**Dr. N. Marais**

Department of Systematic Theology and Ecclesiology, Faculty of Theology, University of Stellenbosch.

(orcid.org/0000-0002-6007-4648)

nadiam@sun.ac.za

**DOI:** http://dx.doi.org/10.18820/23099089/actat.Sup29.5

**ISSN:** 1015-8758 (Print)

**ISSN:** 2309-9089 (Online)

**Acta Theologica 2020**
Supp 29:77-92

**Date received:**
7 August 2020

**Date accepted:**
13 August 2020

**Date Published:**
30 November 2020

# "ADORN THE CROSS WITH ROSES"? JUSTICE AND HUMAN DIGNITY, BEAUTY AND HUMAN FLOURISHING[1]

## ABSTRACT

*What does beauty have to do with justice, justification, and salvation? Can the world be saved by beauty? In this contribution, some theological and rhetorical convergences and differences between the discourse on human dignity and the discourse on human flourishing are explored. The role of beauty, in these discourses, is a pivotal concern – especially as often justice and human rights shape the theological discourse on human dignity. A key proposed argument in this analysis is that justice is to human dignity what beauty is to human flourishing, and that these shape or mould the theological language with which salvation – the good news of the gospel – is articulated. The argument concludes by proposing that both forensic language and aesthetic language are born from the fold of Christian soteriology, and that not only the more static, forensic language of human dignity is required to speak about salvation, but also the more pliable, artistic language of human dignity.*

**Published by the UFS**
http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at

© Creative Commons
With Attribution (CC-BY)

1 This contribution is based on my doctoral dissertation, entitled *Imagining human flourishing? A systematic theological exploration of contemporary soteriological discourses* (see Marais 2015a; in particular, 320-326). My thanks to Dr Henco van der Westhuizen for the invitation to contribute to this volume. The title of this contribution comes from Mattes' book entitled *Martin Luther's theology of beauty: A reappraisal* (2017:184).

# 1. INTRODUCTION

> The idea of the beautiful is of no significance in forming the life of Christian faith, which sees in the beautiful the temptation of a false transfiguration of the world which distracts the gaze from "beyond" (Bultmann, quoted in Hart 2003:23).

Of what use is beauty to soteriology? What does beauty have to do with salvation? Even more specifically, what does beauty have to do with justification – and justice?[2] Theologians David Bentley Hart (2003), Miikka Anttila (2010), and Mark Mattes (2017) have engaged the perceived tension between beauty and justice in the oft-quoted words of Bultmann above by appealing to soteriology – and to the cross and Christ's crucifixion, in particular.[3] In short, in the wounds of God lies the beauty of the gospel. Yet what may this mean for our thinking on human dignity – and human flourishing? What role does beauty play in these discourses, governed – as they often are – by the concern for justice and human rights?

2 In South Africa, and within Reformed theology, in particular, the theological link between justification and justice has been emphasised. The South African Reformed theologian Russel Botman (2002:15) argues for a close connection between justification and justice in light of "everything that Christianity has learned about justification after Auschwitz and apartheid". Botman (2002:15) argues that the *doctrinal* connection between justice (*Recht*) and justification (*Rechtfertigung*) must be maintained, because it is a connection that is "rooted in our Reformed tradition" (including, he adds, in the thought of Karl Barth and John Calvin). Botman (2002:16) regards this of the utmost importance, arguing that "[t]o see a separation between justification and justice as a differentiation between doctrine and ethics ... would amount to nothing less than a *doctrinal* betrayal of recent developments" (my emphasis – NM). The theological conversation around justification and justice is ongoing – see, for example, Smit's (2009) article entitled "Justification and divine justice?" and Vosloo's (2018) article entitled "Justification *and* justice? Reflections on the response of some South African Reformed voices to the ecumenical discussion on justification".

