



## **Seeing Is Believing** *The Revelation of God Through Film*

Available July 19, 2022 | \$32, 290 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0200-1

*"Seeing Is Believing breaks new ground for Christians desiring to become more discerning filmgoers. Helping viewers move beyond mere plot analysis, Goodwin heightens our awareness of what images also accomplish. If you love going to movies, you'll love reading this book. You'll also love watching your next movie more!"*

**Robert K. Johnston**, senior professor of theology and culture and codirector of Brehm Film at Fuller Theological Seminary

# Film Images as Divine Revelation

## What led to your interest in theology and film and now sharing about it in this book?

**Richard Vance Goodwin:** My motivation came from studying film as an undergrad and discovering the world of cinema. Many of the movies I was watching—often the types of movies my youth group had warned me against!—were making a significant impression on me. Eventually, through reading theological treatments of movies, I came to understand those experiences as revelatory. But this prompted a number of questions, which I explore in this book. Scholars of theology and film identified a few gaps and weaknesses in the discipline, for example, a lack of attention to formal qualities (e.g., image, music), a lack of engagement with film studies, a lack of engagement with audience reception. All these are areas that my project seeks to address and therefore hopefully bring to the wider conversation in theology and film. At a more popular level, my hope is that people interested in movies—film fans and filmmakers—will be prompted to go beyond the “message” of a movie and consider the more experiential dimension of film-watching—the spiritual importance of emotion and its connection to revelation.

## What is your main thesis in *Seeing Is Believing*?

**Goodwin:** My contention is that certain movies tend to elicit experiences of revelation more frequently than others. But this is a theologically risky statement because we cannot imply that revelation is somehow “manufactured.” Revelation remains solely a work of God that cannot be coerced. So how do certain movies apparently have this effect? My answer starts by suggesting the “Bethel paradigm,” which posits that emotions elicited by films may put people in a place of heightened receptivity to God’s revelation. Another way of putting it is that certain emotions help us “tune in” to what God is already “broadcasting” through creation. This theological foundation gives rise to a distinctive methodology. Rather than simply exploring a movie for its thematic content to find theological resonances, I instead examine how films—particularly through their visual techniques—invite certain types of emotions that, in turn, may be conducive to revelatory experience.

## What do you hope your book contributes to the study of film and theology?

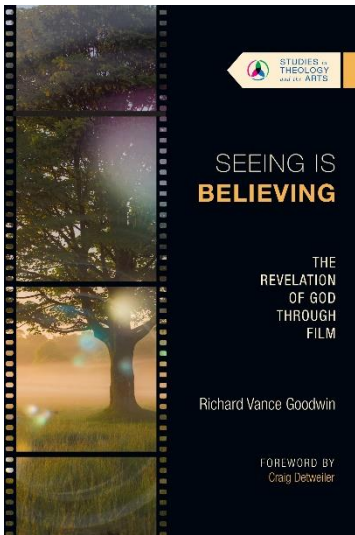
**Goodwin:**

- A unique and much-needed emphasis on image and formal qualities more generally (as opposed to mere “discursive content,” i.e., plot, character, theme)
- A focus on the affective/emotional impact of film and its relationship to revelation
- A new model of revelation that is useful for considering the relationship between how a film is constructed and the degree to which it is likely to be the occasion for revelatory experience



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## DETAILS



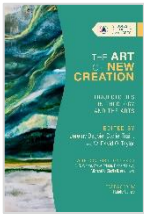
### **Seeing Is Believing** *The Revelation of God Through Film*

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In this study in IVP Academic's STA series, theologian Richard Goodwin considers how the images that constitute film might be a conduit of God's revelation. By considering works by Stanley Kubrik, Martin Scorsese, Terrence Malick, and more, Goodwin argues that by inviting emotional responses, film images can be a medium of divine revelation.

## Theology, Art, and Cultural Engagement

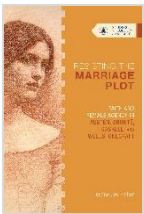
IVP Academic's Studies in Theology and the Arts (STA) series seeks to enable Christians to reflect more deeply upon the relationship between their faith and humanity's artistic and cultural expressions. By drawing on the insights of both academic theologians and artistic practitioners, this series encourages thoughtful engagement with and critical discernment of the full variety of artistic media—including visual art, music, literature, film, theater, and more—which both embody and inform Christian thinking.



### **The Art of New Creation: Trajectories in Theology and the Arts**

edited by Jeremy Begbie, Daniel Train, and W. David O. Taylor | March 29, 2022 | \$30, 264 pages, paperback | 978-1-5140-0326-8

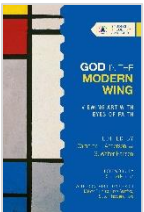
Creation and the new creation are inextricably bound, for the God who created the world is the same God who promises a new heaven and a new earth. Bringing together theologians, biblical scholars, and artists, this volume based on the DITA10 conference at Duke Divinity School explores how the relation between creation and the new creation is informed by and reflected in the arts.



