom. A number of friends deserve special mention as well. In particular I am grateful to Scott Harrower, Paul Manata, Hans Madueme, Brannon Ellis, and Jared Compton who served as trustworthy and tremendously helpful discussion and sparring partners for me. Their criticism, advice, and encouragement during the stage of my doctoral research remains imprinted on the substance and quality of this revised and expanded work. Beyond these, I also want to express my appreciation to Geoff Fulkerson, Jason Stanghelle, and Chris Donato whose camaraderie was a regular staple of intellectual sharpening and refreshment while I was completing my research and teaching at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. The editorial process went exceptionally smooth in readying this book for publication. My sincere thanks to the editorial team at Lexham Press, and most

especially Todd Hains, for not making my life harder than it otherwise might have gone, and for turning my work into such a beautiful book. Last but not least, I want to express my deepest love and gratitude to my wife Sharm, my precious companion and greatest encourager.

ABBREVIATIONS

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AB	Anchor Bible
AH	Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature, 1885; reprint, South Bend, IN: Ex Fontibus, 2010)
BDAG	W. Bauer, F. W. Danker, W. F. Arndt, and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2000)
BSac	*Bibliotheca Sacra*
CBQ	*The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CD	Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance. trans. G. W. Bromiley (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1956–)
DBI	*Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, ed. L. Ryken, J. C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III (Downers Grove, IL/Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1998)
EBC	Expositor's Bible Commentary
ESV	English Standard Version
GL	Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord: A Theological Aesthetics,* Volumes I–VII (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1982–1991)
ICC	International Critical Commentary
IET	Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 3 vols., ed. James T. Dennison Jr., trans. George Musgrave Giger (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992–1997)

IJST	*International Journal of Systematic Theology*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament: Supplement Series
JSPL	*Journal for the Study of Paul and His Letters*
JTC	*Journal for Theology and the Church*
JTI	*Journal of Theological Interpretation*
L&N	Johannes P. Louw, and Eugene A. Nida, ed., *Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 2 vols.
LCC	The Library of Christian Classics
LXX	Septuagint
NDBT	*New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*
NEB	New English Bible
NET	New English Translation, 1st ed. (Biblical Studies Press, 2005)
NICNT	New International Commentary of the New Testament
NICOT	The New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIDNTT	*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*
NIDOTTE	*New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary

PRRD	Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520–1725*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003)
RD	Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 4 vols., ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003–2008)
SBJT	*Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*
SBTS	*Sources for Biblical and Theological Study*
ST	Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 5 vols., trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Westminster, MD: Christian Classics, 1981 [1947])
TD	Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Drama: Theological Dramatic Theory*, Volumes I–V (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1988–1998)
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*
THNTC	The Two Horizons New Testament Commentary
TL	Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theo-Logic: Theological Logical Theory*, Volumes I–III (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2000–2005)
TynBul	*Tyndale Bulletin*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WJE	Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 26 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1957–2008)
WTJ	*Westminster Theological Journal*
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAW	*Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*

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INTRODUCTION

The intent of this work is to explore and develop a theology of beauty based on God's plan in Christ. Thus the nature of beauty, as defined by the divine economy of redemption, which sums all things up in Jesus Christ (Eph 1:10), is pursued in a specifically biblical and systematic way from beginning to end. The aesthetic dimension more broadly considered is a further motivating interest.[1] Karl Barth (1886–1968) poses a cogent rationale for this agenda, namely, that all concepts of universal significance need to be interrogated in terms of the name and the narrative of Jesus Christ.[2] Beauty counts here as one such concept. This project's agenda neither proposes nor advocates a critical "turn to aesthetics" for doing biblical and systematic theology. The lacuna that exists requires a recovery of and reinvigorated attention to theological aesthetics, but it does not require a methodological "turn" as such. What is advocated, however, is that the locus of beauty and the subject of theological aesthetics be given wider recognition and inclusion in the work and pedagogy of systematic theology within a broadly evangelical perspective. Why? At a minimum, so that we may gain a fuller appreciation of the sublimity of God's eternal plan, which reveals a consistent outworking of the beauty intrinsic to the Trinity. The Son incarnate is manifestly key to this outworking, for the economic Trinity "displays" in time the eternal beauty/fittingness of the immanent Trinity. With

1. The phrase "theology of beauty" in this work is used interchangeably with "theological aesthetics." As with the definitional distinction between metaphysic and metaphysics, a theological aesthetic denotes a system of theological aesthetics.

2. See Karl Barth, *CD*, IV/1, 16–17. I am indebted to Graham Cole for drawing this reference to my attention.

this appreciation we come to apprehend better the aesthetic entailment of how the whole of God's plan is incomparably greater than the sum of its parts.

THEOLOGIES OF AESTHETICS

"Theological aesthetics" does not imply there is homogeneity in the kind of theological scholarship on aesthetics that has been/is being done. On the contrary, the diversity of distinct theological approaches to the subject of aesthetics can only rightly be described as heterogeneous. Effectively there are four basic categories in terms of respective concerns and the ways theology applies and is integrated: (1) natural theology of beauty, (2) theology of the arts, (3) religious aesthetics, and (4) theological aesthetics. As employed here, these categories apply as pedagogical distinctions, if not formal ones, for distinguishing and describing the basic (even if in certain respects overlapping) differences. What is not subsumed or entailed in these categories is philosophical aesthetics since its focus and substance do not necessarily address specifically theological concerns.[3] It is not any of our interest, however, to provide a comparative evaluation of these theologies of aesthetics, nor explicate any of them except the last one that we are describing as theological aesthetics. For our purposes I wish only to provide a clear, though brief, description here of these four distinct categories so the reader will not mistakenly assume that all theological scholarship on aesthetics

3. Philosophical aesthetics certainly *may* address theological concerns, of course, but such scholarship can also be done under a fully secular or atheistic set of assumptions. Few would dispute that Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, published in 1790, is the foundational treatise in modern philosophical aesthetics, setting the stage for the different schools of idealist aesthetic philosophies that followed in its wake (e.g., Hegel, Fichte, Schopenhauer, Schiller, and Schelling). Around the middle of the twentieth century, though, philosophical aesthetics began to be used in the wide sense of philosophy of art, where art nowadays is taken broadly to include literature, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, dance, theater, photography, and film. The aesthetics of nature and the environment, and the religious dimensions of art are sometimes treated too. Many topics of more general philosophical interest, such as the nature of representation, imagination, emotion, and expression are addressed in respect of their roles in the arts and artistic appreciation. For a recommended treatment of the development of the philosophy of art, see Noël Carroll, *Art in Three Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

pursues the same common concern or applies and integrates theology using a common approach. What I am putting forward is a properly dogmatic (i.e., Trinitarian) account of aesthetics.

Our first category, *natural theology of beauty*, seeks to give an account from the perceivable beauty of the natural world in attestation of the God that Christianity upholds and proclaims. The aim here is to provide evidential value in the cause of understanding-seeking-faith and/or apologetic value in the cause of faith-seeking-understanding. The affective power of beauty to elicit such visceral responses as "awe," "fear," and "wonder" is generally seen as substantiating the universal search for meaning and spiritual insight within human aesthetic experience. Natural theology of beauty often concerns the aesthetic dimension in relation to the natural and mathematical sciences as well. A common thrust concerning the perceivable order of nature is to emphasize a clear resonance with the transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty, along with the teleological character of creation.[4]

The second category, *theology of the arts*, seeks to understand the place of the arts in the life of faith and in the religious community. It is distinguished typically in terms of exploring the relationship between art and theology from the perspective of artistic technique, that is, the manner in which artwork or artistry is executed. It aims to arrive at conclusions about the capacity of genuine works of art; specifically, how all genuine art can function in its own way as a source of theology and spirituality. A Christian perspective informs one's artistic expression and endeavors in ways both creative and redemptive. According to theology of the arts, by the creative act the artist participates in the highest excellence of God, and this involvement is a basic fact of aesthetic expression for every instance of art.[5] The spiritual dimension in

4. Representative works concerning natural theology of beauty include: Alister E. McGrath, *The Open Secret: A New Vision for Natural Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2008); Thomas Dubay, *The Evidential Power of Beauty: Science and Theology Meet* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1999). For a recommended article addressing this category, see Ryan West and Adam C. Pelser, "Perceiving God through Natural Beauty," *Faith and Philosophy* 32 no. 3 (July 2015): 293–312.

5. The description used here is appropriated loosely from Christopher Evan Longhurst, "Discovering the Sacred in Secular Art: An Aesthetic Modality That 'Speaks of God,'" *American Theological Inquiry* 4 no. 1 (2011): 13–14.

all art is thus presumed to be salutary to one's spiritual formation as part of God's creative and redemptive purposes.[6]

Our next category, *religious aesthetics*, attempts to understand the nature of aesthetic phenomena in art and the natural world, but especially in relation to one's participation in religious traditions and expression. Such understanding is predicated chiefly on aesthetic perception and experience. Here, insight from Scripture may indeed inspire a greater sense of spirituality or worship, but aesthetically rich works of culture also serve as essential sources for enhancing and attuning our spiritual sensibilities. Thus, our growth in spiritual maturity is understood to be conditioned in some measure through appreciating such sources of culture. Religious aesthetics, then, seeks to understand and apply a subjective evaluation of the aesthetic dimension to enhance one's overall religious perspective, practice, and experience, as well as one's aesthetic appreciation of art and nature. There is a vital connection seen between our spiritual growth and reflection on the aesthetic best that culture has to offer. Indeed, in a post-Kantian context, religious aesthetics serves to repudiate a purely intellectualist approach to the world, interpenetrating as it were the spiritual dimension of the natural world, works of culture and art, and cultivating spirituality via aesthetic perception and experience.[7]

And lastly, our fourth category, *theological aesthetics,* is premised on the canon of Scripture being the norm that norms other norms (*norma normans*) over all matters pertaining to Christian doctrine and practice. Scripture's authority as such holds preeminence in how we interpret theologically everything considered general/natural revelation as well as expressions of culture.[8] By extension, biblical authority presides over the domain of aesthetics in its understanding of the whole

6. Representative works concerning theology of the arts include: Richard Viladesau, *Theology and the Arts: Encountering God through Music, Art, and Rhetoric* (New York: Paulist Press, 2000); Jeremy Begbie, ed., *Sounding the Depths: Theology Through the Arts* (London: SCM Press, 2002).

7. Representative works concerning religious aesthetics include: Frank Burch Brown, *Religious Aesthetics: A Theological Study of Making and Meaning* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Aidan Nichols, *Redeeming Beauty: Soundings in Sacral Aesthetics* (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2007).

8. In short, general or natural revelation (in contrast to special revelation whose formal principle is the canon of Scripture) pertains to that available and

of creation—the *theatrum gloriae Dei*, as John Calvin (1509–1564) puts it.[9] The basic position of theological aesthetics, argued by reasonable inference from Scripture, is that beauty corresponds in some way to the attributes of God, and as such is a communicated property or phenomenon of the *opera Dei ad extra*. Inferred from the previous point is that the objective reality of beauty comes from its correspondence to the attributes of God; it is this correspondence that grounds a metaphysically realist view of beauty. In general terms, theological aesthetics derives from biblical- and systematic-theological work concerning or pertaining to the aesthetic dimension as integral to and as apprehended throughout the canon of Scripture. The fruit of theological aesthetics for theology more broadly is its consequent interpretation and implications for doctrine and practice. In this work, theological aesthetics is directed primarily on the objective beauty of the person of Christ, the beauty of the work of Christ (redemption accomplished), and the beauty of Christ's work ongoing through the Holy Spirit (redemption applied). The constructive development of this project involves a biblical-theological characterization of God's beauty—notably in and through God the Son—as reflected economically in the phases of creation, redemption, and consummation.[10] We want to be especially clear, however, that because the eternal beauty/fittingness of the immanent Trinity is manifest in the divine economy, the standard and substance of a theological aesthetic is the economic Trinity itself, with Scripture attesting to, and being itself an ingredient in, the economies of

apprehensible knowledge of God and the created order, evidenced in and through all creation, which God communicates in a universal fashion to all humanity.

9. See John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* 1.5.1–2, 8, 10; 1.6.2; 1.14.20; 2.6.1, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (LCC; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006).

10. The definition of biblical theology this work assumes reflects that of B. S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *NDBT*, ed. T. D. Alexander and B. S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 3–11, here 10: "What is biblical theology? To sum up, *biblical theology may be defined as theological interpretation of Scripture in and for the church. It proceeds with historical and literary sensitivity and seeks to analyze and synthesize the Bible's teaching about God and his relations to the world on its own terms, maintaining sight of the Bible's overarching narrative and Christocentric focus*" (emphasis in the original). As a single summary treatment, Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology: Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 3–18, remains one of the most helpful discussions on the biblical theological method.

revelation and redemption. For theological aesthetics, then, the *sine qua non* of what makes our aesthetic reflection/perception "theological" is not, in the first place, Scripture but the divine economy.

These categorial distinctions also connote important differences concerning the authoritative norm applied in service of discovering theological/spiritual meaning in pursuit of their respective interests. The authoritative norms applied in the first three categories amount to natural revelation, artistic/creative expression, and aesthetic perception and experience respectively. These norms are not necessarily taken to be authoritative in the ultimate sense, but they are the norms applied to get at the meaning and apprehension of what each category is seeking to understand. For theological aesthetics, on the other hand, the canon of Scripture *is* the authoritative norm in the ultimate sense—norming all other norms—for its part in the economies of revelation and redemption. Scripture itself is thus the final court of appeal in any dispute between authorities, including tradition or reason or experience. This idea of an authoritative norm also bears upon the issue of hermeneutics, understood here in terms of methodological approaches for interpretation that seek to get at the best meaning and apprehension of something. In line with the canon of Scripture being the *norma normans* for theological aesthetics, the present work commends the canonical-linguistic approach. At the heart of the canonical-linguistic approach, explains Kevin Vanhoozer, "is the suggestion that the norm of Christian theology is a function of the way language is used in the biblical canon rather than ecclesial culture. The relationship between Scripture and church theology is asymmetrical: the wisdom embodied in the canon must govern the church's speech, thinking, and action today rather than vice versa."[11]

A brief word here about the general witness of Scripture to the aesthetic dimension is in order before we move on. The assertion above that theological aesthetics derives from biblical- and systematic-theological

11. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding: Performing the Drama of Doctrine* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2014), 65, n40. For a thorough presentation of the canonical-linguistic approach, see Vanhoozer's earlier work, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005).

work concerning or pertaining to the aesthetic dimension in evidence throughout the canon of Scripture properly sets the stage to consider the following statement: "That the Bible is an ethical book is evident. Righteousness in all the relations of man as a moral being is the key to its inspiration, the guiding light to correct understanding of its utterance. But it is everywhere inspired and writ in an atmosphere of aesthetics."[12] At a minimum we may affirm that claim in the following sense: the Scriptures attest quite clearly to the beauty of the created order and describe throughout the biblical canon all manner of things in language denoting or connoting an aesthetic sense, not least "the beauty (נֹעַם) of the Lord" (Ps 27:4).[13] At the lexical level both the Old Testament and the New Testament reveal a rich vocabulary of terms that convey a sense of beauty or aesthetics. An abbreviated summary of such terms, along with a selection of examples in support of the general witness of Scripture to the aesthetic dimension, is given in Appendix 1.

THE PATH FORWARD IN ACADEMICS AND SCHOLARSHIP FOR THEOLOGICAL AESTHETICS

It is true that the Scriptures, for their part, nowhere either explicitly justify beauty or explain the principles of beauty. It is primarily if not precisely for that reason that constructive engagement in the area of theological aesthetics among biblical and theological scholars exists today at the margins. A quick search of theological and philosophical works on aesthetics shows that published books and doctoral dissertations alike abound. On the other hand, specifically biblical- and systematic-theological treatments do not. The core weakness of theological aesthetics throughout the history of its various developments has been the primary neglect of a specifically biblical- and systematic-theological treatment.

The reasons behind the aforementioned state of affairs in contemporary scholarship are manifold, but a prominent one clearly would be the lack of consensus that exists on the validity of beauty as a proper locus

12. C. Caverno, "Beauty" in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, vol. 1, ed. James Orr (Chicago: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), 420.

13. Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture translation and verse references provided throughout are from the ESV.

of theology, or if it is affirmed, to which locus it belongs. Sensibilities and commitments on that question run the gamut from the antagonistic to the ambivalent to the occasionally ecstatic. Another reason why beauty and aesthetics are treated in relative isolation from biblical and systematic theology is that theological scholarship on aesthetics is done overwhelmingly in the way of religious aesthetics or theology of the arts, and often esoterically at that. In Christian scholarship today, the scandal of contemporary theological aesthetics is that there is not much of a theological aesthetic.[14] For the work and pedagogy of systematic theology within a broadly evangelical perspective, this is not so much a sin of commission but of omission. This state of affairs translates over to the way systematic-theological treatment of aesthetics is virtually if not altogether absent in the teaching of theology and doctrinal courses taught in Christian higher education, seminaries, and such. A theological view of beauty plays no part, with rare exception, in any of the traditional loci of theology and doctrinal courses that are offered in Christian higher education. The academic state of affairs as such is that the traditional loci of theology and doctrinal courses—for example, the doctrine of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, of man (anthropology), of the church, of the Christian life/ethics, just to name some basic ones—find no place (or rarely so) to include and engage theologically the subject of beauty. And if that were asking too much of Christian academies in the pedagogy of traditional doctrines, efforts toward providing a secondary or elective theology course concerning a theology of beauty in the way of theological aesthetics could no doubt address this lacuna appreciatively. The constructive argumentation I set forth in this project will help serve as a corrective to this neglect. It is my hope that any progress in the recovery of and reinvigorated attention to theological aesthetics at the level of the academy will translate into offering theological and spiritual benefit at the pastoral level for the upbuilding of the church, and for gospel outreach to a world that is hungering to know the ultimate source of all that is true, good, and beautiful.

14. Cf. Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 3.

A CLASSICIST THEORY OF BEAUTY

In this introductory section it is necessary to set out key definitions and concepts concerning beauty and theological aesthetics in the development of a biblical and systematic theology of beauty.[15] I shall start with setting out a formal but more generic answer to the age-old question about the nature of beauty ostensibly posed in conversation between Socrates and the sophist Hippias: "How, if you please, do you know, Socrates, what sort of things are beautiful and ugly? For, come now, could you tell me what the beautiful is?"[16] The following will serve as our definition stemming out of the classical tradition. Beauty is an intrinsic quality of things which, when perceived, pleases the mind by displaying a certain kind of fittingness. That is to say, beauty is discerned via objective properties such as proportion, unity, variety, symmetry, harmony, intricacy, delicacy, simplicity, or suggestiveness.[17] As a quality distinguishable in a thing, therefore, beauty has objective criteria, yet the apperception of the quality of beauty depends on the percipience of the mind (the mental faculty of perceiving), since it is the mind that renders relation of aesthetic properties as something perceived.[18] As I am applying the term in this work, then, fittingness functions as an overarching term expressive of the full range of aesthetic properties

15. For a helpful treatment of how biblical theology and systematic theology relate as disciplines to enable the theological interpretation of Scripture, see Graham A. Cole, *The God Who Became Human: A Biblical Theology of Incarnation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 171–74.

16. Plato, *Greater Hippias* 286cd. The Greek word here translated "beautiful" is from καλός, a widely applicable term denoting that which is aesthetically beautiful, morally excellent, noble, organically sound, desirable, praiseworthy, and the like. The Platonic authenticity of this dialogue is debated, but its philosophical content is generally accepted by scholars as genuinely Platonic, even if not actually penned by him.

17. For an excellent discussion on objective aesthetic properties and criteria, see Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 156–74.

18. This is not to say that we only perceive and appreciate the beauty of something if we know or have knowledge that it is beautiful. Epistemically, a percipient may not have "knowledge" that a thing has certain aesthetic properties, but her mind may nonetheless perceive and appreciate something as beautiful without necessarily *knowing* that it is beautiful. More formally, it is the mind that renders the positive epistemic status our aesthetic beliefs have, even if there is insufficient warrant to have *knowledge* about it.

that identify any and all objective characteristics of beauty. The idea of "fittingness-intensity" advanced by Nicholas Wolterstorff (1932–) develops the point here further:

> Now I suggest that when works are praised for their vitality, their delicacy, their tenderness, their gracefulness, and so forth, they are being praised for a particular fittingness-intensity of their characters. And if that is correct, then what can be said is that among the fittingness-intensities of things we find a great many of the aspects that function for people as aesthetic merits of those things.[19]

Fittingness has been recognized by old (Anselm [1033–1109]) and new (Wolterstorff) theologians as a measure of aesthetic merit. A judgment of fittingness implies a judgment about the degree to which a thing exhibits beauty, and vice versa. And beauty broadly conceived will be expressed throughout this work often by the term "aesthetics" or "aesthetic dimension."

The question may be fairly asked, why appropriate *fittingness* to God's beauty rather than to some other perfection? In other words, can fittingness be characteristic not only of the beautiful but of other perfections such as God's righteousness or his wisdom? In answer to this question we begin in recognition of the fact that the concept of fittingness can apply to one realm of discourse or another. So, for example, there is a fittingness that we associate more with wisdom which is seen as correlated more pronouncedly to truth, and a fittingness that has righteousness/justice in plain view which is seen as correlated more pronouncedly to goodness. With an understanding that there is indeed something to the idea of the non-coincidence of truth, goodness, and beauty in the order of reality (more on this below), there is warrant to say that the fittingness that characterizes something beautiful is not an uncorrelated reality from the fittingness that characterizes something that is wise (or some other perfection). Herman Bavinck's (1854–1921) contention that "beauty always derives its content from the true and the good, and it is their revelation and appearance" goes along with this and is making essentially the same point.[20] In other words we need

19. Wolterstorff, *Art in Action*, 167.

20. Herman Bavinck, "Of Beauty and Aesthetics," in *Essays on Religion, Science,*

not accept that categories or discourses of fittingness are uncorrelated with each other. Rather, on the view I am presenting the transcendental relation between the true, the good, and the beautiful informs all Christian theology (more on this below). Nicholas Healy captures this idea in regard to the actions of God as follows:

> [T]he theologian should attempt to explain why these means to salvation are the best by displaying the appropriateness of God's actions as they are described in Scripture. The argument for fittingness is therefore something like an aesthetic argument because it searches for structure and proportion. The French Dominican, Gilbert Narcisse, gives this definition: "Theological fittingness displays the significance of the chosen means among alternative possibilities, and the reasons according to which God, in his wisdom, has effectively realized and revealed, gratuitously and through his love, the mystery of the salvation and glorification of humanity."[21]

As it relates to human actions, wisdom as a certain species of truth can be proximately understood as lived out knowledge and understanding, involving the ability to make sound judgments in the exercise of our Christian freedom. So wisdom is manifest in its fittingness to know what to do or to say in a given context. And because contexts change wisdom is lived out improvisationally. Its fittingness is seen in discerning the propriety of what to say or do in contextually appropriate ways. Vanhoozer puts it like this: "Disciples improvise each time they exercise Christian freedom fittingly, in obedient response to the gracious word of God that set it in motion. Improvising to the glory of God is ultimately a matter simply of being who one has been created to be in Christ, so that one responds freely and fittingly as if by reflex or second nature."[22] Wisdom as such is lived-out knowledge and understanding that conforms to the truth and understanding as it is found in Christ. In this sense, then, the fittingness that we associate with wisdom correlates to truth more pronouncedly than it does to beauty. With all this

and Society, ed. John Bolt, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 256.

