



# Echoes of

# EDEN



Reflections *on* Christianity, Literature, *and the* Arts

  
J E R R A M   B A R R S  


"*Echoes of Eden* is the most accessible, readable, and yet theologically robust work on Christianity and the arts that you will be able to find. It is biblical, theologically sound, filled with examples, and edifying. It anticipates and answers well all the most common questions that evangelical people ask about the arts. I highly recommend it."

**Tim Keller**, Pastor, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York City;  
author, *The Reason for God*

"Jerram Barrs clearly loves the Christian vision of being human, and he loves human beings of all sorts. In this book he helps us to enjoy the fundamentally human activity of the arts, showing us how 'all great art contains elements of the true story: the story of the good creation, the fallen world, and the longing for redemption.' The chapters giving us a tour of great Christian writers—Lewis, Tolkien, Rowling, Shakespeare, and Austen—bubble over with passionate delight in these authors' artistic and moral achievements."

**C. John Collins**, Professor of Old Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary; author, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?*

"A beautiful book on the contours of beauty by a beautiful man. Jerram Barrs here presents a lifetime of meditations on a subject close to his heart. The arts, he argues, are not a luxury, nor are they the savior. Instead they are an integral part of human life because they provide a unique window onto divine truth and the truth of the divine. The chapter on how to judge the arts is alone worth the price of admission. Reading these pages one can tell that art is not the *subject* for Jerram, but a rich palette, one he has lived with over the years. The arts, in his assessment, tell us not only what has been lost after Eden, but also how we may return to that gorgeous land. This book will enrich both professional artists and anyone else sensitive to the power of the arts for all of life."

**William Edgar**, Professor of Apologetics, Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia; author, *Schaeffer on the Christian Life*

"One of the obvious virtues of this book is its balance between theory and literary criticism of specific authors. The first five chapters are a carefully constructed Christian aesthetic. The second half of the book applies the theory to five authors. The splendid organization of the book makes it easy to read, and there is an admirable range in the subjects covered, as the five theoretic chapters systematically discuss the questions that Christians really ask about the arts, while the addition of Shakespeare and Jane Austen to Christian fantasy writers provides a pleasing scope. Finally, the book has a latent apologetic angle that I liked, not only in the theoretic chapters with their defense of the

arts, but also in the chapters on specific authors, as Barrs explains why he is an enthusiast for each of them.”

**Leland Ryken**, Professor of English, Wheaton College

“This is a wonderful book, especially for those who want to enhance their knowledge of how the church should view the arts. Jerram Barrs brings an intellectually informed and profoundly pastoral approach to confront the misunderstanding and animosity that frequently exist between evangelical Christians and popular contemporary literature such as the Harry Potter series. This book is a must read for anyone who has a burden to see the creation as it is reflected in today’s pop culture.”

**Mike Higgins**, Dean of Students, Covenant Theological Seminary

“Jerram Barrs offers a compelling Christian defense of the imagination as a vehicle of truth and of the need to reclaim an imitative (as opposed to a self-expressive) view of the arts. He not only quotes C. S. Lewis wisely, but has written a book of which Lewis would have approved.”

**Louis Markos**, Professor in English, Scholar in Residence,  
and Robert H. Ray Chair in Humanities, Houston Baptist University;  
author, *Restoring Beauty: The Good, the True, and the Beautiful*  
in the Writings of C. S. Lewis

“For as long as I have known him, Jerram Barrs has passionately loved the arts. In *Echoes of Eden* he lets us share his passion by allowing us a glimpse of the beauty, truth, and grace he sees in the imaginative work of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, J. K. Rowling, William Shakespeare, and Jane Austen. If he stopped there, this would be a book worth reading, but he digs far deeper, framing our understanding of the arts within the biblical worldview. From that perspective, human creativity is a good gift of God in a broken world, an expression of the image of the Creator in which we are made. Because of the brokenness, Barrs outlines eleven broad categories by which to judge a piece of art, since God’s image is always portrayed in ways that are flawed and incomplete. I hope *Echoes of Eden* is read and discussed widely by Christians. The truth of its message can help nurture a Christian imagination, restore the arts to their proper place in the church, and help us frame the unchanging gospel in a way that will cause a postmodern world to consider its claims.”

**Denis D. Haack**, Director, Ransom Fellowship; Visiting Instructor,  
Covenant Theological Seminary

“This is a marvelous book for Christians who wish to think well and biblically about culture. Professor Barrs’s thesis—that human cultural production always has its genesis in something I have for years called the ‘Edenic memory’—is

spot-on. By providing a careful theological analysis of the origins of culture, the book teaches us how to live wisely and rightly in a world overflowing with cultural artifacts. Barrs's observation on the nature and role of fantasy in the Harry Potter chapter is particularly thoughtful, and his chapter on how we are to judge the arts is as fine as anything I've read on the subject."

**Grant Horner**, Associate Professor of Renaissance and Reformation, The Master's College; author, *Meaning at the Movies*

"Evangelical Christianity has long been conflicted over the arts and in particular the literary artistry of such lights as Austen, Tolkien, and Rowling. Some justify such literature only insofar as it functions as an elaborately coded gospel tract. Others, despairing of any Christian rationale, confess such writings to be a distraction, a guilty pleasure, or even satanic. Now, with his typical blend of profundity and lucidity, Jerram Barrs clears away the clutter of much-touted but ultimately muddled arguments and sets forth a clear framework for any Christians interested in thinking biblically about art, not least those Christians who like to spend time in such places as Hogwarts or Middle-earth. Turn the page and prepare to worship!"

**Nicholas Perrin**, Dean, Wheaton College Graduate School

"In a clear and attractive style, Jerram Barrs writes with passion about the 'echoes of Eden' in the arts, which are so central to our humanity, whatever our beliefs. Graciously and with wisdom, he picks up a conversation that has already included such Christian thinkers as John Calvin, Dorothy L. Sayers, J. R. R. Tolkien, and C. S. Lewis. Illustrations that he draws from the fiction of Lewis, Tolkien, J. K. Rowling, the still enormously popular Jane Austen, and others make even more vivid his insightful reflections. Reading his gift of a book is an enriching and inspiring experience not to be missed."

**Colin Duriez**, author, *J. R. R. Tolkien: The Making of a Legend* and *C. S. Lewis: A Biography of Friendship*

"When a lawyer asked Jesus, 'Who is my neighbor?' Jesus didn't preach a sermon; he told a story, and with it he disclosed a profound truth. In *Echoes of Eden*, Jerram Barrs shows us how novelists, playwrights, and poets—much like Jesus—open our eyes and broaden our understanding. He shows us how, by creating worlds, people, problems, and circumstances, great writers put us in touch with the human condition: the struggles and joys, as well as the grief and great satisfactions. In these few pages, Barrs shows us why, especially in the twenty-first century, we need good books: they help us become fully human."

