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The Arts and the Church

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The Arts Defined

The word “art” goes back to a Latin word. This Latin word (*ars, artis*, feminine) denotes “that which is made or created by an artisan”. Thus the arts in the past and present entail something that is the product of *human* ingenuity. By definition whatever occurs naturally is not “art” and therefore does not technically belong to the arts. As such, by definition not even God’s own works of creation qualify as art, although the supreme and most masterful Artisan of all might well have every right to disagree.

In the Middle Ages human beings were expected to earn their living by working the land (farming), by making (artifacting), or by serving (healing, soldiering, selling, governing, etc.). To the medieval mindset “art” was what every one was expected to do. Every *honest* occupation involved some work. Usury and thievery were *dishonest* occupations because they did not do so. Special artistic work done or performed beyond the foundational and ordinary, more for reasons of aesthetics or beauty than for function or decoration, did not yet come into play.¹

The character of the arts then as we know them today is a relatively modern phenomenon. One delightful and captivating survey of major artistic developments in the West is that entitled *Arts in Civilization: Pre-historic Culture to the Twentieth Century* (London: Bloomsbury Books, 1992) by Jack A. Hobbs and Robert L. Duncan. This volume is replete with numerous, coloured, periodic charts chronicling key developments in politics, literature and philosophy, the visual arts, architecture, and music. Articles on the substance and development of the Arts are likewise available in the new *Oxford Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Arts*.²

Also gracing its inside covers are insightful, parallel columns highlighting the major stepping stones in the visual arts, performing arts, in literature, and in music from earliest times to the present.

In spite of some unavoidable overlapping, modern artistic endeavour may conveniently be subdivided into five major groupings:

- 1) the visual arts (such as drawings, paintings, lithographs, etchings, engravings, icons, relief carvings, film photography, manuscript illuminations, etc.);
- 2) the performing arts (choral and instrumental music, hymnody, drama, choreography and dance, etc.);
- 3) the literary arts (fiction, non-fiction, poetry, etc.);
- 4) the structural arts (architecture, mosaics, sculpture, murals, frescoes, stained and painted glass, etc.); and
- 5) the functional arts (such as metalwork, jewelry, pottery, coinage, stamps, seals, horticulture, culinary arts, humour, sepulchral, fabric, poster, and craft art) where artistic endeavours are characterized by their utility in and for ongoing, everyday life.

A Rich But Strained Relationship

The relationship between the arts and the church, though rich and fertile down through the centuries, has not been without its problems. The councils and bishops of the early church were not open to the use of pictures in the early church. What was especially *verboten* was any use of sculpture or three-dimensional art in the round. Their ecclesial prohibitions were based on the understanding or rather misunderstanding of Exodus 20:4-5, which was thought to ban the making of any likeness of anything in heaven, on earth, or under the earth.

The actual situation as to art-making was not so one-sided. Recent research has found more variety and diversity in Christianity and Judaism than has been hitherto recognized. While Christian conciliar and episcopal statements were being made on top, at the very same time at least one Christian underground movement proved otherwise. In the catacombs of Rome, artisans used symbols to witness to the Christian hope of resurrection and eternal life. While no picture or face of Christ was tolerated, the Good Shepherd as a symbol of Christ was permitted; it

could even appear in the round, or be given the face of St. Peter as a model *pastor* on earth. The character of the pictorial scenes drawn from the Hebrew Bible appearing on the walls of Jewish synagogues, such as at Dura Europos³ (3rd century CE) outside Roman Palestine on the Upper Euphrates or in the Holy Land itself on the mosaic floor at Beth Alpha⁴ (7th century CE), necessitates some modification of earlier views on the strict prohibition of pictures even within Judaism. In both places surprisingly even the Hand of God is allowed pictorial representation!

No brief review of the history of the relationship of the arts to the church can overlook the iconoclastic controversy of the Middle Ages. The question of the legitimacy of the use of icons was a most divisive issue in the 8th and 9th centuries and shook the Eastern Orthodox church down to its very foundations. The issue was resolved in the legitimizing decrees of the Seventh Ecumenical Council at Nicea in 787. The *veneration* but not the *worship* of icons was approved. Effective and contributory to the council's final and supportive decrees was the convincing refutation and argumentation of John of Damascus (c675-c749). The final, definitive triumph of iconodules over iconoclasts came historically on the first Sunday of Lent in 843, a joyous event still celebrated by Eastern Orthodoxy on this special Sunday of the church year.

So much of the great classic art and architecture we possess today must be attributed to the energy of the western church of the Renaissance. Such familiar names as Raphael and Michelangelo come to mind. The Renaissance indeed helped rekindle a love for the classic in Rome and Italy. A momentary bit of such energy is captured in the movie *The Agony and the Ecstasy* (1965), where Michaelangelo's (Charlton Heston) artistic struggles with Pope Julius II (Rex Harrison) over the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel are dramatized. For a corresponding commitment and witness to the importance of art and architecture in the East one's eye must eventually fall on the famous Hagia Sophia church built by Emperor Justinian at Constantinople/Istanbul in 532-537. This magnificent domed structure, 33 meters in diameter and 55 meters in height, pierced by 40 windows, once almost seemed to float in thin air as if suspended by a golden chain from heaven. With the city's fall to the Turks in 1453, this building became a mosque, and now reflects in both its interior and exterior the additions and restraints of Islam.