3 Mattes (2017:184), for example, argues that "the gospel is beautiful" and that "[b]eauty is of God's making". In his engagement with this image – the beauty of the cross – he quotes the Finnish Lutheran theologian Miikka Anttila (Antilla 2010:218, in Mattes 2017:185): "In the cross of Christ there is supreme beauty beneath the most abominable ugliness … The ugliness of the cross belongs to us, whereas the beauty is God's … He proves to be most beautiful when he makes us beautiful, that is, gives his beauty to us". Mattes (2017:184) is, therefore, of the opinion that "Bultmann misreads beauty as a means by which sinners seek to circumvent the cross, to avoid the suffering that leads to their own demise, and so they adorn the cross with roses … [W]here Bultmann is wrong, more than anywhere, is in his failure to acknowledge that the gospel is beautiful".

## 2. THE GLORY OF GOD, HUMAN DIGNITY, AND HUMAN FLOURISHING

> The glory of God is a human being fully alive, and the life of humanity is the vision of God (St. Irenaeus, quoted in Soulen & Woodhead, 2006:3).

This catchphrase is often quoted in reference to both human dignity (see, for example, Soulen & Woodhead 2006:8) *and* human flourishing (see, for example, Hall, Langer & McMartin 2010:115) alike.[4] This would suggest that there may possibly be important shared theological grounds for the discourse on human dignity and the discourse on human flourishing, respectively. In both discourses, the glory of God forms an orienting point for thinking about human beings.

Soulen and Woodhead (2006:24) argue that the glory of God is "the reflection of the light of God shining in the faces of those who turn their gaze toward him", and is, therefore, "not a natural human endowment". Rather, "divine dignity" is the foundation of "human dignity", and "human dignity" is the revelation of "divine dignity" (Soulen & Woodhead 2006:8). This connection between God's glory and human beings is more than simply a *formal* connection, however, in that it also comprises an *aesthetic* connection, argues Fiddes (2009:5). Indeed, "*[b]eauty* is to be understood as the glory of God" and "*aesthetics* is seeing the 'form' of the glory of God" (Fiddes 2009:5, my emphasis – NM). The discourses of human dignity and of human flourishing likewise reflect both these (formal *and* aesthetic) elements.

Soulen and Woodhead (2006:6-8) outline three noteworthy themes to Christian conceptions of human dignity, namely that "human dignity is conferred by God"; that the measure and norm of human dignity is discovered in the pattern of God's relating to human beings, and that the context for human dignity is the church, in that "human dignity has an

---

4 In this regard, see also Gestrich's (1997:1) *The return of splendor in the world*, wherein he notes "[w]ith great apprehension ... the decline of splendor in our world today". A crucial question for him is, therefore, whether "the inner vitality of things, relationships, plants, animals, and human beings [can] once again [return] to the very place where they have already begun to recede". Gestrich (1997:13) argues that the splendour of human beings "[disappears] in the wake of sin and separation from God", which means that "[e]verything becomes worthless, mean, and base". Paradoxically, it is in the question regarding where *good,* not evil, comes from – and from where human beings are created – that theology and philosophy are interested, observes Gestrich (1997:25). He points out that "[t]he return of splendor [or glory] is possible [and that] [t]he return of splendor in the midst of a reality demolished by sin is called *grace* by the Bible" (Gestrich 1997:26, original emphasis).

ecclesial rather than an individual horizon". In short, "[h]uman dignity is achieved in relation, not in isolation".

Human flourishing, according to the Yale theologian David Kelsey, arguably comprises blossoming and thriving (see Marais 2015b).[5] Human flourishing expresses God's glory and manifests the beauty of God's relation not in its functionality or self-referentiality, but in its contextuality and concreteness, gracious givenness, relationality and responsiveness, as well as eccentricity. This is the ground of the intrinsic dignity and value of human beings (Kelsey 2009:570). However, this portrayal of human flourishing – as well as the communal reference to the glory of God – raises the question as to the relationship between human dignity and human flourishing. What is the difference, if any, between these two concepts, or are and should they be used synonymously or interchangeably?

Soulen and Woodhead (2006:1-2) note that the rhetoric of human dignity has become increasingly important within public discourse post-World War II, and that it is referred to in important founding documents (such as that of the United Nations) and constitutions the world over. For instance, human dignity is included as a core value of democracy in the South African Constitution (Marais 2013a:239). Moreover, the rhetoric of human dignity is prevalent in contemporary ethical debates on issues ranging from "war and poverty to abortion, human cloning, and euthanasia" (Soulen & Woodhead 2006:2), and deeply embedded in the Christian and classical humanist tradition (Soulen & Woodhead 2006:3; Marais 2013a:239-240). The doctrine of the *imago Dei* has long functioned as the scope within which theological interpretations of human dignity are explored (Marais 2013a; 2013b) and has shaped theological anthropology in distinctive ways.