21. Nicholas M. Healy, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian of the Christian Life* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 38.

22. Vanhoozer, *Faith Speaking Understanding*, 191.

in mind I will comment at points throughout the theological aesthetic I am putting forward how the fittingness identified in a given context may be characteristic not only of the beautiful but manifestly also of other perfections such as God's righteousness or his wisdom.

Integral to our theory is that the beauty of something evokes from the percipient (the perceiving subject) an affective response of delight—that is, a kind of aesthetic pleasure. The lapidary statement by Etienne Gilson provides a critical insight that applies here: "The pleasure experienced in knowing the beautiful does not constitute beauty itself, but it betrays its presence."[23] Indeed, what uniquely characterizes the quality of beauty is its effect of evoking pleasure or delight in the act of perceiving it. Given the fluidity of language, however, Roger Scruton rightly notes the need for aesthetic common sense: "Delight is more important than the terms used to express it, and the terms themselves are in a certain measure anchorless, used more to suggest an effect than to pinpoint the qualities that give rise to it."[24] Since beauty is perceived through our senses and mind—seeing and hearing, notably, but overall in the synthetic operation of the senses with the mind—such delight is effected in us in countless ways and immeasurable degrees. At times that delight is more through a sensory presentation and other times more through an intellectual presentation—it depends on the nature of the thing perceived. With visual art or music, for example, the pleasure evoked in perceiving its aesthetic quality is effected more through a sensory presentation. With a work of literature, on the other hand, the pleasure evoked in perceiving its aesthetics is effected more through an imaginational presentation.[25] Empirically or experientially speaking, one may understand objective properties identified as objective criteria for beauty as simply being attempts to say what evokes pleasure in the act of perceiving the beauty of something. The criteria are always *a posteriori* gestures to the *qualia* of beauty as universal.[26]

23. Etienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Catholic Textbook Division, 1960), 162.

24. Roger Scruton, *Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 15.

25. See Scruton, *Beauty*, 22–26.

26. In this sense beauty is identifiable as a subjective universal, serving as our access to a thing's aesthetic properties. To note, technically there is a distinction between identifying something as being "objective" and identifying something as

In any case, this is not to say that the subjective response of pleasure or delight evoked in perceiving the beauty of something would be identical—whether in quality or degree—for every person. The variable factors that influence the subjective response affected in the act of perceiving a given thing's beauty are manifold. Factors external to a person such as one's inculturation, background, and acquired aesthetic sophistication bear influence in conjunction with all the factors internal to a person that make up one's individuality and personality, and even one's preconceptions of something. Within the variation and differences among people in the way beauty is subjectively experienced are both the mystery and complexity of what I will argue is the dichotomous unity of body and soul that constitutes every human person. It is sufficient for our purposes to affirm only that, when perceived, beauty is experienced in a subjective response of pleasure or delight. I will not seek to explicate further the mystery and complexity of the variable dimensions that influence the subjective response affected in the act of perceiving a thing's beauty.

To be clear, however, a realist view of beauty is premised here.[27] On this view, the quality of beauty inherent in any given thing exists independent of any creaturely percipient, that is, whether or not it is perceived. In my judgment Augustine's certain reply to the age-old question concerning whether beauty is an objective reality or only a subjective reality still speaks truth: "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."[28] We can thus affirm that

being "universal." The former implies mind-independence, while the latter implies a metaphysical realism. The idea of "qualia" denotes the internal and subjective component of sense perceptions, what philosophers loosely refer to as the *raw feels*.

27. Phenomenalism is all about the study of the way things appear to us. It is often assumed to entail that beauty has no independent reality outside the experience of human perception. Against the idea of phenomenalism entailing an anti-realist view about beauty, aesthetic objectivism strongly affirms that beauty does have an independent reality outside the experience of human perception. For a recommended defense on aesthetic objectivism, see Eddy M. Zemach, *Real Beauty* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004).

28. Augustine, *De Vera Religione*, cited in Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 49.

beauty is indeed in the eye of the beholder, though it is not reduced to that. In other words an objectivist view of beauty affirms that a given thing appears to a person *as beautiful*, but without that being reduced in meaning to simply as beautiful *to them*.[29] The classicist theory of beauty I am presenting, therefore, is that beauty is objectively real and thus affective response-independent—that is, the affective response does not act as a trigger to constitute some x as beautiful. The response comes into play for a subject in the act of that subject perceiving the beauty of some thing. So its beauty does trigger an affective response of aesthetic pleasure or delight, but this response is evoked in the act of perceiving it. Thus there does not have to be some perceiver that judges some x as having a certain quality of beauty for it to have that quality of beauty. Rather, the nature of beauty is such that to human percipients at least, an aesthetic pleasure of some form and degree is elicited in the act of perceiving some x. In sum, I am postulating a realist view of beauty, and the unique nature of beauty involves the effect it has of eliciting a subjective response of aesthetic pleasure as we perceive it.

It follows, moreover, that the degree to which the quality of beauty is present in a particular thing determines the degree to which that thing is beautiful. Since the degree to which a thing is beautiful implies the degree of its fittingness in a certain dimension, the idea of "fittingness-intensity," which functions as an evaluative measure of the aesthetic merit of some work or thing, can be adopted and applied here. Considered in negative terms, the degree to which a thing is perceived as "ugly" implies the degree of its ill-fittingness in a certain dimension. Assuming a realist view of beauty, then, "ugliness" represents the degree of something's negative objective beauty, its

29. Cf. N. T. Wright, *Simply Christian: Why Christianity Makes Sense* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 44: "On the one hand, we must acknowledge that beauty, whether in the natural order or within human creation, is sometimes so powerful that it evokes our very deepest feelings of awe, wonder, gratitude, and reverence. Almost all humans sense this some of the time at least, even though they disagree wildly about which things evoke which feelings and why. On the other hand, we must acknowledge that these disagreements and puzzles are enough to press some, without an obvious desire to be cynical or destructive, to say that beauty is all in the mind, or the imagination, or the genes. … It seems we have to hold the two together: beauty is *both* something that calls us out of ourselves *and* something which appeals to feelings deep within us."

deformity/malformity of form, as it were. Scruton sums up the larger point this way:

> Beauty can be consoling, disturbing, sacred, profane; it can be exhilarating, appealing, inspiring, chilling. It can affect us in an unlimited variety of ways. Yet it is never viewed with indifference: beauty demands to be noticed; it speaks to us directly like the voice of an intimate friend. If there are people who are indifferent to beauty, then it is surely because they do not perceive it.[30]

In short, the nature of beauty implies objective properties—with such properties themselves able to serve as objective aesthetic criteria—and involves a complex, affective response from the percipient, whether positively or negatively.

The basic position of theological aesthetics that beauty is a communicated property or phenomenon of the *opera Dei ad extra* means that the existence of beautiful things requires, if you will, the existence of a Beautifier. The question posed by Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988) is germane to our interest: "may it not be that we have a real and inescapable obligation to probe the possibility of there being a genuine relationship between theological beauty and the beauty of the world?"[31] While a justification for aesthetics and an explanation of aesthetic criteria are under-determined by Scripture, there are numerous examples of things in Scripture, material and immaterial in nature, that are described in regard to their beauty or in aesthetic terms.[32] The following point Kevin Vanhoozer advances is axiomatic

30. Scruton, *Beauty*, xi.

31. Hans Urs von Balthasar, *GL*, I, 80.

32. Cf. Paul Helm, "The Impossibility of Divine Passibility" in *The Power and Weakness of God: Impassibility and Orthodoxy*, ed. Nigel M. de S. Cameron (Edinburgh: Rutherford House, 1990), 135: "Biblical language and metaphysical concepts (whether these concepts are derived from Greek sources or from elsewhere) are not strict rivals. This is because of the fact that from the point of view of metaphysics the Bible is an underdeveloped book; there are few, if any, passages which are theoretical and reflective, or which make general claims and which rebut alternatives, of the sort typically advanced in metaphysical discussion. So the Bible does not repudiate developed metaphysics; rather, for the most part it obliquely sidesteps it, for its interests are for the most part elsewhere. But this does not mean that its first-order statements do not have metaphysical implications, only that they are not themselves metaphysical claims."

to our efforts: "The vocation of the theological interpreter of Scripture is to render judgments—ethical, epistemological, and yes, metaphysical—concerning what is 'meet and right' for Christians to affirm of God on the basis of the various modes of divine self-showing, self-giving, and self-saying."[33] The task going forward involves answering how theological beauty relates to the beauty of the world, and conceptually to elaborate just what God's "beautiful self-showing" consists in.[34] As will be shown integral to my argumentation, the objective beauty of the person of Christ, the beauty of the work of Christ (redemption accomplished), and the beauty of Christ's work ongoing through the Holy Spirit (redemption applied) are the preeminent aspects of God's "beautiful self-showing" according to the redemptive-eschatological fulfillment of his original creational purposes.

A biblical and systematic theology of beauty, moreover, needs to give full recognition to aesthetics both narrowly and broadly conceived. Aesthetics *narrowly conceived* denotes any real thing that is perceivable by human beings as patently or conspicuously beautiful. One is consciously attracted to such a thing for its outright aesthetic quality, perhaps a particular quality that stands out—for example, x has perfect proportion; y has lovely harmony. An instance of explicitly recognized beauty is at the same time an instance of that thing being fitting, reflecting in its form and features aesthetic qualities of God's manifest glory. The aesthetic dimension *broadly conceived*, however, understands fittingness to involve more than that which one is consciously attracted to or recognizes for its outright and particular aesthetic quality. While something that exhibits fittingness in a given context may be perceived for a particular aesthetic quality that stands out, it may also be recognized

33. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 198.

34. A recommended treatment on issues pertinent here is found in William Edgar, "Aesthetics: Beauty Avenged, Apologetics Enriched," *WTJ* 63 no. 1 (Spring 2001): 107–22. Worth noting as well is the implication for aesthetics more generally considered. If beauty is a divine attribute or a phenomenological quality corresponding to the revelation of God's attributes in the divine economy, the ontological ground exists to posit a full-orbed realist view of aesthetics. The scope of this project does not entail treating this broader point, however, as our concern is fundamentally in regard to a theological, and more particularly, christological treatment of beauty.

in much more subtle terms regarding its propriety or its overall sense of order or harmony and such like. Pythagoras' classical theory of the "music of the spheres," albeit an obsolete metaphysic, represents an ancient example of aesthetics broadly conceived.[35] Thus, aesthetics broadly conceived is simply a formal distinction that acknowledges the less conspicuous or less perceptible subtle aesthetic aspects that God's glory takes in the design and outworking of his eternal plan in all its diversely splendored forms. We could therefore think of the aesthetic dimension conceived in a narrow sense and the aesthetic dimension conceived in a broad sense as the recognition of a focal/particular perception of beauty versus a subsidiary/synthetic perception of it. Thus, visual art or music might serve as an example of aesthetic qualities perceivable in a narrow sense, and a certain crafting of narrative or work of literature as an example perhaps of aesthetic qualities perceivable in a broad sense. The aesthetic dimension conceived both narrowly or broadly, then, entails the full compass of characteristics betraying God's beauty, all of which are expressions of the aesthetic quality of his manifest glory (more on this below).

BEAUTY AMONG THE TRANSCENDENTALS OF BEING

The notion of "transcendental properties of being" played a foundational role in the metaphysical worldview originating during the Classical Greek period. It remained a key notion in the thinking of the ancient and medieval church Fathers and Schoolmen, and figures prominently in the development of their theological aesthetics. My purposes here are

35. Discovering that harmonic music is expressed in exact numerical ratios of whole numbers, Pythagoras reasoned that music was the ordering principle of the world. For Pythagoras, this fact demonstrated the intelligibility of reality and the existence of a reasoning intelligence behind it. As he pondered the harmonious wonder of music as delivered through singing and through musical instrumentation, Pythagoras concluded that musical harmony was a reflection of a more majestic harmony in the universe—"the music of the spheres." That is to say, music at its best reflected the harmonious sound (itself expressible by numbers) that the heavenly spheres produced together in their rotations through space. In this sense music was number reflected in aural harmony. This harmony of the universe was thought to be composed of various levels of musical tones that humanly produced music could proximate. What music represented, then, was nothing less than human participation in the harmony of the universe, which was able to effect spiritual harmony in one's soul.

limited to describing in brief the following: first, a classical Thomistic view of the transcendental property of being; and second, the transcendental relation concerning truth, goodness, and beauty. Clarifying these transcendentals prepares the way for understanding how beauty relates to the divine attributes.

"Being" is the most general and comprehensive concept we have to describe everything that exists. In Thomistic metaphysics (and late medieval generally) "being" is called a "transcendental" because the act of existing ("to be") is a property common to all real beings, and as such it transcends all distinctions made at the level of genus, category, or individual in the order of reality.[36] Which other properties qualify as transcendentals has been variously argued throughout the history of classical and scholastic metaphysics. Nonetheless, late medieval theories were in basic agreement that a transcendental property of being is "a positive attribute that can be predicated of every real being, so that it is convertible with being itself."[37] For such an attribute to be convertible

36. The idea of "being" as the most general property common to all real beings is suggested in *ST* Ia, q.65, a.3, in which Aquinas states, "Now the underlying principle in things is always more universal than that which informs and restricts it; thus, being is more universal than living, living than understanding, matter than form."

37. W. Norris Clarke, *The One and the Many: A Contemporary Thomistic Metaphysics* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 290–91. This definition begs the question, however, on what is meant here by "real being" and "being itself." The nature of "being" is a fundament of Thomistic metaphysics, of course, but we need not unpack all that for our purposes. Clarke, 25–34, includes a helpful treatment on the Thomistic meaning of "being," which I give here in summary form: "a being" is *that which is*, i.e., actually exists in the real order. A distinction is made between *real* being (*ens realis*) and *mental* being (*ens rationis*). Real being is what exists, in the strong sense of the term, independent or outside of the mind, and is the primary existential meaning of being. Unless otherwise specified, real being is the ordinary meaning of being and has two main modes: (1) a *complete* being, or substance, which exists on its own and not as part of any other being; and (2) any *part* or attribute of a real being which cannot be said to exist on its own, but only to be in another, e.g., "He is a *kind* man." Mental being, on the other hand, is what exists exclusively in the mind, i.e., as being-thought-about by a real mind. Thus, a horse is a real being, whereas a unicorn is only a mental being. Since mental being can only be understood by reference to the mind thinking it, it is radically secondary, dependent, or parasitic on real being, which is primary. All mental beings thus in some way derive from and refer back to the order of real being. Transcendental properties of being are thus predicated, in the proper sense, of every real being, and are not predicated of any mental being since such are strictly eidetic, i.e., these do not exist independent of the mind.

with being itself (i.e., every being) means that it marks a conceptual distinction within the nature of being but it does not mark any real (i.e., ontological) distinction within that nature. In other words the respective concepts that apply to the different transcendental properties "are distinct from each other in what they explicitly affirm about being, but they refer to the identical reality as it exists in itself."[38] Each transcendental property makes explicit some aspect of being that is not made explicit by the term "being," and does so without adding anything ontologically to being.[39] Transcendental properties as such are different attributes of being that are coextensive with being itself, revealing themselves to be universal attributes of the real order. A transcendental property is thus an attribute by which all existing things are predicated in some degree or other as a necessary condition of their very existence.

From the patristic era through to the Middle Ages we find that beauty was on the whole considered a transcendental quality of being, along with truth, goodness, and oneness—*unus et verum et bonum et pulchrum convertuntur*.[40] This presupposition was commonly held by the ancient and medieval church Fathers and Schoolmen, both Eastern and Western, which they found to be consistent with the Scriptures. Although doing theology in the Middle Ages involved straining Neoplatonism and/or Aristotelianism through a Christianizing sieve, the theological synthesis that was produced to the time of Aquinas provided an invaluable legacy of theological aesthetics for all future theological development of its kind. In the course of this work the theological aesthetics of Irenaeus of Lyons (c.130–c.200), Anselm of Canterbury and Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) are representative of the best of the

38. Clarke, *The One and the Many*, 291.

39. Clarke, *The One and the Many*, 291.

40. The following treatments on the long history and development of theological aesthetics are recommended: Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vols. II–V (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1984–1991); Umberto Eco, ed., *History of Beauty*, trans. Alistair McEwen (New York: Rizzoli, 2004); Francis J. Kovach, *Philosophy of Beauty* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1974); Wladyslaw Tatarkiewicz, *History of Aesthetics*, vols. 1–3 (New York: Continuum, 2005); David Konstan, *Beauty: The Fortunes of an Ancient Greek Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For a concise patristic/medieval survey of the positions held on beauty as a transcendental, see Francis J. Kovach, "Beauty," in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Gale Group, 2003), 184–86.

patristic/medieval tradition, with Aquinas' contribution generally considered the acme of its development. To a fair extent this project's overall thesis is a constructive engagement with their ideas.[41]

Since beauty was considered a transcendental property of being, it was considered to belong to the divine essence itself, qualifying it as a divine attribute. In this regard the transcendental properties have long been considered "perfections" that exist in their most perfect form in God. However, given the infinite ontological divide between Creator and creature, the divine perfections are taken to be analogical extensions of being (*analogia entis*) from God to the created world. This points up the idea affirmed in Thomistic metaphysics that a thing is perfected by becoming what by its very nature it is meant to be.[42] The transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty correspond respectively to being as true, good, and beautiful.[43] What is meant regarding "being as true" is ontological truth—that is, being as intrinsically intelligible to the mind. In this sense truth is the relation of being to the mind, or simply, *being as knowable*. So the more fullness of truth a thing has, the greater one's apprehension will be towards that truth. And the more perfectly you know that thing, the more you realize its truth. Likewise, "being as good" denotes ontological goodness—that is, being as intrinsically desirable to the will, corresponding to its perfection (i.e., what by its very nature a thing is meant to be). In this sense goodness is the relation of being to the will, or simply, *being as desirable*. So the more fullness of goodness a thing has, the greater one's desire will be towards that goodness. And the more perfectly you desire that thing, the more you realize its goodness. In the same way, "being as beautiful" denotes ontological

41. Scholarship in the last forty years has produced notable works on the theological aesthetics of these church Fathers, including the following: Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); David S. Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury: The Beauty of Theology* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004); Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); Brendan Thomas Sammon, *The God Who Is Beauty: Beauty as a Divine Name in Thomas Aquinas and Dionysius the Areopagite* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2013).

42. Francesca Aran Murphy, *Christ the Form of Beauty: A Study in Theology and Literature* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 216–17.

43. See Clarke, *The One and the Many*, 294–302, for a helpful treatment on this topic.

beauty—that is, being as intrinsically delightable to both the mind and will in the perception of it, or simply, *being as delightable*. So the more fullness of beauty a thing has, the greater one's pleasure or delight will be towards that beauty. And the more perfectly you delight in that thing, the more you realize its beauty. The distinctive characteristic of beauty, then, over against that of truth and goodness, is that beauty as *beauty* is not desired as a means to another end but communicates to the perceiver of it an associated pleasure or delight *as* that end.

A classical way the transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty are characterized is that in the true the intellect is at rest, and in the good the will is at rest, but in the beautiful both intellect and will together are at rest. We might put it less formally this way: knowledge is about approaching the true in the way that the will is about approaching the good, and delight is about approaching the beautiful. It was from this perspective that the medieval church Fathers and Schoolmen believed that what is true and good is likewise beautiful in form and content, and vice versa. Although British philosopher Roger Scruton demurs on the status of beauty as an ultimate value, his comments offered from a philosophical perspective are nonetheless germane: "Why believe *p*? Because it is true. Why want *x*? Because it is good. Why look at *y*? Because it is beautiful. In some way, philosophers have argued, those answers are on a par: each brings a state of mind into the ambit of reason, by connecting it to something that it is in our nature, as rational beings, to pursue."[44] This is the non-coincidence of the "true," the "good," and the "beautiful," as it has been called. We also note that the concept of transcendental beauty is fully consistent, mutatis mutandis, with the theory of beauty we sketched out earlier—that is, that beauty is objectively real, subjectively experienced. I will assume with regard to our theory of beauty the premise that the ontological grounding of beauty is a transcendental reality.[45] It was just this intuition that led

44. Scruton, *Beauty*, 2.

45. Granting that the ontological grounding of beauty is a transcendental reality, it makes a great deal of sense for the pleasure experienced in perceiving the beautiful to elicit along with that some sort of eschatological longing in us. Wright, *Simply Christian*, 40–41, describes just this sort of longing: "Beauty, like justice, slips through our fingers. We photograph the sunset, but all we get is the memory of the moment, not the moment itself. We buy the recording, but the symphony

C. S. Lewis (1898–1963) to remark, "The sweetest thing in all my life has been the longing … to find the place where all the beauty came from."[46] This premise comports with our theological premise that beauty corresponds in some way to the attributes of God (more on this below). As I will argue, the transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty in God's work of creation, redemption, and consummation are strongly correlated because these attributes—coordinate with God's knowledge, will, and beatitude—are communicable perfections of God's essential nature and thus are expressed inherently in all his outward works. As a final point here, since the canon of Scripture is the *norma normans* for the theological aesthetics with which our biblical and systematic theology of beauty as defined by the divine economy of redemption is developed, the theory of beauty stemming out of the classical tradition that has served to fund this will be more properly qualified as needed in the Conclusion.