The history of the church to the present has been described as a struggle between the church and the state. The rise of Gothic architec-

ture (12th century) in France early on signalled a growing spirit of dissatisfaction outside of Rome. The attention and focus given the western facade of the Gothic cathedral as the ruler's entrance was indicative of this new spirit and rise of princely power and influence. It is not by accident that Gothic architecture was not very welcome in Italy. The German Reformation experience and the desire of Henry VIII for a male heir contributed even more to the western church's loss of dominance outside of Rome. As the church also lost more and more control of the sponsorship of the arts to the royal courts, the arts passed accordingly from the triumphal and doxological to more secular appropriations of common religious themes. Musicians, painters, architects became the playthings of dukes and princes and their works were accomplished as much for the self-indulgence of patron hosts and the entertainment of their guests as for the praise and glory of God. The temptation arose for the artist to go it somewhat alone, independent of bishop or duke, as was played out in the brilliance and tragedy of Mozart.

The close linkage of the arts with the church of Rome had grave consequences for some who abandoned the church at Rome. In bold witness against Rome, Zwingli and Calvin came to regard the arts with principled negativity. For similar reasons in England and upon their arrival in North America the Puritans could not stomach much Romish art. While churches faithful to the Orthodox, Russian, and the Roman traditions on this continent maintained some positive affirmation of the arts, those who "protested" were less eager to do so. Only gradually in the United States and Canada did the arts gain a respectable holding in Protestant church circles, yet more often than not along more meditative and secular lines outside the formal church. Today's neglect of the arts within many of our churches still reflects something of these former old-age denominational and political ideologies, coupled with democracy's ever-present downside, the propensity to settle for the lowest common denominator.

The Neglect of the Arts

One can only decry the ephemeral and less-foundational passions pursued by so much of contemporary society. People across the spectrum seem to be willing to settle for so little for so much. A British pop group, the Spice Girls, even without Ginger, sells out 13,000 tickets for

\$35 on up (into the \$100s from scalpers) for a concert on 1 July in Madison Square Gardens, New York, NY, in twelve minutes!⁵ Rock stars who perhaps could not make it musically anywhere in a contemporary symphony orchestra, draw standing room-only audiences at top dollar to help young people lose their hearing, if not their moral and spiritual values. Spectator sports such as hockey, basketball, football, and baseball, and participatory sports such as golf, skiing, fishing, and hunting command enormous amounts of time and money. Shopping, TV sitcoms and soap operas, talk-shows fill the waking hours of countless patrons. The arts seem to be on the back burner, if in the kitchen at all, attractive to and supported by only a minority.

No doubt, the reasons for the neglect of the arts today are complex and multiple. But certainly one reason has to be the lowly place given the arts in the educational system. Where the arts are given last place behind science, mathematics, and physical education, the implicit suggestion made to the young is that the arts are secondary or even tertiary to life. To help the younger set understand and appreciate the arts one needs to give them much more thoughtful and sensitive artistic exposure early in life. This simple kerygma was what Richard Dreyfuss was attempting to proclaim in the spirited movie *Mr. Holland's Opus* (1995). Where are we when we have to play classical music in Toronto's troublesome malls or subway system to drive loitering youth to go elsewhere?⁶ It is one thing to hear Ferde Grofe's opening movement in the *Grand Canyon Suite* or Beethoven's use of the "shepherd's song" in his Pastoral Symphony No. 6, it is another thing to experience what is really happening: in the former, the sun's rising in musical majesty; in the latter, nature's joyful revitalization with the passing on of a thunderous rain-storm. Can and should anyone's day be complete today without some music by Mozart? Will anyone ever know true perfection or a full sense of dramatic climax without experiencing Pachelbel's *Canon*, a piano concerto by Beethoven, or the *scene finale* of Act IV of Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* ballet? It has been shown that interest in and of the arts is frequently in direct proportion to the level of one's general education. Where the level of education is low, a correspondent underappreciation of the arts is not unusual. Results in a recent research project indicated that even rats exposed to Mozart before birth ended up as smarter, faster learners than those exposed to Philip Glass.⁷

Correspondingly, contemporary neglect of the arts in the church

begins with the lamentable absence of deliberate inculcation of the artistic dimension in contemporary theological education. The arts in theological education, according to Wilson Yates, are currently approached from one to three perspectives: the *theoretical* (where the arts themselves are taken seriously as significant conscious or unconscious religious statements), the *analytical* (where the arts are viewed more or less as historical statements and reflections of faith by those who have gone), and the *practical* (where attention is given as to how varied art forms may more effectively be utilized in the church's ministries). It turns out that in the majority of institutions the greatest number of arts courses fall within the analytical and practical categories, with relatively few institutions taking on the greater challenge of the theoretical. Yates' review included seven US and two Canadian Anglican/Episcopal schools and eight Lutheran US institutions. Of the 134 theological schools examined *in toto*, only eleven institutions in the USA were singled out for any considered achievement in the matter of theological integration with the arts.⁸ If it is true that any theology that fails to take the arts seriously is an impoverished theology, it is also true that any church that fails to consider the arts meaningfully as part of its being is an impoverished church.