**Richard Doster**, Editor, *byFaith* magazine; author, *Safe at Home*

Other Crossway Books by Jerram Barrs

*Learning Evangelism from Jesus*

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*Through His Eyes: God's Perspective on Women in the Bible*

*Echoes of Eden: Reflections on Christianity, Literature, and the Arts*

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## God and Humans as Creative Artists

Thinking scripturally about the arts is an area where there appears to be great confusion in our churches. On the one hand, many Christians have been taught that, as believers in Christ, we ought only to listen to music, read books, or watch films that have been produced by fellow believers. On the other hand, almost all Christians will, in fact, read newspapers and books, watch television shows and movies, go to plays and musicals, listen to music, and buy art cards and pictures for our walls simply because we *like* these things. And we will do this without much reflection on who produced them, unless we encounter something that is obviously blasphemous, gratuitously violent, or clearly pornographic.

Even those who suggest most passionately that Christians should only enjoy art by other Christians will take delight in buildings, bridges, roads, interior decoration, clothes, or beautifully prepared and presented meals, and they will take this delight without asking whether the architect, builder, designer, manufacturer, or chef is a committed believer in the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, how are Christians to think about the arts? To approach this subject, we begin with the biblical doctrine of creation.

### **God, the Creator of All Things, Visible and Invisible**

Every orthodox creed and every believing theologian throughout the history of the church has affirmed the Christian's faith in God, the Creator of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible. We all have our favorite scriptural passages that affirm this doctrine, that express our hope in the Lord who made all things,

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and that communicate this faith and hope with words of marvelous beauty. Two such passages are Psalm 8:1,

O LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

and Psalm 19:1,

The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

We praise God now for the wonder of his creation, and we will praise him for this for all eternity:

Worthy are you, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honor and power,  
for you created all things,  
and by your will they existed and were created. (Rev. 4:11)

Many other Scriptures also explore this conviction—sometimes at great length, as well as in glorious poetry; see, for instance, Job 38–41, Psalm 148, and Psalm 19 (a psalm that C. S. Lewis called one of the greatest lyric poems ever written).

John Calvin, in exquisitely beautiful French prose, writes of the wonder of God's creation in words that retain their remarkable power even in our English translations and are worth quoting at length:

1. Since the perfection of blessedness consists in the knowledge of God, he has been pleased, in order that none might be excluded from the means of obtaining felicity, not only to deposit in our minds that seed of religion of which we have already spoken, but so to manifest his perfections in the whole structure of the universe, and daily place himself in our view, that we cannot open our eyes without being compelled to behold him. His essence, indeed, is incomprehensible, utterly transcending all human thought; but on each of his works his glory is engraven in characters so bright, so distinct, and so illustrious, that none, however

dull and illiterate, can plead ignorance as their excuse. . . . And because the glory of his power and wisdom is more refulgent in the firmament, it is frequently designated as his palace. And, first, wherever you turn your eyes, there is no portion of the world, however minute, that does not exhibit at least some sparks of beauty; while it is impossible to contemplate the vast and beautiful fabric as it extends around, without being overwhelmed by the immense weight of glory. Hence, the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews elegantly describes the visible worlds as images of the invisible (Heb. 11:3), the elegant structure of the world serving us as a kind of mirror, in which we may behold God, though otherwise invisible. . . .

2. In attestation of his wondrous wisdom, both the heavens and the earth present us with innumerable proofs, not only those more recondite proofs which astronomy, medicine, and all the natural sciences are designed to illustrate, but proofs which force themselves on the notice of the most illiterate peasant, who cannot open his eyes without beholding them. It is true, indeed, that those who are more or less intimately acquainted with those liberal studies are thereby assisted and enabled to obtain a deeper insight into the secret workings of divine wisdom. No man, however, though he be ignorant of these, is incapacitated for discerning such proofs of creative wisdom as may well cause him to break forth in admiration of the Creator. . . . Still, none who have the use of their eyes can be ignorant of the divine skill manifested so conspicuously in the endless variety, yet distinct and well-ordered array, of the heavenly host; and, therefore it is plain that the Lord has furnished every man with abundant proofs of his wisdom.<sup>1</sup>

The English poet Gerard Manley Hopkins delights us with his poetic paean of praise in one of his best-known works, “God’s Grandeur”:

The world is charged with the grandeur of God.  
It will flame out, like shining from shook foil.

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<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 1.5.1–2.

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In another of Hopkins's poems, "Pied Beauty," we find that he holds up for our pleasure the amazing diversity of color, texture, taste, and action in creation:

Glory be to God for dappled things—  
For skies of couple-colour as a brindled cow;  
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;  
Fresh-firecoal chestnut falls; finches' wings;  
Landscape plotted and pieced—fold, fallow, and plough;  
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;  
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)  
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;  
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:  
Praise him.

Daniel Loizeaux considers God's creativity under four headings. He writes: "How God's imagination daily loads us with benefits. Contemplate this embarrassment of riches from a four-fold aspect: their perfection, diversity, profusion, inventiveness."<sup>2</sup> I am indebted to Loizeaux's discussion in my own exploration of these four aspects of God's creative genius.

### *Perfection*

If we look under a microscope at anything God has made to see it in all its detail, we will discover that the more we see, the more amazing is his creative genius. A closer view enables us to see new and unimagined beauties and infinitesimally tiny wonders. Look at the structure of a leaf, a diamond, a snowflake, or a human cell. If we compare any product of human technology to any work of God—for example, try looking at an object made of polished steel, copper, or bronze—and try the same experiment in magnification, we very soon will observe the difference. What God has made is

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<sup>2</sup>Daniel Loizeaux, "The Imagination of God," *Genesis: Journal of the Society of Christians in the Arts, Inc.* 1, no. 2 (1975): 72.

lovely to our eyes, but our own works, viewed under a microscope, show their flaws.

### *Diversity*

Think of the many different varieties of birds, insects, trees, and flowers; or for an even more extraordinary example, the infinite variety of snowflakes, sunrises, sunsets, or—more importantly—human beings: no two are exactly the same.

Several times over the past few years my wife and I have traveled to Naples, a city on the Gulf Coast of Florida, to stay for a few weeks in a friend's home just five minutes' walk from the beach. Each afternoon when we are there we join the many other people who return to the beach to watch the sun go down over the Gulf—each day it is glorious, and each day it is different. In each moment of each sunset there is constant change, and yet every moment has its own glory and perfect beauty.

