

## Holiness of Beauty and Beauty of Holiness

British artist and engraver Eric Gill (1882-1940), in his essay, "*The Priesthood of Craftsmanship*," posits a holiness of beauty and a beauty of holiness as the incarnation of art into words and images that become flesh, and as things seen and experienced. I find reprieve or escape into such holiness and beauty a most desired experience. For of such transcendent quality is the experience. It transforms me. It is the essence of truth: holiness and beauty. All truth is therefore holy, that is, set apart from *non-truth*, including speculation, innuendo, hypotheses, epistemological and ontological assumptions, science, philosophies, theories, etc. These non-truths do not inquire into the meaning of holy and beautiful. However, my journey to understand the kingdom of God is a meaningful inquiry because it offers more than just knowledge. It offers freedom and peace. Non-truths do not offer such freedom and peace. For them there is no reprieve or escape. Instead they offer anxiety and bondage in a world of chaos, totalitarianism, and conspicuous consumption.

Beauty is by some considered characteristic of a person, an animal, a place or object, or an idea that provides a perceptual experience of pleasure or satisfaction. Beauty is also studied as part of aesthetics, such as the abstractions of mathematics and cultural peculiarities. Ideal beauty is a characteristic admired, or that which possesses peculiar features widely attributed to perceptions of beauty that define perfection. Regrettably, there are perceptions of beauty that are neither abstract nor peculiar but blatantly false. This beauty is defined by a propaganda paradigm that feeds the profit machines of commerce. Always out of reach but worth spending every valuable dollar in its pursuit. Such beauty changes daily with tidal fads of popularity and entertainment. It is neither holy nor beautiful. The experience of such *faux* beauty often involves the adoption of some known or unknown entity, such as a celebrity or an ideology, as being exemplary of balance and harmony with nature. That notion may lead to feelings of attraction and emotional well-being. Because this is a subjective experience of feelings, it is often said that "beauty is in the eye of the beholder."

But it is not. Beauty is in the eyes of the Creator. If people do not know the Creator, they cannot see His beauty nor experience its holiness, that is, critically discern what sets truth apart from non-truth. Yet, we are not left without tangible evidence that even the naked eye can see. The greatest evidence of beauty and holiness in all its forms is the created order of all nature as designed by God, the Creator. We look up into the night sky or walk on a forest trail and there we encounter unimaginable divine order, not a randomness advocated by chaos theorist, but an orderly progression of stars above and the minutiae of cellular growth beneath of feet. Such presence of beauty is the *tabula rasa* of my reprieve or escape. It is a desire to express beauty in all its forms, especially the beauty of natural form. That form is embodied in the two primary aspects of natural form, nature itself, and human form. Human form finds expression in the figurative arts, whether representational or as abstract expressions, whereas nature inspires me to express myself in written arts.

That's where I draw the line. Form is defined by line. Drawing the line defines my primary and transformative experience of beauty and holiness. When the line translates form into shape, contour, mass, gesture, light and dark, the drawing takes on a life of its own. The drawing, or work of art, becomes the incarnation of art into images that

become flesh, as things seen and experienced. When I write, it is a similar experience line by line from page to paragraph to published book. And I aim to accomplish both words and images as would a craftsman who heeds the call to be good steward of the gifts he (she) has been given. Therefore, my purpose is not to reform, reshape or transform culture, society, institutions, government, religion, or the church, with slogans, placards, and graphics. My only purpose is to inform others (culture, society, institutions, government, religion, and the church) that there is a Divine truth to be experienced as peace and joy, even if the winds of commercial change and the tides of media populism persuade and provoke otherwise. As an artist, an author and mentor, I press in to inform others through what Eric Gill called the “priesthood of craftsmanship.”

As a transformed being, hopefully evident in the way I live and the manner in which I conduct myself, I desire to be a true witness to the experience of holiness and beauty. An experience in words and images of that all-abiding truth of the kingdom of God embraced by a sincere inquiry into its righteousness. This has helped me discover the holiness of beauty and the beauty of holiness as most a worthwhile and desired experience. But, that experience is not defined by success. I do not succeed in everything I set out to do. Disappointment and failure also dog my daily quest.

Needless to say, the experience becomes immeasurably meaningful when I take a further step of faith beyond natural form and embark on a spiritual quest, as did Cerulean during his odyssey as narrated in the epic poem, *“Journey of a Long Distance Voyager,”* which took me eight years to write and decades more to live. I live the spiritual quest by actively engaging my spirit, my mind and my body, in an odyssey of discovering things and people holy, and things and people beautiful.

Holiness of things and people is not defined by acts of ceremony, ritual, religious observance, piety, or any other mannerism prescribed by culture, society, or media. Holiness of things and people is defined by the fruit of the Spirit in those who seek after beauty. One such fruit is creative freedom as a phenomenon of ecstasy and delight that comprises both inspiration and craftsmanship when integrated into a priesthood that is the prerequisite to critical thought about every lived experience. Truth is what the Spirit of God reveals. If He does not reveal it, anything else is speculation. And speculation will not set me free or give me peace. Speculation is chaotic. Assurance and conviction are orderly.