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Earthly Visions: Theology and the Challenges of Art

Timothy J. Gorringe

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This stimulating book argues that great art can function as a "secular parable"—that is, like the parables of Jesus, art can lead viewers to reflect on the reality and presence of God in the world. T. J. Gorringe examines representative secular paintings of the most significant types (mythological themes, genre painting, portraiture, landscape, still life, abstract art), showing how each type can point toward God, whether by envisaging an alternative future, creating aesthetic delight, or teaching us to see things differently. His provocative study challenges the notion that art since the 15th century has become increasingly secularized.

Gorringe gives careful consideration to each work's historical background and artistic context, as well as to art historical and critical appraisals. With an ecumenical approach, he then provides an insightful argument for how each piece can be read theologically. Although readers may sometimes disagree with his theological stance or his interpretation of specific works, his engaging commentary provokes reflection and challenges deeper questioning and awareness.

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