### *Profusion*

God loves abundance: think of those daily sunsets or the flowers in a meadow, or the stars in the night sky—if you can get away from bright city lights to see them, such as out in a deep forest, in a desert, or high up on a mountain. In such a setting, the sky seems to be nothing but stars. Indeed, astronomers tell us that there are sixty billion galaxies in the universe, and that each one of these galaxies contains between ten billion and a hundred billion stars. Our sun is just one of these untold billions of stars. Such profusion is unimaginable to us.

I remember going hiking in the Sierra Mountains in Central California with my sons and a friend and his family. We slept out in the open, and one night we set out our sleeping bags by the shore of a small lake at about eleven thousand feet. It was a clear night and we lay there looking up at the stars. The number of them and the brightness of their light overwhelmed us. Then the moon rose over the mountains across the lake, and I burst out with the words of Psalm 8:

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O LORD, our Lord,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens. . . .

When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and stars, which you have set in place . . . (vv. 1–3)

Then, together we sang hymns and songs of praise. We had to express something of our awe and wonder at the loveliness of this world and of the glory of its Maker.

### *Inventiveness*

We admire men and women who come up with new designs, and rightly so. But just think how this activity is only an infinitesimally tiny copy of the inventiveness of the Lord, who delights in making all things new—not just at the beginning of the creation, but every day.

### **Not Asceticism but the Glad Reception and Enjoyment of the Gifts of God’s Creativity**

It is evident as we read Genesis 1 that God believed that all he had made was good. Repeatedly during the account of the creation, this refrain occurs: “God saw that it [“the light,” v. 4] was good” (Gen. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25). At the literary high point of the text, when we read that he had created man, we find this expression of the Lord’s delight in his work: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good” (1:31).

However, some Christians believe that this world and the created order are no longer good after the fall. One writer puts it this way: “Before the Fall there was an earth; now there is a world; after the Second Coming there will be a kingdom.” He goes on to say that everything of this old creation—even inanimate matter—is contaminated by the spirit of antichrist, indwelt by the Devil, and under the power of darkness. The writer concludes, therefore, that the enjoyment of life and of God’s daily gifts is no longer genuinely

spiritual; for such enjoyment is tainted with carnality and therefore in some manner suspect and inherently dangerous to us.

Calvin responded to such a view with a resounding affirmation of the beauty of this world and the appropriateness of delight in God's creation gifts: "Should the Lord have attracted our eyes to the beauty of the flowers, and our sense of smell to pleasant odors, and should it then be sin to drink them in? Has he not even made the colors so that the one is more wonderful than the other?"<sup>3</sup>

Scripture itself insists not only that delight in creation and the enjoyment of God's gifts are right and good, but also that asceticism—the claim that taking pleasure in our creaturely life is somehow unspiritual or even sinful—is in fact a heretical teaching. If heresy seems an excessive charge, then consider Paul's passionate words in 1 Timothy 4:1–5, an example of a biblical denunciation of the teaching that it is ungodly to enjoy the gifts of life:

Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the insincerity of liars whose consciences are seared, who forbid marriage and require abstinence from foods that God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, for it is made holy by the word of God and prayer.

In these words, Paul insists that food, sex, marriage—indeed all the gifts of creation—are good and holy, for God himself has declared them to be so in his Word. Paul demands that we see that asceticism, even if it comes under the guise of spirituality, is heretical, even demonic. Why does he speak with such impassioned language? The simple answer is that the teaching that it is sinful to enjoy the gifts of creation is deeply blasphemous because it is a rejection of God's own valuation of creation. Asceticism turns its back on God and regards his creation as worthless, or even worse, as somehow corrupting to us, as if creation itself were a source of sin.

<sup>3</sup>John Calvin, *On the Life of the Christian Man* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1952), 88.

Repeatedly in the history of the church, Christians have been tempted to devalue the richness of creation—and therefore the arts—as if it would be somehow more “spiritual” to live a life devoid of beauty, of good things, of music, of literature, of painting, of color, and so forth. It is as if bare simplicity, barrenness, and even ugliness were somehow more pleasing to God. Behind this idea is the conviction that the “spiritual” is all that matters, and that the physical, therefore, is at best only of secondary value. In this view, the arts are considered optional, rather extravagant, an unnecessary extra in life. But this belief is nonsense and, according to Paul, a heresy of the most serious kind, for in the end it is a denial of the goodness of creation and the goodness of its Creator.

The English poet and pastor George Herbert, in his poem “The Elixir,” captured this obligation of the Christian to value as good all that God has made. This poem may be found in many hymnals; I include here stanzas 1, 4, and 6:

Teach me, my God and King,  
 In all things thee to see,  
 And what I do in anything  
 To do it as for thee.

All may of thee partake:  
 Nothing can be so mean  
 Which with his tincture, “for thy sake,”  
 Will not grow bright and clean.

This is the famous stone  
 That turneth all to gold;  
 For that which God doth touch and own  
 Cannot for lesse be told.

Reflecting further on this theme, we may point to five foundational doctrines that affirm the value of the richness of life here in this world:



- *Creation.* See, again, Genesis 1 with its repeated “God saw that it was good” and Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 4:1–5 (quoted above). God commands us to agree with him, to acknowledge that everything that he has made is good, and then to receive this good work of his with thankful and glad hearts.
- *Common grace, or God’s providential care for all creation.* See Genesis 9:8–17 and the everlasting covenant that God makes with all creatures after the flood. God cares for *all* creation, as evidenced in Psalms 104 and 145, and also in Jesus’s words in Matthew 6:26–29 and 10:29–31, where he speaks of God watching over and providing for the flowers and the birds and, even more, all people.
- *The incarnation.* The eternal Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, became flesh; he became a man; he became a part of this universe—not merely for the thirty-three years of his earthly life, but for all eternity to come. Who can imagine a more remarkable affirmation of the physical than this, that the everlasting God who alone has immortality entered our world, joined the human race, and shares our life forever!
- *Bodily resurrection.* See Paul’s joyful words about our physical resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 and 2 Corinthians 5:1–5. Nothing expresses with greater clarity that our physical life in this world is precious than this conviction of God’s commitment, “not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:4).
- *The new creation.* There will be a renewed earth, with the curse removed (see Rom. 8:18–25; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1–4). This promise of the glory of the earth to come underlines the significance and value of all that God has made for our enjoyment here and now. Redemption will not be complete until our human life is restored to its full delight in the wonder of God’s good creation.

