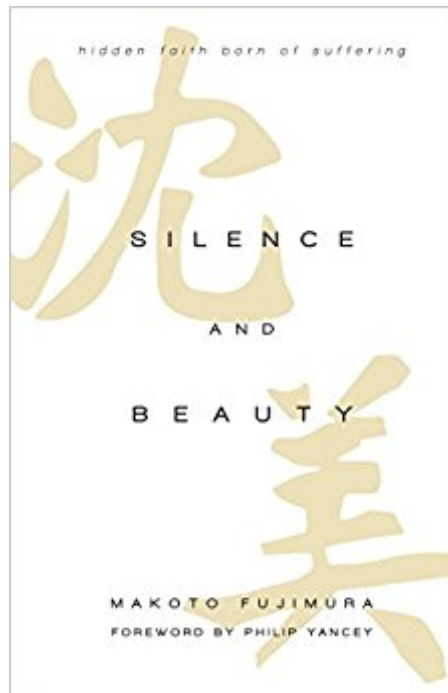




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# Silence And Beauty: Hidden Faith Born Of Suffering



## Synopsis

2016 Aldersgate Prize by the John Wesley Honors College at Indiana Wesleyan University  
Evangelical Christian Publishers Association Top Shelf Book Cover Award Shusaku Endo's novel *Silence*, first published in 1966, endures as one of the greatest works of twentieth-century Japanese literature. Its narrative of the persecution of Christians in seventeenth-century Japan raises uncomfortable questions about God and the ambiguity of faith in the midst of suffering and hostility. Endo's *Silence* took internationally renowned visual artist Makoto Fujimura on a pilgrimage of grappling with the nature of art, the significance of pain and his own cultural heritage. His artistic faith journey overlaps with Endo's as he uncovers deep layers of meaning in Japanese history and literature, expressed in art both past and present. He finds connections to how faith is lived in contemporary contexts of trauma and glimpses of how the gospel is conveyed in Christ-hidden cultures. In this world of pain and suffering, God often seems silent. Fujimura's reflections show that light is yet present in darkness, and that silence speaks with hidden beauty and truth.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Only Mako Fujimura could have written this book. It sheds light on a wealth of topics—a classic novel, Japanese culture, Martin Scorsese's filmmaking, the fine arts, theology, the enigmas of East and West—and leaves the reader with a startlingly new encounter with Christ." (Philip Yancey)"Fujimura . . . unearths universal implications about faith, suffering, and art in this focused literary study of one novel, Shusaku Endo's *Silence*. . . . Fujimura analyzes Japan's fumi-e

culture, calling it 'a culture of lament,' and asserts that 'faith can include our failures, even multiple failures.' Stories of historical figures on which Endo based *Silence*, scriptural analysis, and a wide range of literary and artistic references from both Japanese and Western culture (including Martin Scorsese's 2016 film adaptation of *Silence*) add rich, refracted layers to this carefully crafted, masterful book." (Publishers Weekly STARRED REVIEW, March 11, 2016)"Makoto Fujimura is a remarkable artist and writer, and his engagement with the writings of the great Shusaku Endo •and *Silence* in particularâ •is deep and impassioned, as you will discover on every page of this book. By way of response to a great artist, Fujimura has created a quietly eloquent meditation on art and faith, and where they converge." (Martin Scorsese, director of *Gangs of New York*, *The Wolf of Wall Street*, and *Silence*)"My friend Mako Fujimura is one of the most thoughtful, sensitive and eloquent artists of this generation. Like his otherworldly and luminous paintings, his book *Silence and Beauty* is at once glorious and profound, an exquisite exploration of truth and beauty, silence and suffering. Give yourself and others the immeasurable gift of this gentle, inspiring treasure." (Eric Metaxas, New York Times bestselling author of *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy*)"Makoto Fujimura's *Silence and Beauty* (IVP, 2016) artfully probes Shusaku Endo's famous novel *Silence*, and in doing so shows how God's truth bores through silence and darkness." (Marvin Olasky, *WORLD*, April 16, 2016)"Fujimura's book is a brilliant blend of investigation and reflection. The reader learns about the compelling history of Christianity in Japan and its strangely enduring influence there, while at the same time being led into a profound meditation on the relation of Christian faith to contemporary culture. A truly impressive achievement." (Gordon Graham, Henry Luce III Professor of Philosophy and the Arts, Princeton Theological Seminary, author of *The Re-enchantment of the World*)"How can we live in a world where we encounter suffering every day? Where is the voice of God when we doubt his goodness? It takes a very specific perspective to write beautiful prose about these questions, but in this book, Mako does just thatâ •exploring the themes raised by Endo's novel and their continuing resonance across our difficult, anxious times. *Silence and Beauty* is a gift for us as we try to be the fragrance of Christ in a suffering world." (Alissa Wilkinson, chief film critic, *Christianity Today*, assistant professor of English and humanities, The King's College)"Fujimura's *Silence and Beauty* is a truly remarkable spiritual, theological and intellectual autobiography for our time. It will be of interest to a broad readership, not least of all those who still hear the disorienting and potentially transformational call to intercultural mission in the way of Jesus. Fujimura's musings on the Christ-hidden culture of Japan, his own story and contemporary culture are revelatory, and his layering of the Ground Zero theme functions like a Rembrandt primer out of which a sublime beauty and grace emerges." (Thomas John Hastings, research fellow, Kagawa Archives and