Allied to educational wholesomeness is the matter of cultural values passed on. A society is truly in trouble when a basketball player earns \$807,692 US per week, or a baseball pitcher \$11,500,000 per year, while incredibly a Canadian prime minister, a member of parliament, a doctor, a teacher, a pastor, an artist, or a musician makes considerably less.⁹ If culture is defined as the inner values and attitudes that guide a given population, admiration for and pursuit of such purely material goals moves one to want to update Jesus' parable of the "rich fool" (Luke 12:13-21). In such a cultural environment, understandably, one should not be surprised to learn that young and old have one primary goal, to be as materially rich as possible. To make one materially rich, the pursuit of the arts does not fit in.

The sheer complexity and diversity of the arts may present another formidable obstacle. One does not learn to appreciate the intricacies of classical music, dance, literature, paintings, and sculpture over a weekend. Meaningful acquaintance takes time and opportunity and costs money. Instead of appreciating the highest and most complicated evidences of artistic expression, it is so much easier to settle for more popular, and more immediate, self-indulgent brands of song and dance.

Apart from the fact that the arts do contribute much to the overall economy, for those less well off financially interest in the arts palls by comparison with interest in jobs and making a go of it economically. For some of this nation's poor, there is little or no money left for experiencing the arts in theatre, concert, or cinema. People in such straits understandably plead that federal and provincial monies earmarked for the arts be directed their way. As one person put it: "People who want or need such stuff should be willing to pay for it themselves."

Tragically the arts and *classics* have been and are a *class* thing. Historically the arts have been associated with the upper classes and better educated of society. As of old, it is the individual and corporate rich who have the means to support, sponsor, collect, and promote the arts. In a day when it is regrettably fashionable and politically profitable to blame the rich for so much of what is wrong with our world, it is unfortunate that the arts suffer in part because of their identification with the monied and powerful. In the face of such demagoguery and demonizing, it would seem more God-pleasing to applaud all efforts to enrich our society than to undermine or vilify them.

The Contribution of the Arts

The arts have much to contribute to the life and mission of the church. The potential of the arts for our ministries is bounded only by our own creativity and imagination. The theology of the church has been set forth succinctly in the Apostolic Creed. The three articles of this creed similarly set forth the relation of the arts to the church's historic purpose.

In keeping with the thrust of the First Article, the arts assist us to appreciate the fullness of God's creation, what is, what we have in common as human beings, as believers and non-believers. The arts assist us in our description of the way things have been and are; the arts continue to serve as a thermometer to measure and as a gauge to monitor the substance and spirit of a particular age and culture. The arts are a tip-off as to what has been and is going on in our world and society. There is a human agenda out there and it surely will find expression through the artistic efforts of insightful women and men now as in the past. The arts give us as church the opportunity to see and engage this expression.

The Second Article of the creed addresses the problem of human shortcomings and alienations and proclaims the story of God's work of

reconciliation in Christ. The arts are not only a mirror of the latest News but of the Bad News that has been and is going on and what God has done about it. The arts help pinpoint those self-centered and societal preoccupations that are worthy of prophetic warning and judgment and in need of divine emancipating, redemption, and forgiveness. The arts have much to say about what should not be in the light of a divine/human relationship restored. The arts have meaningfully told and retold the story of the Good News of Christ from birth to resurrection for every eye, ear, heart, and mind to see, hear, feel, and believe.

The Third Article speaks of the work of the Holy Spirit, the ongoing work of nurturing and upbuilding in the faith. While we may appreciate the arts as a vehicle to describe what should not be, we dare not overlook their contribution to the final vision and ongoing reconstructive task of theology. The arts can portray with penetrating clarity, as in Edward Hicks' *The Peaceable Kingdom*, based on Isaiah 11:6-9, the eschatological vision of what must and will be by God's power and grace. Rather than remain bogged down in the negative or the present the arts can accentuate the positive, affirm, and celebrate our common and final hope as church.

As part of their capacity to witness, the arts supply us with the historic and classic pieces that people and time have judged worthy of preservation. David Tracy defines a classic as that "which surprises, provokes, challenges, shocks, and eventually transforms us: an experience that upsets conventional opinion and expands the sense of the possible...."¹⁰ The arts not only supply us as church with ready-to-use models and forms but serve as avenues for new incentives and creative juices that lead to new works that may stand the test of time and find an honoured place in the artistic repertoire of the church's testimony.

Surely we do not live by words alone. We communicate as much non-verbally as verbally. Our communication to each other is not restricted to mere words but includes such other factors as body posture, eye contact, facial expression, gestures, and voice inflection. The arts participate in this wondrous world of multiple communication, as well as in the strengths and limitations that go with it. Strengths include seeing and feeling the uplifting convictions and emotions conveyed to us in the arts. Limitations include the decisions that of necessity come upon the individual artist in the moment of commitment. Unlike the beauty of the ambiguities in a given written text, the artist must commit herself/himself

one way or another in the exposition of a biblical text's dynamic. But herein lies the artistic gift: its unique focus and intensity.