## God’s Image Bearers as Sub-Creators

Man and woman, God’s image bearers, are made to be sub-creators following after their Creator. The God who made all things made

us to exercise dominion under him over this good creation (Gen. 1:26–28). In Psalm 8, David declares that this likeness to God, demonstrated as we rule over this earth and its creatures, constitutes our glory as human persons. He asks a question that many people ask when they are overwhelmed by the glory of creation (just as we were that night in the High Sierras):

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,  
what is man that you are mindful of him? (vv. 3–4)

David replies to his own question:

You have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings  
and crowned him with glory and honor.  
You have given him dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under his feet. (vv. 5–6)

This answer by David challenges us never to devalue human beings, for we are crowned with the glory and honor of being like God. The universe in which we live may indeed be so remarkable and wonderful to us that we sometimes feel very small and insignificant when we look at its beauty or grandeur. But in Psalm 8 David teaches us that God’s glory shines more brightly in each human person than it ever does in the loveliest night sky, the grandest mountain range, or the vastest ocean.

We are persons made to be like the personal God who made us and everything else around us. As those created to image God, we are designed by him to exercise rule over the creation in which we are set. In exercising dominion over God’s good creation, we are not creators in an absolute sense, like God, but, rather, sub-creators at best. We never create *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) like God, for we are always working with some aspect of what he has already made. We might say that our dominion over this earth means that we “till the garden” of color, words, form and texture, sound and harmony, stone and clay, and imagination; of God’s works in creation and of human works in history and in society. Sir Isaac

Newton likened our ruling the earth with the arts and sciences to the playing of a child: "I do not know what I may appear to the world; but to myself I seem to have been only like a boy, playing on the sea-shore, and diverting myself in now and then finding a smoother pebble or a prettier shell than ordinary, whilst the great ocean of truth lay all undiscovered before me."<sup>4</sup>

C. S. Lewis recognized that all great artists acknowledge that there is something outside themselves that is greater than they are, and that is greater than the works that they make: "The greatest poems (*indeed all of the greatest artistic works*) have been made by men who valued something else much more than poetry."<sup>5</sup> For the Christian, there needs to be a humble bowing before God the Creator and a glad acceptance of the gift of his created order with which we all do our work.

We exercise dominion now by "making things" with our hands, minds, and imaginations. This task will be ours forever, for on the renewed earth all the creative glory of all the nations will be brought into the kingdom of God to honor Christ (Rev. 21:24–26). Year by year we will go up from every part of this earth and bring what we have made to offer at the feet of Christ the King.

Sometimes Christians will insist that the only work that is truly worthwhile, pleasing to God, and spiritual is the work of serving the proclamation of the gospel across the world. This view suggests that if we were all truly earnest Christians, we would leave our "secular" jobs, in which we are simply making a living, providing for our families, and ruling the world, and we would all join the "sacred" work of mission. But if we stop and think about Jesus's life, we see that he was doing so-called secular work as a carpenter or a fisherman for many more years than he was a preacher and teacher. It would be blasphemous to suppose that during these years Jesus was living in a manner that was not fully godly and completely pleasing to his Father in heaven.

<sup>4</sup>Quoted in L. T. More, *Isaac Newton: A Biography* (New York: Scribner, 1934), 664.

<sup>5</sup>C. S. Lewis, "Christianity and Literature," *Genesis: Journal of the Society of Christians in the Arts, Inc.* 1, no. 2 (1975): 22.

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The import of this reflection on our human calling to “till the garden” of this world with body, mind, and imagination is that the arts need no justification; they are good gifts of God, a basic part of the creation order. Our calling is simply to be thankful for these gifts of sub-creativity.

We may say, however, that there are five aspects of our God-given creativity, or five “callings” to direct us as we engage in the work of creating before the face of God, the great Creator who made us like himself and for himself:

- We are to seek to *glorify God* in all we do.
- We are designed to *find fulfillment for ourselves* in using, developing, and expressing the gifts God has so richly given us.
- We are to seek to *be of benefit to others*, so that they may be able to look at what we create and say of it, “It is good.” The Christian artist always lives in community and is called to serve others in the development and expression of the gifts God has given to each one for the blessing of all.
- In being creative, we fulfill our human design by *exercising dominion* over the earth.
- We are called, in all we do, including in our creative work, to *set back the boundaries of the fall*, to restrain the abnormality of our present human life in its brokenness and sorrow and of our present world that is under the curse and therefore resists our dominion.

## Imitation, the Heart of the Christian's Approach to Creativity

In becoming a Christian, a person bows before God as Creator, Lord, Judge, Redeemer, Lawgiver, and Teacher. In everything we recognize that we are to live from henceforth before the face of God. How will this recognition impact the way we think about the work of the arts? In acknowledging that we live in God's world and that we are his creatures, the Christian ought to have a rather more humble approach to the work of art than is sometimes found in the reflections of those artists who see themselves at the center of reality.

Shakespeare had this humility about his work, though if we consider both the dramas and the poetry that poured out from him, we might justly call him one of the greatest of human creators. The poet Dryden said of Shakespeare, "After God, he has created most." In polls done around the year 2000, Shakespeare was considered far and away the most significant human being of the previous millennium. Yet Shakespeare said of himself that he simply held "a mirror up to nature," and in all his writings there is no trace of arrogance or demand to be considered someone more special than others because of his creative gifts.

George Herbert, like Shakespeare a Christian, wrote in "The Forerunners,"

True beauty dwells on high; ours is a flame  
But borrowed thence to light us thither.

Lewis comments on this understanding of the artist as being an imitator rather than an original creator, and in the process he challenges much contemporary reflection about the work of the artist:

What are the key-words of modern criticism? *Creative*, with its opposite *derivative*; *spontaneity*, with its opposite *convention*; *freedom*, contrasted with *rules*. Great authors are innovators, pioneers, explorers; bad authors bunch in schools and follow models. Or again, great authors are always “breaking fetters” and “bursting bonds.” They have personality, they “are themselves.” I do not know whether we often think out the implication of such language into a consistent philosophy; but we certainly have a general picture of bad work flowing from conformity and discipleship, and of good work bursting out from certain centres of explosive force—apparently self-originating force—which we call men of genius.<sup>1</sup>

Lewis then draws our attention to the way in which the New Testament speaks about the Christian life in very different terms:

Thus in Gal. iv. 19 Christ is to be “formed” inside each believer—the verb here used meaning to shape, to figure, or even to draw a sketch. In First Thessalonians (i. 6) Christians are told to imitate St. Paul and the Lord, and elsewhere (1 Cor. x. 33) to imitate St. Paul as he in his turn imitates Christ—thus giving us another stage of progressive imitation. Changing the metaphor we find that believers are to acquire the fragrance of Christ, *redolere Christum* (2 Cor. ii. 16); that the glory of God has appeared in the face of Christ as, at the creation, light appeared in the universe (2 Cor. iv. 6); and, finally, if my reading of a much disputed passage is correct, that a Christian is to Christ as a mirror to an object (2 Cor. iii. 18).