Resource Center, former professor of practical theology, Tokyo Union Theological Seminary)"When I read Shusaku Endo's *Silence* for the first time, I vowed that I would refuse to ever read anything written about it. I wanted to preserve the profound sense of mystery and beauty that the novel evoked in me. I am so happy now that I broke that vow by reading this wonderful book by Makoto Fujimura. Mako not only enhances and deepens the sense of mystery, butâ •as he has done so consistently in his visual works of artâ •he adds significantly to the beauty!" (Richard Mouw, president emeritus, professor of faith and public life, Fuller Theological Seminary)"Mako Fujimura offers us a moving and illuminating series of reflections on one of the most powerful novels ever written. He helps us to understand how Endo's tale of martyrdom lives in the tensions between East and West, faith and doubt, trust and betrayal. Above all, Fujimura enables us to sense that grace can liveâ •and inspire new lifeâ •even in the midst of suffering." (Gregory Wolfe, editor, *Image*)"This year marks both the 50th birthday of Shusaku Endo's novel *Silence* and release of Martin Scorsese's film about this story of martyrs. Artist Makoto Fujimura used this to pen one of the most elegant nonfiction books in recent memory. We enter the world of *Silence*, and cannot help but be transformed by the beauty and suffering of those who have gone before." (Relevant, May/June 2016)"Fumi-e, for Fujimura, encapsulate the soul and struggle of modern Japan. The author paints a vivid portrait of Japanese cultural identity, especially Japanese concepts of beauty exemplified by hiddenness and silence. The story does not end there, though, for, as the author points out, what was revealed to him in Endo's workâ •namely, that God is in the silence." (Christine Engel, *Booklist*, May 1, 2016)"*Silence and Beauty* is a classic work of art. The book is a call to the world for reconciliation, understanding, and a depth of intimacy that can heal us and return us to each other and to a humble seeking of God in both the silence and beauty that surround us daily and attend us in the wake of our continual Ground Zeros." (Shann Ray, author *American Masculine*, winner of the 2012 American Book Award)"*Silence and Beauty* is an astounding work, a gift and challenge to all of us as well as a deeply felt love letter to Japan." (Mark Basnage, director, *MakeKnowledge*)"Fujimuraâ •a renowned visual artist and writer whose paintings hang in top world museumsâ •has illuminated the Gospels to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible. He features the ideal of beautyâ •particularly the beauty born of sacrificeâ •believing that art 'can heal as well as confound.' With these reflections, he explores the overlap of sacrifice and redemption, those ways faith lives in contemporary circumstances of pain and suffering. His pensive writing invites us to interrogate our own silences in the face of truth. Fujimura's journey is woven with Endo's, who demonstrates 'how powerfully God speaks through silence,' how 'in the mystery of silence and beauty,' God is revealed to 'speak through our broken lives.'" (Martha Dudich,

