

discussion. While the writing is accessible to undergraduates, and parts of the book may fit well into some courses, the overall thrust of the book seems better suited to those with an interest in pursuing careers in theology, which makes it an excellent resource for introductory graduate courses and for theologians and libraries.

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*Beauty's Vineyard: A Theological Aesthetic of Anguish and Anticipation.* By Kimberly Vrudny. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2016. xxx + 264 pages. \$27.99.

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In her admirable work, *Beauty's Vineyard: A Theological Aesthetic of Anguish and Anticipation*, Kimberly Vrudny examines new and productive ways to consider the Trinity, theodicy, and ways in which Christians can live responsibly in a complex and sometimes painful world. Drawing on her undergraduate training in art history, as well as some personal experiences of heartache and religious questioning, Vrudny conceives of a formulation of Trinitarian doctrine that combines robust theology with an expansive, liberating perspective on human existence.

Vrudny begins with the Parable of the Tenants from the Gospel of Matthew, in which tenant farmers abuse and beat the slaves assigned to work in the fields. Later the same tenants go so far as to beat and kill the owner's own son. Jesus ends the parable by commenting that even the kingdom of God will be taken away from those to whom it was originally promised. How are readers to take this pronouncement? Vrudny asks. Are we to understand God as vindictive and violent, or is there another way to read such parables?

To answer this, Vrudny considers the variety of ways that the ugliness and fearsomeness of the world have been met with beauty, truth, and goodness. Her conception of the Christian triune God takes the form of Creator as goodness expressed in justice, the Son as beauty expressed in compassion, and Spirit as truth expressed in wisdom (42). In applying this formulation of the Trinity to the founding events of Christianity and to some seminal events of human history, Vrudny leads her readers on new paths of understanding of the Crucifixion, the suffering of innocents, and the best ways to wrestle with such difficult matters. The lessons of restorative justice practices from Africa, says Vrudny, allow us to reconcile justice and forgiveness, and will make room for reconciliation without further subjecting one another to the

wrongdoings of the violent (169–73). Ultimately, we bear responsibility for alleviating the suffering of others, whatever the source of that suffering may be. We are responsible for protecting the beauty of the *imago Dei*, whatever form ultimate Beauty may take, no matter how different from ourselves it may be.

Vrudny closes the book by discussing the Parable of the Vineyard (again from Matthew), in which readers find that the master of a vineyard hires workers at different times during the day. Yet at the end of the day, each laborer is paid equally. Like the workers who were hired early in the day, we may be thoroughly perplexed with the seeming lack of fairness in distribution of wages. Vrudny concludes that while it is natural for us to question the justice of some being paid at different rates than others, we miss the overall message of the story: we should focus not on the parity of pay (not primarily) but on what is ultimately produced in such a place—a fruitful crop that everyone may enjoy. Every worker, no matter his or her talent, no matter how long that person has been in the field, contributes to the beauty that is the final harvest (251).

While the book does include a color plate for each of its chapters, some readers may find themselves wishing there were still more illustrations and more in-depth discussion of the artworks included. Vrudny includes works illustrative of the Holocaust, the trauma endured by a group of twentieth-century soldiers, and the violence experienced by a young African American man, among others, but to art history and art theory novices her discussions may feel thin. Nevertheless, Vrudny makes up for the paucity of illustrations with a vividly descriptive writing style. Readers can easily picture her anguish during her own experiences of family death, the poverty she observed while on a research trip in South Africa, and the understanding she gained while researching the torture endured by Argentinians during the period known as the Dirty War.

This book is best suited to a scholar of religion and theology, whether at the graduate or professional level; previous experience with the thought of Anselm, Thomas Aquinas, and Tillich will be helpful to the reader, though not necessarily required. Advanced undergraduate students of religion may also enjoy this work.

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