Yet not all contemporary theologians ground their arguments on human dignity in the doctrine of the *imago Dei.* Kelsey (2009:1008) is one of the notable exceptions to this trajectory, in that he (as he himself admits) develops a relational interpretation of human beings and human dignity "without reference to the classical theological anthropological trope, 'Human beings bear the imago Dei'" (see Marais 2013b:5-6). I have argued elsewhere (Marais 2013b:11-12) that Kelsey's theological anthropology moves away from a closed, fixed, static system of describing human beings, and toward a "systematic unsystematic whole", wherein there is

5 A paper, entitled "Fully alive? On God and human flourishing", based on the material in this section, was published in *Jong teoloë praat saam … oor God, gemeentes en geloof* (Marais 2015b). Few, if any, theologians have framed the notion "human flourishing" as clearly and convincingly as the Yale theologian David Kelsey (2009), in his *Eccentric existence: A theological anthropology*.

greater openness to new insights on what it means to be human.[6] Indeed, other contemporary theologians have also moved toward stressing "the multidimensionality of human dignity" (Soulen & Woodhead 2006:23-24), wherein "human dignity in theological context is not a static possession but an eschatological provocation and goal".

Outlining the differences between the concept of human dignity and the concept of human flourishing may, therefore, be more complex than merely describing the former as fixed and the latter as dynamic. The modern use of human dignity as "the inner basis or foundation of [human] rights that flow naturally and inevitably from it" differs greatly from the Christian affirmation, and particularly *early* Christian thought, that human dignity is "derivative of the more primitive and central notion of humans being created in the image and likeness of God" (Soulen & Woodhead 2006:12). There are, in other words, a multiplicity of usages of human dignity, ranging from foundational usages (such as in human rights discourses) to derivative usages (such as in biblical exegeses of the *imago Dei* texts), which would make an oversimplified conceptual comparison between human dignity and human flourishing quite impossible. Indeed, there may be important reasons to not simply *equate* human dignity with human flourishing.

## 3. JUSTICE IS TO HUMAN DIGNITY WHAT BEAUTY IS TO HUMAN FLOURISHING

A notable difference between the notions of human dignity and human flourishing, therefore, lies in their respective metaphorical frames of reference. Whereas human dignity has come to be embedded in a *judicial* or *political* rhetoric (see Soulen & Woodhead 2006:1-2; De Lange 2010:3-5), human flourishing is rooted in a *biological* or *agricultural* rhetoric (see Sarot 1996:10-11). Indeed, "flourishing is a positive concept which suggests verdant life" (Trisk, 2012:262), whereas dignity – whether as a "derivative concept" reliant on the confession that human beings are created in the image of God (Soulen & Woodhead 2006:12; see Marais 2013b), or as a "foundational concept", "from which flow [human] rights"

6 Kelsey (2009:897) explains that "[t]he major reason that the traditional way of systematizing theological anthropology around the theme of the *imago Dei* will not do is a formal reason. The problem lies in the conventional procedure's assumption that anthropological claims made in Christian practices of secondary theology are warranted by a single canonical narrative that has a single plot or narrative logic".

(Soulen & Woodhead 2006:12)[7] – is a "negative concept", which suggests experiences of injustice (De Lange 2010:3; see Marais 2013a:236-237).

This implies that, whereas human dignity language upholds and protects the *minimum* requirements of being humane, human flourishing language strives and pushes towards the supposedly *infinite* possibilities of being human. As such, the concept of human dignity may very well be less pliable than the concept of human flourishing – just as the concept of human flourishing may be less focused than the concept of human dignity. This does not mean that the rhetoric of human flourishing should not *include* the affirmation of human dignity; nor that the rhetoric of human flourishing should *replace* the rhetoric of human dignity.[8] Instead, acknowledging the distinct frames of reference and conceptual loadedness of each of these rhetorics may inhibit a simple conflation of flourishing with dignity.