SUMMARY OF OVERALL ARGUMENT

Granting the postulation premised earlier that the Bible is "everywhere inspired and writ in an atmosphere of aesthetics," what should a sound theology of beauty about the plan of God in Christ look like? Let me pose the grand concern here in Pauline fashion: what ways does a theological aesthetic highlight certain aspects of the plan and purposes of God, promised before the ages began, that he has realized in Christ Jesus? My aim overall is to put forward the christological contours of a biblically-based theology of beauty in answer to that question. The term "contours" here pertains to the principal phases of God's eternal plan in salvation history—the drama of redemption or *theodrama*, if you will—in its outworking of creation, redemption, and consummation. What is at issue in all this is the doctrine of God in the first instance and, following from this, a greater appreciation of an aspect of God's self-revelation that has been generally overlooked when we speak about

says something different when we listen to it at home. We climb the mountain, and though the view from the summit is indeed magnificent, it leaves us wanting more; even if we could build a house there and gaze all day at the scene, the itch wouldn't go away. Indeed, the beauty sometimes seems to be in the itching itself, the sense of longing, the kind of pleasure which is exquisite and yet leaves us unsatisfied."

46. C. S. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces: A Myth Retold* (Orlando: Harcourt, 1980), 75.

the doctrines of creation, fall, incarnation, redemption, and consummation, namely, the aesthetic dimension.[47] Our focus on perceiving the beauty of the theodrama, moreover, invites a kind of heuristic approach through applying aesthetic criticism to aid our viewing of that beauty.

My working hypothesis is twofold: first, beauty corresponds in some way to the attributes of God; second, the theodrama of God's eternal plan in creation, redemption, and consummation entails a consistent and fitting expression and outworking of this divine beauty. The way undertaken in this work involves giving up-front theological reflection on beauty in relation to both the Trinity relating essentially (*ad intra*) and the Trinity operating economically (*ad extra*). My thesis is that the Son's fittingness as incarnate Redeemer, and in the divine economy in general, is the critical lens for seeing God's beauty, serving as well to display the Son's glory in every stage of the theodrama. The properly dogmatic (i.e., Trinitarian) ground of the Son's fittingness is God's beauty which, in conjunction with divine simplicity, entails that everything God does is, by definition, beautiful (i.e., God-glorifying). I trace this theological aesthetic across the principal phases of the theodrama (creation, redemption, and consummation) through the lens of Christology and the related theme of the *imago Dei*. In the order of my presentation I have chosen first to set out the concept of fittingness and then examine the plan of God in Christ as it is reflected economically in the phases of creation, redemption, and consummation. To be crystal clear, however, the order of reality is the divine economy, and any conceptual proposals I offer for consideration must follow as these relate to the divine economy.

A constructive development in argument of this thesis is put forward, involving a biblical- and systematic-theological characterization of God's beauty—notably in and through the Son as incarnate Redeemer

47. On this point, Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 1144, writes, "Beyond the logical or rational character of theology, there is also its aesthetic character. There is the potential, as we survey the whole of God's truth, of grasping its artistic nature. There is a beauty to the great compass and the interrelatedness of the doctrines. The organic character of theology, its balanced depiction of the whole of reality and of human nature, should bring a sense of satisfaction to the human capacity to appreciate beauty in the form of symmetry, comprehensiveness, and coherence."

and with respect to humans as divine image-bearers—in relation to the principal phases of the theodrama: creation, redemption, and consummation. I refer to this constructive development as the christological contours of beauty. The christological contours of beauty will demonstrate the following points:

1. The beauty of the divine plan is a function of the fittingness of the Son as incarnate Redeemer being foundational to its design and outworking.
2. The beauty of our formation as Christian disciples is that vital part of God's work in this present age of forming and making beautiful his children, which is all about their being conformed to the image of his Son. The work of spiritual formation involves Christians living out fittingly their identity in Christ, which is part and parcel of the progressive work of spiritual transformation that God through Christ by the Spirit does in us. That central purpose of spiritual transformation in the plan of salvation is integral to the church of God—the Bride of Christ—being formed and "adorned" in preparation for her nuptial union with Christ.

An important element of my argument is that the beauty of God manifested economically is expressed and perceivable *as a quality of* the glory of God inherent in his work of creation, redemption, and consummation. The display of God's glory is thus always beautiful, always fitting, always entails an aesthetic dimension to it. Furthermore, the motif of God's glory is the primary material point in Scripture that I develop in reference to the christological contours of beauty.[48] A core focus of my argument, moreover, concerns the outworking of the divine plan centrally in the fate of the creature made in God's image. Within my development of the christological contours of beauty the image of God serves as a major theological motif, which I also develop in relation

48. Christopher W. Morgan, "Toward a Theology of the Glory of God," in *The Glory of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 159, encapsulates nicely the idea of God's glory and glorification *ad extra* this way: "[T]he triune God who is glorious displays his glory, largely through his creation, image-bearers, providence, and redemptive acts. God's people respond by glorifying him. God receives glory and, through uniting his people to Christ, shares his glory with them—all to his glory."

to the glory motif. The symmetry of the divine plan, which entails the symmetrical nature of the Son's agency in it, is an integral part of the aesthetics inherent in the structure (i.e., form) that God's glory takes in his work of creation, redemption, and consummation. That symmetry is revealed in the following basic ways:

1. That the work of creation is through the Son, so likewise the work of redemption (re-creation or the renewal of creation) also is accomplished through the Son.
2. That the Son is the preexistent image of God through whom humanity is imaged protologically, so likewise through the Son as the last Adam the redeemed are imaged eschatologically.
3. That as an analogue of the only-begotten Son's relationship to the Father, the Son of God as incarnate Redeemer procures adoptive sonship for all those he redeems, so that these may become beloved sons of God the Father.

The christological contours of beauty also entail that our formation as Christian disciples is that vital part of God's work in this present age of forming and making beautiful his children, which is all about their being conformed to the image of his Son.[49] That complete work of spiritual formation encompasses the church of God being prepared so that Christ as Bridegroom can present her to himself as his glorified Bride. Theological aesthetics performed in this key resounds to the true beauty reflected in the glory of God's work in the economy of salvation, which contrasts with and shows as altogether bankrupt the pretender cultural ideals of beauty represented by all with which the world is enthralled and that she idolizes.

On a final note, an entailment of our thesis is that the outward manifestation of God's beauty is expressive of that perfection of beatitude and sense of delight that belongs to the Trinity *ad intra*. It is God's own beatitude, I suggest, that, in this present age, correlates with a properly aesthetic dimension to our faith seeking understanding, the fruit and expression of which is a knowing pleasure and heartfelt delight

49. In addition, theological aesthetics presents an untapped lode for thinking about the correlation between the aesthetic domain and the ethical domain.

in God and in his gospel of grace through Jesus Christ. Such delight suggests itself as being a faint reflection of that aesthetic delight—that beatitude—in God's own being, and is the doxological component of divine beauty's effect on us that provides a foretaste in this life of our enjoying God forever in the next. For it is of the highest spiritual caliber in our sojourn with God to not only grow in sound knowledge of God and the revelation of his plan—that is, growing in "truth"; and not only to perform more faithfully and reflect in our lives the revelation of his ways and character—that is, growing in "goodness"; but equally vital, to *delight* increasingly in God for who he is and for making us partakers through the person and work of Christ of his eternal Triune life—that is, growing in "beauty." In this way the spiritual growth of each believer becomes more in step with and partakes more fully in the truth, goodness, and beauty that is coordinate with God's knowledge, will, and beatitude.

SYNOPSIS

The following chapter previews adumbrate the christological contours of beauty that I present in this work. The previews serve only to sketch out the bare contours of each chapter, highlighting important theological and aesthetic areas addressed. In addition, for Chapters 3, 4, and 6 I include a featured theologian who has contributed valuably to the subject of divine beauty or to theological aesthetics more generally, and set out in summary form their view on that. In Chapter 2, which concerns the doctrine of God, I set out the respective view on divine beauty of four featured theologians. The theologians all featured vary from the medieval period up to the recent modern, and I chose them based on their theology of beauty being especially relevant to the primary chapter in which each is contributing. Pertinent aspects of their theology are cited or engaged with throughout the chapter as well. Featuring and appropriating the work of such theologians in this way represents a mode of retrieval that "commends a more celebratory style of theological portrayal … [that] rehabilitates classical sources of Christian theology and draws together their potential in furthering

the theological task."[50] What this does is constructively braid into the development of my overall argumentation a variety of theological aesthetic perspectives from different church traditions and various periods of church history—in conjunction with the diverse work of other theologians and scholars I engage with throughout. Given the fundamentally constructive nature of this work, these featured theologians serve primarily as theological protagonists in its development, and theologically antagonistic points of issue are referenced against my argumentation but I do not focus on these. In the Conclusion I will compare and contrast the key aspects of their theological aesthetics with the theological aesthetics for which I have argued in the christological contours of beauty.

Chapter 2, "Beauty Triune," begins with the doctrine of God, which is the foundation for our theology of beauty. Our featured theologians on divine beauty are Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas, Herman Bavinck, and Karl Barth. In broad strokes, the focus is all about God's beauty and glory, explicated with regard to Trinitarian doctrine and the divine attributes. Theological reflection on beauty is developed in relation to both the Trinity operating economically (*ad extra*)—that is, God's saving activity in history, centered on the work of the Son and the Spirit—and the Trinity relating essentially (*ad intra*)—that is, God's own eternal, internal, life as Father, Son, and Spirit. The larger effort here concerns the theodramatic fittingness of the Son as incarnate Redeemer, taken to be fundamental to the design and outworking of God's eternal plan. That central idea drives the christological contours of beauty.

Chapter 3, "Creation: Beauty's Debut," considers the divine work of creation, focusing primarily on Genesis 1–2 as our base text. Our featured theologian is Irenaeus. From Genesis 1–2 the idea of the "proto-eschaton" is developed, understood as prototypical themes of creation that anticipate consummative themes of the eschaton; these themes are integral to the design and consummative fulfillment of God's eternal plan. A theological interpretation of the image of God is given, arguing that everything constitutive of the image of God is comprehended

50. John Webster, "Theologies of Retrieval" in *The Oxford Handbook of Systematic Theology*, ed. John Webster, Kathryn Tanner, and Iain Torrance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 596.

in three principal aspects—the official (royal priest), constitutional (whole person, i.e., body-soul), and ethical-relational. The fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 and God's consequent curse on the created order is in turn briefly addressed. In view of the narrative prominence of divine justice, the largely ignored notion of fittingness in reference to retributive justice is presented.

Chapter 4, "The Incarnation: Beauty Condescending," addresses how God's eternal plan plays out climactically in the person and work of Christ. Hans Urs von Balthasar is our featured theologian. The christological contours of beauty are developed here in regard to four key aspects of Christ's identity, followed by an excursus. First, *Christ the Image of God*. Attention here is on Christ as the image of God whose glory is made visible in and expressed through the form of his humanity. Second, *Christ the Form of a Slave*. A theological interpretation of Philippians 2:6–8 is given, arguing that the beauty of Christ is qualified by the theodramatic fittingness of his identity revealed in the form of a slave. Third, *Christ the Last Adam and the True Israel*. The theodramatic fittingness of Christ is argued in how he recapitulates in his life the history of the first Adam and God's covenant people Israel. Fourth, *Christ the Transfigured*. A theological interpretation is given in reference to Christ's identity as revealed at the event of his transfiguration. The aesthetic dimension argued here pertains to the redemptive-historical fittingness of the event, and the theodramatic fittingness of the Son with respect to his transfigured form. And fifth, *Excursus: Theological Aesthetic of Isaiah 53:2*. A theological aesthetic of Isaiah 53:2*b* is given, addressing Isaiah's Servant of the Lord as identified with the person of Christ, described here by the prophet as having "no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him."

Chapter 5, "The Cross: Beauty Redeeming," develops the christological contours of beauty in reference to the accomplishment of Christ's work on the cross and the already but not-yet accomplished work of Christ in the state of his heavenly exaltation. A theological interpretation of Hebrews 2:10 and 7:26 is given concerning the notion of fittingness that the author of Hebrews takes up in direct reference to Christ's high priestly mediatorship. Following this, Christ's kingly glory is argued as being epitomized in his death on the cross. The christological

contours of beauty then shift in reference to the already but not-yet order of reality governed under the preeminence of Christ's heavenly rule. Argued here is how the facets of God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven are defining of Christ's reconciling rule, which operates in various ways (and to varying degrees) in the spheres of human-divine relations and human-human relations in an already but not-yet consummate unity and harmony.

Chapter 6, "Re-creation: Beauty's Denouement," shows how the prototypical themes from Genesis 1–2 of the proto-eschaton come at last to rest and have their eschatological fulfillment. Our featured theologian to conclude with is Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758). The theological aesthetics here initially concern the unitive and unifying work of God given from two perspectives: first, how every believer is called to be conformed to the image of Christ; and second, the pattern after which the church universal images Christ in and to the world. Presented in the first instance is how everything constitutive of the protological image of God as comprehended in its three principal aspects—the official, constitutional, and ethical-relational—undergoes now through the Spirit for sons and daughters of God the progressive work of being transformed into the image of Christ from glory to glory. Presented in the second instance is how this present age is the already but not-yet order of reality in which God is doing that preparation of making his church beautiful for her end-time glorification as the wife of the Lamb. With respect to the damned in hell, it is proposed that these do not in any way participate in God's creational intention, which is revealed in its eternal fullness in the consummation when all things become summed up ultimately in Christ. The fittingness of God's retributive justice carries through in how the profound dignity conferred by God on man and woman alike by virtue of being created in his image becomes, for the damned, their being and bearing the utmost indignity. Lastly, shown here is how the eschatologically realized beauty of God in the economy of consummation becomes especially distinguished in its gloriousness against that of the economies of creation and redemption. The concluding note considers how the eschatological end of creation will be incomparably and everlastingly more glorious than its protological beginning for the redeemed in Christ.

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BEAUTY TRIUNE

The foundation for our christological contours of beauty begins with the doctrine of God. To recall from the Introduction, the constructive development of this project involves a biblical-theological characterization of God's beauty—notably in and through God the Son—as it is reflected economically in the phases of creation, redemption, and consummation. The distinct conceptual content of beauty that applies to the beauty of God manifested economically is what I had set out in our classicist theory of beauty in the Introduction. Our theological aesthetic of the doctrine of God and christological contours of beauty overall will therefore be concordant with our theory of beauty. Since the focus of my argumentation here is trained on the relation of beauty to God, it is necessarily limited in its scope and more in the way of a proposed theological aesthetic model. I am assuming upfront a doctrine of God fully consistent with Nicene Trinitarianism, and thus the development of our theological aesthetic will be in ways fully consistent with that. Additionally, the featured theologians in this chapter are Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas, Herman Bavinck, and Karl Barth. The contributions of all four theologians to the subject of divine beauty are especially relevant to the theological aesthetic of the doctrine of God that I am putting forward, and to a fair extent this chapter constructively appropriates and engages their ideas. As a first order of business, then, I will summarize their respective positions on divine beauty, and will engage with various aspects of their theology accordingly throughout the rest of this chapter, and to lesser degrees in succeeding chapters.

The interest of this chapter is to put forward a theological aesthetic model of the doctrine of God, and notably with respect to God the Son,

that will serve as the properly dogmatic (i.e., Trinitarian) ground for the constructive argument set forth in the subsequent chapters. My argumentation here in regard to the doctrine of God is developed in five main sections as follows:

1. *Beauty—A Divine Attribute?* First, I present how the beauty of God is most basically associated in Scripture with God's glory. In consideration of beauty as a divine perfection, the doctrine of divine simplicity, I argue, provides a systematic theological way to disambiguate how beauty relates to the other attributes.
2. *The Relation between Beauty and God's Glory.* I define the theological relation between God's glory and beauty. First, I set out what is meant or entailed by the glory of God expressed in his outward works (*ad extra*) and the glory of God in himself (*ad intra*). Following that I define the relation of God's glory to the objectively real aspect of God's extrinsic beauty.
3. *The Relation between Beauty and God's Beatitude.* I address the subjectively experienced aspect of God's extrinsic beauty, arguing that a theological aesthetic relation exists between beauty and God's beatitude. First, I set out what is meant or entailed by God's beatitude. Following that I clarify the relation of God's beatitude to beauty. Based on that relation, I draw together the fuller connection of transcendental truth, goodness, and beauty to the working of the Trinity *ad extra*.
4. *The Immanent Form of the Godhead's Beauty.* I define the immanent form of the Godhead's beauty, which is developed from our preceding argumentation for divine beauty and God's fullness of being as the Trinity of persons.
5. *The Fittingness of God the Son as Incarnate Redeemer.* Our Trinitarian account of aesthetics centers on the theological claim at the heart of this project's overall constructive argument, namely, that the Son's fittingness as incarnate Redeemer is displayed in Scripture as being fundamental to the design and outworking of God's eternal plan. The aesthetic notion of fittingness plays a critical role in my argumentation. First, I argue that all Trinitarian action in the divine economy is fittingly performed from the Father, through the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. Following that I lay out three theologically significant ways

the Scriptures attest to how the theodramatic fittingness of the Son has correspondence to the symmetrical nature of his agency in the work of the divine economy. Lastly, using Anselm and Aquinas as my guides, I consider the concept of fittingness in regard to the persons of the immanent Trinity, focusing in on the immanent fittingness of the Son.

THEOLOGIANS' POSITIONS ON DIVINE BEAUTY

Anselm of Canterbury on Divine Beauty

Anselm works out his doctrine of God from metaphysical principles influenced largely by and consonant with Augustine's: God is what he possesses in all the highest perfections. Each positive good on the creaturely plane of reality, beauty included, is carried to its highest perfection in God.[1] For Anselm, these divine perfections are neither constituent qualities or quantities of God's being, nor is there any contradiction internal to God between coextensive "supremes." The supreme nature just *is* all of them. An entailment of this is that the full compass of redemptive-history in which God's plan and purposes are fully realized involves an aesthetic expression of God's own nature, for God and his ways are wholly beautiful. Anselm gives expression to this basic idea in *Proslogion* chapter 17, affirming the harmony and beauty integral to God's nature: "For you have these qualities in you, O Lord God, in your own ineffable way; and you have given them in their own perceptible way to the things you created."[2] Moreover, the aesthetic nature of God provides the proper "optics" through which to describe sin and evil, while vindicating God from being its author. The harmony of the cosmos itself is served by the principle of contrariety.

1. Anselm, *Monologion* in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007), 24, gives clear expression to this (chap. 16): "Now it is clear that whatever good things the supreme nature is, he is that supremely. And so he is the supreme essence, supreme life, supreme reason, supreme salvation, supreme justice, supreme wisdom, supreme truth, supreme goodness, supreme greatness, supreme beauty, supreme immortality, supreme incorruptibility, supreme immutability, supreme beatitude, supreme eternity, supreme power, supreme unity, which is none other than supremely being, supremely living, and other similar things." See also Augustine, *Confessions* 1.4.4, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

2. Anselm, *Proslogion* in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Williams, 91.

As Frank Burch Brown points out in regard to the disorder, disharmony and ugliness brought about by evil, "Anselm says only that any ugliness in the order of things would ultimately be intolerable to God; and because hell is designed to remedy [i.e., rectify] the ugliness of sin, he implies—without stating it outright—that hell should be seen as in some way beautiful."[3] The underlying premise is that hell is designed to rectify the ugliness of sin by way of divine justice being fully vindicated.

Basic to Anselm's understanding of the divine nature is the concept of fittingness. In *Cur Deus Homo* 1.3, for example, fittingness is a defining characteristic of the aesthetic aspect of redemption, seen in the evident symmetry entailed in its outworking:

> And it was fitting that the devil, who through the tasting of a tree defeated the human being whom he persuaded, should be defeated by a human being through the suffering on a tree that he inflicted. And there are many other things that, if carefully considered, demonstrate the indescribable beauty that belongs to our redemption, accomplished in this way.[4]

The redemptive-eschatological structure of the divine plan will be perfected in unity and symmetry, for only in this way will God's ultimate purposes in creation and redemption be perfectly fitting. This is demonstrated in the aesthetic unity in which all things are governed and brought to their ultimate completion. Even the exact number of angels who fell irreparably through sin will be replaced in corresponding proportion from the redeemed lot of humanity, since "it was God's plan to replace the fallen angels from out of the human race" for that heavenly city that awaits.[5]

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3. Frank Burch Brown, "The Beauty of Hell: Anselm on God's Eternal Design," *Journal of Religion* 73 (Jul 1993): 329–56, here 340. Along similar lines, David Hogg, *Anselm of Canterbury*, 151, explains: "The challenge of disorder, disharmony and ugliness brought about by evil is countered by Anselm when he places evil within the larger context of aesthetic concerns, thereby showing the paradox of evil: it can only exist within a world marked by beauty."

4. Anselm, *Cur Deus Homo* in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Williams, 248. In the full context, Anselm cites other examples of such symmetry. *Cur Deus Homo* 2.11 (*Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Williams, 303–4), discusses fittingness in the plan of redemption further.

5. *Cur Deus Homo* 1.19 (*Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Williams, 300).

Thomas Aquinas on Divine Beauty

Like Anselm, Aquinas considered beauty a divine perfection as well, though his formulations to a considerable extent are the fruit of having worked out the Pseudo-Dionysian conceptions of beauty in a scholastic climate now warmed up to Aristotelianism.[6] For Aquinas, beauty is an attribute of God's being, which itself is the primal cause of the created order of all things.[7] And flowing from the fullness of God's being—i.e., the plenitude of his perfections—is the free participation of all created beings in the fullness of God's beauty (*supersubstantiale pulchrum*), which is the fount of all the beautiful. Aquinas thus writes in his commentary on the *Divine Names* of Dionysius, "The beauty of the creature is nothing else than the likeness of the divine beauty participated in things."[8] Although Aquinas' system begins with God as the first cause of being and the fullness of being, "it is clear," Francis Kovach explains, "that the basis of Thomas' theory of the essence of beauty rests on observations of an impressively broad scope and on the employment of the principle of the analogy of being."[9] From this Aquinas posits three formal criteria of beauty: proportion or consonance (*proportio sive consonatia*), integrity or wholeness (*integritas sive perfectio*), and clarity or splendor (*claritas sive splendor*).[10]

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6. It was under the teaching authority of Albertus Magnus (c.1200–1280) that Aquinas received the ideas of aesthetics that influenced him the most, namely, the Dionysian conceptions of beauty. In actuality, Albertus' influence on Aquinas regarding aesthetics can be thought of foremost as mediating Dionysius in a scholastic climate that had embraced the Aristotelianism of its day. See Umberto Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, trans. Hugh Bredin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 25–26.

7. Scholarly opinion varies as to whether or not Aquinas considered beauty a transcendental quality of being, and hence of the divine essence itself. The opinion here agrees with such Thomistic scholars as Jacques Maritain, Etienne Gilson, G. B. Phelan, Armand A. Maurer, Umberto Eco, and W. Norris Clarke.