Liguorian, July-August 2016)"In the foreword to *Silence and Beauty*, Philip Yancey writes, 'Only Mako Fujimura could have written this book.' Truly, the book seems written by a Providence that moved Fujimura through Japan and America at significant moments in history and gifted him with particular talents and insight that allowed him to piece together the tragedy of Nagasaki and 9/11 with the fictional apostasy of Endo's Father Rodrigues and the persecution of a 16th-century tea master. 'My writing seems refractive in nature,' Fujimura writes at the start of his book, preparing us for the book's layers of narrative, research, and reflection that remind us of his nihonga paintings. Because of its entangling of multiple piecesâ•literary and art criticism, sociological and psychological explorations of Japanese culture, and personal narrativeâ•Fujimura's book is best read both forwards and backwards. It should not be read once and put back on the shelf; rather, it should be drunk like a tonic, like the antidote or inoculative drug that he claims Endo's *Silence* itself is for our culture." (Jessica Hooten Wilson, *Books & Culture*, September/October 2016)"It is the details that make the text an experience of beauty. They will also make Endo's *Silence* all the more wondrous." (Jessica Coblentz, *Catholic Library World*, September 2016)"*Silence and Beauty*' deserves to be read more than once." (Joseph W. Smith III, *Sun-Gazette*, January 29, 2017)"Shusaku Endo's novel *Silence* makes us eyewitnesses to the brutality of Japan's seventeenth-century persecution that forced Christians to choose between silence and death. In his reflection *Silence and Beauty*, Makoto Fujimura masterfully appropriates that painful history for the challenges Christians face in this time between timesâ•whether it be death in Syria and Iraq or increasing hostility in the West. Fujimura asks us to face our own silences and emerge understanding both the suffering and the beauty that silence calls forth." (Roberta Green Ahmanson, philanthropist and journalist)

Makoto Fujimura is an internationally renowned artist, writer, and speaker who serves as the director of Fuller Theological Seminary's Brehm Center for Worship, Theology, and the Arts. He is also the founder of the International Arts Movement and served as a presidential appointee to the National Council on the Arts from 2003 to 2009. His books include *Refractions: A Journey of Faith, Art and Culture* and *Silence and Beauty*. Recognized worldwide as a cultural shaper, Fujimura's work has been exhibited at galleries including Dillon Gallery in New York, Sato Museum in Tokyo, The Contemporary Museum of Tokyo, Tokyo National University of Fine Arts Museum, Bentley Gallery in Arizona, Taikoo Place in Hong Kong and Vienna's Belvedere Museum. In 2011 the Fujimura Institute was established and launched the Qu4rtets, a collaboration between Fujimura, painter Bruce Herman, Duke theologian/pianist Jeremy Begbie and Yale composer Christopher

Theofanidis, based on T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets. A popular speaker, Fujimura has lectured at numerous conferences, universities and museums, including the Aspen Institute, Yale and Princeton Universities, Sato Museum and the Phoenix Art Museum. Among many awards and recognitions, Bucknell University honored him with the Outstanding Alumni Award in 2012, and the American Academy of Religion named him as its 2014 Religion and the Arts award recipient. He has received honorary doctorates from Belhaven University, Biola University, Cairn University and Roanoke College.

This book requires slow, thoughtful reading - much like the novel itself. I particularly enjoyed Fujimura's musings on Japan's culture - how it was impacted by the presence and persecutions of its Christians, how Endo was both part of and yet removed from Japanese culture as a Christian, how even the failures of the missionaries there left an impact. I would definitely recommend this for anyone who would like greater insight into the context for the novel and its author.

The story of how this book came to be is just as interesting as the book itself. Its title and inspiration come from Shusaku Endo's 1966 novel *Silence*, about a Portuguese Jesuit who goes on a mission to Japan in the 17th century and faces the terrible choice of either recanting his faith or, if he does not recant, watching Japanese Christians endure brutal torture. If you haven't read *Silence* yet, I highly recommend that you do so before diving into *Silence and Beauty*; however, Makoto Fujimura does include a synopsis of the novel at the end of his book to provide some context. Or now that Martin Scorsese's film adaptation is out, you can go see the movie. It's an excellent adaptation, true to the novel's themes, and therefore very difficult to watch, but well worth at least one viewing. *Silence and Beauty* relates Japanese-American artist Makoto Fujimura's experience of becoming a Christian while in Japan studying nihonga, a traditional style of Japanese painting. Although these subjects may seem unrelated, Fujimura's study of traditional Japanese art exposed him to the history of Christianity in Japan through his discovery of the fumi-e. Fumi-e (stepping images) are relief depictions of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary that the Tokugawa shogunate ordered suspect Japanese to trample on; those who refused to trample were identified as Christians and tortured. This discovery led Fujimura to Endo's novel, in which the fumi-e are a prominent element of the plot. Years later, a conversation with Martin Scorsese about his film adaptation of *Silence* inspired Fujimura to write a book using Endo's novel as a framework for reflections on his own experience with Christianity and Japanese culture. As a