This consideration – namely, how the rhetoric of human flourishing differs from the rhetoric of human dignity – does call for a closer scrutiny of the concept of human flourishing. In Kelsey's outline of human flourishing, the concept "blossoming" is of particular importance, since he links this in a deliberate manner with "beauty". For Kelsey (2009:315), "to blossom" is "to manifest the type of beauty of which a given life is capable by virtue of God's relating to it". The rhetorics of flowering, blossoming, blooming – and, indeed, flourishing – are governed by a deeply embedded concern for (manifesting) beauty. Perhaps it would be possible to develop the relationship between beauty and the rhetoric of human flourishing, and between justice and the rhetoric of human dignity, somewhat further. Perhaps, this theological concern for beauty provides the fertile soil, from which the discourse on human flourishing may be cultivated, just as a theological concern for justice comes to be the soil, in which the discourse of human dignity is grown and grounded. Stated somewhat differently: justice is to human dignity what beauty is to human flourishing.

However, Kelsey's exegesis of human flourishing and his notion of blossoming, in particular, are also open to critique. Although his account

---

7 Taylor (1991:46) notes that "the modern notion of dignity [is] now used in a universalist and egalitarian sense", and that "the underlying premise here is that everyone shares in this", and argues that "[t]his concept of dignity is the only one compatible with a democratic society".

8 De Lange (2010:3-5), for instance, outlines two discourses within human dignity, namely a discourse of justice (which focuses on a shared humanity) and a discourse of flourishing (which focuses on individuality) (see Marais 2013a:236-237) – whereby he inverts this relationship in order that human dignity may include human flourishing. For De Lange (2010:5), neither of these two discourses overwhelms the other, in that they are embedded in different social contexts. He argues that the discourse of justice rules over the political, public realm, whereas the discourse of flourishing rules over the private realm of charity and care.

is coherent and systematic in its concern for avoiding the concept "well-being" and thereby the trappings of health and wealth,[9] he works with primarily a functional interpretation of flourishing, which may be lacking in *aesthetic* depth. This is perhaps best illustrated in a comparison to Jantzen's definition of flourishing, which holds to the etymological connection with flowers. She writes that the word "flourish" "is related to the Middle English *florir* and the Latin *florêre,* which means 'to flower'" (Jantzen 1996:61). In its noun form, "flourish" refers to "the mass of flowers on a fruit tree, or the bloom of luxuriant, verdant growth" (Jantzen 1996:61). In its verb form, "to flourish" means "to blossom, to thrive, to throw out leaves and shoots, growing vigorously and luxuriantly" (Jantzen 1996:61). Using "flourish" with reference to human beings, whether in its noun form or verb form, "denotes abundance, overflowing with vigour and energy and productiveness, prosperity, success and good health" (Jantzen 1996:61).

It ought to be noted, however, that Kelsey (2009:315) does consider some of these notions, by connecting "blossoming" with "beauty". He goes on to make a deliberate choice *against* the metaphoric extension of "luxuriant growth", because "it unqualifiedly reintroduces health as a metaphor" (Kelsey 2009:315). Yet he makes the choice *for* a metaphoric extension of "blossoming" that includes providing "fruit" (that may nurture and support the flourishing of others) and "seed" (that may determine the flourishing of subsequent generations) (Kelsey 2009:315). This could possibly also include an affirmation that flourishing does not only *provide* for external sources that make for the flourishing of others (such as fruit and seed),[10] but also the recognition that flourishing *draws* on external sources, "as a plant draws water and nutrients from the soil" (Trisk 2008:199). This does not mean that the rhetoric of flourishing ought to "lead one to emphasize only the public and the political at the expense of the private and inner life" (Jantzen 1996:74), for

> [a] plant which flourishes does so from its own inner life, "rooted and grounded" in its source. If that inner life is gone, the plant withers and dries up, no matter how good its external sources.

9 Kelsey (2009:317) consistently excludes the metaphorical connotation with "maximal good health", because "health is problematic as an index of human flourishing" in that "health" and "unhealth" are understood functionally and self-referentially. This runs against the grain of the logic of his larger anthropological argument, namely that human beings are *not* finally to be understood in relation to ourselves, but excentrically, in relation to God and, therefore, "outside" of ourselves.