Lewis points out that thinking of oneself as “original” and as a “creator” is very close to summing up the reality of the fall, where humans turned from what is better and greater than

<sup>1</sup>This and the next several quotes are taken from C. S. Lewis, “Christianity and Literature,” *Genesis: Journal of the Society of Christians in the Arts, Inc.* 1, no. 2 (1975): 18–20.

themselves—God, who is the Originator—to what is lesser and derived—themselves. Lewis then applies this biblical insight to the work of the writer and the artist:

Applying this principle to literature, in its greatest generality, we should get as the basis of all critical theory the maxim that an author should never conceive of himself as bringing into existence beauty or wisdom that did not exist before, but simply and solely as trying to embody in terms of his own art some reflection of eternal Beauty and Wisdom.

Lewis comments on the difference between the Christian and the man who sees himself at the center of reality: “St. Augustine and Rousseau both write *Confessions*; but to the one his own temperament is a kind of absolute (*au moins je suis autre*), to the other it is ‘a narrow house, too narrow for thee to enter—oh make it wide. It is in ruins—oh rebuild it.’”

Lewis explicitly acknowledges the similarities between a Christian view and a Platonic view of the arts as imitative of something transcendent. For the Platonist and neo-Platonist, this world is a copy, a shadow of the divine world above. The arts will not be satisfied with exploring what is found here—the copies—but will seek to enter into heaven itself to imitate the true origin of all that we see here on earth. Quoting Plotinus, Lewis says: “‘The arts do not simply imitate what they see but re-ascend to those principles from which Nature herself is derived.’ Art and Nature thus become rival copies of the same supersensual original, and there is no reason why Art should not be the better of the two.”<sup>2</sup>

I am not suggesting, of course, that Platonic and Christian views of the arts are precisely the same. The point is simply this: both the Platonist and the Christian acknowledge that this world is dependent on something greater. As a Christian I acknowledge that all things, including myself, are made by God and that all things, including myself, live in dependence on God and for God.

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<sup>2</sup>Plotinus, *Ennead*, 5.8.320, quoted in C. S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*, Oxford History of English Literature 3 (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 320.

As an artist I will be glad to receive from above the pattern for my work—just as those who built the tabernacle and the temple did their work in obedience to God’s ordering and in submission to the heavenly original that they copied.

Using Sir Philip Sidney as an example, Lewis further notes:

The poet, unlike the historian, is not “captived to the truth of a foolish world,” but can “deliver a golden.” Sidney . . . inherited, in a Christianized form, the Platonic dualism. Nature was not the whole. Above earth was heaven; behind the phenomenal, the metaphysical. To that higher region the human soul belonged. The natural world, as Bacon said, was “in proportion inferior to the soul.” The man who . . . improved on Nature, and painted what might be or ought to be, did not feel that he was retreating from reality into a merely subjective refuge; he was reascending from a world which he had a right to call “foolish” and asserting his divine origin.<sup>3</sup>

We may describe a Christian understanding of the arts in the following way: Our work in any field of the arts will be imitative. We will be thinking God’s thoughts after him—painting with his colors; speaking with his gift of language; exploring and expressing his sounds and harmonies; working with his creation in all its glory, diversity, and in-built inventiveness. In addition, we will find ourselves longing to make known the beauty of life as it once was in Paradise, the tragedy of its present marring, and the hope of our final redemption. All great art will echo these three elements of Eden: (1) Eden in its original glory, (2) Eden that is lost to us, and (3) the promise that Eden will be restored. We will look later in some depth at this call of the artist to make “echoes of Eden.”

I do not mean to suggest that there is no room for creativity or originality in a Christian understanding of the arts. Lewis thought it appropriate to use the term *sub-creation* for J. R. R. Tolkien’s work *The Lord of the Rings*, for Tolkien devoted a lifetime to creating the world of Middle-earth in extraordinary depth and detail. Yet, he

<sup>3</sup>Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century*, 320–21.



was, of course, dependent on this "first" creation, God's creation, as the original from which Tolkien "copied" all his remarkable ideas. So then, we may use the terms *creative* and *original* as long as we understand that we do not mean them in an absolute sense, for in everything we do, we act as those who are created and who are working within the boundaries of this created universe.

We can therefore take delight in this secondary sense of "sub-creation" as found in the work of a Christian poet who designs new forms (as did John Donne or T. S. Eliot); or the plays of a Christian dramatist whose work far supersedes that of his predecessors (as did Shakespeare's); or the compositions of a Christian musician who writes music in original styles (as did Bach); or the canvases of the Christian painter who breaks with tradition (as did Rembrandt or van Gogh). However, a Christian will just as gladly use forms already in existence if those forms fit the purposes and passions of any given work.

Another way to express this recognition of the secondary nature of all our art would be to understand that all creative work is a form of praise and worship: by creating we declare the glory of God, who made us in his likeness.

### **The Arts as More Than an Expression of the Self**

These reflections on imitation rather than absolute originality for the artist lead us to a related issue. Since the Romantic period, beginning in the years after 1800, the arts have become increasingly a matter of mere self-expression. This arises from the sense of the artist as the one who sees to the very core of reality. In this view the artist becomes like God, just as Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent to imagine that they could become rivals to God. The artist is seen as having a special sensibility that gives him or her a higher understanding of and deeper insight into the human condition, which therefore elevates the artist above the average person as one to be admired.

But the Christian who works in the arts will not presume to be the great revealer, another god, the prophet or priest of the

age, a special mentor breaking new barriers. To do so would be to become the priest in a smaller and smaller cult. The more inward and purely self-expressive art becomes, the more inaccessible it is to others. For artistic communication to occur, art cannot be simply an expression of the self. True art must have some contact with life, with reality, with other people who exist alongside the artist. Lewis puts it something like this: "Great writing (and all great art) exists because there is a world not created by the writer."

In contrast to the Romantic view, artists need to see themselves as dependent on abilities they are born with, as dependent on others, and as dependent on the objective world around them. Christian artists need to regard themselves as creatures of God, using gifts given by God, delighting in the world made by God, needing the help of other artists, doing their work to the glory of God, and devoting their labors to the enrichment of the lives of others.

