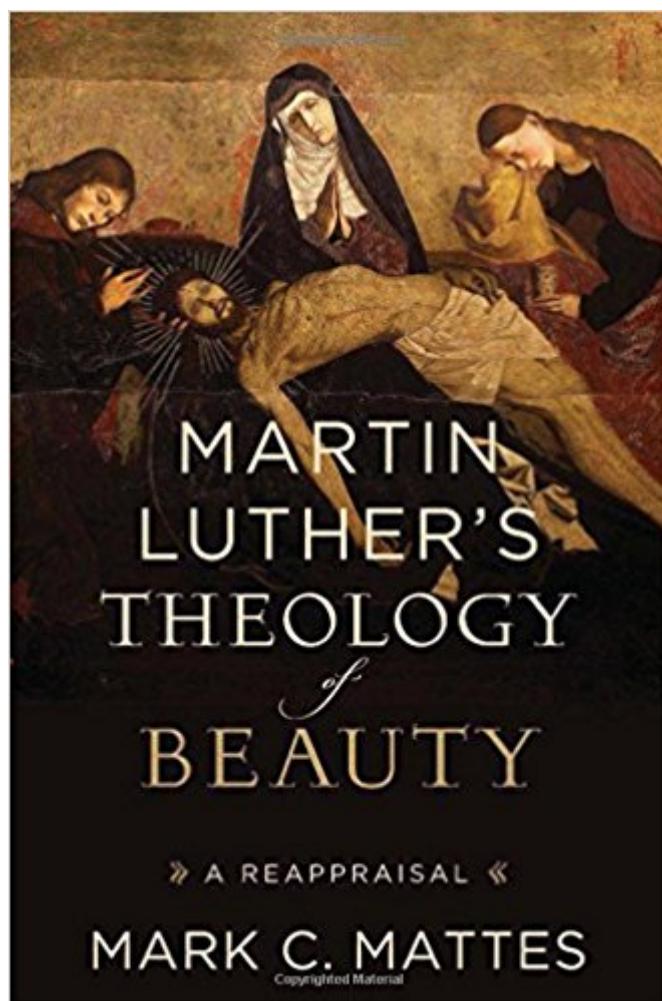


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Martin Luther's Theology Of Beauty: A Reappraisal



Synopsis

Many contemporary theologians seek to retrieve the concept of beauty as a way for people to encounter God. This groundbreaking book argues that while Martin Luther's view of beauty has often been ignored or underappreciated, it has much to contribute to that quest. Mark Mattes, one of today's leading Lutheran theologians, analyzes Luther's theological aesthetics and discusses its implications for music, art, and the contemplative life. Mattes shows that for Luther, the cross is the lens through which the beauty of God is refracted into the world.

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Customer Reviews

"With a careful mining of the resources at hand in Martin Luther's explorations of the significance of visual imagery, God's ordering of his creation, and related concepts, and with insightful assessment of Luther's actual use of the graphic arts and music, Mattes's groundbreaking work addresses with depth and skill aesthetic theories that grow out of the *nouvelle théologie* of Henri de Lubac and others with challenges that will enrich and expand our perceptions and analyses of the nature of the beautiful according to God's creation and in the light of Christ's cross."--Robert Kolb, Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis" While scholars have paid attention to Luther's views of music, visual images, and rhetorical style, no one has claimed that these views amount to an overall theory of beauty or aesthetics. But Mattes boldly shows how music and images are related to Luther's ideas of human senses, goodness, and personal renewal. His solid historical results enable Mattes to enter into critical dialogue with John Milbank, Charles Taylor, and other contemporary thinkers.

Martin Luther's Theology of Beauty will persuade both historians and theologians to revise their opinions regarding the Lutheran Reformation."--Risto Saarinen, University of Helsinki"Matthes's rigorous study of Martin Luther's theology of beauty liberates the Reformer from his own tradition, which has often limited, marginalized, or otherwise ignored its own robust aesthetic resources. Matthes's Luther thus emerges as an important resource for revealing the unique contributions that Lutheran thought can make to aesthetics as well as the study of art and culture."--Daniel A. Siedell, The King's College, New York City"What a great surprise, that one of the most important Lutheran theologians writing today would take up the subject of Luther and beauty. Aesthetics seems at first glance to be a foreign and contradictory undertaking for the great teacher of the cross. But Luther is all about beauty, if we'll only stoop low enough to see correctly. And the timing of this book could not be better, since theologically we are no longer in the age of the ethically good, or even the rationally true, but the aesthetically beautiful. Luther's is a voice that must be heard, or we all will go down the same rabbit holes again. Matthes is a master in clarifying what Luther brings to this very current affair, and he keeps us grounded in the beauty of the deeply incarnate Word that produces all the things that the world is sure are ugly but that God uses for his glory in a most surprising turn of events."--Steven Paulson, Luther Seminary

"Mark Matthes has given us an intriguing and richly textured study of beauty in Luther's theology. In the crucified Christ, salvation is given to those who believe; thus, Christ is beautiful, and believers can celebrate this 'gospel beauty' through the ways God grants mercy in worship: preaching and the sacraments. Christ has absorbed the ugliness of sin, enabling believers to feel at home in the world and to celebrate creation's beauty. This splendid study will deepen understandings of Luther and open new appreciations for the fullness of Jesus Christ as 'the fulcrum through which life, and most specifically truth, goodness, and beauty, are to be understood.'"--Donald K. McKim, editor of *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther* and author of *Moments with Martin Luther: 95 Daily Devotions*"Beauty has historically been a neglected topic in much of traditional Protestant theology, a lacuna of increasing significance in an age that is more and more preoccupied with aesthetics. In this book Matthes retrieves Martin Luther as a source for aesthetic reflection and, in so doing, brings both Luther's thought and the Protestantism that stems from him into important dialogue with both earlier theologians and contemporary thinkers such as Charles Taylor and John Milbank. Martin Luther's Theology of Beauty is rich in historical theological insight and modern philosophical potential."--Carl A. R. Trueman, Westminster Theological Seminary, Pennsylvania"Claiming that Luther's work has not only 'existential' depth but also 'cosmic' and 'eschatological' breadth, Matthes

brings to the fore the centrality of beauty in Luther's theology. Providing a careful and clear reading of Luther's work that situates it within its historical context and in relation to contemporary discussions, Mattes argues that, for Luther, God's proper work--mercy--is beautiful indeed. Timely and incisive, this book charts a distinctive path that opens up fresh appropriations of Luther's work in our time."--Lois Malcolm, Luther Seminary"Most students of theology would never guess that Martin Luther, famous for his denunciation of theologies of glory, had a richly developed aesthetic. This is the thesis made plausible by Mark Mattes, a distinguished Lutheran theologian. Clear and learned, this book draws connections that will surprise many."--Gerald McDermott, Beeson Divinity School; coauthor of *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*

I have been looking forward to this book since I first heard about. Simply put, it is a "beautiful" book in every respect: well written, well researched, well organized. It allows insight into the theology of Martin Luther from a new angle, which, considering from how many angles Luther has been analyzed and researched is commendable! What I appreciate most about the book is how keenly it focuses on the Gospel of Christ and how that Gospel does have the power not merely to inform, but to enlighten, to change, etc. I have read and continue to read, closely, every book on Luther and his theology that I can get my hands on and have been doing so now for nearly thirty years. This book truly stands out as unique and I thank the author for his evident labor of love.

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