10 Indeed, "[t]he metaphor of flourishing ... suggests a mutual commitment and responsibility to one another's flourishing. We depend on others just as much as they depend on us. There is no room here for rescuers and dependents" (Trisk 2008:200).

What this may mean is that not only the survival of, say, a rose plant is in view here, but something more; not only the fact *that* the rose plant lives, but the appreciation of *how* the rose plant lives. In other words, flourishing entails the recognition that the rose plant exhibits and contributes an aesthetic component by its very living. Without life, the plant cannot flourish, and its survival is surely the minimum condition for its flourishing. Yet *when* it flourishes, the rose plant does something more than merely survive – it also brings forth roses, and in the form of its roses, also colours and smells, and a life worth observing, worth planting, worth watering, worth pruning, worth protecting, worth gifting, worth receiving, worth appreciating.

Extending the metaphor of flourishing only in a functional way such as including "fruit" and "seed" as descriptions of flourishing *for* others may be too limited if it does not also include some reflection on "the beauty of which a given life is capable" (Kelsey 2009:315). Such beauty may be "fragile beauty", but it has the potential to "release the springs of creativity by which newness can enter the world" (Trisk 2012:263, quoting Jantzen 2004:111) – perhaps exactly in its "gifting" potential, as part of the intricate politics and economics of gift-giving.

## 4. THE AESTHETIC APPEAL OF THE DISCOURSE ON HUMAN FLOURISHING

The rhetoric of human flourishing is rooted in the good news of the gospel, in the affirmation that human beings may live full, abundant, and good lives by the grace and salvation that the triune God grants. Moreover, the specifically *aesthetic* appeal of flourishing talk is starkly evident in a conceptual comparison with the notion of dignity. Human dignity is rhetorically static and fixed, and for good reason. In circumstances where the human dignity and basic human rights of human beings are violated, the concept of "human dignity" stands firm as a beacon or a minimum indication of what *may not* be perpetrated against human beings. Justice governs what human dignity means.

Human flourishing, however, is dynamic and open, in that it fluctuates, changes, and resists being fixed to a single ideal or set of ideals of what human beings *can* experience and accomplish. There may be no minimum requirement; only the living pulse of what it means to live a good life. There is no gold standard for blossoming. Human flourishing may look very different across human lives, but it would appear as if beauty – together with justice – governs what human flourishing means in different contexts.

The quality of the performance of each of these rhetorics is, therefore, determined by their metaphorical frames of reference. Just as it would compromise the performance of the rhetoric of human dignity, if the concept of human dignity would become fluctuating and open in circumstances of violence and violation, so too the performance of the rhetoric of human flourishing would be hampered, if the concept of human flourishing were to be fixed and closed to any new insights or possibilities of being human.

In other words, there is not only life and energy in flourishing, but also *beauty* and *pleasure* and *delight.* The rhetoric of flourishing does not only perform in a functional way, but it also *appeals* to, and *lures* the reader into an imagined world of meaning. The rhetoric of flourishing, in other words, is meant to *entice* and *beguile* its audience into a particular imagined world or landscape. It *pulls* or *draws* its audience in, by artfully sketching a picture of alternative possibilities of life and living. As such, it cannot be defined in any final way, and resists any attempt to fix its meaning and assign it a range of synonyms – or, for that matter, antonyms. Perhaps, it is exactly herein that the appeal of the rhetoric of human flourishing lies – namely, that it can potentially mean many things, and that an imaginative appraisal or approach thereby comes closest to understanding how this rhetoric performs.

## 5. HUMAN FLOURISHING – IN A SECULAR AGE?

> [F]or Christians, God wills human flourishing (Taylor 2011:173).

The rhetoric of human flourishing has not escaped serious critique. The philosopher Charles Taylor is critical of modernity's increased emphasis on "flourishing" and ascribes this to its exclusive humanism, which denies any kind of transcendence and, therefore, any thinking that is imbued with meaning not only "beyond beauty", but also "beyond life". For Taylor (2011:177), the dilemma is that the rhetoric of human flourishing betrays the modern lack in "transcendental outlook" or "vision". Indeed, "Western modernity is very inhospitable to the transcendent"; a relationship which he would come to describe as a "conflict between modern culture and the transcendent" (Taylor 2011:174). He identifies the development of modern notions of freedom with a rise in what he calls "exclusive humanism" ("based exclusively on a notion of *human flourishing*"), wherein there is no sense in which "human life aims beyond itself" (Taylor 2011:172, my emphasis – NM).