### **The Creativity of Others Helps Us Enter into God's Creativity**

We are finite, and that is good, for this is the way God made us; yet God's world surrounds us with all its extraordinary variety, beauty, order, and richness. Lewis reflects on how we may experience more of the wonder of God's world as we read and so enter into someone else's perspective on this world. This is true in all the arts; each painter, sculptor, writer, composer, musician, or designer sees something of the world that we do not see, and so as we look or listen or read, we are enriched by each artist's vision. Lewis asks why we enjoy reading (and we may apply this to all the arts). He answers:

The nearest I have yet got to an answer is that we seek an enlargement of our being. We want to be more than ourselves. Each of us by nature sees the whole world from one point of view with a perspective and a selectiveness peculiar to himself. And even when we build disinterested fantasies, they are saturated with, and limited by, our own psychology. To acquiesce in this particularity on the sensuous level—in other words, not to dis-

count perspective—would be lunacy. We should then believe that the railway line really grew narrower as it receded into the distance. But we want to escape the illusions of perspective on higher levels too. We want to see with other eyes, to imagine with other imaginations, to feel with other hearts, as well as with our own. We are not content to be Leibnitzian monads. We demand windows. Literature as Logos is a series of windows, even of doors. One of the things we feel after reading a great work is “I have got out.” Or from another point of view, “I have got in”; pierced the shell of some other monad and discovered what it is like inside.<sup>4</sup>

Lewis points out how reading (or the enjoyment of any artwork) is similar to love, moral activity, and the exercise of the mind, for in each of these activities we are called out of ourselves into the life of another person. This would be a joy and an enlargement of us even if we were not fallen creatures, for we are told that even before the rebellion of our first ancestors, it was “not good for the man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18). God has so designed us that we need others to complement us in every aspect of our lives.

God has not made us to be isolated individuals who find fulfillment simply by ourselves, or even—and I say this carefully—only in relationship with him. He has made us for others so that, though finite persons, we together can reflect the unity and diversity within the godhead, and can take delight in the gifts, wisdom, and insight of our fellow men and women. The greatest commandment calls us to love God with heart and soul and mind and strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves. God’s Word teaches us that we know we love God by the reality of our love for other human persons.<sup>5</sup>

When we add to this the fact that we are fallen and that the essence of the fall is to worship and serve oneself, we begin to see how important are the arts, for they give us a wider and fuller view of God’s good world. The arts enable us to look beyond ourselves and beyond the horizons of our own experience. They help us to stop being so self-centered. Lewis writes:

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<sup>4</sup>C. S. Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 137–38.

<sup>5</sup>See 1 John 4:7–12.

Good reading, therefore, though it is not essentially an affectional or moral or intellectual activity, has something in common with all three. In love we escape from our self into one other. In the moral sphere, every act of justice or charity involves putting ourselves in the other person's place and thus transcending our own competitive particularity. In coming to understand anything we are rejecting the facts as they are for us in favour of the facts as they are. The primary impulse of each is to maintain and aggrandize himself. The secondary impulse is to go out of the self, to correct its provincialism and heal its loneliness. In love, in virtue, in the pursuit of knowledge, and in the reception of the arts, we are doing this. Obviously this process can be described either as an enlargement or as a temporary annihilation of the self. But that is an old paradox; "he that loseth his life shall save it." . . .

This, so far as I can see, is the specific value or good of literature considered as Logos; it admits us to experiences other than our own. They are not, any more than our personal experiences, all equally worth having. Some, as we say, "interest" us more than others. The causes of this interest are naturally extremely various and differ from one man to another; it may be the typical (and we say "How true!") or the abnormal (and we say "How strange!"); it may be the beautiful, the terrible, the awe-inspiring, the exhilarating, the pathetic, the comic, or the merely piquant. Literature gives the entrée to them all. . . .

Literary experience heals the wound, without undermining the privilege, of individuality. There are mass emotions which heal the wound; but they destroy the privilege. In them our separate selves are pooled and we sink back into sub-individuality. But in reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do.<sup>6</sup>

"Literature makes us feel more about things, and feel about more things." A friend attributed these words to Thomas De Quincey, the English essayist. I have not been able to confirm this attribu-

<sup>6</sup>Lewis, *An Experiment in Criticism*, 138-41.

tion, but anyone who loves to read will agree gladly that literature deepens and broadens our experience. What is true of literature is true of all the arts. In the enjoyment of others' creativity, I enter into a vision and richness beyond my own: "familiar things made new, new things made familiar," to paraphrase Samuel Johnson. Chesterton understood this and sums it up for us: "Fiction means the common things as seen by the uncommon people."<sup>7</sup> T. S. Eliot also writes of this as he thinks about the nature of poetry. The poet, he suggests, leads us into a new level of consciousness,

making people more aware of what they feel already, and therefore teaching them something about themselves. But he is not merely a more conscious individual than the others; he is also individually different from other people, and from other poets too, and can make his readers share consciously in new feelings which they had not experienced before.<sup>8</sup>

In this expansion of the self, the arts are indeed like love or moral action. One gives oneself to another, yet is never more fully oneself.

### **Art by Christians and by Non-Christians**

An important question arises here that takes us back to an idea brought up at the beginning of this book: Should Christians only enjoy the art of fellow Christians? The question might imply that Christians make better artists than non-Christians, which seems absurd! But many believers speak as if it is impossible for the Christian to enjoy or be edified by the creative works of unbelievers. As I pointed out earlier, the truth is that there is not a single Christian in the world who does not daily benefit from the creative gifts and hard work of the unbelievers around him or her. Our clothes, our food, our homes, our public buildings, our transport, our furnishings, our machinery, our technology—the greater part of all of this has been designed and made by people who are not Christians. Besides enjoying the practical *utility* of many of these

<sup>7</sup>G. K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens: A Critical Study* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1906), 84.

<sup>8</sup>T. S. Eliot, "On Poetry and Poets," quoted in *Reading Literature: Some Christian Approaches*, ed. David Barratt and Roger Pooley (Leicester, UK: UCCF Literary Studies Group, 1985), 8.

things, there is no single believer anywhere in the world who does not also enjoy daily the *beauty* of design apparent in many of these essential parts of our lives.

On even the briefest reflection of the daily benefit Christians receive from the work of non-Christians, it is obvious that God has given his creative gifts to believers and unbelievers alike. Scripture acknowledges this in many ways, and we should need no other evidence than the insistence of God's Word that all human persons are made in his image (see Psalm 8 once more, or James 3:9–10).

In Acts 14:17, we see Paul talking to the idolatrous pagans in the city of Lystra about God's generosity. He says, "[God] has not left himself without a testimony: He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons" (NIV). Jesus calls us to be like our heavenly Father, who gives his good gifts to the believer and the unbeliever, the righteous and the wicked (Matt. 5:43–48). The writer of Proverbs declares that God's wisdom raises her voice not just to the people of Israel but to the whole human race so that there might be good laws and just rule in every nation (Prov. 8:1–4, 15–16). In 1 Kings 5, we read how God is pleased that Solomon is hiring the finest craftsmen of the day, unbelievers sent by Hiram, king of Tyre, to build the temple and to work on its interior design.