What the arts essentially contribute to the church is the visual, the emotional, and the experiential alongside the verbal and aural. We in the church have been too much a "word people" in our liturgy, readings, and sermonizing. The creative use of sculpture, music, film, paintings, frescoes, icons, literature, dance, architecture, poetry, chancel drama, liturgical dance, and floral arrangements are powerful additions to the written scriptural and confessional word. Even the theological in humour and political cartoons has its place. The arts help us see, hear, feel, taste, touch, and even smell.

The famous choral director Robert Shaw in an invited address to a Mennonite audience in Winnipeg, in January of 1985, had a great deal to say about the vital importance of the arts to the church. Here is but a snippet of what he said:

For me the arts are the flesh become Word. That the Word became flesh is familiar doctrine. But what about the reciprocal miracle? The daily possibility of matter become spirit — paint on canvas in one century turned to tears six centuries later, words on to paper today, flung into a theatre tomorrow to change a life the year after, little spots of ink transferred into a miracle of symphonic song joining thousands of listeners and doers in a rare community of brotherhood? Art is the flesh become Word.¹¹

The arts in the fullest sense of the word witness to the depths and ongoing potential of the human imagination, whether that be visual, oral, verbal, historical, fictional, or emotional. Christian imagination is that power of the Spirit by which the shape of things to come is anticipated and seized. To communicate more fully and imaginatively we should be using all that we are capable of. Lower and higher education dare not be limited to what is verbally written or spoken. The arts are not to be something extra but fundamental and integral to the whole gospel curriculum and communication. The arts enshrine the highest expressions of the human psyche, the most penetrating and painful observations on life, and the noblest thoughts and imaginations of the heart, mind, and spirit. How foolish to deny *that* to our children and to our parishioners! Without artistic imagination no one should dare to be — period! Without heightened imagination there can be no true poet, historian, pastor, or theologian. For the church, the unimaginative alternative is to be dull,

unwelcome, uninteresting, time-bound, and repetitive.

Epilogue

Lutherans in particular should have little trouble with the arts. While iconoclastic tendencies may have expressed themselves in the case of other notable Reformers such as Calvin or Zwingli, such was not the case with Martin Luther. Luther sought to preserve what was worthy of the gospel in the rich western Catholic tradition. Luther never intended his reforming work to result as it did into a separate denomination. His effort was first and foremost a reforming movement within the church catholic. Thus Luther preserved much of the Roman mass in his *German Mass* in 1526. At least thirty-nine hymns are now associated with his name, including the hymn inspired by the David/Goliath story, so synonymous with the Reformation, *Ein' feste Burg* (1527/28).¹² But there is perhaps no better example of how to put the arts to work in the service and praise of Christ than the Orthodox Lutheran J. S. Bach. His son Carl Philipp Emmanuel Bach reports that his father composed at least five cantatas for every Sunday and festival of the church year. His Cantata #140, *Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme*, first performed on November 25, 1731, based on the Gospel lesson Matthew 25:1-13, for the 27th Sunday after Trinity, has been touted as one of his best.¹³ The theme of this cantata, *wachet auf*, may well serve as a call to the church today to “wake up” to the rich potential of the arts for the life and mission of the church.

Addendum: Resources for the Arts in the Church

Of all the resources on the arts, the most impressive and timely has to be the Internet. Individuals and university departments have created a veritable goldmine of information on all artistic fronts. One needs but to start surfing the *Yahoo* database and click “Arts and Humanities” for leads, or type one of a great many URL's, such as <http://witcombe.bcpw.sbc.edu/ARTHLinks.html> to read or download an incredible array of detail in text, sound, and picture. Perhaps the only caution needed is to remember that not every site is equally authoritative. As nearly everyone can technically have a web page, an inventive sixth-grader can appear to be just as authoritative as a seasoned univer-

sity professor.

Printed resources for promoting greater interplay between the arts and Christian worship, preaching, reaching, and teaching are abundant. In the face of such plenitude one can only be partial and selective. First and foremost on the list for sheer passion for the subject are John Dillenberger's *A Theology of Artistic Sensibilities: The Visual Arts and the Church* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1986), Books 1-2 of Robert Webber's *Music and the Arts in Christian Worship* (Nashville, TN: Star Song, 1994, vol. 4 in the Complete Library of Christian Worship series), William S. Taylor's *Seeing the Mystery: Exploring Christian Faith through the Eyes of Artists* (Winfield, BC: Wood Lake Books, 1989), and *Christian Faith and the Contemporary Arts*, ed. by Finley Eversole (New York, NY/Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962).¹⁴

When it comes to dismantling western art in terms of its component parts, one must highly commend Lois Fichner-Rathus for her straightforward clarity of expression (and inclusion of woman artists), in her book *Understanding Art* (5th ed.; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995). Everyone should also enjoy working through the twenty "great pictures" treated in *The Art Pack*, a unique, irresistible, three-dimensional tour through the creation of art over the centuries.¹⁵