The rhetoric of such an exclusive humanism may have dangerous implications, argues Taylor. One danger he identifies is the abovementioned

negation of transcendence in (or beyond) human life. For Taylor (2011:172-173), transcendence (that which is "beyond life") means that "the point of things isn't exhausted by life, the fullness of life, even the goodness of life", the affirmation of "something that matters beyond life, on which life itself originally draws". He notes that the language of human flourishing has often been taken up in the various theologies of different religions, in an attempt to combine transcendence ("aiming beyond life or opening yourself to a change in identity" [Taylor 2011:174]) and human flourishing, in which a flourishing self assumes a stable identity (Taylor 2011:173). Modern theology, and Protestant theology, in particular, employ the rhetoric of human flourishing without necessarily being aware of the limitations or dangers that accompany this.

Renouncing human flourishing does not solve this problem, argues Taylor (2007:17; 2011:174), for, even if theology should altogether avoid speaking about human flourishing, the focus on humanity's flourishing will still be retained. Moving the focus from flourishing to transcendence, from human life to God, does not hinder the inevitable turn to flourishing also in this relationship, because

> renunciation decenters you in relation with God, God's will is that humans flourish, and so you are taken back to an affirmation of this flourishing (Taylor 2011:174).[11]

This is particularly evident in theological engagements with God's power and human flourishing.[12] For theologians who think and write about human flourishing, the suspicion – for which Friedrich Nietzsche is often regarded as a spokesperson – that "Christians magnify God and God's

11 Ford (2008:4-5) notes that Taylor's description of "how Christianity relates to human flourishing" is embedded in "Taylor's portrayal of our secular age, [which he] centered on human flourishing". The critical difference between religion, also the Christian faith, and the "exclusive humanism", of which Taylor warns, lies in transcendence (and, more particularly, in "the reality of a transcendent, personal God") (Ford 2008:4). Taylor's story of how "the secular age" came to be ("between 1500 AD and today") has, as its main theme, how "Western culture has moved from taking religion for granted as the overall framework of reality to having no such framework at all" (Ford 2008:2). Human flourishing therein becomes "the common reference point of the extremes between which Taylor sees our culture stretched – transcendent religion and exclusive humanism" (Ford 2008:3).

12 "The Christian faith is from beginning sacrifice: sacrifice of all freedom, all pride, all self-confidence of the spirit, at the same time enslavement and self-mockery, self-mutilation" (Nietzsche III:46 of 1974:57). Such an account of the Christian faith, by way of the famous critique of 19th century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, has captured the imagination of contemporary theologians for some time. See, in particular, the papers presented at the Yale consultation on "God's power and human flourishing" (2008), and specifically those by Kelsey ("On human flourishing"), Ford ("God's power and human flourishing"), and Wolterstorff ("God's power and human flourishing").

power and dominion by systematically minimizing human beings, making them small, weak, and servile" (Kelsey 2008:1; see Marais 2015a:20), is particularly important, for it sketches the relationship between (God's) power and (human) flourishing as mutually exclusive, mutually limiting, competing goods. Nowhere is the dilemma of human flourishing's reliance upon human dignity, or beauty's reliance upon justice, better illustrated – namely, in Taylor's accusation that the language of human flourishing leans too far *toward* exclusive humanism and too far *away from* any transcendent framework.

Volf (2011:58-59) agrees with Taylor that "an anthropocentric shift" (or "the gradual redirection of interest from the transcendent God to human beings and their mundane affairs"), during the 18th century, has led to the emergence of "a different account of human flourishing ... in the West". Such an anthropological turn would also become evident in theology and, particularly, in soteriology. This would appear to be Taylor's concern, namely that the rhetoric of human flourishing has been untethered from God. The good news of the gospel is anchored in a transcendent outlook or vision that safeguards human flourishing. Taylor does not seem to oppose a focus on human flourishing as such, but he is concerned for how a theological account of human flourishing is approached and anchored within the Christian faith tradition.