8. Aquinas, *In Divinis Nominibus*, c.4, lect. 5, n337, quoted in Armand A. Maurer, *About Beauty: A Thomistic Interpretation* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1983), 116.

9. Francis J. Kovach, *Scholastic Challenges to Some Medieval and Modern Ideas* (Stillwater, OK: Western Publications, 1987), 248.

10. In *ST* Ia, q.39, a.8, Aquinas provides a systematic formulation of these three criteria. The question posed in this *Summa* article, and thus the context of Aquinas' formulation is "Whether the Essential Attributes Are Appropriated to the Persons [of the Trinity] in a Fitting Manner by the Holy Doctors?" A recommended

For Aquinas, *proportion* as an essential quality in beauty is synonymous with harmony and symmetry; proportion as such is "an analogous term, having many meanings, each determined by its context."[11] All meanings of proportion, moreover, are a function of being's "form," because for all being, whether sensible or intelligible, form provides the proximate ground of its beauty—"to be" is thus to be beautiful.[12] *Integrity*, although related to proportion, expresses the realized perfection of a thing—that is, what by its very nature a thing is meant to be. A thing is integral or whole that lacks nothing both in its existence and in whatever its form requires it to be in its telic wholeness. To be whole, as such, is what by its very nature a thing is meant to be perfectly and completely. "In a second sense," states Armand Maurer, "a thing is integral when it is perfect in its operation [or function]. Wholeness, in short, demands perfection in being and action. Lacking any of the parts required for the perfection of its form, or failing in its perfect operation, it falls short of the wholeness due to it, and to that extent it is ugly."[13] *Clarity* likewise is a function of being's form, just as we saw with proportion. For Aquinas, clarity is the distinctive "light" or splendor that each form imparts in its act of being. Since clarity is an analogous term as well, the kind of thing something is—sensible or intelligible, corporeal or spiritual—determines the kind of radiance perceivable by the percipient. Aquinas also attributes to *claritas* an expressive or communicative quality in itself, which signifies a "manifestation"—that is, expression—of a state of internal beauty.[14]

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treatment regarding this is found in Eco, *The Aesthetics of Thomas Aquinas*, chapter IV: The Formal Criteria of Beauty.

11. Maurer, *About Beauty*, 11.

12. In the Thomistic perspective, "form" is the natural basis ontologically for why everything is the kind of thing that it is, and serves as the principle for why matter has the particular structure that it has. In virtue of a thing's form, the conditions that are constitutive of aesthetic value are given for its own distinctive beauty. A thing is beautiful in proportion to its own form, according to the level of perfection it has in its form.

13. Maurer, *About Beauty*, 12. In n21, Maurer explains, "What is ugly is less than it should be; it falls short of the actuality due to it. It may be wanting in wholeness, like a person without an arm or a leg, or in order or proportion, like the discordant notes in a musical composition or a badly balanced mathematical equation."

14. Aquinas, *ST* IIa IIae, q.132, a.1, cited in Eco, *Thomas Aquinas*, 251, n129.

Since God is the fullness of being, then, fullness of perfect proportion and integrity must be present in his immanent form. At the same time, since the immanent form of God's beauty has to do with Triune beauty, it cannot be considered strictly in terms of the unchangeable essence *de Deo uno*.[15] The divine essence is whatever the three persons are together, whose essential qualities are represented in the Unity-in-Trinity that is God. Armand Maurer puts it this way: "Now God is absolutely one by nature; from this point of view He exhibits no order or proportion. Here there is only pure unity. But He is three in Persons. In His personal life there is harmony and proportion and consequently beauty."[16] In the same way, perfect clarity is represented in that communicative quality in God that manifests and expresses his internal Triune beauty.

Herman Bavinck on Divine Beauty

The late nineteenth/early twentieth century Dutch Reformed theologian Herman Bavinck treats the topic of beauty in his *Reformed Dogmatics* in connection with God's attributes, blessedness, and glory.[17] Although articulating his theology of beauty from a distinctly Reformed perspective, Bavinck does base his view, at least in part, on certain premises common to the theological aesthetics of Anselm and Aquinas. Especially noteworthy here is the analogical predication of creaturely attributes to divine attributes: "Just as contemplation of God's creatures directs our attention upward and prompts us to speak of God's eternity and omnipresence, his righteousness and grace, so it also gives us a glimpse of God's glory. What we have here, however, is analogy, not identity."[18] Thus, for Bavinck, in the *ordo cognoscendi* an aesthetics from below precedes an aesthetics from above. He also speaks approvingly of the

15. In his treatment of the divine persons, Aquinas, *ST* Ia, q.42, a.4, ad 3, echoes as much: "all the relations together are not greater than only one; nor are all the persons something greater than only one; because the whole perfection of the divine nature [*tota perfectio divinae naturae*] exists in each person."

16. Maurer, *About Beauty*, 114.

17. For Bavinck's overall treatment pertaining to divine beauty, see *RD*, 2:249–55. Although beauty is treated there but briefly, it is the first modern work of dogmatics proper to recognize it in relation to the divine attributes.

18. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:254.

classical triad of truth, goodness, and beauty as transcendental qualities of God's being: "The pinnacle of beauty, the beauty toward which all creatures point, is God. He is supreme being, supreme truth, supreme goodness, and also the apex of unchanging beauty."[19] But Bavinck recognized the Neoplatonic association such language carries, and thus with respect to divine beauty makes clear his preference "to speak of God's majesty and glory" instead. Be that as it may, for Bavinck God's beauty is synonymous with his glory.[20]

Karl Barth on Divine Beauty

Like Bavinck, Barth treats beauty in his *Church Dogmatics* under the doctrine of God in connection with the divine perfections, though he is clear that beauty itself is not included "with the divine perfections which are the divine essence itself."[21] For Barth, the idea of beauty is invoked as an explanatory concept of God's glory. To say that God is beautiful is "to say how he enlightens and convinces and persuades us" in his revelation.[22] That is to say, God's glory is beautiful in how it evokes response from human beings by that which it gives. And exactly what God's glory gives that elicits response is "his overflowing self-communicating joy," a joy that has the "peculiar power and characteristic of

19. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:254. In a separate article, Bavinck's description of the features of beauty bears noticeable similarities to that of Aquinas: "Beauty always derives its content from the true and the good, and it is their revelation and appearance. Beauty thus consists in the agreement with content and form, with essence (idea) and appearance; it exists in harmony, proportion, unity in diversity, organization, glow, glory, shining, fullness, perfection revealed or whatever one wants to name it. But beauty always is in relation to form, revelation, and appearance." Herman Bavinck, "Of Beauty and Aesthetics," in *Essays on Religion, Science, and Society*, ed. John Bolt, trans. Harry Boonstra and Gerrit Sheeres (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 256.

20. Bavinck *RD,* 2:256, explains, "Speaking of creatures, we call them pretty, beautiful, or splendid; but for the beauty of God Scripture has a special word: glory. For that reason it is not advisable to speak—with the church fathers, scholastics, and Catholic theologians—of God's beauty." Previously, Bavinck, *RD*, 2.252, defines God's glory as "the splendor and brilliance that is inseparably associated with all of God's attributes and his self-revelation in nature and grace, the glorious form in which he everywhere appears to his creatures."

21. Karl Barth, *CD*, II/1, 652. For Barth's overall treatment pertaining to divine beauty, see *CD* II/1, §31.3 (608–677).

22. Barth, *CD*, II/1, 650.

giving pleasure, awakening desire, and creating enjoyment."[23] Barth identifies the objective basis of God's glory as something in God's perfections "which justifies us in having joy, desire and pleasure towards him." As he relates,

> We shall not presume to try to interpret God's glory from the point of view of His beauty, as if it were the essence of His glory. But we cannot overlook the fact that God is glorious in such a way that He radiates joy, so that He is all He is with and not without beauty. Otherwise His glory might well be joyless. … We are dealing here solely with the question of the form of revelation.[24]

This "something" that obliges, summons, and attracts us to God is the "form" of God's glory, and is concomitant with the form of the revelation of God. Barth offers three central examples as to how the form of God's glory is known. First, God's attributes are revealed in the form of his self-revelation as the Lord, the Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer. Second, the Triunity of God: it is only as the one being of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that God is the perfections that he is. The Triunity of God is thus seen as the secret of his beauty. The third example is the incarnation—"the center and goal of all of God's works and therefore the hidden beginning of them all." What is reflected in the relationship between the divine and human nature in Christ is thus the beautiful form of the divine being.[25]

The beauty of God is best conceptualized, then, as that persuasive and convincing element in God's revelation, manifest in the form of his glory. The dynamic of God's beauty is thus interrelated with Barth's view of the *analogia fidei*, and his foundational thesis of the being of God may be adapted to describe his view of divine beauty as follows: *God's beauty is what it is in the glory of his revelation, and thus, God's beauty is Triune glory in act*.[26]

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23. Barth, *CD*, II/1, 653. In all this Barth seems to be attempting to hold together God's beauty *in se* and *pro nobis*, so that neither is conceptualized apart from the other. I am indebted to Brannon Ellis for this insight.

24. Barth, *CD*, II/1, 655.

25. See Barth, *CD*, II/1, 657–65.

26. Emphasis added. The mature conception of Barth's christocentric theology in relation to the particular question of the being of God is captured in his thesis:

BEAUTY—A DIVINE ATTRIBUTE?

The names by which God identifies himself or by which God is referred to in Scripture have been recognized throughout church history as making known, explicitly or implicitly, various attributes of God, that is, ascriptions that are intrinsically true of him.[27] The names are "telling," but they are not "definitive" or directly ascriptive. Although explicit biblical references to the "beauty" of God (or otherwise identifying God specifically in terms of his beauty) are few, verses such as Psalm 27:4; 96:6; 145:5,12 and Isaiah 28:5 and 33:17 link directly images of a crown, a diadem, kingdom, and the sanctuary of the Lord to God's beauty. From these texts a connection is evident between divine beauty and the majesty and glory, the kingship and sovereignty of God (cf. Job 40:10; Zech 9:16–17). In many instances the imagery describing theophanies and prophetic visions conveys the same kind of association in language charged with aesthetic overtones. Isaiah's vision of the Lord enthroned in majestic glory (Isa 6:1–4; John 12:41), Ezekiel's vision of God's glory (Ezek 1), and John's apocalyptic vision of Christ (Rev 1:13–18; 4:2–3) are striking examples.[28] Terms in Scripture expressive of "beauty," moreover, are also used in a parallel relationship with "glory" (e.g., Exod 28:2). In short, the beauty and sublimity of God is most basically associated in Scripture with God's glory.[29] Indeed, we saw already the deep

"God is who He is in the act of His revelation," and thus, God's being is Triune "being in act." See Barth, *CD*, II/1, 257 and 262.

27. Herman Bavinck, *RD*, 2:96, 111, summarizes the point here thus: "All that we can say about God must be based on his self-revelation. … As God reveals himself, so is he; in his names he himself becomes knowable to us. Though he is indeed infinitely superior to all his creatures—so that we can possess only an analogical knowledge of him not an exhaustive (adequated) knowledge—yet his several attributes, attributes that come through in his revelation, bring to our mind, each time from a special perspective, the fullness of his being." What God has revealed to us about himself in the Holy Scriptures is our paramount source and authority for this, although this is not at all to preclude making use of insights from general revelation/natural theology enlisted as an *ancilla theologiae*. Note, because divine attributes are understood to be intrinsic to God's essence or nature, the term divine "perfections" is sometimes stated as being preferable. In this work the terms "attributes" and "perfections" are used synonymously. See Bavinck, *RD*, 2:96–112 and 2:137–47.

28. "Beauty" in *DBI*, 84.

29. In John-Mark Hart, "Triune Beauty and the Ugly Cross: Towards a Theological Aesthetic," *TynBul* 66 no.2 (2015): 295–96, Hart expounds on the

connection between beauty and the glory of God reflected explicitly in the positions on divine beauty of Herman Bavinck and Karl Barth. I will further elaborate on that connection in the next section.

Beauty and Divine Simplicity

We are trying to answer whether beauty is of the divine nature itself, qualifying it as a divine perfection, or if not, how beauty should be qualified with respect to the divine nature. Among the featured theologians engaged with in this chapter, Anselm of Canterbury, Thomas Aquinas, Herman Bavinck, and Karl Barth have argued theological positions on beauty in relation to the divine perfections in two basic ways: beauty

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above-noted connection in Scripture between beauty and God's splendor, majesty and glory: "Because Aaron has been set apart as high priest of the holy God, he is to wear holy garments, which represent the sacredness of his vocation 'for glory and for beauty'. The text goes on to describe in some detail the appearance of these clothes. As J. A. Motyer notes, 'the same colours, fabrics and gold were used for [Aaron's] garments as for the tabernacle,' with the effect that Aaron's clothes visually represent his consecration as God's 'heavenly man'. The high priest has been set apart to serve a transcendent God whose heavenly reign is gloriously manifest among his people at the site of the tabernacle. To put this a different way, the tabernacle and priesthood of Israel are the channels that God has chosen for his presence to break into the fallen world, and the aesthetic beauty of the tabernacle and priestly garments are meant to signify the sacredness of God's in-breaking glory. Thus, in this text, the concepts of glory and beauty are closely parallel, and they are both related to the perceptible manifestation of God's transcendent presence. Similar dynamics are at work in the interplay of the words glory (*kabod*) and beauty (*tipharah*) in Psalm 96. The Psalm repeatedly speaks of God's glory and beauty alongside other closely related terms such as splendour (*hod*), majesty (*hadar*), and strength (*oz*). These first two terms each have a semantic range that overlaps considerably with *kabod* and *tipharah*, while 'strength' is repeated in this context to emphasize the manifestation of God's transcendent power through his 'wonderful deeds among all the peoples' (verse 3). These wonderful deeds are also described as God's works of salvation as well as his righteous and faithful judgements among the peoples of the world (verses 2, 13). Thus the terms glory, beauty, splendour, majesty, and strength all signify the manifestation of God's transcendent goodness as it becomes apparent in his works of love, justice, and faithfulness. In response to these manifestations of divine goodness, the psalm invites 'all the earth' and the 'families of the peoples' to tremble before him, worship him with exuberant songs of praise, and proclaim his 'salvation from day to day'. The psalm also contrasts God's glory and beauty with the worthlessness of idols, in which none of God's righteousness, grace, faithfulness, and power are apparent (verses 4–5). Thus the concepts of glory and beauty in Psalm 96 involve the manifestation of God's transcendent greatness through his mighty acts, and this manifest greatness calls for exuberant worship and witness from humanity."

either is a divine perfection or corresponds in some way to the divine perfections. The mysterious and theologically slippery nature of beauty again presents itself. Nuancing the question at issue even further, is beauty a divine attribute itself, or a quality of every attribute, or the sum of them? Should we perhaps say instead that the way all the attributes comport in God—that is, the way they coexist in perfect harmony and sublime agreement—is beautiful and is what we mean by divine beauty? Scripture does not exactly parse out these subtleties. In consideration of beauty as an attribute, the doctrine of divine simplicity (DDS) provides a systematic-theological approach to disambiguate how beauty relates to the other attributes. Without exception, our featured theologians—Anselm, Aquinas, Bavinck, and Barth—are all proponents of divine simplicity.[30] A defense of the DDS will not be mounted here; I am stipulating, however, that I accept the DDS as valid.[31]

Our interest here is limited to describing in brief four basic claims of the DDS. Following that, I will put forward a biblically consistent construal on beauty in relation to God's attributes. It is important to note that the DDS is not so much a notion read explicitly or implicitly from the biblical data as it is the theological rationale seen to underlie the divine perfections that *are* readable from the biblical data.[32] According to Eleonore Stump the doctrine can be thought of as comprising the following claims:[33]

30. On the topic in hand, Richard Muller, *PRRD*, III, 39, states: "The doctrine of divine simplicity is among the normative assumptions of theology from the time of the church fathers, to the age of the great medieval scholastic systems, to the era of Reformation and post-Reformation theology, and indeed, on into the succeeding era of late orthodoxy and rationalism."

31. For a recommended defense of the DDS, see James E. Dolezal, *God without Parts: Divine Simplicity and the Metaphysics of God's Absoluteness* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011); also, Thomas H. McCall, "Trinity Doctrine, Plain and Simple" in *Advancing Trinitarian Doctrine: Explorations in Constructive Dogmatics*, ed. Oliver D. Crisp and Fred Sanders (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 42–59. The DDS has mixed scholarly support, and in more recent times has become noticeably more controverted in both systematic and philosophical theology. For a helpful discussion and exposition, see Dolezal, *God without Parts*, Chapter 1: Friends and Foes of the Classical Doctrine of Divine Simplicity.

32. Dolezal, *God without Parts*, 67.

33. Eleonore Stump, "Simplicity" in *A Companion to Philosophy of Religion*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Taliaferro et al. (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 270. Stump's use of the term "property" here is synonymous with attribute.

1. God cannot have any spatial or temporal parts.
2. God cannot have any intrinsic accidental properties.
3. There cannot be any real distinction between one essential property and another in God's nature.
4. There cannot be a real distinction between essence and existence in God.

Implicitly affirmed in the first claim are God's incorporeality and eternality.[34] Both these ascriptions lay claim to the "unboundedness" of God such that his complete, undivided, and unchanging life is ontologically unconditioned by space or time. The notion of divine simplicity, then, offers a useful way to explain conceptually/metaphysically how God can "be simultaneously present to all moments of time [and places of space] in the completeness of his being and essence."[35] Thus, God is not only unconditioned by space and time, but in virtue of this, he is wholly "present" to all spaces and times. According to claim two, a change in God's extrinsic (accidental) properties can occur without a change in God, while a change in God's intrinsic (essential) properties *would be* a change in God.[36] At stake in this claim is God's immutability. The basic idea of claim three is that the distinctions between divine attributes mark a conceptual distinction within God's nature but do not mark any real (i.e., ontological) distinction within it. In line with how we defined transcendental properties of being in the Introduction, what we thus distinguish conceptually as the various divine attributes "is the single thing that is God but recognized by us under differing

34. Stump, "Simplicity," 270. Stump adds, "On the doctrine of simplicity, the life of a simple God is not spread out over time, any more than God is spread out over space."

35. See Dolezal, *God without Parts*, 88–92, here 91–92.

36. Along the same lines Thomas H. McCall, *Forsaken: The Trinity and the Cross, and Why It Matters* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 78, explains, "Attributes that are essential to God on the one hand are those that make God who he is—they are characteristics or perfections of God's own life. Attributes that God has only in relation to the world, on the other hand, are not essential to him but instead are contingent. After perceiving this distinction between essential and contingent attributes, it is important to note that within the unity of God's being and act the attributes that are contingent are grounded in and flow from what is essential to him."

descriptions or in different manifestations."[37] And lastly, according to claim four, "God is so radically one that there is no composition in him even of essence and existence. Consequently, God does not have an essence; instead, he is identical with his essence, and even his existence cannot be distinguished from that essence."[38] Put another way, there is no difference between *what* God is and *that* God is.[39]

Accepting as valid the supposition that God's nature is "pure act," postulating God in himself (*in se*) as being all his attributes comports in Thomistic terms with saying that there is no unrealized metaphysical potentiality in God. He is *actus purus*, pure undivided (and never passive) act.[40] "With God we do not hypothesize any unity underlying the diversity because there is no diversity" with respect to nature, explains Katherin Rogers. "There is just the one, perfect act which is God."[41] With respect to our consideration of beauty as an attribute, then, the DDS account of God's identity suggests that beauty be considered a divine

37. Stump, "Simplicity," 271.

38. Stump, "Simplicity," 271. James Ross, "Religious Language" in *Philosophy of Religion: A Guide to the Subject*, ed. Brian Davies (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1998), 113, elaborates the point in terms of the act-potency relation: "God's essence is said to be identical with his existence … in the sense that, unlike all other real things, there is no real distinction (no real difference) between God's being and what God is, while with all other things, *what* they are is related to their *being* as a *capacity* to its *realization* (a potency that limits act). So, for any other thing, *what-it-is* limits its being: a dog can only be a dog, not a lion."

39. For a helpful discussion of the different models that proponents of the DDS use to defend it, see Dolezal, *God without Parts*, chapter 5: Simplicity and God's Absolute Attributes.

40. Elaborating on this same point, Eleonore Stump, "Dante's Hell, Aquinas's Moral Theory, and the Love of God," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 16 no. 2 (June 1986), 186, writes, "So on the doctrine of simplicity there are in reality no distinctions within the divine nature, and God is in some sense identical with whatever can be really attributed to him. But the respect in which God is devoid of real distinctions does not preclude our distinguishing God's actions in the world from one another and does not require our taking the terms for divine attributes as synonymous. On the doctrine of simplicity, then, there is something inaccurate in saying that God is omnipotent. It is more nearly correct to say that he is identical with omnipotence, but even that statement is misleading. Perhaps the best available formulation is that God is identical with the single indivisible act which he is, one of whose manifestations or partial descriptions is omnipotence." See Aquinas, *ST* Ia, q.3, a.7; *ST* Ia, q.4, a.2, ad 1.

41. Katherin A. Rogers, *The Anselmian Approach to God and Creation* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1997), 39.

perfection in its own right without other qualifications necessary. In sum, the ontological basis for predicating beauty of God is identical with the ontological basis for predicating all of the perfections of God—God simply *is* all his perfections in pure act. It would be inconsistent theologically, therefore, to consider beauty to be a "special case" relative to all of God's other perfections. Thus, beauty is neither a separate portmanteau quality correlated in some way to the divine attributes, or the sum of the attributes, or just the way all the attributes comport in God. In other words, beauty is not itself the ultimate integrative harmony, another way of talking about divine simplicity. Rather, the DDS leads us to say that God ontologically is all his perfections, one of which we have biblical witness and support to say is beauty.[42] This still does not address just what God's beauty consists in; we will attend to that question in short order, however.

THE RELATION BETWEEN BEAUTY AND GOD'S GLORY

At the beginning of this chapter, we saw the deep connection between beauty and the glory of God reflected explicitly in the positions on divine beauty of Herman Bavinck and Karl Barth. The same connection is reflected in the positions of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jonathan Edwards, which I present in Chapters 3 and 5 respectively. Here, I will define the theological relation between God's glory and beauty. First, I will set out what is meant or entailed by God's glory *ad extra* and *ad intra*, and then I will clarify the relation of God's glory to beauty.