This is a particularly interesting example, for it teaches us that it is perfectly appropriate for us to use the gifts of non-Christians to help us build our houses of worship or to aid our worship in other ways (we will return to this issue later). On this subject of what is generally called the "common grace" of God, John Calvin writes with great passion about the folly and blasphemy of denying that God has given his gifts liberally to unbelievers:

Therefore, in reading profane authors, the admirable light of truth displayed in them should remind us, that the human mind, however much fallen and perverted from its original integrity, is still adorned and invested with admirable gifts from its Creator. If we reflect that the Spirit of God is the only fountain of truth, we will be careful, as we would avoid offering insult to him, not

to reject or condemn truth wherever it appears. In despising the gifts, we insult the Giver.<sup>9</sup>

And again:

The sum of the whole is this: From a general survey of the human race, it appears that one of the essential properties of our nature is reason, which distinguishes us from the lower animals, just as these by means of sense are distinguished from inanimate objects. For although some individuals are born without reason, that defect does not impair the general kindness of God [the Battles translation here has “general grace”; the French is *la grace generale de Dieu*], but rather serves to remind us, that whatever we retain ought justly to be ascribed to the divine indulgence. Had God not so spared us, our revolt would have carried along with it the entire destruction of nature. In that some excel in acuteness, and some in judgment, while others have greater readiness in learning some peculiar art, God, by this variety commends his favor toward us, lest any one should presume to arrogate to himself that which flows from his mere liberality. For whence is it that one is more excellent than another, but that in a common nature the grace of God is specially displayed [Battles translates this as “why is one person more excellent than another? Is it not to display in common nature God’s special grace?” The French is *la grace special de Dieu*.] in passing by many and thus proclaiming that it is under obligation to none. We may add, that each individual is brought under particular influences according to his calling.<sup>10</sup>

Calvin in this passage speaks of “general grace” and a form of “special grace” as he reflects on the generous giving of gifts by God to the whole human race. He is quite happy to acknowledge that in many areas of human activity unbelievers may be more gifted and have more wisdom than believers. If you are troubled by this statement, just think of the planes in which you fly, the buildings that you admire or in which you live and work, the technology or

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<sup>9</sup>John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2008), 2.2.15.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.2.17.

medical care from which you benefit. Almost certainly the majority of these have been designed and made by non-Christians. This truth should not trouble us at all, but rather cause us to magnify the grace of God, who gives to all so generously. The question we need to ask about any human artifact is not, Is this made by a Christian or a non-Christian? but rather the question that Genesis 1 prompts us to ask: Is this good?

### **Arts and Crafts**

Another question is the relationship between what tend to be called “arts” (such as music, literature, and painting) and “crafts” (such as the making of household furnishings, clothes, and buildings). Hans Rookmaaker, for many years professor of art history at the Free University of Amsterdam and a director of the L’Abri Fellowship in Holland, wrote very helpfully on this subject. Rookmaaker pointed out that at one time—through the Middle Ages and beyond the Reformation—what we now call the arts were all considered crafts; artists were workmen and working women like any other laborers. Young people were apprenticed in painting or music just as they were in furniture making or metalwork or dyeing. Art was simply the beauty that one expected to find in things made by skilled craftsmen and artisans.

Christians were a part of this cultural outlook, recognizing their abilities in these areas as gifts and callings from God. The result was a great wealth of music, literature, painting, sculpture, architecture, furniture, and many other things that people still flock to see, hear, and enjoy. Consider the examples of Bach, Rembrandt, and Shakespeare—each an outstanding artisan in his particular craft.

Perceptions about the arts began to change during the Romantic period. Art came to be seen as “fine art” or “high culture”; the crafts came to be considered inferior. The arts were disconnected from life, and the artist was deemed a kind of noble genius. What were some of the results of this shift in thinking about the nature of the arts? Here we will summarize some of the points that Rookmaaker



makes in his writing on this subject (see, in particular, his essay *Art Needs No Justification*).<sup>11</sup>

One result of this shift was that art became museum art instead of artistically made objects that were part of the everyday life. We now go to museums to see the works of “great artists,” works that may be beautiful and meaningful in many ways, but have been set apart from the ordinary by their status as art. Contrast that with the great outpouring of paintings that decorated the churches and public buildings in the late medieval period or at the time of the Renaissance. These works were part of people’s lives; wherever they went in the course of a day or a week, they met with artistic works created to beautify everyday existence. With the redefinition of art, however, this became less and less the case.

Along with this shift in thinking and the divorce of artistic endeavors from the everyday, art also became very expensive. Unlike the contemporaries of Michelangelo or Leonardo da Vinci, the common man and woman had very little access to the works of the great artists until the rise of public museums.

In addition, there developed a separation of fine art from commercial art or entertainment art, though in every field, a few artists managed to transcend these divisions. Toulouse-Lautrec, Johann Strauss, Duke Ellington—these are some who bridged that gap between art per se and commercial or entertainment art. Largely because of technology, nowadays we are able to enjoy at a popular level some of the works of the great artists of a previous time—artisans who did not think of themselves as working away at some “higher calling,” but who saw themselves as serving the men and women of their day with the gifts God had given them. Think here of the excellent recent films based on the plays of William Shakespeare or the novels of Jane Austen, which are fine examples of how great art and commercial art can come together, as were the original works of these two authors.

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<sup>11</sup>Hans Rookmaaker, *Art Needs No Justification* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978).

Another consequence of this separation of arts and crafts is the alienation of most ordinary people from the arts (in contrast to the audiences of Shakespeare's plays, which were enjoyed by queen—and later king—and commoner alike). Along with this alienation of ordinary people there has arisen a special class of "art interpreters"—reviewers and critics whose job it is to educate the rest of us so that we are able to understand the arts. Often there is a vast gulf between what the art interpreters claim is good art and what ordinary people enjoy.

When the BBC did a poll on the greatest author of the twentieth century, the public overwhelmingly chose J. R. R. Tolkien and his work *The Lord of the Rings*. Many critics were outraged, as they had expected James Joyce or Virginia Woolf to be chosen. They demanded that the poll be done again and the questions changed to favor their notions of great literature. No matter how the questions were asked, Tolkien still won!

Another example is the BBC poll on which book most influenced British women. Instead of a work by Virginia Woolf, Germaine Greer, or some other heroine of many feminist reviewers, the outright winner was Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. More recently, when Lee Child was awarded finest "Crime Fiction Writer" of 2011 for his outstanding Jack Reacher novels, the great detective-fiction writer P. D. James praised Child publicly for the quality of his work, then added wryly that she feared Child would never win the Booker Prize for finest novel of the year.<sup>12</sup> One of the judges on the Booker panel had remarked that a crime-fiction writer would win the Booker Prize over his dead body.