## 6. CONCLUSION

> The world will be saved by beauty.

This is the subtitle of a book about the life of the Catholic theologian Dorothy Day (see Hennessy 2017). These words come from Dostoevsky's book *The idiot* (2004 [1868]), wherein the main character Prince Myshkin recognises beauty in an artwork by Hans Holbein depicting "The body of the dead Christ in the tomb" (1521). Prince Myshkin – who suffers from epilepsy, and who is taken advantage of, underestimated, offended (see the book title!), and abused in this story – sees beauty in unusual places, strange people, and in difficult circumstances. He is portrayed as someone with an eye and a feel for beauty. It is significant that Dostoevsky lays in this unlikely character's mouth the famous words that the world will be saved by beauty – even more so when one considers that Prince Myshkin utters these words when he is confronted with the wounds and death of Christ in Holbein's portrayal of the buried Christ.

It is perhaps particularly fitting that the image of a rose is used on the cover of this volume to portray beauty, since in it already stands suggested the language game of flourishing, flowering, and blossoming. The rose indicates, at least to my mind, that justice, justification, and salvation has something to do with human flourishing, in some or other way. Forensic language about debts and sins and laws and rights cannot do justice to the scope and depth and riches of the Christian faith tradition's understanding of what lies "beyond life". For us to speak the language of salvation, and good news, and grace, also requires imagination and music and flowers and art. Not only scales, but also (the smell of) roses.[13]

13 The idea that grace smells like roses is raised by the Finnish Lutheran theologian Kirsi Stjerna (2015:267), in an article wherein she reflects on her experience of evening mass in a Catholic church: "The crosses of different sizes, decorated altars, candles, images of Mary, and different memorials for the saints surrounded the pews, where people had gathered to hear the gospel of grace. The friendly faces of the saints and the warm images of Mary in the chapel conveyed truths about grace that are not void of human emotion, relations, or action. The church smelled like roses. The fragrance made me think, 'How does grace smell? Like roses?'".

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anttila, M.
2010. Music. In: O.-P. Vainio (ed.), *Engaging Luther: A (new) theological assessment* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books), pp. 210-222.

Botman, H.R.
2002. "Should the Reformed join in?" Reformed reflections on the joint declaration on the doctrine of justification. *Reformed World* 52(1):12-17.

Bultmann, R.
1975. *Glauben und Verstehen: Gesammelte Aufsätze*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2:137. https://doi.org/10.14315/prth-1967-jg44

De Lange, F.
2010. The hermeneutics of dignity. In: L.J. Claassens & K. Spronk (eds.), *Fragile dignity. Intercontextual conversations on Scriptures, family, and violence* (Atlanta, GA: Society for Biblical Literature), pp. 9-28. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt5hjgv9.4

Dostoevsky, F.
2004. *The idiot.* Translated by D. McDuff. New York: Penguin Books. Penguin Classics.

Fiddes, P.S.
2009. Concept, image and story in systematic theology. *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 11(1):1-23. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2400.2008.00420.x

Ford, D.F.
2008. God's power and human flourishing. Unpublished paper delivered as part of a consultation within the "God and human flourishing" project of Yale University's Centre for Faith and Religion. [Online.] Retrieved from: http://www.yale.edu/faith/ghf/ghf.htm [30 August 2020].

Gestrich, C.
1997. *The Christian doctrine of sin and forgiveness.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans.

Hall, E.L., Langer, R. & McMartin, J.
2010. The role of suffering in human flourishing: Contributions from Positive Psychology, Theology, and Philosophy. *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 38(2):111-121. https://doi.org/10.1177/009164711003800204

Hart, D.B.
2003. *The beauty of the infinite.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans.

Hennessy, K.
2017. *Dorothy Day: The world will be saved by beauty. An intimate portrait of my grandmother.* New York: Scribner Books.

Jantzen, G.M.

1996. The gendered politics of flourishing and salvation. In: V. Brümmer & M. Sarot (eds.), *Happiness, well-being and the meaning of life. A dialogue of social science and religion* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House), pp. 58-75.

2004. *Foundations of violence.* New York: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203484722

Kelsey, D.H.