Defining God's Glory

The referent "glory" in Scripture normally pertains to the Trinity operating economically, but it is arguably used of the Trinity relating essentially as well. The former is considered properly God's extrinsic glory (*ad extra*) and the latter his intrinsic glory (*ad intra*). Bavinck touches on both stating, "When Scripture speaks of God's face, glory, and majesty, it uses figurative language. Like all God's perfections, so also that of God's glory is reflected in his creatures. It is communicable. In the created world there is a faint reflection of the inexpressible glory

42. See the sub-section of Chapter 2, Beauty—A Divine Attribute? and Appendix 1: The General Witness of Scripture to the Aesthetic Dimension.

and majesty that God possesses."[43] As we shall see, the glory of God functions in Scripture in a way parallel to the revealed names of God, namely, both bring to our mind, each time from a special perspective, the plenitude of his perfections.

By far the predominant Hebrew word used for "glory" in the OT (some 200 times) is כָּבוֹד, and it is employed most often in reference to God, his sanctuary, his city, or other sacred objects. The constellation of meanings of כָּבוֹד (e.g., weight, gravity, honor, fame, dignity, splendor, etc.) attain a certain fixation of meaning, and in the process an overall enrichment of meaning, with the advent of the Septuagint, which uses δόξα to translate virtually all the Hebrew words for glory. As well, the more pedestrian meanings of δόξα similarly came to be replaced by the rich Hebrew concept of the glory of God.[44] The concept of God's glory *ad extra* pervades the sweep of Scripture in creation, redemption, and consummation.

Between the biblical narrative of paradisal creation and eschatological consummation we have the great unfolding of revelation of God's manifest glory-presence in redemption. It is sufficient for our present purposes just to highlight some key examples. The visible and active presence of God in the midst of his covenant people is manifest in sundry ways throughout much of the OT as a theophanic glory-presence. In the Exodus account, God's glory-presence involves both deliverance from and destruction of Israel's enemies (Exod 13:21–22; 14:24–25; 16:10; 24:17).[45] Subsequently, God's dwelling among his people is signified in more focal terms by the dwelling of his glory in the tabernacle (the tabernacle functioning as a mobile temple of sorts), as it was in Israel's later temple in Jerusalem (Exod 29:43; 40:34–38; 1 Kgs 8:10–11; 2 Chr 5:13–14; 7:1–3).[46] By the time of Judah's Babylonian exile,

43. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:254.

44. Bernard Ramm, *Them He Glorified: A Systematic Study of the Doctrine of Glorification* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 10–11.

45. See James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010) for a thorough treatment on the connection between glory and judgment.

46. In the unique case of Moses, his vis-à-vis with the glory-presence of the Lord was enough to cause *his* face to radiate luminously (Exod 34:29–35). Ramm, *Them He Glorified*, 13–14, points out that "the apostle Paul affirmed that this manifestation of the divine presence was one of Israel's greatest benefits, for he wrote

however, the glory of the Lord departs from the temple altogether (Ezek 9–11). In the fullness of time it reappears with the advent of the Son of God incarnate, who as the Redeemer of the world is the definitive expression of the glory-presence of God (John 1:14; 1 Tim 4:10; Heb 1:1–3). The reference to Jesus in John 1:14, notes Andreas Köstenberger, "also harks back to OT references to the manifestation of the presence and glory (*kābôd*) of God, be it theophanies, the tabernacle, or the temple."[47]

In the eschatological consummation, the incarnate presence of God in the person of Jesus Christ glorified will dwell eternally with his people—the Bride of Christ, the church of God glorified (Rev 21:1–22:5). This marks the new heavens and earth, the full realization of what Isaiah foresaw: "The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together" (Isa 40:5; ch. 60, especially verses 1–2, 13, 19; cf. Num 14:21; Hab 2:14). On the apostle John's vision of Christ in Revelation 21–22, Köstenberger writes, "Most importantly, in this final vision it is made clear that God shares his glory with his people in fulfillment of Jesus' vision and desire that his followers be allowed to see his preexistent glory (John 17:24; cf. 17:5)."[48] Indeed, Isaiah prophesied of this shared glory in regal and aesthetic language, stating that God's people will be "a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God" (62:2–3; cf. Zech 9:16–17). The apostle Peter simply describes this as being "a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed," although still noting its regal aspect (1 Pet 5:1, 4; cf. Rom 9:23; 1 Cor 15:43; Col 1:27; 3:4). It thus awaits until the consummation of all things for the redeemed in Christ to fully realize the "glory and

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that to them belonged the *glory* (Rom 9:4). Similarly, the cherubim of the mercy seat are called (in Heb 9:5) 'cherubim of glory' because of the glory that glowed between them. The dwelling of the glory of God in the tabernacle not only gives a visible sign of the presence of the Lord but it also makes the entire structure holy." See also the treatment by Tremper Longman III, "The Glory of God in the Old Testament" in *The Glory of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 47–78.

47. Andreas J. Köstenberger, "John" in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 422. The treatment in Ramm, *Them He Glorified,* chapter III: The Glory of Jesus Christ, is recommended as well.

48. Andreas J. Köstenberger, "The Glory of God in John's Gospel and Revelation," in *The Glory of God*, ed. Christopher W. Morgan and Robert A. Peterson (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 125.

honor" with which they have been crowned, for only then will they fully partake in the glory and honor with which Jesus himself has been crowned on their behalf (Heb 2:9; cf. Ps 8:5).[49]

In a variety of ways, and with cumulative effect, the intrinsic glory of God is also attested to in Scripture. To begin with, it is perhaps telling how "the word glory (*kābôd*) serves as a synonym for God himself: 'Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory [i.e., their God] for that which does not profit' (Jer 2:11)." Along with this, in Isaiah 42:8 the Lord identifies himself in terms of his name and his own *kābôd*, which cannot belong to any other.[50] Similarly, in the New Testament God the Father is referred to by Peter as the "Majestic Glory" (2 Pet 1:17), an unusual expression that is likely used here to avoid naming God directly; likewise Paul speaks of "the Father of glory" (Eph 1:17; cf. Acts 7:2). As Ramm observes, these designations are fulsome, implying "that he is a glorious God, that he gives glory, and that he is a being to whom glory belongs."[51] With regard to Jesus, one of the most telling statements is given in John 17:5 in which he refers directly to the glory *ad intra* that he too had with the Father "before the world existed." And just like with the Father, the same fulsomeness of glory is implied in the designations of Jesus as "the Lord of glory" and "the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature" (2 Cor 2:8; Jas 2:1; and Heb 1:3).[52]

Furthermore, it is in Romans 1:18–23 where we find attributes of God's nature described as being "clearly perceived" in creation, revealing "the glory of the immortal God" to humanity (cf. Ps 106:19–20). What is more, the word "glory" frequently serves in Scripture in tandem with or as a proxy for specific attributes of God. In such instances, of

49. See also the relevant treatments in Ramm, *Them He Glorified,* chapter VII: The Glorification and the New Jerusalem, and Morgan, "Toward a Theology of the Glory of God."

50. Ramm, *Them He Glorified*, 18–19. For a helpful discussion on the complementary relation between God's name and his glory, see J. Gordon McConville, "God's 'Name' and God's 'Glory'," *TynBul* 30 (1979): 149–63.

51. Ramm, *Them He Glorified*, 25.

52. Morgan, "Toward a Theology of the Glory of God," 157, rounds this out, stating, "The Spirit, too, is identified with glory (1 Pet 4:14; cf. John 16:14; Eph 1:13–14), especially through the language of presence, indwelling, and temple (John 14-16; Rom 8:9–11; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19–20; 14:24–25; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:11–22; 5:18; 1 Thess 4:8)."

course, the specific attribute(s) has to be determined from the context. Examples here include the following: goodness in the aspects of mercy and grace (Exod 33:18–19; Eph 1:6, 12, 14); truthfulness (1 Sam 15:29); holiness (Isa 6:3); majesty (Isa 35:2); righteousness (Rom 3:23); and power (John 11:40; Rom 6:4; 2 Thess 1:8–9). Indeed, in Scripture glory does seem to connote the publication or external manifestation/realization of God's perfections. "Such biblical data suggests that God's intrinsic glory is broader than a single attribute," observes Christopher Morgan. "It corresponds with his very being and sometimes functions as a sort of summation of his attributes."[53] The associative effect of linking glory so directly with (or as a substitute for) a variety of divine attributes suggests the nature of glory being intrinsic to God *in se*.[54]

Although the above explication of the biblical concept of glory does not account for all its aspects and constellation of meanings, overall it more than suggests that glory "refers not so much to an attribute of God, unlike [e.g.,] 'omnipotence', but is the term that when theologically considered encapsulates the eminence of all God's attributes viewed together in the light of the *tota Scriptura* (the whole biblical testimony)."[55] On this view the immanent glory of God comprehends all of God's attributes. And thus the immanent glory of God means the same as the altogether perfection of God. Consonant with the notion of divine simplicity offered earlier, then, and with a nod towards Aquinas, a perfectly proper way to characterize God's fullness of being would be as *supersubstantiale gloriosum*, his fullness of glory. The relation of white light to the full color spectrum may be figuratively illustrative here. As Isaac Newton demonstrated in the late seventeenth century, an optical prism can be used to separate white light into its constituent spectral colors. The prism does not create colors but simply reveals that all the colors already exist in the light (more technically, it evidences the existence of a spectrum of wavelengths present in visible light).[56]

53. Morgan, "Toward a Theology of the Glory of God," 165. See also Ramm, *Them He Glorified*, 19.

54. Cf. Kittel, δόξα, *TDNT*, 2:244: δόξα denotes the "divine nature or essence either in its invisible or its perceptible form."

55. Graham A. Cole, *God the Peacemaker: How Atonement Brings Shalom* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 225.

56. In a closely related vein of thinking, Gregory of Nyssa applied the

Newton proved this by using a second prism to recompose the spectrum back into white light. So let us say that the white light represents God's glory *ad intra*, then all the spectral colors revealed by the prism represent the revelation of God's extrinsic glory in all its manifestations. And most amazingly, this fullness of glory is fully composed in the person of Christ Jesus.

DEFINING THE RELATION BETWEEN BEAUTY AND GOD'S GLORY

We are in position now to define the theological relation between God's glory and beauty. I have argued so far that the immanent glory of God means the same as the altogether perfection of God. God's glory as such "encapsulates the eminence of all God's attributes," including beauty as being one of those attributes. God's extrinsic beauty is thus one facet of the innumerable facets of his extrinsic glory, all of which is fully consistent with saying that God's extrinsic beauty is a communicable perfection expressed in his outward works. The distinct conceptual content of beauty that applies to the beauty expressed in God's outward

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illustration of the rainbow in grappling with the difficulty that the human mind encounters in reconciling the oneness and threeness of God: "You have before now, in springtime, beheld the brilliance of the bow in the clouds—I mean the bow which is commonly called the 'rainbow'. … Now, the brightness [of the rainbow] is both continuous with itself and divided. It has many diverse colors; and yet the various bright tints of its dye are imperceptibly intermingled, hiding from our eyes the point of contact of the different colors with each other. As a result, between the blue and the flame-color, or the flame-color and the purple, or the purple and the amber, the space which both mingles and separates the two colors cannot be discerned. For when the rays of all the colors are seen they are seen to be distinct, and yet at the same time … it is impossible to find out how far the red or the green color of the radiance extends, and at what point it begins to be no longer perceived as it is when it is distinct. Just as in this example we both clearly distinguish the different colors and yet cannot detect by observation the separation of one from the other, so, please consider that it is also possible to draw [similar] inferences with regard to the divine doctrines. In particular, one can both conclude that the specific characteristics of [each of] the Persons [of the Godhead], like any one of the brilliant colors which appear in the rainbow, reflect their brightness in each of the [other] Persons we believe to be in the Holy Trinity, but that no difference can be observed in the … nature of the one as compared with the others." Gregory of Nyssa in a document that has been titled *On the Difference between* ousia [being] *and* hypostasis [person], quoted in Michael A. G. Haykin, "Defending the Holy Spirit's Deity: Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Pneumatomachian Controversy of the 4th Century," *SBJT* 7 no.3 (Fall 2003), 78.

works is what I set out in our classicist theory of beauty in the Introduction, summarized in abbreviated form as follows: Beauty is an intrinsic quality of things that, when perceived, pleases the mind by displaying a certain kind of fittingness. That is to say, beauty is discerned via objective properties such as proportion, unity, variety, symmetry, harmony, intricacy, delicacy, simplicity, or suggestiveness. As I am applying the term, then, fittingness functions as an overarching term expressive of the full range of aesthetic properties that identify any and all objective characteristics of beauty. What uniquely characterizes the quality of beauty is its effect of evoking pleasure or delight in the act of perceiving it. Thus, a realist view of beauty is postulated in which the unique nature of beauty implies objective properties—with such properties themselves able to serve as objective aesthetic criteria—and involves the effect beauty has of eliciting a subjective response of aesthetic pleasure as we perceive it.[57]

In accordance with our received theory of beauty, therefore, the beauty expressed in God's outward works is objectively real and subjectively experienced. Here, we are only addressing the objectively real aspect of God's extrinsic beauty in relation to his glory. The subjectively experienced aspect of God's extrinsic beauty will be addressed in the next section in our discussion of the relation between beauty and God's beatitude.

Inasmuch as an objectivist view is premised in our theory of beauty, this implies that the quality of beauty has no real being in the abstract (i.e., not purely nominal) but must have existence in an objective form.[58] That is to say, beauty in the order of reality pertains only to something that has form, for something that has no form is sheer abstraction.[59]

57. As I had noted in the Introduction, since the canon of Scripture is the *norma normans* for the theological aesthetics with which our biblical and systematic theology of beauty as defined by the divine economy of redemption is developed, the theory of beauty stemming out of the classical tradition that has served to fund this will be more properly qualified as needed in the Conclusion.

58. The basic universalized meaning of "form" serving here is the given mode, structure, pattern, or essential nature in which any real thing (material or immaterial) exists, occurs or is experienced, expressed, or done. In regard to theological aesthetics in particular, it is important to note that acts as well as things (entities) can be beautiful.

59. What is meant here by "abstraction" is any notional entity or general

And all the countless forms that God's glory takes in creation, redemption, and consummation are themselves objective forms entailing an aesthetic quality of whatever degree. To be clear, beauty is not identical or does not simply equate to glory or the objective forms that God's glory takes—beauty is *not* a synonym for glory, in other words. The distinction here is a subtle one but important to grasp. The theological relation between God's glory and beauty translates as follows: the beauty of God manifested economically (*pulchritudo Dei ad extra*) is expressed and perceivable *as a quality of* the glory of God inherent in his work of creation, redemption, and consummation.[60] The display of God's glory is thus always beautiful, always fitting, always entails an aesthetic dimension to it. The universal scope of this means that an aesthetic dimension—in illimitable expressions and degree—is inherent in the structure (i.e., form) of God's extrinsic glory.[61] Reminiscent here is Anselm's affirmation of the harmony and beauty integral to God's nature: "For you have these qualities in you, O Lord God, in your own ineffable way; and you have given them in their own perceptible way to the things you created."[62] What I am proposing, then, is that the countless forms of the glory of God *ad extra*, down to their most infinitesimal features, are inherently imbued with the full compass of his communicable attributes, one of which is beauty with the untold array of aesthetic characteristics it entails.

Lastly, there is a critical caveat I must register. The ramifications of a creational order radically affected by sin and laboring under the

concept considered apart from an actual instance of a real being. Since sheer abstraction does not have an objective form, it is impossible that an abstraction could have the quality of beauty. Indeed, it is arguable that no attribute has "real being in the abstract."

60. To illustrate the point here in simple fashion, we could say that "wetness" is a particular quality of water in liquid form. We would not want to say, however, that "wetness" *is* liquid water. The "is" in the latter case is simply an "is" of predication.

61. The view I set forth here affirms the ontological ground of the objective forms glory takes in creation, redemption, and consummation as being God's own fullness of glory. Barth, in contrast, views the "form" of God's glory as the specifically persuasive and convincing element in God's revelation. Barth, *CD*, II/1, 659, wants nevertheless to distinguish but not separate God's form from his being, stating that the form is made perfect by the content, i.e., God himself, since the form is necessary to the content and belongs to it.

62. Anselm, *Proslogion* in *Basic Writings*, 91.

judgment curse of God from the fall of our primal parents in Genesis 3, compromise and affect the integrity of all dimensions of the creational order, including the aesthetic. The extrinsic glory of God now pertains to a creation under his judgment curse; a creation groaning to be set free from its bondage to corruption (Rom 8:21–22), and a humanity who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth of what can be perceived and known of God's nature in the things that have been made (Rom 1:18–20). The beauty of God manifested economically does not change from being a quality of his glory inherent in his work of creation. But such glory is reflected now in a created order and a humanity operating under the effects of God's judgment curse, and thus in indeterminable ways the created order itself is tainted/corrupted, and humanity's ability to rightly perceive the attributes of God reflected in creation is obscured/distorted. I will address the undoing of the effects of the judgment curse and the ultimate renewal of creation as I work through the christological contours of beauty in respect of the redemptive-eschatological outworking of the divine plan in the economy of salvation.

THE RELATION BETWEEN BEAUTY AND GOD'S BEATITUDE

In the previous section I defined the theological relation between God's glory and beauty, addressing only the objectively real aspect of God's extrinsic beauty in relation to his glory. In this section I address the subjectively experienced aspect of God's extrinsic beauty, making a theological connection to God's beatitude. Why God's beatitude? In what way does God's beatitude figure in to our theological aesthetic? In the properly dogmatic account of aesthetics that I am putting forward, a theological aesthetic relation exists between beauty and God's beatitude. In defining that theological relation, I will first set out what is meant or entailed by God's beatitude, and then I will clarify the relation of this to beauty. Based on the relation between God's beatitude and beauty, I will draw together the fuller connection of transcendental truth, goodness, and beauty to the working of the Trinity *ad extra*.

God's beatitude refers to his intrinsic or *ad intra* "blessedness." Just as with beauty, however, explicit biblical references identifying God specifically in terms of his beatitude are few. The clearest verses to do

so are 1 Timothy 1:11 and 6:15 in which μακάριος ("blessed") is used as an epithet for the only God (6:15), pointing up blessedness as being intrinsic to the very identity of who God is.[63] The idea of God's own beatitude or blessedness denotes the eternal condition in himself of absolute felicity, delight, satisfaction, and repose.[64] It is worth noting how closely the language Paul uses in 1 Timothy 6:15–16, albeit doxologically driven, resonates with the pronounced aspects in Scripture concerning the beauty of God and his manifest glory, namely, the majesty, kingship, and splendor of God.[65] The Greek word normally used for "blessed" in the sense of God being "worthy of praise" is εὐλογητός.[66] However, while many scholars regard Paul's use of "blessed" in 2 Corinthians 1:3 and

63. As an adjective "blessed" could apply to mean the "praised" God in the sense that he receives the praise or blessing of which he is worthy, but the common consensus among commentators is that "blessed" here means God is blessed in himself, i.e., blessedness is intrinsic to who God is.

64. That various idioms Paul uses in 1 Timothy (and the Pastoral Epistles generally) point to the Hellenistic milieu to which he is writing is well attested. In his commentary on 1 Timothy, Raymond F. Collins, *1 and 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 34–35, states that in using "blessed" as an epithet for God, "[Paul] speaks as did Hellenistic Jews who use the language of Hellenism to express their Jewish faith. Thus, Philo wrote, 'God alone is happy and blessed, exempt from all evil, filled with perfect forms of good, or rather, if the real truth be told, himself the good, who showers the particular goods on heaven and earth' (*Special Laws* 2.53) and that God is the 'Imperishable Blessed One' (*Unchangeableness of God* 26). Hellenistic Judaism's use of 'blessed' to describe God is derived from the Greeks. Aristotle, for example, affirmed that the gods enjoy 'supreme felicity [μακάριος] and happiness' and that the activity of the gods is transcendent in blessedness (*Nicomachean Ethics* 10.8.7). He went on to affirm that 'the whole of the life of the gods is blessed, and that of humans insofar as it contains some likeness to the divine activity' (10.8.8). Philo shared the notion that it is only in relationship to God that other things can be called blessed: 'The good and beautiful things in the world could never have been what they are, save that they were made in the image of the archetype, which is truly good and beautiful, even the uncreated, the blessed, the imperishable' (*Cherubim* 86; see *Gaius* 5)."

65. William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles* (WBC 46; Waco, TX: Word, 2000), 361, offers the following commentary on 1 Timothy 6:15: "The language, drawn from the OT, the Hellenistic synagogue, and Hellenism, describes a mighty and transcendent God who deserves Timothy's loyalty. Some of the language is directed against emperor worship, which had a center in Ephesus, claiming that God and not the emperor possesses immortality, that God is the King over all kings and Lord over all lords, and that God alone possesses might."

66. Examples in both the LXX and the New Testament include the following: 1 Kgs 1:48; 2 Chr 2:11; 6:4; Pss 40:14; 71:18; 88:53; Luke 1:68; Rom 1:25; 9:5; 2 Cor 11:31; 1 Pet 1:3. Cf. Rev 4:11; 5:12–13.

Ephesians 1:3 to be extolling God as "worthy of praise," others suggest the best interpretation of these texts is not the optative sense but the indicative—that is, Paul is referring to God's intrinsic blessedness.[67]

The creaturely experience of blessedness naturally expresses itself in the experience of "happiness" or "delight." Although the full dimension of blessedness surely involves more than possessing a certain sense of felicity, we should not think it involves less than this either. In *ST* Ia, q.62, a.4, Aquinas posits this same idea of God having absolute blessedness in himself: "Perfect beatitude is natural only to God, because existence and beatitude are one and the same thing in Him."[68] As Katherin Rogers succinctly (if over-simplistically) puts it, "The medieval position is simply that it is better to be happy than sad, so God must be infinitely happy."[69] For Aquinas (and the medievals generally) the issue was not whether God is utterly impassive—that is, that he experiences no emotions at all—for "there is no question that in the classical tradition God enjoys complete love and happiness, while 'negative' emotions,

67. For example, the translator's note on Ephesians 1:3 in the NET states: "There is no verb in the Greek text; either the optative ("be") or the indicative ("is") can be supplied. The meaning of the term εὐλογητός, the author's intention at this point in the epistle, and the literary genre of this material must all come into play to determine which is the preferred nuance. Εὐλογητός as an adjective can mean either that one is praised or that one is blessed, that is, in a place of favor and benefit. The meaning "blessed" would be more naturally paired with an indicative verb here and would suggest that blessedness is an intrinsic part of God's character. The meaning "praised" would be more naturally paired with an optative verb here and would suggest that God ought to be praised. Pauline style in the epistles generally moves from statements to obligations, expressing the reality first and then the believer's necessary response, which would favor the indicative. ... When considered as a whole, although a decision is difficult, the indicative seems to fit all the factors better. The author seems to be pointing to who God is and what he has done for believers in this section; the indicative more naturally fits that emphasis. Cf. also 2 Cor 1:3; 1 Pet 1:3." Lending perhaps indirect support is the substantival use of εὐλογητός in Mark 14:61 in which the high priest Caiaphas, interrogating Jesus, asks, "Are you the Christ—the son of the Blessed [i.e., God]?" (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ εὐλογητοῦ). This reference to God as "the Blessed One" is properly seen as a Jewish circumlocution for God's name, similar to the periphrastic way Peter refers to God as the "Majestic Glory" (2 Pet 1:17).