Romantic notions of art create practical difficulties for artists and art students who are sensible enough to see the problems of this approach. Indeed, we currently see a crisis in the arts that leads to the question, Why am I working at this? By the Romantic vision of art, the artist is driven inward to find his or her identity in and through the work produced. But a problem arises: what if one finds only emptiness inside?

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<sup>12</sup>P. D. James has written an outstanding series of novels with the detective Adam Dalgliesh as one of her major characters. Many of these books have been turned into excellent television series.

The Romantic conception of artists as tortured geniuses expressing their innermost being creates particular difficulty for Christians who see the arts as the epitome and clearest expression of the non-Christian spirit of the age. This generates a reaction among the vast majority of Christians and raises two problems that constantly confront the believer who senses God's calling to be an artist.

*First, art is considered by many in our churches to be unnecessary and unspiritual, even worldly.* Therefore, Christians who desire to be artists are told, "Leave art to the pagans. Our Christian calling is to be spiritual and to bear witness to Christ." But even if we take this negative attitude toward the arts, we still find that art is inescapably part of our lives. Anyone who thinks about the presentation of food on a plate or what colors of flowers to grow in their garden is acknowledging that human beings cannot escape the arts.

*Second, the Christian who perseveres and enters the arts has to face all sorts of criticisms: the charge of hedonism, of worldliness, of being sinful or carnal.* Artists are often considered lazy, for art is not "real work." The artist is thought to be in danger from the world. A young believer who persists in such a calling may be told, "If you have to be an artist, then at least use your art for evangelistic purposes. This can be your only justification for pursuing such a life."

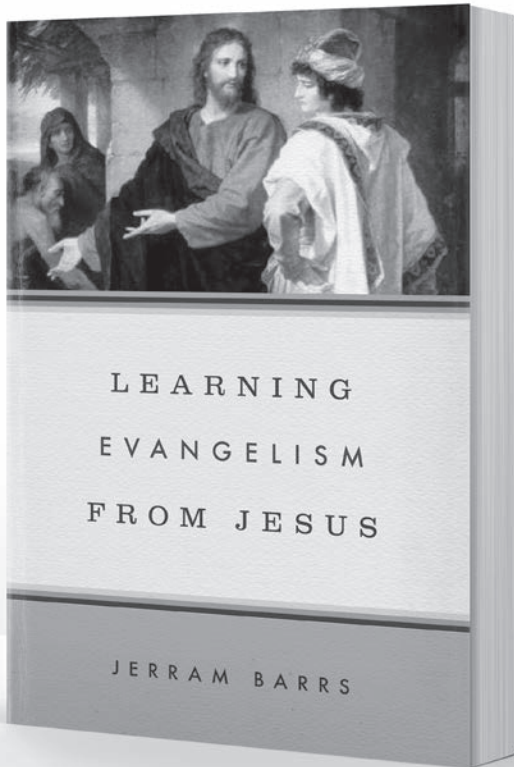
How are we as Christians to respond to such charges, criticisms, and challenges? We do need to make a response for the sake of Christians who have been gifted by God and who wish to pursue this calling. And our response should include the following:

- *Art needs no justification.* It is simply a gift of God, part of his created reality, to be received like any other gift—with gratitude.
- *We must not say that "art is for art's sake," for this is the Romantic heresy.* Art is to be tied to the reality of God's creation and to our human calling to live as his image bearers.
- *The Christian artist will regard himself or herself as a craftsman.* Artists will see themselves not as self-serving visionaries, but as ordinary humans (that is glorious enough!) with a particular

calling from God to serve him and their fellow humans by working with words, music, color, stone, metal, and so on.

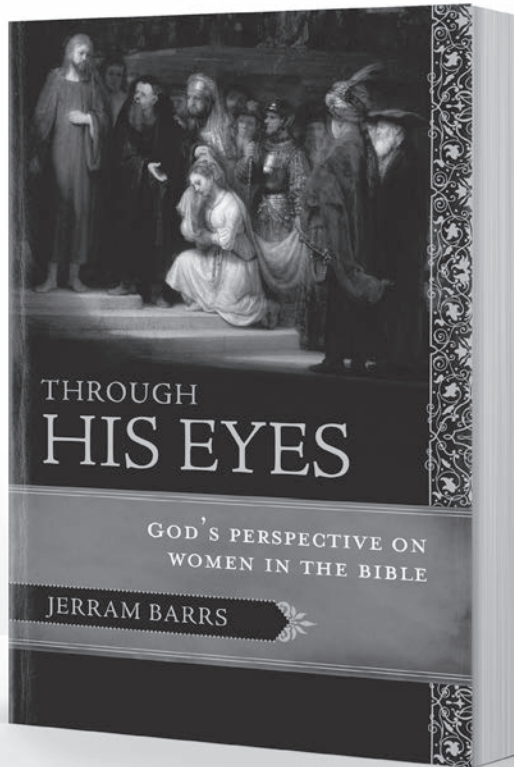
- *Most importantly, the Christian in the arts will be committed to humility.* The true artist does *not* say, “I will be an artist, an inspired voice of the gods” (this is too religious a claim), or the “revealer of truth,” as if a prophet, or a “self-revealing genius” (these suggest that only the artist can truly see reality). Rather, the true artist sees his or her work within the context of and as a subset of God’s larger and infinitely more creative work. The true artist values something more than self. The true artist holds up a mirror to what God has made.

# What does Jesus teach us about evangelism?



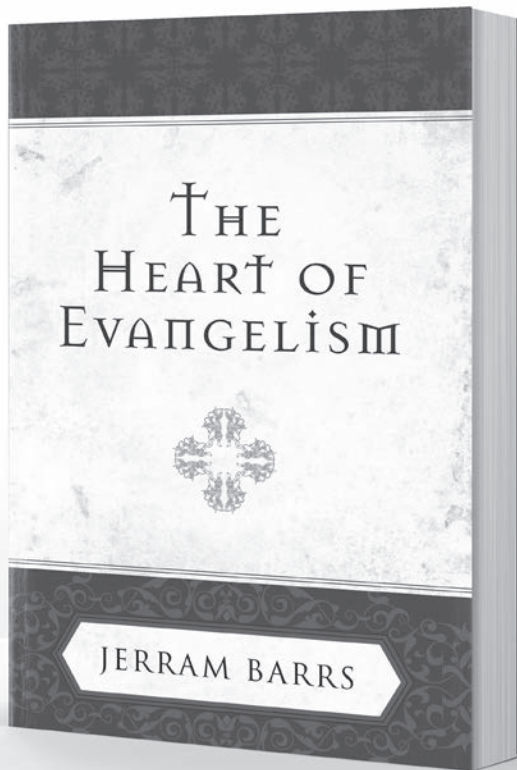
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