2008. On human flourishing: A theocentric perspective. Unpublished paper delivered as part of a consultation within the "God and human flourishing" project of Yale University's Centre for Faith and Religion. [Online.] Retrieved from: http://www.yale.edu/faith/ghf/ghf.htm [30 August 2020].

2009. *Eccentric existence: A theological anthropology.* Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press.

Marais, N.

2013a. Eccentric existence: David H. Kelsey oor teosentriese menswaardigheid. *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 54(3&4):234-248. [Online.] Retrieved from: http://ngtt.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/379/483 [30 August 2020]. https://doi.org/10.5952/54-3-4-379

2013b. "Imaging the image of God": David H. Kelsey oor die *Imago Dei*. *Nederduitse Gereformeerde Teologiese Tydskrif* 54(1&2):1-14. [Online.] Retrieved from: http://ngtt.journals.ac.za/pub/article/view/314/421 [30 August 2020]. https://doi.org/10.5952/54-1-2-314

2015a. Imagining human flourishing? A systematic theological exploration of contemporary soteriological discourses. Unpublished PhD dissertation. Stellenbosch: Stellenbosch University.

2015b. Fully alive? On God and human flourishing. In: A. Potgieter & C. Wepener (eds.), *Jong teoloë praat saam … oor God, gemeentes en geloof* (Wellington: Bybelmedia), pp. 129-142.

Mattes, M.C.

2017. *Martin Luther's theology of beauty: A reappraisal.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

Nietzsche, F.W.

1974. *Beyond good and evil: Prelude to a philosophy of the future.* Translated by R.J. Hollingdale. Victoria, Australia: Penguin Books.

Sarot, M.

1996. Introduction: Happiness, well-being and the meaning of life. In: V. Brümmer & M. Sarot (eds.), *Happiness, well-being and the meaning of life. A dialogue of social science and religion* (Kampen: Kok Pharos Publishing House), pp. 1-25.

SMIT, D.J.
2009. Justification and divine justice? In: M. Weinrich & J. Burgess (eds.), *What is justification about?: Reformed contributions to an ecumenical theme* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans), pp. 88-121.

SOULEN, R.K. & WOODHEAD, L.
2006. Introduction: Contextualizing human dignity. In: R.K. Soulen & L. Woodhead (eds.), *God and human dignity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans), pp. 1-24.

STJERNA, K.
2015. Grace only? Or, all is grace? *Dialog: A Journal of Theology* 54(3):260-268. https://doi.org/10.1111/dial.12187

TAYLOR, C.
1991. *The ethics of authenticity.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

2007. *A secular age.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

2011. *Dilemma and connections. Selected essays.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

TRISK, J.
2008. "Springs of newness and beauty": Grace Jantzen and the search for God. *Scriptura* 98:194-203. https://doi.org/10.7833/98-0-705

2012. Grace Jantzen (1948-2006) – "They shall flourish as a garden". In: E.M. Conradie (ed.), *Creation and salvation. Vol. 2. A companion on recent theological movements* (Berlin: LIT Verlag), pp. 259-263.

VOLF, M.
2011. *A public faith. How followers of Christ should serve the common good.* Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

VOSLOO, R.R.
2018. Rechtfertigung *und* Gerechtigkeit? Überlegungen zur Positionierung einiger südafrikanischer Reformierter in der ökumenischen Gerechtigkeitsdebatte. In: T. Jähnichen, T. Meireis, J. Rehm, G. Wegner, S. Reihs & H.-R. Reuter (eds.), *Globale Wirkungen der Reformation* (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlaganstalt), pp. 164-179. Jahrbuch Sozialer Protestantismus. Vol. 11.

WOLTERSTORFF, N.
2008. God's power and human flourishing. Unpublished paper delivered as part of a consultation within the "God and Human Flourishing" project of Yale University's Centre for Faith and Religion. [Online.] Retrieved from: http://www.yale.edu/faith/ghf/ghf.htm [30 August 2020].

| *Keywords* | *Trefwoorde* |
| --- | --- |
| Human flourishing | Menslike florering |
| Salvation | Verlossing |
| Human dignity | Menswaardigheid |
| Rhetorical theology | Retoriese teologie |