68. Continuing, Aquinas adds, "Beatitude, however, is not of the nature of the creature, but is its end." E.g., also *ST* Ia, q.26; Ia IIae, q.3, a.1, ad 1; Ia IIae, q.3, a.2, ad 1, 4.

69. Katherin A. Rogers, *Perfect Being Theology* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 51.

like hate and sorrow, which are the falling away from love and joy, are impossible for a perfect being to experience (*ST* Ia, q.20)."[70] To affirm such "positive" emotions of God is to analogically predicate at least well-ordered creaturely emotions to him. What is assumed here is not an anthropomorphic projection of our image upon God, but rather a theomorphic projection of God's image upon us.[71] The anthropomorphous God, in other words, corresponds to the theomorphous human being. "We are usually quite content to speak of the divine mind," points out Graham Cole, "Why balk at speaking of God's feelings?"[72] It is, in other words, to take as *illegitimate* the premise that God's nature is simply impassive and as *legitimate* the ascription to God of an intrinsic emotional life, not in the merely metaphorical sense, but analogical to our own emotional life if this were not infected by and without the effects of sin. On this view an emotional life that is labile or entails real imperfection, impropriety, or disquietude must not be predicated of God. Yet at the same time the attribute of impassivity is likewise to be considered its own kind of imperfection. A proper distinction is to be made, however, between divine impassivity and divine impassibility—these concerns are not identical ones. The core concern of divine impassibility is whether God can be affected by something outside himself. Discussions on this oftentimes have to do with whether and/or how God is subject to the so-called "negative" emotions, often distinguished as "passions."[73] For obvious reasons the matter of Christ's suffering is

70. Rogers, *Perfect Being Theology*, 51.

71. Brian G. Mattson, *Restored to Our Destiny: Eschatology and the Image of God in Herman Bavinck's Reformed Dogmatics* (Boston: Brill, 2012), 120, notes the significance of the *imago Dei* to our point: "The theologian is authorized to analogically apply human attributes of God (as scripture does) precisely because God already created human beings as an analogical image of himself."

72. Graham A. Cole, "The Living God: Anthropomorphic or Anthropopathic?," *The Reformed Theological Review* 59 no.1 (April 2000): 24. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:50, makes the obverse point on our capacity to know as well as *feel* God: "If God cannot be known, then neither can he be felt and, in that feeling, enjoyed."

73. There is an important difference to mark here between God being passionate and his having passions—the former being proper to affirm but not the latter (*the passion* in reference to Christ Jesus suffering death is altogether something different, however, from what we mean here by God having passions). Cole, "The Living God," n23, is instructive on this point, noting, "there is an old theological distinction going back to Tertullian (c.160–c.225CE) that distinguishes between God having emotion and feeling ('*motus*' and '*sensus*') as we do and God having passions

an inescapable part of these discussions as well. Issues pertaining to divine impassibility are adjacent but not central to our present interest, though, which is the beatitude of God in himself.

A key question is whether or not God's beatitude is subject to any essential change. A partial answer at this point can be given. According to divine simplicity, the Triune God as Father, Son, and Spirit is his attributes—his fullness of glory—and since God himself is not subject to any essential change, neither are his attributes. God's beatitude does not "suffer change." God is not impassive, in other words, but can be understood as being impassible in this sense—the *infinite quality and integrity* of God's intrinsic emotional life does not suffer change.[74] And because the essence of who God is cannot suffer change, he cannot become more beatified than he is or less beatified than he is.

This is fully consistent with our view that God simply is all his perfections. As Stephen Holmes relates, "If God is simple, then God's existence is necessarily dependent only on a single basis, which is (by supposition) his own good pleasure in his existence. … This means, necessarily, that God is possessed of the perfection of aseity: his life is consequent on nothing other than himself."[75] Indeed, whatever else the I AM revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14 may denote about God's identity, it does seem to connote with it the ontological notion of divine aseity.[76]

('*passiones*') which subvert His character as they do our own. According to Tertullian, God has emotions and feelings but not passions." Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, 1.4: "You love without burning, you are jealous in a way that is free of anxiety, you 'repent' (Gen 6:6) without the pain of regret, you are wrathful and remain tranquil."

74. Cf. Rob Lister, *God Is Impassible and Impassioned: Toward a Theology of Divine Emotion* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 175: "[I]t is in fact Scripture that leads us to the conclusion that God is *both* invulnerable to *involuntarily* precipitated emotional vicissitude *and* supremely passionate about his creatures' practice of obedience and rebellion, as well as their experience of joy and affliction."

75. Stephen R. Holmes, "A Simple Salvation? Soteriology and the Perfections of God" in *God of Salvation: Soteriology in Theological Perspective*, ed. Ivor J. Davidson and Murray A. Rae (Farnham, Surrey, England: Ashgate, 2011), 39. Holmes, 39–40, further states, "Aseity also has consequences, however: if God is *a se*, then God is also necessarily immutable and impassible, if both these perfections are properly understood. Both are essentially claims that God's life is not changed or damaged by anything beyond himself."

76. Concerning theological interpretation of Exodus 3:14, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology: Divine Action, Passion, and Authorship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 42, states: "The ontological 'I am' does not

The apostle Paul's words to the Athenians seem to connote as much: "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:24–25). In this light the perfection of divine aseity may be seen as cousin to the perfection of divine beatitude. Bavinck captures this idea nicely: "[God] does not have to become anything, but is what he is eternally. He has no goal outside himself but is self-sufficient, all-sufficient (Ps 50:8ff; Isa 40:28ff; Hab 2:20). He receives nothing, but only gives. All things need him; he needs nothing or nobody. He always aims at himself because he cannot rest in anything other than himself."[77] The relation of the *ad intra* blessedness of God to his altogether perfection begins to come into more integrated focus now. John Webster characterizes the latter thus:

> God's perfection is not first and foremost a negative concept, denoting the absence of restriction or fulfillment in the being of God; these entailments may follow, but perfection chiefly refers to the sheer positive plenitude of God's being. Further, like the closely parallel concepts of God as *a se* or *causa sui*, the concept of divine perfection is not primarily a formal concept but a material one. "We call that perfect which lacks nothing of the mode of its perfection," says Aquinas [*ST* Ia, q.4, a.1].[78]

Consonant with this depiction of God's perfection as "the sheer positive plenitude of his being," the apostle Paul, after surveying God's purposes in salvation history, concludes, "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever" (Rom 11:36).

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exhaust all possible readings of God's name. There is another tradition of interpretation that focuses more on the biblical *mythos* itself. Here, the spotlight shines on the narrative context, where God's naming is part of a longer dialogue between God and Moses, which in turn is an episode in the story of Moses' call and, beyond that, a key scene in the even larger story of God's covenant with Abraham. This covenanted 'I am' gives rise to a different 'metaphysics of the Exodus' where what is at issue is not simply God's existence but covenant faithfulness." See Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 40–44, for the fuller discussion.

77. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:211.

78. John Webster, "God's Perfect Life," in *God's Life in Trinity*, ed. Miroslav Volf and Michael Welker (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 143.

Christopher Morgan expands on this nicely: "God's self-sufficiency and glory are intricately linked: God is the creator ("from him"), sustainer ("through him"), and goal ("to him") of all things. The self-sufficient and independent God creates out of fullness, guides out of fullness, and receives back according to his communicated fullness."[79]

The theological synthesis of God's beatitude and beauty that obtains at this point is along these lines: the beatitude of God represents the eternal condition in himself of absolute satisfaction and delight, which is bound up with the sheer positive plenitude of his being—that is, the altogether perfection of who God is as Father, Son, and Spirit. This "plenitude" of God is synonymous with his fullness of glory. Bavinck encapsulates the point likewise: "The perfection of God, which is inwardly the ground of his blessedness, outwardly as it were carries his glory with it."[80] As I argued earlier, God's beauty is also bound up with the altogether perfection of who God is as Father, Son, and Spirit. Manifested economically, the beauty of God (*pulchritudo Dei ad extra*) is expressed and perceivable as an aesthetic quality of his glory inherent in his work of creation, redemption, and consummation. The universal scope of this means that an aesthetic dimension—in illimitable expressions and degree—is inherent in the structure (i.e., form) of God's extrinsic glory. What uniquely characterizes the subjectively experienced aspect of the beauty expressed in God's outward works is its effect of evoking pleasure or delight in the act of perceiving it. The distinctive characteristic of beauty, moreover, is that beauty as *beauty* is not desired as a means to another end but communicates to the perceiver of it an associated pleasure or delight *as* that end. That characteristic to communicate delight as its own end is correlative to

79. Morgan, "Toward a Theology of the Glory of God," 163. Cf. Aquinas, *ST* Ia, q.26, a.4.

80. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:252. In consistent terms, *The Westminster Confession of Faith* 2.2 affirms as much: "God hath all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of himself; and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he hath made, nor deriving any glory from them, but only manifesting his own glory in, by, unto, and upon them. He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things; and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever himself pleaseth."

that absolute self-delight that characterizes God's own eternal, internal, life as Father, Son, and Spirit.

Drawing this altogether, I propose the following postulate on the theological aesthetic relation between beauty and God's beatitude: *the beauty of God ad extra as it is perceived and experienced by human beings is what most clearly evinces that perfection of beatitude and sense of delight that belongs to the Trinity ad intra*. From this perspective, the subjectively experienced aspect of beauty points beyond itself to that absolute self-delight that characterizes God in himself. "In the beautiful," writes David Bentley Hart, "God's glory is revealed as something communicable and intrinsically delightful, as including the creature in its ends, and as completely worthy of love."[81] As I suggest below, it is God's beatitude in himself that correlates with a properly aesthetic dimension to our faith seeking understanding, the fruit and expression of which is a knowing pleasure and heartfelt delight in the Lord.

One subtlety to call out here is that the economic forms of God's glory have an aesthetic dimension to them, however narrowly or broadly conceived their aesthetic qualities may be. Aesthetics *narrowly conceived* denotes any real thing that is perceivable by human beings as patently or conspicuously beautiful. One is consciously attracted to such a thing for its outright aesthetic quality, perhaps a particular quality that stands out. An instance of explicitly recognized beauty is at the same time an instance of that thing being fitting, reflecting in its form and features aesthetic qualities of God's manifest glory. The aesthetic dimension *broadly conceived*, however, understands fittingness to involve more than that which one is consciously attracted to or recognizes for its outright and particular aesthetic quality. While something that exhibits fittingness may be perceived for a particular aesthetic quality that stands out, it may also be recognized in much more subtle terms regarding its propriety or its overall sense of order or harmony and such like. Thus, aesthetics broadly conceived is simply a formal distinction that acknowledges the less conspicuous or less perceptible subtle aesthetic aspects that God's glory takes in the design

81. David Bentley Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite: The Aesthetics of Christian Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 17.

and outworking of his eternal plan in all its diversely splendored forms. We could therefore think of the aesthetic dimension conceived in a narrow sense and the aesthetic dimension conceived in a broad sense as the recognition of a focal/particular perception of beauty versus a subsidiary/synthetic perception of it. The aesthetic dimension both narrowly or broadly conceived, then, entails the full compass of characteristics betraying God's beauty, all of which are expressions of the aesthetic quality of his manifest glory.

Lastly, the same critical caveat I registered in the previous section bears repeating regarding the ramifications of a creational order radically affected by sin and laboring under the judgment curse of God from the fall of our primal parents in Genesis 3. What uniquely characterizes the subjectively experienced aspect of the beauty expressed in God's outward works is still its effect of evoking pleasure or delight in the act of perceiving it. But the consequent condition of human fallenness now means that humanity's ability to subjectively experience that pleasure or delight involves, in indeterminable ways and degree, a spoiling or diminishing of that experience.

The Relation of Divine Beatitude to Transcendental Truth, Goodness, and Beauty

The theological aesthetic relation between beauty and God's beatitude discussed above has a direct bearing on what I referred to in the Introduction as "the non-coincidence of the true, the good, and the beautiful." I will argue here that the transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty in God's work of creation, redemption, and consummation are strongly correlated because these attributes are communicable perfections of God's essential nature that are coordinate with God's knowledge, will, and beatitude.

God's fullness of being, which is the glorious life of God *ad intra*, "does not mean that God's perfection is simple stasis," writes Webster, "God *enacts* his perfection."[82] As Scripture amply indicates, it is according to God's perfect knowledge and will that all things from him and through him and to him are so enacted (e.g., Rom 11:33; Col 2:2–3; Eph

82. Webster, "God's Perfect Life," 147.

1:11; Rev 4:11). Aquinas puts it concisely: "The knowledge of God, joined to His will, is the cause of all things."[83] If the notion of divine simplicity is to apply here, however, then the perfection of God's knowing and willing are perfections of his infinite act.[84] The analogical predication of these activities to God thus requires proper qualification, as Matthew Levering relates: "When we speak about the supremely simple God using words taken from the perfections of creatures, we distinguish God's intellect and will, even though in him they are the same."[85] There is thus no differentiation between what God in himself knows and wills and his act of knowing and willing.[86] "If we say, 'God is omniscient,'" explains Rogers, "we should not understand this to mean that God possesses some quality, omniscience, which enables Him to know everything. Rather 'God is omniscient,' means just that God knows everything. Strictly speaking, God does not *have* the power to do things. God does things."[87] Accepting this picture, and given as I argued earlier that blessedness is also a perfection of God's fullness of being, we may round out our concept of God's beatitude as follows: *God's beatitude is bound up with his knowledge and will of which the very knowing and willing is his absolute satisfaction and delight*. God enacts his

83. *ST* Ia, q.14, a.9, ad 3; see also *ST* Ia, q.14, a.1, ad 1–3; Ia, q.19, a.1.

84. The Reformed orthodox understanding of "the *vita* and *aseitas Dei*," as Muller, *PRRD*, III, 377, notes, maintained this basic view: "It is not merely the case that the divine life is related to and understood in terms of the other divine attributes; the divine life is the actualization of all the other attributes—and, as the actuosity of an essentially spiritual and rational being, it is characterized by intellect and will or knowing and willing."

85. Matthew Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics: Aquinas and the Renewal of Trinitarian Theology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 97.

86. In service here are the classical definitions of divine knowledge and will common to the medieval and the Protestant scholastics. In basic terms the intellect is that which knows objects, and the will is that which has an appetite or desire for them. The *veritas Dei* is the correspondence of the *intellectus Dei* and *voluntas Dei* with the essence of God. For its part, the *voluntas Dei* operates to bring about the good known to and desired by God as the highest end or greatest good (*summum bonum*) of all things. See respective terms in Richard A. Muller, *Dictionary of Latin and Greek Theological Terms: Drawn Principally from Protestant Scholastic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985).

87. Rogers, *The Anselmian Approach to God and Creation*, 37–38. Cf. Aquinas, *ST* Ia, q.8, a.3, ad 3.

perfection, we may thus better say, according to his perfect knowledge, will, and beatitude.[88]

To speak in terms of God enacting his perfection, of course, is to mean that his perfect knowledge, will, and beatitude extend to other than himself, that is, from his glory *ad intra* to his glory *ad extra* in his work of creation, redemption, and consummation. Respecting here the infinite ontological divide between Creator and creature, God *in se* must be distinguished from the work that he does. The question Levering poses speaks to a seeming tension at the heart of the matter: "But why does [God's] will extend to anything beyond himself? If he wills the other things that we see around us, moreover, it would seem that these other things might either frustrate God's will or be unfitting things for God to will."[89] Considering the overall scheme of things, why would God even *want* to enact the theodrama? It is a fair question, after all, in view of our argument above regarding the aseity and *ad intra* blessedness of God. As far as what has been revealed to us, it all concerns God's eternal plan and purposes according to the Scriptures, of which cardinal points will be explored in the succeeding chapters of this work. That said, Levering's engagement with Aquinas is instructive here. Quoting Aquinas,

> If natural things, in so far as they are perfect, communicate their good to others, much more does it appertain to the divine will to communicate by likeness its own good to others as much as possible. Thus, then, He wills both Himself to be, and other things to be; but Himself as the end, and other things as ordained to that end; inasmuch as it befits the divine goodness that other things should be partakers therein.[90]

88. Addressing the topic of "The Decrees of God in General and Predestination in Particular," Francis Turretin, *IET*, vol. 1, Topic IV, Quest. III, Sec. III, states along related lines, "God's decrees depend on his good pleasure (*eudokia*) (Matt 11:26; Eph 1:5; Rom 9:11). Therefore they are not suspended upon any condition outside of God." (page 316). Turretin (1623–1687) was a Swiss-Italian Reformed theologian among the Genevan Reformers. Cf. also Muller, *PRRD*, III, 456–69.

89. Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 99.

90. *ST* Ia, q.19, a.2 quoted in Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 99 (the *Summa* quote here extends beyond Levering's).

Aquinas thus argues that since a self-giving inclination is a natural aspect of a well-ordered human will to share the good it possesses with others, such a perfection would naturally and accordingly belong to God. Levering's follow-up commentary is helpful: "Our question—why would God will other things, when he is delighting in his own infinite goodness—is thus turned on its head: embracing his own infinite goodness does not in fact trap God in his own self, but rather constitutes precisely the reason why God wills to share his being in finite ways, that is, why God wills other things."[91] But lest we be guilty of "fill[ing] the content of God's inner life with images drawn from what someone happens to regard as humanity's 'best practice,'" a theologically sound answer requires further filling in according to the Scriptures.[92] We will simply mark for now the idea that, in virtue of his self-giving nature, God communicates himself so that we might be partakers "in the glory that is going to be revealed" (1 Pet 5:1).

With God, as I have presented the case, his knowledge, will, and beatitude are all of a piece. But as a formal distinction at least, we may understand the transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty to function in coordinated relation to God's knowledge, will, and beatitude, respectively. By extension it follows that the transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty are coordinate with the performative enactment of God's thought, will, and beatitude for his eternal plan. The knowability, desirability, and delightability of the created order are thus "transcendental" aspects of reality—*per prius et posterius*—inasmuch as: (a) their ultimate grounding is in God as the Creator, Redeemer, and Consummator of all things; and (b) the givenness of the truth, goodness, and beauty of the world is a precondition of all subjective personal engagement with the world.[93]

91. Levering, *Scripture and Metaphysics*, 99. Along the same lines, Bavinck, *RD*, 2:233, states: "[God's] love for himself incorporates into itself the love he has for his creatures and through them returns to himself. Therefore, his willing, also in relation to creatures, is never a striving for some as yet unpossessed good and hence no sign of imperfection and infelicity. On the contrary: his willing is always—also in and through his creatures—absolute self-enjoyment, perfect blessedness, divine rest. In God rest and labor are one; his self-sufficiency coincides with absolute actuality."

92. Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 160.

93. In the order of knowing (*ordo cognoscendi*), the truth, goodness, and beauty

We are in position now to propose a modest reframing of the classical way that the transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty have been characterized: *in the true the intellect* (*knowledge*) *is at rest, in the good the will is at rest, and in the beautiful the beatitude is at rest*.[94] In this qualified sense the metaphysical ground of all truth is coordinate with God's knowledge, of all goodness is coordinate with God's will, and of all beauty is coordinate with God's beatitude. Qualified in this way, then, I suggest that it is God's own beatitude that, in this present age, correlates with a properly aesthetic dimension to our faith seeking understanding, the fruit and expression of which is a knowing pleasure and heartfelt delight in the Lord. Such delight suggests itself as being a faint reflection of that aesthetic delight, that beatitude in God's own being, and is the doxological component of divine beauty's effect on us that provides a foretaste in this life of our enjoying God forever in the next. With respect to the effect of God's beauty on us, it is worth noting the striking affinity here with Barth's view: "The glory of God, to share in which is the intention and purpose of his love for the creature, is the overflowing of the inner perfection and joy of God."[95] While Barth held that beauty itself is not a divine perfection, he nonetheless grasped the significance of the correlation that exists between the experience of perceiving beauty and the overflowing delight identified with it. In the chapters ahead, we will see the same striking affinity regarding the

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of the world in the prima facie sense (i.e., from below) precede the transcendentals of truth, goodness, and beauty in the ultima facie sense (i.e., from above). I accept a metaphysic of analogical extensions of being from God to the created world. In this way I am affirming an extramental realism by affirming God as the divine subject who is absolutely necessary/non-contingent to that realism. Human subjects, on the other hand, are contingent in a basic sense but necessary in the sense that their engagement with the world is a conditional necessity for perceiving the knowability, desirability, and delightability of the world.

94. The idea of "at rest" here implies the idea of being "fully satisfied." Striking in part a similar chord is Aquinas' treatment "Of the Cause of Love" in *ST* Ia IIae, q.27, a.1. In the first article he addresses "Whether Good Is the Only Cause of Love?" In ad 3 he begins by stating, "The beautiful is the same as the good, and they differ in aspect only. For since good is what all seek, the notion of good is that which calms the desire; while the notion of the beautiful is that which calms the desire, by being seen or known."

95. Barth, *CD*, II/1, 671.

effect of God's beauty on us reflected in the positions of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Jonathan Edwards.

THE IMMANENT FORM OF THE GODHEAD'S BEAUTY

In the interest of filling out a properly dogmatic account of aesthetics with respect to the doctrine of the immanent Trinity, my aim here is to define the immanent form of the Godhead's beauty. The focus of our discussions has been on the perfections of God's essential nature with respect to beauty, the God who out of his fullness of glory enacts his eternal plan according to his perfect knowledge, will, and beatitude. In cumulative argument so far I have presented the case for understanding beauty theologically in a threefold way. Specifically, beauty as being (a) an attribute of God; (b) a quality of the glory of God *ad extra* inherent in his work of creation, redemption, and consummation; and (c) the divine perfection *ad extra* as it is perceived and experienced by human beings that most clearly evinces that perfection of beatitude and sense of delight that belongs to the Trinity *ad intra*. Admittedly, I have so far only referenced the Trinity in my argumentation in more or less passing fashion. Our attention here on the Triunity of God keeps in mind our objectivist premise that beauty in the order of reality (not just *created* reality) pertains only to something that has form. In defining the immanent form of the Godhead's beauty, I will first set out God's fullness of being in terms of the Trinity of persons. The theological groundwork laid here all pays forward in the subsequent section as we address the fittingness of the eternal Son as incarnate Redeemer.