As a classic introduction to art history, so much of it touching the church, the most recent edition of H.W. Janson's *History of Art* is high on the list.¹⁶ The intellectual, social, and political background surrounding the history of art is ably covered by Bronowski/Mazlish's *The Western Intellectual Tradition*, Arnold Hauser's *The Social History of Art*, *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, and Mortimer Adler's *The Great Ideas*.¹⁷ Early Christian art/architecture as treated by early scholars such as Lowrie has now been updated by Milburn and Matthews.¹⁸ Visual mapping of artists, sites, and movements from ancient Greece to the modern age is nicely done in the *Atlas of Western Art History* by J. Steer and A. White and on the Renaissance as edited by Nicholas Mann in the volume *Cultural Atlas of the Renaissance*.¹⁹ Treatment of the visual arts from the Colonial period onward in North America is dealt with in John Dillenberger's *The Visual Arts and Christianity in America* and in John Wilmerding's *The Genius of American Painting*.²⁰ For individual artists in a set covering the panorama of art history one cannot easily outmatch the now out-of-print *Time-Life Library of Art* series comprising twenty-seven volumes, plus an index.²¹

Should one wish to go on an arm-chair tour of European churches and museums, one should sit down with *The Cambridge Guide to the Museums of Europe*, Daniel Madden's *A Religious Guide to Europe*, or even Cees Nooteboom's *Roads to Santiago*.²² Among recently published dictionaries on art and artists one can cite *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists*, *Harrap's Illustrated Dictionary of Art & Artists*, the *Illustrated Dictionary of Narrative Painting*, and James Hall's *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art*.²³ The ultimate authority on all of the visual arts has to be *The Dictionary of Art* (New York, NY: Grove's Dictionaries, 1996). Its 34 volumes, comprising 41,000 articles by 6700 of the world's finest scholars from 120 countries, deal with all aspects of the visual arts. The set is a bit pricey at \$8000 US!

Where the desire is to concentrate on scenes from the Old or New Testament in art, a representative collection is present in Brion/Heimann's *The Bible in Art*, in Bernard Bruce's *The Bible and Its Painters*, in Richard Muehlberger's parallel volumes, *The Bible in Art: The Old Testament* and *The Bible in Art: The New Testament*, and in the book *Great Women of the Bible in Art and Literature* by Dorothee Soelle et al.²⁴ Moreover, representative colour slides of architecture, sculpture, painting, and minor arts are available for purchase from *Color Slide Source & Reference of World Art* and black/white and colour prints as well from *The University Prints Catalogue*.²⁵

For perspectives on films relating to the Bible I would recommend the two works by Larry J. Kreitzer, *The Old Testament in Fiction and Film* and *The New Testament in Fiction and Film*.²⁶ Also helpful is *Film Odyssey* and *Image & Likeness: Religious Visions in American Film Classics*.²⁷ For searching through films by subject or title one need but consult Christopher Case's *The Ultimate Movie Thesaurus* or the most recent edition of Leonard Maltin's *Movie Video Guide*.²⁸ The story and potential for theological use of photography is possible through a reading of Helmut and Alison Gernsheim's *A Concise History of Photography* and viewing the pictures in one or all of the four collaborative efforts by Martin Marty and his award-winning photographer son Micah.²⁹ The colour and beauty of illuminated manuscripts is unavoidable in C. de Hamel's *Scribe and Illuminators* and such reissued oldies as *The Art of Illuminated Manuscripts* and *The Illuminated Books of the Middle Ages*.³⁰ Sensitive introduction to and genuine appreciation of most ico-

nography is one assured result of reading *Icons: Windows on Eternity and Doors of Perception*.³¹ Reflective inspiration for our own lives is another likely positive outcome afforded us in working through the iconographic study of individual saints in Duchet-Suchaux/Pastoureau's *The Bible and the Saints* alongside Anne Gordon's *A Book of Saints*.³²

Resources for the literary arts are equally rewarding. For locating biblical motifs, concepts, names, quotations, and allusions resonating in English literature from the Middle Ages to the present there is nothing more spectacular than *A Dictionary of Biblical Tradition in English Literature*.³³ Particularly useful for British, North American, and world literature are the recent compilations edited by Frank Magil, *Masterpieces of World Literature* and *Masterpieces of American Literature*. These two collections supply descriptions, analyses, plots, themes, and critical evaluations of major works of fiction, non-fiction, drama, and poetry.³⁴ Interested theologian/book-lovers are also directed to *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, *The Bloomsbury Guide to English Literature*, *Benet's Reader's Encyclopedia of American Literature*, *The Bedford Introduction to Literature*, and *A Reader's Guide to the Twentieth Century Novel*.³⁵ A representative collection of spiritual classics from St. Augustine to Bonhoeffer is extant in Bernhard Christensen's *The Inward Pilgrimage*,³⁶ and poetry related to Scripture is dutifully covered in the selections chosen for Old and New Testament in the two-volume publication *Chapters into Verse: Poetry in English Inspired by the Bible*.³⁷