### **Resisting the Marriage Plot: Faith and Female Agency in Austen, Brontë, Gaskell, and Wollstonecraft**

by Dalene Joy Fisher | December 21, 2021 | \$30, 272 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5071-6

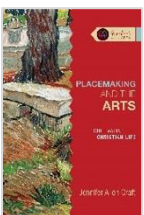
Fiction has long been used to cast vision for social change, but the role of Christian faith in such works has often been overlooked. In this STA volume, Dalene Joy Fisher examines how the works of Jane Austen, Anne Brontë, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Mary Wollstonecraft challenge cultural expectations of women and marriage, exploring how Christianity can be a transformative force of liberation.



### **God in the Modern Wing: Viewing Art with Eyes of Faith**

edited by Cameron J. Anderson and G. Walter Hansen | October 12, 2021 | \$30, 216 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5069-3

Should Christians even bother with modern art? This STA volume gathers the reflections of artists, art historians, and theologians who collectively offer a more complicated narrative of the history of modern art and its place in the Christian life. Readers will find insights on the work and faith of artists like Marc Chagall, Jackson Pollock, Mark Rothko, Andy Warhol, and more.



### **Placemaking and the Arts: Cultivating the Christian Life**

by Jennifer Allen Craft | October 30, 2018 | \$32, 280 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5067-9

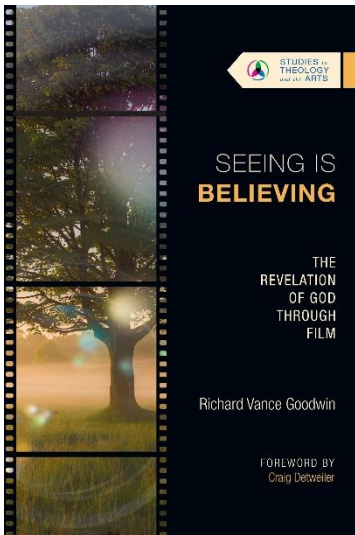
What role does place play in the Christian life? In this STA volume, Jennifer Allen Craft gives a practical theology of the arts, contending that the arts place us in time, space, and community in ways that encourage us to be fully and imaginatively present in a variety of contexts: the natural world, our homes, our worshipping communities, and society.



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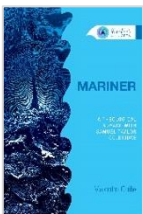
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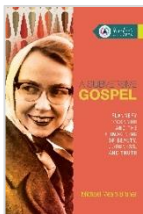
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### **Mariner: A Theological Voyage with Samuel Taylor Coleridge**

by Malcolm Guite | February 13, 2018 | \$40, 384 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5068-6

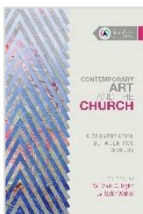
Poet and theologian Malcolm Guite leads readers on a journey with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, whose own life paralleled the experience in his famous poem "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." On this theological voyage, Guite draws out the continuing relevance of this work and the ability of poetry to communicate the truths of humanity's fallenness, our need for grace, and the possibility of redemption.



### **A Subversive Gospel: Flannery O'Connor and the Reimagining of Beauty, Goodness, and Truth**

by Michael Mears Bruner | October 24, 2017 | \$32, 260 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5066-2

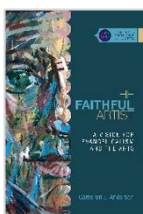
The good news of Jesus Christ is a subversive gospel, and following Jesus is a subversive act. Exploring the theological aesthetic of American author Flannery O'Connor, Michael Bruner argues that her fiction reveals what discipleship to Jesus Christ entails by subverting the traditional understandings of beauty, truth, and goodness.



### **Contemporary Art and the Church: A Conversation Between Two Worlds**

edited by W. David O. Taylor and Taylor Worley | June 20, 2017 | \$30, x + 246 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5065-5

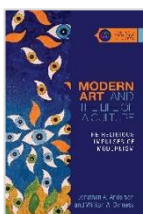
The church and the contemporary art world often find themselves in an uneasy relationship in which misunderstanding and mistrust abound. Drawn from the 2015 biennial CIVA conference, these reflections from theologians, pastors, and practicing artists imagine the possibility of a renewed and mutually fruitful relationship between contemporary art and the church.



### **The Faithful Artist: A Vision for Evangelicalism and the Arts**

by Cameron J. Anderson | October 10, 2016 | \$28, 283 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5064-8

Drawing upon his experiences as both a Christian and an artist, Cameron J. Anderson traces the relationship between the evangelical church and modern art in postwar America. While acknowledging the tensions between faith and visual art, he casts a vision for how Christian artists can faithfully pursue their vocational calling in contemporary culture.



### **Modern Art and the Life of a Culture: The Religious Impulses of Modernism**

by Jonathan A. Anderson and William A. Dyrness | May 24, 2016 | \$35, 376 pages, paperback | 978-0-8308-5135-5

In 1970, Hans Rookmaaker published *Modern Art and the Death of a Culture*, a groundbreaking work that considered the role of the Christian artist in society. This volume responds to his work by bringing together a practicing artist and a theologian who argue that modernist art is underwritten by deeply religious concerns.



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