As there is no real distinction between essence and existence (being) in God, so there is no real distinction between the essence of God and the Trinity of persons. For the being and nature of God who enacts his eternal plan is the selfsame Trinity—"the one who is himself as he executes his own being in his acts as Father, Son and Holy Spirit."[96]

96. John Webster, *Confessing God: Essays in Christian Dogmatics II* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 112. Brannon Ellis, *Calvin, Classical Trinitarianism, and the Aseity of the Son* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 206, captures the point here well in summary: "Consistent with the classical practice of locating the distinctions in God between the persons and not 'in' the essence, then, we should affirm unqualifiedly that Father, Son, and Spirit are *this* God in all respects and unqualifiedly. Every attribute of God is equally an attribute of each person of the Triune God."

On these terms there is no reason at all to view the doctrine of the one God (*de Deo uno*) to be at variance with that of the Trinity (*de Deo trino*), nor should either one be considered of first importance over the other. Whereas the latter is concerned with the distinct persons of the Trinity, the focus of the former is more on the divine nature and attributes that are common to all three persons of the Godhead and as such are understood to be integrally essential to Trinitarian doctrine.[97] The twofold use of "God" in John 1:1 is a traditional prooftext that refers to both the *person* of the Father and the *divine nature* shared by the Father and the Son. The person of the Spirit shares the same. As Brannon Ellis notes, "The God who is from himself is the Trinity, so that the persons are no more separable with respect to deity as they are identical with respect to one another."[98] The tri-personal God, therefore, has *one nature*, that is, one divine essence that is *one life*. The Godhead, in other words, does not simply have "a life" held in common or united as one by some sort of confederation between the persons of the Trinity, but rather numerically one life *ad intra* that is indivisibly tri-personal.[99] Indeed,

97. In regard to developments in theology proper after the Reformation, Richard Muller, *PRRD*, III, 156, states: "The *locus* [doctrine of God] does not segment Trinity off from the discussion of essence and attributes: the issue addressed by this order is not a movement from an extended philosophical or speculative discussion of 'what' God is to a biblicistic, Trinitarian definition of 'who' God is, but the movement from a statement of 'what' (or 'who') the existent One is, namely, God, to a lengthy discussion in terms of attributes and Trinity, of precisely 'what sort' of God has been revealed, namely, a triune God who is simple, infinite, omnipotent, gracious, merciful, and so forth." For a helpful discussion on issues as relates to classical theism, see Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 82–93; also James E. Dolezal, "Trinity, Simplicity and the Status of God's Personal Relations," *IJST* 16 no. 1 (Jan 2014): 79–98.

98. Ellis, *Calvin*, 209.

99. Cf. Calvin, *Institutes* 1.13.5, ed. McNeill, trans. Battles: "Say that in the one essence of God there is a trinity of persons; you will say in one word what Scripture states, and cut short empty talkativeness. Indeed, if anxious superstition so constrains anyone that he cannot bear these terms, yet no one could now deny, even if he were to burst, that when we hear 'one' we ought to understand 'unity of substance'; when we hear 'three in one essence,' the persons in this trinity are meant. When this is confessed without guile, we need not dally over words." See also the helpful discussion in Brannon Ellis, "The Spirit from the Father, of Himself God: A Calvinian Approach to the Filioque Debate," in *Ecumenical Perspectives on the Filioque for the 21st Century*, ed. Myk Habets (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 87–106.

the God who enacts his eternal plan according to his perfect knowledge, will, and beatitude is the Trinity of persons who subsist in an order of relations of mutual love and eternal delight with and in one another (i.e., perichoretically), and whose perfections are together shared in full equality in every respect.

Like all attributes of the divine nature, beauty is properly taken to be common to all three persons of the Godhead. We have no clear reasons from Scripture to think that beauty is to be identified with only one or two persons of the Trinity. The concept of the immanent form of the Godhead's beauty is developed from our overall argumentation for divine beauty and God's fullness of being as the Trinity of persons. The ordered Triunity of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is already a theologically basic description of the "form" of the Godhead. However, there are a few further points that bear mentioning here.

To begin with, we may affirm that the infinitude of God in his perfections in no way denotes any sort of "formlessness" in God. "[B]eauty and the infinite entirely coincide," postulates David Bentley Hart, "for the very life of God is one of—to phrase it strangely—infinite form."[100] On this view, God's "infinite form" does not equate to God's "formlessness of being" (cf. John 5:37) but rather, to "the sheer positive plenitude of his being," that is, to God's fullness of glory. God is as such *Forma Formarum*. To be sure, since the immanent form of God's beauty has to do with Triune beauty, it cannot be considered strictly in terms of the unchangeable essence *de Deo uno*. Unity in a monadic sense, moreover, does not comport with beauty as understood to entail the aspect of fittingness, for beauty as such involves a context of plurality or diversity to "be fitting." That idea is reminiscent of Aquinas' view of divine beauty given earlier, which says that perfect proportion and integrity in God are present in virtue of the Triunity of the persons. From another perspective, the infinitely perfect God "who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see" (1 Tim 6:16) is the selfsame Trinity of persons who dwell in mutual love and eternal delight with and in one another. Here, the notion of God dwelling in

100. Hart, *The Beauty of the Infinite*, 131.

"unapproachable light" is reminiscent of Aquinas' aesthetic criterion of *claritas*, which as regards God signifies his internal beauty.[101]

The concept of divine simplicity informs us that the divine essence is whatever the three persons are together, whose essential qualities are represented in the Unity-in-Trinity that is God. As Stephen Wright explains, "If the divine essence is whatever the three are together, then a doctrine of simplicity is not incompatible with a theology that prefers to make constant reference to the mutual activity of the Father, Son, and Spirit—which is simply the revealed name for the singular divine essence. The grammar of simplicity is a subset of a Trinitarian grammar."[102] In the most basic terms, then, *the immanent form of the Godhead's beauty is God's Triunity—his three-in-oneness—consisting of all its absolute perfections in triadic divine simplicity, or better, Triune simplicity*. Worth noting here is Karl Barth's view of divine beauty given earlier, which includes his point that the Triunity of God is the secret of God's beauty.

The only form of the Godhead revealed to us, however, is the economic form, which "has its origin from the Father, proceeds through the Son, and is perfected in the Holy Spirit."[103] For since the eternal beauty/fittingness of the immanent Trinity is manifest in the divine economy, the standard and substance of a theological aesthetic is the economic Trinity itself, with Scripture attesting to, and being itself an ingredient in, the economies of revelation and redemption. Christopher Holmes captures nicely the relation between God's Triunity and his perfections manifest in the divine economy this way:

> The one God who is himself a multiplicity of attributes communicates himself in history: his history is a genuine bestowal or

101. Suggestively, Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Art in Action: Toward a Christian Aesthetic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 167, poses the following questions with respect to his idea of "fittingness-intensity," which is taken as a measure of aesthetic merit: "Could it be that when Aquinas spoke of the 'brightness' [*claritas*] of a work he had in mind the very same thing that I have called the work's *intensity*? And could it be that when our contemporary critics speak of a work's 'expressiveness' they also mean the very same thing?"

102. Stephen John Wright, *Dogmatic Aesthetics: A Theology of Beauty in Dialogue with Robert W. Jenson* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 81.

103. Gregory of Nyssa, *To Ablabius, on "Not Three Gods"* Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd ser., 5:334 cited in Vanhoozer, *Remythologizing Theology*, 247.

> disclosure of the holy fellowship that God is. Thus, attributes are always understood to be attributes of the triune God, attributes peculiar to the persons' relations and their perichoresis which overflows in their creating, reconciling, and perfecting action in the world.[104]

And that brings us now to the central idea informing the christological contours of beauty for which this project argues—the fittingness of God the Son as incarnate Redeemer.

The Fittingness of God the Son as Incarnate Redeemer

Our Trinitarian account of aesthetics subsumes the idea of the Son's fittingness as incarnate Redeemer. The theological claim at the heart of this project's overall constructive argument is that the Son's fittingness as incarnate Redeemer is foundational to the design and outworking of God's eternal plan. The christological contours of beauty developed in the chapters following take their basic shape from the overarching design of the divine plan, which can be characterized in terms of a fundamental *symmetry* between creation and re-creation.[105] The symmetry of that design, along with the symmetrical nature of the Son's agency in it, are an integral part of the aesthetics inherent in the structure (i.e., form) that God's glory takes in his work of creation, redemption, and consummation. This creational-re-creational symmetry is identifiable by the symmetrical nature of the Son's agency in the work of the divine economy, which I will unpack below. The section is divided into three parts: (1) the fittingness of the Trinity operating economically; (2) the theodramatic fittingness of the Son as incarnate Redeemer; and (3) the immanent fittingness of the Son in the ordered Triunity of God.

104. Christopher R. J. Holmes, *Revisiting the Doctrine of the Divine Attributes: In Dialogue with Karl Barth, Eberhard Jüngel and Wolf Krötke* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 3.

105. I set out my argument for the basic shape of the divine plan in Chapter 3; see in particular my discussion of the Sublime Comedy: The Theodramatic Form of the Divine Plan.

The Fittingness of the Trinity Operating Economically

The Trinity, as John Webster states in traditional Nicene language, is that "life in the processions or personal relations that constitute [God's] absolute vitality *in se*. God is perfect as the Father who begets the Son. … Further, God is perfect as the Father and the Son who together breathe the Spirit, and so as the Spirit who proceeds from them."[106] The language of "begotten" and "proceeding" (or "spirating"), used respectively with regard to the Son and the Spirit, refers traditionally to their eternal relations—that is, their respective processions within the Godhead. From the revelation of the Son and the Spirit in their economic missions is discerned the irreducibly real distinctions of the persons of the Trinity. On this point, Robert Reymond provides a helpful gloss:

> The distinguishing property of the Father is paternity (*paternitas*) from which flow "economical" activities which are unique to his paternity; the Son's is filiation (*filiatio*) from which flow "economical" activities which are unique to his filiation; and the Holy Spirit's is spiration (*spiratio*) from which flow "economical" activities which are unique to his spiration.[107]

The fittingness of the economical activities of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, respectively, is basic, I submit, to what characterizes the aesthetic dimension (i.e., beauty) of the Trinity operating economically.[108] Unpacking that a bit, the economical activities of the persons in the economies of creation, redemption, and consummation reflect with

106. Webster, "God's Perfect Life," 149.

107. Robert L. Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith*, 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998), 340.

108. Nicholas M. Healy, *Thomas Aquinas: Theologian of the Christian Life* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 38, offers the following insight: "[T]he theologian should attempt to explain why these means to salvation are the best by displaying the appropriateness of God's actions as they are described in Scripture. The argument for fittingness is therefore something like an aesthetic argument because it searches for structure and proportion. The French Dominican, Gilbert Narcisse, gives this definition: 'Theological fittingness displays the significance of the chosen means among alternative possibilities, and the reasons according to which God, in his wisdom, has effectively realized and revealed, gratuitously and through his love, the mystery of the salvation and glorification of humanity.'" See also Aquinas, *ST* IIIa, q.1.

perfect fittingness the paternity of the Father (the working of all things is *from the Father*), the filiation of the Son (the working of all things is *through the Son*), and the spiration of the Holy Spirit (the working of all things is *in the Spirit*).[109] Here, there is perfect unity in perfect freedom and personal distinction. Since I characterize that relation of the persons in terms of "perfect fittingness," I should clarify what is entailed in the idea of the fittingness being "perfect." For this I am adopting and adapting the principle advanced by Oliver Crisp that "*for any given created theatre, God's glory must be exercised in such a manner as to display all his divine attributes*."[110] What I submit is that not only do the respective economical activities of the persons reflect a proper fittingness in relation to the real distinctions of the persons, but their economical activities reflect a *perfect* fittingness because through their extratrinitarian works, God's fullness of glory is brought to a consummative expression that is all-dimensional in scope, cosmic in scale. According to the biblical theodrama, that consummative expression entails a glorified new creation with all those who would become partakers of the divine nature becoming themselves consummately glorified.[111]

Relating the above principle to our primary interest—the Son's fittingness as incarnate Redeemer—obtains in the following proposition: *it is in Christ and through Christ that God's glory is manifested in dramatic, or better, theodramatic fashion so that all God's perfections might be wondrously displayed* (cf. Col 2:9). Stephen Holmes articulates essentially the same point in relation to God's work of salvation through the Son:

109. We will have more to say as relates to the real distinctions of the persons of the Trinity in the discussion below under The Immanent Fittingness of the Son in the Ordered Triunity of God.

110. Oliver D. Crisp, *Retrieving Doctrine: Essays in Reformed Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 91 (emphasis in the original). For the full discussion, see chapter 4: Francis Turretin on the Necessity of the Incarnation. With regard to the last part of Crisp's statement, it perhaps better should say "all his *communicable* attributes" if the idea here is that they are to be displayable (so, perceivable/experienceable).

111. Granted, the mystery of theodicy and perdition are also part of God's revealed plan. These are factors that cannot be simply marginalized or glossed over. We can only confess the inscrutability of God's wisdom on such things (Deut 29:29). The theodrama can thus in no wise be simplistically considered.

> An adequate soteriology will not accept any setting aside or opposing of God's perfections. God's life is a single, glorious and unending stream of joy and love; we speak of our differing experiences of this single act using diverse language, but all that language must be referred to the one origin. In acting in Christ to save, every possible aspect of God's perfection is necessarily fully and completely expressed; if our accounts of salvation do less, they remain inadequate.[112]

The christological contours of beauty developed in the chapters following seek to show how the outworking of God's eternal plan through the Son brings to consummative expression the fullness of God's glory; this outworking involves how all things that God redeems through Christ play a role sharing in and perhaps in some sense magnifying the glory that is to be revealed.

Although Christ alone is the incarnate Redeemer, it is only ever the Triune God who orchestrates redemption and ultimately consummates it. In this way, God has revealed and interpreted himself through the person and work of Christ and by the personal work of the Holy Spirit. As to the economy of redemption, "The Father redeems, but always through the Son in the Spirit; the Son redeems, but always from the Father in the Spirit; the Spirit redeems, but always from the Father through the Son, so that the Father together with the Son and the Spirit pursue and accomplish the redemption that belongs to God alone (Isa 45:21–25; Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10)."[113] The indivisible and intra-essential unity in the relation of the persons of the Trinity is identified, then, in the unsubstitutable distinctions of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which are revealed in their extratrinitarian works.

A critical point I need to clarify concerns how we understand the respective fittingness of the persons for our doctrine of God. To position this in negative terms first, the respective fittingness of the economical activities of the persons do not play out in the divine economy on account of the *absolute necessity* of the case. If something is absolutely necessary, it cannot be any other way no matter what else was the

112. Holmes, "A Simple Salvation?," 46.
113. Ellis, *Calvin*, 224.

case. In short, the way things are is the way they must be. So for the economical activities of the persons to be fitting because these activities are absolutely necessary means that it is not possible that these play out any other way, regardless of any prior (temporal or logical) contingent fact that was the case. Such a conception of fittingness is problematic because, at a minimum, it violates God's freedom to create or not create.[114] Rather, on the view I am positing, the respective fittingness of the economical activities of the persons play out in the divine economy on account of the *conditional necessity* of the case. So for the economical activities of the persons to be fitting because these activities are conditionally necessary means that these play out as they do given (conditional on) the prior contingent fact of God's free decision to create as he did. The eternal plan God sovereignly and freely willed and delighted to enact is the created condition established, and thus the economical activities of the persons reflect with perfect fittingness the paternity of the Father, the filiation of the Son, and the spiration of the Holy Spirit in relation to *this* plan.[115] Nonetheless, it seems theologically sound to accept that, in principle, God's freedom could have entailed his free decision either to not create at all or to enact a plan(s) different from the one that he did. In the latter case, it seems fair to presume that, in relation to *that* hypothetical plan(s), the economical activities of the persons would likewise reflect with perfect fittingness the paternity of the Father, the filiation of the Son, and the spiration of the Holy Spirit.

114. On this point I affirm John Webster's statement as being axiomatic: "The triune God could be without the world; no perfection of God would be lost, no triune bliss compromised, were the world not to exist; no enhancement of God is achieved by the world's existence." "Trinity and Creation," *IJST* 12 no. 1 (Jan 2010): 12.

115. What Augustine is keen to emphasize is that the divine actions in relation to the plan of redemption were most fitting. See, e.g., Augustine, *The Trinity* 13.4, 2nd ed., ed. John E. Rotelle, trans. Edmund Hill (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2012): "Now there are people who say, 'Was there no other way available to God of setting men free from the unhappiness of this mortality, that he should want his only begotten Son, God coeternal with himself, to become man by putting on a human soul and flesh, and, having become mortal, to suffer death?' And it is not enough to rebut them by maintaining that this way God chose of setting us free through *the mediator between God and men the man Christ Jesus* (1 Tim 2:5) is good and befitting the divine dignity; we must also show, not indeed that no other possible way was available to God, since all things are equally within his power, but that there neither was nor should have been a more suitable way of curing our unhappy state" (page 355). See also Aquinas, *ST* IIIa, q.1, a.2.

The Theodramatic Fittingness of the Son as Incarnate Redeemer

The principal aim of this section is to lay out three theologically significant ways the Scriptures attest to how the theodramatic fittingness of the Son has correspondence to the symmetrical nature of his agency in the work of the divine economy.[116] All of this sets up and anticipates the christological contours of beauty developed in the succeeding chapters and serves to highlight certain important structural aspects of the contours. The contours *in nuce* unfold in God's redemptive love toward his covenant people, and climactically so in the person and work of Christ. The symmetrical nature of the Son's agency in the work of the divine economy that I will be fleshing out below is summarized as follows:

1. That the work of creation is through the Son, so likewise the work of redemption (re-creation or the renewal of creation) also is accomplished through the Son.
2. That the Son is the preexistent image of God through whom humanity is imaged protologically, so likewise through the Son as the last Adam the redeemed are imaged eschatologically.
3. That as an analogue of the only-begotten Son's relationship to the Father, the Son of God as incarnate Redeemer procures adoptive sonship for all those he redeems, so that these may become beloved sons of God the Father.

These primary symmetries of the Son's agency in the divine economy are bound up with his fittingness as incarnate Redeemer, which itself is foundational to the design and outworking of God's eternal plan. That is the theological claim at the heart of this project's overall argument. As a basic point, the beauty of redemptive-history is recognized as a function of the fittingness involved in its design and outworking. Moreover, the beauty of redemptive-history is theodramatic, which

116. Cf. Healy, *Thomas Aquinas*, 38: "Fittingness arguments are found throughout Scripture where analogies are drawn, connections between things, events and people are noted, and references made back and forward. One of the most obvious examples of such arguments is figurative exegesis, such as Paul's contention that Christ is the second Adam, or the implication in Luke that the Twelve are to be linked with the people of Israel. Such connections do not depend upon deductive logic; they must appeal to one's sense of proportion or fittingness."

pertains to the person/role of Christ. I refer to the beauty of Christ's identity in terms of theodramatic fittingness, that is, his being and doing as displayed predominantly in his obedient relationship to the Father demonstrated through the experiences of his earthly life.

Primary Symmetry 1

That the work of creation is through the Son, so likewise the work of redemption (re-creation or the renewal of creation) also is accomplished through the Son. The Son's role as creator is writ large in the opening verses of John's Gospel. Plainly echoing the opening declaration of Genesis, John 1:1 states, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." As the prologue reveals, the Word, the divine Logos, is none other than the "only Son" (μονογενὴς, John 1:14, 18) of the Father, who "became flesh" (John 1:14) as Jesus Christ (John 1:17). The particular nature of the Son's role as creator is given in verse 3: "All things ἐγένετο through him." As Craig Koester points out, "This too echoes the biblical creation story. The main verb is ἐγένετο, which is used repeatedly in the Greek translation of Genesis: "God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was (ἐγένετο) light" (Gen 1:3)."[117] God's performative word thus brought into being out of nothingness all of creation *through* his own Word, the only Son of the Father (cf. Heb 11:3; 2 Pet 3:5). Orchestrated in Trinitarian terms, of course, the Holy Spirit was agent in creation as well (Gen 1:2; cf. Pss 33:6–9; 104:30). In *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*, Irenaeus expresses the Trinitarian pattern of creation this way:

> Since God is rational, therefore by [the] Spirit he adorned all things: as also the prophet says: *By the word of the Lord were the heavens established, and by his spirit all their power* [Ps 33:6]. Since then the Word establishes, that is to say, gives body and grants the reality of being, and the Spirit gives order and form to the diversity of the powers; rightly and fittingly is the Word called the Son, and the Spirit the Wisdom of God. Well also does Paul His apostle say: *one God, the Father, who is over all and through all and in us all* [Eph 4:6].

117. Craig R. Koester, *The Word of Life: A Theology of John's Gospel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 30. In the LXX translation of Genesis 1, ἐγένετο is scattered throughout no less than twenty times.

> For *over all* is the Father: and *through all* is the Son, for through Him all things were made by the Father; and *in us all* is the Spirit, who cries *Abba Father*, and fashions man into the likeness of God.[118]

In consistent terms, then, the working of the Trinity in the economy of creation is the same, mutatis mutandis, as I described above with respect to the economy of redemption: the Father creates, but always through the Son in the Spirit; the Son creates, but always from the Father in the Spirit; the Spirit creates, but always from the Father through the Son, so that the Father together with the Son and the Spirit pursue and accomplish the creational work that belongs to God alone.[119]

The author of Hebrews likewise describes the Son as the agent "through whom also [God] created the world" (Heb 1:2).[120] In verse 10 of the same chapter, he ascribes to the Son what was said there of the Lord (Yahweh) in Psalm 102:25: "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands." Consonant with both the Johannine prologue and the epistle to the Hebrews, Pauline teaching links similarly the creational and redemptive work of the Son. A *locus classicus* is 1 Corinthians 8:6, a christianized reformulation of the *Shema'* (Deut 6:4) whose wording is divided between God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son: "yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." Paul's formulation encompasses the whole of reality

118. Iain M. MacKenzie, *Irenaeus's Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching: A Theological Commentary and Translation*, trans. J. Armitage Robinson (Aldershot, Hants, England: Ashgate, 2002), 2. This is found in section 5 of Irenaeus's *The Demonstration of the Apostolic Preaching*.