There are some new and noteworthy resources for the performing arts in the subdiscipline of music. The story of Christian music from the Gregorian chant to Black Gospel is told with infectious engagement by Andrew Wilson-Dickson in his *The Story of Christian Music*.³⁸ Updated and concise treatment of the entire Western musical experience is chronicled in the fifth edition of *A History of Western Music*, in Peter Gammond's most excellent *Classical Composers*, in Phil Goulding's amusingly irreverent *Classical Music* (detailing the world's fifty greatest composers and their 1000 greatest works), in *Harrap's Illustrated Dictionary of Music & Musicians*, and in *The Music Pack*, a three-dimensional instructional guide on every aspect of musical history, which includes a CD with selections from the works of twenty great and influential composers from Josquin des Prez to Stravinski and Alban Berg.³⁹ The progress of Hebrew and Jewish music from its earliest beginnings to modern Israel is

traced in Peter Gradenwitz's most recent edition of *The Music of Israel*.⁴⁰ A critical survey of organ music from Hofhaimer to Persischetti is shared in the 5th edition of *A Guide to Organ Music* by Viktor Lukas.⁴¹ Insights and summaries of a full range of oratorios, masses, and large cantatas from Samuel Adler to Elinor Remick Warren are accessible in Kurt Pahlen's *The World of the Oratorio* and in the new books that have appeared on those two special baroque composers in love with biblical themes, George Frideric Handel and J. S. Bach.⁴² The stories of 101 great ballets and the librettos of 101 great operas are also now readily within reach in English for those of us who wish to pursue these artistic forms, along with the recent volume totally given over to the operas of the British composer Benjamin Britten, such as *Noye's Fludde*, *The Burning Fiery Furnace*, and *The Prodigal Son*.⁴³

There are significant resources for drama as well. In drama instead of reading about people in the Bible, one gets to play them. Selected shorter books of the Bible, such as Ruth, Song of Songs, or even the Gospel of Mark, lend themselves for dramatic use as is. Lawrence Waddy's *The Bible as Drama* reworks 90 Bible stories into plays for use in church.⁴⁴ Albert Johnson's *Best Church Plays*, Ray Kostulias' *I Witness*, and T. W. Schroeder's *15 Life-Related Dramas* are but further samples of the many dramatic resources out there for use in our worship and religious education.⁴⁵ For the Thanksgiving season, one might even be industrious enough to mount a production of Archibald MacLeish's modernization of the Book of Job, the play *J.B.*⁴⁶ During Lent or Easter, for something really different, a congregation might opt to stage a "living art picture," i.e., to still-life a famous painting befitting the liturgical season, involving the congregation as whole.⁴⁷

Auditory rather than participatory study of drama is within earshot in the New York Pro Musica stereo CD presentations (from MA Classics) of the Medieval musical dramas *The Play of Daniel* and *The Play of Herod*. Resources from mime and sacred dance are also not absent.⁴⁸

Recent books on architecture provide another area for theological engagement. The fascinating story of human structural inventiveness is recounted in the book *Great Architecture of the World*.⁴⁹ Marvels of architecture given special focus in recent books include *Hagia Sophia: Architecture, Structure, and Liturgy*, *The Sistine Chapel*, *The Gothic Cathedral*, *Chartres Cathedral*, and the *Cathedrals of England, Scotland, and Wales*.⁵⁰ The details and wonder of stained glass windows are

addressed in Brown and O'Connor's *Medieval Craftsmen: Glass Painters* and in the studies by Brissae, Dowley, and Reyntiens.⁵¹ As for sculpture since the 5th century, striking and eye-opening (and, I might add, heavy to carry!) is the two-volume set *Sculpture: The Great Tradition*, ed. by Bernard Ceysson.⁵²

Myriad are the resources for the functional arts. There are studies of coins from the biblical world as well as from the whole wide world.⁵³ *The Big Book of Jewish Humor* delightfully and warmly brings us humour related to the Hebrew scriptural tradition.⁵⁴ Humour related to the New Testament certainly touches upon the many books by Robert L. Short.⁵⁵ Douglas Adams' *The Prostitute in the Family* and the more academic perspectives of *On Humour and the Comic in the Hebrew Bible* also deserve our scrutiny.⁵⁶ The hoax of the last and unquestionably the least of the great J. S. Bach's many children is unfortunately documented in Prof. Peter Schickele's *The Definitive Biography of P.D.Q. Bach?*⁵⁷ And who of us has not reflected theologically over a recent episode of *The Simpsons*? Crafts, jewelry, reliquaries, metalwork, tiling, furniture, printmaking, philately, food, horticulture, embroidery, clothing, wallpapering, and tapestry, to name but a further selective few, likewise each have representative publications today.⁵⁸

As it is, many fine suggestions are made for each Sunday of the church year in *Gathered for Worship*, published by the ELCIC in 1995, and in *Lift Up Your Heart*, the ELCIC's monthly worship URL (<http://www.golden.net/~grahl/whatsnew.html>) ably maintained by ELCIC pastors Wendell Grahlman and André Lavergne. Yet deserving of further and special mention here is the related arts and lectionary resource *Imaging the Word*, a three-volume publication from Pilgrim/United Church Press, and the two musico-poetic and literary arts resources *Looking for God* and *Listening for God* from Augsburg Fortress Press. The four 20-minute video tape set *Looking for God* uses art, music, and poetry to help us in our search for God; the two-volume *Listening for God* is aimed at those of us who enjoy reading and discussing literature.