bilingual Japanese-American who has lived in Japan and the United States and shares Endō's Christian faith, Fujimura is uniquely qualified to discuss both the cultural and religious aspects of Silence in a way that Western readers can understand. His commentary offers rare insight on how Japanese culture influenced the shape of Christianity in Japan and how Christianity, in turn, continues to shape Japanese culture to this day. I had never thought of Christianity having any significant influence on Japanese culture, as less than one percent of Japanese are Christians. Fujimura admits his is a radical notion, but it is certainly intriguing: Endō wrote in a country haunted by Christ, and this historical mark, like the footprints in the wooden frames of a fumi-e, remains indelible but it is concealed, hidden within the Japanese psyche; this explains the psychological and sociological reality that affects Japan today. Further, I present here the most radical notion: Japan is still a Christ-hidden culture, haunted by the past, with a developed sense of hiding well what is most important. Endō, an archaeologist of cultural trauma, begins to dip into the mud, scooping up the elements of broken shards of the culture of Christianity in Japan, and discovers, in my mind, the essential beauty and humanity of Japan. Silence and Beauty is highly illuminating to the themes in Endō's novel and to the more subtle aspects of Japanese culture I was not aware of. Fujimura also sheds light on the life of Shusaku Endō, drawing from memoirs and interviews to interpret the author's motivation and inspiration for writing Silence, which I found especially fascinating. If you want to understand more about Silence, its author Shusaku Endō, the mysterious relationship between Japanese culture and Christianity in Japan, or at least one of the above, you can't have a better guide than Makoto Fujimura.

SILENCE AND BEAUTY is an elegant book in both its form and its content. This is one book for which you might want to get the print edition, even if you typically buy Kindle books, as it is a hardcover with vellum dustjacket, and color artwork on the endpapers and inside the book. 2016 is a banner year for Shusaku Endō's extraordinary novel SILENCE. Not only is this the 50th anniversary of the book's release, the launch of Martin Scorsese's long-awaited film adaptation is also scheduled for later this year. Given these special occasions, the time is right for a companion book like Makoto Fujimura's SILENCE AND BEAUTY, and few, if any other commentators are as well suited to reflect on the novel as Fujimura, a noted Japanese-American visual artist, whose work, like Endō's, is deeply rooted in his Christian faith. SILENCE AND BEAUTY will best be read by readers who are familiar with Endō's novel, or at least those who are reading the two books in tandem. SILENCE, but

Fujimura writes, "It is an artistic expression that moves us into the darkness of our Ground Zero conditions. But beyond the trauma of our Ground Zeroes, we find the beauty of the gospel that heals and restores. Fujimura's work is not a commentary on the novel, but rather a poignant reflection his personal experiences (including being in the heart of NYC on 9/11) and those of Japanese culture both historically (in the early modern age in which Endo's SILENCE is set) and more recently (including the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki). Fujimura deftly layers these stories on top of the other, as he would layer strokes of paint in one of his paintings in the traditional Japanese nihonga style, creating a wondrous work that reflects the beauty of God's redemption of our fragmented world. It is a book that "like one of Fujimura's paintings" should be taken patiently and savored. As we abide with this book, we inevitably will find encounter the profound beauty of God's love and healing that runs even deeper than the most egregious of our transgressions against our Creator. In a world groaning for healing and reconciliation, we cannot afford to ignore this book!

Powerful. Multi-faceted. The work of a brilliant mind. Soulful. Deeply intimate. Silence and Beauty is a classic work of art. The book is a call to the world for reconciliation, understanding, and a depth of intimacy that can heal us and return us to each other and to a humble seeking of God in both silence and beauty that surrounds us daily and attends us in the wake of our continual Ground Zeros. Respectful to people of all faiths. Respectful of those who seek and may find themselves at odds either with faith or atheism. Caring to the very bones of our existence. Silence and Beauty is a song to Japan, and through this vessel of wisdom and love, a song to the cultures of the world.

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