119. Bavinck, *RD*, 2:423, rounds this out, stating, "While there is cooperation, there is not division of labor. All things originate simultaneously from the Father through the Son in the Spirit. The Father is the first cause; the initiative for creation proceeds from him. Accordingly, in an administrative sense, creation is specifically attributed to him. The Son is not an instrument but the personal wisdom, the Logos, by whom everything is created. … And the Holy Spirit is the personal immanent cause by which all things live and move and have their being, receive their own form and configuration, and are led to their destination, in God."

120. The Greek term translated "world" here, τοὺς αἰῶνας, denotes "ages" or "worlds," and is similarly used for the whole universe of space and time in Hebrews 11:3.

created by God—both creation and redemption—in God's bringing "all things" to ultimate fulfillment in himself, in new creation (cf. 2 Cor 5:17).

In the Christ-hymn of Colossians 1:15–20, the apostle expands on what he had previously accredited to Christ in 1 Corinthians 8:6 by attributing the totality of God's creational and redemptive work and purposes all to the Son: "For by him all things were created … all things were created through him and for him" (1:16). The repeated emphasis on Christ's relation to "all things" (Col 1:16, 17, 20) highlights his role as the only mediator of creation and new creation. Thus, through him for whom all things were made, all things shall be made new (Rev 21:5). Commenting on these two thematic divisions of the hymn, Marianne Thompson writes: "In its structure, it sets creation and redemption parallel to each other. Each has its focal point in Christ, who is the firstborn, agent, and goal of both creation and new creation. Because Christ is the agent of creation, he is also the agent of the re-creation of the world."[121]

Primary Symmetry 2

That the Son is the preexistent image of God through whom humanity is imaged protologically (image of their Creator), so likewise through the Son as the last Adam the redeemed are imaged eschatologically (image of their Redeemer). With reference once again to the Colossians Christ-hymn, Paul declares the Son *to be* "the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1:15). The repetition of πρωτότοκος unites the two thematic divisions of the hymn—the "*firstborn* of all creation" (Col 1:15) and the "*firstborn* from the dead" (Col 1:18). Given how the hymn depicts the Son as agent of both creation and redemption (re-creation), the following distinction can be drawn from Paul's characterization of the Son in verse 15: "The image of God language clarifies the Son's consubstantial relation to the Father (cf. Col 1:19 and 2:9), and the firstborn language clarifies the Son's fundamental relation to creation."[122]

121. Marianne Meye Thompson, *Colossians and Philemon* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 28.

122. Lane G. Tipton, "Christology in Colossians 1:15–20 and Hebrews 1:1–4: An Exercise in Biblico-Systematic Theology," in *Resurrection and Eschatology: Essays in Honor of Richard B. Gaffin Jr.*, ed. Lane G. Tipton and Jeffrey C. Waddington (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 188.

Hebrews 1:3*a* expresses in a parallel way the Pauline idea of the Son as the image of God, applying in context here to the Son incarnate: "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint (χαρακτὴρ) of his nature" (cf. John 1:14; 2 Cor 4:6). The author of Hebrews, notes William Lane, "used the word χαρακτὴρ to convey as emphatically as he could his conviction that in Jesus Christ there has been provided a perfect, visible expression of the reality of God."[123]

The allusion in Colossians 1:15 to Genesis 1:26–27 is patent, with Paul employing εἰκών, the Septuagint's rendering of צֶלֶם ("image"). Furthermore, the emphasis of the Colossians hymn on Christ's preeminence over all things (Col 1:18) is reminiscent of the theme of dominion in Genesis 1:26–28. The force of the allusions together recommends understanding the creation of humankind through a christological lens. Two basic points pertaining to protology and eschatology are derivative here and concern Paul's language elsewhere of the "two Adams." First, the preexistent Son not only *is* the image of God, but is himself the image archetype in which Adam was formed at creation, and indeed in whose image all human beings are constituted. In other words, human beings are created *in* the image of God, and the image of God *is* God the Son.[124] Second, the Son incarnate is the image of God in the person of Jesus Christ whom Paul calls the second or last Adam (1 Cor 15:45–46). And "as the last, or eschatological, Adam, whose life is as decisive for the nature and possibilities of human life as the first, or protological, Adam," Christ embodies the divine purpose for humanity in accordance with which the first Adam was created (cf. Rom 5:14*b*).[125] That purpose, as

123. William L. Lane, *Hebrews 1–8* (WBC 47A; Waco, TX: Word, 1991), 13.

124. While it is fair to say that Genesis 1 is ambiguous as to whether it gives a God-the-Son or a Trinitarian content to the *imago Dei*, the New Testament itself relates the content of the *imago Dei* exclusively to Christ. Concerning Genesis 1:26–27, Philip Edgcumbe Hughes, *The True Image: The Origin and Destiny of Man in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 17, writes: "True enough, it is the triune God who said, 'Let us make man in our image,' but the pronoun 'our' does not necessarily imply plurality in that image. That this in fact is not the implication is made plain by the designation of the Son as the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15; 2 Cor 4:4). That is why the image in which man was made and to which he must conform is specifically the eternal Son, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity."

125. Stephen R. Holmes, "Image of God" in *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible*, ed. Kevin J. Vanhoozer (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 319.

the New Testament makes clear, involves becoming the glorified new humanity conformed to the image of Christ.

While taking the Son to be the preexistent image of God through whom every human bears the divine image protologically, Scripture witnesses also to the reality that, because of the fall, humans are malformed by sin and can no longer properly image God. In other words, humans are unable to *be-like-God* as we were created to be. The further witness of Scripture, of course, is that through Christ as the last Adam, all those who are in his fellowship bear Christ's image eschatologically (cf. 1 Cor 15:49). The aspect of our redemption lying in between the eschatological "already" and the "not-yet" is that divine work Paul describes as our "being transformed (μεταμορφούμεθα) into the same image [as Christ] from one degree of glory to another" (2 Cor 3:18). Likewise, our new nature in Christ "is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator" (Col 3:10). The capstone of this divine work is to have Christ fully "formed" in us (Gal 4:19) in accordance with the design of the divine plan (Rom 8:29–30).[126] The symmetry of the Son's role is perhaps best summarized by Philip Hughes: "The divine purpose of creation is grounded in the Son, and what was begun in the Son is also completed in the Son."[127]

Primary Symmetry 3

That as an analogue of the only-begotten Son's relationship to the Father, the Son of God as incarnate Redeemer procures adoptive sonship for all those he redeems, so that these may become beloved sons of God the Father.[128] In the first place, the idea of adoptive sonship in the Old

126. In reference to the Romans text, Gordon D. Fee, *Pauline Christology: An Exegetical-Theological Study* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 184, adds, "This is what God's new people have been predestined for: to be conformed to the *image of his Son*, who himself has assumed the role of πρωτότοκος (*firstborn*) among many brothers and sisters."

127. Hughes, *The True Image*, ix.

128. Cf. Healy, *Thomas Aquinas*, 39: "It is because of the absolute fittingness of Christ's humanity that we are able to perceive the *convenientia* between the triune God and creation. … A son is naturally like his father, which means that people are called sons and daughters of God in so far as they participate, by way of likeness, in him who is the Son of God by nature; and they know God in the measure that they resemble him, since all knowledge is brought about by assimilation to him."

Testament theologically informs that of the New Testament. Here too, the creation narrative provides the starting point. The record of the birth of Adam's son, Seth, in Genese 5:1–3 makes explicit that the relationship of Seth to Adam is analogous to Adam's relationship to God. As Beale explains, "For Seth to be 'in the likeness, according to the image' of Adam indicates that he has been born from Adam, reflects Adam's nature, and is Adam's son. This is 'sonship' language," and thus, the "language in Genesis 1:26 indicates that Adam is a son of God."[129] Meredith Kline likewise states, "To be the image of God is to be the son of God."[130] That Luke in his Gospel account concludes the genealogy of Jesus with "Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God" (3:38) shows that the filial connection here is hardly incidental.

The notion of divine sonship is conspicuous again where, even before the Exodus and establishment of the Sinai covenant, the Lord calls Israel his son: "Thus says the LORD, Israel is my firstborn son, and I say to you, 'Let my son go that he may serve me'" (Exod 4:22–23; cf. Ps 80:15; Hos 11:1). Scripture makes clear that it was in electing grace and according to his sovereign purposes that the Lord adopted Israel as his son. For where Israel as a whole is called Yahweh's son, or conversely, Yahweh is referred to as Israel's father,[131] is not explained by any other reason than that God had "set his love on" Israel and had chosen her for himself in keeping the oath that he swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Deut 7:7–8; 9:5–6). Sonship in this light entails covenantal privilege. But where Israelites are addressed as "sons" (בָּנִים, often translated as "children") of Yahweh, this aspect of Israel's sonship "corresponds to the other side of the covenant relationship, namely the imperative demand for obedience—a demand which applied to all individual members of that nation."[132] It is especially in the Davidic covenant, prophesied in 2 Samuel 7:11–14 (cf. Pss 2:6–7; 89:26–27; 132), that we see both these aspects of sonship signified in a pronounced way. On this point

129. G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 402.

130. Meredith G. Kline, *Images of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1999), 35.

131. E.g., Deuteronomy 32:6, 18; Hosea 11:1; Jeremiah 31:9; Isaiah 63:15–16; 64:8.

132. Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 123. E.g., Deuteronomy 14:1; Isaiah 1:2; 30:1, 9; Jeremiah 3:22.

Christopher Wright observes, "Among other things, it points to the way the king in a sense 'embodied' Israel, since Israel was also designated Yahweh's 'firstborn son' (Exod 4:22). But in the context of the Davidic covenant it has a double purpose: to emphasize God's love (i.e., his unbreakable commitment) on the one hand, and the requirement of obedience (the primary duty of sonship) on the other."[133]

As to why Israel is called God's "son" and "firstborn," Beale takes a wide-lens approach and draws the following connection: "The likely reason … is that the mantle of Adam had been passed on to Noah and then to the patriarchs and their 'seed,' Israel. … [T]he OT constantly reiterates Adam's commission from Gen 1:28 and applies it to Israel."[134] Thus, Israel's sonship can be seen as a positional status she inherited from God in connection with the commission Adam was given as God's son.[135] It is this background that theologically informs and eschatologically points to the new covenant adoption of believers in Christ.

The New Testament uses language of "new birth" and "adoption" to describe believers' *filial* relationship to God through Christ. While both represent models of familial relationship, the former represents the Johannine model, characterized best as sonship by *regeneration* or *new birth*; the latter represents the Pauline model, characterized best as sonship by *adoption*.[136] Worth noting, the Greek term υἱοθεσία (adoption) occurs in the New Testament only in Paul and never in the Septuagint.[137] Moreover, as 2 Corinthians 6:18 makes plain (paraphrasing 2 Sam 7:14 and Isa 43:6), both males and females are included in Paul's concept of divine "sonship."

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133. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, 91. For a helpful discussion on this point, see Gerald Cooke, "The Israelite King as Son of God," *ZAW* 73 no. 2 (1961): 202–25.

134. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology,* 402.

135. For a recommended treatment on the relationship between Genesis 1–3 and Old Testament Israel's history, see Seth D. Postell, *Adam and Israel: Genesis 1–3 as the Introduction to the Torah and Tahakh* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2011).

136. The description given here draws from David B. Garner, "Adoption in Christ" (PhD diss., Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, PA, 2002), chapter 3: Adoption in Contemporary Context: John and Paul. It may well be that John's view of Christ's sonship as *sui generis* leads him to prefer calling believers "children of God" (τέκνα θεοῦ) rather than "sons of God" (υἱοὶ θεοῦ).

137. In reference to believers it is used in Romans 8:15, 23; Galatians 4:5; and Ephesians 1:5.

According to Ephesians 1:3–6, "he [God the Father] predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose (εὐδοκία) of his will" (Eph 1:5).[138] Recognizable here is the consistent nature of the Son's agency, namely, that just as through Christ the redeemed are re-created in his image, so also through him the redeemed receive adoptive sonship. This would seem to follow from the correlation we saw above between the image of God and sonship. A further point here, εὐδοκία conveys a thicker meaning than indicated in our English translation, for it "signifies not simply the purpose of God but also the delight that he takes in his plans."[139] Although God delights perfectly in all of the divine plan, our adoption as sons through Christ seems to be at the heart of it. In the paean of Ephesians 1:3–14, Paul extols its christocentric as well as its Trinitarian dimensions.[140]

Beginning in Galatians 4:4, Paul again expresses the manifest purpose of God's will—that for which he sent forth his Son, the mission for which the Son became flesh—namely, "to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons." The context of Galatians 4:1–7 highlights the redemptive-historical development from old covenant sonship, belonging to Israel as a child minor (Gal 4:1–2), to the mature sonship of new covenant adoption (Gal 4:5–7), procured and realized through the messianic Sonship of Christ for all who are the spiritual descendants of Abraham through faith (Galatians 3). Lastly, in Romans 8, as in Galatians, the apostle again describes the

138. The study note on Ephesians 1:5 in the NET states: "*Adoption as his sons* is different from spiritual birth as children. All true believers have been born as children of God and will be adopted as sons of God. The adoption is both a future reality, and in some sense, already true. To be adopted as a son means to have the full rights of an heir. Thus, although in the ancient world, only boys could be adopted as sons, in God's family all children—both male and female—are adopted."

139. Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians* (PNTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 103. O'Brien continues, "The preposition 'according to' (*kata*) indicates the norm or standard, showing that his choosing many to come into a special relationship with himself was in keeping with what he delighted to do and with his saving plan. 'He enjoys imparting his riches to many children.' Consequently, as men and women break out in praise (vv. 3, 6, 12, 14), their pleasure in God is a response to his delight in doing good to them."

140. Garner, "Adoption," 60, summarizes this accordingly: "The Father lovingly ordains his eternal purpose (vv. 3–6), the Son willingly carries out these eternal purposes in *Heilsgeschichte* (vv. 7–12), and the Holy Spirit applies the eternal purposes of the Father on the basis of the work of the Son (vv. 13–14)."

believers' adoption in terms of freedom from bondage, filial intimacy with the Father, and redemptive transformation. "Summarily, in Rom 8:1–23," writes Garner, "Paul joins the juridical (justification) and renovative (sanctification) under *adoptive sonship* through the ministry of the eschatological Spirit, whereby through union with the Son of God, the sons of God participate in *all* that Jesus Christ, the eschatological Son, accomplished."[141]

The Immanent Fittingness of the Son in the Ordered Triunity of God

In our discussion earlier on the immanent form of the Godhead's beauty, I defined that as God's Triunity—his three-in-oneness—consisting of all its absolute perfections in Triune simplicity. In this section our interest again has to do with the immanent Trinity, but the focus is narrowed in on the immanent fittingness of the Son. Our efforts here will help round out the concept of fittingness in regard to the persons of the immanent Trinity, and the role of the Son as Redeemer in particular. To that end, we will revisit Aquinas' *Summa* article, *ST* Ia, q.39, a.8, in which he provides a systematic formulation of his three formal criteria of beauty in answer to the question, "Whether the Essential Attributes Are Appropriated to the Persons of the Trinity in a Fitting Manner by the Holy Doctors?" Aquinas' discussion in *ST* Ia, q.39, a.8, pertains directly to the notion of the immanent fittingness of the Son. While Aquinas understood beauty to be an attribute of the divine nature and thus common to all three persons of the Godhead, he also argues in this *Summa* article that *beauty* is the designation that applies best to the Son and therefore is specifically "appropriated" to him.[142] But on what basis does Aquinas see beauty as characterizing best the personal mode of being of the Son? His answer has to do with what are, in Aquinas' view, three identifying aspects of the Son's filial relation to the Father. Those three identifying aspects are characterized by the three

141. Garner, "Adoption," 117.

142. In this article, Aquinas also advances and explains that to the Father the name *eternity* is most proper, and to the Holy Spirit the name *use* is most proper.

essential qualities of beauty, namely, *proportion*, *integrity*, and *clarity*.[143] He reasons accordingly along the following lines. By virtue of the Son:

1. Being the express image of the Father, i.e., the perfect likeness of the original, the condition of perfect proportion is satisfied.
2. Having in himself "truly and perfectly the nature of the Father," the condition of perfect integrity or wholeness is satisfied.
3. Proceeding eternally from the Father as his Word, which is the perfectly communicated radiance of the Father, the condition of perfect clarity is satisfied.[144]

In my judgment, however, the idea here that essential attributes are appropriated to the personal modes of being of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit lacks clear scriptural grounding. For our purposes it nonetheless serves illustratively, showing how, for Aquinas, the immanent fittingness of the Son is integrally connected to the filiation of the Son, whose identifying aspects exhibit perfectly all the hallmarks of beauty.

Assuming, as I have argued, that the economical activities of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are perfectly fitting according to God's eternal plan, a relevant question is whether or not the persons of the immanent Trinity could have substituted for the economical roles/activities of the other persons. For example, could the Father or the Holy Spirit have assumed the role of incarnate Redeemer instead of the Son? Both Anselm and Aquinas are instructive here, for both address this very question in terms of fittingness. Arguing from an *a posteriori* perspective, Anselm offers two main reasons for "why God assumed human being into a unity of person with the Son rather than into a unity with either of the other persons."[145] His first reason concerns our

143. It is not incidental, just to note, that Aquinas' fullest account of the three criteria of beauty occurs here in reference to God, specifically the beauty that characterizes the filiation of the Son.

144. Vanhoozer's comments, *Remythologizing Theology*, 51, are germane here: "The first word God spoke resulted in light (Gen 1:3). There is some debate among commentators as to whether the Son passively reflects or actively radiates light. In favor of the latter is a certain parallel with the Son as definitive word: both word and light are means of the Father's expressive presence. Just as the word expresses thought, so radiance expresses light."

145. Anselm, *On the Incarnation of the Word* in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Thomas Williams (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2007), 228 (sect. 10).

finite human understanding. The most fitting choice by God was for the immanent Son to become the economic Son in order to not upset our capacity to make sense of the Trinitarian relations with regard to how God revealed himself economically.[146] His second reason concerns the way human thinking is naturally oriented. Because "the one who was to become flesh was to intercede for the human race," states Anselm, "the human mind more appropriately enough conceives a son pleading with his father than one individual pleading with another, although the human nature, not the divine nature, makes this supplication to the deity."[147] While Anselm offers a positive rationale for the propriety of the immanent Son assuming the role of the economic Son, it is unclear whether he actually denies the possibility (irrespective of fittingness) that the Father or the Holy Spirit could have assumed this role instead. It is Aquinas who gives the more definitive answer to this, at least as he sees it.

In *ST* IIIa, q.3, a.5, which addresses "Whether Each of the Divine Persons Could Have Assumed Human Nature?," Aquinas answers, "Whatever the Son can do, so can the Father and the Holy Spirit, otherwise the power of the three Persons would not be one. But the Son was able to become incarnate. Therefore the Father and the Holy Spirit were able to become incarnate." Aquinas' argument here rests on the fact that in divinity all three persons of the Godhead share full equality together in every respect. The Father or the Holy Spirit could therefore have assumed the role of the economic Son simply because of their common divine *ability*. To say in an absolute sense that *only* God the Son could have assumed the role of the economic Son, therefore, is to imply that the Son is different in essence from the Father and the Holy

146. Anselm argues thus: "If the Holy Spirit became flesh, as the Son became flesh, surely the Holy Spirit would be the son of a human being. Therefore, there would be two sons in the divine Trinity, namely, the Son of God and the son of the human being. And so some mixture of doubt would be generated when we were speaking of God the 'son.' For both would be God and son, although one would be the Son of God, the other the son of a human being. … And if the Father were to have assumed a human being into the unity of his person, the multiplication of sons would result in the same improprieties in God." Anselm, *On the Incarnation of the Word* in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Williams, 228 (sect. 10).

147. Anselm, *On the Incarnation of the Word* in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans. Williams, 251. Anselm recapitulates this argument in *Cur Deus Homo* 2.9.

Spirit, not just in personal distinction from them. But this contravenes the intra-essential unity of the divine persons, for with respect to their common divinity the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are equipollent. In my judgment Aquinas' argument here seems correct. Moreover, the distinct personal *suitability* (i.e., fittingness) of the divine persons comes into play as well. He writes in the same article, "It belongs to the Father to be innascible as to the eternal birth, and the temporal birth would not destroy this. But the Son of God is said to be sent in regard to the Incarnation, inasmuch as He is from another, without which the Incarnation would not suffice for the nature of mission" (ad 3).[148] Aquinas applies the idea of fittingness still further in *ST* IIIa, q.3, a.8, which addresses "Whether It Was More Fitting That the Person of the Son Rather Than Any Other Divine Person Should Assume Human Nature?" While Anselm's reasoning on this has mainly to do with how God accommodated human ways of thinking, Aquinas argues directly for the fittingness of the Son's role in the divine economy. "It was most fitting that the Person of the Son should become incarnate," states Aquinas. Represented in these extracts from the *Summa* article, the three reasons Aquinas gives are as follows:

1. *[ad 2] Creation/Re-creation through the Word:* "The first creation of things was made by the power of God the Father through the Word; hence the second creation ought to have been brought about through the Word, by the power of God the Father, in order that restoration should correspond to creation according to 2 Corinthians 5:19."
2. *The Word as Exemplar Likeness:* "Now the Person of the Son, Who is the Word of God, has a certain common agreement with all creatures, because the word of the craftsman, i.e., his concept, is an exemplar likeness of whatever is made by him. Hence the Word of God, Who is His eternal concept, is the exemplar likeness of all creatures."[149]

148. In *ST* Ia, q.43, a.4, which addresses "Whether the Father Can Be Fittingly Sent?," Aquinas answers, "The very idea of mission means procession from another, and in God it means procession according to origin, as above expounded. Hence, as the Father is not from another, in no way is it fitting for Him to be sent; but this can only belong to the Son and to the Holy Ghost, to Whom it belongs to be from another."

149. The idea Aquinas uses of "exemplar likeness" is understood in this way: the idea or image of a thing formed in the mind that serves as a model, original, or

3. Natural Sonship/Adoptive sonship: "Hence it was fitting that by Him Who is the natural Son, men should share this likeness of sonship by adoption, as the Apostle says in Romans 8:29."

What is noteworthy here is that the three reasons Aquinas offers for why it was most fitting that the Son should become incarnate are closely parallel to the three primary ways I presented above on how the theodramatic fittingness of the Son has correspondence to the symmetrical nature of his agency in the work of the divine economy. This gets back to the point that to a fair extent the christological contours of beauty that this project explores and develops, constructively appropriate and engage the theological aesthetics of our featured theologians, and fundamentally those of the medieval church Fathers in regard to the doctrine of God.

pattern to be copied or imitated; an archetype. See also Aquinas' answer in *ST* Ia, q.45, a.6, which addresses "Whether to Create Is Proper to Any Person?"