Numerous and informative video sets are on the market to provide us with background and impetus for more profitable theological discussion and appreciation of the arts. Here I am thinking of Lord Kenneth Clark's monumental (7 VHS set) TV series *Civilization* (10 hrs) on architecture, art, philosophy, literature, and music, and related monograph *A Guide to Civilisation* (New York: NY: Time-Life Films, 1970) and book

Civilisation: A Personal View (New York, NY: Harper, 1990); and Sister Wendy's lavish and well-received (5 VHS set) *Story of Painting* (300 mins), a BBC production that leads its viewers on an artistic tour from the first known cave drawings through the Renaissance to New York's Soho scene. What is more, there is the life story of Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-c1652), the first master female painter to join an exclusive male vocation, as told in the French film *Artemisia*. Yet this subtitled film will most likely not be acceptable to all groups in the light of Director Agnes Merlet's recreation of the decadent sexuality of the period as well as Artemisia's scandalous rape by her tutor Agostino Tassi.

Classics such as *The Story of Ruth*, *Charlotte's Web*, *Babette's Feast*, *Les Miserables*, *Joan of Arc*, *A Man for All Seasons*, *Martin Luther*, *Hanged on a Twisted Cross* (on Dietrich Bonhoeffer — excellent and very moving!), and *Romero* are procurable from Gateway Films Vision Video, of Worchester, PA. A fine selection of art videos and CD-ROMs from the Library Video Company of Bala Cynwyd, PA, includes such grand productions as the (4 volume set) *Art of the Western World* (8 hrs), hosted by Michael Wood [see corresponding textbook by Bruce Cole and Adelheid Gealt (New York, NY: Summit Books, 1989)], the (9 volume set) *Hermitage Masterpieces Collection* (60 mins each), the (5 volume set) *Masterpieces of Italian Art Series* (60 mins each), and the (11 volume) *America's Music Series* (60 mins each) covering music from the Blues to Rock and Roll. Representative films on comparative religion and Scripture, such as *The Swedish Lutheran Church*, *Genesis: A Living Conversation with Bill Moyers*, *God & Politics with Bill Moyers*, *Byzantium: From Splendor to Ruin*, *Medieval Manuscripts*, and *Islamic Art*, are forthcoming for purchase or rental, here in Canada, from Films for Humanities & Sciences, of Fort Erie, ON. And furthermore, there is Audio-Form, located in Guilford, CT, as a viable source for such diverse audio and video cassettes as *Dante: Medieval Images of Order*, *Martin Luther King Jr: Causes of Prejudice*, *Lord of the Dance*, *The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*, John Osburne's *Luther*, and *The Joy of Bach*.

For those of us still not satiated or still flush with the necessary shekels, there is, of course, the entire Barnes and Noble store chain, offering such notable items as: *Cathedral* (60 mins), an instructive video on the construction and politics of Chartres and Reims, *The Power of the Past: Florence* (90 mins), *Michelangelo and the Sistine Chapel* (35 mins), (the 3 VHS set) *The Life of Leonardo da Vinci* (90 mins each), (the 8

VHS set) *In the Footsteps of Peter: The Museums and the Buildings of Vatican City* (60 mins each), (the 5 VHS set/35-105 mins each) *Grand Museum Series* (Prado, Vatican Museum, Uffizi, Louvre, London National Gallery), and a number of applicable videos in the *Biography* series (cf. Michelangelo, Mozart, Shakespeare). And not to be forgotten, the whole range of art education and multicultural art resources from Crystal Productions in Glenview, IL, or the many university audio and video lectures by distinguished arts scholars on a variety of subjects, attainable from The Teaching Company in Springfield, VA.

And when it comes to a wide range of music appropriate to our churches for the entire liturgical church year, one can hardly top the 1998-99 *Music Catalog* from Augsburg Fortress.

And last but not least — journals. Beside the many journals cited in the index to *Gathered for Worship* or on the ELCIC's regularly-updated URL *Lift Up Your Hearts*, there are a number of other publications that touch upon the arts that deserve attention, if not subscription: *Christianity and the Arts*, *ARTS: The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies*, *Religion and the Arts* (A Journal from Boston College), *Biblicon* (Sheffield Academic Press), *Bible Review*, *Books & Culture: A Christian Review*, *BBC Music Magazine and CD*, *Religious Education* (Scholars Press), and *Cross Accent: Journal of the Association of Lutheran Church Musicians*. Happy reading and researching!

Advice of the Popes who succeeded the Age of Raphael
 Degrade first the Arts if you'd mankind degrade,
 Hire idiots to paint with cold light and hot shade,
 Give high price for the worst, leave the best in disgrace,
 And with the labours of ignorance fill every place.⁵⁹

Notes

- ¹ For more on the definition of the arts, see Gene E. Veith, Jr., *State of the Arts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991) 29-38.
- ² Cf. John J. Nowich, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated Encyclopedia of the Arts* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1990). See also Hendrik Willem van Loon, *The Arts* (5th printing; New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1939).
- ³ Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert L. Kessler, *The Frescoes of the Dura Synagogue and Christian Art* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 1990).
- ⁴ N. Avigad, "Beth Alpha," *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in*

the Holy Land, Vol. 1, ed. by Michael Avi-Yonah (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1955) 187-190.

- ⁵ One should probably not take much comfort from the fact that the same concert in Canada at Molson Amphitheatre, Toronto, ON, on 11 July, took thirty-five minutes to sell out.
- ⁶ Saskatoon's *The Star Phoenix* (24 March 1998).
- ⁷ Saskatoon's *The Star Phoenix* (5 August 1998).
- ⁸ Wilson Yates, *The Arts in Theological Education: New Possibilities for Interpretation* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1987).
- ⁹ Such is the projected weekly salary for Michael Jordan for 1999 should he decide to continue to play basketball for the Chicago Bulls, and the average annual salary for pitcher Greg Maddux of the Atlanta Braves for the years 1998-2002.
- ¹⁰ David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1987) 108.
- ¹¹ I am indebted to Dr. Robert Solem, recently retired from the music department of the University of Saskatchewan, for sharing with me a cassette tape of Shaw's presentation.
- ¹² Ulrich S. Leupold, ed., *Liturgy and Hymns*, Vol. 53 of *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1965).
- ¹³ Data taken from the CD *Bach: Cantatas BWV 140 & 51*, notes written and music directed by Joshua Rifkin, The Bach Ensemble, Musical Heritage Society, 1987.
- ¹⁴ See also related works such as Jaroslav Pelikan's *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1985), *The Illustrated Jesus through the Centuries* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1997); and yet to be published *Mary through the Centuries*; Gary B. Reiersen, *The Art in Preaching: The Intersection of Theology, Worship, and Preaching with the Arts* (Lanham/ New York, NY: University Press of America, 1988); and Michael Camille's *The Gothic Idol: Ideology and Image-making in Medieval Art* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1989), a provocative study of the use of Christian art to advance prejudice against and misrepresentation of pagans, Muslims, Jews, heretics, and homosexuals.
- ¹⁵ C. Prayling et al., *The Art Pack* (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992).
- ¹⁶ Horst W. Janson, *History of Art* (3rd ed., 2 volume set ed., as rev. and expanded by Anthony F. Janson; Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1986). Other histories of art worthy of note are: Bernard S. Meyers and Trewin

Copplestone, eds., *The History of Art* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, 1992); Hugh Honour and John Fleming, *The Visual Arts: A History* (3rd ed., Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1991).

- 17 J. Bronowski and Bruce Mazlish, *The Western Intellectual Tradition: From Leonardo to Hegel* (New York, NY: Barnes & Noble, 1993); Arnold Hauser, *The Social History of Art*, 4 vols. (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1957-58, 1985); John McManners, ed., *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1992); and Mortimer Adler, *The Great Ideas: A Lexicon of Western Thought* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1992). The Adler material originally appeared as vols. 2-3 (1952) and vols. 1-2 (1990) of the Great Books of the Western World series.
- 18 See Walter Lowrie, *Art in the Early Church* (New York, NY: Pantheon Books, 1947); Robert Milburn, *Early Christian Art & Architecture* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1988); Thomas F. Mathews, *The Clash of Gods: A Reinterpretation of Early Christian Art* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993).
- 19 John Steer and Anthony White, *Atlas of Western Art History* (New York, NY: Facts on File, 1994); Nicholas Mann, ed., *Cultural Atlas of the Renaissance* (New York, NY: Prentice Hall, 1993); see also Andre Chastel, *Art of the Italian Renaissance* (New York, NY: Arch Cape Press, 1988).
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- 21 *The Time-Life Library of Art*, with Robert Morton as series editor (New York, NY: Time-Life Books, 1970, 1972).
- 22 Kenneth Hudson and Ann Nicholls, *The Cambridge Guide to the Museums of Europe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Daniel M. Madden, *A Religious Guide to Europe* (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1975); Cees Nooteboom, *Roads to Santiago: Detours and Riddles in the Lands and History of Spain* (New York, NY: Harcourt Bruce, 1997).
- 23 Ian Chilvers, ed., *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Art and Artists* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1991); Diana Davis, ed., *Harrap's Illustrated Dictionary of Art and Artists* (Bromley, UK: Harrap Books, 1990); Anabel Thomas, *Illustrated Dictionary of Narrative Painting* (London, UK: National Gallery Publications, 1994); James Hall, *Illustrated Dictionary of Symbols in Eastern and Western Art* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1994).
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- ²⁵ See Nahum Tschacbosov, *Color Slide Source & Reference of World Art: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting, Minor Arts* (formerly *Teachers Manual*), American Library Color Slide Company, Inc., American Archives of World Art, P.O. Box 4414, Grand Central Station, New York, NY, 10163-4414; *The University Prints*, 21 East Street, P.O. Box 485, Winchester, MA, 01890).
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